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## The Role of Nazi Propaganda in the Destruction of the European Jews

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THE ROLE OF NAZI PROPAGANDA  
IN THE  
DESTRUCTION OF THE EUROPEAN JEWS

By

Dawnn C. Adams

Honors Thesis

Submitted to the Longwood College Honors Committee

in partial fulfillment

for the

Bachelor of Arts Degree in History

with

Honors

April, 1976

Farmville, Virginia

Approved:

Date:

Robert Wolfe

April 22, 1976

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April 22 1976

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April 22, 1976

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May 5, 1976

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National Socialism was a mass movement which combined elements of romanticism, nationalism, militarism, mysticism, 19th century racial doctrines, and most importantly anti-Semitism. The pseudo-scientific racial theories of the 19th century and anti-Semitism paved the way for the introduction and the acceptance of Adolf Hitler's perverted racial doctrine of the master, Aryan race.<sup>1</sup> Propaganda was the medium used to spread Hitler's ideology. It permeated the entire country, created an atmosphere conducive to the discrimination and persecution of Jews, and led ultimately to the "final solution of the Jewish question." The Nazi regime through its relentless, unending propaganda

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<sup>1</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews (Chicago, 1961), 1-18. A vast number of books have been written concerning the racial war that Hitler declared against the Jews. The most comprehensive book on the subject is Hilberg's Destruction, and it is still the best source on how the Jews were systematically annihilated. The best German language source is H. G. Adler, Der Verwaltete Mensch: Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland (Tubingen, 1974). A good recent account of the "final solution" is found in Lucy Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews 1933-1945 (New York, 1975). An important study of the Jewish resistance to persecution throughout the centuries with emphasis on the Nazi era is Reuben Ainsztein, Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe (New York, 1974). Another valuable source for studying the persecution of the Jews is the International Military Tribunal Document Book I, The Adoption and Publication of Programs for Persecution of the Jews, which was compiled by the Prosecution in the trial of the war criminals in Nuremburg, Germany, 1946.

successfully waged a "great racial war"<sup>2</sup> against the Jews of Europe. The propaganda served to inflame Germans to participate in active anti-Semitic measures; and then numbed the German public into apathetic acceptance of racial anti-Jewish measures.

Nazism overcame Germany, it was what most Germans wanted or thought they wanted under the combined pressure of reality and illusion.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Semitism was the most pointed weapon of the Hitler regime; it became the focal point of the movement and a consensus upon which people of all classes and backgrounds agreed in advocating anti-Jewish measures. The Nazis sought to annihilate Europe's Jews and were aided in the realization of their goal by the efficient propaganda machine. Propaganda was inexorably linked, thematically, to the "final solution."

The development of the relationship between propaganda and the "final solution" began with the founder of the

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<sup>2</sup>Jay W. Baird, The Mythical World of Nazi Propaganda, 1939-1945 (Minneapolis, 1974), 6.

<sup>3</sup>Milton Mayer, They Thought They Were Free - The Germans 1933-1945 (Chicago, 1955), xix. The chief promulgator of myth and illusion was the Nazi propaganda machine. See especially Jay W. Baird, The Mythical World of Nazi Propaganda, 1939-1945 (Minneapolis, 1974). Insight into Hitler's propaganda techniques is provided in Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1971), and International Military Tribunal Document Book E, Propaganda, Censorship, and Supervision of Cultural Activities. The effect of propaganda on the opinions and attitudes of the German people is well-documented in Heinz Boberach (ed.), Meldungen aus dem Reich (Stuttgart, 1968).

National Socialist regime and its chief propagandist, Adolf Hitler. Hitler, together with Dr. Paul Josef Goebbels, Head of the Reich Propaganda Ministry after 1933, molded Germany into an instrument of the Fuhrer's will. One of Hitler's chief objectives was to resurrect Germany from the defeat and collapse of World War I and destroy the people whom he held responsible for Germany's shame and disaster--the Jews. Hitlerism became the term for brutal totalitarianism which combined terror and deliberate racial slaughter. Anti-Semitism became the official state policy and panacea for the problems of postwar Germany.<sup>4</sup> This wasn't the only answer to Germany's dilemma but it was the basis. The war, along with rapid industrialization, urbanization, and depression caused moral and spiritual decay. The solution appeared to be National Socialism with its promise of employment, and the return of German prestige. Hitler said that "The most tremendous task in our movement is to provide a new creed for these great, searching, stumbling, masses, a creed which will not fail them in these times of confusion, by which they can sweat and build so that there will be one spot where their heart may find rest."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>George Stein (ed.), Hitler (Englewood Cliffs, 1968), 7; Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (New York, 1964), 397. The doctrine of the Aryan or master race was constantly exploited by Hitler during his twelve years in power.

<sup>5</sup>National Archives, Document No. 2881-PS, Hitler's Speech of April 12, 1922. (Hereafter all documents will be cited NA, Doc. No. with individual document and/or page identification).

Anti-Semitism was an integral part of the Nazi ideology. Actually Nazi ideology was not original, rather it was based on historical precedents which, with some modifications, appealed to the already existing anti-Semitism of the German people. The racial theories of the 19th century were the core of Hitler's racial ideology and made implementation easier since the population had already been conditioned to believe in the differentiation of races. The first writer of race theory was the French Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) who published Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines in which he stated that race was the determining factor in the rise and fall of civilizations. Pure races rose to power, and bastardized races were defeated. The Germanic race, the Aryan, was the most valuable but it was degenerating because of mixing.<sup>6</sup> Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) Origins of the Species published in 1859, and The Descent of Man published in 1871 lent further support to the theory of racial superiority. The "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection" would eliminate the weak leaving only the strong to survive. The concept of the mythical Nordic race was espoused by the Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), who popularized the racial theories of the 19th century in his book, Die Grundlagen des XIX. Jahrhunderts, published in 1900. The German people, Chamberlain claimed, were

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<sup>6</sup>Horst von Maltitz, The Evolution of Hitler's Germany (New York, 1973), 26.



responsible for great cultural achievements; they were superior to the Jews, whom he also considered a pure race. To Chamberlain the Germans by right were entitled to be the world's masters.<sup>7</sup> Another racial theory which prevailed in the early 20th century was founded by Georg Lanz von Liebenfels, a fanatical racist who directed the formation of the Aryan League. The League was an organization based on racial mysticism, and the racial superiority of the blond, blue-eyed Aryan.<sup>8</sup> These pseudo-scientific theories became the basis of Hitler's racial ideology. The Pan German Association organized in 1891 was a professional organization of professors, teachers, and others who were racist, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic; they had a great effect on the youth of the pre-Hitler period in Germany.<sup>9</sup> The already existing prejudices against the Jews, and the racial doctrines combined to create an atmosphere conducive to the rise of Hitler's perverted, mythical racial doctrine of the supremacy of the Germanic (Aryan) race.

The hold that the Nazis had on the German public was the result of their propaganda and their terror tactics.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>8</sup>Joachim C. Fest, Hitler (New York, 1974), 36; Maltitz, Evolution, 79-80. Lanz von Liebenfels' society's symbol was the swastika. To some historians, he is believed to have had a direct influence on Hitler's doctrine of Aryan supremacy; yet, to others, Hitler's doctrine was an outgrowth of his personal experiences.

<sup>9</sup>Maltitz, Evolution, 32.

The Jew was a single, collective, tangible enemy who was easily accessible<sup>10</sup> and easily identified by the Germans. Thus, elementary principles for successful propaganda were achieved--the enemy was at once identifiable, real, and accessible. Nazi policies were consistently anti-Semitic, they gave new impetus to the old racial doctrines. The highly efficient Nazi propaganda machine saw to it that the average German, as a member of the master race, was compelled to take action against the racially inferior Jews.

The phenomena of totalitarianism which was able to control thought and action in Germany became a reality due to the post-World War I atmosphere. The "miseries of defeat, militarism, inflation, and depression; the collapse of traditional values; urbanization; these had led hundreds of thousands to National Socialism by 1930."<sup>11</sup> There were, in addition, certain psychological and cultural factors present in Germany, largely as a result of Germany's peculiar historical development which made Hitler's rise to power possible: "respect for established authority, self-pity in defeat, the search for scapegoats in misery, brutality alternating with obsequiousness, and a willingness to take orders."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Hilberg, Destruction, 13.

<sup>11</sup>Robert E. Herzstein, Adolf Hitler and the German Trauma 1913-1945 (New York, 1974), 269.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

In addition, the Weimar Republic failed to win the confidence of the German people because of the public's association of postwar reparations and the Versailles Treaty with the government of the Republic. The situation in Germany grew steadily worse, especially after the economic depressions of 1923 and 1929, and the alienation of the Germans increased. This manifested itself in the immorality of the age, in the increase in the number of suicides, and in the growth of radical political parties. Communism was one of the causes of the rise in Nazi popularity. It had appeared to be an answer to the postwar conditions of Germany so Hitler countered with something just as radical--mysticism and anti-Semitism.

Hitler drew heavily on the racial doctrines of the 19th and 20th centuries because he believed that a clear understanding of the racial problem, hence the Jewish problem, was necessary for the resurrection of the German race and the German nation.<sup>13</sup> The Jew was the cause and the incarnation of all that was evil or destructive in Germany. The Jews, to Hitler, were an inferior race. They were the antithesis of the racially superior Aryan (German) race and were to be treated as mortal enemies. The Nazis seized upon racial anti-Semitism and created further myths about the Jew which made him the cause of everything wrong with modernity, ranging from Bolshevism

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<sup>13</sup> Stein, Hitler, 26.

to finance capitalism; from unfair competition of department stores to the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>14</sup> The Jew had to be expelled in order for the Aryan race to survive. By emphasizing the glorious German past, the Nazis offered the quickest and most radical relief from the stress and insecurity which arose from their defeat in World War I. By emphasizing the Jew as sinister they were better able to make the party the focus of all classes and individuals.<sup>15</sup> The Jew became the enemy of the entire German population. The idea of superiority was a common denominator in the persecution of the Jews, and many who would not have followed Hitler were drawn to the Party because of its anti-Semitism and call for Jewish persecution. Anti-Semitism became the "convenient instrument with which to unite groups and classes of divergent views and interests under one banner."<sup>16</sup>

Hitler, in his speech of April 12, 1922, described his racial anti-Semitism as "new creed for the masses" and its spreading among the German people as "the most formidable task to be accomplished by our movement."<sup>17</sup> The enemy within--the Jew--was stereotyped by Volkisch (Racial) thought.

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<sup>14</sup>Herzstein, Trauma, 94.

<sup>15</sup>John L. Snell (ed.), The Nazi Revolution: Germany's Guilt or Germany's Fate? (Boston, 1959), 86-87.

<sup>16</sup>National Archives, IMT Document Book I, IMT charge against the Nazi regime.

<sup>17</sup>NA, 2881-PS.

The stereotype of the Jew was central to Nazi ideology. The Jew had to be given broad, general characteristics so as to be recognizable in a negative form to all classes of people, from peasants and laborers to bankers and lawyers. Hitler gave his "German revolution" its focus by making it into an anti-Jewish revolution.<sup>18</sup>

The Germans were ignorant about the Jews and the Nazis capitalized on that fact. The common fear of the Jews on the part of the Germans, made them an easy target for the anti-Jewish ideology which was promulgated in the Nazi propaganda. The enmity between Germans and Jews was eternal. The Jew, according to Hitler, was responsible for the degeneration of the German race, they were the major obstacle to the realization of racial purity.

