

**Background:** This is a translation of G. Stark's pamphlet on propaganda techniques. It was the first in a series of pamphlets produced by Goebbels' *Reichspropaganda-Abteilung*, the propaganda section of the Nazi Party. It aimed at providing information for Nazi propagandists in larger cities. This translation uses the third printing, at which point 55,000 copies were in circulation. The original runs 23 pages of text. It includes some material taken from [an earlier Nazi brochure on propaganda](#), but develops matters in greater depth.

**The source:** G. Stark, *Moderne politische Propaganda* (Munich: Verlag Frz. Eher Nachf., 1930).

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## ***Modern Political Propaganda***

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### **Introduction**

Propaganda in cities differs in many ways from that in the countryside. The major reason is the entirely different life style of big-city dwellers. They are politically more sophisticated and have an entirely different attitude towards things.

The following observations focus on large cities, not on the countryside. However, the essentials of propaganda are largely similar.

The face of the city, as a center of production and consumption, is marked by advertising. The concentration of many companies leads to intense competition, which is won not necessarily by the firm with the best product, but rather with the best advertising. Poster pillars, newspapers, billboards and so on hammer incessantly on the victim, until finally he bends to the power of the advertising firm and buys.

This out-and-out commercial advertising is aimed exclusively at earning money, and appeals only to the billfold. But the most effective advertising is not necessarily for the best product.

Political **propaganda** is something entirely different. It uses indeed in part the same methods to reach its goals, but rests on entirely different assumptions. Propaganda is by no means simply commercial advertising applied to the political, or spiritual arena. They seek only momentary effect, whereas political propaganda seeks the systematic enlightenment necessary to win supporters to a worldview. We recall the many comrades who gave their lives for the movement. They were propagandists of the deed up to the last breath.

The **Organization** of the party must be such that it is able to make good use of the citizens who have been won for the movement.

### **The Organization of Propaganda**

The recognition that only a unified propaganda apparatus has the likelihood of success led the party headquarters and several regional offices (*Gauleitungen*) to create central propaganda offices. Where that has not yet happened, immediate steps should be taken.

The task of these propaganda centrals is to study advertising methods and see how we can use them, which requires above all a well-organized propaganda organization.

To this end each local group must train propaganda wardens, who will lead the entire local propaganda effort and are responsible for its flawless execution in their areas. These propaganda wardens, subordinate to the local and section offices, work closely with the cell leaders and cell officers, as well as with the S.A. It is often a good idea for the propaganda warden to train others in his section or local group to help him with his duties.

Of course, **each party member** should help out with propaganda. To be a member is to be obligated to serve. The S.A. is also obliged to be ready to serve at any time, regardless of the weather.

Regular party members should be grouped in units to carry out house-to-house propaganda.

A special group, skilled in hanging posters, should not be lacking.

The Gau offices provide sections and local groups with guidelines for propaganda. These guidelines should be on paper, and are finding for all sections and local groups. In propaganda department **meetings**, questions and advice for propaganda wardens will be discussed. **Regular meetings** of the propaganda wardens discuss current questions of propaganda. Special **educational courses** provide propaganda wardens with the proper skills. To support what they hear, special **notebooks** are produced.

The entire collection of propaganda material should generally be produced by the Reich or the Gau propaganda offices. Economics of scale save considerable sums.

Although the sections and local groups generally enjoy considerable flexibility, at particular times (e.g., during major campaigns, elections, etc.) they must follow precisely the plans of the propaganda central.

The press office is a branch of the propaganda department. It should receive clippings of all reports of attacks, meeting disturbances, marches and so on from both our own and the enemy press.

## The Methods of Propaganda

To carry out propaganda effectively in the cities, it is necessary to understand the proper use of the most important methods of propaganda. It is above all essential that the propaganda warden does not follow advice coming from a desktop, but rather that he is and remains in close contact with the people. Only he who understands everyday life, and who is familiar with events in political life, will be able to speak effectively to the people he wishes to persuade. Without that contact, advertising speaks in a dead language. **To see with the eyes of the masses — that is the whole secret of effective propaganda.**

There are four kinds of propaganda:

1. Propaganda through **the written word**,
2. Propaganda through **the spoken word**,
3. Propaganda through **mass marches**,
4. Propaganda through **cultural gatherings**.

