

American Media Coverage of the Rise of Hitler: An Indicator of Depression-Era American Isolationism or of a False Assessment of the Rise of the Chancellor?

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Introduction

This study seeks to analyze the response of the US media to the rise of Hitler, a process which occurred during the Great Depression, in the 1930s. At a time when the attention of the country was focused on domestic economic problems, assessment of the rise of a leader who became such a prominent figure is an interesting topic worthy of analysis. While his rise could not be wholly ignored, one can imagine that it would probably have been spoken of more in a less tense domestic climate. Overall, this study shows that the rise of the Führer was not described in as critical of a way as should be expected of a democratic nation, especially one that would go on to fight, in an extremely bloody and protracted manner, this man and all he represented.

In an attempt to establish an adequate answer to the question, we must firmly establish what can be considered to be an appropriate representation of what constitutes the United States' media. For this reason, this study includes analysis of a variety of different types of print publications which vary in size, audience, political leaning, and motivation. The New York Times was a traditionally liberal newspaper that had a massive readership during this time. It enjoyed a reputation as an agenda-setting media outlet, and its content revealed what it considered should be important to its reader. The Wall Street Journal was also often agenda-setting but reflected the interests of the public to a greater extent than The New York Times. The Wall Street Journal attempted to write about what concerned its readers, which is why



its economic leaning was readily consumed by members of the American public during the Great Depression. It was a conservative periodical, and also had a large audience during the 1930s. Time Magazine was a widely consumed weekly magazine during the 1930s and remains very popular among a similar demographic today. Rather than being agenda-setting, this publication attempted to reflect public interest and write about what the public wished to read. This publication is useful in determining the general attitude of the American public towards a specific topic. The Literary Digest was a weekly magazine that, unlike The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, was very opinion-based and did not attempt to as great of an extent to present news in a non-partisan way. While readership was large, it was not nearly as massive as the first three publications and was not as consistent in its reporting of world events. Nevertheless, like Time Magazine, The Literary Digest seemed to reflect what was on the mind of the average American. The last two publications analyzed were much more limited in their audience, but provide interesting insights into the attitudes and concerns of the two audiences which they hoped to reach. The Pittsburgh Chronicle was an African-American publication and grew to become very popular in the 1930s. It was quite opinion-based and had a very specific agenda it hoped to put forth. Finally, The Sentinel was a prominent Jewish weekly in the 1930s. The reaction of this news outlet is of interest, as it captured the reaction of American Jews toward the growing wave of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Overall, the response to Hitler's rise will be analyzed across these news sources. It will be determined whether the consistent lack of critical and investigative reporting towards the rise of the Führer was merely due to the more pressing issues occurring in the US during the Great Depression, pushing articles about the topic to the later pages of the periodical, or whether there was an ill-assessment, and subsequent underestimation, of the power and strength of Hitler and his growing movement.

Hitler's Rise to Power: A Brief Account

A brief history of Hitler's rise is essential for studying the media's responses to his rise. His rise can be traced earlier than 1932, but for the purpose of this study, his first run at President is the first event that will be analyzed. He ran against incumbent Paul von Hindenburg. Hindenburg won by a low margin; thus a run-off had to be conducted. In the run-off, it was established clearly that Hindenburg would be president. Hindenburg at first feared Hitler's immense popularity that he accrued during 1932 through speeches and rallies, and viewed it as a threat to his power; therefore, he initially did not appoint Hitler as Chancellor. However, in

the next elections in November of 1932, the Nazis lost many seats to the Communists, making right-wing Germans even more desperate to get Hitler into power. Eventually, former Chancellor Franz von Papen, supported by the conservative German National People's Party, convinced Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as Chancellor. On January 30th, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor by Hindenburg.

Hitler's appointment was a watershed event in German history, as he immediately began setting his grandiose plan for Germany into action. He ordered an expansion of the Gestapo; appointed Goering as head of the new security force; and began eliminating any and all opponents. The next important event of Hitler's Chancellorship was the Reichstag fire, which took place on February 27, 1933. This event is significant as it is said to be the reason why the Nazis were able to become so established in the German government. The fire was an attack on the German parliament building and was blamed on Communist bricklayer Marinus van der Lubbe. The Nazis took this event as a pretense to acquire more power, as they claimed that it was evidence of the Communists attempting to take control of Germany. The fault of the fire has been questioned, with some even purporting that it was the Nazis themselves who led the attack in order to gain control. Regardless of who was at fault, the Nazis certainly did gain control following the fire. Immediately following the fire came the Enabling Act, a constitutional amendment that gave Hitler and the German Cabinet plenary powers with which they could enact laws without the approval of the Reichstag. The laws under the Enabling Act of 1933 also essentially declared war on the Communists and gave Hitler emergency powers to suspend the civil liberties of any person accused of being Communist. It also allowed for mass arrests of Communists. The next event that will be analyzed is the death of Hindenburg, which resulted in Hitler assuming the roles of both Führer and Chancellor, marking his accumulation of all power in Germany complete. The events of this period of time are what will be considered as Hitler's "rise," for the purpose of this paper. The major periodicals of the time framed the major events of Hitler's rise to power and early Chancellorship in specific ways to send certain messages to their readership. This article will analyze each media source its use of framing theory with respect to the historical events.

Media Framing Theory

Framing theory is an idea that was first formally elaborated by Erving Goffman. Goffman's essay, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, advances his postulation that humans operate in primary frameworks, which govern the way they interpret the events of their

environment.¹ In this analysis, news sources will be viewed in their coverage of Hitler regarding two aspects: both the simple mention, measured quantitatively, of the events of his rise and the rise of Nazism, as well as the attitude of the articles in which he was mentioned, and how this attitude was related to media-framing, if that proves to be motivation behind the tone of the author. Humans digest and understand information through these natural and social frameworks in order to understand events in a wider context. These frameworks are closely tied to communication and the spreading of information and form the basis of media-framing theory. In regards to media, this theory argues that journalists knowingly present information in a specific way (a “frame”). This frame, in line with Goffman’s ideas, greatly affects how the reader interprets information. Thus, when this frame is consciously employed by a journalist, it can be considered a form of agenda-setting theory. McCombs and Shaw first proposed this theory and established the following hypothesis:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position.²

Reports of Hitler fall into two categories— “credible” frames and “non-credible” frames. Credible frames presented Hitler’s rise as probable, citing his popularity and political skill. They presented Hitler as a potential leader, although articles presenting his potential as a leader were fearful of his rise, noting its imminence. Non-credible frames underestimated and undermined his potential power, emphasizing limits on his power, highlighting his lack of experience and Austrian heritage, and arguing that Nazi popularity would be ephemeral. Non-credible frames were dismissive of Hitler’s power. Few, if any, publications, presented credible frames of Hitler prior to his appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, and even through the beginning of 1933?, the use of this type of frame persisted. The motivations behind this will be assessed in this study. There is a clear lack of consistent and credible framing of Hitler across the board in American media, as news outlets underestimated Hitler’s popularity, but rather solely advanced the strength in popularity of the German Republic.

