

OSS PROPAGANDA IN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST

Jack B. Pfeiffer *

The barrage struck enemy lines in the theaters of war and penetrated to the enemy heartland. The ammunition was words and cartoons, sometimes subtle and sometimes crude, manufactured to arouse doubt, distrust, and despair among German and Japanese fighting men and their families. It took the form of postcards, leaflets, stickers, postage stamps, newspapers, and even toilet paper. It was the work of the Morale Operations units of the Office of Strategic Services, part of the propaganda assault the United States launched against the Axis powers in World War II.

Some forty years after the propaganda attack, samples of the materials used remain in scrapbooks and on briefing boards. Sifting through these materials, one can reconstruct an OSS effort that was sharply focused on issues common both in the European and Far Eastern areas of combat.

The OSS propaganda contained in the scrapbooks was intended to stimulate resistance to Axis forces, undermine the confidence of Axis combat units, encourage defeatism among the ranks, and increase both passive resistance (work slowdowns) and direct action (sabotage and assassination) against the Japanese and Germans and their supporters. Among the key themes played in both theaters of operation:

1. The ruthless and savage nature of the invaders.
2. Denigration of military and political leaders as greedy, self-seeking, and indifferent to the needs of their people.
3. The burden of the war falling on common soldiers and citizens in the homeland and not on leaders.
4. The political leaders were liars and cowards.
5. The women of front-line soldiers became targets for rear echelon bedroom "heroes."

In addition to themes such as these, the OSS made extensive use of ridicule as a weapon to weaken the enemy. In the case of Germany, for example, Morale Operations (MO) postcards made mockery of the Luftwaffe and Germany's heavy tanks; and leaflets and stickers questioned Nazi bravery. In the Far Eastern theater, Japanese claims about the blessings of the Co-Prosperity Sphere were put into a scatological context. In similar vein, a caricature of Hitler was printed on rolls of toilet paper. A description of the

* The author emphasizes that although many of the propaganda materials are self-explanatory, he would have had far more difficulty preparing this summary had he not been assisted by Chinese, Japanese, and German linguists from the Language Training Division, Office of Training and Education. In particular, many of the subtleties intended for target audiences would have been missed.

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origin of the Japanese flag also used an unfavorable anatomical comparison, linking the rising sun to a monkey's red behind.

Symbols, too, were used in the anti-Axis propaganda effort. One of the more successful of these was the crossed-out Japanese flag which was described as follows:

In the China Theater in April, 1945, MO rear and forward bases launched the crossed-out Japanese flag symbol in the form of leaflets, posters and stickers. The MO symbol of Jap defeat became so widespread throughout China that it was seen in areas as far as 500 miles from the original points of dissemination. *Time* magazine on its 20 August 1945 issue carried the same symbol as its V-J Day cover. The apparent coincidence suggests that *Time's* correspondents in China must have seen the MO symbol and cabled the idea to *Time* staff in the USA for its use as an appropriate cover design.



In the more subtle format of textual items were spurious newspapers, military orders and reports, letters, postcards, and proclamations. One curious item in the last category was a *Proclama* attributed to Mussolini which stated among other things:

The conquest of Berlin and the fall of Adolf Hitler have placed on my shoulders the great responsibility of bringing to a victorious end the war in our dear Italy.

In the *Proclama*, dated 28 April 1945, Mussolini claimed to be the "Supreme Commander of all the Italian-German forces in Italy." It is not known if MO Rome circulated this proclamation; if so, it would have been too late. Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, had been shot by partisans and hung by their heels from a lampost on 25 April 1945.

One of the more widely circulated propaganda items from MO Rome was a German language newspaper, *Das Neue Deutschland (DND)* which reputedly was published by anti-Hitler Germans. *DND* was a fast operation. US forces entered Rome on 4 June 1944, and within eleven days the MO office in Rome had begun production of *DND*. The front page of 15 June 1944 carried a drawing to illustrate the failure of Hitler's promises in light of the increasing successes of the Allied armies. *DND* was printed both in full size and miniature, with many of the miniature copies stamped to indicate that they had been recovered from the bodies of German soldiers.

An item of unusual nature was the propaganda postage stamp which, at first glance, appeared to be normal. The fake stamps, however, carried a caricature of Hitler as a death's head and a message that the Third Reich was doomed.

