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Welt im Film, der Augenzeuge, und die Deutsche Demokratische Republik: The Power of Propaganda in Germany's Post-World War II Climate (1945 - 1953)

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*Welt im Film, der Augenzeuge, und die Deutsche Demokratische
Republik: The Power of Propaganda in Germany's Post-World War II*

Climate (1945 - 1953)

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Abstract

1945 marked the end of World War II, the fall of the National Socialist Workers Party (NSDAP, or Nazi Party), and led to a divided Germany. When the war officially ended, Germany was broken and *Stunde Null*, or 'zero hour,' was implemented. The intention was to allow Germany to rebuild and encouraged forgetting the past in order to move forward. Initiating this plan during this vulnerable period left fertile ground for the country to be swayed politically. An easy way to reach audiences was through cinema and photography. The NSDAP capitalized on technological advancements in film and photography to revolutionize the practice of propaganda. The newsreels became one of the largest components of Nazi propaganda shown before movie screenings, targeting their audience in large numbers at a time. Citizens were under the impression that what they were being told was truthful. Understanding the Nazis' cinema and photography is crucial in order to understand the use of image in the post-war period. Since the population had previously acclimated to newsreels and photography, the occupying powers decided to implement newsreels alongside other propaganda tactics used by the NSDAP in their respective zones as part of the denazification initiative. The newsreels of the East and West differed in execution but the intent was the same: to politically influence the people living in

their zones. The employment of newsreels and photography as propaganda tools initiated the divide between the two Germanies before the wall was ultimately built in 1961.

Keywords: Propaganda, NSDAP, West Germany, East Germany, Denazify, Marxist-Leninism, Fascism, Newsreels

May 8, 1945 officially marked the end of World War II. The term *Stunde Null*, or the zero hour of Germany, was used with the intent to encourage Western Europe, specifically the countries who fell victim to the National Socialist Workers Party (NSDAP or Nazi Party), to forget the past and focus on rebuilding the future. Germany was divided into four occupation zones: France, England, the United States, and the Soviet Union (USSR). What made the division of a post-war Germany unique is that the capital Berlin, located in the midst of the Soviet occupation zone, was divided into four zones; the Western half was divided into three parts between the French, the English, and the Americans while the Soviets held onto the Eastern half. In each of these zones, the occupying power tried to inculcate the population with its political views. Propaganda played a critical role in post-war Germany, especially because of the propaganda initiative of the NSDAP. I define propaganda in the terms Edward Bernays proposes:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. (Bernays 37)

The post-war public, especially the German public, was already habituated to propaganda's many forms, particularly photography and the infamous newsreels shown in movie theatres prior to film screenings. The majority of Germans were exposed to the newsreels during Hitler's reign, and so during the denazification initiative of the Allies, newsreels were once again used because the German public was acclimated to them, giving the Allies the ability to directly counter the Nazi newsreels. Understanding propaganda produced during Hitler's time in power is imperative in grasping the role it played during the denazification initiative—this is because this media ultimately fertilized propaganda created in the 'Cold War.'

This paper examines the dialogue between the images employed with propagandistic intent from 1945 to 1953 from both the eastern and western sectors of Berlin, and how they echo the propaganda produced by the NSDAP. By analyzing the propaganda that was created in the beginning of a "new" Germany, I hope to elucidate a dialogue often lost, between East and West concerning the influence images have on a rebuilding society and the power they have to sway opinions and worldviews. My analysis below will consist of: the advancement of photography and film and how they helped facilitate the propaganda of the NSDAP, an analysis of newsreels produced in both East and West Germany—with specific emphasis on the uprising that occurred on June 17, 1953 in East Germany—and a comparison and contrast of East and West German newsreels and how they echo NSDAP propaganda. I will argue a leader-like presence is crucial when analyzing newsreels as propagandistic mechanisms, fully embraced by the NSDAP and West Germany but ignored in East Germany after Stalin's death. East and West Germany started a propaganda war with each other in 1945 by utilizing the propagandistic film and photography techniques of the Nazis, which led to Germany being divided both culturally and symbolically.

