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## Rhodes Historical Review

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**Game Day in the South: "Dixie's Last Stand," the BAD Times, and the History of Black Protest at the University of Arkansas**

*Zara Raezer*

**The Delegitimization of the Mexican Government and the Zapatista Response: An Analysis of the Constitutionality of the Chiapaneco Revolt**

*Julian Porcelli*

**The Miracle Doctor: How the Nazi Propaganda Machine Manufactured Complicity and Consent from the German People**

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**One Giant Contradiction: The Evolution of the Nazi View of Women from 1934-1943**

*Lauren King*



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# **Game Day in the South: “Dixie’s Last Stand,” the BAD Times, and the History of Black Protest at the University of Arkansas**

**Zara Raezer**

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In December 1969, The University of Arkansas’ administration was fighting to silence Black protest ahead of “The Game of the Century.” The first Black student organization formed earlier that year—Black Americans for Democracy (or BAD) demanded the end of Black students’ marginalization. Despite the University’s effort to integrate a decade earlier, the Black student population on campus remained minimal and habitually neglected. Confederate memorabilia could still be found in classrooms and dorm rooms on campus, and before the Razorback football team took to the field on game day, the Razorback Band drummed out “Dixie.”

In the days leading up to the big game between the University of Texas and the University of Arkansas on

December 6, 1969, BAD decided it was time to end the stadium-wide whistling to the Confederacy's pseudo-national anthem. "Dixie's Last Stand" at the University of Arkansas, a term coined by historian Terry Frei, was one of many campus-wide debates happening in the South at that time. Examining the victories of BAD, an innovative campus organization, at the University of Arkansas in the late '60s and early '70s gives important insight to broader Black protest on Southern campuses at the precipice of change throughout university life. BAD was only one small organization, on one campus, yet their ability to move the University towards a more inclusive stance was remarkable and enduring.

## **Historical Background**

As integration rolled out across the South, the University of Arkansas quietly observed as their counterparts mismanaged integrations and created campus crises. Throughout the disastrous integration of Central High in Little Rock, AR, the University avoided questions concerning the Civil Rights Movement and its role as a college campus. Compared to the University of Mississippi, where James Meredith found himself denied entrance, falsely accused of felony charges, and continually harassed, the U of A had a quiet integration a decade before. The University of Arkansas Law School was desperate to avoid the costly and bitter legal battles that swept the South and decided to enroll Silas Hunt, the University's first Black student, quietly integrating the all-

white campus in 1948. However, at the time of BAD's founding, only two faculty members were Black,<sup>1</sup> and oppression was omnipresent. This chafed against the (relatively) progressive narrative that the University wanted to propagate. For Fayetteville, the University acted as a crown jewel of liberal ideals throughout the State at the time and continues to do so today. However, Black students' reality on campus hardly reflected this. They found themselves excluded from sports, housing, and student activities until the mid-60s. The University would not progress until Black students began to organize around these central issues.

### **Navigating BAD's Early Protests**

Black Americans for Democracy first banded together at the University in 1968 in reaction to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Their first protest was against *The Arkansas Traveler*, the student news publication. *The Traveler* reported on this protest the next day, remarking that nearly 70 students blocked the entrance to the publication's building for seven hours.<sup>2</sup> A quiet and peaceful protest, this was the first act of civil disobedience taken by Black students. In their account of the protest, *The Traveler* defended its status as a victim, attributing the protest to:

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Leigh Allen, ed., "BAD Times Collection," University Libraries Digital Collections (University of Arkansas, 2019), <https://digitalcollections.uark.edu/digital/collection/BADTimes/id/3>.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Williams, "TRAVELER Publication Blocked," *Arkansas Traveler*, May 15, 1968, Vol. 62 edition, sec. 131, pp. 1-4.



The dispute arose over the TRAVELER'S failure to print a letter to the editor written by John Rowe, Buchanan from El Dorado. The letter which Rowe admits had "some racial overtones" was written in answer to a letter printed in the TRAVELER that attacked the excessive amount of publicity that was given.<sup>3</sup>

The juxtaposition of their excuse for not printing the letter, next to the reason for BAD's protest, reveals the racism that Black students faced when attempting to address their concerns through traditional media sources at their school. While BAD would later start their own publication, this original transgression of the Traveler served as an example of the widespread silencing of Black students at the University. In addition to their concerns about being silenced on campus:

BAD had a list of thirteen demands, including ending discrimination in room assignments, sororities, fraternities, and athletics; enactment of policies reporting unfair classroom treatment to a faculty-student committee; creation of a black history course; recruitment of black faculty, administrators, and staff; and banning the playing of the song "Dixie" and the use of black face grease paint at official university functions.<sup>4</sup>

BAD's first goals established in 1968 remained consisted and were only refined as the organization became more sophisticated in their operations.

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<sup>3</sup> Russell Williams, "TRAVELER Publication Blocked," pp. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> Amy Leigh Allen "Black Americans for Democracy (BAD)," March 19, 2019. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/black-americans-for-democracy-8377/>.

For the next year, BAD worked towards gaining greater visibility on campus. The *Razorback*, the University's yearbook, reflects this work—in the 1968 edition, the yearbook fails to mention any activist groups on campus outside of frequent dismissive comments about the liberal Southern Student Organizing Committee.<sup>5</sup> Throughout their stint at the University, the SSOC was derided for their social protests, which often focused on the Vietnam War and women's liberation. Before BAD, they were the only active social justice group on campus making enough ruckus to be mocked by the conservative yearbook editors. However, by 1969, this changed, and the yearbook had two notable features—"I Had A Dream' Echoes on Campus," a respectful description of a student-faculty march held by BAD on the year anniversary of MLK's death, and "Black Emphasis Week," which included photos and quotes from the new event put on by BAD that would become a tradition in the years to come.<sup>6</sup> After establishing its presence on campus, BAD began to refine its goals and plan for its next protest. 1969 would prove to be a tumultuous year for BAD, as they denounced "Dixie" and were targeted with a stunning act of violence.

The phrase "Black Power" was foundational to the group's identity and goals. First spoken by SNCC organizer, Stokely Carmichael during the March Against Fear, "Black

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<sup>5</sup> Bill Ebbert, ed., *Razorback 1968*, vol. 71 (Fayetteville, AR: Associated Students, University of Arkansas, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Tommie Patterson, *Razorback 1969*, ed. Bill Ebbert, vol. 72 (Fayetteville, AR: Associated Students, University of Arkansas, 1969).

Power” as a concept sent shockwaves through Black organizers. In BAD’s newsletter from 1972, BAD president Casey Owens outlined the group’s goals and desires. Owens states that the three goals of the group are to:

1) Provide a focus for Black students. 2) Make all phases of student life relevant to Black people. 3) Provide a link of communication between the Black students and the campus administrators, state officers, and community leaders. 4) Employ any reliable and feasible methods to make campus life meaningful for every student at the University of Arkansas. BAD is organized also, to furnish specific social actions such as the recruitment of minority faculty members, staff, and students; the abolition of discriminatory practices on the campus and in the community; and the establishment of a broad base for racial identity.<sup>7</sup>

These goals demonstrate BAD’s interest in creating a group that would interpret and develop what it meant to be Black at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Peniel E. Joseph describes the defining factor of the Black Power movement being the “major impact resonated in the grassroots activism of thousands of community organizers, students, trade unionists, prisoners, intellectuals, low-income women, and preachers who adopted Black Power’s ethos of self determination as an organizing tool.”<sup>8</sup> What Owens described as the group’s foundational goals aligned with the Black Power movement. The focus on uplifting Black

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<sup>7</sup> Willie Freeman, Debendas Kook, and Wanda Robinson, eds., “Owens Explains Goals, Structures of BAD,” n.d, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Peniel Joseph, “Rethinking the Black Power Era,” *The Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 3 (2009): pp. 707-716, 716.

community and the individual concerns of the University of Arkansas campus allowed them to personalize the movement they were working towards. Students at the University were working to understand themselves in the larger context of Black Power's ideological leaders, like Carmichael and Malcolm X, and, in doing so, were able to create their own explicit goals to elicit Black Power at the U of A. Looking to gain social power that had been previously denied, creating a unified voice that advocated for all Black members of the Razorback community became a priority for BAD.

In 1969, BAD's struggles and strategies were played out on the football field. Arkansas, number two at the time in college football, was set to host Texas A&M in a brutal match at Razorback Stadium on December 6th, 1969, a game dubbed the "Game of the Century" in the weeks leading up to kickoff. BAD saw the national attention as their moment to renew calls from the previous year to end the tradition of playing the revered Confederate pseudo-anthem, "Dixie." Broadly understood as a salute to the antebellum South, BAD protested "Dixie" as an outdated and racist callback to Arkansas history's nasty underbelly. That week, *The Traveler* reported that 60 to 70 Black students protested "Dixie's" performance at a pep rally by taking the band's seats before they could sit down. The University's response was to move the pep rally and play "Dixie" halfway across campus, in the Wilson-Sharp dormitory.<sup>9</sup> This thwarted the plan of silencing

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<sup>9</sup> "UofA Black Students Disrupt Pep Rally." *Arkansas Traveler*. December 2, 1969, 64 edition, sec. 49.

“Dixie” at the pep rally. In an interview with the newspaper, the President of BAD, Eugene Hunt, vented his frustration, saying, “All we asked was a chance to state our position. The most disgusting thing is that they didn’t allow us to say it.”<sup>10</sup> Black students were again silenced on campus and then later ridiculed by white students for being bothersome. However, while the University administration was unwilling to meet with students, the President of the student government insisted on working with BAD and held a vote with the student senate that week to ban the playing of “Dixie.” Jo Martin remarked, “If we only wake up and listen to some of the frustrations of the people around us, we will realize some of the problems. If we don’t wake up, we may be heading for a real crisis.”<sup>11</sup>

The campus' atmosphere further soured the week of the game. Professor Gordon Morgan, UA's first Black faculty member, described white students reacting to Black students' coordinated resistance by hosting on-campus Confederate-themed parties.<sup>12</sup> Repeatedly, the Traveler reported that while the student senate was ready to take action against “Dixie,” the general population of the University was outraged at the idea of “Dixie” being pulled from the song lineup. In a letter to the editor on the December 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of The Traveler, a

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<sup>10</sup> “UofA Black Students Disrupt Pep Rally,” 64 edition, sec. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Joshua Youngblood, “Campus in 1969, Part II: Dixie, Nixon, and the ‘Game of the Century.’,” 365 McIlroy, December 5, 2019, <https://librariesblog.uark.edu/campus-in-1969-part-ii-dixie-nixon-and-the-game-of-the-century/>.

student advocating for the continuation of “Dixie’s” presence at games remarked that, “Possibly a majority of the people on this campus would ask that ‘Dixie’ be maintained as a fight song here. On the other hand, the Blacks, a minority, find ‘Dixie’ to be offensive.”<sup>13</sup> BAD was well aware of this, as evidenced by its chosen direct action. Instead of petitioning students at a campus-wide level and holding mass demonstrations on the lawn of the Student Union, BAD focused its efforts at pep rallies (where “Dixie” performances were held), towards the newspaper (the most widely read campus publication at the time) and the student senate and administration (where the power to discontinue “Dixie’s” performance was held). BAD’s efforts were smart, self-aware, and ultimately effective. Saturation of students hit a critical mass where it mattered: in the student senate. A motion to encourage the discontinuation of “Dixie” passed 28 to 6.<sup>14</sup> However, this could not prevent the outbreak of violence that followed the University band director’s announcement that the University of Arkansas Marching Band would replace “Dixie” with the school’s fight song.

To this day, the person who shot Darrell Brown, the first Black football player at the University of Arkansas, remains unknown. From the start of his time as a Razorback to the year of the “Game of the Century” in 1969, Brown’s experience was marred with violence and served as the

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<sup>13</sup> “Student Senate Votes 28-6 To Discontinue Playing Dixie,” *Arkansas Traveler*, December 1969, 64 edition, sec. 50, pp. 1-4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

defining feature of his experience. His time as a Razorback football player was troubled—in a 2011 interview, Brown recalled being targeted during drill practice, with eleven white players being encouraged to tackle him repeatedly. Despite this, Brown stood back up and allowed them to rerun the drill, saying, "They ran that drill anytime they wanted."<sup>15</sup> Brown served as the team's tackling dummy for a season, and ultimately, Brown never graced the field for more than a one-time walk-on. By 1969, Brown ended his undergraduate career and moved on to studying at the University of Arkansas School of Law, pursuing his J.D like his predecessor, Silas Hunt. As he recalled years later, "I'm still working on some of it. I can forgive, but it's hard to forget."<sup>16</sup> Brown's experience recalls Ta-Nehisi Coates' subsequent conception of the "missing thing" that led to institutionalized Black slavery. Coates notes that systemic oppression "was related to the plunder of our bodies, the fact that any claim to ourselves, to the hands that secured us, the spine that braced us, and the head that directed us, was contestable."<sup>17</sup> Brown's career as a Razorback was an act of protest, one that went mostly unrecognized until recent years. Despite repeated attempts by his teammates and coaches to discourage him from playing, he never yielded and asserted himself as a true

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<sup>15</sup> "Brown Recognized as Arkansas Football Trailblazer," Yahoo! Sports (Yahoo!, October 7, 2011), <https://sports.yahoo.com/news/brown-recognized-arkansas-football-trailblazer-112500671--ncaaf.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 43.

Razorback. After Brown tore cartilage in his knee and was declared unable to play again, his football career ended, but his courageous resistance did not.

While in law school, Brown participated in protests taking place on campus, including the planned occupation of the football field at the game against Texas A&M. That evening, after Brown began to jog at night to a BAD meeting in an on-campus apartment, an unknown assailant shot him in the knee in a drive-by attack. "I was jogging along," Brown recalled, "and a car came up and I remember hearing a pop. I just kept jogging until I started feeling something funny in my right knee. I stopped and realized I'd been shot. I hadn't been shot before, so I didn't know what was happening."<sup>18</sup> His body, as Coates had described, once again became "contestable." The attacker that shot Darrell Brown argued that upholding "Dixie" as a University institution was worth Brown's life. Darrell Brown's activism on and off the field was not without consequence. After years of physical and mental degradation as a member of the Razorback football team, Brown once again suffered extreme brutality because the University failed to uphold the inherent worth and value of its Black students' lives.

Despite this outbreak of violence, the University refused to allow the shooting to dampen the "Game of the Century" celebrations the next day. BAD canceled their protest out of fear of further retaliation, and the school senate reaffirmed their position to stop the playing of "Dixie." The

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<sup>18</sup> "Brown Recognized as Arkansas Football Trailblazer," Yahoo! Sports.



University administration had won: BAD would be silent for the “Game of the Century.” The game was dubbed such for its high stakes for the Razorbacks—the game marked one hundred years of college football, and Arkansas had not lost a game since playing Texas the previous year. Beyond this, “The Game of the Century” was also careful political theater for both the University and the Nixon administration. Between the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, President Nixon found his administration the constant target of student protest and militancy across campuses. Nixon traveled to university football games with “America’s Pastor,” Reverend Billy Graham, in an effort to ridicule student protestors and unite his conservative base with the growing evangelical wing in his party. His appearance at the game, while unusual, was part of a larger tour of conservative schools. Historian Dr. Rick Perlstein chronicles the University of Tennessee Knoxville’s 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary, held in May of the following year at their football stadium, where President Nixon was invited to speak. The event paralleled “The Game of the Century” in both its purpose and attendants. President Nixon arrived at a southern school, with planned student protests, joined Billy Graham, and neutered the student protestors’ political ambitions. In his speech, President Nixon spoke to the protestors, chiding, “[Billy Graham] told me that there would be youth from the university, from other parts of the state, representing different points of view. I am just glad

that there seems to be a rather solid majority on one side rather than the other side tonight.”<sup>19</sup>

The University of Arkansas’ President, David Mullins, understood President Nixon’s anxiety about student activists. Mullins practically demanded the uneasy peace that took over the game. The Traveler ran this message from Mullins on December 5th:

The UofA is proud of the recognition it is receiving this week. It is an unusual time and carries with it unusual responsibilities. It is the request of the University that no demonstrations occur on the campus this Saturday. Demonstrations inside the stadium area which might disrupt a bonafide University function are in violation of University regulations and will not be permitted...Sticks, rods, and other supports for signs, placards or banners, might constitute a hazard to fans in the stadium because of crowded conditions...I hope all students, faculty, alumni, other fans, and visitors enjoy this exciting weekend.<sup>20</sup>

Because of the shooting of Darrell Brown, the administration got their wishes. While the University band would never strike up “Dixie” again, the day was quiet outside of this. President Nixon arrived in Fayetteville, watched the Razorbacks lose, made no consequential remarks, and left. BAD’s protest ended, and the school avoided any serious racial reconciliation for the year 1969. President Nixon’s appearance at the game signalled his disinterest in engaging

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<sup>19</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York City, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2009), 502.