¹ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 21-40.

² *Ibid*, 21-40.

³ *Ibid*, 21-40.

The New York Times

The New York Times was an American daily newspaper which, since its foundation in 1851, has remained one of the most prominent and widely read publications in the country. By the 1930s, it had already established this reputation, and it was generally accepted that the publication had liberal leanings. The audience of this paper was broad—spanning households of all socioeconomic backgrounds with interests not only in events occurring in the US, but also abroad. In contrast to other media outlets that will be analyzed in this study, The New York Times should not be considered a reflection of American interest and concern but, rather, a source that created it, informing the American citizens about important topics that merit such attention and shaping the debate that emerged. Since 1896, the paper's slogan "All The News That's Fit To Print," has been displayed on the front page, and this slogan was an appropriate description of the newspaper.³ It intends to cover most major events occurring in the US and the world. Fitting this description, The New York Times was the first American publication to report on Hitler's rise in 1932. Prior to this, coverage of the eventual Chancellor of Germany was sporadic. However, once Hitler was appointed Chancellor, The New York Times began extensive coverage of the Reich leader. Initial coverage was not condemnatory nor investigative and even implied a possible stability that could come with his appointment. However, The New York Times at this time was decidedly more critical of Hitler than many other of the major publications included in the study. Because Hitler presented more of a threat to Europe than the US, The New York Times initially drew a collection of reactions from the continent, as opposed to advancing its own opinion. This strategy ultimately changed as Hitler gained political prominence and power, and The New York Times to informed their readers of the rise, as well as background, of this man and the Nazi party. The New York Times, while clearly less centered on America than the other publications studied, was still delayed in reporting of the rise of Adolf Hitler, and markedly not very critical of the man, considering the great strides he took toward undermining democracy during the first months and years of his Chancellorship.

The New York Times is one of the three publications studied that contains clear usage of media-framing theory. As mentioned, The New York Times seemed to set the news and establish people's opinions, as

⁴ "The Rise of Adolf Hitler," last modified 1996, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/riseofhitler/runs.htm>.

opposed to reflecting public opinion. However, as it did not only serve to reflect public opinion, it did keep public interest in mind, especially on the front pages and major headlines, in order to continue to be successful in selling papers. As mentioned, coverage of Hitler by The New York Times, as well as other major American news outlets, increased exponentially in 1933.

The greatest mention of Hitler prior to his appointment as Chancellor in the pages of the The New York Times occurred when he ran for president in March of 1932. In this election, Hitler ran against incumbent Paul von Hindenburg, and the reaction of the publication, presenting a non-credible frame of the candidate and severely underestimating his relative success, is worth noting. Hindenburg won the first round of the election, with support from 49% of the electorate, or 18,651,497 votes.⁴ Hitler, however, came in second place, receiving 30% of the vote, or 11,339,446 votes.⁵ A run-off had to be conducted as Hindenburg did not win the majority, but the media reactions to the first elections will be analyzed as opposed to the run-off, as these reactions are more worthy of note, because Hindenburg's eventual success in the run-off was expected. Prior to the election, the paper's reporting revealed a sense of fear about the success of Hitler and the Nazis, exemplified in an article entitled "Nazi Uprising Feared," although it was pushed back to page seven.⁶ The article did not express a fear in the US but merely reported on protests in Berlin, during which protesters had decreed that "a vote for Hitler means voting for hatred, inexperience, nepotism, and ruin for the German people....Vote for Hindenburg and you vote for wisdom, tradition, impartiality, responsibility, union, right, freedom, and preservation of a new rise of the Reich and the people."⁷ Absent from the issue on March 10th was any mention of the arguments of the Hitlerites against Hindenburg. The paper implied that Hitler's supporters were not so formidable a force, as nothing about their ideals, beliefs, or strength was mentioned. After the elections on March 13th, The New York Times published an article expressing the relief felt by the United States after the success of Hindenburg. In the article "Result in Germany Elates Washington," the author described that the "Returns Help to Prove Germans Retain Faith in Conservative Political Leadership," and that "Hoover, Secretary of State Stimson, and other high officials...ha[d] been anxious for

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Nazi Uprising Feared," *New York Times*, March 10, 1932, 7.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Result in Germany Elates Washington," *New York Times*, March 14, 1932, 8.

the continuance of the present regime in Germany and would view a victory by the Hitlerites as a distinct menace to the European situation.”⁸ This reaction seems to be the most negative of Hitler up to this date, and remained so for the next several mentions of his rise. In a subsequent article on March 15th, *The New York Times* deemphasizes the prominence of this fear, in an article entitled “German Republicanism,” in which the author wrote “(i)t is humanly certain that President Hindenburg will win the runoff election next month. For Hitler, it is impossible to foresee more than 14,000,000 votes, representing his own poll on Sunday and that of the Hindenburg Nationalists.”⁹ The use of strong rhetoric such as “impossible” in describing Hitler’s ploy at gaining power was seen consistently in early articles about his actions. While it is true that Hitler was over 2.5 million votes short of 14 million, using such words severely underestimated the relatively large success he had achieved, considering his rapid rise to political relevancy. The article went on to state that “the simple fact is that the outside world, and a considerable number of Germans at home, have been led to exaggerate the numerical strength of Hitlerism and to underestimate the strength of German republicanism and democracy.”¹⁰ This article seems to go against the previously mentioned article about relief felt in Washington, as it deems any fear as unfounded. The article mentioned the “hard times which have settled over Germany since the war,” commonly cited as one of the major reasons for Hitler’s rise, but went on to say that this will “account more for the passion of Hitlerism than for its numbers,” and concluded by cementing the belief in the strength of the German republic.¹¹ The media consistently used non-credible frames, both subtle and overt, implied and explicit, that pointed to the inevitable failure in Hitler’s rise.

After Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the American media, including *The New York Times*, had a strong reaction. For the first time, Hitler graced the main headline on the front page, which read “Hitler Made Chancellor Of Germany But Coalition Cabinet Limits Power; Centralists Hold Balance In Reichstag. Wall Street Doesn’t React.”¹² However, even with Hitler’s assumption of such power which, as demonstrated, had clearly not been predicted, the headline was curbed by the second half of the statement: “But Coa-

⁹ “German Republicanism,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1932, 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Hitler Made Chancellor Of Germany But Coalition Cabinet Limits Power; Centralists Hold Balance In Reichstag,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

lition Cabinet Limits Power; Centralists Hold Balance in Reichstag.”¹³ The article went on to describe how the Cabinet, which constitutionally limited Hitler’s power, was “not truly representative of Hitlerism,” and that its composition “leaves Herr Hitler no scope for gratification of any dictatorial ambition.”¹⁴ The article also discussed the reaction of Wall Street, a necessary inclusion, due to the concern with the country’s economy by the American people. Thus, the headline contained a non-credible frame, in which Hitler’s power was underestimated, due to the limitations placed upon him. Overall, in response to this event, The New York Times had a relatively positive reaction, save one article entitled “Germany Ventures.”¹⁵ In this article, the author wrote of the “disturbing effect at home,” and the “grave apprehensions abroad” that this appointment will create.¹⁶ However, it ended on an uneasy, but not wholly negative note, stating that “(m)uch of his old electoral thunder has either been stolen from him or has died down into a negligible rumble. The more violent parts of his alleged program he has himself in recent months been softening down or abandoning.”¹⁷ Ultimately, the author concluded that Hitler’s actions should be watched closely, but that “Germans have repeatedly shown to stand by and defend and preserve their republic,” and they will probably “triumph over every danger,” including Hitler, “suddenly rising in their path.”¹⁸ The rest of the articles, however, take on a more positive tone, pointing to the limits on his power. In an issue on February 5th, the same sentiments of positivity remain, this time defined less by the limits on his power than his actual policies. One article explained that “his changes have almost always been on the side of reason and common sense,” and that Hitler’s voice “seems to [resonate like] an entire orchestra.”¹⁹ He was beginning to be described as a credible leader as he was spoken of positively or reported within a credible frame. The next notable event in Hitler’s rise was the Reichstag Fire that occurred on February 17th, 1933, which not only destroyed the symbol of German democracy, but was perhaps the first event that led to Hitler’s dictatorship. The fire was blamed on Communists, and this justified the creation of an “emergency decree, the Decree for the Protection of the People and the State,” which “suspended the right to assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and other

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Germany Ventures,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “Diet Dissolution Refused in Prussia,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1933, 1.

²⁰ “The Reichstag Fire,” *The New York Times*, last modified January 29, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>

constitutional protections, including all restraints on police investigations.”²⁰ Because of this event, later in the year, Hitler suggested the transfer of all power to himself, and this was voted upon and approved by the Reichstag, resulting in Hitler becoming the most powerful man in Germany. The response of The New York Times to both of these events will be assessed.

On February 28th, news of the fire covered the front page of The New York Times, as expected, because this was a major incident in Germany. The main article, “Incendiary Fire Wrecks Reichstag; 100 Red Members Ordered Seized,” simply reported the details of the event as they were understood, including the supposed guilt of a Communist.²¹ On March 1st, the following day, the front page of the periodical was devoted to the beginning of Hitler’s crusade to limit fundamental civil rights under the justification of protecting Germany from the violent Communists who had destroyed the Reichstag. The article seemed to confirm the validity of this precaution, without any hint that this could be a slippery slope into a more grave and widespread suspension of rights. The article, “Hitler Suspends Reich Guarantees; Left Press Banned,” speaks of the “Emergency Decree” designed to “Combat ‘Communist Terror’ by eliminating ‘Constitutional Safeguards.’”²² The author wrote that “last night’s fire, which rendered the Reichstag building untenable for at least a year, has provided for the expected basis for measures of repression throughout the Reich unprecedented save in time of war or revolution.”²³ Thus, while it did point to how the measures were “unprecedented,” it added that they are “expected,” due to the alleged attack by the Communists.²⁴ It argued that this response of a suspension of “all constitutional articles guaranteeing private property, personal liberty, freedom of the press, secrecy of postal communications and the right to hold meetings and form associations,” was a result of the “wave of popular hysteria” in Germany.²⁵ Hitler’s actions, this article and others, argued, were catalyzed by the fear of communism, and were not condemned to the extent that might have been expected from a leading periodical of a democratic nation (although this lack of condemnation could possibly predict the same

article.php?ModuleId=10007657.

²¹ “Incendiary Fire Wrecks Reichstag; 100 Red Members Ordered Seized,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1933, 1.

²² “Hitler Suspends Reich Guarantees; Left Press Banned,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1933, 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Hitler’s Press Chief Hints Ban May Last,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1933, 11.

trend during the Red Scare following the Second World War in the US). The New York Times did not seem to have much of a negative reaction, even when it asserted that “Hitler’s Press Chief Hints Ban May Last,” and that he “Intimates Left Papers Will be Suppressed Permanently.”²⁶

The next important event, was the Reichstag vote, giving legislative power to Hitler. The New York Times deemed this news worthy of front page display again on March 24th, 1933 with the main headline “Hitler Cabinet Gets Power to Rule As A Dictatorship; Reichstag Quits Sine Die.”²⁷ The article discussed the text of the Enabling Act, which granted Hitler extraordinary power. The article also stated that Hitler had “no desire to increase [Germany’s] armed forces if other nations disarmed.”²⁸ The author added that Hitler had “achieved the great triumph for which he has been fighting for fourteen years, and it is considered that he is now the master of Germany with power greater than any of his predecessors in the Chancellery.”²⁹ There was some mention of the gravity of this newfound power by Hitler:

under the enabling act the Cabinet will have the power to promulgate laws without reference to the Reichstag. In its deeper implications the law will enable the Hitler-Papen government to override the Federal Constitution even to the extent of eliminating President von Hindenburg from further promulgating laws and decrees, as this power is given to the cabinet.³⁰

However, the author did not frame this in an agenda-setting method. There was no comparison to anything an average American reader might know, which could advance the fact that this magnitude of power was unprecedented, as future articles would include.

