

James Madison University

**JMU Scholarly Commons**

---

Masters Theses, 2020-current

The Graduate School

---

5-8-2020

## Die Kunst des Betrugs: An analysis of national socialist propaganda

Nicholas Strasser

*James Madison University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/masters202029>



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Political History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Strasser, Nicholas, "Die Kunst des Betrugs: An analysis of national socialist propaganda" (2020). *Masters Theses, 2020-current*. 32.

<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/masters202029/32>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses, 2020-current by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [dc\\_admin@jmu.edu](mailto:dc_admin@jmu.edu).

Die Kunst des Betrugs: An Analysis of National Socialist Propaganda

Nicholas Strasser

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

May 2020

FACULTY COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Dr. Michael Gubser

Committee Members/Readers:

Dr. Christian Davis

Dr. Richard Meixsel

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Chapter I.....	9
Chapter II .....	42
Conclusion .....	77
Figures.....	83
Bibliography .....	92

## List of Figures

### Figure

1 <i>Macht frei die Scholle Bauern wählt hitler, Liste 1</i> .....	83
2 <i>Unsere letzte Hoffnung: Hitler</i> .....	84
3 <i>Schluss jetzt! Wählt Hitler</i> .....	85
4 <i>Arbeit, Freiheit und Brot! Wählt Liste 8 National-Sozialisten!</i> .....	86
5 <i>In grösster Not wählte Hindenburg Adolf Hitler zum Reichkanzler.</i> .....	87
6 <i>Führer wir folgen Dir! Alle sagen Ja!</i> .....	88
7 <i>Die NSDAP sichert die Volksgemeinschaft</i> .....	89
8 <i>Der Deutsche Student, Kämpft für Führer und Volk</i> .....	90
9 <i>Bund Deutscher Mädels in der Hitler Jugend</i> .....	91

## **Abstract**

Modern propaganda is often associated with oppressive authoritarian regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This project seeks to compare Nazi propaganda in the years leading up to 1933 with propaganda following the Nazi ascension to power but before the drive to war. These differences were significant and meaningful enough to warrant closer examination. This comparison seeks to determine how the Nazis altered their propaganda once they ascended to power in 1933, specifically analyzing what the Nazis emphasized and retained from before 1933 once they no longer had to compete with other parties but instead had to consolidate power. For the period prior to 1933, the analysis attempts to explain how the Nazis competed with others by addressing how they were capable of branding and marketing National Socialist ideology in order to appeal to a wide German voting bloc without appearing radical. In other words, how did they use propaganda to demonstrate the politically adaptable nature of their ideology? The analysis of propaganda following 1933 reveals how much the Nazis were holding back throughout their campaigning and assesses the transparency of their message. For the years 1933-36, the overall message, branding strategies, and transmission methods are also considered. The key points addressed are the following: the message and content of Nazi propaganda and how it shifted over time, the mediums and various transmission methods, and the value of propaganda both in marketing the Nazi ideological appeal and promoting Third Reich policy.

## Introduction

Propaganda at its most basic is an investment in influencing people's thought, practiced for the benefit of a cause or movement. The term has been tainted due to its association with murderous authoritarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Arguably the most infamous example is Nazi Germany. Although National Socialism is today characterized as abhorrent, this was not necessarily the case for Germans at the time, as the Nazi platform articulated propaganda in a 'palatable' format, one that could mobilize mass support. The Nazis were ruthless in their propagandistic aims, and they shifted their agenda at crucial points throughout the Third Reich. The most prevalent example of this alteration was the shift from propaganda from before 1933, when the Nazis assumed power, to afterwards, as they consolidated their rule. When the Nazis vied for political power, the movement recognized propaganda as a vital facet of its strategy. By contrast, once they attained power in 1933, propaganda was fashioned to create an artificial environment that facilitated the 'omnipresence' of National Socialism despite not having achieved an absolute majority. Propaganda continued to remain a strong force after 1933, but its focus had to be realigned in order to reflect the future aspirations of the movement. Following 1933, propaganda became an extension of governmental authority, and as a consequence, was implemented in a regimental manner designed to maintain the social order of the Third Reich, while simultaneously acting as a coercive force.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Those interested in an all-encompassing account of the Third Reich regime and the coverage of domestic affairs should begin with Richard J. Evans series, *The Third Reich in Power* (Penguin, 2005) and *The Coming of the Third Reich* (Penguin, 2005). An older more generalized but still valuable account of the chronology of Nazi Germany can be found in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (Random House, 1991). The past few years have seen a tremendous increase in the scholarship on Nazi propaganda. Randall L. Bytwerk, *Bending Spines: The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic* (MSU Press, 2012) is an excellent account that articulates how propaganda shifted over the course of the Third Reich and the role it played in shaping a German future. Those more interested in the locally concentrated efforts of propaganda production should consult Randall L. Bytwerk "Grassroots Propaganda in the Third Reich: The Reich Ring for National Socialist Propaganda and Public Enlightenment." *German Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (2010): 93-118. Those interested in a closer examination of how propaganda works in general should consult Jason Stanley *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton University Press, 2015). The works of Oron James Hale, *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (Princeton University Press, 1964) as well as Horst J.P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz *Hitler's*

There was an element of continuity between Nazi propaganda before and after 1933. This continuity is reflective of the characteristics Nazi propaganda possesses, namely those of simplicity and adaptability. Propaganda in the Nazi context was representative of the notion that, “Demagoguery is propaganda in the service of unworthy political ideals.”<sup>2</sup> It proved to be a versatile political tool that up to 1933 allowed the Nazis to maintain the façade of acting within the parameters of democracy. Examples of propaganda produced by the Nazis, show that propagandistic ‘success’ was determined by two major components.<sup>3</sup> The first was simplicity and consistency. Rather than attempting to convolute a series of talking points in order to fit a specific agenda, or unnecessarily limit the scope of applicability, the objective of Nazi propaganda was to break down complex concepts into digestible bits of information for the masses. The Nazis understood that propaganda must reflect the desire of the masses and effectively cater to what would be classified as a collective mentality. Generally speaking, the masses of Germany were susceptible to political change, due to the shared national experience of undesirable circumstances following World War I. Therefore, it was essential to the Nazis that their propaganda efforts target the base emotion of the intended audience. The simplicity of Nazi propaganda coincided with its general lack of substantive content; it sought to appeal on an emotional level as opposed to a logical one. That said, Nazi propaganda compensated for its lack

---

*Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Radio Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997) concentrates on the transmission of propaganda and how the message of Nazi ideology was tailored to accommodate the differences between distributions. Finally, those interested in studying the phenomenon of how the National Socialist ideology was articulated into the development of racially charged propaganda that was reinforced with a pseudoscientific sense of legitimacy should consult Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 68.

<sup>3</sup> In his book, Stanley refers to two distinct types of propaganda which he designates as either ‘supportive’ or ‘undermining’. This designation of propaganda components acts as a reference point in his work but the observations made regarding propaganda in the Nazi context are my own. Instead of using the Stanley’s phrasing of ‘supportive’ or ‘undermining’, the basis of components determining the basis of propagandistic success are termed as simplicity, consistency, and adaptability. These terms are reflective of observations made in the examination of Nazi propaganda and best illustrate the degree of overlap in material leading up to and following 1933.



of depth with an absolute clarity, saturating the intended target with relentless repetition. The second component of Nazi propaganda was adaptability. The adaptability of Nazi propaganda was revealed in its messaging whereas consistency marked the means of transmission. While propaganda was used by other parties as a means to marketing an ideology, it required a sense of adaptability to the political environment. The Nazis recognized that propaganda ceased to be effective once it refused to reflect changing circumstances. Additionally, the efforts of Nazi propaganda were adaptable not only in messaging, but also in purpose. Nazi propaganda was used not only as a means of garnering support for a particular idea or individual, but also as a means of coercion, particularly after 1933, contributing to the 'omnipresence' of the ideology it was propagating.

The establishment of the Nazi governing structure was predicated upon propaganda. This was because National Socialism could not survive without the propagandistic saturation of the German public. Propaganda was undoubtedly an integral component of National Socialism, made evident by the totalitarian nature of the ideology. However, propaganda was an instrument that was always in transition, as the Nazis shifted the primary focus of their propaganda efforts over the course of the movement's political career. In other words, Nazi propaganda reflected a consistency representative of the party platform while the specificities of messaging and articulation were altered depending on what the Nazis saw as a propaganda priority at any given moment. Propaganda took on different roles over the course of the Nazi existence. Initially serving as an aid to consolidate power, propaganda was transformed into a facet of regime order and coercion. This shift in Nazi propaganda efforts highlighted the need to maintain it as "the means by which the highly privileged group in a society controls negatively privileged groups."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 162.

This reality was made increasingly evident with specific regards to how the Nazis approached those within the German population who did not fit the ‘vision’ of National Socialism. This applied namely to those who were considered ‘inferior’ peoples and political opponents. Furthermore, Nazi propaganda highlighted the adaptability of their political ideology. This was made evident following the ascension to power, when propaganda was altered over the course of a few months. The manifestation of this shift reflected the authoritarian inspired change in government.

Nazi propaganda deliberately articulated falsehoods that flooded the lives of everyday Germans. These false narratives would play a crucial role in their quest for power. The efforts of the Nazis in crafting early propaganda were not necessarily complex; in fact, they were rather simplistic. The National Socialist platform acted as a sort of ‘echo chamber’, whereby the targeting of their messaging was dependent upon the collective attitude of the general population at any given time. In other words, propaganda “[made] the state move as one, stirred by emotions that far surpass the evidence for their intensity.”<sup>5</sup> Propaganda under the Third Reich tried to resemble legitimate providers of information. This was accomplished through different means such as portraying propaganda in the form of news or subtly inserting propaganda themes into German culture, such as art, architecture, literature, and film. Since state-produced media was the only legal obtainable means of information in the Third Reich without being openly challenged, this greatly contributed to the legitimacy of its status. However, the reality indicates the presence of an underlying agenda of infecting the German political discourse with information that would

---

<sup>5</sup> Stanley, *How Propaganda Works*, 48.

produce the desired impact. The Nazis used propaganda in order to advance their worldview by ostracizing and vilifying their opposition, whether it political or racial.

Before the Nazis ascended to power in 1933, their propaganda platform was designed to provoke sentiments of discontent and disenfranchisement within Germany. These measures were meant to reach out to Germans even if they were not ardent supporters of National Socialism, Germans who would entertain Nazism as a means of protest against what was perceived as an ineffective government. As a whole, Germans possessed a sense of pragmatism and lack of faith in the strength of their democratic system of governance early in the Weimar period. Despite subsiding briefly in the mid-1920s, these attitudes resumed with the onset of the Great Depression. This was attributed to the fact that the nation had previously been under a strong and consistent, yet undemocratic, leadership of the Kaiser and had not practiced democratic governance in the same manner as other Western geopolitical entities. Negative perceptions of Weimar governance were due to its purported responsibility for defeat in World War I, as its establishment coincided with signing the Versailles treaty. The faith in the government was shaken even further when those in power were deemed incapable of offering solutions to the economic and political woes that befell the German population after 1929. Given the direness of conditions in Germany, these circumstances played directly into the hands of Nazi propagandists. This was highlighted with the stylistic approach of Dr. Joseph Goebbels in particular, who ‘perfected’ the marketing capabilities of Nazi propaganda. “There was a good deal of showmanship and of the American circus à la Barnum in Goebbels’ techniques, but at the same time they were intended to provoke and incite the ‘Marxists’—a convenient label for lumping together the governmental Social-Democrats and the oppositional Communists—to fool them

and to expose their sham.”<sup>6</sup> Early propaganda measures not only exaggerated the blame assigned to specific scapegoats, i.e. Jews and Weimar bureaucrats, but also promised a future Germany under National Socialism that if given the chance, would provide and promote a ‘better’ life for Germans in perpetuity.

This served as ammunition for the propaganda efforts of the Nazis in that the movement did not have to create an artificial situation within the German political discourse in order to benefit its ideological cause. Instead, the Nazis simply used their propaganda in order to forge a singular cohesive argument that was simplified in a manner that all Germans could understand and relate to. Additionally, through the careful orchestration of public displays or selection of party speakers depending on the demographics of their audience, the Nazis were able to prey upon the desires, fears, and prejudices of the German people. This notion was reinforced by Goebbels, who advocated, “that propaganda should be able to talk with different tongues in order to be able to persuade the educated as much as the masses.”<sup>7</sup> The scale of Nazi propaganda was malleable and vague enough to oblige groups within the German population, but cohesive enough to present the façade of political solidarity. The character attributes of the German population were not crafted by the Nazis. Rather, the Nazis took note of what the specificities were and organized their propaganda efforts around them to maximize the opportunity for political advancement. The goal of this singular argument was to weaken and destabilize the democratic government in a manner that would ultimately pave the way for the Nazi acquisition of political power. The Nazis use of propaganda was predicated on gauging the pulse of the German political environment prior to action. This was accomplished through the deliberate

---

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Kohn Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1965), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 28.

timing of propaganda, increasing the likelihood of effectiveness. Nazi propaganda was undoubtedly integral to acquiring and holding political power, but was by no means unchanging. In essence, the deliberate shifting of propaganda efforts aided the Nazis in their quest for compulsory allegiance and governmentally granted legitimacy. Propaganda served as the representation of what the Third Reich aspired to accomplish but fell short. This was reflected in the realization that the expectations of the Nazi state, outlined through propaganda, were significantly higher and seemingly unobtainable when compared to the stark reality that faced the extent of their ambitions.

Unsere letzte Hoffnung:  
The Manipulation of Truth and Consolidation of Nazi  
Power

When launching propaganda, its effectiveness is considered by assessing the political climate and conditions necessary to ensure its success. In the fascist context, the primary function of propaganda is to manipulate truth in order to deceive and delude a populace into blindly pledging allegiance either to a charismatic leader or a singular common narrative narrowly defined and devoid of alternative viewpoints. Propaganda is crafted by the careful selection of half-truths and to prey on fears and biases already held by the intended audience.

The *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) or Nazi Party, was ultimately able to develop and master this skill. This resulted in parliamentary election success in 1932 and the subsequent appointment of Adolf Hitler to the chancellorship in 1933. Comparatively speaking, it was imperative for the NSDAP to employ propaganda in an effort to garner and maintain a sufficient base of support when they were competing for power against other parties in a functioning, if weakened, democracy. “Where Nazi propaganda before 1933 was undoubtedly successful was in persuading large sections of the German people that only a large, powerful, and dynamic anti-Marxist force – the NSDAP – stood a chance of succeeding in the fight against Marxism.”<sup>8</sup> It was paramount for the NSDAP to remain flexible and adaptable in their use of propaganda. The skillful use of propaganda messages and timing benefitted National Socialism, as it highlighted the adaptability of the ideology within the context of shifting governmental structures. The NSDAP was initially a fringe political movement whose prominence waned after a failed coup in 1923, referred to as the Munich Beer Hall Putsch. Once the Nazis consolidated power however, the NSDAP transformed their use of propaganda from simply acquiring voter support and aiding recruitment, to reach beyond the parameters of politics

---

<sup>8</sup> David Welch, *Nazi Propaganda (RLE Nazi Germany & Holocaust): The Power and the Limitations* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 184.

in a manner that transcended the former limitations of electoral purposes. Following the establishment of the Third Reich, it was determined that, “[f]or Goebbels, then, propaganda was to be the oil that lubricated the machinery of the state.”<sup>9</sup> While propaganda after 1933 still marketed the general ‘appeal’ to Nazism, it increasingly acted as an enforcer of Nazi governance, made evident in its coupling with threats of violence. This shift in the focus and function of NSDAP propaganda ultimately expanded with the governmental institutionalization of propaganda beginning in 1933, a major staple of the Third Reich bureaucracy.

In the NSDAP, the definition of propaganda was rather fluid and reflected ideological adaptability, for the purpose of its implementation changed radically following 1933. The Nazis fundamentally used propaganda as a means to an end in order to advance their political agenda and coupled its implementation with episodic incidents of violence. While propaganda was undoubtedly an important tool for the Nazis, it alone was not capable of maintaining accumulated political gains. In essence, violence was the flip side of the same coin, in that propaganda had to be supplemented with bouts of physical intimidation in order to remain effective after 1933. These conditions created an atmosphere of fear whereby the easiest option to avoid confrontation was to abide by the its messaging. This revelation was made evident by Franz Neumann, who had spent time in Nazi Germany, and made observations on the role of propaganda through the acknowledgment of its juxtaposition with political violence as well as its inseparability from Nazi ideology when he remarks,

To prevent the masses from thinking, they must be kept in a permanent state of tension. That is accomplished by propaganda. The ideology is in an unceasing process of change and adaption to the prevailing sentiment of the masses...Propaganda wears out, however, and it wears out all the more rapidly the faster slogans are changed. So it is supplemented by terror. Violence is not

---

<sup>9</sup> Welch, *Nazi Propaganda*, 40.



just one unimportant phenomenon in the structure of National Socialist society; it is the very basis upon which society rests. Violence not only terrorizes but attracts.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to 1933, the propaganda of the NSDAP was used solely for elections and disseminating the Nazi political platform to mobilize significant voter support. This meant that the pre-1933 propaganda practice was used to obtain mainstream credibility as a viable political alternative to the instabilities of the Weimar Republic or to other radical movements. The propaganda of the pre-1933 era was tailored to assist the NSDAP in its quest for political gains and accomplished this end through the systemic targeting of demographics (such as urban versus rural audiences) in its messaging. Early propaganda produced by the Nazis reflected an attempt to capitalize upon the negative ramifications of German defeat in World War I and increased intensity with the onset of the Great Depression as opposed to preaching the ideological aims of their political agenda. The NSDAP used national talking points such as the Versailles Treaty or the collapse of Germany's economy as a means of drawing in individuals by appealing to common emotional sentiments of hopelessness and vindictiveness. The Nazis then used these attitudes to 'enlighten' the German populace of the 'viability' of National Socialism. This approach would only be temporary, for when the NSDAP ascended to power in 1933, the strategy no longer necessitated garnering sufficient voter support. Instead, with propaganda institutionalized, it became an extension of governmental authority. With the increased use of violence under the dictatorship, the role of propaganda permeated the broad realm of media acting as a form of coercion and to an extent, peer pressure, to maintain order under the Third Reich regime.

---

<sup>10</sup> Franz Leopold Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009), 402-3.

