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Making a New American Identity: The Associated Press and Nazi Germany, 1933- 1938

Jakob Lippert

HS 390: The Historian's Laboratory (Dr. Nick Dupras)

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The Second World War marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of American exceptionalism. In particular, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's speech of December 29, 1940, in which he referred to the United States as the "arsenal of democracy", constituted a radical revision of the nation's self-perception on the world stage. Although the US was not to enter the war for another year, Roosevelt's speech made it clear that he saw the country as the standard bearer for "democratic" values – values that the country would henceforth take upon itself to defend worldwide. The ideas that the democratic character and institutions of the United States are unique in world history, and that they should serve as an example to the rest of the world, are as old as the nation itself, and were widely trumpeted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only after World War II, however, were these sentiments translated into an altruistic justification for America's interventionist attitude in foreign affairs. After nearly a decade of strong support for non-interventionism among the American public, the United States emerged from WWII as the self-appointed moral leader of the (Western) international community – a role that, judging by the staggering 75% of poll respondents who supported intervention in Korea in 1950, average Americans wholeheartedly embraced.¹

Why was WWII the turning point at which Americans decided that their values should be spread and defended worldwide by American military power? As early as 1919, in the wake of another global war in whose conclusion American forces had played a prominent role, President Woodrow Wilson had declared that "the isolation of the United States is at an end".² In 1919, however, the zeal of the public did not match Wilson's lofty internationalist ideals. The failure of the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and join the League of Nations, as well as the rabid

¹ John E. Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam," *The American Political Science Review* 65, no.2 (1971): 360, doi:10.2307/1954454.

² Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 2.

nativism that accompanied the Red Scare, demonstrated that the majority of Americans were not interested in becoming “a determining factor in the history of mankind”, despite what Wilson claimed.³ Between the world wars, then, there was a dramatic shift in the character of popular American nationalism. At the end of the First World War, it was focused inward, in a self-defensive posture; at the end of the Second, it was projected outward, in a brazenly interventionist one. The defining factor in this inversion, as I will argue, was the rise of fascist governments in Europe, particularly that of Nazi Germany.

In the illiberal domestic policy and predatory foreign policy of the Third Reich, Americans located a sort of foil for their own values; as if only once its direct opposite arose could the “American way” truly be defined. As the 1930s wore on, and the aggression of Hitler’s Germany and its allies mounted, the conviction of Americans that their country had an obligation to defend liberal values, practices and institutions on a global scale grew stronger. Materially, the US’s status as a superpower and “world policeman” was confirmed during the Second World War; culturally, however, the American public had been developing an image of itself as such for several years before the country entered the war. This image was born from opposition to the bogeyman of fascism, but only to very specific elements of that ideology that were particularly offensive to American political and cultural sensibilities. Indeed, what were perceived as the *positive* elements of fascism were just as important in the construction of the new, internationalist American exceptionalism. Finally, and crucially, the American public’s understanding of Nazism was deeply influenced by how those governments were reported on by the Associated Press – an organization whose coverage was anything but objective.

³ Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 2.

In researching and writing this essay, I focused on coverage of Nazi Germany, as well as its wartime allies, in the American press. Using the *Daily Mining Journal*, a newspaper based in Marquette, Michigan, as a case study, I sought to examine how fascism was covered on a national level (by the correspondents of the Associated Press), and how this national coverage influenced opinions on fascism, and America's relationship to it, on a local level (as expressed in the paper's editorial columns). The portrayal of the Third Reich and its allies by the Associated Press is a complicated issue; by 1935, the AP was the only American news syndicate whose reporters were still in Germany, following the Nazi seizure of power. Therefore, most of the American public's knowledge concerning events in Germany was entirely dependent on reports written by AP journalists. The reports of the AP from Germany were self-censored by necessity, due to the constant threat of their expulsion from the country. Therefore, their reporting was fairly soft on Hitler's government, largely skimming over its worst antisemitic excesses.

The consequences of this reporting can clearly be seen in the *Mining Journal's* editorials during the early years of the Hitler regime, which, while recognizing Hitler as a dictator, tend to dismiss him as a blustering demagogue and a product of Germany's inherently unstable political climate. As the 1930s progressed, and the threat posed by Germany to peace in Europe grew, the attitude of the editorials changed. Beginning around 1935, during the buildup to the passage of the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws, a new trend begins to emerge; editorials which strongly criticize Germany's suppression of press and religious freedoms, while making conscious comparisons to the unique democratic institutions of the United States. Amid this criticism, however, it is clear that the editorial staff of the *Mining Journal* remained deeply fascinated by the foundations of fascist ideology, particularly its racial elements and the concept of territorial expansion for the sake of *Lebensraum* or living space. The progress of the editorials shows the

development of the new American exceptionalism that was occurring nationwide, one defined by its relationship to fascism.

The self-censored reporting of the Associated Press, which highlighted the illiberal domestic policies exercised by the National Socialist regime in Germany, was instrumental in creating a dominant image of fascism in American culture that was defined by the ideology's opposition to traditionally "American" values such as constitutionalism, press freedom, and religious freedom, rather than by the racial nationalism that was equally important to its character. The national press's de-emphasis of the imperialist and racist atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis allowed for, and indeed contributed to, the development at the local level of the new, interventionist, and internationalist form of American exceptionalism that emerged during the Second World War. This exceptionalism was rooted in a defense of the aforementioned "American" values, while incorporating the aggressive militarism and Western chauvinism integral to the worldview of Adolf Hitler, which the AP had failed to highlight in its reports. American nationalism as we know it today is indebted both to America's struggle against and to its enduring fascination with the fascist ideologies of 1930s Europe.

