

The great dictator: charlie chaplin's characterization of adolf hitler

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Charlie Chaplin's "The Great Dictator" imitates Nazi Germany's banners and uniforms; however, two crosses in the shape of an X is used in place of the infamous swastika symbol. This cross symbol is prevalent throughout the film as it is seen on just about everything ranging from buckets to banners to even statues. This is done to copy how the swastika was plastered on virtually everything. This is done to make fun of the swastika as being overdone and cult like. The film makes fun of the German conformity by changing the renowned statue "The Thinker" to be in the position of a Heil Hitler salute. All of this is done to show how much of an influence Hitler was to Germany at this time with almost everything around him having to do with Nazism and to make the western audience to laugh at rather than feel threatened by these rituals.

Adolf Hitler is represented by Chaplin in a comedic manner which pokes fun at his serious and powerful image. Chaplin portrays Hitler through the character Hynkel. Hynkel is clumsy and takes himself too seriously. Hynkel makes fun of this in how he acts when angered. Chaplin accurately captures Hitler's appearance through the similarity of the hairstyle, mustache, and uniform. In addition to Hitler's appearance, Chaplin imitates Hitler's speech giving abilities how so as Hitler starts off his speeches slow and works his way up to a more energetic and uproaring approach. In "The Great Dictator", Hitler's character Hynkel has a Jewish double. He is used to humanize the Jews. Hynkel is brutal towards the Jews but temporarily ceases his mission due to Schultz. The character of Schultz is used to point out to the audience the irony of Hitler's Aryan German ideology, as he does not fit the image that he is pushing for. Schultz and Hynkel look identical and

neither fit the Aryan image. By having the soldiers mistake Hynkel for a Jew, it shows to the audience the hypocrisy of Hitler's views. In addition, through the Schultz, Chaplin is able to convey his ideas and true views on Hitler's prejudice towards the Jews in the final speech.

Hynkel desires to become emperor of the world which is laughable from the perspective of the audience, as it is an extremely unrealistic goal. Chaplin further satirizes Hitler's goals through the scene when Hynkel is playing with the ball that is painted to look like the earth. Hynkel first asks for his advisor to leave the room, then immediately after, he reveals an immature personality. While playing with the ball, Hynkel tosses it back and forth as a child would and even bumps it with his butt. This further satirizes Hitler's professional, stern character. Having Hynkel wait to be alone suggests to the audience that behind Hitler's intimidating and powerful image, he is a foolish, childish man. This scene has Hynkel/Hitler literally playing with the world. It appears to be for his own entertainment rather than for the benefit of others and eventually leads to the ball/earth being popped/destroyed. This suggests that Hitler plays with the fate of the world, and if he has control of it long enough, he will eventually destroy it.