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The Image of the Enemy: To Auschwitz with Righteousness.

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The Image of the Enemy:
To Auschwitz with Righteousness

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of University Honors

By

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February 25, 2011

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study and analysis of Nazi propaganda, specifically focusing on the medium of film. Throughout Hitler's Third Reich, propaganda played a vital role in maintaining popular support for the party platform in addition to fueling the convictions of the Nazi elite. There are three main divisions to this study. First, an overview of the structure and organization of Nazi Germany and particularly The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda will be given, followed by an exploration of the origins and evolution of anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. Last, two Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda films will be analyzed to exemplify the whole of Nazi propaganda. Specifically, an emphasis will be made that these films played a significant role in solidifying and sustaining the mentalities and actions desired by the Nazi regime. Consequently, these films can be correlated to historical events which occurred before and after 1940.

While there are inherent limits on the study of history, this thesis utilizes two films released in 1940 as primary sources. Despite the language barrier that one would think would make research difficult, the primary and secondary sources used in this thesis have been translated and edited in to English. Even so, words can and do have various connotations, thus one must exercise caution to not take certain quoted material and stretch or add meaning to what may have actually been meant. Where appropriate, words in both English and German are included in order to help the reader. This thesis concludes with a broad discussion on the modern existence of anti-Semitism and what today's society may learn from Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The motivation for this project comes from taking a special topics summer course, “The Shock of the New: Cinema in Weimar Germany.” Who knew watching and analyzing silent films could actually be intriguing and fun. Since that class and the later “History of the Holocaust” course, I have wrestled back and forth with ideas to focus on and films to use in my thesis project. Much gratitude is due to Dr. Fritz for his guidance and willingness to extend his knowledge to me before and during this project. I also thank Dr. Watson for his support over these past few years. It may be rare to find a student majoring in history, but who ultimately enters the profession of medicine. For this, I thank the entire history department for doing a terrific job at making history enjoyable and challenging. I also appreciate Dr. Cody’s encouragement to study one’s passions, and Dr. Barker’s expertise on film studies. The reading and research phase of this project would have been much more difficult if it were not for the ETSU interlibrary loan system. On the same note, I am thankful for finding the Chicago based International Historic Films, Inc.; I recommend them to any student or professor looking to find rare films. Finally, I thank my grandparents who raised me and instilled in me the work ethic and values that I have today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO NAZI GERMANY

“Heil Hitler!” – The Rise of Nazi Germany

Imagine film as a weapon. Certainly, unlike the gun, films do not directly cause bloodshed and loss of life; however, film can be used in such a way as to prepare and numb a society for such future actions. This is the case for Nazi Germany and its intricately structured propaganda machine. This thesis will show how the Nazi Party created this machine and used it for such purposes. Specifically, this thesis will examine two films released in 1940, *Jew Sues* (*Jud Suess*) and *The Eternal Jew* (*Der ewige Jude*), to reveal how Nazi leaders utilized the medium of film as a conduit to streamline political and anti-Semitic ideas to the German populace in an effort to solidify preexisting notions and prepare people for the coming atrocities of the Holocaust.

The term “propaganda” originated in a religious setting in 1622 when Pope Gregory XV created the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. This body had the task of spreading Catholicism in the New World and thwarting Protestantism in Europe, and just over three-hundred years later, propaganda found in Nazi Germany could be seen as applying to society in a religious sense. That is, Nazi leaders let their worldview encompass all aspects of life in both their own elite ranks and that of the ordinary citizen. Randall Bytwerk asserts that propaganda is a necessary consequence of the flow of technology. Amidst a diversity of media outlets (radio, television, newspaper, film), propaganda allows governments to easily inform and satisfy citizens. Out of the many ways to explicitly define the term “propaganda,” Jacques Ellul describes it best as “a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through

psychological manipulation and incorporated in an organization.’’¹ Interestingly, Bytwerk makes a valid point by explaining that in propaganda, there is not *just* an evil propagandist seeking out an innocent citizen, but instead, there is a citizen who actively seeks propaganda as a source of information; the propagandist merely satisfies the citizen’s desire.²

Prior to Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) taking full control of Germany, the country was run by the democratic Weimar Republic government, which assumed power in 1919. The specifics of Weimar failures and crises will be discussed later, but for now, it is important to note the significance of elections and the activities of the Nazi Party during the Weimar era. In the 1928 elections, the NSDAP received just over 800,000 votes, but by 1932, the number increased to nearly fourteen million. These numbers indicate that in just four years, the Nazi Party went from receiving three percent to nearly forty percent of the popular vote. Consequently, the NSDAP became the largest political party in the Reichstag, and equally important, this shift in politics cleared the way for Hitler’s Chancellorship.³ Reasonably enough, one may wonder how the Nazis appealed to so many citizens within such a short period of time. David Welch asserts that the Nazi Party achieved success because it focused heavily on integrating the bifurcated middle class. Collectively known as the *Mittlestand*, the “old middle class,” made up of farmers, artisans, and small shop owners, and the “new middle class,” made up of white-collar workers, felt threatened by the economic instability and exceedingly high unemployment during the Weimar Republic. The Nazis, in turn, were viewed on one hand to be liberating Germany from capitalism, while on the other hand to be revolutionaries determined to

¹ Randall L. Bytwerk, *Bending Spines – The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and The German Democratic Republic* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3-4.

³ David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (New York: Routledge Publishing Co., 1993), 9-10.

create a new social order. As time progressed in these early years of the Nazi Party, an active and efficient propaganda machine was developed to help undercut the already weak Weimar Republic, and as Welch further contends, “What distinguished the NSDAP from other parties in opposition was its ability to combine the themes of traditional German nationalism with Nazi ideological motifs.”⁴

One of the first propaganda activities of the Nazi Party began in 1925 with the Party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Unlike the Weimar political press which released lengthy articles, the *Völkischer Beobachter* publications used short phrases filled with over exaggerations and emphasis on National Socialist subjects such as “the evil of Jewry and Bolshevism, the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty, [and] the weakness of Weimar parliamentarianism.” All of these articles were accompanied by popular and effective Nazi slogans, particularly “*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*” (“One people, one nation, one leader”), that emphasized the key themes of unity and racial community.⁵ In 1928, Hitler appointed the skilled and clever propagandist Joseph Goebbels to be in charge of all Nazi propaganda efforts. Notably, in the early years of the Nazi Party, the use of mass communications such as radio, film, television, and newspaper was absent; however, under the leadership of Goebbels, the Party rapidly increased its use of these mediums as a result of Hitler and Goebbels’ belief in their value of spreading propaganda to the masses.⁶

On February 1, 1933, just two days after being appointed chancellor by President Paul von Hindenburg, Adolf Hitler addressed the German people via a radio broadcast. At the top of his agenda was maintaining Germany’s cultural, religious, and political legacies, and solving

⁴ Welch, *The Third Reich*, 15-16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Germany's social and economic problems. Compared to the late 1920s, the favored message of the Nazi Party was now political consensus, not ideological radicalism. Hitler focused on a broad, conservative agenda that many Germans supported. Decreasing unemployment, placing emphasis on Christianity as the basis of moral life, defending family, creating political unity, and preventing the country from falling into Communist hands were top priorities for Hitler. Notably, anti-Semitic ideologies were kept to a minimum at this early stage.

Out of widespread fear of a possible Communist uprising, Hitler seized the opportunity and passed legislation that eradicated civil liberties. With the Reichstag dissolved, Hitler called for new elections. The February 4, 1933, temporary "Decree for the Protection of the German People" limited the press and gave police the authority to stop political rallies, thus halting all election campaigning. This act was followed by a more serious revocation of civil freedoms subsequent to the February 27 burning of the Reichstag building. While the nature of this fire is still undetermined, Hitler blamed Communists and used the fire as an opportunity to thwart political opposition. Thus, the February 28 "Decree for the Protection of the People and the State" suspended the rights to assembly and free speech and press; powers were also granted to arrest and imprison political dissidents.

In the last free elections held on March 5, 1933, the Nazi Party received approximately seventeen million votes (44 percent of total votes). Later in the same month, the Party and its conservative allies passed an Enabling Act, known formally as the "Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the State," that transferred legislative power to the executive branch, thus allowing Hitler to enact laws without parliamentary approval. The law passed with disapproval from only the Social Democratic Party which had just 96 seats out of 441 total Reichstag seats;

although the Communist Party had 81 seats, it was banned following the election and could not even vote.⁷

Paralleled to these political events were the actions of the paramilitary troopers, *Sturmabteilung* (SA), and the elite party bodyguards, *Schutzstaffeln* (SS). These forces beat and arrested those deemed to be political opponents of the Nazi Party. By mid March, 1933, SS leader Heinrich Himmler opened the first concentration camp located at Dachau, near Munich. By July, this and other similar camps held nearly thirty thousand political prisoners. These police and military actions coupled with the political events gave way for Hitler's desired single-party state where all other parties were either banned or forced into dissolution.⁸

The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda

With full control of Germany nearly complete, the Nazi Party had effectively removed Weimar democracy and transitioned Germany into a one-party state. Propaganda initially served as both a vital tool to win over Germans who did not support Hitler and to push onward with Nazi programs. At each step, propagandists put forth a favorable message of national unity; later messages not emphasized at this point by the Nazis would come to signify the campaigns that made possible the persecution of Jews and other groups of undesirables.⁹ According to David Welch, Hitler did not try to hide his dislike for the masses. Hitler was convinced they were “malleable and corrupt...[and] feminine by nature and attitude.”¹⁰ Hitler even wrote in his 1925 autobiography and political theory book *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) that “[p]ropaganda must always address itself to the broad masses of the people. Propaganda is not meant for the

⁷ Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, *State of Deception – The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 63-64.

