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Propaganda: How Germany Convinced the Masses

By Tracey Martin

Abstract: During the 1930s and 1940s, the National Socialist German Worker's Party launched a full-scale propaganda campaign in conjunction with their military and political efforts as a means to subdue, indoctrinate, and control the masses of Germany and the European countryside. It is through this utilization of propaganda that Nazi Germany created a political machine that pumped out propagandistic messages frequently enough to sublimate the atrocities of the Holocaust into acceptable responses to the perceived Jewish problem. This usage of propaganda led to a united German identity, founded in a response full of hatred towards the Jewish people. This look into the power of propaganda sheds appropriate light on the psychological impact of repeated information, especially in times of economic stress and war.

Propaganda has been around for centuries, perhaps millennia, existing both in times of peace and war, and continues to position itself at the forefront of culture, society, and most importantly, politics. The implementation of propaganda in Nazi Germany before and during World War II represents an incredible phenomenon of hatred and racism. During the first half of the twentieth century, anti-Semitic propaganda rapidly grew in Germany culminating in the eventual Holocaust of the 1940s. Propagandistic pieces lead to a warped sense of reality based on the manipulation of one's ideology or current situation. This psychological manipulation led to both soldiers and civilians

participating in the Holocaust. The power of propaganda represents a crucial boiling point of human morality in Nazi Germany. By utilizing technological advancements of radio, cinema, mass printing, and other visual stimuli, the National Socialist German Worker's Party (Nazi Party) waged a home-front war to convince the populace of who they believed was the true enemy: the Jew. This clever use of propaganda throughout Germany in the first half of the twentieth century acted as the driving force behind the Holocaust, fostering a national identity forged in hate and racism.

What is the definition of propaganda? The typical definition of propaganda, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is "the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person."¹ Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party in Germany, describes propaganda as "a truly terrible weapon in the hands of an expert."² George Orwell, English author of the popular novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, describes propaganda as "lies, even when one is telling the truth."³ Perhaps the greatest definition of the concept of propaganda is by Richard Alan Nelson:

Propaganda is neutrally defined as a systematic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels.⁴

¹ "Propaganda." Merriam-Webster. Accessed May 21, 2019.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/propaganda>.

² Edward J. Phillips, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Richard Alan Nelson, *A Chronology and Glossary of Propaganda in the United States* (1996) 232-233.

Nelson's definition of propaganda encompasses the common themes and broadens the concept of propaganda by not limiting propaganda to a political sphere. The broadening of the term "propaganda" allows one to further understand what propaganda is and what the purpose of propaganda is and was.

The purpose of propaganda in Nazi Germany was to foster a unity based on the concept of racial superiority and anti-Semitism. According to Edward Phillips, propaganda "serves as the antithesis of objectivity, rationality, and truthfulness."⁵ Nazi propaganda exhibited Phillips' antithesis definition by rooting its evidence in pseudo-sciences, emotions, and economic distress. Gustave le Bon, a renowned French academic known for his theory on the psychological identity of crowds, who influenced world leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt, Sigmund Freud, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler, "proposed that crowds become dependent on images and illusions to guide their actions. The leader must thus supply these illusions to garner support."⁶ This explanation of the goals of propaganda is echoed with Richard J. Evans explanation that propaganda was "to keep people fighting and make sure they conformed, even if only outwardly, to the demands the regime made on them."⁷ Propagandistic ideology extends beyond the conventional battlefield to the fight for survival and rehabilitation of the German economy and its people. With that being noted, Evans is correct in his assessment of the usage of propaganda in Nazi Germany.

The introduction of propaganda did not magically surface in 1939 with anti-Semitic propaganda; instead, the usage of propaganda in Germany slowly began after their defeat in World War I, eventually culminating into their most effective weapon against the Jewish people. Germany, being assigned the fault of

⁵ Nelson, "A Chronology and Glossary of Propaganda," 232-233.

⁶ Sean J. Harrington, "World War II and Propaganda," in *The Disney Fetish*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), 171.

