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POSTERS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN BRITAIN.

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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN.

100, THOMAS STREET

DUBLIN.

Submitted by:

Suzanne Callery

Dingle, Co.Kerry.



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## FOREWORD



The aim of this thesis is to look at why the posters of the Second World War in Britain were designed as they were and what they were intended to do and also to show the different approaches of different designers and how they organised their activities. What was the economic, social and commercial role and effect of these posters.

Posters have become in this century one of the many modern instruments of persuasion. They reflect the mood of the time, the style of their creators and ( in the case of political posters) the preoccupations of politicians and propagandists. They draw on artistic achievements, in particular the prevalent styles of draftsmanship and painting in each country. There is usually a close link between the technical level of commercial advertising and political propaganda. If they are effective, it is because their appeal is direct, immediate and easily understood.

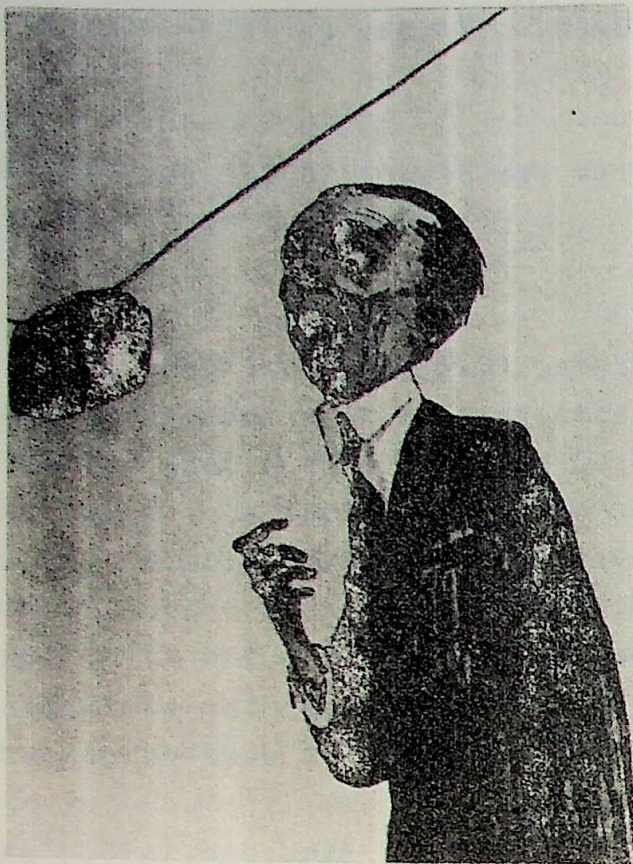
It is best at this stage to define the operative words in the previous paragraph, as they will appear continuously throughout the text. Propaganda in its broadest sense is the systematic spreading or propagation of particular ideas, doctrines and practices. Political, in its broadest sense, means engaged in or taking sides, as in debate. Many of the World War posters are more propagandistic than political, because they present an idea without necessarily associating it with a bid for office or a programme for reform.

Propaganda, when applied to the political poster means the use of symbols, text and pictures to influence the attitudes of the audience. Every political group makes propaganda, all groups that communicate with mass audiences must be propagandistic.

Propaganda has a unique function, the spreading of controversial ideas to a broad mass of people. The method is to redefine popular concepts of political and social issues, using appropriate visual elements. More sophisticated techniques include the re-arrangements of accepted graphic symbols, with other design elements, to produce new meanings. The propagandists task, is to over-ride old symbols, substituting new associations, or to invent wholly new symbols. The basic guide lines in the use of propaganda, can be seen by taking some quotations from the major exponents of propaganda in Germany and Britain around the years leading up to the Second World War.

"Nothing is easier than leading the people on a leash. I just





A caricature of Joseph  
Goebbels, the Nazi Pro-  
-paganda Organisation  
Director.



"One people, one nation,  
one leader"  
1938/ Germany  
Adolf Hitler



hold up a dazzling campaign poster and they jump through it".

Joseph Goebbels.

"Propaganda is, or should be, easy for the winning side and difficult for the losing "

Lockhart.

Hitlers description of Nazi propaganda was as follows:-

"All propaganda must be presented in a popular form and must fix its intellectual level so as not to be above the heads of the least intellectual of those to whom it is directed. This purely intellectual level will have to be that of the lowest mental common demoninator among the public it is designed to reach. All effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare essentials and those must be expressed, as far as possible, in the stereo-type formula."

The poster has been the broad disseminator of the ideas and images that have characterised each period of modern history; it has directly mirrored social and cultural change, and in its most experimental periods, the poster has led the way to new forms - the traditional role of the avant-garde. It has survived as a vehicle to inform and persuade, because of its essentially topical nature. Unlike other forms of artistic expression posters are made in response to specific needs.

The posters of the Second World War in Britain served primarily as government propaganda and where-ever it was placed, it called for patriotism, for guarding national security, for participating in production and being on guard against the enemy.

Although poster design continues up to the present day, the writer is dealing with events that have not been experienced first hand. As there is such a tremendous amount of information available on this subject there arises the problem of compression and selection. The writer uses her judgement, which is likely to be influenced by personal feeling to deal with the work of those designers which she believes to be of greatest importance during the Second World War in Britain.

This thesis includes a brief outline on the use of the pictorial poster during the First World War and the different uses of posters during the two World Wars. Section 1.0



This is followed by an account of the influence that the developments which were taking place in painting between the wars had on poster design; the accent was on originality of treatment and much was gained by the study of non-representational art: Futurism, Cubism and Constructivism. The elements of colour, shape, texture and pattern so prominent in these schools were soon exploited in poster design, and a powerful new style was born. Section 1.1.

In Section 2 the posters have been divided into groups according to their themes. First there are the posters concerning the war effort: they are largely non military and deal with industrial production for the war, with Government Bonds and Savings, with the mobilisation of women. Section 2.1.

Secondly there are the posters concerning national security, they instruct and exhort. Section 2.2 .

The third group deals with posters making appeal to patriotism. They follow the First World War "Your Country needs you!" pattern. Section 2.3.

These three groups make a direct appeal- the first and third groups positive, the second group negative - to citizens.

Then there are some posters that deal with safety, public health and medical campaigns which were a major concern in Britain. Section 2.4.

Finally there are the posters which were issued by the army bureau of current affairs in 1942 whose function was to interest servicemen in political and social questions. Section 2.5.

A poster should be dynamic enough visually to obtain and hold an interest with its own different sort of voice and expression. One of the most important qualities of the poster is that it can, when effectively designed, leave a lasting message, its primary objective being to convey to the audience a given body of information. On the other hand, the essential function of art is to change or intensify one's perception of reality. The problem with war-time posters is that to produce an effective propaganda poster, one had to master more than the basic design principles of simplicity, clarity, balance, unity, emphasis and attention getting. These elements were necessary



but the technique of the design for the propaganda poster also involves complex choices of art style, mode of presentation and symbolic representation: the style that is most effective in general is one that is understandable to the broadest mass of people. Sophisticated art styles often do not appeal to the average viewer, who may not be educated enough to interpret non-objective or subjective art, which includes Dadism, Expressionism, Surrealism and other such abstractions. Those designers who were most successful were careful in their use of modernism. The research they made into these movements was beneficial to them in designing posters. It made it possible for them to make newer translations of old forms, and it helped them to emphasise the qualities and importance of the use of colour. It helped also to simplify their arrangements of ideas, creating posters that did not need too much analysis to be understood. Success meant recognising that there was an essential difference between the function of the poster and the function of a painting, and that the conception must therefore be different too.

It is also important that a poster be judged as a complete entity, one that looks as if its an agglomeration of parts cannot work effectively. The idea of a copywriter, the artist and the client to arrive at a conclusion to the problem before any actual work is done was only coming into effect at the outbreak of the Second World War. This co-operation between the various people constructing the poster stimulated the ability of each to produce a homogeneous result, leading to a greater economy of expression and avoiding the pitfall of the poster in which the picture was a realistic illustration of what had already been said in words. The realisation of the significance of graphic imagery in place of literal illustration was a tremendous release to the imagination of the designers of the Second World War posters in Britain.





Figure P.0



## Section 1.0

When The Great War began in 1914 the era of mass communications had barely begun. There was no radio, no television: The moving picture industry was only beginning. Posters therefore played an important role in forming opinions, providing easily understood information and boosting morale. Even in the most advanced nations a reasonably large proportion of the population did not read all that well.

In the half century before the outbreak of the 1914-1918 War illustrators and printers produced pictorial posters to publicise, inform and advertise, so it was easy enough for the poster industry to change with the outbreak of the First World War to the job of persuasion as part of the nations war effort. The First World War was three years old before the usual war problems became acute. Commerce, articulate through advertising, did not at first have to make any drastic changes in approaching and appealing to consumers. At this time commercial propaganda was not so elaborate nor so highly developed technically as during the Second World War, so was not at first fundamentally altered in character. The Great War did stimulate the evolution of the propaganda poster, as it did many other areas of technological change and innovation, such as the development of the motor car and the aircraft, but propaganda, as a weapon for use against the enemy, was not organised until later in the Great War, and it was not until the end of the war that the potency of propaganda as a weapon was recognised. Despite this the war effort managed to launch artists into the most intensive use of graphic art seen up to that time and this stage probably marked the most extensive mobilisation of printed pictorial propaganda for political purposes in history. Posters dealt in slogans and simple quickly comprehended visual images. While many designers employed conventional contemporary advertising techniques on themes related to the war, a few sophisticated poster artists were able to extend the prosaic advertising poster of peacetime into compelling and even moving advertisements for war. For example the poster of a portrait of Lord Kitchener (Fig.P.0) with outstretched pointing hand and an imposing spread of military moustache is at once commanding and appealing and was one of the most famous appeals used to stimulate recruitment during the Great War, its posterly simplicity had impact far in excess of any of its contemporaries. Its job was to convey to the populace



the charisma of the leader Kitchener, and the moral pressure to fight for one's life and family. Its simplicity, symbolism and perfect balance of bold lettering with pictorial elements gave it more power than any other British design during those years. It was such a compelling poster it was copied and soon "Uncle Sam" also needed you and eventually even the Tsar. World War One posters had a universal theme, the repetition of exhortation and warning. God was involved from all sides and there were blatant appeals to duty, honour, king, and country. In 1914-1918 propaganda was not expected to win the war. It was not conducted in a gentlemanly way, it was a minor instrument of war used in an unhurried way. The organisational structure of propaganda was developed slowly and so were the vehicles for the delivery of its message. They were usually primitive and most of them, with the exception of a few of the First World War posters, would have been unusable in the Second World War.



## Section 1.0A

The two World Wars provided a propaganda explosion when different political systems competed against each other. The competition was for the highest stakes; for the allegiance of their peoples and the maintenance of their morale, for the demoralisation of the enemy and the destruction of his alliances. Nevertheless, the task of propaganda in the two World Wars were different and even more so the instruments used.

By the outbreak of the 1939-1945 War new processes had overtaken the poster as the most important way of influencing the public. Radio, sound motion pictures, newsreels and popular newspapers had been introduced or perfected and were instrumental in carrying the bulk of messages which in 1914-1918 had been communicated by posters. At the same time, improvements in technique and developments in the posters use made it a more effective means of influence. No country could ignore the primitive graphic appeal of the propaganda poster. Max Beerbohm's cynical observations in the 1930s that "We need another war to bring out the best in our artists, and to kill off the worst of them" was almost justified by the event. The posters of the 1939-1945 war differed from those of the previous conflict in several respects. They were generated largely by designers and copywriters who had acquired their skills in commercial advertising rather than in the printer's shop. Their work avoided the extremes of amateurism prevalent in earlier war posters and was more professional. Posters of the 1939-1945 War were more realistic and humorous and despite the struggle between competing ideologies, less earnest. Perhaps the major difference between the posters of the two World Wars was that those of the Second World War sought to a far greater degree to change the behaviour of those at whom the posters were directed. In the Great War most posters were designed largely to channel national feeling towards the war effort and so recruiting posters were abundant. In the 1939-1945 war there was mass conscription, so not much need for these recruitment posters and posters appeared which required civilians to actually do things as well as believe that their cause was just.

These changes of circumstances meant that the poster during the Second World War could not play the same role as the posters of the Great War. British posters during the Second



World War revealed the inevitable similarities of approach as well as the divergences of assumption and prejudice. The handsome heroes with striking and generally blue eyes, strong pronounced jaws and muscular torsos remained as popular in Second World War posters as they had been in the posters of The Great War. God played a substantially smaller part in the Second World War posters than in the First World War. When the Christain Cross did appear it was more often than not to mark a grave. In the poster "I believe" (Figure C.1 ) the Christain Cross is superimposed on the Nazi "crooked cross", this symbolically depicted the Nazis as opponents of Christain values, the use of black on the Nazi symbol underlines this. The size of the bright red Christain Cross in relation to the Swastika affirmed that Christainity would triumph. No explanatory copy was needed , "I believe" may confuse the viewer initially as it is in black as is the Swastika, but luckily the symbolism is strong enough to illiminate further confusion.

