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BEFORE THE BLOOD TRIBUNAL

by

RUDI WOBBE & JERRY BORROWMAN

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Utah Immigrant Survived Third Reich, But Not Cancer

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Cancer killed him, but the disease was only one of many battles Rudi Wobbe fought during his life.

As a youth, he challenged the Hitler regime and for his crimes, spent 3½ years in a Nazi concentration camp.

"He always spoke out on politics to make sure people don't sit idly by, that people are aware of what the government is doing and what's going on in the world," Karen Kadleck, Mr. Wobbe's youngest daughter, said Tuesday. "He advocated being part of the political process right until his death."

Mr. Wobbe, 65, died Jan. 31 in a Salt Lake City hospital. At his funeral Tuesday, the machinist was heralded for his courageous battle against the cancer that afflicted his prostate, leg, and lungs during the last year.

But eulogies delivered Tuesday made little mention of an earlier battle—one he fought 50 years ago in Hamburg Germany, when Mr. Wobbe and two colleagues were accused of high crimes against the Third Reich.

The three, members of the Resistance Movement, used Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints equipment and supplies to write anti-Hitler leaflets. The leaflets were placed in mailboxes, telephone booths, and in the pockets of coats hanging in an opera-house lobby. In the pamphlets they called Hitler a murderer and Nazis liars. They predicted the Nazis would be crushed.

Mr. Wobbe was 15 at the time. His friends, Karl Schnibbe and Helmuth Huebener were 16 and 17. Yet they understood the danger of their actions, for which they were caught, arrested and taken to the "Blood Court"—a room full of judges wearing blood-red robes.

The verdict: guilty.

Mr. Huebener's sentence was death under the guillotine blade, which was carried out.

Mr. Schnibbe drew a 5-year sentence. Mr. Wobbe got 10 years, but endured only 3½ years of beatings by prison guards before being rescued by the Allies, the British.

The Wobbes found their way to Salt Lake City, world headquarters of their church. They arrived on July 4, 1953, "and have celebrated ever since," Mrs. Kadleck said.

But only in the last few years did Mr. Wobbe, whose heavy accent told of his German heritage, publicly speak of the fight for freedom that helped form his character.

"Even in church he was a loud, strong teacher; never boring. He'd bring out interesting points to stimulate people and challenge their minds," Mrs. Kadleck said. "Even his handshake was firm and challenging. He let you know he was a powerful man and commanded respect."

But no fanfare.

With prodding from family, Mr. Wobbe finally wrote about his life as a dissident. A week before his death came his greatest tribute. He signed a contract with Covenant Publishing to have his book *Before the Blood Tribunal* published.

in order to become familiar with it. However, the army was so successful at this time that no one thought we'd ever need to use these shelters.

When I turned fourteen in the summer of 1941, the leaders of the local Hitler Youth started to harass me again. At my age young people were automatically transferred from the Jung Volk (Young Folk) into the Hitler Youth. I was attending an evening engineering school four nights each week, so there wasn't much time for anything else. One day I received notification to appear before a finding committee of the Hitler Youth. I took all my receipts and registration documents and visited the office. "Why have we not seen anything of you since you have been transferred to the Hitler Youth?" they demanded.

"I've been very busy going to school in the evenings after work," I replied, and showed them my papers. I went on to tell them I understood that the Fuhrer wanted the German youth to be the best educated in the world, and that's exactly what I was trying to do.

"Well, what about Sundays?" they asked. "Don't you have time then?"

I told them I didn't because I went to Sunday School with my folks, then. "Oh, you are one of those religious ones, are you?"

"Yes, I believe in God, and go to church on Sundays," I told them.

Out of the corner of my eye I noticed one of them get up and leave while we were talking, but didn't think anything of it. When I came out of the room he was waiting for me, wanting to "talk" with me. I told him I was in a hurry to go to school.

"Oh, you have enough time for me now," he blurted.

"What is it you want?" I asked him.

"We have our meeting scheduled right now, and you'd better attend it," he told me.

"I told you I am late for school, so you'd better let me pass," I said.

"No way. You have to stay." With that he started to push me against the wall.

"Hold it, man, you better watch what you are doing," I warned. "I don't like to be pushed around!"

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked, impertinently. "You can't touch me while I'm in uniform!"

"Then get out of it, you coward," I told him. He pushed me again, a little bit harder than the first time. By now I was getting angry, and while he was bending forward to push me again, I let him have an uppercut, which caught him square on the jaw. It knocked him out cold. I jumped on my bike and peddled at full speed out of the compound. Several weeks later I received another letter ordering me back to the office. This time I simply ignored it.

It was also in the summer of 1941 that my friend Helmuth Huebener told me his brother Gerhard had left him a short-wave radio for safe keeping. His brother had purchased it while on duty in France. Helmuth told me he had tried it out once, and he invited me to visit him at 9:30 P.M. that night, after his grandparents went to sleep. That meeting was to be a rendezvous with destiny and would change my life forever. At the tender age of fifteen I was about to embark on a course that would bring me in direct defiance of the Nazi government. But, first, we should go back in time just a bit to introduce you to my remarkable young friend, Helmuth Huebener.

CHAPTER TWO



MY FRIEND, HELMUTH

It was in Primary that I first met Helmuth Huebener. He was a shy nine-year-old and I was an exuberant eight-year-old. I was about half-a-head taller than Helmuth, but he towered over me in intelligence. He was a straight "A" student, while I managed only a good average. We found ourselves going to classes together, and in spite of our differences, we became fast friends.

Helmuth grew up in rather difficult circumstances. His mother was divorced and Helmuth was the youngest of three boys, his half-brothers coming from a previous marriage. To try to make ends meet, his mother had to work nights—first as a worker in the government mint, later at a local hospital. Because she was gone so much of the time, her parents, the Sudrows, agreed to take care of the children. Later, after Helmuth's mother married the Nazi Rottenfuehrer (minor official) Hugo Huebener, who adopted Helmuth, they asked if he wouldn't like to come live with them. Helmuth declined, saying that he liked living with his brothers and grandparents in their apartment on Louisenweg/Hammerbrook.

Helmuth and I liked to do the same things and read the same books. In the summertime I would visit Helmuth, and together we would go to an outdoor swimming area on the Bille River. Other times he came all the way to my home in Rothenburgsort to go with me to Kaltehofe, a swimming installation located on the Elbe River. We also enjoyed playing soccer and other games together with other boys our age.

Helmuth got me interested in reading books on world history. While I was still enthralled with the western novels of Zane Grey, Helmuth's interest shifted to politics and world affairs. A natural teacher, he would study a book and then pass it on to me pointing out key ideas I needed to take note of. After I had finished, he'd quiz me on the important points and the moral the author was trying to convey. He had great depth for one so young and had a remarkable ability to share his insights. It was because of this obvious ability that he was allowed to advance to the Oberbau (middle school) in 1938.

It was also this year that the Nazis entered my school to enroll everyone in either the Young Folks (Cub Scout age) or Hitler Youth (Boy Scout age), whether we wanted to join or not. Because he had always been fairly quiet on the subject of the Nazis, I assumed Helmuth would feel like most Germans—that it was an honor to be included. Still, I mentioned to Helmuth how much I resented being pushed into something against my will. Helmuth replied that the "Devil had tried to do the very same thing at the council in heaven before the world was formed, by putting forth a plan forcing everybody into salvation." This response surprised me, so I asked him how he felt about the Nazis. He replied, "Rudi, don't you ever believe what people are saying to you, especially in politics. They are always large in words but small in actions. Only time will tell," he went on, "because they are trying to win the working class over right now by providing employment and temporary economic gains."

"It sounds like you're not really sure of them," I said, to which he replied again, with a smile on his lips, "Time will tell."

Then I understood what he was trying to convey to me. He wasn't an ardent follower of Nazi ideology but was putting up a clever smoke screen so others could not see his real convictions and suspect his intentions. Pretty clever, I thought, and my respect for him grew even more.

Toward the end of 1938, Helmuth approached me with the idea of forming a detective agency. We had been reading the ten cent detective novels of authors such as John Kling and Rolf Tarring. It was a real treat to read the twenty-five cent Lord Lister series. Because of our admiration for this heroic writer, Helmuth made up some identification cards that

named us the Lord Lister Detective Agency. His badge number was #1 and mine was #2. He also wrote up some rules of conduct to govern our behavior as detectives.

We studied the police reports in the newspaper to find any unsolved crimes we could take on. After selecting a case, we tried to get some clues as to the Where? When? and Who Done It? questions that intrigue the curious mind. We even befriended one of the detectives from the local police station. Helmuth had such a way with people that this detective was soon very open with us.

