**Stunde Null – The Zero Hour**

**Finding the Good Germans**

“It serves me right, fool that I was,” said my Pohlmann grandfather when he heard that he had to undergo the lengthy denazification process before the *Spruchkammer* (German-run denazification committee), which delayed the license to reopen his carpentry shop. He had not told Mutti that after resisting the Nazi regime for so long, he had joined the Nazi Party in the late fall of 1944, about six months before the end. He had been desperate because obtaining work and lumber had become conditional on being a Party member. Now in the aftermath all Party members born before 1919 were automatically brought before the denazification committee…. He didn’t complain or feel unjustly persecuted, as do most of the small-time Nazis, even though it took months before his turn came and he was finally declared *nicht belasted* (not burdened) and could begin to work again.” [[1]](#endnote-1)

Grandfather Pohlman was victimized twice. First by the Nazis who required he join the party to practice his profession and again by the occupation forces and the procedure of denazification which delayed his return to work.

In preparation for the end of the war – the Office of Strategic Services and its Psychological Warfare Division, began planning for occupation and the goal of identifying, denazifying, demilitarizing and re-educating the nation of Germany.

**Identifying which Germans were Nazis**.

One of the first steps was finding Germans who were known to be trustworthy, anti-nazi or non-nazi and with the skills to rebuild the nation. The upper echelon was well known like generals, Nazi newspaper publishers and editors, and people who could be identified by public records. These were subject to immediate arrest or at least, immediate removal from their jobs. The further down the ranks they looked, the more difficult the search became.

Who was a Nazi?[[2]](#endnote-2) As an arbitrary starting point, people who joined the Nazi party during Hitler’s rise in 1933 and before were presumed to be die-hard Nazi. They had remained Nazi during the entire 12 years of Hitler’s reign. Everyone from Gestapo to leaders of the Hitler Youth were immediately removed from their jobs. Anyone deemed Nazi was prohibited from employment in public office until vetted and interviewed and determined as ‘nominal’ or ‘non-Nazi. ‘ Grandfather Pohlman would have been deemed a *Muss Nazi*, one of those who joined the party only to keep a job or be allowed to practice a profession.

 “Those in “public office”, Burgermeisters, police chiefs, and “legal personnel” and all persons appointed to these and higher offices after 30 January 1933 would be unemployable.

The group of “persons of importance in quasi-public and private enterprises” was taken to cover executives in civil, economic, and labor organizations, in corporations, in industrial, agricultural and finance institutions, in the press, and in education.

Later the date of note was changed from 1933 to 1937. Nazis subject to mandatory removal were all persons who had held office in the party, had joined before May 1, 1937. Private enterprise was taken to cover executives in civil, economic, and labor organization in corporations, in industrial, agricultural, and financial institutions in the press and in education (including teachers), or had joined later and were more than nominal members. “

The result of all these removals was there were few people available to run the factories, publish the newspapers, conduct the court system, teach the schools. Many who had been party members were not allowed to hold any position higher than common laborer. If rigorously enforced, half the population of Germany could be considered unemployable.

**Die Weisse Liste.[[3]](#endnote-3)** The White List. As more information came in from interviews with German POWs the military identified individuals on a White List, a Gray List, and a Black List. So many people had been arrested or removed from their jobs that the occupation needed to identify those Germans who were known to be trustworthy anti-Nazis or non-Nazis who could be put to work. GIG has a copy of Die Weisse Liste. The list gives a very brief two or three sentence description for each person. Many were identified by prisoners of war.

Sample listings:

**Harnack, Elisabet, von**: Berlin-Halensee Str. 5; Tel.: 97 46 69 (1941) Daughter of famous scholar Friedrich Harnack. Social worker. “Never gave in to Nazi doctrine. She had more courage than most Germans and dared to meet her Jewish friends.”

**Harnack, Ernst, von:** Berlin-Zehlendorf, Am Fischtal 8. Tel: 84 08 87. (1941) Civil servant., Dismissed without pension 1933. Social Democrat. Reported to be strongly anti-Nazi. About 55 years old.

