

Propaganda

In World War II many countries used propaganda to spread lies, hatred, motivation, intimidation, and recruitment films. Although some of these messages had the same intentions, some countries like Germany and the United States had a different way of executing these messages. Their motivation and reason for sending these messages differ in a large way and this is seen by the content these films contain in them. Countries like Germany made films to affirm the Germans that they were fighting for a just cause and their country was filled with joy. On the other hand, the US sent messages to motivate citizens to join the fight because their way of life was being threatened by the axis of power (the gangsters).

Germany's Propaganda

Hitler tries to rebuild and prepare Germany for war by slowly introducing the country to it by making citizens into soldiers. These soldiers work on roads, farms, and help people move towards a new and improved Germany. By rebuilding Germany, Hitler establishes his position as a savior of the country, as someone who really cares about the people. He embeds an image of a healthy Germany by making films like "Triumph of the Will" (Hitler 1935) which include only healthy, young, and strong people in the images. Women and children love him and praise him, this establishes an image of acceptance by all people, almost as if he was a god. There are no soldiers from World War I (WWI) in any of these films, he doesn't want to remind the youth of what they have lost. He wants to establish an image of Germany that portrays happiness, light, a sense of pride for the people for when he gives his speeches to move the audience.

This form of propaganda is meant to blind the German people to believe they are working towards a new Germany, a Germany that is prosperous and happy. This blindness would allow Hitler to do things that would otherwise be constituted as an act of aggression towards other countries. Citizens

would become nervous and cause unrest that would eventually eat Germany to form the inside. Hitler starts claiming land from other countries but because of the image he has bestowed of himself, the German people don't think he's doing anything wrong. At this time there's nothing to suggest that Hitler plans on going to war with anyone and that he is only doing this for the good of Germany. This leads people to believe Hitler is doing this for the good of the people. He blames that Jews for what happened to Germany, this reassures people that what happened to Germany wasn't their fault, it gives them a sense of entitlement to the country and to them alone.

United States Propaganda

The United States used propaganda for recruitment purposes and raised help for things such as selling bonds, getting kids to gather metals, anything that would help with the war effort. They made cartoons that resembled the Axis of power and made fun of them, they made the dictators of those countries look like a bunch of jokers that one should laugh at. While this was no laughing matter, it seems like a common theme in the US to make fun of such events to make them seem ridiculous and outrageous but still raise up arms against them.

In the film "Why We Fight" (Capra, Why We Fight 1942) we see the US using propaganda in a way that is almost comedic and makes the dictators look like a bunch of thugs. It puts a sense of responsibility on the people to fight against the Axis power by playing on an Americans character to fight back against such thugs. It's hard to motivate and persuade someone to fight against an enemy that's thousands of miles away and hasn't done anything to you yet. The film had parts that touched on such subject by stating that we stood by and waited to believe that this didn't concern us but we were fools to think so. Such a statement would strike a bit of shame mixed with a sense of uplifting spirit to go fight in order to redeem one's self for making such a mistake.

Freedom has always played a big part in the lives of Americans and some of the images in the films are directly attacking such freedoms. You see young children training to fight in the war in countries like Italy, Japan, and Germany. We see young Japanese boys running around with guns and spears, Italian boys training to fight in a war with gas masks. This type of imagery would instantly and definitely convince an American that these countries are inhumane and are not something that they would want to be a part of.

While these dictators aren't someone to take lightly, the film always tries to make them look like a bunch of clowns. This gives one a sense of feeling that these men aren't gods, they aren't men with divine powers, these are just men who need to be taken down. While Germans might feel like Hitler is a man with great power and for anyone to meet him would be a great privilege, to say the least. For an American, Hitler is just another man and every soldier is aching to land a good punch to good old Adolph's jaw. The films try to strip the power from Hitler and make him look like the ordinary man he is, even less of a man perhaps.

Propaganda Differences

Germany: Every country tries to send out propaganda to their citizens but every country has their own way of doing so. The same type of messages won't work on all people because of different backgrounds they come from. For Hitler, he had to pick up the country's spirit after the first world war in order to even begin anything. The United States on the other hand had to motivate people to give up their current pleasures and go fight against an enemy that wasn't in sight (Until Pearl Harbor). Germans only cared about themselves, they needed to know their country and their citizens were going to be okay. Hitler played on this and assured them their country was going to rise and rule all of Europe and this made the German people feel like they were no longer going to live in such shame. It doesn't seem like the Germans really cared about who they stepped on and

why they were invading other countries. There's a sense of blindness to the fact that they are killing innocent people who haven't done anything to them but somehow they felt entitled to the land they were conquering. This was Hitler's way of propaganda, he wanted his people to support his war even if it had no legitimate reason for causing such a war.

United States: The United States had a very different way of portraying their propaganda. It didn't have to fulfill their citizens sense of belonging to their country. Americans didn't need to know they were going to conquer the world, they didn't need to blame someone else for any bad things that happened to them like the Germans blamed the Jews. Instead, the US played on a different emotion and those emotions were the sense of freedom. Americans have grown to love their freedom of speech, their freedom to live where they desire, the freedom of knowing that their children won't need to train in warfare at 12 years old. They made propaganda films in a more comedic and uplifting sense to keep people happy and confident. This kept one in a state of mind where the Axis of power weren't anything new, they were just another team of bandits that needed to be stopped and this is something that the US has dealt with before.

Both countries had different ways of displaying propaganda imagery but they still had a similar purpose. That purpose was to recruit their citizens into battle and this plays on a person's need to protect their way of life. Everyone wants to keep their traditions and the way they have become use to living. No one wants another country to come in and change the way you have become accustomed to living. Even though Germany, Italy, and Japan weren't threatened by anyone to provoke a war, they still convinced their people that they were in danger and that other countries were out to get them and their way of life so in a way all propaganda was the same.

References

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