



Discovering Our American Heritages

By Jim Myers

“ . . . We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”

The self-evident truths are:

1. all men are created equal
2. all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights
3. among the Rights endowed by the Creator are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness

The following words are found in the closing paragraph of this document.

“ . . . We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States . . . And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Please read the paragraph above out loud and slowly. *Underline the truths, rights, and obligations in the paragraphs above. Keep them in mind as you read the next story!*

The Story of Witold Pilecki

You have two options for how to use this newsletter – (1) an article to read; or (2) use it as a Module in the **BHC Life 1st Education Network** (*Life 1st EN*). The following is a **facts-based story** that most Americans have never heard. I hope you share and discuss it with family members and friends, no matter which option you choose. If you chose the second option, follow instructions in boxes like the one below.

Life 1st EN: *Note that information must be anchored to time and place. This makes it possible to identify the context, order in which it appears, and the sources of the information.*

- In January **1919**, **Anton Drexler** founded the **German Workers' Party**. This party was formed from a group who had previously met regularly to discuss political matters. The party met weekly in a beer hall in Munich. **After the pressures of war Munich was politically unstable. People were inclined to support new ideas that advocated extreme change.** The party advocated a range of ideas, including hostility to the Treaty of Versailles, nationalism, concern about the nation's moral standards and changing culture, and extreme antisemitism.¹
- On **February 24, 1920**, the German Workers' Party changed its name to the **National Socialist German Workers' Party** (NSDAP), more commonly referred to as the **Nazi Party**. **Drexler** mentored his successor in the NSDAP, **Adolf Hitler**, during his early years in politics.²
- On **November 8–9, 1923**, **Adolf Hitler** and the **Nazi Party** led a coalition group in an attempt to overthrow the German government. This attempted *coup d'état* came to be known as the **Beer Hall Putsch**. A putsch is a sudden and often violent attempt to overthrow a government, similar to a coup d'état. The term originates from German and refers to a secretive plot to seize power.³ Hitler aimed to seize control of the state government, march on Berlin, and **overthrow the German federal government**. They sought to establish a new government to oversee the creation of a unified Greater German Reich. In this new government, **citizenship would be based on race**.⁴

¹ <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/the-nazi-rise-to-power/the-early-years-of-the-nazi-party/>

² <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/the-nazi-rise-to-power/the-early-years-of-the-nazi-party/>

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/putsch>

⁴ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/beer-hall-putsch-munich-putsch>

The putsch failed and Bavarian authorities prosecuted nine participants. **The judges convicted Hitler on the charge of high treason**. However, they gave him the lightest allowable sentence of five years in a **minimum-security prison at Landsberg am Lech** with the possibility of parole. Hitler led a pleasant lifestyle for an inmate. Prison authorities allowed him to wear his civilian clothes, to meet with other inmates as he pleased, and to send and receive many letters. Prison authorities also permitted Hitler to use the services of his personal secretary, **Rudolf Hess**, a fellow inmate convicted of high treason. **While in prison, Hitler dictated to Hess the first volume of his infamous autobiography, *Mein Kampf***.⁵

Among those who marched with Hitler were men who would later hold key positions in Nazi Germany: Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, Julius Streicher, and Wilhelm Frick. After World War II ended in 1945, four of these men stood in the defendants' dock at the trial of major war criminals in Nuremberg. The fifth only escaped that fate by committing suicide.⁶

- **December 1924 Hitler** released from prison.⁷
- In **1924**, **Witold Pilecki**'s father fell ill and he was honor bound to take on his family's dilapidated estate in **Krupa, Eastern Poland**. It had a crumbling manor house, overgrown orchards, and **550 acres of rolling wheat fields**. Suddenly Witold found himself **the steward of the local community**. Peasants from the local village of Krupa worked his fields and sought his advice on how to develop their own land. He set up a dairy cooperative to earn them better prices. After spending a large chunk of his inheritance on his prized Arabian mare, **he founded the local reserve unit**.⁸
- Beginning in **1933**, IBM created a strategic relationship with Germany and Hitler's Reich. "Reich" is a German word meaning "realm" or "empire," often used to refer to historical empires in Germany, such as the Holy Roman Empire, the German Empire, and Nazi Germany, which is commonly known as the "Third Reich." The term signifies a kingdom or an imperial state.

