

III

Der Stürmer: "A Fierce and Filthy Rag"

Der Stürmer is the most infamous newspaper in history. For twenty-two years every issue denounced Jews in crude, vicious, and vivid ways. Although Streicher employed a large staff by the end of the 1930s, he always had the final say. "Streicher and the *Stürmer*, they are one and the same," he would say proudly.

In its early years there was little to suggest the paper's future notoriety. Streicher began it during his first major battle for control of Nuremberg Nazism in 1923. Anti-Streicher forces had held an "Evening of Revelations" on April 14, 1923, at which Streicher was charged with being a liar and a coward, of having unsavory friends, of mistreating his wife, and of flirting with women, the kinds of accusations that would follow him throughout his career. Streicher's response was to begin a newspaper. Later he described how he chose the name *Stürmer*. Wandering through the woods on a fine spring day he thought about what to call his paper. While resting under a fir tree, inspiration struck. He jumped up and shouted, "I have it! Since the paper will storm the red fortress, it shall be called the *Stürmer*."¹ The story is most likely an afterthought, but the title he chose was typically Nazi. Other party organs had names like *Der Angriff* (the Attack) and *Die Flamme* (the Flame), names suggesting action and forcefulness.

Paper's name

Afterthought
Follow Him

STORM

slogan. Formerly it had been "A Nuremberg weekly in the struggle for truth." Now it became "A German weekly in the struggle for truth."

The mainstay of the newspaper during the Weimar period was scandal. To maintain his readership Streicher had to provide a steady supply of interesting and fresh material, an enterprise in which he had surprising success. Early in 1924 he printed a notice that the paper's price was twenty pfennig, and that those newsdealers attempting to charge more should be reported to him. It was the spectacular that made it possible to scalp a weekly newspaper.

Most of the scandal at first was political. Mayor Luppe and his administration were accused of every manner of abuse of power. If there were problems with Nuremberg housing, it was the fault of Nuremberg Jewry. If there was unemployment, Jews were to blame. But Nuremberg politics was of limited interest to the growing numbers of readers outside Nuremberg, so Streicher turned to the standbys of sensational journalism, sex and crime, preferably together. Each new alleged case of Jewish rape or sexual criminality received eager attention from the *Stürmer's* staff. The sexual material naturally made it interesting to young people; the *Stürmer* became the Nuremberg equivalent to an American boy's clandestine copy of *Playboy*. In 1925 a gentleman who claimed to be neither Jewish nor one of Streicher's political opponents wrote to his own newspaper:

Streicher always presents an attention-getting piece of news in his *Stürmer*. He always brings something rotten to the light of day. He wants to keep his readers in constant suspense. But what do his readers want? Sensation and filth. Streicher gives that to them. He floods his readers with tastelessness. And who are his readers? Mostly adolescents who are still wet behind the ears. Thanks to Streicher's "education," every lad is familiar with homosexuality and prostitution. One cannot blame Streicher for speaking about these matters. Every newspaper today does. The question is how one speaks of them. Streicher gives them great prominence. May not one be concerned when one sees the *Stürmer* not only in the hands of older students, but also in the possession of elementary school children?³

The *C. V. Zeitung*, a national Jewish monthly, made the same point in

NEEDED
FRESH
MATERIAL

Jews
Blamed
for
ALL

the
same
sex
+
crime
TOPICS

SENSATION
+
FILTH

Why are
soaps so popular?

1926, observing that many Nuremberg children read the *Stürmer*, and Mayor Luppe accused Streicher of publishing the "worst pornographic colportage literature."