<sup>20</sup> David Mullins, “President’s Message” *Arkansas Traveler*, December 5, 1969, 64 edition, sec. 89.

with serious social reform, and the University of Arkansas joined him.

However, while the administration was done with the issue, the students were not. In the December 4th issue of the *Traveler*, a few days before the game, a white student wrote in about "Dixie," saying, "An inconsequential vote of the student senate that does not truly reflect the opinion of the student body cannot change the fact that Dixie is a primary part of the University spirit program. A silent burial cannot kill that which never dies: the feeling that Dixie belongs to Razorback spirit."<sup>21</sup> This comment echoed a petition of 1207 signatures to the administration that denounced the student senate's recommendation for "Dixie" to be discontinued.<sup>22</sup>

This passionate defense of "Dixie" as a natural extension of southern heritage disintegrates when contrasted with "Dixie's" actual origins. Instead of being a folk song, as imagined by the white university students, it was a minstrel song written by Daniel Decatur Emmett, an Ohioan. Southern historian Dr. Karen Cox frames the song's creation as part of a rash of show tunes composed by northerners to entertain the minstrel audiences at northern theatres. As Cox describes:

It appealed to America's nostalgia for the antebellum South and was an upbeat song that was easy to sing. Although not intended as a rallying song for southern armies, it nonetheless became associated with the Confederacy, even though numerous other writers of the period

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<sup>21</sup> "A Simple Eulogy" *Arkansas Traveler*. December 4, 1969, 64 edition, sec. 51.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

composed different lyrics for the song, including northern versions such as "Dixie for the Union" and "Dixie Unionized."<sup>23</sup>

"Dixie's" true history fails to hit the same saccharine notes as the imagined one, but despite this, "Dixie" became an important emblem of "the Lost Cause." "Dixie" was part of the Lost Cause's decades-long, violent effort to reframe the Confederacy as a noble moment of Southern history. As the Daughters of the Confederacy erected Confederate monuments, and the Klu Klux Klan began their violent reign, "Dixie" was propped up in remembrance of the antebellum South that never existed. Students writing into the newspaper believed in the lie of a romantic past sold to them by "Dixie." Black students understood its significance as a tool of white supremacy.

And yet, while a shooting would seem to startle students out of their attachment to "Dixie," the reporting from the day after proves otherwise. Campus influencers like President of the Student Senate, Jo Martin, expressed horror at the shooting, alongside others. However, the *Traveler* still published this as well, a comment from student Steve Crow:

I do not think the black minority should be able to change the traditions of the University. If the majority of students wanted to stop playing "Dixie" at the pep rallies, then it might be fine to drop it. The shooting of the black student is not surprising considering the way they are

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<sup>23</sup> Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 11.

imposing on other students. Although it is very unfortunate that it occurred.<sup>24</sup>

Crow states plainly what others only alluded to; the ritual performance of “Dixie” meant more than Black students' lives or safety. Darrell Brown's subsequent disgust and disassociation from the University in his adult life is unsurprising in light of these comments. Perhaps more disappointing than the outright racism is the silence that followed. After the last murmurs of student letters petered out Christmas break, 1970 saw little social action and a gutting of the activist energy that had electrified the campus months prior. Another year would pass before BAD would return to the work they started the decade before.

### **BAD's Activism In the 70s**

Despite the end of the decade proving itself demoralizing, BAD forged on and reimagined their organization over the next ten years. The last ten years saw the establishment of organized Black protest at the University, but this was the decade that BAD could exert its influence and become a permanent force for social change on campus. At a symposium hosted by BAD in the fall of 1971, BAD's president James Bingham summarized the last decade, saying:

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<sup>24</sup> “UofA Students React to Shooting Incident; Current Dixie Ban.,” *Arkansas Traveler*, December 8, 1969, 64 edition, sec. 54, p. 1.

"Past efforts by Black organizations have been very gentlemanly-like and because of these tactics the administration has given little or no consideration to the Black Students. Therefore, the Black students feel that it is necessary to come together as a united front to make it known that they are aware of the inequities and injustices of this situation and want an adequate and positive action by the University and its governing bodies."<sup>25</sup>

BAD contended with the administration and oppositional students, finding itself embroiled in a new conflict with every semester. Regardless, both sides held strong. As BAD moved into the 70s, the Black Power Movement's influence, as well as the Black Panthers', grew more evident. The BAD Times ran successively more assertive op-eds on the importance of a greater Black presence on campus, both within the student population and in faculty. Demands grew for a Black studies program. Dr. Joy Ann Williamson notes that students' desire for "the development of Black studies, a voice in the disbursement of program funds, and a more relevant general education,"<sup>26</sup> were supported by Black Panther Leaders at the University of California at Los Angeles. Throughout the decade, BAD's demands mirrored those of other Black student groups throughout the country and gained support from elders in the

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<sup>25</sup> "Black Moratorium Scheduled Thursday," *Arkansas Traveler*, November 9, 1971, 66 edition, sec. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Joy Ann Williamson, "Community Control With A Black Nationalist Twist: The Black Panther Party's Educational Programs," *Counterpoints* 237 (2005): pp. 137-157, 150.

movement. BAD always remained non-violent in their organizing, but, undoubtedly, they asked many of the same questions as their peers at other institutions throughout the country: how and when will our University serve us?

BAD saw successive 'wins' throughout the decade, and each one of them was carefully cataloged in *The BAD Times*. The seventies saw: the first Black president of the Associated Student Government, the first Black "Razorback Beauty," the first Black "Who's Who" yearbook feature, the first Black Razorback Band member, and subsequently the first Black Drum Major, the first Black UARk-ette (the UARkettes were an elite acapella group), the first Black Cheerleader, the first Black law professor, as well as numerous other "firsts" that were faithfully reported upon each semester.<sup>27</sup> In addition to this public joy and celebration of community, BAD made efforts to build community alongside. *The BAD Times* advertised for their gospel choir, their intramural basketball team, and their beauty pageants.<sup>28</sup> Each edition was careful to balance its tone; editorials on grievances were carefully juxtaposed with snippets of Black students' success on campus. It would be easy to discount this as "fluff", but the happiness expressed in the *Bad Times* is wholly the substance of the newspaper. Black joy is a form of protest. The *Bad Times'* celebratory tone is a type of resistance

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<sup>27</sup> Mellonne Carrigan, "Black Coed Becomes Razorback Beauty," n.d.; "Four Black Selected for Who's Who," n.d. ; "Knox, New Law Professor Becomes First Black in Department," n.d. ; "Got Spirit? Band, UARkette, and Athletes," n.d.

<sup>28</sup> "BAD Activities," n.d.

that's been used for generations. In a journal article focusing on the resistance of Black women during American slavery, Dr. Stephanie Camp analyzed:

Brutality did not constitute the whole of black bodily experience. For people, like bondspeople and women as a group, who have experienced oppression through the body, the body becomes an important site of not only suffering but also (and therefore) of resistance, enjoyment, and potentially transcendence.<sup>29</sup>

BAD continued the practice of uplifting moments of Black joy in their newsletter. When the University expects misery from you, a pivot towards optimism and celebration is a form of resistance in that it subverts expectations.

BAD, however, was never one-dimensional. Their strength lay in their versatility and ability to tap into their members' different needs while challenging the University on many fronts at once. Unsurprisingly, BAD's editorials regularly expressed disappointment in lost promises as well as commentary on the Black experience at UARK. There was investigative journalism into substantiated claims of grade-discrimination, lack of Black faculty members, and the harassment and cuts in funding that BAD was regularly subjected to. An article titled, "Conspiracy" co-written by "Black Law Students" details the regular failure and dismissal of Black students from the law school, despite their academic

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<sup>29</sup> Stephanie M. H. Camp. "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861." *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 3 (2002): 540



performance being average or better than that of their white counterparts. A law professor, Dr. Milton Copeland, is singled out as a perpetrator of discrimination, with the authors writing

We do not say that there is a conspiracy among the professors who have consistently given blacks the worse grades in their classes; but at least from their records, as illustrated by Professor Copeland's grades, there seems to be a tacit understanding...We conclude that the plight of the black student has not changed since the first black student, Silas Hunt, was admitted in 1948.<sup>30</sup>

In tracking this change from earlier newsletters, which primarily focused on organizational updates rather than investigative pieces on university policy failures, BAD falls into a pattern seen at schools across the country during The Black Campus movement. After establishing themselves through direct action in the 60s and becoming a social presence on campus in the Black community, BAD had gathered enough influence and social capital to make direct complaints to the university through their newsletter--they were professionals at this point. As Ibram H. Rogers says in his journal article "The Black Campus Movement and the Institutionalization of Black Studies, 1965-1970":

"The discipline of Black Studies was institutionalized when Black students walked into their dorms in the fall of 1969. Several Black students died; hundreds of Black students were injured or imprisoned; thousands of Black students were suspended and expelled; tens of

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<sup>30</sup> Black Law Students, "Conspiracy," n.d.

thousands of Black students sacrificed their education through waging protest; hundreds of thousands of students participated in this vicious protracted freedom fight, this national Black Campus Movement that not only institutionalized Black studies, but compelled the diversification of higher education."<sup>31</sup>

BAD's campus activism had given them a permanent place on the campus social scene. Their work in the 60s and 70s varied, but they held true, and pushed the University into a place of greater racial reconciliation and equality.

### **Black Protest at the University of Arkansas Today**

#BlackAtUARK is the latest iteration of Black protest at the U of A. Today, Black protest is alive on campus—and on Twitter. Black students at UARK tweeted their grievances with the University, using the #BlackAtUark to collate their experiences into one timeline. Many of these frustrations expressed on Twitter in 2020 are similar to those of BAD's in the 60s and 70s. Twitter user @kandyflan tweeted “#BlackatUark the higher ups wondering why African American retention rates are dropping but won't put in any effort to provide a safe space for black people to feel welcome & recognized.”<sup>32</sup> Another student, @wmreid2020, remarked, “#BlackatUark is having a segregationist glorified on campus

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<sup>31</sup> Ibram H. Rogers, "The Black Campus Movement and the Institutionalization of Black Studies, 1965-1970." *Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 1 (2012): 21-40.

<sup>32</sup> Twitter post, June 2020, 1:37 pm, <https://twitter.com/kandyflan/status/1272599058599645184>

with a statue, dining hall and a college all in his name.”<sup>33</sup> Both concerns over administrative failures and the reverence paid to racist Southerners and traditions echo BAD’s concerns. And, as in the past, the administration’s response has been slow. The Chancellor of the University of Arkansas, Dr. Joseph Steinmetz, posted after two weeks after the hashtag blew up, “I have been reading #blackatUARK and I hear you. Your experiences as black students are powerful, painful testaments to the vital work we need to do to make our campus equitable and inclusive. These hard, real discussions are an important step to affect change together. #UARK.”<sup>34</sup> While an empathetic and concerned response, Dr. Steinmetz’s tweet felt late and underwhelming. Only the next few years will uncover the veracity of the administration’s commitment to Black students—in the interim, Black students will continue to push for a University that supports all its students, through direct action and social media.

BAD invokes a unique look into campus activist politics of the 60s and 70s, particularly on a Southern campus that resisted nearly all of their efforts. Their coordinated campaigns demanding racial equity on campus had an indelible impact. Through various means of protests, including greater social presence, direct action, and creating their own press, they were able to make tremendous gains

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<sup>33</sup> Will Reid, Twitter post, June 2020, 6:36 pm, <https://twitter.com/wmreid2000/status/1272674390245879808>

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Steinmetz, Twitter post, June 2020, 11:33am, <https://twitter.com/JoeSteinmetz/status/1272930195851431941>

regarding campus diversity in students and faculty, integrate programming at the University, and fight against systems of institutionalized academic discrimination. In light of the Black Lives Matter movement's rise, students are again organizing to fight for greater equality both on campus and in their wider communities; BAD leaves lessons of flexibility alongside dogged determination to create a better world. As campus activists forge their path today, they will find that the protests of the 60s and 70s prove evergreen in their wisdom.

# The Delegitimization of the Mexican Government and the Zapatista Response: An Analysis of the Constitutionality of the Chiapaneco Revolt

**Julian Porcelli**

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*“We are an army of dreamers, and that’s why we’re invincible” —  
Subcomandante Marcos*

The Wall was torn down. Proponents of communism were in full retreat throughout the world. The question on humanity’s mind was no longer, “Will the West succeed,” but rather, “How much will the West take?” The 1990s saw the end of the Cold War and the birth of neoliberal hegemony. The United States and other Western powers were virtually unopposed when applying their soft power—the use of cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries

to do something, rather than the use of military power<sup>1</sup>—to open new markets around the globe and create a favorable comparative advantage over less powerful nations. Although many developing states at the time collaborated with these Western powers in creating neoliberal treaties and economic policies, the people of those countries did not necessarily view those new arrangements in a favorable way. Many times, these new economic arrangements negatively affected the general population by uprooting their livelihoods and forcing them to participate in the globalized economy with little payoff.<sup>2</sup> This was the case for the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico, who through the enactment of the 1995 NAFTA agreement were forced to enter into the global market economy at a disadvantaged position.

This neoliberal agreement was the last straw. Decades of extreme poverty coupled with the corrupt and negligent Salinas presidency led to resentment among the people of Chiapas, which ultimately manifested into the Zapatista Uprising, a revolt that mobilized and declared war on the Mexican government on January 1st, 1994. A far-left uprising occurring in the backyard of the United States was a complete shock to the world, and countless national and international media outlets made sure to broadcast it. As such, many scholarly works have been written since the uprising that

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<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “soft power,” accessed February 22, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/soft-power>.

<sup>2</sup> Ray Kiely, “Poverty Reduction through Liberalisation? Neoliberalism and the Myth of Global Convergence,” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (July 2007).

analyze the causes of the rebellion, including such monumental works as Neil Harvey's *Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms and Popular Struggle*. In his masterpiece published in 1995, he utilizes statistical data concerning land usage and indices of poverty (percent of households with access to drinking water, drainage, etc.) to provide insight as to the socioeconomic and political factors that led to the 1994 uprising in Chiapas.<sup>3</sup> The comprehensive and meticulous use of data by Harvey is a great inspiration for my work, and I, like him, have engaged in statistical-heavy research when producing this paper. However, much existing literature and scholarly works already analyze the rebellion in-depth. Rather than re-create this analysis of the reasons behind the rebellion, I utilize the Mexican constitution to demonstrate how the Mexican government lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the rebels and to make the case for the legality of the uprising according to Mexican law.

### **The Nature of the EZLN Movement**

To understand the constitutional legitimacy of the Zapatista uprising, one must first understand the nature of the EZLN movement. In this paper I utilize various primary sources when analyzing the causes of the rebellion and its character, including both written and videotaped interviews,

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<sup>3</sup> Neil Harvey, "Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms and Popular Struggle," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1995): 48, accessed November 29, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992973>.

various documents from the Mexican government such as the *San Andres Accords* and the Mexican constitution, and polls and statistics. However, one particularly critical source that I utilize is the *"First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle, Today We Say 'Enough is Enough!' (Ya Basta!)"*, a manifesto written by the general command of the EZLN and addressed to the people of Mexico. This manifesto declares that they are officially at war with the Mexican government and calls upon the Mexican people to join the movement. Aside from the actual contents, the way the document is written provides key insights about the Zapatista movement.

First and foremost, the usage of "we" instead of "I" in the document is a clear indication of the leftist character of the group; many leftist organizations choose to deny the presence of a leader within their organization due to their disdain for hierarchy. Although at the time Subcomandante Marcos was in a clear and respected position of primacy amongst the EZLN commanders, the fact that the organization's official documents and call to arms use the pronoun "we" instead of "I" highlights the leftist character of the movement. The nature of the group is further highlighted in the document's brief description of the group's attire and flag colors when they write that, "We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tri-colored flag highly respected by our insurgent fighters. We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike. Our flag carries the following letters, 'EZLN,' Zapatista National Liberation



Army, and we always carry our flag into combat.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than rejecting the nation like so many other liberation movements, the group’s respect and use of Mexico’s national tri-colored flag solidifies their allegiance to the Mexican nation.

