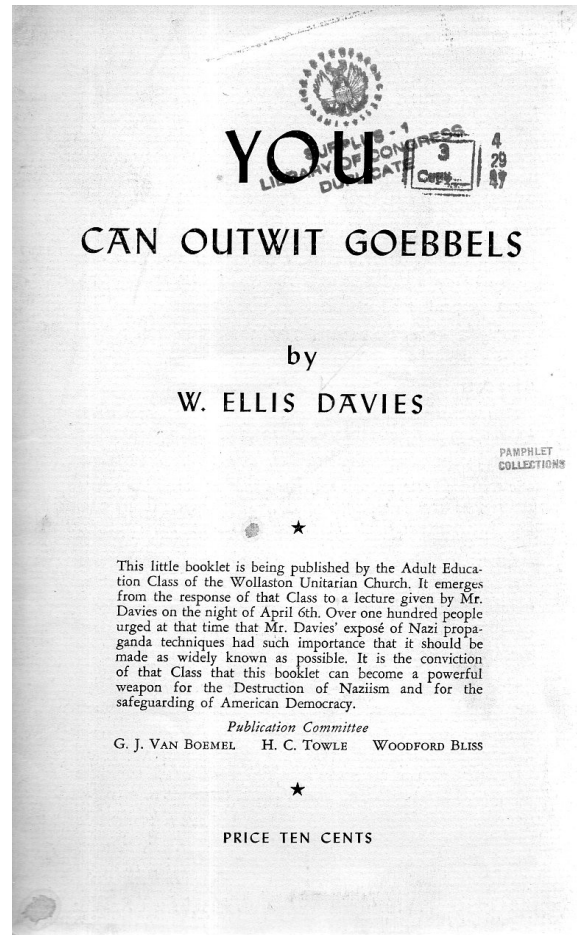


You can Outwit Goebbels

by W. Ellis Davies

Wollaston Unitarian Church, Wollaston, Massachusetts, 194- (ca. 1941-3?)



*An interesting and logical pamphlet on recognizing and decoding Nazi propaganda.
[Rare—no references to it online, and no copies located in WorldCat/OCLC]*

JF Ptak Science Books thesciencebookstore.com historyofideasblog.com

FOREWORD

You can outwit Goebbels. You can render ineffectual the most brilliant refinements of the art of propaganda that have ever emerged from a nation at war. You can deprive Hitler of his secret weapon!

When a nation knows what Hitler's secret weapon is, that weapon ceases to exist. It can remain a weapon only as long as it is a secret.

Simply to say that Hitler's secret weapon is a fifth column is wholly inadequate. It must be understood that the Nazi fifth column is so remarkably adept that even the most sincere and patriotic Americans can be, and are, unwittingly exploited in its service. Utterly without knowing it, you may be a Nazi agent! Even this writer, long an intransigent foe of Naziism, has, in earnest endeavors to protect Democracy, discovered himself unconsciously serving the Nazi propaganda machine. So astute is Goebbels in the manipulation of that machine that its most effective work is done by unsuspecting, patriotic Americans who do not know the great Nazi secret.

It is the purpose of the following paragraphs to expose that secret and indicate a technique for the total destruction of Hitler's secret weapon.

W. E. D.

Hitler's dream of world domination was hardly a pipe-dream. It was based upon shrewd calculations. Fortunately, however, there were two serious miscalculations. The first was the failure accurately to estimate the effectiveness of Russian resistance; the second was the failure to anticipate the resiliency of American Democracy.

Had it not been for these two vital factors it is highly probable that we should, even here in America, as in the rest of the world be faced with the prospect of Nazi enslavement. A glance at a map of the world in a new way should make this obvious.

If you will observe the relationship of the three continents, Africa, Europe and Asia to each other you will notice that they form a land-mass embracing by far most of the earth's territory. Whatever power achieved rigid control of this huge land-mass would, if so disposed, maintain hegemony over the whole world. It is vital to the people living on territory outside this land-mass to prevent the Axis from achieving a conquest of it. For the economic and political dependence of these surrounding areas, including not only Australia, the Pacific Islands and England, but even the whole of the Western Hemisphere, is such that our standard of living and our way of life is inextricably interrelated with the regime, or regimes, on the great land-mass.

It is clear now that Axis strategy seeks as its major initial step toward world-domination an unquestioned dominion over these three continents which are joined by land. It is equally clear that our future is dependent upon a counter-strategy which will deny such a success to the Axis.