The typical Jew, according to all Nazi propaganda, was one caked with filth, living in ghettos, and involved in ritual murders. He was linked with money and a lust for Aryan women, and most importantly he was linked to Bolshevism. Bolshevism made the Jewish fear contemporary to the Germans. The revival of past anti-Semitic writings was a popular move by the propagandists in order to prove that the Jew had been considered destructive for centuries and would continue to do evil unless a solution to his presence were found. Martin Luther's anti-Semitic writings and those of other Christians were exploited by the Nazis.

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<sup>18</sup>George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology, (New York, 1964), 7-8.

Modern German anti-Semitism was "the bastard child of the union of Christian anti-Semitism with German nationalism."<sup>19</sup> Anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews was not a new practice, it had been a recurrent factor throughout German history. For centuries the Christians had tried to forcibly convert the Jews, and when that failed expulsion was offered to the Jews as an alternative. Every action taken by the Nazis had been previously implemented by the Church's Canonical Law. The Church had prohibited inter-marriage and "mixing"; Jews had been forbidden free and public movement; and Jews had even been marked by yellow belts in 1215.<sup>20</sup> Anti-Semitism was a historical phenomena that was put to destructive use by the Nazis.

Hitler's personal hatred of the Jews was a deep emotional commitment and he used it as a vehicle to political power.<sup>21</sup> He had discovered a source of unity among the German people--anti-Semitism appealed to the majority of voters. As a rule, German anti-Semites wanted the Jews excluded from public office, subjected to educational and professional discrimination, and pushed into a position of an under-privileged minority. The Germans were to be given priority; however, their demands stopped there.<sup>22</sup> National Socialism

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<sup>19</sup>Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews 1933-1945, (New York, 1975), 23.

<sup>20</sup>Hilberg, Destruction, 5-7.

<sup>21</sup>Mosse, Ideology, 296.

<sup>22</sup>Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide, (New York, 1966), 210.

delivered those demands, and much more. The idea of racial purification became popular throughout Germany due to the efficient propaganda methods employed by the Nazis. The Nazi doctrine of the master race was effective propaganda because it entitled the German people to subjugate, dominate, and eventually exterminate other races without any feelings of guilt.<sup>23</sup>

Jews were depicted as devoid of all human (German) characteristics in order to depersonalize extermination. Depersonalization was necessary in order to make all Jews evil to all Germans. The Jewish evil was an abstraction, yet a reality.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the Nazis were ridding Germany of an evil, and not cold-bloodedly murdering friends and neighbors. Pictures, films, novels, lectures, everything encouraged cruelty toward the Jews. Between 1933 and 1938 Germany was saturated with the idea of the Jew as responsible for evil and the idea of the need to find a solution to that evil so that Germany might recapture her glorious past.

Hitler's twelve year reign of terror made anything but conformity to Nazism dangerous. The instruments of terror were the SS, the Gestapo, and the threat of the concentration camp. The people of Germany lived by two

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<sup>23</sup>International Military Tribunal, Trials of Major War Criminals before the Nuremburg Military Tribunal, (Nuremburg, Germany, 1946-1947), Vol. 1, 31. (Hereafter cited as IMT, Vol. #, p. #).

<sup>24</sup>Mosse, Ideology, 302.

main principles during those twelve years--the Führer and the dominion of race.<sup>25</sup> The German people were provided with an excuse to practice murder and/or the acceptance of murder by the Nazi myth of the Jewish conspiracy and Bolshevism.

Hitler had always advocated the "removal (Entfernung) of the Jews altogether."<sup>26</sup> He constantly called for their removal in his ideological treatise, Mein Kampf. The pages of Mein Kampf are filled with the stereotype of the Jew and the techniques of propaganda with which to achieve their removal.<sup>27</sup> The most important and successful propaganda was that which linked the Jew to Bolshevism and charged them with conspiring to spread Bolshevism throughout the world. To Hitler and National Socialism the Jew was synonymous with Bolshevism. For many the idea of the Jewish conspiracy was more than ideology or world view--"it was something which took possession of their psyches, so they were able, for instance, to burn small children alive without any conscious feelings of compassion or guilt."<sup>28</sup> The conduct of the war and the execution of the "final solution" were justified by those preposterous lies concocted by the Nazis.

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<sup>25</sup> Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>27</sup> Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1971), 304, 325, 427, 623.

<sup>28</sup> Cohn, Genocide, 245.



The public and relentless program of the persecution of the Jews was adopted by the Nazis in their official party program proclaimed on February 24, 1920 by Hitler. The program consisted of twenty-five points, one fifth of which were to be directed at the Jews upon the Nazi accession to power. Point Four stated that "No Jew is a member of the German nation,"<sup>29</sup> thus the Jew was to be deprived of his citizenship. Anyone who was not a citizen would live in Germany as a "guest," present only by the authority of the Nazis. The Jews were to be deprived of employment by point six, which stated that only "citizens of the Reich could hold government office."<sup>30</sup> The Reich would provide for its citizens and should it become impossible to provide for the entire population, non-citizens would be expelled. Further immigration of non-Germans would be prohibited, and all those who entered subsequent to August 14, 1914 would leave immediately. Point twenty-three was important in that it would advocate "legal warfare against political lies"<sup>31</sup> by excluding Jews from the press. All editors of the press would be German; any non-German would have to obtain special state permission to print their paper; and finally Jewish financial participation in the press would be prohibited.<sup>32</sup> Those points became the basis for the

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<sup>29</sup> NA, 1708-PS, NSDAP Program, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

legal discrimination against the Jews from 1935 to 1938 which was set forth in the Nuremberg Laws.

The Nazi program was preceded and followed by speeches and writings of other Nazi leaders who laid the ideological basis for the measures against the Jews. Alfred Rosenberg advocated programs against the Jews on the basis that they were a "separate nation within Germany"<sup>33</sup> and had no right to participate politically, socially, or economically in Germany. Gottfried Feder, official commentator of the Nazi Party program, stated that "Antisemitism is in a way the emotional foundation of our movement."<sup>34</sup> Walter Gross, director of the office of Racial policy of the Nazi party, felt that anti-Semitism was an "education in racial thinking," and was important to the party's revolutionary nature.<sup>35</sup> The plans and programs had a future and final aim, they were not merely concerned with a solution to a momentary uncomfortable situation. The ideological bases had been laid by Hitler in Mein Kampf, by party leaders, and most importantly they had been presented to the people by state and party propaganda. As Hitler predicted in his speech of April 29, 1920 he would "carry on the struggle until the last Jew was removed from the German Reich."<sup>36</sup> Propaganda

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<sup>33</sup>NA, 2842-PS, Alfred Rosenberg, Die Spur des Juden in Wandel der Zeit.

<sup>34</sup>NA, 2844-PS, Das Program der NSDAP.

<sup>35</sup>NA, 2845-PS, Walter Gross, Ein Jahr rassenpolitische Erziehung, (1934).

<sup>36</sup>Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 17.

ensured that National Socialism became the creed of salvation for the disillusioned and dispossessed masses of the postwar era; at the same time anti-Semitic propaganda became the written death warrant for millions of European Jews.

Propaganda, as conceived by Hitler, was an art which consisted "precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the national masses...."<sup>37</sup> The Nazi propaganda machine called the masses' attention to certain facts, processes, and necessities and compelled them towards certain ends. The Germans were conditioned by Nazi propaganda to accept the active, violent persecution and eventually the extermination of the Jews. The combination of terror and propaganda created a Germany which could do nothing to counter Hitler's will. The Führer had genuine believers in his program for Germany's revolution, those who did not believe were convinced to do so by the effective propaganda and the threat of the concentration camp. Hitler was a "cold-blooded, sophisticated and calculating Machiavelli, who knew how to use intrigue, threats, and provocation to create situations necessary to the achievement to his aims."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, 180; Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, The German Cinema (New York, 1971), 65-66.

<sup>38</sup>Eduoard Calic (ed.), Secret Conversations with Hitler: The Two Newly Discovered 1931 Interviews, trans. Richard Barry (New York, 1971), 142.

Thus, Germany became enslaved by a maniacal, pseudo-scientific, pseudo-intellectual ideology.

Hitler's propaganda made the world "Jew conscious"-- simply hearing the term made many Germans immediately suspicious and distrustful.<sup>39</sup> The German peoples' indoctrination became so thorough that they either ignored, consciously refused to recognize, or passively accepted the obvious signs that hinted at the ultimate mass murder of millions of people--but alien people with whom they had nothing in common.

The Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and the Propaganda Department of the National Socialist Party were both under the control of Dr. Paul Josef Goebbels. Together he and Hitler transformed Germany into a willing instrument for the realization of the Führer's will. Goebbels created the Führer myth and the anti-myth of the Jew; these were his greatest achievements.<sup>40</sup> The key to Goebbels' life was his statement--"It is almost immaterial what we believe in, so long as we believe in something."<sup>41</sup> This statement also provided the key to his propaganda tactics; he gave Germany a leader and a cause to fight for, and molded the beliefs of the German people.

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<sup>39</sup> James Parkes, Anti-Semitism, (Chicago, 1963), iv.

<sup>40</sup> Helmut Heiber, Joseph Goebbels, (Berlin, 1962), 201.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 15.

The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda came into existence by a decree dated March 13, 1933.<sup>42</sup> The entire apparatus of public communications was under the control of Goebbels. Hitler had complete confidence in Goebbels, and during the next five years the Nazi propaganda machine became so comprehensive and efficient that it exerted enormous influence over the everyday life of the average German. In civic and cultural affairs, in public entertainment, in radio, in the cinema, and in novels Goebbels extended the themes of Nazi ideology. Literally every form of communication was under the Ministry's strong, guiding hand.

The Propaganda Department within the Ministry "coordinated propaganda policies and issued over-all directives to the various functional departments which then implemented the directives."<sup>43</sup> A special function was "enlightenment of the people to the Jewish question" and the racial policies of the Reich.<sup>44</sup> The office of Active Propaganda organized all propaganda actions from major events to celebrations by local groups. The Jewry Department was a branch of the Propaganda Department and was responsible for the active propaganda carried out against the Jews.<sup>45</sup> The elimination

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<sup>42</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book E, E-8.

<sup>43</sup> NA, 2434-A-PS, Excerpts from G. W. Mueller's Book on Propaganda Ministry, E-10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., E-12.

<sup>45</sup> IMT, Vol. 17, 167.

of all Jews from German cultural life was the task of the propaganda department known as Special Cultural Tasks; it was responsible for suggesting the necessary propaganda actions that should be taken against the Jews in Germany. The most important task of the entire Ministry was the enlightenment of the German people and the world to the "Jewish question" through the weapon of propaganda directed against enemies of the State and hostile ideologies.<sup>46</sup>

The Propaganda Ministry was organized around the Propaganda Coordination Division, which ensured that all media for forming public opinion were harnessed effectively. The division provided publicity for the party and information for the ideological education of the German people. Coordination and arrangement, planning and initiation of all anti-Jewish and other nation-wide campaigns were handled by the division. The Division issued directives which fed the "proper" information to newspapers and periodicals, and controlled pictorial reporting. The staffs that were employed were "specialists" in racial and ideological questions and were charged with making the propaganda applicable both at home and abroad, and later to the countries occupied by the Reich.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> NA, 2434-A-PS, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Derrick Sington and Arthur Wiendenfeld, The Goebbels Experiment: A Study of the Nazi Propaganda Machine, (London, 1942), 78.