Also in this issue was one of the first mentions of the terrors of the Holocaust. On page two, the periodical published an article “Nazis Resentful At Agitation Here,” which explains the German resentment of American opposition to Hitler’s anti-Semitism.³¹ In it, the author c Dr. Heinrich Simon, who declared: “the outside world has failed, with the fewest exceptions, to form a true conception of the German state

²⁷ “Hitler Cabinet Gets Power to Rule As A Dictatorship; Reichstag Quits Sine Die,” *New York Times*, March 24, 1933, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Nazis Resentful At Agitation Here,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1933, 2.

³² *Ibid.*

of mind since the war...completely misunderstood.”³² The issue also included reports on violence towards Jews in Poland.

The next major step in Hitler’s rise was the death of Hindenburg, which resulted in Hitler’s assumption of the powers of both Führer and Chancellor. This step, to consolidate power in the person of Hitler, was one of the first times that true alarm, without qualification, towards an event in Hitler’s rise emerged in the American media, although this fear is documented to be emerging out of Europe. President Hindenburg died on August 2nd, 1934 and, on the following day, the front page of *The New York Times* read: “Hitler Takes Presidential Power, Ending Title; Army Swears Fealty; Ratifying Election Set for Aug. 19,” with the following subheading: “Hitler to Be Only Fuehrer and Chancellor; Says ‘President’ Is for Hindenburg Alone.”³³ The publication included reactions from across much of Europe, particularly from the French, in an article entitled “Hitler’s New Role Troubles French: Now That He Is Supreme in Reich They Fear He May Set Out on Foreign Adventures.”³⁴ It is worth noting that the word “adventures” was used, in place of stronger vocabulary, such as “conquest” or “destruction.” The periodical also included that “Vienna is Perturbed,” and that the “Soviet Is Gloomy on the Outlook.”³⁵ It was here, for the first time, that *The New York Times* clearly attempted to convey the gravity of this event to its readers, as it printed the following:

the official news machinery proclaimed to a stunned nation that in Adolf Hitler would be vested the powers of both President and Chancellor—giving him autocratic authority of a scope never accorded to a Hohenzollern monarch of the past nor vested in the head of any other modern State.³⁶

This article was one of the first instances of media-framing by *The New York Times* with the purpose of causing alarm in the American people. This desire to cause alarm most likely because it had become abundantly clear that Hitler had accomplished his goal of complete power, and had not been limited by any outside forces. However, the periodical still seemed to urge restraint, as, in an article entitled

³³ “Hitler Takes Presidential Power, Ending Title; Army Swears Fealty; Ratifying Election Set For Aug. 19,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 1.

³⁴ “Hitler’s New Role Troubles French: Now That He Is Supreme in Reich They Fear He May Set Out on Foreign Adventures,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 1.

³⁵ “Vienna is Perturbed,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 1; “Soviet is Gloomy On The Outlook,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 1.

³⁶ “Nazi Chief Now Supreme,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 1.

³⁷ “Roosevelt Sends Hitler Message,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1934, 4.

“Roosevelt Sends Hitler Message,” the author wrote, “But Washington Circles Do Not See Death Causing Great Change in Situation.”³⁷ Thus, while there seemed to be need for alarm in Europe, this fear should not have extend to the home front. .

After Hitler was officially voted Führer, on August 19th, the American media, especially The New York Times, finally took note of the potential threat of Hitler’s expansion of power for the western world.. The front page read, “Hitler Now World’s Supreme Autocrat; Legally Answerable to Nobody for Acts.”³⁸ The article argued that “powers greater than those held by any ruler in the modern world are put in the hands of Adolf Hitler as a result of today’s plebiscite.”³⁹ The article repeated this same idea in different ways to its readers, seemingly to ensure complete understanding of the gravity of the situation:

As Reich leader and Reich Chancellor he holds the powers that belonged to the late President von Hindenburg and he has in addition the enormous authority conferred on him as Chancellor by an act adopted when the Nazis obtained full power in the Reich. Under that act he had virtually supreme legislative authority.⁴⁰

The article continued “(i)t must be realized that the Reichstag has become a mere rubber stamp for his decrees.”⁴¹ Another article, entitled “Absolute Power Is Won,” continued to compare Hitler’s power to that of others, an example of a credible frame, as it says:

The endorsement gives Chancellor Hitler, who four years ago was not even a German citizen, dictatorial powers unequaled in any other country, and probably unequaled in history since the days of Genghis Khan. He has more power than Joseph Stalin in Russia, who has a party machine to reckon with; more power than Premier Mussolini of Italy who shares his prerogative with the titular ruler; more power than any American President ever dreamed of.⁴²

The final step that cemented credible frame reportage of Hitler occurred with Hitler’s first major violation of the Treaty of Versailles—the reintroduction of military conscription in Germany on March

³⁸ “Hitler Now World’s Supreme Autocrat; Legally Answerable to Nobody for Acts,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1934, 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Hitler Now World’s Supreme Autocrat; Legally Answerable to Nobody for Acts,” 1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Absolute Power is Won,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1934, 1.

⁴³ “Germany Creates Army of 500,000, Orders Conscription, Scraps treaty; Entente Powers Confer on

16th, 1935. On the following day the front page of The New York Times read, “Germany Creates Army of 500,000, Orders Conscription, Scraps treaty; Entente Powers Confer on Action.”⁴³ In the article, while there was not much mention of US reaction, there was a compilation of reactions from European powers, especially from the French, who consider it a “stunning blow.” Thus the paper framed the article in such a way as to elicit a fearful reaction from its readers.⁴⁴ Thus, reporting of Hitler’s rise by The New York Times was sporadic and notably lacking in an investigative or condemning nature.

