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The Warner Brothers Prove Their Patriotism

Lara Jacobson

“You may correctly charge me with being anti-Nazi. But no one can charge me with being anti-American.”¹ These were the words of Harry Warner, President of Warner Brothers Production Inc., who stood up in front of the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce in September of 1941 challenging alleged accusations of propaganda in their films. The Warner Brothers’ studio, consisting of four siblings, Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack, was simplistic in that way; they were anti-Nazi, American citizens, and proud of it. They hated the Nazis and they loved their adopted home country. Whether the world was at war or not, they believed in freedom of speech, social justice, promotion of the truth and their movies consistently reflected these ideals. Being second-generation immigrants from Poland who also were of the Jewish faith meant the rise of Hitler in the 1930’s was especially jarring to them. Their people in Europe were becoming increasingly oppressed as the Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ Party continued to gain power in Germany and beyond, but unlike many other Americans, the Warner Brothers chose to acknowledge the violence being inflicted upon the Jewish community abroad. They were the first motion picture studio to dedicate their efforts on and off the screen to the anti-fascist campaign well before America’s involvement in the Second World War. It did not take an international invasion or a Holocaust to get the Brothers to understand the growing hostility towards Jews and other minorities; they understood Hitler, the Nazis, and their threatening potential from a very early stage. Using their knowledge and influential platform in Hollywood, the Brothers made their first significant statement on the matter through film; all of America and beyond would now become more aware of the dangers of Nazism.

The Warner Brothers did not care about the taboo or sensitive nature of the topics they tackled, instead controversy was their specialty, and taking on an oppressive government regime in a foreign country was no exception. Their first major film about Germany, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), led the way for other Warner Brother war films reach the movie-going public. Although other motion picture studios eventually joined the war conversation, it is important to note that the Warner Brothers were the first. The first to cut ties with their German distributors, the first to produce a film showcasing to the world the injustices of the Nazis, and the first Jewish moguls in Hollywood. They were the first in many different scenarios, the studio was a consistent contributor to the war effort throughout the war and beyond. The Brothers did not just enlist their pictures, they enlisted their entire company to aid the Allies. This ranged from producing short training videos used by the military to donating actual pints of plasma to Red Cross who would pick it up from the studio. The Warner Brothers’ journey throughout the war was a tedious and enduring one, whether the company was being accused or praised for their works, it did not matter to the siblings. Their Polish and Jewish ancestry did not hinder the Warner Brothers in their efforts to aid the Allies in World War II, instead these qualities helped create a studio determined to raise awareness and combat global injustice all the while displaying

¹ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda. September 25, 1941. USC Warner Bros. Archives, Box 2947,812-815.

their unwavering patriotism to the United States in ways that utilized and went beyond the big screen.

Judaism, Hard Work, and Success in America

The story of how the Warner Brothers came to be a major success began how most ‘American Dream’ stories do; migrating from their home to the land of ‘milk and honey’ and finding success in the United States.² Their parents, Benjamin Wonsal and Pearl Eichelbaum, both born in 1857, were married and lived together in Krasnosielc, a small village in Poland, just outside of Warsaw. However, during the late 1800’s, Poland was still under the control of the Russian Empire and growing up, Benjamin was not allowed to attend school because he was a Jew.³ In order for Benjamin and the other Jewish children to acquire an education without the Russians knowing, they gathered in stables where a rabbi taught them about the realities of their religion and race.⁴ Once Benjamin and Pearl started having children, such as Harry who was the first born of the four founding brothers (born in 1881), they realized that they would have to eventually uproot their family. The next brother, Albert was born three years later also in Krasnosielc, Poland, followed by Sam born in 1887 in Baltimore, Maryland and lastly, Jack born in 1892 in London, Ontario, Canada. The Brothers were just four of twelve children their parents bore during their travels from Poland to the United States, to Canada, and eventually back to the States where they settled and raised their family in Youngstown, Ohio. Benjamin was determined to provide a better life for his children, free of religious prejudice and full of unlimited opportunities, motivating him to leave his family behind and migrate to the United States in the early 1880’s. Their father’s dedication to Judaism and his hard work to make a better life for his family set the tone for his offspring. As they grew up in America, they realized their potential career possibilities, but the Brothers never expected that they would eventually create one of the largest motion picture companies in the world today.

Growing up an immigrant in 20th century America was difficult, but being simultaneously Jewish also heightened the level of prejudice the Warner family endured throughout their journey of ‘making it’ in the United States. Regardless, the family was proud of their religion, even if it was in the minority in comparison to the dominantly Christian nation they now lived in. Despite the pride Benjamin felt for his upbringing, it was clear that he would need to change his and his family’s name in order to give them the chance of a fair opportunity in America. Wonsal became Warner, and Hirsch was changed to Harry, Abraham shortened to Abe or Albert, and Schmucl was altered to Sam all for the sake of the family avoiding more prejudice. The act of changing their names displayed the family’s early dedication to becoming “more American,” and although the Brothers were forced to give up part of their Polish identities at a young age, they remained rooted in the values and beliefs instilled in them by their parents.

The Warner family may have converted their names to adapt to their new home country, but that did not stop them from practicing Judaism in their home. Jack recalled in his autobiography that he had no interest in learning Hebrew growing up in Youngstown, but having endured many hardships as a Jewish child in Poland, Benjamin was determined to make sure his

² “The Rise of the House of Warner: A Synopsis of a Most Unusual Bit of Business History, Appropriate on the Occasion of Vitaphone’s Third Birthday,” *Moving Picture reviews theatre management*. August, 1929.

³ Jack L. Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1965), 16.

⁴ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 16.

children appreciated the religion that he and Pearl worked so hard to continually practice.⁵ Benjamin had a Boston rabbi travel to their house and teach their children the Hebrew language and the history of their people. Jack, being an uninterested and unamused child at the time, did not enjoy these sessions', he recalled:

[rabbi speaking] "'...Your brother Harry talks Hebrew like English and he does not need the pin.'

He was right about Harry. He could read and write and speak Hebrew when he was only seven years old. But for me it was hard enough to learn English, to say nothing of the whole megillah in Hebrew, too. So I said to myself: 'Rabbi, the next time you stab me with the pin I'm going to jerk your beard.'"⁶

Jack went on to tell how he in fact did pull the rabbi's beard, causing that encounter to mark the last time the teacher worked with the Warner children. Although not all the Brothers were appreciative of their religious education at a young age, the words and pictures they produced in the future would indicate its lasting impact on them.

In addition to encouraging Judaism, Benjamin set the example as to what hard work entailed. While he worked long days ranging from sixteen to eighteen hours, Pearl, their mother stayed home and made clothes and shoes for the kids so they family could save money.⁷ Jack admitted that his parents may have had very little money but, "they had guts. And they had love."⁸ Nevertheless, the boys were still expected to pull their weight for the family once they became old enough to work. In addition to the Brother's schoolwork, they all obtained various jobs; Harry started off as a cobbler's apprentice, Sam was a fireman on the Erie Railroad, and Jack with his exceptional vocals, made money by singing.⁹ However none of them had a strong passion for their careers and felt their efforts would be most effective if they pooled their collective talents. Soon, the Warner's went from owning a bicycle shop in Youngstown to opening a theatre in Newcastle, Pennsylvania in 1903.¹⁰ The absence of a nickelodeon in town encouraged the family to contribute cinematically to their community. Upon acquiring a projection machine, the Warners opened their theatre. Harry arranged the show and picture, Rose (their sister) played the piano, Sam ran the projector, Albert sold tickets, and finally Jack sang along in correlation with the slides.¹¹ That small theatre of ninety-nine seats eventually turned into Warner's Feature Film Company where they became a significant presence on the whole east side of America and Canada as well.¹² A 1914 article about the Warner Brothers, cited the mogul family as a company that was "paying the highest prices for the features has served its purposes in attracting some of the best producers [...]."¹³ Even early on, the Brothers were

⁵ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 17.

⁶ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 17.

⁷ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 33-34.

⁸ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 13.

⁹ "The Rise of the House of Warner: A Synopsis of a Most Unusual Bit of Business History, Appropriate on the Occasion of Vitaphone's Third Birthday," *Moving Picture* reviews theatre management. August, 1929.

¹⁰ "Warner, Albert; Warner, Harry M.; and Warner, Jack L." *Current Biography (Bio Ref Bank)* (January 1, 1945): *Biography Reference Bank (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 13, 2018).

¹¹ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. *Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda*. September 25, 1941. USC Warner Bros. Archives, Box 2947,812-815.

¹² Article. *The Moving Picture World: Warner's Feature, Inc.* July 11, 1914.

¹³ Article. *The Moving Picture World: Warner's Feature, Inc.*

making strategic moves that helped them quickly rise to the top. Just four years later they opened a new studio on Sunset Boulevard in California where they became further established in Hollywood and from there business took off, growing their enterprise into a national, and even international force.