Propaganda shows were planned by the division in an attempt to poison German minds against the Jews. A large number of documents, letters (facsimiles), charts and photographs were placed on display in exhibitions in Frankfurt and other major cities to illustrate "the rapidity, the uncontrollable sexuality, and the parasitic nature of the Jews."<sup>48</sup> Professional anti-Semites, racial researchers, attended an Anti-Jewish Congress in Frankfurt and as a result a "Library for the Study of the Jewish Question" was opened in 1940.<sup>49</sup> Through such measures, the German people were constantly subjected to an intensive anti-Semitic propaganda campaign from 1933 on.

The Nazi government united the nation through its extensive use of propaganda and the forceful elimination of criticism. Since Goebbels controlled the Zentralverlag, the central publishing house and holding company of the entire Party publishing machines and its official organs such as the Völkischer Beobachter, Der Angriff, Der SA Mann, and Das Schwarze Korps,<sup>50</sup> freedom of thought, and independent judgment largely ceased to exist in Germany. After 1933 the anti-Semitic theme was so prevalent that National Socialism was publicized as the racial will of the German

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book E, E-5.

people, a will ultimately expressed by the annihilation of the Jews.<sup>51</sup>

Nazi propaganda was unique in that it merged the practical with the mythical.<sup>52</sup> Hitler's propaganda focused on the irrational through myths and symbols based on race. The collective fears of an entire nation were directed toward the Jews. The peculiar genius of Hitler and Goebbels combined "German patriotism with Nazi ideological motifs"<sup>53</sup> and used it as an effective weapon against the Jews. Nazi ideology and the propaganda produced by Goebbels both embraced myth, in fact mythical themes were their core. The primary myth was that of the Aryans' racial struggle against the international Jewish conspiracy. Hitler exploited the anti-Semitism which had previously swept Germany. The Jews were depicted by many racists and nationalists as the epitome of modern civilization's materialism and the embodiment of all that was wrong with the postwar world. German hatred of the Jews was intensified by the clever and persuasive propaganda which constantly preached Aryan supremacy and the need to destroy the Jews before they plunged the world into another war.

The official attitude with respect to propaganda was that it was an important function of the Party ideology.

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<sup>51</sup>Gerald Reitlinger, The Final Solution, (London, 1953), 485.

<sup>52</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 3.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 4.



It was, as Hitler often said, "the means which would move the masses."<sup>54</sup> Propaganda was the manner by which Nazi ideology was infused into every aspect of German life. The major aim of propaganda was to prepare the German people for coming events<sup>55</sup>, and to enlighten them about the "Jewish question."

Nazi propaganda was public; it utilized the mass communications system which had been developed prior to the rise of Hitler. The most effective public method of propaganda was the Party rally, a mass meeting usually held in a major city, where Hitler or the other major Party figures delivered speeches which "moved" the crowd to accept the certain policies and ideas. Another advantage of the Party rally was that the evidence disappeared. The spoken word, effective immediately, vanished when the rally ended only to be spread by "Mundpropaganda."<sup>56</sup>

There were basically three types of propaganda. The unorganized agitation of radical fanatics in the Party, those who were violently and grossly anti-Semitic, like Julius Streicher, editor of Der Stürmer. The second type was the Party propaganda and the third was official propaganda developed and disseminated by the Reich

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<sup>54</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, 179, 184, 480.

<sup>55</sup>IMT, Vol. 17, 145.

<sup>56</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 24. "Mundpropaganda", (Whisper-propaganda) spread person to person.

Propaganda Ministry. The success of Nazi propaganda depended upon three major principles; trust in Hitler's humanness; trust in the ethical purity of the system; and absolute trust in Hitler's peaceful intentions.<sup>57</sup> All were destroyed by Hitler's declaration of war and the murder of over five million Jews.

Nazi propaganda spread theories of racial distinction and racial superiority and paved the way for the mass murder of the Jews. An entire culture was permeated by the doctrine of the master race. The Nazis interfered in virtually every aspect of public and private to an extent unknown in any other culture. The Germans literally had no private lives; "their work, their holidays, new buildings, the education of their children, the films they saw, newspapers they read--all carried Nazi stamps."<sup>58</sup> The Germans were trapped in their Nazi state by the totalitarian control of Hitler.

Every facet of national life was directed by a single source and authority--Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. Goebbels' "machinery" was hidden from the public, only the final product was presented. The task of propaganda was to attract followers and spread the message to the masses, and evoke hatred, on the part of the Germans, toward the Jew. Propaganda was an agent of natural selection--the more

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<sup>57</sup>IMT, Vol. 17, 142-143. Testimony of Hans Fritzsche, June 26, 1946.

<sup>58</sup>Z. A. B. Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, (London, 1964), 23.

The Nazi dictatorship was the first to carry out such radical and inciting the propaganda, the more it frightened off weaklings and attracted only the strong, willing, people into the Party. Propaganda had no policy, only a purpose, which was to concentrate on as few points as possible and to drive them home repeatedly.<sup>59</sup> There was no middle ground in the themes employed by Nazi propaganda, which emphasized the most radical and extremist impulses. The Jew was evil, therefore the Jew had to be driven from German life, and by implication exterminated.

Centralization of all activities under Goebbels enabled him to eliminate other alternative sources of information. A mass audience was created by the manufacture of a cheap, uniform, Volksempfänger (radio)<sup>60</sup>, which was used both at home and at work. Compulsory listening was developed as was compulsory attendance at meetings and compulsory reading of Party newspapers.<sup>61</sup> In an effort to control morale and conceal the "many discrepancies between Nazi propaganda and the truth, Goebbels made attempts to prevent the Germans from hearing enemy counter-propaganda."<sup>62</sup> Listening to enemy radio broadcasts during the war was punishable by death.

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<sup>59</sup>Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, xiv.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 38.

<sup>59</sup>Joachim C. Fest, The Face of the Third Reich (New York, 1970), 92.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 95.

The Nazi dictatorship was the first to carry out such an extensive mind control program in a highly industrialized society. Mind control was achieved by the constant use of myth and symbolism in propaganda. Nazism became a kind of religion; Hitler was both the spiritual and political leader of the Reich. The Nuremberg rallies became "high mass" celebrations.<sup>63</sup> The blond, blue-eyed beast, the Aryan, was misappropriated from Friedrich Nietzsche. Even the swastika was understood to be an Aryan symbol, and the "eagle was the Aryan among animals."<sup>64</sup> Everywhere a German went, he was reminded of his "supremacy."

The essence of propaganda was to win people over so sincerely that they succumbed to it, never to escape from its grasp. Racial thought produced strong myths, slogans, and hymns which appealed to the most primitive instincts of the masses.<sup>65</sup> Totalitarian propaganda needed an enemy; Hitler identified it as the Jew. It was Hitler's idea "that by the clever and continuous use of propaganda a people can be made to mistake heaven for hell, and vice versa, the most miserable for Paradise."<sup>66</sup> In the vehemence of its attacks upon the Jew, the validity of this generalization was translated into a stark, terrible reality by the Third Reich.

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<sup>63</sup>Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, 9.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Joachim C. Fest, The Face of the Third Reich (New York, 1970), 92.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 95.

Hitler became the mythical symbol of hope for the entire German population of all ages and classes. He appealed to the German national pride and the postwar (World War I) hatreds and emotions. National Socialism advocated violence against the postwar evils such as the Weimar Republic, the Jews, and all those who questioned the racial doctrines of supremacy.

Another major aim of the continuous and unrelenting propaganda was to justify the war against the Jews to the rest of the world and to persuade other nations to adopt similar methods. The propaganda had to be simple, appealing, and emotional, and directed toward the "uneducated masses and not the questioning intellectuals."<sup>67</sup> According to Goebbels, "propaganda had absolutely nothing to do with truth."<sup>68</sup> The manipulation of minds in the Third Reich was complete when the German people passively accepted the anti-Jewish actions of the regime.

The Nazis seldom exercised caution in their propaganda. The word Jew occurred with obsessive recurrence as did pejorative synonyms such as "usurers, profiteers, exploiters, capitalist."<sup>69</sup> Nothing concerning the "final solution" was evident in writing; in fact, Hitler directed the NSDAP leaders to never put anything in writing about the solution

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<sup>67</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 17.

<sup>68</sup>Fest, Face, 91.

<sup>69</sup>Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 152.

to the "Jewish question."<sup>70</sup> However, an impending "solution" was mentioned in speeches. Anti-Semitism was the most pointed weapon of Nazi propaganda, which advocated the radical elimination of the danger--the Jew.

After 1939 Nazi propaganda depicted the war as a racial issue. The Jews had provoked the war and wanted the extermination of the German people. The Jews were responsible for the conspiracy to destroy the German race; their actions in the postwar period had indicated that desire. Until the collapse of the Third Reich the main theme of Nazi propaganda was anti-Semitism. The international conspiracy idea and the link to Bolshevism continued to be the most powerful anti-Jewish themes. Anti-Semitic propaganda developed from racial discrimination policies to themes which advocated the complete elimination of the Jew from German life. As late as the winter of 1944-1945, when German defeat seemed imminent and the extermination centers were being liberated, the need for a Jewish solution was still being emphasized in the propaganda of the Reich. The ultimate result of the Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda was its contribution to the destruction of the European Jews by conditioning the German people into a complacent acceptance of the radical anti-Semitic measures that were the obvious preludes to the program of annihilation.

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 158.

Themes that were in any way related to anti-Semitism or themes that in any way degraded the Jews were acceptable as propaganda. The "Jewish conspiracy," the evil, "eternal" Jew and the "Jewish problem" were stressed over and over again in propaganda that was used both as an inducement and justification for the persecutions and pogroms. Aryan supremacy was also used as incitement for persecutions. The regime argued that the German people had the right to subjugate all inferior peoples, and their right could, if necessary, be violently executed.

As the years passed, the increasing tempo of the persecutions was explained by anti-Jewish arguments evident in propaganda. "International Jewry had turned against the Reich,"<sup>71</sup> the Jews had led Germany into World War I and World War II. The Jews were responsible for the actions of Jews abroad, the rich capitalist Jews of America and the filthy ghetto Jews of the Eastern European territories. Any anti-Jewish measures were merely reactions to unjustified Jewish provocation. Anything that went wrong was the result of the Jews' presence in Germany. The Nazis transformed the harmless Jew into the sinister, ludicrous figure of the "eternal Jew."<sup>72</sup> The primary

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<sup>71</sup>Ernst K. Bramsted, Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda 1925-1945 (East Lansing, Michigan, 1965), 378.

<sup>72</sup>Bramsted, Goebbels and Propaganda, 377; Baird, Mythical World, 6.

justification for any anti-Jewish measure was that the Jew was the perpetrator of Bolshevism. Jews were the representatives of "Communism with its mask off."<sup>73</sup> Not only did the link to Bolshevism justify persecution, it appealed to more people as a reason for action. Germans were extremely afraid of the phenomena known as Bolshevism. The Jew was a parasite, "the main carrier of the Bolshevist disease."<sup>74</sup> Every anti-Semitic statement issued by the Propaganda Ministry was another step toward the complete degradation of the Jews and their eventual annihilation. Propaganda on the part of the Nazis was a series of shrewdly calculated steps which led to the acceptance of the "final solution of the Jewish question" in the Third Reich and its territories.

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 Nazi propaganda had tried to expose continually the "absurdity of pro-Semitic propaganda"<sup>75</sup> by increasing the viciousness of their own anti-Semitic propaganda. Jews allegedly lived in filth; they were evil; they lacked culture, but they did serve one purpose. They spurred the Aryan on to struggle against them, thus, the very presence of the Jew made the Aryan more conscious of his racially superior position. The Aryan virtues of strength and work were

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<sup>73</sup>Bramsted, Goebbels and Propaganda, 380.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 382.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 34.



constantly contrasted to those of the "decadent Jew, the plutocratic, democratic piracy."<sup>76</sup> The only time that the propaganda war against the Jews ceased was just prior to the 1936 Olympics which were to be held in Berlin.<sup>77</sup> Hitler halted the public anti-Jewish campaigns in order to impress the world and convince international opinion that the reports of Jewish persecutions were false.