After World War I, the political climate of Germany was unstable as a result of Kaiser Wilhelm II's abdication and the forced installation of a democracy that was perceived as weak: the Weimar Republic. As a result, "[f]or reasons good or bad, Germans turned indifferent to the Weimar Republic, but they did not remain inactive or apathetic."<sup>11</sup> Political parties such as the Social Democrats and the Centre Party sought to represent the more moderate inclinations of the German populace in their attempt to establish a democracy. However, political elements considered to be fringe movements took root and manifested in the ideological extremes of the communists and the NSDAP. Initially speaking, the NSDAP was relatively small and was by all accounts an insignificant political movement. This would change: when Hitler joined the Nazi party following his service in World War I and quickly rose through the ranks to attain leadership, the publicity of the NSDAP radically intensified.

Hitler was a profound contributor to the party, because his extremely pervasive points became integrated within the NSDAP political platform. Throughout the 1920s, Hitler was considered by political moderates as nothing more than a rabble-rousing demagogue whose oratorical rhetoric was fanatic and fiery both in content and delivery. NSDAP propaganda placed significant value on the delivery of rhetoric through oratory as opposed to published means. This was a sentiment which remained consistent within the propaganda arsenal well into the Third Reich. Franz Alfred Six, who would become a leading figure in the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) organization, was one of the chief influencers of this logic, and remarked on its overall importance as the lifeblood of the Nazi propaganda machine. Six regularly made these claims and espoused them ironically in published formats. One such remark made by Six was first published in *Die politische Propaganda der NSDAP im Kampf um die Macht* and stated that,

---

<sup>11</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 136.

“The power of oratory is above all a development of the individual’s own forces of will; it is a spiritual-intellectual struggle that involves vanquishing the weaker will of the masses and subordinating it to the influence of one’s own.”<sup>12</sup> Hitler became the face of the NSDAP movement due to his oratorical skills, which were carefully articulated to simplify his talking points as an appeal to all Germans and would often result in a display of enthusiastic emotion from the audience. Hitler would deliver NSDAP rhetoric in a particular fashion. This was best described by author Richard J. Evans when he states,

Often beginning a speech quietly, to capture his audience’s attention, he would gradually build to a climax, his deep, rather hoarse voice would rise in pitch, climbing in a crescendo to a ranting and screaming finale, accompanied by carefully rehearsed dramatic gestures, his face glistening with sweat, his lank, dark hair falling forward over his face as he worked his audience into a frenzy of emotion...He seemed as many who had listened to his early speeches testified, to speak straight from the heart, and to express their own deepest fears and desires.<sup>13</sup>

Hitler prioritized the spoken word over other means of propaganda distribution. The rationale for this was that it allowed for an easier opportunity to appeal directly to the emotions of an audience in a way which the written word could not. Under Hitler’s leadership, the NSDAP echoed the emphasis on oratory over other means of propaganda and utilized this delivery mechanism as the primary means of reaching a German audience.

Despite the heavy emphasis placed on the spoken word, the movement employed other means of propaganda, especially the press. The *Völkischer Beobachter* (VB) was the dominant press propaganda apparatus of the NSDAP but was relegated to specific regions in an effort to allocate finances for production more freely in order to compensate for cities that refused to sign

---

<sup>12</sup> Franz Alfred Six, "The Power of the Spoken Word (1936).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 86.

<sup>13</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 2005), 171.

contracts with the movement. The press power structure and maintaining its effectiveness was delegated to regional leaders or *Gauleiter*. This was due to the lack of means to expand and establish a national propaganda network in the initial stages of the NSDAP movement. On the organization of the Nazi press, author Oron James Hale states, “Before 1933, National Socialist press propaganda was decentralized to the Gau and district areas and their official leaders. Financing of the propaganda organs was likewise a local or regional responsibility. The V-B was the official organ of the party directorate; through it was communicated the party line and news of party action.”<sup>14</sup> While the NSDAP press adequately served the aims of the movement throughout the duration of the pre-1933 era, it always remained subservient to oratorical rhetoric as determined by both Hitler and Goebbels.

While the NSDAP was responsible for a variety of publications in the pre-1933 era, *Der Angriff* was another that emerged in 1927 and was characterized by its rampant inflammatory language. Established under the leadership of Goebbels, *Der Angriff* was rather crude, juxtaposing anti-Semitic rhetoric with anti-Weimar sentiment. Unlike most politically radical press publications of the times, *Der Angriff* was defined by its uncouth accusatory disposition. This was accomplished not by means of systemically laying out the tenets of their ideological platform, but through mobilizing support behind a singular commonality of emotional discontent of the general population. Using his technical skills as a propagandist, Goebbels used *Der Angriff* to prop up Hitler as the incarnation of the party, assisting in fostering the deification of his leadership as Führer. Additionally, political cartoons were implemented within the publication by propaganda artists such as Hans Schweitzer, and were designed for the purpose of reinforcing

---

<sup>14</sup> Oron James Hale, "The Nazi Party Press, 1925-1933.," In *The Captive Press in the Third Reich* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), 39. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0sz5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0sz5).

the popular image of Hitler. Illustrations mixed with the talking points of National Socialism served to benefit the advancement of NSDAP prerogatives and helped place the movement within the mainstream political discourse of Germany. An instance of this within *Der Angriff* was referenced by author Russel Lemmons where he observed that the front cover of, “the 23 April 1928 issue contained a drawing of Hitler, a determined look on his face, with the upraised arms of his followers in the background...Hitler always appeared with a serious countenance, the problems of Germany his constant concern.”<sup>15</sup> The organization of the press masterminded by Goebbels was of great importance to the NSDAP, second only to the prioritization of oratorical rhetoric, and seemingly on par with the profound emphasis placed on other propaganda mediums such as film or radio.

The NSDAP press helped in electoral propaganda, for it possessed the ability to tailor the movement’s message as a means of appealing to varying regions and demographics. The extent of its power and influence however, would profoundly increase. Following Hitler’s consolidation of power in 1933, and under Goebbels leadership, the NSDAP systemically barred rival publications and mandated the creation of a national press under the orchestration of *Gleichschaltung*. This process consisted of coordinating or synchronizing uniformity and subordination to national authority under the doctrine of Nazism. That is not to say the Nazi vision of *Gleichschaltung* was exclusive to the propaganda medium of the press. Over time, the NSDAP would incorporate other means of transmission in order to achieve the ultimate goal of creating a society governed and permeated by the tenets of National Socialism. This measure

---

<sup>15</sup> Russel Lemmons, *Goebbels and Der Angriff* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 53.

was accomplished through means of powerful public displays as well as more subtle assertions in terms of careful articulation and the deliberate regulation of information under the Third Reich.

Hitler aspired to political power, and like Benito Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922, the most ardent followers of the NSDAP would attempt to seize governmental power by force in what would become known as the Beer Hall Putsch held in November 1923. The Beer Hall Putsch ultimately failed and thus damaged the perception of the NSDAP, as Hitler was arrested for treason in its immediate aftermath. During the course of his trial, Hitler utilized his cross-examination for propagandistic purposes as witnessed by Wilfrid Bade: "And Hitler speaks. Speaks for four and a half hours. The courtroom sinks, the court sinks, the walls sink—only one man is left standing and hundreds of thousands listening—millions—this man is not the accused, by God, he is an inexorable accuser, and his sentences burn like flames."<sup>16</sup>

Hitler's trial was comprised of absolute and fanatic claims that legitimized his treasonous actions as no worse than those of the alleged traitors in 1918 who forced German surrender. He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to five years in Landsberg Prison, but was eligible for parole within nine months. It was within the walls of prison that Hitler dictated *Mein Kampf*. Some of the rhetoric within the title reflected Hitler's own ideas regarding propaganda for the NSDAP movement as well as its subject matter and application. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler recognized the role propaganda played during World War I and understood that it was to be used as a political weapon given that popular support was vital to the legitimization of Nazism. When describing the measures of implementing propaganda and maximizing its effectivity, Hitler remarked, "Propaganda must be adjusted to the broad masses in content and in form, and its

---

<sup>16</sup> Wilfrid Bade, "The Hitler Trial (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 27.

soundness is to be measured exclusively by its effective result.”<sup>17</sup> The new plan for the NSDAP was simple: subside overtly antagonistic political agitation, and fundamentally alter the image of the movement from an agenda driven by radical overthrow in order to restore the movement as a viable political platform capable of garnering sufficient voter support through a relentless propaganda campaign. The treasonous acts of the NSDAP were propagandized in a manner that bolstered Hitler’s eventual support. In essence, “By accepting full responsibility for the putsch at his trial in February, while the conservative and army leaders denied having anything to do with it, Hitler created the myth of the sole responsibility of the NSDAP and thereby became a hero to the völkisch extremists.”<sup>18</sup>

While there were concerted efforts to establish Nazi propaganda at the outset of the movement, the failed Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 ultimately served as a crucial turning point. In the immediate aftermath, both the coup and subsequent trial provided the Nazis with unprecedented coverage, and served as a mechanism of ‘free press’ both in terms of their ideological platform as well as the symbolic elements that marketed their movement on a broader scale, such as the swastika iconography. It also elevated the status of Hitler in particular as well, granting him with national coverage. This development martyred the early supporters of the NSDAP movement and gave them recognition that, as far as the Nazis were concerned, represented a crucial point within the German historical narrative. For example, following the events of the 1923 putsch, future swastika banners were met with a consecration ritual that used the original banner stained

---

<sup>17</sup> Adolf Hitler and Abraham H. Foxman, *Mein Kampf*, Translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 342.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremy Noakes, "Conflict and Development in the NSDAP 1924-1927.," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 4, 1966, 34. [www.jstor.org/stable/259890](http://www.jstor.org/stable/259890).

with the blood of those who fell in the name of the NSDAP cause.<sup>19</sup> Measures such as this were of great importance to the development of NSDAP propaganda endeavors in these sense that, it ‘canonized’ the movement’s early struggle and streamlined it with the mutual feelings of resentment held by Germans on a national scale. Additionally, while these gestures were capable of producing profound imagery for propaganda, these procedures were geared more towards symbolism, similar to that of an advertising capacity rather than reflecting substantive content. In essence, “[t]he idea of not only creating an instant classic but putting it to immediate mythological use shows the Nazis’ canny understanding of how to conflate marketing and magic.”<sup>20</sup> This overt symbolism would prove to be a great value within the Nazi propaganda arsenal, as the NSDAP would later make numerous references that harked back to the days of the *Kampfzeit* with nostalgia. Additionally, the debacle in Munich provided the NSDAP with a ‘trial run’ to assess the strength of the Weimar government, and determine the degree of public support for a revolutionary overthrow. This was a lesson for future propaganda endeavors of the NSDAP, as future messaging would be centered around the necessity of advocating civil engagement by electing Nazis to the Reichstag as opposed to promoting violence and chaos in the streets. The takeaway from the failed Munich Putsch was that it ultimately forced the NSDAP to clean up their image and refine the party platform as a whole.

The Munich Beer Hall Putsch granted the NSDAP unprecedented media coverage and provided the opportunity to spin the narrative for its own justification. Additionally, this failed attempt to overthrow the government presented the Nazi agitators with a cause that marketed

---

<sup>19</sup> “1934 Reichsparteitag, Nuremberg,” *Triumph des Willens*, Directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum), Film, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562205>

<sup>20</sup> Tim Blackmore, *Gorgeous War: The Branding War Between the Third Reich and the United States* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2019), 93.



itself as righteous by virtue and acting in the interests of the German people. This was accomplished through the depiction of its participants as common *Volk* who attempted to better the lives of everyday Germans by fostering a degree of national unity under National Socialism. As far as the NSDAP was concerned, the result of the movement's failure hardened the resolve to advance its ideological platform on a national scale. In essence, "[i]t was only the catastrophe of the year 1923 that forced the National Socialist movement to sink its roots so deep in the soil of the German empire that it could survive even the severest storm."<sup>21</sup> With this development, the Nazis were aiming to receive sympathy from the German public, and they did so through the mythologization of its martyrs and their subsequent propagandization. Additionally, the NSDAP championed themselves as the self-proclaimed defenders of German sovereignty against communism and the incompetence of Weimar. This assisted in acquiring the support of individuals who were not necessarily on board with the Nazi platform but were either vehemently disgusted with the communist agenda or fed up with the shortcomings of a weak democratic structure. This gave the NSDAP the necessary ammunition to produce a compelling propaganda narrative appealing to the emotional state of the average German, portraying the ideology of National Socialism as a cure-all.

Upon leaving prison, Hitler possessed the keen understanding that if the NSDAP was to gain political prominence, the previous agenda of staging a revolutionary coup against Weimar would no longer be feasible. Instead, the NSDAP would have to game the political structure of Weimar democracy in order to win elections. The entirety of propaganda production would be geared towards assaulting the governing structure of the Weimar Republic. The reasoning for

---

<sup>21</sup> Walter Frank, "On the History of National Socialism (1939).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 40.

such a maneuver lay in the fact that Weimar Germany “was vulnerable because many did not accept its legitimacy, and because it was there: it stood in the way of Nazi power.”<sup>22</sup> Once political power was attained, the NSDAP could orchestrate the demise of Weimar German democracy and reshape it into a model reflecting both the party platform of the NSDAP and the racially motivated goals outlined within *Mein Kampf*. Hitler in the late 1920s and early 1930s promoted the interests of the NSDAP through propagandistic endeavors that were deemed necessary if the party was to recover from the failed Beer Hall Putsch. The attention Hitler had attained as a result of the unsuccessful coup and subsequent trial helped with name recognition and publicity. These developments were initially not enough, however, despite the notion that politics were severely fractured in the Weimar Republic.

The conditions of Weimar Germany from 1924-29 temporarily reduced political and economic hardships that ultimately reduced the necessity for extreme parties like the NSDAP. Additionally, some of the NSDAP activities were either barred or severely limited which required the leaders of the movement to tread carefully as to not jeopardize future political gains or run the risk of falling into absolute obscurity. Despite Hitler’s relatively early release from prison after nine months of serving his sentence, “[h]e was not allowed to speak in public in most parts of Germany until 1927; he was still banned in Prussia, which covered over half the Weimar Republic’s land surface and contained the majority of its population, as late as 1928.”<sup>23</sup> The NSDAP had to fundamentally reorient the goals of the movement, resolve internal divisions brought about by the individual agendas of its leaders in Hitler’s absence, and alter its methods

---

<sup>22</sup> Nicholas O’Shaughnessy, *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2016), 28.

<sup>23</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 201.

to achieve political prominence. This was to be accomplished by means of solidifying the movement behind one man, one Führer: Hitler.

There was some resistance within the NSDAP movement to this tactical shift, namely from the paramilitary *Sturmabteilung* (SA). These brownshirt thugs led by Ernst Röhm, were still hellbent on political agitation and revolutionary overthrow, despite the outcome of the putsch failure and Hitler's shift in marketing the Nazi platform. Such attitudes would prove to be liabilities for the Nazis later, as Röhm amongst others, were taken out in 1934 during an event called the 'Night of the Long Knives' in order to remove dissidents from within the Nazi movement. Despite the stubbornness of SA leadership to adopt change, the presence of the organization and their practice of street politics through violence assisted in propagandizing National Socialism within the general political discourse while simultaneously intimidating rival political parties. This aided the branding of the Nazi image for "[t]he brownshirts were introduced nationwide in 1926 and soon became the most notorious National Socialist symbol of recognition after the swastika."<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the propaganda developments undertaken by the NSDAP represented a stark contrast from the early 1920s, when Hitler directed his demagoguery exclusively to fanatic zealots. These changes altered the focus of the movement to encompass broader propaganda messaging, targeting centrists and attitudes of political apathy, in order to widen the base of Nazi support. Certain themes within this propaganda shift were significantly curtailed, such as anti-Semitism, and were recast in a manner "[t]hat meant primarily appeals to small businessmen, shop clerks, and the rural population, with a primary content of anti-Marxism plus attacks on the economic policies of the Weimar Republic."<sup>25</sup> While there were several

---

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Siemens, *Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 41.

<sup>25</sup> William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945* (Brattleboro, Vermont: Echo Books and Media Publishing, 2014), 29.

experiments underway testing the effectiveness of other propaganda transmission mediums, the use of speeches remained as the primary driving mechanism of the NSDAP. This was owed in large part to Hitler's personal aspirations as head of the movement as well as his speaking abilities to articulate 'selling points' for the party platform.

The Nazis changed significant aspects of their propaganda after 1933. One of the most prevalent examples of this phenomenon was how the NSDAP approached their vehement anti-Semitic tendencies as a major component of their ideological platform while resisting blowback from the established government. Before 1933, there was an attempt, albeit halfhearted, to limit the pejorative terminology toward Jewish individuals, replacing it with euphemisms. This was particularly evident following the lift on Hitler's ban from public speaking. The lack of initially overt anti-Semitic rhetoric was not only done for the benefit of political moderates; rather it was the leadership of the NSDAP cautiously navigating the political atmosphere following the disastrous results associated with the failed 1923 putsch. In addition, it was not to the NSDAP benefit to promote rabid anti-Semitic rhetoric for the sake of ideological advancement. What had essentially occurred was, where anti-Semitism was once an openly discussed tenet of the NSDAP with a certain degree of veracity, the late 1920s up to 1933 was dominated by hushed tones of anti-Semitic rhetoric. This reflected a crucial point in the propaganda shift of the Nazis. While anti-Semitism was not entirely removed from the NSDAP platform, as it was a defining characteristic, it had to be curtailed in order not to be overtly antagonistic. This turn of events was best summarized when Evans states,

Antisemitism, so prominent in Nazi propaganda in the 1920s, took a back seat, and had little influence in winning the Nazis support in the elections of the early 1930s. More important by far was the image the Party projected on the street,

where the marching columns of stormtroopers added to the general image of disciplined vigour and determination that Goebbels sought to project.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, the Nazis recognized the present bias within German society against the Jewish population, and capitalized upon it early on. However, it did not assist in granting the movement with the political gains it so desperately craved.