# I believe . . .

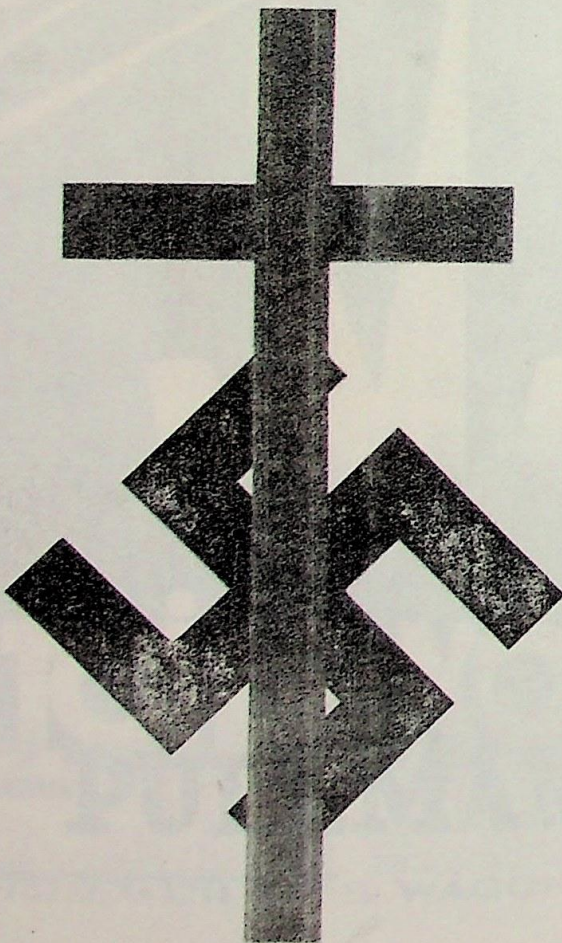


Figure C.1.



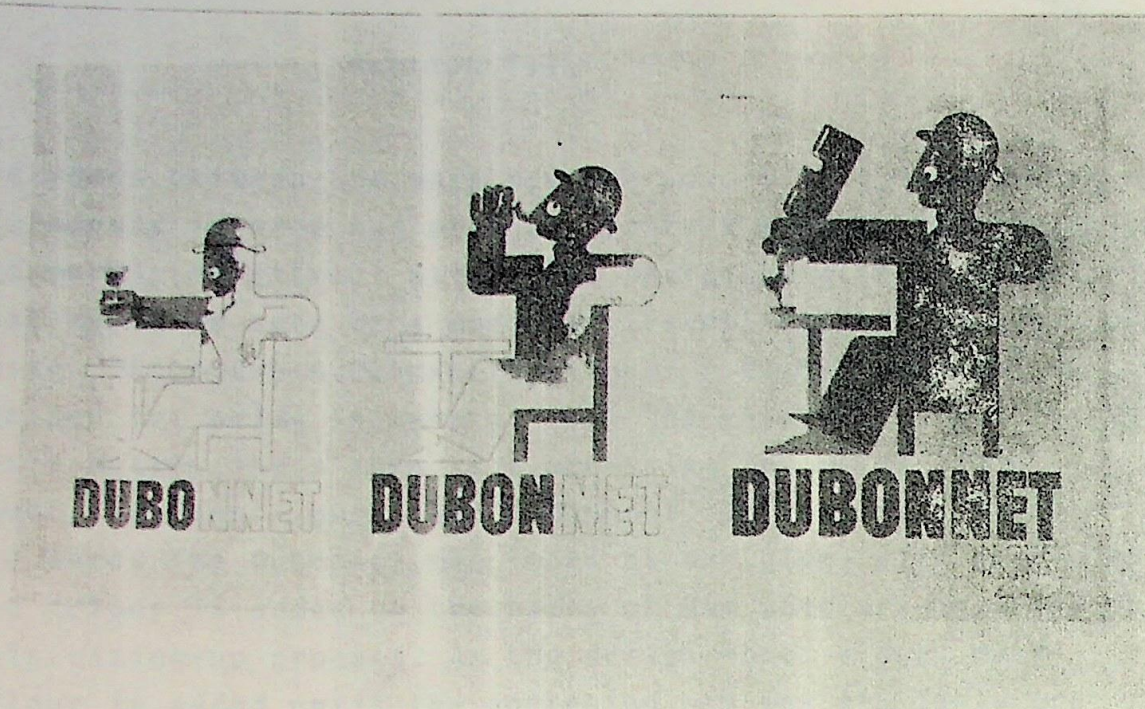


Figure P.1.

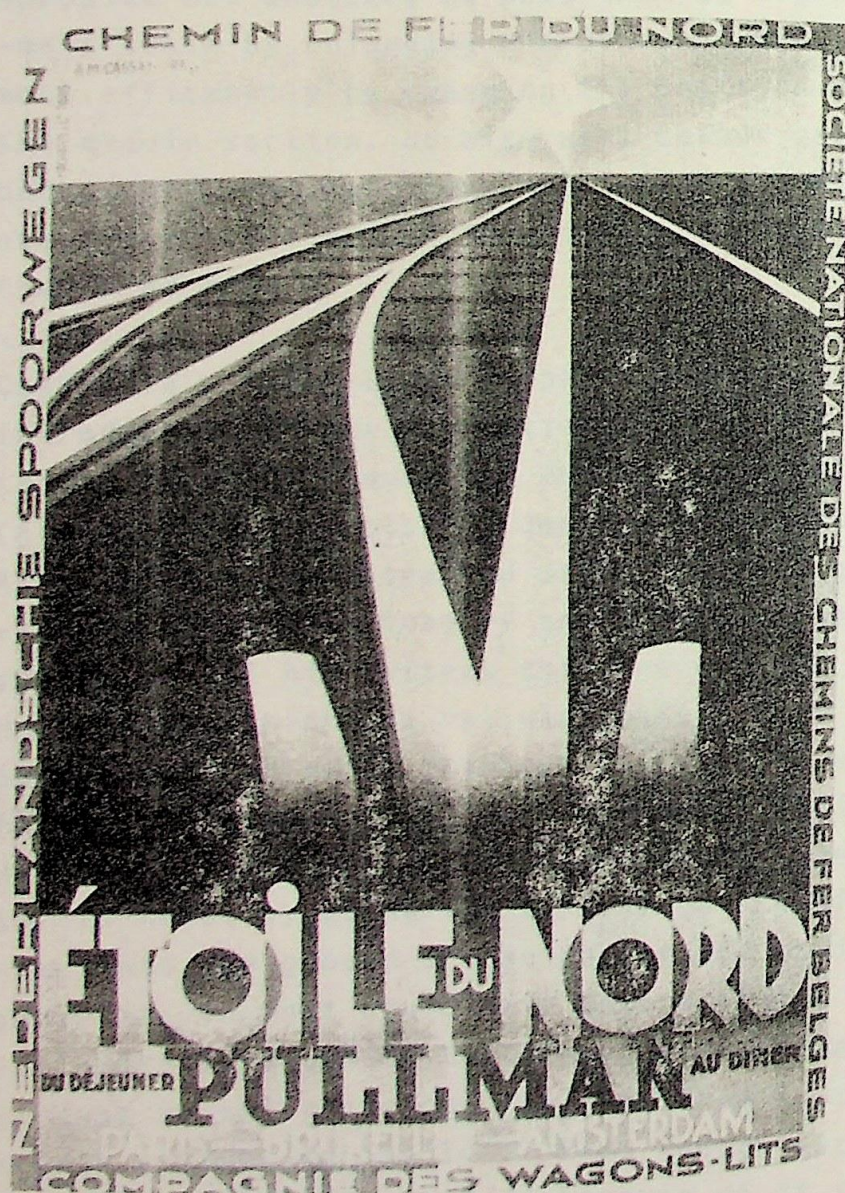


Figure P.2.



## Section 1.1.

The years between the wars saw the advertising industry change enormously in size and methods. Posters were no longer designed merely to attract attention. Designers started to consider what could be seen by a motorist travelling at 50 m.p.h.; the poster "Dubo, Dubon, Dubonnet" (Figure P.1) by Cassandre was praised for being in keeping with the rhythm of travel on the Paris Metro. The slogan is a pun using the words "dubo"-doubt, "du bon"-good, and "Dubonnet". In the first panel of the three the Dubonnet man looks at the glass with suspicion, and colour is added to the parts of him that are involved in this sizing-up process. As the design moves along, more colour is added until the contented man and his table are completely filled in as he pours his second glass. Cassandre plays with those elements that involve not only the play on words but also, instead of putting the matching coloured edges opposite one another, he puts them at right angles. He distorts scale by enlarging the Dubonnet man's eye, which he uses most efficiently by changing the position of the eye-ball in the middle section. He also uses colour gradation in the background that heightens the impact of what is taking place and serves as a smooth transition and framing device between the three panels.

Cassandre's Avant-Garde graphics are significant for their introduction of the aesthetics of the 20th Century painting to the field of commercial design. His poster "Etoile du Nord" (Figure P.2) reflects his debt to Cubist, Purist and Machine Art. There is a restrained use of colour, geometric abstraction, superimposed imagery and dynamic lines suggesting speed. Of all his posters this one was his most audacious. He dispensed with the railway imagery that one had always encountered in every previous railway poster, leaving only the rails. Cassandre solved the problem of having to advertise a daytime service that used a nocturnal image (the North Star) as its name, by using the Surreal device of turning a night-sky into the ground of the poster and having the star hover above it. In what could have been a static arrangement, the rails are laid out so that they imply forward movement. This is done by splitting one rail off from another and having it rejoin another to its left. Even though such an arrangement is mechanically false it is because of it that the poster attains a rather compelling "realism".



A contemporary of Cassandras who also showed flashes of how posters adapted tendencies of the avant-garde was the American born artist Edward McKnight Kauffer. He was considered the best poster designer in Britain between the wars. He was actually the artist chiefly responsible for the assimilation of avant-garde techniques in Britain. McKnight Kauffer attached great importance to his work in the public sector, he felt that though nothing much had changed technically, the changes that had taken place in his social background in the 30 years prior to the Second World War were profound. In an address given to the Royal Society of Art in 1938 he said :- "I cannot help feeling myself that external reality has to some extent lost something of its collective significance, or perhaps it is that its significance seems less valuable and less immediate in its appeal, contrasted with the distress that social disruption on such a colossal scale as we have witnessed in our time, has created."

In these circumstances as Europe moved closer to the Second World War, Kauffer saw his work as a healing art. He even saw the enlightening commerce between artist and public as obstructed only by conscienceless, badly directed commerce. He suggested that artists who did not work in advertising were, in the face of massive social dislocation, contributing nothing.

Kauffer saw the potential for democratising art through commercial advertising. "The artist in advertising is a new kind of being" he wrote "it is his business constantly to correct values, to establish new ones, to stimulate advertising and to help make it worthy of the civilisation that needs it". His work was particularly influenced by the mechanistic and angular art of the Italian Futurists. The Futurists delight in the dynamism of modern life was best expressed in themes of mechanical speed and mass movement, and it was to these works that Kauffer referred when dealing with similar subjects for Underground posters. Consistent characteristics of Kauffer's are his simplification of form, bold and legible composition and symbolic imagery used to convey the essence of his subject matter. The 1930s marked the height of his success, when his posters were common sights in the London Tube Stations. This exposure is significant, for through it Kauffer's work familiarised a large public with the conventions of modern painting.

Since Kauffer was an American citizen, he was not commissioned





Figure C.2.

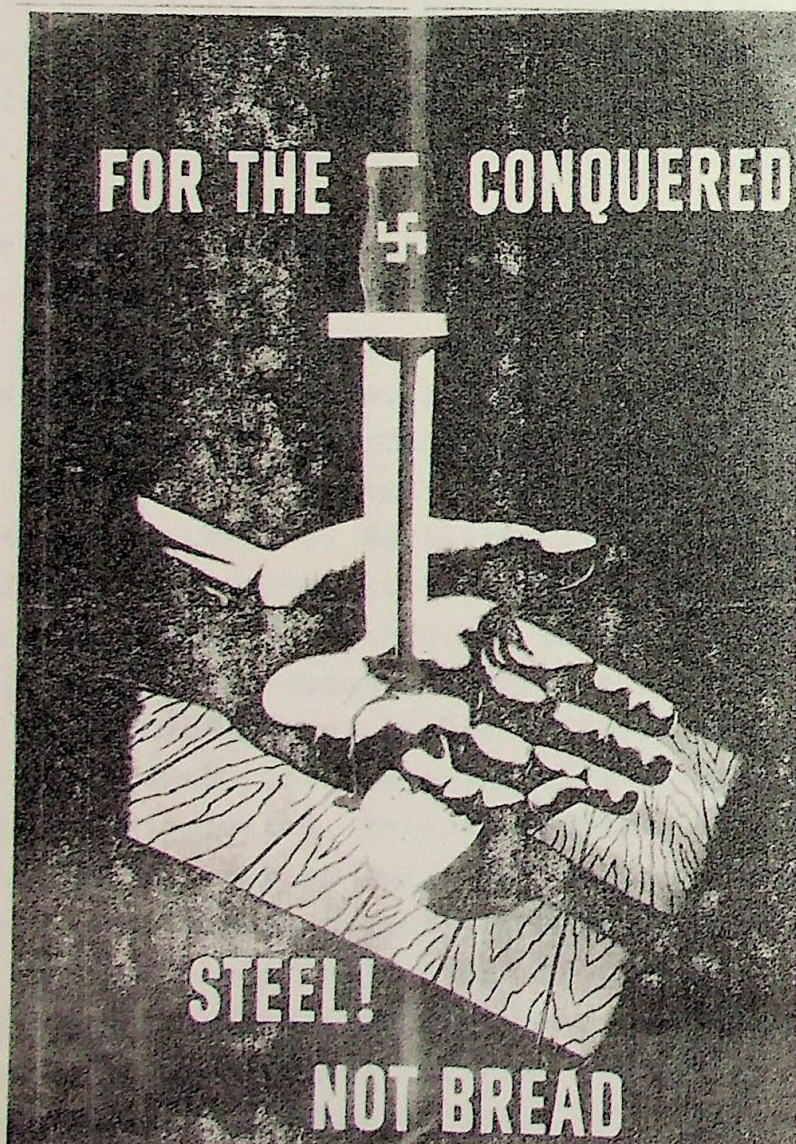


Figure C.3.



by the British Ministries to design British War posters and therefore could not make a living in England during the war years. He returned to his native America in 1940 where he worked in New York City. There his reputation remained a rather esoteric one and his commissions for posters came mainly from institutions, he did design war posters for various American war relief associations; in America in 1942 artists brought out a series of posters glorifying the struggles of the minor allies to remind American citizens that the smaller countries of occupied Europe went on fighting the Germans. McKnight Kauffer's poster "Greece fights on" (Figure C.2 ) was one of the most graphic of these. It shows a sombre profile, helmeted and stylized against the Greek Flag. This silhouette represents the whole Greek nation. The combination of type and image in this poster is excellent, it is as though "Greece", which is tilted upwards and reversed out of black in white, is a hand waving its national flag proudly, the condensed roman typeface in white is particularly successful in conveying the pride the Greeks feel in their effort as a small nation involved in a world war. The slant of the words "Fights on" in bold sans serif capital letters shows strength and its portrayal in yellow seems to say they are rearing to go and able to fight.