Propaganda

Traditional stories, poems, and music were given specific twists or intonations to mock and denigrate both Japanese and Germans. It would appear that there was much greater emphasis on cultural considerations and precision in the language used in preparing propaganda items for the Far East than for Europe. Both German and Japanese prisoners of war were reported to have assisted in the preparation of MO propaganda materials. Contrary to the popular belief at the time, not all Japanese soldiers would rather commit harikari than surrender. There is evidence that Japanese POWs had a major role in the production of OSS propaganda. The Morale Operations Branch of the Sino-American Cooperative Association (SACOMO) in Chungking reported on its efforts as follows:

WORK OF SACOMO-VALLEY SCRIPT DEPARTMENT IN ADDITION TO PRODUCTION

1. Weekly, excerpts from current intelligence received at this base are made and sent to the field together with suggestions for MO work derived therefrom. In addition to these suggestions, from ten to fifteen rumors are suggested weekly to field bases.
2. This station produced Japanese materials proposed by Advance Bases which do not have the facilities for such production themselves. For example, a forged order is now being produced to spread stories of surrender among the Japanese and the necessity for keeping such information from the men during these harsh times.
3. Production samples sent to us from Kunming, Calcutta, and Washington are read and presented to Japanese prisoners for approval and disapproval. Approved projects are ordered and distributed to SACOMO Advanced Bases for target distribution.

WORK OF SACOMO-VALLEY JAPANESE PRISONER OF WAR GROUP

1. Produce poison pen letters and postcards. These are purported to be letters from home to soldiers, from soldiers to other soldiers, etc., generally with oblique references to severe suffering in war, perfidy of military leaders, futility of struggle against Allied might, and so on—anything calculated to weaken the Japanese in our target area. Six hundred and thirty have been produced and distributed since 26 May 1945.
2. All translations of English into Japanese and all calligraphy for our production were done by prisoners—although recently Sgt. Yasui directed and contributed to this work. This includes translation and calligraphy for all issues of the Japanese newspaper we have been producing, for captions on the various art projects, for various pamphlets and, currently, for Japanese orders being forged here.
3. The prisoners read Domei News Agency intercepts in Japanese characters and thus are able to prepare articles for the newspaper to add a note of authenticity to it beyond anything we could do without them.

4. Frequently the prisoners are consulted on possible production, and their opinions have made possible a definite SACOMO production-propaganda line. This propaganda line policy has been incorporated into a report and sent to all Advance Bases to be certain that MO efforts are concentrated into one channel and do not become diffuse and tend to cancel out each other by opposite pressures.

In part, such support may have been the result of an OSS campaign in which phony newspapers regularly featured a "letter from America." One of these offered an American soldier's observations of plush conditions for the Japanese in US POW camps. Food, clothing, shelter, and recreation (including baseball) were set out as inducements to get Japanese troops to surrender.

Whether originated in OSS offices in Washington, Chungking, or Rome, the propaganda samples show consistency regarding the themes of MO production—the inevitability of US victory, the need for all anti-Japanese or anti-German factions to join in the fight against their respective enemies, the encouragement of passive and active resistance, and promotion of a defeatist spirit among Axis troops and their surrogates.*

Where the collection of eleven oversized scrapbooks contains a miscellany of examples, the collection of thirty-five briefing boards graphically and textually presents the story of the MO propaganda effort from inception of ideas through production, dissemination and, in many instances, results of a given project.

One briefing board explains the purpose of the "W" campaign directed at German soldiers and civilians:

LEAFLETS

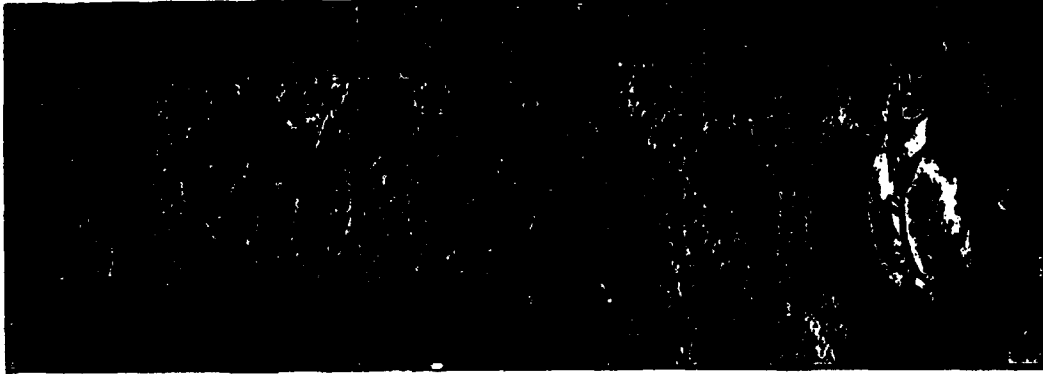
A numbered series of sixteen leaflets, all in the same visual and literary style, and bearing the same identifying question, "*Wie Lange Noch?*" (How much longer?) were disseminated over a period of months, as the purported media of a clandestine group of German soldiers and civilians protesting against Nazi rule. A hand symbol, using three extended fingers to suggest the "W" of *Wie*, was also suggested and repeated on each leaflet. Subjects of discontent for leaflets: Nazis taking the best of food and women, imported workers disrupting the homeland, German "secret weapons" never arriving, air raids making home life hopeless, Goebbels' falsehoods becoming ridiculous, etc.

STICKERS

To give the circulation of the leaflet series the appearance of a concerted campaign, wall stickers were devised. Behind-the-lines agents, while distributing the leaflets, could also find quiet moments to paste stickers on German vehicles, posters, walls, books, doors, windows, plates, etc. Even if the stickers alone were not understood,

* The next ten pages contain reproductions of the graphic propaganda materials, with captions translated from Chinese, Japanese, or German into English. The panels on the first of these pages should be viewed right to left. The narrative resumes on Page 55.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY



IF YOU LAUGH, THEY WILL PULL OUT YOUR GOLD TEETH. SO SHUT YOUR MOUTH AND DON'T EVEN SMILE.



IF YOU ARE DILIGENT, THEY WILL MAKE YOU SUFFER FROM UNBEARABLE HARD WORK. BETTER MAKE YOURSELF AS COMFORTABLE AS CAN BE.



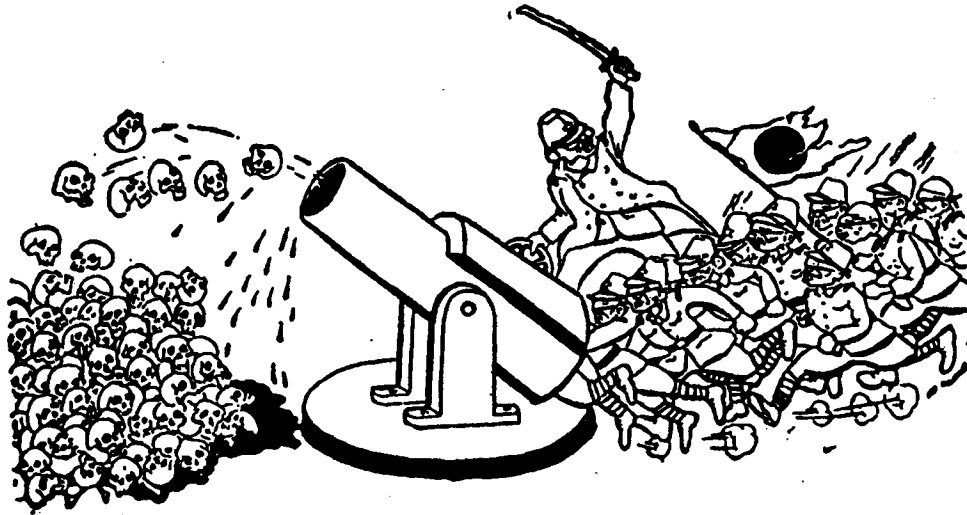
IF YOU ARE SEEN, YOU WILL BE BADLY USED--EVEN IF YOU ARE AN UGLY WOMAN. SO IF YOU CANNOT HIDE, YOU BETTER GET AWAY.

·陳上筵肉血民人，賓貴宴京南



JAPANESE INVADERS CONSUME THE BLOOD AND
FLESH OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE

大日本之戰鬥體制



CANNON FODDER

時は切迫してゐるのだ!!

上海

FUN IN SHANGHAI

兵士平和聯盟

本土

DEATH IN JAPAN

忘れるな!