[Elisabet survived the war. Ernst did not. He was hung in 1945 for his part in the 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler.]

**Der Fragebogen.[[4]](#endnote-4)** The Questionnaire. The process of accumulating information was very slow and based on local officials and residents – who may themselves have been Nazi – or neighbors renouncing neighbors. Millions of people were displaced from bombed out cities. Bombed out along with buildings were many records. Low level Nazis displaced from their homes could hope to establish a new clean identity elsewhere in the country.

The Allies created the Fragebogen to directly require Germans to honestly disclose their backgrounds, education, experience, and their political party affiliations.

The Fragebogen is a six page 131 question document that every adult German was required to answer truthfully and completely. 14 million Germans completed the form in the US sector.

An internet search revealed that the Fragebogen files continue to exist. They are within many shelves and boxes in the National Archive. We obtained two copies of Fragebogen from the Archives.

The pages direct the user to type or print in block letters. Each question is in both English and German.

Our two samples - **Anton Schuetz** and **Georg Waltenberger** -
**Anton Schuetz[[5]](#endnote-5)** says he was Head of Administration at the Heidelberg employment office. He was born September 24, 1906. He is 39. He has dark hair and brown eyes. He has a wart on the left side of his nose. His home address is Ladenburgerstrasse 46 Heidelberg.

Questions:

20. Which church do you belong to? **None**

21. Have you ever officially or unofficially dissolved your association with a church? **Yes.**

23. If so, do you provide details and reasons? In 1927 as a result of conviction (lack of belief).

He attended elementary school and secondary school but did not pass the Abitur to attend university.

Questions 41 thru 95 list acronyms for Nazi organizations.

Anton identified only one organization, the DAP *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* German Workers Party. He joined 1.8.34 remained until it was dissolved.

He said „nein“ to NSDAP *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German National Socialist Workers' Party - the Nazi party)*.*

Question 108 – who did you vote for in November 1932? DVP *Deutsche Volkspartei* the German People’s Party, a conservative-liberal party.

Anton’s work history shows that he worked in accounting and insurance at a bank, an insurance company, a paint manufacturer and the Heidelberg employment office. He did not serve in the military.

In summary, Anton was a mostly non-political civilian office worker. There is no indication that he had any problems and remained employed.

Georg is another story.

**Georg Waltenberger[[6]](#endnote-6)**

Georg was born in 1889. He is 57 years old. He is 5’6” tall and 125 pounds. Hair is gray and balding. Brown eyes. He is Roman Catholic and says he speaks English, French and Latin. Like Anton, he attended elementary and secondary school but did not pass the Abitur for university.

He passed a civil service exam and held a position as a postal inspector. He gave his reason for leaving as: *Arrested by USA troops 3 May, 1945*.

Why was Georg arrested? Unlike Anton, Georg was a joiner and a Nazi.

NSDAP National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi) 1933 to end of war.

NSFK National Socialist Flyers Corps 1935 to end.

NSV National Socialist People’s Welfare 1935 to end.

Reichsbund Deutschen Beamten Imperial German Civil Servants

NS Reichsbund Deutscher Leibesbüngen NS Physical Association 1934 to end.

Reichsluftschutzbund Paramilitary air raid warnings 1935 to end.

Reichskolonialbund Reich Colonial League 1935 to end.

Georg’s file contains the Office of Military Government of Bavaria - Tribunal Supervision Worksheet

Georg was arrested May 3, 1945 but his trial date is February 4 1947. The Tribunal Worksheet does not indicate the results of his trial.

Anton had a clean record. Georg admitted to membership in seven Nazi organizations.

Couldn’t Georg have just lied?

**Herr Hans Huber.[[7]](#endnote-7)** Herr Huber was the manager of a pulp paper plant in Munich. In April, 1945 a staff car pulled up and an officer told Herr Huber that trucks would be bringing bales of paper and ordered that they must be destroyed immediately. Herr Huber of course agreed. When the bales of paper began to appear, Herr Huber, who was not a Nazi, checked the contents of the bales and hid them aside in the back of his plant. Two weeks later the Allies took Munich and Herr Huber turned over the bales of paper. To this point the Nazis were their own worst enemy. Their meticulous recordkeeping contained detailed membership records, fingerprints, photographs and complete details of Nazi memberships in the many organizations from Gestapo to Hitler Youth, the Nazi Auto Club and hundreds of other Nazi organizations. The records were valuable to confirm the white list, identify the gray list and to prosecute the black list.