The twentieth century bore witness to numerous advances in film and photography, which proved important to the trajectory of history that followed. In 1908, the maverick French film company Pathé Frères invented “the world’s first weekly newsreel” the *Pathè Journal*, a continuous series that quickly gained international exposure due to the release of different versions (Williams; R. Abel 508). The power of film became clear due to the nature of film attendance; it is an experience that is both individual and communal since the audience is “forged into a unified whole, temporarily joined by similar emotional reactions to the projections on the screen” (Fehrenbach 2). In view of the early twentieth-century advances in film, many countries began to embrace film production, especially for political purposes, because it was believed that cinema had an “apparently overwhelming influence on the viewer’s psyche” (Fehrenbach 2). Germany was one of these countries, which commonly “embedded in politics of culture and identity,” a theme that is integral to the rise of the newsreels produced by the NSDAP and those produced after 1945 (Fehrenbach 2). Although the Reich Ministry of Propaganda diluted the practice of newsreels, they were already utilized for their ability to further governmental agendas during World War I (Fehrenbach 3). The importance that film and photography had as propagandistic tools would not have been possible without early technological advancements.

From his accession to power to his downfall, propaganda played a vital role in Hitler’s political career. Before Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, he was personally involved with the production of propaganda in the early years of the Weimar Republic for the German Workers’ Party—many features of this propaganda were then embraced by the NSDAP (T. Abel 61). Hitler regarded propaganda as public education which had the main purpose of influencing the masses to adopt the same views and opinions of the party and the state (Bytwerk 42-43).

From his own experiences, Hitler determined that effective propaganda was “aimed at the emotions [with messages that] struck heavily but effectively” (T. Abel 61). The propaganda produced in the Third Reich was more concerned with the audiences’ emotional response, resulting in “little concern with facts and logic” (T. Abel 61). Considering his previous involvement, it comes as no surprise that Hitler would be actively involved with the propaganda produced by the Reich Ministry of Propaganda (Bramsted 49).

One crucial element that the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, headed by Joseph Goebbels, exploited was the newsreels. As previously mentioned, the production and usage of newsreels was not developed by the NSDAP, but they did capitalize off new technological developments that would ultimately alter the practice of propaganda. Before the newsreels became a prominent component of the Nazi propaganda program, Goebbels was initially very “unwilling to introduce state produced newsreels” (Tegal 143). In order to further understand the complexity of the Nazi propaganda machine, it is imperative to note that in Nazi Germany “propaganda was a function of the state” and the various agencies which encompassed the state “were supported and reinforced by the Party” (Bramsted 71). Once the ability to reach large numbers of people en masse through newsreels became apparent, they were embraced and “Goebbels took full command and was closely involved in editing newsreels,” requiring only Hitler’s approval before their public distribution (Bramsted 144). The newsreels ultimately became their own empire within the NSDAP, which was composed of three large components: “energy, organization and talent,” and fundamentally were “the direct result of the military conquest of Europe” (Bramsted 144). Starting in 1938, it was mandated that newsreels were screened prior to all movie screenings in cinemas, not only in Nazi-conquered Europe and German satellites but neutral countries as well (K. Hoffmann 133; Tegal 144).

The Nazi newsreels were systematic in both production and distribution. Hitler's presence and the NSDAP's conquest of Europe were omnipresent throughout photography and newsreels (Bytwerk 16). Early on, the Reich became very invested in the production of newsreels. Hitler considered film to be a vital catalyst for successful propaganda due to its combination of four qualities that makes film inherently unique: "(1) subjective emotional appeal; (2) limitation of contents; (3) possibility of using it throughout to illustrate the fighting attitude and (4) continuous and uniform repetition" (Bramsted 66). A remarkable feature of the Party newsreels is that they tended "to unify the news instead of dividing it," an element not found in the Allied newsreels, specifically, those produced by the United States (Kracauer 154). One crucial function of the newsreels was to address the imminent war that Germany would face. Once other countries began to succumb to Nazi Germany, each occupied country was mandated to show custom-made newsreels that were composed of homogenous messages (Tegal 144). When analyzing the newsreels of the Nazis, it becomes evident that image took precedence over words—this is because images were believed to be a catalyst to communicate on a deeper and more emotional level (Kracauer 160). The images seen within the newsreels can be seen as a pastiche, various scenes that cover a vast number of current affairs all within the same reel.