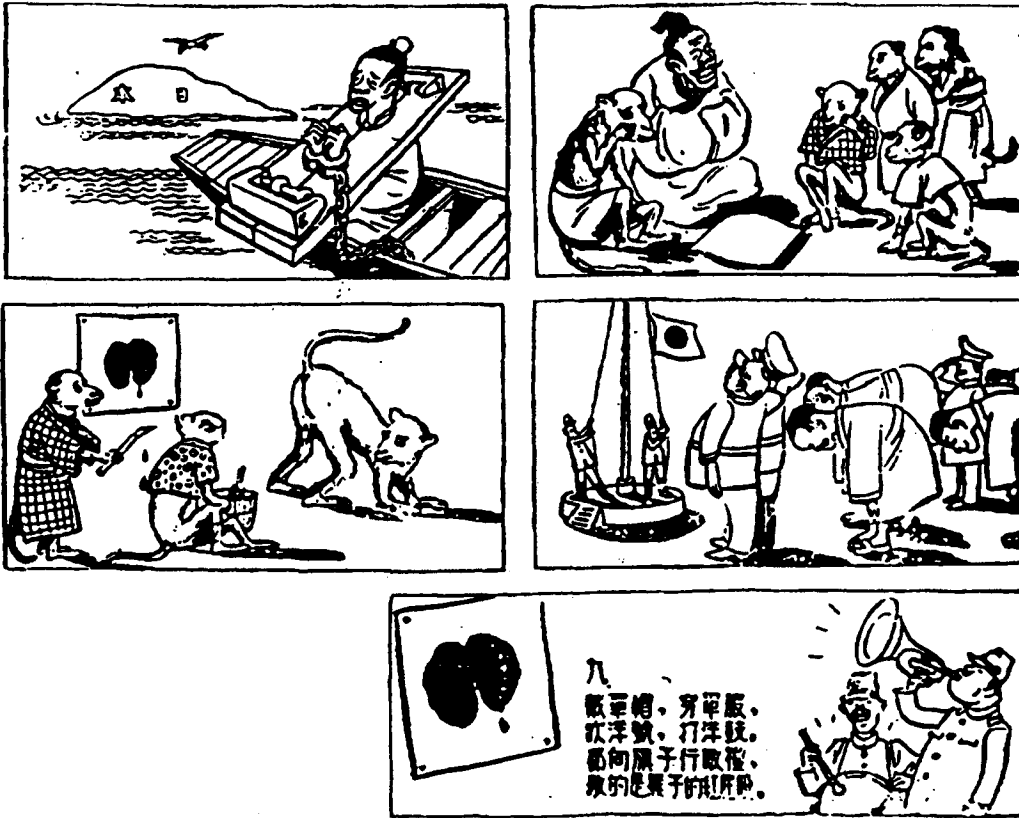
諸君が一日永く戦へば、祖國は一日永く悔きを受けるのだ。

祖國では、堪へ難い恐怖のさ中にあるのに、高級將校達の鮮態と放蕩とはついつつゆく。

奴らは賄賂でホロ銅の金を早く費してしまはねばならないのだ。

奴らも戦争が失敗で、その時期が迫つてゐるのを知つてゐる。

ORIGIN OF THE JAPANESE FLAG



Origin of the Japanese Flag

Here's an affair that's truly amusing. Do you know it or don't you? Whence the rising sun flag derived? What was the pattern for it?

Once there was a great criminal. The Chinese people wanted to be rid of him, so they put him on a boat and the stormy winds carried him to the Jap islands. Japan was then a desert island. Nothing but monkeys romped over the land. The criminal chose a monkey bride, and their descendants were not a few. The monkey wife aged and came near death. She then gave her descendants a sheet of paper, chose an imp who was a painter, and ordered him to do a portrait of her.

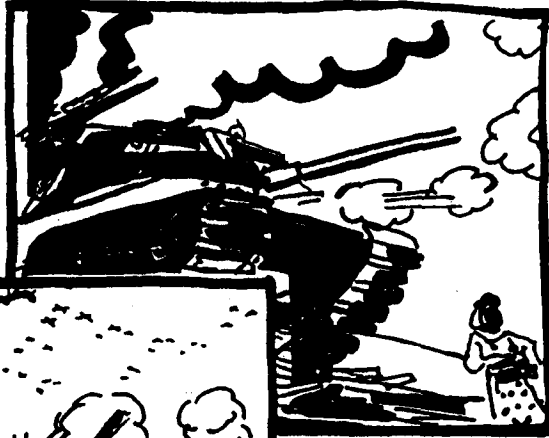
The painter was about to start his drawing when it suddenly occurred to the monkey dame that a monkey is ugly and hairy, but the backside is fine. Her bottom was particularly red—yes, red and bright and untouched by age. So a portrait was made of her bottom to hang in a temple as a national treasure. As time passed it was no longer clear—then the origin was forgotten. Afterwards, doing it over with fresh color a dauber made a round, red plaster of it.