⁷ Michael H. Kater, "War and Public Opinion, Propaganda, and Culture," in *Culture in Nazi Germany* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019), 172.

World War I, faced many economic and military hardships in the form of reparations and military limitations. French and British delegates during the Paris Peace Conference sought severe punishments for the nation of Germany. The Treaty of Versailles was born out of the Paris Peace Conference and alongside it, the birth of German frustrations. During the conference, Germany was attributed to the fault of World War I. This was in part due to France's eagerness to retain the Alsace-Lorraine territory from Germany, the United States of America entering the war due to German naval aggression and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and Great Britain fearing for the balance of European powers. These reasons combined to present a clear image of Germany being at fault. Just as Germany had been the designated scapegoat in the peace talks at Versailles, the Nazi Party now needed a common enemy of their own and a reason as to why Germany lost in World War I: enter the Jewish people. The Jewish people were no strangers to persecution and discrimination. In fact, anti-Semitism existed prior to the Nazi Party as evidenced with the sacking of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 BCE during the First Jewish-Roman War. Additionally, while the First Crusade's goal was to reclaim Jerusalem from the Muslim Fatimid Caliphate, Jews were targeted as well during the Siege of Jerusalem in 1099 CE. In addition to these two events, the general religious intolerance had plagued the Jewish faith for millennia and with the mass printing of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903), anti-Semitic propaganda had begun to spread in twentieth century Europe. *The Elders of Zion* presented itself as a factual document exposing a Jewish global conspiracy of world domination. The perfect scapegoat had just presented itself and Joseph Goebbels would pounce on the opportunity.

Joseph Goebbels, master propagandist, high-ranking Nazi Party official, and Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, was tasked with convincing the masses of a Jewish threat after his successful campaign for Adolf Hitler in 1932. Goebbels was a "tireless, tenacious agitator with the gift of paralyzing opponents by a guileful combination of venom, slander,

and insinuation.”⁸ The master manipulator directly controlled propaganda in Nazi Germany, and even prior to 1939, preached of a Jewish threat, held book burnings, and cleansed the arts. Goebbels stated that,

Propaganda is absolutely necessary, even if it is only a means to an end. Otherwise the idea could never take over the state. I must be able to get what I think important across to many people. The task of a gifted propagandist is to take what many have thought and put it in a way that reaches everyone from the educated to the common man.⁹

In 1928, Goebbels gave a speech about propaganda in which he stated, “millions of people are willing to die for a gospel, and our movement is becoming more and more a gospel.”¹⁰ While Goebbels’ goal was to create a national enemy from the Jewish people, he also sought to provide Germany and her people a sense of pride, unity, and nationalism, mimicking the concept of a religious belief. The German populace could place their blind faith behind the savior of their nation, economy, and pride: Adolf Hitler.

The imitation of religion is seen with the idolization of Hitler. Goebbels attempted to unify the nation with Hitler serving as a messianic savior figurehead. Hitler was helping rebuild Germany and was presented as the right choice to get Germany back on its feet.¹¹ The continued idolization of Hitler is seen in the mass production of Hitler portraits for citizens to hang in their homes. One painting by an artist named F. Thiele in 1938 portrays

⁸ Robert S. Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* (London: Routledge, 2002), 77.

⁹ Joseph Goebbels, “Knowledge and Propaganda,” *German Propaganda Archive*. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/goeb54.htm>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Randall Bytwerk, *Hitler is building. Help him. Buy German goods*, mid-1930s, German Propaganda Archive.

Hitler in a heroic context.¹² The painting shows Hitler center, surrounded by hard working men to the right and adoring women to the left. Behind him stands a member of the Hitler Youth, blonde and blue-eyed, holding the Nazi Flag representing the support of Hitler as well as the future of Nazi Germany, the youth.¹³ Aside from artwork, the idolization of Hitler was echoed in literature and speeches. This is especially apparent in a paper that was published weekly called *Das Schwarze Korps*:

But there is one man who cannot lay down his burden, who carries a hundred times more than anyone else, who does not weaken or falter, who does not confuse the forest with the trees. He is a granite wall we need not worry about, who is everything that is good and brave and true in us, who warms us with the glow of his great soul: the Führer!¹⁴

This portrayal of Hitler as infallible and as a messianic type savior of Germany helped create a sense of unity, pride, and nationalism among the German people. While unity under a leader was important to the Nazi Party's goals, Germany needed to be united against a common enemy to further foster unity.