Ironically, many early *Stürmer* readers seem to have been Jewish. After the war Streicher claimed Jews had given him valuable financial support by purchasing the paper. His statement is supported by an advertising circular from a Jewish newspaper in Nuremberg around 1925: "It is of great concern to the Licht Verlag that the *Stürmer* is very frequently read even in Jewish circles. We have found that large numbers of citizens of the Jewish faith buy the *Stürmer* and then take it home concealed in a copy of the *8 Uhr Blatt* or the *Morgenpresse*. THUS THE JEWS DIRECTLY SUPPORT THE STURMER."⁴

Where did Streicher's material come from? Each week there seemed to be a new scandal to report, and when there was nothing new, he would rehash an old one. Most material came from angry readers or dedicated Nazis. When the police raided the *Stürmer* office in 1927, they found that the paper received more material than it could use. Most readers, a later report concluded, were not seeking payment, but wanted to air their grievances publicly.⁵ Nuremberg was a large city, and the surrounding countryside was well populated, so there was never a shortage of people out for revenge. Those who tried to sell information, in fact, were turned down. In 1926, for example, an anonymous correspondent offered to provide an incriminating letter from Mayor Luppe for five thousand marks, an offer the paper did not accept. Interestingly, Luppe received a similar offer of incriminating information about Streicher at about the same time.

What probably was typical of the source of much *Stürmer* material was later reported by Adolf Hitler:

One must never forget the services rendered by the *Stürmer*. Without it the affair of the Jew Hirsch's perjury, at Nuremberg, would never have come out. And how many other scandals he exposed!

One day a Nazi saw a Jew, in Nuremberg station, impatiently throw a letter into the waste-paper basket. He recovered the letter and, after having read it, took it to the *Stürmer*. It was a blackmailer's letter in which the recipient, the Jew Hirsch, was threatened that the game would be given away if he stopped coughing up. The *Stürmer's* revelation provoked an inquiry. It thus became known that a country girl, who had a place in Nuremberg in the household of Herr Hirsch, had brought an

REVEALS
JEWISH
READERS IN
BEGINNING

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N.B.

action against him for rape. Hirsch got the girl to swear in court that she had never had relations with other men—then produced numerous witnesses who all claimed to have had relations with her. The German judges did not understand that Jews have no scruples when it's a question of saving one of their compatriots. They therefore condemned the servant to one and a half years in prison. The letter thrown impatiently away by Hirsch was written by one of the false witnesses suborned by him—which witness considered that he could conveniently add blackmail to perjury.⁶

Since most material did not have to be paid for, editorial expenses were low. The Nuremberg police estimated that the *Stürmer* earned substantial profits, which were used to support other Nazi activities, a view common in Nuremberg at the time.

From its first issue, the *Stürmer* was directed to that lowest common denominator that Hitler thought the proper target of propaganda. Heinz Preiss, a young scholar who attached himself to Streicher after 1933, becoming his court historian, accurately described Streicher's intent:

Since he wanted to capture the masses, he had to write in a way that the masses could understand, in a style that was simple and easy to comprehend. He had recognized that the way to achieve the greatest effect on an audience was through simple sentences. Writing had to adopt the style of speaking if it were to have a similar effect. Streicher wrote in the *Stürmer* the way he talked. . . . The worker who came home late at night from the factory was neither willing nor able to read intellectual treatises. He was, however, willing to read what interested him and what he could understand. Streicher therefore took the content from daily life and the style from speech. He thus gave the *Stürmer* its style, a style which many intellectuals could not understand, but which fundamentally was nothing but the product of his own experience gained over the years.⁷

His sentences were in fact far shorter than the average for written German, and his vocabulary was elementary. There was never much doubt about what Streicher had to say—he avoided nearly every qualifier. As editor Ernst Hiemer put it in 1935: "The *Stürmer* is the paper of the people. Its language is simple, its sentences clear. Its

Armed At
Lowest
Education

Lowest
Common
Denominator

Simple
Style

wrote
how he
spoke

vocab
elementary

N.B.

N.B.

REPETITION
OF ANTI-SEMITIC
IDIOLOGY

words have one meaning. Its tone is rough. It has to be! The *Stürmer* is not a Sunday paper. The *Stürmer* fights for truth. A fight is not fought with kid gloves. And the truth is not smooth and slippery. It is rough and hard."⁸

Not only was what Streicher said simple and blunt, it also was repeated endlessly. A single issue might have half a dozen articles on the same theme. Major topics recurred so often that a reader had only to read a few issues before he encountered nearly all the arguments in Streicher's anti-Semitic arsenal. New evidence was always provided, but only rarely new arguments.