Of his poster "Steel not bread" Kauffer said:- "America has been trying to sell the war to the public with pretty legs and bosoms. War is grim and you have to be grim to win". This poster which shows a bayoneted hand was designed for the U.S. Treasury Department for "Distinguished service in the war saving programme". This poster (Figure C.3) warns that if conquered by Nazis the vanquished would be cruelly treated. This poster is interesting in that the bayonet piercing the hand reminds one of the crucifixion, so here again we see the opposition of the Nazis to Christianity- the Nazis depicted as Christ killers- (Pontius Pilate and his followers). The whole image is in shadows so most of the table is eliminated, only a rectangle remains on to which a light shines picking out those elements which the artist considered important, these elements portray what looks like the hand of Christ nailed to the Cross. The bread on the table under the hand indicated that the conquered would be given no pity. Kauffer has reversed copy out of the black shadow surrounding this image, in white. His use of the Sans serif capital letters indicated that he wanted to state very clearly how important this message was and that the public should



not be left "in the dark" as to what would happen if we were conquered by the Nazis.

Other poster artists played with the ideas of the Avant-garde painters and graphic designers. Several experimented with the notions of figurative mass that came out of Cezanne and the Cubists, but none were as successful as either Kauffer or Cassandra in developing the dynamic, geometric and powerful poster making style that freed poster making from a long influence of the German designers, the caricaturesque influence of Italian poster designers, as well as from the heavy handed attempts deriving from a watered-down use of Cubism. The reason these two designers stood above other commercial poster artists of the period are numerous, but what served them best was an ability to take themes or subjects and create one or more symbols which could be given a multidimensionality that in a single image would evoke a multitude of associations. Neither relied on complex realism, instead the most direct and compelling elements were chosen and incorporated to create forceful and eye catching imagery that combined with the lettering succeeded in making clear and direct communication between the client and the public.





Figure C.4.



**WILL MINE**  
**ARE OF ARMS IS CARE OF LIFE**

*Warning to British soldiers of the danger of  
'ty weapons, c. 1912, England: Abram Games.*

Figure C.5.



## Section 1.1A

Between the wars advertising campaigns had specific targets that were increasingly measured by sales results, this competitiveness urged designers to experiment and improve their work. Products which needed modern images were treated with visual wit. Experiments in the new technique of photomontage, which is the sticking of photographic images on top of an unusual or incongruous background had a shock value which was very effective. This technique stemmed from the Cubist habit of sticking newspaper cuttings on their paintings, it was developed by the Dadists and well established by 1939. In Britain its use in posters was pioneered during the 30s by avant-garde designers such as E. McKnight Kauffer. Its use in war posters was chiefly by designers aware of modern development in art. Zero is the pseudonym adopted by Hans Schlegel when he was working in New York. He studied at the National School of Applied Art in Berlin at a time when the Bauhaus was making its impact and then worked for five years in New York. He was one of a small group involved in the development of modern American advertising design. During the 1939-1945 war Zero designed a number of elegant posters for London Transport and the Ministry of Food. In his poster "Eat Greens for vitality" (Figure C.4) he has used photomontage. The writer has chosen this poster to give a simple example of the technique used in photomontage as it shows clearly how the artist has placed a photograph of a healthy looking man over a huge cabbage leaf to create an eye-catching poster which explains itself clearly, the message is unforced and spontaneous, making its statement with easy clarity.

A more complicated example of the photomontage technique can be seen in Abram Games poster "His Rifle will fire, will mine Care of arms is care of life" (Figure C.5.) In the background we see a larger than life, evil looking German. The blurred photograph of this soldier in stark shades of grey works to enforce the idea that there is always a danger of the enemy lurking in the background, ready for action. He is firing his gun out of the poster, directly at the viewer, our attention is drawn to this by a white circle surrounding the outer edge of the barrel, telling us in no uncertain terms that "his rifle will fire". The problem is "will mine", this use of "will mine" rather than "will yours" put the viewer in the line





MAY END LIKE THIS...

Figure C.6.



of fire and involves him in the action. "My" weapon lies horizontally across the poster in the foreground of the poster and is shown clearly to stress its importance. A question mark through which "my" finger is slotted at the same time as "I" pull the trigger works effectively with the copyline to make a direct connection with the fact that if "my" trigger is not clean and "my" weapon in good order it will not fire. The use of colour is limited the only colour being "will mine" and "my" red hand, incidentally, this is also the only show of warmth in the poster. The combination of type and illustration is effective in that either could work alone but together they reinforce the message, the type used is bold and strong, pointing out that this is a serious message which should be taken notice of.

In the poster "Horseplay with weapons may end like this" (Figure C. 6.) Games' has made use of the photomontage technique to create a poster that is hard hitting and truthful. This poster would have been directed at soldiers who cared for and knew the working of weapons. The spiralling effect seen here is what one sees when looking through the barrel of a rifle, when the trigger is pulled the bullet spins through the barrel, this spin keeps the trajectory intended by the user. Games probably used this knowledge when designing this poster as the spinning impression calls to mind the image of a bullet spinning through a rifle barrel. To the ordinary layman this swirling whirlpool imagery would have illustrated how easy it was to be drawn into the sort of horseplay which often led to disaster. In the foreground the dead man is lying out toward the viewer, he is encircled by a red ring which is cut by a white band indicating that his life has been cut short. Above him two black accusing hands which are red, where they have been cut at the wrists, point toward a figure running away from the victim in panic and carrying a gun. Obviously he is the horseplayer who shot his comrade. The type used for "horseplay" is light and playful, but immediately changes to a more sober and direct typeface with the mention of weapons, when disaster has struck we are told in bold stark black lettering how such horseplay can end. The design illustrates exactly what has taken place and complements the copy.

Games in many of his war posters showed an awareness of the shock value of photomontage. He realised that this technique



had a greater value in the poster than in other forms of advertising because being a style that was unsuitable as pictures or illustration, it became a selling factor in as much as it attracted attention.

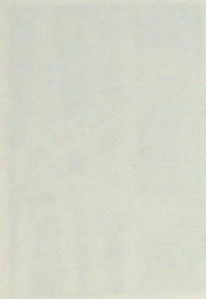


Figure 2.2

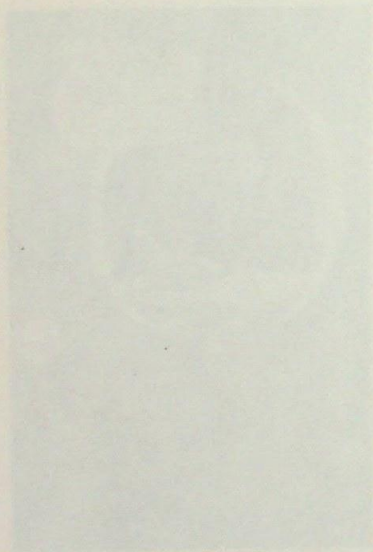


Figure 2.3





Figure C.7.

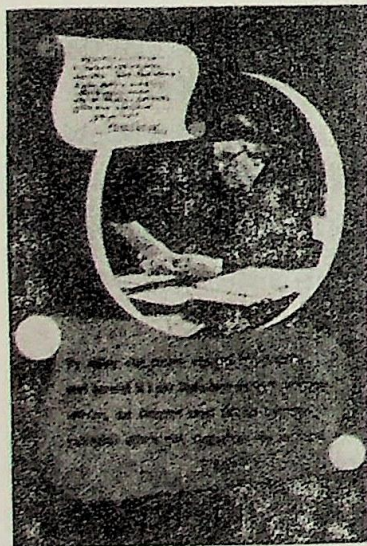


Figure C.8.



## Section 1.1B

Of great importance also was the development of a higher standard of typography and layout. Previously the desire to gain an effect was so strong in many designers who aspired to modernism that the fact that typography and layout were a means and not an end was totally lost sight of, eventually designers were becoming more subtle in their approach to type. It was chiefly as a result of the work of the Bauhaus that it was realised that typography was as important a part of a poster as the image, and indeed could become the image. Sometimes two or three words could solve a problem better than pictures, if they were displayed in a dramatic pictorial form. This attitude is reflected in the unadorned lettering of the air raid precautions poster "A.R.P." by Ashley Havinden, who was a typographic designer in his own right, (Figure C.7) in which the Johnston typeface designed by Edward Johnston for London Transport in 1916 formed an integral part of the poster. Ashley, like McKnight Kauffer was a modern graphic artist, influenced by the avant-garde movement, notably Cubism; "Cubism created new realities parallel with life but not existing as ambitions of life, was extremely valuable to advertising technique. The poster particularly had a similar task, namely to create visually an equivalent of a product or service when it cannot possibly be that product or service itself... for speed of visual communication in a hurrying world, the dramatic stylisation suggested by Cubism provided stimulus towards a new kind of expression". Ashley put these principles forward for Chrysler, for whom he stylised cars and figures for world wide campaign beginning in 1929. Like all designers of his generation, he broke from Cubism at the end of the 30's but kept its power for communication.

His later posters relied chiefly on his brilliant use of typography and layout as can be seen from his poster which was commissioned by the Ministry of Information for the Netherlands Government in 1940. (Figure C. 8) It bears a proclamation by Queen Wilhelmina to encourage the Dutch, during the German occupation. Translation of text-

"We shall not rest until the main goal has been achieved. The Fatherland and where you were born must prove that the unnumberable sacrifices will not have been in vain". By choosing the representative form, "Queen Wilhelmina" that appealed to a very broad group this poster would have created an interest anyway, but it has through Ashley's use of typography and layout avoided



the limitation which sometimes befall figurative design whereby the designer excludes a large potential audience if he does not choose graphic imagery which would have been understood by all. Ashley combines graphic imagery (the simplified manuscripts) and modern typography with a sombre photograph of Queen Wilhelmina harmoniously. He accomplishes this by taking the subdued colours of the photograph and intensifying them to become the main colours of the poster. The orange on which the type is imposed does not glare as would be expected, because it is a deeper tone of the colour of her scarf and the folds of her coat, the brown background also contains much of the same orange colour. This gives the poster a comfortable warm feeling which appealed to all sectors of the public and brought the queen closer to them. Ashley, through his superb use of an authoritative typeface integrated so harmoniously with the image of the queen and her handwritten proclamation, portrayed to the public a woman who was both a comrade and a leader to her people.

Designers learned to gain effect by slight and careful adjustments of spacing between letters, words and lines, with the primary purpose of ensuring that the reader could read with the maximum of ease the sense conveyed, this was of the utmost importance as the poster permitted the viewer time to interpret the message whereas the radio set a pace at which the audience had to listen and understand.



## Section 2.

During the Second World War Britain became, with the exception of the Soviet Union, the most intensively organised of the belligerent nations. Pressure on both human and material resources called for the utmost care in their distribution and use, and posters were one of the most important means by which the population was alerted to the need for economy. The purpose to which posters were put in support of Britain's war effort illustrates their increased range of uses in the Second World War. There was an increased use of government posters on the home front giving information about rationing and petrol restrictions, or advice on subjects like health and diet. Posters were used to buttress patriotism, caution security, urge greater production, or reveal the nature of the enemy.

Posters achieved this by instructing and informing the public, or by suggesting new ways of looking at the war. Their central ideas had to correspond to the mentality and the desires of their populace, their appeal had to be easily comprehensible to the target audience. Their layout had to conform to certain basic rules. It had to be striking, at once attracting attention, it had to draw attention in a certain direction and in a certain sequence, its message had to be clear and capable of holding attention for long enough for the message to sink in. British posters conveyed a strong sense of the commonplace. Few dealt in the rhetoric of glory. Their tone was not that of God and Empire as in 1914-1918 but was one of determination rather than bravado. The characters of the posters were ordinary people, in the people's war, ordinary people asked their fellows for greater effort.

Generally the types of Second World War propaganda were :-

Production. (Section 2.1.)

National Security. (Section 2.2.)

Patriotic Enthusiasm. (Section 2.3.)

Public Health and Safety. (Section 2.4.)