Nazism transformed "traditional anti-Semitism into a literal war of annihilation."<sup>78</sup> Hitler turned the 19th century racial doctrines into a mythical war of Aryans versus Jews, and subsequently changed that war into a very real war. It was a struggle in which either the Jew or the Aryans would win. As a result, Nazi propaganda caused the masses to lose all ability to distinguish between myth and reality. The Germans became paranoid where the Jews were concerned. Nazi propaganda had so thoroughly permeated German culture that in the deluded German mind every Jewish man, woman, and child became lethal enemies of the German racial community. The Nazi theme of the guilt of the Jews for the post-World War I conditions helped warrant their elimination. Actual mass murder and gassing were nowhere mentioned, but the wholesale destruction of the Jews was justified by crude arguments which were spread throughout

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<sup>76</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 92.

<sup>77</sup>Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, 55.

<sup>78</sup>Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 166.

the Third Reich and its territories by the efficient propaganda machine. Everything short of an actual public announcement of the "final solution" had taken place to prepare the Germans for the forthcoming "fait accompli."<sup>79</sup>

The stereotype of the Jew prevailed in all Nazi propaganda as did the anti-Semitic themes. The basis for Jewish stereotyping was drawn from Hitler's ideological treatise, Mein Kampf, which was published by the party press in 1925. The book was eventually widely read (or at least widely bought) by the German public, and it was well exploited by the Nazi propaganda machine. A constant factor in Nazi propaganda was the presence of the eternal Jew and the need to expel him from Germany. Books, magazines, newspapers, and films were the carriers of racial hatred. The Jews were creatures with traits fantasized by Hitler. With no respect for the individual Jew who had been successfully assimilated into German culture, Hitler tagged the Jews, collectively, with characteristics of filth, conspiracy, and Bolshevism. To Hitler the Jew was "an apparition in a black caftan" with "definite racial characteristics."<sup>80</sup> This was important because later the Nazi persecution of the Jews was based on the premise of Aryan supremacy, and the alleged plot of the Jewish-Bolshevik world conspiracy to destroy Germany.

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<sup>79</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 6.

<sup>80</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, 56.

One of the most consistent themes found in Nazi propaganda was the concept of the Jew as a "parasite" which fed itself by destroying other races, especially the Germans. The Jewish man was constantly trying to seduce the Aryan women. Hitler illustrated that point over and over in Mein Kampf,<sup>81</sup> and that simple illustration became the basic theme around which movies and books were developed.

Hitler and Goebbels exploited virtually every medium available to spread their message of racial discrimination. Beginning with the Nazi accession to power all communications came under the direct control of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. In the Nazi Press, the Jew was unmasked after successfully doing evil for centuries. Goebbels' proof of a Jewish conspiracy was the widely distributed forgery known as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Protocols were an elaborate ruse developed to prove that an international clique of Jewish conspirators was preparing to assume total world power. The Protocols were first exploited to help the Nazis to power, and then to justify Hitler's terror, his war, and his plans for genocide.<sup>82</sup> The Nazis also used other means to do the same thing. Extensive propaganda made the Jew the scapegoat of real or

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 325. Films, such as "Jud Süß," would exploit this theme continually as would novels, newspapers, and magazines.

<sup>82</sup> Cohn, Genocide, 17, 194; Baird, Mythical World, 6; Calic, Two New Interviews, 154.

imagined fears on the part of the Germans. The image of the Jew was perverted, falsified, magnified, and distorted by a propaganda machine which conditioned an entire population to accept any action, legal or illegal, taken against the Jew. The combination of the 19th century racial doctrines, the Protocols, and the propaganda tactics of the Third Reich insured that the Jews would find no defenders.<sup>83</sup>

Goebbels and Hitler recognized film as an important, integral part of propaganda. Goebbels was obsessed by film and its power over people, and everything produced on film had to be approved personally by him. Hitler wanted "to exploit film as an instrument of propaganda, but in such a way that every theatergoer may be clearly aware that on such and such an occasion he is going to see a political film."<sup>84</sup> The purpose of making films during the Hitler era was twofold; to make propaganda for the state and to educate the people therein. Film was an important instrument of propaganda since it appealed to people of all strata, so important that it was given a separate section within the Ministry, Filmkammer (Chamber of Film), which was responsible for the making of propaganda films and the arrangements for their display. Goebbels instructed studios to produce films with "precise tendencies,

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<sup>83</sup>Parkes, Anti-Semitism, 88.

<sup>84</sup>David Stewart Hull, Film in The Third Reich (Berkeley, 1969), 20.

sharp racial contours portraying men and society as they are in reality."<sup>85</sup> The racial reality of the Nazis was actually mythical in origin, and it was the myth that Goebbels exploited.

Actually only a small number of the films were overtly propagandistic, but the most violent and persuasive were the anti-Semitic films. Film developed into a peculiar form of propaganda. The German people resisted films which were too obviously propagandistic and it was especially hard to find writers, actors, and directors to make explicit propaganda films.<sup>86</sup> Anti-Semitism in film developed gradually from films which contained only a few anti-Semitic remarks, "Ich fur dich-du fur mich" released in 1934, to ones which were openly and violently anti-Jewish like "Der Ewige Jude" released in 1940.

Anti-Semitic films were not the only films produced during Hitler's reign. Films which were complimentary of the regime and films which exploited the mythical pomp and pageantry of National Socialism were also produced,<sup>87</sup> though

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<sup>85</sup> Lotte H. Eisner, The Haunted Screen, (London, 1969), 329.

<sup>86</sup> Hull, Film, 36.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 75. Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph des Willens" produced in 1936 is the very best example of the use of myth in film. Hitler's plane descends through the clouds like Odin, an ancient Aryan god, as the movie begins. The purpose of the film about the 1934 Nuremberg party rally was to introduce the party leaders, and to subtly impress foreign audiences while frightening them.

they were eclipsed in importance by the anti-Semitic films. Entertaining the people with Nazi ideology made film an important medium. Every film contained ideological illusions ranging from the mild and almost concealed to the violent and over emphasized. Propaganda films were, like the anti-Jewish campaigns, halted temporarily in 1935-1936 because of the upcoming Olympics in Berlin.

The major result of complete government control over the film industry, which had been realized by 1938, was the production of violent, and lurid anti-Semitic films. The four major explicitly anti-Semitic films, three feature films and one documentary, were produced and released between 1938-1941. The first known anti-Semitic film was "Robert und Bertram," produced in 1938 and released in July of 1939.<sup>88</sup> The story was set in 1839 and concerned the adventures of two vagabonds, Robert and Bertram, who decide to help the daughter of an innkeeper; she had been forced into marriage with a Jew. The film was simple-mindedly anti-Semitic and overly exaggerated the Jewish characters. The second feature length film, "Die Rothschild Aktien von Waterloo,"<sup>89</sup> was more vicious. The plot traced the history of the Rothschild family, with the facts grossly distorted. The film stated that the Rothschilds made their millions by announcing that Napoleon had won at Waterloo. It ended

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<sup>88</sup>Hull, Film, 158.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 159.

with the flaming star of David and map of England and the announcement that "As this film is completed, the last members of the Rothschild family are leaving Europe as refugees and escaping to their allies in England...."<sup>90</sup>

The "Rothschilds" was anti-British as well as anti-Semitic.

The two most vehement anti-Semitic films were released in late 1940, coinciding with the beginning of the most radical phase of Hitler's long range plan to rid Germany of the Jews. The most notorious feature film was "Jud Süß" directed by Veit Harlan, and starring Ferdinand Marian as Süß Oppenheimer, and Werner Krauss as Rabbi Loew. The pseudo-historical film was not related to the story published by Lion Feuchtwanger in 1925.<sup>91</sup> The movie was concerned with the expansion of the power of Süß Oppenheimer who was the financial advisor of Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg. The mysterious religious practices of the Jews were also featured. Süß arrived in Württemberg and ingratiated himself to Duke Alexander. Gradually Süß grew more powerful at court, eventually to the point of ruthlessness and corruption. Süß cheated the state and defiled the Aryan race. He abducted the daughter of a powerful counselor and brutally raped her while he had her husband tortured in the basement. Here again was the ever present insinuation that Hitler had

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 160.

<sup>91</sup>Manvell and Fraenkel, Cinema, 87.

made--the Jews were out to destroy the Aryans racially. Throughout the entire movie the Aryan and the Jew were contrasted. Süß had lusted for the Aryan maiden, Doreathea, and had succeeded in degrading the race. Doreathea escaped and drowned herself. All this was made known and as the Duke died the Duchy revolted and condemned Süß Oppenheimer to death. The most violent scene depicted the execution of Süß Oppenheimer. He was placed in an iron cage and hauled to the top of the scaffold and hanged. The film urged the people of the state never to forget the lesson, subsequently the Jews were forced to leave the country. The picture of the Jew being hanged was graphically etched in the German mind.<sup>92</sup> The film was so barbaric that it was banned for teens under fourteen.<sup>93</sup> "Jud Süß" was a box-office hit in several ways. Jews were often beaten by Germans once they had viewed the movie.<sup>94</sup> The movie did just what the propagandists had hoped--it incited violent action against the Jews.

"Jud Süß" was required viewing for all military troops at home and at the front, as well as the SS, and the police.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> National Archives, "Jud Süß," 1940.

<sup>93</sup> Hull, Film, 168.

<sup>94</sup> Heinz Boberach (ed.), Meldungen aus dem Reich, (Stuttgart, 1968), 115; Hull, Film, 169.

<sup>95</sup> Baird, Mythical World, 7; Hull, Film, 170.



When "resettlements" were imminent "Jud Süß" was almost always shown in local theaters, especially in the East. It was shown in order to incense the indigenous population against the Jew so that when troops arrived to relocate the Jews there would be no attempts to help them resist.<sup>96</sup>

The epitome of anti-Semitic propaganda was the film documentary "Der Ewige Jude" which was released in November, 1940. Filmed in the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos to give it authenticity, "Ewige Jude" contrasted Jewish individualism and self-seeking to the National Socialism ideal of Volksgemeinschaft (racial community).<sup>97</sup> The main message of the documentary was obvious--the Jews were parasites fit only for liquidation. The film, according to the introduction, was concerned with the worldwide Jewish problem. It was originally conceived by Dr. Eberhard Taubert, Goebbels' expert on the Jewish question in the Propaganda Ministry, and directed by Dr. Fritz Hippler, Head of the Propaganda Ministry's film department (1939-1943), and was filmed by a special detail from the Propaganda Ministry.<sup>98</sup> The film

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<sup>96</sup>Hull, Film, 170; Baird, Mythical World, 7.

<sup>97</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 6; Library of Congress, "Der Ewige Jude," 1940.