The Jewish were chosen as that enemy. With the perpetual onslaught of anti-Semitic propagandistic pieces, being Jewish became synonymous with thievery, wickedness, deceitfulness, uncleanness, and more. The unification under a leader only goes so far; the common Jewish threat was used to propel the united German people into a sense of intense comradeship, pride, and nationalism. The Jewish people were labeled as a people that were

¹² Franz Thiele, *Untitled*, 1938, German Propaganda Archive.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Randall Bytwerk, *He is Victory!* Accessed February 27, 2020. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/sk01.htm>.

attempting world domination.¹⁵ In fact, in the eyes of the Nazi Party, the war was the fault of the Jew.¹⁶

Goebbels penned a publication in 1928 entitled *Buy Only From the Jew* in which he posed as a satirical essay about the effects of purchasing goods from Jewish stores. In the essay, Jews are putting German businesses out of business by selling cheap, knock-off products.¹⁷ He asks “when was the Jew not our enemy? When did he not hate and persecute and slander and spit on us?”¹⁸ The core argument in the essay is that by buying from Jewish businesses, Germans are letting their fellow citizens starve.¹⁹ Therefore, Goebbels encourages German citizens to purchase from Jewish businesses, claiming that, “the great injustice you do to your own people, the sooner the day will come when a man comes to take up the whip and drive the moneychangers from the temple of our fatherland.”²⁰ In addition to the penned writings of Goebbels, film played an important role in Nazi propaganda.

The usage of film was one of the best instruments to convince the masses. Film is easily written off as entertainment, but it is “not to be underestimated as a means of education.”²¹ Film was so important that Goebbels believed feature films were an extremely important propaganda tool.²² In fact, the usage of film in Nazi propaganda was so prominent that movie attendance more than doubled during the war and the amount of propaganda films made up about a quarter of Germany’s total film production.²³ Films possessed a dangerous power of conviction over the

¹⁵ Phillips, *State of Deception*, 20.

¹⁶ Mjolnir, *He is Guilty of War*, 1943, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection.

¹⁷ Deutsche, *kauf nur bei Juden!* Der Angriff. Aufsätze aus der Kampfzeit. Munich; Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1935. 331-333.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/angrif10.htm>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kater, *Culture in Nazi Germany*, 184.

²² Phillips, *State of Deception*, 12.

²³ Ibid.

populace. These films utilized every fearmongering tactic that could be thought of at the time.

One such film is *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*). *The Eternal Jew* is perhaps the most reviling propagandistic piece of film in Nazi Germany and presents the Jewish people as a plague. They are compared to rats that spread disease and contagion and flood the nation while devouring the resources of the area. A film review from 1940 in *Unser Wille und Weg* (The Nazi Party monthly for propagandists) claimed the film provided “a broad treatment of the life and effects of this parasitic race using genuine material taken from real life.”²⁴ The anonymous author goes on to discuss how the Jewish people have always been a criminal race and that they simply migrate from nation-to-nation, sucking the land dry of its resources. The author continues, “we have broken their power over us. We are the initiators of the fight against world Jewry, which now directs its hate, its brutal greed and destructive will toward us. We must win this battle for ourselves, for Europe, for the world.”²⁵ By presenting the Jewish people as a plague or parasite needing to be rid of, the film convinces the viewer that they are in the right.

