

Et derrière: Le Juif:

A Study of the Effectiveness Visual Anti-Semitic Propaganda in France, 1940-1944

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Introduction

In *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler wrote, “Propaganda is a truly terrible weapon in the hands of an expert.”¹ World War II saw the use of propaganda by the most experienced pundits who learned from previous authorities what worked. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment for Hitler’s Nazi government, was inarguably a propaganda expert. Aristotle A. Kallis defines propaganda as “a systematic process of information management geared to promoting a particular goal and to guaranteeing a popular response as desired by the propagandist.”² The Nazis proved themselves to be masters of manipulation. Not only did they convince the German people that they would save them from their suffering resulting from World War I, but they also brainwashed them into perpetrating one of the worst crimes against humanity and, what is more, believing they were in the right to do so.

The Jewish people have long been oppressed by those in power. They were enslaved by the Egyptians, their temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, their religion was outlawed, and they were expelled out of countries and forced into ghettos. They have served as a target and scapegoat for centuries. Christians have accused them of murdering youths for blood libel rituals. They have always been considered “other.” The Nazi Party’s goal included depicting “the Jew” as perpetrators of Bolshevism and Western plutocratic democracies, warmongers, and progenitors of genocide. International Jewry was the enemy. By studying the content of propaganda in a single country, namely France (which had both an occupied and a non-occupied zone), one can hope to determine the effectiveness of anti-Semitic propaganda in influencing the actions and beliefs of the French masses towards both French and foreign Jews.

¹ Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, quoted in Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), 1.1.

² Aristotle A. Kallis, quoted in Luckert and Bachrach, *State of Deception*, 1-2.

Visual propaganda is among the most poignant forms of Nazi manipulation methods. This paper will look into the various forms of visual propaganda employed in France by both the Nazi and Vichy governments. It will draw conclusions about overarching anti-Semitic themes found in posters, newsreels, and films, as well as “scientific” exhibitions. Then it will attempt to deduce how successful the propagandists were at influencing people’s actions and thoughts in regards to the Jews. However, one must keep in mind that it is impossible to come to irrefutable conclusions when measuring people’s reactions. Polling data is often unavailable (if it exists at all) and inaccurate. People do not react to things the same way and can often disguise their true feelings. But by looking at the data available in *Sicherheitsdienst* (or SD, the security police of Nazi Germany) reports, polls, reviews, and eyewitness accounts, one can hope to have at least a glimpse into the French mindset.

This research is significant because, while Nazi propaganda as a whole has been researched relatively thoroughly, anti-Semitic visual propaganda in France has been largely overlooked, especially in English publications. France was the first nation to give the Jews full rights as citizens, yet blatant anti-Semitism was present long before WWII (e.g. the Dreyfus affair). The Vichy government and many of the French people collaborated with the Nazis, willingly sending numerous Jews to concentration camps and, in the many cases, their eventual deaths. However, they were careful to send as many foreign Jews as possible before completely turning on their own Frenchmen.³ France is a unique nation during the WWII time period. Beginning as a staunch Ally, it fell and collaborated with the Nazis, creating two seats of power – one in Nazi Paris, the other in Vichy. This paper will attempt to discern if the French were so willing to comply because they were told (through propaganda) that the Jews were responsible

³ Paul Webster. “The Vichy Policy on Jewish Deportation.” 11 May 2005. BBC. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/jewish_deportation_01.shtml>. 2 February 2010.

for their miseries or because they were simply trying to survive themselves, willing to do anything

The conclusions could have significant implications because genocide is still an issue today. The memorial at Dachau reads, “Never Again,” in several different languages. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, asks its visitors to “Think about What You Saw.” Other peoples have been persecuted, becoming victims of genocide, but very little has been done about it. When strong, charismatic, totalitarian leaders command authority, they have all the power. They can convince the majority of the population to turn on a subgroup. Propaganda did not end with WWII and Hitler’s death. It had been used in previous wars and has continued to be employed since.

The media are our main sources of learning about the news today. We read newspapers, listen to the news on radio and television, and watch movies. Journalists are supposed to be objective and they often try to be, but even scrupulous media outlets have a certain bias. The media possess the power to spin the information and showcase it in a light that fits their points of view. Propaganda can be subtle and hidden in intricate layers of supposed news.

Was the anti-Semitic propaganda responsible for the expulsion and deportation of the Jews in France? Was it able to convince the French people that the Jews were responsible for their troubles? Or were theirs the actions of a people who remained preoccupied in their own survival and who would do anything to maintain their own safety? Whatever the answer, the fact remains that 75,721 Jewish refugees and French citizens were deported to death camps.⁴

⁴ Webster.

Historiography

Anti-Semitic propaganda is hardly a new area of study. Numerous historians have written entire books on the subject, in addition to the wide information available to researchers in journals, exhibits, and even documentaries. However, most studies choose to concentrate on Germany or did not focus on the sphere of visual propaganda. The amount of materials available regarding visual propaganda in France remains extremely limited, especially if English language constraints exist.

Among the leading scholars of anti-Semitic propaganda in Germany are Jeffrey Herf and David Welch. Herf provides a thorough overview of Nazi propaganda that focused specifically on the Jews. Herf proposes that the Nazis believed that the Jews started WWII and that “The Jews are Guilty of Everything” (as one of his chapters reads). He also examines traditional accusations against the Jews, such as their Bolshevik and plutocratic roots, and tries to examine the average German citizen’s knowledge of the plight of the Jews.⁵ Welch is one of the world’s leading experts on Nazi propaganda in Germany. *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* argues that the German citizenry was already well-poised to accept Hitler’s messages because they believed them to be true.⁶ In *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945*, Welch scrutinizes various themes of Nazi films, a form of propaganda that had not been thoroughly examined until this work. He describes both the mechanics of films production and the beliefs behind the propaganda in movie form and even concentrates on the theme of the “Image of the Enemy,” which of course includes Jews, Bolsheviks, and Brits. He analyzes the major antisemitic films, including *Jud Süß*, *The Rothschilds*, and *The Eternal Jew*.⁷

⁵ Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁶ David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁷ David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

However, the study of French propaganda during this time period is rather limited. A key work in this particular field is Dominique Rossignol's *L'Histoire de la Propagande en France de 1940 à 1944: L'utopie Pétain*. Her study of propaganda in France during the period of the Vichy Regime breaks down into three specific sections: the Vichy myth, the image of a "European France," and Vichy France's diverse (and numerous) "enemies." Among Vichy's enemies are, of course, the Jewish people, in addition to the Bolsheviks (who were widely believed to be intricately tied with the Jews) and the Anglo-Americans (whom propaganda portrayed as puppets of Jews). She seeks to show readers how Pétain and the Vichy government tried to influence the French people into believing their government was working with its people's best interests at heart, creating a haven or utopia for the French citizens still living in a world full of war. She deems the Vichy government to be totalitarian, completely in control of its media and propaganda apparatus.⁸ Other works that delve into visual propaganda in France are few and far between. *L'Oeil de Vichy* is a collection of clips from newsreels and short films shown in Vichy France. Some analysis is offered by the contributors, including Claude Chabrol and Robert Paxton, detailing the manipulation of film footage by the Nazis to present their point of view. There are very few voice-overs explaining this documentary but it shows how horrendously Jews were depicted by both the Nazis and the Vichy regime. English subtitles and a dubbed narration are provided.⁹ Diane Afoumado's *L'Affiche Antisémite en France sous l'Occupation* provides examples of antisemitic posters that were posted around France during World War II. She provides a good deal of background information about each poster, explaining who created it, as well as the anti-Semitic symbolism and messages put forth by the authorities. Although she somewhat delves into an analysis of the times and the posters (such as when she looks into the

⁸ Dominique Rossignol, *Histoire de la Propagande en France de 1940 à 1944: L'utopie Pétain*, 1st ed., Politique d'aujourd'hui (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1991).

⁹ FIT Production (Firm) et al., *L'Oeil De Vichy* (First Run Features Home Video, 2003).

only public opinion poll of the time), her work focuses on description and making readers understand how to see the posters, not on making conclusions about the power of propaganda.¹⁰

Clearly, a study in English about visual anti-Semitic propaganda had yet to be undertaken. This paper hopes to fill that void.