VISUAL
IMBROW

Streicher also realized the value of visual material. The message of a cartoon or photograph could be absorbed in seconds, not the minutes necessary even for the brief *Stürmer* articles. The first issues, it is true, carried no illustrations, but by 1925 he was running cartoons in nearly every issue, and in 1930 he added photographs.

N.B.

The cartoons were certainly the most striking element in the *Stürmer*. Early in the publication of the paper Streicher discovered a cartoonist of outstanding crudity, Philippe Rupprecht, who under the pen name Fips became identified with the *Stürmer* almost as closely as Streicher. Immigrating to Argentina after World War I, Fips had worked as a cowboy on a cattle ranch. He returned to Nuremberg around 1924 and was hired by the *Fränkische Tagespost*, a newspaper affiliated with the Social Democrats. Sent to cover the second Luppe-Streicher trial with instructions to draw Streicher, he instead drew Luppe and a prominent Nuremberg Jew involved in the trial. The cartoons were published by the *Stürmer* in December 1925 (see figure 4), and Fips joined the staff. With the exception of the year 1927, he remained the *Stürmer's* only regular cartoonist until 1945, drawing thousands of vivid and revolting anti-Jewish caricatures. His style changed over his career, but the essential characteristics of a Fips Jew remained constant. He was short, fat, ugly, unshaven, drooling, sexually perverted, bent-nosed, with piglike eyes, a visual embodiment of the message of the *Stürmer's* articles.

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N.B.

How Jew
parodied in
cartoons

Though Streicher came to have a large staff, he retained control of what appeared in the *Stürmer*. Many of the lead editorials carried his name after 1933, when it was safe to claim credit, and interior articles often were written according to his instructions. He would read much material on the Jews, underlining in red what he thought useful for

Stürmer articles. Lesser writers could then recast the indicated material into proper form.

When Hitler took power the *Stürmer* was already one of the most popular Nazi publications, selling about twenty-five thousand copies weekly. Curiously, Streicher did not yet own the paper. Legal arrangements had never been written out, and when his printer died in 1934, the widow claimed ownership. To avoid legal proceedings, Streicher purchased all rights for forty thousand marks, not a bad price since the *Stürmer* soon made him wealthy. By the mid-1930s it was selling hundreds of thousands of copies weekly. Precise figures are hard to determine, but the circulation guaranteed advertisers climbed rapidly, particularly after Streicher hired a capable circulation manager in 1934, reaching about five hundred thousand in 1935. The print run then seems to have been around seven hundred thousand.

TABLE 2

Der Stürmer Circulation: 1927-38

Issue/Year	Circulation
1927	14,000
1933	25,000
No. 6 (1934)	47,000
No. 13 (1934)	49,000
No. 17 (1934)	50,000
No. 19 (1934)	60,000
No. 33 (1934)	80,000
No. 35 (1934)	94,114
No. 42 (1934)	113,800
No. 6 (1935)	132,897
No. 19 (1935)	202,600
No. 29 (1935)	244,600
No. 32 (1935)	286,400
No. 36 (1935)	410,600
No. 40 (1935)	486,000
No. 5 (1938)	473,000

The circulation growth after 1934 was assisted by enthusiastic promotion. Robert Ley, the Nazi labor leader, pushed the *Stürmer* on his membership. Various party affiliates conducted circulation drives. In 1937, for example, a Nazi district farmer's organization leader wrote his subordinates ordering them to attend to the *Stürmer* when conducting anti-Jewish agitation. "No educational material is better there than the old anti-Semitic fighting paper of the *Gauleiter* of Franconia, Julius Streicher, the *Stürmer*. With blunt plainness he reveals the crimes of the Jewish race from the beginning to the present."⁹ All subordinates were to subscribe, and were to inform him that they had done so. No excuses would be accepted.