An additional film known as *Jud Süß* (*Süss the Jew*) depicts the typical Jewish man, Süß, as a corrupt thief. In the film, Süß is portrayed as corrupt, stealing from the land, and depriving the nation of its wealth. This is a common theme in both *The Eternal Jew* and *Süss the Jew*, but unlike *The Eternal Jew*, the “villain” is exposed and executed and all other Jews in the land are driven out of the territory. The expulsion of the “villain” and victory of the German people led to Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel, to order every SS member to see it.²⁶ While visual and literary propaganda were crucial to Goebbels goals, and thousands of pieces of propaganda were created by the Nazi party, not all useful propagandistic pieces came from Nazi Germany.

²⁴ Unser Wille und Weg, 10. 1940, 54-55. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/ewig.htm>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Phillips, *State of Deception*, 118.

Theodore Kaufman, a Jewish citizen of the United States, provided the Nazi Party with more fuel for their propaganda fire. Kaufman self-published a book under the title of *Germany Must Perish*, in which he argues for the forced sterilization of the entire German population.²⁷ Goebbels used this piece of work to portray the Jewish people as genocidal enemies bent on the total annihilation of the German people. He presented the book as an official Allied policy and represented Kaufman as an influential advisor to President Roosevelt, even though neither of these claims were true.²⁸ Goebbels' quick recasting of an anti-Nazi publication into an anti-Semitic propaganda piece speaks to the natural talent of deception that he possessed and his mastery over it. The idea that a Jew was behind Roosevelt's decisions carried an implication of a common theme in anti-Semitism: that Jews were the puppet masters of the world.

The puppet master theme is incredibly common in Nazi propaganda. One such printing depicts a Jewish man as a devious octopus. He possesses China, Russia, Britain, and the United States within his tentacles and inherently controls them with his crooked smile.²⁹ Another poster presents a chain of nations being devoured by the next. Britain is being eaten by the United States, China eats the United States, and eating all of them are the Jews.³⁰ *Behind the Enemy Powers: the Jew* is a propagandistic poster that displays a plump Jewish man standing behind the flags of the Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain, signifying that the Jew is the true enemy behind the enemy.³¹ An additional poster to represent the puppet master mentality is a literal depiction of a lethargic Jew acting as puppet master.³² In this poster the Jew almost seems bored with his toys as he dangles Franklin Roosevelt, Winston

²⁷ Phillips, *State of Deception*, 128.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Randall Bytwerk, *Untitled*, 1943, German Propaganda Archive.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Behind the Enemy Powers: The Jews*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection.

³² Randall Bytwerk, *Untitled*, 1942, German Propaganda Archive.

Churchill, and Joseph Stalin on the puppet stage. The puppet masters were controlling their destiny, and that destiny was world domination.

A German tabloid newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, published issues vilifying the Jewish people in matters of world dominance. In October 1936, issue 41 of the tabloid printed the Jew as a voracious man who devours others.³³ Bodies hang out of the full mouth representing his insatiable appetite for control. The issue reads, “far be it from the Jews to enslave a single people. Their goal is to devour the entire world.”³⁴ The 47th issue, printed in November 1937 depicts the Jew as a “money demon” with his claws in the entire planet.³⁵ The



Behind the Enemy Powers,
Courtesy USHMM.

Star of David seems to be tattooed on the body of the demon and the British and American symbols for their respective currencies are also engraved on his arm. The visual representation of Jewish people through text and art is but one step of the Nazi process of Jewish extermination, and the next step was to convince the masses that mass extermination was acceptable.

In 1939, Adolf Hitler initiated a program known as the T4 Euthanasia Program. This program sought the destruction of those deemed incurable, the elderly, and the physically or mentally disabled. The program disguised itself as a euthanasia program, but in fact, it was a mass extermination of people that the Nazi party deemed unfit to live. Public opinion on the program became uneasy and uncomfortable with the mass killings, so in 1941, the film *Ich Klage an (I Accuse)* was released in an effort to garner

³³ Randall Bytwerk, *Stürmer*, 1936, German Propaganda Archive.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

popular support for the systematic killings and ease tensions. *Ich Klage an* follows the story of Hanna, the beautiful wife of a doctor who is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The story follows her husband's attempts to find a cure for her ailment, only to fail each time. Finally, as the disease progresses, Hanna desires death and begs her husband to let her go, to which he eventually agrees. The portrayal and bonding to an emotional character put in a situation that anyone could potentially experience, played on the emotions, and fears of the viewer, ultimately convinced viewers to look at the euthanasia program in a more favorable light. In the end, the public opposition to the euthanasia program still existed and the program was officially ended in 1941, but mass killings remained a covert operation of the Nazi Party.

