

Audiences of Nazism: Media Effects and Responses, 1923-1945

Since the end of the war, the Nazis' success in turning their fringe party into a mass movement and, once in power, securing the support of a large majority of the German population has often been explained as the result of their effective propaganda communicated through all of the modern mass media then available. For example, in his final statement at the Nuremberg trial, Albert Speer characterized the Nazi regime as the first dictatorship to make complete use of all technical means in a manner perfect for the domination of its own nation, that is, for preventing independent thinking. This explanation came in handy for those Germans who had applauded the regime or even actively supported it. They could point out that the Nazis had established a ministry of propaganda whose head, Joseph Goebbels, had often pitched himself as the cunning mastermind behind its well orchestrated propaganda, much of which consisted in images of enthusiastic masses. Theories of totalitarianism have also identified the supposed power of mass media to indoctrinate and manipulate audiences as a key factor of totalitarian rule. But such broad claims about the power of media have long been questioned. It is well known by now that audiences tend to look for confirmation of their views and how hard it is to get them to change their minds. Goebbels's grandiloquent claims have been challenged. And we know that the Nazis' stagings of overwhelming mass support were intended to convey the message that non-supporters were outsiders. However, historical research into the details of audience reception is still rare. It is true that primary sources are not so easy to find, but it is definitely worth the effort. Participants of this conference will present a variety of case studies and discuss the possibilities and limitations of studying audience reception under the Nazi dictatorship.

Thursday 24 May

9:00 - 9:30 Welcome / Introduction (Paul Betts and Ulrike Weckel)

9:30 - 10:30

Jochen Hung, Utrecht

How to retain Nazi voters as readers. The liberal press of the Weimar Republic after 1930

Michael Wildt, Berlin

Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung 1932/33: Transforming the audience

Hannah Ahlheim, Berlin

When a sticker becomes a threat: German Jews and their perception of Nazi propaganda 1923–1938

10:30-11:15 Discussion

11:15-11:45 Coffee break

11:45-12:45

Janosch Steuer, Zurich

Reading fake news. Responses to media reports on the "Night of the Long Knives" and the modes of political behaviour in the Third Reich

Annina Hofferberth, Gießen

Euphoric responses to perfect stagings? Contemporary perceptions of the NSDAP party rallies at Nuremberg in diaries and letters, 1933-1938

Hanne Lessau, Nuremberg

Blurring the lines between the real and the ideal. Visual representations of the party rally grounds at Nuremberg and their effects on audiences

12:45-13:30 Discussion

13:30-15:00 Lunch break

15:00-16:00

Kate Lacey, Sussex

On the receiving end: Positioning radio listeners in the Third Reich

Neil Gregor, Southampton

Towards a new 'Hörergemeinschaft'? *Kraft durch Freude*, bourgeois concert-going, and the visual/textual culture of the concert hall, 1933-1945

Patrick Merziger, Leipzig

Tracing the public in entertainment. Community theatre and its interrelation with mass-media in Weimar and National Socialist Germany

16:00-17:00

Discussion

Optional: Viewing session of some amateur home movies (Michaela Scharf)

Friday 25 May

9:00-10:00

Joseph Garncarz, Cologne

On film preferences of Germans in the Nazi era: New empirical success data and first evaluations

Erica Carter, London

Film experience and audience history: a late 1930s Austrian case study

Michaela Scharf, Vienna

Adapting National Socialist imagery: Ambitious amateur films between media reception and self-visualization

10:00-10:45

Discussion

10:45-11:15

Coffee break

11:15-12:15

Bernhard Fulda, Cambridge

The Degenerate Art campaign and its audiences

Pamela Swett, Hamilton

Advertising and its audiences in interwar Germany

Maiken Umbach, Nottingham

Private photography and the reception of visual media in Nazi Germany

12:15-13:00

Discussion

13:00-14:30

Lunch break

14:30-15:30

Timothy Schmalz, Cambridge

Imagined reception: The internal dilemmas of propaganda creation through the *SS Kalender*, 1938-1944

Julia Torrie, Fredericton

The media of occupation: Books, photography and German soldiers in France, 1940-44

Nick Stargardt, Oxford

Media, morality and wartime crisis management: public responses to "total war" and the murder of the Jews

15:30-16:15

Discussion

16:15-16:45

Coffee break

16:45-17:45

Panel discussion with Jane Caplan, Mark Roseman, Ulrike Weckel and the participants