

MAAT (Montevideo).

Propaganda Machinery: National Socialism.

Agustin V. Startari.

Cita:

Agustin V. Startari (2026). *Propaganda Machinery: National Socialism*.
Montevideo: MAAT.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/agustin.v.startari/238>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/p0c2/kf1>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

Acta Académica es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. Acta Académica fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.

PROPAGANDA MACHINERY NATIONAL SOCIALISM AGUSTÍN V.

Die öffentliche Meinung
A Struggle for the Soul of the People



PROPAG
MACHIN
NATIONAL SO

Between 1920 and 1933, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) made propaganda a central component of its political and electoral organization. This book examines that process in the context of the crisis of the Weimar Republic and analyzes how message simplification, repetition, public staging, construction of the adversary, and personalization of leadership expanded the movement's capacity for mobilization.

Drawing on speeches by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, the party press, visual material, and historiographical sources, *Propaganda Machinery* examines the rhetorical and organizational devices that structured National Socialist communication. The analysis pays particular attention to the relationship among language, political emotions, symbols, media of dissemination, and audience segmentation.

The approach combines political history, linguistics, rhetoric, and discourse analysis. Propaganda is not presented as a single cause of the Nazi rise to power, but as an instrument whose effectiveness depended on economic, institutional, and social conditions, party organization, and, increasingly, political violence.

The study distinguishes party propaganda before 1933 from the state system of propaganda, censorship, and cultural coordination developed after the seizure of power. This distinction makes it possible to examine more precisely which resources were used in electoral competition and which belonged to the subsequent institutionalization of dictatorship.

Agustin V. Startari is a researcher, linguist, and author specializing in the intersection of **language, artificial intelligence, power, legitimacy, and historical sciences**.

His work examines how linguistic, discursive, and technological structures organize perceptions of authority, distribute responsibility, and shape the ways institutions, artificial intelligence systems, and structures of power represent political, historical, and social events.

Among his best-known books are *Creation of an Empire: The Ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom*, which analyzes the symbolic and political consolidation of pharaonic power, and *Propaganda Machinery: National Socialism*, a critical study of the discursive techniques used by the Nazi regime to shape public opinion and construct ideological legitimacy. Other publications, such as *Evangelization in the Pen of Fray Bartolomé and Ukraine and Russia: A Conflict in Progress*, extend his analysis to different forms of domination, religion, and contemporary geopolitics.

His books form part of the **Work Papers** series, an editorial project that combines documentary analysis, an interdisciplinary approach, and expository clarity for readers seeking to understand the historical and discursive mechanisms of power.

AGUSTIN V. STARTARI

PROPAGANDA MACHINERY

NATIONAL SOCIALISM

AGUSTIN V. STARTARI

AGUSTIN V. STARTARI

WORK PAPERS

NO. 7

Original title: Maquinaria de Propaganda: El nacionalsocialismo

Author: Agustin V. Startari

Cover Design: Visual Art Design

Cover Illustration: Visual Art Design

© Agustin V. Startari, Montevideo, 2010

ISBN (first edition): 978-9974-8228-7-0

ISBN (second edition): 979-8-3150-6670-5

RESEARCHER ID: NGR-2476-2025

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15449748

First edition: December 20, 2010

Second edition: May 2025

Revised edition: August 2026

Publisher: MAAT

Series: Work Papers

Volume: 7

This work has been published under the MAAT imprint for distribution and public availability through the publisher's online platform.

No part of this work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, by any means or procedure, including reprographic or digital processing, or distributed by rental or public lending, without the written authorization of the copyright holders and subject to the penalties established by law.

GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER I. WEIMAR: POSTWAR CRISIS AND POLITICAL RADICALIZATION	13
1.1. The Weimar Republic, the Treaty of Versailles, and the Crisis of Legitimacy	13
1.2. The Hyperinflation of 1923 and Social Dislocation.....	15
1.3. The Great Depression, Unemployment, and Electoral Radicalization	17
CHAPTER II. THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM	19
2.1. Ideology, Weltanschauung, and Doctrinal Opportunism	19
2.2. Hitler and the National Socialist Party	25
2.3. The Munich Putsch, Imprisonment, and Reorganization.....	38
CHAPTER III. CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC	45
3.1. Party Society, Modernization, and Economic Crisis	45
3.2. Culture, Modernity, and Reaction	49
CHAPTER IV. NAZI PROPAGANDA: CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, AND TECHNIQUES.....	51
4.1. The Concept of Propaganda and the Analytical Framework	51
4.1.1. Persuasion, Emotion, and Mobilization	57
4.2. Principles of National Socialist Propaganda.....	68
4.3. Propaganda Techniques and Uses.....	77
4.4. Visual Standardization, Public Presence, and Coercion	90
CHAPTER V. JOSEPH GOEBBELS AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PROPAGANDA.....	94
5.1. Joseph Goebbels: Career and Formation.....	94
5.2. The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda	96
5.3. Wartime Projection: The Propaganda Companies	107
CONCLUSIONS.....	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES	115

Secondary Bibliography.....	115
Primary and Documentary Sources	119

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes National Socialist propaganda from the formation and expansion of the NSDAP to Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933. The central problem is not to attribute the Nazi rise to a single cause, but to establish the role propaganda played within a broader combination of economic crisis, institutional delegitimation, political polarization, party organization, street violence, and negotiation among conservative elites. References to the period after 1933 are used as comparative extensions to show the institutionalization of mechanisms already present during the struggle for power.

The corpus brings together speeches, party press, memoirs, and diaries, alongside historical scholarship and studies of persuasion and political communication. The analysis combines semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric, semiotics, and discourse analysis with a reconstruction of the historical context. Particular attention is paid to the lexicon of crisis and salvation, the construction of the enemy, causal simplification, repetition, the use of slogans, visual staging, the organization of rallies, and the adaptation of messages to differentiated audiences. Anachronistic categories such as neuro-linguistic programming are excluded: there are no historical or methodological grounds for attributing to the NSDAP the use of a discipline formulated decades later.

Propaganda is understood here as a practice of political intervention, not as a technique capable of producing automatic obedience. Its effectiveness was uneven and depended on predispositions, prior identities, networks of sociability, access to media, electoral circumstances, and competition with other parties. For the same reason, expressions such as “the masses” or “the German people” are used only when they correspond to the vocabulary of the sources; the analysis distinguishes among social groups, regions, confessions, generations, and electorates. Before 1933, persuasion, mobilization, and party violence coexisted; after

1933, propaganda became integrated into a state system of censorship, cultural coordination, and coercion.

Four questions organize the research: what propaganda resources National Socialism employed; how those resources were articulated with party organization and the available media; what role Hitler, Goebbels, and other cadres played in their design and execution; and to what extent reception varied across social sectors and political circumstances. The chapters that follow first reconstruct the Weimar context and the formation of the movement, then its cultural framework, and finally the concepts, principles, techniques, and institutions of Nazi propaganda.

CHAPTER I. WEIMAR: POSTWAR CRISIS AND POLITICAL RADICALIZATION

1.1. The Weimar Republic, the Treaty of Versailles, and the Crisis of Legitimacy

Following Germany's defeat in the First World War, Wilhelm II abdicated and the Empire gave way to a parliamentary republic whose National Assembly met in Weimar¹. In 1919, the new government signed the Treaty of Versailles, which imposed territorial losses, military restrictions, and a reparations regime². The treaty had important economic consequences, although the subsequent development of the German economy cannot be reduced to reparations alone: domestic debt, inflation, social conflict, and dependence on foreign credit also conditioned the republic's stability³. The postwar period was marked by political violence, insurrectionary attempts, and an intense dispute over the legitimacy of the new order. In that context, nationalist sectors disseminated the “stab-in-the-back” legend, which attributed defeat to internal enemies, particularly Marxists and Jews⁴. The elections of January 1919 led to the Assembly charged with drafting the Constitution. The text recognized broad political and social rights, but from the outset its operation was subject to economic pressures, party conflicts, and forces that rejected the republican system. Weimar's instability cannot be explained by an alleged national character incapable of exercising freedom, but by the interaction among institutions, political coalitions, violence, and a crisis of legitimacy⁵. The founding coalition brought together significant democratic forces, but it had to compete

¹ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy Since 1914* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 93.

² Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (New York: Random House, 2001), 324-328.

³ James Joll, *Europe Since 1870: An International History* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 208.

⁴ E. Weber, *Historia universal siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1958), 56.

⁵ Ernst Johann and Jörg Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana de los últimos cien años* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1970), 133-134.

with revolutionary and counterrevolutionary projects that challenged the new regime from opposing positions.

The Weimar Constitution established universal suffrage, proportional representation, and a Reichstag elected by popular vote. The president of the Republic was directly elected, appointed and dismissed the chancellor, could dissolve the Reichstag, and possessed emergency powers under Article 48. The chancellor and cabinet had to maintain political support in parliament, while the federal structure preserved the powers of the states. This design combined parliamentary and presidential elements and, under conditions of crisis, created considerable scope for government by decree.⁶ Proportional representation encouraged a multiparty system and coalition governments. Fragmentation, however, did not by itself cause the republic's collapse: the problem lay in its combination with anti-system parties, economic crises, polarization, political violence, and the growing use of exceptional presidential mechanisms. In this context, the contemporary testimony of Raúl Maestri is pertinent:

The Republic never won the allegiance, even with reservations, of two sectors: the proletariat disillusioned with socialism, which organized under the new banner of communism, and all those groups animated by a specific patriotic sentiment that could not be reconciled with the new forms of the State. In the years immediately following the war, both fronts represented a more or less similar capacity for mobilization. But the position of the latter was favorable: while the State declared unrelenting war on communism, it treated the nationalists like troublesome relatives⁷.

The postwar crisis was a condition of possibility, not a sufficient explanation for the Nazi rise. Military defeat, conflict over Versailles, political violence, and economic uncertainty widened the space available to anti-system forces⁸. The NSDAP, however, remained marginal for much of the 1920s. Its growth also depended

⁶ Robert-Hermann Tenbrock, *Historia de Alemania* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1968), 270.

⁷ Raúl Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán* (Barcelona: Biblioteca Nueva, 1932), 30-31.

⁸ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 5.

on party reorganization, the crisis that began in 1929, and its ability to present different messages to different audiences within a common narrative of rupture with Weimar.

They were nationalists, patriots, Germanizers (antisemites), and idealists. They retained a certain resentment toward the monarchy, which had known neither how to win the war nor how to lose the defeat with dignity, yet at the same time they longed for the Empire and for the comfort of feeling its absolute command. (...) Then a subtle word acquired everyday currency and a meaning at once mystical and concrete: Volksgemeinschaft, a popular and ethnic community. They denied the reality of social classes, which they regarded as a diabolical invention of the Jews, and proposed in their place a Germany equally maternal toward all its children. (...) It fell precisely to Adolf Hitler to unify and direct this current that lacked a channel. He was the most sensitive and active temperament among all those found within it⁹.

1.2. The Hyperinflation of 1923 and Social Disorganization

Another decisive episode in the first phase of Weimar was the hyperinflation of 1923, aggravated by the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in the context of the reparations dispute¹⁰. France and Belgium justified the occupation on the grounds of German defaults on deliveries required under the reparations regime¹¹. The German government responded with a policy of passive resistance and financially supported affected workers and firms, resorting to monetary issuance that accelerated the depreciation of the mark¹².

⁹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 33-35.

¹⁰ Timothy W. Mason, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43.

¹¹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 126.

¹² Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 2001), 27.

The mark had already been depreciating, but during 1923 the loss of value reached an extreme pace and culminated in November of that year¹³. Monetary disorganization disrupted wages, contracts, savings, and prices and redistributed losses and gains unevenly¹⁴. The episode eroded confidence in institutions and was exploited by radical movements, including the NSDAP, which presented itself as a rupture with the Weimar order¹⁵. The effects were especially severe for sectors with fixed nominal incomes or savings; other actors, including debtors and speculators, could benefit from depreciation. These social differences are more useful analytically than the racial classifications employed by the propaganda of the period.

With regard to the devaluation afflicting Germany in 1924, Konrad Heiden recounts a story in a chapter entitled “The Death of Money”:

A man who believed he had a small fortune in the bank might receive the following letter from the directors: “The bank deeply regrets that it can no longer administer your deposit of sixty-eight thousand marks, since the costs are out of proportion to the capital. We have therefore taken the liberty of returning it to you. As we have no banknotes of so little value at our disposal, we have rounded the sum up to one million marks. A 1,000,000-mark note is enclosed.” The envelope was adorned with a five-million-mark stamp and its postmark.¹⁶

The occupation of the Ruhr and the financing of passive resistance deepened the fiscal and monetary crisis, but hyperinflation was not permanent. In November 1923 the government introduced the Rentenmark and brought uncontrolled monetary issuance to an

¹³ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 35.

¹⁴ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 187.

¹⁵ Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39.

¹⁶ Konrad Heiden, cited in Michael Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich* (Madrid: Santillana, 2003), 86.

end; during 1924, the Dawes Plan temporarily reorganized reparations and facilitated access to American credit. Stabilization opened several years of relative recovery. It did not, however, erase the political memory of inflation or distrust of institutions, factors that would again be activated by anti-system propaganda when the Great Depression shattered that stability.

1.3. The Great Depression, Unemployment, and Electoral Radicalization

The Great Depression that began in 1929 produced a severe contraction of the German economy and a massive increase in unemployment. Dependence on American credit amplified the impact of the crisis on firms, banks, and public administrations¹⁷. Between 1928 and 1932, the NSDAP went from being a marginal electoral force to a mass party. This growth coincided with the crisis of the traditional right, the weakening of parliamentary coalitions, and a general radicalization of political competition¹⁸. Hitler exploited this context to consolidate his authority within the party and to absorb or subordinate nationalist and völkisch sectors that shared part of his ideological repertoire¹⁹. Political competition in these years was also fought in the streets. The principal forces maintained uniformed paramilitary formations: the NSDAP's SA, the communist Rotfrontkämpferbund, the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold associated with the SPD, and the nationalist right's Stahlhelm. The deployment of uniforms, parades, and the occupation of public space was not unique to National Socialism. The National Socialist rise therefore resulted from an interaction among economic crisis, party organization, electoral mobilization, political violence, and the loss of legitimacy of existing alternatives; it was not the product of a single factor or of homogeneous adherence by German society.

¹⁷ Pasquale Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2011), 39-41.

¹⁸ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 123-124.

¹⁹ George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 96.

The racialists were unable to draw the practical conclusions from the correct theoretical judgments on the Jewish Question. Thus the German racist movement followed a course similar to that of the 1880s and 1890s. As in that earlier period, its leadership gradually fell into the hands of highly honorable but fantastically naïve men—educated men, university professors, district councillors, teachers, and lawyers. In short, an idealistic and refined bourgeois class. It lacked the warm breath of the nation's youthful vigor²⁰.

The crisis after 1929 made unemployment, material insecurity, and loss of status central issues in political competition²¹. The NSDAP articulated these tensions through a rhetoric of Volksgemeinschaft that promised to overcome class conflict without adopting an egalitarian program. The racialized national community was presented as an alternative to both Marxism and liberalism and made it possible to combine social demands with radical nationalism²². This offer did not produce a uniform response. The Nazi electoral base was heterogeneous and varied by region, confession, occupation, and circumstance; significant sectors of the organized working class remained affiliated with the SPD, the KPD, or, in Catholic areas, the Zentrum. Party symbols, rituals, and organizations strengthened the identity of adherents, but they did not replace the economic and political conditions that made mobilization possible.

(...) class is an unjustifiable social reality and must be replaced by the State. This leads to the corporate organization of society which, in turn, must culminate in a professional Parliament coexisting with another of a political nature. Workers' unions must be integrated into this new system and consequently lose their present class character and renounce their weapon of struggle: the strike.²³

²⁰ Hitler, cited in Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 107.

²¹ VILLANI, P. (2007). Ob. Cit., (13), 103-119.

²² Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX, 1914-1991* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1995).

²³ Hitler, cited in Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 55.

CHAPTER II. THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

2.1. Ideology, Weltanschauung, and Doctrinal Opportunism

Discussion of the doctrinal nature of National Socialism requires a distinction between systematic philosophy and political ideology. Nazism did not constitute a coherent philosophy in the academic sense, but it did articulate a recognizable ideological core: racial nationalism, antisemitism, anti-Marxism, rejection of liberal democracy, the Führerprinzip, Volksgemeinschaft, and territorial expansion linked to Lebensraum. Its eclectic and anti-intellectual character therefore does not amount to an absence of doctrine. Works such as *Mein Kampf* and *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* offered a repertoire of categories, enemies, and political ends that oriented action, although without constituting a consistent theoretical system²⁴. Programmatic ambiguity made it possible to adapt priorities and vocabularies to different audiences and circumstances. The analytical problem is not to choose between “ideology” and “opportunism,” but to explain how a relatively stable doctrinal core coexisted with tactically flexible political practice. As early as the 1930s, Raúl Maestri observed this tension between idealist pretension and political utility:

National Socialism declares itself to be a reaction against democracy and liberalism and continually reiterates its idealist character²⁵.

He then quotes Hitler in order to call those claims into question:

The following statements, however, strip these pretensions of all meaning: “The fundamental insight is that the State does not represent an end, but a means.” “The State is a means to

²⁴ Richard J. Evans, *El Tercer Reich en el poder, 1933-1939* (Madrid: Crítica, 2006), 81.

²⁵ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 46.

an end: the preservation of the race.” “The State must be understood as an organization” (Hitler).²⁶

National Socialism did not constitute a coherent philosophical system, but it did bring together a recognizable ideological core: biological racism, antisemitism, ultranationalism, anti-Marxism, rejection of parliamentary liberalism, and the demand for a hierarchically ordered national community²⁷. The cult of leadership and the legitimation of force completed this repertoire²⁸. The postwar crisis and Hitler's political skill facilitated its expansion without, by themselves, explaining its doctrinal content²⁹. The notion of *Weltanschauung* made it possible to present this heterogeneous ensemble as a total worldview. Works such as *Mein Kampf* and *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* lack scientific rigor, but they were important as repertoires of concepts, images, and political justifications³⁰. The absence of a systematic theory, also noted by Neumann, therefore does not amount to an absence of ideology; it more accurately describes its instrumental flexibility and contradictions.

National Socialism has no political or social theory; it has no philosophy and it does not care about truth³¹.

Neumann thus shifts the discussion: the question is not whether National Socialism possessed a systematic philosophy, but how a rigid ideological core could coexist with opportunistic and adaptable political practice.

In a given situation it will accept any theory that is useful and will abandon it as soon as the situation changes³².

²⁶ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 46.

²⁷ Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Vintage, 1996), 91.

²⁸ Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 97-98.

²⁹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 184.

³⁰ Evans, *El Tercer Reich en el poder*, 81.

³¹ Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: pensamiento y acción en el nacionalsocialismo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1943), 482.

³² Neumann, *Behemoth*, 483.

He considers it essential to take into account the ambiguity of National Socialist claims, their contradictions, and the use of any means necessary to achieve their purpose.

National Socialism is both capitalist and anti-capitalist, authoritarian and anti-authoritarian. It will cooperate with any group in the army or bureaucracy that submits to National Socialist propaganda, but it will not hesitate to flatter anti-authoritarian movements when expedient.

Neumann summarizes this programmatic plasticity through a series of contradictions that reveal National Socialism's capacity to adapt its discourse to different audiences and circumstances:

National Socialism is both for and against agrarian reform, for and against property, for and against idealism³³.

National Socialism's relationship with Nietzsche was selective: the regime's propagandists and publicists appropriated motifs compatible with a language of force and hierarchy while omitting the philosopher's rejection of antisemitism and German nationalism. This appropriation does not warrant a linear genealogy from Nietzsche to National Socialism³⁴. Political antisemitism in Central Europe predated Nazism and drew on religious, nationalist, and racial traditions. Forms of legal discrimination found in different periods of the Habsburg monarchy demonstrate this historical depth, but they should not be presented teleologically as a direct prelude to Nazi policies³⁵. Hitler and other agitators exploited already available antisemitic repertoires, radicalized them, and integrated them into a totalizing explanation of political and social crisis³⁶.

³³ Neumann, *Behemoth*, 483.

³⁴ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Nationalism and Democracy", en *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 34-35.

³⁵ Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, 91.

³⁶ Peter Pulzer, "The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria", en *Antisemitism: The Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, vol. 1, ed. Richard S. Levy (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 137-138.