A Brief Look at French Anti-Semitism

Hitler is hardly the first person to have an agenda against the Jews. They are amongst the most discriminated against groups in history. Ancient Egyptian pharaohs played their part, as did medieval kings and queens, designating Jews to second class citizens (or slaves) or driving them out of the country as a whole. They have been labeled as scapegoats for millennia before Hitler was born. France is no exception.

It is interesting to note that France was the first Western European nation to give full civil rights to the Jews with the passing of two important statutes in 1790 and 1791. During this period of Enlightenment, other nations followed suit, to varying degrees of success. However, this era of rationality did not last. Racist ideas abounded in the thirty years before World War I and provided a solid groundwork for Vichy anti-Semitism. Then came the Dreyfus Affair, where a French Jewish officer was accused of treason. Although most of the newspapers of the time propagated the view that he was guilty, Alfred Dreyfus was eventually found innocent. The 1930s experienced a wave of renewed and particularly vicious anti-Semitism. When the country suffered severe economic distress, for which the Jews once again received the blame. They were also seen as outsiders by the xenophobic French. 1938 witnessed demonstrations against the Jews in Paris. Herschel Grynszpan, a Jewish teenager, shot a German diplomat in the German embassy in Paris, an act which thrust Jewry into a highly criticized spotlight. That same year,

¹⁰ Diane Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation* (Paris: Berg, 2008).

refugees poured into France, including some 40,000 Jews. France was not equipped to deal with so many foreigners.¹¹ They turned against the Jews, those recently naturalized or refugees, believing that “France’s international weakness, its economic decline, its parliamentary disorder, its diminished sense of national purpose, its declining birthrate, its flagging bourgeois culture – all could be attributed to the Jews, so notoriously not French yet so vividly evident in so many spheres of French activity.”¹²

On September 3, 1939, World War II began when Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declared war on Germany. By May 10, 1940, the Nazis had invaded France. June 3 marked the first day the Germans bombed Paris. On June 14, the Germans marched onto the streets of Paris. A mere two days later, Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain became French Prime Minister of a government based in Vichy. On June 22, the French signed an armistice with the Nazis.¹³ The Vichy Regime was installed after France capitulated to the Nazis, splitting the country into an Occupied and a “Free” Zone. The Germans occupied the North while Vichy controlled the Southern Free Zone. As leader of this collaborative government, Pétain was nominally in charge of two-fifths of the French nation and achieved a cult like status among the French citizens. Vendors sold his picture to households and he restructured France in such a way that it appeared that France truly benefited from its surrender. The French remained eager to hold onto some part of their power and acted in ways that they thought would allow Germany to grant them greater autonomy. As a result, the French took actions against the Jews before the Germans ordered them to do so. Eager to please Hitler, the Vichy government passed Jewish Statutes in October 1940, restricting the Jews and racially defining them. Soon they were banned

¹¹ Michael Robert Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 25-71.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³ “World War II in Europe.” 1996. The History Place.
<<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/ww2time.htm>>. 6 March 2010.

from particular professions and businesses were Aryanized. 1941 marked the beginning of the mass arrests of Jewish refugees and French Jews. They were sent to concentration camps, such as Drancy, and many were sent to the extermination camps in Poland. Vichy France was autonomous and free, to an extent, to do as they wished with the Jews.¹⁴ However, they chose to send the Jews to suffering and, in many cases, death. While the first German ordinance was issued on September 27, 1940, requiring Jews to register and refusing them reentry to the Occupied Zone, by this time, Vichy had already begun the process of “reviewing naturalizations and purging the medical and legal professions. Without any possible doubt, Vichy had begun its own anti-Semitic career before the first German text appeared, and without direct German order.”¹⁵ The October 3, 1940, *Statut des juifs* defined the Jews and excluded them from certain positions, in addition to setting quotas. The Germans were quite happy to allow the French to take the reins in actions against the Jews, giving the Nazis deniability.¹⁶

The authorities in both zones did more than just pass laws. Actions taken against the Jews tested public opinion. Beginning in 1938, Germany expelled Jews from the country, sending them to France, which did not have the capability to handle so many extra people. These refugees were interned in camps in the Free Zone, such as Gurs, Saint-Cyprien, and Rivestale. When actions against the Jews commenced, only foreign Jews felt the effects. However, in 1941, growing anti-Semitism entrapped French Jews too. In 1941, Parisian Jews (whose information was readily available thanks to the mandated census previously filled out) were arrested and nearly 4,000 Jews were sent to the Pithiviers or Beaune-la-Rolande camps, often before being deported east to the killing camps. At first, the public was informed that Jews of a certain age were needed for these “labor transports.” However, even young children could be found on these

¹⁴ Webster. “The Vichy Policy on Jewish Deportation.”

¹⁵ Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 6-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-10.

trains. The July 1942 roundup of Parisian Jews proved to be the single most influential event in changing public opinion. In two days (July 16 and 17), the police arrested over 12,000 Jews. They were kept in camps such as Drancy for a few days before being shipped to Auschwitz. The event could not be kept a secret and the image of thousands of women and children being shoved into overcrowded train cars caused revulsion in many French citizens.¹⁷

On the Walls of France: The Poster War

Artists design posters intending to send a powerful message with few words. These posters use images and drawings to inculcate in their audiences what their creators wanted people to take away from the illustrations. The walls in Paris and other French cities served to remind people who they should mistrust. Jews were one of the most targeted groups, receiving a lot of blame for the nation's problems. Margaret Collins Weitz of Suffolk University maintains that a "poster war" existed in France during World War II. She agrees with Dominique Rossignol's statement that "war with images extends war with arms."¹⁸

Using posters to increase awareness about a particular point of view is not a new phenomenon, particularly in France. Political posters have been used by the French since 1539. In 1835, a law was enacted which limited freedom of expression in relation to images because they had the power to "incite to action."¹⁹ However, the use of posters since 1539, including during the French Revolution, never reached the magnitude it did from 1940 to 1945. The times were hard on most citizens; there were many shortages, including paper. Yet the number of

¹⁷ See generally Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1993).; Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry series (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England [for] Brandeis University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001); Philippe Burrin, *France Under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise* (New York: New Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Rossignol quoted in Margaret Collins Weitz, "Art in the Service of Propaganda: The Poster War in France during World War II," *Religion & the Arts* 4, no. 1 (March 2000): 43.

¹⁹ Ibid.

posters produced was astronomical. For example, over three million were printed to honor Labor Day 1941. The emphasis placed on the production of these posters attests to the importance the authorities placed on them.²⁰

The Jews were accused of many things, supporting the idea of the “worldwide Jewish conspiracy.”²¹ Posters emphasized the Jewish people’s connection with a need for the National Revolution, the Black Market, warmongers, health risks, Free Masons, and the Allied powers of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union. In addition, both Nazi Germany and Vichy France produced these posters, but they were stylistically different.²²

Germany placed great importance on propaganda in France, installing the Propaganda Abteilung, an attachment of the military administration, which received orders from Goebbels’s Ministry of Information and Propaganda. The Propaganda Abteilung had three goals: to ban propaganda that worked against their goals, including eliminating all anti-German, Masonic, or Jewish influences; to gather information about public opinion and its reactions with the help of the German espionage and police services; and to present to the French the new Germany and the benefits it had to offer due to the Nazi regime, specifically the social benefits, and to emphasize its power and invincibility.²³ Despite all these objectives and the innumerable posters printed to educate the French, the most oft repeated theme in German posters was anti-Semitism.²⁴

According to Diane Afoumado, author of *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’Occupation* (*Antisemitic Posters in France during the Occupation*), “In reality, if one were to compare the chronology of propaganda campaigns to that of military events, German propaganda very clearly

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Shannon L Fogg. "Refugees and Indifference: The Effects of Shortages on Attitudes towards Jews in France's Limousin Region During World War II." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 31-54. <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed March 31, 2010), 387.

²² Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’occupation*.

²³ Rossignol, *Histoire de la Propagande*, 49.