⁸ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 66.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰ Welch, *The Third Reich*, 11.

intellectual classes.”¹¹ Hitler further argued that propaganda must be directed to people through a “popular form” and that its intellectual content must be fixed at a level that would not go above the head of the least intellectual member of an audience. The function of propaganda was to “awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to its feelings,”¹² and undoubtedly, all forms of Nazi propaganda abided by this idea and capitalized on the German people’s fear of enemies undermining the nation’s internal unity and threatening its stability. Hitler believed that the capacities of the masses were limited; their ability to understand was minimal, and memories were quick to fade. As such, he wrote that “all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare essentials, and these must be expressed as far as possible in stereotyped formulas.”¹³ Overall, Hitler’s propaganda aims centered on notions of simplicity, uniformity, concentration, and repetition. To insure cooperation and agreement, Hitler placed emphasis on reinforcing propaganda at all levels with fear and threats of violence.¹⁴ By arousing the people’s emotions of fear, love, hatred, and idealism Hitler and his propaganda machine sought to bring information and ideologies to the whole German nation. If, however, the message presented to the masses failed to stay on the course outlined in *Mein Kampf*, then the effort was sure to fail.

On March 11, 1933, just over a month after coming to power, Hitler established the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Two days later on March 13, Joseph Goebbels was appointed to lead the Ministry. The process of forming the Ministry began in early 1933, but because of upcoming elections in March, Hitler decided to postpone the formal

¹¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf – Official Nazi English Translation* (LaVergne, TN: Elite Minds Inc., 2009), 129.

¹² Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 130.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Welch, *The Third Reich*, 11, 15.

announcement until shortly after. The Ministry would prove to give Nazi propaganda efforts the “mark of legality,” and of course, a continued way for the Party to inform and persuade the masses.¹⁵ President von Hindenberg issued a statement that outlined the purpose of the Ministry to be a means of “enlightening and propagandizing the people with regard to the policies of the Reich government and the national reconstruction of the German fatherland.”¹⁶ In effect, a revolution was underway. With respect to transforming the German people into a body abiding and agreeing with National Socialist tendencies, little to no violence would be used; instead, Nazi leaders sought to “transform the nation through a revolution of the spirit.”¹⁷ The task of aligning the German people together (*Gleichschaltung*) in common agreement with the new Nazi worldview (*Weltanschauung*) was the responsibility of the Ministry. Soon after the Ministry was established, the press, arts, scientific institutions, and entertainment industry all came under the influence of Nazi rule. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler clearly expected the usefulness of propaganda in creating a Germany ruled entirely by the Nazi regime,¹⁸ and in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, Hitler further proclaimed that “decontamination” of Germany was of utmost priority. To achieve such a goal, “the whole educational system, theater, film, literature, the press, and broadcasting” were to fall subservient to Nazi principles for the overall hope of maintaining “the eternal values” of Germany.¹⁹ Nazi propaganda sought to rally the citizenry ideologically. That is, by introducing the idea of a German community and consciousness in addition to German superiority over other groups of people, propaganda would help form attitudes in a society awakened by the most basic

¹⁵ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 9.

¹⁶ Hilmar Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda – Film and National Socialism, 1933-1945*, Trans. by John A. Broadwin and V.R. Berghahn (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 90.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 66.

of instincts, primarily fear, but also accompanied by idealism and the hope for a new society that would rectify the crises of the previous two decades.²⁰

The burning of thousands of supposedly anti-Nazi books and pamphlets throughout Germany in March, 1933, represented the beginning of an era of state censorship and control of nearly all forms of public and cultural life. Speaking in Berlin, Goebbels put forth his gratitude for the people taking part in the burning and asserted that “[o]ut of these ashes the phoenix of a new age will rise.”²¹ These book burnings paralleled the push to gain control of the press and media outlets. Through the “Editors Law” of October 4, 1933, the organization responsible for admitting people into these professions was to keep track of the racial purities of workers, thereby effectively preventing those judged to have any degree of “Jewish blood” from entering the professions. Furthermore, Clause 14 of the law made clear the requirement of writers and editors to omit information that could weaken the Reich, either domestically or abroad.²² From Berlin, the Ministry even went to the extent of issuing daily directives issued to propaganda offices throughout Germany outlining what stories and information could or could not be released to the public. Those in media and press outlets faced being fired or sent to concentration camps if they did not comply with the Nazi directives. Ironically, Goebbels, previously a journalist, wrote in his own diary, ““Any man who still has a residue of honor will be very careful not to become a journalist.””²³

Goebbels and his Ministry took control of the arts by ruling which artists and what content could be made available to the public. “Degenerate art” was banned, and Nazi-approved

²⁰ Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 91-92.

²¹ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 67.

²² *Ibid.*, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*, 70.

“*völkisch* art” was permitted and embraced for its value to German culture. Hitler was insistent that *all* culture came from the Aryan. Phrases such as “German culture,” “German blood,” and “the German national community” explicitly made anything or anyone not deemed German to be an outcast and undesirable. Only true Germans were believed to possess the noble virtues of “cleanliness, discipline, courage, the spirit of sacrifice, loyalty, [and] honor;”²⁴ the motto “*Meine Ehre heißt Treue*” (“Loyalty is my honor”) was even inscribed on the belt buckle of every man in the *Schutzstaffel*. Such captivating phrases and ideas were used in propaganda to “prepare the nation for Hitler’s wars of conquest [and] to justify them as legitimate acts of defense.”²⁵

Director of the Ministry’s Broadcasting Department Eugen Hadomovsky believed that he and his workers were “the SA of propaganda.”²⁶ Just as the SA openly roamed the streets and visited any house it wished, those involved with Reich radio broadcasting saw their work in a similar light as they, too, entered the streets and homes of nearly every German and effectively spread National Socialist ideas. It is important to note that not all broadcasts were explicit political propaganda; Goebbels actually reserved significant amounts of time for entertainment programs. With many Germans purchasing the cheap “people’s receivers” (*Volksempfänger*), the nation became the second largest radio audience in the world. In addition to the prevalence of these radios in most homes, businesses, and restaurants, Nazi officials also made use of loudspeakers in public gathering spots. These speakers were used for “national moments” which sought to “forge bonds of patriotic unity” by promoting communal listening.²⁷ Though the Nazi Party exerted control over nearly all mediums of art and communication and unquestionably

²⁴ Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 70.

communicated their messages to the German public in an effective manner, the use of film would prove to yield the most striking forms of Nazi propaganda.

Nationalization of the German Film Industry

Prior to 1927, the Nazi Party realized the potential of film propaganda, but had little experience in production and funds for such endeavors were minimal. Films produced up to this year were mainly compilations of party gatherings and marches. In 1927, however, the tide of Nazi film propaganda shifted. In that year, Alfred Hugenberg, head of the conservative German National People's Party (DNVP), purchased Ufa (*Unversum-Film-Aktiengesellschaft*), the country's largest and most celebrated film company. From here on, NSDAP activities were recorded by Ufa and shown to the German public. In 1932, regional film offices (*Landesfilmstellen*) were created to distribute Party films while the Film Service (*Filmamt*) was in charge of film production. By fall of 1932, Goebbels had successfully centered all film activities under his control in Berlin. During these years, the film industry continued to suffer from economic turmoil, bankruptcy, and dwindling attendance figures. The film industry responded by adopting the SPIO-Plan of 1932. Under the direction of SPIO, the industry's main representative body, this plan sought to form an agreement among all sectors involved in the industry while maintaining its traditional structure. Yet by early 1933, the Nazi effort to organize and centralize the film industry undermined the German Cinema Owners' Association by getting Adolf Engl elected as head of the Association; Engl was also leader of the Nazi Film Theatre Cells, the Nazi's own professional film association. Consequently, the Nazis had successfully infiltrated one of their own into the industry and guaranteed that Nazi influences would permeate the entire industry from that point onward.²⁸

²⁸ David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2007), 5-7.