The 1925 elections were a crucial point in the evolution of the NSDAP. While the Nazis did not put up their own candidate, the movement recognized that a great deal of potential voter support lay within the demographic of those who voted for Paul von Hindenburg. The ideological alignment of Hindenburg's voter bloc was a combination of moderate to conservative leaning. Furthermore, the commonality of Hindenburg's constituents with the Nazi platform is that both possessed sentiments of nationalism and a vehement fear of communism. Those who had voted for Hindenburg in 1925 were not adamant Nazi supporters, but by 1929-30 saw the platform as the lesser of two evils and capable of serving as a stable constant in the midst of economic uncertainty and a bulwark against the threat of communism. This was made evident under the presumption that even if a significant bloc of this voter support could not be 'converted' to National Socialism, the propagandistic endeavors of the movement could capitalize on the collective attitude of disenfranchisement, therefore garnering votes placed as a result of protest rather than ardent support. Thus when Hitler came to enter the political fray as a presidential candidate in 1932, "[d]rawing on the same forces, Nazism appeared to be a basically counterrevolutionary force that owed its energy to 'time-honored nationalist-conservative and even monarchist ideas,' as Martin Broszat put it, even if the movement made necessary concessions to the format and rhetoric of mass politics."<sup>27</sup> The 1925 elections served as a sort of

---

<sup>26</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 448-49.

<sup>27</sup> Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 163.

bellwether indicating the atmosphere of discontent in Germany that would factor into the future trajectory of Nazi electoral successes in the 1930 and 1932 elections. This was due in large part to the unresolved attitudes of resentment that were heightened following the Great Depression and the emergence of a commonplace belief that a vote for Hitler was an act of defiance against the perceived incompetence of the Weimar government.

Hitler was a major selling point of the NSDAP image. As a public speaker he recognized the necessity to balance the ferocious rhetorical style that had successfully drawn in the earliest supporters of the Nazis with a palatable message that was marketable to political moderates. The appearance of Hitler promoted strength for the propaganda purposes of the NSDAP given his disposition to wear military inspired uniforms and nature of political proceedings. However, this image was mostly attributed to Hitler's mechanisms of delivery as an orator and the 'theatricality' of his simplified articulation. However, Hitler's propaganda by the NSDAP was not solely attributed to his oratorical skills. What made Hitler of great value to the Nazi party was his cult of personality capable of transcending social class and political affiliation in order to unify all Germans. In essence,

Before the Beer Hall Putsch, individual party members worshipped their leader to varying degrees, but between 1926 and 1928 devotion was institutionalised...Nazi propaganda became obsessed with popularising the Führer cult and ensuring that it spread to the smallest party chapter. Among the most effective pieces of propaganda were Heinrich Hoffman's first photographic brochures, "Germany's Awakening in Word and Image," from 1924 and 1926. They reinforced Hitler's quasi-religious aura as a man who had emerged from the people and who was preaching the gospel of love for the fatherland.<sup>28</sup>

Hitler served as the centerpiece for the NSDAP in the sense that, "[t]he conscious build-up of the 'Führer myth' in the years following the refoundation of the Party had the clear function of

---

<sup>28</sup> Volker Ullrich and Jefferson Chase, *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939* (New York: Knopf, 2016), 207-08.

compensating for the lack of ideological unity and clarity within the different factions of the Nazi Movement.”<sup>29</sup> There was immense propaganda value in the creation of a ‘Führer cult’ that would remain a cornerstone of the Third Reich, and was carefully maintained through a barrage of material created to deify Hitler.

While there was a great sense of adulation espoused by devout Nazis, this spectacle also enhanced Hitler’s popularity across the board. This was due in part to the proliferation of propaganda by political opposition, who desired to use the notion of Hitler as Führer as a weapon against the NSDAP. This revelation was made evident in propaganda produced by communists and socialists who emphasized that, “Hitler in power...would inevitably mean poverty, repression, untold misery, and ultimately war.”<sup>30</sup> While this sentiment permeated the political environment in an attempt to steal wind from the sails of the NSDAP, the coverage granted Hitler with greater opportunities for publicity, which significantly contributed to the growing coverage of Nazi propaganda.

One of the first major objectives of the NSDAP was to grow beyond being a solely regional political entity, and branch outwards to forge a national movement that would be recognizable by all Germans, capable of adequately competing with other parties. The new strategy of the NSDAP reflected the necessary measures that had to be taken to reach beyond the limitations of regional politics. As author Peter D. Stachura states,

Some progress towards diluting the predominantly Bavarian characteristics of the party had been made in 1924-25 in northwest and northern Germany by Gregor Strasser and others, and despite the changes in organizational methods and

---

<sup>29</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 26.

<sup>30</sup> Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth,"* 32.

propaganda priorities during the later 1920s, the NSDAP's focal point became increasingly located in northern, central and eastern parts of the country.<sup>31</sup>

The ascension of the NSDAP movement provided ample means for articulating their propaganda in order to appeal to various demographic groups. Such measures were designated to exponentially increase membership to the NSDAP and expand upon a devout base of followers who would in turn serve as reliable voters. The NSDAP sought to address the various spheres of German life and utilize the weak foundation of the Weimar Republic for propagandistic purposes. This is not to say that the NSDAP sacrificed key planks of their platform for the sake of appealing to the masses. As Stachura states, "The party did not any time before 1933 abandon any of the principal components of its ideological makeup: socialism, anti-capitalism, nationalism, anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism all continued to be part of its appeal. What did change was the emphasis on these elements, which in turn produced shifts in strategy."<sup>32</sup>

The development of these propaganda mechanisms aided the elimination of internal divisions within the movement through expressing the will of Hitler as undisputed leader of the Nazis, and simultaneously, consolidated the political right under the banner of the NSDAP. The justification for this shift was that it would solidify a guaranteed base of voter support for the NSDAP. This was made possible given that those who already supported the fractured political right would be more easily persuaded to vote for the NSDAP as opposed to proponents of the opposite ideological extreme manifested in the communists. Portraying the communists as a national threat made it so that, "National Socialist Propaganda could induce voters to switch to the NSDAP...Conducting its campaign propaganda with an extremely high intensity, the

---

<sup>31</sup> Peter D. Stachura, "The Political Strategy of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933.," *German Studies Review* 3, no. 2, 1980, 269. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1429723>.

<sup>32</sup> Stachura, "The Political Strategy of the Nazi Party.," 274.



NSDAP succeeded in improving its image in the nationalistic part of the electorate.”<sup>33</sup> The alteration of the NSDAP propaganda efforts from a case-by-case regional focus to a uniform platform resulted in widespread recognition by German voters. This was attributed in part to the development which consolidated the political right behind the NSDAP. Building upon this original revelation allowed for a precise propaganda focus on regions that possessed ideological inclinations similar to the NSDAP movement.

The prejudices of the NSDAP movement were altered in order to appeal to a more mainstream political audience, but were not absent from electoral propaganda. The NSDAP had to be cautious when crafting propaganda that identified political opponents and exposed their weaknesses, as being overly bombastic would run the risk of portraying the movement as extremist after the debacle of 1923. However, it had to be articulated in a manner that presented the NSDAP as a stable constant in a democracy that was plagued by ineffective governance and partisan fracturing. Between the political extremes of the NSDAP and communism at play in Weimar politics, those who were considered ideologically moderate possessed both a vehement hatred and legitimate fear of communism. While communism was a political phenomenon occurring within Europe during the interwar period, German fears were chiefly attributed to the violent revolution of 1917 in Russia that overthrew the Tsarist regime and replaced it with the birth of the Soviet Union. It was because of resounding success in an undeniably violent revolution, that those categorized as politically moderate believed that the communists were a more prevalent threat to the existence of Weimar Germany than that of the NSDAP.

---

<sup>33</sup> Dieter Ohr, "Political Meetings of the National Socialists and the Increase of the NSDAP Vote: Analyzing Conditions of Propaganda Effects with Aggregate Data.," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 22, no. 1, 81, 1997, 54. [www.jstor.org/stable/20756115](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20756115).

This would come to benefit NSDAP propaganda efforts, particularly in recruiting followers to the movement. A major component of this propaganda centered on juxtaposing the fear of Bolshevik communism with anti-Semitic rhetoric. Contrasting the political differences between the NSDAP and the communists as well as the perceived threat that they posed to Germany as a nation following the Nazi ascension to power, Goebbels stated in a speech delivered in 1935 that

National Socialism would give the lead in a new concept and shaping of European civilization. But the Bolsheviks carry on a campaign, directed by the Jews, with the international underworld, against culture as such. Bolshevism is not merely anti-bourgeois; it is against human civilization itself. In its final consequences it signifies the destruction of all the commercial, social, political and cultural achievements of Western Europe, in favor of a deracinated and nomadic international cabal that has found its representation in Judaism.<sup>34</sup>

From NSDAP's early propaganda rhetoric and the publication of *Mein Kampf*, it was no secret that Hitler and the political platform he represented held significant disdain for both Jews and communists. However, there was a certain degree of restraint exhibited by the NSDAP, for despite the harshness of language directed at these groups, the extent of Hitler's plans for these individuals was not clear in electoral propaganda, only appearing in early NSDAP rhetoric and as turgid rantings within the pages of *Mein Kampf*. While anti-Semitism was inarguably a prevalent aspect of the NSDAP political platform, the issue was not as highly prioritized as one might suspect. Instead, electoral propaganda had the tendency to harp upon commonalities of German discontent concerning ineffective Weimar governance, grievances against Versailles, and overall weakness of the democratic system. The extent of anti-Semitism expressed by the NSDAP was nothing necessarily new in Germany, as there was already the presence of a historic

---

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "Communism with the Mask Off (1935).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 128.

bias against the Jewish populace that was further oversimplified and magnified under the talking points of the National Socialist platform.

Another propaganda target was the different socioeconomic classes, namely the distinction between urban and rural Germans, and unifying the German population under the banner of the NSDAP. With regards to the urban population, most of the propaganda either affirmed that the movement was the only solution capable of providing stability or of resisting the communists. As a result, in the late 1920s the rural population was lower on the propaganda priority list of the NSDAP for the time being, despite having been affected more profoundly from the aftermath of World War I and the insufficient governance of the Weimar Republic than that of the urban population. This prioritization was attributed to the notion that urban centers within Germany reflected a denser concentration of voting bases which were more competitive. This was due to the prevalence of opposition parties such as the Social Democrats or the communists and did not constitute much of a threat to the Nazis in more rural areas. While this does not necessarily mean that the Nazis disregarded the voice of Germany's rural demographic, it did not carry as much weight from areas with higher population densities.

Yet if the NSDAP was to solidify a broad base of support, a propaganda solution would have to be designed in order to appeal to the rural population. Despite the fact that, "[s]ince the party lacked an official agricultural program until 1930, Nazi spokesmen presented a heterogenous mass of themes and solutions ranging from a call for land reform and the division of large estates for the benefit of small and middle-sized farmers to a demand for cheap fertilizer."<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of rural Germans in the propaganda targeting of the NSDAP proved to

---

<sup>35</sup> Johnpeter Horst Grill, "The Nazi Party's Rural Propaganda before 1928.," *Central European History* 15, no. 2, 1982, 155. [www.jstor.org/stable/4545955](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4545955).

be a resoundingly useful asset in the movement's quest to expand influence into other categories of German voters undervalued by other political parties. (Figure 1) Employing propaganda designed to unify ethnic Germans was ultimately successful in spurring an attitude of camaraderie under the banner of the NSDAP in the sense that,

More convincingly than other right-wing groups, the Nazis welcomed participants from all social classes, especially workers. Moreover, the growing cadre of National Socialist speakers made themselves expert in the most local farm or tax issues as they traveled around the countryside and demonstrated an ability to discuss bread-and-butter issues with just about anybody, a tactic designed not so much to better represent material interests but to win credibility as ordinary fellows who understood the proverbial 'man on the street.'<sup>36</sup>

The phenomenon of targeted propaganda specifically tailored to individual regions was key. Such tactics used to maneuver through this dilemma demonstrated how the Nazis were capable of using such methods in order to spur their emergence as a nationally recognized movement. However, no event would offer more propagandistic opportunity for the NSDAP than with the onset of the Great Depression. The movement would ultimately reap the benefits from elections held in 1930 and 1932 as a result of the propaganda efforts endeavored upon since Hitler's release from prison.

When the American stock market crashed in 1929, the economic repercussions were particularly unforgiving in Germany. "The depression between 1929 and 1932 was characterised by a sharp fall in prices, particularly agricultural prices, very high levels of unemployment and business failure, a sharp and sustained fall in investment activity of all kinds and a fall in government spending faster than that of national income."<sup>37</sup> Despite previous attempts to reorient Germany's future, the German economy went off the rails and continued to spiral downward due

---

<sup>36</sup> Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 193.

<sup>37</sup> Richard James Overy, *The Nazi Economic Recovery 1932-1938*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13-14.

to hyperinflation. The political structure of the Weimar Republic offered no solutions to the crisis, as the parties within the Reichstag remained splintered. Because of the multitude of parties participating in the Weimar democracy, too many competing political agendas hindered progress that could have otherwise alleviated the situation, and the lack of a definite majority stifled attempts to resolve the crisis. This crisis ultimately became a breeding ground for political extremism, as the German populace was willing to accept extreme solutions to their woes, as many were unemployed and possessed no means of acquiring basic amenities necessary for survival.

The downturn of the German economy and failure of recovery plans designed to prevent such an outcome expanded the base of NSDAP support and was beneficial in the sense that, “[u]nlike the Weimar parties which tended to represent clearly defined clusters of socially homogenous groups, whether entrepreneurs or *Arbeitnehmer*, blue or white collar workers, Protestants or Catholics, the pre depression NSDAP had transcended these basic lines of socioeconomic and religious cleavage around which the German party system had developed.”<sup>38</sup> Even though the NSDAP had achieved significant progress in their propaganda efforts to increase the size of their membership, it was with the Great Depression that the NSDAP would exponentially widen their base. This economic travesty would provide the necessary ammunition to the Nazis that would radically intensify the extent of NSDAP appeal to even the most politically indifferent individuals within German society.

While the NSDAP seized the opportunity to increase overall membership, the communists intensified their propaganda efforts as well as the degree of violence at NSDAP

---

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Childers, "The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote.," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4, 1976, 25. [www.jstor.org/stable/260190](http://www.jstor.org/stable/260190).

meetings and rallies. The NSDAP had developed a solution to deal with the increasing prevalence of this issue. Despite the initial resistance to the shift in the NSDAP focus following the failed Putsch, the SA brownshirts continued to remain the foot soldiers of the movement and would frequently engage communist aggressors in street fighting. Engaging with the communists served to bolster the propaganda efforts of the NSDAP given that it viewed itself as a political movement of force willing to stand and fight against ideological opponents. Combatting communists both at the ballot box and in the street was seen by the Nazis as not only a necessary measure, but one to be encouraged. It was the commonplace belief amongst the Nazi ranks that, “[t]he National Socialist idea is the antithesis of Marxism; the National Socialist movement is thus created for the express purpose of defeating the enemy...If it were ever to win over the masses by carrying out propaganda campaigns, it has to go head-to-head with the Marxist masses who were prepared to defend their dominance on the streets by any means necessary.”<sup>39</sup> There is a distinction, however, between those who voted in favor of the NSDAP as a means of protesting the Weimar government or out of communist fears, and those who willingly took up arms and resorted to violence as a means of protecting the movement from ideological adversaries.

Nevertheless, the propagandistic notion which united all recent followers of the NSDAP was the shared hatred of communism due to the threat it posed in an unstable Weimar democracy whose foundation was further weakened by the Great Depression. Supporters of National Socialism were united through the commonality that, “Nazi joiners thus came mainly from the local bourgeoisie, a shifting ideological community of classes and strata precariously united by antisocialist sentiment.”<sup>40</sup> The theme of uniting Germans behind the singular platform of the

---

<sup>39</sup> Franz Alfred Six, “The Propaganda of the Street and the Masses (1936).,” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 82.

<sup>40</sup> Rudy Koshar, “From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany.,” *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 1, 1987, 9. [www.jstor.org/stable/1880375](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1880375).

NSDAP against the backdrop of the Great Depression, along with vehement anti-communist sentiments, would come to dominate the propaganda produced by the movement. The usefulness of this propagandistic endeavor would be put to the test with the Nazis' attempt to produce profound electoral successes in the 1930 and 1932 Reichstag elections.

The NSDAP had to make a loud entrance into the political arena if the movement was to remain politically competitive and viable. The Reichstag elections of 1930 and 1932 presented the NSDAP with an opportunity to utilize the inefficiencies of the Weimar Republic to their advantage. This was another significant turning point in Nazi propaganda. Its new aim was to infect the democratic proceedings with notions of totalitarianism that promised to eliminate the chaos and depravity brought upon the German nation by the Great Depression. As Evans states,

Hitler and his Party offered a vague but powerful rhetorical vision of a Germany united and strong, a movement that transcended social boundaries and overcame social conflict, a racial community of all Germans working together, a new Reich that would rebuild Germany's economic strength and restore the nation to its rightful place in the world. This was a message that had a powerful appeal to many who looked nostalgically back to the Reich created by Bismarck, and dreamed of a new leader who would resurrect Germany's lost glory. It was a message that summed up everything that many people felt was wrong with the Republic, and gave them the opportunity to register the profundity of their disillusion with it by voting for a movement that was its opposite in every respect. Below this very general level, the Nazi propaganda apparatus skillfully targeted specific groups in the German electorate, giving campaigners training in addressing different kinds of audience, advertising meetings extensively in advance, providing topics for particular venues and picking the speaker to suit the occasion.<sup>41</sup>

The propaganda produced by the NSDAP for the 1930 and 1932 Reichstag elections reflected the shift of the movement from the pre-1923 revolutionary-driven agenda and transcended the audiences beyond those who qualified as the political right. Such measures of Nazi propaganda

---

<sup>41</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 257.

sought to encompass anyone who had been disenfranchised by the Weimar Republic and were fed up with their feeble attempts to stabilize the economic downturn. The overarching theme of this propaganda was to depict Hitler as the ‘savior’ of German glory and the ‘restorer’ of German honor who, with the help of the NSDAP movement, would bring about the end of hardships.