Writing in 1932, Raúl Maestri interpreted the National Socialist appeal to German patriotism in the following terms:

National Socialism speculates on the patriotic myth, yet it itself recognizes the problematic and highly distinctive character of German patriotism. By virtue of what we might call the “monadism” of the Germanic spirit and of the centripetal circumstances of German history that have sustained it, German patriotism is a purely spiritual experience devoid of any precise concrete content.³⁷

Hitler assigned an instrumental function to doctrinal formulation: it had to establish a sufficiently stable core to be reproduced uniformly by the movement. At the same time, the preface to *Mein Kampf* underscores his preference for the effectiveness of oratory over writing³⁸. This combination makes it possible to distinguish propagandistic consistency from philosophical coherence. Rather than attributing to him the literal aim of “elevating nationalism into a religion” without a verifiable reference, it is preferable to consider the following primary text:

I know full well that the spoken word wins men's wills more readily than the written word, and that the progress of every great movement in the world has generally been due more to great speakers than to great writers.

Nevertheless, it is indispensable that a doctrine be set forth once and for all in its essential features, so that it may subsequently be upheld and propagated uniformly and consistently. Proceeding from this consideration, the present book constitutes the cornerstone that I contribute to the common undertaking.

THE AUTHOR

Written in Landsberg Prison

³⁷ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 140.

³⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mi lucha* (Barcelona: Antalbe, 1984).

am Lech, October 16,³⁹ 1924

Alfred Rosenberg occupied an important place in the elaboration and dissemination of National Socialism's racial worldview, although his influence on day-to-day decision-making was less than that of other leaders⁴⁰. His position should not be measured solely by his personal proximity to Hitler: his formulations on race, history, and living space circulated within the movement and contributed to its ideological vocabulary⁴¹. At the same time, the regime's expansionist and genocidal policy cannot be derived from a single work or a single ideologue⁴². Hitler combined diverse sources, grievances, and doctrines and maintained a competitive power structure in which Goebbels, Himmler, Göring, and other actors exercised different areas of authority⁴³. Rosenberg is especially useful for observing how the regime transformed pseudohistory and racism into a narrative of struggle among peoples and races⁴⁴.

The National Socialist movement is the culminating fact of German postwar life. This fact is a present and indubitable reality. Its roots run deep: materially, they must be sought in the development capitalism has undergone in recent decades; spiritually, they border on the founding of the Prussian State, the polarizing datum of German history for the past two centuries. Finally, National Socialism is a child of its time, and the values that today fill the world atmosphere exert a particularly strong influence upon it⁴⁵.

Maestri's testimony is valuable precisely because of its contemporaneity: as early as 1932 he warned that National Socialism could not be reduced to a temporary economic reaction. His interpretation linked transformations in capitalism, Prussian state traditions, and postwar ideological currents. The National Socialist

³⁹ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 3.

⁴⁰ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 177.

⁴¹ Evans, *El Tercer Reich en el poder*, 81.

⁴² Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 253.

⁴³ Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, 91.

⁴⁴ Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis*, 217.

⁴⁵ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 133.

concept of Volk added to this diagnosis an imagined community defined in racial terms, presented as organic, prior to class divisions, and superior to parliamentary institutions. This operation transformed a cultural category into a principle of political exclusion.

September 14, 1930 represents, in German postwar history, the actualization and manifestation of the National Socialist movement, of everything this movement signifies as a genuinely historical phenomenon. Precisely because German National Socialism embodies a history-making force, its implications extend beyond the sphere of one nation's domestic interests. It would require a superficial distortion of the true terms of the political problem of our time to see in German National Socialism merely one opposition party among others in a given country. And this is so regardless of what the National Socialist party may presently represent or even of the course its destiny may take⁴⁶.

The author of the preceding passage refers to the growing importance of National Socialism in Germany and Europe during the interwar period, a development that many observers chose to underestimate by dismissing it as merely a response to the economic and political problems of the time. In this regard, the view of the British historian and journalist A. J. P. Taylor is relevant: he argues that the emergence of Nazism cannot be understood solely in terms of the economic crisis, but must be seen as the result of a combination of factors, including Germany's defeat in the First World War, the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, the political instability and weakness of the Weimar state, the ideological polarization of society, and the spread of nationalist and antisemitic ideas⁴⁷.

In the early days of National Socialist success, an opinion gained currency in Germany and abroad according to which National Socialism was a “fever curve,” caused and sustained

⁴⁶ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 7-8.

⁴⁷ A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History Since 1815* (London: Routledge, 2001).

by economic contingencies. By now it would be obstinate to persist in this view, and both then and now it is a simplification that serves only to disregard an uncomfortable reality⁴⁸.

Maestri's expression "uncomfortable reality" records the fact that National Socialist growth was visible before 1933 and that its authoritarian implications generated opposition and alarm. It was not, however, a phenomenon simply "misunderstood" by a passive Europe. Governments, parties, diplomats, and intellectuals interpreted the movement in divergent ways and on the basis of unequal information. For the purposes of this study, a more limited conclusion is relevant: the economic crisis favored the NSDAP, but its rise must also be explained through nationalism, antisemitism, anticommunism, party organization, political violence, and the deterioration of parliamentary coalitions⁴⁹.

2.2. Hitler and the National Socialist Party

This study does not seek to undertake an extensive investigation of the already much-studied figure of Adolf Hitler; it will provide only a very brief overview of his life, work, and rise to power. The aim is to offer a general outline of his mentality. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable to detail, however briefly, certain implications of the party's formation and political life. The role of the Führer was of fundamental importance to the Nazi movement. Nazism would not have acquired the strength it did without Hitler, and some knowledge of his character and formative years is therefore necessary to understand the movement he led. For a time, his ancestry and early life were obscured by the tendentious autobiographical information in *Mein Kampf* and by the heroic image fashioned by his Nazi biographers. Adolf Hitler is one of the few historical figures whose name has become, so to speak, truly commonplace. Born on April 20, 1889, into an obscure lower-

⁴⁸ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 12-13.

⁴⁹ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*.

middle-class family, he died fifty-six years later by his own hand in the devastated capital of the Reich he had created. At the age of eighteen he received part of his paternal inheritance, which he squandered before moving to Vienna and unsuccessfully attempting to enter the Academy of Fine Arts. It was in Vienna that his personality and ideas took shape. Hitler volunteered in 1914, served in the List Regiment, and apparently was an exemplary soldier. He acted as a dispatch runner between the front and regimental headquarters, moving along lines of communication that were frequent targets of enemy fire. He was awarded the coveted Iron Cross, although the circumstances of the action for which he received it are not known here. He was wounded in 1916 and promoted to corporal the following year. In 1918 he was subjected to a gas attack and temporarily blinded. Hitler was later assigned to teach courses at Lechfeld, near Munich. According to Hitler himself, it was there that he discovered his aptitude for demagoguery.

I began with the greatest enthusiasm and love. For suddenly I was offered an opportunity to speak before a large audience, and what I had always assumed purely by intuition, without knowing it for certain, was then confirmed: I was able to “speak” ... And I could pride myself on a certain success: in the course of my lectures I led many hundreds of comrades—indeed, thousands—back to their people and their fatherland. I “nationalized” the troops⁵⁰.

Even those attending this anti-Bolshevik instructional course were struck by Hitler:

Herr Hitler in particular is, one might say, a born popular orator who, thanks to his fanaticism and the populist style of his speeches, inevitably compels his audience to attend to what he says and to share his views.⁵¹

The figure of Hitler and his ideology remain subjects of scholarly study and debate. According to Ian Kershaw, antisemitism

⁵⁰ Hitler, cited in Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 142.

⁵¹ Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 125.

was a basic feature of Hitler's demagogic arsenal from the beginning of his political career. Kershaw notes that during his brief period of anti-Bolshevik instruction at Lechfeld in August 1919, Hitler was already speaking to fellow soldiers about the "Jewish question" and later became, for his superior Mayr, the group's specialist on the subject⁵². In addition to his antisemitic position, Germany's defeat in the First World War was a severe blow to Hitler, and his decision to enter political life may in part have been connected to this frustration⁵³. As Joachim Fest observes, "the experience of the First World War was decisive in shaping Hitler's character and mentality." The humiliation of defeat, combined with the economic crisis through which the country was passing, created conditions favorable to the emergence of a strong leader promising radical solutions to national problems. In September 1919, Hitler was instructed to investigate a small group calling itself the German Workers' Party, from which the Nazi movement would later emerge. As a result of his intervention at the meeting he had been ordered to attend, Hitler was invited to join the committee and quickly became its most prominent member⁵⁴. In 1920 he was discharged from the army and became a professional political activist. In July 1921, after a conflict between Hitler and other members of the committee, he was granted dictatorial powers within the Party, thereby establishing the leadership principle that became a basic rule of the Nazi Party and later of the Third Reich.

In 1919 Hitler joined in Munich one of the many rebellious right-wing nuclei (...) He was the seventh member of this group⁵⁵.

In contrast to this claim, Ian Kershaw states that after returning to Munich from his training at Lechfeld, Hitler was assigned to monitor a local political party known as the German

⁵² Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 97.

⁵³ Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 75.

⁵⁴ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 44.

⁵⁵ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 35.

Workers' Party (DAP, from its German initials)⁵⁶. According to Kershaw, Hitler joined the party as its fifth member rather than the seventh, as he later claimed, and was assigned membership number 555 in order to give his position within the party greater apparent weight. In addition, Anton Drexler, the party's first leader, wrote to Hitler in January 1940 confirming that he had been recruited to monitor the party and that his role in the formation of the DAP had been relatively minor⁵⁷. This information provides important context for the early years of Hitler's political career, particularly his role in the formation of the German Workers' Party, which later became the Nazi Party. According to this source, Hitler did not occupy a leadership role from the outset; he joined as an ordinary member and his influence gradually increased as he consolidated his position within the organization. It is important to emphasize that Hitler's entry into the German Workers' Party and his subsequent consolidation as leader of the Nazi Party were not merely accidental developments. As Kershaw indicates, Hitler was assigned this task after his brief period of anti-Bolshevik instruction at Lechfeld in August 1919⁵⁸. In this sense, his entry into the party and involvement in politics can be understood as resulting initially from an assignment by those under whom he was serving. Likewise, the fact that Hitler was assigned a membership number higher than his actual place in the sequence, as Anton Drexler's letter indicates, suggests an early effort to create an image of greater organizational weight around his figure. As historian Alan Bullock emphasizes, this preoccupation with power and authority would later be reflected in the leadership principle Hitler established within the Nazi Party, under which his authority and decisions were not subject to challenge⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ "Interview with Ian Kershaw", BBC News, June 21, 2005, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-15985320>.

⁵⁷ Anton Drexler, "Brief des Gründers an den Führer", Bundesarchiv, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/adr/adrhl/kap1_1/para2_34.html.

⁵⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 63.

⁵⁹ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 44.

It should be emphasized that this leadership principle was not established overnight, but emerged from a process through which Hitler consolidated power within the party. As historian Richard J. Evans notes, it was in 1921 that Hitler received dictatorial powers in the Nazi Party. This marked a turning point in the consolidation of his leadership and laid foundations for the later creation of an authoritarian regime in Germany.

No one knows better than you yourself, my Führer, that you were never the seventh member of the party, but at most the seventh member of the committee, which I asked you to join as head of recruitment. And a few years ago I had to complain to a Party office that your first valid DAP membership card, bearing Schüssler's signature and mine, had been falsified: the number 555 had been erased and the number 7 inserted in its place⁶⁰.

Democratic institutions incurred Hitler's disapproval during his years in Vienna, and the view he formed of them once and for all dates from that period. His rejection of notions of racial equality also originated there. Hitler was appalled by what he perceived as the failure of the Germans of the Habsburg Empire to subordinate the Slavic population. He began to dream of a united Greater Reich, a vision he would realize in 1938 when the opportunity arose. It was likewise in the Austrian capital that he discerned what he later understood as foundations for the "Final Solution." There was nothing original in Hitler's views about Jews. Antisemitism was endemic in Vienna, and much of what he later wrote about Jews was commonplace in the antisemitic newspapers and pamphlets he had read there before 1914. Viennese antisemitism was also marked by a sexual dimension. Hitler would give the question of race priority over every other issue as the key to solving what he regarded as Germany's decadence. In his work he explains:

Pure race. The coexistence of different races on the planet produces war, and through war and struggle with the

⁶⁰ Anton Drexler, cited in Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 145.

environment their qualities are purified and affirmed. (...) Each race has a specific cosmic mission (...). Thus, for example, the Germanic race is a “creative” race, while the Semitic race is an accumulative race. The tragedy of history and its subversion consist in interracial mixture. The Germanic race has suffered this process for millennia and therefore its rectification is the most urgent demand⁶¹.

There is no solid historiographical basis for explaining Hitler's antisemitism through an alleged traumatic sexual experience or venereal disease; such hypotheses belong to a speculative psychobiographical tradition that does not permit causal conclusions⁶². For historical analysis, it is more productive to reconstruct the political and cultural repertoires in which his antisemitism took shape⁶³. In Vienna and later in Munich, Hitler was exposed to Pan-German nationalism, völkisch antisemitism, pseudoscientific racism, and anti-liberal discourses; his autobiographical account of this formation must be read critically rather than as transparent testimony⁶⁴. Before 1914 his organized political participation was limited, but he observed campaigns, press practices, and styles of mobilization that he later reinterpreted selectively⁶⁵. Among his points of reference were Austrian Social Democracy, Georg von Schönerer's Pan-Germanism, and Karl Lueger's Christian Social movement, from which he drew divergent lessons concerning organization, leadership, antisemitism, and relations with mass publics⁶⁶. Rather than searching for a single psychological origin, it is preferable to examine how these influences were radicalized and combined within a distinctive racial ideology. With regard to hopes for a reconstructed Germany, Captain Karl Mayr stated:

⁶¹ Hitler, cited in Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 41.

⁶² Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 45.

⁶³ Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 8-9.

⁶⁴ Volker Ullrich, *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 25-27.

⁶⁵ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 81-84.

⁶⁶ Ullrich, *Hitler: Ascent*, 32.

“A truly united and free Germany can only be built through a revolution, and that revolution can only be led by a strong and charismatic man with a clear vision of the future⁶⁷.”

Hitler's personal motivations do not by themselves explain the formation of his antisemitism or his later political effectiveness. His radicalization occurred within a preexisting ideological field and was transformed by the experience of war, the defeat of 1918, the counterrevolutionary climate of the postwar period, and his entry into party politics. What is historically relevant is the conversion of these repertoires into a program of racial exclusion and a strategy of mobilization, not the search for a single private cause.

The national workers' party must provide the basis for the vigorous assault force we are awaiting... We have highly capable young men. One Herr Hitler, for example, has become a motivating force, a popular speaker of the first rank. In the Munich section we have two thousand members, compared with fewer than one hundred in the summer of 1919.⁶⁸

Captain Karl Mayr to the exiled putschist Wolfgang Kapp, September 24, 1920.

Hitler quickly succeeded in taking control of the Party committee. He organized more ambitious meetings, placed propaganda in the press, and sent mimeographed announcements. During 1920, the party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party and adopted an official program⁶⁹. The program called for the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany, in contrast to the smaller Germany created by Bismarck in 1871. It also demanded the abolition of the Treaty of Versailles and the acquisition of colonies for Germany to accommodate population expansion⁷⁰. According to the program, citizens of the state were to be equal, but only subjects of German blood could be citizens and

⁶⁷ See Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 87.

⁶⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 128.

⁶⁹ Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 146.

⁷⁰ Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 146.

enjoy political rights and hold public office. Admission to the party also required possession of certain qualities. It may be said that Hitler, despite having had no political experience before 1914, learned a great deal by observing political tactics. In particular, he learned how to create a mass movement and how to pursue power on the basis of the disparate ideas he had accumulated. The three parties that, unknowingly, served as his teachers were Austrian Social Democracy, Georg von Schönerer's Pan-German nationalists, and Karl Lueger's Christian Social Party. From the Pan-German nationalists, Hitler learned what he believed should be avoided. In his view, their failure resulted from their inability to use the masses, their expenditure of energy on parliamentary conflict, and the weakening of their political potential through gratuitous attacks on the Church. In summary, the 1920 program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party laid foundations for a political movement that sought the unification of the German people, territorial expansion, and the exclusion of those who were not subjects of German blood. Hitler also learned by observing the political tactics of other parties and used these lessons in constructing the mass movement that would later carry him to power.

To enter the Party, it was necessary to satisfy certain requirements: race, ideology, devotion, and so forth⁷¹.

Maestri describes what he considered fundamental at the outset for the proper functioning of the National Socialist Party and the assurance of its continuity:

But the primary task was the organization of the National Socialist army, the so-called “*Sturmabteilungen*” (Assault Sections). For this purpose, young people, even adolescents, were recruited. They were immediately assigned a mission: guarding National Socialist meetings. On their first appearance they had the opportunity to engage in a brawl with Marxist workers and emerged victorious.⁷²

⁷¹ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 104.

⁷² Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 104.

The first duty established in the National Socialist program for German citizens was to work for the good of the State. Access to education was to be open to all, but its principal function would be to teach the sociology of the State. Public health was to be maintained at a high standard through protective measures for mothers and children and through compulsory physical exercise. Although freedom of the press was to be permitted, the program stipulated that Christianity would play an important role within a framework of the common good and conformity with the moral sense of the German race. Foreigners were to have few rights and Jews, in particular, were again to be subjected to discrimination. The formation of a national army was also envisaged. The National Socialist program likewise contained measures presented as socialist, including the abolition of unearned income, confiscation of war profits, nationalization of enterprises, profit-sharing in industry, social security in retirement, agrarian reform, and the death penalty for those making illicit profits. Finally, a strong central authority was to be established in parliamentary form, although the program itself implied severe criticism of the parliamentary system⁷³. It is important to note that although National Socialist propaganda was regarded by many as pure demagoguery, the program was declared unalterable and some of its provisions were at times substantially implemented. The rapid adhesion of individuals to the party ranks can be illustrated by the words attributed to Georg Schott, who stated that “National Socialism found its way into people's hearts through propaganda, which permeated every corner of public and private life⁷⁴.”

The secret of this personality lies in the fact that within it, in fully living form, the deepest element latent in the soul of the German people has taken shape... That is what Adolf Hitler represents: the living embodiment of the nation's longing. *Das Volksbuch*, 1924⁷⁵.

⁷³ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*.

⁷⁴ Georg Schott, “In deutscher Stunde”, *Die Gesellschaft* 2, no. 7 (1925): 10-11.

⁷⁵ Georg Schott, cited in Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 231.

The NSDAP flag, adopted in 1920, combined red, white, and black with the swastika. Hitler retrospectively assigned social, national, and racial meanings to these elements within the movement's program⁷⁶. The swastika was an ancient symbol used in diverse cultural contexts and, before the NSDAP, had also circulated in nationalist and *völkisch* milieus. The party transformed it into its own political emblem and incorporated it into standards, armbands, posters, and public rituals. Control of the *Völkischer Beobachter* from 1920 onward also provided the movement with a stable press platform for disseminating its messages⁷⁷. The reception of this propaganda cannot be explained by “psycho-ethnic” traits or by an alleged national disposition toward submission. Support for the NSDAP varied by region, confession, occupation, age, economic experience, and electoral context, and the party adjusted its messages to exploit those differences⁷⁸. Reactionary currents of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the racism of Gobineau and Chamberlain and certain forms of cultural nationalism, did contribute to the intellectual repertoire from which National Socialism drew and radicalized racial themes and Germanic mythologies.

In 1933 an SA sergeant explained his reasons for becoming a National Socialist.

Our opponents therefore made a mistake when they equated us, as a party, with the Economic Party, the Democrats, or the Marxist parties. All those parties were merely interest groups; they had no soul, no spiritual bonds. Adolf Hitler emerged as the bearer of a new political religion. This religion was born from the German national awakening of August 1, 1914 and the great struggle of our people between 1914 and 1918.⁷⁹

These were the genuine believers, those who had joined Nazism long before they were pressured to do so, and together they constituted only a small proportion of the German population.

⁷⁶ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 135.

⁷⁷ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 152.

⁷⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 153.

⁷⁹ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 147.

Anton Drexler, one of the founders of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), initiated the movement but failed to consolidate himself as its leader because of his lack of charisma and political skill. According to historian Richard J. Evans, Drexler “was a man without a clear program, without oratorical ability, without any talent for political organization.” His weak leadership and internal competition within the party contributed to his decline after his confrontation with Adolf Hitler in 1921 and his subsequent departure from the party in 1923. Although Drexler reconciled with Hitler in 1930, his influence within the party had disappeared.

