Nazi Propaganda: The Theme of Work and Workers in the Pre-Power and Post-Power Years

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Nazi Propaganda: The Theme of Work and Workers in the Pre-Power and Post-Power Years
The NSDAP (The Nationalist Socialist Worker’s Party) also known as the Nazis successfully used propaganda during their effort to achieve power in Germany. The Nazis did not illegally gain power in Germany, but used their propaganda to put themselves in the commanding role through legal elections. The Nazis propaganda was a leading factor contributing to their rise to power. They were able to adapt and change their propaganda to match the mood of the nation and to target certain ideas and problems, such as unemployment and poverty in order to make themselves look like the only hope in escaping these problems plaguing Germany. The Nazis propaganda was able to target any possible group such as workers, men, and woman or even target a whole town individually. They could come from any possible angle in order to persuade people to join and support their party. This adaptability can be seen through their focus on the working class in Germany. The way the Nazis focus on the theme of work and workers in their propaganda posters changes drastically with their gain of power in 1933. Before 1933 the Nazis are trying to win the worker over and make promises for helping out the worker and staving off unemployment and communism. After 1933 the way the worker is depicted takes a drastic turn and they become aspects of the Nazi party and they start to add an idea of nationalism in order to protect the worker.

This paper will look mainly at Nazi propaganda posters released in Germany focusing on the theme of work and workers in Germany both before and after 1933 and the changing of messages conveyed by these posters to the German people. There is a drastic change in how the Nazis developed their posters between these two time periods. The first time period, pre-1933, focuses on hope and answers for the problems that the working class faced in Germany.
during the Weimar Republic. Some problems include unemployment and the threat of Communists and the Jews. The second time period, 1933-1939, focuses on pushing the answers that the Nazis promised for these problems they recognized in their pre-1933 posters. The Nazis portrayed their answers to these problems from pre-1933 in ways such as nationalism with their push to buy German goods in order to protect the workers. Also with the addition of making the worker now look a member of the Nazi party and adding that the Nazi party is there to protect them now. These differences and similarities can tell us some of what was going on within not only Germany, but within the Nazi party as well. By looking at the different ways the worker is portrayed whether he is big or small or if he is dressed up in Nazi uniform or not are some of the big aspects of these two time frames of posters.

Historiographically the Nazi propaganda system has always been looked on as successful. The Nazis commitment to being adaptable allowed their propaganda to infiltrate every aspect and way of life in Germany; in this they were successful just to be able to push their ideas to anyone and everyone. Look at the vast amounts that they released throughout their existence both before and after power all the way up to the last days of the war in 1945. So much has been written on the topic of Nazi propaganda about almost any topic and theme possible. Nazi propaganda has ranged from the conscious straightforward propaganda in posters and speeches etc. They also used subconscious ideas in posters, parades, landscapes among others.

As early as 1943 books such as The Goebbels Experiment: a Study of the Nazi Propaganda Machine was written about the success of this system. Books such as The Goebbels Experiment were written by men that spent time in British intelligence and saw how
the propaganda worked and focused on how this system worked so successfully in Germany.\(^1\) This book touches very little on the theme of work, but it does have good information such as how the Reich Labor Service (RAD), a Nazi program created to fight unemployment, was made up of almost 25 million people and that every factory was riddled with propaganda wardens spreading Nazi ideology.\(^2\) Many topics have been looked at inside the different areas of Nazi propaganda from posters in occupied France\(^3\) and Anti-Komintern\(^4\) to the subconscious ideas during their parades\(^5\) and in Nazi “Holy” grounds such as the Obersalzburg.\(^6\) Margaret Collins Weitz writes about the posters used in Nazi occupied France. In her writing she touches on the idea of work in their posters aimed at the French. She discusses one that shows a mother and daughter in the foreground with a man in the background clearly working with the tag-line “Bad Days are over, Papa is making money in Germany!”\(^7\) By looking at these posters it can be seen that the Nazis knew that the theme of work was a powerful one. This idea was such a powerful because it played on the fear of the people; both those unemployed and those who still had jobs. William Sheridan Allen’s book *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1922-1945* is a prime example of adaptability and the role of fear. It focuses on one town in Germany and the many different approaches the Nazis used. Whether it was how

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6. Brett Ashley Kaplan “Masking Nazi Violence in the Beautiful Landscape of the Obersalzberg” in Comparative literature,
the Nazis decided on what speaker to bring in and which group of people to bring in for said speaker this book offers an insight into a small microcosm of that adaptability used throughout Germany.\textsuperscript{8}

Hitler and the Nazi party’s connection to the worker have been debated on how much they actually targeted the workers. Max Kele focuses on the relationship between the Nazis and the working class pre-1933 in his book \textit{Nazis and Workers}. He brings up a good point looking at how many authors throughout history have tried to put a date on the turning point when the Nazis turned away from leftist thinking and away from the working class to support corporations and the right wing. Dates for this turn are quite spread including 1921(Georg Franz-Wilhelm), 1922(Werner Maser), 1923(Hanns Hoffman), 1926(Reinhard Kuhnlt), 1927( Dietrich Orlow), 1929(Joseph Nyomarkay).\textsuperscript{9} Kele believes that most authors agree that by 1930 this change had occurred, but Kele argues that though Hitler may have turned to corporations and the right-wing he did not crush the left wing and left it open to work because he did not want to weaken a part of the party that was so successful.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Nazi Propaganda System Organization}