The propaganda efforts were far reaching and highly mobilized for the sake of the 1930 elections, primarily due to Goebbels’ appointment to lead the propaganda campaign. This marked yet another dramatic turning point in the trajectory of NSDAP propaganda. The extent of its messaging as well as its purpose were now reorganized under Goebbels, who had a clear vision for the functionality and importance of propaganda moving forward. This vision would be the foundational groundwork for the establishment of a propaganda apparatus to be protected under the government, and would be granted the same legitimacy as any other bureaucratic institution. For the time being, as far as Goebbels was concerned, the primary function of electoral propaganda was, “not to discover a theory or to develop a program, but rather to translate that theory and program into the language of the people, to make them comprehensible to the broad masses of the people.”<sup>42</sup> Profound propaganda imagery appeared in the form of posters, either depicting the strength of the NSDAP or the conditions of depravity witnessed by the German people firsthand. An example of this was displayed in a poster portraying the weakness and hopelessness of German society and relaying the message that voting for Hitler would bring about the end of German suffering and the rebirth of German pride.(Figure 2) The NSDAP often portrayed the political movement in a ‘savior’ capacity through contrasting the

---

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Goebbels, *Wille Und Weg*, 1931, pp. 2-5. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/wille.htm>.



bleak conditions and sentiments of disenfranchisement and hopelessness with the prospect of a 'prosperous' future portraying a sense of renewed national pride.

Additionally, NSDAP posters would attempt to showcase opportunities for everyday Germans that would be made possible if they joined the Nazi movement, such as political liberation from Weimar bureaucrats emerging beneath the shackles of 'oppression.' (Figure 3) These illustrations were hyperbolic, and spared nothing in depicting what the NSDAP idolized to what they believed was an ideal German: the Aryan. Some of these depictions would also illustrate a future of better living conditions under a government determined by the NSDAP through promises of employment and foodstuffs for families struggling under the Great Depression.<sup>43</sup> (Figure 4) While traditional means of propaganda were held in high regard such as speeches, posters, mass gatherings, or publications, the NSDAP had another tool in their arsenal to broaden their chances within the 1930 election onwards: film.

On the intrinsic propaganda value of the film medium, author William G. Chrystal states, "[s]till pictures or motion pictures could be selected, edited or even falsified to present a semblance of reality, thereby presenting an idea to the viewer with more force than any pamphlet or book."<sup>44</sup> Despite the relatively recent introduction of film to the NSDAP compendium, film would come to play a pivotal role in the 1930 and 1932 elections, and would remain a cornerstone of propaganda usage throughout the duration of the Third Reich. The NSDAP film propaganda produced during the 1930 and 1932 elections blossomed under the Third Reich as

---

<sup>43</sup> It is important to note however, that while Hitler was undoubtedly a central rallying figure, there are not many posters depicting Hitler exclusively prior to 1933. While there are several posters illustrating Hitler's presidential campaign, Hitler does not evidently emerge as a prevalent subject of propaganda imagery until after 1933, once the Nazis consolidated political power. While Hitler was a central component to the ascension of the Nazi platform, propaganda involving him was either in the form of speech audio or photographs rather than poster illustrations.

<sup>44</sup> William G. Chrystal, "Nazi Party Election Films, 1927-1938.," *Cinema Journal* 15, no. 1, 1975, 29-30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1225103>.

large quantities had already been manufactured, and was energized as a result of new projects underway. Despite the grandiose spectacle that many of these films possessed, their prominence was second to other mediums of the press, newsreels, and radio. This is attributed to the fact that, with the exception of a few specific instances, film was reserved mostly for the purposes of entertainment as opposed to blatant indoctrination.<sup>45</sup> That said, when film was used in order to disseminate the ideological message of the party platform, this propaganda succinctly addressed what was wrong with German life in an attempt to manipulate the greatest number of individuals into pawns for the sake of acquiring political power.

Despite Hitler's failed run for the role of Reich president against the incumbent Hindenburg, the NSDAP achieved resounding electoral success within the chambers of the Reichstag. The NSDAP's tireless propaganda endeavors had paid off, and were reflected within the election results of 1930 and 1932. The NSDAP movement had acquired a significant quantity of seats, 230 out of 608, not a majority but the largest party in the Reichstag, capable of paralyzing Weimar democratic legal proceedings with their prevalent increase in representation.<sup>46</sup> While the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda played a role in strengthening the NSDAP platform, its efforts to profoundly divide and weaken the political opposition was the primary factor. The Nazis were responsible for contributing to the chaotic political environment before 1933 due to their employment of rhetorical antagonization as well as ideologically-motivated street violence. The Nazis would alternate between their use of propaganda and violence given that the application of either was dependent on the conditions of the moment. Nevertheless, both played a significant role in determining the outcome of elections. As far as

---

<sup>45</sup> Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 57.

<sup>46</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 293.

the Nazis were concerned, the movement was beginning to reap the benefits of its tireless campaigning. Acknowledging the status of the political climate in Germany, the NSDAP expressed the sentiment that,

Let us be honest with ourselves. The road is free and open, but our main enemy has done unexpectedly well in resisting the National Socialist advance. We have certainly succeeded in fragmenting the Marxist front and in winning a large number of former Marxists for our worldview. The Social Democrats are fighting desperately for their survival, and thanks to National Socialist educational work, hundreds of thousands, even millions of people, who once were firm supporters of the Marxist nonsense are beginning to waver.<sup>47</sup>

The electorate gains of the NSDAP presented a legitimate threat to the stability of the Weimar Republic. The primary attribute of the NSDAP propaganda machine was their self-proclaimed image and reputation of representing more than simply a political party, but an all-encompassing movement. The distinction between both was that while political parties were limited to serving as representations of their defining ideological tenets, a movement was seen as a more unifying force, capable of answering not only political concerns but offering a 'vision' for the future that it aspired to accomplish. The imagery that accompanied NSDAP propaganda served in a symbolic capacity for the movement and distinguished them from political opponents as a strong centralized force rallying around the leadership of Hitler.

Hitler was depicted within NSDAP propaganda as not only the Führer of the NSDAP, but the Führer of Germany seeking to establish political unity and restore German strength in an environment racked with uncertainty and desperation. With the NSDAP as the largest party in the Reichstag, Hitler possessed the capacity to issue directives to the movement in order to stifle

---

<sup>47</sup> Fritz Oerter, "Our Speakers in the Anti-Marxist Struggle: The Balance of an Election Year (1932).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 31-32.

the attempts of progress made by other parties in the Weimar Republic. Unfortunately for Hitler, his loss to Hindenburg suggested that unless the NSDAP could maintain momentum their support would deteriorate, and their ideological opponents would take advantage of this weakness. As a result, Hitler recognized that the propaganda machine which organized his presidential campaign and elevated the NSDAP to the highest attained electoral gains on record, could not permanently sustain the means of propaganda production independently. In other words, the sustainability of propaganda was contingent on the funding provided at the regional level as well as maintaining relevance within the media and by extension, political discourse. This meant that immediate action would be required of the NSDAP in order to succeed in their goal of dismantling the Weimar democracy in favor of a strong centralized government under the autocratic leadership of Hitler as Führer. The position that Hitler now aspired to secure was the chancellorship, for he would accept nothing less.

Recognizing the threat that the NSDAP posed to the foundational structure of the Weimar government, Hindenburg came under pressure from the leaders of other political movements to appoint Hitler to the position of chancellor. As long as the NSDAP remained the largest party in the Reichstag, and Hitler continued to operate freely outside of the parameters of government office, the NSDAP could stifle legislative progress if Hitler did not get what he wanted. If Hitler was granted the opportunity to become chancellor, then the other political leaders outside of the NSDAP movement within the Weimar Republic could control him with relative ease.

Hindenburg recognized the direness of the situation, given the possibility that reluctance to appease Hitler could prolong the continual suffering of Germans. Eventually, after immense pressure and with no other viable alternatives, Hindenburg appointed Hitler to the position of chancellor on January 30, 1933. The event immediately became a celebratory affair as the

NSDAP propagandized this achievement by attributing it to the success of their movement. This point was reiterated in a radio address by Hermann Göring that same night. Within the address, Göring proclaimed,

As I stand here at the microphone, hundred of thousands of people are thronging outside in front of the windows of the Reich Chancellery in a mood that can only be compared with that in August of 1914 when a nation again set out to defend everything in its possession. The 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1933 will similarly go down in German history as the day the nation found its way back to itself, because a new nation emerged and made short work of all the agony, humiliation, and treachery of the past fourteen years.<sup>48</sup>

With Hitler in the position of chancellor, he now wielded the power to consolidate absolute authority, which is ultimately what would occur. Within the following months Hitler would enact emergency legislative powers, namely the Enabling Act of 1933, in response to the Reichstag fire that was believed to have been started by a Dutch communist. The legislation that passed through the Reichstag would suspend civil liberties, end the free press, ban other political parties, and effectively declare Hitler as the absolute ruler of Germany. Additionally, when Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler merged the roles of president and chancellor creating the position of Führer, effectively placing himself as the head of the totalitarian regime in what become known as the Third Reich.

NSDAP propaganda efforts played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Third Reich. The NSDAP was dependent upon the use of propaganda for the purposes of electoral success, and under the leadership of Goebbels, its implementation revolutionized the conduct of how campaigns were run. Through their extensive mastery of techniques and messaging designed to manipulate the truth for the sake of their political platform, the NSDAP had

---

<sup>48</sup> Hermann Göring, "Radio Address: 30 January 1933.," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 45.

overwhelmingly succeeded in essentially burying their ideological adversaries beneath an avalanche of a mechanized propaganda barrage. This propaganda was meant to reach the widest audience possible in an effort to encompass all Germans under the banner of the NSDAP. Hitler became and maintained the role of serving as the NSDAP personified. Through Hitler's leadership of the organization and his use of propaganda to ensure a mass following, he was able to garner considerable support. This enabled him to disintegrate democratic processes within the Weimar Republic and become chancellor, establishing the totalitarian regime known as the Third Reich.

Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer:  
Propaganda under the Prewar Third Reich

“Nazism, the highest power delivery all the positive characteristics of the nation, is inconceivable without propaganda.”<sup>49</sup> The purpose of propaganda under the Third Reich served an entirely different capacity than it did in the pre-1933 era. The degree of difference between the two goals of Third Reich propaganda was profound: earlier material required a subtler and albeit restrained strategy. By contrast, later propaganda served as the institutionalized legitimizer and enforcer of an authoritarian governing structure defined by National Socialism. The enforcer capacity of propaganda after 1933 was made possible due its association with violence.

After the Nazis acquired the necessary mechanisms of political power to alter the governing structures of the Weimar Republic, propaganda took on a role of enforcement through maintaining the ideological ‘purity’ of the German public. This was accomplished through the deliberate attempt to either promote ideals of National Socialism or to omit and vilify viewpoints that were contradictory to the platform of the NSDAP. Once propaganda became a staple of the Third Reich bureaucracy, it emerged from the realm of politics and became mainstream in its unilateral saturation of German media, entertainment, and culture. The institutionalization of NSDAP propaganda made it increasingly difficult to discern what was propaganda and what was not. This was due to the fact that the Third Reich regulated the flow of information and would only cover what was perceived to be in line with the Nazi party.

From 1933 onwards, the definition of propaganda could not be pinned down as easily prior to the establishment of the Third Reich. This was due to the fact that, if it could not be identified as propaganda on the surface, information became weaponized through the unrelenting indiscriminate propagandization of information juxtaposed with the simultaneous censorship of

---

<sup>49</sup> Leopold Gutterer, "Propaganda Als Politik.," *Zeitschrift Für Politik* 26, 1936, 36.  
[www.jstor.org/stable/43527336](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43527336).



alternative outlets and/or viewpoints. During the prewar years of the Third Reich, the practice of propaganda was crucial to maintaining an atmosphere of total control. If Goebbels was capable of spinning a narrative that depicted every German as a willing participant of National Socialism, no individual would be willing to stand out for fear of being subjected to negative ramifications. This highlights the political adaptability of the NSDAP in that, immediately after obtaining the means to dismantle the already fragile Weimar Republic, the role of propaganda was capable of demonstrating a seamless transition to becoming an extension of governmental power rather than being limited to the purposes of mobilizing popular support.

Under the Third Reich beginning in 1933, propaganda was institutionalized in an effort to enlighten the German populace to the benefits of National Socialism and to ensure that NSDAP principles remained prevalent throughout Germany as a means to preserve and maintain the social order outlined by the party platform. Led by Goebbels, the propaganda produced under the nationalized *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* or Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (RMVP) sought to ensure that all levels of German life toed the line of the NSDAP. Regarding the objectives and purpose of the RMVP Goebbels states, “[t]he methods of propaganda cannot be subject to aesthetic judgment. The only judgment that can be passed is based on the success of the method. For propaganda is not an end in itself but rather a means to an end. We are establishing here a Ministry for Propaganda, which does not exist for its own sake and thus represents an end in itself, but which is rather a means to an end.”<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "The Tasks of the Ministry of Propaganda (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 456.

In the three years following the initial ascension to power, the NSDAP would once again change its use of propaganda, signifying a turning point in its purpose. This shift downplayed the notion of simply attaining followers for elections and was radically reoriented to serve in a functionary capacity designed to maintain the political order of the NSDAP. This dramatic shift highlights the political adaptability of the Nazi party given that, over the course of a few months, the NSDAP had profoundly altered their propaganda efforts from competing exclusively in a multi-party system to being used as a means of consolidating political power. The task of the RMVP under the Reich was to instill the 'patriotic' values of the NSDAP by censoring alternative views and founding a cultural rebirth of German society to be defined by National Socialism in every regard. German culture, education, news and entertainment became exclusively determined by the RMVP. Propaganda material was produced for the sole purpose of espousing the rhetoric proclaimed by Hitler and the NSDAP. The RMVP was also tasked with simultaneously rooting out dissenting views and the last remaining notions of truth, declaring them as acts of treason against the German Reich and its Führer. The NSDAP used the policies and programs introduced in the initial first three years of the Third Reich for propagandistic purposes to reaffirm to the German people the 'benefits' that National Socialism possessed. The common notion within this propaganda was that the NSDAP had restored German honor, pride and strength.

As a result, propaganda permeated German life not only the sphere of elections, where it was created, but also in the realms of culture, entertainment, and news. These facets of the NSDAP propaganda endeavors included three major components. The first regarded the identification of both the political and racial 'enemies' of the Reich and early steps to expedite the process of expelling various groups from German society entirely. The next concerned

indoctrination of the youth in order to become inclined to National Socialist doctrine through raising the next generation of Germans to toe the NSDAP line both in thought and action. Lastly, and arguably the most prevalent, was reinforcing the myth that as Führer Hitler had saved Germany from the evils of Bolshevik communism and depths of political instability associated with the democracy under the Weimar Republic.

Propaganda under the Third Reich was designed and produced for the sole intent of meeting the policy goals of Hitler and the NSDAP. While propaganda played a role in the establishment of the Third Reich, it would eventually act as an agent of the outright terror organized by the state. This development was only made possible with the recently acquired institutionalized status of propaganda. In other words, propaganda had become a measure of enforced ‘ideological purity’ and that if there were those who refused to toe the Nazi line, via indoctrination, violators would be punished in accordance with Third Reich protocol. As Hannah Arendt notes, “[w]herever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it replaces propaganda with indoctrination and uses violence not so much to frighten people (this is only done in the initial stages when political opposition still exists) as to realize constantly its ideological doctrine and its practical lies.”<sup>51</sup> Propaganda, according to Goebbels, was to serve in a twofold capacity. The first was that of maintaining the degree of unity shared by the German people behind the National Socialist movement through the adulation of Hitler as the personification of the nation. This was to be accomplished by emphasizing racialized notions of German culture, and was to be propagandized nonstop, saturating German society indiscriminately. The second was that of fostering a rebirth of Germanness, based on the belief structure of the National Socialist ideology. This Germanness was characterized by quasi-Prussian militarism and reflected the

---

<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1966), 341.

racial hierarchy promoted by the Nazis. Both objectives were enforced through the careful implementation of political violence and contributed greatly to the projected image of strength that the Third Reich claimed to possess. The aims of this propaganda agenda were met while the Nazi bureaucrats simultaneously reshaped the nation in a manner to where it would possess the principles of the NSDAP in perpetuity, in essence a thousand-year Reich.

As Führer, Hitler established a one-party state guided by the principles of the NSDAP and ultimately sought to nationalize governmental institutions under the doctrine of the movement to ensure solidarity among the German people. The Third Reich sought to promote Hitler's cult of personality and therefore mandated acts of expressing perpetual obedience to him whether it was through exercising the extended arm salute with a resounding "Heil Hitler", or by means of professing unconditional loyalty to the Führer under oath. An example of this was when Rudolf Hess delivered a speech emphasizing the significance of pledging allegiance to Hitler and the implication of following his leadership if the NSDAP vision for Germany was to exist in perpetuity. Hess states, "Adolf Hitler is Germany, and Germany is Adolf Hitler. Whoever takes an oath to Hitler takes an oath to Germany!"<sup>52</sup> From 1933 onward, Hitler was portrayed in propaganda as the messiah of Germany who with his 'vision', had saved the nation from the humiliation, suffering, and depravity experienced in the years following World War I. Hitler also fostered the propaganda belief that under his leadership, all Germans were united as one belonging to him as Führer, and he would lead the nation in building an empire upon NSDAP principles that would last 1000 years.

---

<sup>52</sup> Rudolf Hess, "The Oath to Adolf Hitler (1934).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 76.