After the initial newsreels were distributed and the ability to persuade crowds became clear, they were produced and released quickly. When comparing newsreels between America and Nazi Germany, one very crucial element becomes apparent—the Nazis quickly found that as far as newsreels were concerned, as means of persuasion, pictures were believed to work more effectively at eliciting emotive responses that were in line with the Party's "desired direction" (Kracauer 157). It is argued that American newsreels were not as successful since they were charged with dialogue, explaining to the audience what they should see, dividing the audience's

attention between narrative and visual, preventing the audiences' certainty if "they should follow the pictorial development or verbal narration" (Kracauer 161). Statistically, "only 31 percent of the total number of shots were accompanied by words," which is less than "one third of the film footage," whereas the "American spreads over nearly its whole length" (Kracauer 155). It was Hitler's belief "that feelings are a surer guide than the mind" since "the masses can be misled by reason" (Bytwerk 43). The framework that generated the newsreels in Nazi Germany, and other territories that were mandated to show them, becomes crucial when analyzing the newsreels produced by the Allies from the denazification period until the beginning of the Cold War.

The propaganda war between the United States and the USSR started before the Soviet occupation of Germany. The Soviet photographer Yevgeny Khaldei symbolically marked the end of the NSDAP's power and the Soviet besiegement of Berlin with his photograph *Victory over Reichstag, Berlin* that was initially claimed to have been taken on May 2, 1945 (Zöller 13). The photograph is seen as the Soviet response to the American photograph *Raising the flag on Iwo Jima* taken by Joe Rosenthal in February of 1945, since it was "at great length planned, on the ground only after the end of the actual fighting, targeted and later changed by retouching" (Zöller 27-28). Before the official end of the war, Stalin verbally acknowledged the influence of each Allied power by remarking in April of 1945, "whoever imposes on a territory also imposes on it his own social system," a reminiscence of the "cuius regio, eius religio" principle (Dennis 15; Schlegel). Once the Allies claimed victory, "the existing German media system was dissolved and subsequently reorganized" (Hickethier 39). On June 5, 1945, Nazi Germany was officially dissolved and the Allies agreed their governments would be the only authorities in their respective zones (Grothe 16).

1949 is remembered as the year that Germany split into two—the three Western Allies “were united under one constitution” forming West Germany, while the Soviet sector remained autonomous (Barron 14). It is important to mention that the propaganda in East Germany started to appear in the Soviet Style between 1945-1949 (Heather 8). Brewing tensions between East and West were exacerbated in 1949 when the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (DDR, or the German Democratic Republic) was officially established (Grothe 18). Everything Western and oppositional to the DDR’s policies were banned (Grothe 40). In the eyes of East German propaganda, West Germany was still full of fascists who posed a threat to peace and solidarity, whereas the West took the American perspective that Marxist-Leninism was a greater threat to humanity and that the East was unwilling to comply with unification. Through the usage of imagery, in this case specifically film, the DDR “seemed to be refighting World War II in its struggles with West Germany” (Bytwerk 39). The newsreels produced by the West maintained the collective Western Allies’ emphasis on the re-education and denazification of the German public while iterating the western Cold War political perspectives, promoting the distinction the Western Allies wanted to create between West and East Germany (Uelzmann 81; Fay 15-16).

The *Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA) was the company that produced *der Augenzeuge* and was chartered by the Soviet government in 1946 (Grothe 125). It was the “official East German perspective” (Uelzmann 81). When operations for *der Augenzeuge* initially began, it “had kind words for all,” discussing and embracing “internal Soviet affairs” and even endorsed a “joint Allied occupation of Berlin” (Jorgan 63). East Germany had an advantage with the production of *der Augenzeuge* since it was “the first and for a long time the only” true German newsreel, produced by Germans for Germans (Jorgan 64). By contrast, Western newsreels remained under control of the Allies for a significant period. Initially the

“*Augenzeuge*’s world contained an East and a West” and its early productions “stressed [the] virtue of pointing out differing points of view” (Jorgan 63). In 1948, that dialogue changed; no longer was the West a friendly neighbor to the East. Instead, it was painted as a threatening country incapable of caring for its people, while the East seemingly flourished (Jorgan 63-64).

The SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) officially seized control of East Germany in 1949 and would remain in power for the remainder of East Germany’s existence (Dennis 28). They promised to fight fascism, which multiple *Augenzeuge* episodes led the people of the DDR to believe was still flourishing in the West (*Der Augenzeuge* 39/1947). Several episodes made it appear that the Jewish community was still being hunted, that the destruction of synagogues and graves was “on the daily schedule,” showing the distribution of brochures that said “Witch Hunt against Jews: Adenauer’s administration encourages antisemitism” (*Der Augenzeuge* 17/1959). Konrad Adenauer, first Chancellor for the Federal Republic of Germany (or West Germany), was labeled a “Jew Murderer,” along with claims that under his administration fascists were still walking freely around West Germany (*Der Augenzeuge* 17/1959). Not only was Adenauer often compared to Hitler but often times his name was accompanied with the words *Wie Hitler*, as well as claims that visitors to West Germany from Israel were terrified that things were “back to the Nazi times” (“KZ-Drohungen”; “Es ist weider”). The memories of the *Hitler Krieg* were deliberately brought up frequently to keep the horrors and the fear of the consistently iterated imminent “third world war” fresh (*Der Augenzeuge* 64/1947; *Der Augenzeuge* 40/1951). The SED, as with Hitler, saw early on the value of group viewing in a cinema. It is important to note that televisions were available in this era, but due to the retail price they were a luxury many could not afford in both Germanies. Collective viewing “often leads to group experiences, which the SED consider[ed] to be very potent for indoctrination” (Grothe 118). Labor and the

rebuilding of a new ‘better’ Germany was consistently emphasized—“work for today, red for tomorrow, red for our people” (*Der Augenzeuge* 33/1952). Freedom, unity, and ideals encouraged by Marxist-Leninism were always proclaimed at the end of newsreels, whether it be through narration and the promise of a “new better life,” or through cultural events encouraged by the DDR, i.e. sport, theater, or music (*Der Augenzeuge* 64/1946; *Der Augenzeuge* 74/1947; *Der Augenzeuge* 13/1952).

Der Augenzeuge intentionally encouraged an anti-American narrative. The previous war, the bombs, the destruction and pain that survivors endured consistently echoed throughout the newsreels from the East, and was barely mentioned in the West. The American military and government was made responsible for the destruction of East Germany in the media produced by the DDR (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). Alongside film footage of Germany’s most heavily bombed city during the war, Dresden, when footage of the old renowned university appears, the commentator simply says “after the American air raid, only the upper facade remains” (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). Filming was also active during the Korean War. Citizens of East Germany were shown footage that gave viewers the impression that the American military was colonizing and locals were miserable in their territory, which is countered by the filmed reception of Russian troops in Korea (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). In these film clips, locals are standing around with USSR flags, waving to the soldiers and tanks passing by. Soldiers are seen looking on with pride as the North Korean military proudly walk alongside them to face the West (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). A few years later, the DDR reintroduced some footage of the Korean War to show an orphanage full of children in Korea during which one child says that the Americans stole her parents from her (*Der Augenzeuge* 40/1951). In a newsreel that begins with a remembrance of the six year anniversary of the bombing of Dassau, the viewer is led into the reel