The Nazi propaganda system was vast and infiltrated every aspect of life. Sington and Weidenfeld in their book \textit{The Goebbels Experiment} cover most of the different areas of propaganda for the Nazi system. By looking at this book it can be seen how Nazi propaganda was a part of everyday life and infiltrated every aspect of life. Nazi propaganda included

\textsuperscript{9} Max H. Kele, \textit{Nazis and Workers: National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1972), 216.
\textsuperscript{10} Kele, \textit{Nazis and Workers}, 217.
speeches, newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts both foreign and domestic, tourist
destinations, movies, theatre, literature and aspects of the fine arts, and even songs and
music.\(^{11}\) Not only was the system adaptable it was spread through almost every aspect of life.
Propaganda became a core aspect of everyday life for the Nazis and eventually for the people
of Germany.

The Nazi propaganda machine was an efficient, intricate and adaptable system that led
the way for the Nazis to seize power in 1933. Two names are synonymous with the idea of
propaganda in Nazi Germany; those being Adolf Hitler and Josef Goebbels. According to Hitler
himself the NSDAP was an organization that was purely dedicated to propaganda.\(^{12}\) Hitler saw
propaganda as the center of a successful party. He believed that if it was not possible to win
the German people to your side then there could not be a successful party that would be able
achieve power. Scholars argue that Goebbels saw himself as the mastermind behind the Nazi
propaganda system and the molder of public opinion.\(^{13}\) Goebbels had a huge ego when it came
to propaganda and he saw himself as the man who would draw support to the Nazi party.
These men knew the power of propaganda and the ability of it to win over a nation. Some
historians such as Aristotle Kallis writing in the 2000s pointed out that Goebbels role in
propaganda was greatly exaggerated and blown out of proportion. It was not that he did not
play a big part, but he was not the molder of minds that he claimed to be and has been talked

\(^{11}\) Sington & Weidenfeld, *The Goebbels Experiment*.
Socialist Leadership,” *German History* 28(2010), 168.
\(^{13}\) Muhlenfeld, “Between State and Party”, 168.
about as. Kallis argues that no matter how brilliant Hitler was about propaganda, and how important he knew his instructions to Goebbels and other lesser leaders were; often his instructions were confusing and unclear or they interfered with other orders or instructions. The roles of these men are not always clear, they played big parts, but how big a part and how much power they actually had is still a question.

There are many different aspects of Nazi propaganda and in order to accomplish this the system was split into many different groups of responsibility. The system itself would need a whole other paper in order to completely explain the way it worked. Some examples of the way it worked will be explained here in order to give a sense of the system itself that was behind the propaganda. First of all propaganda responsibility was split between two major groups in Nazi Germany. First the Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment ran by the state through the state, and then the Party Propaganda Department, ran through the party itself. A simple way to look at a sample of the organization of Nazi system is by looking at the Gau, which was a mid level propaganda manager. In each county there was a Guapropagandaleiter and then in each of these counties they were split down to smaller areas of influence led by the Gaus and then smaller and smaller. Because of all of these shrinking areas of influence and the mixture of two different actual offices of propaganda, one through the state and one through the party itself there was a lot of overlap in responsibility.

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15 Kallis, “Nazi Propaganda Decision Making”, 63-64.
Some scholars such as Kallis see this overlapping of responsibilities as a problem that instead of them working together successfully they instead stepped on each other’s toes and occasionally put out contradicting information.\textsuperscript{18} So when looking through these posters and coming across things that don’t make sense together it’ll be important to remember that some saw the downsides to the system and that occasionally it got in its own way. Deitrich Orlow put it great in his book \textit{The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933} when explaining how the system worked and why it occasionally got in its own way. Orlow writes that many different propaganda bureaucracies developed all headed by an administrator that felt he answered solely to Hitler and no one but Hitler himself.\textsuperscript{19} Orlow then states “The party as a whole thus became a series of administratively and functionally autonomous feudal fiefs with their own vertical organizations arranged around the core of the vertical administration of the party proper.”\textsuperscript{20} Due to this, the system lacked any real method in coordinating with each other which on multiple occasions led to contradictory information being given out by different administrations.

\textbf{The Plight of the Worker in Germany}

Many of the workers were opened up to the idea of the Nazis when the depression hit the world in the late 1920s. Opening the road for the Nazis to target them and gain their support by the use of propaganda. By January of 1933 the amount of unemployed in Germany

\begin{itemize}
  \item Kallis, “Nazi Propaganda Decision Making”, 69.
  \item Deitrich Orlow, \textit{The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933} (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1969.), 204.
  \item Orlow, \textit{History of the Nazi Party}, 204.
\end{itemize}
had risen to about 6 million people which were about double since the year before. This number is cited in some Nazi posters, though only one of this type will be used in this paper. Prior to this 1933 high, and before the great depression in the late 1920s, unemployment was quite low and the economy was running well. During this time most Germans were turned off to the radical ideas of Hitler and the Nazi party. One reason why the workers looked to Hitler was because of his prediction about the great depression. So when it eventually happened Germans began to listen to him because if he could predict that, then what else might he be able to do? Unemployment prior to 1930 was not a problem and during this time people did not listen or believe in many of the things coming from the Nazi party. After the depression and the eventual rise in unemployment that went hand in hand with the depression. Many Germans flocked to Hitler and this could be a reason for such a huge amount of propaganda being targeted to the theme of work and workers. Unemployment became one of the biggest problem in the lives of everyday Germans and Hitler and his propaganda gave a way out of this problem and people were very likely to latch on to it. Scholars such as Allen argue that it was not just unemployment, but the fear of unemployment as well. In Northeim, the town in his book, even when the depression hit it did not affect them, but alarmists in the town began to spread the fear that it would eventually.