**1. Propaganda through the written word:** flyers, leaflets, party newspapers and books, advertising circulars, apartment newspapers and factory papers, posters, stamps, other newspapers, N.S. stamps and postcards, banners and billboards, slides, and films. Remember that it is against the law to use walls, building facades, street surfaces, and so on. The following observations apply only to permitted forms of propaganda.

a) Not much needs to be said about the effectiveness of **stickers**. Their task is to be a constant reminder to the indifferent and to gradually unsettle them. Stickers in the wrong places are usually placed by the enemy to discredit us.

Identical stickers next to each other make a good effect. "Many drops wear away stone" applies here. Incessantly, repeatedly, people must see our stickers!

How should they look? They should be small enough so the person applying them will have enough saliva. They should be brief (few, but vivid words). The layout should be good, with no white space at the edges where graffiti can be written. Each party member should carry such stickers with him. One can apply them quickly and inconspicuously.

b) The **flyer**, with a few sentences, which is distributed on the street, has lost its effectiveness. It is soon thrown away, and its content, mostly only an announcement of a meeting, is hardly noticed.

Successful small leaflets (30 by 60 mm) that carry texts like this:

“National Socialists buy only in German shops. The middle class paper: the *Völkischer Beobachter*.”

These small leaflets can be left in shops.

Another promising innovation is **flyers with caricatures**. A timely sketch by our Mjölfnir [**a Nazi cartoonist**] with an appropriate caption is effective. Good pictures are also effective (e.g., illustrations from the *Angriff* or from the pamphlet “[Those Damned Nazis](#)”).

Flyers in various colors, but with identical slogans, some with caricatures, spread through entire city districts are effective. For example:

- Against Marxism and Reaction — the National Socialists!
- For Freedom and Bread — the National Socialists!
- Your greeting: Heil Hitler!
- Down with the party corpses! Power to the National Socialists!
- Become a National Socialist, all else is shit. The NSDAP has the welfare of the city in mind.

The slogans can be ordered from the propaganda department.

All flyers, leaflets, posters and so on that are posted should be attached in a way that makes them difficult to remove. Random application requires care, and is besides illegal. Our opponents use plate glass successfully; also display windows of German shops.

c) The **leaflet** should contain a brief, easily understandable idea. It should appeal to the enemy, which demands a certain skill on the part of the writer. The text can be **cruder in working class districts**, more **subtle** in the style of the Berlin democratic papers in middle class neighborhoods. The most important phrases should be in bold or larger type. Tiny text, bad organization and boring material kill interest. The interest of the indifferent, from whom one cannot expect much effort, must be awakened.

The legal issue here is important. The distributor of a leaflet is at risk when information about the printer or author is missing.

Information about distribution is given in rubrics d) and e).

d) **Special issues of party newspapers** have a special note in red at the top announcing a particular meeting. A rubber stamp can be used for this. Circle the date in red.

A **trial subscription** to our newspapers can have a remarkable effect on the average person who receives little mail.

don't underestimate the impact of mailing advertising material and meeting invitations to those in the S-Files (Sympathizers file) maintained by local groups and sections. Mail is much more personal. Over time, it has its effects.

Each party member must ask for our newspapers in all restaurants, railway stations, newspaper kiosks and so on.

More than ever, it is important to provide reading rooms with copies of our papers.

And don't forget the little things, to which we owe much success. One always brings newspapers (new and used), leaflets, etc. along. At appropriate times, one "accidentally" leaves them in the train, streetcar, in restaurants, businesses in which one shops, in doctor and dentist offices, at the barber, etc.

**Books** are such an obvious means of advertising that nothing more needs to be said.

e) The **brochures**, which in contrast to leaflets provide the reader with more detailed treatments of various issues, suffer the disadvantage of costing sections and local groups considerable money. The Propaganda Department tries to provide these at reasonable prices by printing large numbers. We are preparing a brief version of our party program in an edition of 150,000, which will cost 2 pfennig.

