

PROPAGANDA AND WAR

A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE 1914-1918

War, Conflict and Society

HPHP6902

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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To investigate the impact of propaganda primarily on the British population during World War One, with a focus on a number of research questions to assist the main question posed.

Did propaganda send millions to their deaths?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Apparatus

How developed was the British propaganda apparatus prior to 1914?

Exposure

How much propaganda were the British public exposed to prior and including the period of 1914-1918?

Contributing Factors

To what level did propaganda assist in contributing to the recruitment of men for war?

Consumption

We know propaganda was mass produced and consumed but how can we judge the effects in evidential terms?

WHY?

Traditional historiography of WWI propaganda emphasized how extremely effective propaganda was at shaping public opinion. British propaganda became centralised and was used as a tool by the government to mobilize support, conceal the truth and maintain a narrative to help achieve victory in total war.

Modern historians reject the idea of a passive, brainwashed public. What I want to explore is how different people interpreted propaganda and how can we measure this interaction?

STARTING MY RESEARCH

My research started with key propaganda literacy which assisted in providing me with a overview of the propaganda apparatus available to Britain prior to war and also the evolution of propaganda as the war progressed.

FOCUSING MY RESEARCH

Propaganda being such a vast research area I had to narrow my dissertation into four key areas.

Recruitment

How propaganda assisted in recruiting men to fight.

Morale

How propaganda assisted in maintaining public support and morale as the war dragged on.

Dehumanisation of the Enemy

The levels in which the British media and government dehumanised the Germans.

Manipulation of America

The lengths undertaken by the British to control the narrative reaching America that helped shape public opinion.

SOURCES

- Literacy sources, Key readings...
- Daily Newspapers from 1914-1918 and pre war.
- Local Reading newspapers
- Government records
- Imperial War Museum and Military Museum of Istanbul
- Posters

FINDINGS SO FAR

- While it has been difficult to prove how propaganda had a direct effect on the population I have found a number of correlations which directly link the propaganda produced and consumed to increased numbers of recruitment.
- The level and impact Lord Northcliffe had on influencing the American public is startling.
- The propaganda campaign of falsehoods and dehumanisation of the enemy is far reaching and has a profound impact on the British psyche.

CONCLUSION

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