The Associated Press in Nazi Germany

The Nazi Party's control of the domestic press in Germany became absolute in the first few months after Adolf Hitler came to power on January 30, 1933. The Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, headed by Joseph Goebbels, shut down all newspapers critical of the regime, particularly the organs of the banned Communist and Social Democratic parties. Most of the papers that remained in operation were brought under the purview of the Nazi-owned *Eher Verlag* publishing house, best known for printing Hitler's political testament, *Mein Kampf*, in 1924. The Nazis could not buy out or arrest correspondents of the foreign press

as they could with German nationals; however, they were able to use the threat of expulsion to enforce self-censorship in the reporting of these organizations. Keeping a close eye on the reports that appeared in the foreign press, Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry stood at the ready to expel from Germany any foreign correspondents whose reporting displeased the Nazi Party apparatus. The employment of Jewish photographers and journalists was a sure ticket to expulsion under the Editor's Law of October 1933, which banned "non-Aryans" from reporting in Germany and specified that all journalists "regulate their work in accordance with National Socialism as a philosophy of life and as a conception of government".⁴

This was the situation in which the German bureau of the Associated Press found itself in the early years of the Nazi regime. At the time, the AP's reports were published in over 1,400 American newspapers, including the *Daily Mining Journal* in Marquette.⁵ Faced with the prospect of self-censorship or expulsion from the country, the AP chose the former without hesitation, a decision agreed upon by Berlin bureau chief Louis P. Lochner (who was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1939 for his reporting on the Hitler regime) and AP headquarters in New York.⁶ Other press syndicates were less unscrupulous; by 1935, the AP was the last remaining Western news agency reporting from Germany, and it remained so until the initiation of formal hostilities between Germany and the United States in December 1941. This made the AP's reporting the sole source of information on events in Nazi Germany for most Americans; only the largest independent newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, were able to send their own correspondents to the country.

⁴ Larry Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny: The AP and Nazi Germany, 1933-1945* (New York, NY: Associated Press, 2017), 11, <https://www.ap.org/about/history/ap-in-germany-1933-1945/ap-in-germany-report.pdf>.

⁵ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 2.

⁶ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 1.

The AP's central decision-maker in Nazi Germany for the entire duration of its presence there was Louis P. Lochner, the organization's Berlin bureau chief and, more significantly, the head of the AP's German-based photo service, which sold images taken by AP photographers worldwide to newspapers around Germany. Unlike the Berlin office, which reported to AP headquarters in New York and was thus a nominally independent body, the photo service, founded in 1931, was registered under German law as a *GmbH* (company with limited liability; the equivalent of an LLC in the United States).⁷ This meant that Lochner, as the head of a German-registered press concern, was obligated to observe the full extent of the Editor's Law in its operations. Lochner regarded the maintenance of the AP's presence in Germany as his number-one priority, as expressed in a 1933 letter to AP general manager Kent Cooper:

“I hold, however, that it is more important for us to remain in the field here, even if occasionally we are licked, than to risk having our whole organization destroyed by publishing a picture to which the regime in power objects.”⁸

In other words, Lochner took the position that censored reporting from Germany was better than no reporting at all. Cooper concurred, stating in an interview six years later that “an organization that represents 1,400 newspapers” should not “abuse the hospitality” of a foreign country where its reporters were guests.⁹ The AP's policy, then, was to report everything that Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry would allow them to, and nothing that the Ministry objected to. Going even further than mere acquiescence to Nazi-imposed self-censorship, however, was Lochner's personal policy for the conduct of his bureau under Nazi rule, which he outlined to Cooper in the same letter quoted above:

“1. Accept the German nationalistic revolution as a fact and give the new regime a chance.

⁷ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 2.

⁸ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 14.

⁹ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 16.

2. Be scrupulously accurate about every item that leaves the office.
3. Stick only to unquestionable sources; decline to handle anonymous.
4. Refrain from sending sensational or alarmist stories unless those who supply the facts are ready to stand for them in case I am questioned.
5. Live up to the laws and the decrees of the country even though they are irksome and contrary to journalistic ideals.
6. Cultivate the men of the new regime with a view to gaining their confidence in the fairness, integrity, and objectivity of the A.P. even in the case of stories that those in control of the new Germany frown upon for personal or partisan reasons, but that must be carried by a nonpartisan organization like A.P. if it does not want to lose its reputation.
7. Always remember that, no matter what may happen, the A.P. will want to have a bureau in Germany.”¹⁰

Lochner's two central goals were to maintain the AP's presence in Germany and to maintain objectivity in his dealings with the regime. Keeping the AP in the good books of the Propaganda Ministry was more important to Lochner than “journalistic ideals”, adherence to which had ensured the expulsion of every other major Western press syndicate by 1935. Because of Cooper and Lochner's decision to prioritize the continuation of their operations in Germany at any cost, the Nazi regime was able to ensure that its portrayal on the front pages of over 1,400 American newspapers was as precisely controlled as its portrayal in its own domestic press. This did not, as we shall see, engender any particular sympathy for Nazism among the majority of Americans, even in the early years of the Third Reich. It did, however, ensure that Americans saw only the elements of fascism that the Nazis allowed them to see.

The American Perception of Fascism Prior to Entering the War

Before examining the attitudes of Americans towards fascism (and Nazism in particular) during the 1930s, it is important to recognize that Nazi racial and colonial theories took heavy

¹⁰ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 14-15.

inspiration from American culture and history. An important component of Nazism is the idea that the German people require *Lebensraum* (living space) in order to proliferate and reach their full potential. Although contemptuous of America's status as a cultural melting pot, Hitler viewed the early history of the United States as proof that the *Lebensraum* ideology could be implemented in the real world. In the genocidal process of westward expansion advanced under the banner of Manifest Destiny, Hitler found the germ of his own plans for Germany's drive eastward: a nation that had "gunned down the millions of Redskins to a few hundred thousand, and now keep the modest remnant under observation in a cage".¹¹ Germany's "General Plan for the East" involved the starvation, enslavement, and eventual annihilation of over fifty million Slavs and Jews, paving the way for a "Greater Germany" that would stretch to the Ural Mountains, its frontiers guarded by *Wehrbauer* (soldier-farmers). American racial discrimination, both legal and cultural, was also an important model for Nazi Germany. The official *National Socialist Handbook of Law and Legislation* recognized the US as the model for the creation of a "race state", and lauded its "fundamental recognition" of scientific racism in the Jim Crow laws.¹² Nazi jurists were confused and repulsed by the integration of Jews into American society, but in the legal status of Black people they located precedents for the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws.

Why is this information important? Aside from casting a sobering light on the global consequences of American racism, it gives important context to the way in which Americans viewed the Nazis and their ideology before WWII. As the primary evidence will reveal, the *Lebensraum* ideology, with its genocidal implications, was not nearly so controversial among the

¹¹ James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 9.