As a result of their hard work and dedication to the movie making industry, their ability to create a platform to express their Jewish faith became possible during the World War II era. In 1940, multiple years after they opened their first studio and having become wildly successful, Harry gave a speech to thousands of his employees and their families about the duties and obligations of their company at this time: “As I see it, we have a very simple problem here and that is: ‘United we survive and divided we fall.’ We must unite and quit listening to anybody discussing whether you or I am a Jew or a Catholic or a Protestant or of any other faith- and not allow anyone to say anything against anybody’s faith- or we will fall just the same as they did over there [...]”¹⁴ Hollywood may have not been accepting of the moguls when they first entered the industry, but there was no denying the powerful presence and germane words from the prestigious president himself. The Warner Brothers were Polish, Jewish, and proud of these identities. The prejudice their parents faced back in Poland under the Russian Empire was not unlike the discrimination the Brothers experienced in Hollywood, yet the opportunity presented in America for a better life was a significant indication as to how the Warner Brothers came to be so patriotic and loyal to a nation that was not originally their own, and the way they integrated this sentiment.

Warner Brothers Don’t Hold Back

The launch of Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack’s production company began with the creation of *My Four Years in Germany*, released in 1918. The silent film was based on James W. Gerard’s experiences as the American ambassador who monitored British interests in Germany during the First World War. The Brother’s boldly chose World War I as the subject of their very first production, a daring decision considering the sensitivity of the content and of the war in general. The studio kick-started its business with a film addressing current world events; no matter if those happenings were for good or for bad, the Warner Brothers made it clear that depicting real events on the big screen would be a critical part to the family’s approach to movie making. As the company grew, the Brother’s influence increased. Their flourishing power made them not only a future resource for President Franklin Roosevelt’s war effort, but trailblazers in the motion picture industry when it came to creating entertaining and informative films that were discerning products of the time. The family believed the screen had a job whether in wartime or not, its purpose was to entertain and inform its audiences; while they focused on both components, many other studios only favored the former. The film, *My Four Years in Germany*, would set the standard of what was to come for Warner Brothers Entertainment.

With the war still raging in 1917, Gerard published his book which provided expert insight and analysis regarding the internal political affairs of Germany. In his foreword, Gerard was quite transparent with his readers, describing in detail just how serious of a threat Germany was at this time, calling them a powerful state that was “unbroken” compared to the other nations

¹⁴ Pamphlet. “Statement of Policy,” Reprinted from *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 31, 1942. USC Warner Bros. Archives, accessed January 23, 2018.

that were also engaged in the Great War.¹⁵ The country was a dominating military force for they had a constant influx of young men ready to serve their country and their overall skill in battle made for an impressive, yet deadly enemy for the Allies.¹⁶ Gerard made it a point to offer these statements in the beginning of his book, explaining, “Americans do not grasp either the magnitude or the importance of this war.”¹⁷ Thus, within the first few pages, he argued that the outcome of the war was in doubt as long as the Allies continued to underestimate the Central Powers. It was apparent from his strong words and urgent tone that he wanted readers to grasp the significance of his ideas. He continued, “we are engaged in a war against the greatest military power the world has ever seen [...] We stand in great peril, and only the exercise of ruthless realism can win this war for us.”¹⁸ Gerard made no effort to hide the truth of Germany’s destructive potential in Europe and instead put into perspective the current conditions of the Great War.

Gerard’s book contained the kind of material the Warner Brothers’ valued and were drawn to. They appreciated the authenticity and ferocity behind his words as well as the stand he took against tyranny, making his book an obvious choice for a film adaptation. The parallels found in Gerard’s text and the future work of the Warner Brothers’ is all too apparent; the fighting words, commitment to educating audiences, and patriotic themes are motifs found consistently throughout Gerard’s book and the Brothers’ films. Gerard took a risk by publishing a book that did not blind the readers with ignorant and misleading American patriotism, instead he had another goal in mind, “it is only because I believe that our people should be informed that I have consented to write this book. There are too many thinkers, writers and speakers in the United States; from now on we need the doers, the organisers, and the realists who alone can win this contest for us, for democracy and for permanent peace!”¹⁹ Just a year after the book was published, the Warner Brothers would release their film version of the text, expanding on Gerard’s patriotic rhetoric, and emphasizing through visuals the importance and urgency of the situations he portrayed in his book.

With its valiant messages and bold stance on the war, this black and white, silent film launched the studio as a national force. As precarious as it was to publish a book displaying America and the Allies in a controversial position in the current war, it was equally as daring for the Brothers to produce a motion picture with the same ideas. The company hit the ground running and never looked back; cultivating films that addressed sensitive, taboo, and controversial topics became the culture of their studio. Working endlessly and producing hundreds of films in the 1920’s proved that the Warner Brothers were serious about the movie making industry and would become a force to be reckon with for decades to come. The successful debut of the Vitaphone, in their films, *Don Juan* (1926) and *The Jazz Singer* (1927), resulted in box office hits for the company as well as driving them to become one of the elite studios of the time. The Vitaphone proved to be a major technological stepping stone because it enabled the studio to synchronize sound with picture, forever changing the cinematic experience. The progress of harmonizing music with film was an especially symbolic tribute to their late brother Sam, who played a large role in the developing the Vitaphone but was unable to see its

¹⁵ James W. Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1917), vii.

¹⁶ Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, vii.

¹⁷ Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, vii,

¹⁸ Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, ix.

¹⁹ Gerard, *My Four Years in Germany*, x.

full potential for he passed away from pneumonia just twenty-four hours before the release of *The Jazz Singer*.²⁰

As the family continued to gain prestige and power in Hollywood, their social circles grew and they found themselves in the company of esteemed politicians. In a meeting in New York during the early 1930's, Harry and Jack discussed the former's change in alliance from the Republican to the Democratic party, citing: "The country is in chaos. There is revolution in the air, and we need a change."²¹ His proposed solution to this economic mess was Governor Roosevelt and Jack's connections on the other side of the country made him a valuable resource. His response to his brother's plea for help, "I'm your man."²² The combined networking of Harry and Jack on both the East and West coasts of the United States helped Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt get elected president in 1932.²³

As Jack Warner and FDR's relationship grew, the family became major supporters of the president. In Jack's autobiography, he stated that at the end of his trip to the capital in 1933, Roosevelt asked him if he would like a diplomatic position overseas.²⁴ Warner responded, "I'm very flattered Mr. President. But I think I can do better for your foreign relations with a good picture about America now and then."²⁵ This prophetic response would soon prove to be all too accurate. In fact, these pictures the Warner Brothers made held little back when telling stories of America and it's internal struggles. This was especially true with the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in 1939, that called upon the United States to take action in an overseas war, a risk that most citizens were still hesitant about taking again.

The Warner Brothers were not ones to avoid risky and subversive topics with their films, instead they embraced and showcased them. They strongly believed it was their role in the industry to produce pictures that were relevant to the time and that supported a noble cause. In March of 1937, Harry Warner released an article presenting his opinion of what the role of the motion picture industry should be; "the men and women who make a nation's entertainment have obligations above and beyond their primary commercial objective, which is the box office. [...] The motion picture can be a great power for peace and good will or, if we shirk our obvious duty, it can stand idly by and let the world go to pot."²⁶ The Warner Brothers were well aware of their power and influence on the world, Harry completed his statement by saying, "I think we are making an honest effort to use the screen's influence for the greatest general good of humanity."²⁷ Based on movies such as *Black Fury* (1935) which addressed mine labor troubles at the time; *They Won't Forget* (1937), on prejudice in the Deep South; and *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), which portrayed the controversial Dreyfus case, Harry's words held true. *Fortune* magazine credited the Brothers as "the only major studio that seems to know or care what is going on in America besides pearl-handled gunplay, sexual dalliance, and the giving of topcoats

²⁰ Jack L. Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1965), 180.

²¹ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 208.

²² Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 208.

²³ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 208.

²⁴ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 224.

²⁵ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 224.

²⁶ Betty Warner Sheinbaum (Comments), *Warners War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood*, USC Fisher Gallery, October 1, 2013. Quotes from March 1937, accessed September 20, 2017.

²⁷ Sheinbaum (Comments), *Warners War*.

to comedy butlers.”²⁸ Their aggressive approach to confronting questionable topics head on earned them a reputation as risk takers in the industry, unafraid of stirring the social and political pot in order to make a statement. In various cases, the Brothers valued the message they were publicizing over the many negative repercussions that could potentially result such as decrease in profits, critical public response, and persecution from the federal government. All of which followed the Brothers’ release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in 1939.

The Warner Brothers were repeatedly praised for their ability to produce pictures on current events that strove for accuracy in their portrayal. *Fortune* magazine claimed, “Warner pictures are hence as close to real life as Hollywood ever gets.”²⁹ The studio not only created authentic and entertaining films, but controversial ones, which were growing more and more successful with each production. *Fortune* magazine included Harry Warner’s confession of his favorite film, “...The one on Patrick Henry (*Give Me Liberty*), he would rather watch than any other Warner picture, but he believes that all Warner pictures contain some moral lesson. ‘The motion picture presents right and wrong, as the Bible does. By showing both right and wrong we teach the right.’”³⁰ In this public statement not only did the Warner family prove yet again their patriotism by referencing Patrick Henry, a United States symbolic figure of the American Revolution, but also by citing the Bible and appealing to the predominantly Christian population despite his own Jewish devotion. The article went on to commend the eldest Warner Brother on his personal beliefs, stating “Harry is so violently anti-Nazi that his incalculable influence could be all too quickly enlisted in America if the democratic nations should go to war.”³¹ It must be noted that this was written in 1937 when the National Socialist German Workers’ Party dominated Germany’s government at the time but there was still no war yet. With their strong opinions and compelling films, the Warner Brothers had made a name for themselves, not only in Hollywood but all across America. Their near constant portrayal of current events throughout their business’s cinematic history displayed the company’s flair for choosing the risky stories other studios avoided. They were a Jewish family who immigrated from Poland who now owned and operated one of the largest and most successful motion picture studios in the United States by solely producing what they believed in. But, their biggest, most controversial film, was just around the corner.