**Primary Sources: Nazi Posters**

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23 McMillan, “Unemployment in Nazi Germany”.

This paper will focus on twelve Nazi posters, six from each of the two time periods all centering on the theme of work and workers. These posters have been chosen due to not only their similarities, but some of the drastic differences in how they targeted the working class. There were hundreds of Nazi posters maybe thousands. These particular posters were chosen because of the connections they have with each other and that they cover many different portrayals of the aspects of life and worries of the worker the Nazis were pushing. Posters from pre-1933 include quotes such as “Our Last Hope, Hitler”, “The Workers have Awakened”, and “Work and Food, Vote List 1”, “5,600,000 Unemployed”, Bravo Herr Von Papen”, “Workers of the Mind and Hand”. The posters use symbols and messages of power and the idea of hope to first build up the worker and make them feel as a powerful part of society; then with this to bring them to the Nazis claiming they are fighting for them. This can be seen in these posters the ideas of strength and community. The Nazis are putting the workers to the forefront of the society and that they are the driving force that moves this country.

The post-1933 posters still focus on the workers, but now they come at them from a different point of view. These posters now focus on protecting the working class that helped put the Nazis into power and focusing on making good on the promises they made to the workers before they gained power. The Nazis had built a fragile support base and after gaining power in 1933 they had to follow through with the things they promised in their posters pre-1933 or risk that support base collapsing and the possibility of losing power. The quotes for this time period of posters include “Before: Hopelessness, Unemployment...After: Hope Work...”, “We Build Body and Soul”, “Hitler is Building”, “Germans Buy German Goods”, “National Farming Rally”, and ‘A Wonderful Task: Reich Labor Service Woman’s Leader.” The Nazis were
attempting to fulfill those promises they made pre-1933 and to show how they planned to do that. Not only were they showing how they were going to do it they were convincing the citizens to get on their wave length and follow the plans they set up to fulfill these promises set up pre-1933.

It is through analyzing these posters that the adaptability of the Nazis propaganda can be seen in the way that they target the workers. Not only in the differences in targeting in the specific time frames and all of the different directions they come from to try and win their support. But also the huge changes in the themes behind the posters that carry this theme of work after they gained power in 1933. The Nazis kept a stream of propaganda that was ever changing in order to fit the mood of the people and the workers. These posters have the major theme of work and then more minor themes within them including hope, strength, and power. The paper will be looking at how the worker is represented, how much the Nazi ideology is pushed, and what they are offering or portraying to offer to the worker. These themes and the way they changed is a clear indication of how willing the Nazis were to change up their propaganda and were always attempting to mold it to fit specific situations.

**Pre-1933 Posters**

Not all the posters used in Germany by the Nazis used pictures; some relied solely on the textual message to draw the viewer in. This first poster (Figure 1) is directed towards the workers, mainly though the unemployed workers. The poster dates back to January of 1932 and is just a plain black and white poster that reads: “5,600,000 unemployed demand work! The need of the unemployed is the need of the whole people! On Friday evening, 15 January 1932,
at 8 p.m., there will be sixteen mass meetings for the unemployed.”\textsuperscript{25} This is the main part of the text on this poster attempting to get not only unemployed, but those worried about the unemployed too to attend this meeting. The poster also lists all the places the mass meetings will be held at and has the price of the meeting, 20 pfenning for the employed and 10 pfenning for the unemployed. Charging less for those unemployed is clear sign that they already were trying to help the unemployed by making their meetings more affordable to attend. They still had to make money so they could not run meetings for free, but by offering a cheaper price for the unemployed they were showing that they had the concerns of the unemployed in mind.

The number 5,600,000 is the biggest part and at the top of this poster. Then the text gets steadily smaller as the poster continues. The number catches the eye and it feels as if the poster is yelling at you with its size of print for the first sentence and the exclamation point. The wording is important here, not that 5,600,000 need work, but that they demand work, and so it seems that the Nazis are going to be running a meeting to touch on how they could help out with that demand. The next sentence is just as powerful because they are claiming that the needs of the unemployed are the needs of the people as well. They are trying to bring everyone together here saying that the Nazis know that everyone is in this together and if this many people are unemployed something needs to be done about it. It doesn’t just affect the unemployed, but it affects the whole country.

The Nazis did not just focus on white collar workers or blue collar workers, but attempted to put them all into one whole group that included all kinds of workers. Such as the

\textsuperscript{25} “5,600,000 unemployed demand work” German Propaganda Archive, http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters/unemployed, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2013)
poster with the caption: “Workers of the mind and hand! Vote for the front soldier Adolf Hitler!” This poster (Figure 2) has a picture of two individuals’ upper bodies, both male, looking on with serious looks. This poster dates to about the 1932 presidential elections in spring in which the Nazis took the majority of votes over the other parties in Germany, though not enough to take control of the Reichstag from opposing parties. Looking at this poster and thinking about the wording of the caption it is easy to realize that these two men represent the two areas of workers in Germany. Those being the white collar workers, the figure in the back, and the blue collar workers the figure in the front.

