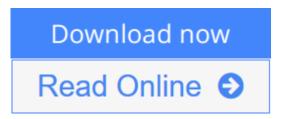


Bending Spines: The Propagandas of Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic (Rhetoric & Public Affairs)

By Randall L. Bytwerk



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Why do totalitarian propagandas such as those created in Nazi Germany and the former German Democratic Republic initially succeed, and why do they ultimately fail? Outside observers often make two serious mistakes when they interpret the propaganda spawned by these authoritarian regimes. First, they assume their propagandas worked largely because they were supported by a police state, that people cheered Hitler and Honecker because they feared the consequences of not doing so. Second, they assume that propaganda really succeeded in persuading most of the citizenry, that the Nuremberg rallies were a reflection of how most Germans thought, or that most East Germans were convinced Marxist-Leninists. World War II Allies feared that rooting out Nazism would be a very difficult task. No leading scholar or politician in the West expected East Germany to collapse nearly rapidly as it did. Effective propaganda depends on a full range of persuasive methods, from the gentlest suggestion to overt violence, which the dictatorship of the 20th century understood well. religious in nature. Nazism and Marxism-Leninism presented themselves as explanations for all of life - culture, morality, science, history, recreation. They provided people with reasons for accepting the status quo. Bending Spines examines the full range of persuasive techniques used by Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic, and concludes that both systems failed in part because they expected more of their propaganda than it was able to deliver.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Naturally, the common people don't want war, but after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag people along whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. This is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the county to danger. It works the same in every country."

About the Author

Randall L. Bytwerk is a Professor of Communication at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. His book *Julius Streicher* received the National Communication Association Golden Anniversary Award.

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