It is interesting to note that the EZLN emphasizes their use of red and black as symbols of their identification as workers. Their choice of utilizing traditional symbols of the working-class signals that the group identifies itself largely with a specific socio-economic class. What the group cited as their justification to fight against the Mexican government is equally indicative of the EZLN’s identity: the Mexican constitution. Their utilization of the Mexican constitution informs us that although the EZLN were against the contemporary leaders in charge of the Mexican government, the group did in fact view the constitution as an authoritative document. This reveals that the EZLN saw itself as a part of Mexican society and, thus, one cannot characterize it as a separatist movement. The EZLN’s identification and allegiance to a specific economic group coupled with their continued allegiance to Mexico make it apparent that the group had strictly socio-economic and cultural liberation goals in mind rather than separatist goals.

If the group’s allegiance lies with the Mexican nation, then, what drove them to rebel against the state’s government? Various socioeconomic, political, and

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<sup>4</sup> General Command of the EZLN, “First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle, Today We Say, ‘Enough is Enough!’ (Ya Basta!),” 1993.

governmental factors in Mexico led many in Chiapas to view the government, specifically the Salinas administration, as an entity working against their wellbeing. Fundamental to the Zapatista's beliefs was the idea that the government should exist to serve the people and ensure their wellbeing. Thus, the Mexican government lost its legitimacy in the eyes of Chiapanecos. Consequently, the EZLN launched its campaign against the Mexican government in defiance of the Salinas administration and with the hope of forcing the state to adopt a more favorable attitude towards the indigenous people of Mexico. The following pages will explain more thoroughly the underlying reasons for the Zapatista uprising.

## **The Presidency of Carlos Salinas**

One key factor leading to the Chiapas uprising was the corruption of and the land reforms instituted by the Salinas administration. To put the administration's corruption into context, the very election where it obtained victory was rigged and fraudulent, with all the voter ballots burned shortly afterwards to ensure that the truth about the election could never be proved.<sup>5</sup> However, although never officially proven, the election fraud in 1988 by the PRI (*Partido*

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<sup>5</sup> Ginger Thompson, "Ex-President in Mexico Casts New Light on Rigged 1988 Election," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2004, [www.nytimes.com/2004/03/09/world/ex-president-in-mexico-casts-new-light-on-rigged-1988-election.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/09/world/ex-president-in-mexico-casts-new-light-on-rigged-1988-election.html).

This article centers around the publishing of a new memoir from a former PRI Mexican president, Miguel de la Madrid, which includes his own experiences with the rigged election of 1988.

*Revolucionario Institucional*) government was incredibly blatant and the Mexican people were absolutely aware of it. The voting irregularities were incredibly public and visible, with many cases of polling stations opening late, stuffed or stolen ballot boxes, and the purging of ballots in favor of the opposition (Cárdenas of the Democratic National Front).<sup>6</sup> To add insult to injury, it was in Chiapas where Salinas received the “highest” vote in all of Mexico with 89.9% of the vote.<sup>7</sup> Seeing as Chiapas was the location of the staunchly anti-Salinas and well-supported EZLN uprising, this percentage of electoral support for Salinas was an obvious case of widespread voter fraud.

Although the election of 1988 was highly disturbing and unacceptable to the Mexican people, that level of corruption and decrepit behavior by the government was something that Mexican citizens had endured for nearly 60 years after the PRI party took the reins of the post-revolutionary government in 1929. Even though other political parties existed, for years the PRI used tactics such as the election fraud used in 1988 to outmaneuver their opponents and stay in power. In fact, the reputation of the PRI in Mexico was so bad amongst the Mexican populace that a New York Times national survey

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<sup>6</sup> Francisco Cantú, 2019, “The Fingerprints of Fraud: Evidence from Mexico’s 1988 Presidential Election,” *American Political Science Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2019), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/fingerprints-of-fraud-evidence-from-mexicos-1988-presidential-election/8F3C1BCA4C53FE85EA48E51321E339E9>.

<sup>7</sup> “Elections and Events 1988-1989,” The Library UC San Diego, [library.ucsd.edu/research-and-collections/collections/notable-collections/latin-american-elections-statistics/Mexico/elections-and-events-19881989.html](http://library.ucsd.edu/research-and-collections/collections/notable-collections/latin-american-elections-statistics/Mexico/elections-and-events-19881989.html).

conducted in Mexico in 1989 found that although the PRI was the main party that people voted for, when asked why the vast majority answered: "It's the one that always wins/it's the strongest."<sup>8</sup> The fact that a majority of those who voted for the PRI did so not out of ideological commitment but rather because of the high frequency of its electoral success demonstrates that Mexicans were well aware that there was no electoral competition against the PRI and that a vote towards any other party was a vote wasted. Moreover, on the next question of that same survey, which asked the respondent to select the statement that best describes their own opinion, 64% of respondents selected: "The Mexican political system should be changed so that the candidates of other parties will be able to win more often." In addition, when answering the question of how frequently they thought that the federal government does the "right thing," 60% of respondents selected "only some of the time."<sup>9</sup> Polls like this one reveal how poorly the Mexican people viewed the state of democracy and politics under the PRI.

Although Mexicans from all around the country chafed under the PRI presidency of Salinas, the people of Chiapas were particularly upset at the government because of the land reform policies it pursued. Salinas, facing an underperforming Mexican economy, pursued modernization reforms and policies ostensibly to boost the economy. Many

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<sup>8</sup> The New York Times, "The New York Times Mexico Survey, 1986," Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1992-02-16. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR08666.v1>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

of the reforms were focused on privatizing state-owned holdings in the hopes that they would become more competitive in non-governmental hands.<sup>10</sup> Because a large percentage of the land were *ejidos*, state-owned communal land that was redistributed for cultivation by ordinary farmers, many reforms targeted the agricultural sector. However, *ejidos* were more suitable for low-production subsistence farming, with many still relying on rain-fed agriculture,<sup>11</sup> and thus were not meant to make Mexican corn into a cash crop. Therefore, in order to boost competitiveness in the hopes of creating a thriving export agricultural economy, the Salinas administration decided to make edits to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution in 1992. Article 27 guarantees the existence and government aid to *ejidos*.<sup>12</sup> The Salinas administration, with full support from the Mexican legislature, decided to remove the statement in Article 27 that guarantees “land for landless rural communities, as well as its prohibitions on the ownership of rural land by corporations,” and added that “under the proposal members of *ejidos*, called *ejidatarios*, would be able to mortgage, rent, or sell their individual plots.”<sup>13</sup>

These edits to the amendment caused the indigenous people of Chiapas in particular to resent the move and view

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<sup>10</sup> Neil Harvey, “Rebellion in Chiapas,” 45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Mexico, *Constitution of the United Mexican States, 1917 (as amended)*, Washington: Pan American Union, 1961.

<sup>13</sup> James J. Kelly, “Article 27 and Mexican Land Reform: The Legacy of Zapata's Dream,” *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 25, no. 541 (1993-1994).

the amendment as an affront to their well-being, considering that more than 41.1% of the land in the largely indigenous state were *ejidos*.<sup>14</sup> For these citizens, the reforms meant it was likely that large landowners would buy most of the land from the common people.<sup>15</sup> The prospect of losing precious land was absolutely unacceptable to the people of Chiapas and ultimately proved to be a critical catalyst for the January 1<sup>st</sup> Zapatista uprising in 1994. In the January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994 edition of the EZLN's official newspaper, *El Despertador Mexicano* (which coincided with the uprising), the section which outlined the Zapatistas' "Revolutionary Laws" opens with the statement that the EZLN commands "the return of the land to those who work it and, in the tradition of Emiliano Zapata and in opposition to the reforms to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, the EZLN again takes up the just struggle of rural Mexico for land and freedom."<sup>16</sup>

The centrality of the land reforms to the Zapatista's cause cannot be understated. In fact, the need to amend Article 27 of the Mexican constitution was the first motion expressed by the EZLN's delegates in the *San Andrés Accords* in 1996,<sup>17</sup> which sought to negotiate conditions for a potential peace between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government. The Zapatistas thought that the amendment should be revised because it did not "reflect the spirit of Emiliano

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<sup>14</sup> Harvey, 41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>16</sup> "Revolutionary Laws," *El Despertador Mexicano*, December 31, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> "The San Andrés Accords," February 16, 1996,

[ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Mex%2019960216.pdf](http://ucdpged.uu.se/peaceagreements/fulltext/Mex%2019960216.pdf).

Zapata, summarized in two basic demands: the land belongs to those who work it, and Land and Freedom.”<sup>18</sup> However, when presented to the Mexican government for approval to be enacted into legislation, the *San Andrés Accords* were rejected by the Salinas administration and a new counter initiative was presented. These newly revised accords would have the government concede less to the Zapatistas. In turn, the Zapatistas ultimately rejected the new proposal for its limited concessions. Hence, although the government and the rebels maintained a ceasefire, no official treaty between the two parties was signed.

Thus, although there were multiple factors and conditions that prompted the EZLN to rebel against the Mexican government in 1994, the land reforms under the Salinas administration were a particular catalyst that delegitimized the Mexican government in the eyes of indigenous Chiapanecos. How could a government and party originating from the Mexican Revolution act against the well-being of the same indigenous *campesinos* who fought and died to create that revolution? To the rebels of Chiapas, the government had lost its way. It had lost the revolutionary and egalitarian fervor from which it was created. The Zapatistas knew that the Salinas government was in no way, shape, or form the government fought for by Emiliano Zapata; it was not Zapata’s Mexico. Thus, with both the spirit of Zapata and competitive democracy absent from the Salinas administration, the members of the EZLN saw the Mexican

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<sup>18</sup> “The San Andrés Accords.”

government as illegitimate. Logically, they understood that the only action left to save Mexico was to revolt.

## Fears over NAFTA

The NAFTA agreement was equally responsible for the rebellion in Chiapas. After nearly a decade of economic recession, which featured a high inflation rate coupled with extremely low increases in GDP,<sup>19</sup> the Salinas administration's main focus was to modernize the Mexican economy. Salinas, who received his PhD in economics from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, pursued the neoliberal policies of privatization and increases in foreign investment into Mexico. In a culmination of his economic strategies, he approached the U.S. government to form a bilateral free trade agreement, which he hoped would attract foreign investment into Mexico. He was certain that both "cheap labor *and* privileged access to the U.S. market" as a result of a bilateral treaty with the United States would entice foreign capital to flow into the country.<sup>20</sup> After talks with both the United States and Canada, Salinas and the two other nations agreed to sign the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which would establish a free-trade zone across the three nations and "barriers to cross-border

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<sup>19</sup> Timothy Goodman, "The Economy," in *Mexico: A Country Study*, ed. Tim L. Merrill and Ramón Miró (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1996,) 150-151.

<sup>20</sup> Dongwoo Kim, "Modernization or Betrayal: Neoliberalism in Mexico," *Constellations* 4, no. 1 (January 2013).



investment and to the movement of goods and services among the three countries.”<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly enough, NAFTA did not actually undermine traditional maize production.<sup>22</sup> According to a 2005 study conducted by the World Bank Group, the traditional rainfed production of maize did not fall after the implementation of NAFTA, and the trend of falling Mexican maize prices had already been in motion since the early 1980s.<sup>23</sup> Many people within the indigenous community in Mexico, especially in Chiapas, saw the agreement more as an affront in ideology and spirit to their communities and livelihoods. With the vast majority of *ejidos* and communal land dedicated to the maize cultivation, and with a majority of that land rain-irrigated,<sup>24</sup> there was fear over foreign maize production undermining that production undertaken by indigenous communities. Moreover, with the reforms to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution that threatened the communal *ejidos* in favor of private land ownership, there was fear that the trade agreements would lead to foreign ownership of the land.

After the successful occupation of San Cristóbal de las Casas on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, the *de facto* leader of the uprising, Subcomandante Marcos, made a speech in which he made the

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<sup>21</sup> *NAFTA, The North American Free Trade Agreement: a Guide to Customs Procedures*. Washington, DC: Dept. of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service: [Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., distributor], 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Norbert Fiess and Daniel Lederman, “Mexican Corn: The Effects of NAFTA,” *Trade Note 18*, (September 24, 2004): 1-4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Harvey, 41.

EZLN's stance towards NAFTA clear, stating that "today is the beginning of NAFTA, which is nothing more than a death sentence for the indigenous ethnicities of Mexico, which are perfectly dispensable in the modernization program of Salinas de Gortari."<sup>25</sup> Likewise, in an interview from 1997 high in the Chiapaneco mountains, he stated that the agreements between Mexico and the North American countries (referring to NAFTA) would "exclude" minorities, mainly indigenous people, from the economy in the name of rewarding "economically productive" entities and would concentrate resources.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to remember that it was the *idea* of NAFTA that pushed many in the indigenous Chiapaneco community to rebel as Zapatistas. The EZLN occupied San Cristóbal de las Casas, the capital of Chiapas, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, which was far too premature for any significant structural economic change to be felt on the ground (NAFTA only just went into effect that same day). Therefore, the fear of losing *ejidos* and communal land to private actors rather than the actual economic effects of NAFTA were what pushed indigenous communities in Chiapas to rebel against the neoliberal Salinas administration. This great fear of the administration pursuing policies that could likely lead to the removal of land from indigenous hands caused many Chiapanecos to see the

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<sup>25</sup> Chris Gilbreth and Gerardo Otero, "Democratization in Mexico: The Zapatista Uprising and Civil Society," *Latin American Perspectives* 28, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>26</sup> Kerry Appel, "Interview with Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN,"

YouTube Video, 37:45, April 21, 2012,

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3pHmHbqgTk&t=718s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3pHmHbqgTk&t=718s).

Mexican government as an agent acting against their wellbeing. Thus, in their eyes the government had become illegitimate and order needed to be restored to the Mexican nation to ensure that the people were protected. Revolution was thus the next course of action.

### **The Dire Poverty of Indigenous Chiapanecos**

Another underlying reason for the Zapatista rebellion was the frustration and desperation Chiapanecos felt in facing extreme poverty, which went unaddressed by the government. The majority-indigenous state of Chiapas was (and still is) plagued by poverty and underdevelopment. In fact, in 1992 it was reported that 33.1% of households in Chiapas did not have electricity, 41.6% did not have drinking water, and 58.8% did not have drainage—all grossly higher than the national average and that of other Mexican states.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the incredibly high poverty rate in Chiapas meant that many children had to forgo education and work to help subsidize the household. In 1990 nearly 30% of school age children in Chiapas did not attend school.<sup>28</sup> In fact, out of the 16,058 classrooms in 1989, only 96 were located in indigenous areas.<sup>29</sup> If that were not enough, extreme poverty meant little

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<sup>27</sup> INEGI, “Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO),” *La Jornada*, January 3, 1994: 11.

<sup>28</sup> Geraldine Novelo, “Women and Literacy Development in Mexico,” in *Women and Literacy Development in the Third World*, ed. Eve Malmquist (Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University and UNESCO, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, “Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds,” January 27, 1992.

if no access to various proteins and fruits needed for a healthy diet. In 1989 54% of the population of Chiapas were malnourished, and in the isolated indigenous areas that number was 80%.<sup>30</sup>

The EZLN affirmed, time and time again, that the dire situation of Chiapanecos—particularly indigenous Chiapanecos—was a central reason that they needed to rebel. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994, a letter titled “Responses to Government Lies” was published by the EZLN. The letter opens with the group reaffirming why they chose to rebel, and it states that they have “the principal objective of letting the Mexican people and the world know the miserable conditions that millions of Mexicans, especially we, the Indigenous people, live and die in.”<sup>31</sup> The EZLN’s uprising was thus born out of the dire poverty of the indigenous of Chiapas. One seasoned Tzeltal Zapatista fighter named “Elisa” was interviewed about her life and her reasons for joining the EZLN in the January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1994 edition of *La Jornada*. Reminiscing on her childhood, she explained, “I saw how my family lived, in utter poverty, and we organized ourselves to make war, to live better.”<sup>32</sup>

The combined corruption of the Salinas government, the NAFTA agreement’s exacerbation of agrarian and economic inequality, and the exhaustion and frustration of the impoverished indigenous community of Chiapas were

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<sup>30</sup> Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, “Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds.”

<sup>31</sup> CCRI-CG of the EZLN, “Responses to Government Lies,” January 6, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> Elisa, interview by Gaspar Morquecho, *La Jornada*, January 19, 1994, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/Zapatistas/chapter03.html>.

unacceptable and intolerable to the members of the EZLN and created ripe conditions for the rebellion. The cause of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas was thus a combination of various conditions and events. The dire poverty of the indigenous community in the state already created anxiety and resentment towards the Mexican government. How could an administration present itself as the leader of the Mexican nation if it acted contrary to the constitution built upon Emiliano Zapata's populist policies? The corruption, agrarian reforms, and the signing of the NAFTA agreement introduced by the Salinas government were grounds for the indigenous people of Chiapas to view the current government as illegitimate. Thus, in order to save a nation that was deviating from the path of the Mexican Revolution and Zapata, the EZLN decided to waken the spirit of revolution once again and continue the fight for "tierra y libertad": land and liberty.