In this photo the Nazis are trying to tell workers that Hitler fought for them before and he will fight for them again. Like many workers he was a frontline soldier so he could be trusted to watch out for workers if he is in charge. Hitler most likely was trying to portray that many soldiers also were part of the working class. The blue collar worker is in front of the white collar worker, probably because the Nazis realized that the blue collar working class was a bigger audience and bigger source of potential votes thus in this poster giving a subconscious idea that blue collar workers are more important. What is interesting in this photo is the way that they draw the workers. Both have hard stern faces lined with what must be years of hard work. The arm of the blue collar worker is big and full of muscle attempting to portray a sense of power coming from the workers. This poster and the way it portrays the working man seeks to show that the NSDAP understands that the workers, both blue and white, are hard workers.

27 Orlow, History of the Nazi Party, 243.
and that they have worked hard year after year and Hitler recognizes that and is there to make sure they earn what they have worked towards so much in the previous years.

The Nazis portrayed that the German people needed help in many posters. They also sensed that they did not want a hand out, but instead a hand-up. This poster (Figure 3) dates to about November of 1932 the poster’s caption is “Work and Food, Vote List 1.” If the people vote Hitler in they will be moving in a direction of being able to support themselves. This poster is telling people to make the right decision in the election and pointing out that the Nazis will bring work and food to the country if they are elected into power.

The picture on the poster just adds to the effect of the Nazis being able to help out the everyday German and make sure they have both work and food. The picture on this poster shows Nazi arms coming from the top of the poster handing tools for work and for farming to what must be hands of the German citizens coming from the bottom of the poster. The Nazi arms are coming from the top of the poster while the other arms are coming from the bottom. This could be an illusion that they come from a more powerful source and they have God on their side or they are doing God’s work since they are reaching down from above to the arms of the German people reaching up. Another important aspect of this poster is the difference in the Nazi arms and the German arms. The Nazi arms have veins and the look of power in them again, while the arms of the citizens do not have veins and can be labeled as small or even weak. The Nazis represent power and they are willing to use that to help out the regular German’s who have fallen on hard times.

The Nazis, mainly Hitler, portrayed themselves to the German people as the only answer to many of these problems including their poster (Figure 4) with the quote: “Our Last Hope, Hitler.”29 This poster’s picture is of a bunch of people that all look like regular lower to middle class people standing in a huge group looking forward. The art on the poster seems more like a sketch with the eyes of all the people are dark and fits well with all their faces since they all seem sad or distraught. The crowd is full of not just men, but woman, and even children. Most of the posters used in this paper that follow the theme of work used mainly only men, but with the addition of woman and children in this one it helps to attach the problems of the workers to everyone in the nation. The men in this poster, similar to the earlier poster about workers of the mind and hand, have men dressed in both white-collar and blue-collar working outfits.

This poster does not connect clearly to the worker, but at this point in 1932 the German economy was collapsing and about six million were unemployed. The poster can be seen as people having to come to the realization that only Hitler can bring them out of this depression they have fallen into. This poster is playing on the idea that people have given up hope and working in the system that is set up is not working and only Hitler and the Nazi party is able to help them. For those seeing this poster even if they were not unemployed at the time the fear of unemployment and joining this group of sad and downcast groups of people who feel hopeless would motivate them to move towards someone, Hitler, who could stop this problem from growing. This poster was attempting to cover and include anyone and everyone from the working class whether blue or white collared and to make it seem that anyone could be

affected and that no one was safe. If you could get people to think that no one was safe that fear would drive them right into Hitler and the Nazis waiting arms.

Another poster (Figure 5) with the theme of work and workers also attacks one of the many enemies of the Nazis, the Communists. The communists were seen as enemies because they were targeting the workers too and were stealing votes from the Nazi party. The quote on this poster is “Bravo Herr von Papen! Keep up those emergency decrees, and the pension and pay cuts. That will give us Communists our last chance! Is that to be what happens? NO! Only one man can rescue us from Bolshevism: Adolf Hitler!”

This has one of the strongest pictures of any of the posters. It has a huge skeleton wearing the uniform of a communist, plus the whole thing is in shades of red. This poster plays on the fears of the German people and raising the fear of an outside enemy in order to bring in more support for the Nazis. Papen was making many people angry with his reactionary policies including the lowering of wages making the workers more and more angry. The Nazis have now put forward to the worker that they are not just the best choice for the working class, but the only one that actually cares about the worker. The Nazis are attempting to scare the workers about joining and supporting the Communist party. If this was actually that big of a worry to the Nazis at the time isn’t very clear, but the fact that Goebbels used bolshevist type strategies in his propaganda still at this time may have shown that they were not too afraid of them and even recognized that some of their propaganda was good enough to use in their

31 Joseph Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1967), 106.
The depiction of the skeleton Communist soldier as evil is very frightening and fills up most of the poster. If Communism is an overwhelming force, Hitler is depicted as a hero and a warrior that if voted in will fight away the Communists and keep the workers of Germany safe from them. Von Papen’s emergency decrees and pension and pay cuts hurt the worker so the worker will look for a way to better their situation. So this poster is killing two birds with one stone in a sense, making Communism the enemy and demonizing von Papen for pushing the people towards Communism. Only Hitler is left to help them, and the people must make sure that Hitler is able to save them, from a Communist state.

