



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Public Relations Review



Full Length Article

Targeting Crowds: A study of how the Norwegian Labour Party adapted Nazi rhetorical methodology

Tor Bang

BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, N-0442, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 September 2015
Received in revised form 18 January 2017
Accepted 13 February 2017
Available online xxx

Keywords:

Crowds
Public Relations
Scandinavia
Labour movement
Propaganda
Nazi Germany

ABSTRACT

The immense success of post WWI European totalitarian regimes form the backdrop for this study. Political success is often credited cleverly crafted communication strategies. The Norwegian Labour Party applied methods similar to those found in Nazi Germany as of 1933/34, luring voters away from the dogmatic Right and Left, to the leftist social democratic movement. One key element of this highly successful strategy is the shift from a somber accentuation on methods of scientific persuasion, emphasizing a perceived rationale of a social system based in Marxism, to propaganda, bombarding masses with slogans and one-liners. Another key element is an acknowledgement of indifferent voters. The vast majority of the voter potential did not attend political meeting and were unable to recognize and separate ideologies. This led party strategists to developing methodologies on how to approach voters as crowds, not merely as individual citizens in large numbers. Recognizing the homogeneity and protective environment of the Darwinian herd, crowds became target groups for the Labour Party election campaigns, in which they found gratification by unison songs, theatrical entertainment and simple slogans.

© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Purpose of study

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on similarities between propaganda practices in the parallel worlds of the 1930s labour movement in Scandinavia, with emphasis on Norway, and the NSDAP, the German Nazi-Party, and how the Norwegian Labour Party knowingly utilized methods developed by the NSDAP.

2. Background

Following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, labour leaders expected a European revolutionary wave. Germany had undergone a series of revolution-like political changes between 1918 and 1933. The most dramatic, by far, was that of Hitler's NSDAP, which initially drew support from wide segments of the capitalism-skeptical Left (Benz, 2009; Klee, 2003; Maser, 1981).

E-mail address: tor.bang@bi.no

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.014>
0363-8111/© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article in press as: Bang, T. Targeting Crowds: A study of how the Norwegian Labour Party adapted Nazi rhetorical methodology. *Public Relations Review* (2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.02.014>

3. Strive for the working class vote

In 1930, the Norwegian “working class”, was narrowly defined as “industrial workers” and encompassed only about 27.5% of the social stratum that defined the labour movement’s primary target. (www.ssb.no, 30th November 2014; Granat, 1934). The defining persona, in movement norms and sentiment, was nevertheless a male manual worker. Peasants and coastal fishermen, many of whom impoverished, owned their means of production and were generally not willing to hand over land and cattle, tools and vessels to co-operatives.

Scandinavian labour parties’ goal was political power through democratic elections. Their objectives were to 1) attract voters, and 2) prevent voting for totalitarian parties. Such circumstances necessitated a persuasive communication strategy, capable of turning class brethren into sympathizers and voters.

4. Research questions

While pre-1930 social-democratic communication had emphasized a rhetoric of logos, i.e. the statistical and societal rationale of applied Marxism, Nazi communication tactics focused on pathos: entertaining crowds by one-liners and slogans. Judging by period literature, it is evident that there are methodological similarities between 1930s Scandinavian labour movement rhetorical strategies and those of the NSDAP. The research questions for this paper are therefore:

How can the Norwegian labour movement’s 1930s propaganda be traced to NSDAP methodology? And, what is the role of the crowd in period communication strategy?

The field of research is tracing potential influence on the 1930s Scandinavian labour movement rhetorical strategies.

5. Key concepts and literature review

The 1930s’ Norwegian, and Swedish, literature on intentional communication is anecdotic as well as applied, and based in social science and psychology. From the 1920s, theories of social psychology were applied in intentional communication theory and methods. Such means of persuasion, labelled “propaganda”, and/or “advertising”, is a key concept here.

A second concept, “crowd”, appears in late 19th and early 20th century psychological research (Le Bon, 1895; Trotter, 1917; Sombart, 1925; Moe, 1934a, 1934b). “Crowd” was subsequently adapted by scholars and strategists embedded in political discourse.

Literature points to research and practice developed in the USA shortly after WWI. Edward Edward Bernays (1922; 1928; 1965) introduced himself as a “propagandist” because “propaganda”, intentional, strategic communication, was what he pursued:

When I served on the U.S. Committee on Public Information in World War I, 1918–1920, “public information” was the term used for the war’s informational effort. But I did not hesitate to call myself a propagandist, even though the word had been tarnished by the German propaganda of the Kaiser and by the Communists (1965, p. 287).

He argued that “propaganda” was a common term, i.e. in the presidential “US Committee on Public Information”. Miller (2004) argued that Bernays’ motivation for using “propaganda” of such activity could have been

to rid the word of its bad smell [. . .] Bernays always deemed himself to be both “a truth-seeker and a propagandist for propaganda” [. . .] his interest would be purely scientific; and so his effort to redeem the word is based to some extent on intellectual necessity, there being no adequate substitute for propaganda. In this Bernays was right and never gave up his preference for that word over all the euphemisms (p. 15).

Bernays was familiar with negative connotations and associations of “propaganda”. Nevertheless, he argued:

[. . .] the poor connotations of the word in the postwar period induced George Creel, when he wrote his story of the U.S. Committee on Public Information in 1920, to call his book *How We Advertised America*. This was illustrative of the uncertainty with which new meanings found words to express them (1965, p. 288).

Miller emphasized that the fields of propaganda and publicity overlap in the sense that “admen and publicists, no longer common hucksters, but professionals, sold their talents to Big Business through a long barrage of books, essays, speeches and events extolling the miraculous effects of advertising and/or publicity – i.e. propaganda” (2004, p. 12). Bernays’ WWI-insight proved transferable to civilian and commercial purposes in post-war America: Such “peacetime propaganda [. . .] would at once exalt the nation and advance the civilizing process, teaching immigrants and other folks of modest means how to transform themselves, through smart consumption, into happy and presentable Americans [. . .]” (2004, p. 13).

Man, argued Bernays, (1922) is blinded by own prejudice and is therefore unable to see and interpret the world unconditionally, a point of view he claimed to be sharing with contemporary psychologists and sociologists. He recommended propagandists to spread their ideas as widely as possible (Ellul, 1965; Moe, 1934a, 1934b): “He transmits his ideas, however, through all those mediums which help to build public opinion – the radio, the lecture platform, advertising, the stage, the motion picture, the mails” (Ellul, 1965, p. 57). Reaching out to the uninformed was not easy. Bernays went on:

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4761770>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4761770>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)