Were Germany and Japan to achieve that goal together we should be without bases adequate for effective offensives against them. And our capacity for production of the implements of war would be greatly outmatched. In order to play anything approximating an effectual role in world affairs we should be placed in a position of having to choose between the German and Japanese tyrannies for friends. And what is ultimately so catastrophic as to be almost unthinkable is the fact that the Nazis and Japanese would inevitably clash and precipitate a race war which would be

devastating beyond imagination. We should find it impossible to isolate ourselves from such a war; the price of our participation would be, not simply guns for butter, but total impoverishment of the whole nation.

Hence, irrespectively of our affirmative objectives in this war (and the peace which must follow is tremendously important) it is of paramount importance to prevent the Axis from completing the initial major step which would wrest control of the three continents from our Allies.

It follows necessarily, therefore, that the utmost in cooperation with our Allies who are now matching weapons with the Axis is a prerequisite of our success.

It follows also that Axis strategy requires as the prerequisite to its goals a disintegration of the unity of the United Nations. It is, ultimately, by creating this disintegration alone that the Axis can hope to win.

For this purpose the Nazis have constructed two gigantic weapons; the first is a military machine which seeks to destroy the communications of the United Nations; the second is a Fifth Column which promotes divisions both between and within each of the United Nations. As to which of these two weapons is the more powerful is an open question. In any case the RAPIDITY with which both Nazi and Japanese conquests have been made is itself eloquent testimony to the unprecedented power of the Trojan Horse. In both cases, as is now very well known, the way for conquest was paved most dexterously by fifth columns.

The fifth column, or secret weapon, exists only because Nazi propagandist techniques have been sufficiently skillful to create it. In other words, the fifth column is moulded by a Nazi propaganda which is subtle enough to convince people in enemy nations that it is in their interest to serve the Nazi cause. These Nationals of Germany's enemy countries thereupon become the agents of Goebbels and practice their seductive arts on untold numbers of unwitting patriots.

Their objective is twofold: to create divisions among people of their own nation and to enhance differences between the allied nations.

The technique of "Divide and Conquer" is not at all new. But

[4]

some Nazi refinements of it are quite novel. It is these refinements that we shall now expose.

At the base of Nazi propaganda technique is a dilemma from which it is exceedingly difficult for us to escape. The dilemma might be illustrated by a difficulty known to any engineer who has sought to weld cast iron. It is easy enough to weld a break in a casting and make the welded place the strongest place. But usually the casting is thus weakened in other places. The cure is as bad as the ailment!

In the armor of the Democracies there are, inescapably, certain weaknesses; but we cannot afford those weaknesses and we must heal them; yet in the very attempt to heal them we are in danger, thru Nazi manipulations, of making new weaknesses.

This is our dilemma: If we leave the weak spots in our armor we are in danger; if we remove them we may create new ones. It is this dilemma which the Nazis are able to use very brilliantly. It is one of the principle factors at the core of their technique.

Let us see how this works. There have been times when the war effort of our British Allies has left much to be desired; their failures have resulted in part from weaknesses in their armor which needed to be removed; in order to be removed it was necessary to expose them; but how could one expose such weaknesses without providing the Nazis with material for promoting divisiveness? How could one expose the mistakes of British Colonial policy without giving the Nazis an opportunity of creating disillusionment as to confidence in our Allies?

Aided by such a dilemma it has been all too easy for pro-Axis agents to suggest that an Allied victory would mean only an expanded Empire for Britain and debts for the United States.

The technique is this: If the common interest plus the self-interest of the enemies unites them for war, divide them by suggesting that the peace will be worse than an Axis victory. This technique is even now being used unfortunately, with all too great success. For example recall the suspicions that have been aroused in connection with our Russian Ally. We are told that if the Axis loses, the price will be Communism in Europe; we are asked if we want to aid Russia at the expense of seeing the Soviet system spread.

[5]

Then, interestingly enough, we are appraised at different times of two mutually exclusive theories calculated to promote mistrust and suspicion of Russia: it is cynically suggested at one time that the Russians will stop at the German border and leave us holding the bag; and we are told at another time that the Russians will surge across the German border and across every other boundary line in Europe, not stopping until they reach the coast of Spain.

In either case the implication is that it is useless to go on fighting since we shall be cheated of the fruits of victory; or the price of victory must be so high that we shall not want to pay it. And in either case the effort to defeat the Axis is discouraged, which is precisely what the Axis desires.