A final poster (Figure 6) follows the same idea as the previous poster building up the worker and demonizing some of the enemies of the German state. This poster’s quote is simple and to the point “The Workers Have Awakened!”33 The picture on this poster is of a worker standing tall and defiant looking down upon smaller figures of a Marxist with a Jewish man whispering in his ear. The Marxist is holding a sign that says “Nazi Barons! Emergency decrees, lies and slander. The big-wigs are living high on the hog. The people are wretched.” In the background is a huge swastika along with a scene of factories.

The worker depicted in this poster is standing up and looking down on the Marxist and Jew as if they are below him. The swastika in the background is the representation of hope for the worker and the worker realizes that the Nazis are his real answer. They are attempting to fix the economy and get people back to work. The Marxist and Jew trying to talk him into joining them are small and below him. They look ugly and weak compared to the worker. The

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32 Kele, Nazi and Workers, 212.
worker like many of the posters is big and strong with powerful facial features. They are again making the worker out to be an important aspect of society and it is up to them to ignore the lies coming from the Marxist, or Communist, who is being led by the Jewish. The worker has come to his senses and realized who his enemy is and who is really here to help him, the Nazis. The worker and the swastika in the picture are strong images in the poster; clearly linking them against the weak looking Marxist and Jew. The worker has “awakened” to the right path and the right choice for the future of Germany. Similar to earlier posters the worker also has blonde hair, making him an ideal representation of the perfect race heard from the Nazis so much.

These previous explained posters all show aspects of the way the Nazis developed messages designed to gain the electoral vote of the workers. The first two posters and the last poster represent the worker and the Nazis as strong. They are now workers for the Nazis and strong members of society. In the first two posters and the final poster is an idea that the worker has the choice and he is able to do it himself. Especially in the second poster; they are not just giving the worker stuff, but instead giving them the means to do it themselves. The Nazis are not offering to just give handouts, but they are offering the chance for people to do it themselves, rebuild themselves, and make themselves self sufficient. A huge success here is clearly seen in the first poster and pops up in other posters with the idea that workers of the mind and hand are in the same boat and that they are not separate from each other. In the fourth and fifth posters there is a complete sense of hopelessness and fear that the Nazis are playing on trying to push the idea that Hitler is the only choice in order to save the people from this hopelessness. Along with that the Nazis are pointing out the enemies that, without Hitler,
will move in and destroy the nation. Hitler also attacks the old leadership in poster five and shows that the way things are going is leading to a takeover by the Communists. The final poster then shows that behind these Marxist Communists are the ultimate enemy the Jewish and that they are trying to trick the worker into following the Communist.

The biggest aspect in this time period is that Hitler and the Nazi propaganda system is trying to push the idea that they understand the worker is in trouble, and that they are under constant attack from outside influences. They know that they need to help the worker and they plan on making life for the worker more bearable. They are planning on fighting the problem of unemployment and giving the workers the tools they need in order to be successful and become productive members in society again. Now that Hitler, Goebbels and their propaganda has set up all these possible solutions they put themselves in the situation of being the only hope for the workers. They were now able to climb into power in 1933. Not all workers went over to the Nazis, they split the worker vote with the Communist party in Germany in the elections in the early 1930s. The important fact here is that they stole votes away from the Nazis main competitors making it easier for the Nazis to overtake them. The Nazis have to make sure that they follow through with their promises made in the pre-power posters. In the next time period, 1933-1939, there is a drastic shift in the make-up of posters that center on the theme of workers and what messages they are pushing.

Post-1933 Posters

In 1936 the Nazis released a poster (Figure 7) focusing on what the German people gained by putting Hitler and the Nazis into power with the caption “Before: Unemployment,
hopelessness, desolation, strikes, lockouts. Today: Work, joy, discipline, comaradarie. Give the Führer your vote!”

The picture on this poster has two important parts. The background represents the “before” of the caption while the foreground represents the “after” of the caption. The background has regular citizens with signs around their necks looking sad and dejected facing problem after problem just like the “before” list explained. The foreground shows a Nazi soldier holding a shovel standing up straight and looking powerful.

The Nazi soldier is the biggest part of the poster and he is pushed to the front and center. This helps represent power especially compared to those regular citizens in the background. The shovel could easily be replaced by a weapon such as a rifle and would still fit in the poster perfectly. The shovel represents a weapon without actually being a weapon. The poster is portraying that if support does not go to the Fuhrer and the Nazis then the German people are destined to repeat the before and get stuck in that time of hopelessness and unemployment again. If they not only back the Nazis, but become a Nazi you are moving to fight these problems and to bring work and joy among other happy things to the lives of the workers.

A poster (Figure 8) released in the mid 1930s also changed the way they characterized the worker and what it meant to be a worker in Nazi Germany. The poster is advertising the Reich Labor Service (RAD), a Nazi labor program, is at the top of the poster and at the bottom it claims “We build body and soul.”

The picture on the poster is of two shirtless teenage boys

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wearing Nazi uniforms, minus the shirt. One of the two boys is holding a shovel over his shoulder while the other has his hand high into the air.