## **The Constitution**

For any reader who does not count themselves amongst the government elite and is not well versed in their respective constitutions, it is likely the case that education has instilled a belief that any aggression or defiance towards the state is generally illegal. However, many constitutions provide clauses that allow the nation's citizens to seize power outside of the formal electoral process provided that certain

conditions are met.<sup>33</sup> Thus, given the contents of this article, it is imperative to consider the constitutionality of the EZLN's revolt in the eyes of Mexican law and what implications this has for the future of Mexico.

Like the United States Constitution, the 1917 Mexican Constitution was written in the aftermath of a great societal upheaval, the Mexican Revolution. The new constitution sought to address the dispossession of resources and land of the *campesinos*, the common rural folk of Mexico, by favoring the deconcentrating of land through such redistributive programs and institutions as the communal *ejido*.<sup>34</sup> To guarantee that the will of the Mexican people would always be represented in government, the constitution also guaranteed free and fair elections regarding the act of voting someone into public office.<sup>35</sup> Although the constitution clearly guaranteed both of these prerogatives to its citizens, over the latter half of the 20th century various PRI administrations sought to undermine those programs and policies, with Salinas's agrarian reforms and electoral corruption representing the greatest affront. Although one could make the case that the Salinas administration was well within its rights to make edits to Article 27, this argument does not stand knowing that the administration engaged in widespread election fraud to secure its victory in 1988, and

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Ginsburg, Daniel Lansberg-Rodriguez and Mila Versteeg, "When to Overthrow your Government: The Right to Resist in the World's Constitutions," *UCLA Law Review* 60, no. 1184 (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Mexico, *Constitution of the United Mexican States, 1917 (as amended)*, 1961.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore was not a legitimate representative of the Mexican people. Consequently, the Salinas regime had no right to change the constitution, for it lacked electoral legitimacy.

In response to the administration's illegitimate alterations to the constitution and abandonment of engaging in free and fair elections, the General Command of the EZLN was legally sound when they wrote in their declaration of war in the December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1993 edition of *El Despertador Mexicano* that, "as our last hope, after having tried to utilize all legal means based on our Constitution, we go to our Constitution, to apply Article 39, which says: 'National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government.'"<sup>36</sup> Article 39 does not stipulate that the people must alter their government through strictly *electoral* means and as such, should electoral change be impossible as in the case of PRI-dominated Mexico, the Mexican people are not barred from utilizing non-electoral methods to modify their government. Clearly, the EZLN were completely within their constitutional rights to declare war against the Salinas administration, which had conducted itself in a manner that was contrary to the principles outlined in the original 1917 Constitution that guaranteed *ejidos* for Mexicans to till and free and fair elections.

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<sup>36</sup> General Command of the EZLN, "Declaration of War," *El Despertador Mexicano*, December 31, 1993.

## Conclusion

The 1994 Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas should be a lesson to the Mexican government. The event was a stark reminder that the people of Mexico understood their constitution well and were aware that they were the only source of the government's power. Unfortunately, the Mexican government has largely forgotten this point and continues to govern disregarding the ripening conditions for rebellion. Administration after administration has continued to fail to provide an adequate and stable environment for many Mexicans. According to a recent survey conducted by AS/COA Online, the people of Mexico believe that under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador poverty, organized crime presence, violence, and insecurity have risen.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the failure of the current government in stopping cartel violence has led to the rise of self-defense militias such as CRAC-PC (Regional Coordination of Community Authorities- Community Police) in the Mexican state of Guerrero.<sup>38</sup>

Should the Mexican people continue to face unacceptable insecurity and poverty, it is plausible that they may view the Mexican electoral process as inadequate to

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<sup>37</sup> Carin Zissis, "Approval Tracker: Mexico's President AMLO," AS/COA, November 23, 2020, [www.as-coa.org/articles/approval-tracker-mexicos-president-amlo](http://www.as-coa.org/articles/approval-tracker-mexicos-president-amlo).

<sup>38</sup> Natalie Gallón, "Children Are Joining a Self-Defense Militia in Mexico," CNN, January 30, 2020, [www.cnn.com/2020/01/30/americas/children-self-defense-militias-in-mexico-intl/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2020/01/30/americas/children-self-defense-militias-in-mexico-intl/index.html).



deliver the serious societal change that is needed. With an increasingly armed populace<sup>39</sup> forming militias in response to the security vacuum created by government inaction, it bears consideration that, should AMLO's administration and those succeeding it continue to fail to address the societal ills befalling the Mexican people, a repeat of the 1994 Zapatista rebellion could be around the corner. Power belongs exclusively to the people. The government should never forget that.

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<sup>39</sup> Gabriela Martinez, "The Flow of Guns from the U.S. to Mexico Is Getting Lost in the Border Debate," *PBS*, June 12, 2019, [www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/the-flow-of-guns-from-the-u-s-to-mexico-is-getting-lost-in-the-border-debate](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/the-flow-of-guns-from-the-u-s-to-mexico-is-getting-lost-in-the-border-debate).

# **The Miracle Doctor: How the Nazi Propaganda Machine Manufactured Complicity and Consent from the German People**

**Charlie Mackey**

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The Nazi Party in Germany boasted an extremely effective propaganda machine. This machine, as a functional arm of the Party, served to imbue all parts of German culture with the affirmative traits viewed as desirable by the Party. These traits were key components of fascism, such as patriotism, national unity, and masculine strength. Of course, the Party also emphasized negative traits, such as anti-Semitism and the exclusion of those perceived as “other.” But in order to instill these values as distinctly German, the Nazi Party first needed to create something that people wanted to be a part of. Anti-Semitism, in a vacuum, was not the unifying value of the Nazi Party. Anti-Semitism fit an important piece

of Nazi philosophy, but it would have been nearly impossible for the Party to gain a following relying only on anti-Semitism. Instead, the Party created a multifaceted approach to propaganda to permeate German culture, reinforcing Nazi values, both affirmative and negative, at every turn.

Fascism, in many ways, is built around cultural myths. In Italy, Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party openly declared that "our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation."<sup>1</sup> Fascism relies on building new, uniquely fascist mythic traditions: specifically, the leader principle. The leader principle refers to the idea that there is only one man (and it is necessarily a man) who can possibly address the crisis and undo the national fall from glory. Adolf Hitler's well-deserved reputation as the face of the Nazi Party was no accident, but instead a deliberately created image, which served both a general political function and a key role in instituting fascism and specifically Nazism in Germany. It is important to note that some aspects of the leader principle are simply requirements of mass politics, and that in many ways, Hitler was an extremely effective practitioner of mass politics, particularly given the relative newness of mass communication. However, Hitler created a unique, cult-like following, and established himself as a strong, charismatic presence, both in the German government and in the collective German consciousness. The propaganda machine

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe, 1919-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 160, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=acGhRyqfuGIC&pg=GBS.PT159.w.1.1.30>.

of the Nazi Party deliberately accomplished this using a unique combination of tactics and techniques, including official propaganda campaigns, strong Nazi influence on youth, and informal cultural regulations. These propaganda tactics influenced German culture from a variety of different sources and imbued all aspects of German society with Nazi values. The Nazi propaganda campaigns extended far beyond the official scope of the Ministry of Propaganda and well into the collective cultural psyche of the German *volk* (people). The Nazi grasp on the minds and hearts of the German people blurred the lines between consent and coercion and instilled a genuine desire to uphold and perpetuate affirmative Nazi values.

Obviously, Hitler was an extremely effective speaker. However, many great speakers throughout history did not possess nearly the cult of personality that Hitler enjoyed during the Nazi reign in Germany. What separates Hitler from other charismatic speakers is, among other things, the *Führer* myth. The *Führer* myth refers to the specific implementation of the leader principle in Nazi Germany. "*Führer*" translates to "leader," but "leader" fails to encapsulate the breadth of Hitler's role or the significance of the title in Nazi Germany. In the wake of the Treaty of Versailles and the subsequent economic depression, the German people were searching for a savior. Ursula Meyer-Semlies, a German woman who grew up in the Third Reich, later said, "There was a poem at the time, that the German people were waiting for a *Führer*, *nicht*? The poem went, 'O

God, send us a *Führer* who will change our misfortune, by God's word.' And many Germans felt the same way."<sup>2</sup> For many Germans, Hitler was exactly the savior they had been awaiting. Hitler was responsible for all good things. Hitler transcended existing political titles, as they did not do justice to the breadth of what he represented to the German people: "Hitler promptly merged the positions of Chancellor (Prime Minister) and President in himself and got the armed forces and civil service to take an oath of loyalty to him, not as Chancellor-President, head of government and state, but as '*Führer* of the German people.'"<sup>3</sup> It is not sufficient to simply characterize Hitler as a leader, because the term "leader" does not bring with it the connotations that "*Führer*" did for Hitler. This was the result of the carefully crafted public image of Hitler. But how was this image created?

First, propaganda was used to deify Hitler, demonize perceived enemies of the state, and provide justification for the Party's actions. The Nazis hijacked existing youth institutions and created new ones, specifically aimed at creating future human capital for the Reich's army, centering around Hitler. Public schools began to carefully monitor students' ideological affiliation, and curriculum was curated to align with particular Nazi values, such as strength, unity, and nationalism. Extracurricular programs such as the Hitler Youth trained young boys for a future in the military and the

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<sup>2</sup> Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Women Recall the Third Reich* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, 154.

League of German Girls prepared young girls for a future as loyal wives and mothers. Informally, individuals enforced Nazi mandates through self-regulation, whether due to a genuine loyalty to the party or simply out of fear. Mass regulation and enforcement of ideological and racial crimes (such as disloyalty to the Party or miscegenation) were often impossible in practice, so the bulk of enforcement responsibility fell to zealous Nazi supporters, who were quick to officially denounce those perceived as disloyal. Demonstrating one's loyalty to the *Führer* became a simple way to publicly demonstrate one's loyalty to the party; or, perhaps more accurately, a failure to publicly demonstrate loyalty to the *Führer* was to actively combat the Party's goals and ideals and to risk denouncement.

In their early days, the National Socialist Party struggled to gain a foothold in the *Reichstag* (German parliament). Their inflammatory, racist rhetoric won them more notoriety than followers in the early 1920s. During Hitler's imprisonment following the failed *putsch* of 1923, he began writing *Mein Kampf* (My Fight). The book sold fairly well when it was released in 1925, but sales exploded once the Nazis' performance in the 1930 *Reichstag* elections made it clear that the party had legitimate staying power in German politics.<sup>4</sup> The book made Hitler into a household name and outlined many details of both his personal philosophy and his

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<sup>4</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Mein Kampf," Holocaust Encyclopedia, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d., accessed 4 December 2020, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/mein-kampf>.

political tactics, including his outright anti-Semitism and his fondness for propaganda. Hitler saw propaganda as one of the most important tools available to a politician in shaping public opinion. He wrote:

All propaganda must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to. Consequently, the greater the mass it is intended to reach, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be... We must avoid excessive intellectual demands on our public, and too much caution cannot be extended in this direction. The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it exploits the emotions of the masses, the more effective it will be...The receptivity of the great masses is very limited, their intelligence is small, but their power of forgetting is enormous. In consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan. As soon as you sacrifice this slogan and try to be many-sided, the effect will piddle away, for the crowd can neither digest nor retain the material offered...[the task of propaganda] is not to make an objective study of the truth, in so far as it favours the enemy, and then set it before the masses with academic fairness. Its task is to serve our own right, always and unflinchingly.<sup>5</sup>

This quotation reveals a number of important points about how Hitler understood the relation between a government and its people, specifically with regards to the dissemination of information and propaganda. Hitler states essentially that propaganda should be simple and repetitive.

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<sup>5</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (n.p.: Fairborne, 1925), 182-185.

He argues that the masses do not have a strong collective memory, so, in order to be retained at scale, nuance must be removed. Hitler makes it clear in this passage that effective propaganda does not present its audience with the most accurate, clear information, in a way that will help the audience consider all sides of an issue and take an educated position. It does the exact opposite. Propaganda is meant to “serve our own right, always and unflinchingly.” Hitler and the Nazis used propaganda effectively to achieve their own ends, whether through the normalization of overt anti-Semitism, as in a cartoon in *Der Stürmer*, or constant insistence upon Hitler’s providence, or any other number of subjects: in any case, there was never a clear picture of a logical opposite or any attempt to provide genuine political education, and the opposition (be it political, racial, or military) was to be lambasted at any and every opportunity.

Hitler’s understanding of propaganda was largely shaped by his own observations and perceptions of World War I. He attributed the German defeat to superior propaganda from the United States and Britain. He thought Allied propaganda effectively demonized their German enemy and appealed directly to its audience’s emotions.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Hitler thought, American news reports of German barbarism (largely unsubstantiated) helped the Allies gain the moral high ground, driving public support for the war and

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.), 14.



inspiring Allied troops. Furthermore, he credited Allied propaganda dropped behind German lines with demoralizing German troops, writing, “The army gradually learned to think as the enemy wanted it to.”<sup>7</sup> These observations shaped Hitler’s view of the role that propaganda should play in his own party.

In many instances, the Nazi Party faced ideological incongruence, particularly in the matter of concrete policy. Propaganda, however, was decidedly the opposite. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda and trusted confidant, understood propaganda in many of the same ways Hitler did. Goebbels once defined active propaganda as “belabour[ing] the people so long until they succumb to us.”<sup>8</sup> Goebbels also stated, “Propaganda must not investigate the truth objectively—but it must present that aspect of the truth which is favorable to its own side.”<sup>9</sup> However, Goebbels, in contrast to Hitler, believed that propaganda should be subtle. “He believed that propaganda had far less of an impact once the audience became conscious of the message,” writes film historian Alan Sennett.<sup>10</sup> “He tended to favor the production of entertainment films that engaged the viewer and delivered messages through an emotional involvement with characters

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<sup>7</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 189.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth J. Campbell, "Joseph Goebbels: Propagandist," *American Intelligence Journal* 30, no. 2 (2012): 128, accessed December 4, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26202024>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Sennett, "Film Propaganda: Triumph of the Will as a Case Study," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 55, no. 1 (2014): 48, accessed December 3, 2020, doi:10.13110/framework.55.1.0045.

and storyline.”<sup>11</sup> The combined effectiveness of the two philosophies about propaganda is clearly evident in the way propaganda was understood by those living in Germany at the time. Journalist Stéphane Roussel said, “I often had the feeling that Germany had never recovered from [World War I]...here is a sick people. And this sick people has now found a miracle doctor. A man who says, ‘I will turn you into a successful people.’”<sup>12</sup> The comparison between Nazism and a transmittable sickness was echoed by Arnhild Söhnchen [pseudonym], who called the public wave of enthusiasm about the two “like a contagious disease.”<sup>13</sup>

In 1927, Goebbels became the editor of a newspaper called *Der Angriff* (“The Attack”) and began regularly getting involved in conflicts between local communists and members of the *Frei Korps*, groups of World War I veterans who acted as roving paramilitary troops during the interwar period.<sup>14</sup> *Der Angriff* began to transform into a medium for Goebbels to attack anti-Nazi politicians, as well as Jews and communists. German emigrant Fritz Marcuse later said, “The ‘Attack’ at that time was utterly appalling. The lies that they allowed themselves. But some of the people believed them. And this enabled Goebbels to bring a large part of the petty bourgeoisie over to his side. Goebbels understood that he could use terror

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<sup>11</sup> Sennett, “Film Propaganda,” 48.

<sup>12</sup> “Watch Adolf Hitler’s campaign for the chancellor and Joseph Goebbels’s role in promoting his propaganda and terror,” *Britannica* video, 3:06, accessed 4 December 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/video/180215/Adolf-Hitler-campaign-chancellor-propaganda-Joseph-Goebbels>.

<sup>13</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, “Goebbels,” 127.

to conquer the streets.”<sup>15</sup> In April of 1930, Goebbels was named the Nazi Minister of Propaganda.<sup>16</sup> Goebbels was talented in his ability to play off a crowd’s emotions, and he developed tactics to separate himself and the Nazis from the communists. He employed techniques such as featuring the victims of street violence at the hands of communists bandaged, in their stretchers, laid on the stage next to him as he spoke, and portraying those killed by communists as deliberate martyrs.<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Campbell writes:

When a local thug shot and killed Wessel [one of Goebbels’ street thugs] in January 1930 at the instigation of the Communists, Goebbels changed Wessel’s life into that of a martyr, a student who wanted to give his all to society, an almost Christ-like figure. Goebbels had this nonsense set to music, which by 1933 was sung throughout Germany. The song became the official anthem of the Nazi Party.<sup>18</sup>

This example highlights not only Goebbels’ deft public framing of the death of a “drunk...womanizer” in a manner that would serve to benefit his own political agenda, but also speaks to his quickly growing role as a primary public face of the Nazi Party and the crucial emphasis placed on propaganda within the Party.<sup>19</sup> Goebbels would later employ similar tactics in January of 1933, when a Party member was killed in a brawl with communists. Goebbels organized:

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<sup>15</sup> “Hitler’s campaign and Goebbels’s propaganda,” *Britannica*.