with videos of burning buildings and a voice over saying that American terror planes have destroyed the city (*Der Augenzeuge* 12/1951). Then, the audience is transported to a memorial at which somber groups are standing with USSR and DDR flags, leaving flowers collectively at the memorial. After a few minutes, assuming the audience was given enough time to digest and process the images, the commentator says the memorial was for those who died and are lost due to the American destruction (*Der Augenzeuge* 12/1951). The US throughout these films is consistently accused of provoking the East by sending spies over to destroy “the reconstruction,” and the films are full of claims that the “USA leads the Cold War,” alongside that America was unwilling to remove their weapons from West Germany and were importing more tanks to West Germany (*Der Augenzeuge* 31/1952; *Der Augenzeuge B* 14/1959; *Der Augenzeuge* 44/1952). It is also claimed often that the “USSR does the most for peace” and the citizens of the USSR supported peace and freedom the strongest (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). The previous claims are accompanied by images of jovial people enjoying that freedom, while videos of bombs destroying buildings and images of people impoverished on the street are used to claim that the West gave the rights to conquer the East (*Der Augenzeuge* 13/1949). This attitude was also seen in the distribution of newspapers, which stated that the US was discriminatory towards Soviet correspondents who were not granted freedom of the press (“Pressefreiheit made in USA”). The anti-American tone encouraged by the newsreels of the DDR was a consistent narrative.

Much like the newsreels of the East, those produced and distributed in the West were distinctive. *Welt im Film* was one of the main newsreels in the initial post-war period, and it was produced “under the oversight of the British and the American” governments with the intention to be shown in all the movie theaters in their respective zones (Uelzmann 81; Fay 15; Uelzmann 87). This newsreel was the only one that consumers in their sectors had access to from 1945 to

1950 (Fay 15). In 1949, the *Deutsche Wochenschau*, which was the title of the newsreels produced during the reign of the NSDAP, reintroduced itself as the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* (Uelzmann 61). The newsreels produced for and distributed in West Germany “remained under federal control between 1949 and 1963” (Uelzmann 61). Konrad Adenauer was elected to be chairman of the CDU in the British zone in 1946 and elected Chancellor of the Federal Republic in 1949 (Kleinmann). When putting into account that Adenauer survived through three German states, personally witnessing “the efficiency and efficacy of National Socialist propaganda” as well as the propaganda produced during the post-war occupation, it is no surprise that Adenauer knew the power of images and that “public opinion was crucial to securing and maintaining political power” (Uelzmann 63). Due to his experiences witnessing the effects of propaganda, Adenauer embraced its use since he believed that the “means to public opinion lay in a firm control of the media” (Uelzmann 63).

The newsreels in the West endorsed an anti-Soviet position. Compared to their Eastern counterparts, accounts of the war were rarely brought up. They did not allow images from wartime to resonate with their audience until the narrator would comment to explain sights. The *Fox Tönende Wochenschau*, produced by the American company 20th Century Fox (who produced some of the NSDAP newsreels), was also a dominant newsreel in the years after 1945, which greeted its viewer with the promise they would be “given the most interesting and most current [information] in the entire world in color and sound.” (H. Hoffmann 84; Fox Tönende Wochenschau 49/1953). This newsreel, alongside those shown in the West, contradicted messages communicated in the East. Like their Eastern counterparts, these newsreels referred to their zone as the “free” zone (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 49/1953). In various newsreels, it is argued that weaponry, which was heavily criticized in the East, was the “hope of our time”—

they employed the concept of community with words like “us, our, we” which was more prominent in the newsreels of the East (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 49/1953). The West had many production companies for its newsreels, a tactic which broadened its ability to reach larger audiences. Promotion of Western ideals and combating the claims made by the East were a consistent aim.

1953 is a vital year when discussing the propaganda and dialogue between East and West Germany. Early in that year Joseph Stalin died and DEFA released the film “Stalin’s Werk ist Unglaublich” (Stalin’s Work is Unbelievable) (*Stalin’s Werk ist Unglaublich* 11/1953). Somber songs accompany idealized images of the USSR—people are seen crying, others purging themselves of Nazi memorabilia and burning the SS flag—these images captivate the viewer while the commentator remains silent for the vast majority of the short film (*Stalin’s Werk ist Unglaublich* 11/53). At the end, the narrator makes a rare appearance saying “Stalin’s picture shows hope for mankind” (*Stalin’s Werk ist Unglaublich* 11/1953). Stalin’s visual presence was strong in the DDR. It was common to see his face on flags, smaller images often accompanying the word “freedom,” and the walls of homes adorned with images of Stalin (*Der Augenzeuge* 49/1952; *Der Augenzeuge* 22/1951; *Stalin’s Werk ist Unglaublich* 11/1953). Shortly after Stalin’s death, the terror of his reign came to light, but instead of welcoming a dialogue about the atrocities, East Germany chose to avoid all mention and reference to Joseph Stalin (Bytwerk 28). Moving forward, the DDR never acknowledged a leader with “the same amount of praise” (Bytwerk 28). It is important to note that the purge of Stalin did not officially begin until 1956 at the “Third SED Conference” (Grothe 24).

