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The Rhetorical Dimensions of Radio
Propaganda in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945 Download[Frank Rybicki](#)**Defense Date**

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Abstract

The intrinsic power and subtle influence of broadcasting is not readily recognized by the average consumer of mass media. This circumstance has an abusive potential for those wishing to use the electronic media for ulterior motives. Such was the case between 1933 and 1945 when the Nazis unleashed their manipulative mass media campaign that helped facilitate totalitarian control over the German people. This dissertation is the study of its radio component. Special emphasis is placed on the origins, construction, and subsequent implementation of Nazi broadcast rhetoric heard on domestic and short wave radio during the twelve-year period of the Third Reich.

In refusing the notion that a solitary critical perspective can be used in the creation of political consciousness and culture, I admit to using any theoretical insight or concept that sheds light on rhetorical efforts. In the practice of criticism, I believe this is the function of rhetorical theory. Therefore, the following selected theoretical methods are employed:

Cable's theory of rhetoric as organization is shown as an appropriate means of describing the radio divisions within the bureaucratic Propaganda Ministry.

Bitzer's work on the significance of the rhetorical situation is applied to the simple act of listening to finely crafted radio programming in Nazi Germany.

The speaker's link between rhetoric and ideology is explained with McGee's "ideograph" theory.

The construction of a new language suited to the goals of the Nazis is analyzed by examples of Burke's unifiers and McGuire's close textual work on Mein Kampf.

Marcuse divides the language into pragmatic and mythical layers, while the rhetoric and motivations of eight American "radio traitors," who served as Nazi broadcasters, are investigated and tied into the overall propaganda scheme. The consequences of this

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inquiry indicate that the National Socialists, with Dr. Goebbels' masterful propagandistic insights, tapped into the needs of a post-World War I German society and rebuilt a nationalistic spirit that unfortunately led to war and greater devastation than had been seen some three decades earlier. The new medium of radio, as a major source of information or mis-information, played no small part in this tragic outcome.

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Radio broadcasts played a major part in the Nazi propaganda machine. In an era before mass television, radio, newspapers and cinema all played their part in putting over to the public Hitler's messages. Propaganda was placed in the hands of Joseph Goebbels and it was his idea to make cheap radios available to the German public. In March 1933, Goebbels transferred this power to the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda with himself at the helm. This remained the way until the end of World War Two. Radio broadcasts played home the Nazi ideals – national pride, patriotism, pride in Hitler, Aryan pride etc. All households that possessed a radio had to pay 2 marks a month to cover the cost of radio broadcasting. Rhetorical Approach Any discussion of the rhetorical dimensions of radio propaganda used by the Nazis in their twelve years of dominance prior to and during the Second World War in Germany must begin with an analysis of Hitler's propaganda organization. This organization, through the manipulation of the mass media, was responsible for influencing the actions and attitudes of millions of German people. Of course, any discussion of propaganda inherently carries a rhetorical element necessary for the propaganda to function. Since the present focus is on the organizational nature of Nazi Germany's