<sup>16</sup> Campbell, “Goebbels,” 128.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-128.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, “Goebbels,” 128.

a mammoth funeral with a procession of thousands of SS, SA, and Hitler Youth through Berlin...emphasizing Nazi strength. Hitler, Goebbels, [Hermann] Goering, and other orators next went to the bars and homes of this small province in an attempt to get out the vote...Goebbels shouted 'victory' and the mass of the German people believed him, despite the fact that the Nazi Party had not gained 50 percent of the vote.<sup>20</sup>

When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933, it took just 6 weeks for Hitler to appoint Goebbels as Minister of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment.<sup>21</sup> Goebbels was effective in this role. He held meetings in which he gave journalists instructions on stories, and sometimes even gave them pre-written articles to publish, although he did allow "some variation from the accepted standard."<sup>22</sup> Nazi newspapers declared Hitler "the People's Chancellor," which fit the political narrative more aptly than "Reich Chancellor Hitler," as many non-Nazi newspapers referred to him, although the number of non-Nazi newspapers sharply dropped as the Nazis took over many newspapers formerly run by the Communist and Social Democratic Parties.<sup>23</sup> Historian Ian Kershaw writes, "The dramatic changes taking place in Germany during these weeks in early 1933 provided the propaganda machine with

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell, "Goebbels," 129.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 50; Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 66.

full and unbridled opportunity to centre on Hitler not as the Party leader or Head of Government, but as the focal point of ‘national rebirth.’”<sup>24</sup>

Goebbels’ masterstroke, however, was in his utilization of radio broadcasting. Goebbels broadcast 50 speeches made by Hitler in his first year of power, which Goebbels “used for propaganda to create the *Führer* myth of infallibility. The result was that many people, who looked askance at the Party, had confidence in Hitler after his ascent to power in 1933.”<sup>25</sup> Goebbels also pressured manufacturers to build cheap radios at scale in order to boost Hitler’s audience. These cheap radios, in combination with short-wave transmitters, were used to spread Nazi rhetoric across the world, allowed Hitler to speak to “not less than 56 million Germans” by 1935.<sup>26</sup> Figure 1 is a propaganda poster advertising personal radios, saying “The People’s Receiver! Every National Comrade a Radio Listener!”<sup>27</sup> The poster is sleek and brightly colored with the infamous striking Nazi red against a solid black background, giving it an aesthetically satisfying quality. The poster provides a concrete visualization for the intersection of national unification with technological progress, both meant to be understood as accomplishments of the Nazi state. Propaganda campaigns began “daily barrage[s] of patriotic verbiage,” and when

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<sup>24</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 53-54.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, “Goebbels,” 130.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> [The People’s Receiver Radio Propaganda Poster], 1936 in Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 71.



Figure 1.

Hitler himself addressed the nation in August of 1934, “a virtual national holiday was declared in order to permit the maximum number to listen in; amplifiers were installed in many of the principal squares of the larger cities, and a special request was made to the owners of receiving sets to share them with their less fortunate neighbors.”<sup>28</sup>

Radios combined with the Nazi international propaganda magazine *Signal*, which, at its peak, sold 2 and a half million copies per issue in twenty languages, to spread Nazi rhetoric across the globe.<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, the Nazis hosted the 1936 Olympics in Munich, which provided them a chance to demonstrate the powers of fascism to the world. In an effort to appeal to foreigners, public anti-Semitic displays were taken down and efforts were made to conceal overt racism in Nazi Germany.

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold J. Zurcher, “The Hitler Referenda,” *The American Political Science Review*, 29, no. 1 (February 1935): 94-95, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1947171>.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Harwood, *Hitler's War: World War II as portrayed by Signal, the International Nazi Propaganda Magazine* (London: Quantum, 2014), 6.

Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda instructed reporters to avoid racism in their stories, saying, "The racial point of view should not be used in any way reporting sports results; above all Negroes should not be insensitively reported...Negroes are American citizens and must be treated with respect as Americans."<sup>30</sup> However, while state officials saw an opportunity to demonstrate Nazi superiority, the Olympics provided a rare means of temporary escape for Jewish citizens. Peter Gay, a Jewish German, writes, "[buying our tickets to the Olympics] among a small cadre of colorful, noisy Hungarian fans was cannier still. It meant that my father and I could simply blend in with our surroundings so that we did not have to give the Nazi salute when the *Führer* appeared or a German was awarded a gold medal...Conversely, we were safe in supporting the Americans passionately, and we did."<sup>31</sup> Gay, a German citizen by birth, later writes, "Unfortunately, many German athletes also did well enough to win an array of gold medals. I took them all as virtually personal insults...When the Games were over the Germans came in first, well ahead of the United States. It was a propaganda coup for Hitler's Germany, but true sportsmen—I include my father and myself among them—were unimpressed."<sup>32</sup> With the ever-present emphasis on Nazi values throughout German culture, Jews and other political dissidents struggled to find cultural refuge. The Olympics, while giving loyal

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<sup>30</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 84.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Gay, *My German Question* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 79.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

Nazis a chance to prove themselves as genetically superior, also gave those who opposed the regime an outlet to do so safely.

Goebbels' attempt to regulate the entirety of German media extended as well to the film industry, although there is some debate among scholars about the extent to which German films released during the period of Nazi rule can be classified as propaganda. While only 153 of the 1,094 films released under Nazi rule were explicitly labelled as "political" at the time, other filmmakers worked under pressures of censorship and self-regulation, meaning that their work was immeasurably shaped by Nazi policies and values.<sup>33</sup> Alan Sennett wonders, "Does this mean, then, that all films made during the Nazi period should be seen as 'political' in the broad sense that they contain messages and were required to conform or not contradict the ideological norms of the regime? Or is it possible to make a distinction between films that are 'made politically' and films that are entertainment?"<sup>34</sup> Sennett argues that there is no clear answer to this question, so the political context of a film, particularly a supposedly "non-political" film, is inextricable from its public reception and messaging.

The inherent politicization of cinema in general did not stop the Nazis, however, from making their own explicitly political propaganda films. In 1935, leading German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl produced the film *Triumph des*

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<sup>33</sup> Sennett, "Film Propaganda," 48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



*Willens* (Triumph of the Will), documenting a 1934 rally in Nuremberg. It is widely regarded as one of the most significant propaganda films of all time. The film won prizes at a number of festivals between 1935 and 1937 and enjoyed huge box office success.<sup>35</sup> There is debate within the film community about whether the film has greater significance as an artistic achievement or as a tool of propaganda. Legendary film critic Roger Ebert wrote, "That 'Triumph of the Will' is a great propaganda film, there is no doubt, and various surveys have named it so. But I doubt that anyone not already a Nazi could be swayed by it. Being a Nazi, to this film, means being a mindless pawn in thrall to the godlike Hitler."<sup>36</sup> Film critic Dan Olson argues that to even debate the artistic value itself is a result of propaganda, saying, "Nazi sympathizers spent a lot of time between the film's release in 1935 and the war promoting the idea of *Triumph of the Will* as an advancement of filmmaking. It was an intentional message to promote Nazi state art as superior...It is, however, not a triumph of filmmaking; it is a triumph of budget."<sup>37</sup>

The film opens with Hitler literally descending from the clouds in an airplane to arrive in the middle of cheering throngs. Sennett writes, "The symbolism could hardly be

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<sup>35</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 82.

<sup>36</sup> Roger Ebert, "Triumph of the Will Movie Review (1935)," *Triumph of the Will movie review (1935)* | Roger Ebert, accessed December 3, 2020, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-triumph-of-the-will-1935>.

<sup>37</sup> Dan Olson, "Triumph of the Will and the Cinematic Language of Propaganda," YouTube video, 18:15, posted by Folding Ideas, 10 February 2017, accessed 3 December 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJlQm1Z\\_D7w&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJlQm1Z_D7w&feature=emb_title).

more explicit. Hitler descends from the skies like a god attending a festival in his honor...While the German nation is depicted as a crowd, lacking in individual properties, Hitler is a god-like presence through the use of close-up shots of him speaking...The masses are both uniformed and presented as a uniform body. For much of the film, their leader is the only individual present.”<sup>38</sup> The film explicitly reinforced the notion that Hitler was not only distinct from the German people as a whole, but literally above them. The German people are shown as a single collective, unified around and yet clearly distinct from their fearless leader, whose commanding voice and body language paints an image of unwavering masculine strength. The image is exactly what the Party means to convey: Germany’s strength is reflected from their leader to the masses, both of which feed off one another.

Riefenstahl later claimed that the film was meant to be an academic documentary. However, these claims of documentary objectivity are weakened by the fact that Hitler specifically commissioned the film and provided “generous state funding and access to the party hierarchy.”<sup>39</sup> Further detracting from the director’s claim that she was simply documenting the event, she organized and restaged shots from the original rally after the fact, in order to improve upon their cinematography. Sennett argues that “documentaries cannot be deemed to portray ‘reality’ simply because the

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<sup>38</sup> Sennett, 51-53.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

camera becomes the spectator. The viewer's gaze is directed at whatever the filmmaker desires him or her to see. While the subject matter is real enough, the image is a construction and perhaps a distortion of reality. The viewer is thus manipulated by the filmmaker despite, or rather because of, the ostensible reality of the image on screen. *Triumph of the Will* clearly displays this stratagem."<sup>40</sup> The version of reality presented by the film disguises everything except the unified strength it is meant to convey, which is trumpeted and repeated *ad nauseum*, until the viewer is left with no other vision of the truth, mirroring the propaganda strategy outlined by Hitler himself in *Mein Kampf*.

Print media provided another avenue for Nazi propaganda. Newspapers such as *Der Stürmer* published widely read weekly editions filled to the brim with vile anti-Semitic content. *Der Stürmer*, founded in 1923 by Julius Streicher and famously featuring anti-Semitic cartoons on the front cover, was among the most popular, with its readership including the *Führer* himself.<sup>41</sup> In fact, according to a Nazi official, Hitler "was simply on thorns to see each new issue of the *Stürmer*. It was the one periodical that he always read with pleasure, from first page to last."<sup>42</sup> One 1934 issue claimed that "Jews murdered people and drank their blood,"

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<sup>40</sup> Sennett, 51-53.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Bryant, "Streicher, Fips & *Der Stürmer*," *History Today*, 58, no. 8 (Aug 2008), 60.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

with a front cover image featuring blonde women and children with their throats cut.<sup>43</sup>

As the regime progressed, it became increasingly difficult for Nazi-controlled news outlets to ignore acts of violence and overt racism. *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, marked a drastic shift in the outright violence being perpetrated against German Jews on November 9th and 10th of 1938.<sup>44</sup> 7500 Jewish businesses were damaged or destroyed, countless homes were destroyed, and many synagogues were burned, not to mention the more than 90 Jews who were killed in the streets, supposedly all carried out in response to the assassination of a German diplomat by a Jewish refugee.<sup>45</sup> German state newspapers were ordered to falsely portray the assassination as the work of organized Jewish groups working against the German government.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry instructed the German press "not to publish any photographs of the damaged Jewish property, to bury the story on back pages, and to minimize the extent of the destruction. Newspapers were urged to describe the events as the 'spontaneous outrage' of the German people against the Jews for their criminal actions."<sup>47</sup> Diplomats around the world were horrified by news of *Kristallnacht*, and German efforts to downplay the destruction did little to quell international

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<sup>43</sup> Mark Bryant, "Streicher, Fips & *Der Stürmer*," 61.

<sup>44</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 91.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-93.

outrage. So Goebbels shifted tactics, instead focusing on the atrocities committed by other governments around the world to portray democracies as hypocritical.<sup>48</sup> Stories were run about the prevalence of lynchings in America, as well as stories of British human rights violations in Palestine.<sup>49</sup>

In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the German press was expected to help facilitate the voluntary emigration of the Jewish population by refusing to publish stories that “might make German Jews hesitant to leave. In June 1939, when 907 mostly Jewish passengers of the MS *St. Louis* were denied entry into Cuba and the United States, the German media initiated a news blackout, fearing that such stories would discourage Jews from leaving.”<sup>50</sup>

As it became clear that war was imminent, the press was expected to play a key role by priming citizens for both the horrors of war and the atrocities that would follow in the Holocaust. According to Steve Luckert and Susan Bachrach, the wartime mission of the German press was threefold: to explain to the German people why war was necessary; to justify German military actions; and to create a vilified perception of the enemy.<sup>51</sup>

The Ministry of Propaganda was extremely effective in its efforts to control the German media and powerfully exerted itself to portray Hitler in the most favorable possible light. The Ministry not only controlled the narrative

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<sup>48</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 94.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

surrounding the *Führer* himself, but also constructed stories so as to best support the enactment of his political agenda by demonizing enemies of the state and reinforcing the lies told by government officials. Their widespread influence shaped much of German culture during this period. In addition to the Ministry of Propaganda's outright attempts to manipulate the public, the Nazis worked in other areas to instill their values and beliefs in children.

The establishment of the *Führer* myth, particularly in the long term, required the involvement and active participation of German youth. The Party correctly predicted that it would be far easier to convince the generation of children to enthusiastically support the Nazi cause, and in many cases, children were the only true Nazis in the household. The *Hitler Jugend* program (Hitler Youth, HJ) and the *Bund deutsch Mädel* (League of German Girls, BdM) were incredibly popular even before participation was federally mandated, with the HJ seeing a growth of nearly 2 million members in 1933 alone.<sup>52</sup> These programs were meant to raise German children to become ideal Nazis as adults: the boys received preparation to ultimately achieve the "neutralization of Europe's Jews," including "premilitary training [such as]...camp and hiking exercises...Local HJ groups enthusiastically played 'war games' against each other, during which boys could be roughed up badly in order to

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<sup>52</sup> Urvashi Goutam and Urvashi Gautam, "Pedagogical Nazi Propaganda (1939-1945)," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 75 (2014): 1018, accessed 4 December 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158487>.

steel themselves for greater adventures.”<sup>53</sup> Armed Forces Minister Werner von Blomberg said, “Service in the *Wehrmacht* [German Army] is the last and highest step in the general educational process of any young German, from the home to the school, to the HJ and Labor Service.”<sup>54</sup> Children as young as ten years old were recorded saying, “What are we now? *Pimpfe* [boys]. What do we want to be? Soldiers!”<sup>55</sup> There were strong connections between the HJ and the notorious *Schutzstaffel* (SS), which were negotiated largely by SS leader Heinrich Himmler himself.<sup>56</sup> Historian Michael Kater writes, “It was one of the great propaganda achievements of the Nazi rulers that they were able to offer a political and ideological world view that granted status, certainty, and power to young people, so much so that teenagers of both genders could accept and abide by the prescribed behaviors with hardly any qualms.”<sup>57</sup> As the war effort progressed, the HJ became less subtle in its training, and its routines “continued with the express purpose of immediately transferring eighteen-year-old youths into the armed forces.”<sup>58</sup> In 1943, Hitler wrote to an HJ leader:

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 26.

<sup>57</sup> Kater, *Hitler Youth*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

In the future each new generation in the premilitary training camps will be taught by soldiers who have proved themselves at the front, most of whom were themselves former Hitler Youth leaders. The primary goal of this training is to instill soldierly attitudes and behavior in keeping with National Socialist principles...Hitler Youth will see its highest purpose in this most difficult and fateful struggle to be that of providing the fighting armies with the best new generation of soldiers...they will grow up to be a tough young race that will eventually successfully accomplish all the tasks set for our people by destiny.<sup>59</sup>

Former HJ member Jost Hermand wrote that the most memorable part of this training was ski lessons. Pre-military training also included using “eyes and ears to meet all possible challenges,” and gunmanship, cartography, and field exercises meant to “strengthen our will to fight.”<sup>60</sup> Hermand recalls the SS officers training them as “not as authoritarian as we would have expected German officers to be.”<sup>61</sup> Training was meant to appeal to the boys. The HJ was never intended to scare children into participating or punish them; on the contrary, the program was meant to give young children a positive understanding of the Party and instill values of militarism, nationalistic strength, and personal sacrifice.

