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THE *SENTINEL*:

AMERICAN-JEWISH WEEKLY COVERAGE IN CHICAGO OF
NAZI PERSECUTION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY AND THE HOLOCAUST,
1930-1947

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES PROGRAM
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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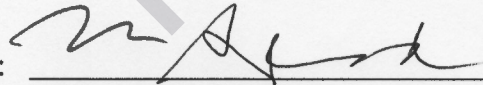
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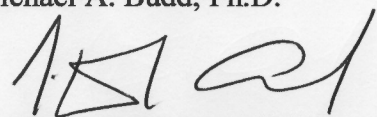
This dissertation of Norah Schneider entitled "The *Sentinel*: American-Jewish Weekly Coverage in Chicago of Nazi Persecution of European Jewry and the Holocaust, 1930-1947" submitted to the Ph.D. Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Salve Regina University has been read and approved by the following individuals:

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PREVIEW

Dedication

My Inspiration

Great Great Grandmother Ella Reis Kohn
1886-1942 (presumed)

In Memoriam

Robert Guy Lewis
1934-2014

Irwin Schneider
1932-2017

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank a number of people for their help in making this research possible. First and foremost, I must thank my committee: Dr. Timothy Demy, you have been with me since the beginning developing this topic and I thank you for your guidance; Dr. Daniel Cowdin, your energy and enthusiasm kept me motivated; and Dr. Timothy Neary, you always thought of me with sources and articles, keeping me encouraged not only for this dissertation but all of my studies. I thank all three of you for your unwavering support and encouragement and I have enjoyed every step of this process with you. I also want to thank Dr. Michael Budd, PhD Program Director, for his continued support throughout this research.

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and my mother, Vanessa Schneider. There are not enough words to express how much your love and support mean to me. I could not have done this without you. I love you.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

Abstract

With a qualitative, historical analysis of each issue between 1930 and 1947, this dissertation examines how the *Sentinel*, an Anglo-Jewish weekly out of Chicago, Illinois, covered the rise of Nazism, Nazi persecution of European Jewry, the Holocaust, and its immediate aftermath. Prior to this dissertation, the *Sentinel*, despite being one of the major Anglo-Jewish weeklies in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, and being published in Chicago, the American city with the second largest Jewish population after New York during the time examined in this dissertation, had never been studied in depth. The *Sentinel* prided itself on covering all essential Jewish news from Chicago, the United States, and the world. Through essays, editorials, and articles via wire services, the *Sentinel* followed the rise of Hitler and Nazism and provided detailed information about the increasing persecution of German Jewry under Nazi rule through the 1930s. With the outbreak of the Second World War, persecution transitioned to the systematic extermination of European Jewry and the *Sentinel* continued to offer comprehensive reports as Nazi control spread throughout Europe. Even as the entrance of the United States into the war impacted information coming out of Europe, the coverage of Nazi atrocities toward European Jews remained a priority to the *Sentinel*. Within the pages of the *Sentinel*, the major topics of Nazi persecution of European Jewry and the Holocaust can be found as they happened and in immense detail. Following the end of the Second World War in Europe, the *Sentinel* followed the trials of Nazi criminals and reported on new information learned in the years immediately after the war.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Need of Study

This dissertation examines the question “How did the *Sentinel*, a Chicago Anglo-Jewish weekly, report the rise of Nazism, Nazi persecution of European Jewry, the Holocaust, and its immediate aftermath?”¹ Understanding how and what the press, especially the American and Allied press, reported regarding the atrocities against European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s provides insight into what and when the public knew about such events. There have been recent studies of the mainstream American press’s coverage of these events as well as the reporting of the Roman Catholic and Protestant American press. While there are many questions focusing specifically on what American Jewry knew and why they did not try harder to assist their European brethren, there has been little examination of the American Jewish press. In his book *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*, Holocaust historian David Wyman observes “much further study of American Jewry’s response is needed, including examination of Jewish leaders, organizations, local communities and synagogues, as well as the Jewish press.”² This dissertation analyzes one aspect of the Jewish American press in the form of an Anglo-Jewish weekly and places it in the broader context of the events of Europe between 1930 and 1947 and American press coverage of those events.

