

In the early twentieth century, *noblesse oblige* was no longer sufficient to ensure allegiance to a ruler. Once social and political revolutions rocked the European monarchies, modern leaders – particularly authoritarian ones – realized that old methods of ensuring loyalty were obsolete. They needed to capture the hearts and minds of the populace not by invoking God-given eminence, but by bombarding them with persuasive images through mass media.

Adolf Hitler was not the first to embrace cinema, radio and graphic design, but he and his minions certainly mastered the fine 'art' of image building, what we now call branding. Initially using limited means, Hitler relied on the most outreaching communication tool of the day: photography.

Just after joining the radical German political group that would become the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in 1919, Hitler met photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, who soon became his personal confidant and image impresario. The relationship proved profitable both in terms of wealth and power, for both of them. Hoffmann shot over two and a half million photographs of Hitler, which at the time projected a Hitlerian image that seduced Germans, and left quite a pictorial legacy. Although Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, receives the lion's share of credit for campaigns that branded the NSDAP and the Nazi state, Hoffmann was, in fact, Hitler's most prodigious image-maker and propagator. From the fruits of this work, he built an huge entrepreneurial business by making Hitler into a veritable commodity.

Born in 1885 in Fürth, just outside of Nürnberg, Germany, Hoffmann was the scion of a well-known family of photographers that catered to royal society. As a teen, he worked under Hugo Thiele, the court photographer of the Grand Duke of Hesse in Darmstadt, and as a young man he moved to London, where he published art books while further honing his craft as a

photographer. In 1910, after returning to Germany, he opened a successful portrait studio in Munich. Four years later, during the First World War, he served as a photographer in the Bavarian Army, and in 1919 he published his first photo book about Germany. In 1920, at the behest of Hitler, Hoffmann joined the NSDAP and was immediately admitted into its inner circle; he even loaned part of his own office on Schellingstrasse in Munich to the financially strapped NSDAP. Hoffmann's most important assignment as Hitler's personal photographer occurred a few years later, in 1924, when *der Führer* was released from Landsberg prison, where he had served the minimum amount of time following the failed coup to overthrow the Republican government. Hoffmann alone was authorized to shoot and sell photographs of Hitler, which were carefully orchestrated to maximize all the propaganda values. The result of this photo-op was a photograph of Hitler strikingly attired in a trench coat, standing on the running board of an expensive new automobile – not the typical jailbird photo. It was the most published news pic of the day, and proved to Hitler and Hoffmann how easy it was to manipulate the press.

Hoffmann earned significant fees from selling this and other photos to the German newspapers – even the liberal ones – the proceeds of which he shared with Hitler (a merchandising model that made *der Führer* and Hoffmann considerable profit over the years). Owing to this patronage, by 1929 Hoffmann opened branch offices for his photo business in Berlin, Vienna, Frankfurt aM, Paris and The Hague. He also hired a shop assistant, named Eva Anna Paula Braun, the 17-year-old daughter of a Munich schoolteacher, who became Hitler's mistress and later his wife, just hours before both committed suicide during the Russian siege of Berlin.

Hoffmann was worldly, unlike many of the top Nazis. He spoke English well, he had a son-in-law whose mother was American, and he maintained an office in England until the outbreak of war.

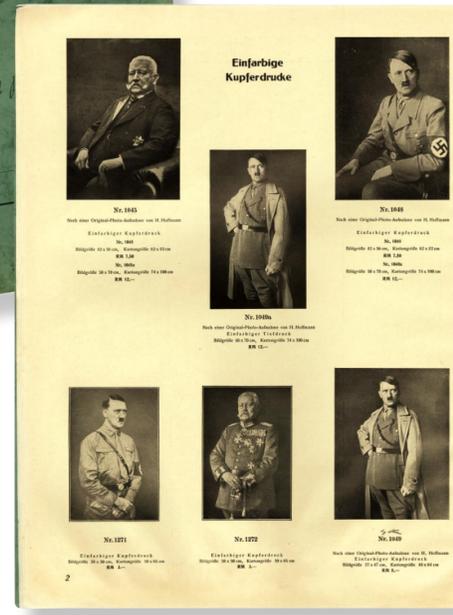
He was also a nasty drunk, which surprisingly didn't seem to bother the teetotal Hitler. Hoffmann enjoyed total access (until 1942 or 1943) to Hitler, and even possessed the precious Hitlergebiet pass, allowing entry to exclusive fetes at Obersalzberg and only issued to those at the highest levels. Hoffmann was also given total discretion over who used his photographs and was given licence to sell Hitler's images to any printers and publishers he deemed suitable. However, his dominion was not only over photographic images; rather a large percentage of various Hitler souvenirs were sold through his catalogues and licensed to other retailers. Hoffmann was also a close friend of Wilhelm Ohnesorge, Minister of the Post, who allowed him to establish the system whereby Hitler was paid a royalty for each time his likeness was used on a German stamp. He also crafted a plan under which Hitler received a royalty every time his face was published on anything from postcards to posters. No wonder that in 1938 Hitler appointed Hoffmann 'Professor' out of respect for his artistic sense and business acumen.

