

Introduction

It serves nothing to depend on past economic forms and social relationships. If we, as a people, do not want to decline, we must become comfortable with the new and emerging world. Advertising is a language of this world.¹

This plea, made in 1929, neatly encapsulates the starting point for this book. It comes from the pen of Hans Luther, the deliberately party-less, former chancellor of the Weimar Republic and soon-to-be head of the Reichsbank and ambassador to the United States until 1937. Typical of his entire political career, which included roles in the republic, Nazi dictatorship, and the early Federal Republic, this statement is one that encourages adaptation. The details of how Germans were to “become comfortable with the new and emerging world” and what that world might look like were yet to be determined. What was certain, according to Luther, was that advertising would be a key component of this emerging world, a medium for participating in this transformative process. Men and women working in ads-related jobs certainly welcomed the social and economic significance attributed to their work. Others were more wary of any world in which advertising was to be a central form of expression, and yet even they agreed that the modern advertisement—at once arresting in form or content and banal in its ubiquitous presence—was here to stay.

This book takes Luther’s entreaty seriously by examining what advertising in the two decades following this statement can tell us about the ways Germans came to terms with the “new and emerging world.” This process was not a passive one: individuals in a variety of fields championed their own visions of reform or revolution in Germany after the First World War; after 1933 Nazi ideologues and supporters began to implement their utopian blueprint; and the victorious Allies entered the stage with new ideals

and plans in 1945. With its focus on the Third Reich, this book attempts on one level to tease out the complex relationships between corporations and the regime. These relationships were not equal, but neither was the power of the dictatorship absolute. Rather a bounded relative autonomy characterized the relationship between the National Socialist regime and the commercial sector, including the aspiring advertising profession in the 1930s. Bounded because the regime set certain non-negotiable parameters: anti-Semitic, nationalist, and regenerative, which ad professionals accepted largely without complaint. Relatively autonomous in the sense that both parties wished to maintain a degree of separation, recognized some mutuality of interest, and preferred self-discipline to command and control.

At the same time, *Selling under the Swastika* seeks to go beyond decisions made by corporate elites and the regime's bureaucrats. By examining the production and circulation of promotional materials, evaluating sales strategies and consumer feedback, the book offers a new perspective on life in National Socialist Germany. I demonstrate that companies and their consumers were fully engaged in the market even into the war years: companies fought to continue advertising, selling, and preparing for expansion, while consumers continued to purchase many products (particularly low-priced items) they had come to rely on. The book discusses the strategies employed by commercial actors that created ties for consumers between their own material lives and "the new order," thereby assisting the regime in gaining and maintaining mass support. However, thinking about National Socialism as a "political response to the problems created by consumption" is a more complicated task than simply outlining policies of control and coercion from above, or resistance to those policies from below.² Instead, the book maintains that the promotion of commerce and a certain Nazi vision of business ethics were intrinsic to the ideological goals of the regime and the dreams of empire after the onset of war. In other words, the regime's attempts to reach out to those working in the commercial sector and their customers were not driven solely by the need to achieve legitimacy for the dictatorship; consumers and commercial actors had active roles to play in the Nazi utopia.³

In exploring this territory, this study offers three correctives to the existing literature on social cohesion, consumption, and business in the Third Reich. While recent scholarship has convincingly demonstrated that in the mid-1930s most members of the racial community [*Volksgemeinschaft*] responded positively to the calls for participation in building the new Germany, and experienced this period as a time of pleasure and optimism, this

book offers evidence that appeals to community and other Nazi goals came also from the private sector—appeals that were perhaps more persuasive coming from respected national corporations or local employers.⁴ It also challenges the dominance of the “virtual consumption” model that emphasizes the importance of state promises of future plenty, by focusing on the actual buying and selling that continued to shape daily life.⁵ In this way the book uses advertisements to examine the ways brand name goods “became a favorite repository of new Nazi myths and fantasies.”⁶ Finally, in arguing that the mechanics of individual consumption and the advertising industry that lubricated it were more than just a means of stabilizing the Nazi government, the book redresses our understanding of the legacy of Nazi-era reforms for postwar German developments. Twenty years ago Michael Geyer issued his provocative statement that “the social contract for an acquisitive [German] society was formed in the consuming passions of the 1930s and 1940s rather than in the postwar years.”⁷ *Selling under the Swastika* puts Geyer’s declaration to the test. By exploring the mechanisms of German commercial culture between the end of the 1920s and the early 1950s, the book confirms that the language of buying and selling triumphed, despite the war, and re-emerged after 1945 in a position to supersede the language of politics as a unifying force.