In effect, the Nazi takeover of the German Cinema Owners' Association began what would be a "plethora of complex laws, decrees and intricate state machinery" designed to achieve conformity of the industry and public, consequently helping the Party achieve coordination (*Gleichschaltung*) of the cinema industry. Although Goebbels was realistic and believed in the idea that the industry would not respond favorably to extremism, those seeking to use radical measures to help achieve control over the film industry accomplished their goal; Engl's election to the Association brought the resignation of every other member on the board. By May, 1933, the Nazi Party banned all trade unions, and the film industry's trade union DACHO (*Dach-Organisation der Filmschaffenden Deutschlands e.V.*) disbanded and became part of the only trade union allowed under Nazi control, the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*).²⁹

Given the importance of the medium in possible propaganda success, as the Nazis assumed full control in Germany they intensified their focus on reformation of the film industry. By the summer of 1933, the Nazis had created the Reich Film Chamber (*Reichsfilmkammer*, RFK), and on September 22, 1933, Goebbels "decided to extend the idea to the whole of German life" and thus created the Reich Chamber of Culture (*Reichskulturkammer*, RKK). In all, the RKK was made up of seven Chambers (*Kammern*): film, literature, theatre, music, fine arts, press, and radio. The creation of the RKK illustrates the efforts made to coordinate not only a nation's film industry, but the whole of social and cultural life. As David Welch points out, however, these efforts did not achieve exactly what Goebbels and Hitler hoped for with respect to the film industry – "harmonization of all branches of the industry" – but it did succeed in

²⁹ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 9.

restricting personal and artistic freedoms.³⁰ To alleviate any misgivings the Nazis faced from the industry, Goebbels created the private, limited-liability company *Filmkreditbank* (FKB) to provide credit and financing for the industry; however, the FKB was just another Nazi arm helping the Party achieve its control of the film industry. In fact, the FKB could refuse to finance a film until it conformed to the standards and expectations of the Nazi Party. An additional function of the RFK was the removal of all “degenerate” artists and employees from the industry, given the policy that only “true” Germans could take part in such activities. Curt Belling, an ardent Nazi supporter, claimed that “70 per cent of all scripts were written by Jews; almost 50 per cent of directors working in Germany were Jewish; and 70 per cent of all production companies were owned by Jews.”³¹ Welch, however, reports that these statistics are an over exaggeration of the actual Jewish influence in the film industry. One may conclude, therefore, that the Nazis might have hoped that such figures would inflame and stir up hatred against Jews.³²

To further limit any anti-Nazi backlash as a result of their control over the film industry and to extend his influence even more over the industry, Goebbels proclaimed the “Reich Cinema Law” in February, 1934. Instead of just preventing “bad” films from being produced, this law promoted “good” films, too. Such effort was achieved in three ways: “a compulsory script censorship, an increase in the number of provisions which...might ban a film, and a greatly enlarged system of distinction marks (*Prädikate*).”³³ Perhaps the most important aspect of this legislation was the creation of a pre-censor (*Vorensor*) who was an official of the Ministry

³⁰ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

called the Reich Film Director (*Reichsfilmdramaturg*) and functioned at a film's pre-production stages. That is, a producer was required to submit a brief overview of the film's plot, and if the plot passed screening, then the full script of the film could be written and submitted for further review. Only after both stages were passed could a film actually begin production.³⁴ By the mid-thirties, this office also helped to create an industry nearly free of any Jewish influence.³⁵ While the "Reich Cinema Law" sought to promote "positive" films, the system of distinction marks was in reality a form of negative control and taxation. Prior to this law, it was considered an honor for a film to be given distinction marks; such awards even allowed film companies to receive tax deductions. With the law enacted, however, the old system remained in place, but with the added requirement that any film hoping to be shown in public *must* receive some form of distinction marks. Examples of award titles included: "Politically valuable...Artistically valuable...Valuable for Youth...[and] Nationally valuable."³⁶ In their relevance to propaganda, these distinction marks were actually a means of informing the audiences on the content of a particular film. For instance, Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and Wolfgang Liebeneiner's *I Accuse* (1941) both received the award "Politically valuable" for their assumed value in the areas of rallying German spirit and rationalizing euthanasia programs, respectively.³⁷ As one further point illustrating the Nazi control over life in German, Goebbels banned all forms of art criticism in late 1936, limiting critics to writing merely "descriptive reviews."³⁸

³⁴ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 13-14.

³⁵ David Weinberg, "Approaches to the Study of Film in the Third Reich: A Critical Appraisal" *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, (1984): 111.

³⁶ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Complete nationalization and centralization of the German film industry neared completion in January, 1942, when all film studios were absorbed into the newly formed organization *Ufa-Film GmbH* (referred to as Ufi to distinguish it from the older Ufa studios). Aristotle Kallis writes that there are two ways of interpreting the formation of Ufi. On one hand, Ufi represents the peak of a step-by-step process of intentional centralization and ideological takeover of the film industry. Alternatively, one can just as easily view the formation of Ufi as a result of the transition from peace to wartime. That is, the outbreak of World War II “released the regime from the burden of accountability,” consequently allowing Nazi leaders to pursue and achieve long-term goals in a matter of months, versus slowly transitioning the industry to be controlled by the Nazi Party. While Kallis admits that deciphering the exact cause of the final act of the “nazification” of the film industry “remains a moot point,” he notes that January, 1942, was a “real turning point” for the Nazi regime.³⁹ As will be discussed in the next chapter, the ideological radicalization of anti-Semitism in Germany took momentous leaps in the summer of 1941 and early 1942. The Party’s actions to nationalize the film industry correlate with the process of strengthening and escalating violence against Jews. That is, “for both economic and political reasons,” supervising and monitoring closely the film industry at all stages of production was vital in order to propagate ideology and insure propaganda success.⁴⁰ In the end, Goebbels and his Ministry officials found themselves in a position to “wield substantial power and influence” through the medium of film. Given the relatively smooth coordination of the industry as a result of measures leading up to the creation of Ufi, Goebbels and his Propaganda Ministry seemed unstoppable. As history would tell, however, the Nazi Party would have a

³⁹ Aristotle A. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24-25.

⁴⁰ Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 25.

World War on its hands, and despite propaganda efforts to build and maintain an undying German spirit, the United States and its allies would prove to be the ultimate victors in stopping Nazi Germany from being successful.⁴¹

Interestingly, there exists a debate among scholars as to what amount of German films produced under the Third Reich were actually propagandistic in nature. Historian David Hull believes that “no more than twenty-five per cent” of such movies actually contained propaganda messages. This number is arrived at by including explicitly propagandistic films and reasoning that some producers even got away with not following Nazi rules, thus releasing films that were valued solely for entertainment quality. In contrast to this position is Erwin Leiser’s argument that all films released during the Third Reich contained some degree of propaganda. By dissolving the distinction between entertainment and political films, Leiser insists that “even escapist films contained Nazi ideals or at least served to lull German audiences into forgetfulness.”⁴² These arguments bring up a vital idea to consider. As historians analyzing the past, we must not judge and divide in such a way as to forget the complexities of the past. Essentially, both Hull and Leiser pose valid assessments of film during the Third Reich, and perhaps this discussion is better served by admitting that, quite possibly, the reality was a combination of the two sides. The Nazi regime was surely determined to objectify its worldview, but as David Weinberg points out, “[b]ecause it was irrational, it was necessary for the regime to control every aspect of reality.” In essence, films, with their intrinsic ability to “distort reality and to mesmerize audiences,” proved extremely valuable to the success of the Nazi propaganda

⁴¹ Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 26.

⁴² Weinberg, “Approaches to the Study of Film,” 112.

machine.⁴³ The apparent commitment of the Nazi regime to Aryanization suggests that ideology played a significant part in shaping film policies. To the Ministry, economy and propaganda success were linked in the sense that by producing films with messages aligned with ideals of National Socialism, especially the ideas of German unity and the purity of German blood, people would “again flock to movie theatres and German film-making would thrive.”⁴⁴

Public Response to Nazi Propaganda

So how did the German public respond to Nazi propaganda measures? To obtain this information, the Nazi Party utilized two forms of population sampling: Party reports and SD reports. Undoubtedly, propaganda success on a total population scale can be easily achieved if leaders know what the public thinks and feels about official government ideas and actions; however, one must admit that, in a totalitarian state, the ease with which people readily divulge their true beliefs is lessened. By 1938, Party reports often labeled as “Political Situation Reports” or “Morale Reports” contained information that was relayed to the central leadership both monthly and weekly, depending on the importance and relevance of the content. Weekly regional reports incorporated information obtained from offices such as the Propaganda Department and Department for Peasants. One thing was certain, the Nazi elite demanded and emphasized the importance of regular collection and reporting of information to gauge current public sentiments. The end of most reports contained information and evaluations of propaganda measures. The first portion of these sections contained information on local and regional office activities and efforts to distribute propaganda to the masses. The remaining portion contained ““reviews”” of propaganda and the effectiveness of such efforts.⁴⁵

⁴³ Weinberg, “Approaches to the Study of Film,” 113.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

In most cases, the reports portrayed Party activities favorably; the few negative comments were usually accompanied with extensive detail. Overall, one must consider the Party Reports carefully given the plausible argument that people living in a totalitarian state do not “air their doubts and criticisms of the regime in the presence of its representatives.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, those functionaries writing and distributing the reports may have only reported positive sentiment, considering the notion that their jobs were to instill in the masses positive attitudes toward the Nazis actions and ideas. In essence, their job successes would be judged by higher authorities directly from information compiled in the reports, and given the belief of some historians that high ranking Nazi officials sometimes edited, omitted, and even deliberately translocated pieces of one regional report to another region’s report, one may find it difficult to assess the true state of public opinion by using Party Reports. As Unger reasonably notes, reading these reports may even cause one to believe that public opinion remained unchanged throughout World War II, even in the face of defeat.⁴⁷

The SD reports, however, reflect the ups and downs of the masses “closely and, on the whole, plausibly.”⁴⁸ Contrasted to general statements made in Party Reports such as “the mood is good,” SD reports sought to validate their claims with direct quotations from those people sampled. Generally speaking, the SD had fewer motives for hiding any unpleasant truths obtained from sampling the public versus the Nazi Party functionaries. Although inherently difficult to cast any certainty on this issue, Unger believes that the impression gained from

⁴⁵ Aryeh L. Unger, “The Public Opinion Reports of the Nazi Party” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 29, no. 4, (1966): 565-568.

