

HISTORICAL SKETCH

With the advent of World War I, governments realized the importance of using propaganda to shape public opinion, gain support, provide information on war aims, and boost civilian and military morale. Since the era of mass communication was at its genesis, the poster was the medium used to spread the ideologies of the warring nations. Posters were an important tool for reaching out to the illiterate population in all countries, including the industrialized countries of the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and France. During the inter-war years, professors and intellectuals analyzed the effects that propaganda techniques had on the citizens in the United States, Britain, and France. War propaganda was characterized as having four major objectives: to mobilize hatred against the enemy; to preserve the friendship of allies; to procure the cooperation of neutrals; and, to demoralize the enemy.

With the outbreak of World War II, the poster once again was used by governments to rally their citizens for the war effort, although the role of the poster transformed. With the era of mass communication in full swing, posters reiterated the government messages and campaigns introduced on the radio, in magazines and newspapers, and in the movie industry. Inexpensive and accessible, posters linked the military front lines with the home front to make every citizen realize that they were participants. Using symbols and slogans, posters sold the idea that citizens were soldiers and that the factory and the home were also military arenas. Mobilizing the American public with poster propaganda became a wartime industry, almost as important as the manufacturing of bullets, guns, and other military equipment.

The United States government established two propaganda offices during World War II, one for overt propaganda and one for covert propaganda. At the start of World War II, prior to American involvement, The Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) was temporarily responsible for promoting “defense” and support of the countries fighting Germany. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, there was a shift in the theme of posters from “defense” to “victory,” and with that shift came a new office to specialize in overt, or public, propaganda campaigns.

In June 1942, the OFF was replaced by the Office of War Information (OWI), which was responsible for approving and distributing war posters for various Government agencies and departments. The OWI developed six campaign themes to inform the public of Government war aims and information. The six themes were the nature of the enemy, the nature of our allies, the need to work, the need to fight, the need to sacrifice, and the Americans, which promoted democracy, freedom, and lack of discrimination of race and religion. The goal of the artist was to produce immediate and a lasting response in the viewer. The six campaign themes are clearly evident in this World War II poster collection, and they will be discussed further below in the scope and content section.

In January 1942, the War Advertising Council was created with Chester J. LaRouche, vice-president of the advertising firm Young & Rubicam, Inc., elected as the chairman. He created the National Advisory Council on government posters, whose goal was to develop an effective poster design. From March 16-April 1, 1942, Young & Rubicam conducted a survey in Toronto, Canada. They looked at thirty-three Canadian war posters to see why the public was confused

about the intent of the poster. From that research, Young & Rubicam suggested that a good war poster must meet two criteria. First, the poster should appeal to the viewers' emotions. Second, the poster should be a literal picture in photographic detail. To make a deep impression, the poster must appeal to the emotions. For example, a government study found that vivid images of women or children in danger were effective emotional devices. A poster that looked like a photograph would help a viewer connect to the message because the poster's subject would look like the average American. Abstract design or symbolism was avoided.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection (312 posters and maps; 3 boxes; 9 linear inches) was created and preserved by the Lafayette College Library during the war years of 1941-1945. Issued by various government agencies, private organizations and businesses, and foreign countries, these posters mobilized the citizens in a time of adversity, through art, illustration, and photographs. Posters are arranged by topic. Areas of note include posters designed by American illustrator Norman Rockwell as well as British Empire and foreign nation posters. Other noteworthy posters involve the negative portrayal of the Japanese enemy.

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1: U.S. Savings Bonds (14 posters)

When the United States went to war, the government quickly became industry's prime customer, diverting much of the nation's production capacity to war material. To pay for the effort, the government borrowed money directly from its citizens by selling war bonds, advertising them as a way to protect the children of future generations or to bring the soldiers overseas safely home. Organizations, including the Red Cross and labor unions, cooperated with the U.S. government by actively participating in bond drives. The war bond posters by Norman Rockwell can be found in Box 2, Folder 4.

Folder 2: Wartime Production (21 posters)

To understand the importance of the production posters during the war, we must briefly look at the 1930s. Between 1933 and 1938, labor unrest swept through the country as 5,600,000 workers participated in over 10,000 strikes. Labor unions fought on the workers' behalf against management and corporations, and as the 1930s came to a close, tensions and feelings of mistrust ran high. By 1941, the government felt that a defense emergency existed because the post-depression economy needed to be stimulated toward meeting the needs of the military and possible defense of the United States.