Dietrich Eckart, another early member of the NSDAP and a mentor to Hitler, was a minor poet, playwright, and journalist⁸⁰. Eckart played an important role in the formation of National Socialist ideology and was among the first to recognize Hitler's leadership potential. In his work “Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me,” Eckart argues that National Socialism is the only answer to “Jewish Bolshevism” and calls for the removal of Jews from German life⁸¹. His influence in the party was brief, however, and ended with his death in 1923 after years of alcohol abuse⁸². Eckart was remembered in party history as an important precursor of National Socialist ideology. Adolf Hitler and other National Socialist leaders frequently cited Eckart's writings as a source of inspiration for their ideology. In *Mein Kampf*, for example, Hitler wrote of Eckart:

“He was one of the greatest authorities on the German soul of his time and therefore one of the few who could grasp the meaning of my struggle⁸³.”

Eckart was also editor of the National Socialist newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* and used this medium to disseminate party ideas.

⁸⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 169.

⁸¹ Dietrich Eckart, *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me* (Munich: Franz Eher Nachf., 1924), 20.

⁸² Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 169.

⁸³ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*.

According to some historians, Eckart was one of the principal architects of a mystical vision of German nationalism that combined elements of Christianity and occultism. Eckart believed that Germans were a people chosen by God and that they had a divine mission to lead the world toward a new era of justice and freedom⁸⁴. This vision was important to the formation of the National Socialist concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community), which sought to unite the German people in a common struggle for the common good. In summary, Dietrich Eckart is an important figure for understanding the origins and roots of National Socialist ideology and its influence on Adolf Hitler's leadership. Although his role in the party was brief, his legacy remained present within the movement until the end of the Second World War.

Ernst Röhm, for his part, was one of the most influential leaders of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), also known as the "Brownshirts," the Nazi Party's militia. A captain in the German army, Röhm organized the SA into a powerful paramilitary force. According to Kershaw, Röhm was "one of the few in the party capable of openly challenging Hitler." He envisioned the SA as a "hidden" military force that could absorb the *Reichswehr* and become Germany's official army. This idea, however, conflicted with Hitler's strategy of retaining control over the armed forces and keeping the SA subordinate to the party. The conflict between Röhm and Hitler culminated in Röhm's murder in 1934 during the Night of the Long Knives. As for Drexler, his role in the creation of the NSDAP is recognized in the historical literature. According to Bullock, Drexler "was the party's first leader and had laid the theoretical foundations of National Socialism⁸⁵." His lack of political skill and his limited charisma, however, left him in the background behind more prominent leaders such as Hitler and Röhm. Claims concerning Anton Drexler's weak leadership and political abilities in the creation of the NSDAP are shared by several historians. In *The Third Reich in*

⁸⁴ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 173-178.

⁸⁵ Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 38.

Power, Richard J. Evans describes Drexler as “a man without a clear program, without oratorical skills, without any talent for political organization.” Alfred Rosenberg was a Baltic German, born in Estonia and the son of a shoemaker.⁸⁶ His degree in architecture from the University of Moscow may have impressed Hitler, who regarded him as an intellectual. Hopelessly inept in practical politics, he served the movement in several roles, including as editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Hermann Göring had commanded the famous Richthofen squadron during the war and had been awarded the *Pour le Mérite*. After the war, he married a wealthy Swedish divorcée and attended courses irregularly at the University of Munich. In addition to assisting the Party financially, he collaborated with Röhm in organizing the SA. Rudolf Hess was the son of a German merchant established in Egypt, where he had lived for several years. During the war he served, like Hitler, in the List Regiment and later as a pilot. After the war he pursued studies in Munich, where he joined the Party. He was a bitter antisemite and introduced Hitler to geopolitics. He remained, almost to the end, one of the Führer's most loyal adherents and was among the few Nazi leaders not dominated by personal ambition.

Julius Streicher was one of the NSDAP's early militants and, from 1923, editor of *Der Stürmer*, a newspaper devoted to a particularly virulent form of antisemitic propaganda. His importance lay less in doctrinal elaboration than in the repetition of caricatures, sexual accusations, conspiracy myths, and dehumanizing representations. He also participated in the regime's anti-Jewish campaigns. In 1940 he was removed from his party offices following internal proceedings concerning misconduct, conflicts, and corruption, although he retained Hitler's personal support and remained connected to *Der Stürmer*. His trajectory demonstrates that the Nazi propaganda apparatus was not homogeneous: party media,

⁸⁶ Evans, *El Tercer Reich en el poder*, 95.

regional initiatives, and central structures coexisted with different styles and audiences⁸⁷.

2.3. The Munich Putsch, Imprisonment, and Reorganization

In 1923, the Nazi Party was still little known outside Bavaria; even there, it was not the most prominent political group⁸⁸. Nevertheless, 1923 would mark the Nazis' first major bid for power: the Beer Hall Putsch. Circumstances appeared favorable. The Weimar Constitution of 1919 was proving difficult to operate and faced hostility from powerful interests, including industrialists, while the Treaty of Versailles was almost universally rejected⁸⁹. Inflation reached its peak in 1923 with the collapse of the currency, coinciding with the French occupation of the Ruhr early that year to enforce reparations payments. This factor worked against the Nazis. Hitler intended to put an end to the “November criminals,” as he habitually described the Berlin government that had submitted to the Allies in November 1918, but French policy rallied public opinion behind the government.

Within the Bavarian political atmosphere there was widespread hostility toward Berlin. Hitler failed to assess the situation adequately and planned a march on the capital with the support of other dissident groups, possibly inspired by Mussolini's successful March on Rome in 1922. On November 8, 1923, an improvised plan known as the Beer Hall Putsch was set in motion, in which Hitler and his followers attempted to seize control of the Bavarian government. The coup failed, however, and Hitler was arrested and imprisoned. It is important to note that hostility toward Berlin was driven by opposition to the Weimar Constitution and the Treaty of Versailles, as well as by the country's difficult economic situation and inflation.

⁸⁷ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Julius Streicher: Biography”, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 13, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/julius-streicher-biography>.

⁸⁸ Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 174.

⁸⁹ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 156-157.

Mussolini's March on Rome also appeared to Hitler as a successful example of how a political movement might seize power by force.

The press announced that on the evening of November 8, 1923, Gustav von Kahr, head of the Bavarian government, together with other political and military leaders, would address a public meeting at the Bürgerbräukeller, a beer hall on the outskirts of Munich. Hitler, who was then planning a coup d'état, believed that Kahr would announce support for the Nazi cause and for Bavaria's secession from the rest of Germany. It was also rumored that Kahr supported restoration of the Wittelsbach monarchy, Bavaria's former royal house⁹⁰.

Shortly after the meeting began, the SA surrounded the building. Hitler entered, fired a pistol to attract attention, and forced the triumvirate into an adjoining room at gunpoint, leaving Göring to urge the astonished audience to remain calm and drink their beer. The triumvirate refused to yield to Hitler's demands; he locked them in and, returning to the main hall, declared that they had formed a provisional Reich government together with him. The applause that greeted this false declaration momentarily impressed the triumvirate. Meanwhile, a messenger had brought General Ludendorff to the scene, one of Germany's most popular war heroes, then living in Bavaria and actively involved in anti-republican politics. Although angered by the complete lack of political judgment shown in Hitler's precipitate action, Ludendorff advised the triumvirate to cooperate. The five men returned to the platform, publicly swore loyalty to one another and to their new regime, and the meeting then dispersed. At that point Hitler was called into the vestibule; when he returned, the triumvirate had gone. Kahr rapidly transferred the seat of government to Regensburg, leaving orders for posters denouncing the putsch to be displayed in Munich. During the confused night that followed, it became clear that neither the local Reichswehr units nor the police would go over to the Nazis, although no attempt was made to expel the SA from the grounds of the Bürgerbräukeller. The

⁹⁰ Fest, *Hitler*, 246; John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 278.

following morning, Ludendorff proposed marching into the city center and taking it, confident that neither soldiers nor police would fire on so legendary a figure.⁹¹ Lacking a better plan, Hitler agreed. The Nazi column forced its way through one unit of armed police but found its path blocked where the narrow Residenzstraße opens onto the Odeonsplatz. It is unclear which side fired first, but at the first volley of rifle fire the Nazis broke and fled, with no one quicker to escape than the Führer, who was taken in a waiting car to the Hanfstaengls' country house, where he was arrested two days later. Hitler was confined in Landsberg fortress prison, where he lived in relative comfort with several of his companions. He began dictating *Mein Kampf*, which was still unfinished when he was released. The Nazi Party was banned and its press suppressed throughout the Reich; in his absence Hitler appointed Rosenberg to direct the movement, which soon became prey to internal struggles. In the Reichstag elections of May 1924, the Nazis, in combination with similar groups, won thirty-two seats, but by December their number had fallen to fourteen. The Republic, by contrast, was weathering the storm. Under the direction of Hjalmar Schacht, a financier of exceptional ability, the currency was stabilized, while the Dawes Plan eased the complex burden of reparations. France withdrew from the Ruhr and Stresemann's policy prepared the way for the Locarno Treaties and Germany's admission to the League of Nations. American capital began to flow into Germany and an era of prosperity opened. When Hitler was provisionally released in December 1924, Nazism appeared to be approaching extinction.⁹² Maestri similarly argued that:

The National Socialist Party is in crisis. This matters for Germany and its development insofar as, paradoxically, the party's crisis coincides with the reiteration and consolidation of the National Socialist movement⁹³.

⁹¹ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 123.

⁹² Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*, 144.

⁹³ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 168.

The failed coup carried out by the Nazis in 1923, known as the Munich Putsch, not only had consequences for the leaders of the conspiracy; it also became a decisive experience for Adolf Hitler and for his strategic conception of how power might be conquered in Germany. At the time of the putsch, Hitler had not yet fully consolidated his leadership of the Nazi Party and remained relatively unknown in German politics. During his subsequent trial for treason, he used his oratorical abilities to attract media attention and gain notoriety for his cause. The failure of the putsch and the resulting convictions of Hitler and other Nazi leaders, including Ernst Röhm, forced the Nazi Party to reconsider its political tactics and strategies. For Hitler, the failure of the putsch demonstrated that power could not be attained through a straightforward violent seizure and that such violence risked alienating potential allies and sympathizers. He therefore began to plan a “legal revolution,” that is, the conquest of power through the procedures established by the German Constitution of the period rather than through another coup d'état. Another lesson Hitler drew was the importance of organization and propaganda in securing broad popular support. After the putsch, he devoted himself to consolidating his leadership within the Nazi Party and establishing a solid organizational structure that would allow him to exercise comprehensive control over the party and its activities. He also began to use propaganda systematically to disseminate his ideology and political plans and to mobilize mass audiences around his figure and cause. In summary, the failure of the Munich Putsch had a decisive impact on Hitler's political strategy and on the consolidation of the Nazi Party. Thereafter, he adopted a strategy based on acquiring power through formally legal means and on using propaganda and organization as instruments for mobilizing mass support around his leadership⁹⁴.

Following the failure of the Putsch and the temporary banning of the NSDAP, the reorganization begun in 1925 strengthened the party's territorial structure and the Führerprinzip. Gregor Strasser played a decisive role in expansion into northern Germany and

⁹⁴ Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo*, 101-102.

developed a network of press and organization that retained a degree of autonomy⁹⁵. His differences with Hitler did not simply amount to a stable division between equivalent “left” and “right” wings: they concerned strategy, organization, property, relations with economic elites, and the degree of centralization⁹⁶. The Bamberg Conference of 1926 reinforced Hitler's primacy and weakened the autonomy of Strasser's group⁹⁷. In the years that followed, the party's national expansion combined territorial Gaue, auxiliary organizations, propaganda, and new administrative structures. The final break with Gregor Strasser came in December 1932, amid the political crisis that preceded Hitler's appointment as chancellor.

Following the NSDAP's reorganization, propaganda acquired an increasingly specialized party structure. Joseph Goebbels's central role developed after his rapprochement with Hitler: he was appointed Gauleiter of Berlin in 1926 and Reichspropagandaleiter of the party in 1930. He did not lead the NSDAP during Hitler's imprisonment, nor is it methodologically valid to explain his political trajectory through his physical disability or to infer a “neurotic mentality” from it. Reorganization also included sectoral departments, territorial structures, and paramilitary organizations. Tensions with Gregor Strasser and Ernst Röhm demonstrate that Hitler's authority was the outcome of a prolonged internal struggle. Röhm returned from Bolivia in 1930 to reorganize the SA, whose autonomy and violence posed continuing problems for the party's political leadership.

During the 1920s, the German economy experienced a period of growth and stability after the turbulent postwar years. In 1924, implementation of the Dawes Plan, designed to assist Germany in meeting the war reparations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, brought an inflow of foreign investment and temporary relief from inflation. This, together with growing disillusionment among many Germans with the Weimar Republic, provided favorable ground for the reorganization and growth of the Nazi Party. In addition, the

⁹⁵ Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis*.

⁹⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*.

⁹⁷ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 206.

election of Hindenburg as president in 1925—a retired military officer with a reputation as a symbol of national unity—reduced hostility toward the Weimar Republic among some sectors of the German right. For Hitler, however, Hindenburg's election did not represent genuine reconciliation but an opportunity to expand the party's support through propaganda and the development of a more effective organizational structure. The strategic use of modern communication technologies, including radio, film, and public rallies, together with the creation of a clearly defined leadership hierarchy and a powerful paramilitary organization such as the SA, helped make the Nazi Party a formidable political force by the time the Great Depression struck Germany at the end of the 1920s.

Hitler's accumulation of power cannot be described primarily as the result of an alleged “psychic violence.” The NSDAP combined propaganda, territorial organization, electoral mobilization, and the physical violence of the SA with opportunities created by economic crisis and the deterioration of the parliamentary system. After 1933, the propagandistic construction of the Führer as a providential leader operated alongside the elimination of opposition, police coercion, and the institutional transformation of the state. Persuasion and violence were not alternatives; they formed part of the same process of acquiring and consolidating power.

With the Republic visibly entering a phase of disintegration, the Nazis could at last seize the opportunity for which they had waited so long. Hitler believed that his moment had arrived. His struggle for power and the skill with which Nazism exploited and focused the incoherent resentments of a bewildered and disillusioned people are major factors in explaining the replacement of democracy by totalitarianism. From the outset, Hitler spared no effort in his attacks on the Republic, the Treaty of Versailles, the forces of reaction, and the Jews. He shrewdly appreciated the importance of the army and, as early as his 1924 trial, took the opportunity to emphasize that the Reichswehr and Nazism shared the objective of creating a greater Germany. Shortly after noon on January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by the president. Despite the

claims of his propagandists, he had not been carried to power by a wave of popular enthusiasm. The Führer had maneuvered his way into the chancellorship through intrigue, with the connivance of the “old guard” he despised and with the consent of that part of the German electorate that had supported the Nazi Party in the most recent Reichstag elections, amounting to no more than roughly one third of the vote.

In his first speech as chancellor, on February 10, 1933, he invoked the proposals of his adversaries in order to set his own policies against them, recounting fourteen years of failures and asking: What was your program? Anyone who opposed the Nazis was cast as a traitor. Hitler's concluding peroration is worth quoting in full:

I cannot divest myself of my faith in my Volk; I cannot detach myself from the conviction that this nation will one day rise again; I cannot separate myself from my love for this, for my Volk; and I harbor the firm conviction that the hour will finally come when millions who today despise us will stand at our side and join us in acclaiming the new German Reich, hard won and painfully acquired, which we have created together—the new German realm of greatness and power and glory and justice. Amen⁹⁸.

Hitler's accession to power in 1933 cannot be attributed to a single method of persuasion. The following chapter examines propaganda as one component of a broader strategy, attending to its concepts, rhetorical resources, media, audiences, and forms of coordination. The aim is to explain its function without turning it into a self-sufficient technique for recruiting or controlling the population.

⁹⁸ Hitler, cited in Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 185.

CHAPTER III. CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

3.1. Party Society, Modernization, and Economic Crisis

This section does not repeat the economic chronology of Chapter I. Its purpose is to examine how modernization, party fragmentation, professional unemployment, and status insecurity were translated into political and cultural perceptions susceptible to mobilization.

The Weimar Republic combined intense cultural experimentation with economic internationalization, the expansion of mass media, and severe political conflict. Berlin acquired a central position in European culture, but this modernity coexisted with traditionalist reactions, political violence, and profound regional and social differences. There is no basis for describing this process as a threat to the “mental stability” of an average German. Resentment toward the Treaty of Versailles, by contrast, was a widely available political resource: it crossed ideological tendencies, and nationalist and National Socialist propaganda radicalized it by linking humiliation to economic crisis and internal enemies⁹⁹. From 1930 onward, the combination of depression, parliamentary fragmentation, and the growing use of presidential decrees altered the conditions of political competition. Heinrich Brüning's cabinets increasingly depended on Article 48, weakening parliamentary practice without making dictatorship inevitable. Responsibility for Weimar's collapse likewise cannot be distributed indiscriminately among “all parties”: political actors differed in their commitment to the constitutional order, their willingness to accept authoritarian solutions, and their participation in political violence. The simultaneous growth of the KPD and the NSDAP intensified polarization; Nazi propaganda exploited anticommunism to present the party to conservative and middle-class

⁹⁹ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 133.

sectors as a barrier against revolution, even as its own strategy actively contributed to eroding the system.

Ernst Nolte, a prominent German historian, argues that the economic and political crisis Germany experienced in the early 1930s was the principal factor behind the change in the outlook of the German population and the growing support for the NSDAP. Nolte maintains that the crisis was not merely a condition but the foundation of the Nazi Party's rise, because it generated throughout Germany a sense of bewilderment and frustration comparable to that experienced during the brief Bavarian Soviet Republic of 1919. The proposition that the crisis was a key factor in the rise of Nazism is widely shared among historians, who have emphasized the deep despair produced by mass unemployment, inflation, widespread poverty, and the loss of confidence in traditional democratic institutions that appeared unable to resolve the crisis. Some historians, however, have questioned Nolte's treatment of the crisis as the principal cause of Nazism's rise. British historian Richard J. Evans, for example, argues that although economic and political crisis was important, cultural and ideological factors must also be considered, including nationalism and antisemitism embedded in German society at the time. Similarly, German historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler argues that Nazism's rise resulted from a combination of factors, including economic crisis, the weakness of the German political system, and limited popular commitment to liberal democracy.¹⁰⁰ It remains important, nevertheless, to emphasize the broad agreement concerning the importance of economic and political crisis in the Nazi rise. Ian Kershaw, for example, identifies the crisis as a key factor in the Nazi Party's appeal to the German population, while Detlev Peukert has argued that it produced a crisis of confidence in the political system and democratic institutions, which in turn contributed to the party's rise. The authors examined in this study differ little over how favorable the crisis of the early 1930s proved to National Socialism. This consensus can be seen throughout the present investigation, as can the "bewilderment" of the German

¹⁰⁰ Ernst Nolte, *El fascismo en su época* (Barcelona: Ediciones S.A., 1967), 388.

population described by Nolte. As elected representatives proved unable to provide clear leadership, many Germans became increasingly disillusioned with the democratic experiment, particularly with its failure to solve their material problems. Popular support for the National Socialist Party therefore increased. During the First World War, Germany had subjected its economic resources to excessive strain, suffered population losses, and experienced declining health standards. The Versailles settlement deprived it of cultivable land and mineral resources, while reparations imposed a heavy future burden. Germany had shifted from creditor to debtor nation. During the war, an unsatisfactory fiscal policy based more on borrowing than taxation created inflationary tendencies that were not counteracted after the conflict, and during 1922 the mark depreciated sharply. In 1923 it collapsed completely, with the exchange rate reaching 4.2 trillion marks to the dollar. Maestri evokes this reality as follows:

The Republic's "assets" do not offset its "liabilities," either in international or domestic policy. Moreover, its material basis—the budget—has been continuously deteriorating. In the fiscal year 1926–27 it recorded a deficit of 90.7 million marks; in 1927–28, 303.3 million; in 1928–29, 1,058.5 million; in 1929–30, 1,236.7 million.¹⁰¹

The period of economic growth Germany experienced between 1924 and 1930 was, according to some historians, little more than a superficial prosperity based on high-interest short-term loans. Even so, the economic crisis of the period could not erase from collective memory the loss of savings or fear of unemployment, anxieties that became reality for thousands of Germans in 1931. The New York stock market crash of 1929 had an immediate effect on Germany, triggering a banking crisis that placed industry under severe strain. Foreign creditors began calling in short-term loans, while the rapid contraction of world trade made it still more difficult for Germany—and for other nations facing similar problems—to service their debts by increasing exports. The most significant social

¹⁰¹ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 92–93.

consequence of the economic crisis was the rise in unemployment, which generated a profound sense of insecurity and contributed to the emergence of extremist political movements in the 1930s. In this regard, the economic crisis must be recognized as one of the factors contributing to the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany, as numerous historians have emphasized¹⁰².