⁴⁶ Unger, “*The Public Opinion Reports*,” 570.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 571-574.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 572.

reading the SD reports is that the “SD allowed few inhibitions to stand in the way in presenting its picture of public opinion that was wholly unadorned and, for the Nazi leadership, often highly unflattering.”⁴⁹ The difference between Party and SD Reports can best be seen in propaganda reporting. While both incidental and deliberate changes were made to even minor criticisms in Party Reports by the time they reached the high command, SD reports did not hesitate to unveil the shortcomings of propaganda. By January 1943, SD reports noted that the general public was “‘against all propaganda’” as a result of its “‘overbearing and boastful character.’”⁵⁰ An SD report released several months later in 1943 stated that people were tired and sickened by the anti-Jewish campaign. The existence of two opposite institutions of public reporting gives credence to the argument that analyzing and gaining credible information from opinion reporting is minimal. At the same time, however, reporting in the Third Reich as revealed through matter-of-fact SD reporting allows historians to draw more valid and logical conclusions on the state of public attitudes versus the unreliable Party Reports. Perhaps just as important is the idea that as a result of reported public distaste for Nazi propaganda, especially in the later years of Nazi rule, one may agree with the suggestion that not all Germans were in fact staunch Nazi supporters. This is not to say that Germans were blind of the actions being perpetrated by the Nazis, but realistically, it seems far-fetched to conclude that all German citizens supported the Nazi Party in all of its policies.

Myth & Credibility

With control over nearly all mass media and cultural institutions achieved by the Nazi’s propaganda machine, how did they maintain credibility and support? To begin answering this question, one can view the two myths of *Der Führer* (the Leader) and the *Volksgemeinschaft* (the

⁴⁹ Unger, “The Public Opinion Reports,” 578.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 579.

national community) as the primary means of keeping the German public interconnected with the objectives of the Nazi Party. In the 1920s, Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party, but once control of Germany was achieved, he became the leader of all Germans. The “Heil Hitler” expression and the arm salute known even in today’s society signified allegiance to Hitler’s Germany. Anyone not conforming to these standards stood in opposition to the Nazi Party and its political and social goals. Success in foreign and domestic social affairs increased Hitler’s popularity. For instance, the regaining of territory lost as a result of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles and the gaining of Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938 contributed to boosting German pride. Propaganda claimed Hitler “initiated the rebirth of Germany” and remedied Weimar era failures and embarrassments. Propaganda contrasting grave economic conditions such as high inflation and unemployment coupled with the shame of the Versailles Treaty experienced during Weimar Germany made Hitler’s Germany favorable for many citizens. Hitler was portrayed as a savior of the German people, a man working to build a national community built upon principles of racial, cultural, and social harmonies. Interrelated with the Hitler myth was that of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Given the Weimar failures and World War I defeat, some Germans yearned for renewed strength, harmony, and order. Others chose to view the prospect favorably because of the promise to provide Germany with newfound stability and pride. Thus, from both retrospective and futuristic motivations, the hope of creating a national community was favored by German citizens. Rectifying inequalities within Germany’s economic classes while removing those unwanted as members of the racially defined nation (*Volk*) was a well received notion, especially by younger Germans and those born after 1900.⁵¹ In reflecting on his observations of the German youth in 1937, British historian Stephen Roberts admitted, “It is this

⁵¹ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 78-79.

utter lack of any objective or critical attitude on the part of youth, even with university students, that made me fear the most for the future of Germany. They are nothing but vessels for State propaganda.”⁵²

⁵² Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 82.

CHAPTER 2

NAZI ANTI-SEMITISM

Setting the Stage

To Hitler, war was “less a struggle among nations than a fight to the finish pitting Aryan against Jew,” or as Hermann Göring declared in October, 1941, ““This is not the Second World War, this is the Great Racial War.””⁵³ After the outbreak of World War II, Goebbels stated to his subordinates that ““propaganda does not have anything to do with truth! We serve truth by serving a German victory.””⁵⁴ Jay Baird writes that “the genius of Hitler and Goebbels was to merge the themes of traditional German patriotism with Nazi ideological motifs.”⁵⁵ Thus, given the description of the Jew as the single greatest enemy of Nazi Germany, propaganda about them was meant to arouse the fears of Germans, thereby helping the argument that a “solution” was needed to solve “Jewish question.”

Determining who was and was not a “national comrade” (*Volksgenossen*) became a key issue not only for government bureaucrats and police officials, but for propagandists, too. Propaganda disseminated the proper state approved information on this issue to the public and justified measures taken against these “outsiders:” Gypsies, homosexuals, political opponents, allegedly genetically inferior Germans (those with mental or physical disabilities), and above all others, Jews. In part, propagandists relied on preexisting hatred and stereotypes to depict Jews as an “alien race” that behaved like parasites. By feeding off the host, Jews “poisoned its [the host

⁵³ Jay W. Baird, *The Mythical World of Nazi War Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

nation] culture, seized its economy, and enslaved its workers and farmers.”⁵⁶ Such notions repeatedly appeared in state-supported ideology. Nazis also put forward the risks to racial purity and national health associated with ““mixing”” German and Jewish blood; some scholars at leading universities even provided “objective” research to give anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic propaganda credibility, while some religious leaders did the same by incorporating anti-Semitic ideas into sermons. During times of sheer violence directed towards Jews, propaganda helped create in Germans attitudes of tolerance, passivity, and acceptance of the measures. The first major anti-Jewish action occurred on April 1, 1933, with the boycott of Jewish businesses. Propagandists called the action a response to atrocity stories spread by ““world Jewry; ”” the propaganda, however, was not entirely successful as many Germans continued to visit the businesses.⁵⁷

Propaganda also helped to spread acceptance of the “Nuremberg Laws” passed in September, 1935. These two laws came as a result of the German public’s distaste for direct violence towards Jews committed by radicals of the Nazi Party. The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor” banned marriage and sexual relations between Jews and German blooded individuals. The “Reich Citizenship Law” prevented persons who were not German blooded from being recognized as German citizens. A later supplementary decree to the “Nuremberg Laws” made in November, 1935, established the “Mischlinge Test” which attempted to define who was either Jewish or mixed blooded depending on the number of Jewish grandparents an individual had in his or her family. The “Nuremberg Laws,” therefore, were significant in that they formalized legal restrictions on Jews and made apparent the initial sentiments which would pave the way for further actions that would occur during Hitler’s reign.

⁵⁶ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 86.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

Interestingly, some Jews and non-Jews believed the “Nuremberg Laws” would restore order in Germany.⁵⁸ As for Hitler, he justified these laws as “the only way of heading off the likelihood of spontaneous ‘defensive actions of the enraged population.’”⁵⁹ Thus, it is possible that Hitler actually meant to separate himself from the unpopular radical actions committed by Nazi Party functionaries, therefore giving him legitimacy through the veil of legal justification.

David Bankier asserts that for many Germans, the law was more of “an assault” on the black-white-red imperial flag, as the law made the Swastika banner the new German flag, and was less important for its ostracizing of Jews. Dissolving the idea of Jews as German citizens was seen as “an obvious and absolutely natural measure,” not because of indifference to the “Jewish Question,” but out of “tacit consent to the Nazi solution” and agreement with the idea of “isolating and removing Jews from the *Volksgemeinschaft*.”⁶⁰ The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor” was positively received as it confined anti-Jewish actions to the “framework of law and order;” no longer would mob violence be permissible. District reporting throughout Germany even claimed that peace was indeed restored to an acceptable level after the passage of the “Nuremberg Laws.”⁶¹ Still yet, a small number of people opposed the laws for fear of international boycott and retaliation. Overall, though, the “Nuremberg Laws” were widely accepted for the racial policy contained within as well as the establishment of a framework for limiting violent anti-Semitic activities.⁶²

⁵⁸ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 89-90.

⁵⁹ Ian Kershaw, *The “Hitler Myth” – Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1987), 236.

⁶⁰ David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution – Public Opinion Under Nazism* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 76-77.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 79.