The citizens of Germany and surrounding European



Bytwerk, Chasing.

nations understood that the Jewish people were their enemy. One poster published in 1941, in Russian, depicts soldier-like Jews being pushed out of the territory by bayonets. It roughly translates, "Get the Jewish-Bolshevik warmongers out of Europe."³⁶

Posters depicted Jews as all manner of vile, but one poster even depicted them as Satan.³⁷ A

Ukrainian poster roughly translated to, "Satan has taken off his mask."

Echoing the sentiments of the *Germany Must Perish*, a *Der*

Stürmer cartoon depicted a strong Nazi member tossing a Jewish man

off a cliff, captioned, "go where you wanted me to go, you evil spirit."³⁸ The insinuation and repetition that the Jewish people were

³⁶ Randall Bytwerk, *Chasing*, German Propaganda Archive.

³⁷ Randall Bytwerk, *Satan has taken off his mask*, German Propaganda Archive.

³⁸ Randall Bytwerk, *untitled*, German Propaganda Archive.

hellbent on the total destruction of the German people was the strongest argument in favor of mass extermination, and eventually, was the core argument that mass extermination was the only solution.

The Nazi Party believed that the only solution to the Jewish problem was to get rid of them all, specifically through genocide. Cartoons presented in *Der Stürmer* helped convince the reader that the mass extermination of the Jewish people was the only solution. In issue 45 the author attacks even the babies of the Jewish people, “every little Jewish baby grows up to be a Jew.”³⁹ A self-explanatory and obvious piece of information in contemporary times, but in 1940s Germany, it was viewed as a dangerous prospect considering that Jewish people were portrayed as being synonymous to criminals, parasites, plagues, or as serpents. Issue 10, printed in March 1935, depicts the Jew as a serpent and captions this, “do not grow weary, do not loosen the grip, this poisonous serpent may not slip away. Better that one strangles it to death than that our misery begin anew.”⁴⁰ The tenth issue of the propagandistic tabloid was published years before the start of the war and the T4 Euthanasia Program, yet it suggests that it is better to kill the Jew before the Jew can hurt Germany again. The sentiment of destroy or be destroyed is echoed in the September 1944 issue, “life is not worth living when one does not resist the parasite, never satisfied as it creeps about. We must win and will win.”⁴¹ Accompanied with the caption is an image of a grotesque parasitic looking creature with big eyes and a big nose, clearly meant to represent the Jew. The massive creature is seen slowly crawling towards Europe, representing an immediate threat if left untamed. Finally, in a 1939 speech by Robert Ley, the Reich Organizational Leader, to other Nazi officials, he argues, “If the Jew wants to fight, it is fine with us. We have wanted that fight for a long time. There is no room in the world for the Jews anymore.

³⁹ Randall Bytwerk, *untitled*, 1934, German Propaganda Archive.

⁴⁰ Randall Bytwerk, *untitled*, 1935, German Propaganda Archive.

⁴¹ Randall Bytwerk, *untitled*, 1944, German Propaganda Archive.

The Jew or us, one of us will have to go.”⁴² The common theme of kill or be killed can be seen in Nazi propaganda spanning over a decade, both public and private. This repetition of the dehumanizing propaganda targeting the Jews led towards public acceptance of the policies being advised by the Nazi Party.

