Telling a Story through Posters:

A Comparison of Nazi and Soviet Propaganda Posters during World War II

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Introduction:

World War II was a time when several authoritarian regimes contested for dominance in Europe. Two of the most notable of these were Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. World War II started when they initiated a joint invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. From this point until summer 1941, there was not much contention between Germany and the USSR. This ended when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union with Operation Barbarossa. The Nazis were victorious and pushed far into European Russia. The tides turned in favor of the Soviet Union with their victory in Stalingrad after months of fighting. This victory paved the way for the other Soviet victories that took them to the Nazi capital of Berlin where the Nazi regime fell in April of 1945. Throughout this timeframe, the governments of both countries made use of propaganda to convey information to their populations.

Propaganda, as a whole, typically has a negative connotation with it, but it can be more broadly defined as the effort of a government to communicate information to its population. Propaganda took many different forms of media such as, newspapers, films, speeches, and posters. The different forms of propaganda were used to appeal to different audiences. More noticeably than the other types of propaganda, posters were accessible to the largest part of the population. Unlike newspapers or films, posters were freely accessible to the general public, and unlike speeches, viewing posters were more accessible to the average individual. Posters were freely visible to anyone who walked down the street. They also, oftentimes, would not contain many words so that those struggling with literacy were still able to understand what message was being conveyed. The time around World War II saw an increase of countries using propaganda to spread their message, the result of which can be seen even today with modern advertising. During the war these countries had to convince their populations to support their militaries in both victories

and defeats. Despite the differences between the fascism in Nazi Germany and the communism in the Soviet Union, many of these propaganda posters have some overarching similarities that can be connected. Some of which can be seen in their depictions of the enemy and with their call back to nationalism. To gain a better understanding of the importance of propaganda usage during World War II, this thesis will be discussing the said similarities and differences in propaganda posters from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Literature Review:

Few historians have done extensive comparisons between Nazi and Soviet wartime propaganda. From analyzing the works of other historians from this time, I have found some major differences between how Nazi and Soviet historians approach the topic. Nazi historians seem to have some consistency with breaking Nazi propaganda into chronological phases that highlight the different aims that the Nazis had and the measures that they took to achieve those ends. Soviet historians were unable to find such timely phases within the wartime propaganda of the Soviet Union. There are several divisions of Soviet propaganda posters that the historians denote, such as nationalism and gruesome depictions of the invading Nazis. Compared to Nazi propaganda, the Soviets were much more liberal in their depiction of women. Some overarching similarities that both groups of historians have noted is the use of nationalism and the depictions of the enemy. Aside from depicting the enemy as subhuman, the Nazis also focused a lot of their propaganda efforts in dehumanizing the European Jewish population; the Soviets did not aim their propaganda efforts at anyone except the German Nazis.

Historians David Welch and Aristotle Kallis both breakdown Nazi propaganda into four main categories during the course of World War II. Both agree on when the Nazis made a

propaganda shift. The first phase of Nazi propaganda takes place from the start of the war in September 1939 to the invasion of France. The next phase is during the Nazi campaign into the Soviet Union, starting in the summer of 1941. The third phase takes place during Goebbels's call for "total war," which was when Germany started losing its conquered territory and faced numerous major military losses. The final phase of Nazi propaganda was when the Allies started encircling the Reich and the Nazis became more and more desperate for support from the German people. Welch and Kallis have very similar arguments as to what Nazi propaganda looked like during these four phases of World War II. Even though not all other historians use their phases identically, there is a clear consensus that the shifts that Welch and Kallis notes in Nazi propaganda are accurate.

At the beginning of World War II, the Nazis experienced great military success, but still needed to convince the Germans to support the war. Welch calls this phase "*Blitzkrieg*" and explains that it was "invariably accompanied by intimidation and fear."[1] He also explains that during this phase, "propaganda was able to advertise military victories and indirectly help to prepare an atmosphere… of new ones."[2] The people, who were mostly longing for peace, were taught by the propaganda to expect continual Nazi military triumphs. Kallis explains that Nazi propaganda during the time of Anschluss and the annexation of the Sudetenland was mostly about justification.[3] He also argues that propaganda during the airstrikes over London were used to convince the populace that the war was likely going to last much longer than expected using Britain's grandeur as an empire as an excuse.[4] With telling the people that such powerful nations

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[1] David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 91.
[2] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 91.
[3] Aristotle A. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War,* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave
        Macmillan, 2005), 93.
[4] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 102-103.

need time to fall, Goebbels and the Nazi propaganda machine were able to prepare them for the next step in the Second World War which is the invasion of the Soviet Union.

The second phase of Nazi propaganda was during the invasion of the Soviet Union, known as Operation Barbarossa. Welch argues that Hitler was firm in his belief that the peoples of the Soviet Union were sub-human compared to the Aryan. In spite of this, Goebbels changed the Nazi propaganda motive by claiming that Stalin was tricking the Soviet people into a conspiracy with the capitalists and the Jews. This was done to try to gain Communist supporters of the Nazi invasion.[5] Despite this, the Nazis did start reintroducing anti-Bolshevik propaganda after the Nazi troops started marching into the USSR. There was a pause in the Nazi production of anti-Bolshevik propaganda during the time that the non-aggression pact between the two countries was in effect. Kallis emphasizes that during Operation Barbarossa, the Nazis tried to eliminate the hatred of the Slavic peoples by going so far as to ban "the use of the word 'Slav', due to its negative racial connotations."[6] He also argues that the Nazis were quick to claim victory against the Soviet Union, claiming that her defeat was inevitable and not in the distant future; the first of which appeared in October of 1941.[7] During this time, both Welch and Kallis agree that the Nazis were split between trying to convince the Soviet people for support, and viewing them as less important than the German race. This time was also filled with quixotic Nazi hopes for a conquered Soviet Union within a few months of the start of Operation Barbarossa.

After the Nazis' humiliating defeat in Stalingrad, Goebbels called for "total war;" this meant that all Germans, on the warfront and home front had to give all that they can to support the German war effort. Morale among the German population was incredibly low; Goebbels made a

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[5] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 101.
[6] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 112.
[7] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 118-119.

drastic shift in propaganda to try to cure the low morale by allowing the media to share more truths about the status of the war. Welch describes Goebbels as taking on "a posture similar to that of Winston Churchill" during this time because "he made no secret of the difficulties ahead, admitted that German defeat was possible, and called for total involvement in the war effort."[8] These positions were very different from what he had done during the beginning stages of the war, when the Nazi government refused to acknowledge military losses or even difficulties. The total war phase of Nazi propaganda was when the Nazis started to include images of women joining the workforce as their service was now needed as part of the full mobilization of Germany.[9] This was the time that "the public was distrustful of *any* propaganda material."[10] Goebbels, during this phase also stepped up the fear campaign by exaggerating how much power the Soviet Union would have over Europe if the Third Reich were to fall.[11] This third phase was the turning point for Nazi propaganda when they had to start working more defensively as their military victories became further and further apart. This paved the way for the final step in Nazi propaganda which was their last attempt to persuade the population into supporting the Nazi ideology.

Welch describes the last phase of Nazi propaganda as a "retreat into mythology and promises of retaliation;"[12] Kallis refers to it as "the winding road to defeat."[13] Germany at the time was plagued with low morale and numerous military defeats. The German people had little to no faith in the Nazi media meaning that Goebbels had to work hard to prevent too much disappointment about the war. The airstrikes on German-held territory by the Allied forces gave a visible enemy to the Nazi propaganda machine that they could use to scare the people into

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[8] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 107.
[9] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 111.
[10] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 148.
[11] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 111; Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 135.
[12] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 113.
[13] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 153.

supporting the Reich. The Welch argues that "by the beginning of 1944 there was a massive loss of confidence in the regime, particularly after Allied bombers had demonstrated that they could reach as far south as Bavaria."[14] Once the bombs started to drop on some of the furthest places of the Reich from the Allies, many Germans knew that their country was falling apart, and it would not be long before the war was over with an Allied victory. Kallis explains that Nazi propaganda at this time had three main challenges: keep the morale up among the Germans; to create a greater meaning for the war that would give purpose to the war beyond daily events so if a battle is lost, morale stays up; and "to appeal to the population's will to resist the enemy at all cost now that the enemy was closing in on the old Reich itself."[15] These three goals were not easy as the last segment of World War II included Allied troops landing on Normandy, continuing airstrikes, and the promised retaliatory weapon, the V-1, failing immediately.[16]

The Nazis worked hard to keep the people's morale up in spite of them losing the war. Welch believes that for the Nazis to keep such morale up required them to move from stating facts, or lies, about the progress of the war, they needed to move into bold claims often feeding off mythology. He states: "the final two years of the war were in general a period of decreasing propaganda effectiveness and increasing dependence on the substitution of myth for reality."[17] This last phase of the war was essentially filled with fear of what the Soviet military would do with a conquered Germany. Nazi propaganda only became "more intense" as the Soviets drew closer to Berlin.[18]

[14] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 114.
[15] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 174.
[16] Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda*, 167.
[17] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 119.
[18] Welch, *The Third Reich*, 124.

Ian Kershaw shares in the belief that most Germans did not want another war when Hitler started his invasion of Poland. Kershaw also points out that at the beginning of the war, propaganda did cause many Germans to go from not wanting any war, to believing that war was brought upon them by the actions of other nations.[19] The Nazi propaganda, was initially able to at least placate the people into allowing the Nazi government to start a foreign war beginning with the invasion of Poland. This ideal of accepting the war as inevitable was very common throughout the beginning stages of World War II. Kershaw explains that people started to doubt Nazi propaganda when stories from soldiers on the front lines who were visiting friends and family while on leave and of refugees from the Allied airstrikes did not line up with what the official state message was.[20] This caused rumors to spread making it harder for Nazi propaganda to have a hold on people.