Brochures treating current issues will follow.

Party members in normal clothing are very effective when they distribute such brochures at busy corners. This propaganda is even stronger when the distributor has a sign that says something like "Free Brochure: How Long Will It Go On?" He who understands the psychology of the masses knows that people will take such brochures only when they are free.

Leaflets, free newspapers and brochures should be **distributed** only in such places where it is likely that they will be read immediately. Good places are in train stations, for those going to a train, **not** coming from one. People will read on the train, but not on the street. Another example: distribute in the morning at factory gates (**not** at the end of the shift). Then the material can be read and discussed during the breakfast break. Our leaflets and newspapers are also good reading for those waiting in the unemployment offices, for travelers in long distance trains, etc., anywhere where time must be killed and people will read anything.

The best success comes through the **systematic distribution** of advertising material from **door-to-door**. This should be done only on **Sunday mornings** so that people can read them at their leisure with their morning coffee.

Get every citizen a brochure on Sunday morning!

f) An important method of propaganda is the so-called "**neighborhood newspaper**," which, following the Communist example, are produced for a specific area and distributed only there.

They contain news about our neighborhood activities and about the questions of the day. To keep the sections and local groups free from difficulty with the law, the political part is printed by a central office in the *Gau*. The sections and local groups need to produce only the general section, list the section meetings, the *Gau* meetings, and so on. An effective masthead is important.

g) The **factory newspaper** is modeled after the neighborhood newspapers. They are designed only for a single factory and cover work issues and political issues. To make them more interesting, events in the relevant factory are covered. These newspapers are monitored by a central Gau office. Typical mastheads: *NSB-Scheinwerfer*, *Siemens-Lautsprecher*, *Lorenz-Aktie*, etc.

h) **Posters**, despite their considerable cost, are the best form of propaganda, and in relation to their cost a cheap method of advertising.

Posters with text give a brief summary of a meeting and acquaint the reader with the goals of the speaker. It is well known that our textual posters have their own style, such that the attentive observer recognizes from a distance that it is something from the Nazis. Large posters in red must be designed so that they stand out on the poster pillar. A small poster is ineffective, and not in keeping with the significance of our movement. No one reads a poster stuffed with text. The top must be clear enough to draw attention. The bottom must also catch attention. The swastika should be used sparingly at first,

particularly in middle class districts.

The headline must be large; it should dominate the poster. In general, only the name of the party should be emphasized in the text. The text should, as already mentioned, be short and make the meeting topic clear. A mention of our press is also appropriate.

Effective posters emphasize words that create a certain mood and can be noticed from a distance.

A good example was the familiar large poster of *Gau* Greater Berlin: *Heil Kaiser Dir!*, that had great success because it appeared at the right time (27. January) and at the right places in the proper size.

We are preparing examples of good posters and an article titled "Posters and leaflets from idea to reality."

The text poster fulfills its purpose when, besides the already-mentioned clear content, there is sufficient time to read it. If not, the picture poster is better. The effect of the picture poster lies with its capacity to be understood at a glance, to get across the spiritual attitude instantly, whereas the text poster needs a certain time to read and a longer time to think about. The hurried city-dweller does not have much time. Mostly, he only catches a quick look at a poster while walking past. The picture has to instantly say at a glance everything that a longer text poster says. Herein lies the difficulty. It is hard to find a riveting picture with a few catchy words. There aren't many Mjöltnirs [a leading Nazi artist]. For us, the picture poster is simply a question of money. Here too we are limited by financial weakness.

The posters from *Gau* Berlin for the Reichstag election of 1928 and the city elections of 1929 are familiar. The Rathenau poster from the "Angriff," halfway between a text and picture poster, had great effect. Unfortunately, it could be used only in a limited way. The illustration will be passed along to the individual *Gau* offices for use in other posters.

The advertising campaign for the "Angriff" was imitated by the Ullstein paper "Tempo," though to a degree corresponding to the financial strength of the firm. Our posters were:

- Nr. 1. The Attack
- Nr. 2. When will the Attack happen?
- Nr. 3. "The Attack," the German evening newspaper.

