

# Hitler & Propaganda | Sample Essay

## **How did Hitler and the Nazis use propaganda to increase and maintain power in Germany in 1933-1939?**

It cannot be denied that Hitler and the Nazis had great power and control over Germany in the 1930's. This power was achieved and maintained by a large propaganda campaign throughout Germany. Propaganda is defined as the spreading of information to convince people of your point of view in order to achieve, increase or maintain power. This can certainly be seen throughout Hitler's great efforts to achieve and maintain power. This propaganda included many cruel and unjust laws and campaigns such as the Nuremberg Laws. Hitler used propaganda as he knew it was one of his greatest assets, he was an outstanding public speaker and tactfully chose many resources such as aircraft, films and even loudspeakers from trucks. Hitler employed various people to assist these efforts including, Joseph Goebbels as a Minister for Propaganda and Leni Riefenstahl as a producer of Nazi propaganda movies. It cannot be denied that these efforts in the use of propaganda greatly contributed to the success of the Nazi party in the 1930's.

Hitler hired Joseph Goebbels to concentrate on the area of propaganda. Goebbels was already a strong member of the Nazi Party who had a great admiration for Hitler, even writing 'Adolf Hitler, I love you' in his diary on numerous occasions. Goebbels even used propaganda before being appointed the role. He edited his own newspaper 'Der Angriff' in order to spread Nazi ideas about Jews and communists. He also organised public meetings and demonstrations in Berlin to promote Nazi beliefs and policies. He was elected to the

Reichstag in 1928 and it was there he was appointed Reich Propaganda leader of the Nazi Party. He organised Hitler's presidential election campaigns and general elections. He was seen as a master of propaganda techniques as he studied numerous American advertising methods. His propaganda was very important in Hitler's rise to power in the 1920s and therefore heavily contributed to the Nazi's increase and maintenance of power in 1930's Germany.

Goebbels importance regarding the use of propaganda to increase and maintain power became even more significant when Hitler became chancellor in 1933. Goebbels was appointed Minister of Propaganda and brought all elements of German life under Nazi control – media, cinema, sport. He used an array of techniques to ensure Nazi power. He organised a public burning of anti-Nazi books, families were brought to the People's Radio to listen to Nazi broadcasts, loudspeakers were used to broadcast these radio shows to the members of the public, editors of newspapers were obliged to follow the Nazi line. He also used film and cinema to ensure that as many members of the German population would be exposed and enticed by Nazi policies. Goebbels also developed a cult of personality around Hitler; posters of Hitler were everywhere, depicting him in a positive light, special feast days were established to celebrate Hitler including his birthday being a national holiday. 'Heil Hitler' was used as a form of salute and slogans were developed to establish Hitler's image; "Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Fuhrer". Goebbels ideas, theories and efforts certainly proved effective in the increase and maintenance of Nazi power in the 1930's.

The effectiveness of Joseph Goebbels in Nazi propaganda is difficult to dispute. At no time up to 1933, did the Nazi Party win a majority of votes at elections. They may have been the largest political party in 1933, but they did not have a majority of support among the people. Therefore, those who had supported the Nazis needed to be informed on how correct their choice was with an emphasis on the strength of the party and the leadership. Those who opposed the Nazi Party had to be convinced that it was pointless continuing with their opposition. The fact that [Goebbels](#) had so much power is indicative of how important Hitler thought it was to ensure that the people were won over or intimidated into accepting Nazi rule. He established a positive image for Hitler and a powerful image for the Nazi Party. Goebbels himself once described the importance of propaganda, "The essence of propaganda consists in winning people over an idea so sincerely, so vitally, that in the end they succumb to it utterly and can never escape from it."

Hitler wanted to control the Catholic Church in Germany. He condemned the Catholics for defending the weak and hated the Jewish. He saw the church as a major obstacle before achieving a totalitarian state and he wanted the church as yet another outlet for propaganda. Hitler made a Concordat with the church in 1933 promising to respect the rights of the church if they stayed out of his political matters. Hitler quickly broke his promises as Catholic civil servants were fired and priests were arrested for sexual immorality and currency smuggling. These trials became part of his huge Anti-Catholic propaganda, led by Goebbels, to undermine the influence of the church. This was a constant battle throughout Hitler's power as both sides criticized each other. However this use of propaganda was yet another aspect that effected Nazi power in the 1930's.