Kershaw also gives his own breakdown of the different phases of the aims of Nazi propaganda with regard to its goal and how well it was received. He states that the first phase which took place from when the Nazis came to power to when war broke out in 1939, was intended to "prepare the German people psychologically for war."[21] The next phase that Kershaw identifies takes place right after Nazi soldiers first step foot in Poland; Nazi propaganda's intention at this time was to keep the population's stamina up for a long war. Kershaw also explains that by 1942, before any key military defeats, the popularity for propaganda was decreasing, and the military defeats only made matters worse. Goebbels's attempt to bring more truths into the propaganda

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[19] Ian Kershaw, "How Effective was Nazi Propaganda?" in *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations*, ed. David Welch (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 186.
[20] Kershaw, "How Effective," 194.
[21] Kershaw, "How Effective," 200.

had minimal success, but "by 1944 the failure was all but total."[22] As the war was ending, so was the success of Nazi propaganda.

Robert Herzstein in *The War That Hitler Won*, argues that from even before the Nazis came to power in 1933, Nazi propaganda had the intention of making the enemy look as brutal as possible. He mentions that Goebbels in 1941 stated "the aim of these placards had to be to make the enemy look brutal, for you gained nothing on a life-or-death struggle by making him small and ridiculous."[23] Herzstein argues that the Nazis did not want to simply belittle their enemies, being the Jews and other racial and political enemies; the Nazis wanted to make their enemies look so horrendous that the German population would ostracize them.

Herzstein also explains that in the summer of 1943, Nazi propaganda passed its peak in number due to the quantity of Allied bombs dropping made it difficult for posters to remain in place for long period of time.[24] This point agrees with Welch's and Kallis's listed phases of Nazi propaganda. During 1943, the Nazis were desperate to find support among the German people who were turning away from propaganda. This caused the Nazis to generate more propaganda with the hope that it would spur more people into belief. Herzstein also explains the "total war" phase of Nazi propaganda; he explains that there were millions of propaganda posters scattered throughout Germany on "buses, trains, kiosks, in shop windows, and on the outside walls of buildings."[25] These posters were of many different topics such as exaggerating the result of a Soviet victory, the call for "total war" on the home front, and emphasizing Hitler's role as leader of the Third Reich.[26] While the other historians, such as Welch, Kallis, and Kershaw, argue that

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[22] Kershaw, "How Effective," 201.
[23] Robert Edwin Herzstein, *The War That Hitler Won: The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History*, (New York: Putnam, 1978), 199.
[24] Herzstein, *The War*, 214.
[25] Herzstein, *The War*, 199, 209.
[26] Herzstein, *The War*, 199, 209.

Nazi propaganda posters were not appreciated by the German people, Herzstein focuses his argument on the volume of propaganda posters that were produced at different stages during the Second World War.

Gerald Kirwin writes about the effect of the Allied bombings on Nazi propaganda. The Allied bombings took place during the last two phases of Nazi propaganda listed by Welch and Kallis. Kirwin's analysis of Nazi propaganda during this time agrees with the schema that Welch and Kallis have constructed. Kirwin explains that as the calendars changed to 1943, Nazi propaganda's role also changed. It now has to be defensive as the Third Reich was being attacked by Allied aircrafts.[27] This was around the same time that Goebbels called for "total war" and started to allow Nazi propaganda to contain more truths. Many other historians explain that this part of the war was filled with low morale among the German population who were starting to lose faith in the Nazi regime. Kirwin states that "German propagandists were being increasingly forced into the passive role of offsetting and halting the negative effects on morale created by factors they could do nothing to control."[28] He argues that in lieu of the increased Allied bombing, the Nazi propagandists had to move from dictating what emotions the German people felt via the propaganda to now having to do triage on the endless Allied bombings of German cities that brought the population's morale to an all new low.

Kirwin also mentions that Nazi propaganda, with the intention of making bombing victims feel acknowledged, would treat civilian victims of airstrikes the same as soldiers who died in battle.[29] In Nazi Germany, fallen soldiers were given great honor in the media, so, the intention was, that the airstrike victims not feel forgotten by their government. This was one way that the

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[27] Gerald Kirwin, "Allied Bombing and Nazi Domestic Propaganda," *European History Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (July 1985), 342.
[28] Kirwin, "Allied Bombing," 342.
[29] Kirwin, "Allied Bombing," 344.

Nazis used to try to raise morale as World War II was starting to come to a close. Nazi truthfulness about the casualties from the airstrikes was supposed to make "the population of the affected areas… appreciate the government's concern for their plight."[30] Keeping the bombed-out Germans placated in spite of their condition was one major concern that the Nazi propaganda machine had during the last few years of the war. While Kirwin's article focuses more on Nazi radio propaganda, it can still be used to gauge the changes that the Allied airstrikes had on Nazi propaganda posters.

Kirwin argues that Goebbels propaganda efforts during the last few years of the war were far from successful as morale was very low among the Germans at this time. He writes: "If Goebbels had succeeded in procuring a 'propaganda victory', the defeatist behaviour of parts of the population… would not have been possible."[31] He believes that because there was so much doubt about a Nazi victory among Germans during the final stages in the war, Nazi propaganda failed completely, since its aim was to help the people keep their faith in the regime even when the war was not going in their favor. This statement only answers how successful Nazi propaganda was during the end of World War II; during the beginning of the war, Nazi propaganda had some more success as they were winning important battles and were still on the offensive. Yet, throughout the war, Nazi propaganda had to deal with the population's growing desire to end the fighting.

David Welch has another work on Nazi propaganda movements during this time. In his article "Nazi Propaganda and the *Volksgemeinschaft*: Constructing a People's Community," Welch argues that Nazi propaganda from the time that the Nazis came to power through the start of the Second World War, used the theme of "*Volksgemeinschaft*," or "people's community," to convey

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[30] Kirwin, "Allied Bombing," 347.
[31] Kirwin, "Allied Bombing," 357.

their desire of uniting the German people under the Nazi cause. He argues that "propaganda was intended to be the active force cementing the 'national community' together."[32] Welch believes that creating this "national community" was the sole purpose of Nazi propaganda as without that unity felt among all Germans, getting them to allow to the start of World War II and the Nazi's horrible treatment of their enemies would be almost impossible. Welch also argues the importance of posters in trying to convert the working class and youth into the Nazi cult. He explains that the Nazis used posters to try to convince the working-class Germans to join the National Socialist Welfare Organization. The working class was rather resistant to accepting Nazism, but were rather passive when it came to their level of resistance. They did not actively support the Nazis, but they did not openly oppose them either.[33]

Welch also describes posters for another group of Germans whose acceptance was crucial to the success of the Nazi regime, the German youth. The Nazis established programs for the youth to be fully indoctrinated into the Nazi ideology. There were many posters written on the topic of Hitler Youth, an organization meant for young boys to learn about Hitler and Nazi ideology. Welch argues that the posters used to advertise the Hitler Youth shows "the degree to which the German youth was expected to transfer allegiance from family to the national community and to subordinate individualism to the service of the Third Reich."[34] This is fundamental to Nazi doctrine, that the state, here represented by the "national community" is more important than the welfare of the individual or the family. Overall, in this article, Welch examines Nazi propaganda relating to their emphasis on the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This is similar to the first phase of Nazi propaganda as listed by Welch in *The Third Reich* and Kallis in *Nazi Propaganda*

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[32] David Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the *Volksgemeinschaft*: Constructing a People's Community," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (April 2004), 218.
[33] Welch, "Nazi Propaganda," 226.
[34] Welch, "Nazi Propaganda," 233.

and the Second World War, as that phase was filled with the Nazis trying to gather support by unifying the German people as a single entity.

Julius Yourman, in November 1939, wrote an article about Nazi propaganda with a contemporary point of view. This was written just months after the start of World War II, when Nazi propaganda was still in the first phase that Welch and Kallis both describe. Yourman's article also provides a useful look into the *Volksgemeinschaft* that Welch talks about in his article on Nazi propaganda during the beginning stages of the Second World War. Yourman argues that the Nazis followed seven steps with their propaganda that allowed them to come to power, and start a conflict that would quickly turn into World War II. These seven methods are all different ways of belittling the enemy and making the German people seem as the innocent victims in some giant, international plot against them. One such method listed by Yourman was "Name Calling." Yourman describes the Nazis as using such terrible names to refer to their enemies, whether they be the Jews, Communists, or supporters of liberalism, that could "horrify even the skeptical."[35] Yourman argues that the Nazis had to scare the populace into supporting their regime, or at least being neutral about it.

Yourman also argues that the Nazis worked hard to convince the German children to accept their regime. He calls this method "Transfer," and describes it as when "the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept."[36] Yourman explains that the Nazis used "Transfer" to convert the German children into accepting and supporting their regime. He writes that "for children, the transfer device most frequently employed is the symbol of the Nazi hero—especially in his role of

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[35] Julius Yourman, "Propaganda Techniques within Nazi Germany," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 13, no. 3 (November 1939), 149.
[36] Yourman, "Propaganda Techniques," 151.

soldier."[37]   This concurs with Welch's modern assessment of Nazi propaganda during this time.
While Yourman does not mention the Hitler Youth Organization, its purpose, as described by
Welch, was the same as what was described in the "Transfer" section. The Hitler Youth was formed
to unite German boys under the "people's community" by transferring normal symbols of heroism
onto Nazi soldiers and prepare the boys to join the military and fight for the Nazis.