CONSUMER CULTURE, COMMERCIAL CULTURE

Nazi Germany was not a mass-consumer society, but it was closer to being one than we often presume. If we apply John Brewer’s six criteria characteristic of mass-consumer societies, Nazi Germany passes easily on all but two, and even those two shortcomings are debatable. This book demonstrates that there were “communication systems that attach[ed] meaningful images to certain goods” and that there was “a shared recognition of commodities as conveyors of meaning.” It is also clear that consumers were viewed as “economic players” and that some citizens had “an ambivalence toward the phenomenon of consumption.”⁸ What is perhaps missing is the availability of a broad range of products and the emphasis on leisure found in a mass-consumer society.⁹ The chief sticking point for most scholars with regard to the former point is that the majority of German households were unable to afford consumer durables, such as cars and large household appliances, until the late 1950s. Durables are considered the benchmark in judging the significance of individual consumption in any economy because of

the complexity of these purchases, involving lay-away schemes, credit, or personal savings, and the significance of the manufacturing process, which involves heavy investment of labor and material resources.¹⁰ Despite the absence of durables in the majority of German households, individuals did experience a wide range of consumer goods. The wealthy certainly enjoyed a broad spectrum of luxury and daily use items, but the middle and even the working classes also saw their lives changed by a growing range of less expensive products in these decades.¹¹ The issue of leisure is also a tricky one. Hitler's government certainly prioritized war readiness, which led to a productionist mentality generally, but the labor involved was always coupled with incentives, including greater leisure opportunities for members of the Volk at least until the war began.

Despite this proximity to Brewer's definition and the interest scholars have taken in investigating West German consumer culture, the focus of the historical literature of the Third Reich has been on the production side of the economy. Studies of national recovery and rearmament policies, heavy industry, finance, cartelization, and the use of slave labor during the war years are plentiful. The fact that purchasing power remained low in the 1930s has served as sufficient reason to continue the focus on the economic conditions for waging war.¹² However, Albrecht Ritschl maintains that the worst of the Depression was over by 1932, and that the upswing that followed cannot be chiefly attributed to deficit spending in the form of building projects, state employment schemes, or rearmament policies of the new Nazi-led government.¹³ "With or without Hitler," Ritschl insists, recovery was "on the doorstep," and long-term unemployment was becoming less and less of a threat.¹⁴ While the debate remains alive and others give much more credit to the "military Keynesianism" of the regime, oral history evidence seems to corroborate Ritschl's statistical findings that stress improvement in the private sector.¹⁵ From these sources, we learn that compared with the upheavals of the 1920s and the Depression years of the early 1930s, many individuals (at least, those not targeted by the regime) developed a sense of optimism about their financial futures in the middle part of the decade.¹⁶

André Steiner concurs with this evaluation. Despite the fact that the average real income among workers continued to worsen from 1932 until 1935, only improving thereafter, Steiner emphasizes the psychological significance of stable employment. In other words, even if living standards were only marginally better in 1938 than they had been in 1932, given higher prices and intermittent shortages, family incomes were more secure,

and that in itself went far in providing emotional relief for weary Germans and ultimately support for the regime.¹⁷ This optimism did not extend to the purchase of large-ticket items; household appliances and cars remained beyond the reach of the vast majority of Germans until the post-1945 period. The “virtual consumption” of such items, however, relied on this optimism—the confidence that ownership was just around the corner. In the meantime, men and women were able to take pleasure in an array of relatively inexpensive nonessential consumer products and leisure activities that were available until the early 1940s.¹⁸ This relative contentment among members of the Volk had its political dimensions as well. It appeared that the regime was making good on its promise to stabilize the economy. This real consumption of affordable goods had tangible consequences for the growth and maintenance of support for the dictatorship. Just as heroic images of productive laboring “Aryans” aided the mission of drawing the racial community together,¹⁹ certain visions of consuming Aryans also bound the nation more tightly and made it easier to cleave off others from economic and social life.

Missing from the debates about the Third Reich has been an examination of the territory that mediates between production and consumption: commercial culture, or “the historically specific and reciprocal interactions of economic and cultural capital.”²⁰ Despite the limits on individual consumption effected by economic policies that prioritized the coming war, commercial culture remained an active and meaningful sphere in which ideological claims about gender, race, the nation, urbanization, consumption, business, health, morality, and pleasure were tested. Advertising, the practice of making others aware of goods and services for sale, is one realm in which these and other historically contingent themes were publicly contested in Nazi Germany.

