

HOLOCAUST:

RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

NAZI PROPAGANDA

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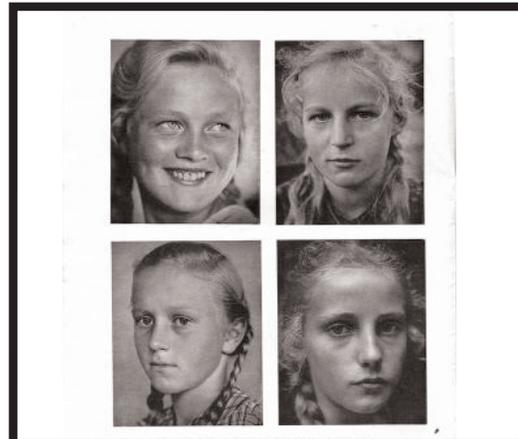
Propaganda is information that is spread for the purpose of promoting some cause. The primary use of the term is in political contexts and generally refers to efforts sponsored by governments and political parties (Webster Dictionary).

Propaganda often plays an important role in political and wartime strategy. One of the most successful propaganda campaigns was the one waged by the Nazis between 1923 and 1945. Their goal was threefold: to recruit members for the Nazi Party, to recruit for their armed forces and to campaign against the Jews. The anti-Semitic propaganda contributed to making it acceptable to discriminate against and isolate one group.

The main architect of Nazi propaganda was **Joseph Goebbels** (1897 - 1945). As the Reichs Minister for Propaganda and Enlightenment, he was in total control of radio, film and printed media, including school textbooks. All were used to spread Nazi beliefs, and to convince Germans that their leader, Adolf Hitler, was a veritable god, and that the German's fate was to rule the world. Germans were forbidden to read foreign newspapers or listen to foreign broadcasts. Each German was given a free radio, the **Volksempfänger** (People's Radio), which had only one vacuum tube and thus received only local Nazi transmissions.¹

Goebbels was quoted as saying, "Propaganda does not have anything to do with truth." His deep-seated and relentless hate of the Jews could be found in every article or speech: "Jews are to be declared unconditionally exterminable ... with the concept of annihilation through work remaining the best ..."² Some of the most antisemitic films were produced under Goebbels' close supervision.

A large portion of Nazi propaganda was directed toward children. Each young male became a member of the **Hitler-Jugend**, the Nazi youth organization. Through a constant program of meetings and indoctrination, "Hitler Youth" were subjected to continuous propaganda that depicted them as future masters of the world.



The monthly magazine, *Volk und Rasse*, began publication in 1925. It was a semi-popular publication with articles on various aspects of racial thinking. There was occasional anti-Semitism, but most of the material portrayed the Germanic races in the most favorable light. The Nazis devoted a lot of attention to determining the physical appearance of various groups. The caption says: "As long as the German people have racially valuable children, its future is assured." This is from the June 1942 issue.

From collection at Calvin College.

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Young women joined the **Bund Deutscher Mädel**, with the goal of becoming good German homemakers. In Nazi Germany, a woman's life was described as "Church, Children and Cooking." They were discouraged from wearing make-up, smoking or buying expensive clothes. The women

were expected to grow their hair long in order to put it in braids or a bun, and to have numerous children to populate the German Reich.

In 1923, Julius Streicher (1885 - 1946) founded and edited the racist newspaper, *Der Stürmer* (1923 - 45). He used this newspaper to preach and spread his hatred for Jewish people. The magazine was full of antisemitic cartoons, often obscene, in which he demonized the Jews.

¹ "The Fuehrer attaches a great importance to a powerful anti-Semitic propaganda. I told him that 70 to 80% of our broadcasts are devoted to it ..." Goebbels Diaries, May 10, 1943.

² Speech to the People's Court, July 22, 1941.

The Nazi propaganda machines which functioned from 1923 until 1945, contributed to the Holocaust and the genocide of Poles, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and other "undesirable" people. Tragically, surveys showed that most Germans were influenced by this propaganda.

activities

1. As a class, discuss why propaganda was such an important tool for the Nazis in their quest to kill the Jewish population.
2. The media plays a large role in the Nazi propaganda machine. Look through today's Seattle Times and think about how newspapers might play a role in propaganda. What aspects of the newspaper might be considered propaganda? Why do you feel this way? Are there any parts of the newspaper that combat the negative impact of propaganda? How?
3. Look in The Seattle Times archives for the Associated Press article, "First Amendment goes 'too far,' say students in survey. Read it and discuss this article after learning about the Nazi's use of the newspaper to implement their Final Solution.

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