The "devils" took it to be the sun and patterned the national flag after it. Every day at the flag raising ceremony big and little military gentry must be present. Wearing army caps, wearing uniforms, blowing bugles, beating drums. All salute the flag. And the thing so revered is a monkey's red arse.

Propaganda

GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

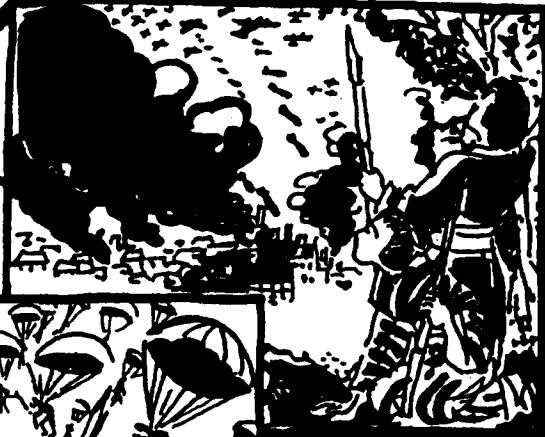
Their war-madness drives the generals even to sacrifice our women and children.



Bamboo spears against warships means the useless slaughter of families.



The Zaibatsu hide in their deep shelters while our families are left to face the rain of enemy bombs.



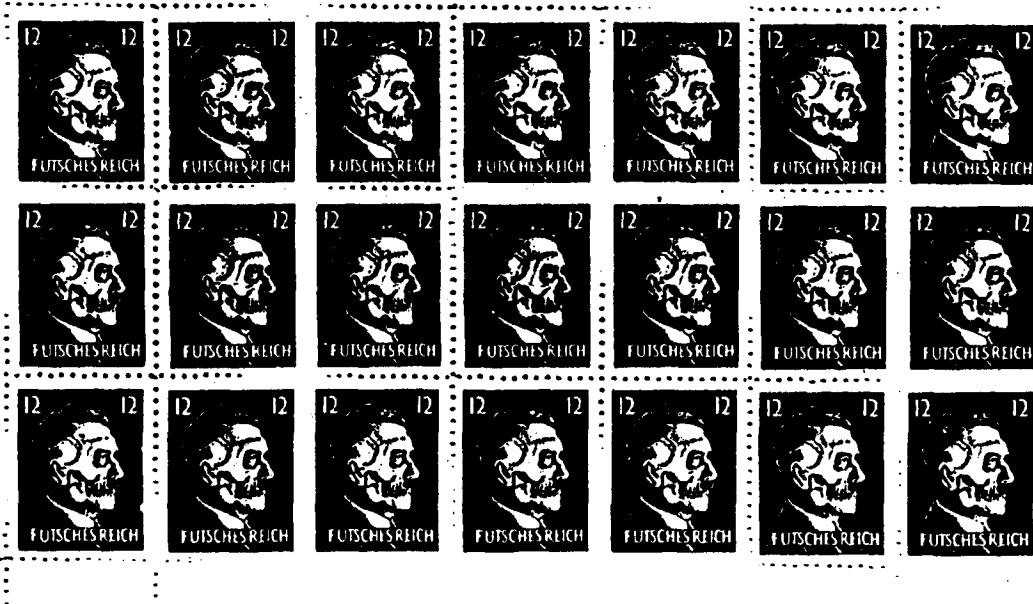
Now our families are to be hopelessly sacrificed.