        In his article, Yourman also argues that the Nazis would use "glittering generalities" to
gather support from the general population. The Nazis used this device of propaganda by
appealing to the *Volk* mentality that Germany should return to tradition. This also lines up with
what Welch discusses in his article. Both are arguing that the Nazis, during the early stages of the
war, heavily used the idea of German *Volk* to gather support. Yourman states that "the most
sweeping generality is that conveyed by the word *Volk*… to return to the true Germanic tradition
of the Middle Ages."[38]   As long as the Nazis proclaimed that they were bringing back such
tradition, the people would support them more and more. Yourman's article is important as it gives
a view from the start of World War II of what methods and motives Nazi propaganda had. While
his article is incapable of showing how the phases of Nazi propaganda changed throughout the
war, it does give a good illustration of how the first phase of Nazi propaganda was viewed to the
contemporary observer. Yourman's analysis of the different methods of propaganda by the Nazis
shows that the perceptions of the motives for such propaganda have not changed too much since
World War II first started.

        Zbyněk Zeman gave an argument in the 1960s about the different wartime phases of Nazi
propaganda. While his phases are less clearly defined, they have a lot in common with Welch's
and Kallis's divisions of Nazi wartime propaganda. Zeman even mentions a popular poster tagline

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[37] Yourman, "Propaganda Techniques," 153.
[38] Yourman, "Propaganda Techniques," 150.

that was at its height early 1939; it was "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*,"[39] which translates to "one people, one empire, one leader." This was a dramatic phrase that was used throughout the Third Reich to give the people a sense of community behind the will of Hitler. Zeman further states that right before the Nazis invaded Poland, all anti-Bolshevik propaganda ceased due to the nonaggression pact with the Soviets. At this time, Zeman argues, it was impossible for Nazi propaganda "to stake any claims to defending Europe from Bolshevism,"[40] Since the Nazis could not continue producing anti-Bolshevik propaganda, Zeman explains that the Nazis expended their energy during the beginning stages of the war on excluding Great Britain from European affairs. This was then tied back together once the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Zeman argues that the Nazis used claims that their invasion of the Soviet Union was "occasioned by a British-Bolshevik conspiracy against Germany."[41] He states that this period of Nazi propaganda included claims that the Eastern Front was not just Germany fighting the Soviets, but all of Europe uniting to defeat a common enemy.[42] Zeman's argument focuses on how Nazi propaganda was intended for and received by other countries subject to Nazi propaganda.

Zeman also states that during the latter stages of World War II, when the Nazis were struggling for any decisive military win, their loss at the Battle of Stalingrad only made matters worse. "The hopes they raised during the first phase of the war were dashed to the ground, and a psychological crisis accompanied the military defeat."[43] This defeat took a toll on the morale of the German population, and the Nazi propaganda had a tough time trying to keep morale up. Zeman and Welch both argue that during the later stages of the war, Goebbels started to resemble

[39] Z. A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 162.
[40] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 162.
[41] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 165.
[42] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 165.
[43] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 174.

Winston Churchill in his propaganda output, as both individuals at this time worked to mobilize fully their nation's resources.[44]

Zeman also argues that the Nazi's propaganda heavily played off two main themes from the time that they started gaining momentum in the 1920s to the fall of Berlin in 1945. These two themes are anti-Semitic and anti-Communist. The Nazis tried to tie both hatreds together so claiming that Communism was a Jewish ploy, but not all Nazi anti-Communist propaganda uses this connection. Zeman suggests that Nazi propaganda portrayed Hitler as saving Germany from Communism and proclaiming that "what he had done for Germany, he could easily do for Europe."[45] This shows how the Nazis were not only creating fears for the German and, in some instances, even the European population as a whole, but were then advertising themselves and, more importantly, Hitler as the solution to such problems. Zeman describes the length that the Nazis went to understand the Soviet propaganda during the war; he states that the Nazis established the Institute for the Scientific Research on the Soviet Union, which was "intended to generate propaganda about the Soviet Union, not *to* it."[46] Zeman elaborates that this institute was filled with individuals who specialized in the study of the Soviet Union to better produce anti-Communist propaganda.

He furthers his argument that anti-Communist and anti-Semitic propaganda were connected by stating that "anti-Communist propaganda was, for the National Socialists, unthinkable without its antisemitic concomitant."[47] Zeman believes that the Nazis had anti-Communist and anti-Semitic propaganda completely intertwined with each other. This was their basis for most propaganda leading up to World War II and after the invasion of the Soviet Union

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[44] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 173.
[45] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 87.
[46] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 88.
[47] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 88.

in the summer of 1941. Once the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, they brought back the anti-Communist propaganda but with a different take. Zeman argues that it was at this point that the Nazis introduced the claim that Bolshevism in the East was working with plutocracy in the West against Germany. He explains that the Nazis proclaimed that both groups were being led by the Jews in some great, international conspiracy.[48]

Zeman also includes a description of what he thinks were some reasons for the success of Nazi propaganda. He explains that Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* gives a very detailed description of the role of propaganda within a Nazi government. Zeman argues that "propaganda spread the conspirators' message to the masses, and it helped widen the 'first nucleus' into a broad organization."[49] Without propaganda, the Nazis would hardly have had any support. Zeman argues that one of the few things at which the Nazis did not fail was in the realm of propaganda.[50] He argues that the Nazi propaganda was effective at making the German population complicit in the Nazi regime's aggressions. His argument follows that since the Nazis took the German economy out of such rampant hyperinflation, and rebuilt their infrastructure so quickly and successfully, that their propaganda efforts were already set up to be more successful among the population. He states that: "While other European governments were still struggling with the aftermath of the economic crisis, the Nazis had solved it in Germany…. Many of the original aims of the National Socialists had been achieved: power and success were now living realities."[51] With this power and success, the Nazis had the ability to convince the population to believe almost anything they told them. His argument essentially states that Nazi propaganda was only as successful as the rest of their regime.

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[48] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 101.
[49] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 3.
[50] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 2.
[51] Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda*, 52.

Barbara McCloskey's article, "Marking Time," describes how the Nazis represented women in their propaganda posters during World War II and how their appearances changed as the war progressed. One of the first points that she mentions is just how little that Nazi propaganda posters depict women compared to that in America, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union at the same time.[52] This, McCloskey argues, is due to the Nazi ideology which was more averse to women's participation in society to the extent that they did in the other countries. The depiction of women in such posters was so infrequent that out of the six hundred Nazi posters that McCloskey studied, only thirty-three had depictions of women.[53] Women's absence from the Nazi propaganda posters shows how for the majority of the war, women were an afterthought to most Nazi poster artists. Just as many other historians have, McCloskey acknowledges a great shift in Nazi propaganda immediately after the Nazi's defeat at Stalingrad in 1942. She argues that after the Battle of Stalingrad, and Goebbels's call for total war, Nazi propaganda posters started to depict women as "chaste and maternal… in order to provide a continuing rationale for the increasingly desperate war effort."[54] While women were still not represented as much as in other nations, this shift was intended to help the German people to feel moved to give to the war effort as much as they can. By 1944, McCloskey argues that posters had little effect on the population and were considered to be a poor use of materials especially since paper had been rationed for almost a year.[55] Regardless of these facts, the Nazis continued to produce propaganda posters for the remainer of the war.

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[52] Barbara McCloskey, "Marking Time: Women and Nazi Propaganda Art during World War II," *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 2, no. 1 (July 11, 2012), 2.
[53] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 3-4.
[54] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 8.
[55] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 14.

Women were also depicted in posters for textile drives intended to support the armed forces. McCloskey argues that even in such mundane depictions as these, the characteristics of the women on the posters changed as the war continued and the Nazis became more desperate for donated supplies. In 1942, towards the beginning of the war, Nazi posters for clothing drives shows a "maternal woman, depicted with puffed sleeves and soft beneficence."[56] This is how the Nazis wanted all women to appear as they were viewed as the key to increasing the population of the Aryan race. While there is no direct or indirect attack on the Bolsheviks made in this poster, it takes place during the second phase of Nazi propaganda after the invasion of the Soviet Union. For most of World War II, the Nazis chose to portray women who were more likely to exhibit traditional virtues. The modern woman, wearing makeup with fancy hairstyles was often only depicted in a negative light for the beginning stages of the war. This changed as the war grew in intensity causing the Nazis to need to recruit more and more of the population into both helping the warfront and the home front.

McCloskey argues that as the Nazi's struggle during the war became more and more desperate, the Nazi propagandists shifted their portrayal of women in their posters. She turns her attention to another poster for a Nazi textile drive, but this one is from 1944. This second poster, features a "woman [who] is decidedly young and urban with her painted lips, eye shadow, and telltale permanent-wave hairstyle."[57] A modern hairstyle at the time, the permanent-wave was very expensive and viewed as frivolous in Nazi Germany.[58] For a women wearing makeup and donning an expensive hairstyle to appear in Nazi propaganda as serving the Reich means that the poster artists were desperate for support from all areas of society even the ones previously deemed

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[56] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.
[57] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 15.
[58] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.

to be portraying un-Nazi virtues. The second poster was produced after the Nazis suffered major military losses at Stalingrad and Goebbels made his "total war" declaration. This would put it in the third phase of Nazi propaganda. At this point in the war, the Nazis were desperate for a military victory and needed help from all sectors of society to make that possible.

