

## **Nazi Propaganda: An Historical Case Study on the Ethics of Communication**

The Nazis masterfully used speeches and the media to manipulate the German people by preying on their wounded pride, resentment, and feelings of superiority to win their support. Nazi propaganda tried to avoid rational discourse to appeal to irrational impulses. Weikart will also demonstrate that Hitler and other Nazis deceived the German public about their religious stance, bringing many to falsely think that Hitler and his party were more in harmony with their own views.

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### I. Early Nazi Propaganda

- A. Played on resentment, bitterness over loss of World War I
- B. Cultivated pride with racial superiority and promises of greatness
- C. 2 main themes of Hitler's early speeches (and 25 Point Program)
  - 1. Versailles Treaty
  - 2. Scapegoating the Jews

### II. *Mein Kampf*

- A. Content – racism, social Darwinism, anti-communism
- B. Instructions about propaganda
  - 1. Anti-intellectual
  - 2. Repetition

### III. Why did Nazi propaganda appeal to so many Germans?

- A. Content was mainstream
- B. Touched people's emotions

IV. Methods (before coming to power)

- A. Mass meetings
- B. SA
- C. Newspapers

V. After coming to power, monopolizing culture

- A. Goebbels set up Reich Chambers of Culture Sept. 1933
- B. Radio
- C. Film
- D. Education
- E. Hitler Youth
- F. Hitler cult

VI. Nazi Propaganda about religion

A. Before coming to power

1. 25 Point Program espoused “positive Christianity”
2. *Mein Kampf*
3. Hitler proclaimed that Jesus was his Savior
4. Photo of Hitler coming out of church

B. After coming to power

1. Nazi flags and SA in churches
2. German Christian movement
3. Concordat with Catholic Church
4. Protestant Church Elections

C. Campaign against church influence

1. Eliminated church youth organisations
2. Closed church-run schools
3. Led press campaign against Catholic priests
4. Jailed Confessing Church pastors and Catholic priests

## VII. Lessons

### ***Suggested Readings:***

Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Religion: The Twisted Beliefs That Drove the Third Reich*. Washington, DC: Regnery History, 2016.

Richard Weikart, *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Routledge, 2002.

Ian Kershaw, *The "Hitler Myth": Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. NY: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press, 1987

William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945*. Rev. ed. NY: Franklin Watts, 1984.