

GERMANY'S CAMPAIGN TO PLACE THE "WAR GUILT" ON JEWS

by CLYDE R. MILLER*

WITH the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact and the outbreak of the Hitler war following German aggression in Poland, a change in the tactics of Nazi propagandists and the controlled press was anticipated. Hitherto, Hitler and Göbbels had pounded away at Bolshevism and its alleged Jewish connections as the world's greatest enemy. They had used this fear as one of their stepping-stones to power. It had provided their excuse for intervening in the Spanish revolution.† Through the Anti-Comintern they had welded a tenuous alliance with Italy, Japan, Hungary and Franco Spain, and even had won an influential amount of sympathy for their aims in British and French conservative circles. Anything the Nazis wanted to attack was immediately labeled, "Jewish Communism."‡

After the establishment of friendly relations with Soviet Russia, the Bolshevik bogy was promptly dropped by Nazi propagandists. In Germany, newspapers, periodicals and books abruptly became completely silent on the question of Bolshevism. In its place there was created a new target for Nazi propagandists, "democratic world Jewry," and "Jewish democracy." Primarily for home consumption, at first, a vigorous effort was made to place the responsibility for the outbreak of war on these newly-revived Nazi bogys.

The first note was sounded by Herr Hitler himself as early as September 3 in his appeal to the nation. He charged that the war was brought about not by the British people but by the "Jewish plutocratic and democratic upper crust." The cry was immediately taken up by the entire press. The *Neue Tag* of Prague of September 4, for instance, warned the British that they were fighting "not for the chimera of democracy or humanitarianism but in the interest of international financial Jewry."

In succeeding days the Nazi press campaign became more and more vigorous. A good example is furnished by the September 19 issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi party organ, which in a *Leitartikel* pointed to the "ominous agitation" of Jewish organizations and charged that English democracy was waging war against Germany because Jews had urged

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† Hitler made it clear after Franco's triumph that in Spain he had achieved victory over the democracies and that that had been his original purpose in aiding Franco. See *Spain, A Case Study*, Vol. II, Publications of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis.

‡ See the studies, *How to Detect Propaganda*, and *Propaganda Techniques of German Fascism*, Vol. I, Publications of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis.

it to do so. Accusing Jews of setting in motion "a barrage which assumed extraordinary proportions" following the Nazi conquest of Czecho-Slovakia, the *Völkischer Beobachter* continued: "The war trumpet was sounded in all parts of the world. British newspapers, above all, diligently made war against Germany with their new slogan, 'peace front,' the excuse for the isolation of the government; the same arguments and the same methods were used by the anti-German press in all other countries—everything by order of world Jewry."

The campaign was continued in each issue, but a week later the *Völkischer Beobachter* broadened the attack. It stated: "England does not want war. England does not wage Chamberlain's war but the war of the Churchill group and its might money suppliers and their confederates from the dives of the City and Wall Street, from the masonic lodges and synagogues."

Similar accusations were hurled against "the Jews in the western democracies" by Julius Streicher in the *Fränkische Tageszeitung* as well as by other Nazi journals. The *Schwarze Korps*, organ of the S.S. (Blackshirts), charged, for instance, that Jews were working for the destruction of Christian peoples, and that England was sacrificing its youth for a "Jew war."

At the same time Nazi papers started a scurrilous campaign against the Jews of Poland, charging them with being the scavengers of the battlefields and the snipers who ambushed innocent German soldiers. Characteristic of this campaign is the feature issued by the *Illustrierter Beobachter* of Munich which published two full pages of photographs of Polish Jews under the heading, "Hyenas of the Battlefield." An obviously terror-stricken old Jew, carrying all his worldly possessions in a sack slung across his shoulder is described as a thief and a scavenger. In another picture, a group of elderly men of scholarly appearance, men who could hardly be imagined handling a rifle, are lined up before a Nazi officer on a charge of having shot at German soldiers. A third photograph shows a similar group of distinguished looking men crowded into a truck taking them to a concentration camp. The *Völkischer Beobachter* similarly denounced Polish Jews, adding that they had exploited peasants to an unprecedented degree.

Such tactics are primarily designed for home consumption in order to build up a new menace to replace the previous Bolshevist demon. Another step in this direction was the order directing the Anti-Comintern, a Nazi organization originally set up to prepare and disseminate propaganda against Soviet Russia, to cease such activities and concentrate its efforts solely against Jews. Its chief publication, the *Contra-Comintern*, was also to undergo complete revision including a change of name. In this way the Nazis seek to explain to their own people why Britain and France were fighting them and at the same time to justify their treatment of the helpless Jews of Poland.