Nazi soldiers were quick to succumb to this propagandistic manipulation. Captain Hans Kondruss wrote, “[I]t will be necessary to scorch out this boil of plague, because these ‘animals’ will always constitute a danger.”⁴³ The sentiment of kill or be killed again presents itself, this time in the form of a personal opinion and not a published work. Lance-Corporal Hans Fleischauer had similar thoughts, “the Jew is a real master in murdering, burning and massacring... these bandits deserve the worst and toughest punishment conceivable.”⁴⁴ While Captain Kondruss and Lance-Corporal Fleischauer represent militaristic influence of propaganda, one must remember that the core goal of propaganda is to convince the masses.

The repetition of dehumanizing and scapegoating the Jewish people led to civilian contempt. The portrayal of Jews as demons, thieves, warmongers, and more led to the inciting of hatred and violence against the Jewish population. Lance-Corporal Heinrich Sachs stated that the local civilian populations were in favor of the Nazi Party’s actions and “how the Jewish question was solved with impressive thoroughness under the enthusiastic applause of the local population.”⁴⁵ “Many had made their peace with the Germans and their deported Jewish neighbors. Missing was empathy, awareness, or concern about the Jews’ misfortunes.”⁴⁶ In fact, in the case of the Poles, many did not

⁴² Robert Ley, “Wir oder die Juden...” Die Hoheitsträger 3. May 1939. 4-6. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/ley3.htm>.

⁴³ Bartov, Omer. “Hitler’s Army,” in *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, 76-83, fourth ed.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Goldberg, “The Bystander During the Holocaust,” *Utah Law Review* no. 4 (August 2017), 651.

simply tolerate the persecution of the Jewish people, they urged the Germans on.⁴⁷ In addition to lack of empathy and enthusiastic support of the Nazis, bystanders also took part in violent acts against Jews. In one instance, “German soldiers watched and snapped photographs as Lithuanian citizens beat Jews to death with iron rods.”⁴⁸ On August 7, 1941 a crowd formed as the SS gathered Jews in a courtyard to be executed. The Nazi soldiers asked if any of the crowd had any “scores to settle” with the Jews. Then the soldiers allowed the Jews to be beaten and abused by civilians and then later executed.⁴⁹ Party members, soldiers, and civilians alike had been convinced that the Jew was the enemy, all that was left was to maintain that conviction.

Part of the maintenance of anti-Semitism in Europe was suppressing outside influences. Broadcasts, literature, and propaganda from the Allied Powers were expressly forbidden. Radio was a powerful medium of propaganda for repetition according to Joseph Goebbels and was necessary for the “preservation of our morale.”⁵⁰ The strength of radio broadcasts was two-front, for the power that Nazi Germany found in radio was also found by the Allied Powers. The Nazi Party outlawed the listening of foreign radio broadcasts and presented foreign broadcasts as anti-German propaganda.⁵¹ American broadcasts were deemed as lies. One such propaganda piece portrays Uncle Sam broadcasting on the radio while “truth stands on her head.”⁵² Allied propaganda was instrumental in the German defeat of World War I, so the citizens were warned not to fall for it again.⁵³ The blaming of Allied propaganda was a logical defensive reaction. Propaganda was known to be highly influential and

⁴⁷ Ibid, 655.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Phillips, *State of Deception*, 127.

⁵⁰ Kater, *Culture in Nazi Germany*, 181.

⁵¹ Randall Bytwerk, *Veraeter*, 1940, German Propaganda Archive.

⁵² Randall Bytwerk, *untitled*, 1943, German Propaganda Archive.

⁵³ Phillips, *State of Deception*, 107.

enemy propaganda was perhaps the only thing capable of hindering the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda.

