Sounds of the Reich: Nazi Party Radio and Speeches

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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.

During the 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 radios. The 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. German 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.

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.

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 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.”

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 overtly 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 Goring, 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 overtly 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.

**Citations**
Saldern, Adelheid. 2004. “Volk and Heimat Culture in Radio Broadcasting during the Period of Transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany.”

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