²⁴ Weitz, “Art in the Service of Propaganda,” 43.

appears as examples of ‘anti’ propaganda, of which they place the Jews at the center, denouncing them as the worst of all enemies who must be ‘eradicated’ at all costs.”²⁵

The situation remained very similar for posters printed by Vichy France. These posters used images to great effectiveness, often covering the entire surface with an illustration. The texts remained straightforward and succinct. However, that fact does not make the use of such posters any less important in the indoctrination plans of Vichy. In fact, “Marshal Pétain’s government made an exceptional effort to influence French opinion with posters...Vichy favored posters and radio broadcasts to communicate with the public.”²⁶ French posters could be categorized into three different groupings: announcements by the authorities; appeals to civic virtue; and political posters supporting Pétain. In contrast to German propaganda in this medium, the majority of Vichy posters did not relate to the Jews, although the Jews often played some role. The cult of Pétain held a prominent place in French objectives. So, too, did the elements of his National Revolution. The motto of the French Republic had been “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” (“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”). These changed to “Travail, Famille, Patrie” (“Work, Family, Country”). The Christian religion also held a place of importance (especially when mentally juxtaposed with the Jews), specifically the martyrdom of Joan of Arc. The French worked hard to prove that they remained a powerful, independent nation (part of the “Country” theme of the National Revolution), emphasizing their empire in the posters. While the Jews dominated German posters, and even though Vichy France condemned the Jews, Communists, and Freemasons, all considered to fall under the Jewish umbrella, “Vichy’s longest campaign

²⁵ Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’occupation*, 29. « En réalité, si l’on plaque la chronologie des campagnes de propagande sur celle des événements militaires, la propagande allemande apparaît très clairement comme celle des ‘anti’ au cœur de laquelle les Allemands placent les Juifs dénoncés comme le pire de tous les ennemis qu’il faut ‘éradiquer’ à tout prix. »

²⁶ Weitz, “Art in the Service of Propaganda,” 49-50.

during the Occupation was devoted to the ‘Crusade against Bolshevism.’”²⁷ However, Bolsheviks and Communists (i.e. Jews) were often confused.²⁸

However, the Vichy government was not the only force at work in producing anti-Semitic posters. Collaborationist parties also contributed in promoting hatred towards the Jews. Pierre Costantini’s Ligue Française, Marcel Bucard’s Parti Franciste, and Jacques Doriot’s Parti Populaire Français plastered the walls with posters, highlighting the loathing they felt to the Jews. Of these, the Ligue Française holds a special place. They believed that France had to eliminate all those who stood against their goal of a European Revolution.²⁹ These enemies were “those who enslave, betray, squander the Country: Jews, Free Masons, [...] camouflaged patriots, [...] foreigners [...] this scum must be swept out.”³⁰

The styles of French and German posters differed in regard to the Jews. Nazis distributed the propaganda through two channels: putting up posters with German origins (simply changing the message to the occupied country’s language, but leaving the graphics the same) and requesting that the French create their own posters beginning in the fall of 1940 to establish racism in the country.³¹ This instruction led to differences in the two poster styles. German posters emphasized racial elements, not religious. However, the French people were not familiar with the image of the Jew that the Germans had been emphasizing. The “shtetl” Jew was unrecognizable to the French, so the French-made posters concentrated on images that would be more common in France. The French were considered too rational to accept this violent image of the Jew at first. The images needed to be adjusted to local tastes. The German depiction of the

²⁷ Ibid., 63.

²⁸ Ibid., 50-63.

²⁹ Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’occupation*, 22-26.

³⁰ Quoted in Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’Occupation*, 25. « [C]eux qui ont asservi, trahi, dilapidé la Patrie: Juifs, Francs-maçons, [...] patriotes camouflés, [...] mètèques [...] cette racaille doit être balayée. »

³¹ Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’Occupation*, 26.

violent Jew was unacceptable to the French population. They needed something with which they were familiar to rouse their emotions.³²

An excellent example of a German anti-Semitic poster reads “Et derrière: Le Juif” (“And Behind: The Jew”). This poster was printed in several languages and displayed in the occupied countries. Behind the flags of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, lurks an extreme depiction of a Jew. He exemplifies the racial definition of a Jew as set out in the Nuremberg laws. He wears a bowler hat and a black suit, with a gold waist band from which hangs a Star of David. The poster informs its viewers that this man is a capitalist Jew who is manipulating the Allied Powers. Thus, the Jews are not to be trusted. A Jewish conspiracy exists, the poster claims. Beware. This poster, placed in the context of the Holocaust, shows that the Nazis concentrated a large part of their efforts into eliminating the Jews from the face of the earth.³³

A French poster created by the Ligue Française, printed first in 1941 and then again in 1944, cries, “Laissez-nous tranquilles!” (“Leave us alone!”) It shows the various enemies against which the French couple planting something into the ground must contend. The Ligue Française thus invokes the three aspects of the National Revolution (the couple is the Family, the plant represents Work, and they are standing in front of an outline of France, lit up with the sun, or Country). Out of the darkness, from beyond the edges of the nation, four enemies wait to pounce: the wolves of Free Masonry, the Jews, and de Gaulle, as well as the three-headed serpent, Lies. This poster warns Frenchmen that they must beware enemies from outside. They should only trust those inside.³⁴ Implicitly, the poster tells its viewers to beware foreigners but trust the Germans and the Vichy government. Weitz notes, “In Nazi logic, every foreigner was Jewish.”³⁵

³² Diane Afoumado, interview by author, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, January 22, 2010.

³³ Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 78-81.

³⁴ Ibid., 90-91.

³⁵ Weitz, “Art in the Service of Propaganda,” 49.

Although this poster does not promote an identical message, the similarities are noticeable. The snarling Jewish wolf, accompanied by his wolf pack of Free Masons (long-considered to have Jewish affiliation) and de Gaulle (considered to be under the thumb of the Jew) and their tool, lies, is intended to bring worry to the audience's mind.

But how effective were these posters in affecting people's opinions? Of course, no simple, clear cut method exists to measure people's reactions. According to contemporary eye witnesses, despite the illegality of such acts, people ripped the posters down very soon after they were put up. Sometimes guards were placed around the posters to ensure the propaganda was not disturbed.³⁶ Weitz agrees with the difficulties in measuring how effective the poster war was.

She states,

Although we can never fully assess the collective response to these extraordinary efforts to influence a population that was largely passive in the early period, the overwhelming use of propaganda posters during the German occupation merits attention. The French population could hardly disregard them. Consider the possible impact on a young person of the several-story high caricature of a Jew [to be discussed later]. Their public space was invaded, literally during the poster war. In this battle for the minds and hearts of the French, religious themes were used extensively by the Vichy regime. The repeated use of Christian iconology contrasted with the negative presentation of non-Christians, especially Jewish figures.³⁷

The Cinematic Experience: Propaganda on the Big Screen

The year 1940 proved full of important dates and events for France. On June 22nd, the French signed the Armistice. About a week earlier, on June 14th, the Germans entered Paris. The next day, the Pigalle movie theater reopened (most likely closed due to the Nazi bombings). 20 more theaters opened in the next four days. Within a couple of weeks, by the beginning of July, 100 cinemas were doing business again. Three of the most anti-Semitic films were produced by Nazi Germany in 1940: *Jud Süß*, *Der Ewige Jude*, and *Die Rothschilds*. Although no evidence

³⁶ Ibid., 73.

³⁷ Ibid.

remains to prove that the *Der Ewige Jude* was ever distributed to movie theaters in France, it still played a role in Nazi propaganda, if only in newsreels, as will be shown later. It certainly was an important piece in general Nazi propaganda. French citizens attended the movies in droves, hoping to escape the reality of war in a few hours' worth of entertainment.³⁸

Before watching the film they paid for, French audiences were required by law to sit through the newsreels which played before the feature. Before the summer of 1942, France had two different companies responsible for producing these newsreels. In the Occupied Zone, every week the Nazi established *Actualités Mondiales* "combined repackaged clips from Germany and other parts of the Reich with a smaller number of sequences filmed on site in France."³⁹ Vichy France had its own production company, *France Actualités Pathé-Gaumont*, which chose to film in non-occupied France and its colonies. The clips provided different views to each zone. While competition between the two companies did not truly exist, few clips were shared between them in the beginning, at least not until they combined to form one Franco-German unit: *France-Actualités*. Newsreels, relatively unstudied as a method of propaganda, can provide valuable information and insight into how effective propaganda was. Newsreels reflect the politics, society, and economics of the time, as well as the ideology of the government. They can also be used to gauge the impact of propaganda films on the collective mind. Newsreels can therefore be used to measure the influence of propaganda on the French people.⁴⁰

Vichy newsreels, produced by *France Actualités Pathé-Gaumont*, appeared very popular among the masses in the Free Zone, Syria, Switzerland, and North Africa, the regions to which

³⁸ Francois Garcon, "Nazi Film Propaganda in Occupied France," in *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations*, ed. David Welch (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1983), 161.