Confessions of a Nazi Spy

The Warner Brother’s effort to generate awareness about the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Europe can be distinctly seen in their production of the groundbreaking film, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. No other major movie entertainment company even dared to touch a topic as controversial and taboo as that of what was happening in Germany in the 1930’s. But the Brother’s Polish and Jewish heritage plus their cinematic history of covering problematic events would not allow a matter that affected them so personally to go unchallenged. Additionally, in the early 1930’s when the studio received news that one of their employees working in Berlin had been killed by Nazis because he was Jewish, it became even more imperative that they respond. Jack was notified of the murder when he was abroad in Austria on business and quickly

²⁸ Fortune Magazine. *Warner Brothers*. Newspaper Article. Dec 1937, accessed October 30, 2017.

²⁹ Fortune Magazine. *Warner Brothers*.

³⁰ Fortune Magazine. *Warner Brothers*.

³¹ Fortune Magazine. *Warner Brothers*.

took action by shutting down their offices and film exchanges in Germany, claiming, “terror was creeping across the country.”³² He even tried to warn theatre and film director Max Reinhardt, telling him to get out right away, Reinhardt answered, “I am safe here...Hitler will listen to reason.” Jack’s response was all too foretelling of what was to come, “Hitler listens to no one.”³³

The Warner Brothers not only had strong ethnic ties to those under the duress of Hitler’s regime in Europe but their religion solidified their decision to take a stand against the Nazis. The persecution their parents faced growing up in Poland when it was under the Russian Empire, instilled in the Brothers’ the notion of hard work and appreciation of their new life in America, where they had an abundance of opportunities and freedom. They chose not to waste that chance, and used their platform to advocate for the humane treatment of individuals, whose voices that were suppressed by Hitler at the time. Regarded by the Brothers as “one of the greatest productions we have ever undertaken [...] for we believe that the screen has grown up [...] for its scope is unlimited; and it will be our endeavor to hold our place in the vanguard of its progress”, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* proved to be exactly that for the studio’s success.³⁴ It was a groundbreaking yet informative film; and once audiences saw it, Americas could no longer turn a blind eye to the fascism and hostility occurring overseas.

But not everyone in the film industry was as passionate as the Brother’s were when it came to highlighting Hitler and his followers on the big screen. A large reason why many companies did not even consider this topic was because of the impact it would have on their international profits. German ties would surely be cut, as well as relations with any other country who wished to remain neutral during the soon to be global conflict. Ultimately, none of this mattered to the Warner Brothers studio. Due in part to the studio’s power and success, the family could afford to be outwardly expressive about the importance of making *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, and they let no one get in their way. During the process of making *Nazi Spy*, a Hollywood executive confronted the youngest brother, ““Look, Jack... a lot of us are still booking pictures in Germany, and taking money out of there. We’re not at war with Germany, and you’re going to hurt some of our own people here.’ ‘Hurt what?’ I said angrily. ‘Their picketbooks? Listen, these murdering bastards killed our own man in Germany because he wouldn’t heil Hitler... I’m going to finish this picture, and Hitler and Goebbels can scream all they want. And so can guys like you!’”³⁵ The Third Reich was quickly growing more powerful and the Warner Brothers wanted to make a statement the best way they knew how to, through films.

The pressbook of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) released to theatres nationwide displayed the overall feeling of urgency the Brother’s were trying to relay. In the opening pages of the pressbook, it told distributors, “‘Confessions of a Nazi Spy’ must not be treated the same way you handle the average picture. Because of the nature of this picture- its timeliness, its importance, and its story content- exploitation should be no problem to you.”³⁶ The provocative

³² Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 249.

³³ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 249.

³⁴ Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., *WARNER BROS. ANNOUNCE NEXT SEASON’S PRODUCTION PLANS*, (New York), March 13, 1939. Margaret Herrick Library, accessed October 30, 2017.

³⁵ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 262.

³⁶ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook. January 30, 1940, accessed November 20, 2017, 5.

word choice employed in these first few lines already called upon the reader to prove his/her patriotism, specifically the last sentence that assumed showing this film would be no issue at all despite its sensitive content and the blatant controversies content. Under the section entitled “Working Ideas for First Run Theatres,” the book suggested, “for lobby and front display make your theatre indicate that something big and important is about to happen. **It is your American privilege to show this picture and a privilege for every American to see it!** (emphasis in original)”³⁷ The Brothers were selling more than a film at this time, they were trying to sell a cause: anti-fascism. They wanted their audiences to be entranced by this production while feeling the anger and patriotism they themselves did during the early onset of the Second World War.

In an attempt to bear out these feelings, even after the film ended and audiences left the theatre, the Warner Brothers produced an abundance of campaigning ideas which were outlined in the pressbook. The purpose was to encourage the public to get more involved in the film by creating small activities that would pique the interest of people of all ages. The book suggested distributing ‘Spy Code Match Covers,’ containing a secret message written inside.³⁸ Although these were merely a small novelty item, they were created to imitate how Nazi spies would convey sensitive information, another form of involving the viewer in a hands on way, as if they themselves were decoding classified Nazi information. The pressbook also called on art students to contribute to the patriotic cause by enlisting their poster designs for the film that then could be used by the advertising campaign.³⁹ The posters would be displayed in the lobby of the theatre and the winner would receive free movie tickets to see the film. This strategy not only gave the film free publicity, but it encouraged young adults to think creatively and represent the movie in a unique way. Providing artistic opportunity was not only a strategic way of publicizing the film, it brought another demographic into the conversation. Young adult art students who most likely were attending university were still able to help the war effort through means of expression and imagination.

Lastly, the pressbook said reaching out to “heads of active social and patriotic groups in your community will do much to boost your showing of this picture. Enlist the support of American Legion Posts, American Liberties Union, Patriotic Order of Sons of America, Anti-Defamation League, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans, Historical and Patriotic Societies, Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lion Clubs, Daughters of the American Revolution, Knights of Columbus, etc.”⁴⁰ This method was aimed towards adults who could network through the various organizations they were members of. Although war had not yet begun for the United States in 1939, the groups listed still had some sort of connection with the film whether that was ties to religion, American patriotism, or war in general; all of these factors would played a large role during World War II.

Additionally, they even recommend distributing ‘Pledge Cards’ that read: “I PLEDGE myself to do everything in my power to combat Nazi espionage activities which are endangering the democratic institutions of the United States.”⁴¹ In 1939, it was easy for the United States to lay low while the Allies fought the Axis powers in Europe, but through *Confessions of a Nazi*

³⁷ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 6.

³⁸ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 11.

³⁹ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 10.

⁴⁰ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 10.

⁴¹ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 10.

Spy, the Brother's brought the war to America. They displayed to moviegoers a picture based on real Nazi espionage that took place in New York, while also calling on theatres to prove their patriotism by not only showing the film, but advertising it in a way that challenged people to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States.

The examples listed above are just a few of the numerous different ideas presented in the pressbook to bolster the sentiments presented in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. The meticulously chosen words and themes emphasized throughout the campaign tactics not only encouraged people to see the film, but the Brother's phrased their slogans as if it was a citizen's civic duty to attend the picture. By blending press and patriotism, the Warner Brothers were selling more than a movie; they were selling a cause. They were trying to not only enlighten audiences regarding the overseas conflict but also convince them to take action against it. Whether that was decoding a fake message, participating in an art competition, reaching out to various organizations, or signing an unofficial pledge card declaring their loyalty to the United States, these small acts got the American public involved. Not only did these campaigning techniques help publicize the movie even more, thus raising the Warner Brothers' box office revenue, but they also acted as a catalyst for patriotic sentiment and action against fascism. The studio was able to raise awareness while also making money, an outcome that allowed the Brothers to continue with their anti-Nazi approach in the film industry.

The Brothers were not advocates for violence, nor was *Confession of a Nazi Spy* made to elicit a declaration of war against Germany, but they were determined to inform their audiences of the threats overseas. The Brothers' Polish and Jewish background meant Hitler's antisemitic actions in Europe were especially unsettling for them. The Holocaust had not begun, but the Brothers' efforts on screen showed how deeply troubling they found the Nazi oppression of Jews was even before 1939. For the Jewish population, the worst was yet to come in World War II, but the Warner Brothers did not require the death of millions of innocent people to motivate them to take a political stand. The blatant antisemitism was enough to capture the Brothers' attention and display it on the silver screen for all of American to see as well.