He told us that a streetwalker had been stabbed to death in Rothenburgsort and asked us if we would snoop around to find the killer. For many nights we scurried about the streets of our area looking for anything suspicious. We kept running across a rather shady character by the name of Franz Seemann. He was a street bum who was always looking for a handout and free drinks. As we talked about it, we remembered seeing him in the company of the streetwalker in question just a few nights before her murder. We told this to the detective, and he pulled Franz Seemann in for questioning. Three days later we learned that he had confessed to the crime and that we had solved the case. Wow, did we feel great! With a solved mystery under our belts, we were true detectives—and we were only twelve years old.

Unfortunately, this was the only success we had. The other cases we took on were a lot more difficult, so after awhile we lost interest and drifted into other activities, but we still carried our ID CARDS, just in case.

Sometime later I cut my arm while jumping onto a windowsill that was about four feet above the ground. I had been showing off my athletic prowess but tripped and fell through the window. The glass broke, cutting a deep gash in my left wrist. The sight of blood gushing from the wound was enough to send me racing up the stairs to my mother. She wrapped a towel around my wrist and placed a tourniquet on the artery. She took me down to the grocery store and called a cab. At the hospital I was rushed to the emergency room. From there, I went straight into surgery, where they sewed the severed artery together again. When I awoke, I was startled to see two Gestapo agents standing by my bed to question me. When the doctor and nurses went through my pockets, they found my

Lord Lister ID CARD. That prompted them to call the Gestapo to report me as a potential enemy agent. The agents questioned me about the Lord Lister Detective Agency, asking what kind of a subversive organization it was and what foul goals this distinctively "English" organization had. Or, they asked, was it a cover-up for a secret underground movement? I was still groggy from the anesthetic and could not concentrate very well, but they kept pushing, trying to trip me up. I tried my very best to convince them that our "agency" was not a subversive or underground movement to overthrow the government, but just a game to be played by two innocent boys! After an hour they finally left me alone. But the incident wasn't entirely forgotten. A permanent file was made of the investigation.

The next year was an important one for the world. On 1 September 1939 the Second World War started with Germany's attack on Poland. Everybody was excited or scared. Helmuth grew very serious when I asked him how he felt about it. His response turned out to be prophetic when he replied, "The fire has started to burn—in Poland now—but soon the whole world will be in flames."

For me it was the last year I'd spend in school before starting an apprenticeship as a machinist. Helmuth had one more year left in the Oberbau. His greatest desire was to attend the university, but he knew it was unlikely he ever could.

"You have to have a rich father to attend the higher institutes of learning," he said. "So that leaves me out of the running." But he had great faith, and added, "I will not despair, for the Lord will find a way for me to continue my education."

This was Helmuth at his finest. He always managed to look on the bright side of life. His cheery disposition made it easy for him to find friends.

We attended the same Sunday School class, with Sister Eleanore Bremer as our teacher. She was a gracious lady who knew her lesson material by heart. We liked her a lot and had schoolboy crushes on her because she was very pretty and always wore sweet perfume. Because we liked her so much, we participated actively in class assignments. She rewarded us by giving us her old copy of the scriptures. She had purchased a new set for herself, but for us the old one was a real treasure.

As my friendship with Helmuth grew, we started discussing the lessons we learned from the scriptures. Helmuth was not afraid to tackle the hard parts of the gospel and wasn't at all shy in challenging uninformed adults if they didn't know the doctrine well. He sometimes asked the American missionaries such deeply thought out questions that he embarrassed them. They, in turn, would get a little gruff and tell him to leave things alone, that he was too young to ask such questions. Some adults even thought he was impertinent, but mostly Helmuth was just curious. It's true that he enjoyed rattling people's chains just a little. He just wanted to wake them up and make sure they were seeing all sides of a question. If Helmuth really wanted to though, he could have demonstrated a dazzling display of intellectual fireworks that would have outdistanced even the most educated of the brethren.

The year 1940 witnessed the first bombing raid over Hamburg. We heard that some bombs had fallen into St. Pauli, a section of Hamburg close to the harbor. After Sunday School the next weekend, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe and Helmuth joined me in a walk to the demolished section. When we finally arrived at Grosse Freiheit Street in St. Pauli, we found it difficult to make our way through the mass of people wanting to see the bombed-out house. One bomb had landed in the middle of the street, upturning the pavement and leaving a gaping hole where the street used to be. A second bomb had fallen onto a house, blowing away half its structure clear down to the first floor. We felt sorry for the people who had lost their home and belongings. Little did we know this was only the beginning of the massive destruction that would soon follow.

The war was building in intensity, but life went on in our neighborhood. One of the diversions we enjoyed was going to the movies together. But even there we couldn't escape the horrors of the Nazi world. On one occasion we went to a movie house where they played a German propaganda film entitled "Jud' Sues." The story was about a couple of Jews who were seducing and raping German girls. The movie, in a very demeaning way, portrayed the Jews as being a lecherous, grimy, and treacherous people. I was struck at how the Nazi propagandists preyed upon peoples' emotions through cunning and intrigue so they could gain control over them. Some

in the audience applauded after the film, which really upset Helmuth. He asked, "How can people applaud something like this? How can they demean and dehumanize a whole race of people like that? Before the whole world the Nazis are depicting Germany as a nation of hateful and arrogant people. The Nazis proclaim to be such a super people, of Aryan and pure blood, but in reality they excel only in inhumanity and brutality."

Of course we saw other movies together that were fun to watch. Heinz Ruehmann starred in a hilarious comedy entitled, "Quax der Bruchpilot" (Quax, the Crazy Pilot). Laughter helped ease the tension of the war. But every so often Helmuth started talking about the "Jud' Sues" movie. The movie upset him for a long time.

In their attempt to control everything, the Nazis proclaimed any movie with dancing or kissing in it suitable only for those over the age of eighteen. Since my favorite movie star was a beautiful dancer, I didn't really like this restriction. Besides, since the party made the ban, we wanted to challenge it. The problem was getting past the Hitler Youth patrol who stood outside the movie to check ID CARDS. To outfox them we made it a point to dress sharply, wearing overcoats with white silk scarves and Hamburg hats, the kind successful businessmen or diplomats wore. In our disguise we usually fooled the Hitler Youth patrol so that they didn't ask for our cards.

Not long after the bombing raid in St. Pauli, the raids began in other parts of Hamburg. They made it necessary to have a volunteer air-raid watch in the buildings surrounding our church in St. George. Since our meeting house was part of a larger warehouse complex, we had to post a fire watch as well. Helmuth, Karl-Heinz, and I were asked to fill this watch on New Year's Eve, 1940. At the last minute, Karl-Heinz found a party to go to, so he begged off and Arthur Sommerfeld took his place. The adult assigned to watch with us was Heinrich Worbs, our old friend. I brought some games to play, and Helmuth brought a radio. We didn't play many games because Heinrich Worbs told us stories about growing up in the Hamburg harbor as well as ghost stories that kept us sitting on the edge of our chairs. At midnight all the church bells throughout Hamburg started ringing and the ships in the harbor sounded their foghorns and steam whistles. Fireworks

were prohibited because of the war, but some people set off fireworks anyway. We ascended six stories to the roof of the warehouse to take in the festivities. The night wasn't as grand as the celebrations before the war, but somehow the people of Hamburg seemed to have a good time in spite of war restrictions. In fact, they weren't really very obedient to party rules. Even dancing was officially prohibited, but not many paid attention.

After the noise subsided, we went back down to our watch room again to have some Gluehpunsch (hot cider) and some berliner pfannkuchen (bismarks) which my mother had baked for us. Before we had the refreshments, Brother Heinrich Worbs asked us all to kneel down and have a word of prayer. With a mighty voice he asked the Lord to give us peace, to break the yoke of the Nazi butchers, to make us free, and to prosper the cause of Zion in Germany. He also prayed for the leaders of the Church that they might have the spirit of Christ in their hearts and with love lead the flock into all righteousness despite the prevalent Nazi influence. After the prayer, we looked at each other, and together cautioned Brother Worbs to be more careful of what he was saying in public.

"I tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and I cannot tell a lie," he replied.

"We understand this and agree with you, but please be careful who you are talking to," we urged him. (About a year later, we had occasion to remember this sad warning when our friend was arrested by the Gestapo for making a derogatory remark on the street one day about the Nazis.)

During a lull in the conversation, Helmuth started to play with the dials of the radio, trying to tune in a station other than those authorized by the German Reich. He succeeded in getting Radio Basel/Switzerland and Radio Liechtenstein, but that was all he could find. Every couple of hours we had to go through the warehouse on our routine watch cycle, but everything was all right. There weren't even any air raids to break up the evening. As morning approached, we went to bed to get some sleep. Heinrich Worbs stayed up to read the scriptures, kidding us when we were unable to keep our eyes open anymore. Finally, at 6:00 A.M. our relief came.

