

Give Me Four Years' Time

World War II was one of the darkest times in human history. From the rise of Fascism and the Nazi party to the horrors of the Holocaust, no one could ever forget the damage such a traumatic event dealt upon our world. Throughout the six-year-long period, cruel dictators like Joseph Stalin and Benito Mussolini held all the power in their hands. The most cunning of them all was Adolf Hitler; by appealing to the citizens as a friend, he quickly took control of the German government and unleashed his master plan.

The Great Depression caused Germany to struggle greatly. Poverty and hunger, in addition to political instability, left the country in shambles. Upon seeing the German people losing hope; Hitler realized the potential to make his move. He meticulously went about exploiting his charismatic charm and “empathic” nature to craft an image of himself that the public could trust (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). His powerful, emotional speeches captivated the German people. In their desperation, the citizens looked up to Hitler and his bold promises to free them from doom. Once he was appointed chancellor, Hitler authorized the formation of the “Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.” Joseph Goebbels, the head of the affair, had the responsibility of creating and distributing various forms of Nazi propaganda. Whether it was “art, music, theater, films, books, radio, educational materials, or the press,” Hitler’s influence was everywhere (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*).

Some types of propaganda were meant to create enemies of people whom Hitler viewed as a threat. In most cases, these were the Jews; depicted in grotesque, inhuman ways, people grew to disassociate from the Jews just as Hitler did. In other cases, the artistic and colorful ads glorified Hitler. In one particular image of Nazi propaganda, Hitler stands proudly at a pedestal

before three Nazi banners, the phrase “give me four years’ time” written below in German. Though the image displays only a few words, the message it gives is frighteningly powerful. This Nazi propaganda piece presents the sadistic mastermind as “a military leader, a father figure, and a messianic leader brought to redeem Germany” (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). For these reasons, this image appears to claim that Hitler will be the people’s savior; all it will take is four short years.

Breaking down the image, one can see the different aspects which express said message. For starters, there’s Hitler himself. His confident poise gives off the aura of a leader. Though it is a bit difficult to see his facial expression, one could guess it is an expression of determination. Another essential part of the poster is each black swastika standing out against the red of the three banners. In an article reviewing the book *Iron Fists* written by Steven Heller, “the swastika, an ancient symbol whose meaning... ‘was forever changed when the Nazis co-opted it,’ is now banned in Germany except for ‘artistic, scientific, research or educational purposes’” (Benfey). This symbol represents the power and influence Hitler had over the people of Germany. His profound use of the symbol easily proved capable of manipulating their minds to be like his own. Finally, there is the simple phrase “give me four years’ time.” By using these words, the audience can immediately understand Hitler’s projected vision for Germany; he is undeniably determined. As Hitler himself stated in his book, *Mein Kampf*, that 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. As soon as you sacrifice this slogan and try to be many-sided, the effect will piddle away” (“Visual Essay: The Impact of Propaganda.”).

To sum up, propaganda and advertisements hold major power over people. “In many ways the Nazis were ahead of their time, masters of such political marketing arts as spin and rapid rebuttal” (O’Shaughnessy, Nicholas). Though Hitler’s efforts at winning the war through political advertising campaigns eventually backfired, the damage done was irreversible. In this day and age, people must remember to think for themselves in order to avoid manipulative traps. “The fact that all this was done in the service of the most monstrous empire that was ever created, whose lasting legacy to the human race was its unique pictography of genocide, must alert us to the more sinister ends to which political marketing can be perverted” (O’Shaughnessy, Nicholas). These are certainly memorable words for a memorable time.

Works Cited

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