¹ Anglo-Jewish is a term used to indicate a Jewish American publication is in English instead of Hebrew or Yiddish.

² David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: The New Press, 2007), xvi.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: first, the study analyzes the dissemination of information to Chicago Jewry from the Chicago Jewish press about the events in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s with respect to European Jewry. Second, the study explores the sources of this information. Both of these aspects reflect the presence and influence of technology in the promulgation of information in the middle decades of the twentieth century when radio and newspapers were the two major sources for information regarding current events.

Published weekly and blending the styles of newspaper and magazine, the *Sentinel* provides a spectrum of community, Chicago, national, and international news that focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on the relevance of that news to Jewish readers. In its first issue on February 4, 1911, the *Sentinel*'s mission statement read,

we intend to supply for an intelligent Jewish public, a Jewish newspaper devoted to its interests without regard to the particular class to which the readers may belong. In promising that we shall discuss many Jewish questions, we have in mind that this term is broad enough to include questions relating to Jews, reformed and orthodox, or the Jews who have an equal respect for both or all classes. The fact remains that however different among themselves they may be, Jews have many interests in common, and the chief events affecting one class affect no less the others.³

Because of the breadth of information contained in the *Sentinel*, an in-depth study of all of the content is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The work is therefore not an exhaustive analysis of all of the newspaper's content but, rather, an investigation of information pertaining to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany and the persecution of European Jewry under the Third Reich, ultimately resulting in the Final Solution and the Holocaust. According to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society,

³ Philip P. Bregstone, *Chicago and Its Jews: A Cultural History* (Chicago: Privately Published, 1933), 360-61.

“one of the most striking accomplishments of the *Sentinel* was its early recognition of the ominous developments in Europe in the 1930s. At a time when other newspapers were burying these reports in the back pages, the *Sentinel* sounded the alarm loud and clear.”⁴

It will be important to discern when Chicago Jewry learned from the press what was developing politically and culturally with the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich as well as the subsequent events and details of the persecution of German Jewry, the Holocaust, and its aftermath. Intended to provide information to all Chicago Jews, examining the *Sentinel* from 1930 to 1947 will give insight into what was known in the United States. An important factor is how the *Sentinel* received its information and when it chose to publish that information.

A major media source of information on the status of European Jewry was the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), which focused on important news about and for world Jewry. The *Sentinel* subscribed to the JTA wire service as well as other major wire services of the time, including the Worldwide News Service and the International Jewish Press Service, but relied heavily on the JTA during the Second World War.⁵ According to Haskel Lookstein, “the Anglo-Jewish weekly newspapers and periodicals depended almost entirely upon the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin* for its news reports about European Jewry, as well as for the world reaction and the response of Jews in America and throughout the world” as it was “the main

⁴ Joy Kingsolver, “The *Sentinel*—Digitized!” *Chicago Jewish History*, Fall 2008, 12.

⁵ When the *Sentinel* changed editors in November, 1943, there was a period of time during 1944 and early 1945 that no articles from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency appeared in the *Sentinel*. It is unknown why this occurred as the Jewish Telegraphic Agency continued to function at this significant time for Jewish news.

source of news in English for the Anglo-Jewish press.”⁶ The mainstream press, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Times*, also relied on the Jewish Telegraphic Agency for information and news on European Jewry.⁷

Method and Structure

This dissertation will be a qualitative and historical analysis of the *Sentinel* between the years 1930 and 1947. Editorials, essays, and articles will be examined to determine what information the *Sentinel* published and when it did so. It must be taken into consideration that the *Sentinel* was a weekly and therefore a delay in publication of news as well as the editorials and essays did occur. If for some reason, it did not discuss certain events pertaining to European Jews during the war that will be examined as well. Haskel Lookstein argues that one potential reason for lack of coverage on European Jewry in the Jewish American press is “perhaps the assumption that readers would get the important news elsewhere.”⁸ If correct, his observation could add even more significance to reports in the *Sentinel*.

After the introductory chapter (Chapter One) and review of literature (Chapter Two), this study will be divided into six major time periods with corresponding chapters that present and evaluate coverage by the *Sentinel* of events affecting Jewry in Europe.

⁶ Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938-1944* (New York: Hartmore House, 1985), 25, 48.