<sup>98</sup>Baird, Mythical World, 264, fn 15.

sought to show the Jews as they really were without the "mask of civilization."<sup>99</sup> It was a documentary, a compilation of actual film footage, which depicted the Jews as a race. The film began with scenes of Jewish ghetto life--the religious ceremonies, the meals amidst flies and filth, and the selling in the streets. The Jews were in their element counting their money. They were unlike the Aryan, they were "ohne Arbeite, ohne Bauern, ein Volk von parasiten."<sup>100</sup>

The next section of the film dealt with how Jews attempted to disguise their Jewishness so that they could function in the outside world. A series of clips depicting several Jews and then their German disguises was shown with warnings of how to recognize a Jew in disguise. Jews were wealthy, but like the Rothschilds, they hid their true wealth to trick the tax collectors. The Rothschilds were used as examples of the world-conspiracy. One scene showed the Father telling his five sons to set up banks in Paris, London, Naples, Vienna, and Frankfurt. New York was depicted as the center of Jewish power, Wall Street was Jewish and both were run by Jews like La Guardia and Walter Morgenthau. World War I was the result of the Jewish conspiracy. The film continued with comparisons of the Jewish and Aryan life styles. The Jewish migration from

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<sup>99</sup> LC, "Der Ewige Jude," 1940.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

Palestine into Europe was compared to the migration of rats. The final reel graphically depicted the supposed methods of obtaining kosher meat, with the implied theme of ritual murder in the depiction of the actual slitting of a cow and sheep's throat while they were still alive. The repulsive, brutal butchering scene was the most violent and sickening of the entire film. It was, in fact, prefaced by a written and spoken statement that the squeamish should close their eyes.

The film ended with contrasting scenes of German men and the German order intended to fill the audience with gratification for belonging to a people whose leader had absolutely solved the Jewish problem. Only the Nazis, said the narrator, could "eradicate the perpetrators of such cruelty from the face of the earth." In less than forty-five minutes the Nazi "documentary" developed the theme that any action against the Jew was justified. Extermination was not actually mentioned but the need to rid Europe of the parasitic hold of the Jews was. The film was so "unhealthy" that some parts were not to be shown to women and children.<sup>101</sup> "Der Ewige Jude" was shown simultaneously in sixty-six Berlin theaters.<sup>102</sup> If every major city was as thoroughly saturated with showings

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<sup>101</sup> Singleton and Wiedenfeld, Goebbels Experiment, 220.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 217.

of "Der Ewige Jude," then there is little wonder that violent action was the ultimate result.

Three of the four anti-Semitic films, "Rothschilds," "Jud Süß," and "Der Ewige Jude," premiered in 1940. Unquestionably Goebbels had those films made and shown as an important part of the preparations for the actions which led ultimately to the "final solution of the Jewish question."<sup>103</sup> The anti-Semitic movies were the most successful form of propaganda. They succeeded in stereotyping the Jew and more importantly they succeeded in prompting the public to take or to accept actions against the Jews. These movies must, therefore, share in the responsibility for the murder of millions, for they served as an impetus for the establishment of gas chambers and annihilation camps. After the war some of the actors and directors were tried for their participation in crimes against humanity.<sup>104</sup>

Another important vehicle for the spread of anti-Semitism was the German school system. Once the Nazis came to power, racial science and Nazi ideology were introduced into the curriculum. Teachers were directed

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<sup>103</sup>Hull, Film, 170.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 171. Veit Harlan, director, was tried twice for crimes against humanity, he was acquitted in 1950. Ferdinand Marian, (Süss), apparently committed suicide. Werner Krauss, (Rabbi Loew), was blacklisted. Heinrich George, (Duke Karl), died in 1946 in Sachsenhausen, a Russian concentration camp.

by the Nazis to instruct their students as to the nature, cause, and effect of racial problems, and to enlighten them as to the importance of race to the German people. The idea of racial purification and the doctrine of the master race were taught to children from the time they entered the educational system of the Third Reich at the age of six.<sup>105</sup> One of the best illustrations of the kind of anti-Semitism the Nazis introduced into the schools was found in the notebook of a Jewish student. The topic was racial theory. The notes read:

1. The Jewish race is much inferior to the Negro race.
2. All Jews have crooked legs, fat bellies, curly hair, and an untrustworthy look.
3. Jews were responsible for the World War.
4. They were to blame for the Armistice of 1918 and they made the treaty of Versailles.
5. They were the cause of inflation.
6. They were the downfall of the Roman Empire.
7. Marx was a great criminal.
8. All Jews are Communists.
9. They are the rulers of Russia.<sup>106</sup>

The politicized curriculum of the Reich educational system was supplemented by the propaganda from the organizations for children such as Hitler Youth. The Nazi Primer, the handbook for the schooling of the Hitler youth, was published in 1937 by the Party Press. It was used by seven million youngsters in the Reich.<sup>107</sup> The purpose of such comprehensive

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<sup>105</sup> George L. Mosse (ed.), Nazi Culture, (New York, 1966), 283.

<sup>106</sup> Karl A. Schleunes, The Twisted Road to Auschwitz, (Chicago, 1970), 107-08.

<sup>107</sup> Fritz Brennecke, The Nazi Primer: Official Handbook for Schooling the Hitler Youth, trans. Harwood L. Childs (New York, 1938), xiv.

racial and ideological texts was the indoctrination of a new generation of Nazi leaders who would eventually replace Hitler, Goebbels, and the other Party leaders.

The primer included such topics as the "unlikeness of men," "race formation and heredity," and "German race and cultural territories". It stressed that the German people had been contaminated by the Jew and had to prepare defensive actions against the mind and body contamination. Jewish hegemony in cultural and intellectual life had brought forth the disrupting and disturbing character of the people to the attention of the Germans.<sup>108</sup> The primer then went on to explain the actions which had been taken against Jews prior to 1937, and the National Socialist ideology which was the basis for that action. Racial pride and racial shame, the book asserted, were first reawakened by National Socialism. The German people were enlisted into the fight to preserve the pure race of Germans and guard against any mixing. Nazi success in the racial issue was credited to the fact that it "corresponds to heroic conception of life and the racial character of the German people."<sup>109</sup> Nazi success was, in fact, built upon the success of the Nazi propaganda machine; a machine so comprehensive that it invaded some aspect of every German's life.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 82.

Books, magazines, and newspapers were constantly filled with anti-Jewish propaganda. Two of the important messengers of the printed word were the Völkischer Beobachter, the party newspaper, and Der Stürmer, a violent, vile, vulgar magazine under the general editorship of Julius Streicher, the most maniacal Jew hater in the Third Reich. Der Stürmer was important to the propaganda machine for it had one of the largest circulations, one-half million, and was always displayed on billboards in towns and used in schools.<sup>110</sup> The Germans were made Jew-conscious by Der Stürmer. Articles in Streicher's magazine were filled with lurid accounts of ritual murders, rapes, and other mythical, deranged crimes that had supposedly been committed by Jews. The Germans were constantly urged to take measures to destroy the "bacillus lodged in its body"<sup>111</sup> and save the earth from the Jew.

Der Stürmer also published books for both children and adults. Books for children were published by the Stürmer Verlag so that the German youth would develop the proper attitudes toward the "Jewish question." Two books which aptly illustrate the means used to capture the minds of children are Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom) and

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<sup>110</sup>Cohn, Genocide, 204.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 201.

Trau Keinem Fuchs Auf Gruener Heid Und Keinem Jud Bei  
Seinem Eid (Trust no Fox on A Green Heath and no Jew on  
His Oath).<sup>112</sup>

Trau Keinem Fuchs... was written and illustrated by a teenage girl, Elvira Bauer, and published in 1936. It was a "charming" children's book which contained poems and pictures which depicted Nazi ideology, especially the anti-Semitism. All the propaganda which was being directed at the older generation was explained simply to the children. The poems were accompanied by illustrations, similar to those in fairy tales. The key words, those which described the Jew and his characteristics, were boldfaced in red type. Illustrations were exaggerated--the Germans were very blond, very blue-eyed, very healthy and straight and the Jews were very dark, had very dark features, and very fat bellies. The book went on to explain that the father of the Jews was the devil and the Talmud (Bible) taught them how to cheat and defile the Aryan race. The Jews were presented as obscene and disgusting in print and in the illustrations. Even if children were too young to read, the point was made by the illustrations. One picture showed Julius Streicher receiving a bouquet of flowers because he had taught the children what it meant to be Jewish and what it meant to be German. A generation of

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<sup>112</sup> NA, 3353-PS, Trau Keinem Fuchs Auf Gruener Heid Und Keinem Jud Bei Seinem Eid; NA, 1773-PS, Der Giftpilz.



German children were exposed to the image of the Jew waiting to molest or murder Aryan children.

Another typical work, Der Giftpilz by Ernst Hiemer, was published in 1938. On a higher reading level this book was an extension of the basic themes previously developed in Trau Keinem Fuchs or taught to children at home or school. The stories were longer, more detailed accounts of the evils of the Jews. Jewish characteristics were discussed in a story which depicted racial lessons taught to the children in school. A student who was called on by his teacher to summarize the lesson went to the blackboard and pointed to the illustrations already drawn and said; "One usually recognizes a Jew by his nose. The Jewish nose is crooked at the end. It looks like the figure 6. Therefore it is called the 'Jewish Six'...but the Jew is also recognizable by his lips which are thick and sloppy, and his eyes which are thicker and more fleshy than Aryans' and their look is lurking and sharp."<sup>113</sup> The children then recited in chorus..."If we shall be free of the Jew-- and will again be happy and glad, Then the youth must struggle with us--to subdue the Jew devil."<sup>114</sup> Over and over again Nazi propaganda depicted the evil, eternal Jew-- investing him with satanic and criminal tendencies while potraying the Germans as superior and heroic.

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<sup>113</sup> NA, 1778-PS, Der Giftpilz, 6.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 9.

In the same volume, a Hitler youth recounted a rally which he had attended. The main speaker was Julius Streicher, who urged the young to continue the struggle against the Jew. Streicher elaborated on the horrible crimes of the Jews and said; "Without a solution of the Jewish question there will be no salvation of mankind."<sup>115</sup> The Hitler youth provided unconscious insight into the success of such venom upon the German people when he explained that all who had been present had understood Streicher and had enthusiastically applauded him.

Streicher's book The Jewish World Pest advocated ruthless extermination of Jewry. From the first, Streicher had been the most open advocate of extermination. The cover of the book depicted the globe encircled by the snake Judah, which was transfixed by a swastika-handled sword.<sup>116</sup> Typical of strong anti-Semitic literature were the articles in Der Stürmer which vividly and explicitly described ritual murder. In April of 1937 Der Stürmer carried an article on pages one and two entitled "Ritual Murder." The article contended that any child who was missing had been the victim of a Jewish ritual murder. Many Jews, the article asserted, had confessed that ritual murder was law to the Talmud Jew and took place especially on Purim, in

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>116</sup> Sington and Wiedenfeld, Goebbels Experiment, 99.

memory of the Persian murders, and Passover, in memory of Christ's murder. Instructions were included: The blood of the victims is to be tapped by force, and used in wine and matros to curse all enemies of the Jewish faith and have them perish as had the child whose blood was used. The blood of the slaughtered child, the article alleged, was used by young married Jewish couples and others to absolve them of sin.<sup>117</sup>

Constant and unrelenting repetition of the anti-Jewish themes in films, books, newspapers, and magazines helped to create an atmosphere conducive to the acceptance of the "final solution." Propaganda was responsible for conditioning the German people into an acceptance and endorsement of the steps which led ultimately to the "final solution of the Jewish question." The Germans had no opportunity for free, unprejudiced thinking; if they did, it was quickly subdued by the Nazi threat of death or the concentration camp. The Nazi propaganda machine captured and controlled the German mind, and served as the impetus for action. Nonviolent means, such as disenfranchisement, discrimination, and economic impediments, led, because of their easy implementation and acceptance, to the more organized mass violence, the physical concentration in ghettos, and eventually annihilation.