## Section 2.1.

This battle for production was an essential poster theme for the major combatants. Security and safety was essential to production and civilian morale. Production posters in factories often had a humourous approach, so did those to prevent accidents or promote salvage.

In a war in which civilians could change places with soldiers at short notice, the links between the home front and the military front were very close. The links between the factory and front line, between the war effort and the supporting technology had been established; soldiers were becoming mechanics as well as fighters. This production effort required as forceful a mobilisation of manpower as mobilisation for the armed forces. In factories absenteeism and industrial disputes declined sharply. Men were prepared to give up holidays and work longer hours. The government tried to keep men and women satisfied at their work and the Treasury called for full employment, the Beveridge Plan published in 1942 outlined the future Welfare State. The average weekly wage <sup>rose</sup> by 80% during the war while the cost of living rose by only 31%. Consequently workers were better off under the wartime economy than they had been in peacetime.

The rationing of food and clothing also had their effect, most people had to subsist on portions of food that would have been considered inadequate in pre-war days, but the wartime cafeterias supplied plain, cheap and nutritious meals and the Ministry of Food recipes sometimes consisted of bizarre ingredients to make the most of existing supplies. While the people had to be clothed and fed as well as possible, it was also necessary to meet their other needs with the utmost efficiency and fairness. For example, air raid casualties were given free medical treatment and vitamins, cod liver oil and orange juice were made available to ensure public health. Government food subsidies helped to maintain this happy state of affairs.

The posters in this group closely resemble those appealing to patriotism, but they are more specialised and are aimed at the civilian population. Generally they stress the parallel between the front line soldier and the factory worker, and point to the dependence of the soldier upon the worker. They often





**SOUSCRIVEZ**  
AUX  
**BONS D'ARMEMENT**

Figure C.9.



Figure C.10.



appeal on behalf of production for the individual services, and many of them establish the connection between financial sacrifice, taking the form of War Bonds, and war production. These posters were not as difficult to design as the posters in the national security group. Their objective was clear and simple; their appeal had to be positive, they had to stress the technological nature of war. These points were not always made effectively in the posters of the Second World War as can be seen from the early French wartime poster "Souscrivez aux Bonds d'Armement" (Figure C.9.) The driver of the leading tank looks too grim and frightened to be on the winning side; people who bought war bonds wanted to see heroes emerging from battles as the victors. The tanks are being overflown by aircraft, the direction in which they are flying should have been shown more clearly or a symbol on them indicating that they were French would have been better. The leading tank is identified by a small flag which is not adequate. The designer changed from the well spaced attractive lettering he used for "Souscrivez" to a condensed typeface in black which is too demanding, especially when no effort had been made to at least give the public some indication in the poster as to what had been achieved by these armaments so far. In comparison to the poster "When? its up to you!" (Figure C.10) this poster was not effective in achieving its aims. In Figure C.10 we are shown a bloodied Hitler in caricature, as a symbol of the enemy, cowering from massed British aircraft, shown as such by the R.A.F. symbol on the underside of the wings. It is successful both in showing the importance of workers in industry and it conveys to the viewer how the enemy could be overpowered. Even though Hitler is shown to be very large, filling the bottom third of the poster, it is clear from his amazed expression and the blood on his hands that he does not stand a chance against the R.A.F. The heroes piloting the planes emerge from the bright sky giving a great show of strength and continuity. The "When?" is demanding, but in combination with the images shows the viewer how he could help defeat the enemy just by buying war bonds or working in armaments factories. "Its up to you!" is familiar enough to give the feeling of involvement by speaking directly to the viewer. Though the copy left it to the viewer to make his own decision to help, there is a subtle urgency and demand in the poster which is conveyed by the white type reversed out of a red background.



War production meant labour recruitment and this "Back them up" poster (Figure C.11) points to the importance of production workers in the war. The action picture technique which was regularly used by American poster designers, is not really effective here in arousing very strong emotions, but it does illustrate that the production of armaments was important and worthwhile by showing the British field guns in the foreground hitting a German tank at point blank range. This type of poster also managed to give the man at home a view of what was happening on the front lines and showed him that "backing them up" was worthwhile. The use of brown lettering in the same shade as one would imagine the ground to be, on which the field guns are placed, connects the type with the illustration. "Back them up" as a copy line is also clever in that the viewer stands behind the soldiers and guns, so is backing them up.



*British field-guns smash a German tank attack at point-blank range in Libya.*

**BACK THEM UP!**

Figure C.11.





Figure C.12.



Figure C. 13.



## Section 2.1A

Manpower was being replaced or extended by woman power and new employment offices were being set up in order to mobilize labour. This poster in which we see a woman close up in the foreground, with arms outstretched urging the "Women of Britain" to "Come into the factories" (Figure C.12) abounds in interesting and visual effects. Airbrushed white around her creates the interesting effect of shimmering light; she is exultant because of the planes and tanks that are leaving the factory in front of which she stands. The factory is depicted in simple solid shapes as are the airplanes emerging from it which fly in a curve in the sky between her outstretched arms, indicating that she represents the women of Britain who work in the factories.

The representation of women in posters aroused considerable controversy during the 1939-1945 war, notably over the use of glamour. A Ministry of Information memorandum asserted that there was a general feeling that the Auxiliary Territorial Service (A.T.S.) was not in the same class as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), and that most jobs in the A.T.S. involved menial tasks. In 1942 a major recruiting campaign for the A.T.S. was immediately criticized for making its girls too glamorous for the serious business of war recruitment- utility at this stage was more important than sex appeal. Abram Games' poster "Join the A.T.S." (Figure C.13) attracted much notice in the press where it was nicknamed the Blond Bombshell. The poster was withdrawn and replaced by a less glamorous Ministry of Information photographic poster showing an actual member of the A.T.S., Private Mary Roberts- photos were felt to be simultaneously more realistic and more idealistic. Games' superb technical mastery in the use of the airbrush is displayed in this poster where he has used Braggodocio type which works effectively in the colours of the Union Jack without dominating the poster.

Jonathan Foss was the official man in the Air Ministry public relations department, in this capacity he designed about sixty posters for the Royal Air Force (RAF), of which "Volunteer for flying duties" was the first major one. Aircrew members were all volunteers and the poster was to encourage ground personnel "to volunteer for duties in the air" and to let them know it was possible to do so. This poster featured a photo-



-graph of a real life pilot against against a dawn sky. To give the necessary realism the photograph was chosen from hundreds of suitable idealistic types. It was necessary to include in the poster, as a sort of trade mark, the famous RAF Rondel. Foss said " I put this Rondel behind and slightly above the pilot's head in the place where a halo would go in a traditional painting. In my serious mood these men were patriots and heros,even saints". When he designed "Serve in the WAAF" (Figure C.14)recruiting poster, Foss used his "Volunteer for flying duties" poster and added the photograph of a WAAF called Mary Scaife. He stated that the condensed lettering style seen here was inspired by his favourite poster designer at the time, Cassandra.

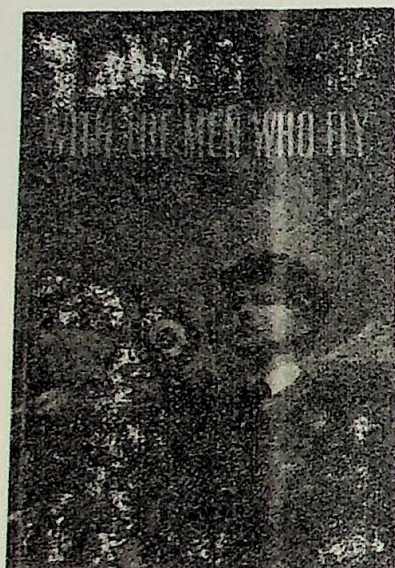


Figure C.14.





Figure C.15.



## Section 2.2.

Concern with national security and patriotic enthusiasm (Appeals to people to keep their mouths shut and to fight hard against the enemy) are two sides of the same coin, but to appeal to group loyalty, to patriotism, is a positive appeal, concern with national security is a matter of warning. The designers of security posters were therefore faced with a much harder task than the designers of Patriotic posters. They had no immediately recognisable symbols to fall back on, unless they used the symbols of the enemy. Such a technique aimed to draw the peoples attention to the danger of the other side - a way of making posters which needed careful handling. The poster designers who tackled the theme of national security simply had to be more inventive than the designers of other types of posters. The force of the poster "Award for careless talk" (Figure C.15) came from clever exploitation of the attributes of the enemy.. A hand bearing a ring with a Nazi symbol presents the medal for "careless talk" to those who were indiscreet. The message is troubling and not immediately receivable; only the bottom line of the text removes the ambiguity and addresses itself directly to the reader; "don't discuss troop movements, ship sailings, war equipment."



## Section 2.2A

Photomontage and cartoons were the two preferred techniques used in designing posters during the Second World War in Britain, the customary drawn or painted posters could fall very flat indeed. The artist whose work, as A.P. Herbert put it, the whole population could "tell across three platforms", was Fougasse.

The aim of the 'propaganda poster according to Fougasse, was to overcome three obstacles: "firstly, a general aversion to reading any notice of any sort, secondly a general disinclination to believe that any notice, even if it were read, could possibly be addressed to ones self, and thirdly, a general unwillingness, even so, to remember the message long enough to do anything about it." His own posters were therefore designed to attract attention, persuade the passerby and keep him persuaded by avoiding realism or the shock of a horror poster. For Fougasse "Realism" states a fact. "If you do this, it leads to that". Humour with its naturally wider net says "If you behave like this, it leads to that". His real name was Cyril Kenneth Bird. He was born in London in 1887. He wanted to be an artist, but his father said he must have a second career, so he trained as an engineer. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1914 and was badly wounded at Gallipoli in 1916. While recuperating he started to draw cartoons of military and other subjects, which he sent to Punch and other magazines. His career as a cartoonist had commenced. It was at this time that Bird adopted the pseudonym of Fougasse, which was a small landmine, which might or might not hit the mark. The name is particularly suitable for a former Royal Engineer as the mine was used only by the corps and anyway, the signature "Bird" was already being used by the Irish artist Jack Yeats, who was also drawing for Punch at this time.

During the Second World War, apart from a visit to France, Fougasse devoted himself to designing visual propaganda of all kinds- books, booklets, pamphlets, press advertising and even a film strip. He worked with practically every ministry and many troops, such as the Women's Voluntary Service, The Young Women's Christian Association and the Kensington War Savings Fund: All his work was given free. Fougasse, who had previously designed some posters for London Underground Railway, clearly analysed the problems facing a poster designer at that time -



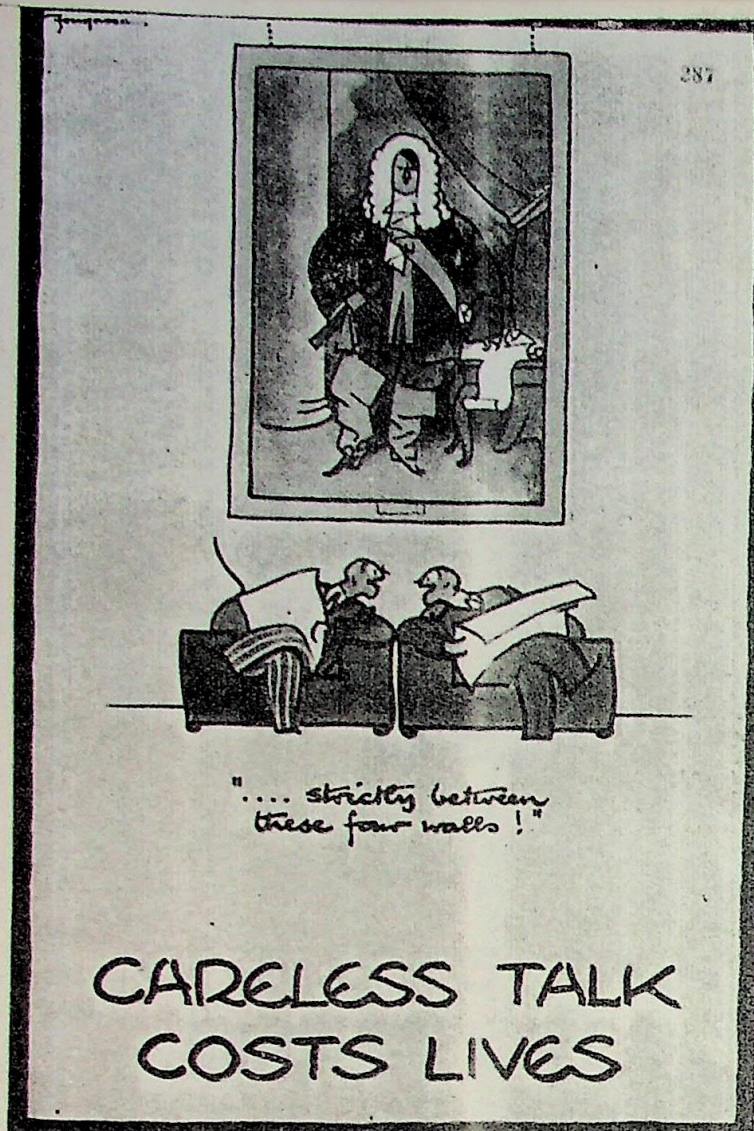


Figure C.16.

