

Louis Arzt RG-50.028.0117 Summary of Interview

Louis Arzt was born in Mulhouse, France, in November 1930. Father: Charles Arzt. Mother: Ann Arzt (née Mueller). Siblings: Older brothers Charles and Peter Arzt.

Louis Arzt's parents became Jehovah's Witnesses in 1941, less than a month after first meeting them. Shortly thereafter, Louis' parents informed the German teacher at his school that Louis would no longer be participating in the flag salute because of the family's politically neutral stand. It was obvious to them that Louis' pro-Nazi teacher did not like Jehovah's Witnesses. It was not long before the Gestapo arrived at the Arzt's home to search for Witness literature, which at that time was banned. When the officers tried to confiscate the Bible, Louis' father reminded them that a German law allowed every household to possess a Bible. So, they took the Witness literature but returned the Bible.

With only a few days' notice, Charles and Ann were told by the Gestapo that their three sons would be taken away from them and placed in a children's home. This was such a shock to Charles that he became ill and could no longer do his full-time job at a factory. The Arzt children were removed from their family home and transported by train. Louis was taken to a penitentiary children's home in Karlsruhe, Germany. His two brothers were taken to a different home about 30 kilometers away. Each school day began at 7 o'clock with a flag salute, then students had two to three hours of schooling, which included Nazi propaganda. The rest of the day was spent working in the fields. Louis recalled an occasion when he was severely beaten by the director of the school for not doing the 'Heil Hitler' salute. Afterward, the director put his arm around Louis and said that if he would just say 'Heil Hitler' once, he could immediately be sent home to be with his parents. Louis said that this felt worse than the beating. It was later recorded in his school report that he had 'refused to say "Heil Hitler," salute the flag, sing national songs, or participate in any political activities.'

Louis was eventually released and sent home, after a judge found a law stating that a juvenile under 14 years of age was not allowed to be taken from his home, deported, and put into a penitentiary home. Years later Louis stated his conviction that the only reason he had been able to stand up for Bible principles and remain neutral at 13 years of age was because God gave him the strength to do so. This experience continued to strengthen Louis' faith for many years after the war.

Louis said that he no longer worries about possible future tests of his faith. His experience as a youth has taught him how to have faith in God and in God's help. Louis looks forward to the time when God's Kingdom will improve conditions in the world.

Keywords

Jehovah's Witnesses—Literature

Jehovah's Witnesses—Political neutrality

Nazi youth re-education

Penitentiary children's home