Brands With Nazi Ties That We All Use

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These companies made fortunes and grew to what they are today with help from Hitler.

Nazi Links with IBM, Coca Cola Fanta, Hugo Boss, The Associated Press, Prett, Kellogg, Kodak, Volkswagon, Adidas, Puma and Bayer Pharmaceuticals

Hugo Jaeger/Timepix/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images
Austrian automobile manufacturer Ferdinand Porsche (left, in dark suit) presents a newly designed convertible Volkswagen car to Adolf Hitler for his 50th birthday. Berlin, Germany. April 20, 1939.
Nowadays, we rightly view the Nazi regime as an evil empire, horrific in their actions and despicable in their ideology. However, Nazi Germany was not always viewed as such.

In fact, many major corporations that have survived to this day did business with the Nazis both before and during World War II.

Furthermore, many business leaders at the time were sympathetic to Nazi ideology and even collaborated with the Nazi government for ideological reasons. Other businesses simply saw a chance to make a profit, ideology aside.

Whatever their motivations, some of these Nazi collaborators provided materials that even helped to organize or carry out the Holocaust itself, while other Nazi collaborators used the slave labor from concentration camps to build their products. Some companies just supplied the Nazi populace and troops during wartime.

While some of these companies were German corporations that were controlled or created by the Nazis, many were foreign companies that went out of their way to work with the Nazis.

Either way, these companies both contributed to and benefitted from the immeasurable human suffering caused by the Nazis. And, in the end, though they’d worked against the interests of their home country, they suffered little to no consequences.

Here are some of the most well-known companies and brands that were Nazi collaborators:

**Nazi Collaborators: IBM**

The Nazis required lots of machinery to help carry out the Holocaust — and some of it was supplied by IBM.
Through their subsidiary, Dehomag, IBM supplied Nazi Germany with the capabilities to easily and efficiently identify Jews and other undesirables, as well as the technology necessary to track their transport to extermination camps.

Before the outbreak of the war, IBM was already a major international computing company and did considerable business in Germany. In 1933, during the beginning of Nazi control of Germany, company president Thomas Watson personally traveled to Germany. There, he oversaw the creation of a new IBM factory and the influx of American capital flowing into their Dehomag subsidiary. Dehomag had just been hired by the Nazi government to carry out a massive nationwide census of Germany. This census was designed to identify populations of Jews, Gypsies, and other ethnic groups deemed undesirable by the regime so that they could be marked for extermination.

IBM also supplied the Nazis with punch cards and a card sorting system that allowed them to search these census databases so that they could identify individuals for extermination. The Nazis then repeated this same process in other countries that they invaded as the war progressed. These punch card machines and sorting systems were also used to coordinate the trains bringing people to concentration camps. Even after 1941, when the United States joined the war, high-ranking IBM employees falsified internal data and used European subsidiaries and smuggling to make sure that Nazi Germany was supplied with all the punch card material and devices it needed.

IBM kept doing business with Nazi Germany because these dealings were incredibly lucrative. In fact, during the war, Nazi Germany was IBM’s second largest territory, after the United States.

At the end of the war, IBM was investigated but, at the time, records were not complete enough to charge the company with a crime. To this day, IBM has never apologized for their complicity in the Holocaust.
FACT #1

The brand Adidas is called like that because of its founder Adi Dassler

FACT #2

The brand Puma was founded by Rudolf Dassler (Adi’s brother)

FACT #3

This was the brand that made the Nazi uniform, Hugo Boss was also a Nazi
Unlike other Nazi collaborators, Volkswagen did not merely collaborate with the Nazi state, but was in fact created by it.

The precursor to the company that would be Volkswagen was a project that was carried out directly under the orders of Adolf Hitler.

In the early 1930s, the German auto industry was largely focused on creating luxury cars. As a result, only one out of every 50 Germans owned a car during this period.
In 1934, seeking to address this gap in the marketplace, Hitler decided that the Nazi government should develop a car for the common man, known as a “People’s Car.” This program was one of many in the “Strength Through Joy” initiative that sought to bring middle-class leisure activities to the German masses.

It was from this idea that Volkswagen gained its name, with “Volks-” meaning people, and referring specifically to Germanic people, and “-wagen” meaning car.

Hitler hired prominent German auto designer Ferdinand Porsche and his company, then known as “Dr. Ing. h. c. F. Porsche GmbH,” to develop this car. It was through this project that the classic Volkswagen “Beetle” shape was designed.

The company intended to sell these cars through a savings scheme subsidized by the Nazi government where citizens would put away a certain portion of their monthly earnings to afford the car.

However, only a small number of these cars were produced before Germany initiated World War II in 1939. Porsche then instead started designing and building military vehicles to aid in Nazi expansion. The most popular of these was the Volkswagen Kübelwagen, a light military vehicle used by the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS.

Meanwhile, Volkswagen also continued to produce the “People’s Car,” mainly for high-ranking Nazi officials.