Heinrich Hoffmann Verlag was not owned by the NSDAP but was tethered to it. Hoffmann produced at least three catalogues (Nationalsozialistischer Bilder Sortimentskatalog – National Socialist Picture Publishers' Full-Line Catalogue), including two in colour and one in black & white (shown here with its title in Futura), featuring a large number of Nazi souvenirs, including postcards, wall hangings, portfolios, card decks, and even large and small bronze busts of *der Führer*, as well as loose-leaf folios of Hitler's watercolour paintings. In addition, there were images of prominent Nazis, Nazi Party historical events, assorted Gauleiter and Reichsleiter, the Berghof, Wehrmacht and NSKK (National Socialist Motor Corps) – officials, and other framed and unframed colour and black and white iconography. They were marketed in the same manner as religious articles. Indeed, so many photos were shot of Hitler and his cronies at countless party and state events



Cover of Hoffmann's black and white catalogue. Ironically the typeface used is Futura (labeled by the regime as representing cultural bolshevism).

Page showing official portraits of Hitler and Von Hindenburg at reasonable prices.



Double spread of postcards, posters and snapshots of Hitler with children and Nazi leaders, Goering, Goebbels, and *der Führer* with Il Duce.

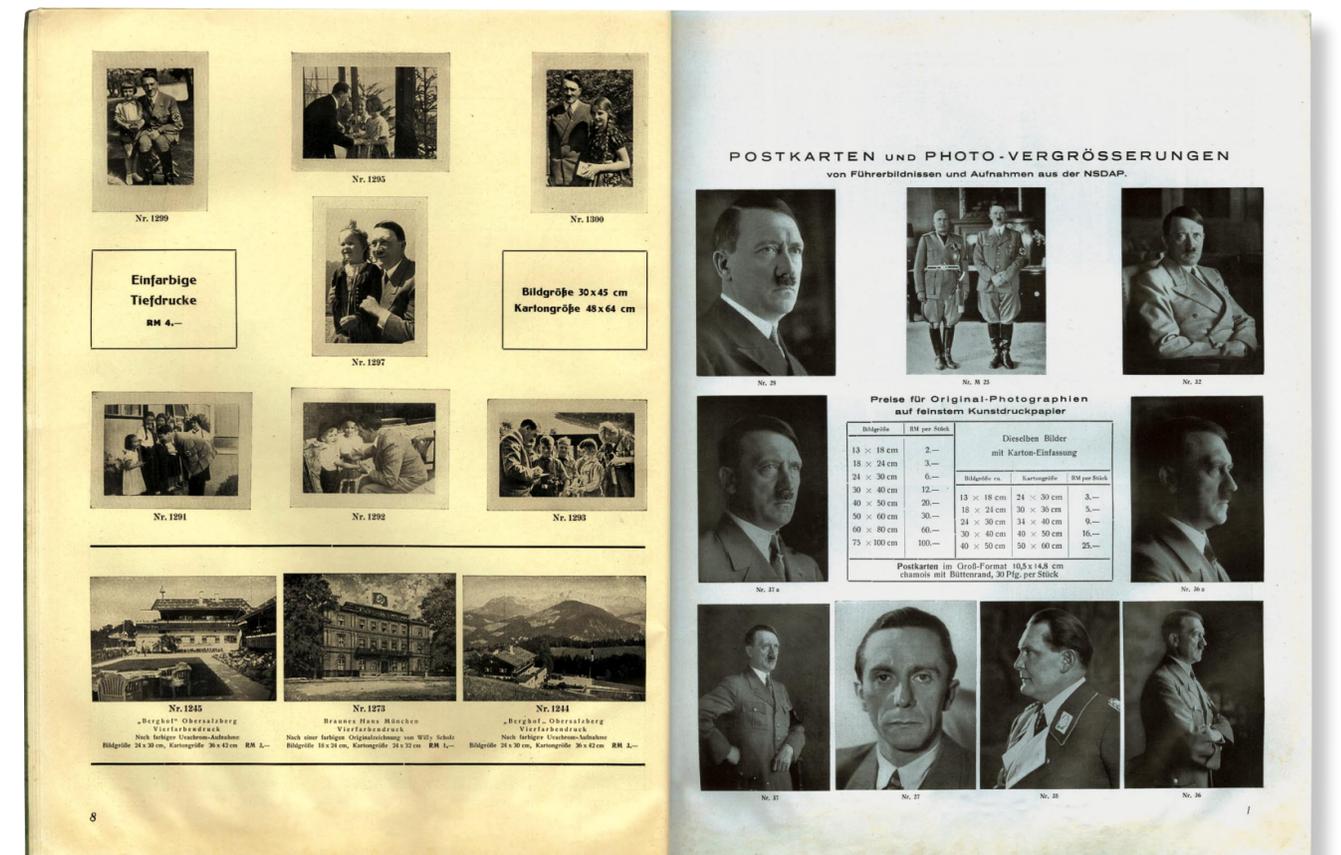
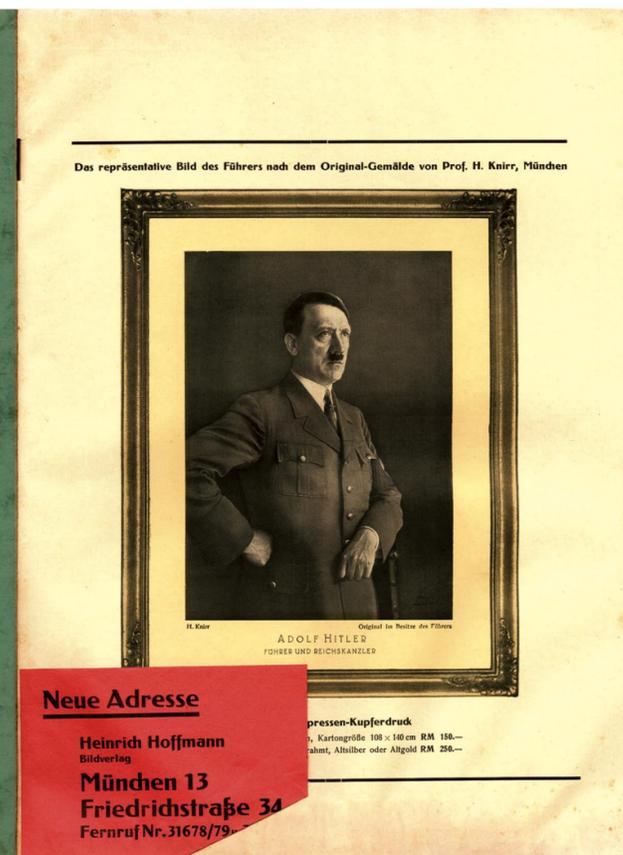
Inside title page showing official, framed portrait of Hitler (selling price 150 RM, Reichsmarks*) and insert for Hoffmann's newest outlet.