Intensification of Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany

The night of November 9, 1938, marked a significant change in the pace of anti-Jewish measures when the Nazis initiated a full night and day of nationwide pogroms against Jews in response to the assassination of a German diplomat in France by a Jewish refugee. SA and SS men disguised as civilians took to the streets and destroyed over 7,000 Jewish businesses and burned hundreds of synagogues. In the process, the Gestapo (State Secret Police) arrested nearly thirty thousand Jewish males and transported them to various concentration camps. After “The Night of Broken Glass” (*Kristallnacht*), the rate of Jewish emigration increased rapidly. As expected, propaganda releases following *Kristallnacht* portrayed the night as “spontaneous outrage” of the German people against the Jews for the terrorist and world Jewry linked assassination of the German diplomat, Ernst vom Rath. Furthermore, the Ministry made efforts to link a 1936 murder of a Party official in Switzerland by a Jew to the vom Rath murder, thereby providing multiple examples establishing and proving the supposed Jewish campaign against Germany. In reality, however, the assassin, Herschel Grynszpan, acted alone in response to the government’s deportation of his parents into Poland. Nevertheless, the press was ordered to announce punishments against the Jews as a result of *Kristallnacht*, including a fine of one billion Reichsmarks to be paid to the government for damages. In terms of international reaction to these events, the public opinion of U.S. citizens turned against Germany. Nearly all media outlets rejected claims that the violence was a result of German outrage. President Franklin D. Roosevelt even withdrew the U.S. ambassador from Germany and publicly stated his disapproval of the violence. Yet, in response to mounting international disapproval of the anti-Jewish violence, Nazis tried to shift people’s attention to British and American atrocities.⁶³ Despite this,

⁶³ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 93-94.

though, non-Jewish Germans, for the first time, sensed a “real danger.” Such treatment of Jews even stirred those who supported ““moderate”” anti-Semitic measures; a small number of people even wrote to the British Embassy expressing their shame for the violent events.⁶⁴

Selling the War

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. The ensuing World War would bring suffering of mammoth proportions. Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, Nazi anti-Jewish measures took the great radical turn to genocide. To present the invasion of Poland as a justified act of defense, propaganda put forth stories of “Polish atrocities,” both real and alleged acts of discrimination and violence against ethnic Germans in Poland. The Reich Press Office even forbade the press from using the word “war.” Instead, they were to describe the events as if the German military had fought back Polish attacks, thus giving credibility to Germany’s actions as a defense in response to being the “victim of aggression.”⁶⁵ The invasion was completed in just one month, and in its wake, the SS paramilitary death squads known as the *Einsatzgruppen* followed behind military forces and brutally murdered tens of thousands of Polish civilians. In the grand scheme of genocide, these forces were the first to perpetrate murder on a large scale. In an effort to justify their actions, German officials told even more atrocity stories, one of which was where “fifty-eight thousand” ethnic Germans were allegedly murdered by Polish civilian and military personnel. These figures, however, were a gross exaggeration used to inflame passions and provide justification for the Nazi’s own extensive murder campaign. In reality, between five and six thousand ethnic Germans were murdered. Overall,

⁶⁴ Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution*, 86-87.

⁶⁵ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 103.

propagandists convinced Germans that the invasion of Poland was justified, and for some Germans, propaganda “reinforced deep-seated anti-Polish sentiment.”⁶⁶

Propaganda was most effective when the German military experienced victory over enemies. Between 1939 and 1942, Germany’s military forces seemed nearly unstoppable, especially with the swift defeat of France in June, 1940. Despite the setback of the Battle of Britain in 1940, propaganda materials reinforced Hitler’s excellence and the invincibility of Germany’s military.⁶⁷ From 1939 until October, 1941, the official Nazi anti-Jewish policy was that of forced emigration. War, however, limited the ability of Jews to leave Germany, as potential relocation venues restricted immigration. Therefore, some Nazi leaders believed that Jewish populations could be placed in ghettos in occupied Poland. While propaganda publicly conveyed forced emigration to be the solution to the “Jewish Question,” efforts to portray Jews as demon creatures and disease-carrying rats persisted. In an attempt to prepare the public for harsher anti-Jewish measures, namely deportation to ghettos, Jews were depicted as a health threat who transmitted diseases, therefore necessitating their quarantine. Ironically, ghettos soon filled beyond capacity and became the breeding grounds for the diseases the Jews were said to have been carriers of in the first place.⁶⁸

The Holocaust

Following the beginning of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis pursued a path to genocide in the East, with propaganda functioning by “inciting hatred, justifying atrocities, and preparing the German population to accept or support ever harsher measures

⁶⁶ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 106.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 119, 123.

against Jews and others in occupied territories and in Germany.”⁶⁹ The Nazi elite saw war against the Soviet Union as a “war of extermination,” and a struggle against an opposing ideology. Propagandists also produced materials to educate military and police units with hatred against the Soviet Communist Party and the “Jewish Bolshevik commissar.”⁷⁰ By emphasizing the link between European Jews and Communism, the image of the Jew as “the enemy” determined to destroy German was reinforced. Propaganda officials were even attached to military units with orders to focus on Red Army “atrocities and infringements of international law.”⁷¹ One such description of commissars stated that “[i]t would be an insult to animals if one were to call the features of these largely Jewish tormentors of people bestial. They are the embodiment of the infernal, and have become the personification of insane hatred of everything that is noble humanity.”⁷² By late summer 1941, German forces shifted from killing men to eradicating whole families regardless of sex or age. By fall of the same year, the shift of anti-Jewish policies to genocidal actions pervaded the Reich, as persecution and deportation were escalated within Germany. By late 1941 and into early 1942, deportations of Jews to concentration camps began. The formal resolution to murder European Jews was announced at the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, to high level Nazi officials who were to be intimately involved with the “Final Solution.” Although Goebbels was not at the meeting, he noted in his diary that in the ghettos, “These [Jews] are no longer human beings; they are

⁶⁹ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 123.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

animals. For this reason, our task is no longer humanitarian but surgical. We must cut here, and quite invasively; otherwise Europe will perish from the Jewish disease.”⁷³

To the Nazis, war literally meant “‘life or death;” either Germany or the Jews would perish. When Hitler took power in 1933, there was no plan to kill millions of Jews. Instead, the Party began with legal and other acceptable means to negatively impact Jewish life in Germany. Though half of the 600,000 Jews in Germany in 1933 were eventually expelled, the acquisition of Poland added nearly two million more Jews to German control. Undoubtedly, this fact troubled Nazi leaders, but the possibility of invading Russia exacerbated the problem to its peak, as millions of more Jews would soon be brought to Nazi control. The “war against ‘subhumans,’” therefore, was easier to carryout given the context and conditions.⁷⁴

The possibility of the Nazis actually perpetrating genocide would not become clear until the beginning of 1939. Undoubtedly, it was clear that the Nazis hated Jews, but as Randall Bytwerk asserts, “their rhetoric did not lead average Germans (or the rest of the world) to expect genocide.”⁷⁵ January 30, 1939, brought a chilling statement to the forefront of Germany’s confrontation with Jews. In a speech to the Reichstag, Hitler made what he called a prophecy and boldly stated, “‘If international finance Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequence will be not the Bolshevization of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.”⁷⁶ While the meaning of this statement was not clear at the time, Hitler’s repeated error in later speeches of attributing the prophecy to the night of September 1,

⁷³ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 128-129.

⁷⁴ Randall L. Bytwerk, “The Argument for Genocide in Nazi Propaganda” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 1, (Feb 2005): 38.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

1939, instead of January 30, is important. The prediction of the destruction of Jews may be taken differently if made during the context of war. Bytwerk reasons that “the word ‘destruction’ takes on a physical connotation missing in peace,” thus showing that Hitler meant his threat seriously. In their effort to communicate Nazi thinking to citizens, leaders made propagandists use the words “destroy (*vernichten*), wipe out (*auslöschen*), exterminate (*ausrotten*), and extirpate (*ausmerzen*).”⁷⁷

Bytwerk stresses that the reaction of the German people to anti-Semitic propaganda was indifference rather than internalization. Communication within the Party constantly admitted worry about the lack of ardent anti-Semitism within the German public. Some believe that the near constant emphasis on Jews as enemy number one had a numbing effect. In short, most Germans could shift their everyday attentions to other things, and they did.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the Führer’s popularity helped the German people to believe uncritically the so-called struggle against the power of world Jewry. This, in turn, ensured at least a degree of passivity among the German people, thus providing the Nazis with a great degree of autonomy to carry out increasingly radical measures in the war against Jews.⁷⁹ Despite the pervasiveness of Nazi propaganda and its undeniable ability to create, solidify, and confirm anti-Semitic attitudes, Ian Kershaw observes that most Germans’ attitudes toward Jews was discriminatory and did not match the attitudes held by Hitler, Goebbels, and other Nazi leaders. In essence, anti-Semitism was of “secondary importance” in shaping the popular opinion of Germans.⁸⁰ Even SD reports released after Hitler repeated his January 30, 1939 “prophecy” on January 30, 1942, state that his

⁷⁷ Bytwerk, “The Argument for Genocide,” 39.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-55.