Goebbels also sought to criminalize rival propaganda operations of political opposition. This maneuver sought to monopolize the means of propaganda transmission, such as the airwaves and press, in order to ensure that the German public would be the sole recipients of content promoted by the NSDAP. When Goebbels was appointed to be head of the RMVP following the NSDAP ascension to power in 1933, he oversaw the creation and distribution of propaganda throughout the state displaying various messages that reflected National Socialist doctrine. The propaganda under the Third Reich profoundly differed from the pre-1933 era. Its purpose had been radically altered in order to maintain the social order of the regime, ensuring that propaganda produced by the NSDAP was unopposed. Some messages reiterated previous platform points, such as lauding the personality cult of Hitler and his undisputed role as Führer. Other themes, however, were new to the mainstream political discourse, and were designated to serve as enforcers and promoters of policy under NSDAP rule. Nevertheless, some of these emerging messages emphasized the creation of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community) that included the roles of women and children juxtaposed with the intense vilification of Jews, and the commendation of domestic 'advances' made by the National Socialist government in the years leading up to World War II. Under the leadership of Goebbels, the NSDAP manufactured its own definition of truth and geared it towards the continuing advancement of the movement's ideological agenda. The newly institutionalized propaganda apparatus overwhelmingly succeeded in permeating through all aspects of German society and was accomplished through repetition as well as outright censorship. As Michael H. Kater states, "[t]he interdependence of culture, propaganda, and politics was constantly emphasized by Goebbels – counting from the

time of his appointment – and paid continuous lip service by his employees, parroted by officials in every bureaucratic nook and cranny of the Reich.”<sup>53</sup>

Propaganda is a means to an end and under the NSDAP, this truth could not be more obvious. Following the ascension to power, Nazi propaganda was altered to sustain official doctrine rather than appeal to potential followers. Prior to the nationalization of the propaganda industry, messaging was articulated in a manner designed to reach out to different portions of the German population that had become disenfranchised under the Weimar government. Before propaganda could be tailored to promote German pride as defined by the Nazis, the NSDAP used it as a means to grant Germans of that which they had been deprived of during the Weimar years and Great Depression. The domestic ‘solutions’ offered by the Nazis promised to grant the nation with a stable economy capable of bearing the fruits of employment and provide a way for impoverished Germans to have access to basic amenities that were previously too expensive to purchase due to hyperinflation, such as bread. However, once these simple basic needs had been met and were provided under the platform of the NSDAP, the movement gained the attention of a captive audience to whom it could promise the world and the population would follow. The new basis of propaganda was reoriented to reflect the prerogatives of Goebbels. In essence, propaganda had been realigned for purposes of efficiency following the transition from being a localized operation to becoming an offshoot of governmental authority. Under the specifications of Goebbels RMVP,

Clearly the role of propaganda was to be central: indeed the new state could not function without it, because propaganda was to fill the hitherto existing void between government and people. Instead of the exercise of popular pressure on government from below through the democratic parliamentary forms of the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich was to offer a system in which the

---

<sup>53</sup> Michael H. Kater, "Pre-War Nazi Culture.," In *Culture in Nazi Germany* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019), 62. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvfc542q](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvfc542q).

Government through propaganda – in press, radio, film, and elsewhere – told the people what it was doing and why they should agree with it.<sup>54</sup>

Propaganda after 1933 acted in a capacity defined by state-sanctioned psychical intimidation juxtaposed with the threat of physical terror. Goebbels' propaganda machine and the methods by which information was presented to the masses operated in a manner that was on par with techniques similar to those used in advertising at the time as well as contemporarily. Totalitarian tendencies aside, the correlation between propaganda and advertising is made evident in the sense that, "For example, Nazi posters used eye-catching graphics such as bold print and slashing, violent lines as well as attention-getting headlines. Radio news programs were often packaged as entertainment, featuring famous singers and celebrities."<sup>55</sup> These techniques of propaganda and the 'limitless' resources that significantly increased the scale of production were only made possible with the state takeover by the Nazis and the institutionalization of propaganda at the bureaucratic level.

Previous propaganda employed by the NSDAP was initially concentrated on a regional level tailored to the demographic of a specific audience. However, once it became institutionalized, propaganda began to paint with a broader brush so to speak, contributing to the ubiquitous nature of National Socialism within German culture. Additionally, with the expansion of governmental power under the Third Reich, the NSDAP controlled the public sphere through a ruthless enforcement of their agenda. This was accomplished with relative ease, for the role of propaganda had been exponentially heightened, in that it acted as an agent of the state. Legitimacy towards Nazism grew under the Third Reich due to the nationalization of a

---

<sup>54</sup> Welch, *Nazi Propaganda*, 36-7.

<sup>55</sup> Anthony R. Pratkanis, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1992), 319.

propaganda apparatus and would bolster the results of NSDAP propaganda indefinitely. Furthermore, “[h]orror and terror also entered the Nazi technique for rumor control. Partly as a result of their study of military panics and partly by observations of civilian crowd reaction, Nazi psychologists worked out elaborate principles not only for producing favorable rumors but also for eradicating those unfavorable or dangerous to their regime.”<sup>56</sup> In essence, Goebbels’ ministry produced an environment in which average Germans regularly suspected one another of disloyalty to the NSDAP, and that the basis of personal safety was granted upon the degree of fanaticism and devotion to the Third Reich. The coercive nature of propaganda in the case of the Third Reich was always present but emerged more prominently in material from 1933 onwards prior to the drive to war.

With more Nazis in the Reichstag, the NSDAP changed its propaganda to sell a message that promised to redefine the German nation under the principles of Nazism to ensure that its longevity would remain perpetual. This propaganda claimed that such a development could only occur through the centralization of power behind one political movement guided by the vision and leadership of one leader, one Führer, Hitler. The propaganda produced by the NSDAP played an instrumental role in culminating the establishment of the Third Reich. Propaganda would permeate all levels of society in an effort to create a collectivist mentality, transcending its previous capacity of being exclusive to the sphere of politics. The objective of Nazi propaganda in this regard was, “to create a uniformly sado-masochistic character, a type of man determined by his isolation and insignificance, who is driven by this very fact into a collective body where he shares the power and glory of that medium of which he has become a part.”<sup>57</sup> Additionally,

---

<sup>56</sup> John W. Meaney, "Propaganda as Psychical Coercion.," *The Review of Politics* 13, no. 1, 1951, 77. [www.jstor.org/stable/1404637](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1404637).

<sup>57</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth*, 402.



the manifestation of propaganda would no longer serve as a means of persuasion, but as a method of maintaining the regime's political order. In other words, propaganda became the mouthpiece that spewed what the German people must accept as their new reality, regardless of whether they were on board or not. The reach of NSDAP propaganda was deep and seemingly unlimited, as the messaging offered a window of insight revealing the intentions of the Nazis moving forward. Some of these messages included: unflinching loyalty to Hitler that breached beyond previous notions of admiration, rabid unchecked anti-Semitism, and mobilization of German youth.

When Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30, 1933, it marked the end of Weimar democracy and laid the groundwork for an autocratic regime. The Nazis celebrated this triumph without hesitation through the creation of various posters that depicted both Hitler and Hindenburg side-by-side as saviors of German governance, despite Hindenburg's personal negative attitudes about Hitler. (Figure 5) Hitler now possessed significant power and aspired to absolute rule, but lacked total control as President Hindenburg remained as Reich President and the NSDAP lacked a majority in the Reichstag. Following the disastrous Reichstag fire, the parliamentary proceedings were relocated to Potsdam, where both Hitler and Hindenburg commemorated the opening of the new Reichstag inside of the Kroll Opera House on what would be known as the Day of Potsdam.<sup>58</sup> Goebbels witnessed the processions firsthand and sought to propagandize the affair, as he recounted the poignant event, "[t]hen the Führer speaks...By the time he is finished, everyone is profoundly shaken. Sitting near Hindenburg, I

---

<sup>58</sup> "Celebrating the Opening of the New Reichstag; Parades in Potsdam," *Der Tag von Potsdam* (1933; Potsdam, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum gift of Consuelo Kagan), Film, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1003817>

can see the tears swelling in his eyes. Everyone rises from their seats to offer enthusiastic praise to the aging field marshal as he shakes hands with the young chancellor.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite Hitler’s ascension to power, propaganda was seen as necessary in order to maintain political order. Its purpose was to create an enthusiasm for the new political structure and to advocate widespread devotion to the tenets of National Socialism. The objective was as follows: rather than cater exclusively to the reliable base of support for the NSDAP or to sway political moderates to vote in favor of the Nazis, propaganda would now force those who were either indifferent towards or contradicted National Socialism to become overzealous in the celebration of the ideology or run the risk to be purged from German society indefinitely. Prior to the consolidation of Nazi power in 1933, NSDAP propaganda became increasingly more effective for the purposes of electoral success, but remained fragmented due to the competing leadership of regional offices and lack of nationalized central authority. As a result, strenuous propaganda competition took place amongst various political factions in a vacuum created by the ineffective governance of the Weimar Republic. Goebbels arrived at the conclusion that to successfully retain the attention of a captive audience it required a clearly defined methodology to be exercised with consistency and uniformity. The skillset of a propagandist as defined by Goebbels was one who possessed certain principles including the capability of reaching mass audiences and influencing their belief structure through appealing to their emotional base on a personal level while capitalizing upon the specificities of a targeted demographic.<sup>60</sup> The subsequent governmental institutionalization of propaganda production made it so that, “[t]he RMVP controlled the mass media, and state power exerted coercion...Goebbels and his

---

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "Day of Potsdam: 22 March 1933.," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 45-6.

<sup>60</sup> Leonard W. Doob, "Goebbels' Principles of Propaganda.," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 14, no. 3, 1950, 419-42. [www.jstor.org/stable/2745999](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745999).

propagandists understood that propaganda had to reach people at the interpersonal level, which the Nazis often said was the most important level.”<sup>61</sup> This marked a turning point in the significance of propaganda in that, since the NSDAP had attained the degree of legitimacy it desired, the role of propaganda was capable of breaching beyond the parameters of matters exclusive to the political sphere. Propaganda under the RMVP became an entity that transcended the prior simplicity of garnering voter support during elections and seamlessly became intertwined within German society, as its influence branched into the sphere of news, culture, and entertainment.

This newly created national propaganda apparatus was subservient to the NSDAP and Hitler. This was made apparent when “On 25 March, Goebbels defined the Ministry’s task as the ‘spiritual mobilization’ of the German people in a permanent re-creation of the spirit of popular enthusiasm that had, so the Nazis claimed, galvanized the German people on the outbreak of war in 1914.”<sup>62</sup> The initial goal of the ministry was to present the Third Reich in a favorable manner that would garner unilateral unflinching support from the German people, namely targeting those that were previously politically neutral. This was to be achieved while simultaneously creating an environment in which it would be dangerous to openly stand in opposition or criticize the policies of the regime. Goebbels possessed a particular vision on the purpose of propaganda and role of the RMVP in service to the Reich that he defined as,

The essence of propaganda is simplicity: we must reject all forms of flourish and decoration in explaining to the people our ideas in all their primitivity...The task of propaganda is not to say as much as possible, but rather to gather completely

---

<sup>61</sup> Randall L. Bytwerk, "Grassroots Propaganda in the Third Reich: The Reich Ring for National Socialist Propaganda and Public Enlightenment.," *German Studies Review* 33, no. 1, 2010, 93-94. [www.jstor.org/stable/40574929](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40574929).

<sup>62</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 121.

confused, complex, and composite ideas into a single catch phrase and then to instill this into the people as a whole.<sup>63</sup>

Propaganda would become an instrumental tool in the administration of the Third Reich as it was used as a means of maintaining the widespread coverage of the NSDAP platform. Its saturation of German society would produce profound changes. These developments would manifest in the cultural phenomenon of what it meant to be German, as the Nazis believed that the German cultural identity had been tarnished under the ‘weaknesses’ of Weimar. It would also result in the reestablishment of a national identity, as the Third Reich encouraged absolute obedience that would result in exponential fanaticism seemingly unparalleled in history. Propaganda aided the enforcement of NSDAP doctrine that was devised to systemically oversee the creation of new National Socialists and maintain a façade of prosperity, freewill, and democracy.

The propaganda produced by Goebbels credited the NSDAP for rescuing Germany from the depths of depravity and granting it a political system capable of fostering a cultural rebirth. A common theme of this propaganda was that under the NSDAP and leadership of Hitler, Germany was now on the path to ‘recovery’ from the ‘weakness’ associated with Weimar democracy and was thus granted a new sense of purpose through the national identity forged by National Socialist ideology. This salvation was made most prominent in public displays of admiration for the NSDAP, through the continuation of public speeches and parades, but was highlighted most infamously in the form of organized mass rallies. Nuremberg was selected for its cultural significance to the German nation and it was the city which the NSDAP designated as the venue for national events to take place. These rallies fostered immense emotion. They brought Germans together from across the nation in mutual support of National Socialism and created an

---

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Goebbels, “The Tasks of the Ministry of Propaganda (1933).,” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 457.

atmosphere of contagious enthusiasm for both the Third Reich as well as the future prospects of the German nation. Wilfrid Bade witnessed a Nuremberg rally, remembering that,

One hundred sixty thousand functionaries report to the call, along with one hundred thousand SA men and SS men and one hundred sixty thousand from the civilian guard of the party. There is no end to the stream of bloodred flags flooding into the gigantic field, gushing down the stairs in ever-increasing numbers, in an electrifying and, in a strange way, enchanting sight. It seems as if this bloodred stream of flags will never end, as if it symbolizes the immortality of National Socialist Germany...It is a gripping image—this brown army of heart and mind, the way it cheers its Führer in one unanimous, unified, and uniformed squall. The way the flags take wind and rise, the banners billowing boldly and big, and the glorious swastika shining victorious.<sup>64</sup>

These rallies were heralded by propaganda, as they provided an opportunity to showcase the mass support of the NSDAP. This message was reinforced by the delivery of emotionally riveting speeches that whipped the masses into a fired-up and charged frenzy. Rallies such as these also aided in the mythologization of the National Socialist ideology, with pageants to canonize Hitler. The ostentatious nature of these rallies were highlighted through firsthand accounts, such as one by Thornton Sinclair, a foreign observer, who remarked that, “Long after the expectant audience has assembled, blasts of trumpets herald the arrival of the *Führer*, who, with his retinue, makes his triumphal entry, marching down the long center aisle to the stage to the strains of the ‘Badenweiler Marsch’ and shouts and cries of ‘*Heil!*’”<sup>65</sup> Many examples of such rallies were captured on film as well, but none were more prevalently illustrated than in Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Triumph des Willens*.<sup>66</sup> With regards to the production of this film, it is

---

<sup>64</sup> Wilfrid Bade, “The Party Rally Day of Victory: The Victory of Faith (1933).,” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 92.

<sup>65</sup> Thornton Sinclair, “The Nazi Party Rally at Nuremberg,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2, no. 4, 1938, 572. [www.jstor.org/stable/2745103](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745103).

<sup>66</sup> *Triumph des Willens*, Directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Germany: Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP, 1935), Film.

noted that Riefenstahl took great care in order to use her mastery of cinema to maximize the delivery of the NSDAP message.

The reception of the film was overwhelmingly positive, as Riefenstahl's cinematography and editing made for 'beautifying' rally scenes and 'mesmerizing' portrayals of Hitler saluting marching uniformed soldiers that were met with infectious enthusiasm by the frenzy of the masses.<sup>67</sup> Riefenstahl's film was overt in the portrayal of NSDAP symbolism and featured many angles of Hitler's fiery rhetoric accompanied by jackbooted troops marching down the streets of Nuremberg. "We see in shots of Nazi uniforms and regalia, of Hitler at the Nuremberg rally, and of goose-stepping troops, future disciplinary fervor, triumphant power, and demagogical obsession."<sup>68</sup> The rationale for showcasing these uniformed soldiers was to demonstrate that Germany had recovered and had ultimately overcome the humiliation and economic straits of post-World War I and the Depression era misfortune.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the intent was to dramatize the demonstration of solidarity and unity amongst Germans across the board. The grandiose displays of nationalistic pride within the film ultimately attribute the domestic success and overall resolve of the German people to the implementation of National Socialist ideology.<sup>70</sup> This served in the propagandistic endeavor of the Third Reich in that, while it continued the dogmatic repetition of Nazi talking points, Riefenstahl it took a step further with her pioneer documentary techniques by personifying that which the platform idolized. The militarization of

---

<sup>67</sup> "Nuremberg Rally 1934," *Triumph des Willens*, Directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum), Film, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562206>

<sup>68</sup> Catherine M. Soussloff, and Bill Nichols, "Leni Riefenstahl: The Power of the Image.," *Discourse* 18, no. 3, 1996, 32. [www.jstor.org/stable/41389418](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389418).

<sup>69</sup> "6th Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg," *Triumph des Willens*, Directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum), Film, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562207>

<sup>70</sup> "1934 Reichsparteitag, Nuremberg," *Triumph des Willens*, Directed by Leni Riefenstahl (1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum), Film, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562205>

ethnic Germans acting in service to the ideology was of great value to the development of propaganda. It contributed to the image that all Germans were involved, as a collective unit, to the pursuit of NSDAP goals. In a subtler context, the film was widely shown and also mentally primed the German people for the prospect of a future conflict by bringing legitimacy to the practices associated with war preparation via uniformed marching soldiers.

While Riefenstahl's film became a textbook example of NSDAP branding, albeit exceptional, other media in addition to cinema were used in order to maximize the breadth of coverage and saturation of Nazi propaganda within Germany. Radio broadcasting was another means of transmitting the message of the NSDAP, as most German families under the Third Reich possessed relatively inexpensive radio sets in their homes that were capable of only domestic programming. Goebbels recognized the instrumental role of radio in achieving the propaganda aims of the Third Reich when he states, "[t]he radio will be for the twentieth century what the press was for the nineteenth century... The radio is the most influential and important intermediary between a spiritual movement and the nation, between the idea and the people."<sup>71</sup> The *Volksempfänger* (radio) was an effective means of reaching the German people. It was relatively easy to obtain as its accessibility transcended socioeconomic class and provided the means for everyone to hear the rhetoric of the NSDAP. Similar to Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'fireside chats' in the midst of the Great Depression, the speeches made by Hitler were transmitted to be heard from the comfort of one's home in order to add to the interpersonal dynamic of the German people for their Führer. With the nationalization of propaganda under the Third Reich, Goebbels placed significant emphasis upon the radio industry and saw its purpose

---

<sup>71</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "Radio as the Eighth Great Power (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 612-13.

as vital if the NSDAP were to hold onto power. Goebbels made this evident through the notion that,

He regarded mass listening, and in the days still to come, mass viewing, as most suitable channels for bringing the people closer to the new State...Goebbels clearly saw in radio an instrument to create the indoctrinated type of obedient follower of the regime. It was to him, as he put it, “a means towards the uniformity (*Vereinheitlichung*) of the German people in the north and the west, in the south and the east, of Catholics and Protestants, of proletarians and bourgeois and peasants.”<sup>72</sup>

Goebbels saw immense value in the medium of the radio and perceived it as comparable to the emotional delivery of rhetoric in person. This was echoed through sentiments that proclaimed, “[i]f one wants the spoken and heard word of the radio to realize a common will, it cannot be done only through transmitters and receivers; instead, a real human connection between sender and receiver must be established.”<sup>73</sup> The unprecedented reliance on the use of radio for propaganda purposes was attributed to the widespread availability and relative low cost that ultimately made it the favorable means of transmitting propaganda to the masses.