Throughout this period, Volkswagen used more than 15,000 slaves from concentration camps to build their cars. Volkswagen even built the Arbeitsdorf concentration camp near one of their factories where they kept a skilled workforce of slaves.

After the end of the war, British Army officer and engineer Major Ivan Hirst took control of the Volkswagen factories. He then restarted production of the “People’s Car” design to supply the Allied effort in occupied Germany.

The company was then transferred to German auto executive Heinrich Nordhoff, who pushed the organization toward the heights it has reached today.

In 1998, Volkswagen agreed to set up a voluntary fund that would benefit the victims of the slave labor they used.
The Coca-Cola Company benefited financially via Nazi Germany. In fact, the company’s product, Fanta, was birthed during the Nazis’ reign.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Coca-Cola’s business in Germany was booming under the leadership of a man named Max Keith. He revamped the Coca-Cola brand in the country and boosted sales. During the 1936 Berlin Olympic games, for example, Keith made sure that attendants had all the Coke they could want.

However, the Coca-Cola Company’s profits were hurt later that year when the Nazi government began to severely limit imports from foreign nations, including Coca-Cola syrup.

However, the president of the Coca-Cola Company communicated through a third party to convince Hermann Göring, Hitler’s second in command, to allow the importation of this syrup.

Not long after, though, in 1937, Coca-Cola took another hit in their efforts to sell their products in Germany when a German executive at a rival soda company spotted a Coke bottle with Hebrew writing on the cap, indicating that the soda was kosher. He used this as evidence to claim that the Coca-Cola Company was secretly run by a Jew.

To counteract this notion, and the ensuing loss of profits from German consumers, Keith began to aggressively brand the Coca-Cola Company in Germany as pro-Nazi.

He reached out specifically to the Hitler Youth, attempting to win over the younger generation of Nazis.
But, in 1940, as World War II progressed, Keith began to worry about import restrictions. Out of concern, he developed a new syrup from local ingredients to be used if they could not get access to the official Coca-Cola syrup from America.

After Keith asked executives at his company to use their “fantasie” (German for “imagination”) to come up with a name for this new drink, they quickly dubbed the new soda “Fanta.”

When the United States entered the war in 1941, all official contact was severed between Keith’s German affiliate and the larger Coca-Cola Company.

With a dwindling supply of Coca-Cola, Keith worked to ensure that his sodas only went to injured soldiers who were specifically members of the Nazi Party. When they had entirely run out of Coca-Cola, the company began selling Fanta, which was a smash hit among the German populace.

After the war, the Coca-Cola Company took back control of their German branch and, despite being ousted by the occupying U.S. military as Nazi collaborators, reinstated Keith as the leader.

**Hugo Boss**

![SS uniforms produced by Hugo Boss](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SS_uniforms)

In 1931, two years before the Nazi Party took control of the German government, Hugo Boss started his fashion label in Metzingen, Germany.
Even before then, Boss had numbered among Germany’s Nazi collaborators, producing early Nazi uniforms in a factory he’d bought in 1924.

However, it was in 1931 when Boss went from being merely the owner of a factory that counted the Nazis among their clients to a Nazi himself when he officially joined the party. Boss also became a sponsoring member of the Schutzstaffel (SS), the Nazis’ paramilitary wing, making monthly donations to the organization.

With his early membership in the party, Boss gained much under the Nazi leadership of Germany.

Though the label did not design the iconic black SS uniforms for which it is often credited, it did manufacture numerous other uniforms for the Nazi regime.

In 1933, Hugo Boss was producing the uniforms for the SS and Hitler Youth, as well as the standard Nazi brownshirts. When Germany began to more intensely remilitarize in 1938, Hugo Boss began to produce uniforms for the Nazi armed forces.

By 1940, the Nazi collaborators at Hugo Boss were pulling in some 1,000,000 Reichsmarks, compared to 200,000 Reichsmarks in 1936.

It was then that the company began to use the slave labor of concentration camp victims in order to produce the large orders that they were receiving at that time.

The company used around 140 people from concentration camps to work in their factories, along with another 40 French prisoners of war.

One former slave at a Hugo Boss factory, Jan Kondak, who was forced to work in the factory from 1942 to 1945, recalls, “In the barracks there were lice and fleas.”
Many in these factories were worked to death or eventually sent to Auschwitz and Buchenwald to be killed.

After the war, Boss was classified as an “activist” and a “supporter and beneficiary of National Socialism.” In 1946, he was fined and stripped of his right to own a company.

After Boss’ death in 1948, the company would continue to live on under his son-in-law, Eugen Holy. Nowadays, Hugo Boss is a major luxury fashion house, selling high-end clothing and accessories around the world.

In 1999, the company finally agreed to contribute to a fund that compensated former forced laborers.

**Nazi Collaborators: The Associated Press**

The Associated Press is an American news agency and photo agency service that is heavily used by many of the largest news organizations around the world today.

They provide much of the basic, on-the-ground-reporting and images for a large portion of the news that you now read and watch. But in the 1930s, they were also **Nazi collaborators**.
When the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, many international news organizations operating in Germany began to experience pressure from the government to conform to Nazi standards.