Following the usual Nazi propaganda tactics, however, it was not long before the effort was made to extend the "war guilt" campaign to other countries, particularly neutrals. As early as September 15, *World Service*, the Nazi overseas propaganda organ whose bulletins, sent free to newspapers and magazines, were published in twelve languages before the war, and since only in six (characteristically, the Polish and Arabic editions were discontinued), bluntly accused Jews of having brought about the war in order to destroy Germany. Poland, with whom Hitler had once made and later broken a treaty of non-aggression, suddenly became, according to *World Service*, dominated by Jews and "the greatest Jew-country in Europe." This Nazi anti-Semitic bulletin charged that Jews had driven Poland to make war against Germany, and having "Judaized governments of the Western democracies," had caused them also to declare war. Léon Blum, "Hore-Belish," Jean Zay and Philip Sassoon are particularly singled out to prove the contentions of *World Service*. Germany, according to this paper, "wants nothing, absolutely nothing" from France or Britain. No mention is made of the extent of Germany's ambitions in Poland.

The recent featuring in the German press under screaming headlines of a letter allegedly written by an unnamed Czech-Jewish refugee in London to a Dr. Zdenek Thon in Prague and purporting to reveal how "democratic world Jewry" controls Winston Churchill and other prominent British government officials and conspired with them to wage war against Hitler is another step in the Nazi campaign to label Jews as "war-mongers." This letter was described in the headlines of the *Völkischer Beobachter* as a "secret Jewish letter" allegedly exposing certain English ministers as "straw men of Judah." In other issues, this organ of the Nazi party accused England of currying Jewish favor by permitting large scale immigration to Palestine at the expense of the Arabs. Books, too, are being utilized in this smear campaign. The recent volume 57 of the Heinrich Pudor series, *Die Internationalen verwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen der jüdischen Hochfinanz* (The International Family Relations of Jewish High Finance), seeks to pin the war guilt on Jews by pointing to the "Jewish banker J. P. Morgan," the alleged director of crude oil production, and to the Guggenheim copper interests as the foremost war mongers.

It is noteworthy that in this instance as well as in the early issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter* previously referred to, the United States is definitely included among the countries supposedly controlled by "the Jewish plutocratic and democratic ruling class." The issue of September 21 similarly denounced the *New York Times* as the organ of "Jewish plutocracy" and the armament industry. Again, on October 4, the *Völkischer Beobachter* launched a vicious denunciation of the late Cardinal Mundelein charging him with having been a "Jew-slave." *Neues Volk*, organ of the Racial

Political Office, in continuing the attacks on the United States cited instances of the mistreatment of Negroes as examples of American hypocrisy. *World Service* of October 1 also included the United States. Charging that Britain and France are fighting "only because the German regime is anti-Jewish," it quoted an alleged speech by Norman Thomas accusing "Jewish bankers in Wall Street" with influencing the government to bring America into the war.

Even the few recent Nazi books that have arrived here make increased use of anti-Jewish material previously employed in convincing the German people that Jews allegedly betrayed them during the World War and brought about the inflation and distress of post-war years. Thus, a book of poems called *Kleiner Juden-Brevier* provides a more subtle version of Julius Streicher's anti-Semitic propaganda, accusing Jews of having brought about Germany's destruction and laying a basis for the present attack on Jews.

The Nazi leader Julius Streicher has also continued the campaign in his *Fränkische Tageszeitung*, the issue of October 13 bluntly declaring that "England and France work together with Jews." The cry that English and Jewish interests are identical is also made by the *Mitteilungen über die Judenfrage* of Berlin, which, in its October issues, makes similar use of the Nazi charges against Jewish activities in post-war years. The *Deutsche Wochenschau* of October 4 repeats these charges and quotes from an article in the *Regime Fascista* by the Italian anti-Semite Farinacci to prove that Jews control the press of England. Similar use of the Farinacci article was made by other Nazi journals.

The direction of these Nazi tactics becomes clearer with the arrival of each additional publication. Jews are, first of all, to be a substitute for the Bolshevist menace dropped as a result of the Nazi-Soviet pact. Jews are also to be the ones responsible for the outbreak of war, since, according to Nazi reasoning, they drove Poland to attack Germany and subsequently England and France to preserve Poland's existence. To make this more palatable for home consumption, alleged Jewish perfidy during and after the World War is reiterated and emphasized as the reason for Germany's defeat. On this basis, Nazi leaders are able to inform their people that Germany is fighting a defensive war and to prepare the Jewish scapegoat in case of forthcoming defeats. The other major aim of this war guilt campaign apparently is to label sympathy for Britain and France in neutral countries a device of "Judaized" democracy. Nazi propagandists naturally hope to influence public opinion in the United States against Britain and France through this new attack, and fantastic revelations similar in tone and content to the Czech forgery may be expected to follow as part of this strategy.