Relatively speaking, Germany is the capitalist country in which unemployment has assumed the greatest proportions. At the end of 1931 there were 5,666,000 unemployed. The development is constant and progressive: the average number unemployed in 1927 was 1,255,000; in 1928, 1,658,000; in 1929, 2,019,000; in 1931, 4,410,000. In the last year, if families are included, nine million people were affected by unemployment.¹⁰³

Professional crisis and unemployment also affected young graduates and white-collar employees, groups for whom expected social mobility became increasingly uncertain. The NSDAP exploited this insecurity through promises of order, employment, mobility, and belonging. Electoral growth was rapid: from 12 seats in 1928 the party rose to 107 in 1930 and 230 in July 1932; in November 1932 it lost ground, although it remained the largest party in the Reichstag. These figures demonstrate massive expansion, not the surrender of “the majority of the population” or an inevitable willingness to sacrifice liberties. Hobsbawm also emphasizes that once consolidated, the regime combined political mobilization with social and leisure policies that helped build acceptance among certain sectors¹⁰⁴. Vacation programs, sport, consumption, and projects such as the “people’s car” formed part of this social and propagandistic dimension¹⁰⁵. Explaining Nazism through an alleged German national tradition of military obedience leads to an essentialism unsupported by the social evidence. Support varied by region, confession, class,

¹⁰² Timothy W. Mason, “La economía alemana durante la Gran Depresión”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 69-89.

¹⁰³ Mason, “La economía alemana durante la Gran Depresión”, 85-86.

¹⁰⁴ Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX*, 134.

¹⁰⁵ Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX*, 143.

occupation, and political context; opposition, abstention, party competition, and forms of resistance also existed. The crisis created opportunities for the NSDAP, but those opportunities were converted into power through organization, propaganda, violence, and specific institutional decisions.

3.2. Culture, Modernity, and Reaction

Weimar culture was plural and conflictual: artistic innovation, the expansion of mass media, and experimentation coexisted with conservative critiques of modernity and with *völkisch* discourses. This coexistence precludes describing the decade as a simple prelude to Nazism; the NSDAP intervened in an already polarized and competitive cultural field.

Weimar culture was marked by an extraordinary density of innovation. In literature, the creation of a dedicated section within the Prussian Academy of Arts and the international recognition of authors such as Thomas Mann symbolized Germany's cultural reintegration¹⁰⁶. In architecture and design, Walter Gropius's Bauhaus brought together craft, technology, and modern production; in music and theater, figures such as Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Bertolt Brecht, and Kurt Weill broadened the experimental repertoire¹⁰⁷. This modernity coexisted with a highly fragmented and politically polarized press system. Local and party newspapers could reinforce nationalist interpretations of Versailles and the crisis, but their circulation cannot be taken as evidence of a uniformly “revanchist” population¹⁰⁸. Nor should contemporary stereotypes concerning Eastern European Jewish immigrants, financial speculation, or alleged Jewish control of cultural industries be reproduced as sociological description. Such associations formed part of the antisemitic repertoire used by nationalists and Nazis to transform economic and

¹⁰⁶ Johann and Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Johann and Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana*, 142.

¹⁰⁸ Johann and Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana*, 144.

cultural change into a racial narrative of threat¹⁰⁹. The central tension of the period was therefore political: a plural and experimental cultural sphere coexisted with campaigns that presented that very plurality as decadence. After 1933, the regime transformed this ideological opposition into censorship, professional exclusion, and authoritarian coordination of culture.

¹⁰⁹ Johann and Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana*.

CHAPTER IV. NAZI PROPAGANDA: CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, AND TECHNIQUES

4.1. The Concept of Propaganda and the Analytical Framework

Language and symbolization make possible the most complex forms of cognitive functioning. According to the contemporary constructivist psychologist and educator David Ausubel, language performs an integral and operative function in thought rather than merely a communicative one, thereby making more complex forms of cognitive functioning possible.¹¹⁰ According to the French political theorist and sociologist Jacques Ellul, propaganda is a process through which attempts are made to influence the opinions and behavior of a population by manipulating symbols, myths, and emotions in pursuit of political, economic, or social objectives. Along similar lines, the American political scientist and sociologist Harold Lasswell defines propaganda as “the systematic use of controlled persuasion in the service of political or ideological interests¹¹¹.”

According to Sánchez-García, as a model of communication propaganda may be defined as the use of large-scale persuasive techniques intended to influence people's attitudes and behavior in relation to an issue, idea, product, or service in order to achieve specific ends. From a linguistic perspective, propaganda can be analyzed through the study of discourse and the communicative processes employed in its construction and dissemination¹¹².

¹¹⁰ David Ausubel, Joseph Novak, and Helen Hanesian, *Psicología educativa: un punto de vista cognoscitivo*, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Trillas, 1983), 15.

¹¹¹ Harold D. Lasswell, “The Theory of Political Propaganda”, *The American Political Science Review* 21, no. 3 (1927): 627-631; Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).

¹¹² M. Sánchez-García, “La propaganda: conceptos, técnicas y retos”, *Comunicación y Sociedad*, no. 17 (2012): 135-159.

Propaganda, in its impetuous advance, will outstrip organization by far in order to win the human material indispensable to the latter. I have always been an enemy of hasty and pedantic organization, which produces inert and mechanical results. For this reason, the best course is to allow an idea to spread from a center through propaganda for a given period of time and then carefully search for leaders among those human beings who have responded to the call¹¹³.

Adolf Hitler had observed the effects produced by propaganda bombardment during the First World War. Even during those years, he held the firm conviction that propaganda possessed enormous persuasive and mobilizing capacity. Hitler was well acquainted with techniques that had already been theoretically formulated since the First World War. He did not merely employ propaganda as a means of achieving his objectives; more fundamentally, he based his political strategy upon it. Hitler had extensive experience of propaganda's persuasive effects, which had already been demonstrated during the war. He treated propaganda as a principal means of pursuing political objectives. Johann and Junker argue that Hitler recruited his most fanatical and radical supporters from the lower and middle bourgeoisie among those economically damaged and politically unstable, as well as from youth and student circles that were consistently attracted by the allure of novelty¹¹⁴.

One of Adolf Hitler's early propagandistic operations was to reverse the pejorative meaning the term had acquired after the First World War because of the extensive use of falsehood during the conflict. Hitler understood propaganda's considerable persuasive and mobilizing capacity, and his strategy relied heavily upon it. His first objective, therefore, was to instill a positive concept of propaganda in German minds by emphasizing the Latin origin *propagare*, which referred to the gardener's practice of placing fresh plant cuttings in the soil in order to multiply them. According to Brown, this Latin root emphasized the idea of transformation through the use of

¹¹³ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 279.

¹¹⁴ Johann and Junker, *Historia de la cultura alemana*, 137.

artificial techniques. In this way, Hitler sought to give propaganda a positive connotation and to legitimize its use for political, economic, and social ends¹¹⁵. The emphasis thus fell on transformation through deliberately applied techniques.

For the purposes of this study, propaganda may be defined as organized communication directed toward producing or reinforcing interpretations, attitudes, and forms of conduct favorable to a political actor. Its resources include the selection of information, repetition, symbolization, framing, emotional appeal, and coordination across channels. Historical definitions vary, and some—especially those derived from early mass psychology—attributed to “suggestion” a capacity that is difficult to sustain empirically today¹¹⁶. Propaganda is distinguished here from advertising by its relationship to power, political conflict, and the construction of legitimacy, although both fields share techniques of design, segmentation, and persuasion. This definition makes it possible to analyze Nazi propaganda without turning it into a mechanism of mind control.

The author emphasizes the importance of the sociocultural framework within which propaganda operates. Although Brown regards its use as fundamental, he argues that Young overlooks one of propaganda's most important weapons, which is verbal in nature: the force of the word. This is made explicit when Hitler, referring to the question of war guilt, states:

It was demonstrated there that verbal violence was not only useful but necessary. (...) In truth, for reasons of a psychological nature, the word is the only instrument capable of producing genuinely great revolutions in feeling.¹¹⁷

Violet Edwards, for her part, defines propaganda as “the expression of an opinion or action by individuals or groups

¹¹⁵ J. A. C. Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión* (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 19.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 19.

¹¹⁷ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 221.

deliberately designed to influence the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends.¹¹⁸”

Propaganda also played a key role in Nazi ideology and strategy, which sought to impose its system of beliefs across all spheres of German life. Thus, for Hitler:

The second duty of propaganda is to overthrow the existing state of affairs by means of the new doctrine.¹¹⁹

This reflects the idea that propaganda seeks not only to persuade or influence public opinion, but also to serve a transformative and revolutionary purpose. Leonard W. Doob defines propaganda as “the systematic attempt by an individual or individuals to control attitudes and, consequently, the actions of groups of individuals through the use of suggestion.” It is important, however, to emphasize that propaganda's systematic character rests not only on attempts to control attitudes but also on the repeated use of the message. Redundancy in dissemination is crucial if a message is to penetrate the attention of its audience and persist over time.¹²⁰ Although the propagandist may systematically seek to shape attitudes, the term is better understood if systematicity is also attributed to reiterated messaging. Without repetition, it is extremely difficult for a discourse to become established among its audiences and, more importantly, to endure.

In *The Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis and Aronson define propaganda as “the techniques of mass persuasion that characterize our postindustrial society. (...) Propaganda consists in communicating a point of view with the ultimate aim that the receiver voluntarily adopt that position as his or her own.” Taking this and other definitions into account, a working definition can be adapted to the present study: propaganda is systematic and repetitive communication conducted through multiple media that seeks to

¹¹⁸ Violet Edwards, *Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis* (New York: Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1938), 40.

¹¹⁹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 281.

¹²⁰ Leonard W. Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), 240.

persuade public opinion through psychological techniques and suggestion, with the aim of instilling an ideology or doctrine and channeling attitudes and opinions toward a particular form of action. Propaganda develops within a specific sociocultural structure and presents a distorted, selected, and interpreted reality charged with emotion, which contributes to its psychological and cultural effectiveness.¹²¹

For the purposes of this study, propaganda is defined as a systematic practice of strategic communication oriented toward selecting, hierarchizing, and repeating interpretations of reality for purposes of political mobilization. It is not synonymous with falsehood: it may combine accurate information, omissions, exaggerations, selective framing, and false assertions. What is decisive is its instrumental orientation, the coordination of messages, adaptation to audiences and channels, and the pursuit of effects on perception, behavior, and legitimacy.

Part of the early literature on propaganda interpreted collective behavior through the categories of crowd psychology. Brown described assembled publics as more susceptible to suggestion¹²². Le Bon took the formulation further by proposing the existence of a “collective mind” and mechanisms of contagion and imitation¹²³. These theories are relevant to reconstructing the intellectual vocabulary of the period, but they should not be accepted as an empirically sufficient account of reception. Nazi rallies combined music, uniforms, lighting, sequences of speakers, and ritual in order to concentrate attention and generate collective identification; such resources could intensify emotion without turning the audience into a hypnotized subject or eliminating individual and social differences. Hitler's oratorical ability must be analyzed within this organizational architecture. Raúl Maestri observed in this regard:

¹²¹ Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *La era de la propaganda: uso y abuso de la persuasión* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1994), 28-29.

¹²² Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 92.

¹²³ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1895), 9.

Moreover, there are technical and psychological reasons that make this project a utopia in poor taste. Its purpose is merely tactical politics: to win the allegiance of the bourgeoisie, which suffers under the weight of accumulated debts contracted at the high rate of interest corresponding to a capital-scarce market such as Germany's. On this, as on every point in the National Socialist program, one must not forget its ideological essence, its sleight of mind¹²⁴.

Persuasion is one dimension of propaganda, but does not exhaust it. Pizarroso emphasizes its intentional character and orientation toward specific audiences¹²⁵. Models of learning can help describe how new information relates to prior knowledge, but they do not by themselves provide a historical theory of political propaganda¹²⁶. For this book, it is more useful to examine the interaction among message, predispositions, identity, context, and repetition¹²⁷. Reception is not passive: the same piece of propaganda may confirm, mobilize, bore, provoke rejection, or simply be ignored.

In the National Socialist case, emotional mobilization relied on observable resources: music, marches, uniforms, repetition of slogans, staging, construction of the enemy, and causal simplification. Speaking of "suggestion" may describe the language used by some authors of the period, but it does not demonstrate the existence of a collective mind or a mechanism of automatic obedience. Antisemitic and anticommunist propaganda combined false assertions, stereotypes, and tendentious selections of facts in order to construct closed explanations of the crisis. It is also important to avoid a widespread but problematic attribution: the maxim according to which a lie becomes more credible the larger it is should not be cited as a formula coined by Goebbels in the absence of a verifiable primary source. In *Mein Kampf*, the "big lie" appears within Hitler's

¹²⁴ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*.

¹²⁵ Alejandro Pizarroso Quintero, *Historia de la propaganda* (Madrid: Eudema, 1993), 27.

¹²⁶ Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian, *Psicología educativa*, 15.

¹²⁷ Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 24.

accusation against his adversaries, not as a rule formulated by Goebbels.

Feeling demands truths or lies, but it never accepts half-truths or half-lies.¹²⁸

Goebbels's diaries are an indispensable source, but they must be read critically: they record the minister's decisions and perceptions while simultaneously constructing his own image and that of the regime. The discrepancy between his claims concerning popular enthusiasm for the anti-Jewish violence of November 1938 and other contemporary testimony illustrates this source problem¹²⁹. Pratkanis and Aronson use Nazi propaganda to show how conspiratorial assertions can be sustained through repetition, selective examples, and reinterpretation of the absence of evidence¹³⁰. This observation should not be transformed into an alleged “doctrine of the big lie” formulated by Goebbels. The expression is associated with a passage in *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler accuses his adversaries; historically, the regime did produce and repeat systematic falsehoods, but their analysis requires identifying each claim, channel, and context rather than attributing an apocryphal maxim to the regime.

4.1.1. Persuasion, Emotion, and Mobilization

Nazi propaganda drew on psychological and advertising resources already present in mass communication: simplification, repetition, association, authority, and emotional appeal¹³¹. Film was especially valuable because it could combine image, music, editing, and narrative within a collective experience¹³². Later critiques of the culture industry offer a way of thinking about the relationship between standardization and mass consumption, but they should not be projected backward as a single causal explanation of Nazi

¹²⁸ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 93.

¹²⁹ Norman Stone, cited in Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 24.

¹³⁰ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 107-108.

¹³¹ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 139.

¹³² David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 218.

reception¹³³. The historical significance lies in the coordination of media and in the progressive reduction of public alternatives after 1933.

Hitler is carrying out a dogma of the German people (as Stalin is of the Russian people), a dogma whose aims are anything but traditional. On the contrary, all the efforts of propaganda to restore some God-knows-how-hypothetical and prehistoric Germanism are intended... to mask the anti-German character of the methods applied in practice... What is being instilled in this inert bourgeoisie is not a sense of the group, which it already possessed, but a sense of the State, which it lacks¹³⁴.

As Welch notes, propaganda is most effective when it does not threaten the convictions of the receiving population or collide directly with the audience's interests. Nazi propaganda therefore achieved results by connecting with preexisting emotions and sentiments and channeling them toward the propagandist's political objectives. Hitler was acutely aware of the resentments surrounding Germany's defeat in the First World War. He therefore sought to persuade audiences that the war had not been lost because of German conduct but because of the alleged "stab in the back" by Jews and communists. In this sense, Nazi propaganda operated by exploiting feelings and emotional dispositions already present among parts of the German population and directing them toward interpretations favorable to the movement. Propaganda thus became an important element in the construction and maintenance of the Nazi regime and its ideology.

Antisemitism has served the National Socialist party as a convenient theme of¹³⁵ agitation...

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler presents war as an effective means of producing national unity and eliminating internal and external

¹³³ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "La industria cultural: Ilustración como engaño de masas", en *Dialéctica de la Ilustración* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998), 165-212.

¹³⁴ Denis de Rougemont, *Diario de Alemania* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1939), 23-24.

¹³⁵ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 43.

enemies. To this end, he argues for mobilizing mass publics through propaganda and nationalist rhetoric and for creating a collective identity defined through the exclusion of “others.” As Stanley Payne observes, “Hitler did not want Germany simply to be a great power, but sought a ‘total revolution’ that would radically transform the nation’s political, social, and cultural structure.”

This was the reason why, after my first address on the Treaty of Versailles, delivered to the troops in my capacity as an instructor, I altered my approach and spoke instead about the peace treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Versailles. For I soon realized that the people knew nothing about the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, but that, thanks to the successful propaganda of their parties, they imagined that this pact constituted one of the most shameful acts of oppression on earth. The persistence with which this deception was placed before the public caused millions of Germans to suppose that the treaty was nothing more than the just retribution for the crime we had committed at Brest-Litovsk. It was therefore regarded as unjust to wage a genuine struggle against the peace of Versailles, an approach that in many cases encountered sincere moral aversion. This is why the shameless and monstrous word “reparations” could find a home in Germany. In my lectures I drew a parallel between the two treaties, compared them point by point, and demonstrated the loyalty and immense humanity of the one against the inhuman cruelty of the other.¹³⁶

Emotional charge does not function as an autonomous force capable of nullifying judgment. In political propaganda, emotions orient attention, perceived importance, and the evaluation of threats or promises. National Socialism repeatedly invoked fear, resentment, pride, hope, and belonging; its effectiveness depended on whether these affects could be connected to experiences and interpretive frameworks already available among specific audiences.

¹³⁶ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 224.

In Hitler's speeches, the opposition between humiliation and rebirth, threat and security, enemy and community organizes much of the emotional intensity. Antisemitism and anticommunism supplied culprits; Volksgemeinschaft offered an image of integration; and Hitler's leadership appeared as a principle of resolution. This repertoire did not mechanically "channel" the masses: it combined emotions with causal attributions and political proposals, and its reception varied according to social position and political circumstances.

The great majority of people are so feminine in their nature and opinions that their thought and actions are governed by sensations and feelings rather than by reasoned considerations. This feeling, however, is not complicated but very simple and consistent. It scarcely knows how to differentiate, but is always one of two things, positive or negative.¹³⁷

The passage attributed to Hitler proceeds from a hierarchical and sexist conception of the audience: it identifies the "feminine" with emotionality and opposes this alleged condition to a minority presented as rational and fit to lead. Semantically, the opposition reduces the diversity of the public to binary categories; pragmatically, it legitimizes the speaker's authority by describing the majority as dependent on simple orientations. The analytical interest lies not in accepting this crowd psychology, but in observing how the discourse itself constructs an audience that requires guidance. The simplification of feelings into "positive" and "negative" performs the same function: it eliminates nuance and facilitates a polarized reading of political reality.

During the electoral campaigns of the early 1930s, Hitler repeatedly invoked frames of threat, crisis, and disorder. Such resources could increase the salience of already existing fears, but they do not warrant the inference that fear automatically produced political adherence. Their effectiveness depended on prior conditions: unemployment, polarization, local experiences of violence, party

¹³⁷ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 93.

identity, anticommunism, and confidence in or rejection of Weimar institutions. The later racial persecution was not the inevitable psychological consequence of an isolated rhetorical tactic, but the outcome of a radical antisemitic ideology transformed into state policy through legislation, bureaucracy, propaganda, and coercion.

Confusion and disorder reign in our streets; the universities are overflowing with students who rebel and provoke disturbances. The communists want to destroy our fatherland; Russia threatens us with its power; the Republic is in danger... in danger from within and from without. Law and order must prevail, because without them the country cannot survive¹³⁸!

The speech constructs a semantic field of threat through terms such as “confusion,” “disorder,” “rebellion,” and “danger,” and sets them against “law” and “order.” The antithesis between order and chaos, together with the attribution of responsibility to communists, Russia, and the Republic itself, frames a coercive response as necessary. Pragmatically, urgency narrows the space for alternatives and presents the speaker's program as the solution; the analysis, however, does not permit the conclusion that the audience accepted it as the only viable outcome. Fear functions here as a resource of framing and mobilization whose reception depends on predispositions and context. Repetition and parallelism intensify the binary opposition, while the image of a fatherland “in danger” converts a political dispute into an existential threat.

Perceived threat can favor more radical political options when combined with loss of status, economic insecurity, and the breakdown of institutional reference points. Hobsbawm links part of the attraction of the radical right to middle-class sectors that perceived their social positions as threatened. In Germany, the Great Depression, the memory of inflation, and fear of communism provided material for such radicalization. National Socialist propaganda did not “prevent” its audiences from reasoning; it selected and simplified grievances, connected them to political

¹³⁸ Hitler, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 216.

identities, and repeated them consistently. The following passage from *Mein Kampf* expresses Hitler's own conception of propaganda directed at broad audiences¹³⁹.