The idea of encouraging civic patriotism and participation in the war was amplified by the various pressbook quotes from the lead actresses and actors. Considering these stars were especially recognizable in Hollywood, what they had to say about the making of the movie held greater importance when recounted to the public. Lya Lys, one of the main actresses, spoke about her experience in Berlin, Germany; "I personally felt the hand of Nazi persecution, because I refused to make pictures for Hitler. When I was leaving Nazi Germany, I was removed from the train and held in custody for six days. It is plain to understand why I have a personal delight in playing in this picture which I hope will awaken everybody to the scourge of Nazism."⁴² For Lys, partaking in a film that directly attacked Hitler and his reign was her way of fighting back against Hitler's terror. Her co-star Edward G. Robinson, the lead actor in *Confessions*, shared his perspective, "in making '*Confessions of a Nazi Spy*', I feel that I am serving my country just as effectively as if I shouldered a gun and marched away to war."⁴³ Their quotes displayed how engaged these actors were in the patriotic cause of making the film. The

⁴² Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 8.

⁴³ Warner Brothers Production Inc. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Pressbook, 8.

Warner Brothers' use of testimonials from their actors and actresses personalized the story and brought home the human dimensions of the struggle against Nazism.

The Brother's goal when making *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, was to expose Nazism for what it really was; at the same time, the Brothers refused to let it be labeled as fiction or worse, propaganda. In a court case concerning alleged propaganda in motion pictures, Harry Warner explained,

“CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY is a factual portrayal of a Nazi spy ring that actually operated in New York City. If that is propaganda, we plead guilty. So it is with each and every one of our pictures dealing with the world situations or with the national defense. These pictures were carefully prepared on the basis of factual happenings and they were not twisted to serve an ulterior purposes.”⁴⁴

They believed the film was a realistic representation of how the Nazis were currently practicing their oppressive regime; at one point in the movie, Dr. Kasser (a Jewish character who was about to be deported) screamed “I will not go back to Germany, they will put me in a concentration camp and torture me!”⁴⁵ This was not an exaggeration or dramatization of German methods, instead it was an extremely accurate statement. Additionally, because half of the film took place in the United States, it suggested that it was not impossible for Hitler's influence to extend beyond Europe. Besides raising awareness, the Brother's also wanted to instill fear in their domestic audiences to encourage combative responses and actions against the Axis Powers. At the end of the film, a pair of American men are discussing the recent Nazi espionage that has transpired, resolving that, “when our basic liberties are threatened, we wake up.”⁴⁶ Through *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the Brother's were drawing America into the war conversation in Europe without actually being involved yet, and in doing so, the film production company was holding U.S. citizens to a much higher moral standard than the government was in 1939.

Film Reviews and Public Opinion of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*

The release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* undoubtedly came as a shock to America and the rest of the world. The bold language, blatant emphasis of the dangers of Hitler and Nazism, as well as the inclusion of actual footage from Germany informed viewers of the happenings in Europe in both an informative yet entertaining way. But, not everyone appreciated the film and what it stood for. The movie was banned in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, and several other Central American countries in an attempt to stay neutral during the early stages of the Second World War.⁴⁷ In contrast, a *LA Examiner* review justified the movie as being completely legal despite its controversial material, “A department official pointed out that existing law contains no provisions under which the Federal Government could prevent production or distribution of such a film.”⁴⁸ It is important to note that even though this film was released on May 6, 1939,

⁴⁴ STATEMENT OF HARRY M. WARNER, PRESIDENT OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES INC., APPEARING BEFORE THE SENATE INTERSTATE SUBCOMMITTEE TO TESTIFY CONCERNING ALLEGED PROPAGANDA IN MOTION PICTURES. Warner Bros. Archives, USC, accessed January 23, 2018.

⁴⁵ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, film. Directed by Anatole Litvak. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 1939.

⁴⁶ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, film.

⁴⁷ “*Latin Uproar: Confessions of a Nazi Spy.*” *Time*, Vol. 37, Issue 6. February 10, 1941.

⁴⁸ Walter Fitzmaurice, “Nazis File Protest on Spy Picture.” *LA Examiner*, June 6, 1939.

just a few months before Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, Hitler and the Nazis were still widely recognized figures in the world and had been since Hitler's ascension to the chancellery in 1933. The Brothers were not introducing American audiences to Germany's political leaders, instead they worked to expose the regime and ensure that no individual could be unaware of what was happening overseas, even those who previously chose to turn a blind eye to the injustices occurring in Europe.

The Warner Brothers were well-traveled and very much aware of the unrest erupting in Germany. Their global awareness and comfortable financial status provided them with the knowledge and means to produce the provocative film that was still within their First Amendment rights despite its crude dialogue. Germany's reaction to the film was less than favorable; they blacklisted any actor and actress in the movie plus any other pictures they participated in.⁴⁹ In 1939, the film was banned in Italy, Japan, most of the Danubian, Baltic, and Scandinavian countries while Hitler also attempted to prevent it from reaching the United Kingdom.⁵⁰ Additionally, Germany was prepared to respond by producing films emphasizing American domestic problems such as "unemployment, gangsterism, and judicial corruption."⁵¹ The international impact this film made in such a sensitive time should not go unnoticed. For better or for worse, the Warner Brothers continued to make a name for themselves while also maintaining an unapologetic attitude about their films.

Many reviews of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* discussed the film beyond its performances, cinematic effects, and directing; they frequently considered the message and the patriotic feelings it evoked. Although critics tend to put a heavy emphasis on how much money a movie grossed, this particular review was unbothered by the film's profits, *Variety* magazine wrote, "for the sheer theme, its treatment and its bearing on German-American relations make the social implications far more important than the immediate question of how much money the release makes for theatres or for Warner Bros."⁵² *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* doubled as a news source at this time.

People were attending the theatre to be entertained but what audience members may not have expected is that actual German footage was used, plus the shocking language, and plot was intended to remain with them long after the film ended. This movie made Americans think. It was unsettling, bold, and held very little back. The author of the *Variety* review went on to say, "'Nazi Spy' could scarcely be more inflammatory if made in wartime. Nearly every charge is fired. Only thing missing is a rape scene by a German soldier."⁵³ According to the author of the review, the audiences were extremely responsive to the film; hissing when Hitler and his Nazis appeared on screen, laughing at the Germans' idiotic behavior, and applauding at various times throughout the picture.⁵⁴ It is obvious that *Confessions* made an impact; it was unlike any other film being produced and it set the stage for change to happen in the movie industry, encouraging a shift towards more political driven movies. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Charlie Chaplin's United

⁴⁹ Fitzmaurice, "Nazis File Protest on Spy Picture."

⁵⁰ Fitzmaurice, "Nazis File Protest on Spy Picture."

⁵¹ Fitzmaurice, "Nazis File Protest on Spy Picture."

⁵² Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Variety Magazine*, May 3, 1939.

⁵³ Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Variety Magazine*.

⁵⁴ Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Variety Magazine*.

Artists, and Paramount Pictures would all follow in the Warner Brothers' footsteps and would go on to create films revolving around Hitler and the happenings in Europe.⁵⁵

Despite the patriotic sentiments and no shortage of American loyalty portrayed in the film, other critics did see some holes in the Warner Brother's product. Frank Nugent of the *New York Times* felt Hitler's overall presence was borderline comical, ultimately hurting the purpose of the film, "[...] we cannot fight down the impression that the picture has cheapened its cause and sacrificed much of its dignity by making its villain twirl their long black mustaches. (A short black one can be villainous enough)."⁵⁶ This was an insightful take on a film that sought to carefully balance its informational quality with entertainment value; clearly Nugent felt the movie was trying too hard to entertain. Although this was not a common response to *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, it indicated that people were taking the film seriously. Americans were beginning to understand the graveness of a short, square mustache and the potential harm it could represent.

Another significant critique of the film was the absence of Judaism or Jewish persecution. The Warner Brothers purposeful decision not to acknowledge religion in their movie indicated that it was a factor they did not want to highlight despite it being an essential policy in Nazi Germany. In a *Hollywood Reporter* review, the film once again got a raving assessment, except for one factor, "sole exception is the burning question of the Nazi execution of the Jew. This is its only direct facet."⁵⁷ Another critique revealed the lack of oppressive behavior from the Germans in the picture, "[...] the inevitable deletion of the Jewish question permits. The missing motivation, anti-Semitism, is the one thing not named and ticketed."⁵⁸ The Brothers were proud of their Jewish religion and made little effort to hide that characteristic of their identity from the public. This effort made it more peculiar that they would not highlight Judaism in this film. Many possibilities could explain the absence of Jewish sentiment, one being that Jews did not have the most respectable reputation in Europe and abroad. Many stereotypes still circulated misrepresentations that made it difficult for Jews to establish an esteemed name for themselves. This could have affected the Brother's decision of including the reality of Jews' lives in Europe considering they were not a universally liked. Another possibility is that going into specific details of the violence, killings, concentration camps, and the brutality of these events could be too much for some audiences to handle. Considering this was brand new information for some, learning about extremely morbid happenings at the movie theatre was not the way citizens would wish to spend their Friday night. Lastly, the Brothers may have thought there was simply not enough room for topic of this magnitude to be properly depicted in the movie in both a sensitive and urgent way. Whatever the reasoning was for the Warner Brothers purposefully leaving out antisemitism, Jews, and their persecution, it left those who noticed puzzled. Yet, the Brothers still managed to create a successful film that presented the evils of Hitler and the Nazis without bringing into the conversation Jews and their horrific half of the story, thus appealing to larger audiences and generating greater ticket sales and more widespread awareness about Nazism.

⁵⁵ Film Review. "Totem and Taboo." *Time*, Vol. 33, Issue 20. May 15, 1939.

