

What contribution did Joseph Goebbels/Leni Riefenstahl make to Nazi propaganda? (2009)

Goebbels and Riefenstahl both made huge contributions to Nazi propaganda. Goebbels was the Reich Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and managed to shape the ordinary people of Germany's opinions on almost all topics, by controlling every aspect of their lives. He gained control of the mass media and censored everything. His contributions to Nazi Germany are endless. Leni Riefenstahl was a famous German filmmaker who made several highly influential documentaries. Her two landmark documentaries 'Triumph of the Will' and 'Olympia' used advanced film techniques and helped greatly with creating the image of Nazi Germany that Hitler wanted.

As Reich minister for propaganda Goebbels had many aims as to establish complete control over the German people. He aimed to promote the ideal of Volksgemeinschaft (people's community) so the German people would feel united. He developed the Führer principle as to depict Hitler as a God like figure. He inspired pride and belief in the Aryan race, encouraged great nationalism, and defended all of Hitler's policies through various forms of media. He supported the antisemitism and racism that was so prevalent during the Third Reich. It is widely accepted that much of these mentalities that were so common in Nazi Germany were taught to ordinary people solely through Goebbels' propaganda.

Goebbels began to take control of the media as he knew this was the most effective way to subtly feed people Hitler's teachings. He first concentrated on the trendy, modern radio. The Reich Radio Channel was established to control all content broadcasted. Anyone working in German radio was required to be a member. The Reich radio company was founded, and it controlled all stations, sending out Daily News bulletins directly to the station. Goebbels warned all radio personalities not to be boring so that the German people would not become disinterested. Popular music was played rather than classical. Cheap radios were sold as to ensure the Nazi message was being shared to as many people as possible. These radios were specifically designed as to only have access to German stations. In 1959, about 70% of all Germans had a radio.

Goebbels also began to control literature to ensure the books people were reading reflected Nazi ideology. In May and June of 1933, students and SA members began to collect all the books they deemed 'un-German' and they removed them from libraries. This led to a series of public book burnings; the most notable being in Berlin in May 1933. Many famous authors such as Sigmund Freud's works were destroyed. Goebbels' Reich Chamber of Culture was founded in September to centralise the control of literature. The Reich Chamber of Culture censored texts and barred certain people from writing. 4000 titles were banned, and 2500 writers left Germany. It was a very important step for Nazi propaganda as literature often teaches people to question things happening around them, therefore it was a large contribution of Goebbels.

Goebbels Also contributed to Nazi control through his control of newspapers. In 1933 most of the opposition newspapers shut down. Jewish or left-wing journalists were sacked. Strict instructions were given to the remaining papers on absolutely everything, even seemingly arbitrary things such as text size. The Nazi publishing company, Eher Verlag, gradually took control of most of the press, eventually owning 80% of the newspapers. The People's Observer, the Nazi paper, soon became the most important paper in Germany. Such control allowed Goebbels and the Nazi Party to filter absolutely everything read by the people of Germany.

Goebbels played a huge role in the planning of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. This was an astounding success in terms of propaganda and one of the biggest contributions Goebbels made. Hitler attended the games and was greeted by the entire stadium standing up and saluting him, illustrating the respect and admiration for the leader to the rest of the world. Foreign visitors left Germany with very positive feelings. Germany won the most medals, complying with the idea that they were the master race. However, Goebbels wasn't the only person who contributed to Nazi propaganda as Leni Riefenstahl was commissioned to make a documentary about the event.

Riefenstahl's films were not only excellent contributions to Nazi propaganda, but impressive works of cinematic art too. In 1932, she created 'The Blue Light', catching the attention of none other than Adolf Hitler. He was impressed by her work and believed she represented what he saw as the ideal German woman. In 1933, she directed an hour-long documentary about the 1933 party rally in Nuremberg called 'Triumph of Faith'. Hitler was impressed and asked her to film the 1934 rallies. The resulting film was named 'Triumph of the Will'. It had no commentary but demonstrated the power, strength and determination of Germany. It clearly illustrated the discipline and loyalty of the masses to Der Führer. It received widespread praise in 1935 and won countless awards. It was highly influential and controversial. It was not only an effective

propaganda tool at home but also abroad as it showed Germany as a united force with great leadership. This was a very important contribution to Nazi propaganda both at home and abroad.

Riefenstahl was then commissioned to film the 1936 Olympics. The resulting 'Olympia' is considered to many one of the greatest sporting documentaries ever produced. It was once again commended on an international level. It extended the propaganda success at the Olympics even further. It showed the German people as strong and united, much like the previous documentary. It was a very valuable contribution to Nazi propaganda.

Both Goebbels and Riefenstahl made undoubtable contributions to Nazi propaganda through effective and lasting methods. Goebbels has been described as the "evil genius of the 20th century marketing". He manipulated the German people through his control of radio, cinema, newspapers, literature, art and posters. Riefenstahl made two landmark documentaries that depicted the image the Nazis wanted to create at home and abroad. Both documentaries were based on events organised by Goebbels. These events were propaganda tools in their own right, but Riefenstahl's films successfully aided Hitler's agenda by creating a powerful image of Germany. Nazi Germany's control over its own people would most likely not have been possible without these figures.