

"The task of propaganda is not to make an objective study of the truth...but to convince the masses."—Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

Nazi Propaganda

“[Propaganda] must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan.”

--Adolf Hitler

“The propaganda is good which leads to success, and that is bad which fails to achieve the desired result, however intelligent it is, for it is not propaganda’s task to be intelligent; its task is to lead to success. Therefore, no one can say your propaganda is too rough, too mean; these are not criteria by which it may be characterized. It ought not to be decent nor out it be gentle or soft or humble; it ought to lead to success....Never mind whether propaganda is at a well-bred level; what matters is that it achieves its purpose.”

--Diary excerpt, Joseph Goebbels, *Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda*

The Power of Words

The power to label ideas, events, groups, and individuals was central to Nazi efforts. Such labels made it clear who were the heroes and who were the enemies. In the process, the Nazis defined themselves as the guardians of the "true" Germany and the custodians of the nations' glorious past.

“The Jew has never founded any civilization, though he has destroyed hundreds. He possesses nothing of his own creation to which he can point. Everything he has is stolen. Foreign people, foreign workmen build him his temples; it is foreigners who shed their blood for him. He has no art of his own; bit by bit he has stolen it all from other peoples. He does not even know how to preserve the precious things others have created.”

--Adolf Hitler, Munich speech on July 28, 1932

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's *Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda*, left nothing to chance. He controlled every word heard over the radio or read in newspaper or magazine. And that control went well beyond censorship. He issued daily instructions on what to say and how to say it. Max von der Gruen said of those changes: All the activities of everyday life were given a military orientation. This military aura extended even into the realm of language. Henceforth one heard only:

instead of “employment office” – “labor mobilization”...

instead of “worker” – “soldier of labor”

instead of “work” – “service to Fuehrer and folk”
instead of “factory meeting” – “factory roll call”
instead of “production” – “the production battle”

It is easy to understand that if, for whatever reasons, these words are hammered into a person’s brain every day, they soon become a part of his language, and he does not necessarily stop and think about where they came from and why they were coined in the first place.¹

Reading is from *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* (Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Brookline, Massachusetts) 1994, pp. 219.

¹ *Howl with the Wolves; Growing Up in Nazi Germany* by Max von der Gruen, trans. Jan Van Heurk (William Morrow), 1980.

The Power of Film

We will view **Triumph of the Will**, directed by Leni Riefenstahl, is a Nazi propaganda film that documented the 8th Party Rally in Nuremberg, September 5-10, 1934. The film won many critics’ awards after it was first shown in 1936 and is considered a documentary masterpiece. But as you will see, it is a chilling portrait of the way film can be used to manipulate emotions. As you watch the film, think about the message Riefenstahl is trying to convey. What techniques (camera angles, music, lighting, etc.) did she use to persuade her audience?

Responses - required assignment

After viewing the pages above and below, go to the discussion forum “Responses to Nazi Propaganda” topic, and post your reflections on the film, words, and images. **Unlike previous discussions we have had, this time we are not asking for dialogue. Only that you post once, and read others' posts.** As you prepare your thoughts, consider the following: What is the message that is being expressed with these words and images? To whom is it directed? What impact might these words and images have?