The HJ, in cooperation with the National Socialist Teachers’ Union and the Ministry of Propaganda, released an annual list of books that should be avoided by young children

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<sup>59</sup> Jost Hermand, *A Hitler Youth in Poland: The Nazis’ Program for Evacuating Children during World War II*, trans. Margot Bettauer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>60</sup> Hermand, *Hitler Youth in Poland*, 59.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*



and books that should be encouraged.<sup>62</sup> Authors eventually began sending manuscripts of books directly to the HJ before publication for approval. In response to the multitude of these books which were perceived to lack Nazi values, one HJ member wrote:

It is necessary to liberate oneself from the remnants of a liberal ideology which by its emphasis on the principle of art for art's sake in the arts and the sciences, saw a literary work as something in its own right and which derived its scale of values from some indeterminable laws of art. The precondition for any understanding is to know one of the basic principles of National Socialist ideology - that that is good which serves the people, and this is harmful which does harm to the people.<sup>63</sup>

The HJ recognized the inherent endorsement of values in literature and took the responsibility of overseeing literature aimed at children would reinforce Nazi values. It is important to remember that Nazi values did not solely focus on anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitism was a key point in the Nazi philosophy, it also included affirmative values centered on characteristics considered German, such as strength, strict social and political hierarchies, and the supremacy of national identity. Therefore, books that did not emphasize German strength or the German historical struggle were effectively banned through extrajudicial means. In 1938, the HJ founded a book club with the intent of "enabl[ing] all youths to obtain

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<sup>62</sup> H.W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922-1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), 138.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-140.

a good youth book at a low cost.”<sup>64</sup> However, the books offered by the club were determined solely by “ideological considerations.”<sup>65</sup> In internal documents, the HJ wrote:

It would be a complete mistake to offer to our children the fairy tales of primitive exotic peoples...We must by considerable care of our youth literature ensure that the generations growing up will have a close relationship with our fairy tales, sagas, and the faith in the ancient gods of our people. From that depends whether we shall succeed in establishing a real German ideology as the unshakeable foundation of our new Reich and the racial self-determination of every German.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to extracurricular programs, classrooms and curriculums were also infiltrated by Nazi ideas. Children’s picture books were published by *Der Stürmer*, thereby ensuring that children were taking in anti-Semitic ideals before they reached the age of seven.<sup>67</sup> By 1937, 97% of teachers belonged to the National Socialist Teachers’ Union, and textbooks were filled with outright anti-Semitism. One math textbook asked, “In 1933, there were 66,060,000 inhabitants in the German Reich, of whom 499,682 were Jews. What is the per cent of aliens?”<sup>68</sup>

Teachers often served as the face of the Nazi Party for many young children and, in some cases, embodied an idealistic version of National Socialism. Margarete Fischer [pseudonym] was a schoolgirl in the 1930s and reports that

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<sup>64</sup> Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 139.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>67</sup> Goutam and Gautam, “Pedagogical Propaganda,” 1018.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1019.

even as a child, she had reservations about the Nazis, saying, “I was against the whole group which sat up there on high around Hitler. We all had complete reservations.”<sup>69</sup> However, Fischer saw a much more positive depiction of Nazism in her teacher:

She [the teacher] embodied the ideals of National Socialism in such a way that I’d still say, if National Socialism really had been how this woman believed it and embodied it, something completely different would have come out of it. She showed us by example what community is, what sacrifice for others is. She never thought of herself. She always lived and worked for others. Exemplary! And that was what she imparted to us as the center of National Socialism. That is what made me so happy. She pulled me into the group, at that time a student union, and personally demonstrated to us in the classroom as well as in the group the best sides, the idealistic sides, of National Socialism. And that convinced me.<sup>70</sup>

Many children’s experiences with Nazism were shaped prominently by their schoolteachers, who in many cases similarly displayed kindness and genuine care for their students. Therefore, it was in the direct interest of the Party to vet those who would be teaching their children to ensure that the teachers would positively demonstrate Nazism in the classroom. Ursula Meyer-Semlies [pseudonym] recounts that her Nazi sympathies paved the way for her to become a teacher, saying that knowledge was not the only criteria for acceptance into teaching school, but “also the point of view one had. And furthermore, I came from a family of teachers,

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<sup>69</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 4-5.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

that was inherited, it was called ‘teaching blood.’”<sup>71</sup> This purity test, paired with the near-universal membership in the National Socialist Teachers’ Union, served to ensure that only committed Nazi supporters could find work as public schoolteachers, thereby exposing students to the most positive portrayal of Nazism possible. This made it irrelevant if the children disliked Hitler or Goebbels or whatever they may have known or heard at home about the political realities of the Nazi regime; children often felt a stronger connection to their teachers’ versions of Nazism than to the abstract Party. Teachers also tended to de-emphasize anti-Semitism from their examples of lived Nazism. Peter Gay, a German Jewish emigrant, writes, “Our teachers were on the whole free of bigotry and did not set out to make their Jewish pupils’ lives harder than those of our gentile classmates.”<sup>72</sup>

Even when the teachers did not discriminate against their own students, the students lacked a critical understanding of the world around them. In 1937, British historian Stephen Roberts wrote on the German students’ “worship” of Hitler, saying, “It is this utter lack of any objective or critical attitude on the part of youth, even with university students, that made me fear the most for the future of Germany. They are nothing but vessels for State propaganda.”<sup>73</sup> Hermand echoed Roberts’ assertion, writing, “Although we were already fourteen-year-old high school

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<sup>71</sup> Owings, *Frauen*, 58.

<sup>72</sup> Gay, *My German Question*, 64.

<sup>73</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 82.

students and belonged to the young elite of the new Reich, we too gave no thought to history or serious literature.”<sup>74</sup> These methods of indoctrination garnered the regime the support of the generation of youth and led to many cases where children were the most loyal members of the Party in their homes. This in turn led to instances of children speaking out against their own parents as being disloyal to the regime, demonstrating the principle of self-regulation.

Self-regulation refers to patterns of individuals making efforts to publicly show support for the regime, largely out of fear and mistrust. Many displays of loyalty were performative, simply meant to alleviate or prevent rumors of one’s resistance to the Party. Discerning genuine displays of support from insincere displays is nearly impossible. Informal methods of displaying approval for the *Führer* became legislated in the early 1930s, chiefly under the direction of Goebbels.<sup>75</sup> While technically supported by law, it would have been extremely difficult for the SS or the Gestapo to enforce these. Laws such as the one dictating that all Germans greet one another with the phrase “Heil Hitler” and an extended right arm would be practically impossible to monitor and punish violators. Therefore, it fell on the populace to enforce such regulations. The “Heil Hitler” greeting had been required of Party members since 1926, and new nationwide mandates were meant to force those who refused to give the salute to publicly declare their opposition

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<sup>74</sup> Hermand, *Hitler Youth in Poland*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell, “Goebbels,” 127.

to the regime.<sup>76</sup> This further blurred the lines between consent and coercion, as it was impossible to tell who was performing the salute out of genuine respect and admiration for the Nazis and who simply feared retribution. The public rhetoric shaping discussions of Nazi rule reflected the performative support for the regime. Nazi poetry began to circulate, including this poem, titled 'The German Hitler Springtime:'

Now has us the Godhead a saviour sent,  
Distress its end has passed.  
To gladness and joy the land gives vent:  
Springtime is here at last.<sup>77</sup>

This poem demonstrates the level of personal reverence for Hitler desired by the Nazi Party, although it is again worth noting that when Hitler took power in 1933 this goal was far from reality. However, it became closer to ubiquitous after the opening of the *Reichstag* in 1933, which was symbolically scheduled for March 21<sup>st</sup>—the first day of spring.<sup>78</sup> The elaborate festivities marked the beginning of what came to be known as the 'Hitler Spring.' Sunny days were referred to as 'Hitler weather.' Communities rushed to plant 'Hitler-Oaks' and make Hitler an honorary citizen.<sup>79</sup> Germans thus felt united under Hitler. As one German put it, "It was fun to be a German again."<sup>80</sup> Hitler's foreign policy

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<sup>76</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 75.

<sup>77</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 53.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>80</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 75.

decisions to retake the Sudetenland and Austria resulted in a surge in German national pride, and Hitler was seen as a “brilliant statesman, a figure picked by ‘destiny’ to lead the nation out of misery, and a vehicle through whom the German people spoke.”<sup>81</sup>

Those who did not enjoy Germany’s newfound successes, however, found it increasingly difficult to safely voice their dissent. The state openly asked for people to self-police, asking, “every nationally-minded People’s Comrade...to report to the Gendarmerie responsible on any insulting of the Reich government or any degradation of the national revolution.”<sup>82</sup> Kershaw writes, “This open invitation was eagerly taken up in a wave of denunciations...made by many ordinary citizens, often arising from a personal grudge towards a neighbor or workmate.”<sup>83</sup> Political denunciations became a race, with fear driving individuals to denounce others before they themselves were denounced. Rumors and gossip quickly spread, leading to public misconceptions about the truth of the Gestapo, including details such as the size of the police force.<sup>84</sup> Historian Robert Gellately argues, “We do not need to choose between interpreting the terror in Nazi Germany as either comprising an evil police or many cooperative denouncers. Clearly both existed and both made

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<sup>81</sup> Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 75.

<sup>82</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Robert Gellately, “Denunciations and Nazi Germany: New Insights and Methodological Problems,” *Historical Social Research*, 22, nos. 3/4 (1997): 231, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20756166>.

the terror possible.”<sup>85</sup> The Gestapo were not particularly interested in understanding the motivations of their unofficial assistants, and official records often make little note of potential reasoning for denunciations. “The police invariably responded to denunciations and investigated, no matter how dubious the source or far-fetched the accusation, even when the motive was quite obviously self-serving,” Gellately writes.<sup>86</sup> Affective motives (such as patriotism, strong personal alignment with the Party, or hatred of Jews) were rarely found, and studies of Gestapo records show that far more often “motives of the denouncers...appear to have been instrumental ones, such as informing on a rival or someone involved in a social dispute.”<sup>87</sup> Gellately cites incidents of denouncers offering to work as agents for the Gestapo, including one case where false information resulted in 50-60 innocent people being charged for high treason.<sup>88</sup> It is unlikely that denouncers were unaware of the harsh reality of the Nazi court system, particularly during the war, which adds further weight to the gravity of the decision to denounce. However, the strength of the personality cult surrounding Hitler drew in both those who were receptive to the politics of the Nazis and also those who saw the regime as an opportunity to gain social standing or a threat to their own pre-existing social position.

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<sup>85</sup>Robert Gellately, “Denunciations and Nazi Germany: New Insights and Methodological Problems,” 232.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.



The lines dividing state propaganda and the informal cult of personality surrounding the *Führer* were not always clear. Perhaps the clearest example of the blurred lines between official state organized propaganda and self-enforced regulations were Hitler's birthday celebrations. Massive crowds came to celebrate the *Führer's* birthday annually, with particularly large celebrations in 1933 (Hitler's first birthday as *Führer*) and 1939 (Hitler's 50th birthday). Kershaw hesitates to attribute the size of the celebration in 1933 to either the propaganda machine or individual citizens, saying, "Though the propaganda machine had excelled itself, it was evidently able to build upon an already existent extensive propensity in wide sections of the population to accept at least some elements of the expanding Hitler cult."<sup>89</sup> In addition to commemorating the *Führer's* birth, the event served a distinct political purpose: to deliberately exclude those who refused to celebrate Hitler. Kershaw writes, "It served not only to reinforce the devotion of the already converted, but to isolate the reluctant and hesitant by making them feel outsiders from a society in which the adulation expressed by millions was the norm."<sup>90</sup> By making acceptance of the regime the social norm (or at least appear the norm), the Nazis were able to indirectly create feelings of exclusion and division amongst the German people who were most likely to dissent against Hitler's rule. At the celebration of Hitler's 50th birthday in 1939, Goebbels gave a famous speech

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<sup>89</sup> Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 57.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

titled "Our Hitler." In the speech, Goebbels depicts Hitler as the savior of the German people, a man who fears no challenge, calling him a "man of historic greatness."<sup>91</sup> Newspapers around the world referred to the event as "Worship of Hitler."<sup>92</sup> The annual event also provided an opportunity for the Nazis to demonstrate their military strength, with the 1939 parade featuring approximately 500,000 soldiers in attendance and the first public display of new anti-aircraft weaponry.<sup>93</sup> The annual parades highlighted both the uniformity and oneness of the German people (thereby further excluding those who did not wish to participate) and the stark individual political and military power of the *Führer* himself, emphasizing the rigid hierarchy of power which culminated entirely in the person of Hitler.

The practical effect of social regulations was that it became impossible to tell who genuinely supported the Party and who simply feared the consequences associated with not supporting the Party. The Nazis held frequent plebiscites, which were nonbinding referenda used to gauge public opinion. These votes consistently returned such high percentages in favor of whatever the Nazis supported that it is impossible to use them today to mean anything at all. The

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Goebbels, "Our Hitler" (speech, Berlin, 19 April 1939), German Propaganda Archive, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/unsers39.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> "Worship of Hitler: Panegyric by Propagandist," *The Age* (Melbourne, AUS), 21 April 1939.

<sup>93</sup> Frederick C. Oechsner, "1,500,000 Watch Parade As Nazis Celebrate Hitler's Birthday: Huge Anti-Aircraft Guns Seen For the First Time - Planes Blacken Berlin's Skies," *Pittsburgh Press*, 20 April 1939.

1934 referendum on Hitler's seizure of the Presidency yielded 89.9% approval. American political scientist Arnold Zurcher wrote at the time, "Despite the absence of an organized opposition, the cabinet made a prodigious effort to elicit support for its point of view. Needless to say, the entire propaganda machine which Nazi Germany has taken such pains to perfect was called into play and every resource of that machine, coordinated and directed by the propaganda ministry, was placed at the disposal of the cabinet. Unquestionably it was upon the efficacy of this machine that the Nazi leaders chiefly relied on for favorable results."<sup>94</sup> Zurcher also writes that while there was "probably very little...downright coercion and intimidation at the polls," one must also consider "intangible official pressure, of which there was undoubtedly a great deal."<sup>95</sup> As personal thoughts and feelings became increasingly subject to pressures both from the regime itself and also its zealous supporters, it began to mean less and less to dissent. Fascism, in its drive for uniformity, invariably gives way to the inherent politicization of all aspects of an individual's life, including sexuality (another type of crime which the regime heavily relied on denunciations to enforce), personal thoughts, and family relations.

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<sup>94</sup> Zurcher, "The Hitler Referenda," 94.

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

Zurcher's claim of "very little...downright coercion" in the context of voting refers more specifically to a lack of organized voter suppression efforts, such as the ones led by the Ku Klux Klan before and during the American Jim Crow era. In fact, 96% of all registered German voters participated in the 1934 referendum.

Propaganda was effective to varying degrees, all of which are difficult to measure precisely. Even those who bought into the politics of the Nazi regime did not necessarily find it easy to carry out concrete actions required by the political ideology, lending credence to the idea that “fascisticization,” or the process through which one becomes a fascist, is indeed a spectrum and a process, and it is hard to specify one’s position on the spectrum. For example, in Christopher Browning’s book *Ordinary Men*, Browning examines a single police battalion throughout the war, comparing the psychological toll of committing massacres as the war progresses. The psychological toll of committing repeated acts of unprovoked evil varied greatly between individual soldiers, but generally decreased as the battalion became more used to the horrors of their daily lives. Even though the Nazi soldiers described in the book were all accustomed to (and ostensibly, by virtue of being Nazi soldiers, in agreement with) the racialized rhetoric of violence of Nazi state propaganda, there was still a difficult adjustment period, during which the theoretical violence turned into physical violence. Some individuals were likely more strongly affected by propaganda than others, and while it is impossible to determine the exact effect on each individual, it is crucial to note that there was a difference between individuals.

Nazi propaganda was ruthless, well-targeted, and extremely effective, but it was not brainwashing. Each German citizen retained free will throughout the Nazi regime.

Hitler, Goebbels, and the Nazis certainly influenced their choices and deliberately curated an environment to drown out and reduce the effect of dissent. But propaganda does not equate to brainwashing, and it is unfair and unrealistic to attribute everything done by the Nazi regime to its propaganda campaigns. Furthermore, it is unfair to claim that anti-Semitism was necessarily the only motivator Germans had for supporting the Nazi Party. Rather, we as modern scholars should understand how propaganda and tactics of mass manipulation were used to create a culture based on ideals of strength through unity which ultimately led to the evils of the Holocaust, while accounting for the fact that individuals retained agency. These points must be understood in conjunction, that neither the regime alone nor the individual citizenry can be held solely culpable for the atrocities committed by the Third Reich but that the cooperation and willing participation of both was necessary. The regime could not have committed these acts without the active support of the people, so the regime specifically created a culture to generate that active support.