Ullstein did it this way:

1. You lack Tempo!
2. You will soon have Tempo.
3. Tomorrow you will have Tempo.
4. "Tempo", the daily evening newspaper.

The legal side has already been covered in section c) (leaflets).

i) **Stamps** can be effective when used on letters, newspapers, etc. They should use very short slogans. It's a good idea to carry a stamp with one, in order to be able to use it whenever possible. As already mentioned, other posters may not be stamped; such stamps will be produced by the propaganda offices and distributed to subordinate units.

k) Too little attention is given to the **local press**, particularly in smaller towns. People learn about the NSDAP only from the standpoint of their party press. Our successes are either ignored or played down. Nonetheless, some local papers with wide readership do not oppose us. These papers are usually willing to print material we provide.

Meeting announcements in the **Community Calendar** are generally carried. There may be a small

charge for longer notices.

Always send newspapers a brief, objective, but nonetheless informative **meeting report** for their local sections.

Advertisements in the middle class press are usually very expensive and only support the enemy. They should be used only when absolutely necessary. Favorable treatment of the meeting should be made a condition of buying an advertisement.

l) **Stamps**, which the Reich Propaganda Office produces in an attractive manner, are not lacking in effect. They can be placed on the first page of letters, on cards and so on in the bottom third. The price varies from 1/2 to 2 pfennig. The price of these stamps finances other propaganda.

**Postcards** of the movement should be sent to friends and acquaintances at every opportunity. They may even have an impact on republican letter carriers.

m) A simple but still effective form of propaganda is the **banners** with short slogans that hang in our large meetings. They can be used in smaller versions on trucks and vans. In such cases, be sure to protect them. Bicycle columns too can be used for propaganda.

n) Another method is the so-called **railway track advertising**. With the permission of the property owner, signs can be erected. The "Völkischer Beobachter" has won a large number of new subscriptions in this way.

**Rooftop advertising** is also useful, Unfortunately, it is expensive when the approval of the owner is required.

o) The use of **slide shows and film** depends on the available means. The party's first films have already been produced by the central office and *Gau* Berlin. A major film is in the works. We too should use the most modern advertising methods to serve our movement.

## 2. Propaganda through the spoken word

Propaganda by the spoken word — talking with the individual, study groups, discussion evenings, mass meetings, choruses — usually result from the written word. The two forms of propaganda are inseparable.

a) The most basic form of oral propaganda is the **discussion with the individual**. This form is still the most effective, since deep contact is established. It is easier to do that in this way than in study groups.

b) The **study group** deepens the idea and educates the party member, and encourages closer contact with citizens who are friendly or at least honestly uncertain about the movement. Through them we win supporters by give and take. Without doubt, the movement from its beginnings built the inner strength it needed and won its best fighters through study groups. Every local group should hold two study groups a month. If in a given month no public meeting is held, it should hold another study group.

A discussion evening is not a membership meeting, open only to a certain audience, but rather a public gathering to which party members may bring guests or truth-seeking racial comrades.

Securing a speaker is not as great a problem as in a public people's meeting, Party members not rhetorically suited for a larger public meeting can do very well in a discussion evening, as long as they possess a firm grasp of the aims of the movement.

They will become increasingly better speakers, and the give-and-take with party members will help them become able to serve as discussion speakers at the meetings of other parties.

The speaker is the propagandist of the idea, who sacrifices his time, strength, health and material

welfare for the movement. Recognizing his ability and caring for him provides support he needs.

It is a matter of honor for a speaker to meet his obligations insofar as it is humanly possible. Meetings should be held regardless of the attendance. The credibility of the party is at stake.

The speaker should keep in mind that although his activity in study evenings promises little fame, they often bring more success for the movement than a public meeting.

e) The public mass meeting is the place where an authoritative speaker proclaims the aims of our movement and the nature of our worldview with regard to domestic and international events to every class of the population. The meeting is therefore a matter of the prestige of the party and a source of strength. The manner of its preparation is the mark of a good local group or section. One should speak of a “mass meeting” only when the masses will really appear.

The theme of the meeting should always be chosen to reach the people, particularly the group that one wants to attract to the meeting. We distinguish between world view and current event themes.

