

DEPARTMENTAL THESIS PROPOSAL: HANNAH MORRIS

Hannah's details demonstrate that she has thought carefully about her focus. Emphasizing how she will correlate changes in rhetoric with political and military developments in Germany, she establishes the significance of her research. Her focus on rhetoric in one publication makes the study feasible; her attention to its relationship to larger stories makes the study significant and relevant to historians' larger questions about Nazism's appeal.

With a focus on one publication, Hannah uses the background section to provide more to convince readers that a study of this particular periodical can shed light on the appeal of anti-Semitic rhetoric. As a first step, Hannah establishes the influence and wide circulation of the paper and gives a sense of its contents. These few details confirm that Hannah has done real legwork.

Josef Goebbel's infamous propaganda techniques and unyielding control over the Third Reich's media outlets has been closely studied in order to understand how National Socialism easily acquired a nation's support. While Goebbel's outlandish attacks on the subversive enemy and Hitler's roaring speeches seduced the German population and solidified an anti-Semitic stronghold, only Julius Streicher and his notorious weekly paper, *Der Stürmer*, could cause die-hard Nazis to disassociate themselves from such a brand of Nazism. Its erotic imagery and deeply anti-Semitic quality appealed above all to the lower-class masses, boasting a high circulation from the Weimar Republic years through the end of the war. Because *Der Stürmer* sought to cement the concept of the parasitic Jew causing Germany's misfortune, it provided a base for the escalation of anti-Semitic actions.

I would thus like to examine how this weekly paper evolved from its original purpose and how or if it escalated anti-Semitic rhetoric as it became clear that the Nazis would lose their war to the "enemy." In this exploration of *Der Stürmer*, I will read, examine, and compare the articles and cartoons from the years of its publication from 1923 through 1945. By first analyzing the paper's entire progression from a marginal to an influential publication, I can later more critically examine the period of my greater interest – the war years. I will begin in 1937, right before Nazi Germany began its expansion into Europe when *Der Stürmer*'s circulation was at its height. Through tracing the nuances of *Der Stürmer*'s rhetorical development as a parallel to the rise and fall of the Nazi party, I hope to expose how such a low-brow newspaper could transfix and hold a generation of readers who would become perpetrators of the cause.

First published in April 1923, *Der Stürmer* eventually became the "one paper Hitler himself claimed to read from cover to cover."¹ While other Nazi-published newspapers like *Völkischer Beobachter* and *Das Reich* covered world news for the Nazi "elite," Julius Streicher and his *Stürmer* did not seek the higher ground, nor did it aim to meet journalistic standards. Through the paper's virulent hatred, erotic cartoons, and articles about *Rassenschande* (miscegenation) trials, Germany's least educated and lower classes found a comfort in the NSDAP. By 1937, the Nuremberg-based paper boasted a circulation of 500,000, a number still misleading because many pedestrians could peruse the contents through special window-displays called "*Stürmerkasten*."²

Scholars have chronicled Julius Streicher's public persona and his rise within the NSDAP. Randall L. Bytwerk's book, *Julius Streicher*, confines *Der Stürmer* to a product of the editor – how *he* became the leading Jew-baiter. The book aims to find the impact of the paper, rather

Although Nazi propaganda is not the object of Hannah's proposed thesis, she employs familiar examples of Nazi rhetoric (Goebbels and Hitler) to introduce her research subject. In doing so, she also establishes a compelling contrast between scholarly interest in those examples and the relative lack of attention to the popular publication she proposes to study. This opening strategy helps readers anticipate the more detailed discussion in the literature review.

Hannah signals the beginning of her literature review with a topic sentence about what "scholars have chronicled."

¹ Bytwerk, *Julius Streicher*, p. 1.

² Ryszka, "The Leading Newspapers in the Third Reich," in *Why Didn't The Press Shout?*, p. 302-3.

than the goal of the rhetoric. Dennis Showalter explains in [his] book, *Little Man, WHAT NOW?*, how *Der Stürmer* fits into a historical timeline of anti-Semitism, detailing each incarnation of the stereotyped Jew throughout its publication in the Weimar era. However, no scholar has traced the purpose of *Der Stürmer* and method of attack in correlation with various periods of the Nazis' power – from its existence as a *völkisch* cult through Hitler's *Machtergreifung* and the period of Total War. The scarcity of research on the topic is most likely due to the nature of the "unscholarly" material, but by examining the rhetoric, article topics, and cartoon subjects, we can begin to understand how "ordinary men" of Nuremberg and Germany could believe in the illusions of the Third Reich.

By breaking down her main question into a series of "research questions," Hannah tells the reader precisely what she will be looking for in her primary source base. Such information is crucial for a successful proposal.

Hannah establishes a gap in the literature that her project aims to fill, but wisely, she does not leave the reader hanging. Instead she clearly explains what filling this gap will help us better understand.