Once appointed chancellor, Hitler immediately set about creating a totalitarian dictatorship which would control all aspects of life and society –political, social, economic and religious. He achieved this power by propaganda. He called a general election that was completely controlled by terror and propaganda against his opponents. He enlisted 400,000 SA in the police and established a strong image. During his campaign a Dutch Communist, van der Lubbe, set fire to the Reichstag but Hitler used this in his favour blaming the incident on Communist threat. In the election, the Nazi's succeeded in increasing their number of seats. After this election, he passed the Enabling Act which gave him the power to rule by decree; this put democracy to an end and gave him the freedom to use propaganda to promote anything he wanted. He used a policy of coordination to destroy all opposition and thanks to propaganda the Nazi's were eventually the only political party allowed. It can be argued that Hitler became a dictator as a result of his tactical strategies and thanks to his skilful use of propaganda, a tool he continued to use to maintain his power in the '30's.

Hitler used a wide range of organisations or other aspects of society to ensure that all possible efforts in propaganda were achieved. Education was a major factor of this. The Nazi Party had full control over what was taught in schools. School subjects were used to get across Nazi ideas with teachers being obliged to be part of the Nazi Teachers' Association. Certain gender roles were also promoted within schools where boys were geared towards military service and girls towards housekeeping. Hitler set up many youth organisations to yet again promote Nazi beliefs and values. Boys joined Hitler Youth and

girls joined the League of German Maidens. Hitler and the Nazis created a police state through the use of terror. This meant that it was very difficult for anyone to go against his policies as all judges were Nazis and concentration camps were established to punish anyone who went outside of Nazi views, this included the infamous brutal treatment of the Jews. Hitler and the Nazis went to great lengths to maintain their power. These lengths unfortunately included great brutality.

The Nuremberg Rallies were a major factor involved with Nazi propoganda. These were annual party rallies held by the Nazis in southern Germany. The rallies began in 1927 and were held each year until 1938. The biggest rallies began in 1933, once Hitler began chancellor of Germany. Albert Speer, an architect, was employed to design the rallies in order to promote Nazi beliefs. He achieved this by using large swastikas, huge banners and searchlights. The events were planned very carefully in order to accommodate huge crowds and to ensure their policies were being promoted. Each rally had a theme, eg. 1938-Rally of Greater Germany. These rallies succeeded in promoting Nazi beliefs and it was at the 1935 Rally that the Nuremberg Laws were passed against the Jews, Jews now becoming second-class citizens. Each day focused on different speeches all promoting and encouraging Nazi ideas. The Nuremberg Rallies were a key feature of Nazi Propaganda and succeeded in increasing and maintaining Nazi power within Germany 1933-1939.

Leni Riefenstahl was also a key figure in Nazi propoganda. Riefenstahl was employed to be a director and producer of films for the Nazi party. She made various films on the Nuremberg Rally including the short film on the 1933 Rally called 'Victory of Faith'. This prompted Hitler to ask her to film the 1934 Nuremberg Rally. She directed and produced

'The Triumph of the Will', a successful documentary on the rally. The film used many impressive film techniques such as panoramic views in order to make a masterpiece of Nazi propaganda. The film was widely acclaimed, winning awards both nationally and internationally. The film celebrated Hitler's leadership of the Nazi organisation and the German population. It showed all sides of the Nazi organisation – the Hitler Youth, the German Labour Front, parades and Hitler's speeches being the highlight. Hitler did not ask Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda, prior to his hiring of Riefenstahl. Goebbels tried to stop these films and made her every effort very difficult. It was said that Goebbels felt his authority was threatened and feared Hitler's dependency on him would fade. He made life very difficult for Leni and this led to her nervous breakdown. She also made 'Olympia', a documentary on the 1936 Berlin Olympics which highlighted the Nazi's successful organisational skills. Leni herself claimed not to be a Nazi and did not understand any of his Hitler's plans and was merely "making documentaries". She was jailed after World War 2 for her involvement in Nazi Propaganda but she denied her role and importance and was released. Whether she was aware of her importance or not, her contribution to Nazi propaganda certainly impacted the increase and maintenance of Nazi power in 1930's Germany.

Hitler and the Nazi party certainly used propaganda in a huge way. Their use strongly affected their popularity throughout the 1930's. Through various propaganda techniques Hitler eventually established a totalitarian dictatorship, fulfilling a role of absolute power. The efforts of Joseph Goebbels and Leni Riefenstahl also impacted his effectiveness. Goebbels provided many key ideas that led to Hitler's popularity such as the Cult of

Personality. Leni Riefenstahl's involvement meant that Nazi policies and achievements were seen throughout the world. Although Hitler and the Nazis abused their power by using it to justify their inhumane, corrupt crimes and promoted a narrow-minded society, their use of propaganda was certainly very impressive as it proved successful in increasing and maintaining Nazi power in Germany between 1933-1945.