⁷ The *New York Times* ended its subscription to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in July 1937, making the news reported in the *Sentinel* that much more significant. See Laurel Leff, “When the Facts Didn’t Speak for Themselves: The Holocaust in the *New York Times*, 1939-1945,” in *Why Didn’t the Press Shout: American and International Journalism During the Holocaust*, edited by Robert Moses Shapiro (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Publishing, 2003), 62.

⁸ Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers*, 54.

Chapter Three will study the years from 1930 to 1933 while Chapter Four will cover 1934 to August 1935. This discussion will include how and when the *Sentinel* started reporting on Hitler and Nazism. Even in the years before Hitler came to power in 1933, the Nazi party displayed their anti-Semitic ideology as well as violence and other actions, political, social, and economic, against German Jews.⁹ Following Hitler becoming Chancellor in January 1933 and the Reichstag elections in March 1933, anti-Semitic activities increased as groups of citizens targeted Jewish businesses, preventing customers from frequenting them and often times causing the businesses to close. Often times, these actions became violent.¹⁰ The central role of anti-Semitism¹¹ in Nazi ideology gradually became more apparent to some members of the American press following the Nazi rise to power but often times reporters and editors of American newspapers chose not to publish all the details of Nazi anti-Semitic activity out of fear of retribution from Germany and the inability to provide concrete proof.¹² The Nazi government's tendency to contradict itself regarding treatment of Jews contributed to this lack of proof. Initially in March 1933, Nazi leadership supported and encouraged the attacks on Jewish businesses but very quickly changed its stance and asked for the discontinuation of any "unauthorized" acts against Jewish businesses.¹³

Chapter Five will cover the period from September 1935, the passing of the Nuremberg Laws, to August 1939, right before the outbreak of the Second World War.

⁹ Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17-19, 24-25.

¹⁰ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 33.

¹¹ There are multiple spellings of anti-Semitism and recent scholarship has discussed the proper spelling of this term. In this dissertation, it will be spelled anti-Semitism, the common spelling for years.

¹² Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 7, 25, 30.

¹³ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 33-34.

With the Nuremberg Laws, the Nazis legalized multiple aspects of their racial policy, which they had previously dealt with using violence and boycotts.¹⁴ The key parts of these laws included banning intermarriage between Aryans and non-Aryans, specifically Jews, and defining who was and was not a citizen of the Reich.¹⁵ The ideology behind these laws was part of the Nazi political agenda from the beginning and the laws themselves had been discussed among Party members since 1933.¹⁶ It was shortly after the Nuremberg Laws that the Nazis began defining specifically who was Aryan and who was Jewish. This was necessary to ensure the Nuremberg Laws were successful. The events of November 9-10, 1938, known as Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass, caused international outrage, including in the United States.¹⁷ Haskel Lookstein believes Kristallnacht “may have been the best reported event of the Holocaust” as “readers of [American] newspapers and magazines and listeners to the radio were kept well informed about developments in Germany.”¹⁸ Occurring two days after the murder of a German embassy official in Paris, Kristallnacht was the result of violent mobs, largely with the support of the Nazi government, attacking citizens and damaging or destroying synagogues as well as Jewish businesses and homes. Tens of thousands of Jews were sent to Buchenwald and Dachau, Nazi concentration camps in Germany.¹⁹ The 1936 Olympics in Berlin will also be discussed as they caused an increased discussion by the American press and the American public about the poor treatment of Jews in Germany and whether the United

¹⁴ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 57.

¹⁵ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 57-58.

¹⁶ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 60.

¹⁷ Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers*, 35-80.

¹⁸ Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers*, 45, 37.

¹⁹ Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers*, 36-37.