³⁹ Brett Bowles, "German newsreel propaganda in France, 1940-1944.," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 24, no. 1 (March 2004): 46.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

its distribution was limited.⁴¹ These newsreels celebrated three main themes: the power of the French colonial empire, the training of the small French army the armistice permitted, and the National Revolution. They showed a triumphant France, emerging victorious over its German conquerors. Interestingly, according to Brett Bowles, anti-Semitic messages were completely absent from Vichy footage.⁴² However, if one were to look at the documentary by Claude Charbol, *L'Oeil de Vichy*, one would come to a somewhat different conclusion. The documentary claims at the outset to consist “of Franco-German newsreels and short films watched by the French in the cinemas of the occupied and non-occupied zones between the 6th of August 1940 and the 3rd of August 1944...This film shows France, not as it was between 1940 and 1944, but as Pétain and the Collaborators wanted it to be seen.”⁴³ Indeed, keeping with Bowles’ argument, there is no mention of Jews at all in film clips from 1940. However, in 1941, this is no longer the case. The audience watching the newsreels is informed about the creation of the Institute for Jewish Research in Paris, which serves as “a central bureau of coordination and information dealing with the Jewish issue scientifically and studying the problem at a European level.” That year as well, French movie goers viewed a segment of a clip from *The Jewish Peril*. A disturbing clip, *The Jewish Peril* compares the Jews to rats, “sly and cruel. He feels the irresistible need to destroy. The Jews’ power lies in their superior numbers and, like proliferating rats, they are a danger to human health. Talking of salubrious places, let’s visit the dark and repulsive pigsty where this Jewish family lives. Vermin swarms there.”⁴⁴ *The Jewish Peril*, a film directed by Pierre Ramelot, claims to be a documentary and looks remarkably similar to another quasi-documentary produced around the same time, Germany’s *Die Ewige Jude* (translated most often

⁴¹ Ibid., 52.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *L'Oeil de Vichy*, DVD, directed by Claude Charbol (New York: First Run Features Home Video, 2003).

⁴⁴ *L'Oeil de Vichy*.

as *The Eternal Jew*, although some sources deem *The Wandering Jew* to be a more accurate title⁴⁵). No matter the origins of the clip, anti-Semitic propaganda debuted in the Vichy newsreels as early as 1941.

German propaganda produced by *Actualités Mondiales* was not nearly as successful as its Vichy counterpart. Other newsreels in the Occupied Zone were outlawed, including those manufactured by the French and Americans, these Nazi newsreels attempted to force French audiences to accept the occupation as a means of necessity and survival. As François Garçon states, “The film newsreels were the principal area in which the Nazis intervened. Because of the importance of controlling information in a conquered country always liable to turn on its invader, Germany used newsreels like real weapons of war.”⁴⁶ In both the Occupied and Free Zones, moviegoers were required by law to watch the newsreels. In Vichy, this was not a problem, as they pushed messages of hope. In the German occupied areas, different circumstances existed. A study of police reports reveal that French citizens were well-aware of their reality. French cinemas witnessed ‘demonstrations’ by the audience, often in the form of whistling, sniggering, and applause at scenes that they disagreed with or found unintentionally galvanizing (such as bombs hitting German homes). The prefect of Landres noted that between 80 and 90 percent of the audience left the cinema during a screening.⁴⁷ German authorities could not let this stand, so they required theater owners to leave lights on half-dimmed while the clips were playing, allowing plain-clothed and uniformed police officers to identify troublemakers and make arrests. Theater managers also made announcements before the clips were shown, warning the audience to remain silent lest they wished to suffer the consequences. Audience members did not always

⁴⁵ David Culbert, “The Impact of Anti-Semitic Film Propaganda on German Audiences: *Jew Süss* and *The Wandering Jew* (1940),” in *Art, Culture, and Media under the Third Reich*, ed. Richard A. Etlin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 147.

⁴⁶ Garçon, “Nazi Film Propaganda,” 169-170.

⁴⁷ Garçon, “Nazi Film Propaganda,” 174.

listen to the advice, resulting in 26 theaters being temporarily closed in late November 1940.

Some audiences were more ingenious in their demonstrations. When they wholeheartedly disagreed with an anti-British story, they sneezed and coughed loudly enough to drown out the dialogue on the screen. The police could do nothing – it was flu season. On other occasions, youths in the cinema threw sneezing powder around the theater, forcing everyone to join in their protest, whether they disagreed or not.⁴⁸

The Nazi conquerors were more open about their support of anti-Semitism in their newsreels, although such content was not as omnipresent as one would believe.

Today newsreel footage of roundups, deportations, and concentration camps are at the forefront of our collective visual memory because of their widespread use in retrospective documentaries, but during the war French movie-goers saw virtually no evidence of the Holocaust on screen. Like pro-collaborationist propaganda, anti-Semitism represented less than 1% of the [*Actualités Mondiales*]'s total content. Though the reports released were strongly prejudicial in nature, presenting the French Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question, the trial of film producer Bernard Natan for fraud, the exhibition titled 'The Jew and France', and a homage to Edouard Drumont, they contained no references to the most ignominious aspects of anti-Semitic persecution. The successive waves of anti-Jewish ordinances passed from October 1940 onward...mass roundups in large French cities...and subsequent deportations to death camps are all conspicuously absent.⁴⁹

What could explain this lack of anti-Semitic messages in the newsreels? According to Bowles, the reason most likely lies within the French people themselves. Already receiving such virulent responses to non-controversial themes that did not threaten to change the status quo, newsreel makers possibly did not want to spark sympathy towards the Jews, to whom the French could potentially relate due to their own sentiment of ill usage by the Germans (food shortages, curfews, etc.). The French have always been very proud to be French and did not want any of their citizens to be abused, especially war veterans, even if they were Jewish.⁵⁰ In this instance, audiences did not tolerate anti-Semitism. However, they were open to anti-Bolshevik

⁴⁸ Bowles, "German Newsreel Propaganda," 50-55.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 49-50.

propaganda. *Actualités Mondiales* “linked anti-Semitism to reports on the ‘Bolshevik peril’, the eastern front, or the activities of the [Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism].”⁵¹ It was also careful to make anti-Semitism appear to have an exclusively French origin.⁵² The French people’s acceptance of anti-Semitism so long as it related to anti-Bolshevism is a marker of the limit of the newsreel’s influence on public opinion.

However, this feeling of commiseration began to change in 1942 – or at least the newsreel production companies attempted to make it so. The French audiences perceived Nazi propaganda as too heavy-handed, too obvious. When the French dubbing was done in clumsy, unskilled French with a heavy German accent, they watched with derision, often ‘demonstrating’ their attitudes. But on May 4, 1942, *France Actualités* came into being. A company that united French and German intentions, *France Actualités* produced newsreels that were shown throughout both sections of France. It promoted cooperation between France and Germany but pretended to be a completely French creation. Bowles claims that “pro-fascist organizations...which had appeared sporadically in the *Actualités Mondiales* from mid-1941 onward, vanished entirely from the retooled newsreel, as did any references to anti-Semitism.”⁵³ *L’Oeil de Vichy* differs on this point. Although the documentary only shows years that news clips were shown and not months, the archive footage from 1942 contains extensive anti-Semitic material. Though not as obviously anti-Semitic as the clips from 1941 (including the trial of Natan and the general destructive nature of the Jews), 1942 included information based more on fact than pure prejudice. French audiences witnessed the deportation of thousands of Jews to the internment camp Drancy, from which many would be sent to Auschwitz. They also learned about the statutes put in place to make Jews separate from others, such as the yellow Star of David. The

⁵¹ Ibid., 55.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 60.

newsreel narrator states, “There’d be no problem if the Jews had blue skins but they don’t so we need a way to recognize them.”⁵⁴ While 1943 appeared relatively free of anti-Semitic themes, 1944 introduced cartoons starring a Jewish character. An anti-Allied and –Semitic piece, it shows Disney characters flying fighter planes equipped with bombs, while a stereotypical Jewish capitalist (his figure can be found on countless prejudicial posters of the time) is broadcasting from a London radio station, ensuring a French family listening in that help is on the way. After Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Popeye drop the bombs on France, a grim reaper appears and the radio transmission is over.⁵⁵

After the French audiences sat through the extraordinarily long newsreel viewings mandated by law, they were finally permitted to watch the movie for which they had paid. Since September 1939, French authorities prohibited the showing of Nazi cinema. However, within three months of signing the armistice, Nazi-produced films appeared everywhere and became a part of everyday life with few obstacles. Certainly, the measures the invading force put into effect helped achieve this development. They banned British and American films, while restricting some French films due to “poor quality.” The ensuing lack of films to play in movie theaters led owners to turn to German films. And to put the final touch of German influence over the movies, the Nazis seized Jewish property, including many cinemas where they could present movies more fitting with their viewpoint.⁵⁶ Joseph Goebbels and the Ministry of Propaganda played very important roles in the production of movies. Goebbels often ensured that the movie met with Nazi ideological standards. Compared to newsreels, German-produced movies tried to convert more people to the Nazi way of thinking, including anti-Semitism. 1940 marked the year three anti-Semitic films were produced: *Jud Süß*, *Der Ewige Jude*, and *Die Rothschilds*.