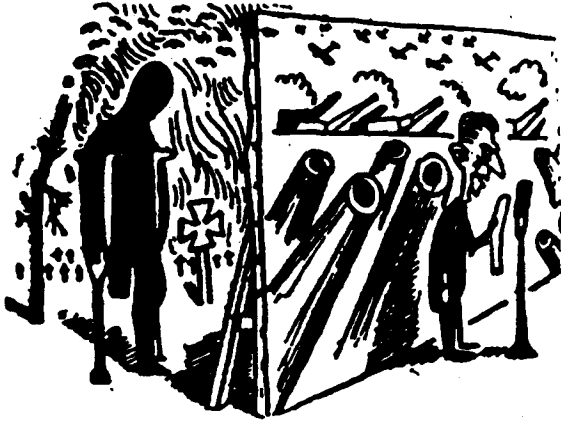
GERMAN REICH



LOST REICH



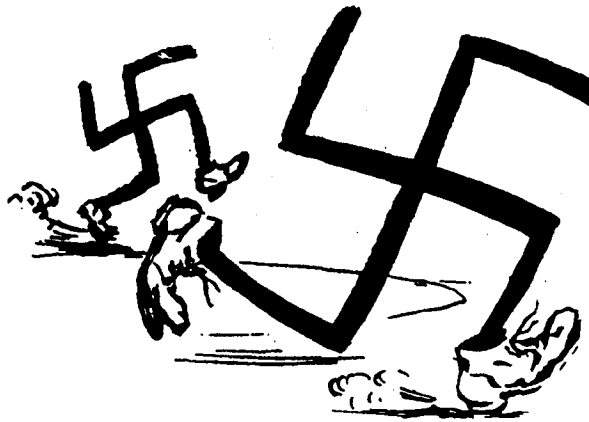
Propaganda



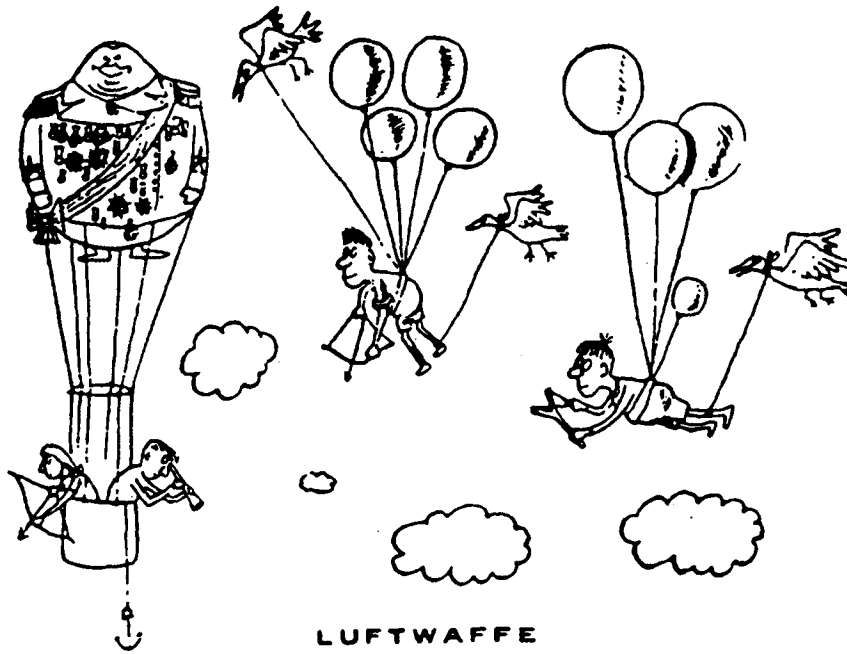
NAZIS' POTESKIN VILLAGE



Partei im zügigen Einsatz

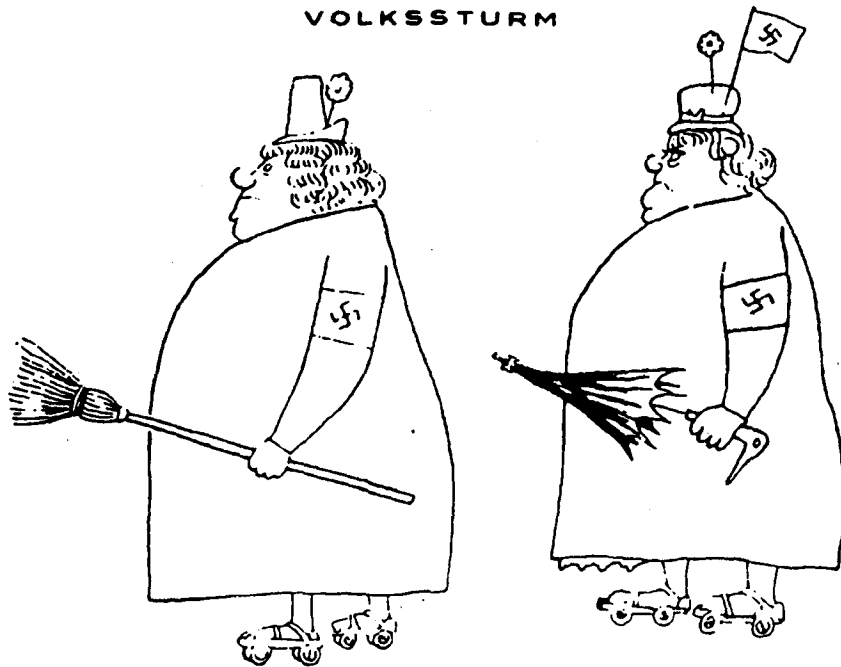