The other way to choose meeting themes is to find sensational events, scandals of the Jews or Marxists, in particular events that can be summarized in three or four words. This encourages the masses to come from curiosity, anger over political events, or in the hope of hearing something advantageous given their financial or class interests.

Do not neglect either worldview or political themes. Otherwise, one either loses contact with the masses, or on the other hand attracts only the masses, not the valuable fighters we need. The goal is to build the enthusiasm of the masses from meeting to meeting so that they are eager to come, as was achieved in an exemplary manner in Munich during the years 1922/23.

The following **principles for conducting meetings** apply:

1. Before the meeting, the speaker should be informed of the local political situation.
2. The meeting chair, with a witness, should assume control from the host.
3. Meeting protection should be assured either by a sufficient number of local or neighboring S.A. men, or by request to the police. The latter is particularly important in the case of meetings that may turn violent, for the riot damage act requires it. The state's responsibilities begin only when damages exceed 400 marks.
4. It has proven advantageous in certain meetings and in certain places to have a part of the S.A. in civilian dress scattered throughout the room in order to deal with expected troublemakers.
5. The chairman conducts the meeting. His introduction and conclusion should be at most 3-5 minutes.
6. Attendance by party members is both expected and tactically necessary, given the opponents. No party member should want to demonstrate, either by not appearing at all or by being inattentive, that he already knows everything that the speaker has to say.
7. In the discussion period, only one speaker from each party is permitted. Announce at the start that a speaker cannot give his speaking time to someone else. It is better in advance to give a speaker from another party a longer speaking time, if that is required by the local situation.

8. At the start of each discussion speech at difficult meetings, it is good to announce the time to the audience to keep the discussion speaker and his supporters from claiming that he has only spoken for 5 or 10 minutes.

9. Make propaganda during the meeting for the central organ of the movement, the "Völkischer Beobachter," either through brief words from the chairman or before the meeting and during the breaks with brochures.

10. Each meeting is to be closed by the chairman with a "Heil" to National Socialism and our Führer Adolf Hitler.

11. Singing a song at the conclusion of a meeting makes sense only if this can be done well. The meeting chairman should give directions. It is to be sung standing up, not by singing one stanza as people are leaving. Thin and scattered voices by several party members make a bad impression, particularly when the opponent begins to sing his battle song.

If many communists are present, do not close with the national anthem. The following case demonstrates this. One of our well-known speakers spoke to a meeting with a predominately communist audience. After he had impressively demonstrated the whole miserable swindle of Bolshevist equality to the audience, the chairman wanted to close the successful meeting with the national anthem. The speaker whispered to him "don't sing the national anthem!" The chairman said: "At the request of the speaker, we won't sing the national anthem!" This stupidity led the communists to say that we had good speakers, but were still reactionaries, while the Stahlhelm members present thought we were concealed Marxists after all!

d) **Choruses** supported by a trumpet are effective. Several short, compelling sentences, repeated often, have a strong effect on a meeting. Be sure they have practiced, and are not in an awkward position.

### 3. Propaganda through mass marches:

The third type of propaganda includes **Demonstrations**, local S.A. marches, *Gau* and Reich party rallies. Here all that needs to be said is that good discipline is the best propaganda.

### 4. Propaganda through cultural gatherings:

Cultural gatherings are the fourth group. The influence of theater and movies on the masses is well known. One has to think only of Piscator or of Russian films like "Battleship Potemkin" and "The General Line." We must try to use these institutions for our purposes, and to combat the destructive influence of cultural Bolshevism. The *N.S. Volksbühne* and the *N.S.-Filmbühne* have been established in some cities already and have done well. They are not only a recreational outlet for party members, but also promotional gatherings. Our theater presents only works displaying the German spirit. The *N.S.-Filmbühne*, which strives to produce our own films, also shows films that put heroic thoughts in the foreground.

In order to use our films every day, we should attempt to supplement political speeches with films in the suburbs. Even the smallest cell can be reached and informed in this way.

This has been only a survey of propaganda. It must be used in various ways, but will be successful only when it is conducted by fanatical fighters with unbreakable wills.