¹² Whitman, *Hitler's American Model*, 160.

American public as the Nazis' persecution of the Catholic Church and shuttering of opposition newspapers. The Nazis' open disdain for the institutions of liberal democracy, including freedom of religion and freedom of the press, stood in direct opposition to the values enshrined in the Constitution. On the other hand, Nazi racial ideology and colonial ambitions would have seemed normal to most Americans in the 1930s. The persecution of the Jews, who (while they did face discrimination) were generally considered white in the United States, was interpreted as an attack on religious freedom by Americans, instead of the racist crusade that it truly was.

Although Nazi Germany's attempts to sway American public opinion in its favor rarely extended beyond boilerplate propaganda tactics (such as their arrangement with the AP), there were significant currents of sympathy for Hitler's regime operating in the US throughout the 1930s. Perhaps the most notable Nazi sympathizer in the country was Henry Ford, a virulent antisemite who distributed the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* through newspapers that he owned. Ford was a public admirer of Hitler who spoke out against America's entry into the war; the German division of Ford Motor Company made use of POW slave labor starting in 1940. The famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, who visited the Third Reich on multiple occasions, was another strong voice for non-interventionism who had high praise for Hitler's economic reforms.

The most visible fascist organization in the United States was the German American Bund, run by German WWI veteran and naturalized US citizen Fritz Julius Kuhn.¹³ Kuhn took the title of *Bundesführer* (state leader) and professed loyalty to Hitler in Berlin. The Bund recruited among German-Americans, primarily focusing on recent immigrants, and focused its energies on criticizing President Roosevelt and the New Deal, as well as promoting a positive

¹³ Sander A. Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 204.

image of the Nazi regime. Most active in New York and the Midwest (due to the high German populations in those areas), the Bund founded “training camps” for its members throughout the country. After Germany’s invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Bund’s focus turned to keeping the US out of the war. Over 20,000 people attended the group’s February 1939 rally in Madison Square Garden, which saw Kuhn make antisemitic declarations before a massive portrait of George Washington.

Of course, the Bund’s crowd of 20,000 was dwarfed by the nearly 100,000 New Yorkers who came out to protest the rally, many of whom had to be held back by police from assaulting the attendees. Combined with the fact that the Bund’s membership declined drastically in the wake of the rally, this illustrates that the Bund was never truly taken seriously by most Americans – or, indeed, by the *real* Nazis, who consistently refused to extend the group any sort of official recognition (beyond a photo op with Hitler that Kuhn was able to secure at the 1936 Berlin Olympics).¹⁴ The Bund’s membership never grew beyond 25,000, and it faced increasing financial problems after 1937. While the Madison Square Garden rally is often presented as proof that significant portions of American society were sympathetic to the Nazis, it actually represented the beginning of the end for the Bund, whose leadership was arrested upon the initiation of hostilities between Germany and the US. American antiwar hysteria was not linked to sympathy with Nazism, but rather to fear of the ideology. This can be seen by examining the activities of a far more successful non-interventionist organization that operated at the same time as the Bund – the America First Committee.

¹⁴ Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States*, 256.

Boasting over 800,000 members, and counting among its donors future US Presidents John F. Kennedy and Gerald R. Ford, the America First Committee was founded in 1940 to oppose at all costs the entry of the United States into the ongoing war in Europe. The committee was profoundly anti-Roosevelt, and hosted antisemitic speakers such as Charles Lindbergh, who insinuated that Jewish financiers were driving the US closer to war. The main element of the AFC's membership, however, was motivated not by antisemitism but by the conviction that involvement in a war between two radical ideologies – fascism and communism – would irrevocably damage the institutions of American democracy. Robert E. Wood, a chairman of the AFC, expressed this belief in a letter to President Roosevelt: “The only possible way of preserving our own institutions is to stay out of the conflict at any cost”. It is clear, then, that fascism was viewed as a danger to American values; isolationism was rooted in opposition to, rather than sympathy with, Nazism. Because anticommunism had been firmly ingrained in American society since the Red Scare of 1919, the sudden uptick in American nationalism that occurred in the late 1930s cannot be attributed to revulsion at the repressions occurring in Stalin's USSR (although anticommunism would become the primary engine of American exceptionalism after WWII). Anticommunism was the constant; Nazism was the variable. Even the majority of Americans who opposed entry into the war in 1939 were, by and large, anti-Nazi, and viewed Hitler's ideology as directly opposed to American values.

Historiography: What Were the AP's Responsibilities?

The historiography of the AP's involvement in Nazi Germany is a short one, as the topic has only been brought to the fore in very recent scholarship. In her 2016 article “The A and P of Propaganda: The Associated Press and Nazi Photojournalism”, German historian Harriet

Scharnberg notes that “previous research on the subject is negligible”.¹⁵ A significant factor in the dearth of academic sources on this subject is the fact that the AP’s internal documents regarding its policies in the Third Reich were not available to scholars until their publication in 2017 – an action prompted by Scharnberg’s article and the embarrassing questions it raised. Scharnberg’s research and conclusions have almost exclusively defined the historical debate on the AP’s role in Nazi Germany – both of the other secondary sources I was able to locate on the subject consist primarily of responses to Scharnberg, and the authors of both texts explicitly name her article as the primary impetus for their own research. The debate has focused primarily on the question of how ethical it was for the AP to remain in Germany and adhere to the media policies of the Nazi Party for as long as it did. While the AP’s own study of its actions in the Third Reich considers Lochner and the Berlin bureau’s acquiescence to Nazi censorship to be justified because it enabled information on Nazi aggression to be revealed to the world, the other sources are united in condemning the AP’s actions, concluding that the organization willingly let itself become a tool of Nazi propaganda.

Harriet Scharnberg’s provocatively titled article, “The A and P of Propaganda”, argues that “a disturbing connection” existed between the Associated Press and the Nazi propaganda machine – not just abroad, but in Germany itself.¹⁶ Using primarily German sources, Scharnberg elaborates on the arrangement that existed between the AP’s German photo service and the Nazi government. Under the terms of this arrangement, the AP supplied photos from its photographers around the world to the Nazi-controlled press, with no subsequent say in how those pictures were used; in return, the AP was supplied with its own pictures by correspondents within Germany to

¹⁵ Harriet Scharnberg, “The A and P of Propaganda: Associated Press and Nazi Photojournalism,” *Studies in Contemporary History* 13 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok-1413>.