Hitler, Goebbels, and other leaders recognized the importance of reforming practices around buying and selling; this created key opportunities for the advocates of commerce, from advertisers and sales staffs to marketing scientists and even some state and party officials. These individuals worked under very unfavorable conditions in the 1930s and 1940s to make sales and consumption respectable pursuits. Their motivations were manifold. Some advertisers, corporate managers, and sales staff were undoubtedly principled National Socialists.²¹ Others were likely more motivated by their willingness to further their own careers or bolster the status of their professions or the brands they represented. Corporate leaders also sought to protect their shares of the market and profitability in potentially difficult

financial times. This study does not operate at the level of individual motivations, but what is clear is that those in the private sector who worked to normalize commercial relations during the Third Reich did much to bolster the dictatorship and its policies. They embraced buying and selling as a hallmark of the modern age. Indeed, for some it served as an essential way to participate in the life of the Volk. Moreover, while the postwar Germany that emerged after 1945 was unlike anything they imagined, their actions helped lay the foundations for the consumer desires and demands of the 1950s.

Finally, in addition to relying on state and business archives, contemporary theoretical writings, and the trade press, this study contributes to the growing body of historical scholarship that employs visual sources as evidentiary matter. While scholars have already used visual representation to examine the ideology and brutality of the regime, this book argues that advertisements from some of Germany's most popular brand-name products, then and today, also offer a lens through which to explore the relationships between businesses and the Nazi state, and between members of the Volk and Germany's political and commercial powers. There was no tremendous rupture in ad culture between the Weimar and Nazi eras, but the changes that did take place were generally welcomed. The resulting mixture of continuity and reform led to a visual culture that was both reassuring in its familiarity and encouraging in its portrayal of Germany's present path.

ADVERTISING AND GERMAN HISTORY

Scholars have begun turning to advertisements as key sources for analyzing needs and desires at a particular historical moment. This statement is most true for the United States, where a number of important texts on advertising have become essential reading for making sense of American culture.²² The same cannot be said for Germany. Historians of early twentieth-century Germany have generally stayed away from advertising as either an important subject in its own right or as a way to get at other questions about German society, politics, culture, or economic development.²³ Most scholars have concluded that Germany did not have a consumer culture until the 1950s or later, and so issues related to consumption in earlier periods have appeared less significant, particularly given the two world wars that dominated the experiences of Germans in these decades and scholarship since. Historians who might have turned to commercial advertising out

of individual interest in visual culture may have chosen to study the vast political propaganda that marked Germany's tumultuous past with revolution, wars, and dictatorships.²⁴

Finally, there is still some hesitation about what to do with advertisements as historical sources.²⁵ At various conferences, for example, I have been asked how I deal with the "reception problem"—the fact that it is largely impossible to evaluate how individual consumers interpreted the ads they saw. Judging how advertising messages were received is particularly difficult in the pre-1945 era, before consumer surveys and other forms of testing "success" became common in Europe. However, we should not see this point as a major stumbling block to working closely with ads. Instead, as David Ciarlo entreats, we need to look for "a pattern in a down-pour." In other words, by viewing large numbers of images we can begin to see certain patterns that reflect common ways of "crafting and of seeing imagery" in a given time period. Surely there are always individuals (among advertisers and among consumers) who interpreted imagery in wholly unique ways, but we can also presume by looking at the coherence among ads for different products that there were patterns of representation that became so common they constituted a "visual hegemony."²⁶

By the late nineteenth century, the industrialization and urbanization of Germany meant that more and more products competed for attention in the marketplace. While signage and ads were not new, the vast proliferation of advertising materials around the turn of the century marked a new era in the relationship between sellers and buyers. The ubiquitous nature of ads in the twentieth century, far more prevalent than state-sponsored propaganda even under National Socialism, forces us to examine their relevance in this society. Advertisements are important cultural artifacts that gave shape to the anxieties and aspirations prevalent at this time. Advertisements do not reflect social reality, but they do allow us to consider what ideas circulated under this regime alongside the messages delivered by state and party propaganda, and to what extent they reinforced or diverged from Nazi ideology.

