

Willi Pohl RG-50.028.0085.01.01

Summary of Interview

Willi Pohl relates his experience during 1933, when he had to decide whether to salute the Nazi flag or not salute and be expelled from school. As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Willi refused to salute the flag and was expelled. He regularly attended secretly held Witness meetings and participated in distributing Witness literature. As a result, in 1937, when he was 18 years old, he was arrested and sent to a concentration camp. The young woman who Willi later married was also arrested and sent to the same concentration camp.

At the camp, prisoners were treated very harshly by the SS guards who often kicked and slapped them. After eight months, 200 of Jehovah's Witnesses were tried and prosecuted at a special court. The Nazis told the young prisoners that they had been misled, and in order to be given a second chance, they should marry Nazis and thus become good citizens. Having been forewarned about this by his lawyer, Willi and the young woman he later married decided to become engaged before they were called to the special court hearing. They were both sentenced to three more months in prison before being freed.

Toward the end of the war, Willi was sent several draft orders which he refused. Because he was considered an army deserter, Willi could have been executed at any time if he was caught. So, he hid in the forest until the war ended.