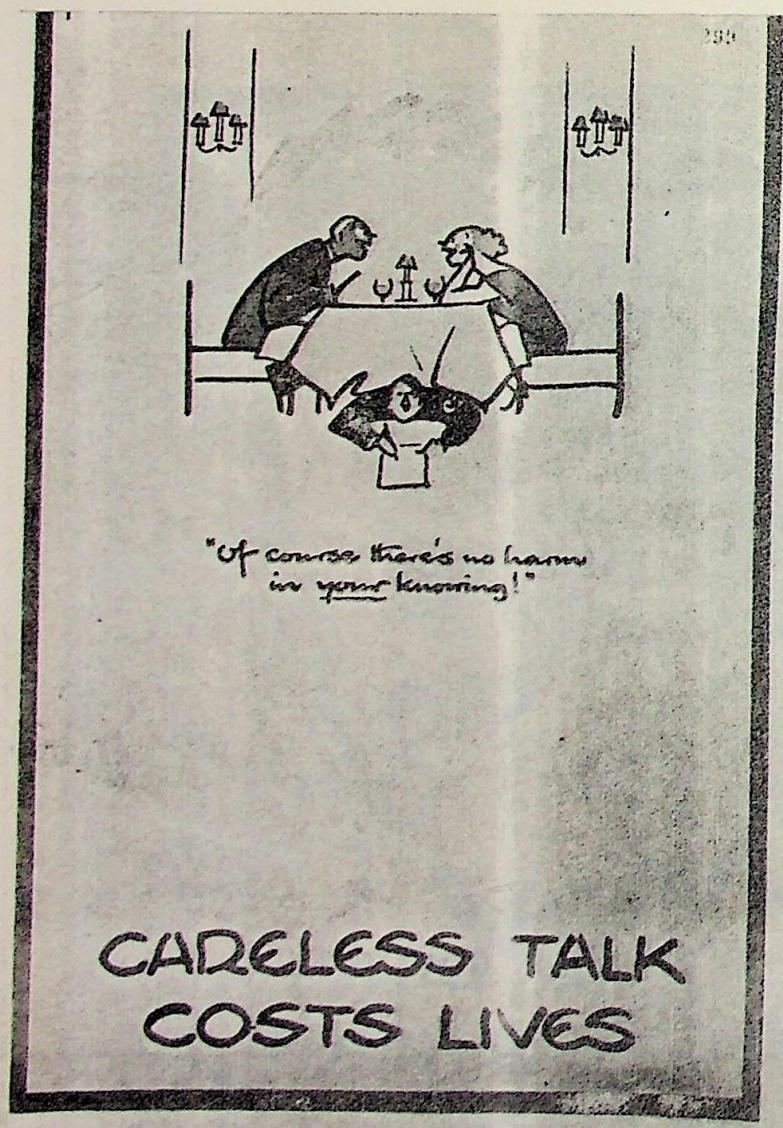


Figure C.17.





Figure C.18.



Figure C.19.



-public apathy in the face of an onslaught of posters and the necessity of relying on restaurants, shops and pubs for the display of these posters. He deliberately set out to tackle these problems by using an arresting sense of humour together with a totally individual simplified technique which seemed to cut the subject down to human size and drew the audience into the design. His light hearted approach to a serious problem really rubbed in the existence of that problem and the idea that simple images and phrases which could be absorbed at a glance were very effective, is obviously true. Who can forget the Fuhrer's face staring fixedly from a dignified portrait (Figure C.16) in a club or a pub over the heads of two garrulous members; we are given no indication as to where this room is so the artist manages to speak to a larger sector of the public by allowing them to choose their own setting. In (Figure C.17) "of course there's no harm in your knowing" we see a man and woman sitting at a table chatting while Hitler sits underneath the table taking down everything that is being said. The setting could be in a restaurant, which some could afford, but it could just as easily be at a friends house or at home, this choice of choosing your own setting avoided eliminating any section of the general public. His entirely different way of presenting slogans used by the ordinary person; "strictly between these four walls!" or "of course there's no harm in your knowing" cut the subjects down to human size so the viewer could identify with what he saw. His ingenious idea of using small but well defined hand written messages, which are clearly visible and understandable, in the space beneath the images, connect the slogan to the speaker and manage to strike a cord of remembrance in the viewer, reminding him if he had used such phrases recently.

Fougasse strengthens the impact of the images in his posters by always placing the arrangements very centrally and by using a large number of bright colours but only on the important elements. He found no cause to use background colour, a line usually divides floor and walls, this elimination of all unnecessary features made the subjects the integral part of the posters. He also drew the characters in simple lines, but what is subtle and interesting about his work is the suggestion of a multiple perspective achieved by the animated expressions he gave to the characters of his



posters. These expressions also helped the viewer to see what each character is thinking and have that "deja vu" quality which reminds the viewer of his own expressions when he recounts secret stories in confidence. In (Figure C.18) "You never know who's listening!" a pair of chatting women on a bus, both wear that excited expression you see on someone who cannot wait to tell their story, Himmler and Goring sit two seats behind them looking well contented and seemingly uninterested, happily waiting for more information.

Such posters show clearly that from the beginning of World War Two humour was of the utmost importance. Other British designers tried to follow Fougasse's humorous approach, but they often lacked his elegant wit, as can be seen from the slapdash style and thin rhyme of "Keep Mum, She's not so dumb" (Figure C.19) a poster which exploits the recurrent theme of the glamorous spy and is directed only at a very selective audience; how many laymen would meet such a glamorous woman, during the war especially, in their local clubs or pub. The male characters in this poster are rather dignified looking, probably majors or generals, who would have been quite indignant in the way they are portrayed in this scene fawning over this beautiful woman and competing for her attention. This poster could almost be an advertisement for whiskey or perfume as the personality gives the impression of a film star or the like.

The French poster by Paul Colin "Silence, l'Ennemi" (Figure C.20) tackled this difficult theme, but with imagination and a touch of humour. The enemy is a sinister silhouette skulking in the background, the impact of the enemy is strengthened by presenting him as a black solid shape surrounded by a fuzzy light. It is made clear that he is eavesdropping by making a loose outline in white of his helmet and ear. The friends stand in the foreground and are portrayed in white, any detail is shown by the use of shadows, they are oblivious to the intruder behind them. The civilian listens intently to the military figure, and wears a rather comic look on his face. Neither of them have any idea how important the information is, which the state has entrusted to them. The copy is short (silence, the enemy is eavesdropping) and the large white perfectly balanced lettering is very eye catching. "Silence" is slightly more subdued in colour creating a "shh.." effect, while "l'Ennemi" in stark white clearly warns that the enemy is close.

Fougasse's method of gentle hinting rather than commands



characterizes much of the propaganda intended for Londoners. His work now strangely dated was intended to appeal to the Punch reading, city worker and was immensely popular. He isolated his designs from other distractions by a gulf of white space enclosed in a neat red border, the success of this solution may be measured by the widespread appreciation of Fougasse's posters, especially the "Careless talk" series, both during the war and subsequently.

From 1937 to 1948 Fougasse was art editor of Punch and from 1949 to 1953 he was editor. He had many one-man exhibitions and published collections of his work almost annually. He lived in Morar, Inverness and died in London in 1965.



Figure C.20



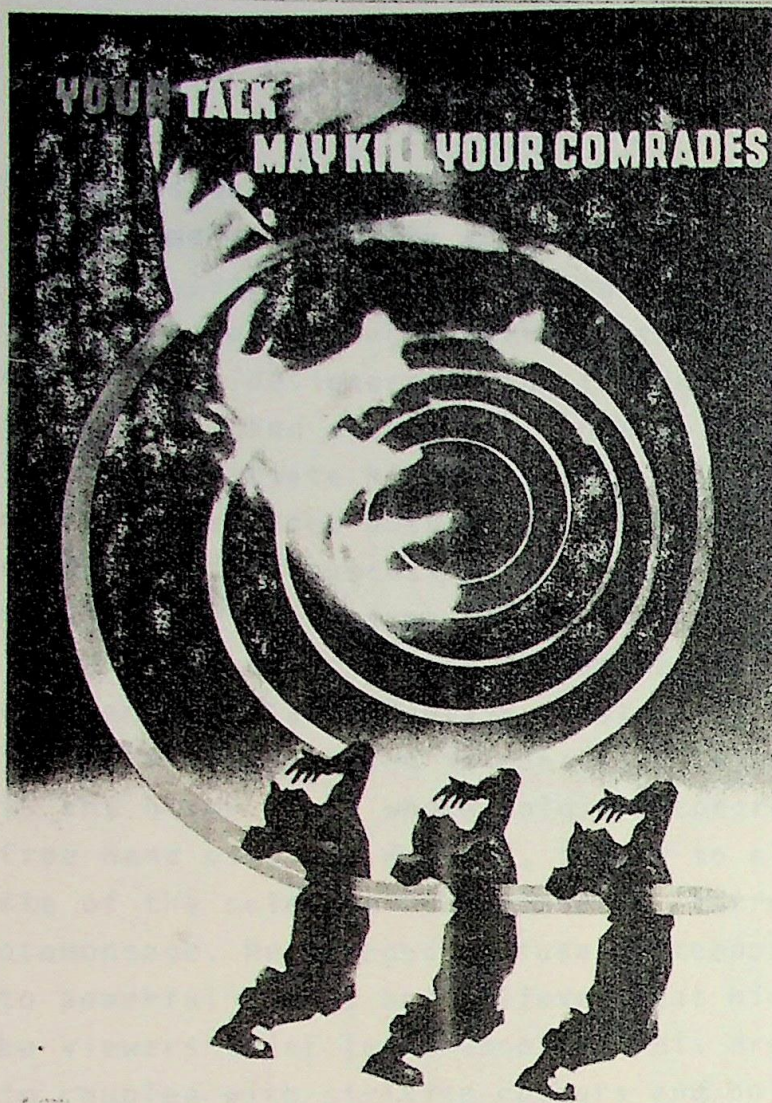


Figure C.21.



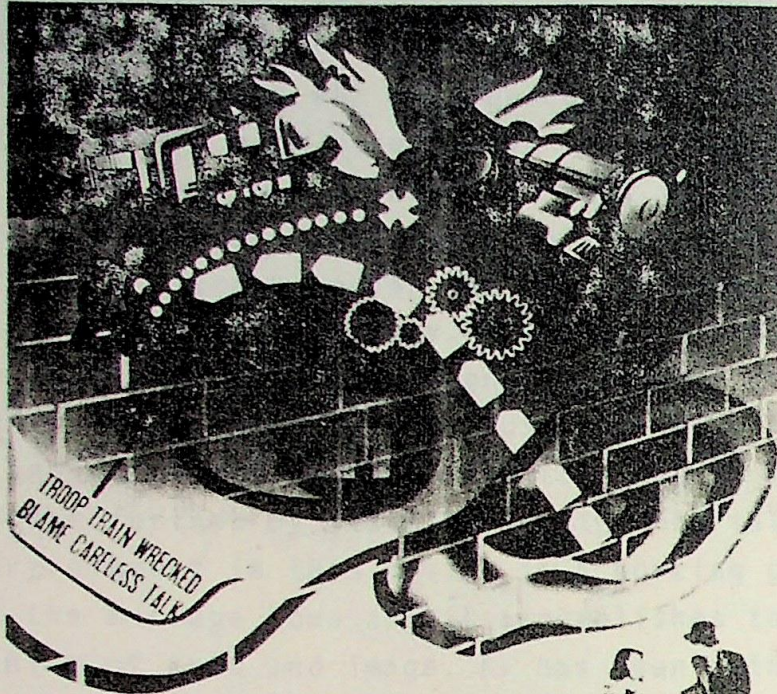
## Section 2.2B.

Abram Games was another accomplished and respected designer on the theme of careless talk. He joined the Infantry as a private in 1940. He was posted to the War Office in June 1941 to design a recruiting poster for the Royal Armoured Corps. He Proposed that designers in the forces should be used to design instructional and educational posters for army use, and was allowed to initiate his own themes on a trial basis. The army had never used posters internally of the type designed and the idea was successful. In 1942 Games was joined by Frank Newbould and in the same year he was appointed to a newly established post: official war poster designer, with the Rank of Lieutenant and later Captain. Posters by Games and other war officers were displayed in canteens, barrack rooms, medical huts and other areas where soldiers congregated. Games, having a free hand with his designs, strove to elevate the graphic taste of the soldiers by his use of surrealistic imagery and photomontage. He managed to fuse contemporary artistic trends into powerful images and believed that his war posters should make viewers think for themselves. His dramatic use of symbolism coupled with striking colours and bold unusual lettering made his posters the most sophisticated of any produced during the war.

The blend of blurred photography, geometrical design and drawing in the poster "Your talk may kill your comrades" (Figure C.21) is direct in its message and effect. His approach in this supremely effective poster is hard hitting and unsentimental. It is one of his most important and successful posters, using the complex style favoured by British official propaganda. To differentiate between closeness and distance in this poster Games used white in the foreground which graduates into shadows to become a solid black. Here he used the technique of photomontage when he imposed a blurred photograph of the speaker onto this background. This image fills the top half of the poster, illustrating the danger a "big mouth" can cause, no matter how far away he is. Waves issuing from this man's mouth form a spiral which unwinds into a sword and changes in colour from white to red before piercing three identical figures, in the foreground, who fall in unison. In all Games' posters so far he has used the colour red when talking about "you", this change from white to red illustrates that "your talk" is what "may kill your comrades".



# BEWARE



## THE WALLS HAVE EARS



Figure C.22.