Nine special editions also were published after 1933, often timed to appear at the annual Nuremberg rally. These had themes such as ritual murder, Jewish criminality, the world Jewish conspiracy, Jewish sex crimes, and the Jews of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Print runs were as high as 2,000,000, and extensive national advertising was conducted.

The readership of the *Stürmer* was even larger than the circulation figures suggest, for thousands of elaborate display cases were built by loyal readers throughout Germany that displayed each week's issue. A journalism handbook published during the Nazi era claimed that such display cases were to be found everywhere in Germany, giving the paper an unprecedented readership. These cases, built in areas where many people passed by, were often elaborate structures (see figure 5). Usually they were graced with slogans from the *Stürmer* such as "The Jews are our misfortune" or "German women and girls: the Jews are your destruction." ^{N.B.} The *Stürmer* regularly urged readers to keep the display cases well maintained and uncluttered. A 1936 notice to readers, for example, instructed readers to keep only the latest issue of the newspaper and *Stürmer* publishing house literature on display. "It is especially important that *Stürmer* display cases do not adversely affect the local scenery."¹⁰ Many issues of the paper carried photographs of particularly impressive display cases, and most issues in the 1930s carried long lists of newly erected ones.

Showcases were built in places where people naturally congregated—bus stops, factory canteens, public squares, parks, and busy streets. A passerby could, within a few seconds, pause to see the latest Fips cartoon, or devote the several minutes necessary to read

Display cases placed in public places

any of the generally brief articles. The showcases became part of everyday life in the Third Reich.

The enormous circulation of the *Stürmer* was in itself evidence of its official popularity, but there was more. Adolf Hitler himself praised it. Hermann Rauschning, summarizing a conversation with Hitler, reports the Führer's admiration for Streicher's work:

Anti-Semitism . . . was beyond question the most important weapon in his propagandist arsenal, and almost everywhere it was of deadly efficiency. That was why he had allowed Streicher, for example, a free hand. The man's stuff, too, was amusing, and very cleverly done. Wherever, he wondered, did Streicher get his constant supply of new material? He, Hitler, was simply on thorns to see each new issue of the *Stürmer*. It was the one periodical that he always read with pleasure, from the first page to the last.¹¹

Streicher regularly cited Hitler's praise, which does not have to be strictly true, of course. But the fact that Hitler was willing to make such a statement gave the *Stürmer* considerable force.

Other leading figures of the party wrote letters praising the *Stürmer*, apparently in response to a request from the paper. Victor Lutze, chief of the Storm Troopers, wrote in 1937: "The *Stürmer* has an essential role in seeing that each German today views the Jewish question as the crucial question of the nation, and the honor of having put racial thought in popular language." Albert Forster, *Gauleiter* of Danzig, wrote:

With pleasure I say that the *Stürmer*, more than any other daily or weekly newspaper, has made clear to the people in simple ways the danger of Jewry.

Without Julius Streicher and his *Stürmer*, the importance of a solution to the Jewish question would not be seen to be as critical as it actually is by many citizens.

It is therefore to be hoped that those who want to learn the unvarnished truth about the Jewish question will read the *Stürmer*.¹²

Similar letters came from Heinrich Himmler, Robert Ley, Max Amann, and other prominent Nazis.

HITLER
PRAISES
THE PAPER

N.B.

WHAT IS
THE BIG
PROBLEM
WITH THE
Jews?