*In 1940 \$1 equalled 4.5 RM

Heinrich Hoffmann

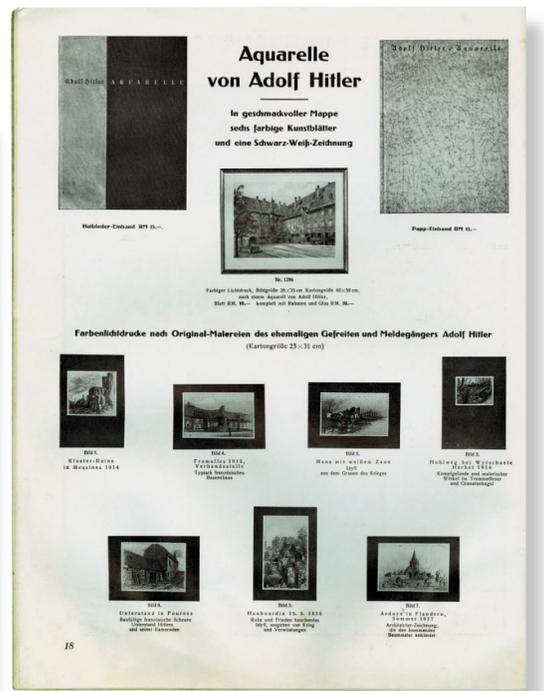
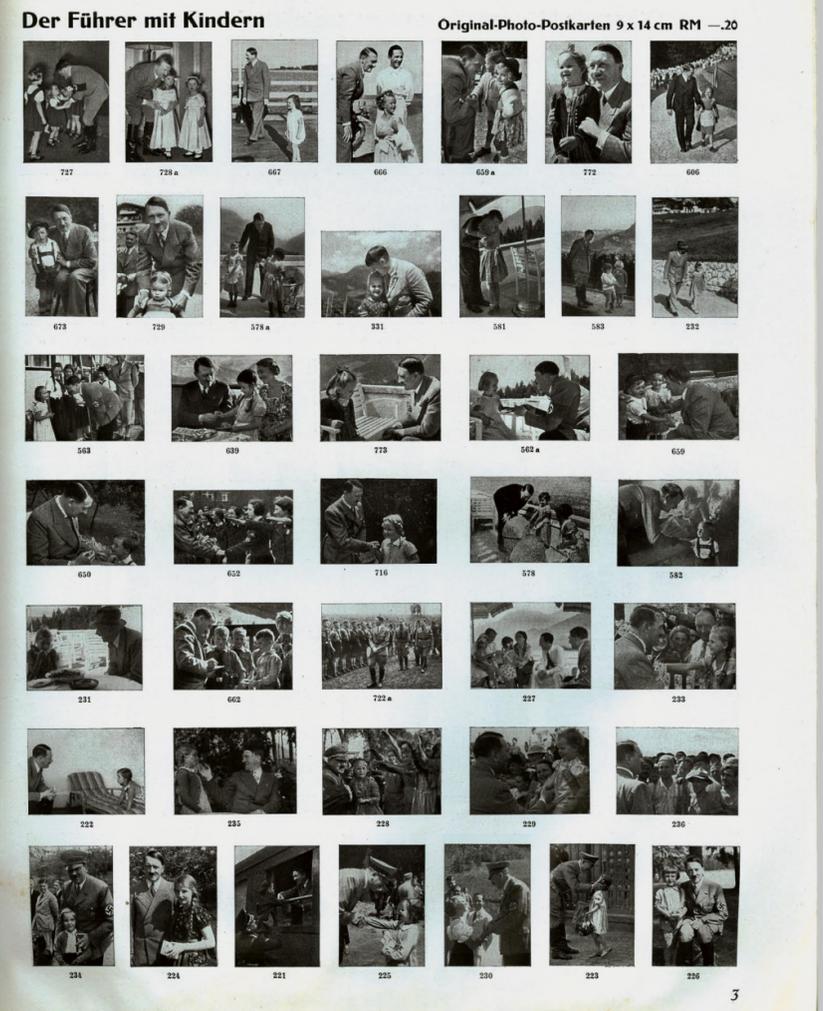
