

What is Propaganda?

The word "propaganda" has some negative associations; people often associate it with dishonesty and lies. The working definition is, however;

“Propaganda consists of the planned use of any form of public or mass-produced communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given group for a specific purpose, whether military, economic, or political.”

"Propaganda consists of the planned use of any form of communication designed to affect the minds, emotions, and action of a given group for a specific purpose." *Linebarger, Paul Myron Anthony. (1954)*

When the nations of the world entered into World War I, the methods and techniques of propaganda were naive and innocent. But by the end of the First World War, the techniques of waging war in the hearts and minds of the public had entered the modern era. Propaganda had become much more sophisticated and powerful.

By WWII, leaders realised that battles could be fought and won on the home front. Propaganda became an important part of motivating the population to work together, toward the common goal of defeating the enemy.

Recruitment images within periods of war or either side of it have gone through a plethora of changes in the current and last century. In this essay, the period of WWI up to present day (2008) will be discussed and analysed, outlining the changes in political correctness, and social acceptance within the boundaries of taste for propaganda images.

It is said that the most famous; at least for myself and others native to this country or even Europe, is the recruitment flyer by the British forces using Lord Kitchener in WWI (*See Figure 1*)



Figure 1

This flyer speaks volumes in how it reaches out to the public, having a pinnacle figure of the forces printed, staring and pointing directly at the viewer, followed by a capitalised and emboldened “YOU” imparts a feeling of individualism. Beneath that is the patriotic phrase of “god save the king” a nationalised phrase used to stir emotion and a sense of self and country.

The image in question has been used as a template for decades, using a famous figure for validity, pointing, staring and ushering a comment to engage attention. Always having a slight variation each time it has been used, you can still see the similarities between them. (*See Figure 2 & 3*)



Figure 2



Figure 3

The Americans using “Uncle Sam” who shares many similarities to Abraham Lincoln; an American President in March 4, 1861 – April 15, 1865, www.wikipedia.com (2008) a near perfect match to the British forces, if the format was plainly copied or pure coincidence will never be known, such a successful and impacting poster was bound to bring some sort of plagiarism.

The Russians again you can see; this time in (figure 3) using the same format, these recruitment posters along with other pictures; (see figure 4 & 5) where known as “White Propaganda”



Figure 4



Figure 5

White propaganda was first published by the British Government throughout the Second World War. (www.nls.uk)

Publications issued by several ministries were aimed at involving civilians in the war effort and assuring them that the armed forces were doing a sterling job. White propaganda on positive developments was also published for the British forces themselves.

The Americans use of white propaganda far outweighed the rest of the allies, the majority of that being patriotic bias imagery aimed at rallying the civilians to aid the war effort, either abroad or at home, also making shocking examples of how easy it can be to help the enemy and the fear that enemy spies are abundant at home. (See Figure 4)



Figure 6

Looking at the Axis side of propaganda, namely the German's, while Hitler was in service in the Bavarian Army during World War I, he saw the great power of War Propaganda, especially as applied by the allies. He clearly understood the fact that the Central Powers, especially Austria and Germany, did not manage to use propaganda in a skilled manner and the Allies on the contrary used it excellently. Irrespective of which side of the war used propaganda in the most provident way, the important fact here is that Hitler had found out something that he would later apply to his Third Reich's benefit.

His War propaganda expert in the World War II became Dr. Joseph Goebbles. Hitler found out that creating what mainly added up to be a lie/bias and then changing it to sound as if it were the simple truth and subsequently to direct this simple lie to people who were uneducated, or at least to those he supposed had no education, could let him manipulate the feelings and emotions of people to make them respond in the way he wanted. With these methods Hitler manipulated many of these people to conform to the ideals of the third Reich and gave him some form of psychological control.

This was a very effective technique specifically during the war, because if someone could persuade the enemy that they were in fact losing the war and it does not matter if they were or not in reality, the will of those people would weaken. During the war, propaganda was the idea that truly attracted Hitler's attention, propaganda was also applied by Hitler in other fields such as persuading the Jews who were on the run in Germany in the time of the holocaust to come out and surrender. The lie that Hitler used in this case is that he would merely exile them out of Germany and that the concentration camps were meant only for those who committed crimes against the Reich.



Figure 7

Figure 7 is taken from (www.calvin.edu, 2008) “This is an SS recruiting poster. I'm not sure of the date. It says one can join at 18, and sign up for shorter or longer periods of service. It gives the address of the recruiting office in Munich. Dr. Robert D. Brooks.”

This is an example of Nazi recruitment posters and you can see a huge difference between that and the allies examples, with Hitler having a good knowledge and insight into the use of propaganda in war time and of course how the allies used it to such success in WWI, he was always unable to replicate directly as it would not have the same impact, the public would become aware of similarities and denounce anything copied directly from the enemy.