These two boys are prime examples of the idea of the Aryan race with their blonde hair and excellent physique. As in the poster before the shovel could easily be replaced with a weapon, but then the poster would look like a recruitment poster for the military. This poster is directed towards bringing younger generations into the work force and building them into not just mature adults able to work, but powerful mature adults. An important idea in this poster is that in order to grow and become a successful worker in the society you must go through the Nazi party. Being a worker now goes hand in hand with being a Nazi. Joining labor groups to prepare to become a worker also makes you a member of the Nazi party. This poster has the idea of strength behind it with how strong the two boys look in the poster. It is the Nazis pointing out that they only build strong men and strong workers. The caption is important in the idea that they are not just building them up physically strong, but building their soul up as well. They may be building them up to be strong members of society, but also they are building them to be competent and able members of the community as a whole.

The idea of work was changed drastically in the posters after 1933. From trying to win them over to gaining support for what those workers were doing. They also put Hitler beside the worker in rebuilding the nation. Another poster (Figure 9) from around the mid-1930s has the caption “Hitler is building. Help him. Buy German goods.” This poster has moved past the idea of helping find work to supporting the work that the workers are now doing. The Nazis are

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pushing a nationalist ideal here and by building the country they are also building themselves. It is a sneaky way of further connecting the nationalist ideal of being German with being a Nazi. The picture is of a man building something by hand, and in the background there is a Nazi flag and farther in the background is a farm being worked. They were idealizing the landscape trying to bring it back to a more pure idea to attach to the Nazi party.

Claiming that Hitler is building the nation connects him to the workers he was winning over. He now stands next to them, working with them, and is asking that everyone support them too by buying things made by them in country. There is a theme of strength as the man is building with heavy blocks by hand and his arms are out and full of muscles. The Nazi flag is not centered in this picture, but it is red whereas everything else is kind of bland browns and greys so your eye is drawn to it. This poster is putting Hitler and the Nazis at the forefront of rebuilding the country and Hitler himself is asking for help to keep the rebuilding of the economy going. The man in the picture is a strong looking blonde man like the idea of the Aryan race.

A poster (Figure 10) done in order to help support the workers in Germany has the quote “German Week, German Goods, German Labor. Germans buy German Goods.”

This is a simple poster and the picture on it shows a set of balances with the German eagle and acorns in one and in the other it has the flags of the USA, France, Japan, Britain, among other European countries. The balance is weighed more towards the side filled with the German eagle giving the idea that anything German is worth more than anything foreign made.

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After 1933 the Nazis had to follow through on their promises to the workers to lower unemployment. This is directed towards the German people attempting to make sure that they can follow through on the promises made to the workers in their pre-1933 posters. This can also be seen as a move towards a nationalist ideal; support the country and by supporting the country it will help the worker. This keeps the workers in Germany working and buying German goods. Another thing with this poster compared to others in this time period is the complete lack of any Nazi symbol in it. It is possible that by this point the idea of supporting Germany in these ways was also supporting the Nazi party so they did not have to push it as hard in all of their posters. This is a poster attempting to build patriotism in the nation by putting a sense of guilt in those from Germany that buy outside of Germany; making it seem as if they are not supporting their country. Then they attach German goods with German labor making sure that the people understand they are supporting the working class by buying these German goods.

The next poster (Figure 11) is rare in the fact that it is advertising work for woman and for a woman’s labor group. The quote on this poster is “A Wonderful Task: Reich Labor Service Woman’s Leader: A Job for Today.” The art on this poster depicts a smiling woman in workers clothes taking up most of the poster, but also there is a swastika in the background. Here is a sign that the Nazis did need woman to join in the work force.

The woman in the poster is happy and that is important. The smile shows that there are opportunities for work for woman. This is a good thing and should make the women happy. The swastika in the background makes sure to let everyone know that this is a part of the Nazi

system. By calling it a wonderful task it gives woman a sense of purpose that may have been missing in their lives. This woman looks proud and the poster wants to make sure that woman realize that by joining the woman’s Reich Labor Service it is wonderful and a big deal. This does go against the idea of what role women were supposed to play in Nazi Germany. Hitler made it clear that for the most part minus some specialist fields woman did not need to be in the work force, but instead should be raising children.\textsuperscript{39} It is a clear attachment again like many of these posters between happiness, hope, work, and the Nazi Ideal. All of these thoughts are becoming one with the idea of Nazism and that is an important aspect for the Nazis that they get attached to creating jobs and fixing unemployment.

The last poster (Figure 12) for 1933-1939 focuses on a very different aspect of working than the other posters in this paper. It focuses on farm work rather than factory work. The text on this poster is “National Farming Rally.”\textsuperscript{40} This poster is more of an advertisement for the farming rally. This poster in fact is one of the strongest propaganda posters for the Nazis. The picture in the poster has in the center a huge Nazi soldier dressed in armor with swastikas on it holding a sword and shield protecting at the bottom of the poster a farmer from the Communists, which is represented by a small star with the hammer and sickle in the top corner.