⁵⁴ FIT Production (Firm) et al., *L’Oeil De Vichy*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Garcon, “Nazi Film Propaganda,” 162.

Without a doubt, *Jud Süß* (or *Jew Süß*) proved to be the biggest success of all the propaganda films. Somewhat based on the life of Joseph Ben Issachar Süßkind Oppenheimer, *Jud Süß* was an extravagant costume drama. It depicted how Süß disguised himself, ingratiated himself to the Karl Alexander, the Duke of Württemberg, and swindled the duke into facilitating the Jews' plans of domination. Eventually, after the sudden death of the duke and Süß's subsequent loss of protection, the Jewish financial advisor was arrested and hanged, while all the Jews that he persuaded the duke to allow into Württemberg were evicted and forced out of the city.⁵⁷ The message of this film could not be clearer and was delivered persuasively to a large audience. As Culbert notes, "Harlan's film ends with the expulsion of all Jews from Württemberg, a clear indication to viewers that the same should hold true for Germany in 1940."⁵⁸ The last words of the film are read as Süß's lifeless body hangs above a courtyard and the Jews leave the city: "I hereby declare the will of the Estates, and the people of Wurttemberg: All Jews are ordered to leave Wurttemberg within three days. No Jew henceforth shall be permitted to enter the state of Wurttemberg. May our descendants observe this law, so that they may be spared great suffering in their lives and property, and in the blood of their children and children's children."⁵⁹ The film made use of character actors, such as Werner Kraus, who portrayed four different characters, including Rabbi Loew, who is meant to frighten the audience due to his "connection with unknown forces neither moral nor responsible to Christian morality. Rabi Loew is the face of what lurks behind the Jew in disguise seeking entrée into official circles."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Jud Süß*, VHS, directed by Veit Harlan (California: Hollywood's Attic, 1940).

⁵⁸ Culbert, "The Impact of Anti-Semitic Film Propaganda," 147, more generally 139-147.

⁵⁹ Hollywood's Attic (Firm), *Jud Süß* (Hollywood's Attic, 1996).

⁶⁰ Culbert, "The Impact of Anti-Semitic Film Propaganda," 146.

Other techniques used by Harlan promote the anti-Semitic themes found in *Jud Süß*. One of the key elements of anti-Semitic propaganda was the revealing of the disguised Jew (i.e. Jud Süß). Süß posed such a threat because he was not easily recognized by the Jewish physiognomy that the Nazis purported all Jews had. He had changed his physical appearance to resemble a Westerner. However, to support the idea that the Jew could be recognized by certain racial characteristics, Harlan used real Jews to play the Jewish extras to bring a certain otherness quality to the screen. More specifically, he strove to create a “demonic effect” demonstrated by the extras in a scene in the synagogue:

Alien sounds and strange dancing that...characterize Jewish ritual...By attempting to link a Hasidic service to a demonic effect, Harlan nevertheless reveals his own attitude, though possibly what he revealed also included genuine obtuseness: even after the war he seemed to remain oblivious to the link between the ‘otherness’ he portrayed and the Nazi policy of exclusion, expulsion, and extermination – or, indeed, to the film’s very purpose as intended by Goebbels.⁶¹

The scene, which showed Jews rocking back and forth and swaying, all the while chanting, was filmed with the intention of demonizing the Jews and to rally a cry for the expulsion of Jews.⁶²

One can imagine how Aryans watching the film must have felt when they heard Jud Süß exclaim, “You Christians aren’t the only ones with a God. We Jews have one as well. The God of vengeance. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”⁶³

However, understanding audience reactions require more than imagination. This film was enormously popular in Germany. Although a costly production for German features of the time (approximately two million reichsmarks), it earned 6.2 million reichsmarks. According to Culbert, audiences of the day thoroughly enjoyed the film and were “instructed” about the Jewish question while watching. Of the seventy million Germans making up the population, over

⁶¹ Susan Tegel, “‘The Demonic Effect’: Veit Harlan’s Use of Jewish Extras in *Jud Süß* (1940),” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 2 (2000), 226-227.

⁶² Tegel, “‘The Demonic Effect,’” 215-233.

⁶³ Hollywood's Attic (Firm), *Jud Süß*.

twenty million of them paid to see this movie between the years of 1940 and 1943, several of whom were inspired to demonstrate against the Jews. The movie held the same kind of draw for French audiences. The drama played to full movie houses and, in Strasbourg, cinema goers were so overwhelmed by what they perceived as the reality the film portrayed that they made comments and several women could not help yelling out, “Filthy Jewboy!”⁶⁴ Clearly, French audiences were willing to listen to anti-Semitic discourse in this format. In fact, *Jud Süß*, which premiered on February 14, 1941, in Germany, broke all French box-office records at the time. It created revolutionary fever among the masses, specifically in Paris, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and Lyon (although really anywhere the film was shown). *Le Film*, a French journal devoted to reviewing movies, thanked all those involved in the production of *Jud Süß* for giving the French movie theaters a masterpiece to screen. Many other anti-Semitic films made their way onto the French cinema screens (e.g. *Die Rothschilds*), but none thankfully enjoyed the same success as Veit Harlan’s creation.⁶⁵

Was the French cinematic experience, very obviously propaganda, effective in influencing people’s thoughts and actions in regards to the Jews? Despite the enormous effort and importance the Nazis placed on the newsreels, they proved useless for the most part. Actually, Bowles deems German newsreel propaganda in France to be “a qualified disaster.”⁶⁶ French audiences were mostly unreceptive to anti-Semitic themes shown before the film. Only links to Bolshevism created any real antagonism against the Jews. Even this message had little support. However, the movies were a different matter. Anti-Semitic messages were rife in films from this time period. *Jud Süß* was particularly effective. The experience with the newsreels proved the French did not shy away from expressing their opinions about images on the screen

⁶⁴ Culbert, “The Impact of Anti-Semitic Film Propaganda,” 139-147.

⁶⁵ Garcon, “Nazi Film Propaganda,” 165.

⁶⁶ Bowles, “German Newsreel Propaganda,” 64.

by whistling, sneezing, or simply walking out of the theater. On the other hand, *Jud Süß* witnessed cries against the Jews and a rush to the cinemas by eager moviegoers. Perhaps the most convincing information to show that this form of propaganda intended to incite people in actions and beliefs against the Jews is *Jud Süß* director Veit Harlan's fate after the war. Amidst the countless Nazi and anti-Semitic film directors of the Third Reich, Harlan was the only one to be tried for crimes against humanity in December 1947. Although they failed to link the film to the groundwork laid in place for the Final Solution and he was acquitted, as Tegel eloquently states, "In his 'quest for authenticity,' Harlan was making his own contribution to 'solving' the Jewish Question."⁶⁷

"Le Juif et la France" Exhibit

Nazi Germany relied on exhibitions to help spread their message throughout the lands they controlled. "Der Ewige Jude" ("The Eternal Jew", the exhibition form of the "documentary" film with the same name) was shown in Munich, Vienna, and Berlin during various time from 1937 to 1939.⁶⁸ Poland was forced to endure several of these kinds of anti-Semitic events. Displays entitled "Jews are the creators of Bolshevism," "Jews corrupt youth," and "Jews drive foreign policy" left no doubt in visitors' minds about the messages they sent.⁶⁹ The exhibit "Le Juif et la France" ("The Jew and France") opened in Paris on September 5, 1941. Adapted from the "Der Ewige Jude" to fit the French point of view, "Le Juif et la France" welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors at the Palais Berlitz.⁷⁰ With such large numbers who attended the exhibit, it is impossible to disregard "Le Juif et La France" as a form of visual propaganda.