The Reich became IBM's largest overseas customer and an immense source of profits. Working hand-in-hand with the Nazis, a massive, door-to-door national

⁵ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/beer-hall-putsch-munich-putsch>

⁶ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/beer-hall-putsch-munich-putsch>

⁷ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/beer-hall-putsch-munich-putsch>

⁸ *The Volunteer: One Man, An Underground Army, And the Secret Mission to Destroy Aushwitz* by Jack Fairweather © 2019; HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY; p. 7.

census was undertaken throughout Germany in 1933. This required IBM engineers to design and print millions of compatible punch cards and paper forms, assemble and train an army of secretaries to punch in data, and deliver large numbers of machines – sorters and tabulators – and ensure that the settings could read the data properly. Finally, IBM had to produce the clear, printed results that the Nazis desired.

The Nazis were amazed. Once Germany's Jews were identified, the second solution the Nazis sought was to effectively oust them from every segment of society. Lawyers, judges, doctors, teachers, merchants, traders, government officials, journalists, musicians, employees of all types, even members of organizations such as auto clubs and gardening groups were all caught up in the cross-comparison of directories, membership books, rosters, and other lists. IBM never sold their machines to the Nazis. It leased them. IBM was paid monthly – right through the war years. IBM New York maintained strict control over the location and use of their machines.

When war broke out the Nazis needed the newest IBM alphabetizers to more efficiently organize the elimination of Polish Jews. The letter they wrote to Thomas J. Watson, IBM's president has been preserved. IBM supplied them . . . The labor index created for the labor and extermination camps required a five-digit Hollerith (IBM) number for each prisoner. The number was tattooed on their arms so they could be read easily, even when their dead bodies were placed in piles . . . The IBM machines were used to coordinate and tabulate all new registrations, death lists, daily strength reports, and transfers from site to site . . . Without IBM's custom designed programs, flawlessly maintained machines, and continuous supply of millions of new punch cards, Extermination by Labor could never have been organized. It was in fact, an IBM designed and coordinated extermination program.⁹

- **September 15, 1935**, the Nazi Party implemented two new laws related to race: **The Reich Citizenship Law** and **The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor**. These laws informally became known as the **Nuremberg Laws**.

*“Moved by **the understanding that purity of German blood** is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people . . . Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if*

⁹ *Nazi Nexus: America's Corporate Connections to Hitler's Holocaust* By Edwin Black; pp. 130, 132, 142, 154 & 160.

concluded abroad to circumvent this law. Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the state prosecutor.”

Life 1st EN: Watch the 2-minute YouTube Video **Fritz Gluckstein Reflects on the Nuremberg Race Laws** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GNIfQV7mJs>

- **November 14, 1935:** A further decree outlines three different ‘degrees’ of **Jews** and **mischlinges** (half-breeds).
- **January 3, 1936,** the scope of the Nuremberg “Blood Protection Law” was extended to include **Gypsies**, **Sinti** and **Roma** (Zimmerman, 1989).
- **February 10, 1936,** the **Gestapo is merged with the state police** and given wide-ranging extra-legal powers.
- **July 12, 1936,** construction of the **Sachsenhausen concentration camp** began (Orth et alii, 1998).
- **August 1, 1936, Olympic Games** begin in Berlin. German cities are cleared of anti-Jewish signs and propaganda.

Life 1st EN: Watch the 4-minute YouTube Video - **The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNKlxcqLKcM>

- **March 9, 1937,** a massive lockup operation was directed against people who had been found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences. Several thousands were arrested throughout the *Reich*. They were sent to the concentration camps. (Wagner, 1996).
- **July 15, 1937,** Buchenwald concentration camp built in Weimar (Orth et alii, 1998).
- **December 14, 1937,** directive for the “**preventive struggle against crime**” legalized the arrests carried out earlier in the year *a posteriori*, and formed **the legal framework for sending multiple offender criminals to concentration camps** (Wagner; 1996).
- **March 12-13, 1938,** Austria was annexed. Police forces became the first *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile groups of policemen in charge of taking control of public

buildings, seizing archives and the files of the main security and State organizations, as well as carrying out arrests of political opponents or persons identified as dangerous. Barely two weeks after the invasion, the arrests carried out in Austria ranged into the thousands.

- **April 26, 1938**, Law for Jewish Wealth ordered Jewish property be registered, inventoried and seized.
- **June 13-18, 1938**, a wave **of arrests of “antisocial persons”** took place. This was a catch-all category comprising persons who had remained unemployed for a long time, misfits, individuals allegedly suffering from mental illnesses, alcoholics and drug addicts (Wagner 1996). Gypsies were also targeted in this wave of arrests (Zimmermann, 1995).
- **August 8, 1938**, Mauthausen concentration camp opens in Austria.
- **September 27, 1938**, Jewish lawyers are forbidden from practicing law or conducting business in Germany.
- **October 5, 1938**, a decree orders that passports of all German Jews be stamped with a large red ‘J’.
- **November 9, 1938**, *Kristallnacht* (“Night of the Broken Glass”). With help from the *Gauleitung* of Franconia and its leader **Julius Streicher**, who was editor-in-chief of *Der Stürmer* newspaper, as well as from **Goebbels**, who was *Gauleiter* of Berlin and Minister of Propaganda, **the SA instigated huge pogroms throughout Germany**.

