

belongs to Him. (Matthew 22:21) If anyone tries to exact from them what belongs to God, that attempt will fail.

What if a Witness is threatened with death? Well, Jehovah's Witnesses have unshakable confidence in God's ability to restore them to life. (Acts 24:15) So Witnesses have the same attitude as did three young Hebrews in ancient Babylon. When threatened with death in a fiery furnace, they told King Nebuchadnezzar: "If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. . . . Let it become known to

you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship." —Daniel 3:17, 18.

Thus, as noted earlier, when Hitler began to climb onto his pedestal as a self-appointed god, an ideological battle was inevitable. The Third Reich, sword drawn, found itself face-to-face with a tiny band of Jehovah's Witnesses who had sworn loyalty to the true God, the Almighty God, Jehovah. Even before the battle began, however, the outcome was decided.

## The Evils of Nazism Exposed

**I**N THE 1920's, as Germany struggled to recover from its defeat in World War I, Jehovah's Witnesses were busy distributing tremendous amounts of Bible literature. Not only did this offer comfort and hope to the German people but it alerted them to the rising power of militarism. Between 1919 and 1933, the Witnesses delivered an average of eight books, booklets, or magazines to each of the approximately 15 million families in Germany.

The *Golden Age* and *Consolation* magazines often drew attention to the militaristic stirrings in Germany. In 1929, more than three years before Hitler came to power, the German edition of *The Golden Age* boldly stated: "National Socialism is . . . a movement that is acting . . . directly in the service of man's enemy, the Devil."

On the eve of Hitler's taking power, *The*

*Golden Age* of January 4, 1933, said: "There looms forth the menacing promontory of the National Socialist movement. It seems incredulous that a political party so insignificant in its origin, so heterodox in its policies, can, in the space of a few years, develop into proportions that overshadow the structure of a national government. Yet Adolf Hitler and his national socialist party (the Nazis) have accomplished this rare feat."

### → An Appeal for Understanding

Hitler became prime minister of Germany on January 30, 1933, and a couple of months later, on April 4, 1933, the Magdeburg branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses was seized. However, the order was rescinded on April 28, 1933, and the property was returned. What would happen next?

In spite of the Hitler regime, Jehovah's Witnesses held a convention in 1933. Some 7,000 Witnesses published a clear: "Our organization in any sense. We are the Word of Jehovah that without his

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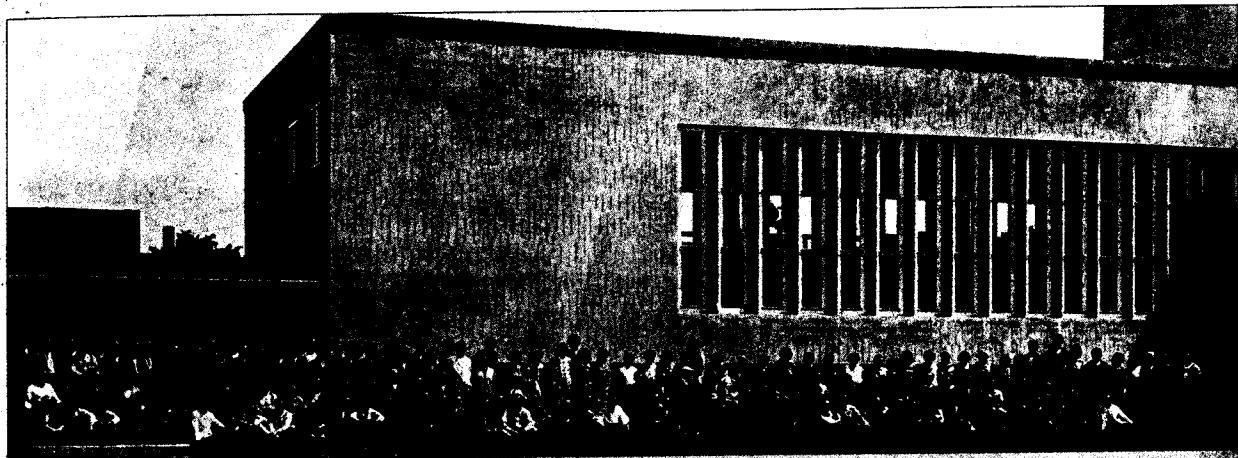
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Magdeburg branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931



In spite of the evident hostility of the Hitler regime, Jehovah's Witnesses organized a convention in Berlin, Germany, on June 25, 1933. Some 7,000 persons assembled. The Witnesses publicly made their intentions clear: "Our organization is not political in any sense. We only insist on teaching the Word of Jehovah God to the people, and that without hindrance."

Thus Jehovah's Witnesses made a good-faith effort to state their case. What were the consequences?

#### The Attack Begins

The immovable neutral position of the Witnesses, along with their loyalty to God's Kingdom, was unacceptable to the Hitler government. The Nazis did not intend to tolerate any refusal to support their ideology.

Immediately after the Berlin convention concluded, the Nazis again seized the branch office at Magdeburg, on June 28, 1933. They broke up Witness meetings and made arrests. Soon Witnesses began to be dismissed from their jobs. They suffered raids on their homes, beatings, and arrests.

By early 1934 the Nazis had seized from the Witnesses 65 tons of Bible literature and had burned it outside Magdeburg.

#### Witnesses' Resolute Stand

Despite these initial attacks, Jehovah's Witnesses stood their ground and publicly denounced the oppression and injustice. The November 1, 1933, issue of *The Watchtower* featured the article "Fear Them Not." It was prepared especially for the German Witnesses, exhorting them to take courage in the face of mounting pressure.

On February 9, 1934, J. F. Rutherford, the president of the Watch Tower Society, sent a letter of protest to Hitler stating: "You may successfully resist any and all men, but you cannot successfully resist Jehovah God. . . . In the name of Jehovah God and His anointed King, Christ Jesus, I demand that you give order to all officials and servants of your government that Jehovah's witnesses in Germany be permitted to peaceably assemble and without hindrance worship God."

Rutherford set March 24, 1934, as the deadline. He said that if by that time relief