¹⁶ Scharnberg, “The A and P of Propaganda,” 3.

be sent home for publication in the US. Because the AP photo service, as discussed previously, fell under the full control of the Editor's Law, the pictures that it was able to send home were handpicked by Nazi censors. Scharnberg argues that both sides of this arrangement benefited the public image of the Nazi regime. The American photos that the AP supplied to the German media were often used in antisemitic propaganda, with Scharnberg providing examples of AP photos that appeared in such luridly titled brochures as "The Jews in the USA" and "The Subhuman".¹⁷ These brochures were used to radicalize Wehrmacht and SS troops before and during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. On the other end, the Nazi regime was able to cultivate an image of itself through the images that it allowed the AP to send home. Scharnberg concludes that the AP willingly ceded "considerable influence over the production of its news pictures to the Ministry of Propaganda"; furthermore, she asserts that "it is reasonable to assume that the intuitive sympathies and antipathies of American newspaper readers were not unaffected" by this propaganda.¹⁸

In May 2017, the Associated Press published a 163-page study, entitled "Covering Tyranny: The AP and Nazi Germany, 1933-1945". The result of an extensive internal review of archival material that the organization claimed to be previously unaware of, the report's content essentially boils down to its introductory assertion that "Due in large part to the AP's aggressive reporting, the dangers of the Nazis' ambitions for domination in Europe and their brutal treatment of its opponents were revealed to the wider world".¹⁹ The report's introduction also stresses that "suggestions that AP at any point sought to help the Nazis or their heinous cause are

¹⁷ Scharnberg, "The A and P of Propaganda," 4-5.

¹⁸ Scharnberg, "The A and P of Propaganda," 27-28.

¹⁹ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 2.

simply wrong”.²⁰ While acknowledging Scharnberg’s findings and frequently commending her work, the report argues that Lochner and the AP leadership were “distressed” by the way in which their photos were used by the Nazis, and that Scharnberg lacks “familiarity with how news agencies function” during wartime.²¹ While exhaustive in its scope and well-researched, the AP report concerns itself primarily with vindicating Lochner’s decisions and rebutting Scharnberg’s conclusions with whataboutism. It is meant to protect the AP’s reputation, rather than make any meaningful contribution to the historiography of Nazi Germany.

In his 2017 article “Secret Photos”, written in response to the AP’s report and making use of the previously unavailable sources that it uncovered (to which Scharnberg did not have access), German historian Norman Domeier focuses on the photo-sharing arrangement discussed above, calling it a “dangerous liaison” that helped the Germans raise morale during the war by demonizing American Jews with the pictures provided by the AP.²² Essentially agreeing with Scharnberg’s conclusions, Domeier dismisses the AP’s report as being of little academic value. Towards the end of his article, Domeier, like Scharnberg, notes that the consequences of the AP’s special relationship with the Nazi regime have not yet been satisfactorily researched. While the majority of his article handles the issue of photojournalism, he pauses to note that Lochner’s prioritizing good relations with the regime over all else may have had an effect on the contents of his print dispatches. “To what extent the strategy of staying in Nazi Germany for as long as possible affected Lochner’s coverage and that of the other AP correspondents”, writes Domeier, “remains to be explored”.²³ This essay represents my attempt at such an exploration.

²⁰ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 2.

²¹ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 76.

²² Norman Domeier, “Secret Photos: The Cooperation between Associated Press and the National Socialist Regime, 1942–1945,” *Studies in Contemporary History* 14, no.2 (2017): 32, <https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.4.967>.

²³ Domeier, “Secret Photos,” 29.

Historiography: What Did “The American Way” Mean in the 1930s?

In her book, *Inventing the American Way*, historian Wendy L. Wall locates the mid-1930s as the period when the idea of an “American Way” entered the lexicon of average Americans. As proof of this, she provides a startling statistic; from 1852 to 1932, a period of eighty years, the phrase “the American way” appeared in the *New York Times* 725 times. Between 1932 to 1942, the figure was 2,230.²⁴ Since before the US entered World War II, many historians have recognized the 1930s as the cradle of modern American exceptionalism, and there is a general consensus that the rise of Nazi Germany played a role in the formulation of a distinct new national identity. The exact influence that fascism exerted on this process, however, is a matter of debate. Over time, the dominant narrative that anticommunism was the prime mover of 1930s American exceptionalism has given way to new interpretations, that center the threat of fascism in their explanations of the increased pride in democratic values and institutions that came to be recognized as “the American Way”.

In their 1939 study *World Revolutionary Propaganda*, political scientists Harold D. Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock assess the power of propaganda to erode the faith of Americans in their own institutions. Viewing the Soviet Union as the “World-Center of revolutionary radical propaganda”, Lasswell and Blumenstock traffic in classic Red Scare tropes, presenting Stalin’s USSR as a far greater threat to the American system than Nazism.²⁵ Communist propaganda, they argue, works by “destroying belief in the accepted symbols” of a nation.²⁶ Furthermore, they assert that nationalism, “a basic pattern of western European

²⁴ Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”: The Politics of Consensus From the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.

²⁵ Harold D. Lasswell and Dorothy Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1939), 3.

²⁶ Lasswell and Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda*, 9.

civilization”, is uniquely suited to combat communist propaganda, and that the propagandists of the Comintern (Communist International, a body run from Moscow) adjusted their approach to the US to include more overtly nationalist elements after witnessing “the triumph of National Socialism in Germany”.²⁷ This approach, they conclude, was a failure, and only led to “the strengthening of defensive tendencies against what was conceived as the threat of Russian control over American life”.²⁸ Therefore, Lasswell and Blumenstock argue that anticommunism was the foremost driver of American nationalism in the 1930s; the genesis of the “American way” was steeped in resistance to the Comintern’s propaganda. Nazism, on the other hand, was only influential insofar as it influenced communists to give their propaganda a more nationalist appeal.