SELLING TO
THE MASSES

more about children's books

The success of the *Stürmer* allowed Streicher to broaden his activity by publishing anti-Semitic books. Two garishly illustrated children's readers were published after 1936, along with a third story-book with lurid tales comparing Jews to unpleasant animals. His early speeches and editorials were published in collections edited by Heinz Preiss. Streicher's collaborator Fritz Fink wrote a guide to anti-Semitic education, copies of which were conveniently available in Braille. A series of pseudoscholarly works appeared, including a study of court Jews, a collection of anti-Jewish proverbs, and a brief work on Bismarck's treaty with Russia. Streicher also produced a series of illustrated books on the Nuremberg rallies and even put out a short-lived anti-Semitic medical journal.

pornography

Another major project was the *Stürmer* archive, first mentioned in 1933. This grew to a sizable collection of anti-Semitea, including thousands of books in Hebrew and Aramaic (languages few staff members could read) and many more in German and other languages. There were many Jewish and Gentile periodicals and a large collection of Fips cartoons and photographs, along with assorted Jewish paraphernalia such as Torah scrolls and the tools of ritual circumcisers. The most notorious part of the collection was its large holding of pornography, which Streicher claimed was for scientific research into the Jewish question.

fascination w/ Jewish porn

Much of the material was sent in by readers, to whom the paper often appealed for such items; more came from seized Jewish property. The Gestapo supplied considerable information, particularly on the theme of Jewish criminality. The Gestapo was usually cooperative, but when some offices were recalcitrant Streicher complained and as usual got action. A 1937 Gestapo memo instructs local offices to turn over to the *Stürmer* whatever it requested. And a 1940 *Stürmer* letter to the Düsseldorf Gestapo office asked particularly for material relevant to Jews and pornography, requesting all pornography in any way connected with Jews—if Jews had written, printed, published, or sold it, the *Stürmer* wanted it.¹³

sworn vial tactic

Over three hundred people worked for Streicher by 1939, including, remarkably enough, a Jew named Jonas Wolk, who under the pen name Fritz Brand wrote particularly dreadful *Stürmer* articles. The Göring report noted that, while Streicher paid Wolk a good salary, he refused to shake hands with him. A 1939 letter from Vienna

came from a Jew who also wanted to have his material printed by the *Stürmer*¹⁴. The bulk of the staff, of less puzzling background, helped Streicher conduct an operation that reached the entire German-speaking world. Copies went to the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, and other countries with large German populations. The world press regularly reported Streicher's doings, viewing him as a major force in Nazi Jew-baiting.

In Germany, even though the *Stürmer* lacked status as an official party paper, it had semi-official status. As a Berlin court that rejected the suit of the victim of a *Stürmer* attack stated:

The *Stürmer* has the task of spreading and deepening the understanding of racial matters among the people, as well as supporting the movement in its vital struggle against international Jewry. Thus it is quite proper for the *Stürmer* and others to be critical of the relationships between individual citizens and the Jews. This is done not to slander the individual, rather to show the whole of Germany how each individual conducts himself with respect to Jewry. The individual has no right to complain about such criticism of his behavior, as long as it is reported objectively, since that would unreasonably hamper or even endanger the necessary work of the *Stürmer*¹⁵

Elsewhere in Germany, citizens were arrested for criticizing Streicher or disparaging his *Stürmer*.

As such a court case suggests, however, even the official anti-Semitism of the Third Reich failed to make Streicher's work popular with many Germans. All sorts of protests from German citizens occurred. The most common involved the sexual element in many *Stürmer* stories. Editor Ernst Hiemer responded vehemently to such complaints: "You may survey the entire thirteen volumes of the *Stürmer* and note every passage which you think endangers the youth. But we will then take the holy books and do the same." It was better to have a youth educated in the sexual threat of Jewry than one ruined through ignorance. A later issue spoke of "perfumed women with delicate nerves and men of the same sort" who objected to the *Stürmer*'s frank treatment. When Streicher attacked the Old Testament (see Chapter V), angry Christians around the nation protested vigorously. Doctors, upset when Streicher's anti-Semitic medical

ANCIENS
ARRESTED
MANY
BEING
CRITICIZED
OF
THE
PAPER

Denounced
idiot

journal argued that vaccinations were part of the Jewish plot, denounced his idiocy.¹⁶

Streicher also received many anonymous letters, which he turned over to the police for investigation. Stürmer display cases often were vandalized. The *Stürmer* regularly attacked its critics. One Fritz Eckart earned space in the paper in 1936, for example, when he walked into his barber shop only to leave when he found a copy of the *Stürmer* on display. Thereafter he would say: "I am a Center Party man and will remain so, come what may."¹⁷ The sixty businessmen in another town who attended a Jewish funeral were attacked, without, however, suffering adverse consequences.

