

Propaganda, Nazi

Systematic promotion of certain ideas and practices in order to further one's cause. The Nazis were among the most sophisticated and innovative users of propaganda in history. Before they rose to national power in Germany, they used propaganda to attract the attention of the public and gain support among the German people. In particular, they created and sold the myth of Hitler's infallibility and dynamism. After the Nazi Party took control of the German government in January 1933, propaganda was used to reinforce Adolf Hitler's hold over Germany and to secure his dictatorship in the public eye and mind.

In his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described his perspective on propaganda. He explained that propaganda is not meant to be used on scientifically trained intellectuals because, as propaganda is not logical, rational, or scientific, the intellectuals will not be swayed by it. Rather, he said, propaganda is meant for the masses who cannot comprehend logic and intellect, but can be convinced of anything if their emotions are manipulated. Hitler further stated that since the masses have very little intelligence and are quite forgetful, the key to propaganda is to keep repeating the same ideas over and over again until they are understood by and engraved on the mind of even the slowest person. Hitler believed that the only way to get across his ideas was to keep the propaganda simplistic and create the illusion that the German people had but one enemy: the Jews. Thus, he combined both racism and Antisemitism in Nazi propaganda, telling the German people over and over how parasitic and racially inferior the Jews are, and how they must be removed for Germany to achieve its goal of becoming a superior, racially pure nation.

Hitler used all sorts of means to hammer home his message. In March 1933, just two months after he came to power, Hitler created the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, and appointed Joseph Goebbels Propaganda Minister. The ministry was divided into seven sections, mirroring the methods used by the Nazis to spread their ideas: radio; the press; films; theater; adult education (which included literature); administration and organization; and propaganda. They masterfully utilized Nazi Party rallies and

parades to attract the attention of the German people and appeal to their need to be part of something larger than themselves. The Nazis also published antisemitic literature, such as the weekly newspaper *Der Stuermer*. The paper included hostile, infantile articles which described Jews as inferior and sexually perverse, while its drawings depicted contorted, ugly Jews with hooked noses, huge ears and lips, hairy bodies, and crooked legs. *Der Stuermer* succeeded in fostering an aura of hatred around Jews by distorting and mocking them - pure propaganda. The Ministry of Propaganda also had antisemitic films produced in order to visually convince Germany that the Jews were so awful that they deserved to be persecuted. *Jued Suss* was a film that came out in Germany in 1940 as one of a series of three antisemitic movies. It told the story of an immoral Jewish banker who rapes a blond "Aryan" woman. All the other Jews in the film are shown to be dirty, immoral, and ugly. Another film, *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), promoted by the Nazis as a documentary, "revealed" the Jews to be a disgusting group that used the blood of Christian children for their religious rituals, thereby bringing up a piece of medieval antisemitism. The Nazis also made films about the great 1937 Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg, which glorified Germany and racism. Goebbels himself stated the fundamental idea behind the Nazis' propaganda machine: "the great mass of people in the simplicity of their hearts are more easily taken in by a big lie than by a little one." (see also Films, Nazi Antisemitic.)