By 1966, with the Cold War at a low ebb, studies of American nationalism were less likely to fall into black-and-white anticommunist tropes. Manfred Jonas’s book *Isolationism in America* accords fascism a more prominent role in the forging of the “American way”. His text examines the issue from the perspective of isolationists – those who sought to protect the “American way” by keeping the country out of European conflicts. Jonas argues that the territorial aggression of Germany and Fascist Italy in the late 1930s forced even the major supporters of isolationism to take anti-fascist positions, and to describe the values that they were trying to protect in direct opposition to the policies of the Nazis. He asserts that by 1937, the majority of the American public felt that there were “basic differences between German and American principles”.²⁹ To prove this, he analyzes the correspondence of the German ambassador to the US, Hans-Heinrich Dieckhoff, who took a pessimistic view of the prospects

²⁷ Lasswell and Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda*, 352-353.

²⁸ Lasswell and Blumenstock, *World Revolutionary Propaganda*, 358.

²⁹ Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 209.

for American neutrality should a conflict erupt. In a 1938 letter, Dieckhoff lamented that due to “American public opinion... it is impossible to speak of a true neutrality on the part of the United States”.³⁰ Jonas concludes that the isolationist cause was already doomed by 1938, because the American public could not ignore the Nazis’ “direct violation of cherished American principles”.³¹

Published in 2008, Wall’s aforementioned book, *Inventing the “American Way”*, takes the position that the rise of Nazism came at the perfect time to resolve a “crisis of Americanism” that she argues began with the Wall Street crash of 1929.³² The widespread poverty and economic downturn of the Great Depression had eroded the faith of many Americans in their government and institutions. The dual threats of Nazism and communism, Wall argues, gave “new urgency” to the efforts of nationalists to develop a unified vision of the “American way”.³³ She contends that while economic conservatives sought to define American values in opposition to communism, liberals and leftists located America’s ideological opposite in Nazism. Due to the popularity of the New Deal and the predominance of the Democratic Party, the antifascist current achieved primacy in the late 1930s – this would be confirmed by the American alliance with the USSR during the Second World War, only to be reversed as soon as the war ended, with the end of the New Deal and the ascendancy of conservative figures such as Joseph McCarthy.

Despite taking different positions on the exact role of fascism as a foil to the nascent “American way”, all three of these texts agree that the threat of Nazi ideology to perceived American values was an important factor in the construction of a new, more overtly nationalist

³⁰ Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 209-210.

³¹ Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 211.

³² Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”*, 17.

³³ Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”*, 27.

American identity in the late 1930s. Despite the fact that by 1938 (and especially after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom) most Americans viewed Nazi Germany as the polar opposite of their democracy, this did not lead to any serious interrogation of American systemic racism. This is especially significant because Nazi antisemitism was one of the foremost *causes célèbres* of the American antifascist movement. *Kristallnacht*, which prompted the recalling of the American ambassador in Berlin, was a clear-cut example to which many Americans were able to point and say, “That is what we’re fighting against.” Why, despite the widespread opposition to Nazism among the American public, was there so little discourse on Hitler’s racial ideology? I argue that the AP’s reporting played a significant role.

Case Study: The *Daily Mining Journal*

The tone and content of the Associated Press’s reporting on Nazi Germany remained roughly the same between 1933 and 1939. It was the escalation of internal repression and imperialist aggression by these countries as the decade wore on that triggered the corresponding upswing in American exceptionalism; the tone of the AP’s articles was the constant that helped steer this rising tide of nationalism in the direction that it eventually took, towards interventionism. In analyzing the front pages and editorial sections of the *Daily Mining Journal* from this period, I have divided the paper’s reactions to European fascism into three distinct phases.

The first few months of articles after Hitler’s ascent to power in January 1933 are characterized by a deep skepticism regarding the viability of his regime. Although the authoritarian character of Nazism is acknowledged, the editorials express the belief that Hitler is simply occupying the latest carriage to ascend the Ferris wheel of interwar German politics. The AP’s reporting, meanwhile, highlights the political violence that heralded Hitler’s ascension

while presenting Hitler himself as a man of peace. This led the *Mining Journal's* reporters to misinterpret Hitler's violent consolidation of power as a continuation of the internal turmoil which had wracked Germany since the end of the First World War, rather than recognizing the rise of a new ideology. Hitler's actions are ascribed by the editorials to a perceived European tendency towards instability and authoritarian rule, essentially writing off the rise of figures like him as a fact of life in Europe. The perceived messiness of European politics is contrasted with the peaceful transfers of power and free elections which characterize the American system.

The front page of the *Mining Journal* on January 31st, 1933 the day after Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany, features an austere headshot of the new head of government. The accompanying AP article, penned by Lochner himself, describes the "paroxysm of joy" experienced by conservative Germans at the appointment of Hitler – a figure who, according to Lochner, "must now show whether the Messiah-like hopes of 13,000,000 Germans in his statesmanship are justified".³⁴ Hitler's alliance with President Paul von Hindenburg is described as "a common effort to pull the fatherland out of the mire" of the Great Depression. In a letter written in 1937, Lochner chronicled his personal feelings on Hitler's appointment, contending that "freedom of the press as understood in America died on the night of January 30, 1933".³⁵ It is obvious why, in the interests of journalistic impartiality, Lochner could not include his personal doubts about the Nazis in his article; however, the comparison of Hitler to the Messiah is a curious choice. In any case, the editorial staff of the paper remained skeptical that the Nazis' self-proclaimed revolution would change anything in Germany. In a February 2 piece titled "Hitler Arrives", Hitler is compared unfavorably with his two predecessors in office, Franz

³⁴ Louis P. Lochner, "Hitler is Made Chancellor of Germany," *Daily Mining Journal*, January 31, 1933.