The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal was a business-focused, daily, conservative American newspaper. It began as a brief bulletin listing news about stocks distributed to traders at the stock exchange in the 1880s, but became The Wall Street Journal in 1889. By the 1930s, circulation had grown exponentially, and, with the stock market crash in 1929, The Wall Street Journal became a household name and product read by tens of thousands of Americans, most of them businessmen.⁴⁵

The reportage of the The Wall Street Journal, like the New York Times, exemplifies media-framing theory. However, the Journal was also a news periodical that reflected the interests and concerns of the American people. This reflection was made abundantly clear in the type of news it included, as it was all surrounding the condition of the American economy. While news events were included, there was almost always some mention of the effect this had on the American economy. In the case of the rise of Hitler, this trend persisted.

Prior to Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, there was hardly mention of him or the Nazi movement. On March 15, 1932, after the presidential election that Hitler lost, The Wall Street Journal ran a piece entitled “Stability in Germany,” comfortably buried on page eight.⁴⁶ In the article, the author described the success of Hindenburg as “a characteristic thing” that was common of the German people.⁴⁷ The article, with a strong economic tone, argued that “at a moment when

Action,” *New York Times*, March 17, 1935, 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Cynthia Crossen, “It all Began in the Basement of a Candy Store: Dow Jones Saga Reflects The Forces That Shaped The Wall Street Journal,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2007.

⁴⁶ “Stability in Germany,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 1932, 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the German home political situation is intimately related to world finance and world economic reconstruction, the German people have rejected political adventuring.”⁴⁸ The article completely discredits Hitler’s progress, even though he gained a large 30% of the vote.⁴⁹ The article ensured its readers that stability, both economic and political, remained in Europe, and that the world markets had not responded negatively to the event.

Between this edition and the declaration of Hitler as Chancellor, there was hardly mention of Hitler or the rise of the Nazi movement. Clearly, *The Wall Street Journal* and the average American businessman were more focused on events within the borders of the US economy. There was mention of the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor on January 31st, 1933, although it was pushed to the second page, in an article entitled “Hitler Granted Chancellorship.”⁵⁰ The article, however, was even less critical than *The New York Times*, and seemed to imply that Hitler would accept limits to his power.⁵¹ The article mainly focused on the reaction of the economy: “Stocks gained one? to two points, while bonds, especially Reich loans, lost two to three.”⁵² The article cited Hitler’s Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick, perhaps hoping to quell any fears about Nazism’s success: “The government’s goal is to live in peace and friendship with the world.”⁵³ In this edition, there was nothing on the front page to draw attention to such a momentous event in Hitler’s rise, depicting the attitude of the newspaper, which was largely focused on the US, especially concerning the US economy.

There was no mention of the Reichstag Fire, and no real mention of the Reichstag vote on legislative power given to Hitler. The only mention of Hitler was in the March 24th, 1933 edition--the day after the vote-- which concerned Germany’s currency, in an article entitled “Hitler Demands Revision Of Debt.”⁵⁴ There was increased coverage of Hitler after Hindenburg died, when the periodical subsequently published an article entitled “Hitler Assumes All Reich Power,” although it was on the second page and not the front page.⁵⁵ This article, how-

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “Hitler Granted Chancellorship” *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 1933, 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Hitler Demands Revision Of Debt,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 1933, 1.

⁵⁵ “Hitler Assumes All Reich Power,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 1934, 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

ever, did not condemn Hitler, but merely described the oaths he made during his appointment, and concluded that “the Nazi extremists are not strong enough to do harm.”⁵⁶ In another article related to the topic, “Nations Await Hitler’s Move,” The Wall Street Journal wrote that Hitler was now clearly in a “stronger position,” but insisted that “open markets show no reaction,” a response in line with its economic motivations.⁵⁷ The reaction of the periodical was clearly focused on the response of the markets, although it did describe the “apprehension” in Europe following this event. The Wall Street Journal was far less critical than The New York Times, and did not make an attempt to frame any article in a way to try to convey to its readers the magnitude and political significance of this event.⁵⁸ However, this restraint was most likely due to the fact that the goal of the newspaper was largely just to convey the economic situation of the US and the world.

Time Magazine

Time Magazine was a weekly newsmagazine published in New York. Its first issue was published in 1923 and, by 1927, it became “the most influential newsmagazine in the United States.”⁵⁹ Until the 1970s, Time was known to be more conservative when it came to political matters.⁶⁰ Time Magazine was often criticized for its somewhat light style, as it was written for the average American, and its audience was meant to be very broad. However, it was because of this light style that Time is such a useful publication to study for this research. The magazine often reflected the attitudes and sentiments of the American public, and was less concerned with agenda-setting, than The New York Times, for example.

The coverage of Hitler prior to his appointment as Chancellor reflected a broad consensus about Hitler’s future: he was someone who had had a chance at to gain political prominence, but failed in its attainment. Prior to his appointment as Chancellor, there was sporadic, but concrete mention of Hitler. After Hitler’s loss in the presidential elections of 1932, Time ran an article entitled “Vive Hindenburg,” which reported that Paris “had been extremely nervous lest Adolf Hitler win the German election and repudiate the Treaty of Versailles.”⁶¹ A month

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Time: American Magazine,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. April 17, 2013. <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Time-American-magazine>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “Vive Hindenburg!,” *Time Magazine*, March 15, 1936, 24.

⁶² “Hitler Stopped?,” *Time Magazine*, April 18, 1932, 17.

later, after the run-off election, TIME published an article entitled “Hitler Stopped?” that discussed Hitler’s loss without giving much information about the man or his campaign.⁶² This article did, however, argue that there was a “rising fascist tide,” although it concluded that, for the moment, it had been defeated by Hindenburg.⁶³ Coverage of Hitler by Time can be described as minimal at best, as the rise of fascism was not seen as a viable threat to the American people. Even at the beginning of 1933, prior to Hitler’s appointment, there did not seem to be much concern for his rise. In the annual Man of the Year article, this year awarded to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Time reported Hitler’s loss:

in 1931 Adolf Hitler was Germany’s rising star. In 1932 he and his Nazis slipped back to the tune of 2,000,000 lost votes. His thunder was largely stolen by General Kurt von Schleicher, the new Chancellor to whom many a German looks as Man of Next Year.⁶⁴

Thus, Hitler was seen as declining in prominence, and it seemed as though Time had predicted that a different German would rise to prominence and would even be worthy of a Man of the Year title. This title essentially declared the man chosen as the most interesting man of the time and presented his face on the front of the magazine. Being awarded this honor cemented a man’s status and placed him at the forefront of consciousness of the American people.

After Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor, Time’s coverage of Hitler was similar to that of The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times, characterized by hesitation, but optimism, largely guaranteed by “anti-Hitler ‘safeguards’” in which the American media put some trust.⁶⁵ Unlike the other two news outlets, however, Time began to delve more into Hitler’s background at this point in time. This deeper personal investigation is not surprising, since Time often focused its reporting on the personal details and backgrounds of figures on the political scene, to a greater extent than news sources such as The New York Times, which were more events-based, and would not cover the background of Hitler until further along in his rise.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Man of the Year,” *Time Magazine*, January 2, 1933, 10.

⁶⁵ “Hitler Into Chancellor,” *Time Magazine*, February 6, 1933, 22.

⁶⁶ “Flaming Reichstag,” *Time Magazine*, March 6, 1933, 22.

Reporting of the Reichstag Fire was included, but subsequent actions by Hitler were not condemned, and did not predict the rise to power of Hitler, who was able to take advantage of this situation to create an emergency state, setting himself up for absolute power. While in its coverage *Time* noted that Hitler was “seeking control of the Reichstag by a campaign of unparalleled violence and bitterness,” it did not conduct much investigation or include much analysis of exactly how it was so violent or what acts could be attributed to the Chancellor.⁶⁶ This seemed to be a trend in all reporting on events surrounding his rise. *Time* did not respond to the Reichstag vote offering Hitler legislative power, most likely because it merely cemented what had been established by The Reichstag Fire, and *Time* was more concerned with American affairs, in general. *Time* did include reports on Hindenburg’s death, and Hitler’s subsequent assumption of power of the Führer and Chancellor. In fact, there were five articles pertaining to Hitler’s actions, but none condemning Hitler’s seizure of such power. Articles mostly reported on Hindenburg and described Hitler as “intuitive.”⁶⁷ There was no concrete investigative journalism into his actions, nor was there any framing by the journalists to attempt to convey to the readers how much power Hitler now possessed. There was subsequently no mention of Hitler’s official movement into the position of Führer and Chancellor in late August.

Coverage of Adolf Hitler by *Time* increased tremendously following his first violation of the Treaty of Versailles—the reintroduction of military conscription in Germany. On March 25th, 1935, *Time* ran an article entitled “Chains Broken!,” which characterized Hitler as a figure larger than life who caused great “excitement” and happiness in Germany.⁶⁸ The article claimed that “Joy filled German hearts to bursting last week when beloved Realm leader Hitler took the most popular plunge of his career.”⁶⁹ *Time* repeatedly referred to Hitler as “Messiah,” rhetoric that seems as though it should be found more in an article published by Nazis, as opposed to the leading newsmagazine of a democratic country. For example, *Time* wrote “Messiah of rearmament though he is, Adolf Hitler speaks with the tongue of Peace,” a seemingly paradoxical sentence. The vocabulary used in this article was most likely a reflection of the sentiment felt by many Americans—that the Treaty of Versailles was too harsh on Germany, and that ac-

⁶⁷ “End of Three Lives” *Time Magazine*, August 13, 1934, 17.

⁶⁸ “Chains Broken!,” *Time Magazine*, March 25, 1935, 22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “Man of the Year,” *Time Magazine*, January 2, 1939, 13.

tions such as a military conscription and rearmament should be seen as justified measures to allow Germany to survive. While *Time* did not praise Hitler himself, it also did not report the issues that arose with the breaking of the Treaty of Versailles; instead it repeated the narrative that Germany had broken from its chains and been saved by its leader. One sentence reads Perhaps if not for the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, actions such as these by the Führer could be seen and understood for what they really were—naked acts of aggression. Thus, it seems as though *Time* was guilty, in this article, of minimizing Hitler's aims.

Hitler was not given the proper attention by *Time* until January of 1939 when he was given the coveted title, "Man of the Year," cementing him as a person of major concern for the American public. It was at this point that the larger significance of Hitler's actions were understood, as he was no longer described as a messiah, or a savior, but as a "conqueror."⁷⁰ At this point in time, following events such as the Anschluss, Hitler's menacing, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic motivations were made transparent, and Hitler was seen by *Time* and, thus, the American public, as the true villain that he was.

The Literary Digest

The *Literary Digest* was an American weekly magazine founded in 1890. Unlike the first three publications analyzed, *The Literary Digest* was largely opinion-based and included partisan analysis, rather than objective accounts of news events. By 1927, *The Literary Digest* had become a prominent news outlet, its readership numbering over one million subscribers.⁷¹ Average Americans interested in not only news, but also analysis of such news events comprised its audience. Overall, analysis of Hitler by this publication seems to be a bit delayed, with coverage often not appearing in the magazine in the issue of that week, but this could be due to the nature of production of the periodical. In general, writers do not seem particularly concerned about the rise of Hitler but rather, with the United States interests in political developments in Germany.

There was no mention of Hitler's failure to win the presidential election of 1932 in Germany, which was the most notable event in Hitler's rise prior to his becoming Chancellor. There was also no mention of

⁷¹ "Press: Digest Digested," *Time Magazine*, May 23, 1938.

⁷² "How They Put a Nazi on the Spot," *The Literary Digest*, February 4, 1933. 13.

the runoff election later that year. When Hitler became Chancellor, there was no mention of the event in the February 4th issue. There was an article about German nationalists and the death of a “devoted Hitlerite,” but nothing of Hitler’s new power.⁷² On February 11th, came mention of Hitler’s rise to Chancellorship with the article “What Hitler Rule Means to Europe.”⁷³ Although pushed to page twelve, The Literary Digest asserted that Hitler and his fellow Nazis “are not figures to be joked with.”⁷⁴ The article added that, to Europe, specifically France, this event “is of greater importance than any event since the fall of the Hohenzollerns.”⁷⁵ A similar comparison between Hitler and the Hohenzollerns was mentioned by The New York Times, but not until Hitler’s ascension to Führer after the death of Hindenburg. The Literary Digest seemed to predict the importance of this step in Hitler’s rise prior to the newspaper. However, this comparison was taken by The Literary Digest from a Paris newspaper, and the article was meant to explain some European power’s more negative response to the event. The article also described the British response to the event, which seemed divided. While the Daily Herald “declares solemnly that ‘with Hitler’s appointment the way is prepared for the return of the ex-Kaiser,’” the London Daily Mail wrote “it looks as if Germany has a stable Government at last.”⁷⁶ Regardless, it is clear that The Literary Digest was focusing on what the event meant to Europe, as opposed to the US.