Sunday morning and evening were spent in Church services, and Church activities kept us pretty busy during the

week. On Monday evening the men went to priesthood meeting while the women attended Relief Society. On Wednesday, the young men and women attended the Mutual Improvement Association, while the Boy Scout age group attended the Juniors (the Boy Scouts had been disbanded by the government in favor of the Hitler Youth). On Friday, to close the week out, we had choir practice.

After these meetings, we would all walk home together. When we reached the Hammerbrookstrasse, Karl-Heinz would break away and travel toward Hohenfelde. The rest of us would continue on toward Hammerbrook, talking, laughing, and singing together. Most of the time we liked to sing hymns but occasionally would sing American songs the missionaries had taught us, such as "You Are My Sunshine" or "Moonlight and Roses." Helmuth particularly liked to sing the American songs. One day, as we were happily singing away, a Hitler Youth patrol stopped us and demanded that we let them inspect our identification cards. After looking them over, they demanded to know why we were singing English songs.

"They are not English songs, but American," Helmuth smarted off. "And why shouldn't we sing them?" he added. "It's not against the law!" With that he really warmed to his subject and said, "Talking about the law, what right do you think you have to harass German citizens on the street? You've not been given the authority of a policeman to question people!" So intense was Helmuth's tirade that the members of the youth patrol were effectively confounded. Finally they gave up and withdrew, unable to compete with Helmuth. After they left, Helmuth said, "That is the trouble with these people—put them in a uniform and they think they have the authority to bully people around. It doesn't matter whether they belong to the Hitler Youth, the SA, or the SS. But that's the way the whole system has become. Our country is being run through threats, intimidations, and even brutal force! And something has to be done about this!" Helmuth's steps had become shorter and shorter as he talked. Finally, he stopped with his eyes fixed on a distant spot in the road.

After a moment, I touched him on the shoulder and said, "Helmuth, is there something the matter with you?"

He bolted, as if being awakened from a deep sleep, looked at me and said, "Yes, something should be done about this!"

"What, Helmuth?" I asked him.

"Not now, Rudi. Not just yet, but soon."

I let it go, but had a feeling he was up to something. To break the serious mood, I said, "Helmuth, let's do some more singing and forget those uniformed party slaves who tried to spoil our evening."

"Yes," he replied, "let's sing." And with this he started an exuberant rendition of "Moonlight and Roses." We all fell in with the song, and pretty soon the dark feeling dissipated.

We parted company and I continued to Rothenburgsort alone. During that quiet walk, I found myself in deep contemplation. I'd seen a different Helmuth than I'd known before. For the first time I had seen deep into his soul. I was intrigued by his intense, negative feelings for the Hitler Youth and the party system. His comment that "something should be done about it," let me know that some kind of resolve was building in his mind. It was also apparent he wasn't yet ready to convert his thoughts into action. No matter how I tried to characterize the remarkable events of that night, I couldn't help but feel that something extraordinary was going to happen and that Helmuth would be in the middle of it. I sensed it would be dangerous and felt both fear and excitement.

The next time we met I asked again what he was up to, but Helmuth just said, "Later, Rudi." Helmuth did tell me of something he'd just read by Heinrich Mann, one of the authors banned by the Nazi Party. The title of the book was *Geist und Tat* (Spirit and Action). As always, he was trying to teach me about political systems by letting me know about the problems other people and nations faced that were similar to Germany's. In the book, Mann quoted Napoleon as saying, "Revolutions are rare, because human life is too short. Everybody thinks to himself, 'it will not profit me to upset the existing order, so why bother?'" Mann went on to say that while the French revolution, with its stirring battle cry, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," echoed throughout the world, those grand aims were forgotten as the bourgeoisie and nobility quietly reestablished themselves. Helmuth said that Mann felt it would be even more difficult to bring about a revolution in Germany because the German people are so fatalistic. While they are deep thinkers who love philosophy, they have a deep suspicion that there really is no great meaning or purpose to

life. Thus, they seek security above all else and are unwilling to overthrow a bad government because of the attitude, "What difference would it make anyway?" Hence, Helmuth concluded, the people were willing to accept Hitler because, in some perverse way, he managed to create for them a fatal feeling of safety.

This was just one example of the deep conversations Helmuth and I had on politics. Because he had received straight A's on his final examinations and dissertation on graduation from basic school, he had been given the high honor of going on to middle school. He was also given a job as an intern to the Department of Social Services. In this position he was being trained to one day hold a career as a high government official. One of the benefits of working there was that most of the books banned by the Nazis were stored in the building archives. This allowed Helmuth to occasionally sneak out books for us to read.

Looking back across the years, I see how much I enjoyed my discussions with Helmuth. With each book he read, his brilliant young mind was resolving itself to the fact that the Nazi regime was evil and should be resisted. Because Helmuth had a strong sense of right and wrong, he felt compelled to explore ideas outside the narrow scope of government propaganda. That intellectual curiosity, coupled with his deep religious conviction of the basic value of each of God's children, was leading him on a collision course with the Nazi Reich.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPT FOR THE
NAZI REGIME

Every family needs a physician. Ours was Dr. Loewenberg, a splendid doctor and surgeon. He was the one who treated my childhood bouts with mumps, tonsillitis, and chicken pox. His good reputation in the medical community and with his patients was probably the reason the Nazis left him alone as long as they did. You see, he was a Jew.

One day the inevitable happened. We approached his office for an appointment only to find a Storm Trooper blocking the door. My mother asked the meaning of this. The Storm Trooper emphatically replied, "No German citizen would willingly patronize a Jewish doctor, and I am here to prevent it!"

"But *we* do!" said my mother, as she pushed the Storm Trooper aside to enter the building. But the next time we tried to visit Dr. Loewenberg things didn't work out so well. Instead of a Storm Trooper, we were greeted by an empty office with a sign posted saying, "Der Jude ist raus!" (The Jew is out!) That was the last time we ever saw the good doctor.

However, a few weeks later we noticed his office was again occupied by another physician named Dr. Maack. Upon entering, we couldn't help but notice the jackboots and the black uniform of the SS hanging from the coat hanger in his office. We didn't visit him again.

More and more frequently, neighbors were disappearing from our apartment building. The Nazis made certain everyone could hear the commotion they created while arresting

one of the terrace residents. The next day we would all ask, "Who was picked up last night?" Then, one or the other of the children would reply, "My father was arrested by the Gestapo!" The two most common reasons for such arrests were opposing the party program or supporting the Jews. There were a lot of former Communists and Social Democrats living in our neighborhood which made it a prime target for the Nazis.

Of course these weren't the only reasons one could be arrested. If you were too frequently late for work or if you didn't get along well with the party representative, you were reported as an "antisocial" individual in need of rehabilitation at a concentration camp. If, by chance, you asked for a couple of days of leave of absence for personal reasons, you were branded an "idler" or "lazy worker," which called for corrective training. If your boss didn't like you or wanted to get even with you for some reason, all he had to do was report you to the Gestapo, and you were picked up and sent to a concentration camp for a stern dose of "work education." The party never talked about what went on in the concentration camps, but one look at a returning victim told us how awful it was. Another "sin" that earned you a ticket to a concentration camp was allowing someone to overhear you complain about the war or the twelve-hour day you were forced to work. Such expressions stamped you as a "defeatist" in need of an attitude change. The worst crime of all was to openly oppose the Nazis by belonging to another party, such as the Communists, Social Democrats, Free Liberals, or Christians. Anyone who did not give up his former affiliations and join the Nazis was in danger of being declared a political enemy, marked a "Political," and promptly sent to a concentration camp.

We learned about the horrors of the concentration camps first hand from a member of our congregation, Brother Heinrich Worbs. We knew him to be a devout Christian, a simple but honest man. His only fault was that he always said what he was thinking and feeling at the time. Among friends that was okay because we would keep his remarks to ourselves. One day, while watching the Nazis erect a statue of one of their "Nazi-heroes," Heinrich remarked, "Another statue for one of those Nazi butchers!" He was overheard and reported to the Gestapo who immediately arrested him and shipped

him to Neuengamme, a feared concentration camp near Hamburg. They kept him for six months. After being released he attended Church meetings again, but we could hardly recognize him. He was a broken man, a shadow of his former self. Brother Otto Berndt took him under his wing and slowly nurtured him back to where he could at least carry on a conversation. When Helmuth and I had a chance to question him privately, he told us that he was not allowed to talk about the treatment he had received. Indeed, he'd been forced to sign a paper that said he was simply there for educational purposes and had been treated well. Further, his captors threatened that if he ever said anything to the opposite effect, he would immediately be returned to the concentration camp and would never be released again.