Hoping to end the defense emergency, the government began producing war production posters hoping to encourage cooperation between the unions and corporations. Many posters have the theme of production equals patriotism, and all workers are "production soldiers" or "factory combatants," who are helping the soldiers fighting overseas. Immediately following President Roosevelt's declaration of war on December 8, 1941, two of the largest unions, the American

Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO), announced their total support for the war effort by promising a no-strike pledge and a commitment to 24-hour production by workers. Not wanting to have a negative public image, the large corporations also responded by stating their commitment to the war effort and their willingness to sacrifice for democracy's sake. Corporations especially wanted the public to forget their earlier unwillingness and hesitation to support early defense production because the corporations thought the war would end before they had made a profit on their investments. After war was declared, the corporations declared their commitment to make a major shift from producing consumer goods to war materials, to increase productivity, and to change the attitudes between workers and management from antagonism to cooperation.

The production posters printed by the government encouraged worker commitment as a patriotic duty. Posters were placed on the walls inside factory areas to create an atmosphere of urgency, participation and factory discipline. The posters implied that there was no personal or company gain in the hard work, increased production, or long hours. Only the fighting men gained from the participation and cooperation of workers and corporations. Posters also warned workers against idleness and laziness, which showed loyalty to Hitler and the Axis powers. These ideals are represented in several series produced by The National Association of Manufacturers. The Lafayette collection has posters from two series. The first series, entitled *Making America Strong*, are posters targeting school children to show the strength of America's wartime production. The second series includes paintings by Ralph Iligan of factory scenes with patriotic images showing the ideal of cooperation among workers and management.

Folder 3: Forest Fire and Fire Prevention (4 posters)

Often grouped with conservation and rationing, fire prevention, especially in regards to forest fires, was depicted as part of the national defense program. Two of the posters in the collection, co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Department of Forests, show careless starting of forest fires as a secret weapon of the Axis powers. One other poster shows how to extinguish a firebomb in case of an emergency or an enemy attack.

Folder 4: Volunteer and Job Programs (12 posters)

During World War II, national organizations and local groups established volunteer and job programs to help with the war effort. Posters featuring Uncle Sam asking for workers to join in the war effort were common sites at the start of the war. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Crop Corps sponsored posters asking for citizens to sign up for farm jobs. The Red Cross sponsored posters asking for volunteers, especially women, to help with their blood drives and war relief program. Also included in this section are posters asking for women to volunteer or work as nurses in the war effort. As with the majority of posters intended to encourage women's involvement, the posters in the Lafayette collection portray women involved in the war effort as attractive, confident, and determined to do their part.

Folder 5: Health, Conservation, and Rationing (34 posters)

Healthy citizens were an important necessity for the war effort. Many posters asked citizens to order coal for the winter, to dress warmly, and to eat nutritional food so they did not get sick, which of course would be a detriment to home defense and prevent workers from going to their wartime jobs. Other posters were printed for the sake of the soldiers at home and overseas, warning them against sexually transmitted diseases contractible by women of disrepute.

After the initial shock of Pearl Harbor wore off, the United States government was concerned that many citizens would become lackadaisical about their role in the new war effort especially since Americans did not suffer the same shortages as their allies. The government started a campaign to remind citizens that items such as gasoline, rubber, sugar, butter, and meat were rationed for the benefit of the American soldiers fighting overseas. Many of the posters reminded citizens of the need for conservation, especially in regard to public transportation, private automobile use, electricity, communications, and water. Citizens were asked to plant their own "victory gardens" and to can vegetables and fruits to conserve food. Salvage campaigns asked for citizens to save items usable in the war effort, such as cans, fats, food scraps, etc.

Folder 6: Related World War II Maps – United States and Foreign (22 maps)

This folder contains an assemblage of U.S. and foreign maps pertaining to the events of the war. Many of the maps were reproduced from magazines, including *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Time*.

Folder 7: Geographical Maps of World War II (32 maps)

The Foreign Policy Association, Inc. in New York City published a series of twelve maps showing the areas of the world affected by the war. The maps generally depict location of Allied and Axis naval bases, as well as political, economic and military information. The second series in this section consists of twenty-one maps published by The New York Times also showing areas affected by the war.

Box 2

Folder 1A: British Empire Posters (46 posters)

The posters in this folder are from the British Empire, specifically Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and India. The British posters were printed by several companies bearing the title "H.M. Stationery." The most well-known poster in the collection of British posters is titled, "Never was so much owed by so many to so few," celebrating the accomplishments of the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain. Some of the other British posters were published by the British Information Services in New York City. The purpose of this agency and its posters was to foster friendly Anglo-American relations and to get American support in Britain's fight against Germany. The Lafayette collection also has an assortment of Canadian wartime posters, including three posters from the Hubert Rogers "Men of Valor" series. Very little information is known about the posters for New Zealand.

There are three posters pertaining to India which were most likely printed to educate Americans about India's culture, government and geography. Two were printed by the Government of India Information Services one by the British Information Services.