Compare the WWI posters to the examples from WWII presented here. Notice how the design and layout enhance the emotional impact of the concepts. Many of these posters still pack a wallop.

In modern times (this century) the way the Government and/or MOD of Britain have had to change tactics regarding recruitment advertisement; has been dramatic. With changing technologies through the decades and changes in political correctness, the community analyses and criticises all forms of advertising strictly.

No longer can we get away with some of the racist and slanderous views and comments used within propaganda posters. Tactics used today are more diverse and sometimes covert.

A Royal Marines advert (www.youtube.com, 2008) shows a supposed enemy, on a beach, showing their resolve and determination and lack of fear, as they retreat a royal marine comes out of camouflage hiding to pursue. It's obvious the MOD are trying to appeal to the Hollywood generation, the “James Bond” stealth, power, achievement and superiority, this appeals in spades to the younger generation who idolise this character.

Comparing this to the British forces R.A.F (Royal Air Force) advert of 2008 (www.youtube.com, 2008) this recruitment takes a different approach, showing the viewer that with the R.A.F they can amount to something in life, that the R.A.F isn't just about flying and it gives skills and meaning. They do show an angle that is; to all intents and purposes, more truthful than the Royal Marines version.

Taking comparisons of modern recruitment to last century, we can formulate that the approach to enlisting has changed dramatically, no longer can the armed forces of any western country rely on pure emotional tactics and it's not about what the individual can do for their country, but more what the armed forces can do for them. This is a major switch and encapsulates modern lifestyle.

We could analyse that due to the commercial aspects of the 21st century, more time, effort and expense has to be used to recruit successfully, the ties of white propaganda still remain as a very biased approach to the recruitment adverts, only showing the "good" side of the armed forces and never the bad, the battles, the injuries, the death, the future of a soldier and the impact on the world and the individual and its family.

This attributes to a great amount of condemnation towards the forces and the Governments that control them, a great example is the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars, numerous people have opposed these wars and pure occupation of others countries.

Public opinion of the U.S (United States) (www.pollingreport.com, 2008) shows that the Iraq war has lost massive support and thus gives the U.S forces/Pentagon headaches in how to use "White Propaganda" to try and ease the negative public views (see figure 7).



Figure 8

It's apparent that the subtle ways of old (WWI/II) have long gone, as mentioned above a more covert approach to appeal to a newer generation

Radio and Television are the main focused media of recruitment in current times, as an example the armed forces recruit heavily on both, trying to appeal in a broader way, comparing current methods against way's used in the past i.e. in WWII the governments could only rely on limited resources like, posters, radio and in smaller venues short reel film. These formats had to maximise the effect and captured audience as much as possible to make greater return on the costs. Budgets and finance are on larger scales in the 21st century but so is the audience being reached too. Will we ever see such a war like those of the early and mid 20th century, hopefully not and to that; comparisons can never be made.

The MOD use new and varying methods, one such method is visiting schools to talk to children, using their own materials to advertise the armed forces, many teachers are speaking out about the "propaganda" (www.bbc.co.uk, 2008) and feel the MOD are using this media to recruit!

"We must also ask ourselves why the MoD are in there influencing the way our students view the Army in the 21st Century"

This is a prime example of the changes in media technology and the effects it has had in terms of recruiting strategies and political boundaries in society.

SUMMARY

It is apparent, that while there have been major changes throughout this and last centuries tactics regarding propaganda imagery, one key factor has still remained, white propaganda still exists and is used in abundance along with other types of propaganda. Differences in country of origin, with the materials show slight changes in the format but largely they all use the same simple techniques.

Drawing attention to the "then and now" factor, examining "then" first, the world wars both united countries together into a single coalition thus drawing in the similarities used by the British the Americans and the Russians for propaganda imagery. Repetition was bound and served upon a silver platter, it worked and worked well, my conclusion is that if not for such tactical imagery then the job of enlisting soldiers in the millions (this required to combat the large infantry numbers of the enemy) would have been immensely harder and this helped form a basis for future needs of propaganda.

Hitler knew that propaganda had to be used and used effectively; even knowing this he still fell short of the lengths the allies went too.

Looking into the “now” factor we see that the bare essentials of propaganda are still at large just repackaged and broadcasted in cleverer terms and up to date with current political acceptance standards.

Although modern ways have changed, no longer can the forces appeal to an individuals emotional state about the “good cause” it is apparent that this target audience would generally not care for this angle.

It is an insult to everyone’s intelligence at times that the Forces don’t give the whole truth about war and enlisting; only giving the positive sides, never the negative, that side is alone for the news media to inform us of these facts.

Never will we be able to dispose of propaganda, especially within the military it’s more a case of the public being able to interpret the images and adverts to understand the true meaning, dispatching the positive and formulating with the negative.

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