VOLKSSTURM



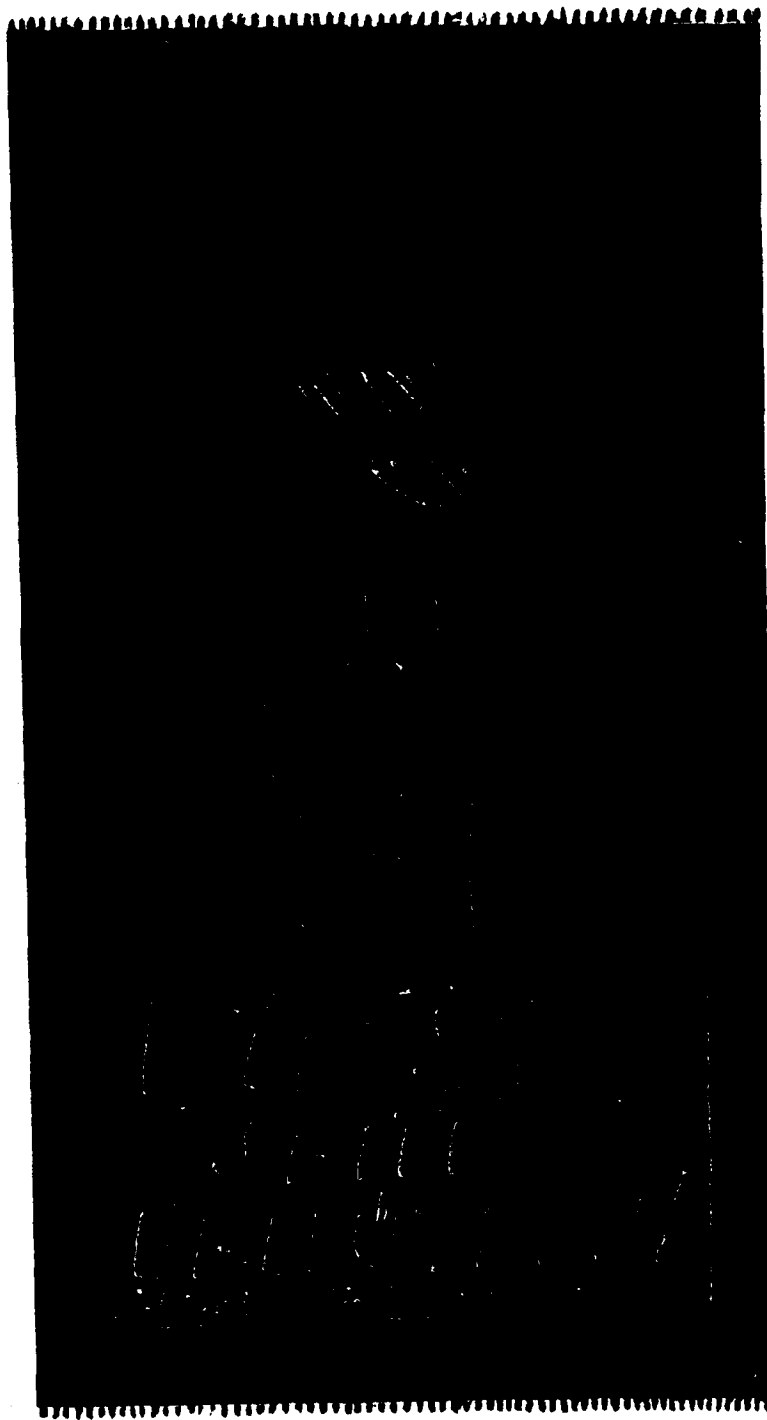
LUFTWAFFE

VOLKSSTURM



SCHWERE PANZER
HEAVY TANK

Propaganda



PRINTED ON TOILET PAPER "USE THIS SIDE"



NR. 6 *Lesen und weitergeben!*

How much longer must we go hungry while the party bosses feast?