This poster is clearly promoting the Nazis as the protectors of the workers and in this case the protectors of farmers. It also clearly outlines the enemy that the Nazis are now protecting the workers from, that being the Communists. The Nazis were showing that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Chris Trueman, History Learning Site, “The Role of Woman in Nazi Germany” Accessed May 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2013, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Women_Nazi_Germany.htm.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} “National Farming Rally”, German Propaganda Archive, http://www.bytwere.com/gpa/posters/bauern36, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th},2013)
\end{itemize}
everyone that labored in Germany was under the same umbrella of protection whether they
were farmer, blue collar worker, or white collar worker. The soldier takes up about half if not
more of the page he is the focal point of this poster. The Nazis are pushing themselves as
protectors and heroes for the average working person and that they will not let an enemy come
in and harm their work. The soldier is armored in medieval style armor because the Nazis have
tried to connect themselves back to ancient powerful civilizations. They also did that through
their parades in Nuremberg so it fits in to their propaganda style.\footnote{Joshua Hagen, “Parades, Public Spaces, and Propaganda: The Nazi Culture Parades in Munich”, 2008,} In these parades they
attempted to connect themselves back to ancient Greece in an attempt to show a lineage of
power and rule.

These posters from after the seizure of power in 1933 all have a theme of work or
worker in them, but they go around it in different ways. The first two are similar in the idea
that the shovel over the shoulder in both could be replaced with a weapon. Both are also
wearing Nazi uniforms. The third poster has something in common with the Nazis being more
pronounced and obvious whether it is uniforms or a brightly colored flag that draws attention.
The final poster also fits into this idea with the huge Nazi soldier and his armor and he is
actually wielding a weapon and the helmet he wears is a Nazi era military helmet. The posters
in this late period now strongly attach the idea of work with the idea of Nazism making the two
ideas go hand in hand. The first two posters and the final poster have an underlying theme for
the military. They are asking people to join their training labor programs and in doing this they
are mobilizing their people at a level. Even the women were being mobilized and put into labor
groups. The Nazis knew they needed to start to organize their people especially able bodied
men from the working class if they were going to have an army for the future. The Nazis have won over the workers and now they need to mold them to their needs and to get more people into an area where they can more easily mold them. The first two posters clearly show the idea of putting Nazi ideology in all aspects of life. The third poster is different. It is a call for the German people to support these workers by buying their goods. That connects the idea with poster four and you see some of the plan for the Nazis keeping the promises they made to the workers to gain their support pre-1933. In a few of these posters there can be seen a connection back to what Ashley Kaplan was arguing about the Nazis using the beauty of landscape in order to push their ideals. Kaplan argues that they used the Obersalzburg in order to make them look non-violent, but in these posters it is more of showing who the Nazis support. With the final poster it can be seen that the Nazis are making more promises of protection for their workers at all levels and they are a strong presence that will fight back the evils of Communism. They are trying to get the German people to support the workers that now are infused with the Nazi ideology and the rebuilding of the economy around the Nazi ideology.

**Comparisons of the Two Time Periods**

There was a massive change in Germany in 1933. The Nazis had achieved the power they were striving for and with that the way they targeted workers to keep their support changed. This is seen through the posters and the changes in the way they portray the theme of work. Not only were there changes, but many similarities can be seen between these two

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42 Kaplan, “Making Nazi Violence”.

sets of posters. The Nazis had a clear idea for what they were striving for and following these posters through time it can be seen the ways they build, morph, and evolve their propaganda.

One of the big similarities in both time periods is the theme of strength. The posters depict not just strength in the worker, but also strength in the Nazi party. In the pre-1933 time period the posters show that the worker is strong and an important building block that needs to be protected. This is seen clearly in the “Workers of the Mind and Hand” poster and the “The Workers have Awakened” posters. Still in the pre-1933 posters there is a mix with the “Work and Bread” poster that shows the strength in the Nazis, but they are giving it back to the worker. After 1933 this theme of strength gets more wrapped up with the Nazi Ideology and the idea of being a worker is getting mixed with the idea of being a Nazi. The “Before...After”, “Building Mind and Soul”, “Hitler is Building”, and “National Farming Rally” posters show strength as an important aspect of Nazi propaganda towards workers. The idea of Germany being a strong state is something they are trying to push very hard. They are building up the self-image of German workers while also letting them know that they are here to also help build that strength. They show both that the worker has the strength and if they don’t the Nazis are willing to help rebuild that strength that is natural for the German worker. They do not demonize the worker it is not their fault if they have lost this strength. In the “Bravo von Papen” and “The Workers have Awakened” posters they are clearly defining enemies that are trying to take this power and strength away from the workers. There is a complete support for the worker through the posters from the idea of them having the power in Germany to the Nazis giving back the power they have lost over the time. Add to this that the loss of power is not their fault and that the Nazis recognize that. The Nazis recognized the need to support the
worker. The worker helped them gain power and if they do not follow up on those promises they could lose the worker just that easy as well. This was a worry since many workers still supported communist ideals and parties up until when the Nazis gained power. In the final poster about the “National Farming Rally” the theme of strength is put into the Nazis completely so they can use that strength to protect the worker. Through the posters it can be seen that there is an enemy to be protected from. Any of the posters that have tools in them can easily be exchanged for weapons. The Nazis are mobilizing the German people and making them feel powerful and strong.

When the Nazis took power in 1933 the way they targeted the worker and the messages they were sending the worker changed quite drastically. In the pre-1933 posters there is this sense of trying to win the worker over. The Nazis were trying to get into power and they were using the posters to build up the worker and to let them know that they understood the worker was hurting and that they deserved better. The Nazis put themselves on the same level and offered their assistance in picking the worker up. The way the worker is drawn shows that the Nazis think they are hard working people that do not want hand outs, but instead want the chance to work themselves.