The Nuremberg rallies, film productions, and radio broadcasts were but facets of the greater aspirations of NSDAP propaganda, as each contribution was meant to simply meet the end of one of the RMVP’s top priorities, which was to foster the continued legend of Hitler. The propaganda produced on Hitler was designed to ultimately deify him as a personification of the National Socialist ideology made manifest. This heightened emphasis differed profoundly from the pre-1933 era and reflected a monumental shift in Hitler’s propagandization. While electoral propaganda sought to initially depict Hitler as a solution to the incompetence of Weimar, the

---

<sup>72</sup> Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 63-4.

<sup>73</sup> Eugen Hadamovsky, “Die lebende Brücke: Vom Wesen der Funkwartarbeit,” in *Dein Rundfunk* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1934), pp. 22-26. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/hada3.htm>



propaganda manufactured under the Nazi regime turned Hitler into a ‘messianic’ figure of sorts, whose sole purpose was to determine the trajectory of Germany’s role as a superpower and to reestablish Germany’s place under the sun. This propaganda bore language that was intricately designed to appeal to the base emotions of the German people. It was made evident that the,

message was self-serving for Germans: the idea of a nation wronged, the language of victimhood, framed by a narcissistic conception of all Germans as innately noble and, actually or latently, heroic...Hence this culture of grievance was a shared creation between Hitler and his congregations, in which Hitler would package and retail to these listeners their rage and agitations.<sup>74</sup>

The messaging of this propaganda was designed to unite the NSDAP political movement behind one man and portray the Führer as an individual who was master of the German people to be worshipped unconditionally by the masses. Simultaneously, this propaganda was also meant to distract the Germans from the internal divisions present within the NSDAP movement while they were being ‘resolved.’

Goebbels’ propaganda intertwined Hitler and the role of Führer, making them inseparable. This was designed to mandate the belief that there was no alternative leader to Hitler, and that the contingency and successes of the Reich were entirely predicated upon his prerogatives. It was a dramatic shift from the pre-1933 foundation of a personality cult that was propagated to the German people for consumption. Hitler as an individual came to permeate all levels of German society. His status as ‘savior’ arose from his various ‘accomplishments’ as leader. Propaganda depicting Hitler credited him for the decline in German unemployment, the unshakable strength of German government, the resurging restoration of German pride, and the profound improvement in overall quality of life standards for the German people. Expressions of

---

<sup>74</sup> O’Shaughnessy, *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand*, 42.

espousing the ‘positives’ of Nazism came from individuals such as Hermann Führbach, who had been previously unemployed but joined the Nazi movement and proclaimed attitudes of enthusiasm in the leadership of Hitler and the trajectory of the nation moving forward. Führbach writes, “[o]n January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933, Adolf Hitler created a united German *Volk*. The great point of his program, to give work again to eight million unemployed, is being fulfilled more quickly than expected. Just in this first year alone, millions went back to work. I, too, am to be counted among those fortunate people.”<sup>75</sup> Propaganda credited Hitler for this rebound from economic depravity, for the lengths to which this was achieved were seemingly endless. As Richard J. Evans states,

Posters and magazine illustrations, newsreels and films proclaimed Hitler as the man from the trenches, with the common touch, not only a many-sided genius with a sense of destiny, but also a humble, even simple human being who had few needs, spurned wealth and display, was kind to children and animals and dealt compassionately with old comrades fallen on hard times.<sup>76</sup>

Hitler was depicted not as a leader distanced from the masses, but as someone capable of relating to each individual and being one with the German people. Having witnessed the struggles and difficulties of an economically devastated Germany after World War I as an unemployed veteran firsthand, Hitler shared common traits that allowed for greater connection.

Many images and slogans sought to solidify the base of German support and aimed to maintain the unity of the masses that would enthusiastically worship Hitler as Führer. An example of such an image was one that proclaimed the slogan “*Führer wir folgen Dir!*” and was accompanied with the stiff-arm salutes proclaiming allegiance to the NSDAP. (Figure 6)

---

<sup>75</sup> Hermann Führbach. "How I Became a National Socialist (1934)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>76</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 122-23.

Propaganda featuring Hitler emphasized his personification of not only the NSDAP movement, but of the German nation and by extension, the entirety of the German people. Hitler was placed within the German historical narrative as the ‘charismatic restorer’ of German honor and the ‘messiah’ of Germany’s future. As Johannes Haller states,

The fact that one man from the people—an Austrian by birth, a soldier in the German army, embodying in his person the national identity and unity of the nation—succeeded by himself in bringing about the improbable through the strength of his belief in Germany, the fact that under his leadership the masses of the nation, without regard for class or party, found themselves together in the struggle for Germany’s honor and freedom, for the unity of the Reich and the people’s community: this alone is a landmark that will shine through the centuries.<sup>77</sup>

Under Hitler all German people were meant to believe that they belonged to him. It was this effort to mythologize the national leader that gave rise to unparalleled fanaticism and devotion to the Führer. This propaganda measure was tribalistic in nature, given that it was entirely dependent upon emotional appeal and devoid of rational thought. Propaganda depicting Hitler established the notion that he was the embodiment of Germany and that he was one with the masses, as he rose to power from within their ranks, attributed to his national vision that stemmed from a providential sense of destiny.

Despite the shifting narratives or methods of propaganda production by the RMVP, the cult of personality surrounding Hitler is one that remained constant throughout the Third Reich. Given that the Führer had all power concentrated as absolute ruler, and through his own will could determine the trajectory of the German nation, the message of the propaganda was to instill an all-encompassing patriotic nationalism designed to elevate Hitler to the status of a savior.

---

<sup>77</sup> Johannes Haller, "The Epochs of German History (1936).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 287.

Such efforts were deemed necessary because, without the propaganda barrage encouraging widespread adulation of Hitler, the gravitas of the NSDAP would begin to wane. This harks back to the primal basis of National Socialism in that, its ideological ‘success’ was entirely reliant upon the practice of propaganda alongside the totalitarian tendency of state terror. It is best exemplified through the statement, “[t]hus Hitler establishes a firm continuity between persuasion, propaganda, intimidation and terror, between words and deeds, and this continuity is the characteristic *praxis* of his regime.”<sup>78</sup> Propaganda was produced as a means of praising the Führer and those who knew him best wished to portray him in a manner that would meet the expectations of a national hero. Baldur Von Schirach, leader of the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth), produced such sentiments by articulating the side of Hitler that many people did not see through embellishing the extent of his deeds when he states, “[w]hether Hitler is motoring through Germany, surrounded by cheering crowds of construction workers, or standing beside the grave of a murdered comrade, deeply moved and shaken, his nobility and profound humanity often render speechless those who meet him for the first time, be they young or old.”<sup>79</sup> Hitler was unequivocally the central figure behind the NSDAP movement, and the portrayal of humanistic qualities was an integral propagandistic endeavor if Germans were to buy into the narrative of his mythologization. This propaganda was necessary if the goals of the Third Reich were to be met and the resolve of the German people was to remain unified and organized behind him as their Führer. If the NSDAP expected to last in perpetuity and see the results of its aspired goals through, the relentless propagandization of Hitler was vital to its continued ‘success.’

---

<sup>78</sup> Joseph P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1975), 69.

<sup>79</sup> Baldur Von Schirach. “Hitler as No One Knows Him (1933).” In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 73.

Hitler was undoubtedly a central component of the propaganda apparatus within the Third Reich. It was crucial to maintain his status of Führer and portray him as reflective not only of the National Socialist ideology, but of the nation itself in order to maintain the notion of absolute cultural unity amongst the German people. The propaganda that depicted Hitler following the ascension to power juxtaposed the early struggles of the *Kampfzeit* alongside the economic depravity and weakness of the Weimar period. This was done in order to create a sense of relatability and mutual understanding between the German people and their Führer.

Propaganda pushed the narrative that the German people possessed a deep level of unilateral adulation for Hitler as he was portrayed leading the NSDAP movement in lifting Germany out of the Great Depression and for beating back the political adversaries perceived to be a viable threat, such as the communists. However, the chief accomplishment of this propaganda was that it solidified the confidence and unwavering faith of the German people, at least on the surface, to become mobilized behind Hitler. This was highlighted through the fact that Hitler granted the German nation a vision for a future that was portrayed as one destined by a sense of providence to be both successful and eternal. This vision was one that promised strength, prosperity, and overall mastery of the world to be shaped by National Socialism in its entirety. It was within this propaganda that indicated a subtle shift in its messaging, for it was one that desired to aid the expansion of the NSDAP platform beyond the boundaries of Germany by any means necessary.

While Hitler's appearance as the defined leader of the German nation was ubiquitous within German society, other facets of propaganda produced by the RMVP addressed the individual character of the German people themselves. This strain of propaganda would appeal to Germans from a collectivist perspective, particularly with regards to their contribution towards a National Socialist future and how they each had a necessary role within the grand scheme of the

Third Reich. A sphere of propaganda within the Third Reich was designed to establish the creation of a *Volksgemeinschaft* which promoted a German cultural identity unified in pursuit of a purpose for the national agenda. (Figure 7) This propaganda aspired to unite Germans by creating an image of the ideal homogenous unit depicting the desired roles to be performed in service of the Reich for each respective family member. The propaganda facilitated the belief that, “In an age of industrialization and class conflict, man (it was argued), had to transform his feeling of alienation into one of belonging to a ‘pure’ community, or *Volk*.”<sup>80</sup> However, the establishment of this *Volksgemeinschaft* was predicated upon a racially-organized hierarchical structure. The basis of its existence was dependent upon the heightened pseudoscientific emphasis of Aryan characteristics whilst simultaneously excluding those deemed undesirable according to National Socialist principles, namely Jews and Marxists. Additionally, a key element of achieving *Volksgemeinschaft* that was “Fundamental in the propaganda presentation was the attempt to forge an awareness of the notion of ‘experience’ (*Erlebnis*) as the spiritual bond that cemented individuals to this new all-embracing ethnic community.”<sup>81</sup> The ultimate purpose of this propaganda that espoused the necessity of *Volksgemeinschaft* was the notion that service to the nation was of utmost importance, and that as opposed to individual needs, it was the fundamental belief that one sought gratification from service to the Reich. This reinforced the collectivist mentality that comprised the doctrine of the NSDAP in that it systemically repressed sentiments of individualism and expelled individuals from society in accordance with their ‘failure’ to adhere to the principles of the Third Reich.

---

<sup>80</sup> David Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community." *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2, 2004, 217. [www.jstor.org/stable/3180722](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180722).

<sup>81</sup> Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft," 218.

The NSDAP urged children to join and participate in youth groups specified by their gender as well. The male organization was called the *Hitlerjugend* and taught boys military inspired activities such as shooting, boxing, and outdoor survival skills. From a policy perspective, this was a means of consolidating the youth behind Nazism. This development would force the upbringing of German youth to reflect the tenets of the ideology in their worldview, and would create the most fanatic supporters of the regime. From propaganda lens however, this was an instance of great value in propagandizing policy of the regime in an effort to strengthen the Nazi grip on Germany. This propaganda marked a turning point in that it breached beyond the parameters of Hitler and the Nazi platform exclusively, and had thus begun to permeate into realms outside of politics. Indoctrinating the youth was not in the same category as electoral propaganda per se, but it had propagandistic value as a matter of policy that was capitalized on under Goebbels' ministry. Additionally, this propaganda value of such measures also served to militarize the German population in an effort to prepare them for the prospect of war. The tenets of National Socialism were introduced as the forefront of German culture, and thus became the idealized 'golden standard' for what was expected of Germans. This was expanded upon further as students were subjected to the educational standards of the NSDAP, whereby they were ideologically indoctrinated into fighting for both the German *Volk* and the Führer. (Figure 8) Schools became havens of propaganda under the Third Reich, and were ultimately reduced to facilities that essentially brainwashed the youth. This propaganda was characterized with false narratives of racially based pseudo-sciences and forced conditioning that emphasized absolute subservience to the will of the state, and by extension, the Führer.

The heightened emphasis on the training of the *Hitlerjugend* was based on the belief that solidifying the youth was necessary since they were to secure the movement. The leader of the

*Hitlerjugend*, Baldur von Schirach, recognized that the consolidation of a youth movement under the tenets of Nazism would serve to ‘benefit’ Germany in a twofold capacity. First, it would ensure the perpetuity of the Third Reich, leading to the creation of the most fanatical supporters and was therefore seen as a policy success on all fronts. Second, showcasing the policy of youth organizations in Nazi Germany held profound propaganda value in that it made it appear as though everyone was a fervent supporter of the NSDAP, contributing to its ‘omnipresence’ within German society. The propagandization of policy was juxtaposed with the indoctrination practices directed towards German youth and reinforced the confirmation that, according to Schirach, “[d]riven and directed by the notion of patriotism and loyalty, they will be all the more earnest, all the more intense in their struggle to eliminate and overcome even the contradictions between generations in their mutual service to the *Volk* and the Reich, in their mutual commitment to the swastika.”<sup>82</sup> The relation between the fervent fanaticism of the *Hitlerjugend* and the notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* was ultimately credited to the propaganda that imprinted the NSDAP ideological platform into the youth so that, “[i]n the *Volksgemeinschaft* the fundamental determinant of status was to be membership to the German nation, and thereafter the magnitude of accomplishment and service to the nation.”<sup>83</sup> In this sense, there was targeted propaganda designated for German youth even after 1933. The importance of service to the nation defined the theme of the propaganda directed towards the *Hitlerjugend* by emphasizing that service to the Reich was necessary not only for the collective good, but for the survival and continuation of the classless egalitarian society that the Third Reich claimed to possess.

---

<sup>82</sup> Baldur Von Schirach, "The National Socialist Youth Movement (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 254.

<sup>83</sup> Peter D. Stachura, "The Ideology of the Hitler Youth in the Kampfzeit.," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 3, 1973, 160. [www.jstor.org/stable/260285](http://www.jstor.org/stable/260285).



Women were not excluded from the creation of *Volksgemeinschaft*. Like the men, the Third Reich emphasized the expectations of women through propaganda that was premised on gender. The female counterpart of these NSDAP youth organizations was called the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls). Like the *Hitlerjugend*, the *Bund* promoted peak physical fitness and ideological dedication to the national cause. Additionally, the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* advocated sentiments of motherhood as well as procreation encouragement for the expansion of the ethnic German population and the exponential increase of future German soldiers. (Figure 9) According to Goebbels, “[t]he first, best, and most suitable place for a woman is in the family, and the most glorious task she can perform is to give the gift of children to her people and nation, children who can continue the line of generations and who can guarantee the nation’s immortality.”<sup>84</sup> The importance of such organizations were articulated within propaganda under the guise that the youth were integral to the continuation of the National Socialist ideology. Propaganda under the Third Reich saw the prospect of German youth not for their individuality, but as an asset whereby indoctrination was equated to that of a long-term investment. The Nazis recognized that if the tenets of Nazism were to outlive those who had institutionalized their practice in Germany, it was vital to ‘prime’ the youth for buying into the ideology thus solidifying the survival of a self-proclaimed Reich that was to last a thousand years. The RMVP recognized the necessity of propaganda appeals to the youth as they were designated to become the standard bearers of the NSDAP movement and aid in the preservation of a thousand-year Reich.

---

<sup>84</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "German Women (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 317.

Propaganda then aimed at redefining the pillars of German culture to reflect National Socialism. This made it increasingly difficult to discern truth from falsehoods, as NSDAP propaganda saturated German society and fostered an ostentatious but oppressive reality based upon the narrative crafted by the government. As far as the Nazis were concerned, “[c]ultural policy or *Kulturpolitik* has always played an important part in German life but it was left to the National Socialists to try systematically to organize and control the entire cultural life of the nation.”<sup>85</sup> Thus life became increasingly politicized as a direct result of this propaganda, contributing to the ‘omnipresence’ of National Socialism in Germany. As a result, propaganda helped to erase, “[t]he misery of crippling unemployment and economic depression appeared to have been erased at a stroke. People were buoyant, optimistic and alive with a sense of purpose.”<sup>86</sup> While propaganda was not the factor that alleviated the economic crisis in Germany, it provided sentiments of reassurance to the German people and portrayed the recovery process of something only made possible with the ascension of the Nazis to power. In reality, while Hitler was responsible for spearheading several public works programs to eliminate unemployment, such as the Autobahn, the overall basis of German economic rebound was attributed to secret rearmament programs designed to militarize the nation for future territorial acquisitions.

Despite the sentiments articulated by the emphasis on cultural unity by propaganda, there was the overwhelming presence of exclusionary tendencies that ostracized those deemed inferior under the racial doctrine of the NSDAP. This manifested itself in the vehement disdain for Jews, as their depiction in propaganda juxtaposed the alleged threat that they posed to the future of the

---

<sup>85</sup> Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Roland, *Life in the Third Reich: Daily Life in Nazi Germany 1933-1945* (London: Arcturus, 2017),

Third Reich in a politicized tone, meshing together Bolshevism/Marxism with the ‘undesirable’ racial characteristics. This was representative of a radical shift in Nazi propaganda that addressed the presence of anti-Semitism within the NSDAP platform. In comparison to restrained anti-Semitism in Nazi propaganda after the failed 1923 putsch but prior to 1933, material produced under the Third Reich was both overt and bombastic in its rhetoric. The propaganda produced under the direction of Goebbels’ RMVP practically foamed at the mouth in its targeting of those deemed ‘undesirable’. Anti-Semitic propaganda following 1933 was innately rabid in their allegations and series of character assaults against those who contradicted the NSDAP. Additionally, the propaganda sought to address the ‘shortcomings’ associated with Marxist thought and defined it in a speech given at the Nuremberg Party Rally on September 12, 1935 in the following way:

Karl Marx is neither a German nor an assimilated Englishman but rather the rabbinical descendant of an alien Jew who, without a shred of understanding of the truly formative forces at work amongst European peoples facing the dire social crisis brought about by the advent of the Machine Age with the profoundest distinctive sense of urgency, did not conceive of a system of recovery and reconstruction, but who instead erected a social and ideological dogmatic construct designed to immortalize the fissures that have begun tearing at the social fabric and to posit this social fragmentation as indispensable and ineluctable.<sup>87</sup>

Unlike the pre-1933 era of self-imposed restrictive messaging prior to the establishment of the RMVP, Goebbels could open the anti-Semitic floodgates. At this point the NSDAP no longer had to maintain the façade that required the reeling back of their highly racialized platform for the sake of acquiring voter support.

---

<sup>87</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, "Bolshevism: The Work of an Alien Race (1935).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 199.