While I encourage others to consider how advertisements might aid their own research, let me make a few comments about how I approached the research for this project. It was surprisingly difficult to get access to corporate archives.²⁷ The nature of that reluctance was not always clear, but the two most common answers are somewhat telling of advertising's lowly status. Some companies had clearly chosen not to save any materials related to advertising. Others had prioritized the archiving of packaging and other

ephemera for their aesthetic value, but had not saved any references to the planning or production of those designs. Clearly the historical worth of ads, beyond their artistic merit, has often gone unrecognized. Moreover, records that might have shed light on how in-house ad departments functioned or about the employees within those departments were generally nonexistent. As a result, beyond a few individuals I am not able to make more than the broadest generalizations about the social backgrounds of Germany's ad writers and designers. There is also the chance that some companies did not want their brands represented in this book, and other collections were destroyed in the war.

Without the luxury of picking and choosing, I examined the papers of any company that welcomed me. A number of these are well known to the scholarly community because they have been willing in the past to allow scholars access: Beiersdorf, Bayer, Henkel, and others. My luck changed somewhat when I realized that the archival holdings of companies nationalized by the East German government had become public materials and were housed since reunification in Germany's system of state archives. Some key collections came to me in this way, chief among them Osram and Böhme Fettchemie. Regardless of the generosity of some firms and the fortuitousness of GDR policy, the source base for this study may appear haphazard. Another strategy would have been to build the source base from a chosen set of newspapers or illustrated magazines, but I did not want to draw my analysis solely or primarily from published advertisements. Instead I have chosen to rely on companies for which advertisements could be found in the national press and read in conjunction with textual documents left by the ad designers or sales departments.

The biggest disappointment of the research stage of this project was that it was nearly impossible to find records from any of the independent ad agencies or placement services that existed in this period. As discussed in the next chapter, there is one very practical reason for this gap. Ad agencies, as we think of them in North America, were quite rare in Nazi-era Germany. The J. Walter Thompson collection at Duke University is an incredible resource, but the American agency was already selling off its Berlin office in 1932 to its German manager. The story at Duke ends with this acrimonious deal, though the new owner continued to operate the agency through the 1930s. German branches of British agencies were also shuttered during the Depression. There are some references in subsequent chapters to the Dorland agency, which quite amazingly survived the war, despite serving as a friendly home to former Bauhaus artists, including most famously Herbert

Bayer. Dorland is still open for business in Berlin today and its managers were kind enough to let me look at their historical collection, but it is quite limited in scope particularly for the years of this study. Other agencies and placement services either disappeared altogether during the war years or were bought up by large international firms in the postwar period, and their archives did not survive these transitions. Readers, it is hoped, will agree that the collection of consumer brands presented here, though in no way exhaustive, offers a useful sample of the major brand-name consumer product manufacturers of the day.²⁸

The ads for these products are in part interesting to today's readers because many of the brands they represent are still available.²⁹ Of course, these big national, and even international, brand-name manufacturers were but a very small percentage of the total number of corporations that placed ads in these years. But as David Ciarlo so clearly demonstrates in his work on the Wilhelmine era, imitation was the name of the game.³⁰ If I were to compile ads for hand crème from a dozen different brands, many would mimic each other in terms of the images and textual tropes used. Each company kept files of competitors' ads from around Germany and abroad and attempted to incorporate what were thought to be winning ideas in their own promotional materials. Although the more prominent brands had styles that would be recognizable to consumers, this cross pollination does lead to the question: to what extent can any advertisement of this era be considered German or more significantly "Nazi"? As is shown in the first chapter, German ad designers traveled abroad, reviewed ads from other countries, attended international conferences and trade shows, and read foreign professional journals and manuals even after the republican era came to an end. Manufacturers of big brand-name products often had significant export sales and sought efficiencies by using artwork and sometimes text too (albeit in translation) in more than one national market. Commercial culture in the Third Reich was, in Jonathan Wiesen's formulation, "flexible enough to accommodate publicity norms that were not, as such, 'German' and that could be effective beyond the borders of the Reich."³¹

Yet there were national peculiarities that resisted dilution. While many of the artistic and conceptual trends should be seen in a larger international context, German advertising also had to remain in sync with its audience at home—and that was an audience that by and large supported the regime and its racist worldview. Designers, copy writers, and sales staff could not make their work relevant if they completely ignored these facts. Nor is it likely that these corporate actors wanted to undercut the regime's popular-

ity, or run afoul of its authority in any way. Many managers cheered the ascension of the Nazi Party; others directly benefited from the new state's racist policies that led to the removal of Jews from their positions. For all these reasons, advertisers sought to align the brands they represented with the challenges and "achievements" of the day. In so doing, company directors demonstrated that they were "on board" with the regime, thereby legitimizing the direction of policy and aiding in the establishment of a Nazi lifestyle.³² As one cigarette ad triumphantly announced, "We have learned to see anew, think and feel anew—we also want now to learn to smoke [in a new way]!"³³