All the time he was telling us about this he was shaking violently as a leaf for fear that they might get him again. Eventually, we calmed his fears to the point that he could tell us what had happened to him. The story sickened us. It seems that part of the "reeducation" process was to force the prisoners to stand naked, or nearly so, outside in the middle of the winter, ankle deep in snow, with their hands shackled together. To make things worse, the SS would pour water over their shackled hands, which soon turned to ice. Then they would come by and beat on the frozen hands with a rubber hose or stick to "warm" them up. While telling us of his ordeal, poor Brother Worbs was constantly looking from side to side, afraid that someone might take him back. We were appalled at the treatment he had received and of the frightened, beaten wreck they had made of this gentle soul. Six weeks later he died.

What upset Helmuth and me most was the way the other members of our congregation treated Brother Worbs upon his return. Rather than rally to his defense to comfort him, many turned a cold shoulder, refusing even to speak with him. He was ostracized because he "kicked against the pricks," by opposing the government. Many, I suspect, were afraid to be seen with him for fear the Nazis would suspect them as well. Thus was the mighty party able to enforce its iron hold on the citizens. By crushing one man, they could terrify everyone else into quiet submission.

Probably the easiest way to gain admittance to a concentration camp was to be a Jew. Anti-Semitism raged throughout

prewar Europe. The Germans were not alone in prejudice against this race of people. But, it was only through the unlimited dictatorial powers of Adolf Hitler that six million people would be subjected to his "final solution." In his cold and calculating way, he set in motion the machinery to attempt to destroy an entire race from off the earth. Only total military defeat was able to quiet this monstrous machine, which had grown drunk on blood and terror.

Under the guise of maintaining racial purity, the Nazis first deprived the Jews of their property and employment. Next, they were herded into crowded corners of the major cities, called ghettos. The ghettos, in turn, fed the furnace of the holocaust as families were torn apart to be sent to the concentration camps where execution or terrible deprivation and inhumanity awaited.

Hitler wasn't just interested in eliminating the German Jews. Whenever a country was conquered, the SS made a sweep through the population to search out the Jews and deport them. Even the half- and quarter-blood Jews were harassed—especially if they were married to Aryan spouses. When they found such a mixed marriage, the SS "requested" the Aryan to divorce the Jew. If they refused to abandon their spouses, they were charged with violation of the Racial Purity Law, which meant non-Jewish spouses would lose their employment. For the rest of the war they were required to perform menial jobs, such as janitor, regardless of professional training or education. One day I found a former department store manager sweeping the floors in the same building he used to manage.

There was simply no end to the lengths the Nazis would go to humiliate a Jew. I saw a Jewish man paraded through the streets of Hamburg with a sign hung around his neck that said, "I am in town the greatest swine, for only with German girls do I sleep and dine."

One of our friends at church was a very intelligent young man named Salomon Schwarz. He was born in Balagansk in Siberia, Russia on 2 July 1916. His mother was a Hungarian Jew who was abducted by the Russians and deported to Siberia in World War I. On the way there, she was raped by a Russian soldier. In this act, he fathered Salomon.

While in Russia, she met and married German prisoner-of-war, Hermann Schwarz. Salomon's maternal grandparents,

the Lehrers, were well to do and sent money to buy their POW son-in-law's way out of Russia. With this help the family was able to return to Hamburg, Germany. Here Salomon grew through the years of childhood as a member of his stepfather's Protestant church. About the time he turned eighteen, he started to ask many questions which his church couldn't answer. His search ultimately led him to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which he joined on 7 June 1935. He was very enthusiastic about his new church and helped in the conversion of his half sister, Anna Marie. He and Anna Marie belonged to the Barmbeck Branch of the Church, which was presided over by my future father-in-law, Alfred Schmidt. They were very content in their Church associations until an unhappy incident occurred in early 1939.

Because the Barmbeck Branch had a very small meetinghouse, whenever a large group needed to meet everyone would travel to our building, the St. Georg Branch, because it had a larger meeting hall. Salomon had joined the district choir, which practiced each Friday evening at the St. Georg meetinghouse. Somehow, the branch president at St. Georg became suspicious of Salomon and one day confronted him. He demanded that Salomon produce an Aryan ID CARD, which, of course, he was unable to do. The branch president told him not to visit the branch again until he could prove he was an Aryan. Shortly thereafter a sign appeared on the entrance to the Church that said, Jews Are Not Allowed To Enter! This was directed against Salomon and others of mixed-blood lines. Because the Church had always taught the importance of tolerance for people of all races, some of the local brethren objected to the placing of such an un-Christian sign on the door of the branch meetinghouse.

When confronted, the St. Georg branch president simply said, "I am just following party lines." He'd been a member of the Nazi party since 1933. It should be noted that this was the only meetinghouse in all of Germany that had such a sign placed above its door. Needless to say, Salomon was shocked and devastated. He did not expect this in what he considered to be the true church. He went to his own branch president, Alfred Schmidt, who assured him that he was always welcome in the Barmbeck Branch and would never be greeted by such a sign there.

Salomon then told his troubles to his friend Walter Schmidt, who went right to work trying to help him. Walter wrote a letter to the Reichssippenamt (Racial Control Office), forwarding a signed affidavit stating that Salomon was of non-Jewish character and stature. This document was signed by friends of Salomon's, including members of the Nazi Party. They were all hoping that Salomon would be classified like the rest of his brothers and sisters, who were identified as half Jews. With this designation, they were not required to wear the six cornered Star of David, which proclaimed the bearer as a Jew. Without the star, they were not harassed and could move about freely. Such were the hopes that inspired the letter. But, the Reichssippenamt failed to reply.

While awaiting an answer, Salomon hoped he would be able to attend a special Church conference meeting at the St. Georg meetinghouse which was featuring a visiting speaker. As they approached the meeting, he asked his sister to go inside and ask permission from the mission president for Salomon to attend. The president sent a message out with his secretary that Salomon would not be able to enter. His sister, with a heavy heart, had to go and tell him of the decision. Salomon broke down and cried as he said, "Why can't I be with my brothers and sisters in the gospel and worship with them?" His sister told him to go home, assuring him she would report the messages of the conference to him later. He told her he wanted to stay there, outside the chapel, to hear the Church hymns they were singing.

It was two years later, in 1941, that Salomon thought he could get an answer if he would apply directly in Berlin to the Reichssippenamt. Before he left on his journey, the whole membership of the Barmbeck branch knelt down in prayer in his behalf. While he was in Berlin to plead his case, a party member reported to the Gestapo that Salomon was not wearing the Star of David. Legally he wasn't required to wear the Star, since his case was still pending. But as soon as he returned from Berlin he was arrested by the Gestapo and shipped to a concentration camp for "educational purposes." His clothing was sent home to his mother. After carefully opening the bundle, she noticed some blood stains on it and screamed loudly, "What have they done to my boy?"

After three weeks they released Salomon. As he came through the door of his home he collapsed and fell into a coma. The family was unable to revive him. His sister Anna Marie rushed to get their branch president, Brother Schmidt, to help him through the power of faith and the priesthood. When she got there, she found that Ernst Schmidt, a son, was also there on furlough from the army. He offered to help and all three immediately began the one hour walk to Salomon's house. Upon arriving, they anointed his head with consecrated oil and blessed him by the power of the priesthood with the instruction to arise. Salomon opened his eyes and sat up. He was very weak and in need of spiritual comfort even more than physical sustenance. They did their best to raise his spirits through cheerful conversation.

When it came time for the two brethren to leave, Salomon pleaded with them to stay and pray with him. They did, hoping all the time that no air-raid alarm would sound to disturb them. It was early morning the next day when Salomon finally calmed down enough to go to sleep. Only then, did they leave for their own homes.

Shortly after this Salomon had to appear before the Nazi court to learn of the findings of the Reichssippenamt. He was still too weak to make it on his own, so Ernst Schmidt, in army uniform, went with him. As Ernst helped Salomon to the witness box, the judge challenged Ernst, saying, "Aren't you ashamed to associate yourself with this Jew, thus soiling the uniform of the German Soldier?"

Ernst replied, "I don't see a Jew, your honor. I only see my friend!" But, the finding of the high office was that Salomon was a full-blooded Jew and would be required to wear the Star. The reasoning behind the decision was that Salomon's Russian father must have been a Jew, since only a Jew would touch a Jewish woman. It was through this clever reasoning that Salomon was found to be one hundred percent Jewish. The Nazis added "Israel" as his middle name (as they did all declared Jews) and sentenced him to move into the ghetto, in the Benekestrasse/Grindel. Before his move, the family had to put a sign on their door declaring that a Jew lived there. It was during this time that Brother Otto Berndt, then district president of the Church, visited Salomon regularly to give him comfort and support. After his move to the ghetto, it was

Walter Schmidt who visited him, even though it was strictly forbidden for an Aryan to visit a Jew. In spite of warnings that he too could be sent to a concentration camp, Brother Schmidt valued his friend's needs more than his own safety and went anyway. He had faith that he was on the Lord's errand and would be protected. His faith was justified.

