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Sounds of the Reich: Nazi Party Radio and Speeches

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SOUNDS OF THE THIRD REICH: RADIO AND SPEECHES OF THE NAZI REGIME

KATELYN HANNERS (MENTOR: SCHIESSL)

RADIO BEFORE THE THIRD REICH

- Radio was the leading medium from WWI to the end of WWII.
- Before the mid-1930s, radios were considered a luxury item that few workers owned due to fees and high costs.
- Broadcasts were catered to the local populations.
- These broadcasts were apolitical and focused on education and fine arts.
- Listeners were mostly educated, cultured, and politically left-leaning.
- Despite modest, well-intentioned beginnings, radio broadcasts slowly evolved away from education and culture broadcasts and began to consist mainly of entertainment.
- People liked to listen to stories and music more than educational broadcasts.



Head of propaganda, Goebbels, giving a speech over radio.

RADIO DURING THE REGIME

- Nazi Germany mass-produced low-cost radios to increase listening volume and by 1938, 60% of all Germans had radios.
- Before Nazi takeover in 1933, Franz von Papen, a popular politician in the 1920s, placed all radio broadcasting under the control of the government.
- The Third Reich also owned most stocks in radio broadcasting, resulting in broadcasts being almost exclusively controlled by the Nazi Regime.
- Hitler used this massive advantage during his takeover and subsequent twelve years of control.
- Nazis began to push more antisemitic propaganda in radio as they were winning the war.
- Goebbels would write antisemitic articles to be read over national radio every Friday. The Nazi regime broadcasted as many speeches, events, and victories as possible.
- Germans would play Nazi broadcasts over loudspeakers.
- Students in school would often be quizzed over what the broadcasts said the next day in school.



A photo of Hitler giving a speech to a large Nazi rally.

VOLK RADIO BROADCASTS

- One type of radio broadcast that gained traction during the evolution of radio were Volk broadcasts. These shows consisted of old stories, poems, and music from decades before in Germany.
- These broadcasts were played during the 1920s during times of great political unrest. Germans were scared for their futures and exhausted by societal fragmentation.
- Volk broadcasts attempted to bridge these growing fissures in German society and unite all people together.
- The makers of these broadcasts wanted to unite people past political parties and differences.
- These radio shows spoke of the negative effects of urbanization and the new liberal government, which many believed to be the downfall of the German people.
- They claimed that, in order to strengthen their country, all Germans needed to come together and support others of their ancestry to reclaim their country.