What does this say about the depth of National Socialist support? Renewed scholarly interest in the concept of a Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* has led to a more complete understanding of how the racial community operated at an everyday level.³⁴ John Connelly's work on Eisenach was an early contribution to the new wave of debate. He argued that a *Volksgemeinschaft* was never achieved "in the way the party leadership intended," but that the concept still had significance in Nazi society. Rather than "internalizing" the ideology, Connelly asserted that at the very least many Germans "externalized" it—using the concept of racial community, and the catchwords issued by the state and party, to serve their own individual needs. This book confirms these findings by presenting instances in which commercial and corporate actors mobilized the language of *Volksgemeinschaft* to suit their own interests. Time and again we are confronted with examples in which advertisers anticipated the regime in its enacting of *Volksgemeinschaft*. As Connelly explained, this "dynamic of anticipatory compliance gave National Socialism its tenacity and radicalism."³⁵ From 1933 until 1942, companies used their advertisements in ways that both implicitly and explicitly supported the regime. Consumers sought products to fulfill needs and desires, but consumption was easily reconciled with the ideology. While there were obvious limits in this economy, hobbled first by international financial crisis and then wage freezes and expenditures for war, consumer items could be easily marketed as beneficial to the material or spiritual well-being of members of the Volk. As long as such items existed, the regime was doing what it promised and ads served as a daily reminder of that claim. By 1943, it was impossible to maintain this link between goods and the promises of *Volksgemeinschaft*, and the production of new ads ceased. Memories of products gone from the shelves inevitably lost their identification with the dreams of the Third Reich, making it possible to resurrect seemingly "untainted" goods in the postwar period as hallmarks of a new consumer society.

SELLING UNDER THE SWASTIKA

The first chapter of the book sets the stage by describing the advertising industry in the Weimar Republic, charting its development in the 1920s and its search for recognition as a valuable and upstanding profession. While German advertisements were well respected throughout Europe and North America for their aesthetic value, at home the industry was still plagued by self-doubt about its economic and social worth. Some Germans remained distrustful of the messages contained in ads, and debate continued about the suitability of the Anglo-American model, in which full-service agencies managed the design and placement of all promotional materials for a brand as part of a concerted effort based on research and planning.³⁶ The chapter, therefore, also touches on the growing interest in the science of marketing, which coincided with the emergence of sophisticated mass media and hotly contested election campaigns in the unfolding crisis of the republic.³⁷ In this shifting climate, we see evidence of changing ad content and new innovations, including the adoption of text-laden ads and the more frequent use of photographs and “scientific proof.” Debate continued, however, and intensified after 1929 as the Depression and political turmoil led some advertisers and other observers to question whether the path of internationalization was the correct one for the industry.

The appointment of the Hitler-led government in early 1933 changed the nature of these discussions. The new regime acted quickly. Chapter 2 examines the establishment of the *Werberat der Deutschen Wirtschaft*, the Ad Council for the German Economy. The minimal scholarship that exists on this body dismisses it as insignificant.³⁸ However, I argue that the Ad Council’s legacy has been largely misunderstood by scholars, who expected heavy censorship of ads and a wholly new and uniform Nazi ad style. Most of the men involved in the *Werberat* came from the business world; they saw the organization as more akin to a lobbying group positioned to defend advertising from its detractors and improve the industry’s reputation with the public, businesses, and the state. Of course the council’s idea of reform included the purging of thousands of ad professionals who were unable to obtain licenses to practice in the field, according to racial and political/professional criteria. However, this “cleansing” combined with changes to the business side of the industry, including new sizing and pricing, the promotion of systematized training, and the support of marketing science to make a lasting impact on German commercial culture.

Chapter 3 begins a new section that describes the commercial culture of the prewar years. The chapter begins with a discussion of ads in the new media of radio and film. These were innovations introduced well before 1933, but the regime did make its mark. Although Goebbels had outlawed the use of radio as an inappropriate platform for commercial messages, advertisers did hold on to film as a relatively new and exciting platform. Yet print ads remained by far the most popular method for promoting goods throughout this period. In their films, print ads, and other promotional venues, companies sought ways to tap into the *Zeitgeist*, producing ads that combined national socialist priorities with trends that can be seen in other national contexts in this period. After the Four-Year Plan (1936) began to squeeze manufacturers with shortages of raw materials, restrictions on trade, and war-readiness became a constant refrain, advertisers sought new and better ways to indicate their products' worth to the Volk.