³⁵ Heinzerling, *Covering Tyranny*, 9.

von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher, both of whom led minority governments that collapsed within months. The possibility that Hitler's cabinet, "the most heterogeneous government the country has ever had to get along with", will exist for much longer than the previous governments is dismissed as "remote".³⁶

The conception of the Nazis as a mere symptom of Germany's innate political instability was merely reinforced in successive *Mining Journal* editorials in the spring of 1933, even as the events unfolding in Germany itself traded the sectarian street fighting that characterized the Weimar Republic for the state-backed crackdowns of the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power). The failure of Marquette-based columnists to differentiate between the chaotic political violence of pre-Nazi Germany and the well-organized purges of Hitler's early rule can largely be ascribed to the AP's own failure to emphasize that a fascist revolution was, indeed, occurring. A sample of front-page articles from February 1933 sport such generalized headlines as "More Violence in Fatherland: Hitler Appointment as Chancellor is Cause" (February 1), "Three More Killed in German Rioting" (February 6), "Socialists Blamed for Germany's Ills" (February 20), "Chancellor Hitler is Friend of Disarmament" (February 23), and, most significantly, "Fire in Reichstag Incendiary, Claim: Dutch Communist Held" (February 28).

The last headline refers, of course, to the Reichstag Fire of February 27, an event that prompted President Hindenburg to give Hitler emergency powers and suspend the civil rights of all Germans with the Reichstag Fire Decree of February 28 (which would remain in force up to the very end of Nazi rule). A March 4 editorial titled "Communists are Banned" takes at face value the Nazi claim that the fire was set by a supporter of the KPD (Communist Party of

³⁶ "Hitler Arrives," *Daily Mining Journal*, February 2, 1933.

Germany). While acknowledging that the fire will be used to cement Nazi political power and implement press censorship, the editorial claims that its main consequence will be an increase in communist violence and greater “disorder” in German politics. The article closes with the assertion that “The German republic has traveled a long ways from Wiemar[sic]”.³⁷ One can almost picture the author’s upturned nose.

A revealing editorial titled “Hitler and Germany”, published on March 27, neatly sums up the consequences of the AP’s reporting on the *Machtergreifung*. Written after the coerced Reichstag passed the Enabling Act, which confirmed Hitler’s power to rule by decree, the article compares Hitler’s newly minted dictatorship to Mussolini’s in Italy, ascribes Mussolini a “genius for dictatorship” which Hitler is perceived to lack, and erroneously equates Nazi antisemitism to the pogroms that were common in czarist Russia. It concludes with the following paragraphs, which bear repeating in full:

“As far as it has gone, the most notable accomplishment of the new German government has been the alienation of sympathy in this country [the United States] and Great Britain, where political toleration is a confirmed, and proved, public policy, and where enlightened liberalism is still the background of all the parties that count for anything.

These countries have viewed the course of events in Germany aghast, and are profoundly concerned over what they fear is a revelation that Germany is, at bottom, the same Germany that struck out for Paris, by way of Belgium, in the spring of 1914.”³⁸

The *Mining Journal*’s primary reaction to the Nazi revolution, as can be seen in these paragraphs, consisted of Western chauvinism and Germanophobia. Both of these sentiments had been firmly ingrained in the American national consciousness since the First World War, when they had stymied Woodrow Wilson’s efforts to join the League of Nations. The idea that

³⁷ “Communists Are Banned,” *Daily Mining Journal*, March 4, 1933.

³⁸ “Hitler and Germany,” *Daily Mining Journal*, March 27, 1933.

“enlightened liberalism” is indigenous to the United States and Britain, and must be protected against the authoritarian currents emerging from Central and Eastern Europe, was a central component of the nativist anti-immigrant violence that erupted during the Red Scare. This violence had emerged out of a perceived necessity to defend the American project – John Winthrop’s “city upon a hill” – against the barbarity of the outside world (it actually emerged out of racism and antisemitism, but this was the ideological justification).

The notion that the American democratic system is superior to any form of government on the European continent, and would never allow the rise of an authoritarian figure such as Hitler, would be mocked by Sinclair Lewis in his cautionary 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*. The *Mining Journal* article’s haughty assertion that “all the parties that count for anything” in the US espouse openness and toleration shows that, in 1933, the chauvinism that had foiled Wilson’s internationalist agenda in 1919 was alive and well. Average Americans reading the AP’s coverage of Hitler’s rise did, indeed, believe that such a thing could never happen here. Preconceived notions of Germanophobia, and the belief that the rise of authoritarian figures in Europe was par for the course, ensured that the first actions of the Nazi regime were not viewed as anomalous. The AP’s failure to differentiate between Nazi repression and previous incarnations of political violence in Germany reinforced the idea that Germany was naturally inclined towards violence, instability and authoritarianism, inhibiting the ability of ordinary Americans to recognize the uniqueness and novelty of fascist ideology. It was not until several years later, when Germany’s increasingly aggressive foreign policy agendas began to threaten the liberal democracies of Europe, that fascism came to be perceived as a distinct threat to American values.

Along with its territorial aggression, the main factor in the *Mining Journal's* recognition of fascism as a threat to American values was the regime's increasingly harsh treatment of Jews. However, the AP's coverage of this phenomenon misrepresented Nazi antisemitism as religious in nature, downplaying the racist foundations of the ideology. One of the main failures of the AP's reporting on Nazi Germany, especially prior to the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 1938, was its tendency to equate the Third Reich's antisemitic policies to its campaigns against the Catholic Church. The Church, especially powerful in southern Germany, was one of the only organizations in the country that remained largely outside Nazi control, although there were a fair number of Nazi sympathizers among the clergy. The regime was deeply suspicious of any power that might sway the loyalty of the German people away from the state; therefore, they worked to suppress Catholic organizations throughout their rule. Nazi campaigns against the church, however, bore no resemblance to their persecution of the Jews. The anti-Catholic measures mostly focused on curbing Catholic political activity, and did not target the average worshipper. Measures against the Jews, meanwhile, sought to deny them citizenship and any form of civil rights. Nazi antisemitism was not based in an antipathy towards the Jewish religion, but towards the Jews as a race. It would therefore be erroneous to equate the anti-Catholic campaigns to the antisemitic ones; however, this is exactly what the AP did, usually grouping the two issues together in the same article.