Many factors in the DDR led to what is remembered as “a bloody day in the calendar of the German history,” when masses of East Berlin citizens stormed the streets chanting “we want

to be free people” (“Berlin, 17. Juni”). This day, June 17, 1953, is remembered and referred to as “Day X” in the East German newsreels (*Der Augenzeuge* 26/1953). It “marked the largest rebellion by an industrialized society against a Bolshevik state since the Communist movement was founded” (Grothe 22). What began as a “mass demonstration” started by construction workers in East Berlin on June 16 grew to about 2,000 workers joining the march to confront the Council of Ministers building (Dennis 65). It is believed the SED was surprised by the scale of the revolt on June 16, and it inevitably would become a topic of Western newsreels since “the workers were rising in revolt against the ‘Workers and Peasants State,’” highlighting the disjuncture between workers and the state (Dennis 65). Once the movement began to spread throughout the entirety of East Germany, mainly amongst “the urban working class” and “the rural community,” and entered its second day, the demands of the protestors also increased (Dennis 65-67). What began as a demonstration against work norms grew into the demand for “the withdrawal of the new norms, an immediate reduction in the cost of living, free and secret elections, the resignation of the government and no punishment of strikers” (Dennis 65-67). Terror fully began to erupt igniting a rebellion in the streets, and on June 17 Soviet tanks and military forces were brought in to establish order (Grothe 22). The deployment of Soviet military increased hostility in East Germany (Dennis 66). Flags were burned on monuments, for instance, on the Brandenburger Tor (Grothe 22). Alongside red and DDR flags being burned, “propaganda signs and Communist files were burned” (Grothe 22). After 1pm, machine guns were fired into the crowd, leaving multiple casualties (“Berlin, 17. Juni”). The unmistakable sound of gunfire ignited a fear amongst East Germans, since it was a sound they had hoped to forget (Weidner). After the initial shots, protestors ran and many sought refuge in West Germany (“Berlin, 17. Juni”). By the afternoon of June 17, order was restored in East Germany (Dennis 66). The

Uprising had serious repercussions including many deaths and injuries, 19 demonstrators subsequently sentenced to death, numerous people arrested and 40 Soviet soldiers put on trial for refusing to shoot “German workers” (Dennis 66-69; “Berlin, 17. Juni”). What makes this uprising interesting is how both Germanies decided to cover it in their respective media.

The West took this opportunity to make the East seem inherently evil, although it seems as if the coverage of this event was limited to places in close proximity to Berlin. Two individuals who lived in Rheinhausen at the time of the uprising recalled the news of the surrounding circumstance—one, a journalist working for a newspaper, the other, a beer brewer, said neither knew about the uprising until after the wall fell (Latotzke). The *Fox Tönende Wochenschaureleased* shortly after shows videos of flags being burned and masses storming the streets, in the background one can see multiple fires and the streets submerged in smoke (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 91/1953). After letting the audience process the images projected, the narrator exclaims, “the end of the democratic sector in Berlin,” accompanied by images of people running and Russian tanks dominating the streets (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 91/1953). Before the end of the newsreel, they take the audience to South Korea and show a sign that reads, “Don’t make Korea like China” (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 91/1953). In the newsreel released immediately after, a memorial is set up in the Western capital of Bonn for the “victims of the Reds” and the “freedom fighters” at which Adenauer is standing behind a row of closed displayed caskets, one for each victim (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 62/1953). After making the audience aware that there were over 100,000 mourners ready to lay flowers at the graves, the narrator says the caskets were empty because the “Soviets did not return the corpses” (*Fox Tönende Wochenschau* 62/1953). *Die Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* remarked of the uprising that

“the tears of the relatives are the tears of the nation” (Hickethier 51). The propaganda produced in the West took advantage of the uprising, referencing it often throughout the years.