Leaving advertisers behind for the moment, Chapter 4 highlights consumers and salesmen as essential actors in this commercial culture. As other scholars have found, it is very difficult to uncover the experiences of the largely female consumer population, except as mediated by others, such as state representatives or party officials.³⁹ In this case, I turn largely to the writings of advertisers and other corporate staff to argue that manufacturers and retailers had more respect for women's "power of the pocketbook" and decision-making skills than is commonly recognized. Of course, not all consumers can be lumped together. Although I have tried to stay away from brands seen as luxury goods, the very nature of brand-name products, which represented uniform quality and an investment in promotional efforts to showcase that reliability, meant that these products were generally out of reach for poor Germans. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that unlike in the United States, where purveyors of consumer goods downplayed class differentiation as they sought to create mass markets, advertisers in Germany did not replace all peasants and workers with ideal middle-class families.⁴⁰ The National Socialist glorification of physical labor and the masculine Aryan body meant that heroic male workers and farmers remained staples in German ad culture, appearing sometimes even in ads that featured plainly middle-class goods, such as the expensive decaffeinated coffee brand Kaffee Hag. Nazi Germany was not a classless society, and this book considers the ways class and gender norms were complicated by racial narratives. Darcy Buerkle has noted, for example, that advertisements in the popular magazine *Die Dame* in the 1920s regularly depicted feminine traits that are "Jewish-enough" so as to include the possibility of

a Jewish-German female shopper. This potential disappears, she argues, by the mid-1930s.⁴¹

Perhaps it goes without saying that racial “others” did not play a significant role in advertising in Nazi Germany. Yet hate-filled caricatures of Jews, blacks, and Slavs were common staples of Nazi-era political propaganda, and images of black servants in particular had a long history in Germany’s visual landscape.⁴² The absence of non-Aryan figures, caricatured or otherwise, is in itself meaningful. While minorities had always been marginalized in German society, their ostracism became state policy after 1933. The “purification” of “German ads” was just one of the myriad ways in which racism was interwoven into the fabric of daily life in Nazi Germany. Moreover, in terms of business ethics, the rejection of an allegedly “Jewish” sales style was implied in every reform. “Honest” business practices were by definition racially circumscribed. With this point in mind, Chapter 4 turns to sales representatives to ask how these commercial actors hoped to fit in to the new marketplace and whether they had a role in the Aryanization of the economy before the war.

A discussion of commercial culture during the Second World War is sorely lacking from the vast historiography of the conflict. This lack of attention to advertising, and the efforts of consumer products industries to retain promotional links to consumers at home and abroad, means that we have missed an important part of daily life in Germany and a link between the empire-building goals of the Third Reich and the emergence of West Germany, in particular, as an economic power. While the war led to sharp cuts in manpower and material resources for consumer products industries and prompted some to insist that ads had no place in a war economy, there were others in industry and with links to the government who were concerned about morale on the home front, and fought to maintain some minimum level of consumer satisfaction. Chapter 5 examines this renewed debate over the value of advertisements and asks how individual consumption was thought to fit in with the visions of empire circulating during the euphoric years of military victory.

The final chapter of *Selling under the Swastika* carries the story through defeat and discusses briefly the re-establishment of a German ads industry in West and East Germany. Although conditions on the home front did not completely deteriorate until late 1944, the collapse of the consumer market after 1942 meant that the visual partnership between brand-name products and the Third Reich began to falter. Chapter 6 suggests that this uncoupling of individual consumption and the Nazi worldview in the second

half of the war was instrumental to the postwar rehabilitation of Germany's consumer goods industries. Messages that linked consumer goods and the regime were largely absent from the landscape, thanks to paper shortages and Allied bombings. In homes ersatz goods had replaced brand names. Long lines, the black market, and going without marked the consumer's world in the last half of the war, and these experiences only became more desperate in the first postwar years. Manufacturers of brand-name goods, and the commercial sphere more generally, thus escaped the taint of defeat.

Ultimately, *Selling under the Swastika* argues that German companies and the Nazi Werberat were able to save advertising from itself. They convinced Germans that buying and selling were not foreign imports or threats to unity, but in fact ways to belong to the community. Even during the war, ads played a reassuring role by reminding Germans of products they associated with peacetime and by offering strategies to deal with hardship. Though, fortunately, the German empire imagined by these advocates of advertising never came to pass, commercial culture was ready to step forward in postwar Germany as a unifying project that could take the place of a disgraced political culture.