Even leading Nazis sometimes worked up the courage to attack Streicher and the *Stürmer*. Otto Dietrich, the press secretary, tried to persuade Hitler to ban the *Stürmer* on several occasions, only to have Hitler respond that Streicher's "primitive methods" were most valuable in reaching the average man. Hans Lammers, Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, and a number of other top party figures also tried to do something about Streicher at one time or another, with the most limited success.¹⁸

N.B.

Christian Comm
Jewish rit.
murder

When Streicher did get into trouble, he could always turn to Hitler for help. In 1934, for example, the ritual-murder special edition produced international uproar, including protests from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hitler finally permitted it to be banned, only after most copies had already been distributed, on the pretext that Streicher's comparison of the Christian sacrament of communion to Jewish ritual murder was an affront to Christians. Later that year, the *Stürmer's* ill-advised attack on a Czechoslovakian statesman got in the way of German diplomacy, resulting in a two-week ban. In 1935 the paper attacked Hans Lammers, and a three-month ban was imposed. But Streicher visited Hitler and secured his order allowing him to resume publication. Hitler revoked another ban in 1938, once again after Streicher made a personal appeal.

PAPER
Goes
too far

Paper
Banned
A few times

By 1940 such difficulties had lessened. With the general tightening of censorship that accompanied the war, proofs of each *Stürmer* issue were sent to Berlin before publication. In November 1940, for example, the censor instructed the paper to hold back an article on Jews in Turkey, to omit an article on Switzerland, and to alter parts of other stories.¹⁹ These changes were not critical of the anti-Jewish

tone—the worst stories passed untouched—but attempts to avoid diplomatic difficulties.

After 1940 the Stürmer's circulation dropped sharply, in part due to war time paper shortages, though Hitler assured enough paper for Streicher to keep going. A more important reason was the disappearance of Jews from everyday life within Germany. In the 1920s and 1930s each issue of the paper had been filled with charges that Jews were about nefarious deeds everywhere in Germany, posing an immediate threat to each reader. But by the war years, most Jews who had not emigrated had been removed to the East, where under the ministrations of the SS and out of public view, they were annihilated in growing numbers. Lacking the element of immediate threat, large numbers of Germans lost whatever interest they had had in the Jewish question. The Stürmer was left a journal of international affairs, not the scandal sheet that had made it notorious. Without the appeal of immediate scandal, the circulation soon dropped to under two hundred thousand. By mid-1944, paper shortages had reduced it from its high of sixteen pages to the four pages it had had in 1923. Yet Streicher continued to the end, his final issue appearing in February 1945. Denouncing the invading Allies as tools of the international Jewish conspiracy, the issue had a limited audience.

The Stürmer was published for twenty-two years. Never before or since was there a newspaper that so crudely proclaimed racial hatred to so many people. Even today, the Stürmer's message is available in anti-Semitic literature published the world over. Indeed, in 1976 the New Christian Crusade Church, a very right-wing organization in Louisiana, printed "The Julius Streicher Memorial Edition" of the 1934 ritual murder special edition (see figure 16). According to the introductory material: "Julius Streicher, German educator, writer, and politician, in whose memory this paper was printed, was a victim of the horrible Talmudic Blood Rite known as the Nuremberg Trials. . . . We now proudly present to you, the reader, for the first time in English, this new edition of Julius Stricher's [sic] most famous issue of *Der Sturmer*." The English-language version has, apparently, sold well.

Drops off
1940

N.B.

N.B.

22 year
publication

N.B.
SAD.

wow!