The Literary Digest had no response to the Reichstag Fire or to the Reichstag vote which gave legislative power to Hitler. Finally, on April 8th, there was more coverage of Hitler, as articles about the Chancellor were moved from the “Foreign Comment” section, to “Topics of the Day,” for the first time, signaling a rising interest in the leader in the American consciousness. In contrast to the previous article run by the periodical, entitled “What Hitler Rule Means to Europe,” on April 8th, The Literary Digest ran the article “What Hitler’s Rule Means to the World,” implying the increasing importance of Hitler’s rise to the world, on a broader scope than just Europe.⁷⁷ The periodical acknowledged how “in a brief two months after he had entered the republican Cabinet, Adolf Hitler had turned the Government into the most absolute of modern dictatorships.”⁷⁸ Despite this, the author of the article

⁷³ “What Hitler Rule Means to Europe,” *The Literary Digest*, February 11, 1933, 12.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ “What Hitler Rule Means to Europe,” 12.

⁷⁷ “What Hitler’s Rule Means to the World,” *The Literary Digest*, April 8, 1933, 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

continued the trend of many other news outlets, writing that “recent Hitler speeches show an unexpectedly moderate tone,” and arguing that he wanted “sincere friends of peace.”⁷⁹

After Hindenburg died, and Hitler took on the role of Führer, the front page of *The Literary Digest* presented the headline “Hitler, Absolute Ruler, Calls for Peace: In Interview, Nazi Leader Declares Germany Learned Lesson in 1918; Eulogizes Hindenburg in Speech Monday Noon Before Reichstag.”⁸⁰ While focusing on the death of Hindenburg, the article discussed the resulting European feelings of unease to this event. When Hitler officially became Führer, articles about Hitler were pushed back to the “Foreign Comment” section, and the article “The First Setback for Germany’s Nazis: Six-Day Speaking-Drive, Led by Goebbels, Preceded National Referendum to Approve Leader’s Assumption of Joint Powers, But Election Results Disappoint Hitlerites,” simply discussed Europe’s reaction to the event, without mention of the US reaction.

When Hitler first violated the Treaty of Versailles, *The Literary Digest* published the article “Adolf Hitler’s Stroke at the Versailles Treaty Stirs All Europe.”⁸¹ In it, the author wrote that “Chancellor Adolf Hitler last Saturday finally carried out the German purpose to make the Treaty of Versailles just another scrap of paper.”⁸² Like the reactions by other publications, *The Literary Digest* did not condemn the action, but argued that Germany had a right to increase their military presence and protect themselves as other nation-states had been doing throughout the inter-war period.⁸³ The author continued the article with the European response, describing it as full of unease and apprehension.⁸⁴ Even the front page of this issue was still focused on domestic affairs, as it centered on Senator Huey Long and issues regarding the US Congress. Overall, despite its reputation as a deeply opinionated publication, *The Literary Digest* seemed to skirt around establishing real opinions regarding Hitler’s rise, as it mostly compiled European reactions and opinions. Stronger opinions were held, and news was analyzed, to a greater extent regarding the domestic affairs touched upon by the magazine.

⁸⁰ “Hitler, Absolute Ruler, Calls for Peace: In Interview, Nazi Leader Declares Germany Learned Lesson in 1918; Eulogizes Hindenburg in Speech Monday Noon Before Reichstag,” *The Literary Digest*, August 11, 1934, 1.

⁸¹ “Adolf Hitler’s Stroke at the Versailles Treaty Stirs All Europe,” *The Literary Digest*, March 23, 1935, 9.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “The Pittsburgh Courier,” *Public Broadcasting Service*. http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/courier.

The Pittsburgh Courier

The Pittsburgh Courier was “once the country’s most widely circulated black newspaper with a national circulation of almost 200,000.”⁸⁵ In the 1930s, “it was one of the top selling black newspapers in the country.”⁸⁶ The audience of the periodical was African-Americans, and topics covered by the newspaper were always those of interest to this specific community. It often “called for improvements in...conditions in which black people were forced to live in Pittsburgh and elsewhere throughout the nation,” and “protested misrepresentations of African Americans in the mainstream media.”⁸⁷ Overall, The Pittsburgh Courier “sought to empower African Americans economically and politically.”⁸⁸ The Courier was clearly very politically-centered, and every issue was related to the human rights struggles of the African-American community at the time. All the articles related to Hitler are concerned with anti-Semitism and how this could be compared to the struggle of African-Americans. While this periodical contains no specific responses to the same events, all articles relevant to Hitler’s rise will be analyzed.

The first mention of Hitler did not appear until April 1933, after he had been declared Chancellor. It appeared on the front page, but under the fold, in an article entitled “Jewish Pogroms in Germany.”⁸⁹ In it, the author condemns the actions of Hitler and the Nazi movement, in the most explicit statement of the periodicals surveyed here, writing “Jealous of the financial, mercantile, artistic and scientific achievements of its...Jews, Hitler’s Germany has launched a campaign of terrorism against them, driving them from their jobs, beating and killing them.”⁹⁰ The Courier focuses on the implications of Hitler’s anti-semitic ideology and makes clear the stakes of Hitler’s leadership. The author continued, “One of the supposedly most enlightened countries of the world, Germany has suddenly descended to the murderous level of reactionary Poland and Roumania in its persecution of the Chosen People.”⁹¹ However, the lessons drawn from these events--what the publication hoped the reader would take away from their coverage--

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⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Jewish Pogroms in Germany,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 22, 1933, 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ “Jewish Pogroms in Germany,” 1.