The East took a different route representing the uprising. Various *Augenzeuge* newsreels assigned blame to West Germany and the American sector. The people of East Germany were told it was a deliberate ploy of the West to disrupt Eastern peace. One newsreel released roughly a month after the Uprising, *der Augenzeuge* begins with what is claimed to be photographic evidence regarding “Day X” (*Der Augenzeuge* 29/1953). Masses of people are seen entering the Eastern sector, on what is claimed to be June 17, and those entering from the American sector are happily taking flyers that are handed out at the gate reading the “Nation’s Echo,” but the camera does not focus on the flyers long enough to see what is written beneath the title (*Der Augenzeuge* 29/1953). In another newsreel, alongside footage of buildings destroyed and vandalized streets, the words “the atrocity became a reality” is said in a disappointing tone by the narrator (*Der Augenzeuge* 26/1953). In the first five minutes, Adenauer is accused of organizing a “putsch,” a deliberate attempt to overthrow the government, with the help of the United States to fight the unity and freedom the East claimed to have created (*Der Augenzeuge* 26/1953). Alongside images of books destroyed and shattered glass by a newly windowless building, the narrator simply claims “this was not the work of demonstrating workers [but] the work of bandits,” again iterating that “Rowdys,” which became the term used for those of West Germany believed to be coming in to the East to disrupt the peace, had come in to ruin the hard work of the East (*Der Augenzeuge* 26/1953). The method that the East decided to implement to discuss the Worker’s Uprising enhanced their anti-American narrative.

When comparing the newsreels by structure and composition produced and shown during Hitler’s regime to those of West Germany, specifically those produced while Adenauer was in

power, many similarities become apparent. It is crucial to mention that many individuals who worked on the newsreels of the Third Reich were later employed in West Germany to help with the production of newsreels (Uelzmann 92). In 1955, the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau* dropped *Neue*, and hence referred to as the *Deutsche Wochenschau*. Only ten years after the end of WWII, it carried the same name it did during the years of the NSDAP (Uelzmann 80). A *Spiegel* article published in 1949, the same year as the release of the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, criticized the name that elicited memories of Nazi propaganda and shed light on some of the crew formerly employed to produce propaganda for the NSDAP (Uelzmann 83). Since some of those working directly to produce propaganda for West Germany also contributed to the propaganda produced by the Nazis, the comparisons are transparent.

It is important at this juncture to make clear that while the NSDAP and West Germany both used propaganda with similar intentions, their goals were dissimilar. Hitler and his peers sought world domination by and for the Aryan race through genocide, whereas West Germany engaged in a propaganda war with East Germany, tried to further Western ideals, and sought to provide a dialogue that was lacking during occupation—dialogue for the German public by Germans (Nazism 1919-1945; Uelzmann 81-82). The latter is imperative to understanding both programs. Hitler saw Germany lose WWI and blamed the propaganda produced at the time to be a reason for Germany's loss (Bytwerk 43). German morale was non-existent in the aftermath of the war and they felt they had lost their “economic standing in the world” (Wolff; Schlegel). They were depleted on every front and needed a boost (Wolff). As mentioned, Hitler worked as a propagandist himself and identified that Germany was in need of a leader. After WWI, Germany officially ousted the monarchy, so the years of the Weimar Republic was the first time Germany embraced and practiced democracy (Müller 1-2). Hitler wanted to be the leader he sought, and

so effectively became that leader. He gave the people a sense of confidence and hope through image, providing propaganda from the German people to the German people—most of the people employed by the Reichs Ministry of Propaganda were in their thirties and deeply affected by the mistakes of the Weimar Republic (Bramsted 58). The public felt heard and understood.

Adenauer witnessed the power of this propaganda himself. He also experienced its downfall and the Allies' attempt to re-educate the populace (Uelzmann 59-60). As mentioned, post-war newsreels needed to be approved by the Allies. However, they were also produced by them, and there is no account that they consulted German people in production. They understood the climate only as outsiders who came to liberate Germany from Hitler's fist, but did not endure what the majority of the German people shared (Mirian). They failed to make Germans feel understood. It was made for German audiences but can be argued to have failed because of this.