⁵⁶ Frank S. Nugent, "THE SCREEN; The Warners Make Faces at Hitler in 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy.'" *New York Times*, April 29, 1939.

⁵⁷ Film Review. "'Nazi Spy' Must Attraction Scoring Boxoffice Bullseye- Daring Treatment Rates Top Praise." *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 28, 1939.

⁵⁸ Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Variety Magazine*, May 3, 1939

Even though *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was the subject of some criticism, the overwhelming response celebrated and praised the film, further confirming the Warner Brothers' picture as a triumph. *The New York Times* described it as the "first outright assault on the dictator's totem," as well as using the word "newsreel" to characterize the picture.⁵⁹ The real life footage incorporated into the movie not only gave it a unique cinematic element, but also opened the public's eye of what was happening in Germany. The film delivered so much information that it did indeed serve as a news source; thus, legitimizing the movie and everything it was showing on the screen while simultaneously attempting to get the audience to feel an assortment of different emotions. *Motion Picture Daily* stated, "this picture is destined to create an awareness for all America of the menace which is around us- and yet it is excellent show stuff to which only Nazi sympathizers will object. Everybody else will praise the film."⁶⁰ *Variety* said, "'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' is more than entertainment. It is a venture in the permitted privileges of the screen, the extent to which the freedom of the film may be employed in discussing matters of moment and matters beyond the mere innocuous patterns of routine, fictional drama. In that sense it is memorable and historical."⁶¹ The focus of many of these excerpts is not on the cinematography of the film or how well the actors performed, but instead the purpose behind the making of the film. This was no ordinary movie in its time. The Brothers were taking United States foreign policy into their own hands; if the country was not going to go overseas to help the Jews, the American public would at least no longer be sheltered from these horrific happenings. It is admirable when a film makes you think, but it is powerful when a film makes you feel. The Warner Brothers' timing of the movie could not have been better and upon gaining more publicity for their picture, they continued to pose a weighted moral question to the American public; you are either loyal to the United States or you are a supporter of Hitler and Nazism.

The Brothers were never afraid to show their allegiance to their adopted home country; so when Kansas City was considering censoring *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, Jack Warner responded forcefully, "I understand about 100 people signed a petition asking the Kansas City censor board to re-view 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy.' I also understand this movement is headed by Herman Gastreich, German vice-consul in Kansas City, who obviously is not a citizen of the United States..."⁶² He continued on, questioning the loyalty of Gastreich due to his nationality, an ironic point considering his own immigrant roots. Jack proceeded, "I cannot believe that any group other than one sympathetic to the Nazi cause or to espionage in the United States would object to the picture... It has been endorsed by leading patriotic societies [...] We feel the petition against our picture is un-American and repugnant to our citizens."⁶³ Jack sympathized with those who did not appreciate their film but reminded readers that they did not have the power to filter their picture, "Naturally we do not expect every individual to agree with the contents of our story, but we feel that no one other than the duly constituted authorities has the right in censor American motion pictures."⁶⁴ The Brothers were personally outraged that there was even a question from a United States citizen about the contents of their film, so much so, that Jack publically outed the individual and linked him to Nazism without any significant evidence. For the Brothers, there

⁵⁹ Film Review. "Totem and Taboo." *Time*, Vol. 33, Issue 20. May 15, 1939.

⁶⁰ Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Motion Picture Daily*, New York Preview. April 28, 1939.

⁶¹ Film Review. "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." *Variety*. April 28, 1939.

⁶² Film Review. "Passed by Censors." *Motion Picture Herald*. May 13, 1939.

⁶³ Film Review. "Passed by Censors." *Motion Picture Herald*.

⁶⁴ Film Review. "Passed by Censors." *Motion Picture Herald*.

was no grey area during this time, thus it was hard for them to understand how any American could sympathize with a group fostering aggression and hate.

The Brothers' had a message they worked hard to deliver and they were determined that every American had the opportunity to witness. They were not going to let a single individual, especially a German individual, to stand in the people's way of viewing their film. The Brothers' had power, and they were ready to use their multiple platforms to publically shame the Kansas City censor board while also indiscreetly labeling those individuals who supported the movement Nazi sympathizers.

Hollywood and WWII

Thanks to the Warner Brothers, the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* exposed America to Nazism and Hitler's terror; it was no longer a secret what was occurring in Europe. However, Hollywood was still slow to warm up to the idea of producing risky films that would hurt the foreign profits as well as possibly decrease domestic sales. This impediment did not deter the Brothers from their mission to make movies that highlighted the social injustices in Europe. In 1939, they also released *Wings of the Navy* and *Espionage Agent*, continuing to focus on themes such as American patriotism and depictions of Germany as the enemy. Along with making films that displayed their beliefs, Harry Warner declared to the company their goal of aiding the European war in 1940 through methods that went beyond the entertainment industry. If one was working for Warner Brothers during this time, they were supporting the family's fight to aid the Allies and persecuted civilians overseas.

Harry, the company's president, set the tone when he gave his speech in June of 1940, "United We Survive, Divided We Fall!" in front of 6,000 of the studios employees and their wives.⁶⁵ He stressed that there was a problem that not only affected the company but "**the lives of our children and their children.** (emphasis in original)"⁶⁶ Harry held little back when warning his employees of what was to come if America continued to ignore the destruction in Europe. He confronted the topic of religion in his speech by citing a Germanic book called, "Defilement of Race" where he read aloud a passage that claimed, "The mission of German nationality in the world is to free this world of JEWS AND CHRISTIANS [...] If we wish to do a thorough job, we must overthrow and shatter all opposing and destructive forces unsparingly and without compromise. GERMANIC BLOOD AND CHRISTIAN BAPTISMAL WATER CAN NEVER MIX."⁶⁷ Of course, looking back at these words with knowledge of the Holocaust, Hitler did not go after the Christian population but this quote of choice by Harry allowed him to reach the vast majority of his audience, not just the employees that shared his Jewish faith. Throughout his speech, Harry posed the crisis in Europe not as a strictly Jewish problem, but an American one. He used the term "we" consistently to indicate that this was everyone's responsibility, "[...] because if we don't succeed in destroying the enemies of the civilized people, no matter what we have won't be worth anything."⁶⁸ Because it was known that Jews were the targeted population in Europe, Judaism being a religion that already had an unfavorable

⁶⁵ Harry M. Warner, *A Statement to the Employees of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc., Delivered by its President*, June 5, 1940.

⁶⁶ Warner, *A Statement to the Employees of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.*, 3.

⁶⁷ Warner, *A Statement to the Employees of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.*, 6.

⁶⁸ Warner, *A Statement to the Employees of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.*, 8.

reputation both abroad and in the United States, it was easy for Americans to turn a blind eye to the antisemitism and violent oppression Jews were facing overseas.

If the Warner family wanted to continue fighting Hitler, it was imperative their employees understood and accepted the direction the company was heading, which was intervention and support of the Allies. Harry took his speech one step further by going beyond the “we” statements and using “you” commands to single out each employee. This highly personal use of rhetoric not only demonstrated how the Warner Brothers worked to communicate effectively with their employees, but how they expected their company to respond to the war abroad. Harry stated in his speech, “all of these things we are talking about, can only come about if you have liberty in your heart; if you have Americanism in your heart. It must be in your heart in order for you to be able to go out and do something about it as it is required of you today.”⁶⁹

Being a successful, Jewish movie mogul in this era was not unique in Hollywood, the Warner family was just one of many different Hollywood executives who practiced Judaism. Samuel Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer who made up two out of the three heads of the MGM studio were both Jewish while Adolph Zukor, the president of Paramount Pictures, was also of the Jewish faith. There was similar passion and American patriotism also present in the films created by these men, but the biggest difference between them and the Warner Brothers was time. With the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), the Brothers became trailblazers in the cinema industry concerning the Nazi presence in Europe and set the standard for other Jewish-Americans moguls. The Brothers’ patriotism was so blatant and thorough that the loyalty they had for their adopted country was undeniable.

Although the various other studios deserve credit for their contributions to the film industry based on their own patriotic movies, their pictures came a few years later, once the United States was engaged in war beginning in 1941. By that time, Warner Brothers had already turned out dozens of films and as a result, Goldwyn, Mayer, and Zukor simply became followers in the industry, only producing movies when it was safe to do so. MGM became involved with the war conversation with the release of *Mrs. Miniver* in 1942 which received praise and multiple Academy Award nominations. The film portrayed distinct anti-German bias while also illustrating the British as peaceful, non-violent people; an obvious attempt at persuading American audiences. Paramount Pictures did not contribute a patriotic film until that same year when they released *Star Spangled-Rhythm*, a musical created to boost war morale. These companies, as well as many others, including RKO, 20th Century Fox, and Universal Pictures, all eventually joined in the market of creating war centered films, especially after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but it must be noted that Warner Brothers studios was the first. They took a chance when no other film studio did. Their biggest risk was choosing to create a film that would shock the world, and then continue to produce features on similar topics. As a result, their company lost money and support. In addition, the Warner family’s safety became challenged when the theatre premiering *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* received bomb threats in addition to Jack being placed Hitler’s “extinction list.”⁷⁰ What began as a risk left the Warner Brothers studio a leader in the motion picture industry during World War II, their knowledge on Europe’s current events

⁶⁹ Warner, *A Statement to the Employees of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.*, 12.

