

***The Eternal Jew*, Film Poster (September 1940)**

Abstract

Joseph Goebbels and his subordinates at the propaganda ministry were thoroughly aware of the power of the still young medium of film, and they put it to strategic use in National Socialist propaganda, for example in the dissemination of antisemitic racial ideology. *The Eternal Jew* [*Der ewige Jude*], a film by Fritz Hippler (1909–2002), was made on commission by the propaganda ministry in 1940. The film was subtitled “A Documentary Film about World Jewry” [“Ein Dokumentarfilm über das Weltjudentum”]. This “documentary film,” which was primarily filmed in the Jewish ghettos of Lodz, Warsaw, Cracow, and Lublin, aimed to make the German public feel disgust and revulsion toward the Jews and to convince the masses of the necessity of a “Final Solution.” The undignified conditions under which Jews in German-occupied Poland were forced to live were supposed to offer evidence of the inferiority of the so-called Eastern Jews [*Ostjuden*] in terms of civilization, biology, and morality. The film employed falsified statistics and age-old prejudices about supposedly Jewish traits (criminality, greed, parasitism, usuriousness, etc.) to expose the alleged conspiracy of world Jewry. Jews living in the Diaspora were likened to wandering rats, a comparison that was supposed to show that Jewish infiltration posed grave dangers to the German population and the Western world as a whole. Accordingly, the film ended with a clip from Hitler’s Reichstag speech of January 30, 1939, the address in which he predicted “the annihilation of the Jewish race.”

The film premiered in German theaters on November 28, 1940. Although it dates from the same year as the antisemitic feature films *Jew Süß* [*Jud Süß*] and *The Rothschilds* [*Die Rothschilds*], it was nowhere near as successful as either of these two films. *The Eternal Jew*, however, was mandatory viewing for police and SS-units, special units of the Wehrmacht, and guards at concentration and extermination camps, since it was thought that the film could ward off any scruples they might feel about the merciless persecution and annihilation of the Jews.

Source



Source: Film poster, *The Eternal Jew*, September 1940, Designer: StS, Bundesarchiv, Plak 003-020-030.

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