(The side note says "Read and pass on.")



NR. 13 *Lesen und weitergeben!*

Bedroom heroes take advantage of the women of front line soldiers.

Wie lange werden diese Schickeljunker bleiben, die immer zu einem Nazi-Mittler schreiben, nach unseren Frauen nachschleichen dürfen?

Wie lange noch?



NR. 14 *Lesen und weitergeben!*

How much longer must our youth fertilize the ground of Europe?

Wie lange noch wird unsere deutsche Jugend als Dünger für den Boden Europas dienen?

Wie lange noch?

Propaganda

curiosity was aroused and evidence given of some underground activity within the enemy area.

MUSIC

An unusual link in the "W" chain was the composing, printing, and distribution of a foxtrot named *Wie Lange Noch*, which, by itself, seemed like any other popular tune devoted to the eternal plaints of parted lovers. However, if connected with the "W" campaign, the song becomes another anti-Nazi manifestation—the voice of a sad and oppressed people asking "how much longer" the fascist yoke will have to be borne. Such a song might well become the "theme" piece for a clandestine radio station representing the dissident group of German soldiers and civilians purported to be back of the whole campaign.

Another board provides details about a faked "Kesselring Proclamation," including some of the results:

PROJECT

To increase confusion between German troops and officers in Northern Italy, MO Rome decided on a new policy based on the actual military situation in September 1944, of spreading the idea among German units that a more or less disorganized retreat had begun, and (that) disobedience of troops with officers and their "taking off" contrary to official orders was common practice.

A fake proclamation was conceived, forbidding such practice by German troops, but giving details of "how it is done." At the same time it showed that an actual organized retreat was in full process. This "proclamation" (*Kommandobefehl*, signed: Kesselring) was disseminated behind the German lines through all routine MO "channels" and by a special operation "Sauerkraut."*

Samples of the "proclamation" were found on German deserters, who refused to continue the fight for Germany "under such conditions."

Obviously the only person that could not be fooled was Field-Marshal Kesselring himself, who on realizing the terrific effect of such propaganda on his troops, found it necessary to deny its authenticity in an official broadcast. Paragraph by paragraph he denied the "proclamation," repeating MO subversive propaganda, thus giving it wider currency.

COMEBACKS

Though Military Intelligence was briefed in advance on the "Kesselring Proclamation" some sections through oversight reported the "Proclamation" as genuine. French "Deuxieme Bureau" also interpreted the military situation as revealed by the "Proclamation" as hard intelligence. PWB (Psychological Warfare Branch) translated and forwarded a copy of the "Proclamation" to MO Rome, suggesting they "employ it for propaganda purposes."

* "Sauerkraut" teams were German POWs who volunteered to go back into German-held areas and disseminate anti-Nazi propaganda.

Propaganda

Another operation described on the MO briefing boards pertained to a photo montage of Hitler greeting a Swiss soldier. It was made by combining a photo of one of the MO soldiers dressed in a Swiss uniform with a photo of Hitler taken from a book. This was used with a story in the 15 November 1944 issue of *Das Neue Deutschland* which "resulted in widespread rumors among the Germans in North Italy that Hitler has 'escaped' to Switzerland."

Then there was "The League of Lonely Women"—a story promulgated as a leaflet in the form of German V-Mail. The soldiers were being told that this organization consisted of "women willing to give themselves over to the fulfillment of the soldier's dream with the purpose of making their home furlough more pleasant and to bolster the German birth rate." It concluded by saying: "Don't be shy. Your wife, sweetheart, and sister is one of us. We think of you, but we also think of Germany." This story was picked up as straight news and played back in the *New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, and the *Washington Post*.

. . .

The two and one-half cubic feet of materials which provided the basis for this report were recovered from approximately three hundred cubic feet of declassified OSS documents scheduled for transfer from CIA to the National Archives and Records Service. More OSS documents, in a volume of some thousand cubic feet, also are scheduled for transfer to NARS, and additional hundreds of cubic feet are available to those with access to classified information. With such a rich store of material to exploit, there should be opportunities to examine the evolution of CIA propaganda efforts in subsequent crises (Korea and Vietnam), and to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns against the OSS accomplishments.