On July 23, 1935, an article appeared in the *Mining Journal* titled "Nazi Leader Predicts Law Against Jews; Goering Orders Dissolution of Catholic Veterans' Organization". The first paragraph is representative of the AP's tendency to link these two unrelated phenomena:

“A threat to legislate Jews out of Germany was the loudest gun fired today in the Nazis’ big drive against “reactionaries”, as it swerved temporarily away from Catholics and war veterans to smash at Hebrews.”³⁹

The AP’s linking of the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws, which would be passed in September of the same year, and the banning of Catholic veterans’ organizations under the umbrella of a campaign against “reactionaries” trivializes the radical and destructive character of the Nuremberg Laws by presenting them as a mere suppression of religious freedom. Perhaps this could be forgiven if it only occurred once, but every single subsequent AP article in the lead-up to the laws’ passage also mentions the persecution of Catholics. In a July 25 column, a single sentence mentioning that Jews are beginning to fear leaving their homes is buried under four paragraphs about the suppression of a Catholic youth organization in the state of Baden. This is billed as the first step in a “complete liquidation of the church question”, a choice of words that is staggering in hindsight when considering the fate that awaited the Jews.⁴⁰ Similarly, a July 26 article titled “Press Hit by Nazis’ Campaign” spends six paragraphs wringing its hands over the banning of Catholic newspapers before squeezing in a mention of an anti-Jewish boycott at the end.⁴¹

The *Mining Journal*’s editorials about the buildup of antisemitic actions in Germany in 1936 bear the clear influence of the AP’s decision to equate those actions to the concurrent anti-Catholic purge. An August 1 piece, “The News From Berlin”, references the regime’s “disposition to challenge organized religion” and goes on to muse that both the impending Nuremberg Laws and the anti-Catholic campaigns are being orchestrated to distract the German

³⁹ Melvin K. Whiteleather, “Nazi Leader Predicts Law Against Jews; Goering Orders Dissolution of Catholic Veterans’ Organization,” *Daily Mining Journal*, July 23, 1935.

⁴⁰ A.D. Stefferud, “Nazis Strike Sharp Blow at Church Units,” *Daily Mining Journal*, July 25, 1935.

⁴¹ A.D. Stefferud, “Press Hit by Nazis’ Campaign,” *Daily Mining Journal*, July 26, 1935.

populace from “unfavorable economic conditions”.⁴² Published later that same week, a piece titled “American Liberty” proclaims that “intolerance and fanaticism like that in Germany are directly contrary to American principles” and that Americans are blessed to enjoy “religious freedom and liberty of conscience”.⁴³ The article hastens to emphasize that the US has no stake in German affairs and should continue to mind its own business in foreign affairs, but the outright declaration of opposition to Nazi religious repression speaks volumes. It proves that by 1935, news of Nazi tyranny was, indeed, having a galvanizing effect on American national pride. Nazi actions against Jews and Catholics, which, thanks to the AP’s reporting, were interpreted as part of a common assault on religious freedom, inspired Americans to tout their own ideals of religious tolerance. With the rise of an illiberal power on the world stage, the *Mining Journal’s* editorial staff felt an increased obligation to emphasize America’s fundamental incompatibility with fascist ideology. A further radicalization in Nazi actions, however, would be required before this flowering of American nationalism could be turned outward and expressed as a global sense of responsibility.

In the midst of this phenomenon, a July 26 editorial titled “The Crowded Nations” reveals a disturbing attraction to Nazi racial and colonial ideology among the *Journal’s* editorial staff, whose principles were supposedly “contrary” to those of the Hitler regime. The editorial, prompted by Fascist Italy’s impending invasion of Ethiopia, applauds the “tolerant and understanding” attitude of Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Biddle, a personal friend of Mussolini and known fascist sympathizer, who “urges the world to recognize the territorial and material needs of the crowded nations”.⁴⁴ By “the crowded nations”, Biddle is

⁴² “The News From Berlin,” *Daily Mining Journal*, August 1, 1935.

⁴³ “American Liberty,” *Daily Mining Journal*, August 8, 1935.

⁴⁴ “The Crowded Nations,” *Daily Mining Journal*, July 26, 1935.

referring to Germany, Italy and Japan, who require expansion to house their “surplus populations”.⁴⁵ While denouncing Italy’s aggression against Ethiopia, the article concurs with Biddle that Americans, with their vast territory, cannot comprehend the struggles of nations who “must enlarge their opportunities or see their people become underprivileged”.⁴⁶ This amounts to an open endorsement of the *Lebensraum* philosophy, and the fact that this major pillar of fascist ideology is advocated by a newspaper supposedly at odds with Nazism is a major indictment of the AP’s reporting. It emphasizes that the AP’s decision to group the Nazis’ antisemitic actions with their anticlericalism created a serious barrier to Americans’ understanding of Nazi racial theories.

The year 1938 was a definitive turning point in terms of American resolve to confront Nazism on the world stage. The radicalization of Nazi military aggression (the *Anschluss* with Austria and the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia) and antisemitic persecution (the *Kristallnacht* pogrom) that occurred in this year impressed upon Americans not only that fascism represented a serious threat to the freedoms they cherished, but that they had an obligation to defend those freedoms for people outside their borders. This manifested partly in a more welcoming attitude towards immigrants. A January 6th editorial about the substantial decrease in “aliens” (foreign nationals residing in the US) since 1920 celebrates the naturalization of immigrants who “have been seeking US citizenship in greater numbers”.⁴⁷ A noticeable departure from the nativist rhetoric of the Red Scare, the article goes on to state that immigrants are

⁴⁵ “The Crowded Nations”.

⁴⁶ “The Crowded Nations”.

⁴⁷ ““Alien Problem” Receding,” *Daily Mining Journal*, January 6, 1938.

“drawn by the realization that America has something very rare and very precious after all, the liberty of a man to be a man and not just an infinitesimal unit in a swarming myriad of Charlie McCarthys.”⁴⁸

While this continues to smack of the chauvinism that colored the editorials back in 1933, the article’s pride in the American system is accompanied by a recognition that that system can, and should, function as a refuge for the victims of oppressive regimes. Contrast this with the “American Liberty” editorial from 1935, which took pains to emphasize that the plight of Jews and Catholics in Germany was none of America’s business.