Add to these anti-British and anti-Russian campaigns the current anti-Jewish, anti-Communist, and anti-New Deal campaigns and it is obvious that the Axis has inspired a well-coordinated attack upon our unity.

If then, the enthusiasm for defeating the Axis can be dissipated by this propaganda we are given the brighter-seeming alternative of making peace and buying rubber and tin from the Japanese more cheaply, and thus more profitably than we bought them from the British, and of doing business with a Europe saved from Communism by the Nazis.

* * *

With this background it is now possible to point out the supreme element in the technique of Nazi propaganda. Just ask the question: WHO ARE THE PROPONENTS OF THE ARGUMENTS WHICH DISCOURAGE UNITY? WHO SPREADS THE SENTIMENTS WHICH ARE ANTI-BRITISH, ANTI-RUSSIAN, ANTI-SEMITIC, ANTI-COMMUNIST AND PRO-PEACE WITH THE AXIS? Are these sentiments spread by known Nazis? Not effectively, of course. By whom, then, are they spread? *Usually by sincere Americans who do not know that they are actually agents of Goebbels.*

This is the salient fact about the success to date of the Nazi fifth column. In almost every country the Nazis have been able to persuade sincere devotees of their own causes to serve the Goebbels' machine. The Nazi exploitation of this principle has been brought to a crowning climax in recent years.

[6]

For example, before the war began, when the Nazis were gaining strength and preparing for their gigantic effort at world domination, who were the people who sabotaged opposition? In England it was a powerful group which came to be known as the Cliveden Set; the devotees of this group were actually persuaded that they could best maintain their way of life by doing precisely what Hitler desired. They organized their government to promote Nazi objectives in Spain and Czechoslovakia; they were aided by equally earnest devotees of their own causes in the persons of Laval and Bonet of France. They all sabotaged the growing opposition to the Nazi because of a sincere belief that they were protecting their own interests. The sincerity of these people was equalled only by their own stupidity and the Nazi duplicity. The point I am trying to make is that these people did not think they were primarily serving the Nazis; they were sincere in their belief that they were saving their own way of life.

There are untold numbers of people, cherishing varying ways of life, holding a sneaking regard for Hitler, or violently excoriating Hitler who, wittingly or unwittingly, have, believing they were promoting their own interests, actually promoted Nazi interests. There are large numbers of such people in the United States today. They constitute a grave weakness in our armor. Even the attempt to eliminate that weakness is fraught with danger UNLESS WE HAVE AN INTELLIGENT TECHNIQUE. It is to such a technique that we must now turn.

* * *

Our objective is to outwit Goebbels. Our dilemma is to remove the weakness from our armor without creating new weaknesses by enhancing disunity.

We must challenge those who are serving, knowingly or unknowingly the Axis aims. We must challenge them without creating divisions, or enhancing divisions already created. How shall we do it? We can do it by adopting two simple rules. They are:

1. ALWAYS CHALLENGE PEOPLE FOR WHAT THEY DO AND NEVER FOR WHAT THEY ARE.
2. LET ANY SUCH CHALLENGE BE BASED UPON THE PRIMARY DESIRE TO WIN THE WAR.

Let us see how this might work. At the time of writing there

[7]

are many attacks being launched against American Communists. These attacks are promoting disunity. It is not the Communists who are at present promoting disunity; with whatever motive, they are enthusiastically pushing the war effort. There are none more keen to see Naziism destroyed, and with good reason if their sentimental attachment is to Russia. Hence, if the Communists are helping to win the war and destroy Naziism, an attack upon them while they are in this mood serves the Axis and injures our war effort.

Take a second illustration: Is it possible, at the present time, to discredit the Soviet Union without aiding Hitler? We must first ask, not whether or not the Russians are Communists, or Socialists but ARE THEY AIDING HITLER? ARE THEY SABOTAGING OR DISCOURAGING THE WAR AGAINST THE AXIS? In other words, not what are they, but WHAT ARE THEY DOING? And it follows of necessity that if the Russians are bending every sinew toward the defeat of the Nazis those who discredit Russia are, whether wittingly or unwittingly, agents of the Axis.

The same questions are relevant in connection with anti-Semitism. Are the Jewish people aiding the Nazis? No group is more ardent in its endeavors to crush Naziism. Therefore, follow the rule, and if you can't challenge people on the basis of what they are doing, don't promote disunity by attacking them for what they are. To attack anyone for what he is, is playing the Nazi game. And it doesn't matter how sincere one may be. One's very sincerity enhances his value to the Nazis.