⁷⁰ Warner, *My First Hundred Years in Hollywood*, 263

combined with the power of the screen gave them an outlet to make a statement that everyone else, including the American government, was too afraid to confront.

1942 was not only the year that most studios began producing war pictures, but also the year the Roosevelt Administration created the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI was a government agency directed by Elmer Davis that had the power to censor films, radio, photographs, newspapers, and many other broadcasting outlets concerning war information. The OWI also became a producer of pro-war features, using media platforms of all kinds but primarily exploiting the silver screen to get their patriotic messages across to the American public; after all, motion pictures were the most effective way to captivate audiences. Essentially, the OWI was a program that encouraged companies to utilize the information the government directly provided to the Hollywood film studios and then communicate that knowledge to the American people through their own forms of media. The OWI further divided into two factions to supervise the film industry, the Bureau of Motion Pictures and the Bureau of Censorship, which was then able to work closely with Hollywood to help construct films that could double as both propaganda and entertainment. The OWI became cautious with what they wanted (or did not want) to be put on the big screen because these media sources were supposed to create “an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government...”⁷¹ Despite the bureaus conscious effort to create films that only aided the war, they did not have the absolute power to determine what movies would debut and which ones would not, as that right remained with the studios. It was now more than ever that they needed the American people behind them with rousing patriotism and unwavering dedication to the United States, a spirit that the Warner Brothers had been trying to evoke since 1939. According to *Hollywood Quarterly*, Mr. Mellett, the head of the Bureau of Motion Pictures, “explained that he did not desire censorship, that he was merely implementing advisory practices. In other words he was attempting to make certain that, in his view, the motion picture was being of maximum service to the war effort.”⁷² The government was attempting at taking a more hands on role within the film industry to ensure that movies were showcasing the war in the best light possible, but not everyone in Hollywood was thrilled about this interference.

Although the OWI could not directly regulate what was put on the big screen, Lowell Mellett and Elmer Davis could make suggestions to studios and advise them on their content. Paramount Pictures, headed by Zukor, one of the other Jewish moguls in Hollywood, chose not to comply with the OWI. According to an article, Paramount sent in less movie scripts to Mellett for advisory than any other studio.⁷³ Additionally, MGM, lead by Mayer, who was a Republican, also acted independently from the OWI by rejecting its advice on the film *White Cargo* as well as failing to submit scripts due to the company’s personal discretion on their movie’s relation to the war.⁷⁴ Regardless of how the other major studios were responding to the OWI, the Warner Brothers, being Democrats and wholehearted supporters of FDR and his administration, proved yet again how their dedication to the war effort and loyalty to the United States meant more to

⁷¹ Cedric Larson, “The Domestic Motion Picture Work of the Office of War Information,” *Hollywood Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1948): 434.

⁷² Larson, “The Domestic Motion Picture Work of the Office of War Information,” 441.

⁷³ Thomas F. Brady, “Hollywood vs OWI: Government Agency’s Request to Pass On Film Scripts Antagonizes Producers,” *The New York Times*, 1943.

⁷⁴ Brady, “Hollywood vs OWI.”

them than having complete autonomy from the government. In response to Mr. Mellett's request, they abided by stating they would send all scripts and long-cut films to the OWI for its approval. While other studios were holding onto all of their creative power, the Warner Bros. ceded some of theirs. An act that left the company extremely vulnerable but displayed the Brother's unquestionable true belief in the United States government, President Roosevelt, and the commitment to a war against fascism.

On December 31, 1942, a "Statement of Policy" written by the Warner Brothers studio and reprinted by *Hollywood Reporter*, opened with a striking line, "Warner Bros. has only one objective for 1943--- Victory."⁷⁵ The text introduced what the company had in store for the coming year, they still planned on providing a "temporary escape from the grim realities of a world plunged into horror by the ambitions of totalitarian lunatics," but they no longer saw the screen as an opportunity, but an obligation.⁷⁶ The statement from the company confessed that Warner Brothers would be straying from the themes of the Second World War and instead would focus on subjects such as past struggles of the nation, democracy, and appreciation of America's complex history.⁷⁷ It also revealed that the studio would be teaming up with the War Department to make 100 training films which would be the "largest single allocation yet made to any one studio."⁷⁸ The year 1943 would prove to be exceedingly successful for the Warner Brothers. The release of films such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Casablanca*, *Watch on the Rhine*, and many more displayed the Brothers' ability to make rousing and educational pictures. Each picture related to the war in a positive way and were of considerable prestige, given the multiple Academy nominations and awards they received. The Warner Brothers demonstrated that it was in fact possible to produce movies that were exciting and poignant but also worked as propaganda. During World War II, the studio's slate of projects was adaptable and diverse. Warner Brothers made films that were both original and patriotic, creative yet abiding with the government, and business-oriented but still willing to sacrifice profits for the greater good. More than anything else, the Brothers were aware that it would take everyone to win the war, "no single man nor individual organization can achieve that purpose alone."⁷⁹ At this point in the war, it was not about competing with others in Hollywood, their goal was winning the war, "but Warner Bros. is determined to do all that it can do-not in pride of its leadership in past achievements, but in humble service to a cause that is above and beyond all other considerations."⁸⁰

Propaganda, Patriotism, or Both?

One of the most important issues the Warner Brothers faced before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and entrance of the United States into the Second World War was the accusation of producing propaganda films, a term they personally would not have used to describe their pictures. The English Oxford Dictionary defines propaganda as: "Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view."⁸¹ In September

⁷⁵ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy," Reprinted from *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 31, 1942. USC Warner Bros. Archives, accessed January 23, 2018.

⁷⁶ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy."

⁷⁷ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy."

⁷⁸ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy."

⁷⁹ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy."

⁸⁰ Pamphlet. "Statement of Policy."

⁸¹ English Oxford Dictionary, definition of "propaganda", <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/propaganda>.

1941, the Warner Brothers Motion Picture Company was accused by the Senate Interstate Subcommittee, of purveying alleged propaganda in two films: *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) and *Sergeant York* (1941). Propaganda during war time is often strongly supported, encouraged, and even required by the government; but when a country is not at war and an influential media agency such as Warner Brothers produced films with an apparent agenda in mind, that was when problems arose. The pre-war government was not keen on the idea of films being produced that encouraged Americans to view Nazis as the enemy or urged their participation in the war as seen in *Sergeant York*. At this time, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the government was not ready to enter the war. Although the Allies needed U.S. support and it was evident that the conflict would prove to be a “moral war”, there was still hesitancy to get involved in a conflict that did not directly encompass the United States. With the executive branch promoting one idea, the Senate encouraging another, and the Warner Brothers fostering a completely different one, a hearing between the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce and Warner Brothers was a necessary attempt by the legislative branch to put an end to the distribution of alleged propaganda.

When *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was released in 1939, a majority of the reviews deemed the film as a piece of propaganda. *Variety* stated in their review “gauged by a definition of entertainment which holds that any presentation which so closely compels the attention and interest of a beholder that he cannot relax his fascination for a moment, this is a picture of profound entertainment.”⁸² *Variety* credited the film as to its ability to please and awe audiences but called the movie for what it was, “‘Nazi Spy’ is most essentially propaganda in the sense that any espousal of a cause, even to the recitation of the issues at stake, partakes of the natural of bias; in the sense that all patriotism, indeed, is a prejudice.”⁸³ The intent of the film was obvious to all who watched it; the Warner Brothers took a major patriotic leap by creating a movie that took such a bold stance on a war that was not yet America’s problem. However, this review pointed out the idea that patriotism during this time could also be viewed as prejudice. There were not only themes of American loyalty, an idea most citizens could support, but also strong anti-Nazi sentiments, a concept that scared a majority of the U.S. populace. The *Motion Picture Herald* argued that, “the pointed and ruthless indictment of the Nazi regime, whose objectives, plans and purpose as outlined in the picture follow closely the facts as they are known to the world, is propaganda, perhaps the strongest propaganda of which the screen is capable.”⁸⁴ Here was a review recognizing the reality of Nazism as well as the urgency behind the Brothers’ message in the film and how it was so articulately expressed. When audiences viewed *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, there was little doubt that the Nazis were being portrayed as the enemy who had a plan to expand their fascist regime throughout Europe and beyond, and America was no exception.

The film, *Sergeant York*, released in July of 1941, (six months before Pearl Harbor) received a similar response to *Confessions*, with the public and the government once again declaring the Warner Brothers’ work as “propaganda.” When describing *Sergeant York*, Theodore Strauss, a journalist from *The New York Times* reiterated the thoughts of William H. Hays’, the current president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, who

⁸² Film Review, “Confessions of a Nazi Spy.” *Variety Magazine*, April 28, 1939.

⁸³ Film Review, “Confessions of a Nazi Spy.” *Variety Magazine*.