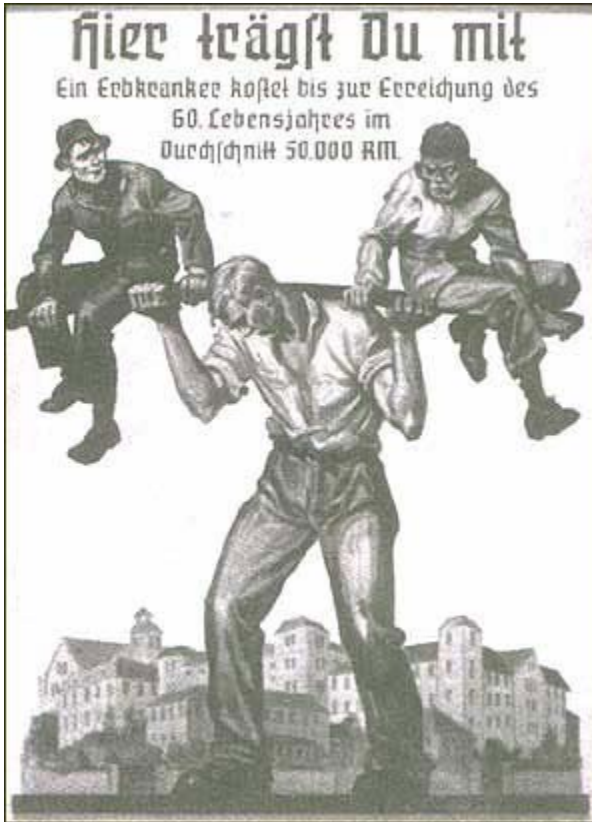
The Power of Images



Propagandists have long known that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Therefore Hitler was determined that all works of art would reflect the ideals of National Socialism. He began by imprisoning or exiling what he called "degenerate" artists. Then he enlisted a corps of "obedient artists" willing to immortalize on canvas the world he described in his speeches and writings. In 1937, the Nazis sponsored three exhibitions that reflected their views on art and artists. The third exhibition, called *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), featured art that

conveyed stereotypes of Jews as communists, swindlers, and sex-fiends. The Nazis used it to "teach" antisemitism. Over 150,000 people saw the exhibition in just three days. This is the title piece of art from that exhibition. It demonstrates the power of art to create an enemy.

It is tempting when looking at any image, to immediately rush to analysis. As you view the image of the "The Eternal Jew," or any of the images from the image gallery (see below) spend a few minutes describing exactly what you see and the effect of what you see before drawing conclusions. Note how the artist has used color, shape, space, perspective and symbols to communicate a message.



This Nazi poster from 1937 reads: "You are Sharing the Load! A Genetically Ill Individual Costs Approximately 50,000 Reichsmarks by the Age of Sixty."

This poster appeals to the ideas reinforced by German eugenicists that the unfit were a burden to society. It preceded the euthanasia operation that would begin in the late 1930s in which children--and later adults who were determined "unfit"--were put to death. Between 1939 and 1941 at least seventy thousand persons were killed. A number of experts place the figure higher, claiming that at least two hundred fifty thousand were murdered. (source: Holocaust

and Human Behavior, pp 279-281)



Earlier in this unit, we examined how 19th century notions of "the other" were created in both science and religion in regard to Jews and people of African descent. The image of "The Eternal Jew" and the one here indicate how these ideas and images were used in Nazi racial propaganda. This image also reinforced the racist fear of the stereotyped African-American man as a sexual threat to "ideal womanhood."

How does this Nazi propaganda cartoon portray the United States? Why would the Nazis want Germans to see Americans in this way? What is the soldier doing with the Greek statue? What is the message of the poster?



1934 antisemitic cartoon from *Brennessel*, the Nazi humor magazine.

Caption: "'Then and Now.' The cartoon shows a Jew stealing a farm before the Nazi takeover, but afterwards he is stopped by the law." (16 January, 1934).

This cartoon both reinforces and creates the stereotype of the Jew as greedy and all-powerful.

Source: Calvin College German Propaganda Archive.



The description of this children's toy from the German Historical Museum is as follows: "The limousine of the Führer' is a fully functioning miniature copy of the Mercedes limousine in which Adolf Hitler used to ride...party conferences. The costly toy functions with the help of a clock-like mechanism. Additionally, the headlights shine when

connected to a battery. Included are the figure of the Führer with movable arms, a driver in NS-uniform, and two members of the NSDAP." Source: German Historical Museum.



The description of this board game from the German Historical Museum is as follows: "In 1936, the NSDAP youth organization HJ (Hitler Youth) was declared to be the official youth organization of the Third Reich, forcing all of the existing youth movements into line. The HJ cleverly (mis)used the desire of children and adolescents for comradeship and campfire romanticism. Sports was the main emphasis of this 'state service', with which the boys were to be prepared for their military service."

Source: German Historical Museum.