# One Giant Contradiction: The Evolution of the Nazi View of Women from 1934-1943

**Lauren King**

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Hitler once said, “Men may build worlds—but a people stands or falls with its women.”<sup>1</sup> Even a strong patriarchy like Nazi Germany acknowledged the importance of women to the success of the regime. In part, Nazi Germany did fall because of their women—or, more specifically, because of their gender roles. However, researchers often overlook women in the study of Nazi Germany because they were relegated to the private sphere and because the regime had a strong patriarchal structure. Early 1930s Nazi ideology depicted the ideal woman as a mother who raised members

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Maßmann, “Kraft aus Liebe und Glauben,” *NS Frauen Warte* 11, no. 14 (April, 1943), p. 185. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw11-14.htm>

of Germany's next generation and indoctrinated them into the fascist system. The relegation of women to the "private sphere" created gender roles structured for peacetime; however, war was always the end goal for the Nazi regime. War is the culmination of any fascist ideology because it combines nationalism with territorial expansion and combats the idea of victimhood. However, the strict gender roles of Nazi Germany created problems for the regime once World War II began and they had to encourage women to join the workforce to support the wartime economy. By the time the Nazi party wanted women to become involved in the public sphere, many women did not want to participate because they had been indoctrinated into fascist ideology from the early 1930s. Thus, the gender roles the Nazis instilled in the 1930s undermined the war effort even though war was the ultimate goal of the regime.

I argue that an ideological shift from traditional and rigid gender roles to a push for women's involvement in the public sphere occurred out of necessity. While a large amount of research has been done about the traditional role of women in Nazi Germany or women who broke that mold—such as Hanna Reitsch, who was a fighter pilot for Germany in World War II—few scholars have researched how the Nazis' view of women shifted specifically out of economic necessity.<sup>2</sup> The traditional, rigid gender roles kept women in the private sphere raising children while the men were breadwinners and

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<sup>2</sup> Hanna Reitsch, *The Sky My Kingdom: Memoirs of the Famous German World War II Test Pilot*, (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers (Ignition), 2009).

participated in the public sphere, but as the war effort picked up, the Nazi party found that they needed women to begin working outside the home. There followed a gradual change in the role of women as portrayed by Nazi propaganda. This change created an ideological conflict between the emphasis on the ideal woman as a motherly figure and the economic push for women to transgress into the masculine public sphere to help with the war effort. However, because the traditional view of women as mothers was deeply entrenched in Nazi ideology, the Nazis often mentally expanded the definitions and concepts about women in order to allow women to work without changing the ideal woman from a motherly figure. This expansion allowed for the appearance of a constant ideology even while the messaging was changing. Mentally expanding differentiates from adapting or transforming gender roles because the Nazis wanted to preserve the appearance that the essential differences between men and women were not changing. To preserve this gender essentialism at the core of their patriarchal regime, they twisted logic so that their gender ideology could survive even while women helped with the war effort.

I analyze the covers as well as the articles written in the *Frauen Warte*, the Nazi Party's women's magazine, to track the change in messaging over time. By examining the *Frauen Warte*, one can see the shift of the Nazis' depiction of the ideal woman from a motherly figure to a person who could contribute to the war effort in other ways. Since the magazine was produced by the women's wing of the Nazi party



(*Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*), it provides a window into how women were viewed by the regime and what the regime's need for them was at the time of publication. It is important to note that Nazi propaganda shows the change in Nazi ideology, but not necessarily a change in reality, because the messaging reveals how the Nazis wanted their women to act and not necessarily how women actually acted. Although the effect of the change in messaging is not the focus of this paper, it is crucial to understand how many women were seeing the magazine and how much visibility it received in order to fully grasp why the change in messaging is so significant. The magazine was extremely popular from its first publication in 1934, and by 1939 there were 1.9 million copies sold for every issue.<sup>3</sup> Because *Frauen Warte* demonstrates how the Nazi party viewed women and wanted them to act, it can be used to track the change in messaging and viewpoint of the party from 1934, when the magazine began, until 1943, when the last surviving cover photo prominently featured a woman. The magazine continued printing until 1945, but the other surviving covers do not prominently feature women and therefore provide less opportunity to analyze how the Nazi party pictured women during the last years of the war.

By complicating the Nazi perception of the ideal woman from a mother to an evolving image based on circumstances, this paper offers a window into the Nazi

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<sup>3</sup> "The Frauen Warte: 1935-1945," German Propaganda Archive, Calvin University, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw.htm>

Party's thoughts on the status of the war and on what was going on at home. When women were depicted as traditional mother figures, the Nazi party felt secure, but imagery encouraging women to work displays insecurity because the party changed their values to adapt to adverse situations. To demonstrate this, I will show the starting point—the Nazi goal for war—and their traditional view of women as mothers. Next, I will trace how this image evolves by examining the *Frauen Warte* before concluding not only that a change in messaging took place, but that it was out of economic necessity due to the war.

## **Women as Traditional Mothers and The Nazi Goal for War**

The Weimar Republic (Germany from 1919-1933), before the Nazis came to power, made major advancements in gender equality. In their 1919 constitution the Weimar Republic stated, “All Germans are equal before the law. Men and women have in principle the same civil rights and duties.”<sup>4</sup> This language is extremely different from the Nazi rhetoric that would come along less than twenty years later. In 1933, on the eve of the Nazi regime, 35 women had seats in the Reichstag.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that there was complete gender equality as those 35 women only made up 7% of the Reichstag, but, for perspective, this was much higher than the

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<sup>4</sup> Weimar Republic 1919 Constitution, Chapter 2, Section 1, Article 109, <https://midcoastseniorcollege.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Weimar-Constitution-Articles.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, (London: Routledge, 2013): 3.

1.1% representation in the United States at the time.<sup>6</sup> The Nazi ideology, however, was built on patriarchy and pushed against the promotion of gender equality that occurred in the Weimar Republic. This Nazi ideology garnered support from men and women alike who believed that the woman's place was in the household.

The Nazis made a point of combatting feminism from the start and emphasizing the image of women as mothers. In fact, according to Stanley, "National Socialism targeted women's movements and feminism generally; for the Nazis, feminism was a Jewish conspiracy to destroy fertility among Aryan women."<sup>7</sup> This rhetoric made motherhood the choice of the in-group, Aryan women, and women in the workforce part of the out-group by associating them with Jewish people. We see this clearly in the words of George Strasser, the Nazi Propaganda Chief in the 1920s, who said, "for a man, military service is the most profound and valuable form of participation—for the woman it is motherhood!"<sup>8</sup> Idealizing motherhood also implicitly discourages women from working. Paula Siber, the head of the *Frauenschaft*, the women's wing of the Nazi party, said in 1933, "to be a woman means to be a mother, means affirming with the whole conscious force of one's soul the value of being a mother and making it a law of life... the highest calling of the National Socialist woman is not just to bear children, but consciously

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<sup>6</sup> Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, (London: Routledge, 2013): 3.

<sup>7</sup> Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us Versus Them*, (New York: Random House, 2018): 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

and out of total devotion to her role and duty as mother to raise children for her people.”<sup>9</sup> This statement shows how strong the view was that women should be mothers, and how, by being mothers, they were helping the *Volk*. Paradoxically, Paula Siber was a woman in a position of power who was not solely devoted to motherhood. This paradox illuminates the complicated view of women during the Nazi era. The regime pushed the message that women should be mothers, but even before the war started, there was a gradual mental expansion of gender roles that allowed some women to pursue careers outside motherhood.

This paradox arose because war was always the goal for the Nazis. In the words of historian Philip Morgan: “War was the apotheosis of fascism and the fascist systems of rule. Only war could realize (sic) the fascist powers’ goal of territorial expansion for ‘living space’; only war justified the mass mobilizing (sic) and warlike indoctrination of the totalitarian state in its formation of the ‘new man’ made in the fascists own image.”<sup>10</sup> The only way to justify the actions taken by the government in a fascist system is war. War allows fascism to combine its idea of victimhood and nationalism to make the ideology fit together. However, while most parts of the fascist ideology fit in with a wartime environment, Nazi gender roles contradicted the needs of wartime society.

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<sup>9</sup> Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us Versus Them*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe 1919-1945*, (New York: Routledge, 2003): 177.

Relegating women to the domestic sphere allowed for them to have more children; to increase the population of the Third Reich, the Nazis promoted big families and wanted women to have as many children as possible. Political philosopher Jason Stanley explains, "To boost the nation, fascist movements are obsessed with reversing declining birthrates; large families raised by dedicated homemakers are the goal."<sup>11</sup> At first, then, the goal of war seems to fit with encouraging women to have large families. However, the goals of war and the goals of motherhood are quite contradictory, as once the men leave to go fight on the front the women are needed to keep the economy going and thus cannot raise their families. If the war had started fifteen to twenty years later, this strategy may have been more effective but would still not be sustainable for a regime with constant warfare. In addition to having to join the workforce, women could no longer have as many children because their husbands were away for the war. Thus, during wartime, the role of women typically changes out of necessity.

### **From Mothers to Labors: Women in Wartime**

The traditional view of women as mothers during the Nazi period matched the reality for most women during the period before the war. However, once the war started, women were needed in the workforce, so the propaganda and messaging directed towards women changed. Instead of

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley, *How Fascism Works*, 152.

being relegated to the private sphere, women were encouraged to work outside of the house in order to help the *Volk* win the war. In this way, the war forced the Nazis to expand the role of women beyond the household. The Nazi propaganda during World War II thus contradicted the propaganda from before the war with regards to the role of women. This shift in messaging from women as mothers to women as part of the workforce provides a more nuanced depiction of the role of women during the Nazi era and illuminates a contradiction and flaw within fascist ideology.

We can see this contradiction in propaganda in the *Frauen Warte*, a biweekly women's magazine which started in 1934. The magazine was run by the *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*, which was the official women's organization of the National Socialist Party and controlled all of the women's affairs.<sup>12</sup> The *Frauenschaft* had female leadership, but it was also strongly controlled by men who were higher up in the party.<sup>13</sup> The *Frauen Warte* was, according to Ella Rossman, "the primary women's magazine in Nazi Germany propagating what was supposed to be the norm in Nazi society, in particular the looks and behavior (sic) of an 'ideal German woman.'"<sup>14</sup> The magazine was the main propaganda

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<sup>12</sup> Ella Rossman, "Ideal Woman as Seen by Third Reich: The Type of Femininity Promoted by Nazi Press," *HSE University*  
<https://iq.hse.ru/en/news/229579218.html>

<sup>13</sup> Geraldine Theresa Horan, *Mothers, Warriors, Guardians of the Soul: Female Discourse in National Socialism 1924 – 1934*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012): 38-39.

<sup>14</sup> Rossman.

outlet that the Nazi party used to reach German women.<sup>15</sup> Although the articles inside the magazine also showed the party's changing viewpoint towards women from mothers to potential members of the workforce, the artwork on the front was most prominent to readers. The cover is what most people saw when walking by newsstands or deciding whether to buy the magazine; it had to make a statement.

Although the *Frauen Warte* was a women's magazine, women did not regularly appear on the cover, as the emphasis on patriarchy was still strong in Nazi Germany. Even though they were the target audience, women were not always portrayed on the cover of the magazine because, even when the topic solely concerned women, men were still the center of the public sphere. Oftentimes, men or children were placed on the cover instead, such as in the January 1940 issue, which showed a young boy making a snowball. The strength of the patriarchy was a crucial element to Nazi fascism and it is vital to note because, despite the change in messaging, women were still underrepresented even in a propaganda magazine targeting them. This illuminates the chasm between men and women from the Nazi perspective. In addition to many covers featuring men and children, the archive also lacks access to every edition, so there are time gaps between the covers analyzed in this article.<sup>16</sup> However, the women who did

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<sup>15</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015): 105.

<sup>16</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* (January 1940), Cover. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw8-13.jpg>

appear on the covers showed the readers what a woman *should* be, according to the Nazi party.

In 1934 the *Frauen Warte* depicted women as caring and nurturing mothers. The point of the propaganda was to convince women to have more children in order to help the Third Reich. An article in one of the first issues states:

“The motherly spirit is the source of all that is eternal. Just as the farmer is deeply bound through the land to the primal forces of nature, a mother receives the rhythm of her life from God’s hand. We want to lead our children, our whole people, back to this primal source of strength. The task of the woman is to replace the spirit of money and of self-interest with the spirit of the mother and the farmer.”<sup>17</sup>

The language implies that the farmer is male and that the woman cannot be both the mother and the farmer. This language sets strict gender roles, casting women as mothers and men as laborers. The woman is also described as passing down the gender roles to her children, and it is her responsibility to raise children loyal to the Reich.

In 1936, however, motherhood was already portrayed in a different context than it was in 1934. In one 1936 issue, the magazine explicitly stated that children belonged to the state instead of to their families. The cover of the issue has a photo of a smiling young boy with a caption that states: “Germany’s

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<sup>17</sup> Erna Günter, “Wir Frauen im Kampf um Deutschlands Erneuerung,” *NS Frauen Warte* 2, no. 17 (25 February 1934), 507.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw2-17.htm>



youth belongs to the Führer!”<sup>18</sup> Although the emphasis was still on motherhood, the focus was removed from women and placed onto the state. In 1934, though women were helping the state by having children, there was still an emphasis on the family unit. By 1936, the family unit had expanded to the entire country so that, ideologically, women had even less power within the home. Women were encouraged to have children to help the Third Reich; it was their duty just as it was a man’s duty to fight for the Reich. Women did not need



Figure 1

to work, make money, or fight to fulfill their duty. They only had to be mothers and produce children for the regime.

This emphasis on motherhood continues on the cover of a 1938 issue of the *Frauen Warte*, which shows a woman holding a child while a male soldier protects her and another man plows the fields (Figure 1).<sup>19</sup> The woman is seated, showing her subordination to the men,

<sup>18</sup> “NS Frauen Warte”, *NS Frauen Warte* 5, no. 22 (1936), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw5-22.jpg>

<sup>19</sup> “NS Frauen Warte”, *NS Frauen Warte* 6, no. 20 (1938), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw6-20.jpg>

who are both standing and tower over her. The men both have hardened expressions and appear to be covered in dirt or tanned from working outside all day, while the woman and her child have noticeably whiter skin. The difference in skin color also depicts the woman and her child as pure. Purity was a vital concept for the Nazis as only people with “pure” (non-Jewish) blood could be Aryan and members of the *Volk*. The whiteness of the woman and her child not only works to show their “biological purity” but also to show their purity of thought, action, and belief. In a more practical sense, her white skin shows that the woman’s place is inside the house, while the man’s tanner skin shows his place is outside the house.

The male soldier standing directly behind the woman and the child is protecting her, which shows the man as both a warrior and the protector of the family. This positioning also gives the impression that the woman cannot protect herself or her child and needs the man to stand guard. The woman is holding her child, again emphasizing her role as a mother. The farmer is plowing the fields, the warrior is protecting the *Volk*, and the woman is raising the child. This contrast implies that motherhood is the only job for women, effectively excluding women from the public sphere. The lighting is also different on the woman and her child than it is on the two men, which shows her distance from them in terms of societal roles. The lighting on the woman and child is even, like indoor lighting, while the lighting on the men is dramatic, comparable to sunset. This difference again emphasizes the

woman's position in the house and the man's position outside of it. The cover thus portrays a traditional Nazi view of women—a view which would evolve once the war started.

Multiple other issues from 1938 and 1939 also depict women as mothers. One shows a woman with her husband and their child with a caption stating, "Happy families are the best foundation of our people."<sup>20</sup> Another issue shows a woman smiling while sitting down with her three children.<sup>21</sup> A third cover from this period shows women participating in athletics, and the issue includes articles on health education.<sup>22</sup> While women depicted as athletes might seem contrary to the traditional female gender roles, in a fascist system forms of physical activity were encouraged to "enhance their female grace" and ability to bear children.<sup>23</sup> All of these covers show the consistency of the Nazi Party's depiction of women before the war started. However, once the war started this consistency disappears.

The April cover in 1940 uses dramatically different imagery and messaging than that which was used in 1938 and 1939 (Figure 2).<sup>24</sup> Now, a woman is shown plowing the fields

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<sup>20</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* (August 1938), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw7-04.jpg>

<sup>21</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* (First Issue May 1939), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw7-23.jpg>

<sup>22</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* (June 1939), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw7-25.jpg>

<sup>23</sup> George Mosse, "The New Fascist Man" in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 161.

<sup>24</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* (1<sup>st</sup> April issue 1940), Cover.

