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Utilization of Propaganda Throughout the Great War: A Revolutionary Experience

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Utilization of Propaganda Throughout the Great War: A Revolutionary Experience

Abstract

This project delves into the impact of propaganda on countries and citizens throughout World War I. It shows how the impacts of this bloodless revolution still resonate in society today, and how it has changed the world eternally, especially with the modern usage of the internet.

Keywords

Propaganda, World War, War, Revolution

Disciplines

International Relations | Military History | Political History

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Introduction

World War I was an experience that was revolutionary for a variety of reasons. It transformed economies throughout the world (and preceded the Great Depression), redefined what it meant to fight in a war, established great alliances and pacts, and destroyed Germany as a country. It can even be cited as one of the reasons for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich

Although many of the atrocities of the war are well known, one of the greatest and most detrimental revolutions in war history started in World War I and has been overlooked since.

Through all the grenades, machine guns, tanks, and mustard gas, there emerged one weapon that could not be destroyed by any number of bombs or bullets. That weapon was (and is) propaganda. Sometimes a measly piece of paper, and other times, a video or picture, propaganda was likely one of the most dominant tools that had been used since the beginning of the war. Within just a few minutes, you will learn why, and hopefully gain a new perspective on what it means to fight a war in the modern world.

What is Propaganda?

Propaganda is any information that is spread for the purpose of persuasion. It is often deceitful, and can be spread in a variety of manners, by a variety of people.

Who Used it, and Why?

Throughout the war, propaganda was used by all involved countries for a variety of purposes. Some examples are:

- Recruiting/enlistment programs
- The Red Cross
- Defamation of opposition
- Collecting donations
- Gaining trust from citizens
- Spreading misinformation for political manipulation

Throughout the war, there were some prominent figures in the realm of propaganda. For example, the Four-Minute Men from the United States (featured in Figure 2) swayed public opinion to allow Wilson to enter the war, and Jean Jaures helped the ISB in trying to cool tensions before the war broke out. Propaganda throughout the war was typically established by poets, writers, politicians, news outlets, film producers, and many more.

Country-Specific Examples From the War

Figure 2



In Figure 2, you will observe an advertisement for Woodrow Wilson's "Four Minute Men," an organization that was established to persuade Americans to let him enter the war. Before their creation, many citizens were furious with their president, as many gave him their votes based on his campaign slogan, "He Kept us Out of the War."

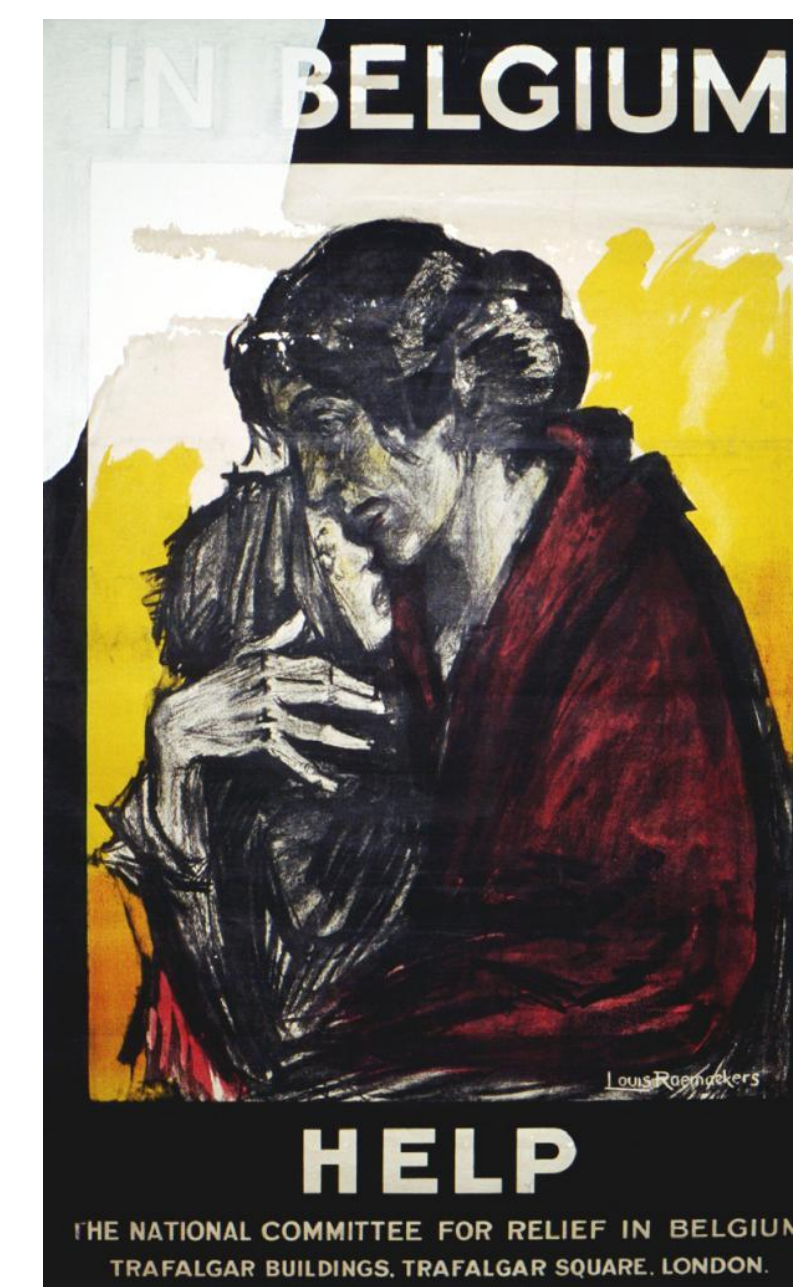
Figure 4



This image represents the significance of the telegraph in propaganda, as it was a way to spread information "quickly" between countries.

"Telegrapher" by dok1 is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Figure 3



One of the most influential movements throughout the war was known as "Poor Little Belgium," and was introduced by the Allied powers to destroy Germany's public appearance.

Figure 5



How Did Propaganda Impact the War?

For Germany, propaganda was impactful, but not positively. Not only was the propaganda used against them incredibly effective, but many of their own efforts backfired. The films that they produced earlier in the war were not only too weak to win over other countries, but they were also known for destroying the appearance of Germans in the eyes of many civilians.

"File:Bundesarchiv Bild 183-R95251, Kaiser Wilhelm II.jpg" by Unknown is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

Figure 6



British propaganda, on the other hand, was highly effective. As shown in Figure 4, they also used a variety of techniques to get their message across, although they relied heavily on the press. They were successful in both recruiting and in winning over public opinion.

"Step into your place. 1915" by kitchener.lord is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/?ref=openverse>.

Figure 7



The United States also achieved great success with their propaganda. Much of it has set a precedent for our sociopolitical endeavors in the modern era.

Why Does it Matter?

Today, propaganda dominates the globe in ways unimaginable to the untrained eye. The President uses the "bully pulpit" at the podium to imbue a certain feeling upon the population, or to gain support from the citizens. News articles report information earlier than they should, stretching the truth to shift political views, and major businesses establish their own "research" under different titles, so that they can promote their products with the persuasive abilities of "experts."

Not only has propaganda brought many things into the world, but it has also nearly removed us from it. It helped to bring us into the Cold War, and it has since soured the United States' relationship with Russia even further since their conflict with Ukraine.

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