



A Resistance to Remember

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Background

The story of German resistance is often overlooked in the Nazi narrative. It was not as large, or united, or recognizable as it was in other countries, such as in Poland, France, and the Soviet Union. However, resistance to the German government still persisted under the nose of the government. Most notably, the Rosenstrasse Protest in February of 1943 was the first and only open, collective protest against the extermination of Jews during the Nazi regime. Up until this date, Jews who were married to German, non-Jewish spouses were safe from deportation under the exception that they were not abandoned by their spouses. On February 18, 1943, it was determined that all Jews left in Berlin were to be removed from Reich territory, which led to 2,000 men married to non-Jewish women being arrested. The wives of these men rose up in a sense of solidarity together to fight to have their husbands returned. Just a week later, those who were imprisoned at Rosenstrasse were released and allowed to remain with their families as the weeklong protest discredited the appearance of public support for the Nazi regime. This project will highlight the significance this protest has in German history and why it is not often in the German cultural memory.

Abstract

Protest and civil disobedience is not remembered when it comes to looking back at German culture and identity during World War II and the Holocaust. There were very few instances of it remembered in written history that explain how some Germans fought back against the Nazi regime, but there are some historians who have dedicated their time to researching cases such as the Rosenstrasse Protest of 1943. The Rosenstrasse Protest was a fight back against the Nazis who incarcerated 2,000 Jewish men, which was led by their German, non-Jewish spouses. This is significant in retrospective because it showed that the German, or "Aryan," identity was not a shared ideology of all German nationals. This project as well looks at why protest was not very common during the Third Reich, which can be concluded to heavy censorship in this era as the regime did not want to appear weak to its citizens and the world. It is important to remember protests like the Rosenstrasse Protest because it is a way to remember that not all German identity at the time was centered around persecuting Jews.

Methods

- In my initial research of protest in Nazi Germany, I found that there were few instances of resistance against the government, which led me to research what made the Rosenstrasse Protest (1943) so significant
- I went to the Rosenstrasse Foundation's website to read the scholarly articles they have provided of primary research on the Rosenstrasse protest
- I then searched keywords, such as "women," "Jew," "resistance," "mischling," etc. in different databases to find more related articles
- The articles I found to be most helpful included content about psychology of Hitler and his regime, which helped me draw the conclusion that prominent protest discredited the Regime
- This is where I found the protest to be the most significant because I learned that violence and force was not used against the women protesting, so I was able to deduce that the Nazis didn't want this protest to become well-known as it ruined the idea of *volksgemeinschaft*
- My overall research led me to come to other conclusions that corroborated the significance of this protest



This is the building where the Jews were detained in during the duration of the protest. It was located on "Rose Street" in Berlin.



"Block der Frauen" was a memorial created by Ingeborg Hunzinger to remember the protest.

Results

In my research, I have found that protest was not popular or frequent during Hitler's regime starting in 1933 and until his death because there was the fear that unrest would disturb the stability of the regime. It has been recorded that Joseph Goebbels ordered the victims of Rosenstrasse to be released to diminish the outcry that the victims' wives were creating with their protest. Goebbels, along with the rest of the Nazi leaders, were afraid that a protest such as this were to get too violent, then their credibility would be lost. During this time period, the regime created morale for the war through the people. This was called *volksgemeinschaft*, which meant the "people's community." Any force used on the German women would have been a blow to *volksgemeinschaft* as it would have shown that not all Germans were united for the basis of the War. Other instances of protest studied during this period had very little documentation to them as censorship in Nazi Germany was profound. The instance of the White Rose resistance group wasn't known until British and American journalists heard their story and decided to publish it. I have also found the Rosenstrasse Protest to be significant to the German memory of the Holocaust because it showed that not all Germans followed the same ideology that was conditioned into them by the Nazis. It also showed that resistance could be demonstrated by ordinary citizens who did not later on become martyrs for their actions.

References

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