Propaganda in World War II
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World War II witnessed the greatest propaganda campaigns in history. Often referred to as the “Fourth Arm” after the army, navy, and air force, propaganda was conducted by all belligerents and was essentially designed to sustain domestic civilian morale during a long war at home while undermining enemy civilian and military confidence in the ability to achieve victory. Although propaganda was becoming a characteristic of peacetime politics in the first half of the twentieth century, it was still seen largely as a weapon of war, especially in democracies.

Dictatorships in the Soviet Union, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany more readily embraced its peacetime use as a form of coercion of mass populations instead of the individualistic democratic predisposition toward persuasion and consensus-building. These different ideologies eventually went to war against each other in 1939, in a conflict that began with a cavalry charge in Poland and ended, six years later, with atomic explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It became a war of national survival - total war.

World War II had survived their “finest hour” in the Battle of Britain of 1940, managed to transform the military humiliation of Dunkirk - the “Dunkirk Spirit” - that is still evoked by nationalists. After Winston Churchill secured one of his greatest achievements, he-president, Franklin Roosevelt, to deploy the sheer weight of propaganda and persuade the Japanese and Italians in a “Europe first” strategy to finally defeat them.

**PROPAGANDA MEDIA**

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, and the American media had reinforced the policy decisions (Film Production). Hollywood professionals like were enlisted to make “indoctrination films” explaining to recruits the threat of fight Germans, but the Japanese. Seven films became compulsory viewing for all US armed forces. Themes of these films were that Japan, Germany, and Italy had conspired to turn the “free world” into a “slave world” and, if they had spurned the “four freedoms” espoused by Roosevelt (freedom of speech and religion, freedom from want and fear), and adapted in 1941 to the Atlantic Charter, they would see the triumph of the “man-machine” over the individual. They were infused with wartime propaganda themes that it was difficult to say “That is just a propaganda film.” So all-pervasive was the pastoralization of German society. So deeply rooted were the lies they survived long after the war had ended.

We have been able to make a good case that the Enigma machine was probably helped the allies to knock two years off the war. We make no equivalent claims. If anything, propaganda most rough instilling hatred of the enemy and bolstering domestic support for the war effort. We need only recall the 14-year-old boys defending the streets of Berlin as the Russians advanced on the city in 1945.

**References and Suggested Readings**