In both newsreels is also a lingering presence of the chancellor, something that Walter Benjamin used to compare fascist aesthetics to those of Marxist-Leninism (Schlegel). Benjamin notes that fascism aestheticizes politics whereas "Communism responds by politicizing arts" (Schlegel). The chancellors in both newsreels are self-alienated "to such a degree that" their presence ultimately "experiences its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure" (Schlegel). The previous statement holds true to the newsreels produced both by NSDAP and in West Germany because the audience is fixated on the omnipresence of leaders that over time they become immune to their presence, thus losing power over visually-structured society. Both newsreels created an aesthetic isolated to their purpose, whereas East Germany held to a consistent visual aesthetic identifiable in all propaganda throughout its existence.

Hitler is remembered as being unwilling to be filmed as much as Goebbels desired, but nonetheless was a consistent presence in newsreels (K. Hoffmann 137). Hitler's appearance

becomes integral in these newsreels, whether it be his speeches or greeting and saluting admirers in the streets who *vergöttert* him (Riefenstahl 1:44:25). Adenauer was consistently present in his newsreels, partly because the CDU always had more influence in the production compared to other parties in West Germany (Uelzmann 58-71). Adenauer was acutely aware that West Germany needed a leader that had to be one of their own, someone who endured the same previous years as the rest of the populace, to guide them (Uelzmann 58-71). The DDR on the other hand always looked towards the USSR. It wanted to embrace socialism for the peace and prosperity it claimed to bestow on the path to becoming Communist (Grothe 38-39). Stalin was leader of the USSR in the early years of the DDR, and newsreels produced during his life included images of him hung on buildings in Berlin with the narrator saying “he is our father and we are his children on the path to freedom” (*Der Augenzeuge* 64/1946). Stalin had a similar visual presence, but not identical—he never visited the DDR and all images shown of him were the images around the DDR. His presence was markedly less captivating than the others.

As previously mentioned, after Stalin died, the atrocities of his rule came to light, but the DDR never acknowledged these terrors, instead opting to no longer mention him. Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht were both very important figures in the government of the DDR. Pieck was the first president of East Germany, who after being a stable figure in the communist movement in Germany before Hitler gained power was exiled to Moscow, and secured his fate in DDR politics after being elected in 1950 (Dennis 31). Ulbricht was a very important figure to the communist movement in Germany, having being exiled to Moscow at the height of Hitler’s power, and remained in a crucial role in the DDR because he was “trusted by the Soviets and was responsive to their needs and priorities” (Dennis 14-16). Ulbricht is barely seen within the newsreels—he occasionally appears, but the time is not substantial. Pieck embraced written

media, especially newspapers, often writing to “his people” directly as if he were speaking to them, but failed in such consistency for the newsreels (“Walter Ulbricht zu Begründung”). The need to pursue communism for peace and the West framed being fascists held a more substantial weight than showing the leaders of the DDR. The fight against fascism and the impurities of the Western world were of more importance to the propagandists of the DDR since it not only embraced the narrative of East against West but also the working class against the ruling class (Schlegel). By embracing anti-fascism they also endorsed the narrative that they were against a ruling class because, “to many theorists, for example Walter Benjamin and Antonio Gramsci, fascism was a last attempt to save capitalism by the ruling class” (Schlegel).

The propaganda produced by the Nazi propaganda machine played an important role in the rhetoric of propaganda produced after 1945 in both East and West Germany. All four sectors initially wanted to denazify and reeducate the depleted German public. Once it became apparent that tensions were brewing between Eastern and Western ideology, mainly Communism against Capitalism, Germany became an obvious site of expansion. Since Germany had to reestablish a government and therefore easily swayed politically, East and West Germany quickly entered into a propaganda war to implement desired ideals. The employment of image as a propaganda tool is crucial since it is malleable; it is easily manipulated to convey messages with accompanying ideals that each respective government wants to supplant, as has been illustrated in this paper. Utilizing the power of image and mass exposure is a crucial component to the history of a divided Germany that should no longer be overlooked.

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