McCloskey argues that women, more specifically, urbanite women, were depicted as weak links regarding keeping national secrecy during the war. These posters often appeared in a series of propaganda posters called the Shadowman campaign, which started in 1943.[59] McCloskey argues that these posters often depicted women as liabilities, prone to letting valuable information slip into the wrong hands. These posters would often also suggest, McCloskey's argument continues, that "urban, white-collar working women beholden to frivolous, 'unGerman' fashion," to be even more vulnerable to letting information out.[60] The Shadowman campaign did not accuse women factory workers of spreading valuable information. The Nazi propagandists preferred to depict female factory workers as helping the Reich as a whole and contributing to the war effort than as undermining the Nazi cause by spreading vital information. The female factory worker's appearance in Nazi posters started after the loss at Stalingrad. McCloskey writes that at this time in the war, "poster artists faced the task of initiating women into Germany's new reality."[61] This "new reality" was the Nazi's shift to drafting men and women into the armed forces which was passed just before the Battle of Stalingrad was lost.[62] For the entirety of the Nazi Party's existence, they have been proclaiming that women do not belong in such dangerous areas as the military or in factories. Once total war was declared, the Nazis had no other choice than to get women to start giving all to support the war effort. Female factory workers, during World War II, were also

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[59] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.
[60] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.
[61] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 13.
[62] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 11.

portrayed positively in Nazi propaganda posters. They were often shown as taking over the jobs that men left behind to join the war effort or that their help was also needed for the war effort. Such posters appear as early as 1941.[63] While women in the workforce, particularly in factories was against Nazi teaching, but McCloskey argues that these posters were needed to encourage German women to work hard to help the war progress.

In the Soviet Union, women were represented in propaganda posters more frequently. Victoria Bonnell writes that women started to appear more in Soviet art once World War II began. The most common depiction of a women was brought back from the imperial Russian days—the depiction of Mother Russia. She appeared as a "stately, matronly woman, sometimes pictured with a small child in her arms."[64] The depiction of Mother Russia was unusual since the Soviet Union, upon coming to power, tried desperately to remove any imagery that was used during the days of the Russian Empire. Bonnell argues that the Soviet "inspiration for female allegorical figures was the neoclassical tradition transmitted by the French Revolution,"[65] In other words, she argues that the Soviet Union viewed their revolution as similar to the French Revolution and thus used similar figures in its propaganda. The Soviet Union also depicted women as factory workers in its posters; Bonnell notes that this started around the year 1920,[66] which was long before World War II. The difference in when women started to appear in propaganda posters between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union is likely because, the Soviet Union prided itself in being progressive by offering equal rights to both men and women, while the Nazis were less keen on women taking jobs in factories until it was absolutely necessary.

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[63] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.
[64] Victoria E. Bonnell, "The Representation of Women in Early Soviet Political Art," *The Russian Review* 50, no. 3
    (July 1991), 275.
[65] Bonnell, "Representation of Women," 270.
[66] Bonnell, "Representation of Women," 278.

Wartime Soviet propaganda posters did not start in 1939 when both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland, but in 1941 when the Nazis started their invasion of the USSR breaking the nonaggression treaty between the two countries.[67] David Brandenberger argues that the Soviet Union started using calls for nationalism to rally the population's support for the war effort. Soviet leaders would often give speeches in support of this nationalistic rhetoric. One line from a speech from Stalin appeared on many Soviet wartime posters. The line reads: "In this war, may you draw inspiration from the valiant example of our great ancestors," which was from Stalin's speech on November 7, 1941.[68] These posters often depicted Soviet soldiers fighting in the foreground with one or more Russian historical figures, often from pre-revolutionary Russia, featured larger-than-life in the background, looking on in support of the Red Army's efforts to drive back the German invaders. The patriotism portrayed by the Soviet Union was quite Russocentric which is opposite the typical Soviet internationalistic mindset. Brandenberger argues that the Soviet media was more Russocentric than the tsarist media was.[69] His reasoning for making this argument is that the Soviet media would only mention non-Russian heroes for only a day, while during World War I, the tsarist media would often talk about them "for weeks on end."[70] Brandenberger's argument that the Soviet Union's propaganda was focused more on the achievements and ventures of Russians than other ethnicities within the USSR is shared by a number of other Soviet historians.

Mark Edele in his article "Paper Soldiers," argues that the reality portrayed in Soviet propaganda posters is vastly different from what was actually occurring in the battlefront.[71] He

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[67] David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1939-1941*, (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2002), 144.
[68] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 149; 153; 155.
[69] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 157-158.
[70] Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 158.
[71] Mark Edele, "Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero according to Soviet Wartime Posters," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 47, no. 1 (1999), 89.

notes that even when the Nazi soldiers were rapidly advancing into the heart of the Soviet Union, the posters still only focused on the might and ability of the Red Army. This is likely because of the Soviet's attempt to keep morale up within the USSR even when the war was not going in their favor. Edele argues that despite the differences between what was portrayed in the posters and reality, there was not dissent for the propaganda posters as there was in Nazi Germany. He explains that the Soviet soldiers would often write "to artists to praise compositions or to express criticism, and artists often answered."[72] This shows a communication between the average Soviet soldier and the propaganda artists that was not present between the Nazi troops and their propagandists. The difference between the posters and reality also gave soldiers the ability to choose for which reason he was fighting.[73] This would give the Soviet populations more reasons to fight against the Nazi invaders. He estimates that a total of 2,500 to 3,000 poster designs were issued during World War II.[74] Most of these posters, Edele continues, were not intended for those living in the country, but for those who lived within the Soviet cities. Among this urbanite audience, the Soviets hoped that the posters would "generate support for collectivization policies."[75] Not only was it easier to produce posters and display them in the cites and large towns of the Soviet Union, but the populations of such areas were more likely to be accepting of such propaganda efforts. Edele also gives an argument that the Soviet Union started to use religious symbolism to appeal to those who still practiced religion in the Soviet Union.

This appeal to religion was rather subtle, but to a Soviet citizen who had any educational background in religion, would have been able to understand. One example of religious innuendo within Soviet propaganda posters is a depiction of a Soviet soldier on horseback killing an enemy

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[72] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 94.
[73] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 90.
[74] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 90.
[75] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 98.

with a caption of "Where the hoof of our horse steps, the reptile will always be pushed into dirt."[76] Edele states that this image and portrayal both are references to St. George and the story of his slaying a dragon. For most of its existence, the Soviet Union did not approve of the open practice of religion, but during the Nazi invasion, Edele argues, the Soviet Union had to incorporate some amount of religion into their rhetoric so that the rural populations would support the war effort and be less likely to turn to their invaders for support. He notes that: "Two-thirds of the men in the Red Army were called up from the still deeply religious and anti-Soviet countryside."[77] Since a majority of soldiers in the Red Army were religious, connecting the German invasion and some religious themes, made them more likely to support the USSR. This incorporation of religion and propaganda in the Soviet Union was new, as Edele points out, gave people the ability to have "a broad range of understandings of the war, its nature, and its goals."[78]

Richard Brody's argument aligns with Edele's as both agree that the state of the war portrayed in the propaganda and that in reality were two different worlds. Brody states that "contrary to the official image of discipline and unity in wartime work, leaders of the wartime Soviet Communist Party encountered profound difficulties in the effective mobilization… of party members to perform political work."[79] The discrepancy that Brody discusses was not noticed by the average Soviet citizen, but by leaders of the propaganda movements of the Soviet Union. Brody continues by explaining that the Soviet leaders were also upset by the disparity between what the agitators were supposed to be doing and what they were actually doing. Agitators were everyday Soviet citizens who had additional responsibilities that their coworkers did not have; they

[76] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 103.
[77] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 104.
[78] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 104.
[79] Richard J. Brody, "Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front during World War II," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* no. 1104 (October, 1994), 1.

were expected by the Soviet leaders to explain the news and answer any questions that their peers had about it. From the institution of agitators before World War II started throughout most of the Nazi invasion, the agitators failed to do their job. Brody argues that the Soviet Union's involvement in the Second World War "demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the official ideology as a belief system among party members themselves—and by extension, among Soviet citizens more generally."[80] Brody argues that throughout out the war, the Soviet government was unable to convince the people, both citizens and leaders, of the Soviet ideology, this failure was with both agitation and propaganda.

Stephen White describes how quickly the Soviet artists designed new posters for the Nazi invasion; he states that "within a week of the invasion five posters had been produced and more than fifty were in preparation."[81] White also argues that Soviet propaganda was not effective at convincing the people during the war. He states that even the poster artists during the war noticed it, and their effectiveness went down even further "when the Red Army moved onto the offensive from 1943 onwards and began no longer to defend Russia's historic territories but to extend the boundaries of Soviet rule."[82] Once the Red Army started bringing the Soviet boundary west of the furthest historic extent of the Russian Empire, the Soviet claim that the war was only to drive the Germans out of the USSR was voided. This caused the propaganda equating the current actions of the Red Army to previous Russian heroes to be negated and the people to lose some faith in the Soviet ideology.

White also argues that the Soviet propaganda posters that were produced during World War II, often called TASS Windows, were the direct descendent of the ROSTA Windows produced by

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[80] Brody, "Ideology," 30.
[81] Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988), 121.
[82] White, *Bolshevik Poster*, 130.

Lenin's supporters during the Russian Civil War in 1917.[83] TASS being the name of the Russian organization that was responsible for much of the distribution of information during the Second World War, a role that it actually took from the ROSTA organization. Since the ROSTA Windows worked during the Russian Civil War to gain support against the White Russians, The Soviets thought that it would be a useful method of spreading the Soviet ideology among the populations during the chaos of a foreign invasion. Edele also traces back the history of the TASS Windows to the ROSTA Windows of the Russian Civil War.[84] He argues that the ROSTA Windows themselves were descended from the *lubki* which he describes as "popular broadsides of prerevolutionary Russia."[85] Edele argues that this old history of posters in Russia, later in the Soviet Union, led to a unique way for the government to convey information to a semi-literate population. Since the Soviets came to power, they were working towards making their society more literate. Posters were an easy way for both those who could and could not read able to understand the message being conveyed by the poster.

