

Memorandum of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior on Nazi Agitation (May 1930)

Abstract

In late April 1930, Joseph Goebbels became Reich propaganda leader for the NSDAP. He went on to devise a propaganda strategy that helped turn the Nazi party into a mass movement. In this memorandum from May 1930, Prussian Minister of the Interior Heinrich Waentig (1870–1943) describes the extent of National Socialist propaganda and agitation – about whose structure and strategy the Prussian government was apparently very well informed. Waentig, a member of the SPD and a professor of economics, had only been in office since March 1930 and would resign in October of that same year.

Source

Hardly a day passes on which there are not several meetings even in narrowly restricted local areas. Carefully organized propaganda headquarters in the individual *Gaue* ensure that the speaker and subject are adapted to the local and economic circumstances. The Reichstag and Landtag deputies of the Party and many other Party speakers travel about every day to undertake and build up this agitation. Through systematic training courses, through correspondence courses and recently through a school for NSDAP speakers established on 1 July 1929, such agitators are trained for this task over a period of months, even years. If they prove themselves, they receive official recognition from the Party and are put under contract to give at least thirty speeches over a period of eight months and receive as an incentive a fee of 20 Reichsmarks or more per evening in addition to their expenses. Rhetorical skill combined with subjects carefully chosen to suit the particular audience, which in the countryside and in the small towns is mainly interested in economic matters, ensure, according to our observations, halls which are almost invariably overcrowded with enthusiastic listeners. Meetings with an audience of between 1000 and 5000 people are a daily occurrence in the bigger towns. Frequently a second or several parallel meetings have to be held because the halls provided cannot hold the numbers who attend [...]. On such occasions the network of local branches is extended as far as possible or at all events contact men are recruited who are intended to prepare the ground through intensive propaganda by word of mouth for the spread of the movement which can be observed everywhere. Frequently such propaganda squads stay in a certain place for several days and try to win the local population for the movement through the most varied sorts of entertainment such as concerts, sports days, tattoos in suitable places and even church parades. In other places an outside propaganda speaker is stationed for a certain time; with a car at his disposal, he travels systematically through the surrounding district. National Socialist theatre groups travelling from place to place serve the same purpose.

Source: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945*, Vol. 1, *The Rise to Power 1919–1934*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, pp. 71–72.

Source of original German text: Ernst Deuerlein, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Augenzeugenberichten*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974, pp. 309–10.

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