Further, even more subtle than these attacks upon people because they are British, or Russian, or Jewish, or Communistic are attacks *seemingly* based on a desire to promote the war against the Axis. For example, currently, many newspapers are excoriating labor and the Administration on the ground that both are inhibiting production of essential war material. When such attacks are launched we are faced with the necessity of choosing between two alternatives, to wit: either the attacks are justified OR THOSE LAUNCHING THE ATTACKS ARE ACTING, CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY, IN THE INTERESTS OF THE AXIS. How shall we discover which of these two things is true?

[8]

Apply the rule and you will discover that almost without exception those launching the attacks have consistently attacked the New Deal and persistently fought against Labor reforms; THIS IS WHAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE. And a careful examination of the record will reveal that they have usually done it with lies.

They are doing it now; they are both saying and implying that the forty-hour week law is limiting the hours of working men to forty hours. This is a lie; men are working many more hours in most defense industries. But the real issue is that they are receiving overtime rates; and those seeking to change the law wish to reduce labor's income. As to whether, under the circumstances, labor's income ought to be reduced is an issue very worthy of debate. That is, since our valiant soldiers get so much less, a real issue. But the real issue is obscured because the foes of labor have meaner motives. THEY SEEK TO DISCREDIT LABOR FOR WHAT IT IS; THEY SEEK TO DISCREDIT THE ADMINISTRATION FOR WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR. In neither case is the polemic based on what Labor and the Administration are doing. Is it possible that these men who create disunity on the grounds that they are promoting the war share the sentiments of the French Newspapers which once repeatedly printed the little motto, "Rather Hitler than Blum?"

Observe, now, what must be an obvious truth to any impartial American: Irrespectively of differences any of us may ever have had with policies emerging from the White House, there are few living Americans with a more magnificent record of anti-Hitler activity than our President. The political maturity he demonstrated in the years preceding Pearl Harbor has since won him the support of very many Americans who now realize the short-sightedness of the isolationism he persistently endeavored to discourage. So outstanding is what our President HAS DONE AND IS DOING to defeat the Axis abroad and to preserve Democracy at home that the violently prejudiced alone could ever accuse him of inhibiting the war effort.

It is not at all necessary to suppose that those entertaining such prejudices are knowingly servants of Goebbels. In fact they are all the more dangerous if, being violently prejudiced, they

[9]

are sincere, and in their own estimate, patriotic. Under such circumstances they are the most potent of all Goebbels' agents.

It should, then, be increasingly clear that the price of prejudice in the United States today is too high. We must dispense with it. And there is to my knowledge no more helpful way than to apply the rules I have laid down. Judge people by what they do; "By their fruits ye shall know them."

* * *

In this connection, I should like to demonstrate that there are certain other prejudices so deleterious to our war effort that we can no longer afford to cherish them. Perhaps chief among them is the anti-Semitism which is so widely exploited by the Nazis in America. Let us analyze it both in terms of its effect upon the war effort and upon ourselves as individuals.

Let us see first that even as these words are being written there is raging in the United States a controversy which Goebbels must greet with delight. I suspect that indirectly, this controversy is one of the little doctor's masterpieces. It began with an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* on the Jewish Problem. It has provoked the kind of discussions for which Americans should, in this crisis, have no time.

If we return for a moment to the propagandist technique of encouraging enemy Nationals with sincere beliefs to sow the seeds of dissension we will remember that during the World War, German agents in this country worked mostly through sincere American patriots. German agents, for example, hunted up sincere Pacifists, persuaded them to put their beliefs into writing and then arranged for publication of these writings. It was seldom necessary for such publications to be owned by Germans. There were always Americans with motives beyond suspicion who could be beguiled into printing what the enemy desired Americans to read.

The extent to which this technique operated in World War 1 was minimal compared to the extent to which it is operating and being operated indirectly by the Nazis in World War 2.

On the basis of the record what would Goebbels be more likely to strive for than to get a well-known, widely read magazine to publish what he wants the American people to think? And what

[10]

more likely than that the authors of the articles Goebbels wants us to read be writers beyond the suspicion of a Nazi association?

