

Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth

Title Card: “In Germany, in the 1930’s, an army of some eight-million children pledged their lives personally to Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. They were called the “Hitler Jugend”- Hitler Youth. This is the story of one of these children. He would rise to high command, receive the Iron Cross from Hitler’s own hands, and live to tell- this cautionary tale.”

“I grew up in a small town in the Rhineland of Germany. I was captured on March 7, 1945, back in my old home town. During my captivity, I was forced to look at documentary footage of concentration camps and death camps, and I didn’t accept them, and I said to my friend, ‘Who do they take us for, this is staged, I mean anybody can pile up bodies.’ The French were so incensed by our insensitivity that when they showed us this that they began to raid into and beat us with rifle butts. They said, ‘You goddamn Nazis, do you think this is a comedy? This is what you have done!’ It was almost a year later before I was able to accept the veracity of the films that I had seen, and it occurred at the war crimes trials in Nuremburg in 1946. When I arrived in the city of Nuremburg, I was stunned by the total change of the Nuremburg I had seen from the Nazi Party Rally of 1948. While I listened on the loudspeakers outside, I heard the full evidence of the accusation directed at the 22 top Nazis who were on trial. One of them was my leader, the former leader of the Hitler Youth. He was a principal reason why I came to Nuremberg. I wanted to know what he had to say in particular with regard to the activities of the Hitler youth. It is my guilt that I trained youths for a man who became a murderer a million times over. Adolph...received 20 years for crimes against humanity. And that in turn, indicated to me, too, an account of mass murder because I had served Hitler just as fanatically as Fuhrer ...I had an overwhelming sense of betrayal at Nuremburg and I had recognized that the man that I had adored was, in fact the biggest monster in world history. It’s a devastating feeling, if you follow to the conclusion that you’re part of the human race. The experience of the Hitler youth in Nazi Germany constitutes a massive case of child abuse. Out of millions of basically innocent children, Hitler and his regime succeeded in creating potential monsters.

Hitler Youth:

Two months after Hitler became the chancellor of Germany, I started elementary school. And I believe this is an aspect that is totally overlooked in our history books. Almost immediately, the Nazis exercised their very first priority which was to captivate the young. Twice a week we were taught racial science which was a specific instruction to be able to differentiate us from the so called inferior races. That’s when I heard for the first time the term Master Race. They taught us about racial purity by the shape of your skull. They matched eye color as an additional measure for the purity of they Aryan race. Very specifically, I remember clearly

them indicting to us why the Jews were different from us. We were surrounded by newspapers that told us that the Jews had made war on us for the last four thousand years. I remember seeing one movie that went much further. It was called "Der Ewige Jude", which means the eternal Jew.

'Rats spread typhus cholera, plague. Just as rats are the lowest form of animals, so are the Jews the lowest form of mankind.'

One thing we knew for sure, that you had to be on constant watch of Jews.

The movie that made these biggest impression on me was not about Jews, but about the Hitler youth movement. It was called 'Hitlerjunge Quex'. It was modeled on the life of a real Hitler youth boy. He was a member of the Berlin Hitler Youth movement. He was giving out leaflets. He was caught by a bunch of young communists. They stabbed him, and he died with the words of the Hitler youth anthem on his lips. To me, it looked like Heaven for the Hitler Youth and I certainly wanted to go there. Even before I reached 10, as soon as I could, I joined the Hitler youth on Hitler's birthday on 1938. I promised at all times to do my duty for the Fuhrer, so help me God. I had accepted the ideology, I had accepted what was being taught in school, Racial Science, I had accepted fully the notion of the Master Race, but it really didn't come together until I went to Nuremburg.

Nuremburg

Nuremburg was the Nazi showcase; it was the annual Nazi party conference- a high honor indeed to attend. It was my first long trip away from home alone. But more important from being away from home for the first time, was the feeling that you belonged to the very best and most important movement. We 50 thousand were a highly select group from all over Germany. Suddenly on the tribunal, the Fuhrer appeared. 'Heil' he said. 'Heil, my youths.' He called us *his* youths. I stood in the first row because of my size, maybe 40-50 feet from him. I said to my bunkmate, 'the Fuhrer looked directly into my eyes.' Hitler said "we were the one people, one nation. And you my youths, you are going to be that people and that nation." After he had uttered this sentence, I belonged to Hitler body and soul. He said, "Before us lies Germany. In us Germany marches. And after us comes Germany." It was mesmerizing to hear the Fuhrer speak. That was the feeling I had at the end of Hitler's speech. Suddenly you had become invincible.

Kristallnacht

After my return from Nuremburg, life in the town seemed quite boring. But all of a sudden, November the 9th, 1938, excitement broke loose- Kristallnacht (The Night of the Broken Glass). As we were crossing the market place, a van stopped and there were perhaps 18, at the most 20 people on it. One of them shouted "Let's get to the synagogue and take it apart". Literally seconds later, the stained glass window came crashing into the road. A few minutes later, a storm trooper

was up on the roof, and he released the rolls of the Torah. And he was shouting “wipe your asses with this!”

Even to me as a ten year old, the events of the Kristallnacht, my witnessing the brutality committed on townspeople whom I had known all of my life signified the end of German innocence. From now on, not one of us could ever maintain that we did not know what was in store for the Jews.

By the fall of 1940, the first deportations of the Jews of Germany began. One of the first ones occurred in my hometown. I recognized all of them, naturally. There were some I had known intimately as a boy. I had no personal animosity towards them, but I felt “what a misfortune that they were Jewish.” And I said that it was completely justified for the survival of Germany that they needed to be deported. Despite the fact that the first friend of my life, Heinz Hellman was Jewish, after a space of 6 years, constant Nazi indoctrination made me totally indifferent to their fate. And I accepted their deportation as a just measure. I fully believed that we, as the Master Race, were entitled to eventually rule the world.