⁷⁹ Kershaw, *The “Hitler Myth,”* 252.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 230.

words were interpreted to mean that the war against Jews “would be followed through to the end with merciless consistency,” and that the existence of Jews in Europe would end in the near future. Notably, however, the prophecy was not the main topic of interest, as the SD reports also mention that information on the war situation in the east was of primary interest to the public. Further evidence that anti-Semitism was of background importance to the general public comes from SD reports released after Hitler yet again repeated his “prophecy” at least five times over a one year period between 1942 and 1943; the reports make no mention of any public reaction to the passage.⁸¹

The Jews Are Guilty... Of Everything!

Interestingly, the Nazis believed that World War II and the conspiracies of world Jewry were, in fact, one in the same; the connection was “causal and necessary and thus by implication not an accident of timing and geography.”⁸² In other words, World War II as we know it was seen by Nazis as an “apocalyptic battle” against the forces of world Jewry. As the Nazi elite saw it, Germany’s actions were a justified defense to atrocities committed by countries under the control of Jews. The ultimate escalation of action from persecution to murder was paralleled by radicalized propaganda about Jews. Hitler portrayed himself as a prophet; he concluded that the beginning of a new war would provide tangible evidence that a cohesive and international Jewish force had indeed set out to destroy Germany. In turn, Germany had to be protected and European Jewry destroyed before achieving the goal of totally destroying Germany.⁸³

⁸¹ Kershaw, *The “Hitler Myth,”* 244-245.

⁸² Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy – Nazi Propaganda During World War II and The Holocaust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1.

⁸³ Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 5-9.

Evidence in the media to this shift of attention to Jews over time is easily seen in posters (*Word of the Week*) placed for viewing on street corners and other public places. From 1936 to 1940, anti-Semitic themes were rare, but by 1941, about a quarter of posters included such content. While the presence of such content increased over time, the total percentage of anti-Semitic propaganda seems to have remained low as a result of Hitler and Goebbels' desire to keep the public from being overly informed on the current actions taking place in the concentration camps.⁸⁴ Nazi propaganda often focused on the "supposed Jewish domination of German professional life, despite the conflicting reality."⁸⁵ Jews made up between less than one percent to just over ten percent of any given profession, and in the Reichstag, less than twenty of the nearly six-hundred members were Jewish.⁸⁶ Thus, the Nazi claim of a Jewish conspiracy, in reality, had no true foundation. The propaganda measures and rhetoric disseminated to the German public was not, as Jeffrey Herf describes, "a consensus in support of mass murder;" instead, this anti-Semitic foundation built in the 1930s permitted a pool of "public hatred, contempt, and indifference" toward Jews. Such attitudes allowed Nazi leaders to proceed forward with the "Final Solution."⁸⁷

In the Darkness of the Death Camps

By winter of 1942, all main Nazi concentration camps had started operations. In speeches and on the radio, Hitler repeated his intent to "exterminate" and "annihilate" all of Europe's Jews. Posters containing anti-Semitic materials increased, but interestingly, press headlines of such stories actually declined. Within just a few years, the Nazis had achieved great success in

⁸⁴ Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 30-31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 49.

their “Final Solution” to the “Jewish Question.” As Jeffrey Herf writes, the Nazis “murdered with breathtaking speed.”⁸⁸ Throughout the Nazi’s genocidal campaign, not a word of the murders was leaked through the press. Instead, propaganda sought to capitalize on preformed anti-Semitism as well as make use of Hitler and Goebbels as authoritative and inspirational figures. Furthermore, Nazis withheld true German casualty numbers by grossly underestimating the figures to public audiences; Goebbels cited in his diary that it was ““not opportune to give these numbers to the public. We’ll wait for a more favorable moment.””⁸⁹ At no time during the war did Goebbels deny what the regime was doing to Jews and other undesirables; instead, he deceptively turned such accusations into “unspecified atrocity stories...and then changed the subject.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 140.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

CHAPTER 3
FILM ANALYSES

Jew Suess

One type of film the Nazis produced was the so-called “historical film.” By using actual historical persons and events, the Nazis claimed to accurately portray reality and capture factual attitudes. The receptivity of the German public to the negative images of Jews as “sly, hypocritical, deceitful, and morally repugnant” in *Jew Suess* shows that previous anti-Semitic propaganda efforts made by Nazis were to a degree successful and allowed the public to view such sentiments as truths with relevance to pertinent social and political issues of the day.⁹¹

Professor of film studies Eric Rentschler writes that *Jew Suess* is Nazi cinema’s most debated and challenged film of the Third Reich. Rivalled only by *The Eternal Jew*, *Jew Suess* still possesses the ability to “ignite fierce passions.”⁹² *Jew Suess*, as Rentschler asserts, undoubtedly helped prepare the German public for future actions of deportation and genocide perpetrated by Germany. One day after its September 24, 1940, premiere, Goebbels wrote in his diary that “[t]he film is an incredible success. One hears only enthusiastic responses. The whole room raves. That’s exactly what I had hoped for.”⁹³ *Jew Suess* is one such “historical film” that Goebbels purported to stick to historical facts and figures; however, after a brief review of actual historical facts, one can clearly see that *Jew Suess* was indeed based more on the Nazi worldview and their determination to depict Jews as enemy number one.

⁹¹ Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War*, 198-199.

⁹² Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion – Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 149.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Throughout German history, no person has provoked a greater dramatic spectacle than Joseph Suess Oppenheimer, the main character in *Jew Suess*. During the reign of Duke Carl Alexander of Württemberg, Oppenheimer rose to a significant level of influence within the Duke's government. Upon the death of the Duke in 1737, Oppenheimer was tried for "high treason" and was sentenced to death. Out of his trial and execution, Oppenheimer came to be a part of German collective memory and was known from that point on as "the Jew Suess." This offensive name came out of his Jewish identity, obviously, and his earlier nickname as a child, "Suesskind" ("Sweet child"). This name, combined with extravagant claims and falsifications about Oppenheimer, thrust his reputation in negative light ever since his trial and subsequent execution.

Oppenheimer was born in 1698 into a successful merchant family. Throughout his childhood and early adult life, he became well-trained and informed on business. After he left home in Vienna in 1732, Oppenheimer met Carl Alexander and soon became his financial advisor. After the death of his uncle soon thereafter, Carl Alexander became Duke of Württemberg, and the relationship between the two men continued. Duke Alexander's reign brought to Württemberg controversial ideas and reforms, one of which was building up military forces. Such a goal required substantial financial revenues, and here Oppenheimer "proved indispensable" to the Duke. By imposing new taxes, Oppenheimer successfully created revenue for the Duke such that the military forces quadrupled to over ten-thousand men. Oppenheimer's service to the Duke earned him substantial wealth and privileges within Württemberg. Notably, though, Oppenheimer was not the only person in the Duke's elite ranks who impacted his reign. Franz Josef von Remchingen was in charge of the Duke's administration, yet by the end of the Duke's brief reign, Remchingen had devised a plan to create a military dictatorship in

Württemberg. Undoubtedly, this created tension between the Duke's administration and the people of Württemberg, and shortly after the Duke's untimely death, Remchingen was arrested. As the events unfolded, Remchingen escaped, leaving Oppenheimer to suffer the full wrath of the people.⁹⁴ Though Oppenheimer actually died in the way depicted in the film, his conviction was a consequence of "abuse of office," not having sexual relations with Christian women.⁹⁵

It is important to note the discrepancies in the actual film versus historical facts. At Director Veit Harlan's trial after the end of World War II, prosecutors consulted "115 eighteenth-century documents from the Stuttgart archives" to show unequivocally that his claim to the historical accuracy of *Jew Süss* was flawed and a misrepresentation of true events. Harlan never admitted this fact, and instead, he claimed that the film was "not incitement, but rather artistic representation of the Jewish problem; no distorted picture, but rather an expression of what is essential, what is human."⁹⁶

This masterpiece of propaganda, *Jew Süss*, was meant to inflame feelings and instigate acts of violence against Jews. Perhaps more importantly, though, is its role in preparing the German public for the deportations and extermination of millions of Jews throughout Europe. At the end of the film, this idea is made clear. After the execution of Süss, a decree is made by a high government official stating, "All Jews must leave Württemberg within three days. No entry for Jews in the entire realm of Württemberg ... May our descendants adhere to this decree, and thereby be spared suffering for their own well-being and for the sake of their children's blood."⁹⁷

This statement makes possible the assertion that in order to gain at least the public's passive

⁹⁴ *Jud Süß*.

⁹⁵ Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, eds., *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television Since 1933* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 78.