Therefore, the act of controlling information was crucial to the success of the Nazi efforts of maintaining the reality they had created. The limitation of newspapers is one aspect of control that the Nazi party practiced. Newspapers were heavily censored and, in May 1941, over 500 newspapers had ceased operations and two years later another 950 shut down. By 1944 each paper was limited to four pages of print, and by 1945 they were restricted to two pages of print.⁵⁴ With the censorship or outright closure of newspapers across Germany, the Nazi Party controlled the flow of information. One important piece of information that was deemed crucial was the manipulation of death tolls in the war. News never reported the actual number of deaths or casualties that the Germans suffered. Instead, films such as *Feldzug in Polen (Campaign in Poland, 1940)*, *Feuertaufe (Baptism of Fire, 1940)*, and *Sieg im Westen (Victory in the West, 1941)* were produced and released to show glorious achievements that the German soldiers had achieved. Such achievements consisted of images of long lines of Allied prisoners and continually advancing German troops and lacked any imagery of dead or wounded German soldiers in the films.⁵⁵ In the event of a defeat the propagandists would change the rhetoric of the story such as the Myth of Stalingrad. The Myth of Stalingrad was a German defeat in which the Germans were heralded as heroes and even though it was a defeat, it was a moral victory.⁵⁶ The censorship of information was not limited exclusively to the media. Camp guards were warned that the inmates were criminals, thieves, parasites, and very dangerous, among other things, and were manipulated to have a preconceived notion of the Jewish inmates. They were guilted into following orders by appealing to German nationalism. Their comrades were on the frontlines fighting against the external enemy, and it was their duty to defend against the internal enemy.

⁵⁴ Kater, *Culture in Nazi Germany*, 201.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

Perhaps the greatest usage of information being controlled was in the Bohemian ghetto Theresienstadt. While concentration camps were factories of death, ghettos were used as another solution to the “Jewish problem.” In a ghetto, food was so scarce, and hygiene was so disgusting, that many died simply from starvation or sickness. Just like the concentration camps, the ghettos were designed to kill Jews in mass numbers. As news of the war atrocities slowly made their rounds around the globe, the Nazi party sought a way to rebuke the news. Theresienstadt was to be the project to refute these claims of war atrocities. The Nazi soldiers put the Jews of the ghetto to work to beautify the ghetto, and they were forced to pretend to enjoy a happy life. Theresienstadt was represented as a “spa town” where elderly and disabled Jews went to retire peacefully. The Red Cross was invited by the Nazi Party to examine Theresienstadt and hopefully put to rest any doubts that the Jews were being mistreated. A film was born out of the Theresienstadt project titled *The Führer Gives the Jews a City* (1944). That piece of propaganda forced the Jews of the ghetto to work as set members, writers, and actors, and children voluntarily participated due to the bribes of food and sweets.⁵⁷ Theresienstadt represents a different type of propaganda in Nazi Germany, a piece of propaganda to quell the concerns of foreigners and citizens alike while glorifying Hitler as a hero who provided the Jews a city.

Hitler is consistently represented as a messianic figure in propaganda and thus his party as an organization of saviors or heroes. The continued representation of the Jews as the enemy and the party as the heroes combined to keep the population in line with Nazi policies. In fact, the Nazi Party held multiple charity events and appealed to the empathy of the German citizens. Every year, the Party hosted a charity drive for their charity, the *Winterhilfswerk*, in which citizens were to donate to charity to

⁵⁷ Phillips, *State of Deception*.

prevent people from going hungry or cold. The poster associated with the drive presents a woman and her daughter looking at a Nazi soldier, seemingly in awe, who has his arms out signifying to come into his embrace.⁵⁸

The *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (National Socialist People's Welfare Organization) or NSV represented the charity causes in Nazi Germany. One poster states, "health, child protection, fighting poverty, aiding travelers, community, helping mothers: These are the tasks of the National Socialist People's Charity. Become a member!"⁵⁹ An additional



Bytwerk, Hunger, 1934.

poster draws on the graceful image of a woman breastfeeding her infant, thus emoting a sense of serenity and peace that must be maintained.⁶⁰ The portrayal of the Nazi party as heroes to Germany comes with the assumption that there are villains, and as evidenced, these villains were portrayed as the Jews and their puppets. German propaganda made sure to convey the idea that Germany was simply defending itself from the Allied powers who were puppets of the national Jewry.

