
The Panic of the US Losing Their Democracy as a Nation

The efforts of American "cultural producers" during World War II constructed and realized the ideal of a democratic American army within the minds of citizens doubtful of whether remaining democratic while engaged in warfare was at all possible. While the cultural producers ultimately proved successful, their endeavors were not met without extreme opposition. Anti-interventionists, religious groups, and psychologists argued that engaging in warfare and forcing military service would turn American men into "overly dependent, imperfectly masculine, and violently aggressive" veterans who would struggle with "resocialization" upon returning home. The fear was that America's army would become too much like those of its belligerent, undemocratic enemies whose totalitarian doctrine it reviled. The response of cultural producers assuaged that fear, as well as many others.

The fear of becoming undemocratic was largely based on American perception of politics in enemy nations. In Germany, for example, the inability of the people to distinguish truth resulted in a deeply indoctrinated nation that blindly followed Hitler and subscribed to his "irrational and fanatical" agenda of hate. President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed American fears of being told lies when he said, "You must [...] have complete confidence that your government is keeping nothing from you except information that will help the enemy in his attempt to destroy us. In a democracy there is always a solemn pact of truth between government and the people; but there must also always be a full use of discretion". In a further effort to promulgate truth, citizens were educated about the role of democracy under the direction of the Educational Policies Commission. Soldiers watched films containing Axis propaganda meant to show them the evils of the restrictive dictatorships they were preparing to battle against. Cultural producers also recognized "the ability of modern warfare [...] to reduce the individual to an expendable cog" and promptly drew parallels between the most regimented aspects of civilian and military life, hoping to promote the individuality and autonomy critical to preserving democracy. Emphasis on racial/ethnic differences within the army was placed in military films to show that America was not as hateful and prejudiced as its enemies. Americans were also taught that American life was peaceful and voluntary - the opposite of militarism and regimentation enforced in dictatorships - and that their country had been forced to defend itself following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. All of the strategies that have been discussed here are evidence of the American desire to preserve the rights and freedoms of democracy without becoming as militaristic as the enemy. One must ask whether America, in all its military might, still subscribes to those desires today.

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