States, and other countries, should boycott the Olympics.²⁰ The Nazis used the 1936 Olympics as a propaganda opportunity and greatly reduced the anti-Jewish persecution during the time when foreign athletes, tourists, and reporters were in Germany in large numbers.²¹ In 1938, Germany gained control over Austria with the Anschluss, and later parts of Czechoslovakia, leading to the political, social, and economic mistreatment of Jews in those countries, as well as violence.²²

Chapter Six will examine the beginning years of the Second World War, from September 1939 to the end of 1942, with respect to European Jewry. This discussion will focus on how the war affected Nazi persecution of Jews as it spread from Germany throughout Europe. In June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union bringing millions of Soviet Jews into German occupied zones. Soviet Jews and other minorities were the first to experience the Nazis' extermination program by shooting squads traveling with the German army as well as German security police units.²³ Success with this program encouraged Nazi leadership to find a way to finally deal with the Jewish question throughout all of their occupied territories in Europe.²⁴

The year 1942 is a significant turning point in Nazi persecution of Jews as it shifted from government-sponsored persecution to government-sponsored extermination. This new policy, which would for the first time include all of Europe's Jews and not just Eastern European and Soviet Jews, became known as the Final Solution and Nazi leadership introduced it at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942. At the Wannsee Conference, Reinhard Heydrich defined the Final Solution as "the

²⁰ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 64.

²¹ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 63; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 62.

²² Longerich, *Holocaust*, 98-99.

²³ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 217, 219.

²⁴ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 264.

Jews were to be annihilated by a combination of forced labor and mass murder.”²⁵

With the introduction of a systematic extermination policy, Hitler became determined to make the Reich completely free of Jews. A new wave of deportations from the Reich began in the spring of 1942.²⁶ Initially Reich Jews were sent to labor camps or ghettos but by June 1942, most Jews deported from the Reich traveled directly to the extermination camps in Eastern Europe, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, Chelmno, and Treblinka.²⁷

This chapter ends in December 1942 as that is when the American public learned, with fairly concrete evidence, about Germany’s plans to exterminate European Jewry. Throughout the spring and summer of 1942, reports from Europe reached the United States regarding the planned extermination of European Jews by the Nazis. One of the most important pieces of information came in the form of a telegram from Gerhart Riegner and the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland. Riegner’s telegram provided information on the extermination of European Jews and Auschwitz.²⁸ The American press published these reports, especially those coming from their reporters who were expelled from Germany following the American entrance into the war.²⁹ Many of these reports, however, contained skepticism questioning not only the information itself but also the sources, as they largely came

²⁵ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 307-08.

²⁶ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 320.

²⁷ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 321-23.

²⁸ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 335.

²⁹ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 159-60.

from Jewish sources.³⁰ It was not until December 1942, however, that the Allied governments confirmed the truth in these reports.³¹

Chapter Seven begins in January 1943 after the Allied governments confirmed news of the Final Solution, Hitler's planned extermination of all European Jewry, and finishes with the end of the Second World War in 1945. These years cover the main aspects of the Holocaust and the major focus of this part of the study will be how the *Sentinel* gained knowledge of and when it published information on the Final Solution. Especially significant was whether the *Sentinel* published more information after the Allies confirmed the Nazis extermination of Jews in December 1942. Important in this chapter as well as the others is how the *Sentinel* gained its information and to what extent information from fleeing European Jews was used as opposed to or in conjunction with wire services. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising occurred in the spring of 1943 and led to the Nazis increasing their persecution and extermination of Jews throughout Poland and other areas of Europe.³²

In July 1944, the Nazi program of deportations in Hungary drew international, including American, attention and protest. The Nazis halted the deportations temporarily because of this.³³ At the same time that Nazis faced increased attention from Allied governments, Allied troops began discovering extermination camps throughout Poland. In the summer of 1944, Soviet troops came across Majdanek extermination camp outside of Lublin, Poland.³⁴ This provided some of the first

³⁰ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 172.

³¹ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 180; "11 Allies Condemn Nazi War on Jews," *New York Times*, December 18, 1942, 1.

³² Longerich, *Holocaust*, 377-79.

³³ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 388.

³⁴ Longerich, *Holocaust*, 411.

eyewitness accounts by Allied troops of the Nazis' extermination of the Jews, including the Nazis' chosen method of killing.