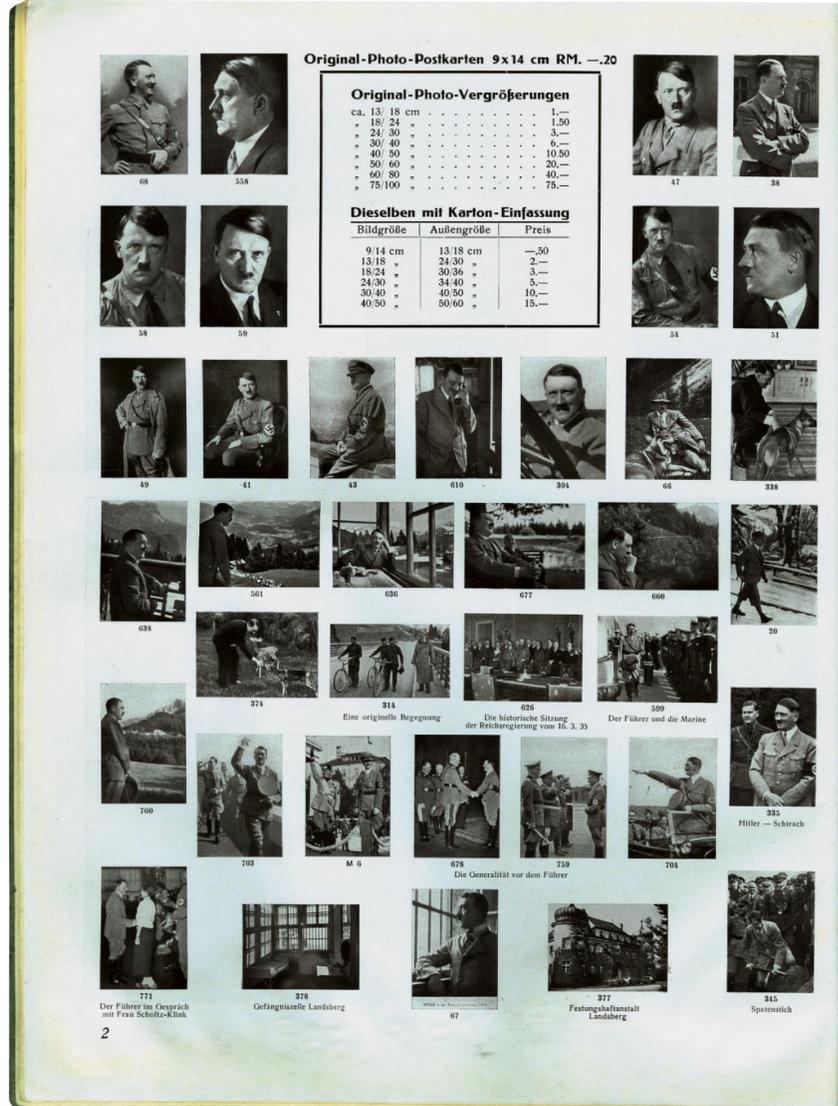
ADOLF HITLER'S
PERSONAL LICHTBILDER
AND PUBLICIST