In the introduction of *Windows on the War: Soviet TASS Posters at Home and Abroad, 1941-1945*, the authors, Peter Zegers and Douglas W. Druick also argue that the Soviet TASS Windows were decedents of the ROSTA Windows of the Russian Civil War and similar to the *lubki* of pre-Soviet Russia.[86] This aligns with the arguments presented by many other historians on this topic. They echo the point of ROSTA Window artist who stated that they were "anticipated… in Russian icons, and popular broadsides, both of which occasionally shared similar narrative and illustrative strategies designed to inform, entertain, and persuade."[87] This is an important

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[83] White, *Bolshevik Poster*, 123.
[84] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 95.
[85] Edele, "Paper Soldiers," 95.
[86] Peter Zegers and Douglas W. Druick, "Introduction," in *Windows on the War: Soviet TASS Posters at Home and Abroad, 1941-1945*, (Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2011), 15.
[87] Zegers and Druick, "Introduction," 15.

connection as both Russians and Soviets have been using visual images to communicate and even indoctrinate the people for over a century before the start of World War II. The authors also argue that by the time that the Nazis invaded the USSR, art styles had shifted away from the ROSTA Windows of two decades prior; the main shift coming from the Soviet adoption of Socialist Realism in 1934, meaning that artistic abstraction was prohibited making way for realistic depictions in their art and posters. This change led to the development of TASS Windows.[88] The ROSTA Windows did not depict reality to the extent that the Soviet leaders appreciated so when the time came for them to create propaganda posters rallying support against the Nazi invasion, they had to remain strictly within the realistic bounds set by the Soviet leaders.

Konstantin Akinsha in his chapter in *Windows on the War* titled "Painting Went out into the Street," explains that many Soviet posters covered "'timeless' topics, such as heroic labor on the home front."[89] Such a topic was most likely used by the Soviet Union, as those still on the home front were more likely to use. He argues that the Soviets utilized posters from the Russian Civil War through to World War II. He continues that once the Nazis started their invasion of the USSR, the use of posters to convey ideologies and information became more popular.[90] The TASS group was started by some Russian artists who wanted to produce posters in support of the war effort. They adopted stenciling as their main medium for producing posters, but "had to execute high art as well."[91] This meant that the TASS artists were going to also include paintings into their lineup of posters. Akinsha notes that this varied greatly from the work of the ROSTA group during the

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[88] Zegers and Druick, "Introduction," 18.
[89] Konstantin Akinsha, "Paintings Went out into the Street," in *Windows on the War: Soviet TASS Posters at Home and Abroad, 1941-1945*, (Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, 2011), 138.
[90] Akinsha, "Paintings," 140-141.
[91] Akinsha, "Paintings," 141.

Russian Civil War who only made posters using stencils.[92] Having more ways to make propaganda posters, made it easier for the Soviet leaders to spread their message to the people.

Another point that Akinsha makes is that the Soviet propaganda posters during this time made the German people as a whole synonymous with the Nazi Party. This caused the Soviet peoples to lose "the remnants of internationalist sentiments toward the German proletariat."[93] The Soviet rhetoric about the Nazi invaders portrayed all Germans as being Nazis. This means that the Soviets stopped caring for the German people as fellow workers being abused by the bourgeoisie, but as evil fascists supporting the invasion of their homeland. These posters that Akinsha uses for his argument often portray Germans as animals or brutal murderers killing innocent civilians, often shown as women and children.[94] Akinsha mentions that this theme continued until just a few weeks before Hitler's death in Berlin in April, 1945.[95]

Karel C. Berkhoff in *Motherland in Danger*, argues that Soviet propaganda during World War II focused on Russocentrism, which was also discussed by Brandenberger. The Russocentrism that they both describe is likely correlated with Stalin's use of Russian history and folklore to inspire the troops and the public to fight back the Germans. One main example that was used by the Soviets to rally support against the Nazis was the adoption of historic Russians into Soviet propaganda. One main example of this was Alexander Nevsky a historic figure who drove the Germans out of Russia in the thirteenth century. Nevsky and other ethnic Russians who were regarded as heroes in the prerevolutionary Russia were glorified in Soviet propaganda during the war more than heroes of other Soviet ethnicities. Berkhoff argues that: "The public references to Russians who supported the German cause… were far fewer than those to their non-Russian

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[92] Akinsha, "Paintings," 141.
[93] Akinsha, "Paintings," 147.
[94] Akinsha, "Paintings," 146; 148-149.
[95] Akinsha, "Paintings," 147.

counterparts—and unlike with them, the long list of these Russians' misdeeds never included nationalism."[96]   Nationalism was against Soviet sentiment, and the Soviet Union, when it acknowledged those who have worked against the Soviets and supported un-Soviet ideas, ethnic Russians were never accused of harboring nationalistic feelings. Berkhoff suggests that this might be due to the Russocentrism that was prevalent in the Soviet propaganda, meaning that a Russian exhibiting nationalism, would only be playing into the Russocentric society.

Berkhoff also acknowledges that the Soviet Union was not completely focused on the glorification of ethnic Russians while ignoring all of the other ethnicities out of the propaganda's attention. He argues that: "The Russians did stand out in the wartime media because of their numerical majority and because of the attitude of leading propagandists in society as a whole."[97] This argument means that Russocentrism is most likely not the Soviet Union playing favorites with the ethnic Russians, but just the simple fact that such a high majority of Soviet citizens were ethnically Russian and the propaganda portrayed such. To back up this argument, Berkhoff states that Stalin "attempted to mobilize those non-Russians by allowing the central media to praise them as national groups."[98]   This does not completely go against the arguments for Russocentrism in Soviet wartime propaganda, because the Soviet Union was only allowing for some reference of other ethnicities, but it does not state that all ethnicities received equal representation in the Soviet propaganda.

He also argues that the Soviet Union, at the start of the invasion of the Nazis, had a vast network of propaganda already established.[99] This propaganda network allowed the Soviet Union

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[96] Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda during World War II*, (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2012), 204.
[97] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 221.
[98] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 221.
[99] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 11.

to create propaganda quickly after the invasion occurred. Berkhoff writes that the Soviet propaganda focused heavily on the "modest goal of *mobilization*."[100] He argues that the Soviet propaganda machine focused its attention on trying to mobilize the Soviet workers and troops so that they would have the best chance at driving back the Nazis. Berkhoff also writes that the Soviet "propaganda presented a dual image of the workers and the peasants. On the one hand, they were severely warned to obey orders, to work overtime, and to combat labor 'desertion.' On the other hand, the media portrayed them as mostly patriotic and willingly selfless."[101] This duality was possibly from the Soviet leaders trying to keep the soldiers on the frontlines supplied while giving the Soviet Union's factory system a good reputation, possibly also helping the Soviet factory worker to feel appreciated.

The Soviet Union's propaganda movements during World War II did focus on the plights and achievements of ethnic Russians, but they also did the same for the other ethnicities within the USSR. It is uncertain if this is actual Russocentrism or not. There is no clear consensus among the historians on Soviet history on if Soviet wartime propaganda favored the Russian ethnicities more than any other. There is consensus among the historians that the Soviet Union had difficulty keeping people to hold the faith of Soviet ideology throughout the duration of the war especially once the Red Army started marching into lands that were not historically under the Russian Empire. Despite the creativity that went into the TASS Windows, Soviet propaganda was not very successful at mobilizing the masses to support the Soviet ideal wholeheartedly.

The works of both the Nazi and the Soviet historians show that there is some similarity between the content of propaganda from these two countries during World War II. Both countries relied on nationalism to boost morale within their nations despite the previous antinationalistic

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[100] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 4.
[101] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 5.

mindset that the Soviet Union previously had. During the start of the war, the Nazis were reluctant to depict women outside traditional roles, but as the war progressed, Nazi propaganda, left with no other choice, joined the Soviet Union in depicting women taking on factory jobs while the men went off to war. Despite this Nazi change, the Soviet Union used the depiction of women more liberally than their rivals to the west. The main difference to note between the work of the two groups of historians is that Nazi propaganda was neatly broken into phases corresponding with events in the war, while Soviet propaganda was more divided into different categories, many of which were present throughout a majority of the war.

<u>Poster Analysis:</u>

From analyzing Nazi propaganda posters, the four phases, or themes, of propaganda that other historians have noticed can mostly be found. Posters from the first phase exhibited hopefulness for continued military success for the Nazis including a strong sense of patriotism in the Nazi regime and strength of the Aryan race. The second phase of propaganda often contained posters that portrayed an anti-Bolshevik message. These posters also created the theory that the Jews were controlling the Communists to destroy the German people. The third phase of Nazi propaganda was the first one in which the Nazis felt concerned for the future of their Reich, due to the crucial Nazi defeat at Stalingrad. Posters during this third phase included the more desperate Nazi plea for "total war," even attempting to recruit women into the workforce, and younger men, still in their early teens, into the military. The fourth phase of Nazi propaganda was described by historians as being filled with the Nazi's call for revenge, but most of the posters from this time entailed a schizophrenic Nazi party obsessed with those who gossip or otherwise spread valuable

Nazi military information; the regime at the time was constantly concerned with the possibility of spies within the Reich.

The first phase which took place from the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, to the start of Operation Barbarossa in June 1942. Several historians have reported that this phase was full of themes of a united Europe and proclaiming Nazi military victories. Others have noticed the anti-Versailles rhetoric and trying to gain support for a long war that permeated Nazi propaganda. The posters from this phase are very patriotic and portray images of victorious soldiers. One particular poster from 1941 (Figure 1), translates to "Front and Homeland: The Guarantee of Victory."[102] It portrays Germans from various backgrounds including a soldier and a factory worker all solemnly looking in the same direction with the Nazi flag waving in the background. It is to represent that all Germans both on the warfront and the home front are all working towards the same goal. Themes such as this were rather common in Nazi posters during this phase of the war because of the effectiveness of the *Blitzkrieg*, quickly conquering the Polish and French forces and growing the Nazi Reich. This poster was distributed throughout Germany as a way to convince the people to support a longer war full of more military victories, with the end goal of a united Europe under Nazi control.