All propaganda must be popular and must adapt its intellectual level to the receptive capacity of the least intelligent among those whom it is intended to reach. Its intellectual level must therefore be lower the larger the mass of people it seeks to win. The receptive capacity of the masses is limited and their understanding slight; moreover, they have a great capacity for forgetting. Under these conditions, all effective propaganda must be restricted to a very few points and present them in the form of battle cries until the last individual has grasped the meaning of each.¹⁴⁰

The effectiveness of propaganda is here grounded in adaptation to what Hitler presents as the limited receptive capacity and understanding of the population. It is therefore necessary, in this conception, to restrict the message to a small number of points and present them as battle cries that can be readily understood by all. The ultimate objective is the acceptance of a doctrine—in this case, that of the National Socialist party.

As the party's director of propaganda, I took care not merely to prepare the ground for the movement's future greatness, but to work according to very radical principles in order to bring the best elements into the organization¹⁴¹.

For Hitler, oratory was a fundamental instrument for disseminating ideas, and his model drew on observation and study of other prominent speakers in history, including the demagogues of the French and Bolshevik revolutions, Austrian and German Social Democrats, and the fiery Welsh speaker Lloyd George. In Hitler's own words, "I do nothing more than follow my predecessors in this technique of propaganda; I merely apply the principles they

¹³⁹ Hobsbawm, *Historia del siglo XX*, 129.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 91.

¹⁴¹ Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 282.

established.” He thus understood oratory as an instrument to be used strategically, employing accessible and popular language to capture the attention and support of mass audiences. Hitler wrote of Lloyd George:

The speeches of this Englishman (sic) were the most admirable, because they testified to a clearly astonishing knowledge of the soul of the great masses of the people (...) in his speeches he found the form and expression that opened the heart of his people to him, ultimately bringing his people fully into the service of his will. The proof of this Englishman's (sic) outstanding political ability lies precisely in the primitiveness of his language, the elemental character of his expression, and the use of readily comprehensible examples of the simplest kind.¹⁴²

Hitler understood the importance and power of propaganda in producing results and achieving objectives. In *Mein Kampf* he makes clear how, in his view, the Allies had prevailed in the First World War through the skillful use of propaganda. He acknowledges that his own side had failed to operate in this field with comparable effectiveness and therefore had to learn from its enemies:

Only during the war did the magnitude of the results that could be obtained through the intelligent application of propaganda become apparent. Unfortunately, in this field too, we had to learn everything from the enemy side, because on our own side initiatives were meager, to put it mildly... The fact is that what we failed to do, the enemy knew how to accomplish with astonishing skill and a truly admirable calculating mind. I myself learned enormously from the enemy's propaganda war¹⁴³.

Hitler focuses on the importance of propaganda and on the success with which it was used by the opposing side. At the semantic level, the passage employs persuasive language—terms such as

¹⁴² Hitler, cited in Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 144.

¹⁴³ Hitler, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 337-338.

“intelligent application,” “astonishing skill,” and “truly admirable calculating mind”—to elevate the enemy's propaganda and emphasize the need to apply comparable methods on his own side. At the semiotic level, the discourse employs symbols and metaphors to establish an emotional connection with the audience, including the word “enemy” as an image of external threat. Antithesis contrasts the lack of initiative on the German side with the enemy's skill in propaganda. Pragmatically, the passage seeks to persuade the audience of propaganda's importance in warfare by highlighting the enemy's successes in this domain and the need to imitate its strategy. Persuasive language and emotional identification through symbols and metaphors are used to orient the audience toward a particular action: the adoption of propaganda as an effective instrument of war. Rhetorically, repetition of the term “propaganda” functions anaphorically and reinforces the centrality of the theme, while antithesis again contrasts domestic shortcomings with enemy proficiency. In this way Hitler refined his oratorical skills before increasingly large audiences and became an effective speaker capable of exerting considerable influence on public opinion. Historians broadly agree on the importance of Hitler's oratorical ability and organizational discipline within the party for the diffusion of his ideas and the consolidation of his power. Pasquale Villani is one among many historians who have emphasized these dimensions of Hitler's political trajectory¹⁴⁴.

Nolte observes that *Mein Kampf* gives primacy to the spoken over the written word and that Hitler's political notoriety depended far more on rallies and speeches than on mass readership of his book¹⁴⁵. The preparation of oratory, repetition of formulas, and coordination of staging were central components of the NSDAP's early propaganda. Hitler demanded internal consistency and forcefulness in the message, but this did not amount to a commitment to factual truth: his propaganda repeatedly relied on political myths, antisemitic falsehoods, and manipulated causal

¹⁴⁴ Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo*, 102.

¹⁴⁵ Nolte, *El fascismo en su época*, 419.

attributions. The relevant distinction is between propagandistic consistency and truthfulness.

The function of propaganda is, for example, not to compare and weigh the reasons of different people, but solely to emphasize the one position placed under discussion. Its mission is not to undertake an objective study of the truth that might favor the enemy and then present it to the masses with academic impartiality; its task is to support our own position at all times and with determination... As soon as our propaganda admits the slightest trace of reason or justice on the other side, the foundations of doubt in the justice of our own cause will have been laid¹⁴⁶.

Neumann argues that National Socialist propaganda was not limited to penetrating points of weakness but pursued a deeper purpose. In his interpretation, the emphasis on activism rather than thought meant that individuals would have neither the freedom nor the time to think for themselves. According to Neumann, “action without thought is possible only if it is directed and controlled, except during brief periods of genuine mass spontaneity. When it is controlled in this way it is pseudo-action, since the actor is not the individual but a bureaucratic apparatus.” Neumann thus questions the actual nature of the action promoted by National Socialist propaganda and suggests that it amounted to manipulation designed to maintain rigid control over society.¹⁴⁷ In his account, the National Socialist technique differed from others by making the action of an authoritarian apparatus appear to be the spontaneous activity of the masses, a technique first deployed in National Socialist mass rallies. Hitler used every available means to attract mass attention, including the proposed law to cancel war debts, promoted by a committee created through popular initiative in which the Nazis participated actively, and the support of Alfred Hugenberg, leader of the German Nationalists. Hitler thereby increasingly came to be regarded by some sectors as an effective instrument in the struggle against Weimar

¹⁴⁶ Hitler, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 346.

¹⁴⁷ Neumann, *Behemoth*, 483.

democracy. Propaganda, treated by Goebbels as a weapon of war, was fundamental to attracting new adherents to National Socialism. Propaganda activity was said to fulfill two primary functions: instilling a large number of ideas in a small group of people and agitating a large number of people through a small number of ideas. The Soviet author Serge Tchakhotine maintained that this portion of society possessed an unstable nervous system and often derived satisfaction from being dominated and guided.¹⁴⁸

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler emphasized the importance of mass rallies as an instrument for attracting new followers and for enabling individuals to experience themselves as part of a larger community, thereby providing a sense of encouragement and comfort. This idea reflects Hitler's view that the individual should be closely bound to the masses and that what he called mass suggestion was a means of producing that bond.

The mass meeting is necessary, if only because in it the individual who is becoming a supporter of a new movement, who feels lonely and may easily become afraid that he stands alone, sees for the first time the image of a great community, something that has a comforting and encouraging effect on people (...) he succumbs to the magical influence of what we call mass suggestion¹⁴⁹.

The passage assigns the rally an integrative function: it transforms the new adherent's perception of isolation into the visible experience of belonging to a large collectivity. Semantically, the opposition between solitude and community organizes the argument; pragmatically, the mass event presents the movement's strength as evidence of political viability. The expression "mass suggestion" belongs to the psychological vocabulary of the period and should not be translated analytically as hypnosis or trance. The effect of the rally can be explained more precisely through ritual synchronization,

¹⁴⁸ Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo*, 102.

¹⁴⁹ Hitler, cited in Neumann, *Behemoth*, 484.

normative pressure, group identification, emotional intensity, and the perception of consensus.

Neumann described National Socialism through images of society's incorporation into a "supermachine" and the reduction of individual spontaneity. This formulation should be read as a critical interpretation of the regime, not as evidence that the population desired domination or was psychologically homogeneous. Historically, propaganda simplified ideological repertoires and adapted them to differentiated audiences: anticommunism, nationalism, antisemitism, promises of order, and, depending on the sector addressed, anticapitalist rhetoric or defense of property. Reception was uneven and depended on interests, identities, and local conditions¹⁵⁰.

Burleigh emphasizes that the NSDAP's electoral advances in rural areas beginning in 1928 led to greater attention to agrarian policy and adjustments in the program. The episode shows that propaganda did not consist only of repeating slogans: the party observed results, segmented audiences, and modified priorities in order to reduce electoral costs and broaden coalitions of support¹⁵¹.

National Socialist visual propaganda articulated a recognizable identity through the red, white, and black palette of the flag, the swastika, standardized banners, typography, posters, and uniforms. The brown shirts of the SA and, later, the black uniforms associated with the SS produced visual differentiation, discipline, and territorial presence. These signs were not merely decorative: they connected propaganda, ritual, and the capacity for intimidation. Their effectiveness did not derive from universal psychological properties of color, but from political associations constructed and repeated in specific contexts¹⁵².

¹⁵⁰ Tenbrock, *Historia de Alemania*, 295.

¹⁵¹ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 138-139.

¹⁵² Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 25.

4.2. Principles of National Socialist Propaganda

The “laws” presented below derive from later systematizations of political propaganda, especially taxonomies formulated in the mid-twentieth century. They are used here as retrospective categories for organizing observable practices; they should not be interpreted as a historical manual that Hitler or Goebbels applied literally or consciously.

The propaganda experience of the First World War directly influenced Hitler's reflections on political communication in *Mein Kampf*. The systematizations of authors such as Jean-Marie Domenach or Paul Quentin were produced later and do not constitute technical sources that the NSDAP followed during its rise. What can be documented is the recurrence of practices such as simplification, repetition, personalization of leadership, adaptation to audiences, and emotional framing. Their contribution to National Socialist growth was important, but they operated alongside party organization, economic crisis, political violence, and institutional weakening.

Domenach and other postwar authors organized political propaganda into principles such as simplification, repetition, identification of the adversary, adaptation of the message, and coordination among channels. These categories are useful for comparing practices, but historically they postdate Nazism and do not demonstrate that the NSDAP followed a technical doctrine formulated in advance. In this book they are employed as a retrospective analytical grid.

Applied retrospectively, this taxonomy makes it possible to identify recurrent features of the National Socialist repertoire: personalization of leadership, moral polarization, the use of symbols, repetition of slogans, adaptation of the same ideological core to different media, and exploitation of fears already present among sectors of the electorate. The violence of the SA and the exclusion of adversaries must be considered alongside these communicative resources, not as merely “symbolic” extensions of propaganda.

The party phase must also be distinguished from the state phase. Before 1933, the NSDAP coordinated propaganda through its press, its Gaue, auxiliary organizations, and electoral campaigns; after the seizure of power, the Propaganda Ministry, professional chambers, and other bodies radically expanded the capacity for coordination and censorship. This later centralization should not be projected backward as though it had existed throughout the Weimar Republic¹⁵³.

The first principle, the “law of simplicity,” can be reformulated as the reduction of complexity. Propaganda messages tend to select a small number of themes, use recognizable vocabulary, and condense positions into slogans, symbols, and repeatable formulas. In the National Socialist case, greetings and slogans such as “Heil Hitler” functioned as markers of allegiance and as ritual components of the party's public presence. Simplicity facilitates circulation and recognition; it does not guarantee acceptance or replace political competition¹⁵⁴.

Repetition should be analyzed in terms of familiarity, salience, and message coordination, not as programming of the unconscious. The Nazis reused key words, metaphors, enemies, and slogans in speeches, posters, press, radio, and public events. The intended effect was to keep themes readily available, reinforce associations, and synchronize interpretive frames across channels. Repetition could increase recognition and recall, but its effectiveness depended on context, the credibility of the sender, audience predispositions, and the presence of competing messages.

There is no historical basis for attributing to National Socialism the use of neuro-linguistic programming, collective hypnosis, or “mind-control” techniques. NLP was formulated decades later and its categories do not constitute a valid tool for causally explaining Nazi propaganda. Superficial similarities can be described with historically and analytically sufficient concepts: rhetoric, repetition, framing,

¹⁵³ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 56.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, *Técnicas de persuasión*, 27.

emotional appeal, ritual, group identification, staging, and audience segmentation.

In his speeches, Hitler relied on formulations of deliberate clarity, sustained by staging that reinforced the argument. When addressing religion, a habitual device was to present the adversary's faith as ineffective against material force. If devotion had not prevented defeat, then devotion was stripped of practical value.

The rhetorical operation of this argument is antithesis, and its function is not to refute religious belief but to render it irrelevant. By establishing military outcome as the only admissible test, the argument transfers the attribute of effectiveness to the regime and leaves the adversary in the realm of the useless. This is a recurrent procedure in Hitler's discourse: reducing the opposing position to an empirical test that it cannot satisfy. In another passage he praises this simplicity as follows:

The very simplicity of the harangues, their style, and the use of simple and readily comprehensible examples are proof of outstanding political ability.¹⁵⁵

The passage condenses two features of National Socialist discourse. First, it explicitly claims simplicity as a political virtue, opposed to the elaborate argumentation Hitler associated with parliamentary ineffectiveness. Second, it identifies communicative effectiveness with the capacity to command: whoever succeeds in making himself understood by the multitude thereby demonstrates an aptitude to govern it. Simplicity is presented here not merely as an oratorical resource, but as a credential of legitimacy.

Discursive simplicity can be described as a strategy of causal attribution and polarization. Rather than developing multicausal explanations, National Socialist speeches concentrated responsibility in defined enemies and converted economic, political, and cultural problems into binary oppositions. This device increased narrative clarity and facilitated repetition of the message, but its reception

¹⁵⁵ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 228.

depended on whether those categories were recognizable to specific audiences.

At the semiotic level, propaganda combined verbal and visual signs to represent unity and exclusion simultaneously. “Reich,” “Volksgemeinschaft,” the swastika, uniforms, and Führer iconography functioned as condensers of belonging; at the same time, representations of the Jew, the Marxist, or the “enemy of the people” established moral boundaries. The symbolic proximity constructed between leader and people was a propagandistic achievement, not evidence of uniform identification between German society and Hitler.

From a pragmatic perspective, short sentences, imperatives, categorical assertions, and rhetorical questions narrowed the discursive space for doubt and oriented interpretation toward specific courses of action. This form of utterance helped present decisiveness and certainty as attributes of leadership. It is unnecessary to attribute an automatic psychological effect to each formulation: the pragmatic force of the discourse arose from repetition, the context of crisis, the authority of the speaker, and the staging surrounding the intervention.

At the rhetorical level, antithesis, anaphora, enumeration, repetition, and parallelism are particularly prominent. These resources gave speeches rhythm and memorability and reinforced oppositions such as order/chaos, community/enemy, and rebirth/decadence. To keep the analysis verifiable, primary quotations should be used where their provenance can be established, while statements retrospectively attributed to Hitler without precise documentary references should be avoided.

Party communication was not strictly one-way. The NSDAP observed electoral results, attendance at events, reception of its press, and reports from its territorial organizations in order to adjust campaigns and priorities.

Audience segmentation allowed the party to preserve a common ideological core while shifting emphasis according to the

public addressed: unemployment and work, agriculture, anticommunism, nationalism, religion, social order, or resentment toward Versailles could occupy different positions depending on region and circumstance.

This feedback process did not amount to “reading” the internal states of individuals. It was political and organizational observation: measuring attendance, voting, membership, press circulation, adversaries' responses, and the effectiveness of slogans.

Gestures, rhythm, pauses, vocal volume, and the spatial arrangement of rallies formed part of political performance. Their analysis belongs to oral rhetoric and nonverbal communication, not to later categories of neuro-linguistic programming.

The second principle, the “law of the fuse,” can be understood as the activation of grievances already available in public debate. Hitler repeatedly invoked Versailles, the defeat of 1918, anticommunism, and antisemitism in order to connect new events with previously established frames of threat. The mechanism did not consist in creating a clinical phobia, but in selecting politically charged themes and presenting them as immediate causes demanding collective response.

It was fundamentally wrong to suggest, whenever the question of war guilt was discussed, that Germany alone could not be blamed for the catastrophe; the correct course would have been to place this responsibility continually and exclusively upon the enemy, even if this did not correspond to the reality of the facts, as nevertheless was the truth.¹⁵⁶

The passage on war guilt illustrates a central operation of propaganda: reducing a complex historical question to an exclusive attribution of responsibility. Semantically, terms such as “guilt,” “catastrophe,” “enemy,” and “truth” organize a binary field; rhetorically, the contrast between what is “wrong” and what is “correct” eliminates intermediate positions; pragmatically, repetition

¹⁵⁶ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 92-93.

of a single cause seeks to establish an interpretive frame favorable to the speaker. This procedure can be analyzed through attribution of agency, causal simplification, and polarization without resorting to clinical analogies with phobias or to NLP categories.

The third principle, the “law of sympathy,” describes, within this retrospective taxonomy, the tendency to present messages through identities, values, and emotions shared with the audience. In National Socialist propaganda this could take the form of comradeship, national pride, grievance, fear, or belonging to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It should not be equated with the “rapport” of later therapeutic models: historically, it concerns the rhetorical construction of affinity and alignment among speaker, audience, and political cause.

Here lies one of the duties of the National Socialist movement. It must teach our people to despise trivialities and direct their eyes toward what is truly great, not to divide and quarrel over secondary questions, and never to forget that the purpose for which we are now fighting represents the very existence of our nation, and that the only enemy we must punish is the force that perpetually seeks to suffocate us¹⁵⁷.

The passage organizes its message around three converging operations: a hierarchy of values, the construction of a single enemy, and the attribution of a pedagogical function to the movement. Semantically, there is a clear appeal to greatness and national unity through expressions such as “truly great,” “our nation,” and “very existence.” It also clearly identifies an enemy, characterized as a force seeking to suffocate the German people. The exhortation to “direct their eyes” toward what is truly great and not to divide over “secondary questions” functions as a hierarchy of attention: it determines what deserves to be seen and disqualifies everything else in advance. The National Socialist movement is likewise presented as an entity that must “teach” the German people, suggesting a role of leadership and control. Pragmatically, the discourse seeks to persuade

¹⁵⁷ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 304-305.

the audience of the importance of unity and struggle against a common enemy. Expressions such as “one of the duties” and “the purpose for which we are now fighting” emphasize the significance of the National Socialist cause. The passage also issues a call to action by declaring that the only enemy to be punished is the force threatening the German nation. At the level of figurative structure, the contrast between division and quarrelling on the one hand and the very existence of the nation on the other presents unity as an imperative of survival rather than an outcome of deliberation. Antithesis likewise opposes “trivialities” to what is “truly great,” thereby establishing a hierarchy of values. The combined effect of these operations is to replace deliberation with adherence: once the enemy has been defined as an existential threat, discussion of means and ends is displaced from the political realm to that of survival.

The fourth principle, termed “synthesis,” describes the reduction of a complex problem to a recognizable thesis and to a sequence of associations that repeatedly return to it. In Hitler's speeches, digressions and examples could accumulate without rigorous analytical logic, but the conclusion restored the central opposition among crisis, enemy, and political solution¹⁵⁸. Pedagogical theories of meaningful learning belong to another field and are unnecessary to explain this procedure. Here, synthesis is understood solely as rhetorical condensation and the hierarchization of information.

The fifth principle, the “law of surprise,” is often formulated in terms of the effectiveness of the half-truth. This formulation requires qualification. Hitler maintained that the feelings of the crowd do not admit nuance or intermediate positions, and from this premise he derived a preference for absolute assertions; there is, by contrast, no documentary basis for attributing to him a doctrine of partial falsehood. What can be verified is the procedure: selecting favorable data, omitting adverse evidence, and framing information within a binary opposition. The gap between this practice and the stated

¹⁵⁸ Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian, *Psicología educativa*, 55.

principle requires no hypothesis about Hitler's intentions or the image he sought to project; it can be explained by the function of the message, which was designed to mobilize rather than inform.

Hitler criticized German propaganda during the First World War for ridiculing the enemy and creating expectations that experience at the front could disprove¹⁵⁹. This observation introduces the problem of credibility: propaganda that visibly contradicts the receiver's experience may lose effectiveness.

The sixth principle, repetition, refers to the reiteration of a limited set of themes. Pratkanis and Aronson relate this preference to Hitler's contemptuous conception of mass publics¹⁶⁰. The passage from *Mein Kampf* insists on few points, simple formulas, and reiteration. There is no need to resort to analogies with self-esteem, mental "programming," or theories of cognitive inclusion to describe it; frequency, salience, familiarity, and consistency of framing are sufficient.