⁹² Ibid.

interestingly had little to do with Germany at all, but much to do with the experience of African-Americans living in the United States. The author wrote:

What is to be learned from this regrettable spectacle...The masses can be easily inflamed against a minority group anywhere whenever unscrupulous leaders will it. American Negroes need always to keep this in mind and not lapse into any false sense of security. We must be eternally vigilant. We must keep our defense well organized and prepared to go into action on all fronts where our citizenship rights are threatened. Right now we are virtually unprepared. We do not adequately support the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, our one efficient defense organization.⁹²

The publication uses the news regarding Hitler and Nazism, in order to give out advice on how they themselves should operate. This provides insight into the perspective of the African-Americans at the time, and shows that they felt a connection to the unfair persecution and discrimination that Jewish people were undergoing in the early 1930s. More than the white Protestant editors of the publications mentioned so far, this author is able to empathize with the situation faced by German Jews. The author concluded that “the Jews have the kind of organization that is hard to beat. Negroes can learn much by watching the methods of the Jews.”⁹³

In another article published in the April 22nd, 1933 issue, writers again explicitly compare the situation of Africans Americans in the United States to that of Jews in Germany.. In “How Can U.S. Aid Germany’s Persecuted When Justice Is Joke in Alabama, Queries,” the author referred to the Scottsboro case, a famous case in which African-Americans were unfairly prosecuted, and related the issue to anti-Semitism in Europe. For this writer, it was hypocritical to condemn such injustice abroad when there was injustice occurring domestically.⁹⁴ In 1934, the periodical “expos[es] the activities of Hitlerism in America” in an article entitled “Hitler Invades America.”⁹⁵ The author discussed the influx of Nazi propaganda in America, and described the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ “How Can U.S. Aid Germany’s Persecuted When Justice Is Joke in Alabama, Queries,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 22, 1933, 1.

⁹⁵ “Hitler Invades America,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 7, 1934, 10.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Nazi movement as “a new Ku Klux Klan in the making.”⁹⁶ Overall, a major theme in the newspaper in articles related to Hitler and Nazism was the hypocrisy of the US in these issues. Additionally, there was no call to join any movement or initiative against anti-Semitic forces but, rather, a focus on what lessons could be learned and comparisons drawn to the plight of African-Americans living in Pittsburgh, as well as in other parts of the country. There was a clear agenda-setting prerogative in this paper, but this agenda would be in the interest of its audience—to further the progress and improve conditions of African-Americans in the US.

The Sentinel

The Sentinel was “the premier Jewish weekly in Chicago” during the 1930s.⁹⁷ The publication “reflected the changing Chicago Jewish community, but also national and international Jewish news.”⁹⁸ While not many issues have been digitized, this study will analyze two issues that have been preserved—one from 1931 and another from 1935. Despite the lack of issues available, important trends and insights can be gained simply from these two articles. Since the publication was Jewish, it presented a very partisan perspective, and nearly every word was aimed at its specific audience, which was much more narrow than those of the first four periodicals mentioned. Even as early as 1931, there was mention by the publication of the dangers of Hitler’s anti-Semitism. In an article, “New Fighters of Anti-Semitism,” the author discussed the injustices done to the Jewish people in Germany, whose rights had already been infringed upon.⁹⁹ As this was written for a Jewish audience, The Sentinel hoped to inform Chicago readers of the plight of their fellow Jewish people abroad, in order to garner support in the US.

In another article of the same issue, entitled “The New Jew of the Old World,” author Brainin wrote about that the problem of anti-Semitism in central Europe was “riding on its highest crest.”¹⁰⁰ He added that “Hitlerism in Germany...ha[s] produced a new type, A Jewish post-war generation.”¹⁰¹ Although Brainin is vague about the details

⁹⁷ “The Jewish Sentinel,” Illinois State Library, Illinois Digital Archives. <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16614coll14>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “New Fighters of Anti-Semitism,” *The Sentinel*, June 19, 1931, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Reuben Brainin, “The New Jew of the Old World,” *The Sentinel*, June 19, 1931, 8.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

of the Nazi movement, he did explore and condemn its implications for Jews in Europe. In an October 1935 issue, there was more interest paid to the rise of Nazism specifically. The magazine went into detail about many Nazis in Germany, as well as supporters in the US, and condemned the movement. Overall, the magazine often did not describe events in Hitler's rise as the other national news sources had, but focused on the anti-Semitism movement in Germany, and on what this meant not only for Jews of the region, but also for Jewish people living in the United States. It seemed to sometimes imply a call to action on the part of American Jewish people.

Conclusion/Results

Overall, it is clear that there was a consistent lack of critical condemnation, as well as the absence of strong investigative work into the rise of Hitler from 1930 to 1935. The motivation for this lack of criticism is unclear, but it seems to be a combination of a strong focus on domestic issues, combined with an incorrect assessment of Hitler's motivations and strength. The previous is clear by what the news publications did choose to cover widely, and to put on their front pages, which included issues related to the US economy and politics, especially on FDR and his New Deal, which was being implemented from 1933 to 1938. Diplomatically, the US was in a state of isolationism, weary from World War I. US journalists seemed to mirror this sentiment. In the case of *The Pittsburgh Courier*, domestic issues related to African-Americans were considered more important. The only publication that seemed to properly place great importance on Hitler's anti-Semitic injustices was *The Sentinel*, and it was a Jewish publication. However, insufficient attention was paid to Hitler's rise politically. Additionally, there was a clearly incorrect assessment of Hitler's motivations and his strength. Initially, there was too much faith placed in the strength of the German Republic in combating the rise of Fascism. As Hitler was gaining power, it was assumed that limits on his power would prevent any dictatorship. Then, when Hitler performed actual acts of aggression, such as the implementation of a military draft, news publications rationalized this as a result of the injustice of the Treaty of Versailles, which was thought to have placed extremely harsh punishments on Germany in 1919. Thus, the coverage of Hitler by the major news sources of the time was very naïve, and mainly verbatim compilations of European responses to events of his rise. However, the journalists were not alone. Even European statesmen and politicians, extensively educated in issues such as diplomacy and politics, held a naïve view of Hitler, which was exemplified by a long-standing, widely held policy of appeasement in the 1930s. While this study does not make the case that any more incisive report-

ing by journalists could have had any impact on the sequence of events or would have altered history, it does make a case for the importance of the accuracy of journalistic reporting in an attempt to properly represent what was occurring. It also points out the early signs of a sentiment of appeasement, and the evident tendency of journalists to make excuses and justifications for Hitler's actions, a practice that was later mirrored by statesmen. Finally, this study serves to prove that, in this case, American journalists were focused on domestic problems, which were severe, instead of devoting more attention to proper reporting of Hitler's rise to dictatorship.

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