The Nazis target the fear of unemployment and attach themselves to this fear in order to offer solutions and promises that with the Nazis things will get better. The big difference after 1933 is that the Nazis are trying to show how they plan on following through with these promises they made the workers before they gained power. The Nazi ideology starts to get more and more wrapped into what it means to be a worker in Germany. Especially by looking

43 Kele, Nazis and Workers, 214.
at the two posters about joining the male Reich Labor groups it is clear that by joining these groups you are becoming a part of the Nazi community. No longer is it the Nazis helping and protecting the worker, but instead getting to a place to protect themselves and the nation. The final poster about the National Farming Rally does seem opposite this idea, but the complete involvement of Nazis in all aspects of work is completed with this poster. The Idea of the Nazis being a part of the workers lives becomes huge in the post-1933 posters. The addition of Nazi uniforms and swastikas as an important aspect of the posters and the messages being sent to the workers about the connection of workers and the Nazi party. Now the Nazis were proving that they had followed through on their promises and it seems that a part that they had not made clear in their earlier posters that was now the workers were an integral part of the Nazi party.

Conclusions

The question now is what does this analysis reveal about Nazis at the time and the way they were seen by the people of Germany? Obviously the Nazis kept their promises since unemployment dropped after they gained power in 1933. By January of 1934 unemployment had dropped to almost half of what it was the year before to 3.3 million. As stated earlier in the paper before the great depression the Nazis were not a popular group and many viewed them as too radical. After though the Nazis jumped on this fear and used their propaganda to both spread the fear to both those who were already unemployed and those who still had jobs, but feared unemployment.

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44 Trueman, “Nazis and the German Economy”
There are big differences between these two periods of time in Nazi History in their propaganda. There is a question whether this periodization of Nazi posters fits the changing of the messages the Nazis were directing towards the workers of Germany. There are many similarities between the periods because of the following of the theme of work and workers. It is important that though these similarities do exist they are in mostly the smaller themes of the posters, such as the fear-mongering of communism and the strength the workers represent. The big changes in the posters are what give the split between these two time periods. The way the worker and the theme of work are portrayed is what matters and what shows that split is important. From pre-1933 and the attempt to gain their support and show them the light that Hitler is offering to help them out of the hole that many had fallen into. Then after 1933 the propaganda is showing its support of the worker and nationalizing the country in attempt to both unites the nation and protects the worker. The biggest difference is how much the Nazi ideology is wrapped up around the worker in the posters. The pre-1933 posters have very little of the Nazi ideology being pushed and central to any of the posters. In the posters after 1933 the Nazi ideology is all of a sudden wrapped up with being a worker. The idea of being a worker also means that you are a part of the Nazi party and supporting the Nation. Pre-1933 the Nazis portrays the workers as the backbone to the nation. After 1933 they then attach themselves to the worker and make themselves out to be the backbone of the nation.

The Nazis were not just brilliant in their propaganda, but also in their decisions on what topics propaganda should cover. Looking through these posters it is easy to see all of the different angles the Nazis came from in order to attract almost anyone into their arms as saviours of the economy. They came out and claimed they could fix the economy and made
promises in their pre-1933 propaganda targeting these workers and those in the working class. Whether they came from an angle of fear towards communism or unemployment or if they built them up as strong members of society the Nazis offered up the chance for the people to help themselves by choosing the Nazis. This is an important part of this propaganda that the Nazis were not offering handouts just hands up. They offered protection and safety and a growth in the economy.

In their post-1933 propaganda it can be seen that they followed through on this and were attempting to make sure the nation helped them follow through with these promises. The Nazi propaganda not only made promises, but they then continued to use the propaganda to the German people to fulfill those promises for them. Again they did it through many different angles. They used the idea of nation building in the idea of buying German goods to move in a direction they saw as able to protect the workers. As well as using the idea of building labor groups centered around the Nazi party to continue to grow their membership and show solutions for the unemployment Germany was suffering. Going back to Hitler saying that the NSDAP was purely dedicated to propaganda is clearly true. The party used it to create promises and to get the country to then help keep those promises made to the workers. The Nazi party would never have come to the success it had if not for their successful use of propaganda and how strongly they stuck to it and allowed it to adapt and change to target the fears and hopes of anyone that may see it.
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Appendix

1. 5,600,000 Unemployed, Poster.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45}“5,600,000 unemployed demand work” German Propaganda Archive, http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters/unemployed, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2013)
2. *Workers of the Mind and Hand, Poster*

3. Work and Bread, Poster.\textsuperscript{47}

4. *Our Last Hope*, Poster.48

5. *Bravo von Papen*, Poster.49

6. Workers have Awakened, Poster.\(^5^0\)

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8. *Body and Soul*, Poster.\(^{52}\)

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9. *Hitler is Building*, Poster.\(^{53}\)

10. Germans Buy German Goods, Poster.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} "German Week, German Goods, German Goods", German Propaganda Archive, http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters/woche, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2013
11. A Wonderful Task, Poster.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{55} “A Wonderful Task”, German Propaganda Archive, \url{http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters/radfrau}, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2013)
12. National Farming Rally, Poster.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{56} “National Farming Rally”, German Propaganda Archive, http://www.bytwerk.com/gpa/posters/bauern36, (last modified February, 2013), (Accessed April 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2013)