⁶⁷ Tegel, "The Demonic Effect," 234, more generally 215 and 233.

⁶⁸ Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 104.

⁶⁹ Jan Grabowski, "German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement, 1939-1945: Inciting Hate through Posters, Films, and Exhibitions." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 23, no. 3 (Winter 2009), 394-398.

⁷⁰ Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 294.

Nominally, the exhibit was the work of the Institut d'Etudes des Questions Juives (Institute for the Study of Jewish Questions, IEQJ) based in Paris. However, the German embassy provided both the initiative and the funds (1,285,786.30 francs).⁷¹ Despite this relatively unknown fact, “Le Juif et la France” remained the lasting trademark of the IEQJ. The Germans were always eager to place as much of the anti-Semitic measures taken on French shoulders, no matter the role they actually played. Commissioner-General Vallat, an ardent Germanophobe and French nationalist, was unwillingly associated with the exhibit. He refused to attend its opening.⁷²

Parisians could hardly miss the presence of this exhibit and its opening on September 5th. A propaganda campaign developed to draw people to the exhibit had been laying the groundwork for weeks. Posters had been plastered to walls, informing the French people of the campaign, articles appeared in the press, and radio announcements were broadcasted. Newsreels spotlighted both the exhibit and arguments made by IEQJ director, Paul Sézille. Arrows adorned to streetlights, such as in the Place de Concorde, and pointed the way to the exhibit. The sign was simply an arrow reading “Exposition” with a Star of David. Loudspeakers, found on boulevards between the Opéra and the Place de la République, encouraged pedestrians to attend the exhibit. Once visitors reached the entrance, they were given a pamphlet explaining the purpose of “Le Juif et la France.” Another measure used to entice people to view the displays and purchase items relating to the exhibit was the possibility of winning a bread card if they purchased a catalogue which had a number in it.⁷³

⁷¹ Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 211-212.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, The Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry series (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England [for] Brandeis University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

Despite all these measures, posters remained the most “in your face” aspect of propaganda for this exhibit. Two posters were produced to promote “Le Juif et la France.” Most of the posters plastered on the walls were about five feet tall. However, one could not miss the giant placards put up announcing the exhibit. Buildings were adorned with promotion banners, not to mention the singular sign that stretched five stories. The first poster produced was drawn by Michel Jacquot. Using black and yellow, to bring to mind the colors (and the stigma) of the Star of David, Jacquot created a caricature of a Jewish face (complete with a large nose and thick lips) over the outline of France. This design was meant to bring to viewers’ minds the idea that Central and Eastern European Jews were invaders and a threat to France. According to Diane Affoumado, this poster was not very effective, simply because its use was not as widespread as the second poster. The second poster associated with the exhibit (on which the giant placards were based) was edited by the IEQJ and created by René Péron, a famous movie poster designer of the time.⁷⁴ The poster showed “a large allegorical composition representing a sort of vampire with a long beard, fat lips, and a hooked nose [*sic*], whose emaciated fingers, similar to the claws of a bird of prey, clutched a terrestrial globe in its grip.”⁷⁵ The Jew cradles the globe, his nails digging into it, his eyes trained longingly on France, outlined within a Star of David. This poster utilizes many basic rules of propaganda to support its message. It only uses the colors of blue, white, and red, the colors of the French flag, reminding visitors of the stakes. Although the entire poster reads, “Exposition: Le Juif et la France,” the words “Le Juif” and “France” are larger, emphasized to show their importance. However, “Le Juif” is written using a font designed to bring to mind the Hebrew alphabet, whereas “France” is written in a simple, plain block print. Viewers are reminded that Jews are a foreign element which can never be integrated into the

⁷⁴ Affoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 100-106.

⁷⁵ Robert de Beauplan, *L'Illustration*, September 20, 1941, quoted in Poznanski, *The Jews in France*, 211.

French community.⁷⁶

The exhibit needed to be designed to suit local tastes. The image of the Jews differed from region to region. In Poland, exhibits were created according to German suggestions, but adapted to the locals.⁷⁷ The same guidelines were used in France for “Le Juif et la France.” In “Der Ewige Jude,” the officials propagated the image of the Shtetl Jew, the image most often used in Germany. However, this vision of the Jew would not have the same impact on the French people, who were unfamiliar with it. So the Germans made adjustments based on public opinion. They took into account the French people’s rational, Cartesian character, as well as the spirit of and respect for individual liberty, which were more strongly developed in France than in other countries.⁷⁸

“Le Juif et la France” was designed to “demonstrate permanence of the Jewish presence and how the Jewish race had invaded national life.”⁷⁹ It did so with the inclusion of an “obscene cornucopia” of texts, drawings, photos, and sculptures meant to cause feelings of antagonism in viewers against the Jews.⁸⁰ The exhibition presented its audience with different facial features and revealed the distinctiveness of the Jewish racial features. The eyes, ears, nose, and mouth of a Jew were presented next to those belonging to non-Jews. Visitors were also given detailed description of the traits each body part possessed, according to “Doctor” Georges Montandon, author of *Comment reconnaître et expliquer le Juif? (How to recognize and explain the Jew?)*, which was used in part in the adjustment of “Der Ewige Jude” into “Le Juif et la France.” Later, attendees saw a composite of the various facial parts in large models, created by the sculptor Boeuf, some of which donned religious attributes. However, others did not, compelling the

⁷⁶ Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 102-103.

⁷⁷ Grabowski, “German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement,” 396.

⁷⁸ Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 105.

⁷⁹ Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 294.

⁸⁰ Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 212.

public to believe that even if one cannot recognize a Jew by what he wears, he still bears physical marks of a Jew. This message moved the definition of a Jew from the religious sphere to the racial one, falling in line with Nazi ideology.⁸¹ With this shift, it was clear that the message of the exhibit was, as stated on the catalogue in capital letters, that “Jews never could be, never can be, never will be assimilated to other peoples.”⁸²

But how many people received that message? What was the public’s reaction? The numbers of visitors reported by various sources are inconclusive on this point. IEQJ Director Sézille boastfully claimed a million visitors, while the German embassy recorded 250,623 visitors in Paris, 61,213 in Bordeaux, and 33,482 in Nancy, making a total of 345,318 visitors. (Interestingly, this number falls far below those of similar exhibits about the Freemasons and a European France.)⁸³ Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, states that the exhibit was considered by IEQJ to be “a wild success: 500,000 people came to see it in Paris alone, before it moved on to two other locations.”⁸⁴ Another source claims that about 200,000 Parisian visitors paid full price to see the exhibit between September 5, 1941 and January 11, 1942, while others did not need to pay for a ticket.⁸⁵ In Poland, visitors had to pay a zloty to view the exhibits, German officials operating on the belief, according to Jan Grabowski, “that people do not appreciate what they can get for free.”⁸⁶ It is possible that authorities in France were under a similar impression, because visitors were required to pay three francs for a ticket, unless they were a Friend of the Institute and produced their membership card, after which they could receive a discount, paying half the price. On Thursdays, children could

⁸¹ Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’occupation*, 100.

⁸² Quoted in Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 294.

⁸³ Burrin, *France Under the Germans*, 294.

⁸⁴ Shoah Resource Center. “Institute for the Study of the Jewish Problem.” Yad Vashem. <http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206328.pdf>. 2 March 2010.

⁸⁵ Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, 211.

⁸⁶ Grabowski, “German Anti-Jewish Propaganda in the Generalgouvernement,” 394-395.

enter free of charge when accompanied by their teachers or their parents, provided that they were in groups made up of at least ten people.⁸⁷

However, it would be unwise to hastily draw conclusions about how people reacted to this exhibit. One cannot assume that the exhibition was successful in its goal of increasing anti-Semitic sentiment among its visitors. For starters, the attendees included a number of Jews, drawn in with a desire to better understand the growing hatred against them and how they were being tied to Bolshevism and internationalism.⁸⁸ The exhibit concluded its tour at the end of the summer of 1942, after which the Germans were content to retire it, lest the French public's reactions to the deportations of Jews made the exhibit an irrefutable failure.⁸⁹ As it was, "the exposition merely confirmed Nazi apprehensions about public opinion and its management in France. Despite a huge publicity effort, the results disappointed the organizers. The displays were not always taken seriously; S  zille found himself the object of a flood of criticisms from non-Jews who felt unjustly accused; and rumors flew concerning his gross financial mismanagement. He reported to [SS-Hauptsturmf  hrer Theodor] Dannecker in January 1942 that all was not well: "A pro-semitic tendency seems apparent, and people take pity on a certain category of Jews."⁹⁰ Thus, overall, the exhibit failed in achieving its objectives.