Salomon stayed in the ghetto until 12 February 1943. On that day he was transported to Auschwitz, where he died in the gas chambers.

While the Nazi party never officially condemned the Christian churches of the country (Hitler didn't want that problem on top of all his others), they undermined the meaning of Christianity by slowly replacing men's allegiance to God with loyalty to the party. For example, the same branch president who caused Salomon so much trouble reprimanded an elderly sister in our branch. On the way to Church one Sunday morning, she had stooped to pick up a leaflet dropped by the British onto the streets of Hamburg. When she arrived at the church she casually showed it to some of the other members. When the president saw what she was doing, he ripped the leaflet from her hand and started shouting, "If you ever bring enemy propaganda literature into this branch house again, I will see to it that you are brought into a concentration camp!"

This action disturbed me deeply. Just two weeks earlier our Sunday School teacher, Sister Bremer, had taught a marvellous lesson about Jesus' instructions to his disciples and the importance of the first and second commandments—to love God with all your heart and soul and to love your neighbor as yourself (see Matthew 22:36–40). I also thought of the scripture where the Lord differentiated between the righteous and the unrighteous when he said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). Somehow I couldn't shake the image of our branch president threatening one of his flock with deportation to a concentration camp simply for picking up a leaflet. When I told Helmuth of the incident, he grew very serious and said, "The evil influence of Nazism, with its disregard of human rights and feelings, is making inroads even into the Church by changing people's priorities and loyalties." Here again, I was taken aback by the depth of his thinking.

As we continued this discussion, we talked of the growing role of the party programs in the Church. For example, we often had to respond to the invitation to listen to the speeches of Hitler or Goebbels during our youth activity night before we could get on with the social activities planned for the evening. Each time the branch president conveniently provided a radio so there would be no excuse to not listen.

The influence of politics on our Church activity got to the point that it seemed to us many of our Christian brothers and sisters considered Hitler to be the "savior of Germany." Superficial parallels were drawn between the Nazi party and the Church, including its organizational structure and strong emphasis on the active participation of every member. Even the fact that the LDS Church encourages genealogical research seemed to coincide with the Nazi's demand for rigorous genealogical pedigrees that proved one's Aryan ancestry. In an attempt to coexist with the Nazi government, American Church officials resorted to public relations efforts which suggested all of the above. The most outspoken Church leader was the East-German Mission President, who published an article in the Nazi newspaper, *Der Voelkische Beobachter* (*The People's Observer*), implying that it was the responsibility of Church members to actively support their government. Dated 14 April 1939, this article caused many in the Church to feel Hitler's cause was justified. Some even included him in their public prayers, asking for divine guidance in his behalf.

Similar incidents were taking place in other churches throughout the land. Of course there were many courageous church leaders who spoke out against the Nazi's rule, but they soon wound up in concentration camps.

The Nazi's covert campaign against religion created a great dilemma for God-fearing citizens. The demands of government often intruded on the traditional goals of organized religion, such as support for one's neighbor, respect for the rights of individuals, etc. When there is a conflict between them, where does one's loyalty lie—with God or government? That was the great question for us.

In retrospect, I can't say what all the precise annoyances were, but it wasn't long before Helmuth Huebener, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, and I found ourselves united in a growing dissatisfaction with Nazism. There were simply too many

contradictions to reconcile. During the day we listened to the propaganda about Hitler and his party helping the German people reestablish their "place in the sun," while at night they came and arrested the fathers and mothers of our friends. If the party was so great and benevolent, why should it be so frightened of dissent or free thinking? Yet, they punished even the slightest opposition.

In Church it was always Helmuth who spoke up, debating the issues. Sometimes he walked the narrow line, challenging the elders to stand up and be counted. He was told to be quiet, that he was too young to understand these things. Whenever the party members tried to subdue our thinking by reciting the long list of Nazi accomplishments, we'd think of Emerson's famous statement, "What you are doing thunders so loudly in my ears that I cannot hear what you are saying." As we watched in disgust at the great injustices being done to our neighbors and fellow Church members, our irritation grew into anger. The actions of the Nazi party and its faithful followers contradicted everything we felt to be noble and sacred. As we watched Salomon Schwarz pass through his Gethsemane, our anger grew into a quiet resolve to do something to resist the evil that now dominated our land.

CHAPTER FOUR

PREPARATION TO
HIGH TREASON

Our story has now come back to the summer of 1941. A victorious German army had swept through Europe, gobbling up Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Current battles were being fought in the distant lands of North Africa, Yugoslavia, and Greece. The German people were proud of their seeming invincibility.

Then, on 22 June 1941, Hitler made one of the most momentous decisions of the war—he ordered the invasion of Russia. In spite of his infamous Nonaggression Pact signed with Stalin just days before the invasion of Poland, he now repudiated the pact and turned his eyes to the east. Everyone assumed the German army would meet with the same success in this endeavor as they had on all the other fronts. German youth marched by torchlight, shouting salutes to their Führer. Things were going well for Adolf Hitler in 1941. He was a winner, and few Germans dared to defy him.

Among the few who did were we three young men of Hamburg who had at last had enough. Even at the tender age of fifteen, the innocence of youth had disappeared, lost to the cruelty of the Nazi party. We were now young men who felt capable of independent thought and action. Our resistance started when Helmuth's half brother, Gerhard, came home on a furlough from the Western front. While there, he purchased a Rola shortwave radio which he left with Helmuth for safe keeping. Of course it was impossible for anyone as naturally

curious as Helmuth to not explore this delightful wonder. As he searched the airwaves, his excitement grew. For the first time in years, he was able to tune into the world outside the German realm. As if guided by fate late one evening he tuned into a broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He started to listen to it regularly. He was so thrilled with what he was hearing that he had to share it with me as soon as possible. I'll never forget the first night I heard this remarkable broadcast. I arrived at about 7:00 P.M. and talked with his grandparents for awhile. As usual they went to bed early, saying good night to us and asking me to not stay too long. For awhile, we perused some of the forbidden books that Helmuth had borrowed from the Social Services library. Finally, at 10:00 P.M., it was time for the broadcast to begin. With our ears glued to the receiver we heard the first bar from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, "Did did did dah—This is BBC London with the German news broadcast!" (As of the beginning of the war, 1 September 1939, a law had been passed that forbade all citizens to listen to any foreign broadcast. But this didn't bother us, for we wanted to know what was happening.)

There was a vast difference between the news the BBC gave us versus the Wehrmachtsbericht (Armed Forces News) and the German newspapers. BBC London gave the casualties precisely for both sides—not at all like a typical German news report, which sounded something like this, "Massive casualties were inflicted upon the Russian Army, with relatively few losses for our own victorious troops." Another broadcast that amused us was a report on the success of the Luftwaffe in sinking the British aircraft carrier, the Ark Royal. According to the BBC, she was still afloat. We heard the same report on another occasion. Helmuth told us later the Germans had sunk this poor ship three different times. The British stood by their story that she remained undamaged and very much battle ready.

At the end of each broadcast, the BBC would invite its listeners to find others who would tune in, then give the times of rebroadcasts. Helmuth hurriedly wrote these down in shorthand. I asked him when he'd learned to take shorthand. "Oh, I took a couple of classes in school," he replied. "Things like shorthand and typing, really come in handy." I was about to find out just how handy his typing skills were.

The next time we met, he gave me a handbill, about one-fourth the size of a sheet of typing paper and asked me to read it. Entitled "Hitler the Murderer!" it contained the message we'd heard on the previous radio broadcast. It talked about the murder of General von Schroeder, military commander of Serbia. I told him the pamphlet looked great, particularly since it was printed on red paper. "Then let's go to work," Helmuth replied. He handed me a stack of leaflets and said, "Put them in mailboxes, telephone booths, and other places—be inventive." But, Rudi," he went on, "be careful not to let anyone see you."

With that, I took off. When I arrived back in Rothenburgsort's Billhorner Roehrendamm, which runs parallel to the Hardenstrasse where I lived, I went to the top floor and started to drop off the handbills in the mailboxes (strasse translates to "street" in English). I quickly learned that I had to be very quick, so people wouldn't see me. Whenever I came out of an apartment house, I kept close to the building so no one could look out and see me from above. Proceeding with this method of distribution, I covered about three apartment houses before my supply ran out. I distributed about thirty to thirty-five handbills that first night.