David Davison[[8]](#endnote-8) writing in American Heritage 1982, was specifically tasked with interviewing and identifying anti-Nazi writers, editors, publishers, theater directors, magazine publishers, those who could be relied on to lead the media and entertainment industry until they could run the media themselves. Interviews were conducted after the Fragebogen. Speaking of the color coding

“Gray was the tragic group, consisting of good Germans who had gone bad under pressure; people of decent anti-Nazi convictions who, because of the necessity of making a living, pursuing a career or even staying out of Gestapo dungeons, had finally caved in to one degree or another.”

“Interrogating the grays was always the most painful …. The consequences of these interrogations could be painfully dramatic. One applicant, after being faced with the record of his concessions to Nazism, killed himself.”

Identifying the Good Germans was a herculean data management task. The goal was for the Good Germans to run the courts, rebuild the country, reopen the newspapers, re-create the nation re-educate citizens and recreate the economy.

The enforcement of the Fragebogen was uneven. After the war 765 scientists and engineers who worked on Hitler’s rocket project were whisked away to the United States. American military opinions were often at odds with that of their superiors’.

“Having been a party member did not prevent a man from being better at his job and having a more agreeable personality than someone who was not. …Frequently the Nazis had training, experience, energy, affability, and not a bad political record. …If all the nazis had been exceedingly unpleasant and rude, denazification would have been easy.” (General George S. Patton, Commanding General, Third Army and Military Governor of Bavaria).

General Patton asked of an officer inspecting bankers, “if he did now think it silly to try to get rid of the most intelligent people in Germany.” Patton valued efficiency and sent many executives and other high-ranking officers and engineers back to their jobs regardless of status. Such actions resulted in his removal by Supreme Commander General Eisenhower.

Despite all the problems in determining who should reliably lead the country, Germany rebounded from total devastation to a successful free market economy. By the 1950s, thanks in part to the Marshall Plan, Currency Reform, the end of rationing, the end of price controls and tax reform, Germany was dramatically reconstructed and was known as the *Wirtschaftswunder,* th*e* Economic Miracle of Europe.

**Find a Fragebogen:** The National Archives has 2,184 boxes of Fragebogen. I asked for two samples scanned and emailed. There may be an expense for a more detailed search.

“These records have not been digitized. For more information about these records, please contact the National Archives at College Park - Textual Reference (RDT2) at archives2reference@nara.gov. Please include as much information in your inquiry as possible, such as full name and dates and location of interest.”

Explain that you are searching for a Fragebogen. The files are arranged geographically by land division, thereunder by name of interrogation center, thereunder roughly alphabetically by name. Provide an address or as much of a location as possible it will help in the search. The NARA researchers are very helpful but shorthanded. Expect to wait three to four weeks for a response.

1. Hunt, Irmgard. *On Hitler’s Mountain: Overcoming the Legacy of a Nazi Childhood* 2005 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ziemke, Earl F. *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany 1944-1946*. Center of Military History. 1990. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Wuermeling, Henric L.*Die Weiße Liste und die Stunde Null in Deutschland 1945***.** F. A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhanbdlung München. 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Scott, Anika.Blog post. **“**The Fragebogen”: *Postwar Germany – 1945-1949.Denazification. Postwar Germany. 1945-1949.* 2014. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. National Archives and Records Administration – RG-260 Entry A1 313 Box 363 Schuetz, Anton [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. National Archives and Records Administration – RG-260 Entry A1 313 Box 642 Waltenberger, Georg [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Taylor, Fred*. Exorcising Hitler: the Occupation and Denazification of Germany.* 2011 Bloomsbury Press, London. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Davidson, David. *Looking for the Good Germans*. American Heritage June/July 1982. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)