⁸⁴ Film Review, “Not Coincidental (First National),” *Motion Picture Herald*. April 29, 1939.

had a very strong opinion on the “propaganda” being created. Hays stated, ““there are those who would use the films to bemuse, rather than amuse, the American public [...] It is for these reasons that we believe ‘Sergeant York’ is far and away the most effective serious propaganda film recently out of Hollywood [...] The characters of these mountain folk have an authentic ring that is rare in Hollywood productions.”⁸⁵ He went on to commend how Warner Brothers uniquely showcased the remote, country lifestyle of Alvin York as an overlooked historical figure of America that is also worth preserving, a refreshing change in theme as opposed to the other “flag-waving” films that were being produced.⁸⁶

In the *Times* article, *Sergeant York* is positively labeled as propaganda whereas *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was seen as biased and prejudiced by the *Motion Picture Herald*. In both examples, the word ‘propaganda’ is used to define both films, one in a favorable manner and the other in a disapproving tone. The American public was not yet ready to accept the idea of Nazism and therefore regarded it negatively but they approved of the World War I film and instead praised that piece of propaganda. *Confessions* was a movie about a situation that was happening during that exact time period whereas *Sergeant York* was a movie about a war that had already concluded, an event that all Americans knew about it and had affirmed. Regardless of the distinct ways in which these films were categorized as propaganda, it is important to note the fact that Warner Brother movies were being labeled as such. It was commonly believed that the studio had biased intent, even if they were taking a pro-American, anti-fascist stance, people were still wary about their partial perspective. Audiences understood that the studio was trying to make a point by choosing to fictionalize events that showcased American action and intervention. It is clear why the Brothers decided to make a picture on the story of Alvin York; he was the most decorated war hero from WWI who practiced pacifism and was deeply religious yet still served his country in a time of need. The film exposed a more rural side of the United States and took a different approach to generating war morale in 1941. If a countryman from Tennessee who was deeply opposed to enacting violence could enlist for his country, then you could too.

Based on the newspaper articles reporting on Senator Gerald Nye, the transcripts of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, and Jack Warner’s autobiography which outlined his relationship with Roosevelt, it is apparent that FDR and some of the conservative legislative leaders in Congress, such as Nye, were not able to see eye-to-eye on the war films being made. In August 1941, Nye argued “at least twenty pictures have been produced in the last year- all designed to drug the reason of the American people- to rouse them to war hysteria [...] he [President Roosevelt] had Sergeant York at the White House and told him that the new picture would do much to rouse our people.”⁸⁷ The immense displeasure implied by Nye’s words articulated the tone as well as opinions he expressed during the hearing of Harry Warner for alleged production of propaganda. In front of the Nye committee, Warner outlined four major points that he denied after claiming quite bluntly that, “while I am opposed to Nazism, I deny

⁸⁵ Theodore Strauss, Article. “Drawing the Line,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1941, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/08/03/109597644.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Strauss, Article. “Drawing the Line.”

⁸⁷ Article, “Nye Says Films Spread War Wave: Senator Charges That Pictures Fan Hysteria,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1941, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/08/02/104299280.pdf>.

that the pictures produced by my company are ‘propaganda’, as has been alleged.”⁸⁸ The Brothers did not want to be viewed as if they were an extension of any other institution but their own. The ideas and beliefs they were presenting in their pictures were independent of the government or any other outside influences, and they wanted to disassociate their films from any of the negative connotations attached the word ‘propaganda.’ Harry continued to refute the Committee’s statements that claimed the Warner Brothers’ films were inciting war, were inaccurate, had an ulterior purpose, the pictures produced were not wanted by the general public, and lastly, that the government had ordered the company to create certain movies.⁸⁹ Harry countered these assertions by saying that the Brothers making films on current affairs is simply routine for the studio, their pictures are in fact accurate and research-based, every movie has proved to be profitable, and that they produced their films voluntarily and proudly without urging from the government.⁹⁰

All four of Harry’s points exposed how influential he and his brothers’ films were during this time, to the point that the government felt as though they were no longer in control of the American public. The Brothers’ had an agenda that was much different from that of the Senate. Harry claimed that war was not necessarily what the studio was pushing for, instead it was an awareness and understanding of what was happening overseas, even though their pictures displayed a very thin, if not transparent line between the two.⁹¹ Public responses were varied. Anger from Senator Nye and others was disputable, but as well as criticism praise also came from the hundreds of film reviews. But as Harry stated, “the proof of the pudding is in the eating. All of the production complained of have been profitable.”⁹² The Warner Brothers were creating films that Americans were watching, whether their films were in line with the government agenda or not, the mogul family was inserting themselves into political and international affairs and there was little the conservatives in D.C. could do.

Even a year after the September 1941 hearing with the Senate Interstate Subcommittee, the Warners still denied the presence of propaganda in their films. In an article from *Variety* newspaper, titled “Patriotism in Pictures”, Harry Warner declared:

“We have consistently refused to censor plays of stories which we make into pictures to conceal from the American people what is happening in the world, or all eventualities. What we have filmed has been the truth, not propaganda, and those who would curtail the freedom of our industry know it. In motion-picture production we follow no ‘isms’

⁸⁸ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda. September 25, 1941. USC Warner Bros. Archives, Box 2947,812-815. Accessed January 23, 2018.

⁸⁹ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda.

⁹⁰ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda.

⁹¹ Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda.

⁹² Hearing Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate Commerce, United States Senate. Moving Picture and Radio Propaganda.

except Americanism. We have fought, in our way for the freedom of thought, of peace, of speech, and of worship.”⁹³

The Brothers believed the pictures they produced were factual and did not deserve to be labeled otherwise, especially not as propaganda. Today it is evident that these films had a biased but noble groundwork to them. The studio was headed by a Jewish family from Poland that had direct relations and strong ties to the populations being persecuted by Hitler. The Warner Brothers may have been biased, but this personal investment they had in the events overseas is what motivated the family to take a stand when others did not. Regardless, films such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *Sergeant York* were composed from credible sources and depicted true events. To them, censoring their products would have been a disservice to the American public. This is how the Warner Brothers battled for their country, through pictures that displayed content relevant to the time. In a sense, the movie moguls were preparing the nation for their destiny.

Creating Everlasting Peace

Dedicating one’s studio to the war cause while simultaneously trying to turn a profit was not ideal for motion picture companies. In evidence of this fact, the Warner Brothers lost revenue due to their multiple contributions, but it did not matter to the family because they believed in the cause. It was as if they too were fighting a two front war. Yet despite their losses, the Warner family had made such a significant impact on the war effort that in 1944, the last Liberty ship from the Richmond Shipyard in California was named after their father, Benjamin Warner, an ultimate tribute not only to the Brothers, but the man that helped bring his wife and kids to America in the first place.⁹⁴ It does not come as a surprise that the Brothers gave their all in contributing to the United States military and government in numerous ways; while other men and women enlisted, the Brothers enlisted their company (although Jack had volunteered in the army for a year), this was their idea of public service.

As World War II drew to a close in 1945, the Warner Brothers still saw lots of work to be done using their motion picture clout. The impressive list of contributions the company made to the war and their dedication to creating “everlasting peace” exemplified the notion that the Brothers believed in what America was fighting for at the time, but also that those sacrifices should not go to waste. A major conviction of the Warner Brothers was that pictures should be used to educate, and the United States government agreed. Senator Edward Martin of Pennsylvania released a statement in the Congressional Record emphasizing the importance of the studio’s work in the education system, not only for adults but children as well. For the Warner Brothers, World War II was an opportunity, a chance to show the world exactly what they believed in as well as how proud they were to call themselves Polish immigrants, who practiced Judaism, and were, above all else American citizens.

Making films and delivering moving speeches were not the only ways the Warner Brothers contributed to the war effort during America’s involvement from 1941-1945; their pictures and words were powerful but the donations of money and material deserve

⁹³ *Variety Newspaper*. “Patriotism in Pictures,” January 7, 1942.

⁹⁴ “Warner, Albert; Warner, Harry M.; and Warner, Jack L.” *Current Biography (Bio Ref Bank)* (January 1, 1945): *Biography Reference Bank (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 20, 2018).

acknowledgement as well. In a report released directly from the studio in December of 1945, before mentioning the company's future plans, Jack wanted to publicize just how dedicated the Brothers were to the war; so that there was no doubt where their loyalty lay as they entered peace time. He outlined a long list of impressive statistics regarding their wartime contributions including; 25% of the Warner employees served in the armed forces, the company provided tours of the studio for 31,356 uniformed men, 20 million war bonds were purchased (employees contributed \$11,765,000), and Red Cross collected a total of 5,200 pints of plasma.⁹⁵ These patriotic offerings were all made while the Brothers were producing a total of forty-six full length pictures centering on American ideals and the war effort as well as 140 short subject movies detailing American history and the nation's ideals; sixty-eight of which went on to be distributed directly to government agencies and were then used for educational purposes.⁹⁶ These were just some of their accomplishments.