Another notable poster from the first phase of Nazi propaganda is from 1940 and bears the image of an eagle charging forward alongside a series of Nazi battle flags (Figure 2). Its caption reads: "Victory is with our flags!"[103] Such a hopeful message for the Nazi regime was very common during the first few years of the war. These posters do not depict in great detail the cause of war; they only attempt to rally support for the war effort and to gain support for the Nazi regime.

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[102] Randall Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945," *German Propaganda Archive*, 2001,
https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/posters3.htm.
[103] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."

One thing to note about these posters is that they are all facing to the left, in terms of cardinal directions, they would be facing to the West where France and the United Kingdom are located. Therefore, the characters in these posters illustrate the same direction that the Nazi troops are facing when going into battle.

The second phase of Nazi propaganda, according to most historians who wrote on the topic, was focused on the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941. The main difference between this phase and the first is the reintroduction of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. Up until the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, the Bolsheviks were one of the main enemies of the Nazis; this all stopped once the pact was signed between the two nations agreeing on a partition of Poland. Days after Nazis troops started to march into the USSR, they started making propaganda against Communism and the Soviet Union as a whole. Several historians agree that much of this propaganda made claims that the Bolsheviks were working together with the Jews in a conspiracy against the Nazi ideology. One interesting poster from the end of 1942, during the second phase of Nazi propaganda (Figure 3), depicts a map of the Nazi advances, including much of European Russia. The caption on the bottom translates to "The New Europe cannot be defeated."[104] The Nazis referred to the lands that they conquered as part of a "New Europe," which they propagated the idea that their new empire could not be defeated by the Communists or the plutocrats who were fighting against them. Such a claim was not uncommon during this phase on Nazi propaganda.

The Nazis were still victorious in battle and they had recently taken on a new enemy, the Soviet Union. During this phase, the Nazis continued their theme for a united Europe—they had more to show for it due to their victories. They made sure to add more details about their claims of a Jewish-Bolshevik-plutocratic conspiracy to have public opinion shift towards opposing the

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[104] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."

Soviet Union. Another poster from this phase of propaganda is also from 1942 (Figure 4). This poster's caption reads "One battle, one will, one goal: Victory at any cost!"[105] This features some factory workers in the foreground and soldiers and a tank in the background. While there is nothing explicitly anti-Bolshevik in this poster, one clear change is evident. The people portrayed in this poster are facing to the right, in cardinal directions, to the East or toward the Soviet Union. Just the direction that the people in the posters can help the viewer to understand where the Nazi's enemy is located at the time of the poster's creation. This shift towards facing the East can be seen as the Nazi's shift toward making the Bolsheviks their number one enemy after Operation Barbarossa started in June of 1941.

Some historians also argue that Nazi propaganda during the second phase was aimed at convincing the Slavic peoples to support the Nazi regime instead of the Soviet Union. There are several Nazi posters that appear in Slavic languages. These posters often use the trope that claims that the Bolsheviks are being controlled by the Jews and should be stopped. There are other historians who believe that the Nazis were too harsh on their propaganda against the Soviets making it less probable that Slavs would start supporting the Nazis. Those historians argue that on top of the anti-Bolshevik propaganda, the Nazis also issued some propaganda against the Slavic peoples. This propaganda, those historians argue, made it more difficult for the Nazis to complete a successful invasion of the Soviet Union, because the Nazis were simultaneously trying to convert the Slavs to Nazism while proclaiming how they viewed the Slavic peoples as being "subhuman."

Regarding Nazi propaganda posters, there are several that are written in Slavic languages attempting to persuade residents of Eastern Europe to support the Nazi cause. Some of these posters portray Stalin or the leaders of the Soviet Union as being Jewish and, therefore, in the Nazi

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[105] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."

mindset, against Germany such as with Figure 5, which has a caption in Ukrainian which translates as "Satan has taken off his Mask."[106] It depicts a gruesome-looking devil with a Star of David on his forehead holding a mask representing Stalin. Other posters are vaguer and depict the whole population of Eastern Europeans as being below that of the Nazi, Aryan race like with Figure 6.[107] Even though Figure 6 comes from February 1943, the same time that the Nazis lost the Battle of Stalingrad and their propaganda shift to phase three, it still exhibits a vulgar depiction of the Slavic people. This poster's caption reads "Victory or Bolshevik Chaos," and it depicts a happy German mother and child compared to an inhuman-looking Slavic Bolshevik and an impoverished family. This poster engrained into the minds of many Germans that the Slavic peoples are below the German both in appearance and quality of life. This second category of posters is what makes some historians believe that the Nazis made the Slavic peoples seem subhuman, which in turn made the Slavs less likely to defect to the Nazis.

Figure 7 shows more propaganda efforts of the Nazis to dehumanize their enemies while trying to convince conquered peoples to support them. It is from the end of this second phase, in 1943,[108] but it shows how even as phase two was ending, the Nazis were still working on convincing people to support them by portraying the enemy as evil. Its caption, which again is in Ukrainian, translates "Stand up to fight Bolshevism in the ranks of the Galicia division."[109] Its purpose was to mobilize the large Ukrainian populations in the expanded Nazi empire to fight against the Bolsheviks. It shows a member of the Galicia division of the SS dressed in white, a historically anti-Soviet color, driving his bayonet through the chest of a brutish Red Army soldier

[106] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."
[107] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."
[108] Imperial War Museums, "[Cyrillic Text: Stand Up to Fight Bolshevism in the Ranks of the Galicia Division],"
       https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/17118.
[109] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."

with blood-soaked hands. This was meant both to motivate the Ukrainians to join the Nazi ranks and to create an image in the mind of the viewer of Soviets being disgusting brutes.

The third phase of Nazi propaganda started after their defeat in Stalingrad in early 1943; this phase is the shortest of all the Nazi propaganda phases as it is viewed as a steppingstone toward the ultimate demise of Hitler's rule in Europe. It started around the time of Goebbels's call for "total war" during a speech in February that year. Many historians agree that Nazi propaganda during this time contained a level of honesty of the difficulties of war to a level not experienced before in Nazi propaganda. This was the first time since the war broke out that there was low morale throughout Germany. Recruitment posters from this time often depict younger looking individuals as the Nazis became desperate for people to volunteer to join the military. Figure 8, which is undated, is likely from either phase three or four of Nazi propaganda—they share a lot of similarities—is attempting to recruit young men, objectively younger than earlier recruitment posters, into the SS. It has the phrase "Especially you!"[110] The poster depicts someone who is very young and appears to be almost a boy. As the Nazis started losing more battles, they became increasingly desperate for more soldiers. This caused them to start recruiting younger people into the military. This is partly what Goebbels meant when he made his declaration of total war. The total war declaration also involved a call for an increase in factory workers, farmers and nurses all to aid the warfront.

Figure 9 comes from 1943 and its caption is "Hard times, hard duties, hard hearts."[111] This poster includes an acknowledgement of how difficult times are getting for Nazis after the defeat at Stalingrad. McCloskey uses this poster in her article to demonstrate how during this time, the Nazis started to depict more women in their posters as having blue-collar jobs. The women are in

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[110] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."
[111] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 14.

the background of this poster reaching for the tools that the men are leaving behind to serve in the military. This poster was intended to motivate the viewer to enlist in the Nazi forces as the Allies were starting to push them back and encroach on German soil. It should also be noted that the men going to war in this poster are facing to the right, or East implying that this poster was likely concerned with Soviet advances at the time.

One interesting Nazi poster that does not quite fit into either category for which the Nazi historians have argued is Figure 10. This poster has a Slovak caption which reads "Forest of the dead at Katyn."[112] It depicts a Polish officer being executed by Soviet soldiers with more Poles being executed in the background in a similar manner. While there is no date given for this poster, it can be determined that it comes from after 1943 when the Nazis stumbled across mass graves from several thousand executions undertaken by the Red Army with Polish prisoners of war during their invasion in 1939. The Nazis used this information during late 1943 to alienate the Soviet Union from the rest of the Allies, but its only effect was alienating them from the Polish government-in-exile.[113] This poster is meant to cause the viewer to feel sorrow for the Poles who were brutally executed and hatred for the Soviets who caused their deaths. It takes place around the time that the Nazis were switching from phase three to phase four, but it does not follow the patterns in either phase entirely. This poster does make a vague call for revenge as posters in phase four often do, but this poster does so in an unusual way. It does not simply show an evil gremlin bearing a Soviet star being killed by a square-jawed Nazi; instead, it shows what is likely a realistic

[112] Ella Rule, "Stalin Society: The Katyn Massacre." *The Espresso Stalinist* (blog), March 10, 2015, https://espressostalinist.com/2015/03/10/stalin-society-the-katyn-massacre/.

[113] Richard Rule, "The Soviet Secret Police & the Katyn Forest Massacre," *Warfare History Network* (blog), accessed February 28, 2024, https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/the-soviet-secret-police-the-katyn-forest-massacre/.

depiction of actual events causing the viewer to feel both sympathy for the Poles and anger towards the Soviets.

The fourth and final phase of Nazi propaganda started around the middle of 1943 and ended alongside the rest of the Nazi regime in April of 1945. During this phase, historians agree that the Nazis were seriously struggling to keep morale up. They believe that the Nazis attempted to keep German morale up by making promises for retaliation on the Allies and by making the cause of war seem ever-greater so that the German people would keep fighting and resist Allied occupation. The posters from this phase of Nazi propaganda closely resemble that from the third phase. It appears as though the posters tell a slightly different story. The greatest difference that I found in posters from this phase, is that these posters seem more suspicious of spies and Germans accidentally letting critical information get into the hands of the Allies.