This spiral forms a similar shape to the semi-circular canal in the inner ear, which may have been what gave Games the idea for this poster, illustrating that the danger is not only what you tell a friend, but more importantly in how many other people he tells; news travels fast by "ear". The information you hold may concern a comrade a million miles away, but one word in the wrong ear and you could be the cause of his untimely death and many others too. The spiral also forms the shape of a bull horn which indicates that if you did speak indiscreetly you might as well have been announcing your information through a microphone for all to hear, eventually it would be heard by the enemy anyway. Although it was the norm during the "careless talk" campaigns which were featured in every country's propaganda, to arouse a sense of horror at the results of indiscretion, Games has in this poster taken this approach a stage further by visually linking the talker and his victims. Every element in this design is a working part which helps to get the message home and it accomplishes the most perfect joining of text and image. As has been pointed out, in all his posters so far Games has used the colour red when talking about "you". It is also true to say that when speaking of danger he usually used white lettering as he does here, and in the poster "His rifle will fire" (Figure C.5) Section 1.1A)

In this poster the "Talk may kill" in white draws attention to the copy although the lettering is small. "Your comrades" in yellow indicates the warmth one feels for a friend. The use of white lettering when it was already too late to warn as can be seen from the poster "Horse-play with weapons" (Figure C.6) (Section 1.1A) in which the black spindly letters of "may end like this" state death.

The excellence of Games' posters comes not only from the quality of the graphics, but also from the special care he gave to the lettering, the choice of characters and layout and the striking, well contrasted colours; not to mention that each design was supported by the designers faith in the ideas he developed.

Other artists did not have the same faith in their designs as can be seen from this diverse security poster "Beware the walls have ears" (Figure C.22) by Jack Leonard, Two people talking





Figure C.23.

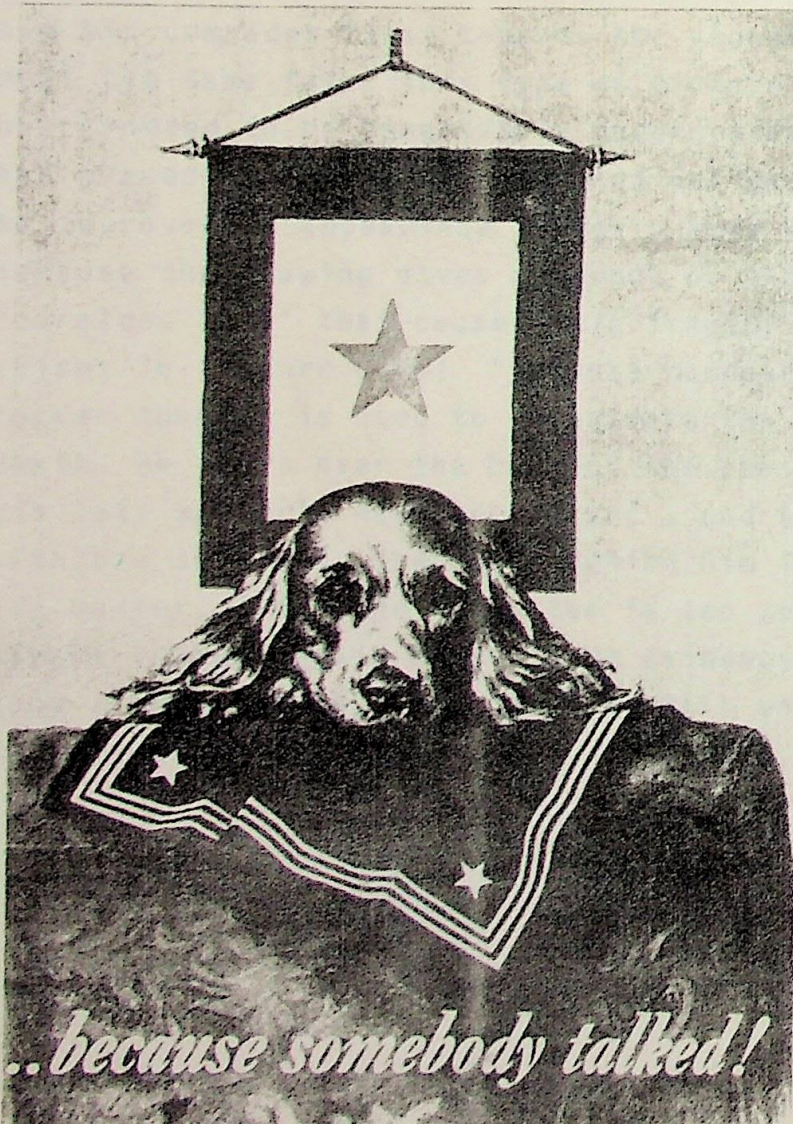


Figure C.24.



in the bottom right corner are the last things to be seen on the poster, they should be the most apparent to at least give the viewer a clearer starting point from which he could follow the "line" of conversation, which as the copy suggests is heard by an ear, drawn realistically rather than symbolically, behind a wall. The eavesdropper in turn passes the information on to the enemy, this is symbolically depicted by the arrows passing through the cogs next to the Nazi symbol. The last arrow points to a Nazi (Depicted by his arm band) about to blow up a train. The line from this fuse-box leads to beneath the train which at this stage is in flames. A small newspaper cutting on the left hand side of the poster tells how "troop train wrecked, blame careless talk". "Beware" in red on a white background suggests caution, but it takes too long to figure out what you are being warned about. This poster gropes for a technique and a clear cut symbol.

In other security posters, the ultimate outcome and the cause--"Careless Talk"- were not graphically linked, as can be seen from the American poster "Careless talk got there first" (Figure C.23) in which we see a parachutist in the foreground who had been shot before he reached the ground. Above and behind him his comrades float towards the ground, they will probably meet the same fate. This type of picture is too complicated and overcrowded to be immediately understandable. Even if the artist had placed it in a white frame and designed the type around it to improve its appearance it would have been ineffective because the drawing gives no proof or indication that it was "careless talk" that caused this tragedy. The same problem arises in (Figure C.24) "Because somebody talked" where a cocker spaniel is used to illustrate the distress caused by death. He peers over the back of the chair, his head resting on his late master's Navy neck scarf, and stares at the viewer with big sad eyes. The award behind him is no replacement for his master. This type of poster is too sentimental and not direct enough. Again there is no evidence, apart from what the copy line tells us, that careless talk was the cause of this sailor's death.



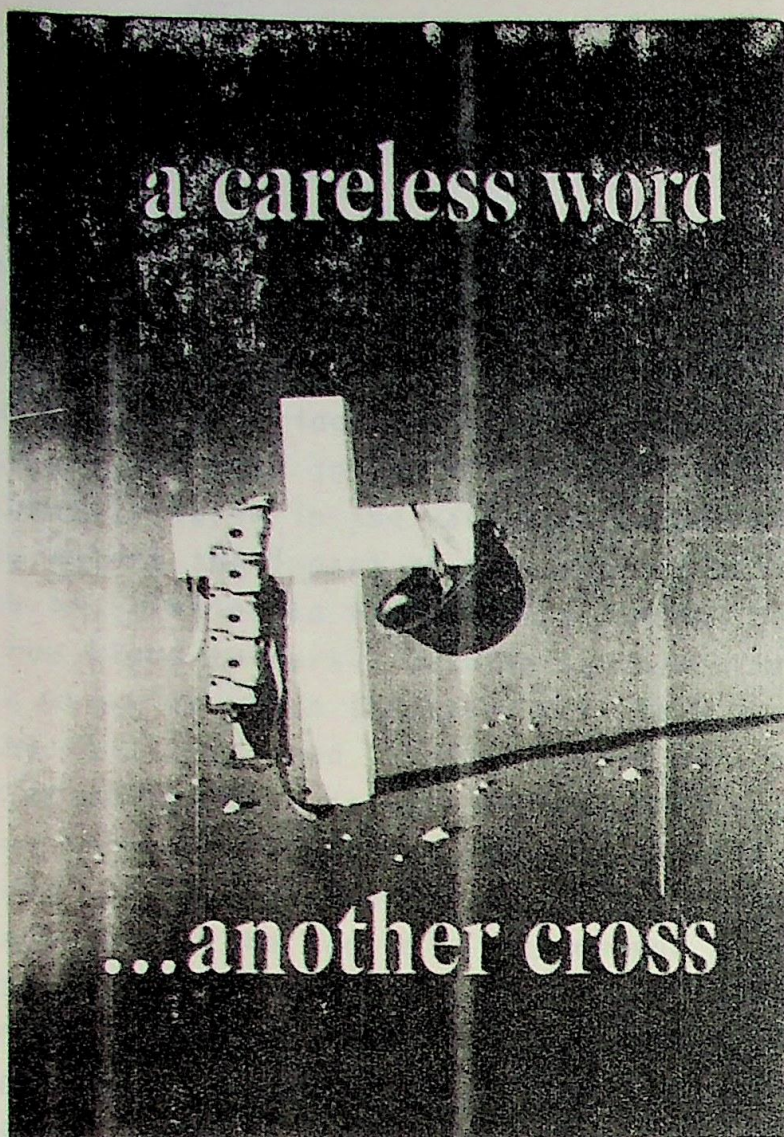


Figure C.25.



### Section 2.2.C

John Atherton's poster "A careless word, another cross" (Figure C.25) is an example of a poster that works although, at first glance, it seems that only the outcome of "a careless word" is portrayed. In the centre a soldier's grave is marked by a white cross from which his cartridge belt and helmet hang. The use of graduating colour abruptly in the foreground from dark to light, to dark abruptly again in the background suggests distance. It also heightens the impact of the cross, which is larger than it should be in relation to the distance created by this abrupt change from light to dark. These darker areas make suitable backgrounds on which to place the type; "a careless word" is imposed onto the "Distance" and "another cross" onto the foreground. This play with perspective is very effective in emphasizing the primary function of the poster; that was to suggest that the "careless word" uttered by someone who thought it was safe to speak, because what he had to say concerned a soldier elsewhere (distance) was capable of causing the death of that soldier. His use of white lower case roman lettering suggests that the speaker is not to be condemned, this was a dangerous mistake anyone could make. We are being told above all to be discreet.

The image echoes dream landscapes by Surrealist artists in the 1930's. Atherton also aimed at a similar effect in painting of which one critic wrote:- "they had the power of lending mysterious undertones to ordinary objects". His career illustrated the close links between commercial art, painting and propaganda, but as this poster illustrated Atherton never forgot the different functions of paintings and posters. His research into the modern movements that were taking place in painting was beneficial to him in designing this poster, by making it possible for him to make newer translations of old forms, which need little analysis to be understood because of his simple arrangement of ideas and his superb use of colour. This poster is an excellent example of the style pioneered by Abram Games and is nothing like the majority of American posters at the time, though Surrealist art did become a more frequent source for poster imagery in America after the war, during which many prominent Surrealist artists had been exiled to the U.S.A.



Most of the National Security posters were concerned with the effect of information leakage on the military front, a few pinpointed the effect of sabotage on war industry. The U.S. cartoon "Watch for this guy" (Figure C.26) equated sabotage with treason and the civilian war, production worker with the soldier, but the designer of the poster found it necessary to provide his message with, for a poster, a long explanatory text. In "The Saboteurs favourite weapon is Arson" (Figure C.27) a specific form of sabotage was pinpointed. Such posters illustrate the difficulties faced in the making of security posters. They had no immediately recognisable symbols to fall back on, they had to explain the points they were trying to make in the text and in the inscriptions on their cartoon figures. It is evident that graphic simplicity and an absence of emotion produced the best security posters.

Whether they make appeals on behalf of military or war industry security, these posters firmly concentrated on the enemy within, they pointed in the same way as patriotic posters to the need for national unity. In a way they encouraged a mild form of paranoia- the feeling that the state was besieged, and not from the outside, but also from the enemy within.



Figure C.26.



Figure C.27.



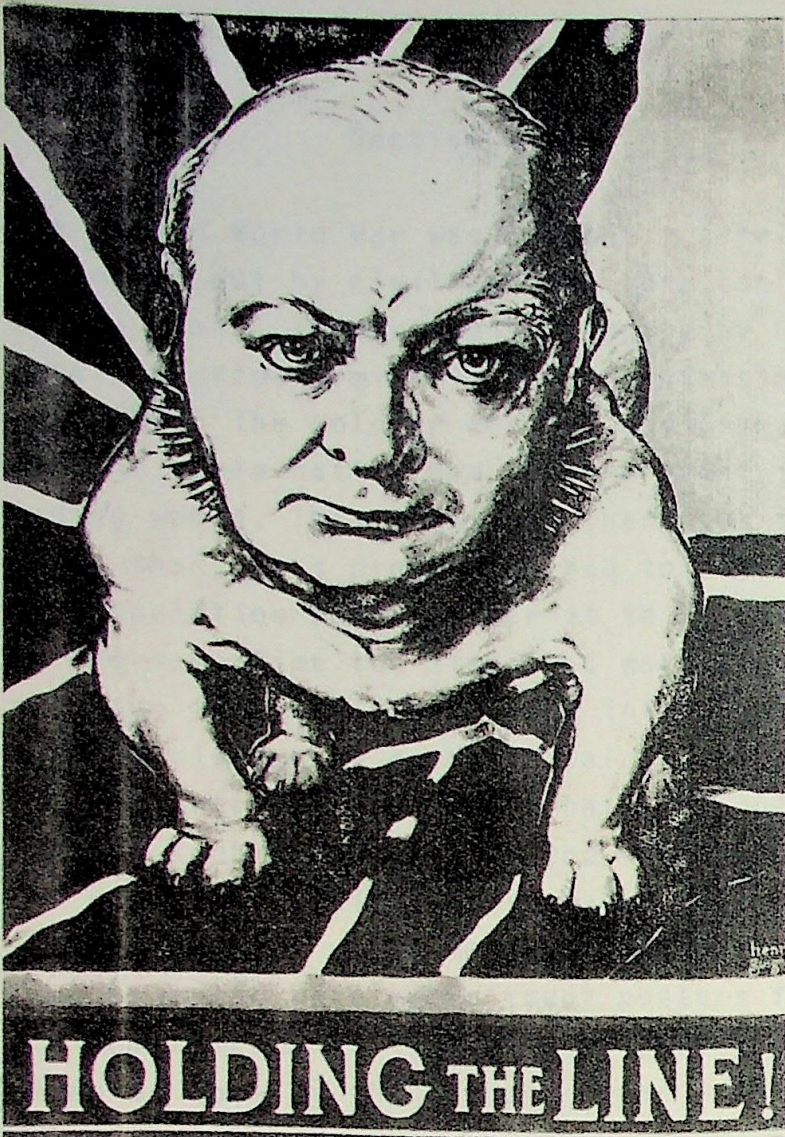


Figure C.27.