The following Sunday I reported my success to Helmuth and told him everything had gone all right. He told me he had a new batch of handbills ready for delivery. The titles were, "Hitler Is Guilty of the Bombing Raids Over Germany!" and, "Who Is Lying?" a pamphlet that compared the Wehrmachtsbericht reports with the news from the BBC. I distributed these new pamphlets in the Markmannstrasse, Kanalstrasse, and Lindleystrasse in Rothenburgsort. I was interested to find that the Nazi Party had placed bulletin boards at the entrance of every apartment house in the area with the intriguing title, "Bulletin Board of the N.S.D.A.P." (in other words, the Nazis' public bulletin board). I couldn't resist the challenge and placed our new handbills on those boards, as well.

It took a real effort on Helmuth's part to produce the leaflets. His system worked something like this:

1) He'd listen to a BBC broadcast, taking down key points in shorthand.

2) After transcribing his notes, he'd decide whether to

copy the broadcast verbatim or use it as a basis for writing an article in his own style.

3) Once the article was prepared, he used our church typewriter to produce the leaflets on bright red paper for distribution. As clerk for our local congregation, he'd been given use of the typewriter to write letters to servicemen in the field. Usually he'd prepare sixty quarter-page leaflets. By using five carbons, he "only" had to type the message twelve times. When he prepared the full-page dissertations, the task was even greater.

4) He did the typing late at night, after his grandparents had gone to bed. He chose to use red paper because it drew attention to the message. To throw the Nazis off the track, he always drew a big, black swastika in the corner. Thus, the casual observer would assume it was just another party bulletin. What a surprise awaited the person who took a closer look.

Over time, Helmuth wrote many different handbills and dissertations, which his small network distributed throughout the city. We did what we felt was right in trying to bring truth to our neighbors. The German Government saw it as the beginning of the crime of Preparation to High Treason. We didn't realize, of course, how famous our activities would soon make us. But, Helmuth didn't hold anything back. He was determined to reveal the truth hidden behind the propaganda. Here is a sample of some of the handbills:

1. Hitler Is Guilty: Of the Bombing Raids Over Germany.
2. Hitler the Murderer: Of General von Schroeder, Commander of Serbia.
3. Down with Hitler: Volks-Traitor, Volks-Betrayer, Volks-Seducer. [This pamphlet used the Allies' "V" for victory sign.]
4. Who Is Lying?: The Wehrmachtsbericht [German Armed Forces News] Are Untrue.
5. One and a Half Million: German Losses Have Reached One and a Half Million in Russia. Listen to BBC London to hear the truth. [The pamphlet listed the times of scheduled broadcasts.]
6. What They Withhold: Losses in Russia Not Being Reported to the Public.

7. 137th Infantry Division: Heavy Losses Reported in that Division.

8. Where Is Rudolf Hess: The Real Reasons Reported for His Flight to Britain.

9. Only Hitler Is the Guilty One: The Reasons for Reprisal Raids over Germany by the R.A.F.

After printing the small handbills, Helmuth started on some full page dissertations. A total of twenty different subjects were covered over the course of our resistance. To list a few:

1. The Voice Of Conscience: A Christmas Message from Rudolf Hess, Originated in England

2. The Nazi Reichsmarshal: Hermann Goering and the Failure of His Luftwaffe!

3. The Hitler Youth We Are Forced to Join: Exposé of the Leaders of the Hitler Youth.

4. Comrades-in-Arms in the North, South, East, and West: Overview of the Military Status on All Fronts. The Sinking (4X) of the Ark Royal, "Iron Savings," Forced Donations to Finance the War.

5. A Wave of Oil: Gasoline Shortages in Germany

6. Perfidies ROME: German/Italian Axis and Their Problems.

7. Speeches by Hitler: A Salty Critique Thereof.

8. In the East Asiatic Theatre Are Many Bases Left for Attack: Appeal to End the War by Toppling Hitler. Hints About the Mysterious Deaths of Field Marshal von Reichenau, General Udet, and Colonel Moelders.

9. *I Have Calculated Everything*: The Defeat of the German Army Due to the Lack of Winter Clothing and Supplies.

An invitation to the German people to join with the Allies in the Ruetli Oath, which demonstrates the resolve of the Allies to win. The oath goes as follows:

We want to be a brotherhood united and never part, despite danger or want. We want to be free, as our fathers were. Rather death, than to live in slavery! We put our trust in the almighty God, and are not afraid of the tyranny of men!

10. 1942, the Decisive Year: An Invitation to the German People to Do Away with the Nazi Regime.

11. The Rudolf Hess Mystery: Why the Government's Second in Command Left Germany to Sue for Peace in England.

12. Weekend Incarceration: German Youth Are Being Intimidated through Weekend Incarcerations [see copy at the end of this chapter for full text].

13. *The Voice of the Homeland*: What the Bible Has to Say About Hitler [see text at end of chapter].

To my surprise, not one of these leaflets was turned into the Rothenburgsort service office of the Gestapo. But, other offices in the Hammerbrook area received reports of leaflets being dropped off in the neighborhood.

The party members were disturbed, to say the least, at finding these leaflets in mailboxes and telephone booths, particularly since all the leaflets had an invitation printed on them, "Dieses ist ein Kettenbrief, darum weitergeben" ("This is a chain letter, pass it on").

Helmuth was quite selective in choosing people to involve in his enterprise. Yet, he felt such a great sense of personal urgency that sometimes he threw caution to the wind and allowed his true feelings to show at inappropriate times. One day he told me of the discussions he held at his place of work at the Social Services Department, the Bieberhaus. As he and the other apprentices talked of political developments, Helmuth cautiously shared his contempt for the system. At one point he even gave a talk among the young people, challenging them to be more critical of political conditions. When I learned of this, I grew very concerned about Helmuth's safety and asked him to be more careful. I didn't realize he was planning to expand his resistance movement even further by bringing in an ever larger number of conspirators to help distribute the leaflets. I learned later that he'd even cultivated ties with communistic youth organizations, like the Wicczorek group, which he met in the Bismarck Bathhouse in Altona. At the time, Karl-Heinz and I were closest to him. Arthur Sommerfeld was also involved and knew his plans to some extent. But we were only involved in distributing the leaflets on a local level. It was about this time that Helmuth found a co-conspirator in Gerhard Duever, a young man who worked

with him at the Bieberhaus. Together, they struck a plan to translate the BBC news into French so it could be passed on to prisoners of war imprisoned in Germany. He also sent these leaflets to the soldiers on the front lines. They even found a printing shop in Kiel where two willing workers agreed to print the leaflets on a secret night shift, in much greater quantities than Helmuth could produce on the branch's typewriter.

As things heated up, Gerhard passed some leaflets on to two other young men named Kurt and Horst Zumsande in an attempt to get them to translate the messages into French. This was done in the presence of another friend, Karl-Horst Pipo. After looking them over, the young men tried to return the leaflets to Gerhard, but he insisted that they at least read them for their political sentiments.

The problems really began when Gerhard and Helmuth tried to find another translator. As bright as Helmuth was, he wasn't a trained and hardened spy. It was a combination of his innocence and zeal that betrayed him. On 20 January 1942, Helmuth and Gerhard entered the room where Werner Kranz was working and tried to enlist his help in translating the leaflets. When Kranz looked at the text of the leaflets, he immediately refused to help and gave them back. This activity caught the attention of Heinrich Mohns, the office Betriebsobmann (political overseer). He came over and asked what was going on and if it was illegal. At this, Helmuth and Gerhard just picked up the leaflets and left. This intrigued Mohns so much that he confronted Kranz for an explanation. Kranz confessed that the papers were enemy propaganda that Huebener wanted him to translate into French.

The next day Mohns confronted frightened Kranz and Gerhard Duever together, demanding they turn the papers over to him. Not having any experience in these matters and having no support group, Duever, as frightened as a teenage boy would be, said he didn't have any with him but was expecting to get some from Helmuth later on. They both agreed to help in obtaining the leaflets. It took Duever until 4 February to bring two copies of the literature in, having been reminded constantly by Mohns to do so. It was the next day, 5 February 1942 that the Gestapo was notified. They immediately came to the office and arrested Helmuth and Gerhard.

The Gestapo agents took them to their homes to conduct a thorough search for incriminating evidence. This wasn't a

problem for Gerhard Duever because he'd been given advance warning and had removed all traces of his activity. He hadn't told Helmuth of what was coming, so they found an abundance of materials at his home. In the typewriter, (the branch had allowed Helmuth to bring it home) they found the last leaflet, still being written, with the title "Who is Harassing Whom?" They also confiscated the Rola Radio and everything else used to prepare the leaflets and took them to Gestapo Headquarters in Hamburg, Stadthausbruecke 8, for the first interrogation.