By 1938, most of the AP’s headlines referred to Germany as “the Nazis” or “Hitler’s Reich” rather than by its actual name. This treatment had been accorded to Japan (“Japs”) since as early as 1933. This policy may not have raised eyebrows among the Nazis themselves, as they considered their party and ideology to be synonymous with the German state, but to US readers it emphasized the “otherness” of Germany’s political system. The same week that the editorial on “aliens” was published, President Roosevelt declared in strong terms his belief in the superiority of the American system, and, more importantly, his confidence in its eventual victory over fascism: “Democracy will be restored and established in those nations which today know it not”.⁴⁹ Although this statement was generally unrelated to the rest of Roosevelt’s speech, the AP pounced on it and highlighted Roosevelt’s statement as being “unprecedented for a chief of state”.⁵⁰ The AP’s focus on Roosevelt’s anti-Nazi rhetoric drew the attention of the *Mining Journal*, which, in a January 10 editorial titled “The President’s Prophecy”, agreed that the AP’s spin on Roosevelt’s speech “should be emphasized”.⁵¹ The article ends with the following

⁴⁸ ““Alien Problem” Receding”. Charlie McCarthy was the dummy operated by the famed ventriloquist Edgar Bergen.

⁴⁹ “The President’s Prophecy,” *Daily Mining Journal*, January 10, 1938.

⁵⁰ “The President’s Prophecy”.

⁵¹ “The President’s Prophecy”.

statement, the *Journal's* most overt assertion of American responsibility on the world stage to date:

“Both Mussolini and Hitler have scoffed at democracy as decadent. The treaty-breaking, war-menacing dictators have predicted the demise of self-government. Here is the answer. Democracies respect their treaty obligations; they are peace-loving; they are free, progressive, and strong. Liberty of thought, speech, and action cannot be crushed indefinitely.

The President's words went around the world. It is to be hoped that they were understood by peoples everywhere.”⁵²

In my estimation, this article represents a clear break with the *Journal's* previous attitude towards Nazi Germany. The increased awareness of, and pride in, “American principles” which had begun around 1935 is now accompanied by a forceful assertion of the US's willingness to advance those principles worldwide, and the implication that the US is ready to act against governments that deny their people basic freedoms. The fact that the AP's report on Roosevelt's speech steered the editorial staff in this direction gives more evidence to my claim that the AP's coverage was a significant influence on the way ordinary Americans viewed foreign affairs.

As the year went on, the *Journal's* editorials became more and more cognizant of America's perceived responsibility to advocate for democracy worldwide, and to defend the victims of fascist aggression. Within days of the *Anschluss*, Hitler's annexation of Austria, the *Journal* published an editorial framing the US's recent trade agreement with Czechoslovakia as a guarantee of American support for “the last of the Central European democracies born in the brain of Woodrow Wilson”.⁵³ Wilson's internationalist legacy, rejected by the Senate and the majority of the public in 1919, was thus revived in 1938, as Czechoslovakia was widely (and correctly) perceived to be the next target of Hitler's expansionism. “The vast majority of

⁵² “The President's Prophecy”.

⁵³ “Good Bargain,” *Daily Mining Journal*, March 14, 1938.

Americans,” the article proclaims, “are glad to help this “island of democracy in a sea of autocracy””.⁵⁴

The Nazis’ persecution of German Jews, which had helped to stir up American national pride in 1936 (albeit for the wrong reasons), reached a point in November 1938 at which the AP could no longer equate it to the hounding of the Catholic Church. The *Kristallnacht* pogrom, occurring on the night of November 9-10, destroyed thousands of synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses, and led to the deaths of hundreds of Jews through murder and suicide. The Nazis made no attempt to censor reports of the pogrom, and it was covered in exceptional detail by news agencies worldwide, including the AP. Headlines such as “Talk Heard of Reestablishing Ghettos” (November 12), “Frantic Jews Seek Way to Pay Huge Fine Levied for Slaying of Diplomat”⁵⁵ (November 14), and “Secluded Jews Await Fate” (November 18) stunned Americans, and occasioned the recall of the US ambassador in Berlin. The *Mining Journal’s* response to the pogrom, a November 16 editorial titled “Wilson Called Home”, makes clear that, despite the later success of the America First Committee and other isolationist groups, the German ambassador Dieckhoff’s conclusion that “it is impossible to speak of a true neutrality on the part of the United States” was largely correct by 1938:

“When a brutally calloused, sadistic and unpredictable government is to be dealt with, the only safe course for nations within its orbit is to be fully prepared, in case of need, to meet it in war.”⁵⁶

The Nuremberg Laws of 1936 had helped spark discussion on the “American way” as a commitment to liberal, democratic values and freedoms. Two years on, the November Pogrom

⁵⁴ “Good Bargain”.

⁵⁵ The murder of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a Jewish assailant in Paris was used as a justification for the pogrom.

⁵⁶ “Wilson Called Home,” *Daily Mining Journal*, November 16, 1938.

helped give the “American way” a new dimension; the conviction that threats to those values and freedoms, whether within American borders or outside them, must be met with uncompromising force. It is a conviction that has sent the troops of the American empire to every corner of the globe since 1945, and one that dominates our national identity even today.

In European fascism, particularly that of Nazi Germany, Americans saw a photo negative of their own society – opposite in color, but similar in its underlying form. The differences were far more visible than the similarities – the censorship and religious persecution employed by the Nazis enraged Americans who considered a free press and freedom of religion as core values of their democracy. In a twist of irony, the exposure of these Nazi abuses to an American audience was itself the result of censorship – the willing self-censorship of the Associated Press, which highlighted these elements of Nazi ideology, while downplaying others, in order to maintain its presence in Hitler’s Germany. The glaring threat posed by fascism to liberal, democratic values led to an upsurge in the pride that average Americans felt for these values, and the forging of a new brand of American exceptionalism that centered around them. In the racist and militarist elements of fascist ideology, however, lay an allure for Americans, one that was less overt but no less significant than the fear inspired by Nazi repression. The predatory imperialism employed by Hitler and his allies, who positioned themselves as Western civilization’s last bulwark against communism (an assertion that the AP’s reporting did little to contest), was consciously adopted into the American psyche after the Second World War, giving birth to American nationalism as it is known today – a nationalism that justifies its military interventions worldwide in the name of protecting the democratic values which fascism had so brutally suppressed. In this way, the AP’s coverage of Nazi Germany and the other fascist movements of 1930s Europe contributed directly

to the genesis of a new era in American self-perception, one defined both by its firm opposition to and subconscious admiration of far-right political ideology.

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