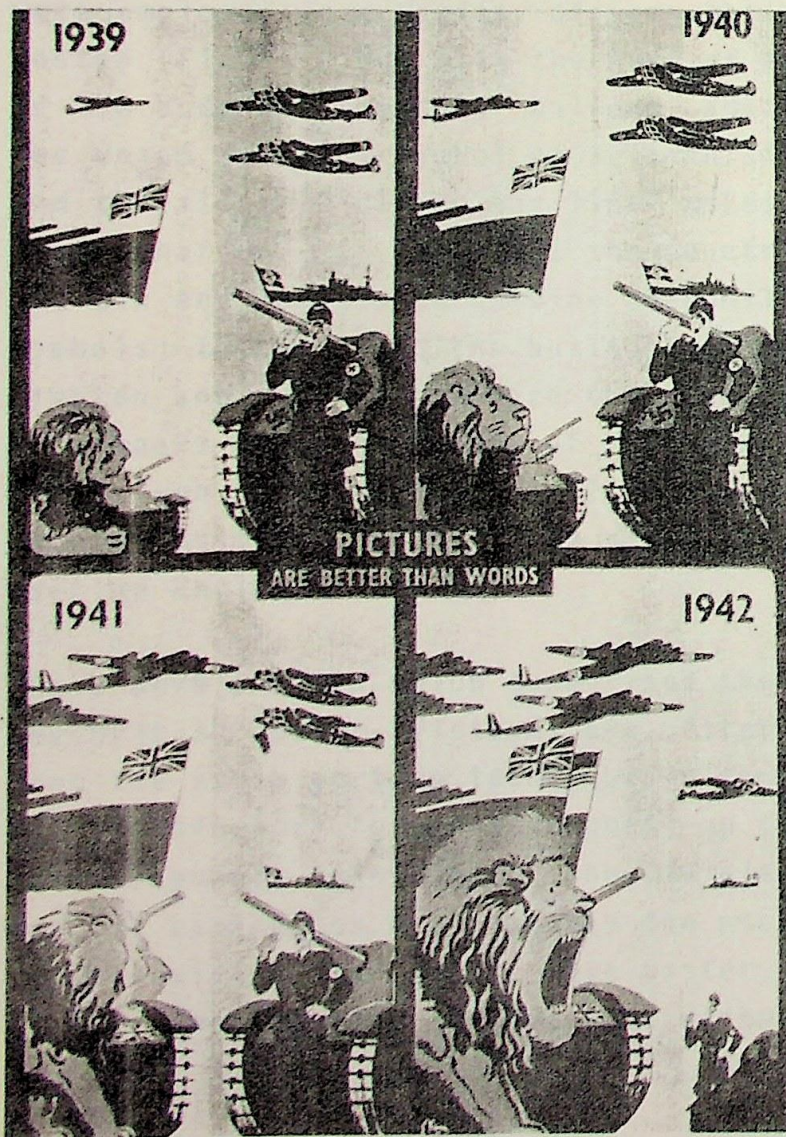


Figure C.28.



### Section 2.3

The Second World War was neither a purely European war, nor was it fought out by civilians who were contesting political power in one state. It was fought largely by European states - by vast conscript armies in which professional soldiers were a minority. The soldier and the civilian were interchangeable and the whole nation had to be brought into the war effort including women. This total war character of the Second World War meant that mass propaganda had to aim at the largest part of the population and convince it to be utterly loyal to the state. At the same time the state was making demands on the people which, in peace time would have been intolerable. That strain must not lead to disloyalty or political doubt. Patriots had to defend their countries and do their national duty whenever required. Without such group loyalty the state could not have prosecuted the war. Patriotic posters made up a large group of wartime posters, many of which made use of emotive symbols and emblems. Some of these were recruitment posters for the armed services and sometimes the state emblems and symbols were repeated on the uniforms worn by the men and women portrayed on the posters. On other posters the colours or the symbols of the national flag were employed in a variety of permutations. Henry Guignon's poster (Figure C.28) with the head of a determined Churchill on the body of a muscular bulldog, against the background of the Union Jack (a symbol of Britain since the Napoleonic Wars) and the slogan "Holding the line" makes the point of dogged determination. It expresses the country's resolve to resist and win and manages to combine Churchill with two patriotic symbols; the flag and the bulldog. Animal symbols tended to lighten and even to humanize the appeal of patriotic posters. It appears that the shadow of the snake, killed by St. George the patron saint of England, lies under the feet of the bulldog signifying that Churchill was regarded nearly as a saint by wartime England.

There were posters which summarised the progress of the war. The British poster "Pictures are better than words" (Figure C.29) uses the strip cartoon technique in four parts to give a simple and satisfactory "progress report" up to the year 1942. The animal symbol, this time a lion, is also used in this poster, and its variations are probably the most effective feature of an otherwise rather ineffective poster. The first section portrays a resting lion showing that although the English are



armed (see war ships, aircraft and tank) they are not aggressive unlike the Germans in the same section. Section two shows the lion becoming aware of the situation. Section three, 1941, portrays the English beginning to become aggressive with the lion becoming fully alert, theirs ships, planes and tank have advanced while the Germans have retreated. In the last section we see the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes on the advancing ships and planes with the lion roaring defiantly, showing that the attitude of the English and their allies had become belligerent and confident, while the German ships and planes retreat and diminish with the nation's self esteem.

Some posters managed to convey their message without copy by using sheer graphic impact as is the case in Figure C.30 a French poster, probably published after the fall of France in one of the western allied countries, which uses patriotic symbols simply and effectively. The swastika is brushed over with three energetic tricolour brush strokes. The graffiti formula suggests popular resistance against Nazi occupation.

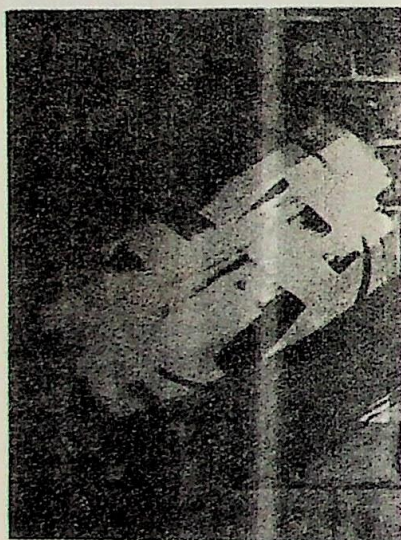
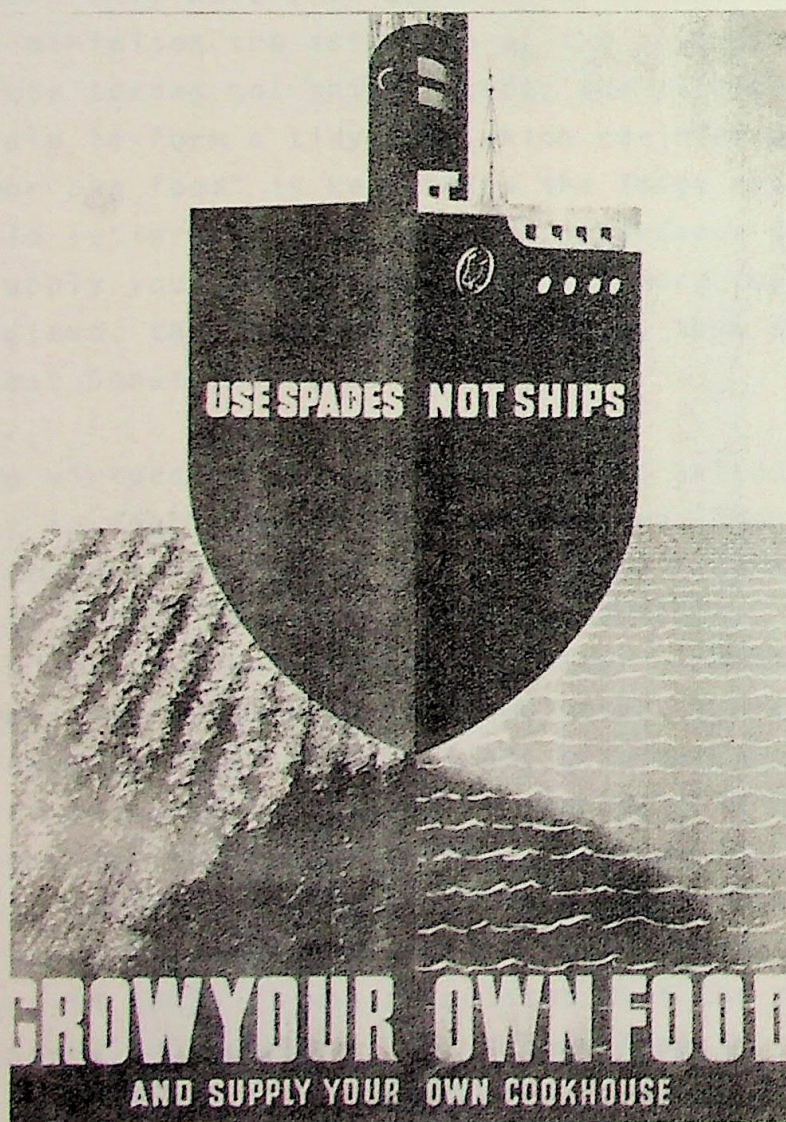
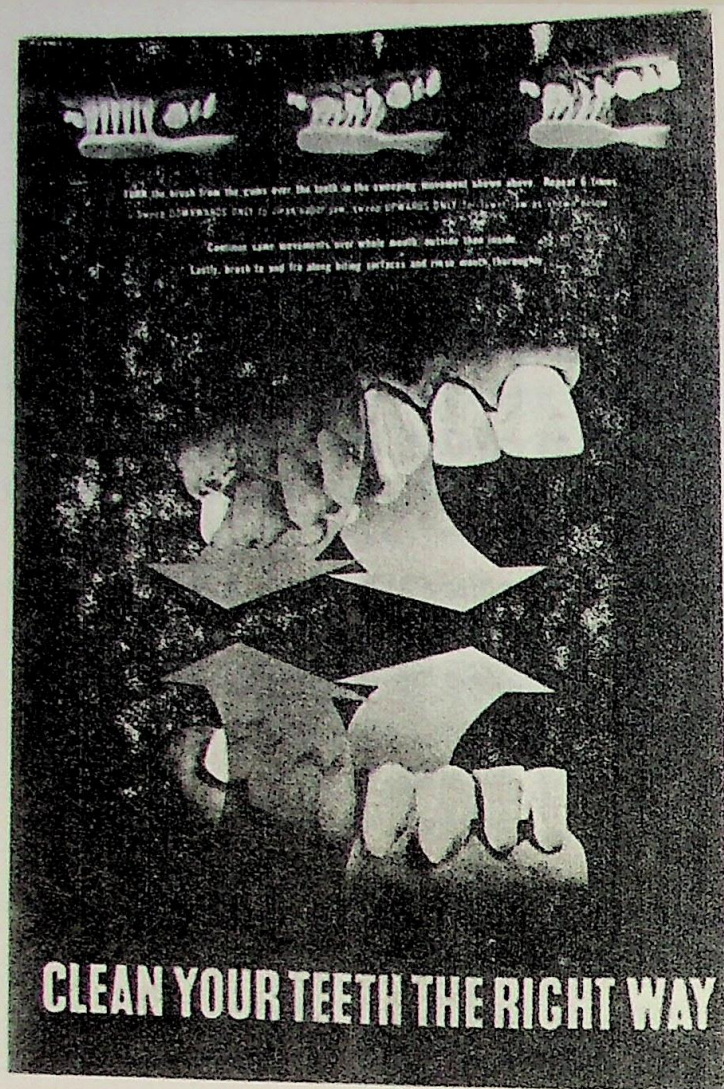


Figure C.30.







## Section 2.4

Safety, public health and medical campaigns were a major concern in Britain, civilians were urged to "Clean your teeth the right way" (Figure P.3) a poster which instructs on cleaning teeth, how the brush should be held and the directions in which it should be used. It gives illustrations of the brush being used on the upper and lower jaw. The photos used are of a set of teeth that have obviously been somewhat neglected as the gums have receded through lack of correct brushing (and age), although the owner of the teeth did have some of them filled. The teeth used to illustrate the poster were ordinary and commonplace, as would be more the norm at that time, rather than a glamorous set, the general run of people would have automatically associated them with their own teeth.