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<sup>117</sup>NA, 2699-PS, "Ritual Murder," Der Stürmer. (April 14, 1937), 1-2.

A policy of official persecution of the Jews commenced with the Nazi accession to power in January, 1933. The successful elimination of the Jews was achieved by a skillful combination of organized terror and systematic propaganda. The bureaucratic process of destruction was a step by step procedure; each step was entirely dependent upon the success of the previous one. As Jewish persecution passed through the successive stages of legislative definition and discrimination, economic expropriation, concentration in ghettos, deportations and slave labor, it became apparent that the Nazis would settle for nothing short of the physical extermination of all Jews.<sup>118</sup>

The first six years of Nazi rule were characterized by measures of legislative discrimination. During those years the anti-Semitic points in the original NSDAP program became a reality. Legal measures were taken to exclude the Jews from all facets of German life. A three-pronged attack began in 1933; Germany was drenched with anti-Jewish propaganda; there was an anti-Jewish boycott; and there was violence against individual Jews. Spontaneous action and violence against Jews was encouraged and advocated by the Nazi government. After a few months, in order to avoid conflict between the German people and the police, large-scale actions were conducted. The first organized act was the boycott of

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<sup>118</sup> Hilberg, Destruction, 29-31, 641; Krieger, Seymour (comp.), Nazi Germany's War Against the Jews, (New York, 1947), 31.

Jewish enterprises which came into effect April 1, 1933.<sup>119</sup> For weeks prior to the boycott Germans had been urged to buy only German made goods from German merchants. SS and SA men were stationed at the doors of Jewish stores; it was another terror tactic, a German would not enter a store which was guarded. Also during 1933 the first legal actions were taken against the Jews. Four laws directed against Jewish professionals were passed.

The Law for the Re-establishment of Professional Civil Service, April 7, 1933, provided for the compulsory retirement of "non-Aryans." It did not apply to those who had been officials since August 1, 1914, or those who had fought in World War I.<sup>120</sup> The second law, also passed April 7, 1933, excluded lawyers of non-Aryan (Jewish) descent from admission to the Bar. Another decree dated April 11, 1933 defined a non-Aryan as an individual who had one Jewish grandparent.<sup>121</sup> On April 25, 1933 a law was passed which limited the number of Jews admitted to the schools; the number of Jews was not to exceed the percentage of Jews in the population of the Reich (1.5%).<sup>122</sup> The final law directed against the Jewish

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<sup>119</sup> NA, 2410-PS, Völkischer Beobachter, (March 31, 1933), 1; Hilberg, Destruction, 19.

<sup>120</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1397-PS; Raul Hilberg (ed.), Documents of Destruction: Germany and Jewry 1933-1945, (Chicago, 1971), 16.

<sup>121</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1401-PS; Hilberg, Documents, 16.

<sup>122</sup> Hilberg, Documents, 16; NA, 2022-PS.

professionals was one which insured that the Propaganda Ministry would encounter no trouble when spreading its messages of hate. The Editorial Law, passed October 4, 1933, stated that only Aryans could hold positions as newspaper editors. These four laws served their purpose, as they "legally" eliminated Jews from the higher professions within the Reich.<sup>123</sup>

Before the Jews could be openly persecuted they had to be identified. To this end, the Nazis did not permit Jews to change their names in order to disguise their Jewishness from the German population. By decree, December 23, 1932, Jews were ordered by the government to adopt Jewish middle names, Israel for men and Sara for women.<sup>124</sup> The Nazis wanted to eliminate Jewish names from institutions and locales that were considered German. The object was to create a Germany devoid of any Jewish influence. Consequently, after 1933 Nazi measures were designed to first identify the Jew, then reduce his contact with Germans and, finally to expel him entirely from German culture.

The final phase of legal disenfranchisement was the series of measures known as the Nuremburg Laws. They constituted the basis of the "final solution" because they provided the definition of "Jew" and solved the mixed

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<sup>123</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 2083-PS.

<sup>124</sup> Hilberg, Documents, 14. Curiously the date of the decree is actually 5 weeks prior to Hitler's legal accession to power

marriage and mixed parentage questions that had to be resolved before a solution could be implemented.<sup>125</sup> The Nuremberg Laws were then the most comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation ever promulgated by any state. Racial laws were legitimized and the "purity of German blood" became a legal responsibility. They were a series of laws designed to restrict Jewish-Aryan relationships and terminate Aryan-Jewish marriages and sexual relations. The laws also equated Aryan status to Reich citizenship.

The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, dated September 15, 1935, stated that "purity of German blood is essential to the further existence of the German people" and forbade marriages between Jews and Germans and inter-racial sexual relations outside marriage. Jews were prohibited from employing Germans in their households; and were forbidden to display the Reich and national flag or national colours.<sup>126</sup>

The Reich Citizenship Law stripped Jews of their German citizenship. The law declared that "a citizen of the Reich is that subject only who is of German or kindred blood," and only a citizen employed full political rights.<sup>127</sup> The

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>126</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 2000-PS; Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham (eds.), Documents on Nazism, 1919-1945, (New York, 1974), 463-464.

<sup>127</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1416-PS; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 465.

Citizenship Law was added to, on November 14, 1935, by the First Regulation under the Reich Citizenship Law. That law defined "Jew" and "part-Jew" and identified the Jewish officials to be dismissed. A "part-Jew" was defined as a person descended from one or two full, racially Jewish grandparents. In the eyes of the law, a Jew became an individual descended from at least three grandparents who were full, racial Jews; an individual descended from two full Jewish parents if (a) he belonged to the Jewish religion, (b) was married to a Jewish person, (c) was the offspring of the marriage of Jews or (d) the offspring of extramarital relationship with a Jew.<sup>128</sup> The Nuremburg Laws also de-nationalized the German Jews. Upon promulgation of the laws Jews were no longer "German Jews"; they were "Jews in Germany," resident in Germany only because the Reich government allowed them to be.<sup>129</sup>

In the wake of the laws arbitrary terror was reduced, but pressure was put on the Germans to continue their ostracization of Jews. The public was not yet convinced of the necessity to expel the Jew. In fact, a report from the police showed that many Germans still regarded Jews as their friends and did not wish to abandon them yet.<sup>130</sup> Eventually,

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<sup>128</sup>NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1417-PS; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 465-466.

<sup>129</sup>Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 193.

<sup>130</sup>Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 467; H. G. Adler, Der Verwaltete Mensch: Studien Zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland, (Tubingen, 1974), 36-37.



after the 1936 Olympics, propaganda convinced the people of the necessity to persecute the Jew, not Jews who were their friends or neighbors.

Emigration also became a factor in Nazi policy in 1933. The Jews who could afford it were allowed to emigrate to Palestine under the Haavara Agreement.<sup>131</sup> By 1938 about 170,000 Jews had taken advantage of the opportunity to leave Germany. Many who did emigrate returned to Germany between 1935 and 1938 because the indiscriminate terror of 1933-1935 had subsided. To the Nazis emigration was not a satisfactory policy because only a small fraction of Jews were able to take advantage of it.

The radicalization of Nazi policy toward the Jews began in 1938 with the event known as the Kristallnacht (night of broken glass). The Kristallnacht of November 9, 1938 was precipitated by an unforeseen incident which the Nazis exploited to the fullest. On November 7, Ernst vom Rath, a junior

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<sup>131</sup>Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 468; Hilberg, Destruction, 95. The Haavara Agreement was concluded between the Third Reich and the Jewish Agency for Palestine. It was a clearing arrangement which permitted "capitalist" Jews who could afford it, and who wanted to emigrate to Palestine to make arrangements with a German exporter to transfer their goods to Palestine. The German exporter was paid with funds from the emigrants' accounts. Emigration was to be financed by the Jews, not the Reich. Many Jews did not wish to leave their homeland (Germany) for a foreign country; and many believed that the Nuremberg Laws were the end of measures which were made against them. Wealthy Jews often helped to finance the emigration of the poorer Jews because their money and possessions were seized by the Nazis.

official in the German embassy in Paris, was shot by a Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan.<sup>132</sup> Vom Rath's death triggered Goebbels' national pogrom of November 9, a revolting wave of violence that provided the Nazis with further opportunities to persecute the Jews. Synagogues were burned, thousands of Jewish shops were looted and destroyed, and over 20,000 Jews were arrested.<sup>133</sup> Nazi propaganda stated that the demonstrations had been a spontaneous uprising of the German people against the Jews.<sup>134</sup> It was, in fact, a planned demonstration which had been directed by Goebbels and carried out by the SA.<sup>135</sup> Many Germans were appalled by the excesses of the Kristallnacht. Melita Maschamann, a member of the Party, analyzed her reactions to the Kristallnacht and found they had been blunted by Party indoctrination and Party propaganda. She was aware that something brutal had taken place, but almost at once accepted what had happened because "The Jews are the enemies of New Germany. Last night they had a taste of what this means...with these thoughts I constructed for myself a justification of the pogrom."<sup>136</sup> The pogrom was horrible

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<sup>132</sup>Hilberg, Destruction, 23.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Adler, Verwaltete Mensch, 36; Hilberg, Destruction, 23; NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 374-PS.

<sup>136</sup>Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 476.

but warranted by the murder of vom Rath, and by Nazi propaganda.

One result of the Kristallnacht was the Conference on the Jewish Question of November 12, 1938. The conference was chaired by Reichs Marshal Hermann Goering, and dealt with the problems of insurance claims due to the Kristallnacht, the Aryanization plans, and the prospects for a further separation of Jews and Aryans.<sup>137</sup> Goering called, by the order of the Führer, for coordination and solution with respect to the "Jewish question." Goering advocated an economic solution; Goebbels advocated more public, social, restrictions and actual physical separation of races; and Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of Security Police and SD, advocated the concentration of Jews in ghettos. Solutions discussed at the conference were implemented the same day. The most decisive measure was Goering's decree excluding Jews from the retail business, thus formalizing Aryanization, the process by which Jews had their businesses forcibly confiscated, and were thus eliminated from German economic life. New social restrictions were also implemented in a majority of the cities and towns; Jews were restricted as to where and when they could be seen in public, and what modes of transportation they could use.<sup>138</sup> From that time on, the

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<sup>137</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1816-PS; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 476-477.

<sup>138</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 1415-PS, 2875-PS; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 482.

Jews were completely segregated from Germans. The general tone of anti-Jewish propaganda became more vicious during the years 1938-1941 as the Third Reich moved inexorably toward the most radical solution to the "Jewish question." As a prophet, Hitler ultimately proved as good as his word. On January 30, 1939, as he pushed Europe toward a new conflagration, Hitler said publicly: "If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!"<sup>139</sup>

Hitler's prophecy was to become a reality as the entire destruction process went through a series of stages; definition, expropriation, deprivation, concentration in ghettos in the large cities, deportation, and ultimately, the "final solution," the killing phase. Definition and expropriation had been taken care of by the economic boycott, the Nuremberg Laws, the Aryanization of Jewish business, and the Kristallnacht. The third step, the concentration of the Jews into the large cities, was not actually planned by the Nazis; it was caused by the gradual impoverishment of the Jews due to Nazi pogroms.

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<sup>139</sup> Norman H. Baynes, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939, (New York, 1942), vol. 1, 741.