Irrespectively, then, of whether there were secret Nazi machination behind the publication of the *Saturday Evening Post's* article on the Jewish Problem, written as it was by a member of the Jewish race, the printing of the article at such a time was, whether the magazine in question knew it or not, a tremendous success for Nazi propaganda and a cruel blow at American unity.

In the first place it posed an issue calculated to promote disunity among Americans. As I have just shown there is in truth no issue and no problem where Jewish support of the war effort is concerned. Why, then, precipitate an issue and manufacture a problem? The answer is that if you can get the Americans to believe there is a Jewish problem you have already reached first base in your efforts to create the problem and promote paralyzing disharmonies. In the second place where a racial prejudice, residually already there, was dormant you have brought it steaming above the surface. Why is there an enhanced Jewish problem in the United States since the article appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*? BECAUSE THE SATURDAY EVENING POST CREATED THE ENHANCEMENT BY POSING THE QUESTION. What could you suggest for a better Nazi coupe d'etat?

However, the issue was capable of being heightened only because too many Americans harbor a prejudice which as Americans today we cannot afford. It is the fact of the existence of that prejudice which makes us capable of exploitation by demagogues and would be demagogues at home and abroad.

It is because the anti-Semitic prejudice is not alone a wound in the side of Democracy, but because it is a great potential danger to Democracy that I want to analyze it now. In America today we cannot afford to harbor attitudes which make us easy marks for Goebbels. And there is nothing more useful to Goebbels than anti-Semitism wherever it is found.

Until about twelve years ago I had lived all my life in England and like many other English youths had acquired a queer mental picture of Americans. I borrowed that picture from the theatre. On the stage Americans were usually portrayed as Yankees wearing loud, check suits and speaking highly ungrammatically with

[11]

a strong nasal accent. To many a credulous English youth, all Americans were like that! Then there are some uncritical Americans whose idea of Englishmen derives either from the movies or from brief contacts with a cockney accent. Since Hollywood has often represented the Englishman as a lanky figure in formal dress, displaying the inevitable monocle, speaking in a high, squeaky voice, being unintentionally funny, though devoid of a sense of humor, some Americans have thought that most Englishmen were like that! Often people have remarked to me with surprise that I have a sense of humor and that, despite my English accent, I don't drop my "aitches."

Behind such attitudes is one of the most prevalent propensities of human beings. It is the propensity for generalising on the basis of limited experiences. This sort of generalization is seldom carried to its logical extremes, but if it were it would postulate such absurdities as the following:

- A. 1. This man, John Doe, has no sense of humor.
- 2. John Doe is an Englishman.
- 3. Therefore, Englishmen have no sense of humor.
- B. 1. A lot of people were bootleggers.
- 2. They were Americans.
- 3. Therefore, Americans are bootleggers.

These propositions are obviously absurd. Any of us who discovered people actually believing them would consider such people mentally inept. Dare we be as critical of ourselves where our generalizations are concerned? For example consider the number of people who have actually become pawns of Goebbels because they have accepted the proposition which follows:

- 1. I heard of some men who are disreputable.
- 2. These men were Jews.
- 3. Therefore, all Jews are disreputable.

I do not mean that that precise generalisation characterises the thinking of all racial fanatics; but I do mean that it represents the mental level on which their thinking regarding race is carried on. In the interests of our intellectual maturity we can hardly afford to tolerate within ourselves such low-grade thinking. Just so ridiculous is the mental process of those who attribute to a whole race or nation, as its exclusive characteristics, some propensity

they have discovered, or think they have discovered, or heard that someone else has discovered, in some members of a race or nation. Just so Father Coughlin attempts to make Communism an apparent Jewish "ism" embracing even the arch-capitalist international bankers because some Jews are Communistic.

The utterances of this pro-Nazi priest, however, and those who reiterate them, are not aimed at intelligent Americans. They are intended to capture the support of those Americans who respond to appeals aimed at the lowest emotions. We should know the nature of these low emotions to which the racial fanatic appeals.

In the first place, there are countless numbers of people who derive satisfaction from observing or inflicting pain and practicing cruelty. They are the Sadists. In fact there is a residue of sadism in almost all people. The movies have a highly developed technique for appealing to it. They carefully represent a person as a thoroughgoing, despicable villain and make us hate him. Then, because he is clearly a villain, and because we hate him, we thrill with the hero who fights, humiliates and vanquishes him. We enjoy the villain's suffering. We do so because we have been made to feel that he deserves it. If our sadistic tendencies have been civilized we cannot enjoy another's pain unless we are sure that he deserves it.