However, the Warner Brothers did not stop there, on top of making countless movies that inspired Americans, they donated many of the film's profits to the war effort while also absorbing all of the charges that came with creating the government requested shorts. These efforts from the studio displayed how the Brothers felt there was much more to give to the war beside movies. Once the war was over and there was no longer a dire need for all out commitment from American citizens, the Warners were able to take a step back from their patriotic services. However, they did not want to be forgotten for their accomplishments. The list of contributions outlined by Jack exhibited how the Brothers wished to emphasize once more their dedication to the United States during America's involvement in the war. But these achievements were now in the past and the studio had to look forward. Jack refocused his rhetoric back to the ultimate point of the public report, which was the studio's future policies; "our responsibility to audiences during peace time is greater than during war time."⁹⁷

Now that the fighting had finally concluded, it was time for the Warner Bros. Pictures to make the shift back to normality, yet even though society was making a change, the studio stayed true to what they believed the role of the movies should be. In the aforementioned report, Jack Warner wasted no time discussing the company's immediate goals during peacetime. Even when the world was no longer at war, they knew their job was still not finished as leaders in the motion picture industry. Jack stressed the necessity of "'reconverting products of the mind as well as of factories' in the direction of everlasting peace."⁹⁸ Their new objective for the following years was not only the return to normalcy but to maintain the harmony that the world was experiencing in the post war months. An almost impossible task but one they had set their mind to. The Warners narrative had remained consistent from the time they produced *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* to the day this report was written and beyond, "the screen has an implicit responsibility in the prevention of future wars...The honest exchange of information and ideas is a primary function of the motion picture."⁹⁹ The Brothers had always viewed the screen as a tool that must be utilized for the greater good, this meant spreading knowledge to audiences on important current events occurring globally. Although the outside world was constantly shifting, the studio

⁹⁵ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY. *Hollywood News*, News and Feature Service Warner Bros. Studio: Burbank, CA, December 15, 1945.

⁹⁶ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY.

⁹⁷ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY.

⁹⁸ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY.

⁹⁹ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY.

remained committed as ever to blending entertainment with information.¹⁰⁰ The fighting may have been over, but there was still important news to cover. It did not matter if it was wartime or peacetime, the Brothers had a job to do.

In December of 1945, Harry Warner attended the Nobel Anniversary Dinner in New York where he spoke about his vision for the company and the nation's future goals of peace. Among Harry were other noteworthy individuals such as Albert Einstein; Senator F. William Fulbright (known for his contributions to international affairs and as the longest serving chairman for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee); and the president of France, Richard de Rochemont. Mr. Warner stressed the notion that the work of the film industry was far from over, "motion pictures can help create the conditions of international good will that are the essential foundation of lasting peace."¹⁰¹ Not only were the Warner Brothers concerned for America during the war, they were just as invested in what became of the country after. Although the Brothers valued the power of the screen and its enormous potential, Harry acknowledged that it could not solve all of the world's problems. Instead he viewed it more as a means of international contact that should be "recognized by the nations of the world as a medium of communication to be accorded the utmost freedom of expression."¹⁰² To Harry, the motion picture industry was supposed to do far more than entertain, but to inform, and not just people in its country of origin but everywhere in the world.

The Brothers were not only committed to ending the Second World War, they were determined to prevent any other world wars from ever occurring, and film was a large part of their solution. Harry anticipated the cinematic field would become more collaborative rather than competitive if unity was the universal goal; "if every nation is to build a wall around its own motion picture industry, we can virtually write off the motion pictures as a force of world peace."¹⁰³ The eldest Warner then concluded his statements with some notable final words that closely resembled how they phrased *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* press propaganda: "I think it is reasonable to say that any country which does not encourage the fullest use of the screen as a means of giving its own people a greater understanding of the meaning of peace on earth and goodwill toward men, does not want peace on earth!"¹⁰⁴ This comment was comparable to previous Warner Brother statements, especially when Jack reacted to the ban of *Confessions* in Kansas City, "I cannot believe that any group other than one sympathetic to the Nazi cause or to espionage in the United States would object to the picture..."¹⁰⁵ The Brothers use of words were carefully structured in a way that indicated that the individual is either an ally of America or an ally of the Axis, forcing that person to pick a side, even when there is a very obvious wrong answer implicit in the phrasing.

In the years following World War II, conversations about patriotism and Americanism had still not died out. In an effort to make more educational films not only for children but also adults to be shown in classrooms and theatres, Senator Martin published a Congressional Record report acknowledging the Warner Brothers and their long list of cinematic contributions focusing

¹⁰⁰ JACK L. WARNER OUTLINES STUDIO'S FUTURE POLICY.

¹⁰¹ "WARNER SEES FILM VITAL TO PEACE," *Motion Picture Herald*, December 15, 1945.

¹⁰² "WARNER SEES FILM VITAL TO PEACE."

¹⁰³ "WARNER SEES FILM VITAL TO PEACE."

¹⁰⁴ "WARNER SEES FILM VITAL TO PEACE."

¹⁰⁵ Film Review. "Passed by Censors." *Motion Picture Herald*. May 13, 1939.

on historic events in 1947. These films were produced in the late 1930's, before the Second World War had even begun, displaying once again that it did not take an international genocide to spark the Brother's patriotic attitudes; the family was already passionate about showcasing the renowned moments of America's history. The lengthy lineup of movies created by the studio included: *The Song of a Nation*, *Give Me Liberty*, *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Bill of Rights*, *Sons of Liberty*, *Romance of Louisiana*, *The Monroe Doctrine*, *Old Hickory*, *Man Without a Country*, *Lincoln in the White House*, *Teddy*, *the Rough Rider*. Senator Martin called the company, "one of the great motion-picture producers, with a fine sense of civic responsibility and good citizenship."¹⁰⁶ Like the Warner Brothers, Senator Martin also saw the potential of the screen, especially as the country was entering an uncertain postwar stage. He claimed "there is a tug of war between our kind of country and communistic dictatorship. Our people tend to take American for granted, and to forget why it came about, and the heroism and sacrifice which went into making our Nation's greatness."¹⁰⁷ The United States government felt that their citizens were not aware of the kind of freedoms and liberties they had in the country, a point that needed to be made clear as communism began to spread around the world.

Once again, patriotism needed to be at an all time high and what better way to inform the American public than through entertainment that was laced with education; a consistent method practiced by the Warner Brothers throughout their company history. Even with the war over, there was still a demand for loyal commitment from United States citizens. What the Warner Brothers were producing more than ten years earlier was finally getting its deserved recognition. War time and peace time would come and go, but the studio remained consistent, doing what they did best providing their service through motion pictures that helped render the nation.

Just two years later in 1949, an article from *Variety* magazine confirmed how the studio continually adapted to the country's needs as well as how they viewed their role as entertainers and educators of the public. Jack explained that, "merely making a lot of pictures and throwing them on the market will not solve our problem... Our method will be to have the right pictures with the right stars ready for distribution in the proper situation at the proper time to bring the best in entertainment values to the public and the maximum in revenues to exhibitors and distributors."¹⁰⁸ With the war over, the business could get back to making significantly more money not by producing an abundance of films, but by creating the right films. Instead of dedicating the whole company to the war effort, this "peace time" allowed for some freedom and flexibility in what projects could be produced. However, this did not mean that the Warner Brothers were going to stop making important and significant pictures. Jack supported the studio's approach by claiming, "Warner Bros. was not built to its present position by sitting back and waiting for plums to be dropped in its lap... It was developed by aggressive action- by going ahead and getting things done... It is that spirit which has guided our company from the time the four Warner brothers made the world sit up and taking notice with our first feature picture. 'My Four Years in Germany.'"¹⁰⁹ Warner Brothers productions was a consistent motion picture studio, the family had values and morals they stuck to before, during, and after the Second World War. They knew what their family had endured before life in America and they were aware of

¹⁰⁶ Scott Martin, Congressional Record: Statement of Senator Martin, of Pennsylvania, on Education in Patriotism Through Motion Pictures," U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, "Congressional Record: Statement of Senator Martin."

¹⁰⁸ "WB Plans Record Production To Meet Expanding Market," *Variety Daily*, April 25, 1949.

¹⁰⁹ "WB Plans Record Production To Meet Expanding Market."

the potential success they could accomplish together in their new home country. Warner Brothers became the successful and influential company that it is today not by playing it safe, but by producing what they believed in; luckily for the United States during World War II, the Brothers valued life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and they made it known by all.

Conclusion

The contributions the Warner Brothers studio made before, during, and after the war were unparalleled by any other motion picture company in Hollywood. Due to the Brothers' Jewish upbringing and their immigrant roots, the family had strong morals and values that they constantly expressed to all who would listen. Instead of being ashamed of their family history, they used their background and their power on and off the screen to showcase to the world what they believed in. To them they were not producing propaganda, they were exhibiting the truth in an informative yet entertaining way. They hated Hitler and his Nazi Party and were proud to be citizens of a country that allowed them publically express these opinions in order to raise awareness and patriotism. Compared to the other Jewish moguls in Hollywood such as Mayer, Goldwyn, and Zukor, the Warner Brothers were the first. They were the first studio to expose American audiences to Hitler and Nazism on the big screen while also taking a distinct stance on the matter by encouraging United States intervention and action. The Brothers were trailblazers in the motion picture industry, they set the tone with *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, and other studios followed. There was injustice occurring in the world and the Brothers would not stand for it. Their courage to create films on complex, provoking, and sensitive topics set them apart from the rest of Hollywood, but their contributions did not stop there. Instead they enlisted the effort of their entire studio through various acts of playing government pictures for free, buying war bonds, and delivering moving speeches to their employees in attempt to arouse national spirit for the war effort. By the end of the Second World War, there was no doubting the Warner Brothers' patriotism and dedication to the country that may have not been their birthplace, but undeniably raised them, their company and movies to incredible heights.

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