One notable example of posters from this phase is that from what McCloskey describes as the "Shadowman campaign that began in 1943."[114] Bytwerk argues that this series started in 1944.[115] This series of posters depicted different people in different positions with an ominous shadow of a man wearing a hat cast across the image; they were often depicted with the caption "Pst!" Figure 11[116] shows this Shadowman eavesdropping on the men's conversation at the table, which could be on sensitive Nazi information. Other posters from this series depict other individuals in different settings in which every day Nazis might find themselves tempted to share Nazi secrets. Some notable ones from this series include an officer having a conversation with his presumed girlfriend, with the caption, "The enemy is listening!"[117] a group of workers having a

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[114] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 10.

[115] Randall Bytwerk, "A Nazi Poster Campaign," *German Propaganda Archive*, 2007, https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/pst-posters.htm.

[116] Bytwerk, "Nazi Posters: 1939-1945."

[117] McCloskey, "Marking Time," 11.

conversation, with a similar caption;[118] and a barber spreading some important information to his client.[119] They are shown in Figures 12-14 respectively. These posters, and many more, were all part of the Shadowman campaign which, from my research, is one of the most popular poster series from this phase of Nazi propaganda. As the war was ending, Nazi propaganda became more desperate for the German people's support and to keep their morale up.

Throughout the war Nazi propaganda was intended to persuade the German people to support the Nazi cause. There seems to be alignment between what the historians have written about Nazi posters and what is actually observed within the Nazi propaganda posters itself. There is less correlation among the historians about timed phases of Soviet propaganda posters. At any given time during the war for the most part, the Soviet propaganda expressed the opposite emotions that the Nazi posters did. When the Nazis were losing conquered territory and their propaganda became more desperate for support and increasing the low German morale. At this same time, the Soviet Union was gaining most of the ground lost by the Nazis; therefore, their propaganda during this phase is more positive as they were militarily victorious. Some historians do point out that Soviet propaganda during this time have to create justification for their continued military conquests that brought the Soviet frontier past the greatest extent of the Russian Empire, a topic that can be found in some of the Soviet propaganda.

Unlike in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union from the time between the joint invasion of Poland and the Nazi invasion of the USSR was mostly peaceful with no major military operations. Posters from this time often do not make reference to the Nazis as the two nations were at peace at the time. Most of the posters from this time do show a strengthening of the Soviet military. Some interesting posters from this timeframe include Figure 15. This poster from 1940 translates

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[118] Bytwerk, "A Nazi Poster Campaign: 1944."
[119] Bytwerk, "A Nazi Poster Campaign: 1944."

to "The Power of the Red Army is Indestructible."[120] The bottom of that poster is several charts which represent the percent growth of different types of military munitions. From left to right the boxes at the bottom represent: "Aircrafts;" "Tanks;" "Heavy, medium and light artillery;" "Artillery, small-caliber, anti-tank, tank;" "Hand guns and machine guns;" and "Mechanical horse power per fighter."[121] These statistics show how much the Soviet military has expanded in the years between 1930 and 1939. This poster shows a wide array of Soviet troops, artillery and aircraft. While this poster predates the Nazi invasion, it boasts the strength of the Red Army. Another poster from this timeframe also shows the use of Soviet posters during this time before the Nazis invaded.

Before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact created temporary peace between the USSR and Germany in 1939, the Soviets were issuing anti-Nazi propaganda to deter Soviet citizens from turning to fascism which was antithetical to communist ideology. This was put on hiatus until the Nazis violated the pact by invading the Soviet Union in 1941. Figure 16 is one of the Soviet posters from the prewar phase of anti-Nazi propaganda. It is dated 1937 and the large caption on the lower righthand side says "Fascism is the enemy of Nations."[122] It shows a map of Germany with a giant skull with a swastika helmet in the center of the country. The skull is attached to four large arms which together form a larger swastika the size of Germany. The fingers on each of the hands are each tipped with sharp knifelike claws. These hands not only reach for the borders of Germany, but they extend beyond; the Soviets were fearful of Nazi expansion into the Soviet sphere of influence and into the rest of Europe. This depiction causes the reader to associate things that pertain to Nazism with death. The Soviets were very concerned about Nazi, and greater fascist

[120] Neboltai.org, Object ID 16332.
[121] Neboltai.org, Object ID 16332.
[122] Neboltai.org, Object ID 10634.

ideas contaminating their people. The pact between the USSR and Germany meant that the Soviets had to stop producing such propaganda, but once the Germans started invading in June 1941, the antifascist propaganda picked up again.

Once the Nazis invaded the USSR in 1941 with Operation Barbarossa, Soviet propaganda made a large change. These posters again started to portray depictions of the Nazi enemy. One of the early images from this early part of the war is Figure 17. This poster from 1941 depicts Soviet aircraft dropping brightly-colored red bombs marked with the Soviet insignia on to an unshown enemy. The text at the bottom reads "The enemy will not be spared."[123] An interesting feature of this poster that a viewer who understands Russian would understand is that the Soviet bomb is striking the word "*vragu*" which means "enemy." This poster also uses colors to show the great compression between the red Soviet bombs and the dark blue background, brings the reader's attention to the bombs that will be dropped on the invading enemy.

A TASS Window from 1942, gives a very gruesome depiction of the Nazis. This poster (Figure 18) proclaims "This is what fascism brings to you."[124] It shows Hitler, with an almost unhuman figure, bulging eyes, and blood dripping from his mouth grasping a noose and some handcuffs in one blood-soaked hand while pointing a pistol at a man lying dead on the ground. The two are both in an ankle-deep, endless pool of blood, which when combined with the blackened sky, gives a disturbing feeling to the viewer. This unsettling TASS Window uses only white, black, and red. The pool of blood in which this scene takes place symbolizes that the death portrayed in the image is far from the only one that the Nazis have committed. The Nazi invasion has quite literally become a bloodbath. With the invasion of the Soviet Union came the Soviet

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[123] Neboltai.org, Object ID 11629.
[124] Neboltai.org, Object ID 94155.

depiction of their enemy. This varied from simply the word "enemy" immediately after the Nazi invasion, to an animalesque portrayal of Hitler one year later.

Another major trend of Soviet propaganda posters throughout the war was nationalism. These posters would often depict figures from Slavic, and more commonly Russian folklore to unify the Soviet population (a majority of whom were Russian) to defeat the Nazi invaders. One such poster is Figure 19 which portrays a modern Soviet soldier raising his gun. Soviet rifles carried by unseen Red Army troops are shown with bayonets ready to attack an unseen enemy. In the background is a medieval Slavic warrior raising his sword to attack the same enemy; it gives the perception either that this medieval warrior's spirit is supporting the Soviet troops, or that the Soviet soldier is emulating the battles that the Slavs have won centuries ago. The caption on the poster reads: "In the Name of the Motherland—Forward, Bogatyrs!"[125] This reference to the motherland signifies when the Soviet Union started to employ nationalistic references in its propaganda. A "Bogatyr" was a commonly used figure in Russian and East Slavic folk stories used in a similar way as a knight is in the West.[126] While this is not exclusively Russian, it does show a shift in Soviet propaganda to make an attempt to rally the people against the Nazis.

While Figure 20 is from 1942, it portrays some of the same nationalistic depictions that became commonplace during 1943. It uses a typical Soviet practice of having monochromatic historical figures in the background appearing to provide support for the Soviet troops in the forefront. It includes a quote that is often attributed to Alexander Nevsky, who is a prominent figure from medieval Russian history who notably defeated Germanic Teutonic knights in the thirteenth century. It reads, "Who comes to us with a sword by the sword shall die."[127] Nevsky's

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[125] Neboltai.org, 15585.
[126] Neboltai.org, 15585.
[127] Soviet-art.ru/world-war-ii-soviet-posters.

famous battle with the Teutons occurred in 1242, so aside from attempting to rally the population against the Nazi invaders, this poster is celebrating the seven hundred years since Nevsky's decisive victory giving the group that would become the Russians control over Northeastern Europe. The emphasis that the Soviet leaders put on Russian heritage despite the multiethnic nature of the USSR, is described by some historians as "Russocentrism."[128] From analyzing Soviet posters from this time, one can find a plethora of examples of Soviet posters that show Russian historical features, some even from the imperial era portrayed as leading the Red Army.

One of the most famous Soviet propaganda posters is Figure 21. This poster is referred to as "The Motherland is Calling"—which is the same as its translation.[129] It was produced in 1941 and features a maternal looking figure who represents the embodiment of the Soviet Motherland. This female embodiment of the nation traces its roots back to Russian imperialism. While all peoples within the Soviet Union could identify with the representation of their country as the Motherland, it spoke more to ethnic Russians who understood the symbolism that was being used better. The woman in the poster is holding a military oath from the Red Army making this poster serve as a means to recruit new soldiers,[130] most likely from Russian backgrounds as Russians made up the majority of the USSR's population. This famous poster uses the nationalistic depiction of the homeland as a way to rally support for the war effort.