Chapter Eight will study the years from the end of the Second World War to 1947. Central to this chapter will be an examination of the *Sentinel's* coverage of the immense amount of information coming out of Europe regarding the Holocaust, especially as survivors shared their experiences from the Nazi camps. Another aspect of this time between the end of the war and 1947 will be the war crimes tribunals held in Europe, especially the Nuremberg Trials. Between the American government's major involvement in the war crimes trials and the American public's interest in the details of what actually happened to European Jewry at the hands of the Nazis, the Nuremberg Trials were front-page news. Closer to home, in late 1945 and early 1946 the *Sentinel* was on the receiving end of multiple libel lawsuits filed by well-known anti-Semites. These lawsuits resulted from articles published in the *Sentinel* covering the Washington sedition trials of 1944 orchestrated by the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish organizations.³⁵

The final chapter and dissertation conclusion will summarize the findings of the study and offer recommendations of additional academic research relevant to the topic and corresponding disciplines.

Relevance to Program

This dissertation will examine the role technology played in how and when one group of people, Chicago Jews (though the paper was also read nationally), received

³⁵ "Anti-semite Files \$100,000 Libel Suit Against Jewish Publication in Chicago," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 11, 1946, <http://www.jta.org/1946/01/11/archive/anti-semite-files-100000-libel-suit-against-jewish-publication-in-chicago>

information regarding social concerns and current events through the medium of the press. This discussion will be twofold examining first how the press, specifically the *Sentinel*, received its news reports via wire services and second, what information it chose to provide to its readers and in what form, such as editorials, essays, and articles. In her examination of the American press and the Holocaust, Deborah Lipstadt argues, “it is not enough to say that what was happening was known; we must evaluate how the information was presented to the public.”³⁶ As “the conduit of information to the public,” the press, and specifically the *Sentinel*, provides insight into how the public received news on the events and experiences of European Jewry between 1930 and 1947.³⁷ In addition, Lipstadt believes that “the press may not determine what the public thinks, but it does influence what it thinks *about*. If the media pay particular attention to an issue, its importance is enhanced in the public’s eyes, and if the media ignores something, public reaction will be nil.”³⁸ With respect to the Anglo-Jewish press of Chicago, this dissertation studies some of the concerns raised by Lipstadt and others in order to provide a greater understanding of one segment of the American Jewish experience of journalism and the events of the tumultuous years of 1930 to 1947. The study uses history, religion, ethnic studies, and journalism to evaluate the information provided to readers of the *Sentinel* during these years. By so doing, the dissertation follows a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of technology and the humanities.

In addition, this dissertation touches on a new topic in the study of technology and humanities called digital humanities. In recent years, the idea of using technology,

³⁶ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 2.

³⁷ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 2.

³⁸ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 3.

as it has been used in scientific disciplines for years, to study humanities has become more prominent. All the years of the *Sentinel* studied for this dissertation, along with years outside the scope of this study, have been digitized and placed in Internet archives that are made accessible to scholars, research centers, and universities. If it were not for the digitization of the *Sentinel*, the in-depth study of the newspaper for this dissertation would not be possible as the hard copies of the newspaper are difficult to access, especially eighteen years of them. Digitizing archives opens up research sources to a much larger group of people making humanities more accessible than it has ever been before.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review includes a selection of books, dissertations,¹ and articles deemed pertinent to the discussion of the *Sentinel's* coverage of Nazism, persecution of European Jewry, and the Holocaust. This includes information on Chicago Jewry, the Holocaust, and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency as well as texts analyzing the role of the newspaper in American society during the 1930s and 1940s.

Hitler, the Third Reich, and Nazism

Sigrid Schultz, the Berlin bureau chief for the *Chicago Tribune* during the rise of the Third Reich until Pearl Harbor in 1941, discusses her concerns about America's failure to understand Germany's true war plans in *Germany Will Try It Again* (1944). Schultz focuses primarily on the environment that allowed for the popularity of Nazism and the rise of Hitler in the years following the First World War and the 1920s. While this time period will not be discussed within this dissertation, it is important to understand what allowed for the development of Nazism and the rise of Hitler to power, which ultimately resulted in the Second World War in Europe and the Holocaust. Schultz does address how the Nazis treated her as an American press correspondent including strict censorship of her articles and radio broadcasts as well as being followed and monitored by the Gestapo during her time in Berlin.

In *20th Century Journey: The Nightmare Years, 1930-1940* (1984), William Shirer uses information from his diary as well as his newspaper publications and radio broadcasts to document what life was like in Europe in the years leading up to and

¹ There are not many theses or dissertations on the Anglo-Jewish press, specifically the press's coverage of the events covered in this dissertation.