<https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw8-19.jpg>



Figure 2

while there is a sketch of a man's profile who is off at war. The message here is clear: the woman is plowing the fields because the man is fighting for Germany. There is a gloomy feeling to the image, with the woman wearing a grey dress, and the man sketched only in grey. There is also a factory in the background producing grey smoke. The grey tones show this is a time of sacrifice, but both the man and the woman are doing their part to protect the *Volk*. Both the man and the woman face forward as if looking at the same thing, some object which is not included in the picture. Their gazes show that the man and the woman work for the same goal: the Third Reich. However, despite working in the fields the woman is still wearing a dress and an apron, which emphasizes her femininity. If the scenery and the plow were not included the woman could be fulfilling traditional gender roles based solely on her attire. Still, this is a dramatic change from the 1938 cover.

In the context of the changing conditions, however, the change in cover makes sense. In 1938 World War II had not

started yet, and the workforce could be supported by men. By contrast, in April of 1940, the war had been going on for just over six months and women were needed outside of the house. Labor shortages due to the war efforts opened up positions that needed to be filled by women. According to Peter Fritzsche, “at the end of the 1930s, labor shortages opened up opportunities for women as well; though earning less than men, women made up 37 percent of the workforce in 1939, a figure that included 6.2 million married women, up from some 4 million in 1933.”<sup>25</sup> This change did not happen overnight, but as the war continued, the Nazi regime had no choice but to include women in the public sphere. The vacillation in the depiction of women over the next year or two shows that, despite how ingrained traditional gender roles were to Nazi ideology, the party was willing to attempt to expand gender roles in order to win the war.

We begin to see this expansion in a May 1940 issue, where an article on Bride and Housewives’ schools noted that women could attend to learn how to be proper brides and how to run households correctly. These schools were established to teach women their roles and how to raise the next generation of Germans properly. However, for the first time, women working outside the house were also mentioned.<sup>26</sup> Although this article in the *Frauen Warte* was focused on being a bride and a housewife, there were several

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 58.

<sup>26</sup> Women working outside of the household may have been mentioned earlier, but this is the first time in the surviving issues available in the Calvin Archive.

mentions, in the same issue, of women working for the war effort. For example, one article about Mother's Day noted that "the mother training program also involves about 5 million working mothers. The mother courses are also taught in factories. The women can participate at the end of the workday, and do not need to travel long distances to another school. They are thankful for this and are eager to learn how to keep a job and household in balance, despite all the difficulties."<sup>27</sup> The working mothers were not looked down upon or ridiculed, but rather were accepted even though they were doing the work of both sexes.<sup>28</sup> This was a shift from women being depicted only as mothers to being more accepted in the public sphere. The article was published in May of 1940 as World War II was in full swing, when more women were needed to work on the home front. However, the main point of the article was still discussing the bride and housewives' schools. Clearly, the change in messaging was not abrupt but more of a gradual change driven by necessity. In fact, the cover of this issue still emphasizes the image of woman as mother.

The woman on the cover of the 1940 May issue is very different from the one on the cover of the 1940 April issue; rather than plowing a field, she is depicted as the ideal mother

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<sup>27</sup> Erna Linhardt-Köpker, "Am Müttertag 1940," *NS Frauen Warte* 8, no. 22 (2<sup>nd</sup> May issue, 1940). <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw8-22a.htm>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 3

enlightened and as representing the righteousness of the family's lifestyle. The sharp contrast of this image with the previous cover shows the vacillation between the ideal woman being a mother figure and the necessity of women helping with the war effort. This contrast is crucial because the Nazis were setting up a wartime society from the beginning, but their traditional depiction of women worked against that goal in its attempts to relegate women to a private sphere.

<sup>29</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* 8, no. 22 (2<sup>nd</sup> May issue, 1940), Cover, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw8-22.jpg>

An example of this continued grappling with contradicting gender roles can be seen in the cover of a June 1941 issue, which shows a BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädel or the League of German Girls) leader from Gau Salzburg.



Figure 4

This picture is thus a dramatic shift from the previous cover which depicted a woman with three children. However, it was also a dramatic shift from the cover with the woman plowing the fields from April of 1940. The woman in the picture holds a position of power and is in no way depicted as being subservient to a

Numerous articles on the inside talk about the role of women in the war effort (Figure 4).<sup>30</sup> The BDM was the female youth organization, like the Hitler youth for the boys. This BDM leader is the first woman seen on the cover who holds a position of power. While she is only in charge of other women, she is still breaking the traditional female role of women solely as mothers.

<sup>30</sup> "The Frauen Warte: 1935-1945," German Propaganda Archive, Calvin University, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw.htm>



man. She still looks traditionally feminine, but her femininity is not overly emphasized. The BDM leader from Gau Salzburg has a hardened expression, which is somewhat intimidating, but her pose and other features almost depict a fragility. She is wearing white to symbolize her purity, but her skin is noticeably darker (similar to the woman plowing the fields), showing that she does not strictly stay in the house. Her portrait is also set outside with nature as the backdrop, with lots of green trees and bushes. Nature is an interesting component because it can fit either the male or female gender stereotype depending on how it is portrayed. On the one hand, there is Mother Earth and the image of women protecting baby animals, depicting women as the caretakers of the planet and nature as the planet's most basic form. However, on the other hand, the wilderness is very much the man's domain, as it is rugged and tough. In the depiction on this magazine cover, the woman is not portrayed as a motherly figure to nature, but she is also separated from it by railing or wall. She is given power and authority while simultaneously being separated from the male realm: the woods. This separation tactic is evident of a larger trend in how the Nazis attempted to keep gender roles separate while still allowing women to help with the war effort out of necessity.

Another way that women were encouraged to step into the public sphere, even while allowing the Nazis to rationalize that gender roles were not changing, was through nursing. Nurses worked on the front lines but did not fight.

They saw the action, but their role was in healing wounds, not causing them. In this way, women were helping with the war effort but were technically staying within their assigned gender role of caregivers. This mental expansion of gender roles is what opened up more opportunities for women, because the survival of the Reich was more important than the strict gender roles that had previously been proscribed.

In looking at how the magazine depicted and described nurses, the expansion of gender roles becomes even more clear. A cover of the *Frauen Warte* in 1942 shows a nurse standing in front of two soldiers.<sup>31</sup> An article inside the issue talks about women serving on the front lines as nurses and establishes them as protectors of the Reich. Although they are not fighting, they are still very much involved in the war effort and are not relegated to taking care of the children at home. These nurses saw the war firsthand, and this aspect of women's roles was highlighted by the Nazi regime. The *Frauen Warte* could have ignored these women and solely focused on the image of women as mothers. However, this change in depiction, which happened gradually, shows how the Nazi view and role of women had to adapt to the war.<sup>32</sup>

The nurse on the cover of this 1942 issue shows a determined woman (Figure 5).<sup>33</sup> Even in comparison to the

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<sup>31</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* 10, no. 13 (Spring, 1942), Cover, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw10-13.jpg>

<sup>32</sup> Dora Stößel, "Kamerad Schwester," *NS Frauen Warte* 10, no. 13 (Spring, 1942), p. 194. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw10-13.htm>

<sup>33</sup> "NS Frauen Warte", *NS Frauen Warte* 10, no. 13 (Spring, 1942), Cover, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw10-13.jpg>

last woman on the cover of a *Frauen Warte* magazine, this nurse has her femininity further downplayed. Her shoulders are broad and her eyes are piercing. While on the last cover, the woman had a serious expression, her mood was softened



Figure 5

by more delicate features and posture. However, this nurse has none of that delicacy and is portrayed as someone who has been hardened by the war. She is depicted in color, while the two soldiers behind her are in black and white. This choice puts the emphasis on the woman instead of on the men. However, the difference in coloring creates a visual effect that separates her from the men, just as the railing separated the BDM leader from the forest in the last cover. All three of them are looking directly at the reader with determined expressions, which shows their dedication to the *Volk*. The nurse is still wearing white, just like the last woman, but it is part of a uniform, which lessens the color's message.

The white still shows purity, but wearing a uniform is associated with the public sphere, so this expands traditional gender roles instead of solely emphasizing her femininity.

One 1943 cover shows a woman hard at work (Figure 6).<sup>34</sup> Presumably in a factory or maybe in her own home, the only thing visible is the woman and the machinery. The caption on the cover reads, “German women always know that it is a matter of the existence or nonexistence of their people. Total war is the demand of the hour. Everybody help!”<sup>35</sup>



Figure 6

Although there had been images and articles showing women working for the war effort, this is the first call to action in the *Frauen Warte*. Here, the woman is not portrayed as a mother and looks much older than the other women who have previously been

<sup>34</sup> “NS Frauen Warte”, *NS Frauen Warte NS Frauen Warte* 11, no. 14 (April 1943), Cover, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/fw/fw11-14.jpg>

<sup>35</sup> “The Frauen Warte: 1935-1945,” German Propaganda Archive, Calvin University, <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw.htm>

on the cover. She is working tirelessly, but the image is dark, with the only light coming from the equipment. This lighting symbolizes that the only hope and light is from her working for the *Volk*. She is still indoors, but the setting is deemphasized by the lighting, with the viewer's eye drawn to the machinery and the woman's face. There are also no children in sight or any hint of motherhood in this picture at all. As the caption says, she is working for the war effort because everyone should be in order to save the *Volk*. This cover is also the first photograph of a woman present in the archives. The change in medium also leads to a change in interpretations. In the past, the covers were illustrated or painted, where the artist and the party have complete freedom over symbolism; but a photograph is different. The photograph gives a sense of reality that the other depictions were lacking by showing a real woman who is really working to help Germany win the war and encouraging other women to do the same. The woman is wearing dark colors instead of white, and her dedication to the *Volk* is what is emphasized, not her femininity or motherliness. Combined with the caption, the cover is encouraging women to join the workforce in order to help Germany win the war.

The same 1943 issue of the *Frauen Warte* which highlights the Führer's birthday is when Hitler was quoted saying, "Men may build worlds—but a people stands or falls with its women." That same article goes on to explain:

German women can give no greater or more beautiful gift to the Führer for his birthday than to recognize the high responsibility these words

demand, and with clear understanding, with the faith and love that are their very nature, to accept the sacrifices and demands that this decisive struggle requires, and do what their personal abilities and possibilities allow! There could be no more beautiful picture on that day than to have the broad river of bravery, heroism, and unshakable courage that ties the Führer to the men who are fighting for their people joined and enlarged by the broad river of love and faith of every woman of the people!<sup>36</sup>

Although the language is not explicit, Hitler encourages women to help with the war effort. However, women were still described as carrying the faith and love for their country. Hitler carefully walked the middle road, not explicitly breaking down gender roles while also allowing women to enter the workforce to help with the war effort. He talked about the male and female essences being different but worked around the logic that being loving and caring relegates women to only being mothers and caregivers. His word choice was important because he never explicitly stated that women should go to work. However, his words still encouraged women to work, especially in the context of the other parts of the article and the cover. The women's strength is what will carry the nation forward; even if it was still a soft strength, they were called to act outside the homes. By describing women with soft strength, gender roles were expanded without being fundamentally changed, allowing women to join the workforce and participate more in the

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<sup>36</sup> Kurt Maßmann, "Kraft aus Liebe und Glauben," *NS Frauen Warte* 11, no. 14 (April, 1943), p. 185. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/fw11-14.htm>

public sphere without disproving the idea that men and women had different essences.

### **Fascism's Achilles Heel**

This analysis of the *Frauen Warte* shows the shift in Nazi messaging, though not necessarily a shift in female action. In addition to strong messaging promoting the image of women as mothers at the beginning of the regime, the Nazis also attacked all kinds of feminism. Due to the success of early Nazi propaganda and the dismantling of female education and employment, many women did not conform to state messaging and instead made decisions based on personal interest.<sup>37</sup> Essentially, Nazi gender roles set themselves up for failure; just because the messaging shifted did not mean it successfully changed the actions of the women in the Third Reich. Women did not blindly follow Nazi propaganda, so the change in messaging only shows a change in thinking and desires of the party, and not necessarily a change in women's actions.

Despite their initial messaging regarding gender roles, the Nazi depiction of women undoubtedly changed when Germany entered the war. The Nazis adjusted their strict view that the primary job of a woman was to have many children in order to give the Third Reich the best chance of

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<sup>37</sup> Michelle Mouton, "From Adventure and Advancement to Derailment and Demotion: Effects of Nazi Gender Policy on Women's Careers and Lives," *Oxford Journals* 43, no. 4 (2010): 945.

winning the war. If the role of women had been central to the Nazi ideology, one would think that it would not budge no matter how bad things got—but that was not the case. Clearly, then, economic necessity was important enough to drive the party to change its messaging regarding gender roles. The Nazi regime needed women to join the workforce while men were off fighting in World War II and thus expanded their traditional gender roles to allow women to join the workforce while still maintaining the tradition of gender essentialism by insisting that women and men had different essences.

The phenomenon of women joining the workforce to help with the war effort is by no means unique to fascism. However, the phenomenon is unique to fascism when combined with the primary fascist goal of war. Other patriarchal regime types model their societies on peacetime because that is their goal. Fascist societies that follow these same patriarchal models of gender roles, however, have an end goal of war. Thus, the ideology encounters a major contradiction that is not present in other regime types. For other regimes, war is a tough time that must be persevered to return back to normal; when women enter the workforce, it is a temporary change that is expected to shift back once the men return from war. Rigid gender roles do not conflict with the goals of the regime in the same way that they do in fascism. However, for the Nazis, war was the culmination and continuation of much of their ideology, but the gendered role of women did not match this element; once they expanded



their messaging regarding gender roles, there was no clear path back to the tradition from which they started.

Thus, the role of women in Nazi Germany shows that fascism is a logically flawed ideology. While the drawbacks of fascism might seem obvious on the surface, much of the ideology is actually tightly knit together, even if one does not agree with the arguments. I believe that the fascist view of women is truly an Achilles heel that could be exploited if other fascist regimes come to power. Total war is the goal of fascist regimes, but if their women do not join the workforce, it is hard to support that end goal. This fundamental weakness shows how the gender roles of fascism come from a strongly patriarchal society and from an emotional instead of utilitarian perspective, since the role of women conflicts with the regime's other goals. From a utilitarian perspective, if a regime's goal is war, then gender equality and female participation in the workforce and the army makes sense because more bodies can help with the war effort. The regime could still have incentives for women to have children to increase population size to create more soldiers, but gender equality would better prepare women for war to support the economy than distinct and strict gender roles.

However, fascism is not a utilitarian regime type. Fascism plays on people's visceral feelings and insecurities instead of coming from a place of logic, which explains why a strong patriarchal system would emotionally cling to gender essentialism and would want to keep women out of the public sphere even when these gender roles create a fundamental

contradiction with the fascist goal of war. In the case of Nazi Germany, the changing depiction of women in propaganda shows that economic necessity drove the Nazi party to adjust their messaging to better serve the war effort. In the end, while Nazi ideology regarding women started from a place of emotion, instead of utility, their ultimate goal of war took precedence, which is why they were willing to mentally expand the role of women when they needed to during the war. These expanding gender roles and the contradiction between the role of women and the goal of war illustrate a fundamental flaw in fascism.

## The Authors

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**Zara Raezer** is a junior at Rhodes College, majoring in English and History from Fayetteville, AR. Her love for history originated with her Dad, who was a history buff. NPR was always on the radio growing up, and the History Channel on in the background. His love for American History spurred Zara into her own studies. Today, Zara is interested in writing and hopes to chronicle stories that were previously overlooked or misconstrued.



**Julian Porcelli** is a junior at Rhodes College. He is majoring in History with a Spanish Language Minor. Julian is interested in various historical subjects but is most passionate about Middle Eastern and Latin American history. His particular style of historical analysis is influenced by his great love for political science and international relations as exemplified by his focus on historical conflicts, policy, and macroeconomics. Julian

views history as a living and breathing “cheat sheet” for life - meaning that one can make decisions easier when understanding the historical precedents and context.



**Charlie Mackey** is a senior from Atlanta, Georgia. He is majoring in History with an English and Political Science double minor, and he is also a captain on the football team. Charlie has been interested in history since he was a child; he particularly enjoys American cultural history and understanding

global changes over time. History has always particularly resonated with him because he loves seeing and studying patterns through time. Charlie thinks history is incredibly important for understanding the world we live in today, and he hopes to continue learning and appreciating transformations in the world throughout his life.



**Lauren King** has been interested in history and stories since she was young, but taking American Studies her junior year of high school helped to solidify that interest. To this day, it is the hardest class she has ever taken, but it helped her to understand and think about the world in new ways. History classes were always some of her

favorites in middle school and high school, but once she got to college and classes became more specific, she loved being able to explore topics that interested her in depth. Lauren could always find something that she was passionate about researching in connection with her classes, which is what led her to write *One Giant Contradiction*.