

# REBRANDING THE ENEMY: AMERICAN PROPAGANDA

## AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN GERMANY, 1944-1949

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### ABSTRACT

My dissertation analyzes visual propaganda produced by the United States government for four distinct audiences (German soldiers, German civilians, American soldiers, and American civilians) in the liminal period from the last phases of World War II to the early stages of the Cold War (1944-1949). I argue that photographs were employed as tools of warfare and diplomacy to rebrand Germany during its transition from enemy to ally. In order to do so, I compare previously censored and unpublished U.S. Army Signal Corps photographs from the National Archives Records Administration with images published in *Heute*, an American government-sponsored German-language picture magazine for German civilians; *Army Talks*, a U.S. Army magazine for American GIs serving in occupied Germany; Allied Psychological Warfare Division leaflets for German soldiers; and *Life*, a commercial magazine for American civilians on the home front. While the term propaganda often has an insidious connotation, implying disinformation, American propagandists employed Archibald MacLeish's "strategy of truth," carefully choosing which images and information to share with given audiences. Critical examination of the photographs and texts featured in and

omitted from these publications reveals how images were edited, censored, and transnationally disseminated to support a carefully constructed and continuously evolving picture of German-American relations.

My study comprises three chapters, each focusing on how subjects frequently portrayed in American propaganda were reframed for German and American readers during this five-year period as policy aims shifted. The first chapter examines how Signal Corps photographs of German prisoners-of-war were used to encourage German surrender in the war's last year and to buoy the spread of postwar democracy. The concentration camp and war crimes trials photographs studied in chapter two demonstrate the American government's use of photography to bring Nazi atrocities to light and to showcase democratic judicial processes. The third chapter analyzes photographs and cartoons of German women and children, which encouraged American soldiers first to fear and later to befriend their former enemies. Together these three case studies show how the government used photographs, and what I term a strategy of selective truth, to reshape American public opinion about Germans and German perceptions of Americans.