⁹⁶ Eric Rentschler, "Commentary on *Jud Süß*," in Veit Harlan (Director), *Jud Süß*, DVD, 2010.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

acceptance of actions to come, Nazi leaders had to build, emphasize, and validate the negative image of the Jew and the notion of removing Jews from Germany. This effort, as revealed in the film, is the exclusion of Jews from Württemberg, correlating to the deportation of German Jews to concentration camps beginning less than one year after the release of the film. Furthermore, the execution scene of Süss itself provides a link between the film and the subsequent acts of violence and genocide against Jews. Though the Wannsee Conference had not taken place by the time this film premiered, the execution and expulsion of Jews at the end of the film helped to agitate and numb the German public, all under the umbrella of entertainment. Certainly, this film proved to be an effective propaganda tool as it helped achieve the twin tasks of disseminating stereotypes as well as measuring the receptiveness of the German public towards possible ways of solving the “Jewish question.” *Jew Süss* was the German box office leader in 1940, and by 1943, 20.3 million people (one in three Germans) had seen the film in Reich controlled theatres.⁹⁸

In terms of relating *Jew Süss* to historical events of the time, it is important to consider that most historians divide the treatment of Jews in Germany and throughout Europe into three phases: exclusion from society up to 1938, expulsion to ghettos until 1941, and ultimately extermination. Given these divisions, *Jew Süss* belongs to the second period; however, the film can also be related to the third phase. That is, after Goebbels visited Lodz, Poland, in fall 1939, he viewed the solution to the “Jewish question” as one requiring radical action; if this did not happen, Europe would “perish with the Jewish disease.”⁹⁹ Growing impatient with the minimal progress on producing *Jew Süss*, he replaced the original director and made Veit Harlan

⁹⁸ *Jud Süß.*

⁹⁹ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 82.

director. This idea, of course, requires one to view Nazi anti-Jewish policy as evolving over a period of time. Simply put, extermination was the final stage in a process which initially began in 1939 with the removal of Poles and Jews from Poland.¹⁰⁰ As Robert Edwin Herzstein points out, “The only difference between the last scene of the film and Nazi genocide was that Jew Suess dies in public, while the Nazis [for the most part]...murdered the Jews privately.”¹⁰¹

Yet another perspective of viewing this film is in terms of World War II. The first script of the film was written just before the invasion of Poland, while the editing process to yield a final script and early filming took place during the first months of the war. Filming concluded just after the successful and swift invasion of France, and the film’s premiere took place the night before the Battle of Britain entered its decisive phase.¹⁰²

SD reports on public reaction to viewing *Jew Suess* note that people believed the portrayal of Oppenheimer to be ““frighteningly-real.”” Other responses described the film as “horrible and authentic, fantastic yet real,”¹⁰³ and in Budapest, it was noted that after viewing the film, some audience members saw a Jew and tore his beard. A former prisoner from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp even reported that, on at least one occasion, after SS guards viewed the film, they told Jews under their guard that they now recognized that “the Jews were even worse than they had thought.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 82.

¹⁰¹ Robert Edwin Herzstein, *The War That Hitler Won – The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1978), 312.

¹⁰² Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 81-82.

¹⁰³ Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion*, 195.

¹⁰⁴ Rolf Giesen, *Nazi Propaganda Films – A History and Filmography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 133.

Plausibly, *Jew Süss* is the most striking expression of Nazi racial hatred in a narrative film. The film shows the Jew working diligently to gain at the expense of others. Notably, dissolves show Süss at one moment to be a bearded, ghetto Jew while in the next to be shaven and civilized. This particular transformation occurs as Süss makes his way to Stuttgart, and then at the end of the film during his trial, the dissolve reverses. Ultimately, one can see that the use of dissolves helps illustrate a key Nazi point: Jews were in fact elusive creatures, and by showing how they easily morph, it would be possible to educate the audience on the true nature of the Jewish race.¹⁰⁵ Here, the goal of Nazi propaganda was to reveal the essence of the Jew, and with his mask uncovered through the use of dissolves, the true Jew was revealed; the propaganda effort was a success. The expression of the negative image of the Jew as revealed through *Oppenheimer*, however, as Eric Rentschler reasons, actually parallels Hitler and Nazi Germany. Unconsciously, the Nazis actually show themselves in their own anti-Semitic propaganda film. Süss is portrayed as a man who speaks of political goals, preys on a conflicted state led by a weak leader, and employs secret police to achieve goals. Clearly, Süss in the film is relatable to Hitler. What is perhaps most striking is that in the end, Süss exclaims, “I was nothing more than a true servant of my sovereign.”¹⁰⁶ This defense bears a striking resemblance to the arguments justifying the Nazis’ actions given numerous times at the Nuremberg War Tribunals. That is, many Nazi officials tried to excuse their actions by saying they simply obeyed commands that were given by higher authorities and the Führer himself.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion*, 159.

¹⁰⁶ *Jud Süß*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The Eternal Jew

Compilation film is a genre that defies structure and traditional boundaries of film. By placing pieces of previous films into new and different thematic contexts, compilation films appear to be realistic and based on factual evidence. Similar to the case of *Jew Sues*, a “historical film,” though, Nazi compilation films also blended whole and part truths with false or exaggerated interpretations to conform to Party ideology. Even Hilmar Hoffman asserts that “as far as the Nazis were concerned, this new reality was geared, above all, to its ideological impact;”¹⁰⁸ thus, historical accuracy was irrelevant.

On November, 28, 1940, the documentary compilation film *The Eternal Jew*, directed by Fritz Hippler, premiered in Berlin, just one year before the systematic extermination of Jews began at camps in Poland. Two versions of the film were shown. The first film, for women and children, was an abbreviated version without the ritual slaughtering scenes of animals. The second, full length, film was shown to men and members of the Nazi Party.¹⁰⁹ *The Eternal Jew* marks the climax of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, as evident in the way Jews are portrayed throughout the hour long film. Hoffman writes that the film is morally deceitful and the most “perverse mishmash” ever produced; “only human scum” could produce and support such a film.¹¹⁰ The film begins with text stating:

The civilized Jews we know in Germany give but an incomplete picture of their true character. This film includes actual footage from the Polish ghettos. It shows us Jews as they really are, before they conceal themselves behind the mask of civilized Europe.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 161.

¹⁰⁹ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 85.

¹¹⁰ Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 173.

¹¹¹ *Der ewige Jude*.

The first screenshots are indeed from Polish ghettos, but the message conveyed by the Nazis to audiences is flawed. While the argument is made that these scenes are an example of Jews in their natural state, one must remember the actual conditions imposed upon Jews by Nazis at that time. Given the number of Jews forced to live in ghettos, one is hard-pressed to see that these conditions were not the inherent state of Jewish life and culture, but a life imposed on them by the Nazi regime. Despite this truth, though, the point Nazis wanted the German people to see was made clear and real: the “natural state” of Jews was shown truthfully and unedited through the camera lens. Starvation, disease, and lack of civilized comforts prevailed in the ghettos; these aspects of Jewish life, despite being a part of a sick and twisted propaganda machine, were undoubtedly made out to be truths. The constantly perpetuated image of the Jew as a disease-carrying rat is also exemplified in the ghetto. Propaganda not only reinforced Nazi beliefs, but also invited the German public into believing the same notion; however, the presence of Jews and disease in the same location do not warrant the conclusion that Jews are disease-carrying *organisms*. Instead, one must realize that disease is a necessary result of cramped and unsanitary living conditions. Again, such conditions were imposed on the Jewish people; Jews were not inherent vehicles of disease. Such propaganda efforts are prime examples of how Nazi ideology was based on fear and the irrational. Director Fritz Hippler even argued in the magazine *Judenfrage* that “[n]o Jew was forced into any kind of action or position during shooting...Consequently, we have rendered the ghetto Jews in an unprejudiced manner, real to life.”¹¹²

In a November, 29, 1940 article in *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, it is reported that “a sigh of relief” is breathed when the film ends; the viewer “returns to light from the darkest

¹¹² Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 90.

swamps.”¹¹³ Yet another article in *Illustrierte Film-Kurier* notes that the end of the film ““fill[s] the viewer with deepest gratitude that he belongs to this nation whose Führer is in the process of developing a fundamental solution to the Jewish problem.””¹¹⁴ Specifically, the end of the film shows the return of the ideal Aryan man, a contrast to the Jew who is focused on for the entire film except the last few minutes of the film. Symbolically, this can be seen as giving hope to the audience that, through racial purity, a unified Germany would be possible and the future of the German nation secure. There is also an appearance made by the Führer himself. The film shows Hitler speaking in front of a large Nazi audience on January, 30, 1939. SD reports from Munich show that when the film ended, audiences were instantly relieved and even “gave ‘enthusiastic’ applause” during the scene where Hitler warned that a new war would result in the ultimate destruction of Jews in Europe. Notably, though, the SD reports were not all affirmative. While positive reactions were reported in the initial weeks and months following the film’s premiere, SD reports note that some people believed the film “followed too quickly on the feature film *Jew Suess*,”¹¹⁵ which premiered in September, 1940. The report further explains that audiences often thought the film had ““nothing really new to say,”” especially after seeing *Jew Suess*. Some audience members were even quoted in an SD report saying ““We’ve had enough of Jewish filth.””¹¹⁶ Consequently, one may agree that those actively involved with the politics and ideological movement of the Nazi Party were the main seekers of the film, while the average audience member and citizen “largely avoided it.” SD reports even mention that in some locations, people actively talked against the film and its “starkly realistic portrait of the Jews.”