by Steven Heller





Pocket-sized photos of Hitler, Hindenburg, and various Nazi functionaries.



Hitler's watercolors in economically priced portfolios. He took pride in his architectural renderings.

Double spread showing various postcard motifs. The left page consists of images depicting his political career from his time in Landsburg Prison (1924) to his rise as Chancellor. Also detailed information of photographic enlargements, sizes, frames and prices. The right page is titled 'Der Führer mit Kindern' (Hitler with children). Hundreds of photographs were taken of Hitler with dogs and children in a family context.



Leading personalities in the nationalistic movement. Photo postcards include a portrait of Hitler's mother (left page, middle bottom row). The right page, shows photos of the 'Berghof', Obersalzberg, Hitler's mountain retreat.

that Hoffmann could change stock on a regular basis. As part of his mass of material, he also designed and packaged a variety of pictorial compilations, among them around fifty paperback photo books devoted to Hitler, which were published well into the 1940s. Hoffmann also wrote important tracts of the early Nazi era, such as *The Hitler Nobody Knows* (1933) and *Jugend um Hitler* (1934). The graphic design of the NSDAP was left in the hands of various official agencies including the Propaganda Atelior of the Propaganda Ministry and the Culture Chamber of graphic arts, attached to the German Labour Front. Hoffmann was more interested in the pure portrait than the nuances of Nazi design aesthetics (so using Futura, designed by the so-called cultural Bolshevik Paul Renner, on Hoffmann's catalogue was something of an anomaly, given the politicization of typefaces in the Third Reich). But there was more to Prof Hoffmann's expertise. He inveigled himself into the cultural hierarchy of the Reich and was responsible for pre-selecting the art works that were to be displayed at the annual House of German Art exhibition in Munich, which was

Hitler's pet art project. In 1940, Hoffmann was awarded a high Nazi honour when elected to the Reichstag from the district of Düsseldorf-East. Yet for being such an insider, he was arrested at the end of the war and sentenced at Nürnberg to ten years in prison as a Nazi profiteer. Because he was tried and convicted, his activities were very carefully monitored by the prosecution, which ordered the seizure of the archive of his photographs, currently held by the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, USA. Despite claims to the contrary, all these images are considered to be public domain, given that they were once Nazi property, and many histories have tapped into the well. Along with filmmaker Leni Reifenstahl, Heinrich Hoffmann, who died in Munich on 11 December 1957, did more to promote Adolf Hitler than any of the other Nazi propagandists. Through his catalogues and books, he provides a textbook example of how image bombardment has been and is continually used in the continuance of power.