

**Background:** This article from the Nazi monthly for propagandists discusses the lessons of the 31 July 1932 Reichstag elections. It is interesting as a Nazi analysis of what worked and what didn't.

**The source:** Gustav Straebe, "Bewährte moderne Propagandamethoden," *Unser Wille und Weg*, 2 (1932), pp. 230-233.

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## Tested Methods of Modern Propaganda

by Helmut von Wilucki

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The difficult election battle is behind all the parties. The Reichstag election of 1932 was particularly difficult for the NSDAP, since an enormous flood of lies from all the other parties, including the DNVP **[Conservative Party]**, was directed toward us. The events of June even forced us in part into the defensive. That was naturally difficult for us, since in all previous elections we were always on the attack.

Since the KPD **[Communists]** did not particularly exert themselves in this campaign and since the other parties made greater efforts, but not in the area of propaganda, the main battle was between the NSDAP and the SPD **[Socialists]**. These two parties are the only ones that did anything new in the area of propaganda. This article will discuss the propaganda methods that proved effective in the last campaign in *Gau Süd Hannover-Braunschweig*.

In general, one can say that the SPD's propaganda was very clever and understood the psychology of the masses. They saw the significance of the swastika symbol, and how it seized the feelings of people and did not let them go. Therefore, they found a compelling symbol for the "Iron Front," the three arrows, and had the desired success with it. Along with other clever methods of propaganda, the three arrows encouraged many Social Democrats to new activity. Our counterpropaganda could not do much, since the three arrows of "activity, discipline and unity" aimed not at the mind, but at the feelings of the Marxists. We did our best to ridicule the "arrow" propaganda by connecting the three Sklarek brothers **[Jewish figures in a major Berlin financial scandal]** to the three arrows in the press, stickers and "visiting cards." Our large red flag with three white arrows and the large inscription "Manufactured by the Sklarek Brothers" won wide attention in heavily trafficked areas.

The SPD's "visiting card" propaganda worked only because of its novelty. We replied to it with our intellectually weightier visiting cards from the "Sklarek Brothers."

The SPD's weekly slogans during the election campaign, which came in circular letters from the SPD's headquarters, were well thought out. For its supporters, the most effective slogan was: "Iron Front against Hitler barons!"

Fortunately for us, we secured a copy of the circular letter enough in advance to make some preparations. The SPD planned to use a slogan affirming the "welfare state" in the second week of July. We in *Gau Süd Hannover-Braunschweig* cleverly used the slogan in mass meetings during the first week, making it impossible for them to use it.

The SPD had planned to use the slogan: "For the welfare state of millions against the welfare state of the millionaires." We used the slogan "Against the welfare state of the bigwigs and profiteers, for work and food for millions." This reduced the effectiveness of their slogan and campaign.

The SPD used daily newspapers for propaganda, apparently following our example during past campaigns. We had good success by regularly delivering our papers to citizens. Their newspaper the

“Volksville” used the method with which the SPD has always had the most success, namely the political lie. It used newspapers and leaflets to spread the lie about the “Hitler Emergency Decrees” of the Papen government. This seems to have had its intended success on a large number of retirees and relief recipients who were not capable of independent thinking.

Our most effective propaganda method was undoubtedly the Hitler mass meeting. The fact that the Führer placed all his energy in the service of propaganda, and the way in which he did it, had an effect on the masses of the voters. It was an event not only in our press, but also to some degree in other newspapers as well. As a result, not only those citizens who participated in the meetings, but everyone else as well was influenced by the spell of the Führer’s mass meetings.

We had prepared by years of smaller meetings. That made the mass meetings in the grand style effective during the July campaign, particularly when they were supported by large marches. The S. A. march was always the movement’s best method of propaganda. The Papen government’s ban on demonstrations was intended to remove our advantage in this regard over other parties. We had already held the first small marches and had completed all preparations for the planned 24 July march.

We reduced our leaflet propaganda in favor of newspaper propaganda in *Gau* Süd Hannover-Braunschweig. We delivered an election newspaper to every house in every village, adjusting it to the audience. One version was directed to the rural population, another to industrial districts. During the last ten days of the campaign, we delivered our *Gau* newspaper, the “Niedersächsische Tageszeitung” to every household in the cities and to the easily reached villages. That allowed us to refute the opponent’s lies each day, and remind readers of our goals and previous accomplishments. Distributing the newspaper to the entire *Gau* was possible because we had a previously prepared plan that used the newspaper’s existing distribution system.

Another part of newspaper propaganda is supplying the so-called “neutral” press with news and material supporting our views. We were able to provide numerous newspapers in the province with our *Gau* Süd Hannover-Braunschweig press service. Provincial papers have a difficult time of it. The editors are beginning to see that it is time to adjust to the electoral masses of the largest party. Many gladly accept our material, particularly since they can receive it without cost and ready for printing. Our opponents have always provided “factual” information to so-called “neutral” newspapers as a way of influencing the voters. It is obvious that we too have to use this method of propaganda.

Following the example of one local group, we used “personal” letters throughout the *Gau*. Model letters were provided to local groups. The letters were then reproduced either by hand or by machine, with personal address. Two days before the election, they were delivered to all voters, not only our supporters. There were different letters for people we knew to be Marxists, farmers, retirees, women, etc. Determining success is naturally possible only in a few cases. But many stories testify that such letters achieved their goal.

We made increased use in this campaign of flags and banners. Election banners in our party’s colors, seen daily by passers-by, surely had an impact. Electric lighting and loud speaker music ensured that they could also be seen at night.

It is particularly effective if Hitler’s flags can dominate the streets during an election. Unfortunately, one has to work hard to persuade supporters to do this. The only place we succeeded in getting really well-flagged streets was in Hannover, and that took constant effort. A corresponding number of the opponent’s “arrow” flags made their appearance too, producing a kind of “election psychology” even in those who were otherwise inattentive. We also distributed thousands of small flags with a swastika and the slogan “Vote for List 2”, with which children and adults made heavy use in the days before the election **[each party had a numbered place on the ballot]**.

We used sound films for the first time in this election campaign. Despite limited time, we succeeded in arranging about 200 performances in 70 places. Sometimes we were able to have our film shown during regular movie shows. Usually, we arranged special events in conjunction with the film. The films were everywhere received with interest and enthusiasm. The films with the Führer and party comrades Dr. Goebbels, Straßer and Göring were particularly successful.

25,000 fellow citizens saw an outdoor showing of “The Führer Speaks” and “German Arms — German Honor.” We used a 10 by 13 meter screen. We can already tell that sound films are a valuable addition to our propaganda activity, particularly when lower rental costs will give local groups the chance to make a small profit.

Loudspeaker wagons are particularly during campaigns, since they allow us to overcome Marxist efforts to keep people away from our meetings, as well as the indifference of those who do not attend. They cannot ignore a 15-20 watt loudspeaker in the streets of a small town or village, even if they want to. We began each time with march music to set the proper atmosphere for the recorded speech by a well-known party member that followed. We closed with a record of a group singing the Horst Wessel Song. Local group leaders repeatedly told us that this propaganda is particularly suited for areas in which meetings are not successful.

The usual forms of propaganda must naturally be continued after the campaign to firm up the voters we have won and win new supporters. Sound films will have a major role from now on. We also need to provide good German theater and musical events, with the works of German artists. We must make it possible for every citizen to attend such an event monthly for a low price. That is one further step to break the Jewish domination of the arts and to win back the German people’s soul.