Measuring General Effectiveness of Visual Anti-Semitic Propaganda

As it has been previously stated, measuring how effective anti-Semitic propaganda was in France from 1940 to 1944 is not an easy task. One can study opinion polls at the time, but they are not the best way to determine what people thought. Especially in a totalitarian society, people

⁸⁷ Afoumado, *L'affiche antis  mite en France sous l'occupation*, 99.

⁸⁸ Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, 211-212.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 211-212.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 212.

may lie and give the answer they think authorities want to hear. These responses skew results. The point is moot as only one survey was ever administered during the time frame in question. No survey has been taken after the fact either.

Or one could choose to look into eye witness accounts. Although people may exaggerate from time to time, these accounts give a good starting point. These witnesses know what happened and can faithfully report it. Examples of this type of source would include diaries, letters, and SD reports. While these sources are a very valuable starting point, they also have an inherent bias. They can only report what the author saw or heard about, an individual case. The conditions that led to the event may have only been possible in a particular area. They cannot be used to come to conclusions as to what the French categorically felt. Although very helpful, they must be taken at face value.

Another possibility requires more analysis. No one can argue that Goebbels and the Nazis were not masters of propaganda. They knew what to present to people to guide them to certain emotions, opinions, and actions. They carefully chose the subtle underlining messages in posters or the over the head obviousness of the movies. The Vichy government, while perhaps not as skilled as Goebbels, was not totally inept. They had the task of manipulating public opinion by appealing to the French people's tastes for propaganda. While some of their methods differed from that of the Nazis, some themes remained the same, such as the Jew as the enemy. To determine how effective the propaganda was, one can compare the content of the propaganda, the message it put forth, with the development of the war. In the beginning, after France fell, Nazi Germany seemed unstoppable. The propaganda at the time reflects this opinion, concentrating on stereotypical images of the Jews. Later in the war, the Allies began to gain momentum, and much of the propaganda started to claim the Jews were controlling these

powers.

Logically, one would look at the most straightforward way to measure public opinion first. At the end of 1942, the Commissariat Général aux Question Juives (Commissariat-General for Jewish Affairs, or the CGQJ) sent out about ten of its officials to collect data on how much their propaganda permeated people's minds, without seeking to influence answers, as they were not looking for anti-Semitic responses. They asked 3,150 random persons across a predetermined socioprofessional and geographical spectrum five questions, all very blunt.⁹¹ One question asked the population, "Do you like the Jews?" Just over half of respondents responded that they were anti-Semites, 36.51% claimed to be indifferent, and the remaining 12.05% thought themselves philo-Semites. They were then asked to pick a reason why they answered the previous question as they did. Among the philo-Semites, 23.63 percent of people claimed that their feelings were "in reaction" to something, whether in reaction against the fascism of the Vichy government or because they felt the Jews were suffering due to German measures. 23.10 percent admired the Jews for their qualities, such as their business sense, the intelligence, and their honesty. The people who claimed to be indifferent had other reasons. Nearly 20 percent ignored the question, while 12.57 percent acknowledged that there were "good and bad Jews." The third most popular response, with 12.20 percent, stated that the Jews are people just like anybody else (13.19 percent of philo-Semites agreed). Although these responses encourage one to believe that propaganda was not very effective in persuading people to anti-Semitism, one must remember that 51.44 percent of respondents stated that they did not like the Jews. For these French citizens, 20.41 percent saw the Jews as exploiters, 16.88 percent considered the Jews to be the cause of all their troubles, and 16.16 percent perceived them to possess qualities that would never allow them to assimilate into French life. The sixth response (9.14 percent) associated Jews with the black

⁹¹ Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, 380-381.

market, something to which propaganda had constantly been linking them.⁹²

The pollsters asked three other questions, which certainly provide some interesting answers: “Are you in favor of the government’s measures taken against the Jews in the Free Zone? If so, do you feel that they are sufficient? If not, what measures do you advocate?” Of those who claimed indifference towards the Jews, 48.59 percent opposed the anti-Semitic measures, while 40.07 percent once again claimed indifference. According to Renée Poznanski, “[T]his gives us an idea of what their ‘indifference’ really meant,” implying that the majority of those who were “indifferent” were actually philo-Semites who were too anxious to state their true feelings to representatives of an anti-Semitic agency. These responses helped one regional head of the Division of Investigations and Inspections (SEC) decide that they needed to guide public opinion to the belief that the anti-Semitic measures were enacted in self-defense, not due to German pressure.⁹³

As interesting as the information in this public opinion poll has the potential to be, there are too many reasons not to trust it, in addition to it being the only one of its kind. The investigators were not official pollsters but CGQJ officials. Even the CGQJ realized that people’s answers were affected. It takes a lot of delusion to believe that, in Limoges and Montpellier, 86 and 90 percent respectively of the population honestly felt themselves to be anti-Semites. However, one should look at the number in any case, especially in regard to those who did not support the anti-Semitic measures. 31 percent of respondents opposed them, and an additional 17 percent remained indifferent.⁹⁴

The second way to measure how effectiveness of propaganda is to look into reports sent by officials to authorities during that time. Take, for example, the reports detailing audience

⁹² Afoumado, *L’affiche antisémite en France sous l’occupation*, 68-70.

⁹³ Poznanski, *Jews in France During World War II*, 381.

⁹⁴ Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 181.

reactions to propagandistic films, described earlier. Although one can assume that prefects' and SD reports contain some bias, they did need to be somewhat truthful and warn the higher powers as to what needed to be done in order to steer the populace in the desired direction. Prefects sent in reports every month and on special occasions. Then the office of the minister of war evaluated public opinion, on a weekly and monthly basis, and reported to Pétain their conclusions after reviewing letters, telegrams, and telephone calls. In one month, December 1943, the office studied 2,448,554 letters, 1,771,330 telegrams, and 20,811 phone calls.⁹⁵

For the most part, foreign Jews and those recently naturalized proved to be the biggest problem for Frenchmen. Among the many problems blamed on them, the black market emerged as the most pressing issue to the public and should suffice as a case study. Prefects reported that the French were occupied with the need to feed themselves. Supposedly, 90 percent of black market operations in the Alpes-Maritimes began with the Jews. In Limousin, the Jews were “grabbing up everything that could be eaten.”⁹⁶ Marrus believes that if Vichy had pushed ahead with the image of the Jew controlling the black market from the shadows, the government may have succeeded in making the Jew an enemy to all the French.⁹⁷ On the other hand, according to Shannon L. Fogg, the lack of food distracted the citizens of the Limousin region from completely stigmatizing the Jews. Indeed, “in cases in which Jewish refugees provided some kind of benefit to communities, Limousin residents generally ignored antisemitic propaganda.”⁹⁸ While the image of the Jew as a black marketer was prevalent in Limousin, reality and myth did not coincide. A report written after the result of the CGQJ poll, supports this idea:

It is curious, however, to note that the French do not seem to consider the Jews to be responsible for the black market, this reason coming only in sixth place with the small

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 183.

⁹⁷ Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 181-183.

⁹⁸ Fogg, “Refugees and Indifference,” 37.

percentage of 4.73% of the entire investigation. This seems to prove that the propaganda that has already been circulated on this point has not had all the desirable results. It is very evident, that if the Jews are at the root of the black market, they are not the only ones to participate in it and above all they are not the only ones to profit from it; the public knows this and each day sees non-Jews engaged in illicit trades; it is this that prevents our propaganda from yielding the expected results, and this demonstrates, moreover, that we must base our effort on more specifically Jewish arguments.⁹⁹

Another report claimed that “the peasants are becoming more Jewish than the Jews...”¹⁰⁰ Thus, one can conclude from these reports that the situation in France in regard to the Jews was so tense that the food situation could have gone in either direction, tolerate the Jews or turn completely against them.