The preceding passage can be read as a reflection on propagandistic credibility: the sender must avoid portraying the enemy in terms so false that the receiver can easily test them against experience. Semantically, Hitler contrasts "ridicule" with "capacity for resistance"; pragmatically, he uses the failure of wartime propaganda as an argument for his own model of communication. Repetition then appears as a mechanism for maintaining continuity of the message, not as a guarantee that an idea will be irreversibly fixed in the mind¹⁶¹. Goebbels also defended coordinated reiteration, while insisting on variation in form and channel to avoid monotony.

Hitler presents this point more clearly when he writes:

¹⁵⁹ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, chap. VI ("La propaganda de guerra").

¹⁶⁰ Hitler, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 338-339.

¹⁶¹ Joseph Goebbels, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 77.

(...) the success of an advertisement, whether commercial or political, is due to the persistence and constancy with which it is employed (...).¹⁶²

In summary, systematic action includes both the reiteration of a message over time and the constant repetition of the same content. According to these authors, Joseph Goebbels understood this principle very well; propagandistic saturation is reflected in his observations, reproduced below:

Order and repetition are usually more primitive than we think. Propaganda must therefore be essentially simple and repetitive. In the long term, only those who can reduce problems to the simplest terms and have the courage to keep repeating them in the simplest possible form, despite the protests of intellectuals, will achieve good results in influencing public opinion¹⁶³.

The seventh principle, termed saturation or attrition, refers to repeated exposure to the same frame. In the Nazi case, sustained repetition of nationalist, antisemitic, and anticommunist themes increased their visibility and normalized their presence in public space, especially after 1933, when competing voices were progressively restricted. Repetition does not, however, amount to automatic conversion: depending on audience and context, it may produce familiarity, fatigue, rejection, or acceptance. The historical importance of the mechanism lies in the asymmetry created when the state controls channels and reduces alternatives, not in an alleged psychological law compelling belief.

The eighth principle, dosage, can be reformulated as the temporal continuity of propagandistic presence. Posters, press, public events, radio, and film kept themes and images in circulation and prevented campaigns from depending on a single intervention. Recurrent exposure reinforced recognition and salience, but it should not be presented as a mechanical theory of mental storage. In

¹⁶² Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 94.

¹⁶³ Joseph Goebbels, cited in Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 184.

communication terms, what matters is the combination of frequency, timing, medium, and audience¹⁶⁴.

The ninth and final principle is orchestration: preserving a thematic core while adapting its form to each channel. A newspaper, poster, rally, radio broadcast, and film do not produce the same type of attention or reach the same audiences. The NSDAP and, after 1933, the state apparatus combined these media in differentiated ways. The concept is useful as a retrospective description of multichannel coordination, not as evidence that Hitler consciously applied “nine laws” from a technical manual.

4.3. Propaganda Techniques and Uses

The first of these techniques is the use of stereotypes. Labeling individuals is a widespread human practice. The journalist Konrad Heiden, who closely studied Hitler over a period of ten years, left a notable analysis of Hitler before he became the Führer:

With impeccable certainty Hitler expressed the mute panic of masses confronted by an invisible enemy and gave a name to the specter that had none. He was a pure fragment of the soul of the modern mass, unclouded by personal qualities. One scarcely needs to ask by what arts he conquered the masses; he did not conquer them, he portrayed and represented them. His speeches are the daydreams of this mass soul; they are chaotic, full of contradictions, often meaningless if his words are taken literally, like dreams, and yet charged with a deeper meaning. (...) Hitler gave voice to the mute terror of the modern mass and gave a name to its mute fear. That is what makes him the greatest mass orator of the age of the masses¹⁶⁵.

Nazi racial propaganda constructed an opposition between an idealized “Aryan” and a “Jew” represented through negative, conspiratorial, and pathological attributes. These characteristics did

¹⁶⁴ Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian, *Psicología educativa*, 120.

¹⁶⁵ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 131.

not describe actual groups: they were ideological stereotypes designed to naturalize hierarchy, exclusion, and violence. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler combined this dichotomy with a language of contamination, selfish interest, and biological threat. The following passage, cited by Burleigh, comes from *Mein Kampf* and must be read within the radicalization of Hitler's antisemitism during the 1920s:

If, at the beginning of the war and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been subjected to poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our finest German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain. Twelve thousand vermin eliminated in time might, however, have saved the lives of a million real Germans, valuable for the future¹⁶⁶.

The passage was not delivered at a meeting in 1942: it comes from *Mein Kampf*. Its importance lies in the fact that, within Hitler's political language of the 1920s, it anticipates an extreme form of dehumanization and hypothetical violence against Jews. Semantically, “corrupters” and “vermin” erase the individuality of the designated group; rhetorically, the comparison between thousands of Jews and millions of German soldiers constructs a false causal and sacrificial relation. The passage should not be read as a literal description of an extermination policy already decided at that moment, but it does constitute evidence of the radical character of Hitler's antisemitism before the seizure of power.

The propagandistic stereotype condenses a diverse group into a limited set of traits and presents those traits as permanent. In the Nazi case, Jews, Roma, homosexual people, political opponents, and other groups were represented through degrading or threatening categories. The intended political effect was to make exclusion intelligible: if the enemy appears essentially dangerous, discriminatory measures can be presented as defense of the community. Propaganda also constructed a positive ideal of the “Aryan,” associated with

¹⁶⁶ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 131.

strength, work, discipline, and sacrifice. Both poles formed part of the same grammar of belonging and exclusion; their broad circulation does not imply that all receivers accepted them in the same way.

Simplification and false dichotomy reduce alternatives: order or chaos, community or enemy, loyalty or betrayal. National Socialism used this procedure to translate economic, political, and social conflicts into moral and racial antagonisms. Its propagandistic utility lay in reducing the need to explain complex causalities and in making different messages compatible within a stable opposition. This reduction favored mobilization, but it did not automatically eliminate debate, doubt, or rejection.

Transfer can be described as associating a message with symbols, institutions, or values that already possess legitimacy for the audience. In Nazi propaganda, flags, rituals, historical references, uniforms, and national vocabulary allowed meanings of authority, continuity, and community to be transferred to the party¹⁶⁷. The concept is more useful as a semiotic and rhetorical relation than as a psychological technique supposedly capable of producing adherence on its own.

Excessive simplification was especially visible in the construction of the “Jewish enemy.” The regime converted distinct phenomena—economic crisis, Marxism, finance, the press, military defeat, and international conflict—into components of a single antisemitic conspiracy. A secure primary example, although later than the central period of this book, is Hitler’s speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, in which he again blamed an alleged “international finance Jewry” for a future war and linked that conspiratorial fiction to a threat of annihilation. This formulation demonstrates the radicalization of a mechanism already present in

¹⁶⁷ Jacques Ellul, *La propaganda: formación de las actitudes humanas* (Barcelona: Hacer, 2003), 120.

earlier propaganda: exclusive attribution of agency to a racial enemy and the elimination of alternative causes¹⁶⁸.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler argues that propaganda directed at broad audiences should reduce the number of themes, limit argumentative complexity, and repeat recognizable formulas. His position is presented here in paraphrase rather than as a literal quotation without a verifiable edition and page reference. The analytical interest lies in its instrumental conception of the audience: effectiveness is associated with reduction of complexity, reiteration, and the primacy of emotional response over deliberation.

Another technique is the substitution of names by terms carrying emotional connotations. Neutral expressions are thereby replaced with others favorable to propagandistic purposes. Linguistic manipulation was common under the Nazi regime. Certain words with pejorative meanings, such as fanatic or blind, acquired positive connotations; indeed, fanatic was one of Hitler's favored terms. More significant was the positive use of the word propaganda itself, to the point that Goebbels would interject in his speeches: "Of course, all this is propaganda!" Nazi language was filled with imperative formulas, superlatives, and emphatic expressions, from Heil Hitler to My young comrades. Archaic terms were revived and attempts were made to modify long-established usages, though some failed, as in the attempt to replace Euer Hochwohlgeboren (Your Honorable Lordship) with Euer Deutschgeboren (Your German Lordship). Euphemistic distortion was also evident, particularly during the war. Difficulties were described as "temporary pauses" and retreats as "elastic advances to the rear"; extermination camps became "labor camps" and deportations "resettlements." As an example of the Nazi regime's persecution and denigration of Jews, one may recall the film *The Eternal Jew*, produced in 1940. Abbreviations and acronyms

¹⁶⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Hitler's Reichstag Speech, January 30, 1939", *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 13, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/timeline-event/holocaust/1939-1941/hitler-speech-to-german-parliament>.

proliferated under the regime, from NSDAP, SS, and SA to GESTA-PO, as well as PKW for passenger cars and LKW for trucks.¹⁶⁹

Selection. The propagandist selects particular facts according to his purposes. The international situation after the Treaty of Versailles became a clear target of the German National Socialist Party. Hitler thereby sought to restore the people's lost confidence. He also frequently distorted history to suit his interests. Thus, the wars in which the United States had participated, beginning with the War of Independence, were invoked to discredit a country "that has settled everything through force¹⁷⁰."

The repetition of slogans condensed complex messages into memorable formulas. "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer" summarized national unity, state centralization, and personal leadership in a brief sequence. Alongside the slogan, identification of the enemy made it possible to attribute heterogeneous problems to recognizable actors. Antisemitism stood at the center of this operation, while Versailles, the "November criminals," Marxism, and foreign powers supplied complementary frames of grievance¹⁷¹. Bracher observes that this reduction of everyday problems to a few causes facilitated attacks on the Weimar system. The procedure did not "solve" complexity: it replaced it with a morally polarized narrative adaptable to different audiences and circumstances.

In the final technique considered here, appeal to authority was used to reinforce the figure of the leader. According to Pratkanis and Aronson, Hitler presented himself as "the statesman, the highest and sole authority," and the term "Führer" was used exclusively to refer to him. Goebbels, for his part, used this technique to channel authority through slogans and encourage acceptance of authority as an overriding presence in German political consciousness. In his diary, Goebbels referred to the use of the epithet "Führer" in relation to Vidkun Quisling, Norway's Minister of Defense from 1931 to

¹⁶⁹ Pizarroso Quintero, *Historia de la propaganda*, 347-348.

¹⁷⁰ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 140.

¹⁷¹ Karl Dietrich Bracher, cited in Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo*, 105.

1933. The episode illustrates how the figure of the leader could be used as an instrument for establishing authority and, in turn, sustaining control over the population.

(...) I forbid the use of the word Führer when it is applied to Quisling. Although he calls himself the Foerer of Norway and the word Foerer can readily be translated as Führer, I do not believe that anyone other than the Führer himself has the right to use that word¹⁷².

For Goebbels, language and words had to be used carefully and strategically to foster nationalism and the idea of strong authority in German minds. In his diary, Goebbels wrote of the importance of reserving words such as “Führer” and “Reich” exclusively for the German context, so that the idea of strong authority and a powerful country would become deeply embedded in the political imagination of the German people. According to Pratkanis and Aronson, Goebbels used appeals to authority to reinforce the idea that Hitler was the sole and supreme authority in Germany and that his power and leadership were to be followed and respected without question. This was reflected in Nazi propaganda and campaign slogans, which emphasized Hitler as the undisputed and charismatic leader of the German people.

There are certain terms that we must reserve exclusively for ourselves, and among them is the word Reich. In the future, the whole world must understand that Reich means only the German Reich¹⁷³.

To all the techniques discussed above must be added exaggeration, counterpropaganda, and the slogan, although exaggeration can also be treated as a form of falsehood. Every propagandist must know the enemy thoroughly in order to plan counterpropaganda and attack it not frontally but element by element, one by one, beginning above all with its weakest points. Exaggeration consists in disproportionately magnifying the positive

¹⁷² Joseph Goebbels, *Diario* (Barcelona: Los Libros de Nuestro Tiempo, 1949), 76.

¹⁷³ Goebbels, *Diario*, 76.

aspects of a fact or product, or the negative aspects of an enemy or competitor. It can be effective in generating intense emotions and attracting attention, but it may also be perceived as manipulative and generate distrust over the longer term. Counterpropaganda, by contrast, seeks to discredit the enemy's propaganda by disseminating information that challenges its truthfulness or relevance. It can be effective when used carefully and grounded in objective evidence, but it may also be perceived as an aggressive strategy and contribute to polarization. Finally, slogans are a common technique in political propaganda and advertising: short, simple phrases condense a key message in a form that is readily remembered and recognized by the public. Such slogans can effectively fix a specific idea or message in the receiver's mind, but they may also be superficial and provide little detailed information about the issue in question. The following excerpt is added as an illustration of Hitler's oratorical power. While in his Nuremberg cell awaiting execution, Hans Frank, the former governor of occupied Poland, recalled the first time he heard Hitler speak:

He impressed me enormously at once. He was completely different from anything I had heard at other public meetings. He had an absolutely clear and simple method. He took the dominant issue of the day, the Diktat of Versailles, and posed the basic question: What now, German people? What is the real situation? What can be done now? He spoke for some two and a half hours, with numerous interruptions from frenzied torrents of applause (...) and you could have listened to him speak for much, much longer. Everything came from the heart and struck a chord in all of us (...) He said what was in the minds of everyone present and connected general experiences with the clear understanding and common wishes of those who were suffering and waiting for a program. In the substance itself he was not original, certainly ... but he was the one destined to act as spokesman for the people (...) He concealed nothing (...) of the horror, anguish, and despair confronting Germany. But not only that. He showed a path, the only path left to all ruined peoples in history: that of the difficult new beginning from the deepest depths, based on

courage, faith, intelligent action, hard work, and devotion to a great, luminous, shared goal (...) He placed himself under the protection of the Almighty with a quite serious and solemn exhortation that the restoration of the honor of the German worker and soldier would be the task of his life (...) When he finished, the applause would not cease (...) From that night on, although I was not a member of the party, I was convinced that if there was one man who could do it, that man was he; Hitler alone would be capable of directing Germany's destiny¹⁷⁴.

The testimony cited above illustrates the importance of staging at Hitler's public meetings. Burleigh emphasizes the use of music, lighting, sequences of speakers, and the calculated delay of the leader's appearance to generate anticipation¹⁷⁵. Such devices intensified attention and collective identification, but they do not justify speaking of a "blocking of consciousness" or a hypnotic state. Persuasion operated alongside organizational discipline, social pressure, and political predispositions. The construction of the Hitler Myth also reinforced the personalization of the movement: the leader appeared as the embodiment of unity and national recovery¹⁷⁶. After 1933, Goebbels amplified this image through the press, radio, film, and state ceremonies. The use of slogans and historical symbols contributed to the visual continuity of the message. The analysis must distinguish between theatrical effectiveness and automatic obedience: rituals could reinforce existing convictions or produce public conformity without eliminating divergent private interpretations.

Today I am proud to have discovered the methods that enabled us not only to render the propaganda of our adversaries ineffective, but also to overwhelm those who devised it with their own words¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁴ Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis*, 164.

¹⁷⁵ Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 145.

¹⁷⁶ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 341.

¹⁷⁷ Hitler, *Mi lucha*, 223-224.

This statement by Hitler clearly reflects a propaganda strategy directed at the less educated strata of German society. The Nazi Party understood that the success of its movement depended to a considerable degree on its ability to mobilize broad popular constituencies, particularly the middle and lower-middle classes. Nazi propaganda therefore focused heavily on appealing to the fears and hopes of these social groups and on presenting the party as the only force capable of resolving the country's economic and political problems. To achieve this objective, Nazi propaganda relied on a range of psychological techniques that appealed directly to people's emotions. As we have seen, these techniques included the construction of a personality cult around Hitler, the use of striking slogans and symbols, and the organization of mass rallies and parades that generated a sense of unity and cohesion around the party.

The intellectual level of propaganda must be lowered in proportion to the size of the mass of people to be won over¹⁷⁸.

The principal aim was to capture the attention of the largest possible number of people from all sectors of society, but above all of the dissatisfied mass that formed part of the fabric of German society. Party preferences in March 1932 provide a clear illustration of the confused state of German politics. Hindenburg, a Prussian, by inclination a member of the National Party, Protestant, and a monarchist at heart, counted among the core of his supporters the Social Democrats, the trade unions, the Catholic Center, and other small democratic parties; for all of them he had become the personification of the Weimar Constitution. The privileged conservative classes of the Protestant north voted either for Duestenberg or for Hitler, while some working-class votes went to the Communist candidate. Tensions were not eased when the results of a very heavy turnout were announced. The popular vote for Nazism appeared to have risen by 86 percent since the previous autumn, although it still trailed Hindenburg by seven million votes.

¹⁷⁸ Hitler, cited in Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 110.

Hindenburg, however, had fallen fewer than 200,000 votes short of the majority required over his three opponents, making a second election necessary. For the second campaign, the ingenious Goebbels devised the new idea of having the Führer travel across Germany by airplane. On one occasion he did so to attend an engagement in Düsseldorf amid violent storms that had, in theory, halted all air traffic in western Germany.

The Nazi press did not miss the opportunity to dramatize the incident as evidence of Hitler's qualities as a leader. The Führer's daring, however, did not suffice to win the election. Although he received more than thirteen million popular votes, Hindenburg remained comfortably ahead with 53 percent of the vote. This result demonstrates the complexity of Germany's political landscape before the 1932 elections and the extent to which Goebbels used every available means to secure as many voters as possible. Raúl Maestri likewise emphasized the complexity of Germany's political configuration before the elections.

The triumph of National Socialism in Germany would be a historical event of greater consequence than Italian Fascism. Germany is an indispensable organ of the modern world, spiritually as well as materially. Every event that affects it profoundly assumes genuine significance for humanity. All the more so at this moment, when Germany stands at the center of the gravest economic and political problems of the day; moreover, the German spirit is passing through an interval of confusion and uncertainty, yet it retains intact its energy, strength, and ambition; the ideology capable of offering a concrete task to these impulses possesses a magnificent opportunity. Finally, the historical decision that is approaching in Germany—for it can be said with absolute certainty that, in one form or another, this country is close to adopting solutions of epochal magnitude—will place on the unsettled

scales of the present a weight that, for an indefinite period, will determine a global orientation¹⁷⁹.

Maestri also linked National Socialist electoral performance to the intensification of propaganda and to the party's ability to present Hitler as an immediate solution to the crisis:

The official ideology of National Socialism (...) has made the Party's great electoral triumphs possible. On this occasion, however, the Party found itself in a difficult position: more than ever it was necessary to "move the masses," but at the same time the promises of the National Socialist paradise were assuming the compromising character of imminence. The Party yielded to this latter fear. The phraseology of National Socialist speakers reached delirious proportions, and in this sea of words scarcely visible were the bubbles of pragmatic ideology swallowed up in the "school for speakers." The National Socialist press presented Hitler not as a candidate for the Presidency, but as the candidate already elected, and descended into injurious polemical excesses. Hitler personally directed the campaign, and the Party mobilized all its resources, from the "Storm Detachments" to fleets of airplanes. Goebbels declared in the Reichstag: "For National Socialism it is a matter of being or not being"¹⁸⁰.

Nazi electoral growth did not lead automatically to power. After becoming the largest force in the Reichstag in July 1932, the NSDAP failed to secure an absolute majority and lost votes in November. Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933, resulted from a combination of political pressure, negotiations among conservative elites, constitutional calculation, and the erosion of the parliamentary system, in a context of violence and intimidation. Propaganda helped broaden the party's public presence and personalize Hitler's leadership, but it does not by itself explain the outcome. Goebbels was a central figure in this machinery, not its sole

¹⁷⁹ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 146.

¹⁸⁰ Maestri, *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*, 158-159.

architect.¹⁸¹ The Nazi electoral apparatus remained in almost permanent mobilization, with materials prepared to respond to opponents and a strong capacity for adaptation. When Hitler faced restrictions on appearing as a speaker, propaganda diversified its spokespeople and formats; this flexibility helped partially detach the movement's visibility from the physical presence of its leader¹⁸². The wartime examples that follow belong to a different phase: they show how, once the regime had been established, propaganda extended into occupied territories and toward audiences subjected to forms of coercion that had not existed in Weimar electoral competition.

It is interesting to observe the importance that a skillful exploitation of religious sentiments can have. At first the Tatars did not display a very friendly attitude toward the German Wehrmacht. But they changed completely when we allowed them to intone their religious chants from the tops of the minarets. So radical has their change been that it is possible to form Tatar auxiliary companies to fight actively against the Bolsheviks¹⁸³.

Goebbels then explains the contrivance used to win Tatar support for National Socialism.

Our effort was supported by the propaganda companies, which distributed photographs of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem visiting the Führer. This produced a great effect¹⁸⁴.