TASS Windows from this time do not often exhibit the flagrant Russian nationalism that many other types of Soviet Posters had. The TASS Windows continued to give different portrayals of the enemy, and educate the populations, both literate and illiterate, about the dangers of their

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[128] Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger*, 202; Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism*, 157-158.
[129] Larisa Epatko, "These Soviet Propaganda Posters Once Evoked Heroism, Pride and Anxiety," *PBS NewsHour*, July 11, 2017, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/these-soviet-propaganda-posters-meant-to-evoke-heroism-pride.
[130] Epatko, "These Soviet Propaganda Posters."

fascist invaders. A notable TASS Window from this time is Figure 22 which is from 1944. Its

caption gives an explanation of how the Soviets justified an invasion of Germany after pushing

the Nazis out of Soviet lands. "The German troops now resemble a wounded beast…. But a

wounded beast that has retired to its lair does not cease to be a dangerous beast. To rid our country

and our allies' countries from the threat of enslavement, we must stay on the heels of the wounded

German beast and finish it off in its own lair." [131] The Soviets wanted to convince the people that

an invasion of Germany was within Soviet best-interests. The Soviets claimed that if they do not

obliterate Nazi fascism, then it would have a resurgence and threaten the security that the USSR

and its allies had thought they achieved. This TASS Window depicts a wounded wolf with Hitler's

face within an area of land labelled Germany, and a Soviet soldier pointing a bayonet at him just

over the border in an area that it colored red to symbolize the Soviet Union. From behind the

Hitler-wolf are two more bayonets from unseen soldiers with the American flag and the British

Union Jack representing the USSR's allies in the defeat of the Nazis. Before images such as this

became prevalent, it was understood that the Soviet's goal was to drive the Germans outside Soviet

territory.

Soviet depiction of women in their posters differs from that of the Nazis. Two of the most

notable of these posters are Figures 23 and 24. Figure 23 from 1942[132] depicts two Soviet female

farmers as a train carries munitions past them to the frontlines. The caption states "tractor in the

field is the same as tank on a battle field."[133] Even prior to World War II, the Soviet Union worked

to give women the same privileges and opportunities as men. During the war the Soviets had to

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[131] Neboltai.org, Object ID 42266.

[132] "Tanks, Tractors, and Soviet Russia," *The Kremlin Kronicles: Understanding the Soviet Union Through Various Facets of Soviet Culture*, October 18, 2015, https://kremlinkronicles.dh.lib.vt.edu/2015/10/18/tanks-tractors-and-soviet-russia.

[133] Soviet-art.ru.

rely more heavily on women as more of the workforce, mostly men, left to fight the Nazis. This poster with its cheerful farmers was intended to motivate the Soviet viewer into valuing the work of the farmer as much as the soldier who uses the tanks to drive back the Nazis. Figure 24 gives a good depiction of Soviet women involved on the frontlines against the Germans. This poster, also from 1942,[134] shows a female Russian soldier striking down a Nazi soldier. The poster proclaims "Soviet partizans, revenge without mercy!"[135] This is starkly different from the Nazi portrayal of women in their posters which only portrayed them performing physical labor at the end of the war when all German able-bodied men were conscripted.

Despite coming from vastly different countries, Nazi and Soviet World War II propaganda posters, both experience shifts in when the propaganda message changed. An overall is that following Operation Barbarossa, when Nazi propaganda was hopeful for the future, Soviet propaganda was trying to raise morale, and when Nazi propaganda was struggling to raise morale, Soviet propaganda was hopeful for the future. Nazi propaganda spend a lot of energy during the war to demonize the Jews and claim that all of their enemies were Jew-operated. The Soviets portrayed the Nazis as animalistic. The Soviets also included more equal representation of women in their posters, while the Nazis refrained from portraying such until it was absolutely necessary. These similarities and differences show how authoritarian governments can use imagery to help the public understand what such war entails, complete separation from the enemy and valiant, patriotic support of one's homeland.

Conclusion:

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[134] "Guerillas, Take Revenge without Mercy!" *Arthive*,
    https://arthive.com/artists/19292~Tatyana_Alekseevna_Eremina/works/547890~Guerrillas_take_revenge_
    without_mercy.
[135] Soviet-art.ru.

Despite the difference in the regimes, there is similarity between both Nazi and Soviet propaganda posters during World War II. Both countries used propaganda posters as a means to sway public opinion. For the Nazis it was to keep fighting even when times were getting tough, and for the Soviets, it was to keep fighting not just until the Nazis were out of the USSR but until the Nazis were completely vanquished. The Nazis and Soviets also both utilized themes of nationalism within their propaganda. This was a logical tool for the Nazis who frequently used nationalism in their rhetoric, but it was unexpected of the Soviets as communism is inherently against such ideology. These countries also used horrendous depictions of their respective enemies to get the public to lose all sympathy for their foes. One difference was how both parties depicted women in their propaganda posters. Depicting women doing tasks that were historically reserved for men was expected of the Soviets who desired to treat women the same as men, but of the Nazis, it was a radical change in ideology signifying their desperate need for more help during the final stages of the war.

Comparing these two realms of propaganda, one can see the importance that these propaganda posters played in the development mass communication as a whole. The Nazis and the Soviets were able to create posters *en masse* and distribute them throughout their vast empires. This was a marvel for its day and is a testament to how rapidly nonmilitary technology changed during the war. Stephen White commented on the speed of the Soviet production of posters that five different designs of posters were made within seven days of the Nazi invasion of the USSR.[136] This production was also met with similarly fast distribution of the posters to local groups to then be hung throughout the town. Similar measures were taken within Nazi Germany too which quickly expanded the growing borders of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, much of modern mass

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[136] White, *Bolshevik Poster*, 121.

communications today have the propaganda posters of the Second World War to thank for its origin.

This comparison of Nazi and Soviet propaganda shows how two regimes with opposing political and economic views both found very similar means of conveying information to the general public during the same war. This consisted of expressing nationalist ideas and vicious depictions of the enemy. The nationalism was to unite the people for a common cause, and the depictions of the enemy was to get the populations to go from being sympathetic to the enemy to outright detesting them. Nazi and Soviet propaganda can help explain how these powers kept their people (mostly) in support throughout a long and bloody war. It can also help illuminate what average citizens experienced in their daily lives, especially if they happened to live in a territory that frequently passed between the two warring powers. A comparison of these two countries' propaganda posters reveals how in a country dominated by international war, similar measures are used for the governments to keep their legitimacy and rally support for exerted effort in the war ahead.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

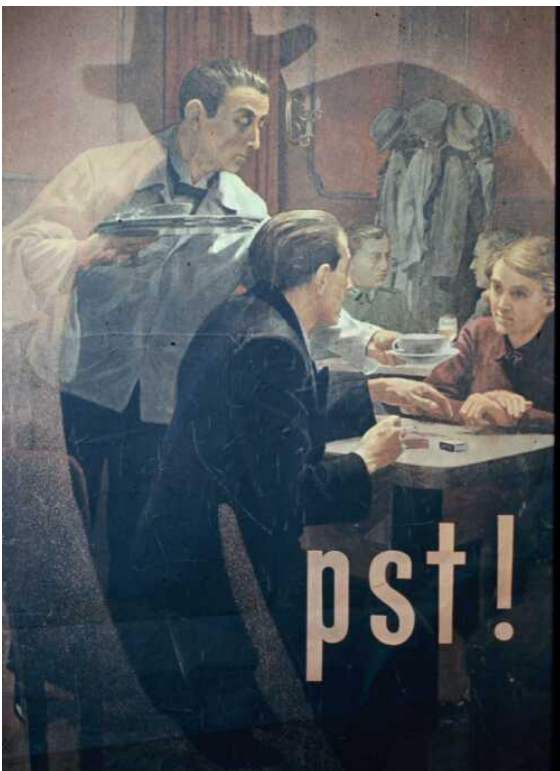Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figure 17
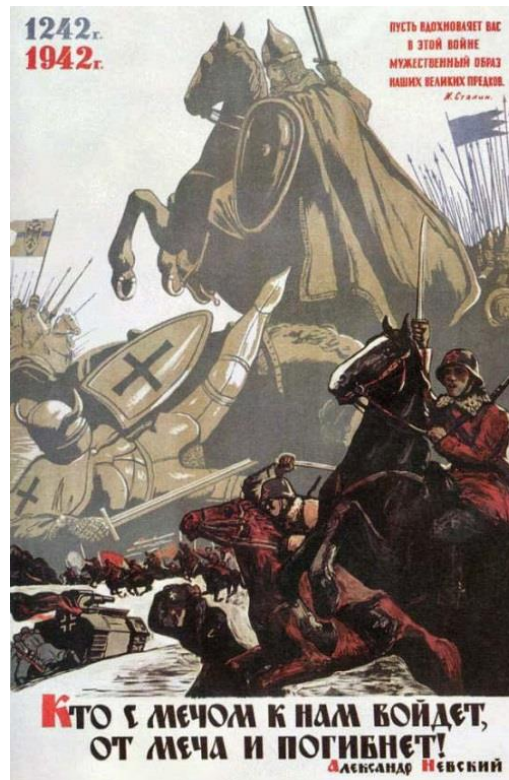

Figure 18

Figure 19

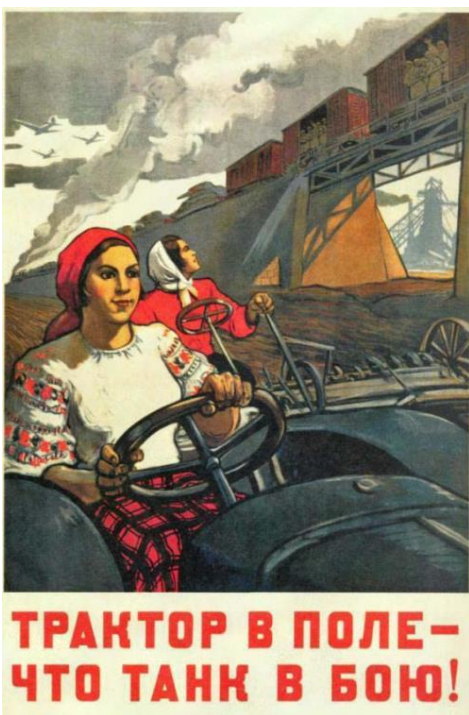Figure 20

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Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

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