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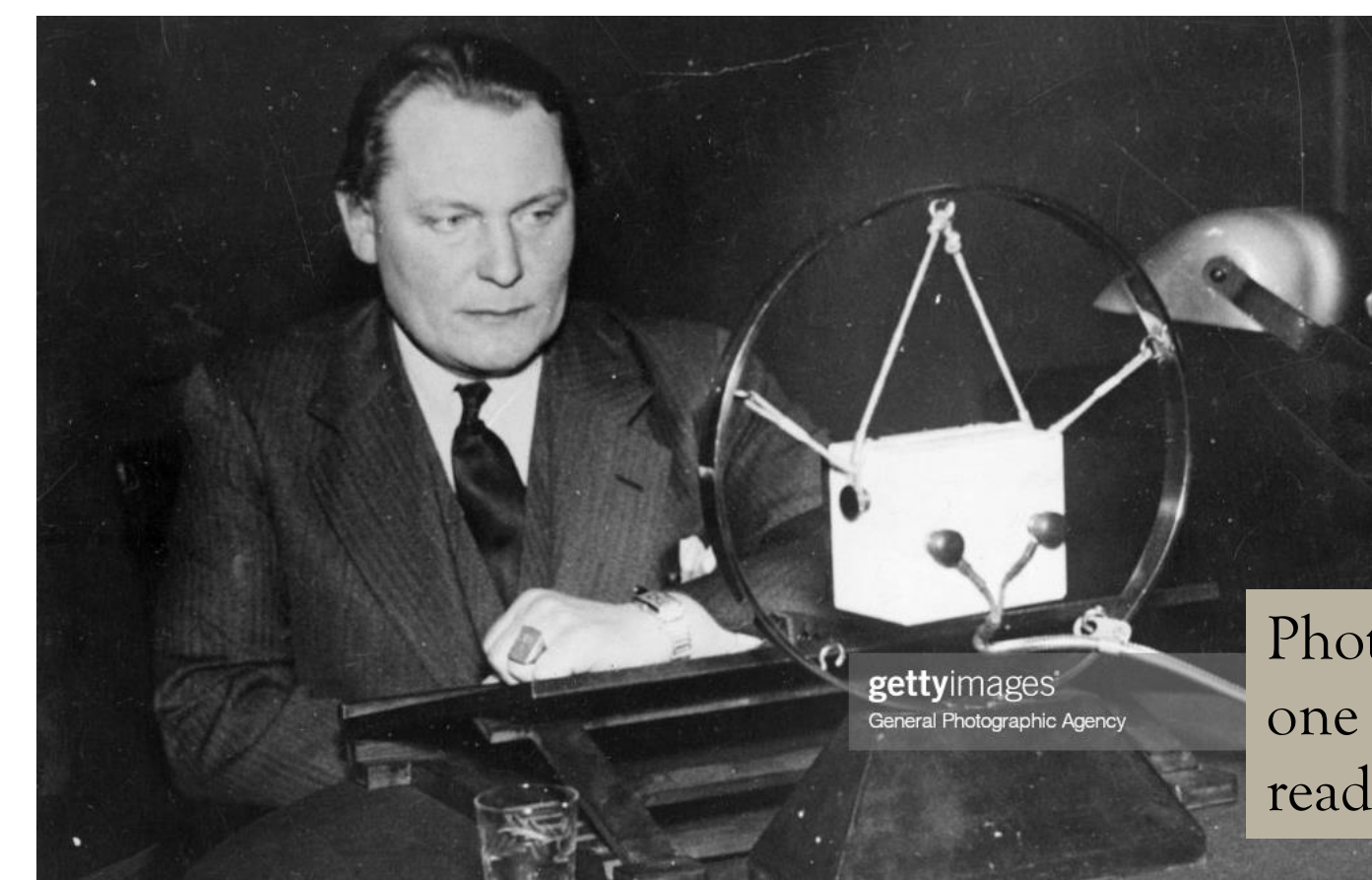


Photo of Goring giving one of his infamous readings via radio.

THEMES OF NAZI SPEECHES

- According to Joseph Goebbels, head of Nazi propaganda, "[Propaganda's] purpose is not to be decent, or gentle, or weak, or modest; it is to be successful."
- Speeches were held at large rallies with formations of men in uniforms and flags flying. The speakers commanded an air of terror and respect.
- Goebbels says that the principle of Nazism "must cast its shadow over all areas of human life."
- Hitler openly stated in speeches before World War II that if a war broke out, that it would be the fault of the Jews and that they would be annihilated as a result.
- The NSDAP claimed all opponents, from the Weimar Republic politicians to the American government were involved in "international Jewry."
- This created a conspiracy theory in Germany that included Germans being cast as superior beings by nature who were wrongfully tormented by evil-doers.
- During a speech by Herman Goering, the second most powerful figure in the regime, he claimed that "This is not the second World War."
- This is a great race war. It is about whether the Germans and Aryans will survive or if the Jew will rule the world, and that is why we are fighting abroad."

CONCLUSION

- Anyone in Germany listening to radio or speeches would understand that Germany was implementing Hitler's pre-war statement that the Jews would be exterminated in order to win the war.
- There was enormous social pressure to listen to broadcasts and speeches.
- Though not outwardly political, Volk broadcasts did resonate with a growing frustration within Germans who did not like the new democratic government or industrialization.
- Broadcasts also included lebensraum broadcasts, an idea that Nazi leaders would later use to justify World War II.
- Nazi speeches regularly relied on many themes seen in Volk broadcasts, such as the idea of a united country without political divisions.