All Nazi functions worked on the principle of music and soul. We always had the music in our ears; the Nazis really in that sense were unsurpassed masters. I don't know if the Germans are more sentimental than other people to singing, but as soon as we began to sing, the words in the song began to acquire a meaning. In our Hitler Youth anthem, these weren't merely words; all of a sudden they became a conviction. I think you can compare it to a religious revival meeting, it was soul stirring.

The War Effort

By 1943, we had been fighting Russia for two years. I was approaching 15 years of age when the German army surrendered at Stalingrad. I remember hearing Beethoven's first symphony followed by the announcement from Hans Schweitzer who very bluntly stated that our forces in Stalingrad had surrendered. Stalingrad was the first time that I conceived that a German defeat might be possible. It was a terrible disaster.

The news feeds carried the call for the German people to defend the nation. Goebbels asked “Do you vote total war?” And we vote yes. The only coherent units in every German town were the Hitler Youth. Anything that would once be normally done to function a city was done by the Hitler Youth. All young boys; 11, 10 even, were asked to paint curbs in fluorescent colors so they would be visible during the night during air raids.

On June the 6th we were told at noon by our commander the allies had landed on the beaches of Normandy. It was called D-Day, but for us Hitler Youth, it meant the enemy was on European soil. June the 6th was the most decisive day since Stalingrad for the Hitler Youth because it came quickly apparent that from now

on, total war effort would take all of us. Hitler decreed the creation of the Luftwaffe the last ditch defense of your own home territory. Two things we had in abundance were Panzerfaust which were very effective up to a range of 200 yards. Even women were taught how to use them. People who could still barely walk were being inducted into the [same thing as before] and they were rounded up by members of the Hitler Youth; which in two weeks the age limit was lowered to 14 and at the very end of the war. In my own unit, I had boys at the age of 12.

It was the last sacrificial effort of the Hitler Youth during the fight for Germany. Our greatest moment occurred early in October 1944. My gun crew shot down a B-17 Flying Fortress. The youngest boy in my unit was thirteen and a half and I was the oldest at sixteen and a half. We were so enabled that we broke into spontaneous shouts. The death defying attitude of the Hitler Youth was such, even boys of 11, 12 and 13 had no innovation but to earn a medal, The Iron Cross, for the survival of the Fatherland. The idea of facing death at no time, was terrifying, because our fanaticism had prepared us for that responsibility for years. The thing that you could do for Germany most was either to win or to do. It was better to die than to live in slavery.

Only ten days before his suicide, it is fitting that Hitler chose to appear for the last time in public as members of the Hitler youths. These were the only Germans he fully trusted. These were the only Germans eager still to die for him, even in the knowledge that Germany would go down. It was a fatal bond that bound us to the fervor to the very end. The fatal bond between Hitler and his Hitler Youths was not even broken by his suicide. Many thousand of members of the Hitler youth kept on fighting to the very end preferring to die than live in a country without their leader. I was in the basement of my house in British and I told Monica Comburg who was a leader of the Hitler Youth as well as my school mate—that it was all over, and she said to me, “We almost had it all,” and I stood in attention and said, “Heil Hitler”—the last time I did it.

I watched through the slit of our basement window, as German tanks moved to the center of my hometown, and at that moment I admitted to myself that Germany was finished. It was the only time in my life that I actively contemplated suicide. I put my pistol and I stuck it in my mouth and I didn't have the courage to pull the trigger. I threw it against the wall and I decided then to try and make it back to the German lines.

I was captured on March the seventh 1945 in my own home town. During my captivity, I was forced to look at documentary footage of concentration camps and death camps. And it was the first time that I was shown the atrocities committed by our nation. They looked at us, and I said to my friend, “Who do they take us for—this stuff is staged.” And one of us began to snicker, and our captures became so incensed that they started yelling at us, “You goddamn Nazi's; this is what you have done.”

It was almost a year later before I was able to accept the veracity of the things I had seen, and it occurred at the war crime trial in Nuremburg in 1946. When I arrived in the city of Nuremburg, I was stunned by the total change of the Nuremburg I had seen at the Nazi Party Rally of 1938.

While I listened on the loudspeakers outside, I heard the full evidence of the accusations directed at the 22 top Nazi's who were on trial. One of them was my leader, the former leader of the Hitler Youth, Adolf Ventura. He was the principle reason I came to Nuremburg. I wanted to know what he had to say in particular in regard to the activities of the Hitler Youth. It is my guilt that I have trained to use for a man who became a murderer a million times over.

Adolf Ventura received twenty years for crimes against humanity. And that in turn, implicated to me to in count of mass murder because I had served Hitler just as emphatically as Ventura. I had an overwhelming sense of betrayal in Nuremburg when I recognized that the man that I had adored was, in fact, the biggest monster in modern history. It's a devastating feeling if you had come to the conclusion that you are part of the human race. The experience of the Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany constitutes a massive case of child abuse. Out of millions of basically innocent children, Hitler and his regime succeeded in creating potential monsters. Could it happen again today? Of course it can. Children are like empty vessels, you can fill them with good, you can fill them with evil, you can fill them with hate, and you can fill them with passion. So the story of the Hitler Youth can be repeated because despite Auschwitz, the world has not changed for the better all that much.

Today Alfons Heck lives and works in the United States.
He has become an American citizen.