

### Primary Source Analysis: Don't Let Go!

My primary source analysis discusses a caricature from 1935 issue of *Der Sturmer* with a text above the drawing that translates from German to “Don’t Let Go!” and a text below which could be translated in English roughly as this: "Do not grow weary, do not loosen the grip. This poisonous serpent may not slip away. Better that one strangles it to death than that our miseries begin anew".<sup>1</sup> This pro-Nazi, weekly, tabloid newspaper was in circulation in Germany from 1923 to the end of World War II and its sole owner and publisher Julius Streicher regularly called for the extermination of the Jews. The caricature and the statement below are the expression of the murderous hatred against the Jews that *Der Sturmer* spewed for over twenty years.

The drawing depicted on the attached photo appeared in *Der Sturmer* two years after Hitler and his National-Socialist Party came to power in Germany. The Fuhrer and the Nazi Party were virulently anti-Semitic, accusing the Jews of every imaginable crime, from being the sole reason for the German defeat in World War I to causing the moral degradation of the German society in general and the German women in particular. But nothing resonated more amongst the Germans than the treat of the “Jewish Bolshevism”. The Nazis claimed that the German Jews were all dangerous

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<sup>1</sup> Tracey, Martin. "Propaganda: How Germany Convinced the Masses," *History in the Making*: 13 (2020), 91-112 (p. 102).

subversives just like their brethren, the Jews from the so called “Pale of Settlement” in Russia. Just like those Russian Jews waited for the opportune moment to destroy the Russian Empire and kill millions of Christians so were the German Jews lying in wait in order to find an opening and turn Germany into a second USSR, causing untold sufferings and millions of deaths in the process.

Armed with such convictions and backed up by the ever-present and highly efficient propaganda machine created by Goebbels, the Nazi managed to convince millions of Germans that the battle against the “Jewish communism”, and the Jews as a whole, was a life and death struggle where everything was allowed as long as it was helping the Germans to achieve the stated objective: removing the malicious Jewish influence over the German culture, education, economy and the affairs of the state.

Thus in a relatively short period of time after they took over in 1933, the Nazis, true to their promises, started restricting the rights of the German citizens of Jewish decent living in Germany, which was followed by outright prosecution and expulsions from the country until all this culminated in the Holocaust.

After providing this necessary background information let’s focus on the primary source in question. In this caricature, a human hand is portrayed strangling a serpent. The serpent seems to have its tongue out, as it struggles to free itself from the attempted strangulation. The incorporation of the serpent and the human hand greatly affects the overall meaning of the caricature. The Nazis

in addition to being virulently anti-Semitic were also not big believers in Christianity. The Fuhrer in particular considered it a religion of the weak people who were incapable of fighting in order to assert their rights. In his private conversations he even expressed his preference for Islam but still he did not intend to prosecute Christians, predicting that this religion would slowly die out as his regime and Nazi ideology tightens its grip over Germany and the world.<sup>2</sup> Still while the Nazis despised Christianity they knew very well how to play on the emotions of their still very religious subjects.

The creation of the Man and later the Woman characterized the beginning of the world. However, the serpent brought the fall of the Man. The woman was lured into eating the forbidden fruit, which resulted in Adam and Eve being expelled from Heaven. The cause of their downfall was the Serpent which symbolizes the devil. Thus the Christians always viewed the serpent as their enemy, the symbol of evil and the devil. By depicting the Jews as a serpent in this caricature the author portrays them as the embodiment of all the evil on this Earth: creatures doing the devil's bidding. On the other side of this battle we see a male hand symbolizing the German Man who is fighting the forces of evil, the World Jewry. That was a common theme in the Nazi propaganda in those years.

The exclamation mark at the end of the sentence above the drawing is adopted to emphasize the seriousness of the situation, to

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<sup>2</sup> Trevor-Roper, H.R., *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-1944* (New York: Enigma Books, 2000)

underline that this is a life and death struggle and that the Germans must harden their hearts and not allow feelings of pity or the natural desire of the Christians to be merciful and forgiving to stop them from doing the difficult task of exterminating the Jews and to ensure the continuing survival and prosperity of the superior German race.

From a purely artistic point of view the different elements of this caricature show the great talent of its author, talent that unfortunately was put in service of the one of the most destructive secular ideologies ever created by men, second only to communism.

The separate images are clearly structured, making it possible for viewers to spot all the necessary elements and to draw the correct conclusions. The human hand is strong, masculine and healthy and as such symbolizes the German Men fighting to protect their Motherland and their families. The head of the serpent looks like the countless other caricatures of Jewish men that were created by Julius Streicher. Their facial features are usually grossly exaggerated in order to portray them as ugly, contemptible creatures, full of lust for White women, greedy and cowardly at the same time. The body of the serpent is full of images of the Star of David in order to leave no doubt who actually must be eradicated.

Images like those distributed daily among the German population, army and security services for almost 20 years, combined with other forms of anti-Jewish propaganda, ultimately led to the greatest atrocity in human history, The Holocaust.

## References:

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- Martin, Tracey. "Propaganda: How Germany Convinced the  
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Enigma Books, 2000)

Nicht auslassen!



Nicht müde werden, nicht die Finger lassen  
Der Faust darf dieser Gifttaumel nicht entschlappen  
Denn besser noch man prelle ihn zu Tod  
Als daß auf's Neu beginne unsre Not