Folder 1B: Foreign Posters (23 posters)

The Lafayette collection has a diverse representation of foreign countries, including Norway, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Russia, France, as well as South America. The first six posters in the collection were published by American magazines, which were in all likelihood trying to gain public support for the countries occupied by the Germans. Some of the posters are written in the country's language and were likely posted in that country or in countries hosting refugees who spoke the language. The rest of the posters were written in English and published by organizations based in the United States. As with the British Information Services mentioned above, these organizations produced posters hoping to educate Americans and gain their sympathy and support for countries in need. The four posters in Spanish were designed by American artists and published in Washington, D.C. They may have been propaganda posters to South American countries to warn them of the "evils" of the Axis powers.

Folder 2: Loose Talk Campaign (16 posters)

National security became a very important part of the American citizens' job for the war effort. The government started a "careless talk" poster campaign to prevent citizens unknowingly passing on important war information to the enemy, for example by discussing troop movements learned from a soldier's letter or talk of war equipment made in a local factory. Many posters encouraged a mild paranoia by picturing citizens surrounded by enemy spies and saboteurs, who looked like average American citizens. The posters main message was "careless talk" led to the death of American soldiers. Some of the posters were very graphic in their message, showing dead or dying soldiers, bloodshed, graves on foreign soil, and families suffering from the loss of a loved one.

Folder 3: Geographical Maps (13 maps)

The maps in this folder range in date from 1936 to 1943. The majority of maps was published by *The National Geographic Magazine*, and mainly covers the Americas, Europe, and the Mediterranean.

Folder 4: Norman Rockwell "Freedom..." (10 posters)

Norman Rockwell based his poster designs on the four freedoms discussed in President Roosevelt's annual congressional address on January 6, 1941 and in the Atlantic Charter signed by Roosevelt and Great Britain's Prime Minister Churchill on August 14, 1941. Rockwell offered rough sketches of everyday scenes representing each of the freedoms to the OWI, but they declined Rockwell's poster designs. Rockwell continued to work on his "Freedoms" series using local citizens in his New England town as models for his sketches, and upon completion, the *Saturday Evening Post* commissioned the paintings to be published in four consecutive issues, February to March 1943. After becoming popular with the American public, the posters

were reproduced by the OWI for a 1943 Treasury Department traveling exhibition on behalf of a war bond drive. The paintings eventually became the most widely reproduced images of the war era.

Folder 5: Patriotism (26 posters)

In addition to mobilizing the nation for the war effort, the government produced posters to increase citizen morale, confidence and patriotism. Americans were reminded daily that they were part of the fight for democracy and freedom not just in America, but throughout the world. Typical symbols or expressions of patriotism included Uncle Sam, the American flag, patriotic speeches, the Statue of Liberty, and patriotic colors. One poster in the collection reminds Americans of our heritage to fight for freedom by referencing the sacrifice of colonial soldiers in 1776. Another popular patriotic campaign referenced the burning of books and the need for freedom of speech. There are seven posters in the collection sponsored by the Pennsylvania Library Association promoting literacy and books in the fight for democracy and freedom. In addition, patriotic posters included the promotion of racial and religious toleration, specifically with African Americans, Jews, and Catholics. One poster in the collection worth noting was produced by the Council Against Intolerance in America. It is a large map of the United States which depicts where the immigrants arriving since the end of the seventeenth century have settled, including information about occupation, culture and religion. The poster attempts to inform Americans about the diversity of the country.

Box 3

Folder 1: United Nations (14 posters)

Prior to their involvement in World War II, Americans practiced a strict foreign policy of isolationism. After Pearl Harbor, the government needed to promote tolerance and support for its newly acquired allies, as well as for the countries occupied by the Axis powers. In the Lafayette collection, there is a series of seven posters entitled "This man is your FRIEND." Each poster has a picture of a man representing different countries, including China, England, Russia, and Ethiopia. Also popular were posters promoting the nations united against the Axis powers. The flags of the united nations were generally displayed around an American symbol for freedom or military equipment denoting strength and power in the hopes of conveying the message, "United we stand, divided we fall."

Folder 2: Recruiting and Air Force (25 posters)

Recruitment posters were an important part of the government's campaign to obtain qualified and able-bodied fighters. A majority of the posters in this folder are for the U.S. Army Air Forces recruitment campaign, particularly asking for aviation cadets and for qualified workers to join ground crews. In addition, there is a ten poster series entitled "Air Force," which promotes a movie produced by Warner Brothers Pictures telling the story of a B-17 crew and her ground crew. Recruitment posters calling for women to join certain groups can be found in Folder 4, "Volunteer and Job Programs," Box 1.