¹¹³ Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 161.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹¹⁵ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 88.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The film in its entirety was viewed as repulsive, and in particular, the ritual slaughter scenes were mentioned to be “the main reason for not seeing the film;” some viewers even fainted during the slaughter scenes. Still yet, *The Eternal Jew* was shown in every major metropolitan area in Germany as well as in theatres throughout occupied countries.¹¹⁷

Like *Jew Sues*, *The Eternal Jew* makes use of dissolves to show how Jews supposedly cleverly disguise themselves and easily transform from typical ghetto-like Jews to persons who easily resemble civilized humanity. The film shows the Jew as a criminal, Weimar politician, capitalist, degenerate artist, and radical revolutionary, but despite their true, disgusting identity, Jews always hid their origins and infiltrated western civilization. Like Oppenheimer, the Jews in *The Eternal Jew* are shown to morph by removing skullcaps and kaftans and shaving their hair, while to make real the claims of Jewish international influence, the film uses the Rothschild family and shows their “delight” in the way they cheat their host states and avoid taxes. The film depicts a “web” stretching from Paris to Vienna and London to Naples and Frankfurt, thus giving visual proof that the Rothschild family successfully integrated into civilized society and obtained great wealth off the burden of other people.

The exact development of *The Eternal Jew* is uncertain due to missing information in Goebbels’ diary between May and October, 1939, but one thing is clear: the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, allowed Hitler and others to connect war with the Jews in Poland. The outbreak of war intimately linked with footage in the beginning of the film from Polish ghettos unquestionably aided in increasing public hatred toward the Jews.¹¹⁸ On the flood and spread of Jews, the narrator informs, “We see a parallel to this in the itinerant routes of rats, which are the

¹¹⁷ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 86-88.

¹¹⁸ Stig Hornshoj-Moller and David Culbert, “*Der ewige jude* (1940): Joseph Goebbels’ Unequaled Monument to Anti-Semitism,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 12, no. 1, (1992): 42.

parasites and bacillus carriers among animals, just as the Jews occupy the same position among mankind.”¹¹⁹ Such a statement and the grotesque images that coincide obviously have the potential to inflame an audience with preexisting notions such as the Germans, and in the opinion of the Nuremberg court, *The Eternal Jew* had ““a decisive influence on the formation of the German people’s opinion against the Jews.”” Notably, while Hitler may have literally meant what he said in his prophetic speech on January 30, 1939, Hornshøj-Møller and Culbert contend that *The Eternal Jew* in no way intended audiences to accept the idea of murdering Jews. Before the film’s release in 1940, the “Final Solution” “meant deportation to Poland... [and] Madagascar.”¹²⁰ During the film’s production stage, though, “discussion within interested political and administrative hierarchies inside Nazi Germany as to the Final Solution changed dramatically;” thus, while Hornshøj-Møller and Culbert may have a point, it is still reasonable to assert the film’s role in broadcasting and confirming the reasons for Jewish hatred as well as creating acceptance of policies that would ultimately bring about mass murder.¹²¹ The peak of Nazi racism is shown vividly in *The Eternal Jew*. By arousing emotions through use of the irrational, the film ultimately “provided the ammunition for a large-caliber anti-Semitic weapon.”¹²² The beginning of genocidal action nearly paralleled the release of this film which aided the justification of mass murder and helped create acceptance on a massive scale.

Collectively, the films *The Eternal Jew* and *Jew Sues* represent a synthesis of the Nazi vow to exterminate the Jews. Robert Herzstein writes that the two films were “advertisements for

¹¹⁹ Hornshøj-Møller and Culbert, “*Der ewige Jude*,” 47.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹²² Hoffman, *The Triumph of Propaganda*, 176.

the ‘Final Solution.’”¹²³ Why, then, were these two films released in 1940? First, given Goebbels’ statements in his diary, the two films examined in this thesis, like any other film released during the Nazi era, went through an exhaustive process of approval and revision, presumably to perfect their propaganda content and potential value to positively impact the Nazi cause. This process took time; therefore, the films were conceived prior to 1940 amidst an evolving propaganda platform that would prove to radicalize and accentuate previous anti-Semitism. In relation to historical events, swift victories over Poland and France did not provide an effective means to solve the “Jewish question.” Instead, acquiring territories beyond Germany brought even more Jews under Nazi control, thus aggravating the “problem” and urgency to solve it. Efforts to deport and resettle Jews ultimately failed, and despite the already heightened level of frustration with the “problem,” Hitler planned on invading Russia, which would certainly have added millions of more Jews under Nazi occupation. This, along with Great Britain’s endurance in the war and the official entrance of the United States to the stage in late 1941 only exacerbated the issues and gave cause for Hitler to confirm his belief that an international “Jewish conspiracy” was at work to destroy Germany. The two films released in September and November of 1940 are, therefore, a part of the realm of propaganda that was under total control of Goebbels, and ultimately the Führer himself.

¹²³ Herzstein, *The War That Hitler Won*, 312.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The Successes and Failures of Nazi Propaganda

In a speech delivered at the 1934 Nuremberg Party Rally, Goebbels asserted, “‘It may be good to have power based on weapons. It is better and longer lasting, however, to win and hold the heart of a people.’”¹²⁴ Despite the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda in spreading anti-Semitic arguments and instilling acceptance of hate toward the Jewish people, it was not totally successful. Propaganda alone did not and could not help the Nazis secure total victory in World War II, let alone achieve widespread support for mass murder. Unquestionably, though, millions were murdered in an effort to solve Germany’s perceived problems, but given the defeat of Germany at Stalingrad and the ensuing Allied liberation of Europe, Germany and its powerful propaganda machine could not stop the tide of war from favoring the Allied forces. Given the events, defeat was delayed, but not inevitable. In *The Eternal Jew*, the narrator voices, “Jewish thinking and Jewish blood will never again pollute the German nation. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, Germany has raised the battle flag against the eternal Jew.”¹²⁵ In the eyes of Nazis, war was indeed a struggle for existence; to achieve victory, any and all traces of Jewish physical, cultural, political, and social existence needed to be removed. As time progressed, Nazi anti-Semitic policies evolved from discrimination to ghettoization and later to deportation and extermination. The prophetic statement made by Hitler in January, 1939, took fruition, and statements and scenes taken from the two films examined in this thesis also prove vital to an analysis of the evolution of anti-Semitism in the Third Reich. Strikingly, in October, 1939, when

¹²⁴ Randall L. Bytwerk, ed. and trans., *Landmark Speeches of National Socialism* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 51.

¹²⁵ *Der ewige Jude*.

The Eternal Jew began production, 230,000 Jews lived in Lodz (where most of the initial scenes of the film took place), but at its liberation in January, 1945, only 877 Jews remained alive.¹²⁶

Implications of Modern Anti-Semitism

Undoubtedly, the ideologies that prevailed and the events that took place during the Nazi era had monumental effects on Jews, the German people, and the entirety of mankind. Over six million Jews perished as a result of an evolved and radicalized Nazi plan to rid Europe of the so-called “Jewish question.” In total, tens of millions of people died as a result of World War II, thus making it the deadliest conflict in human history.¹²⁷ While some leaders of the Nazi Party were held accountable for their actions and involvement in crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg Trials held after the war, the existence of virulent and deceptive propaganda still exists in today’s world. By visiting the United States Holocaust Museum, one can view an exhibit on Nazi propaganda where the many things discussed in this thesis are visible to the eye and come to life. Part of the exhibit, though, makes apparent the link between propaganda and genocide post World War II in other countries such as Uganda, and while some Americans may be quick to argue that our country is separated far from the attitudes and events that took place in Nazi Germany, it is of utmost importance to take a careful look at our own history and current affairs. I am not asserting in the least that the United States is similar to a Germany run by the Nazi Party, but I do argue that, like the German public, the American public is largely informed of political and military affairs by means of mass communication. While these agencies are not controlled, per say, by a political party like the German press and film industries were, they do in fact often identify themselves as broadcasting either a liberal or conservative agenda. This division between competing ideologies in America, whether intentional or not, can certainly give

¹²⁶ Haggith and Newman, *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, 91.

¹²⁷ Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 139.

rise to extremism on both sides. A contrast to Nazi Germany where only state approved information could be circulated or broadcast, Americans enjoy the freedoms of press and speech; however, when extremists abuse these freedoms for the purpose of forwarding a cause that could potentially cause harm, we as a society must take note and demand change. A citizenry informed of the truth combined with responsible media reporting is of utmost importance. Racism, discrimination, and hatred at all levels must be taken seriously and prevented. In particular to anti-Semitism, one cannot deny its existence across the globe. Just recently, a short “remake” version of *The Eternal Jew* was released on YouTube. The original 1940 film is troubling for its virulent content and manipulative effect such that it abetted the genocide of millions of people, but perhaps more significant to today’s society is the fact that such a film has been used to help other extremists spread their message of hate to a potential worldwide audience. The idea of film as a weapon seems rather absurd, since it is not a weapon capable of firing bullets and tearing through flesh. Yet, as the events that unfolded in Nazi Germany show, films were valued for their ability to help further Nazi policies and the desire to eradicate Europe of the influences of Jewry. Film can indeed be used as a weapon, and we should not be so dismissive of the same idea in today’s world. The notion that “not every human being with a face is a human being”¹²⁸ still exists today, and chillingly, it is a very real idea that has the potential to permeate to future generations.

¹²⁸ Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.

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