The process of ghettoization, however, was planned. There were five major steps in the creation of the ghettos. These included the severance of social contacts between races; the enforcement of housing restrictions; the regulation of movement; registration; and the establishment of Jewish ghetto councils.<sup>140</sup>

Beginning in 1939, the movement of Jews was regulated by an elaborate system of identification and passes. A Jew could not move about at all unless he possessed a pass with a large red "J" stamped across the front which identified him as a Jew.<sup>141</sup> Perhaps the most significant measures were the physical markings of Jewish homes with the Zionist blue and white flag, from 1941, the tagging of Jews with the yellow Star of David. The marking of Jews was extremely important because it visibly and publicly identified them, thus making restriction and control much easier. The concentration of the German Jews into ghettos closed the first phase of destructive action; the steps taken from that point on were irreversible.

The anti-Jewish propaganda campaign reached its climax in the years following the Kristallnacht, the same years that the Jews were concentrated in ghettos and eventually deported to the East. The most violent anti-Semitic films appeared during those years, largely in order

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<sup>140</sup>Hilberg, Destruction, 106.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 117.

to condition the public into passive acceptance of the deportations. Once the war began and Nazi Germany seized Czechoslovakia and Poland, Hitler was able to expel the Jews from the Reich. Three expulsions from the fall of 1939 to the fall of 1941 resulted in the Jews and Poles from the incorporated territory being sent to the Generalgouvernement (the Government General of Poland); Jews from the Reich-Protectorat area were sent to the Generalgouvernement; and Jews from the Reich-Protectorat to the incorporated territories. The period of ghetto concentrations and expulsions, 1939-1941, marked the transition from emigration to the policy of the "final solution."<sup>142</sup> A propaganda campaign of 1941 popularized the slogan "Juden, Läuse, Flickfüber" (Jews, Lice, Typhus),<sup>143</sup> a slogan which was circulated everywhere--on posters, in newspapers, movies, and schools. The Jews were continually linked to filth, to disease and all the other evils of Germany. Continuous and unrelenting propaganda of that type helped to produce a psychological willingness on the part of the Germans to ignore or to accept passively the Regime's transition to the final, killing phase of the destruction of the European Jews.

The killing phase was brought about by two of Hitler's decisions. The first, initially made in July 1940, provided

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., 151.

for the invasion of Russia and the establishment of the mobile-killing units, or the Einsatzgruppen. The second was his decision to deport the Jews to the annihilation centers.<sup>144</sup> SS troops and the Einsatzgruppen were exposed to intensive anti-Jewish propaganda. They were the nucleus of indoctrinated anti-Semites. Justification for the killing phase had already been provided by the Nazi propaganda--the Jew was eternally evil, a parasite, and the force behind the spread of Bolshevism; these themes were reinforced time and time again.

July 31, 1941 was a major turning point in the Third Reich's history of Jewish persecution. Reich Marshal Goering charged Heydrich with the job of bringing about a "complete solution (Endlösung) of the Jewish question."<sup>145</sup> The practical implementation of a definite plan to kill the Jews was probably reached after December 1940 and before July 1941. Public mention and advocacy of the "final solution" began in 1941.

Plans for a "final solution" had been mentioned to those Reich Ministries which would be involved, but they were not coordinated until the Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942. The purpose of the conference was to coordinate deportations and establish a general method of

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>145</sup> NA, IMT Doc. Book I, 710-PS; Hilberg, Destruction, 262.

collaboration among the Ministries of the Reich.<sup>146</sup> Prior to the Wannsee Conference, the order for the implementation of an ultimate solution had never been written nor had the ministries been collectively notified. It was also at this point, in January of 1942, that the German people were ready, due to the extensive propaganda campaigns, to accept more drastic measures against the Jews. Action which was severe and violent was warranted--the Jews were responsible for both world wars and the horrible conditions which war created for Germany.

The Wannsee Conference was held at the headquarters of Interpol at the Wannsee (a lake to the west of Berlin) on January 20, 1942 for the express purpose of arranging the "final solution." Those who attended included Heydrich, SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, and other SS leaders and officials from various ministries including the Foreign Office, the Ministry for the Eastern Occupied Territories, the Four-Year Plan, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>147</sup> The conference lasted only about an hour and a half and in that short time the fate of the European Jews was decided.

Heydrich presided over the meeting and did most of the talking to the representatives of the Party and state

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<sup>146</sup>NA, NG 2586-G, Protocol of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid.; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 489; Hilberg, Destruction, 241; Hilberg, Documents, 89.



agencies. He reported that "practical experience is being gathered that is of major significance in view of the coming final solution to the Jewish question."<sup>148</sup> That "experience" was the trials and experiments with mass-killing techniques such as Zyklon B, the gas used in concentration camps, and mobile-killing units like the Einsatzgruppen. The supervision of the "final solution" was centralized in the hands of Reichsführer SS and Chief of German Police, Heinrich Himmler, with Heydrich acting for Himmler. When the Wannsee Conference ended, the annihilation of the Jews had moved beyond ideology toward practical, technical, barbaric implementation.

Heydrich outlined the general procedure for the implementation of the "final solution" in which Europe was to "be combed through from west to east"<sup>149</sup> for Jews who would be evacuated to ghettos and then deported to the extermination camps further east. The Jews would be separated by sex, put in forced labor gangs, and worked until some died through the process of natural elimination. The remainder, who by their mere survival indicated their endurance and their fitness to survive, would be dealt with accordingly so that another Jewish race would not develop. There would be only

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<sup>148</sup> NA, NG-2586-G.

<sup>149</sup> NA, NG-2586-G; Noakes and Pridham, Documents on Nazism, 480; Helmut Krausnik, et. al., Anatomy of the SS State, (New York, 1968), 84-85.

a few exceptions; German Jews over sixty-five and those who had been wounded or decorated in World War I would be spared from the "final solution." An alternate solution was found; they were to be sent to ghettos for the aged which would be in actuality, only stopovers before their shipment to Auschwitz or other extermination complexes.<sup>150</sup> After the Conference the participants met to discuss the mechanics of extermination and various systems of killing.<sup>151</sup>

A special office within the Gestapo, Section IV B of the Reich Security Main Office, under Adolf Eichmann's direction, dealt exclusively with the problems attendant upon carrying out the "final solution."<sup>152</sup> The plan of operation was virtually identical in all countries that came under the Reich's control--Jews were first marked, then deprived of property and possessions, and finally deported for extermination. The forcible emigration of large numbers of Jews had made the territories susceptible to Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda.

The radical intensity of anti-Semitic propaganda remained consistent in the years 1941-1944 even though the process of extermination had begun. The German people had to be convinced that the Jewish danger still existed. Propaganda was also used to convince the Germans of the

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<sup>150</sup>Dawidowicz, War Against Jews, 137.

<sup>151</sup>Hilberg, Documents, 102.

<sup>152</sup>Krieger, Nazi Germany's War, 38.

Jewish plot to annihilate the Germans--it justified the action that was being taken against the Jews. A party journal, Volk Und Rasse (People and Race), declared, in May of 1942 that "a right understanding of Jewry must require its complete annihilation."<sup>153</sup> The propaganda distributed to the troops on the eastern front openly discussed extermination and defended it as a purely defensive measure.<sup>154</sup>

"Final solution of the Jewish question" (Endlösung der Judenfrage) was the code name assigned, by the German bureaucracy, to the systematic annihilation of the European Jews. The "question" referred to the presence of the Jews and the problems they had created for Germany. They took up valuable living space and undermined German nationalism. "Final" meant the ultimate, complete solution to the Jewish problem--extermination. Hitler's ideology and propaganda justified the mass murder of millions of Jews. Much was implied by the phrase "final solution," it meant that a psychological threshold had been crossed, that administrative cooperation had been achieved, and that there would be no exceptions and no stopping until the solution was realized.<sup>155</sup> Propaganda had prepared the Germans psychologically, and the Wannsee Conference had achieved

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<sup>153</sup>Cohn, Genocide, 206.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 204.

<sup>155</sup>Hilberg, Documents, 85.

the necessary administrative guidelines. All that was left by 1942 was the actual implementation of the procedures for the extermination of the Jews of Europe.

The question of the extent of the German peoples' knowledge of the "final solution of the Jewish question" has long baffled historians. How could the Germans let a maniac like Hitler cold-bloodedly murder six million human beings? One possible answer was that the Nazi propaganda had convinced the Germans that the Jews were subhuman and fit only for extermination. The "final solution" was preceded by over eight years of intensive propaganda, public discrimination, and pogroms against the Jews. The racial program underwent radicalization during the years 1933-1944, just as Nazi ideology had done in the 1920's and 1930's.

The German people were victims of a preposterous, but efficient propaganda campaign that declared war on the Jews. The racial doctrines were exploited to their fullest extent, so much so, that they were widely accepted by both Party members and the general public in Germany. People believed fervently in what they had been taught by propaganda about racial supremacy and therefore accepted the persecution of the Jews in Germany as necessary and therefore tolerable. The link developed by Nazi propaganda between the Jew and Bolshevism was another important factor which contributed to the acceptability of the persecutions. Public opinion existed in Germany until 1933, afterwards it was coordinated

into a Nazi public opinion. Criticism was punishable by a sentence in the concentration camps or by death. Rather than suffer unnecessarily, the German people remained apathetically quiet.<sup>156</sup> Hitler's intentions towards the Jews were not fully understood in 1933; he had not even hinted to the Germans that the Jews were to be exterminated.

The discriminations and disenfranchisement measures against the Jews were apparent to the Germans, and they often actively and openly participated in the pogroms. Between 1933-1939 two major developments were well known throughout Germany; one, the legal and economic measures of discrimination of 1933 and 1935, and the Kristallnacht of 1938; and two, the existence of the concentration camps.<sup>157</sup> Many people were repelled by the early actions taken against the Jews such as the boycott, the racial laws, and the Kristallnacht but did not publicly announce their indignation for fear of their life. "Everyone knew, at least after 1938, that Jews as well as leftists were being persecuted in an inhuman manner,"<sup>158</sup> but did not know the true extent of the regime's actions. "Horrors" were hidden, negative reports and allied propaganda were not

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<sup>156</sup> Fritz Ernst, The Germans and Their Modern History, (New York, 1966), 115.

<sup>157</sup> Lawrence D. Stokes, "The German People and the Destruction of the European Jews", Central European History, VI, No. 2, (June, 1973), 172.

<sup>158</sup> Ernst, Modern History, 103.

allowed in Germany. The "indifference" of the German people toward the minor measures paved the way for their "indifference" to the deadlier measures.<sup>159</sup> The propaganda campaign was radicalized after 1938 in order to convince the Germans who were not yet anti-Semitic enough that pogroms against the Jews were indeed necessary and justified.<sup>160</sup>

As in all societies, attitudes toward governmental policies ranged from indifference to fanaticism. There were hundreds of thousands who accepted the world-conspiracy--Bolshevism myth and all its implications and were prepared to denounce anyone who felt otherwise.<sup>161</sup> The German people, on the whole, felt that the Jews deserved punishment for their detrimental presence in Germany. National Socialism became synonymous with anti-Semitism, thereby gaining many supporters who otherwise might not have supported or tolerated Nazism.

All of the anti-Jewish propaganda would have been useless, mere rhetoric, if it had not been for the war. War accelerated the "final solution" because it gave the regime both an excuse for extermination and the conquered territory in which to carry it out. Propaganda never clearly stated that mass executions and gassings were

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<sup>159</sup> Milton Mayer, They Thought They Were Free - The Germans 1933-1945, (Chicago, 1955), 56.

<sup>160</sup> Stokes, Central European History, 175; Bramsted, Goebbels and Propaganda, 106; Eugene Davidson, The Trial of the Germans, (New York, 1966), 539.