As for me, I wasn't aware that anything had happened to end our short lived resistance movement. On the following Sunday, Karl-Heinz and I both wondered where Helmuth was. "Maybe he's late," I told Karl-Heinz, but we both had a feeling of foreboding.

At the end of our worship meeting, the branch president announced that he'd like everyone to stay seated after the service for a special meeting. It was there that he dropped the "bomb." Helmuth Huebener, a member of the St. Georg branch, had been arrested a few days before by the Gestapo. He told us that he didn't have any details but knew it was for political reasons. He also said that as his branch clerk, Helmuth had been given use of the meetinghouse typewriter to write to servicemen in the field, but had misused that trust to write his antigovernment propaganda, which had resulted in its confiscation.

I felt like somebody had just kicked me in the stomach. When I looked over at Karl-Heinz, he met my gaze, and I knew he was feeling the same way. I felt like this was the end of the world. I wanted to go crawl into a hole somewhere and hide for the rest of my life. With that announcement began some of the most fearful and tortuous days of my life—days spent waiting to find out if the Gestapo would learn of my involvement in Helmuth's anti-Nazi activity.

CHAPTER FIVE



THE GESTAPO CLOSES IN

The news of Helmuth's arrest hit Karl-Heinz and me like a thunderbolt out of a clear blue sky. We were speechless—afraid that even by looking at each other someone would point their finger at us and say, "They were always close to young Huebener; they must have been in it together!" The house of cards we had built together was suddenly tumbling down. Our friend and leader was arrested; what would happen to us? The thrill and excitement of our activities was replaced by gnawing terror of what might happen.

After Church, Karl-Heinz and I walked home our separate ways hoping not to attract attention. When my mother got home, she asked me what I knew about it. "Nothing, Mother," I lied, trying not to worry her.

But she gave me a long look, as only a mother can, and said, "We shall see!" I knew she was looking right through me and sensed that I had lied. But, to my relief she dropped the subject and let me return to my household duties. That night I tossed around in bed and worried about what would happen to me. I could see Helmuth facing the Gestapo. I'd heard of the brutal methods they used to interrogate people. I couldn't help but remember what Heinrich Worbs had told us about their cruelty. I prayed fervently to Heavenly Father to help Helmuth, to give him strength to withstand the torture.

My mind returned to the conversations we had held in the happier days when we were plotting our antipropaganda moves. Naturally the subject had come up about what to do if

one of us got caught. We'd each vowed that the captured individual would take all the blame upon himself and not give the others away.

I now asked the question over and over, "Can Helmuth withstand the torture?" I prayed over and over that he could—for my sake. On the other hand, I wanted to stand next to him and take my share of the punishment, so he would not have to face it alone. Such was the conflict and turmoil in my mind.

The biggest question facing me now was what to do? Should I try to sneak out of the country, go underground, or hope it would all pass without me being implicated? I had heard of people hiding in other cities. People had escaped to Switzerland, Sweden, or even England. For several days I contemplated leaving the country—to leave everything behind me and run away. I contacted several sources having connections to neutral or enemy countries. I had to be careful in contacting them so as to not arouse suspicion. Informants were everywhere.

One of the journeymen at the Norddeutsche Kohlen & Koks Werke, my place of work, had an uncle in Sweden. He was always talking about Sweden and how wonderful it was, so I thought he might be a good contact to help me find my way to that neutral country. I read everything I could get hold of about Sweden—the people, the geography, the life-style, etc. Then I had a long conversation with the journeyman, who was more than eager to tell me everything I wanted to know. Just when I was ready to ask if he could help me get there, the shop Nazi stepped up and asked why I was asking so many questions. Apparently he'd picked up bits and pieces of our conversations. I told him I was trying to write an essay about Sweden and was gathering information for it. He exhorted me to "write about Germany, and how great a nation it had become under Hitler who will one day rule the whole world."

"Perhaps that is why I am studying about Sweden," I replied. "About why they wanted to remain neutral in this 'interesting' scheme of events."

"Hah," he crowed. "Sweden is just a haven for a lot of Jews and should be overrun. All of Europe should be a German protectorate." At this, the other journeyman got into the conversation by telling the Nazi to be quiet, that this was a place of work and not a party meeting. Master Truebe walked

into the shop at this moment and told everyone to break it up and go back to work. And so I watched my chance to pursue this avenue of escape disappear in a moment. Because of the Nazi's prying eyes, I never again found a safe opportunity to ask the journeyman about getting to Sweden.

Soon it was 11 February, my sixteenth birthday. We had a small, but nice birthday party at our home that allowed me a few hours to forget the ominous cloud that hung over my head. My mother had baked several cakes, including the famous Rosinenpuffer (raisin cake) I liked so much. My grandmother, Alma Meyer was there with her son Carl and his wife Lisa. The Meyers were a happy family that liked music. My Uncle Alfred played the violin, Uncle Carl the bass fiddle (as well as several other instruments), and I played the clarinet. We played and sang old German folk songs and laughed with each other. Just before parting, we sang a few Church hymns.

As our guests were leaving, the ominous feeling returned. I felt that such a time as this would never come again. Perhaps I would be a castaway in a foreign land or an inmate of a Gestapo concentration camp. The thought came that I needed to contact the underground for help in leaving the country. But how? I turned to gaze on my mother and felt the warmth and security that comes from a family. I felt I just couldn't leave them. If I did escape, the Gestapo would take out its wrath on these people I loved so much! I had seen whole families sent to camps due to the escape of one offending member.

The days passed slowly, leaving me with the daily inner turmoil, not knowing which way to go or what to do. My heart would miss a beat or two each time I passed policemen on the street. I thought everyone knew of my deeds, and that it was just a matter of time until they pounced on me. On Saturday, 14 February, I thought of contacting Karl-Heinz to find out how he was holding up but cast the thought aside for fear it would raise suspicions even further.

The next day, Sunday, I went to church as usual, looking anxiously for Karl-Heinz. I couldn't find him anywhere. As I went outside to wait for him, his sister Carla and her girl friend, Lucy-Erikson, saw me and came toward me. Carla looked around, checking to make sure that nobody was close by, and said, "Karl-Heinz got arrested by the Gestapo last Tuesday—they are going to get you next!" If she'd have hit

me over the head with a sledgehammer, it couldn't have stunned me more! "What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I don't know. What can I do?" was my feeble response.

By now it was time to enter the chapel. I walked as though I were in a trance. Some of the members asked if I was feeling well, because I looked so pale, but I didn't answer them. I barely heard the announcement from the branch president that a second member of the branch was arrested during the previous week. Nor did I hear his sermon about the importance of keeping the laws of the land and supporting and sustaining the Fuhrer who was ordained of God, etc. What I did hear were the whispered remarks of some of the members, such as, "Those poor boys. I wonder what made them do it?" and "Who else is behind this?"

Someone else said, "How terrible, getting arrested by the Gestapo—they do awful things to people!" Then there were other voices, full of anger and hurt, such as "How could they oppose a government that is installed of God?" Another asked, "Doesn't this violate the twelfth Article of Faith which says we should be subject to our rulers and sustain the laws of the land?" Someone else spoke up and said, "They surely have broken the law. I hope they throw the book at them!" And finally, "That is treason, and they should be shot—if I had a gun I would shoot them myself!" With that I had heard enough, and I ran out of the meetinghouse, terrified. The last words I heard were, "I think he is one of them!"

I ran all the way home. Normally it would take a full hour to cover the distance from the church, but I made it in just thirty minutes. The strain of the exercise made me feel better, but soon the fear and anxiety returned. I reasoned that if they got Karl-Heinz, they would soon be coming for me. The question was, what should I do? Should I try to escape or stay put and face whatever was in store for me at home? My mind raced to think of ways out. I thought of our tenant, Jan Gorter. He was from Holland, but had been "drafted" to work in Germany. He talked freely about conditions in Holland, and how they hid Jews from the Gestapo in Amsterdam. The occupation of Holland was harsh; the German army held a tight leash on the population. In spite of that, he said, the Dutch underground had smuggled many Jews and other "politicals" to England right under the noses of the Germans.

At this desperate moment I took a chance, and asked him how one could get in touch with the Dutch Underground if one were trying to escape. He gave me a long look and asked if I was in some kind of trouble. I looked away and said, "Oh no, not me." I hated to lie to him because he was such a good friend, but I had to be careful not to reveal myself to anyone. I told him I was asking for a friend who was in trouble with the police, who might want to escape to avoid prosecution. Jan got very serious and told me to stay out of it, that it was very difficult to get to England by going through Holland because many of the local police were friendly toward the Germans. There were also too many "Mussert" followers in Holland who would inform the Gestapo of any strangers there.