According to Lochner, the Grand Mufti visited Germany in November 1941 and then traveled to Italy for a month before returning to Berlin, where he was received by Hitler on December 8 of that year. The Grand Mufti's visit provides an example of Goebbels's opportunism and of how he exploited this diplomatic

¹⁸¹ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Hitler Comes to Power", *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 13, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hitler-comes-to-power>; Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 139.

¹⁸² Nolte, *El fascismo en su época*, 425.

¹⁸³ Goebbels, *Diario*, 65.

¹⁸⁴ Goebbels, *Diario*, 65.

encounter for his own propagandistic purposes. The Nazi propaganda machinery was also used to consolidate the party's position through every available resource and to capitalize on the various crises confronting Germany. During the period of governmental paralysis from 1928 to 1932, the ruling class was increasingly driven toward authoritarian solutions. Three possible paths lay in that direction: a government of the traditional right, a military dictatorship, or the advent of National Socialism.¹⁸⁵

The preceding examples demonstrate a sustained capacity to exploit grievances, religious symbols, and political conjunctures, but they do not demonstrate mechanical control over audiences. Propaganda operated alongside organization, institutional authority, local interests, and, in occupied territories, coercion. Reception could encompass adherence, opportunism, accommodation, indifference, or resistance.

"What have the old parties achieved of all that they promised?

The end has come!

A period of great political promises and hopes ends in general bankruptcy—political, moral, and economic. The sovereign people may feel grateful to their rulers. For they are responsible for its condition¹⁸⁶.

In this speech, Hitler structures his criticism through contrast: he opposes the promises of the established parties to the present crisis and assigns responsibility to those in government. The appeal to the "sovereign people" allows him rhetorically to appropriate democratic vocabulary in order to legitimize an antidemocratic alternative. The procedure simplifies causal relations and presents the NSDAP as a break with the system, but the analysis does not require assuming that the audience uniformly perceived it as the only solution.

¹⁸⁵ Villani, *El nacionalsocialismo*, 106.

¹⁸⁶ Hitler, cited in Nolte, *El fascismo en su época*, 388.

The comparison with mesmerism, used in part of the literature on persuasion, should not be framed as a historical equivalence or as a demonstrated psychological mechanism. National Socialist practices can be described more precisely through observable operations: capturing attention, formulating an interpretive frame acceptable to predisposed audiences, activating emotions, and defining the situation in terms favorable to the sender. The analogy is retained solely as a historiographical reference to early models of "suggestion"; it does not imply hypnosis, mind control, or technical continuity between mesmerism and Nazi propaganda¹⁸⁷.

4.4. Visual Standardization, Public Presence, and Coercion

The visual standardization of the SA and other organizations served a dual function. On the one hand, it generated immediate recognition, discipline, and a sense of cohesion; on the other, it made visible an organized capacity to occupy public space and to intimidate. The uniform should therefore be analyzed at the boundary between propaganda and coercion: it communicated belonging and strength while simultaneously accompanying actual practices of political violence.

As a system of signs, the National Socialist visual repertoire operated through standardization and repetition. The brown shirt, the swastika armband, the standards, and the typography of posters formed a closed set of elements repeated without variation in parades, rallies, party newspapers, and party premises. The effectiveness of this repertoire did not lie in the originality of each component—several derived from the pre-1918 *völkisch* imaginary—but in their fixed combination and frequency of appearance. The same criterion established for verbal repetition applies here: what the uniform produces is familiarity and salience, not automatic adherence.

¹⁸⁷ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 41.

Organized public presence extended this repertoire into urban space. Marches, rallies, torchlight processions, and deployments on designated dates transformed the street into a stage and the activist into an actor in a collective performance. The political function of these events was twofold: internally, they strengthened cohesion among participants through ritual and bodily discipline; externally, they displayed a volume of support that electoral arithmetic did not yet substantiate. To occupy a square was to advance a claim to representation.

The threshold separating such display from coercion is what gives this section its analytical significance. SA parades did not merely exhibit cohesion: they displayed a capacity for aggression and frequently exercised it. Clashes in meeting halls, attacks on KPD and SPD premises and events, and the physical control of working-class neighborhoods formed part of the same apparatus. The message was not merely "we are many," but "we can impose ourselves." Propaganda accompanied by actual violence changes the conditions under which all other messages are received, because it incorporates the cost of dissent as a variable in the recipient's calculation.

The two dimensions should nevertheless remain analytically distinct. Propaganda operates through symbolic resources and depends on the recipient's interpretation; coercion operates through material resources and does not require that interpretation. Confusing them leads to attributing to persuasion outcomes that are better explained by fear, a recurrent error in the literature on the period. The uniform is particularly revealing precisely because it occupies the point of intersection: it is a sign that communicates a capacity, and its interpretation therefore requires distinguishing which part of the effect derives from meaning and which from threat.

After January 1933, the relationship between the two terms was reversed. While the NSDAP competed for votes, uniformed display was a resource used to contest the streets with other formations that were likewise uniformed. Once the state apparatus had been brought under its control, the uniform ceased to be a promise of force and became an expression of its institutional exercise, while public

presence shifted from competition to exclusive occupation of space, without visible rivals. This is the same displacement noted with regard to the press and radio, and it confirms that the party and state phases cannot be treated as a single analytical unit.

The logic of standardization did not stop at the visible. During the war it extended to the very lexicon of the occupied territories, where the teaching of German was conceived as a vehicle for standardized political terminology. Goebbels's statement closing this section is explicit on this point: vocabulary is understood as an infrastructure of framing, and its standardization as an indirect form of propaganda that need not articulate slogans because it incorporates them into the instrument through which thought itself is organized.

I have given instructions for our Ministry to prepare dictionaries for the occupied regions where German must be taught and disseminated. Above all, they must include terminology consistent with our modern conception of the state. They must also contain those words that express our political dogmatism. It is an indirect form of propaganda from which, in the long run, I expect the best results¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁸ Goebbels, *Diario*, 91.

CHAPTER V. JOSEPH GOEBBELS AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PROPAGANDA

5.1. Joseph Goebbels: Career and Formation

To understand the institutionalization of Nazi propaganda, Joseph Goebbels must be situated within a broader organization. Hitler formulated general principles of propaganda and turned his own oratory into a central resource of the movement; Goebbels, for his part, developed an exceptional capacity to coordinate campaigns, media, calendars, and staged events. His importance was institutional and organizational, not that of an isolated "inventor" of National Socialist propaganda.

Paul Joseph Goebbels was born on October 29, 1897, in Rheydt, Rhineland. He studied literature, history, and philosophy and earned a doctorate at Heidelberg in 1921. His initial aspirations were literary and journalistic. The physical disability he had lived with since childhood and his exclusion from military service are relevant biographical facts, but they do not in themselves constitute a causal explanation for his later political radicalization; linking physical traits or personal experiences to an ideology requires evidence that the sources do not allow us to establish in any simple way.

Goebbels joined the National Socialist movement in the mid-1920s. After a period of proximity to Gregor Strasser's faction, he aligned himself with Hitler and was appointed Gauleiter of Berlin in 1926. In 1927 he launched the newspaper *Der Angriff* and, in 1930, assumed central responsibilities for party propaganda¹⁸⁹. His trajectory illustrates the convergence of ideological militancy, territorial organization, party journalism, and mass politics.

¹⁸⁹ On Goebbels's Berlin period and the founding of *Der Angriff*, see Kershaw, *Hitler: Hubris*.

Goebbels's influence did not derive from any supposed individual genius, but from his capacity to coordinate messages, media, and political rituals within a nationwide organization. He combined the party press, rallies, posters, loudspeakers, film, and radio with a strong personalization of Hitler; this coordination increased the NSDAP's visibility and made it possible to adapt common themes to different audiences¹⁹⁰.

In 1933, this party-based trajectory was transformed into state capacity. The creation of a ministry specifically devoted to propaganda made it possible to expand the coordination of the press, radio, film, culture, and entertainment, although competencies were never absolutely exclusive and coexisted with other centers of power within the regime. This transition from party propaganda to state propaganda is fundamental to avoiding anachronism in the analysis.

Goebbels's diaries and speeches reveal an openly elitist conception of political communication: the public appears as an object of mobilization, the slogan as an instrument of simplification, and repetition as a means of fixation. This language reveals the authoritarian logic of the propagandist and should be read as a source on his self-perception, not as a scientific theory of collective behavior¹⁹¹.

Under Goebbels's direction, propaganda became one of the central components of the dictatorship, but it did not function as an autonomous sphere. The party, ministries, professional organizations, police, educational system, and territorial authorities all participated in coordinating messages and excluding voices. The reach of the post-1933 propaganda apparatus must therefore be analyzed together with censorship, Gleichschaltung, and coercion.

Radio was the electronic medium with the greatest domestic reach used by the regime, supplemented by the press, film, newsreels, posters, loudspeakers, and public rallies. Television existed in Germany as an experimental technology with extremely limited

¹⁹⁰ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 339.

¹⁹¹ Goebbels, cited in Burleigh, *El Tercer Reich*, 138.

audiences and therefore should not be described as a mass medium that carried propaganda directly into homes. Goebbels's strategy consisted in coordinating channels with different capacities and repeating an ideological core through formats suited to each situation¹⁹².

Antisemitic and anti-communist propaganda was not merely a formal device for constructing a "common enemy": it formed part of the ideological core of National Socialism and contributed to legitimizing exclusion, persecution, and violence. After 1933, discursive dehumanization operated within a legal and police system that progressively reduced the capacity of persecuted groups to respond. This relationship makes it impossible to separate analysis of the message from the institutional conditions in which it circulated.

After 1933, propaganda acquired an extensive presence in the press, radio, film, newsreels, posters, schools, culture, and public events. This expansion increased the regime's capacity to set the agenda and restrict alternative interpretations, but it does not permit the claim that the population accepted official policies "without question." The propaganda apparatus operated alongside censorship, professional exclusion, surveillance, and repression. Repetition helped keep ideological frames readily available; its effects varied by group, moment, and wartime experience. This distinction is essential for separating media reach from actual reception.

5.2. The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda

The Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (RMVP) was created in March 1933 and placed under Goebbels's direction. Its capacity for intervention grew through professional coordination, press directives, censorship, control over access to the

¹⁹² United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Nazi Propaganda and Censorship", *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 13, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-propaganda-and-censorship>.

media, and the reorganization of cultural life. It did not, however, constitute an absolute administrative monopoly from its first day: its competencies overlapped with those of other ministries, party agencies, and Nazi leaders. State propaganda therefore functioned as a network of coordination and internal competition within the dictatorship.¹⁹³ In a speech delivered at the opening of the Berlin Motor Show on February 17, 1939, and subsequently reproduced in *Deutsche Technik*, Goebbels articulated his view of the subordination of technology to the regime's political objectives:

(...) National Socialism knew how to take the soulless framework of technology and fill it with the rhythm and warm impulses of our age¹⁹⁴.

Goebbels presented National Socialism as a form of cultural renewal capable of overcoming what the regime defined as Weimar decadence. His discourse combined references to Romanticism, German tradition, community, and sacrifice with an explicit racial hierarchy. This appropriation was selective: heterogeneous authors and cultural traditions were reordered to legitimize a narrative of national continuity. The propagandistic function was not to recover Goethe, Schiller, or Romanticism faithfully, but to transform "German culture" into a normative category through which works compatible with the regime could be included and those labeled Jewish, Marxist, cosmopolitan, or "degenerate" could be excluded.

Every age has its Romanticism, its poetic presentation of life
(...) Our age has one as well. It is harsher and more cruel than
an earlier Romanticism, but it remains Romantic. The steely
Romanticism of our age manifests itself in actions and deeds
in the service of a great national goal, in a sense of duty
elevated to the level of an inviolable principle. We are all,
more or less, Romantics in a new German style. The Reich of

¹⁹³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment", *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed August 13, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/ministry-of-propaganda-and-public-enlightenment>; Jeffrey Herf, *El modernismo reaccionario: tecnología, cultura y política en Weimar y el Tercer Reich* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990), 407.

¹⁹⁴ Herf, *El modernismo reaccionario*, 407.

roaring engines, magnificent industrial creations, and an almost limitless space that we must populate in order to preserve the finest qualities of our Volk is the Reich of our Romanticism.¹⁹⁵

Within the same totalitarian framework, the Minister of Propaganda publicly condemned books and texts written by Jews, leftists, liberals, pacifists, and foreigners. He sponsored the burning of titles and the looting of "suspect" bookstores; in a single night alone, 20,000 books considered harmful or useless to the German people were burned. The Ministry of Propaganda was an extraordinarily elaborate machine for the production and control of ideas. Every branch of communication had a department or section responsible for its appropriate treatment, and each department in turn contained offices charged with specific technical functions. On March 8, 1933, before he had formally become minister, Goebbels reported that his ministry would be divided into five major departments devoted to broadcasting, the press, film, theater, and propaganda. Years later, a colossal ministerial apparatus had emerged—with seventeen departments and innumerable offices—in which a high degree of technical specialization was accompanied by the coordination problems typical of excessive bureaucracy. The two departments with the greatest activity and responsibility were Propaganda and Foreign Affairs. The former decided, directed, and supervised propaganda campaigns and analyzed their results. The Foreign Affairs Department, which expanded most rapidly after the outbreak of war, was responsible for coordinating and determining propaganda activity abroad and eventually comprised more than forty offices. It participated in radio broadcasts and publications intended for foreign audiences and managed the printing and distribution of books, pamphlets, and correspondence. In collaboration with the Foreign Office, it also oversaw the organization of concerts, theatrical performances, lectures, and other cultural events in other countries. In addition, it was responsible for advising and guiding foreigners present in Germany. During the war, the Foreign Affairs Department

¹⁹⁵ Goebbels, cited in Herf, *El modernismo reaccionario*, 408-409.

also undertook operations such as purchasing newspapers abroad, particularly in territories occupied by Germany. In an entry dated January 23, 1942, Goebbels described how he advised Dr. Werner Stephan, a subordinate responsible for purchasing newspapers, news agencies, film-production companies, and other media assets.

I spoke with Stephan about the problem of buying additional newspapers abroad. I believe we must continue doing so, for the greater the number of news organs, especially newspapers, that we possess abroad, the easier our future task of directing Europe will be¹⁹⁶.

This passage also reveals the atmosphere of triumphalism surrounding Dr. Joseph Goebbels. Although mistaken, his outlook was distinctly forward-looking in its attempt to anticipate the possible outcome of the war. In the field of cinema, four days after the preceding entry, Goebbels wrote:

Knothe informed me of the results of his purchases in the southeast.¹⁹⁷ He has acquired a considerable number of movie theaters. They provide us with a certain degree of security with respect to the distribution of our films. German cinema now dominates the Balkans, and American films are steadily losing ground¹⁹⁸.

The regime's film policy combined ministerial intervention, professional regulation, censorship, and economic concentration. Goebbels exercised decisive influence over the sector, but he did not personally control every film or turn every production into explicit propaganda. Entertainment cinema also fulfilled indirect political functions by normalizing values, providing escapism, and sustaining the regime's cultural industry. In openly propagandistic productions, a heroic image of Germany and the demonization of enemies, particularly Jews, were integrated into broader ideological objectives. The medium must be analyzed as part of a coordinated cultural

¹⁹⁶ Goebbels, *Diario*, 46.

¹⁹⁷ Goebbels, *Diario*.

¹⁹⁸ Goebbels, *Diario*, 60.

system, not as a "dream factory" administered monolithically by a single individual.

I shall endeavor to expand our acquisitions in the southeast still further, so that when peace comes we shall be so firmly entrenched that no one will be able to dislodge us¹⁹⁹.

The press was subjected to a progressive process of coordination, censorship, and concentration.²⁰⁰ From 1938 onward, the German News Agency (DNB) operated as the official state news agency. Press conferences and daily directives established priorities, formulations, and restrictions; at the same time, closures, transfers of ownership, professional exclusions, and sanctions reduced the scope of editorial autonomy. The result was a broadly controlled system, although one that remained administratively complex and cannot be reduced to the will of a single office. In his diary, Goebbels also recorded tensions over the way newspapers used official material:

I have some difficulties with the press because it does not follow my suggestions as I would like. (...) Why, when it ought to be howling with joy at the magnificent material we provide? Instead of being delighted, the bourgeois newspapers seem tired of using this material, which infuriates me. But I must continue along the path I have taken, because that is my duty. Unless one constantly lights lamps with which to illuminate and inform the people, they gradually become tired and dulled²⁰¹.

For Lochner, this is an interesting acknowledgment that non-Nazi journalists were not as manageable as the Doctor would have wished. In 1939, 43.5 percent of the circulation of German newspapers was under the control of the party's central publishing house (Eher); by 1944, the figure had risen to 82.5 percent; and with the acquisition of Hugenberg's Scherl publishing house in the final

¹⁹⁹ Goebbels, *Diario*, 60.

²⁰⁰ DNB is the abbreviation for Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro, the official news agency of the Nazi regime.

²⁰¹ Goebbels, *Diario*, 101-102.

months of the war, the monopoly became almost complete.²⁰² For Goebbels, news agencies had to fall within his jurisdiction—that is, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Propaganda. Goebbels wrote about this issue in his diary on February 10, 1942:

I consider it absolutely necessary that the news agencies belong to the Reich. Propaganda is a function of the state, one that the state cannot relinquish under any circumstances. News policy is a fundamental problem, and these matters must be in the hands of the Reich and not of the Party. The Party is not in a position to establish a genuine news agency. In a news agency, 99.9 percent of the news concerns the administration of the country and only a very small percentage the leadership of the Party. I shall encounter some resistance, but I am certain of victory²⁰³.

The passage cited above demonstrates Goebbels's determination to strengthen state jurisdiction over information and to reduce the autonomy of agencies and newspapers. The foreign press and accredited correspondents were likewise subjected to surveillance, guidance, and analysis. This effort at coordination was extensive, but it coexisted with overlapping competencies within the regime and with varying degrees of editorial discipline. State propaganda should therefore be described as a system of increasing control rather than as a perfect capacity to determine the conduct of every recipient.

Defeatist tendencies (...) are due in large part to the irresponsible distribution of news, carried out especially by Seehaus. I shall take the necessary measures to prevent defeatist propaganda from being conducted within our responsible agencies.²⁰⁴

Goebbels, who was never reluctant to combat "defeatism" through force, continued:

²⁰² Burleigh, *E/ Tercer Reich*, 239.

²⁰³ Goebbels, *Diario*, 83.

²⁰⁴ Goebbels, *Diario*, 51.

Canaris has supplied me with a number of shocking examples demonstrating the irresponsibility with which confidential material is distributed. These examples please me. They provide me with the necessary basis for taking exceptionally severe and revolutionary measures²⁰⁵.

The extract illustrates Goebbels's concern with defeatism, confidentiality, and the circulation of information during the war. His exchanges with Wilhelm Canaris demonstrate the connection between propaganda, security, and political leadership, but they do not prove unlimited personal control over every agency of the Reich. In the case of radio, Franz von Papen's government had already advanced centralization before 1933; after the seizure of power, the Ministry of Propaganda expanded control over content, personnel, and the coordination of broadcasts²⁰⁶. Radio administration established political programming, foreign-language broadcasts, monitoring of foreign stations, and policies concerning infrastructure and receivers. The medium's reach made radio a central instrument of regime communication, although reach should not be equated with acceptance. In cinema, control was organized through prior censorship, professional regulation, economic intervention, and increasing industrial concentration. Goebbels exercised decisive influence over priorities and orientation, but he did not personally review every product or turn every film into explicit propaganda; entertainment also served functions of normalization and escapism.

Film production is flourishing in an almost unbelievable way despite the war. What a good idea it was for me to place films at the service of the Reich several years ago! It would be terrible if the great profits now being made by the film industry were to fall into private hands²⁰⁷.

The expansion of cinema exhibition and mobile film units enabled the regime to broaden access to newsreels, entertainment films, and openly propagandistic productions. Attendance figures

²⁰⁵ Goebbels, *Diario*.

²⁰⁶ Goebbels, *Diario*, 238.

²⁰⁷ Goebbels, *Diario*, 45.

cited for the war years demonstrate the social scale of the medium, not the uniformity of its reception. Pratkanis and Aronson use Nazi cinema to illustrate the concentration of antisemitic messages; one of the most explicit productions was *Der ewige Jude* (1940), presented as a documentary and constructed through montage, selection, and dehumanizing analogies²⁰⁸.

National Socialist cinema combined different purposes. *Triumph of the Will* (1935), filmed at the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, transformed the mass meeting into a visual representation of discipline, unanimity, and leadership. Other productions prioritized entertainment or conventional genres, while certain films constructed racial and political enemies. This diversity makes it impossible to treat "Nazi cinema" as a single message. Goebbels also closely monitored productions from enemy countries; the diary entry that follows shows that he evaluated their quality and potential propagandistic effect:

I saw the new American propaganda film *Foreign Correspondent*. It is a first-rate production that will undoubtedly make a certain impression on the broad popular masses in the enemy countries²⁰⁹.