Propaganda on anti-Semitism saturated German society with toxic messaging that sought to vilify Jews by using them as a scapegoat for German woes. In essence, propaganda portrayed Jews in the following manner: directly accountable for German loss in World War I, the catalyst for profoundly negative economic ramifications associated with the Great Depression, and playing an active role regarding the consistent threat of communist takeover under the weakened state of Weimar democracy. The ideological inclinations of National Socialist anti-Semitic propaganda were regularly published in newspapers such as *Das Schwarze Korps*, and made statements that echoed, “[s]ince the beginning of time, the Jew has been the mortal enemy of all nations and peoples [Völker] joined by Nordic leadership and racial bonds.”<sup>88</sup> Under the regime of the Third Reich, to be Jewish or possess Jewish ancestry held an unprecedented and unparalleled negative stigma institutionalized by propaganda that sought to criminalize and ultimately exclude those that defied the values and beliefs of the NSDAP doctrine.

Gone were the days of hushed anti-Semitism. As the government-sanctioned propaganda efforts under the directives of the NSDAP intensified, so would the legal measures designed to eradicate the entirety of those deemed ‘unworthy’ from the public eye of Germans. The emphasis placed upon anti-Semitic propaganda would come to play an integral role in the efforts of *Gleichschaltung* of Germany. This was attributed to the rhetoric that, although hyperbolic, preyed upon the fears and biases which were already held by a sizeable portion of the nation and present prior to the ascension of the NSDAP, making it that much easier to manipulate Germans with said propaganda. In essence, propaganda of the regime reflected the fact that, “Hitler and his comrades were self-taught bigots who mingled romantic Nordic racism with crude

---

<sup>88</sup> Reinhard Heydrich, "The Visible Enemy: The Jews (1935).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 197.

antisemitism.”<sup>89</sup> Propaganda that saturated the post-1933 era acted in two ways. On the one hand, it sought to delegitimize and vilify those deemed as ‘inferior’ according to NSDAP principles, while on the other hand it simultaneously boosted false confidence into the narrative of alleged racial ‘superiority’ possessed by ethnic Germans or *Herrenvolk* mentality.

A great deal of NSDAP propaganda addressed the cult of personality regarding Hitler or the development of *Volkscommunity* through the encouragement of gender roles and the expulsion of ‘undesirable’ elements from German society. However, other directives of propaganda were designed to reiterate the ‘successes’ of the Third Reich that were attributed to the political advances made by the NSDAP. These gains were manifested namely in the elimination of German unemployment, enhanced political unity, and a complete revamping of the German economic structure. Before the ascension of the NSDAP to power in 1933, unemployment was a cancerous plague within Germany, as the nation had been profoundly weakened by the onset of the Great Depression and the punitive stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. One of the first matters of policy that the NSDAP desired to propagandize was that of eliminating unemployment in order to provide stable livelihoods and to end the repercussions of economic calamity. This was accomplished chiefly through massive rearmament initiatives and public works programs, namely those regarding infrastructure that would spur economic growth in order to reestablish Germany as a competitive economic power. Additionally, social welfare programs became propagandized such as *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) and were instrumental in constructing an artificial environment of consensus within German society. The NSDAP relentlessly propagandized the manufactured results of a miraculous economic recovery

---

<sup>89</sup> Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 2003, 112.

in that, “[t]hey increased the state’s short-term debt in order to combat unemployment and to boost domestic spending. That move freed the state from welfare payments, which took money out of government coffers, and offered the promise of increased revenues in the near future.”<sup>90</sup>

Eliminating unemployment in order to mobilize the workforce was a vital component of the propaganda produced prior to the drive to war, as it was necessary to restore the German economy and lay the foundational basis for future intentions of aggressive expansionism. This propaganda differed from previous iterations. Prior measures of propaganda were crafted for the sole purpose of selling the NSDAP platform whereas in this context, Nazi policy was propagandized in an attempt to convey the ‘success’ of their implementation. This is a distinction between propaganda itself and propagandistic value in policy. While the Nazis were somewhat responsible for the revamping of the German economy, due to their rearmament programs, the extent of the propaganda commending the ‘achievement’ of policy was undoubtedly exaggerated.

Nazi propaganda also credited the regime with the accomplishment of achieving political unity. Prior to the NSDAP, German politics was ineffective due to continual splintering, and the Nazis readily took credit for enforced unity. Despite the fact that this outcome was the result of violence juxtaposed with propaganda, the NSDAP championed it all the same. Carl Schmitt was one such individual who emphasized political unity under the tenets of Nazism. Schmitt was a political theorist and prominent member of the NSDAP who lauded the leadership of Hitler associating with it the terminology of *Führerprinzip*. Schmitt argued that the basis of the Third Reich was contingent upon the well-rounded maintenance of political unity and that it was

---

<sup>90</sup> Götz Aly, and Jefferson S. Chase, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Co, 2008), 37.

necessary for the government (in conjecture with the NSDAP movement and the German people) to reject elements of liberal democracy incorporated in previous attempts. Once National Socialism became the dominant political ideology in Germany, Schmitt articulated that, “[t]he political unity of the current state is a tripartite aggregation of state, movement, *Volk*.”<sup>91</sup> Despite establishing a one-party totalitarian regime, the NSDAP championed the notion that, with only one legal party in Germany, solutions to domestic problems could be resolved more quickly. In essence, “[t]he actual development of the relation between the party and the state indicates that the concept of public corporation does not apply here. The party not only co-operates in matters of legislation, administration, and the judicial process, but occupies a position superior to that of the state.”<sup>92</sup> This propagandistic aim was achieved by means of a government-imposed authority. In other words, since the environment of Nazi Germany was saturated with ostentatious propaganda displays of fervent Nazism, it compelled the general population to maintain the guise that they were indeed supporters of the new regime regardless of their personal feelings. At the surface, everyone appeared to be in favor of the NSDAP, for this played into the hands of ensuring a perpetual longevity concerning the established ‘unity’. That said, propaganda was enforced with the implied threat of violence: “[h]enceforth the operation of terror was undertaken by simple injunctions or by subtler and more effective means of social reinforcement.”<sup>93</sup>

Through uniting the German people behind one political movement under the leadership of one individual, the nation could aspire to a better future or so propaganda said. Additionally,

---

<sup>91</sup> Carl Schmitt, "State, Movement, Volk: The Tripartite Division of Political Unity (1933).," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 58.

<sup>92</sup> Neumann, *Behemoth*, 68.

<sup>93</sup> Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, 256.

while the expanding borders of Germany and proposed annexation of territory was prohibited under the clauses of the Versailles Treaty, the Third Reich played upon the lingering sentiments of national resentment. Nazi propaganda was therefore articulated in a manner that would portray their eventual expansionist behavior not as aggressive, but as justifiable with the message proclaiming the desire to unite all ethnic Germans under the governance of one Reich. As Bramsted notes,

Goebbels eloquently presented National Socialism as a respectable though revolutionary movement, full of determination, but definitely a factor for the preservation of peace. Complaining bitterly of the mistrust and misunderstanding of the new regime by the outside world he made much of the fact that it had come to power by legal means. It was a complete misinterpretation of the principle of democracy, he suggested, to conclude from it that the people wanted to rule themselves. The National Socialist regime was in fact a new type of democracy, governing by the will of the people (who wished to be governed with firmness and authority), but determined not to suffer any criticism or opposition.<sup>94</sup>

The propaganda that highlighted the immediate necessity for acquiring new territory was designed to distract individuals from the fact that Germany was ravenous for expansion and had begun to salivate at the opportunities made possible with the ambivalence of Western Europe. Overall, it was the ambitious demands of Hitler as well as the innate ruthlessness of the NSDAP in combination with the ineptitude of Western Europe that ultimately granted Germany with the narrative to expand and blatantly disregard conditions of the Versailles Treaty.

Stereotypical Nazi imagery would, more often than not, include massive swastika banners or Hitler giving speeches to massive adoring crowds, preaching the ‘glory’ of the Reich. NSDAP propaganda was marketed to the German people for the sole purpose of indoctrinating them with the beliefs of National Socialism. The ideological inclination and implementation of

---

<sup>94</sup> Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*, 144.



Nazi propaganda was fundamentally determined at the state level after 1933. At its foundational level however, propaganda was arguably the most effective weapon within the NSDAP political arsenal aside from the threat of brutish physical intimidation. Within Nazi Germany, non-NSDAP media was censored from public view, and only approvable messages to be determined by the propaganda apparatus of the Third Reich could be broadcast to the German public. Due to this systematic production and distribution, NSDAP propaganda ultimately became blurred with legitimate information despite its overtly radical and erroneous messages since it was the only form of media that the German people were able to legally obtain.

German individuals were only permitted access to government approved media, all of which possessed the capacity to be propagandistic in nature. This made it increasingly difficult to discern the difference between propaganda and legitimate information, as NSDAP propaganda had drastically evolved from its initial stages of agitation and political campaigning. The ramifications of this propaganda shift were profound, for even if it did not convert everyone into becoming ardent supporters of National Socialist ideology, it prevailed through the use of emotional appeal to harp upon discontent and biases already possessed by the German people. Thus, when the Germans ultimately decided to wage war, NSDAP propaganda and its associated lies were among the contributing factors preventing the revelation of reality. While the culmination of war was orchestrated by the top bureaucrats of the Third Reich, it was ultimately propaganda which glorified both Hitler and the Reich that mobilized the German people to not only be content with the prospect of going to war, but to be initially enthusiastic in the pursuit of winning one, similarly to the outbreak of war in 1914.

## Conclusion

When assessing Nazi propaganda before and after 1933, there are stark shifts to be noted. Before 1933, it was designed to present the Nazis as a legitimate contender within the German political discourse, shedding the pre-1923 image of extremism and mobilizing voter support under the pretext of dissatisfaction with Weimar democracy and resentment regarding the punishment associated with World War I. Certain cornerstones of the Nazi platform, such as anti-Semitism, were not eliminated from propaganda entirely, but were greatly reduced as Hitler's cult of personality or the promises of economic recovery took priority. This would profoundly shift after 1933 however, when the Nazis began promoting race laws and sought to 'purify' German society by purging 'undesirable' elements. Additionally, Nazi propaganda harped on the danger of communism as well as the discontent attributed to economic uncertainty and political fracture. These factors undoubtedly aided propaganda efforts, ensuring that, even if German voters were not completely sold on the Nazi platform, many would still vote for the platform because they saw it as either the 'lesser of two evils' or as a means of protest.

However, with the establishment of the Third Reich in 1933, the purpose and messaging of propaganda would be fundamentally altered to a degree. After 1933, propaganda began to go beyond electoral purposes, to permeate other levels of German society such as culture, news, and entertainment. Additionally, Nazi propaganda served as an extension of Nazi bureaucracy and sought to indoctrinate the population to adopt the principles of Nazism, via indoctrination, and to embrace the notion of a collective mentality spearheaded with sentiments of ethnonationalism. Post-1933 propaganda also served as an enforcer of sorts, by means of compulsory gestures of allegiance, and helped create an atmosphere whereby Nazism was 'omnipresent,' which made it appear as though everyone was a staunch supporter of the Third Reich. In other words, pre-1933 propaganda desired to persuade individuals to support the Nazi platform whereas post-1933

propaganda made support mandatory under the threat of violence. Furthermore, Nazi propaganda also promoted policy after 1933 such as welfare programs, youth groups, and economic recovery. While the messaging and purpose of Nazi propaganda possesses a stark contrast before and after 1933, the method of transmission more or less remained the same. The Nazis placed significant emphasis on the spoken word, but also made frequent use of the radio and press to serve in place of oral rhetoric at times when it was impractical. Additionally, posters and photographs were regularly used as well in order to convey the Nazi message and did so in an effort to 'standout' in comparison to other forms of media. Film was also a means of transmission which was experimented with before 1933, but exponentially grew in use once Hitler assumed power, manifesting in examples of cinema by directors such as Riefenstahl. The overlap of distribution methods was a constant that remained present in the transition of Nazi propaganda from before to after 1933.

While propaganda would continue to be used by the Nazis throughout World War II, it was not until the series of German military defeats leading up to 1945 that would make the limitations of propaganda increasingly visible. Propaganda continued to remain a coercive force that required total compliance with the totalitarian governing structure of the Third Reich. However, beginning with the disastrous invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the German propaganda machine began to lose momentum as a 'legitimate source' of information, no longer able to portray German military campaigns as victorious. From 1941 onwards, Nazi propaganda attempted to spin the defeats of the German military as temporary setbacks or strategic maneuvers with the 'inevitability' of a final victory still attainable. Despite the increasing prominence of these propaganda limitations made evident due to military failures, "The fact that Germany remained in the war for some two years after the massive military defeats on the

Eastern Front in the winter and spring of 1943, the loss of North Africa that same spring, and the ongoing, heavy Allied bombing raids on German cities,...speaks to the power of Nazi ideology and its expression as propaganda.”<sup>95</sup> Even in April 1945 when Berlin resembled a heap of rubble and no longer the proud capital city of Germany, Nazi propaganda still maintained a delusional outlook that the Nazis could somehow win the war and also encouraged every able-bodied individual to lay their lives down in defense of the Third Reich.

The Nazi perspective on their possibility for ‘success’ during World War II was only reinforced by propaganda produced during the conflict, as propaganda produced prior to 1939 created an outlook that by all measures, can be considered deluded. Leading up to the outbreak of war, propaganda had essentially bolstered a confidence in the Nazis that not only were their territorial goals obtainable, but that such aims were capable of being accomplished with minimal resistance and in relative short order. This served to be the epitome of limitation concerning Nazi propaganda. The notion that, “From Carthage to the Confederacy, weaker bellicose states could convince themselves of the impossible because their fantasies were not checked earlier by cold reality.”<sup>96</sup> From its initial outset to the bitter end, Nazi propaganda supported and encouraged the ‘fantasies’ of the Third Reich, and the primary focus on emotional appeal rather than rational thought blinded the Nazis into believing that victory was inevitable. This significant limitation of propaganda applied in the context of World War II ultimately contributed to the failure of German war aims, and the demise of Nazi ideology indefinitely.

---

<sup>95</sup> Susan D. Bachrach, and Steven Luckert, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Washington D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), 139.

<sup>96</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 14.

Nazi propaganda expired with the defeat of the Third Reich. Unfortunately, the practice of propaganda to advance a political agenda or vilify opponents has not. Propaganda is the deliberate alteration of the truth in order to aid an ulterior purpose or agenda. While the propaganda of the Nazis is looked at with mutual sentiments of perplexity and disgust, propaganda persists today. The most prevalent occurrence is 'fake news'. While both are not the same, the modern-day perception of 'fake news' has been categorized as propagandistic, and continues to influence the current political environment. Those who have accepted the presence of 'fake news' have sought to call out information as deliberately untrue or skewed in a manner given that it is characterized by a lack of objectivity, therefore making it devoid of any substantive value.

It is in this regard that the practice of identifying news as 'fake' for political purposes shares a common practice of Nazi propaganda. The terminology itself is nothing necessarily new, but its newfound connotation and widespread practice have been associated most prominently with the presidential campaign and administration of Donald J. Trump. The integrity of media outlets has been increasingly subjected to attitudes of pragmatism and skepticism due to the prevalence of 'fake news'. Sentiments designated to calling out information as 'fake' holds value in the assessment of historical precedents given that the pertinence of 'fake news' has emerged in previous iterations such as Nazi propaganda. As of late, the journalistic integrity of the media has been called into question. This has contributed greatly to an atmosphere characterized by distrust and a lack of faith in mainstream media outlets. Examples of such occurrences have become increasingly prevalent in recent times, and reveal disturbing echoes of the campaign of disinformation practiced under Nazism. While comparing the Nazis with today's propaganda may seem hyperbolic, the deliberate assault on ethnic minorities or the

presence of foreign propaganda influencing domestic affairs cannot be overlooked. In previous analyses of propaganda, the tendency has been to place it into one oversimplified category defined by broad generalizations or to portray it as a side occurrence without addressing its nuances. Although no two propaganda campaigns serve the same purpose, propaganda in general rests on its adaptability and simplicity. In revealing these tendencies, the study of Nazi propaganda may provide salutary warnings for our own politics today.





(Figure 1) (*Clear the fields Peasants vote for Hitler list 1* Election Poster. Albrecht, Felix. F.J.M. Rehse Archiv f. Zeitgeschichte u. Publizistik München. 1933.)



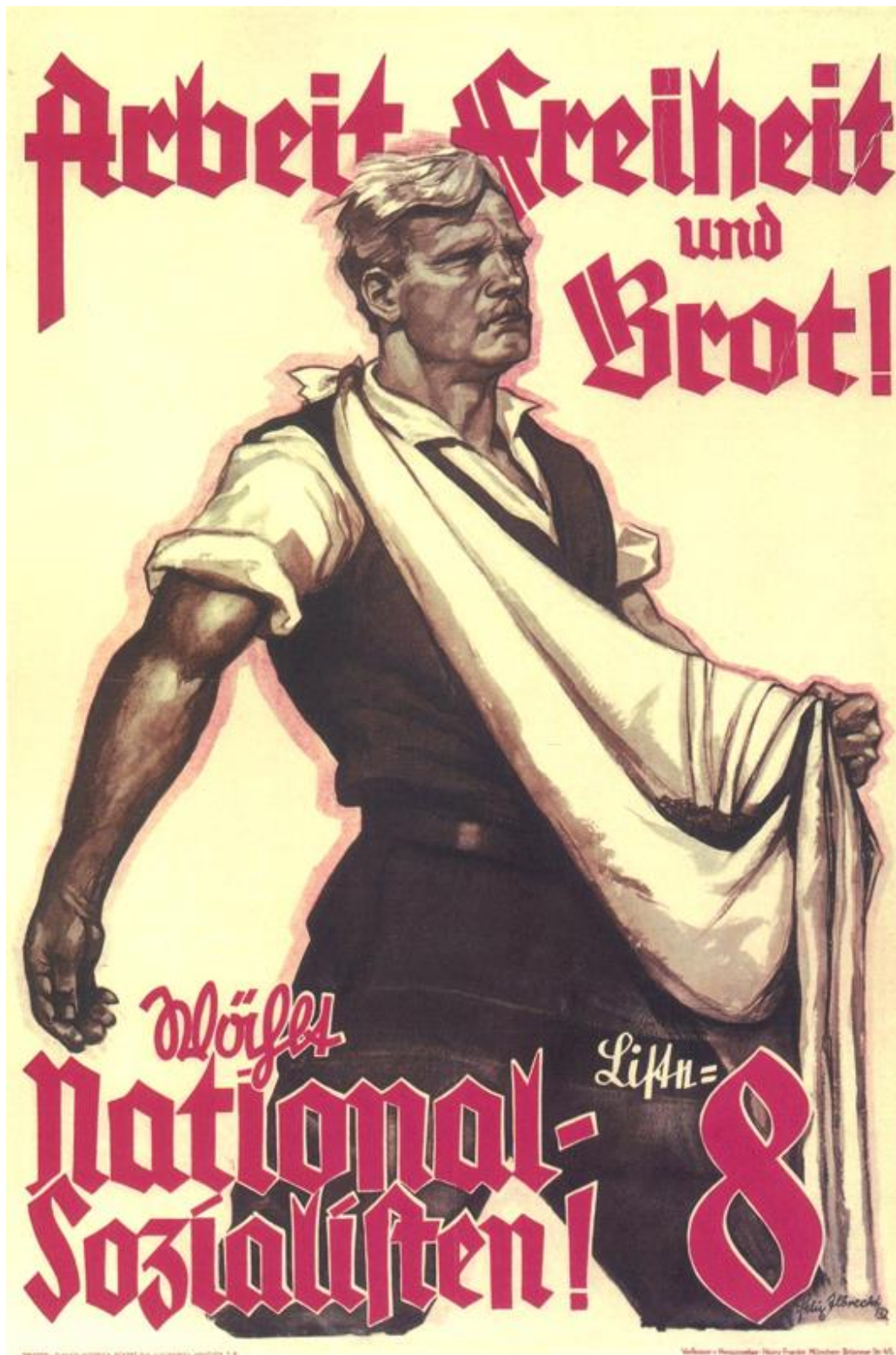


(Figure 2) (*Our Last Hope: Hitler* Election Poster. Schweitzer, Hans. vermutlich Reichspräsidentwahl Bundesarchiv. 1932.)