Because Jan had joined the Church shortly after moving in with us, he'd been at the meetings and learned of the arrest of Helmuth and Karl-Heinz. I could see he was about to ask me if I was involved as well. Fortunately, I didn't have to answer this kind man (who would one day become my stepfather), because at that moment my mother walked in. She marched straight to me and said, "Rudi, we have to talk!" She told me she had been worrying about me since the day she heard of Helmuth's arrest. She knew Helmuth and I were very close and surmised that I had something to do with his political activities.

She went on to say that she knew I had lied to her but was hoping I would come to her and tell her the truth. After she heard the news that Karl-Heinz had been arrested also, she decided she couldn't wait any longer to talk about it. She concluded her speech by saying she knew for certain that I was involved when she saw me get up and leave the meeting. Now she wanted the whole truth. It was very difficult to confess to her. "I lied to you because I did not want you to be involved or get hurt," I told my mom.

"I have figured that out by myself," she said. "But I was hurt that you didn't feel you could trust me. What are you going to do?"

"What can I do?" I replied. "If I run away, they would get you and put you in a concentration camp. I cannot have that on my conscience."

"Why did you do this thing anyway? Did you not know it was against the law?" she asked.

"Mother, I had to do something. I could not just look on and let the Nazis maim, hurt, and kill all the good people of this country," I replied. "Remember what they did to Heinrich Worbs!"

Then my mother cried out, "They are going to arrest you too, and only God knows what they will do to you!" Then the realization hit me with full force, and we both cried in each other's arms.

That night I heard my mother pray to the Lord, asking him to spare me or somehow let the destroying Nazi force pass me by. In spite of her prayer, I spent another sleepless night in my bed. I worried about my mother and my other loved ones and wondered what might happen to them if I was arrested.

The next Monday and Tuesday went by without incident. Yet, I couldn't shake the gnawing feeling in the bottom of my stomach that something awful was about to happen to me. On Wednesday, 18 February, I went to class at the vocational school at Angerstrasse 7. The morning hours were spent learning about steel fabrication, math, and chemistry. At the beginning of the technical drafting class, there was a knock on the door, and I turned to see the principal enter the classroom. He talked for a few moments to my teacher, then they both came to my desk. "Would you please accompany me to my office?" the principal said. "There are two gentlemen who want to talk with you."

I felt again as if somebody had kicked me in the stomach, for I knew that the two "gentlemen" were from the Gestapo. When we entered the principal's office I saw the two in their leather coats and black wide brimmed hats.

"Are you Rudolf Wobbe?"

"Yes, I am."

"Geheime Staatspolizei, mitkommen!" (Gestapo. Come with us!) The identification of these agents was done by quickly flipping the left lapel of their coat to reveal the badge of the dreaded Gestapo.

"But my things are still in the classroom," I stammered.

"Never mind those, come with us *now*!" they said, grabbing me by the arms. They hurried me outside to a waiting car. I was pushed into the back seat next to Officer Muessener. Kommissar Wangemann drove the car. Not a word was spoken as we traveled.

Soon I noticed they were proceeding toward my home. When we reached our house in Rothenburgsort they escorted me upstairs to our apartment on the second floor. My mother was already waiting for us. There were tears in her eyes. Apparently they went there before getting me from school. First, they searched the main rooms of our apartment, finding nothing. Then they asked Mother where I slept. When she showed them, they really went to work. They searched everywhere, including drawers, corners, chests, and shelves. They even pulled out every book on the bookshelf, flipping furiously through the pages. Then they looked under the bed, but didn't find anything there, either. All this time I stood rigid with anxiety as I watched them come closer and closer to my hiding place. I silently prayed to Heavenly Father to strike them with blindness so they wouldn't find it.

On the wall, next to my bed, hung a tapestry depicting an elk in the rutting season, bellowing a challenge to another bull elk. Behind this tapestry was my secret hiding place. The wallpaper had come loose, creating a small pocket in which I had hidden several of the large leaflets. At last Kommissar Wangemann came up and shook the tapestry and made fun of it by pointing to the bull elk and saying, "You will be bugling like this bull elk before we get through with you!" Both of them had a good laugh at this statement. But my prayers were answered, for they didn't find my secret cache. With that they stopped searching and told me to get ready to leave. It was hard to say good-bye to my mother. Her last words were, "God bless you, my son, I will keep praying for you." Then two Gestapo men took me down the stairs and into the car.

The next stop was the Gestapo headquarters at Stadthausbruecke in the center of Hamburg. I was escorted directly to the interrogation room. I was instructed to stand in the middle of the room while Muessener and Wangemann sat in chairs on each side of me. During the interrogation, I had to constantly turn my head from left to right to answer their rapid fire questions. First they asked my name, where I lived, father's name, mother's name, etc. Then they asked me Hitler's birthday, the name of the Nazi party, how many points in the party program, etc. Fortunately, this was data that had been hammered into our minds daily, while in school. By this time I was getting a little bit dizzy from turning

my head all the time. Whenever I tried to answer without looking at them, they barked at me to face them when answering a question. Later, I realized this was one of their methods of irritating a prisoner so that he would lose his concentration.

Now they turned the interrogation to the actual reason for my arrest. They asked me if I ever listened to BBC London or any other foreign broadcast. At this time I remembered the promise we made to protect each other, even to the point of telling lies, if necessary. So, I lied about listening to BBC London in Helmuth's apartment. They didn't like my answer, so Wangemann hit me in the face with his fist. I stumbled over to Muessener, who shoved me back to the center again. "Did you listen to BBC London at Huebener's house?" they asked again, and again. Instead of weakening me, this abuse made me more determined not to give them what they wanted. I began answering them slower and slower. They interpreted my behavior to mean I was slow witted. That was okay by me, because it caused them to slow down a bit. I was scared stiff, but tried to keep a rational head in spite of the terror they inflicted upon me.

Then, they changed tactics. This time they tried to get me to admit that my mother knew all along what I was doing and that she had supported me in this treasonous act. I saw through their ploy and denied their accusations vehemently. I told them I had tried to get the BBC on our radio receiver when I was alone, but that the apparatus was too old and couldn't pick up the BBC. With this they seemed satisfied and dropped the attempt to implicate my mother.

Now they changed their focus to the actual case against us. He said Karl-Heinz had confessed to telling me about the handbills.

"But, he told me that he burned them right away," I told them, trying to shield Karl-Heinz.

"Never mind that; just tell us about yourself," they said. "Huebener told us he gave you twenty handbills with the instruction to distribute them."

"That's a lie," I told them, but I hardly had the words out of my mouth, when I felt the jackboot of Inspector Wangemann against my knee. He kicked me so hard, I fell to the floor. While I was lying there he kicked me some more, this

time in my ribs. Wangemann was reaching for the club which hung on the wall when a knock on the door stopped him and saved me from getting a more severe beating.

The door was opened by an SS guard who said, "The transport to KOLAFU is getting ready to leave. Do you want him to be on it?" The guard's question was directed to Wangemann, who took a moment before answering to regain his composure.

"Take him. We will have him back in the morning anyway."

My days filled with the terror of waiting and wondering were over, but my ordeal had just begun.

CHAPTER SIX



PRETRIAL IMPRISONMENT

I was taken downstairs to board the "Gruene Minna" (our term for the prisoners' bus, which meant, "Green Tin Can"). It was to take us to KOLAFU (a contraction of the camp's full-name, Concentration Camp Fuhlsbuettel). I looked around hoping to find a friendly face, but didn't recognize anyone. A few of us had to wear shackles, which I later learned meant that we were considered hard cases. Two guards were posted in the back of the bus to make certain there was no communication between the prisoners. I couldn't see where we were going since the bus had no side windows. Finally, the bus came to a stop, the back door was opened, and we were told to stand up and get out in single file. As we got up, the fellow next to me whispered in my ear, "Watch out for 'der Lange Paul,'" (the Tall Paul). It didn't take long to figure out who he was talking about, because this giant of a man towered some eight inches above all the other guards. He must have been six foot eight inches tall. Not only that, he stood out from the other guards in brutality as well. His Gummiknueppel (hard rubber truncheon) was never idle. Each of us got to feel it on our backs. "Hurry, hurry, march, march," he screamed, driving us on with his stick. If that didn't make you go fast enough, he'd reward you with a swift kick to the rear.

After getting past Paul, we were led upstairs to the cell-block. I was placed in a cell with an older man who, I later found out, had been a member of the dreaded SS. Because of his prewar experience as an accountant, he had been assigned