<sup>161</sup> Cohn, Genocide, 213.

taking place, but it consistently and constantly hinted that the Jews were being made to pay for the war with their lives.<sup>162</sup>

Raymond H. Geist, former American counsel in Berlin, described the Germans as "being well acquainted with the goings on in concentration camps, and it was well-known that the fate of anyone too actively opposed to any part of the Nazi program was liable to great suffering."<sup>163</sup> The German people were well aware of the consequences, since almost every family in Germany had at one time heard accounts of the atrocities which took place in the concentration camps.<sup>164</sup> The camps existed throughout Germany and knowledge of them was widespread enough to intimidate the population. The existence of death camps, whose purpose was the extermination of the Jews, was less widely known, but known nonetheless.<sup>165</sup>

The Germans were provided with clues, throughout the war, about the extermination of the Jews. The early forms of discrimination and pogroms against the Jews were public knowledge; however, secrecy on the part of the regime increased as anti-Jewish measures moved inexorably toward

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>163</sup> IMT, Vol. 28, 237.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Dwight Macdonald, Memoirs of a Revolutionist: Essays in Political Criticism, (New York, 1957), 42 fn.

the "final solution." Germans were not informed of the actual actions against the Jews beginnings in 1941 but anti-Semitic propaganda continued in order to both incite the people against the Jews and to justify any actions which did become known to the population.

Secrecy was required in implementing the "final solution" but those involved in the bureaucratic and military processes, and those who lived within close proximity of the death camps were well aware of what was happening. The SS troops, the Einsatzgruppen, and the other officials who had to arrange for transportation of the Jews, and those who worked in the factories where Zyklon B was manufactured undoubtedly perceived the enormity of the process. The existence of concentration camps, the official executions and brutalities were known to those who wanted to know; every German could see and hear enough to make the public announcement of exact details unnecessary and even unimportant.<sup>166</sup> People who lived near the death camps were susceptible to the foul stench from the continuous burning of bodies, and they could see the fires of the crematoria for miles.<sup>167</sup> Jews often came into contact with the civilian population in the factories where they were sent to work, and the troops and officials who were involved in the large-scale killing operations often related their knowledge to their families and friends.

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<sup>166</sup>Stokes, Central European History, 170.

<sup>167</sup>IMT, Vol. 33, 278.



The Mauthausen Camp in Austria was built on a plateau five kilometers from the town of Linz, but the surrounding population was conscious of what went on at the camp. They often witnessed the convoys which carried the Jews to their deaths.<sup>168</sup> Belzec, the death camp in Poland from which there was only one known survivor, was located alongside the railroad line and afforded troop transports and other passenger trains a clear view of the installations, and as a result produced a good deal of gossip. Both Belzec and Mauthausen permeated the communities with a disgusting odor from the burnings.<sup>169</sup>

To "know" was to have binding knowledge, sureness, first-hand knowledge. Those officials and troops involved in the extermination process possessed first-hand knowledge of the solution to the "Jewish question." The remainder of the people had only second or third-hand knowledge. This they could derive from two sources; the gossip circulated by those who had first-hand knowledge, and the hints that were liberally sprinkled throughout the organs of Nazi propaganda. Those people had a moral certainty about the exterminations, but the Hitler regime threatened their lives if they disclosed their "knowledge." As a result people denied knowledge and responsibility since there was

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<sup>168</sup>IMT, vol.6, 192.

<sup>169</sup>Hilberg, Documents, 208-11.

"nichts dagegen zu machen" (nothing to do about it).<sup>170</sup>

Extermination was denied by Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry as "enemy propaganda" and no one bothered to question it--why look for trouble. Germans may have felt regret over the slaughter of innocent people, but few, if any, expressed remorse over the processes of deportation, resettlement, relocation, or expropriation.<sup>171</sup>

The continuous, deliberate measures against the Jews made the population more complacent when it came time to implement the "final solution." Once the war began the government could do anything necessary to win, and since propaganda had successfully blamed the war on the Jews it was logical to first rid Germany of the enemy within the state. The war provided the Nazis with the reason and the means systematically to annihilate the Jews. Racial programs of annihilation began September 1, 1939 when Hitler issued the decree which began the euthanasia program. The program was designed to eliminate the physically and mentally unfit from the Lebensraum (living space) of the master, Aryan race. The Euthanasia program was probably more widely known than the exterminations.<sup>172</sup> The theory of the master race was

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<sup>170</sup> Mayer, They Thought, 75.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>172</sup> Stokes, Central European History, 185.

imposed and implemented first among Germans. The German community had nothing to do but "not to interfere,"<sup>173</sup> the Reich would defeat the enemy powers, and emerge supreme.

Much of what was happening was "leaked" to the German public. Although the Germans may not have known of the actual executions, they did know of the possibility of their existence due to the propaganda which had so constantly hinted that the Jews would pay for the trouble they had caused Germany and the Aryan race. Those who had knowledge of the "final solution" did not know the full extent nor the gruesome details of the persecutions. Even though the entire population was never fully enlightened about the "final solution," propaganda successfully identified the entire German population with the regime's actions.

Those Germans who did know about the executions assumed that others were just as knowledgeable, and those who were ignorant assumed the ignorance of all people.<sup>174</sup> Knowledge was certainly more widespread as long as the Jews remained in Germany. Once the Jews were deported into the conquered territories outside the geographic borders of the Reich, knowledge of the measures against the Jews decreased. Deportations were witnessed by the Germans and that was

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<sup>173</sup> Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, (New York, 1963), 150.

<sup>174</sup> Stokes, Central European History, 171.

often the last they knew of the Jews. The Nazis tried to hide the actual murders from the public but could not hide the beatings and forced marches through the streets, and the deportations by train.<sup>175</sup> The Germans were exposed to intensive propaganda which had hinted that the Jews would be annihilated if war resulted. Living under Hitler's totalitarian regime of terror, they could not possibly have doubted the earnest intention of the regime to carry out its threats against the Jews.

The discriminatory measures, the Kristallnacht, the euthanasia program, the war, and the development of the technological machinery of murder culminated in the "final solution". None of those preparatory measures, however, was more instrumental in the formation, implementation, and realization of the plan to murder the Jews of Germany and Europe than the propaganda of the regime. Counter propaganda measures were taken, as late as 1943, in order to justify the anti-Jewish policies of the Reich and the ruthless severity with which they were being implemented.

The Deutscher Wochendienst (German Weekly Service) which was published by the Propaganda Ministry and distributed to the editors of newspapers suggested themes and topics concerning the "Jewish question." The link with Bolshevism was still the strongest weapon in the propaganda arsenal. The editors were urged to stress the

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., 181.

consequences of a Jewish victory--annihilation of the German race. They were told to avoid an overestimation of Jewish power, and to refrain from religious arguments; rather the emphasis was to be on the Jews' lust for destruction and their link to Bolshevism. Criticism of the lack of constructive work and lack of peaceful cooperation the Jews were also to be exploited.<sup>176</sup>

Another edition of the Deutscher Wochendienst, May 21, 1943, was strictly confidential and was not for publication, it was a special anti-Jewish number. It stressed the need for total cooperation of the German Press in spreading the "truth" about the Jewish peril and the necessity of eliminating it. The edition was a collection of all the most important anti-Jewish themes that had been suggested in the past, and put special attention upon anti-Jewish literature that was available in every German town library. The unrelenting task of all periodicals was to emphasize the destructive influence of the Jews in all fields, and the collective guilt of all Jews for World War I and its postwar miseries, and also for World War II. Again, the

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<sup>176</sup> NA, NG-4714, Deutscher Wochendienst, February 5, 1943. The link to Bolshevism (Communism, Marxism) was stressed throughout Hitler's twelve years of power. It was Russian Bolshevism that was feared by the Germans. According to Hitler, the Jews had taken over Russia and were trying to do the same throughout Europe. Communism was linked to the world-conspiracy theme. See Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, (New York, 1964), 365. The Russian example was constantly used in Nazi propaganda; the Germans had to fight the carriers of the Bolshevik disease--the Jews.

strongest arguments and the lengthiest topics were those which linked the Jews to Bolshevism.<sup>177</sup>

By 1942 most of the population was well aware of what was happening to the Jews after their deportation, but propaganda had conditioned the Germans, especially between 1938-1942, to such an extent that most appeared utterly indifferent to the fate of the Jews.<sup>178</sup> The Germans allowed themselves to be brainwashed by the propaganda of the Nazis and were intimidated by the terror tactics of the regime. The passivity on the part of the Germans was the result of successful propaganda which had identified the Jew as the enemy of the state, and as the parasite which spread Bolshevism.

Anyone who lived in Germany during Hitler's war against the Jews had to be aware to some extent of the persecutions. Very few, if any, did anything to try to help the Jews; instead they fought a war to fulfill Hitler's ideology and to keep him in power. The majority of Germans believed fervently that Hitler was their salvation, and for the skeptical there was the refuge of silence--especially if they preferred life to death. There must

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<sup>177</sup> NA, NG-4716, Deutscher Wochendienst, May 21, 1943.

<sup>178</sup> Cohn, Genocide, 212.

have been more than a hundred million people who knew "such things and whispered about them, and yet they could not make the climate unpleasant for the few thousands who carried them out."<sup>179</sup> The majority of the Germans had some form of knowledge of the "final solution." Once the mass killings began, the propaganda which had hinted toward annihilation ceased, but the themes of world-conspiracy, the eternal Jew and Bolshevism prevailed so that "resettlement" would continue to be acceptable to the population of Germany. The Jews constituted no real threat to the Germans and no military purpose was served by their extermination. The Jews became the innocent victims of the perverted obsessions of one man, who translated his bloodlust into an effective national hatred by developing the century's most powerful and successful propaganda apparatus.

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<sup>179</sup>Reitlinger, Final Solution, 483-484.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nazi propaganda played an important role in the destruction of the European Jews. It created the myth of the Jew through careful, calculated exploitation and amplification of the existing tradition of anti-Semitism. As a result, the themes and tone of Nazi propaganda became a crucial instrument in the preparations for the destruction of the Jews. Propaganda incited groups in the population to take action against the Jews and justified for the skeptical the official anti-Semitic measures of the regime. The intensive anti-Jewish propaganda, which reached its most vehement stage with the advent of the Russian campaign in 1941, established in the minds of many Germans an association between the Jews and the internal and external enemies that threatened to destroy Germany. The ever present police and terror system sufficed to frighten into silence those Germans who did not agree that Germany would have to be "Judenfrei" in order to survive and achieve world domination.

Official anti-Semitic propaganda, which permeated films, the press, literature, and the educational system of the Reich, sought to prepare the German people for the enactment of the most radical anti-Semitic measures. As a result, many Germans lost the ability to distinguish between what was real and what was propaganda. In his obsession to destroy the Jews of Europe, the will of the Führer became the conscious or unconscious will of the German nation.



The majority of Germans either suspected or comprehended, with some certainty, the "final solution of the Jewish question" but were well aware of the consequences of making that knowledge public. Nazi pogroms against the Jews were public and knowledge of the excesses of the regime were widespread until the Jews were transported beyond Germany's geographical borders. Once deportations of the Jews from the Reich began operations became more secretive, and knowledge was less certain and widespread.

Both the Germans and the Jews became the victims of a highly sophisticated, effectively organized propaganda machine. The Propaganda Ministry was responsible for the creation of the Führer, "master race", and "eternal Jew" myths and for the dissemination of these myths into every aspect of German life. In this sense, the ultimate significance of Nazi propaganda lay in the different functions it served. It provided both the themes and justifications for anti-Semitism, and the explanations and rationalizations for the persecutions and pogroms that led ultimately to the murder of the European Jews.

"Der ewige Jude"

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