<u>Life 1st EN:</u> Watch the 3-minute YouTube Video - <u>What Was Kristallnacht in the Holocaust?</u> - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQ1E6wO9jXQ

- **August 22, 1939**, Adolf Hitler met with his officers and told them, “It is only by the annihilation of Poland and its vital forces that the German race could expand.” Hitler believed the German people were locked in a brutal contest for resources with other races.
- **August 23, 1939**, Adolf Hitler signed a secret nonaggression pact with Josef Stalin that granted Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union and most of Poland to Germany.

- **August 26, 1939**, Witold Pilecki stood on the manor house steps and watched the car kick up a trail of dust as it drove down the lime tree avenue toward the yard and came to a stop in a white cloud beside the gnarled chestnut. He was thirty-nine-years-old. A soldier stepped out of the dusty car with orders for Witold to gather his men. Poland had ordered a mass mobilization of half a million reservists. Witold, a second lieutenant in the cavalry reserves and member of the local gentry, had forty-eight hours to deliver his unit to the barracks in the nearby town of Lida for loading onto troop transports bound west. He had done his best to train ninety volunteers through the summer, but most of his men were peasants who had never seen action or fired a gun in anger. Several didn't own horses and planned to fight the Germans on bicycles. At least Witold had been able to arm them with Lebel 8 mm bolt-action carbines.
- **August 30, 1939**, near midnight, they arrived in Warsaw after a stop and go 240-mile journey. From his carriage, Witold caught glimpses of the city: cafes and bars had blacked out windows in anticipation of German air raids; people with gas masks over their shoulders filled the streets, too hot and anxious to sleep.
- **September 1, 1939**, Witold saw the first wave of German bombers appear on the horizon. Most of the planes stayed high, bound for Warsaw. Hitler ordered Western Poland annexed to the Reich and over five million Catholic Poles and Jews expelled to make way for German settlers. Tens of thousands of Poles were pressed into work in the Reich that autumn. Killing squads known as the Einsatzgruppen preempted resistance by rounding up and shooting some 20,000 members of the Polish educated and professional classes - lawyers, teachers, doctors, journalists, or simply anyone who looked intellectual — and buried their bodies in mass graves. Newspapers were censored, radios banned, and high schools and universities closed.
- **September 1940**, to uncover the fate of the thousands of Polish people being interred at a mysterious Nazi camp on the border of the Reich, Witold Pilecki volunteered for an audacious mission: assume a fake identity, intentionally get captured and sent to the view camp, and then report back to the underground on what had happened to his compatriots there. But gathering information was not his only task: he was to execute an attack from inside -- where the Germans would least expect it. The name of the camp was **Auschwitz**.

- **September 19, 1940**, during a roundup **Witold Pilecki allowed himself to be arrested** and **he was transported to the Auschwitz concentration camp**. He spent more than two and a half years there, building a conspiratorial network and preparing reports for underground movements on the situation in the camp and the extermination of Jews.
- In **1943**, **Witold Pilecki** did the seemingly impossible and escaped from the camp with two of his fellow prisoners.

Life 1st EN: Watch the 7-minute YouTube Video -- **The story of Witold Pilecki** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0LuqcsEFiw>

- **1945 in Berlin**, the last monthly rent check by a Reich representative was given to a U.S. Army officer. He told the Army man, “Please give this check to Mr. Watson.” Why did IBM do this? It was never about anti-Semitism. It was never about National Socialism. **It was always about the money.**

Life 1st EN: Watch the YouTube video (45 minutes) – **Ask Edwin Anything: IBM and the Holocaust, S1 E19, Jul 23, 2020** -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP5EZtwTnYc>

This is the end of Module 1. **You will receive the next module very soon.**

Registered Life 1st EN Students

Elevate this experience from being a passive reader to an active student in the **Biblical Heritage Center Life 1st Education Network**. **Register as a Student or Team** and interact with **BHC Guides & Instructors** through *emails, postcards, letters, videos, and Zoom broadcasts*. Follow the instructions below and you will understand what an educational experience is like.

1. Go to the BHC Website and click on this graphic BHC Life 1st Network Page. Next, click on this Module – **Discovering Our American Heritages (A001)**. A copy of this newsletter will appear, and you will be able to click on the links in the boxes above.
2. Use this paper copy to make notes or remind you of things that are important to you. Later you will use those notes in discussions with other Life 1st EN Participants.

SHALOM!