That same year, the Nazi government’s Editor’s Law came into effect, mandating that all professional journalists be of Aryan descent and that any Jews be removed from the newsroom. The law also strictly limited what papers were allowed to publish.

Most international news organizations withdrew from Nazi Germany under these conditions, but the AP remained — and fired all their local Jewish staff.

While the Nazi’s journalism laws were limited in scope, and only really affected German citizens, the pressure on the AP had already led them to alter their news habits to placate the Nazi regime.

By late 1933, the head of the German branch of the AP was already refusing to publish images that depicted the discrimination against Jews in Germany in order to stay on the good side of the Nazis.

By 1935, the AP was already one of the few international news organizations still operating in Germany. Large British-American news agencies such as Keystone and Wide World Photos had been banned from the country by the Nazi government. However, the AP remained in the nation due to their continued efforts to appease the Nazis.

At this point, the AP office in Germany came entirely under the control of the Nazi government. They placed SS members into the newsroom and began scrupulously censoring anything that portrayed the Nazis in a negative light.

In its capacity as a photo news service, the AP knowingly sold the Nazis images of Jews from inside Germany and around the world to be used in anti-semitic propaganda. They were also the leading supplier of images for a propaganda book called The Jews in the USA, and in third place among suppliers of photos for the anti-semitic book The Subhuman.

As part of their photo service, the AP also sold images from Germany to the rest of the world. These images could only leave the country after being inspected by some of the many SS members working in their offices. As a result, the AP was publishing images that showed Nazis as heroic leaders, and Jews as subhuman cowards.

This collaboration with the Nazi government was unprecedented for a foreign news press service and contributed to Nazi propaganda both within and outside Germany.

In 2017, the AP released a statement where they claim that their cooperation was justified as it allowed them to provide reporting from within Nazi Germany to the outside world. They have not apologized for their actions.
For decades after the end of World War II, no one knew that the American photography and technology company Kodak was a Nazi collaborator. In the early 2000s, however, new information uncovered at the National Archives revealed the extent of Kodak’s business relationship with Nazi Germany.

Like most international companies of the era, Kodak had subsidiaries in Germany and across Europe. And as Germany’s international aggression increased through the 1930s, Kodak kept its subsidiaries in Germany.

Then, in 1941, the United States joined World War II and mandated that U.S. businesses could no longer import to or export from hostile nations. As was the case with many corporations, Kodak’s branch in Germany became more autonomous at this time, coming completely under Nazi control.

However, unlike many of those companies, Kodak started using their subsidiaries in neutral European nations, like Switzerland and Portugal, to continue doing business with Nazi Germany. They also continued to have control over their German branch thanks to their close relationship with Hitler’s personal economic adviser, Wilhelm Keppler.

These Kodak subsidiaries made substantial purchases of photographic equipment from Nazi Germany, providing funds to a foreign enemy of the United States. They also sold large amounts of photographic and electronic devices to the Nazis, much of which was used towards their war effort.
In internal documents, company leadership continued to justify their relationship with Nazi Germany on the basis of profit throughout the war. In addition to all of that, their German branch used more than 250 slave laborers from Nazi concentration camps.

And after the war, Kodak reabsorbed their German subsidiary and profited off of what they created.

Kodak paid $500,000 into a fund providing for families of those used as slave labor for Nazi corporations, but never apologized for their continued business dealings with Nazi Germany.

**Nazi Collaborators: Bayer**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Zyklon B, developed by IG Farben.

Bayer, the company most known for their popular product Aspirin, has its own horrifying history with Nazi Germany.

Bayer was created as an independent company, but by the 1930s were a part of the company IG Farben, a conglomerate formed by a number of major chemical companies in Germany. And as a German chemical corporation in the Nazi regime, IG Farben committed a long list of atrocities.
When Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, IG Farben worked closely with the Nazi government and military to capture chemical factories in the nation so they could be used by the corporation.

IG Farben was also the company that developed the Zyklon B gas that was used in Nazi death camps to kill Jews and other “undesirables.”

Furthermore, IG Farben relied on concentration camp slave labor throughout World War II and the Holocaust. They built a factory next door to the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp and would use the prisoners at the camp for slave work.

IG Farben employees frequently told their slave laborers that, “If you don’t work faster, you’ll be gassed.

At the end of the war, IG Farben was dissolved, and the directors of the company were put on trial for war crimes.

Although 13 of the 24 company directors arraigned were convicted of war crimes, all of these Nazi collaborators received early release, and most of them were reinstated as directors of the new corporations created out of the dissolution of IG Farben.

Fritz ter Meer, who directed operations at the IG Farben plant at Auschwitz, became the president of Bayer after the war.

Bayer did eventually apologize for their role in the Holocaust — in 1995.

### List of companies involved in the Holocaust

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

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This list is incomplete; you can help by [expanding it](#).

This list includes corporations that were in existence during World War II and that are documented to have profited from participation in the Holocaust.

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31. See IBM during World War II.