The use of newsreels in German wartime propaganda was a highly effective tool for influencing public opinion and raising the morale of combatants. The requirement that they be shown weekly illustrates the stringent control exercised over this medium by the film department. Newsreels were carefully edited to display the successes of the German armed forces and minimize losses. Wartime propaganda also extended to the theater, where only sixteen of the approximately five hundred theaters operating in Germany were financed and administered directly. Performances by theatrical companies and groups at the front nevertheless became an important propaganda instrument, achieving greater specificity by addressing more narrowly defined audiences. Cultural and artistic propaganda was likewise used to exalt German culture and National Socialist

²⁰⁸ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 343.

²⁰⁹ Goebbels, *Diario*, 46.

values. Classical music and figurative painting, for example, were promoted, while modern and experimental art was rejected as degenerate and corrupt. In sum, Nazi propaganda employed a wide range of media to influence public opinion and encourage adherence to the regime, including newsreels, theater, music, painting, and other cultural and artistic forms.

Goebbels's role in his ministry's music department was, to some extent, contradictory in relation to Nazi ideology. On the one hand, as noted above, he was aware of music's psychological effects on the population, and his department therefore performed an important role in approving and prohibiting particular musical works. On the other hand, Goebbels's music policy sometimes diverged from positions within the Nazi Party, which may reflect a degree of latitude within the music department. In comparison with other departments, it thus enjoyed somewhat greater freedom. Its principal tasks were to examine musical programs, approve or prohibit works, appoint musical directors, investigate the backgrounds of musical performers, administer Reich orchestras, and organize music festivals in Germany and abroad. During the war, the department prepared concerts at the front and even conducted an antiwar-themed musical radio campaign that included a large proportion of light music. It is noteworthy that Goebbels lacked a consistent personal aesthetic criterion in music, which may help explain the contradictions in his policy in this sphere. The music department nevertheless played an important role in the Reich's musical propaganda, reflecting the significance the Nazi regime attributed to music as a means of influencing the population.

In the visual arts, cultural policy combined Hitler's personal preferences, competition among agencies, censorship, professional control, and official exhibitions. The regime promoted figurative art compatible with its racial, military, and rural ideals and attacked the avant-garde under the label of "degenerate art." The Ministry of Propaganda participated in regulation and dissemination, but it was not the only center of decision-making. Artistic policy must be understood as part of cultural *Gleichschaltung*: the classification of

artists, control over professional access, administration of exhibitions, and use of cultural events to project an image of German normality, grandeur, and continuity.

Literature was subjected to similar mechanisms. The Reich Chamber of Literature conditioned access to professional practice, while lists of prohibited works, the purging of libraries, and censorship restricted the circulation of authors considered incompatible with the regime. The book burnings of May 1933, initially promoted by Nazified student organizations and supported by public authorities, became a visible symbol of this cultural exclusion. The objective was not only to silence oppositional texts, but to reorganize the publishing field according to political and racial criteria. Propaganda and censorship thus functioned as complementary processes: one expanded authorized messages while the other reduced interpretive competition.

The humblest people approach him with confidence because they feel that he is their friend and protector²¹⁰.

Under the Nazi regime, Hitler's public image was carefully constructed and promoted by the regime's propaganda, with Goebbels among its principal architects. As the passage suggests, Hitler was presented as the friend and protector of ordinary and less privileged people, while simultaneously being portrayed as a strong and authoritarian leader who embodied the values and greatness of the German people. This image circulated widely through posters and newsreels, in which Hitler appeared as a commanding military leader endowed with presence and charisma, capable of inspiring and leading troops toward victory. In short, the regime constructed an image of Hitler that combined proximity and protection with authority and charismatic leadership, all in the service of consolidating his position as Germany's undisputed leader. One example of Hitler's representation as a defiant military leader can be found in the Nazi propaganda poster *Der Sieg wird unser sein!* ("Victory Will Be Ours!"), which depicts Hitler in military uniform

²¹⁰ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 344.

looking toward the horizon with a challenging expression. The image was designed to instill confidence in the armed forces and the population by presenting Hitler as a powerful leader who would guide Germany to victory.

5.3. Wartime Projection: The Propaganda Companies

This section deliberately moves beyond the book's principal chronological boundary. The Propagandakompanien belong to the wartime period and are included to illustrate the military extension of the information and propaganda system constructed after 1933. They should not be projected retrospectively onto the electoral campaigns of Weimar.

Plans to integrate propaganda with military operations intensified from 1938 onward, when the Wehrmacht and the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda established mechanisms of cooperation for a future war. The Propagandakompanien were military units, not civilian indoctrination bodies under Goebbels's direct command. After the outbreak of war, they were attached to branches and formations of the Wehrmacht. Their central functions included producing information from the front for troops and the civilian population, developing propaganda directed at the enemy and at occupied territories, and participating in counterpropaganda activities.

During the Second World War, the Propagandakompanien were military units linked to the Wehrmacht and deployed alongside combat forces. Their correspondents, photographers, camera operators, and technicians produced texts, images, sound recordings, and film at the front; the material was subjected to military control and subsequently integrated into the regime's dissemination circuits. The relationship between the High Command and the Ministry of Propaganda was one of cooperation and divided competencies, not simple personal subordination to Goebbels. Their function combined military information, censorship, propaganda directed toward the home front, and the production of messages for troops, enemies, and occupied territories²¹¹.

²¹¹ Deutsches Historisches Museum, "Propagandakompanien", *LeMO: Lebendiges Museum Online*, accessed August 13, 2026,

The Propagandakompanien were not primarily responsible for organizing rallies, parades, or domestic mass campaigns; those tasks belonged to party structures and the ministerial apparatus. Their distinctive feature was the production of material from the front: reports, photographs, sound recordings, and films that could subsequently be incorporated into newspapers, radio broadcasts, newsreels, and other channels of dissemination.

Cultural censorship and the repression of authors, journalists, and opponents belonged to a broader institutional network that included the Ministry of Propaganda, the Reich Chamber of Culture, police and security agencies, and other institutions. That general function should not be attributed to the Propagandakompanien. These units did operate under military security controls and censorship of material produced at the front, and they acted within contexts of occupation and war characterized by extreme coercion. Distinguishing jurisdictions prevents the entire propaganda system from being collapsed into a single organization.

After 1933, the presence of state propaganda was extensive, but its reach does not by itself demonstrate a uniformly convinced population. In the second half of the 1930s, before the war, unemployment had declined from its Depression-era peak; acquiescence and support for the regime were also connected to economic recovery, foreign policy, conformity, social expectations, and repression. The Hitler cult was a central propagandistic construction, while the coordination of education, culture, and media formed part of the broader process of Gleichschaltung and involved multiple agencies, not the Propagandakompanien.

The output of the propaganda units was directed toward several audiences: the population of the Reich, troops, enemies, and inhabitants of occupied territories. They used written reports, photography, film, recordings, radio, leaflets, and loudspeakers in combinations that varied according to branch of service, period, and

theater of operations. It is therefore unwise to present a fixed numerical composition of writers, photographers, and technicians as though it had applied uniformly to every company throughout the war.

Material produced at the front passed through military control and could then be incorporated into civilian dissemination circuits coordinated by the Ministry of Propaganda. This flow reflects a division of labor among military production, censorship, selection, and distribution. It does not mean that the Ministry unilaterally used the companies to control all information available to the population.

Cooperation between military commands and the Ministry of Propaganda generated recurrent tensions over priorities, censorship, and competencies. Goebbels's diary documents his insistence on combating defeatism and tightening information discipline, but those entries do not by themselves establish a ministerial chain of command over all Propagandakompanien. The following passage should be read as an expression of this coercive conception of information:

I have ordered my men to proceed rigorously against Berlin defeatism and, if necessary, to box the ears of a few fools, confront people with a fait accompli, and teach all potential defeatists a good lesson. We live in an extremely dangerous time, and harsh measures are absolutely necessary²¹².

The study of these units shows that wartime propaganda was an interinstitutional system linking military structures, censorship, and civilian media. The Propagandakompanien produced a substantial portion of the visual and journalistic material from the front and contributed to establishing a heroic representation of the Wehrmacht. Their existence demonstrates the expansion of the propaganda apparatus after 1933 and should not be confused with the party organization that competed for votes during the Weimar Republic.

²¹² Goebbels, *Diario*, 43.

The Propagandakompanien bring the trajectory examined in this book to its conclusion: from party propaganda to a state and military infrastructure capable of controlling the production, selection, and circulation of information. This development expanded the regime's capacity to impose interpretive frames, but it does not warrant inferring uniform or permanent adherence among the population. During the war, propaganda, censorship, repression, and material restrictions operated jointly.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted in this study supports the conclusion that propaganda was a decisive component of National Socialist strategy, but not a self-sufficient cause of Hitler's rise. Its effectiveness depended on a conjuncture marked by successive economic crises, the erosion of political legitimacy, fragmentation of the party system, political violence, the NSDAP's organizational capacity, and decisions by conservative elites that facilitated Hitler's access to the Chancellorship.

Before 1933, Nazi propaganda was above all partisan and competitive: it sought attention, membership, votes, and a presence in the streets within a plural political marketplace. After the seizure of power, the same logic was integrated into a state apparatus that coordinated the press, radio, film, culture, and education and operated alongside censorship, professional exclusion, and coercion. Conflating these two phases leads both to an overestimation of the resources available to the NSDAP during Weimar and to the retrospective projection of the regime's totalitarian capacity.

Communicative success likewise cannot be described as the hypnosis of a homogeneous society. Audiences responded unevenly according to region, confession, class, generation, experience of unemployment, and organizational affiliation. Propaganda was most effective when it connected simple messages to already recognizable conflicts: Versailles, unemployment, fear of communism, social resentment, and nationalism. Its force lay in ordering these tensions within a closed causal narrative, identifying those to blame, and presenting the party—and increasingly Hitler—as the solution.

National Socialist propaganda did not create antisemitism, antimarxism, or radical nationalism *ex nihilo*. It selected existing repertoires, intensified them, and coordinated them with symbols, rituals, and a sustained media presence. The fabrication of the "Jewish enemy" and the "communist enemy" transformed preexisting prejudices into totalizing explanations of economic, political, and

cultural problems, while offering the Volksgemeinschaft as a promise of unity²¹³.

Kershaw's interpretation is useful precisely because it avoids attributing to Hitler a personal power autonomous from the conditions that made it possible: "Hitler was a mediocre person whose enormous impact on history can be explained only by factors external to his person and by the complicity, weakness, ambition, and credulity of others²¹⁴." His historical impact depended on structures, opportunities, collaborators, and audiences acting under different incentives and pressures, not on any supposed collective German need to submit to authority. From this perspective, propaganda must be studied as a relationship among sender, organization, context, and reception, rather than as a unilateral force capable of nullifying social agency.

The distribution of functions within the movement permits a precise answer. Hitler concentrated the expository function and the testing of the rhetorical repertoire, and in *Mein Kampf* he established the criteria the party would apply: few themes, simple formulation, repetition, and appeal to feeling rather than argument. Goebbels contributed what Hitler did not provide: organization—first as Gauleiter of Berlin, where he experimented with contesting urban space and controlled a press organ of his own, and from 1933 at the head of the Reich Ministry, where he transformed the party repertoire into an administered system encompassing press, radio, film, and culture. Alongside them operated a layer of cadres, regional propaganda chiefs, party-trained speakers, editors of the party press, and, during the war, the Propaganda Companies, without whom sustained repetition of the message would have been impossible. This articulation among doctrine, territorial organization, and available media explains why the NSDAP obtained greater communicative returns from resources comparable to those of its competitors.

²¹³ Pratkanis and Aronson, *La era de la propaganda*, 231.

²¹⁴ Kershaw, *Hitler: Nemesis*, 192.

From a linguistic and rhetorical perspective, the corpus reveals clear recurrences: causal simplification; reduction of complexity to binary oppositions; repetition of slogans; construction of an omnipresent adversary; selective attribution of agency and blame; appeals to fear, grievance, and hope; personalization of leadership; synchronization of word, image, music, uniform, and ritual; and adaptation of the same ideological core to different channels and audiences. These procedures do not constitute "mind control"; they are mechanisms of framing, salience, and mobilization whose effects depend on specific conditions of reception.

The principal conclusion is therefore twofold. In the struggle for power, propaganda helped the NSDAP transform dispersed crises into a recognizable political narrative and sustain an organization in permanent mobilization. Under the dictatorship, this capacity was amplified because persuasion ceased to compete under open conditions and instead operated within a system that restricted alternative voices and employed coercion. The Nazi propaganda machinery must be understood in this convergence of discourse, organization, technology, violence, and institutions. This approach makes it possible to explain its reach without turning propaganda into a magical cause or German society into a uniform and passive subject.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Secondary Bibliography

- ALY, Götz, and Susanne Heim. *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- AUSUBEL, David, Joseph Novak, and Helen Hanesian. *Psicología educativa: un punto de vista cognoscitivo*. 2nd ed. Mexico City: Trillas, 1983.
- BRINTON, D. G., and T. Fujimura. *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual*. London: Routledge, 2018.
- BROWN, J. A. C. *Técnicas de persuasión*. Madrid: Alianza, 1991.
- BROWNING, Christopher R. *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- BULLOCK, Alan. *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991.
- BURLEIGH, Michael. *El Tercer Reich*. Madrid: Santillana, 2003.
- CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, and Dominique Maingueneau. *Diccionario de análisis del discurso*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 2002.
- DOOB, Leonard W. *Public Opinion and Propaganda*. New York: Henry Holt, 1948.
- EATWELL, Roger. *Fascism: A History*. London: Vintage, 1996.
- EDWARDS, Violet. *Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis*. New York: Institute for Propaganda Analysis, 1938.
- ELLUL, Jacques. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books, 1971.
- ELLUL, Jacques. *La propaganda: formación de las actitudes humanas*. Barcelona: Hacer, 2003.

- EVANS, Richard J. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.
- EVANS, Richard J. *El Tercer Reich en el poder, 1933-1939*. Madrid: Crítica, 2006.
- EVANS, Richard J. *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939*. New York: Penguin Press, 2005.
- FERNÁNDEZ, Antonio. *Historia del mundo contemporáneo*. Barcelona: Vicens-Vives, 1990.
- FEST, Joachim C. *Hitler*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- FRANCO VENE, Gian. *Yo, Hitler*. Madrid: Nueva Lente, 1983.
- FRITZSCHE, Peter. *Germans into Nazis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- GELLATELY, Robert. *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- GRAML, Hermann. *Antisemitism in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.
- HEIBER, Helmut. *Hitler*. Barcelona: Salvat, 1988.
- HERF, Jeffrey. *El modernismo reaccionario: tecnología, cultura y política en Weimar y el Tercer Reich*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990.
- HERF, Jeffrey. *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- HERZSTEIN, Robert. *The War That Hitler Won: The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History*. New York: Putnam, 1978.
- HOBBSBAWM, Eric J. *Historia del siglo XX, 1914-1991*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1995.
- JÄCKEL, Eberhard. *Hitler in History*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997.

- JOHANN, Ernst, and Jörg Junker. *Historia de la cultura alemana de los últimos cien años*. Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1970.
- JOLL, James. *Europe Since 1870: An International History*. New York: Penguin, 1990.
- KERSHAW, Ian. *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1999.
- KERSHAW, Ian. *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.
- KERSHAW, Ian. *Hitler: A Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.
- KERSHAW, Ian. *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- KERSHAW, Ian. *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. London: Arnold, 2001.
- KNAPP, Mark L. *La comunicación no verbal: el cuerpo y el entorno*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1988.
- LASSWELL, Harold D. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *The American Political Science Review* 21, no. 3 (1927): 627-631.
- LE BON, Gustave. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. New York: Macmillan, 1895.
- LEPAGE, Jean-Denis G. *Hitler Youth: From Seduction to Destruction*. London: Amber Books, 2009.
- MACMILLAN, Margaret. *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War*. New York: Random House, 2001.
- MAESTRI, Raúl. *El nacionalsocialismo alemán*. Barcelona: Biblioteca Nueva, 1932.
- MASON, Timothy W. "La economía alemana durante la Gran Depresión." *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (1988): 69-89.

- MASON, Timothy W. *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- MOMMSEN, Wolfgang J. "Nationalism and Democracy." In *The Fascist Challenge and the Policy of Appeasement*, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Lothar Kettenacker, 34-35. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983.
- MORAGAS, Miquel. *Sociología de la comunicación de masas: propaganda política y opinión pública*. Vol. III. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1979.
- MOSSE, George L. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964.
- MOSSE, George L. *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.
- NEUMANN, Franz. *Behemoth: pensamiento y acción en el nacionalsocialismo*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1943.
- NOLTE, Ernst. *El fascismo en su época*. Barcelona: Ediciones S.A., 1967.
- PARIS, R. *Los orígenes del fascismo*. Barcelona: Península, 1976.
- PAYNE, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- PIZARROSO QUINTERO, Alejandro. *Historia de la propaganda*. Madrid: Eudema, 1993.
- PRATKANIS, Anthony, and Elliot Aronson. *La era de la propaganda: uso y abuso de la persuasión*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1994.
- PULZER, Peter. "The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria." In *Antisemitism: The Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, vol. 1, edited by Richard S. Levy, 137-138. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
- RICH, Norman. *Great Power Diplomacy Since 1914*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

- SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA, M. "La propaganda: conceptos, técnicas y retos." *Comunicación y Sociedad*, no. 17 (2012): 135-159.
- SCHOTT, Georg. "In deutscher Stunde." *Die Gesellschaft* 2, no. 7 (1925): 10-11.
- SNYDER, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- TAYLOR, A. J. P. *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History Since 1815*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- TENBROCK, Robert-Hermann. *Historia de Alemania*. Munich: Max Hueber, 1968.
- TIMOTEO ÁLVAREZ, Jesús. *Historia y modelos de comunicación en el siglo XX*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1992.
- TOLAND, John. *Adolf Hitler*. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.
- ULLRICH, Volker. *Hitler: Ascent, 1889-1939*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016.
- VILLANI, Pasquale. *La edad contemporánea, 1914-1945*. Barcelona: Ariel Historia, 1997.
- VILLANI, Pasquale. *El nacionalsocialismo*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2011.
- VIÑAS, Ángel. *La Alemania nazi y el 18 de julio*. Madrid: Alianza Universidad, 1977.
- WEBER, E. *Historia universal siglo XX*. Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1958.
- WEINBERG, Gerhard L. *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- WELCH, David. *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2011.

Primary and Documentary Sources

Printed Sources and Testimonies

ECKART, Dietrich. *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me*. Munich: Franz Eher Nachf., 1924.

GOEBBELS, Joseph. *Diario*. Barcelona: Los Libros de Nuestro Tiempo, 1949.

HITLER, Adolf. *Mi lucha*. Barcelona: Antalbe, 1984.

PICKER, Henry. *Hitler: anatomía de un dictador. Conversaciones de sobremesa*. Madrid: Grijalbo, 1965.

ROUGEMONT, Denis de. *Diario de Alemania*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1939.

NSDAP Press and Periodicals

The following three publications are listed as objects of study: the book analyzes their function within the NSDAP propaganda apparatus and their relationship to the party's territorial organization. References to their content derive from the secondary literature and the documentary repositories listed below.

Der Angriff. National Socialist newspaper edited by Joseph Goebbels. Berlin, 1927-1945.

Völkischer Beobachter. Official organ of the NSDAP. Munich-Berlin, 1920-1945.

Der Stürmer. Antisemitic newspaper edited by Julius Streicher. Nuremberg, 1923-1945.

Documentary and Digital Sources

DREXLER, Anton. "Brief des Gründers an den Führer."

Bundesarchiv, Akten der Reichskanzlei 1919-1933.

https://www.bundesarchiv.de/aktenreichskanzlei/1919-1933/0000/adr/adrhl/kap1_1/para2_34.html.

DEUTSCHES HISTORISCHES MUSEUM.

"Propagandakompanien." *LeMO: Lebendiges Museum Online*.

<https://www.dhm.de/lemo/kapitel/zweiter-weltkrieg/kriegsverlauf/propagandakompanien>.

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM.

Holocaust Encyclopedia. Washington, D.C.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org>. Articles cited: “Julius Streicher: Biography,” “Hitler Comes to Power,” “Hitler’s Reichstag Speech,” “Nazi Propaganda and Censorship,” and “Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment.”