Finally, one can study the degree to which propaganda succeeded in affecting people by studying the transformation of the propaganda itself over time and comparing it with events that occurred at the same time. To do so requires a basic knowledge of the timeline of World War II and the Holocaust. Early on, after France fell, the Nazis were unstoppable. The Jews were their primary hate target, so they quickly spread their beliefs to the nations they conquered. They did not need to tailor their message with anything more specific than “The Jews are bad; they cause a lot of trouble.” Many themes emerged: the Jews are responsible for the black market; the Jews carry diseases; the Jews are outsiders, etc. Also, in the early posters, the Jew is associated with Bolsheviks, the British, and Freemasons.¹⁰¹ In 1940, three incredibly anti-Semitic films premiered, with varying degrees of success. While reactions were not consistent across the board, authorities did not feel the need to make any great changes to the themes.

However, after Hitler and the Nazis discovered that they were not invincible, the themes began to alter. It concentrated less on general stereotypes and focused on the concept of the Jew acting as puppet master to the Allies. Numerous posters printed in 1942 show a Jewish caricature

⁹⁹ Quoted in Fogg, “Refugees and Indifference,” 45.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See generally afoumado, *L’Affiche antisémite en France sous l’Occupation*.

behind Franklin D. Roosevelt (the US joined the fray on December 8, 1941, after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor), Winston Churchill, or Josef Stalin, or their symbols. Sometimes Charles de Gaulle is present as well.¹⁰² Some posters even hysterically hurl numbers at viewers, stating that Jews control 97 percent of American press.¹⁰³ The German Reich Press Office ordered an intensified anti-Semitic message when Roosevelt and Churchill demanded unconditional surrender, as well as during the Normandy invasions, considered proof of an international Jewish conspiracy causing the war and of Stalin's ability to control Roosevelt and Churchill in a "Jewish-Bolshevik plot" to conquer Europe.¹⁰⁴

This change in message could be accounted to several catalysts. One would be the aforementioned shift in the momentum of the war, giving the Allies their own force. Another reason could be the shift in public opinion in 1942. In the summer of 1942, Jews in France were round up and deported, causing a fork in the road. "After July 1942, after seeing even children deported, the French attitude changed. Yes, some had been anti-Semitic even toward French Jews, but there is a big difference between anti-Semitism and agreeing to deportations."¹⁰⁵ Police reports often expressed the same trend in thoughts. An official from Haut-Garonne, reported "that although the public had demonstrated little concern for foreign Jews before that date, opinions had changed dramatically: 'The spectacle of a train composed of boxcars in which women fainted from the heat and from the odors of straw soaked with urine strongly and unfavorably impressed the French non-Jewish populations which went to see them, especially in the railroad stations.'"¹⁰⁶ The rationality the French so proudly possessed could not blindly

¹⁰² Afoumado, *L'affiche antisémite en France sous l'occupation*, 121-139.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 147.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffrey Herf, "The 'Jewish War': Goebbels and the Antisemitic Campaigns of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry," *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 59.

¹⁰⁵ Vivette Samuel quoted in Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 154.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 156.

accept that the young children or the matronly women took part in the Jewish conspiracy or that these Jews swindled the rest of France through their black market operations. Therefore, one can conclude that the authorities felt they needed to change the message of propaganda because their previous efforts were ultimately ineffective at affecting people's opinions. The adage "Don't fix what isn't broken" is applicable in this scenario, except the propaganda being spewed across the nation was clearly not working the way it was intended and needed to be adjusted, signifying its lack of power to influence the French public.

This change in opinion towards the Jews due to the unpopular deportations may have resulted in the focusing of attention against the Jews specifically, an attempt to make the French believe that the actions taken against the Jews were done in self-defense and for their own good. Instead of concentrating on "Jewish" characteristics, the propaganda focused on the harm the Jews could cause in an attempt to counterbalance the authorities' unfavorable opinion at the time. Both the Nazis and the Vichy regime were eager to once again make Jews the scapegoat. By emphasizing the manipulative skills of international Jewry, both authorities attempted to shift the blame for their loss of power onto the thieving Jews. They wanted to make it seem as if the Jews controlled the Allies so wholly that there was nothing they (the Nazis and French officials) could do to stop the Jewish plot without the aid of the general French public. Unfortunately for the Nazi and collaborationist leaders, the French remained unimpressed. As Susan Zuccotti succinctly summarizes, "The prevailing climate shifted subtly from one of ignorance, indifference, or sullen hostility toward Jews to one of mild benevolence. That new climate,

however, made all the difference for those who needed to hide, and for the minority of Jews and non-Jews who actively helped them.”¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discover how effective visual anti-Semitic propaganda was during the period of French collaboration with the Germans. It first looked at the general anti-Semitic nature of the French people by studying their history. It then analyzed different propaganda mediums, namely posters, newsreels, films, and exhibitions. Finally, it attempted to measure public reaction through polls, reports, and examination of content.

France has a dark past delving often into anti-Semitism. The Dreyfus Affair and the 1930s proved particularly low points in French opinion towards the Jews before Nazi Germany entered the scene, targeting the Jews. When France fell in WWII, it attempted to maintain some dignity and autonomy by enacting anti-Jewish legislation before the Nazis required them to do so. In an attempt to preserve its power, Vichy sacrificed thousands of Jews (approximately 80,000 of them perished during the Holocaust¹⁰⁸).

Both the Nazis and Vichy regime attempted to persuade the public that the Jews were the enemy, dishonest and untrustworthy. Posters plastered on walls told stories of the Jew controlling the Allied powers or attacking French citizens. Newsreels, although devoting little time to the Jews, described the Jews as both filthy rats and extravagant, lazy individuals looking out only for themselves. Films experienced a wide range of reactions. *Jud Süß* proved to be a box office success, although it sometimes incited the audience to actions against the Jews. Other

¹⁰⁷ Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews*, 156. For a general look at specific examples of propaganda during this time, see Afoumado, *L’affiche anti-Semite en France sous l’Occupation* and Claude Chabrol’s *L’Oeil de Vichy*, in addition to the anti-Semitic films, *Jud Süß*, *The Rothschilds*, and *The Eternal Jew*.

¹⁰⁸ Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, “Anti-Jewish Policy and Organization of the Deportations in France and the Netherlands, 1940-1944: A Comparative Study,” *Holocaust Genocide Studies* 20, no. 3 (January 1, 2006): 437.

films must be considered flops. Finally, an exhibit toured France, explaining how to discover a Jew based on his racial characteristics.

Although it is impossible to accurately measure public opinion, three potential methods were presented. Opinion polls, though the most straightforward approach, proved to be the least dependable. People living in an authoritarian nation have all too much reason to lie. A second option could be found in reports filed by officials. Although some bias might present itself, they do provide accurate information on how the general public reacted to propaganda and their thoughts. Finally, one could study the content of propaganda and compare it with the tide of the war. Indeed, evidence shows that the Germans increased their focus on anti-Semitic themes during moments that could prove dangerous for the Nazi's position in the war, such as the Normandy invasion.

Taking all this information into account, one can conclude that both Nazi and Vichy propaganda regarding the Jews was not as influential as their creators could have desired. The French people were far too preoccupied with surviving themselves, feeding their families, to let the Jews enter their consciousness, unless they happened to affect them directly. Many French citizens considered the Jews with indifference. The propaganda could only reinforce previously held prejudices, such as the beliefs that Jews ran the black market and were behind the Bolsheviks.

However, this general lack of influence should not be taken to mean that propaganda should be completely disregarded. It might not have converted a significant number of people to anti-Semitism, but it supported the indifference the French people felt towards the plight of the Jews. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people, including women and children, died. Not to mention the fervor people felt against the Jews in Germany or in Poland. Propaganda can wipe

out an entire people if it finds the right medium and the right audience. Genocides have continued to occur throughout the world after the Holocaust. There is no proof that visual propaganda, in addition to the written word and radio broadcasts, could not prove detrimental to a population in the hands of a skilled manipulator.

Although most of the Jews in France survived, it was not due to the charity the majority population felt towards the Jews. Most people could not be bothered to care about the fate of the Jews when their own fate was on the line. In addition, France had the unique position of maintaining its own form of government after the Nazis conquered it. Many of Vichy's actions were taken with the aim of increasing France's autonomy and thwarting the Nazis. In other nations completely taken over by the Nazis, such as Poland, the Jewish population was nearly entirely wiped out. While it is hard to believe, the Jews in France were actually relatively lucky.

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