As I study the development of *Der Stürmer*, I will be asking several questions. Firstly, how does the NSDAP's promotion of anti-Semitism, through the organ of *Der Stürmer*, change? Does the anti-Semitism take a different form depending upon the stage of the Nazis' power or circumstance of the times like the Depression? What is the image of the regime that ordinary people saw? More specifically, how did *Der Stürmer*, or Nazi-supporters for that matter, publicly handle their imminent defeat in the war? How did the paper continue promoting anti-Semitism when the Jews had long been purged from the readers' society? Lastly, why did the paper's circulation drop dramatically during the war? Did Julius Streicher's fallout from the NSDAP's leadership noticeably affect the publication's output or circulation? Is there evidence of any censorship imposed upon Streicher?

This discussion of other sources suggests other directions Hannah might take as her research develops. Her priorities are clear, but she has explored the topic enough to impress readers with her awareness of supplementary research to round out her main agenda.

In order to conduct this research, I will rely heavily upon *Der Stürmer* itself, which is available in its entirety on microfilm at Northwestern University's library. The front page stories and cartoons will be the focus of the research, not only because there are thousands of pages to read, but also because the front pages are what drew in its readers. In order to gather evidence about Julius Streicher and his paper's readership, I will examine the transcript of his trial at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, read interviews conducted with Streicher, as well examine a compilation of readers' letters to the editor. I will also search for studies about the paper's circulation numbers and readership in order to understand the German public's reception to *Der Stürmer*.

Hannah displays knowledge of her sources—both in terms of availability and the extent of materials. To make the project feasible, she will focus on front-page issues, a decision that has an intellectual justification.

My qualifications and familiarity with Holocaust studies have prepared me to succeed in completing a senior thesis. I have excelled in relevant coursework like *History of the Holocaust* and *German History 1789-1989* with Professor Peter Hayes, and I speak highly-proficient German, despite only beginning to study the language eighteen months ago. Though I am not fluent and will have initial difficulty in reading issues of *Der Stürmer*, I am certain that with practice along with continuing to study the language for my minor, my German reading abilities will improve. I just returned from studying abroad in Germany, where I spent the summer at Berlin's Goethe Institute and the following six months at the University of Tübingen. Throughout the eight months, I actively sought to learn Holocaust history. I visited Sachsenhausen with a Holocaust survivor, took a class in German called *Nationalsozialistische Verfolgung und Vernichtung im deutschen*

Hannah's proposal is a terrific example of explaining how one's limitations will not derail the project. Hannah concedes that she has only recently begun studying German, but she offers compelling evidence of sufficient background and experience to complete the project as proposed.

Südwesten 1933-1945 (Nazi Persecution and Annihilation in Southwest Germany), and gave a presentation in German about persecution between 1933-1938. By the end of this summer, I will have also worked at two Holocaust museums. Two summers ago, I interned at Holocaust Museum Houston, where I gave daily tours to a wide-range of visitors. This summer, I have earned an internship in the photo archives department of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I will have the opportunity to work with rare documents and photos and have access to primary sources that will undoubtedly be useful for my thesis research. After three months at the national museum, I will be more comfortable doing research in archives and using German in a historical context.

Writing a senior thesis will be central to my development as a history student and to my experience at Northwestern. Not only will I learn a more specific and in-depth aspect to Holocaust history, I will also use a medium that I love – the newspaper. Furthermore, this project will help me determine exactly how I want to continue in the course of my life – whether I want to continue high-level research in graduate school or whether I choose another avenue in life. Either way, I know this year-long experience will be invaluable, academically and personally.

Hannah concludes by emphasizing her plans to write a senior thesis, her passion for her subject, and the usefulness of the research for helping her make career plans.

Work Cited

Primary Sources:

- Goldensohn, Leon and Robert Gellately, ed. *The Nuremberg Interviews*. New York: Random House, 2004.
- Hahn, Fred. *Lieber Stürmer: Leserbriefe an d. NS-Kampfbblatt 1924 bis 1945*. Seewald: Stuttgart-Degerloch, 1978.
- Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof*. München: Delphin Verlag, 1984.
- Streicher, Julius. *Kampf dem Weltfiend: Reden aus der Kampfzeit*. Nürnberg: Verlag Der Stürmer, 1938.
- Streicher, Julius, ed. *Der Stürmer*. Nürnberg, 1923-1945.

Secondary Sources:

- Bytwerk, Randall L. *Julius Streicher: Nazi Editor of the Notorious Anti-Semitic Newspaper Der Stürmer*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 1983.
- Dutch, Oswald. *Hitler's 12 Apostles*. New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1940.
- Franciszek, Ryszkza. "The Extermination of the Jews and the Leading Newspapers of the Third Reich: Völkischer Beobachter And Das Reich." in *Why Didn't The Press Shout? American & International Journalism During the Holocaust* edited by Shapiro, Robert Moses, 297-314. Jersey City: Yeshiva University Press, 2003.
- Showalter, Dennis E. *Little Man, WHAT NOW? Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic*. Hamden: Archon Books, 1982.