

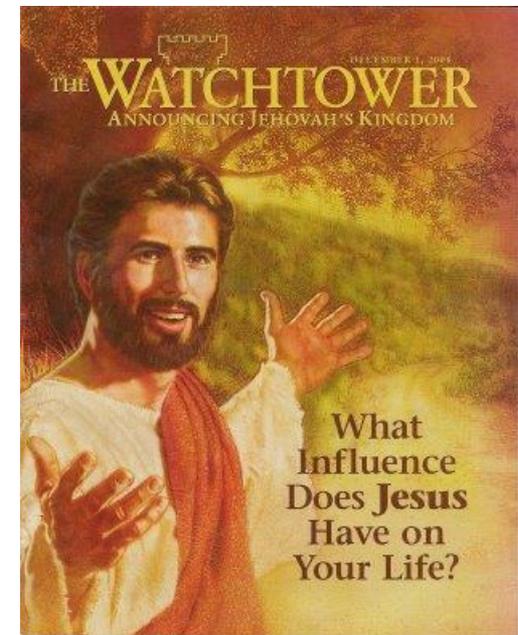
# **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

**THE ONLY VICTIMS WHO COULD SAVE  
THEMSELVES . . . AND CHOSE NOT TO**



# JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN GERMANY

- **1870s = founded in the United States**
- **Beliefs:**
  - Bible is literal truth (historically and scientifically)
  - October 1914 = beginning of the “last days”
  - Satan indirectly controls the world
  - No blood transfusions
  - Citizens of Jehovah’s Kingdom
- **1890s = arrived in Germany**
- **By 1930s, already banned in some German states**
- **1930s = 25,000 JWs in Germany**



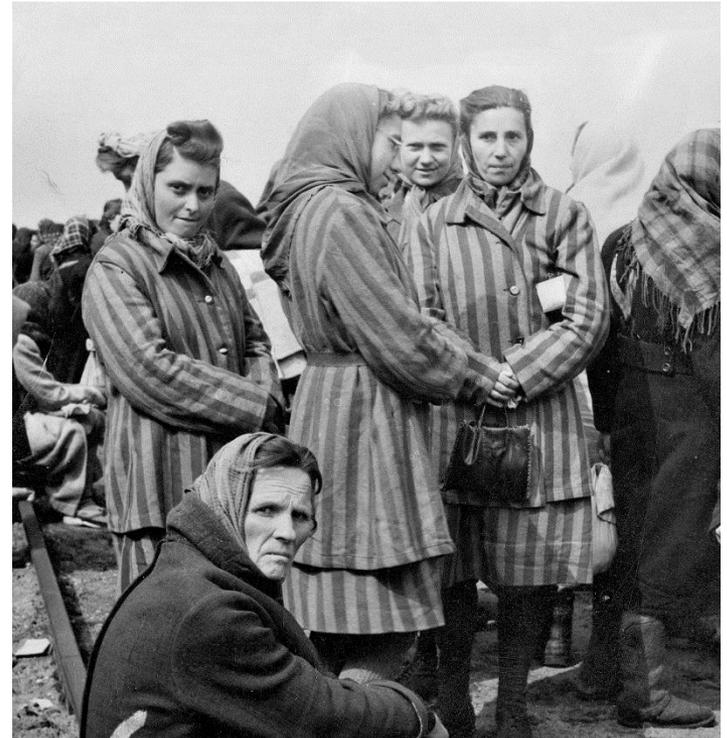
# JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN GERMANY

- **Why persecuted by the Nazis?**
  - Refused to swear allegiance to Hitler
  - Refused to serve in the military
  - Refused to give the Roman/Hitler salute
- **March 1935 = compulsory military service for Germans**
  - JW's refuse to serve
- **April 1935 = national ban on Jehovah's Witnesses**
  - Fired from civil service jobs
  - Legitimate reason to divorce someone



# INCREASING PERSECUTION

- **Ca. 10,000 Jews were arrested during Third Reich**
  - Lots of women arrested
  - Children taken to reformatories
- **Average sentence = 18 months**
  - But could be up to 4 years
- **Some were sent to KZs**
  - Initially labeled “political prisoners”



# BAVARIAN POLITICAL POLICE

- **Decree of 23 September 1935:**
  - Active Jews put in “protective custody” for 7 days
  - Released
  - If caught again, sent to KZ
  - Attempts to evangelize would mean more time in prison
- **Bibles were confiscated from Jews**



# REGISTERING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

- **Secret Order (5 February 1936):**
  - All leaders of left-wing organizations, and also the JW's, needed to be registered in a card index
  - "in case of extraordinary events (war), all enemies of the state . . . Can be taken into protective custody at one blow throughout the Reich territory."