Now, the racial fanatic seeks to exploit our residual sadism by making us believe, if he can, that some race is deserving of cruelty. He helps us to deceive ourselves into believing that we are doing something noble in persecuting others, when, in reality, we are simply giving expression to brutal and vicious emotions which civilized men are gradually relegating to their jungle ancestry.

That is the first thing within us to which the racial fanatic appeals.

The second thing to which he appeals is what a psychiatrist might call "Hyponoia." A good old English word is an excellent substitute: Ignorance! Not only the kind of ignorance on the basis of which people commonly generalize, distinguishing a race by a quite human, and not essentially racial, fault of some members of that race — but also economic ignorance.

The industrial system of the present day is so complicated and intricate a thing that very few people, even among the experts,

thoroughly understand it. When things go wrong economically there are usually many intricately related reasons which few of us are able fully to comprehend. If we are simpleminded we just blame some person, like the President, or some group like the Congress, or a part of the Congress, or some Industrialists, or Communists. It is much easier to blame someone than to try and comprehend the situation. So the racial fanatic, like Father Coughlin, appeals to the simpletons who easily find in Jewish, capitalistic, international-banking-communism the root of all evil.

This leads us to the third thing to which the anti-Semite appeals. The psychiatrist might call it "volitional hyporria" but another good old English word will do: Active Stupidity! Having exploited our ignorance by giving us a scapegoat, the fanatic now urges that IF WE PERSECUTE THAT SCAPEGOAT WE SHALL THUS SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS AND DISSIPATE ALL EVIL. It is stupid in the first place to blame unfortunate conditions on any one race or group; but it is a thousand times more stupid to expect a solution of all problems to emerge from the persecution of that group. One brief glance at the lot of the German people today should suffice to show beyond doubt what happens to a people promoting or permitting the rise of a Despotism on the wings of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, in America still, the racial fanatic appeals to the stupidity which believes it can solve complicated economic problems with racial persecution.

A fourth thing to which the racial fanatic appeals is — to forget all about the psychiatrist and use another good old English word — Cowardice. He appeals to the potential cowardice of a vast majority devoid of the intelligence that might solve its problems, blaming its own bungling incompetency on a powerless minority. That is exactly what happened in Germany. Such a majority is like the bully who, mentally inept but physically big and strong, compensates for his lack of mental power by manifestations of physical power — the big boy who hasn't intelligence enough to achieve distinction, bullying and intimidating little boys. It is ignorance which blames our failures upon a minority; it is stupidity which thinks that the persecution of that minority will bring relief; it is sheer, unmitigated cowardice which oppresses and tortures that minority.

[14]

Now the importance of all this is not for the moment that the Jewish people should be protected against persecution for their sakes. It is important to us who are not Jewish for two reasons; first, our dignity, our self-respect, our love of the democratic culture, should combine to raise us above the possibility of harboring such base and self-belittling prejudices; and second we cannot afford to sustain in our beliefs and attitudes such anomalies which make us easy marks for potential tyrants. It was because the German people, or enough of them, were capable of responding to Hitler's campaign of sadism, ignorance, stupidity and cowardice that the Nazis gained the power to enslave the nation. IT IS LARGELY ON THE BASIS OF THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH LOW EMOTIONS OUTSIDE OF GERMANY THAT HITLER HOPES FURTHER TO EXTEND HIS DOMINATION. It is largely because these low attitudes exist at all in the United States that there is any effectiveness in the Nazi propaganda machine here.

Since, then, it is the existence of such things as racial prejudice which makes people easy victims of the despot's propaganda, permit me to appeal to you, fellow Americans, with a good, characteristic masterpiece of American expressive slang: "Don't be a sucker for a demagogue.

Let us remember that no oppressive, bitter or cruel crusade is ever going to improve human life. Life is enriched, not by fanatical persecutions, but by good-humored persuasions. Compare, if you like, the crusading, anti-Jewish vocal bombardments of Hitler and Coughlin with the gentle humor of that most American, American, Mark Twain who said, "You need not tell me that a person is a Jew or a Catholic, a Protestant, a foreigner or an American; you need tell me only that he is a human being; nothing could be worse than that."

The author of this booklet is the minister of the Wollaston Unitarian Church, and Regular Lecturer at the Monday Evening Adult Education Class.

For additional copies send to Wollaston Unitarian Church, Wollaston, Massachusetts.

[15]