Theodore Kaufman's *Germany Must Perish* populated German propaganda in a multitude of ways. Kaufman had even proposed the distribution of Germany amongst its neighbors and drafted a map.⁶¹ His self-published work had a great impact on Nazi propaganda and helped represent the Nazi Party as defenders

⁵⁸ Randall Bytwerk, *Hunger*, 1934, German Propaganda Archive.

⁵⁹ Randall Bytwerk, *NSV*, 1936, German Propaganda Archive.

⁶⁰ Randall Bytwerk, *Mutterkind*, 1938, German Propaganda Archive.

⁶¹ Randall Bytwerk, *Sterben*, 1938, German Propaganda Archive.

of Germany. The Party was simply defending Germany from their enemies. The war indemnities suffered by Germany post-World War I haunted the Germans and if they would lose in World War II they faced a second potential annihilation of Germany's political, military, economic, cultural, and spiritual identity. The Jewish people had been designated as warmongering puppet masters who were the sole reason that President Roosevelt declared war on Germany.⁶² A Nazi pamphlet used in Party discussions claimed Germany was required to defend itself from the American threat because the institution of Americanization would lead to enslavement, oppression, and destruction of culture.⁶³ Heinrich Goitsch argued that the Germans must defend and keep fighting because they would end up like the Aztecs if they lost, extinct.⁶⁴ Goitsch cites Duff Cooper, a former British minister, stating, "however this war ends, let us be sure that there is no longer a German nation."⁶⁵ Goitsch's essay attempts to muster more German resistance to the Allied threat in the face of potential defeat. Goitsch as well as other authors presented the tried-and-true propagandistic theory of kill or be killed.

There are Two Possibilities issues a grim statement about the potential conclusion of the war: victory or death. Disbursed in January 1945, propagandists fought the war of information until the very end. Outlook on the war was bleak for Germans, and propagandists, in a last-ditch effort started producing pamphlets, leaflets, and whatever else could be massively distributed in hopes of rallying the German people to a victory. The leaflet, in response to the loss of the war, goes on to read, "slave away for foreigners until the end of his life without ever seeing his homeland and his

⁶² Amerika als Zerrbild europäischer Lebensordnung, Schulungs-Unterlage Nr. 19. Der Reichsorganisationsleitung der NSDAP., Hauptschulungsamt, 1942. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/hsa01.htm>.

⁶³ Parole 22: Amerikanisierung wäre das Ende Europas!, Sprechabenddienst, Sept./Oct. 1944. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/sprech44d.htm>.

⁶⁴ Heinrich Goitsch, Niemals! Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1944. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/niemals.htm>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

family again, or one gets shot in the back of the neck a little earlier.”⁶⁶ The author argues that since both of these last possibilities end in death then the German is left with not two possibilities, but one, “we must win the war, and we can win it! Each man and each woman, the entire German people, must call forth their utmost in work, courage, and discipline. Then our future and the future of our children will be assured and the German people will be saved from a descent into Bolshevist chaos!”⁶⁷ Although Germany lost the war in the end, the mere fact that the war lasted two more years after massive military defeats in 1943 speaks of how strong the Nazi ideology, nationalism, and unification was, and the power that propaganda possessed over the nation of Germany.

The combination of anti-Semitic propaganda, Hitler idolization, the suppression of truth, and the manipulation and control of the media, led to a time where propaganda reigned supreme in warfare. The constant repetition and psychological conditioning that came from the intense propaganda campaigns of Nazi Germany led to a national identity that transformed regular citizens and soldiers into an anti-Semitic nation. The case of Nazi Germany must be studied carefully to understand the full power of propaganda and can be applied to contemporary times. In fact, propaganda surrounds every human being. Propaganda is seen in advertisements, commercials, newspapers, and more. Whether the propaganda is to persuade economically or racially, the use of propaganda holds more power than one may initially realize. Propaganda led an entire nation to endorse the removal of an entire race whilst turning a blind eye, even becoming accomplices in the genocide.

⁶⁶ Rüstzeug für die Propaganda in *der Ortsgruppe*, #2. January 1945, 31. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/2choices.htm>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

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