# THE PURPLE TRIANGLE

- **1938 = Jews classified as a separate group**
  - Over 10% of KZ inmates
  - Over 40% in women's prisons
- **Ca. 2600 sent to KZs**



# TREATMENT IN CAMPS

- In Dachau, Jews were separated on arrival
- 1937/1938 = Jew forced to scream, “I am the greatest idiot of the 20<sup>th</sup> century!”
- At Sachsenhausen . . .
  - SS officer had Jew buried alive, with only his head visible
  - SS men were ordered to defecate on his head
- Sometimes, Jews were made personal assistants

# **JW: ARTHUR WINKLER (1938)**

- **Arrested, and acquitted**
- **Two days later, re-arrested**
  - Sent to Esterwegen KZ
- **Verbal abuse**
- **Physical abuse: high-pressure water jet**

# **RESPECT FROM OTHER PRISONERS**

- Often admired by other prisoners
- “Not infrequently they shared food with someone even hungrier.”
- “Their unshakeable faith allowed them to bear all the terrible harassment that the SS directed especially at them with the greatest disregard of death.”
- In Buchenwald, Jews set up a printing press

# A TYPICAL STORY

- Johannes Gärtner, hairdresser
- Arrested several times
- June 1937 = sent to Dachau
- September 1939 = sent to Mauthausen
- February 1940 = sent back to Dachau
- April 1940 = died at Dachau



# RESTRICTIONS ON MAIL

- **1938 = Jews forbidden to send/receive mail**
- **1939 = ban partially lifted**
  - Allowed one letter, with 25 words
- **SS sent postcards to family members**

# FREE TO GO?

- **January 1939 = Jews can go, but must give up faith**
  - Had to admit they had committed treason
  - Had to promise to turn in other active Jews
- **Almost no one signs form**

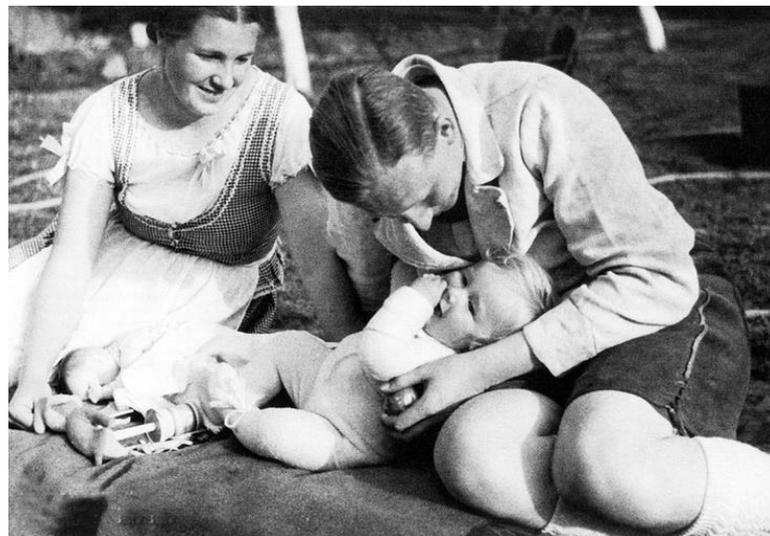
# WARTIME DEVELOPMENT

- September 1939 = Dachau closes temporarily
- 144 Jews moved to Mauthausen (out of ca. 500)
- During war, 250 Jews executed for refusing to serve in the military
  - 80 women



# LINA HEYDRICH

- **Widow, given a nice Czech country estate**
- **Himmler sent 30 Jews to work there**
  - Heydrich had them beaten
- **January 1944 = Jews sent to death camps**
  - Replaced by 15 female Jews



# FINAL TALLY

- 840 children were taken from parents
- More than 6000 Jews were incarcerated
- Ca. 2000 died in KZs
  - 250 of whom were formally executed