(Figure 3) (*Stop Now! Choose Hitler* Election Poster. Schweitzer, Hans. Reichspräsidentenwahl Bundesarchiv. 1932.)



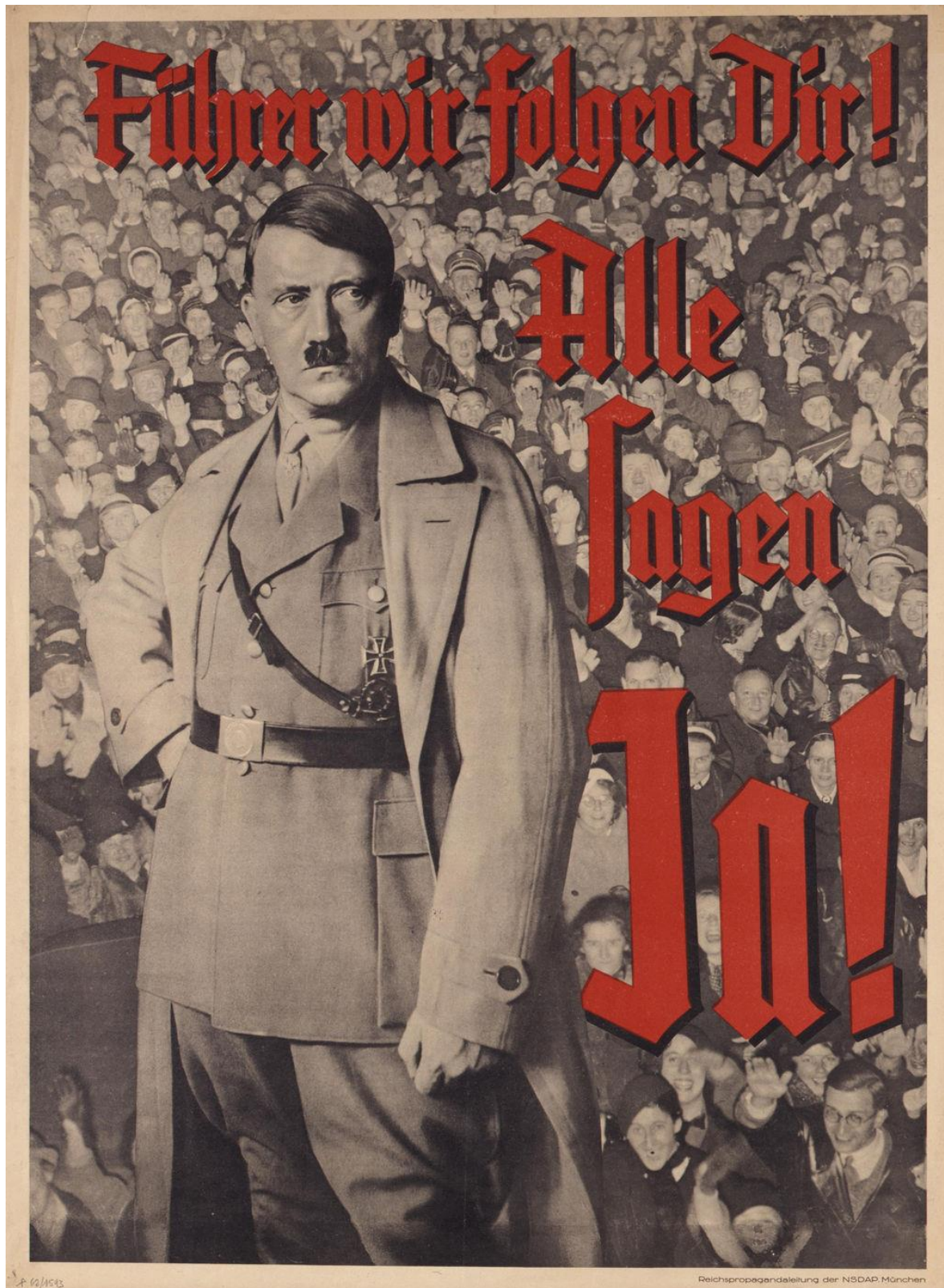


(Figure 4) (*Work, Freedom, Bread. Vote list 8 National-Socialism!* Election Poster. Albrecht, Felix. Landtagswahl Preußen. F.J.M. Rehse Archiv f. Zeitgeschichte u. Publizistik München. 1932.)



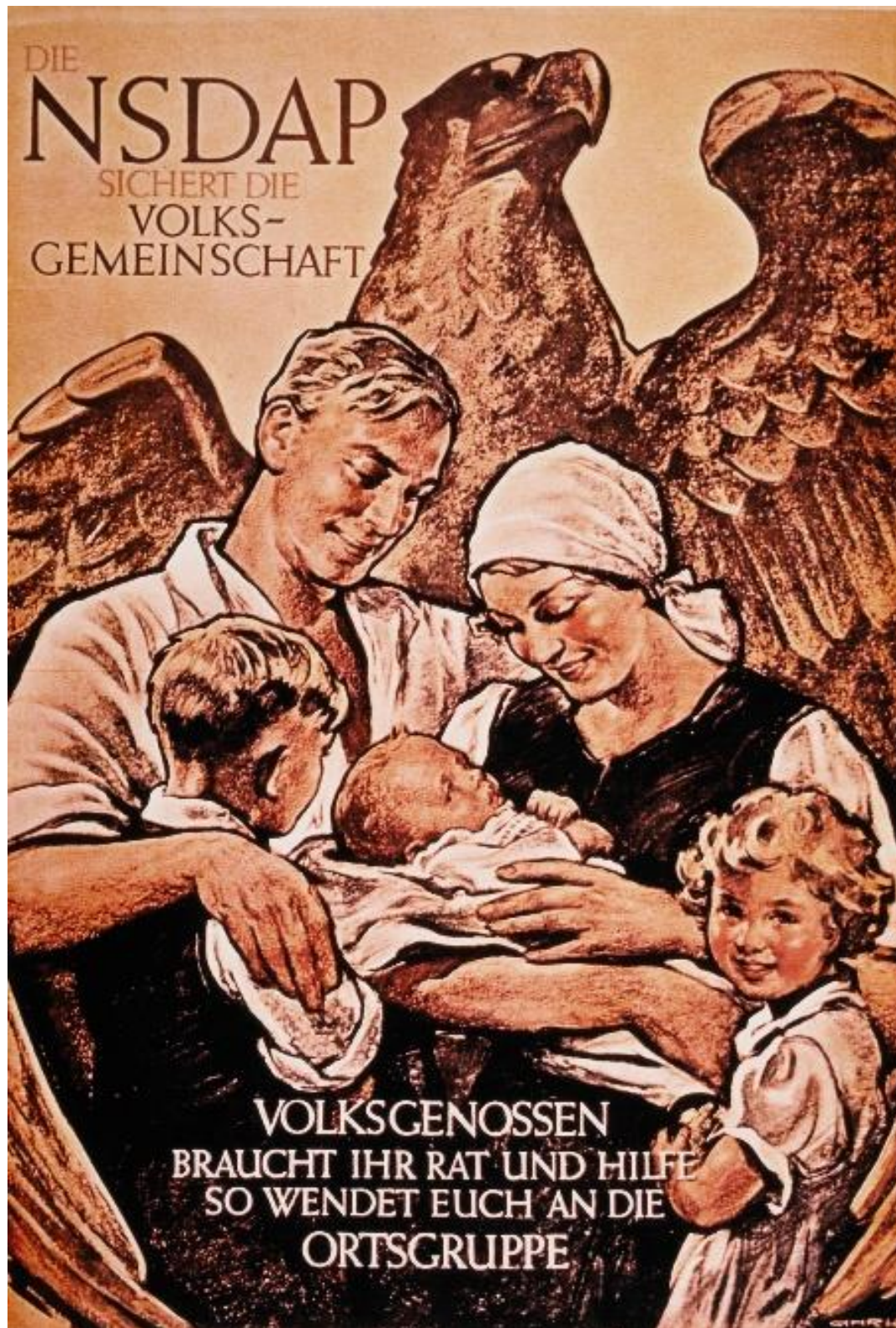
(Figure 5) (*In a time of great necessity Hindenburg elected Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor* Poster. Wurmb, P.v. Reichstagswahl Bundesarchiv, 1933.)





(Figure 6) (*Leader we follow you! All say yes!* Poster. Anonym. Volksabstimmung Bundesarchiv. 1934.)





(Figure 7) (*The NSDAP protects the people. Your fellow comrades need your advice and help, so join the local party organization.* Poster. Ahrlé, René. Carl v. der Linnepe, Lüdenscheid in Wesfalen. Bundesarchiv. 1933/39.)





(Figure 8) (*The German student fights for the leader and people in the team of the student's union NSD. Poster. Hohlwein, Ludwig. Mitgliederwerbung. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress 1936.*)



(Figure 9) (*League of German Girls in the Hitler Youth*. Poster. Hohlwein, Ludwig. Mitgliederwerbung. Reichsjugendführung, Willi Körber. Bundesarchiv. 1934.)



## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- “1934 Reichsparteitag, Nuremberg.” *Triumph des Willens*. Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Film.  
<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562205>
- “6th Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg.” *Triumph des Willens*. Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. (1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Film.  
<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562207>
- Bade, Wilfrid. "The Hitler Trial (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 27-30.
- "The Party Rally Day of Victory: The Victory of Faith (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 91-3.
- “Celebrating the Opening of the New Reichstag; Parades in Potsdam.” *Der Tag von Potsdam*. (1933; Potsdam, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum gift of Consuelo Kagan). Film. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1003817>
- Frank, Walter. "On the History of National Socialism (1939)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 40-42.
- Führbach, Hermann. "How I Became a National Socialist (1934)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 35-6.
- Goebbels, Joseph. "Communism with the Mask Off (1935)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 126-34.
- "Day of Potsdam: 22 March 1933." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 45-6.
- "German Women (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 316-19.
- "Radio as the Eighth Great Power (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 612-16.
- "The Tasks of the Ministry of Propaganda (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 455-57.

- Wille Und Weg*. 1931. pp. 2-5. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/wille.htm>.
- Göring, Hermann. "Radio Address: 30 January 1933." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 45.
- Gutterer, Leopold. "Propaganda Als Politik." *Zeitschrift Für Politik*. 26. 1936. 34-8. [www.jstor.org/stable/43527336](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43527336).
- Hadamovsky, Eugen. "Die lebende Brücke: Vom Wesen der Funkwartarbeit." in *Dein Rundfunk*. Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP. 1934. pp. 22-26. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/hada3.htm>
- Haller, Johannes. "The Epochs of German History (1936)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 285-87.
- Hess, Rudolf. "The Oath to Adolf Hitler (1934)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 74-76.
- Heydrich, Reinhard. "The Visible Enemy: The Jews (1935)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 197-99.
- Hitler, Adolf. and Abraham H. Foxman. *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 2002.
- Neumann, Franz Leopold. *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. 2009.
- "Nuremberg Rally 1934." *Triumph des Willens*. Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1935; Nuremberg, Germany: US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Film. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn562206>
- Oerter, Fritz. "Our Speakers in the Anti-Marxist Struggle: The Balance of an Election Year (1932)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 31-35.
- Rosenberg, Alfred. "Bolshevism: The Work of an Alien Race (1935)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 199-200.
- Schmitt, Carl. "State, Movement, Volk: The Tripartite Division of Political Unity (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 58-9.
- Sinclair, Thornton. "The Nazi Party Rally at Nuremberg." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2. no. 4. 1938. 570-83. [www.jstor.org/stable/2745103](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745103).

Six, Franz Alfred. "The Power of the Spoken Word (1936)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 86-87.

"The Propaganda of the Street and the Masses (1936)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 82-85.

*Triumph des Willens*. Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1935; Germany: Reichspropagandaleitung der NSDAP. 1935. Film.

Von Schirach, Baldur. "Hitler as No One Knows Him (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 72-4.

"The National Socialist Youth Movement (1933)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*. edited by Rabinbach Anson and Gilman Sander L. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2013. 253-54.

## Secondary Sources

Allen, William Sheridan. *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945*. Brattleboro, Vermont: Echo Point Books & Media Publishing. 2014.

Aly, Götz, and Jefferson S. Chase. *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt & Co. 2008.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 1966.

Bachrach, Susan D. and Steven Luckert. *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*. Washington D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2009.

Blackmore, Tim. *Gorgeous War: The Branding War Between the Third Reich and the United States*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 2019.

Bramsted, Ernest K. *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda, 1925-1945*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press. 1965.

Bytwerk, Randall L. "Grassroots Propaganda in the Third Reich: The Reich Ring for National Socialist Propaganda and Public Enlightenment." *German Studies Review* 33. no. 1. 2010. 93-118. [www.jstor.org/stable/40574929](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40574929).

Childers, Thomas. "The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote." *Journal of Contemporary History* 11. no. 4. 1976. 17-42. [www.jstor.org/stable/260190](http://www.jstor.org/stable/260190).

Chrystal, William G. "Nazi Party Election Films, 1927-1938." *Cinema Journal* 15. no. 1. 1975. 29-47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1225103>.

Doob, Leonard W. "Goebbels' Principles of Propaganda." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 14. no. 3. 1950. 419-42. [www.jstor.org/stable/2745999](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745999).

- Evans, Richard J. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. Vol. 1. London: Penguin. 2005.
- The Third Reich in Power*. New York: Penguin. 2005.
- Fritzsche, Peter. *Germans into Nazis*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1998.
- Grill, Johnpeter Horst. "The Nazi Party's Rural Propaganda before 1928." *Central European History* 15. no. 2. 1982. 149-85. [www.jstor.org/stable/4545955](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4545955).
- Hale, Oron James. *The Captive Press in the Third Reich*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1964. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0sz5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0sz5).
- Hanson, Victor Davis. *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won*. New York: Basic Books. 2017.
- Kater, Michael H. *Culture in Nazi Germany*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press. 2019. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvfc542q](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvfc542q).
- Kershaw, Ian. *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford University Press. 1987.
- Koonz, Claudia. *The Nazi Conscience*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2003.
- Koshar, Rudy. "From Stammtisch to Party: Nazi Joiners and the Contradictions of Grass Roots Fascism in Weimar Germany." *The Journal of Modern History* 59. no. 1. 1987. 2-24. [www.jstor.org/stable/1880375](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1880375).
- Lemmons, Russel. *Goebbels and Der Angriff*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. 2015.
- Meaney, John W. "Propaganda as Psychological Coercion." *The Review of Politics* 13. no. 1. 1951. 64-87. [www.jstor.org/stable/1404637](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1404637).
- Noakes, Jeremy. "Conflict and Development in the NSDAP 1924-1927." *Journal of Contemporary History* 1. no. 4. 1966. 3-36. [www.jstor.org/stable/259890](http://www.jstor.org/stable/259890).
- Ohr, Dieter. "Political Meetings of the National Socialists and the Increase of the NSDAP Vote: Analyzing Conditions of Propaganda Effects with Aggregate Data." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 22. no. 1 81. 1997. 29-58. [www.jstor.org/stable/20756115](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20756115).
- O'Shaughnessy, Nicholas. *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2016.
- Overly, Richard J. *The Nazi Economic Recovery 1932-1938*. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Pratkanis, Anthony R., Anthony Pratkanis, and Elliot Aronson. *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1992.

- Roland, Paul. *Life in the Third Reich: Daily Life in Nazi Germany 1933-1945*. London: Arcturus. 2017.
- Siemens, Daniel. *Stormtroopers: A New History of Hitler's Brownshirts*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2017.
- Soussloff, Catherine M. and Bill Nichols. "Leni Riefenstahl: The Power of the Image." *Discourse* 18. no. 3. 1996. 20-44. [www.jstor.org/stable/41389418](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389418).
- Stachura, Peter D. "The Ideology of the Hitler Youth in the Kampfzeit." *Journal of Contemporary History* 8. no. 3. 1973. 155-67. [www.jstor.org/stable/260285](http://www.jstor.org/stable/260285).
- "The Political Strategy of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933." *German Studies Review* 3. no. 2. 1980. 261-88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1429723>.
- Stanley, Jason. *How Propaganda Works*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2015.
- Stern, Joseph P. *Hitler: The Führer and the People*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press. 1975.
- Volker, Ulrich. and Jefferson Chase. *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939*. New York: Knopf. 2016.
- Welch, David. *Nazi Propaganda (RLE Nazi Germany & Holocaust): The Power and the Limitations*. New York: Routledge. 1983.
- "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community." *Journal of Contemporary History* 39. no. 2. 2004. 213-38. [www.jstor.org/stable/3180722](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180722).