People were urged to grow their own food. In Abram Games' poster on this theme (Figure C.31) the illustration is divided down the centre, the left side shows a spade about to dig into the earth, the right side a ship sailing on the sea. This clever combining of two images to create such a balanced illustration could only have been achieved by an artist of Games' calibre. He minimises the intrusion of the text by running the slogan "use spades not ships" across the illustration in a discreet scale to form a tidy band which re-inforces the issue. "Grow your own food" is kept below the image and rendered in strong bold lettering, stressing the importance of being able to "supply your own cookhouse". The more food which was grown in England, the less need for imports, thus saving all round, a great boost to the war effort.

The virtues of green vegetables and salads in helping the consumer to fight infection were stressed, "Doctor Carrot guards your health" (Figure P.4) was a half serious creation to encourage people to use home grown vegetables. The public were warned to get first aid for any minor ailments or injuries which they might otherwise have neglected. The assertion that the present British welfare state originated during the 1939-1945 war certainly holds true in the field of propaganda. The government was roused to action by the special problems created by this war on the home front, and found itself with a large and effective propaganda machine at the Ministry of Information. Thus in 1943, it was calculated that the total incidence of venereal disease was 139% higher than in 1939, the first



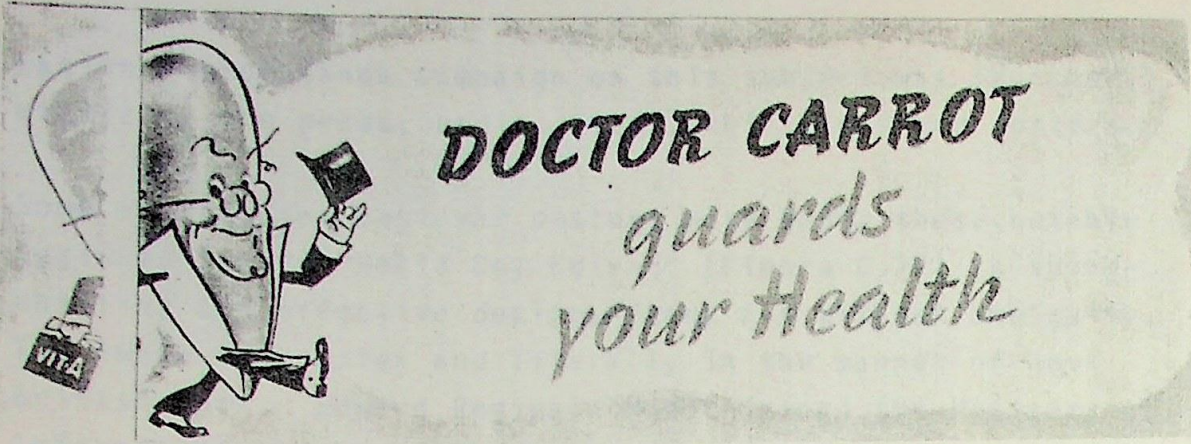


Figure P.4.

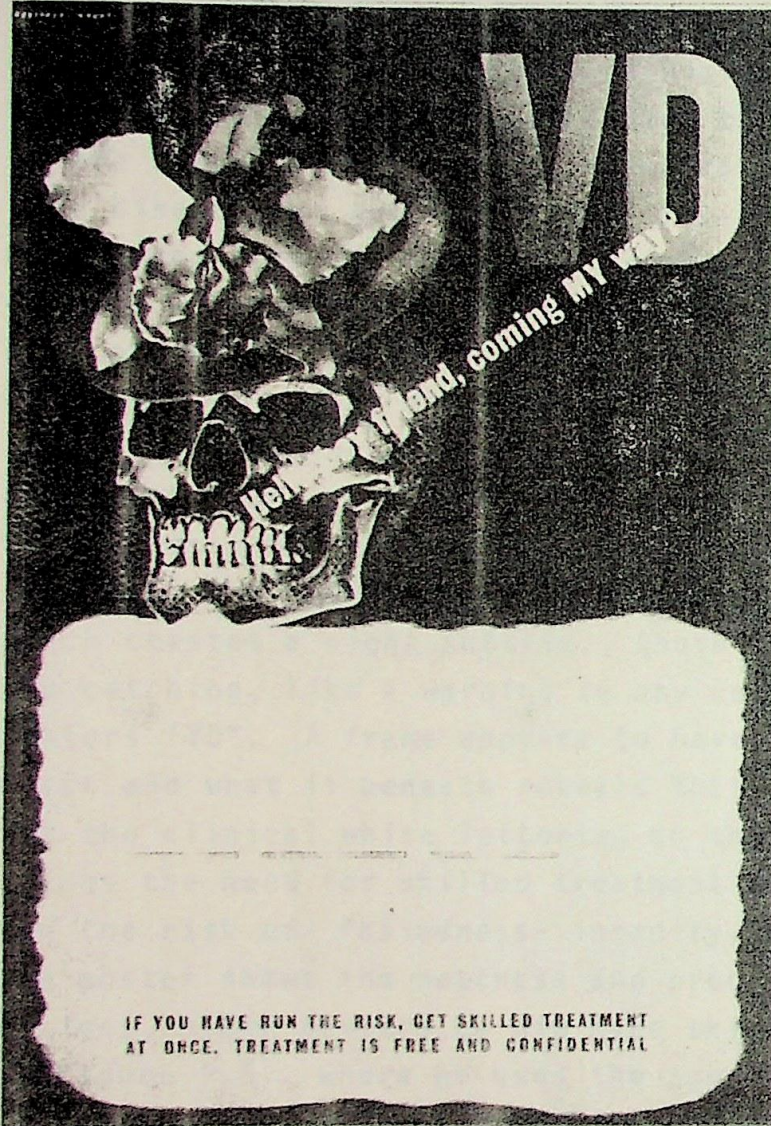


Figure c.32



Figure P.5.



national propaganda campaign on this subject was launched, utilizing the press, radio, films, exhibitions and posters.

Some of Britain's best war posters were among these, notably Reginald Mount's "Hello Boy Friend" (Figure C.32) a spine-chilling and effective design, frank and without ambiguity. The image is complex and literally in the manner of best British work. Edward Reginald Mount joined the Ministry of Information at the outbreak of the war and designed many posters for their campaigns, notably security, salvage, diphtheria immunization and the anti VD campaign of 1943-1944. This was the first national campaign on venereal disease and it was produced for the Ministry of Health and Central Council of Health Education. Mount contributed three posters of which this is the first. Mount wrote of this problem "Research showed.. this disease was not contracted only from prostitutes, but in many cases from the easy girl friend... I wanted to show that contact with this sort of female could, quite literally, be the kiss of death". He uses a human skull in this poster as a symbol of death. It smiles grotesquely at the viewer and asks "Hello boy friend, coming MY way?" "She" wears a flamboyant pink hat as a symbol of inticement, with a veil for a feeling of furtiveness. An orchid placed on the hat adds a fleshy unhealthiness to the whole image, which is imposed on a black background which creates a night setting. Above this image, strong and eye-catching, like a warning to any unsuspecting victims are the letters "VD". A frame appears to have been torn out of the black and what is beneath reveals that the disease is not fatal, but the clinical white lettering on the grey background underlines the need for skilled treatment without which the victim ran the risk of "blindness- insanity, paralysis, premature death". The poster shows the neatness and precision of Mount's painted designs, other posters by him make skillful use of photomontage. In Figure P.5 where he used the same layout as the first poster but this time he warns the man suffering from venereal disease, that it is a vile crime against his wife and unborn child to infect her. He stresses that treatment is free and confidential. The use of photomontage in which two huge shadowed hands reach out to grasp the bride in white is effective in portraying the horror of this disease.



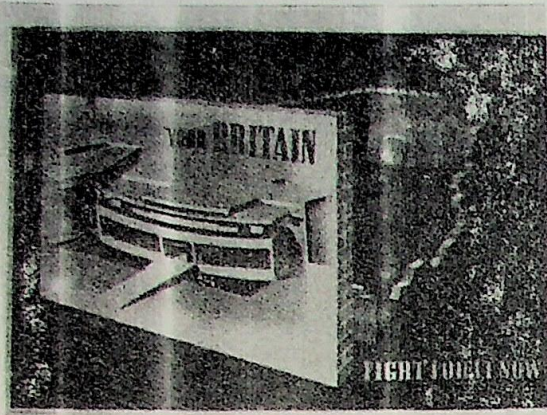


Figure C.33.



Figure C.34.



## Section 2.5.

The communal perils of the blitz and the aftermath of Dunkirk helped to foster a national community sense. A series of posters were issued in 1942 by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs whose function was to interest service men in political and social questions. Included in this series was Abram Games' poster "This is your Britain", (Figure C.33 ). In the foreground of this poster a brick wall, on which there is a view of modern architecture in bright clear colours, is placed in front of a distressing scene of a dilapidated playground, depicted in gloomy colours, in which a young boy with rickets picks his way through the rubbish on the ground. To add the final touch these two contrasting scenes are surrounded by different skies; the wintry sky of the "present" contrasting with the bright sky of the "future". This poster was withdrawn after initial distribution to the army and display at Harrods Poster Exhibition, and copies were destroyed by order of Winston Churchill, who disliked the representation of a child with rickets. The use of this poster of unconventional imagery in which symbolic colours, and the fusion of modern architecture and a dilapidated playground in a single image are depicted, show once again Games' familiarity with Surrealist work by artists such as Dali and de Chirico. This awareness of modern development in art, coupled with the vision of a future urban Britain in which present evils would be righted, contrasts strongly with Frank Newbould's more traditional vision of an idyllic, pastoral, almost historical Britain in his posters on the same theme.

In 1942 Frank Newbould joined the War Office as Games' assistant and in this capacity he designed approximately eleven posters, including four designs for "Your Britain, Fight for it now" series. This scene of the South Downs (Figure C.34 ) aroused feelings of an ideal pastoral Britain. The poster illustrates the peace and beauty of the English countryside. The feeling of space is created by large areas of land on which there are no buildings. In the foreground a farmer is taking his flock of sheep to the homestead, his dog ambles beside him and both walk in a relaxed manner, enjoying the sunny weather and beautiful scenery. This poster is quite outside the mainstream of war posters and Newbould's pictorial approach recalls the flat simple patterning of the Begganstaffs. It is a typical example of how an inter war travel poster was used almost unchanged during the war to arouse patriotic feelings for an idealised pastoral Britain.

Walter Spradbery's "Proud City" posters are another example of



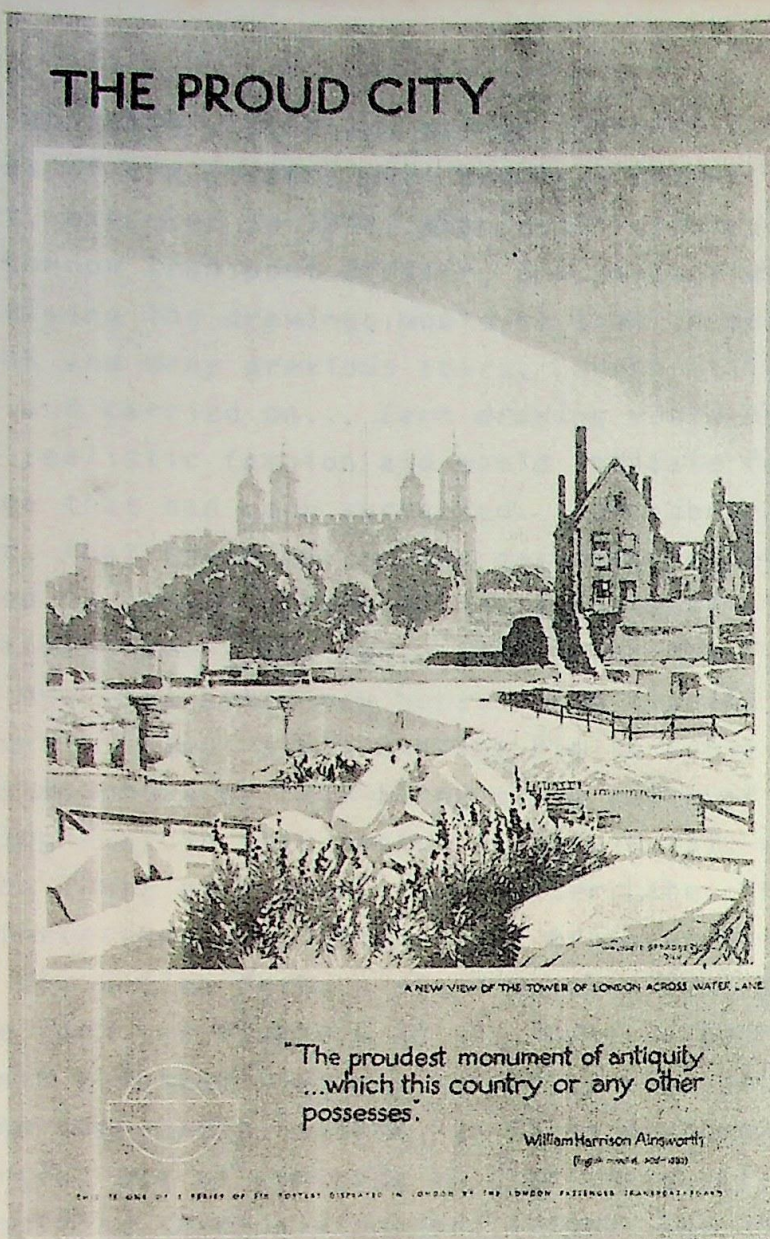


Figure C.35.

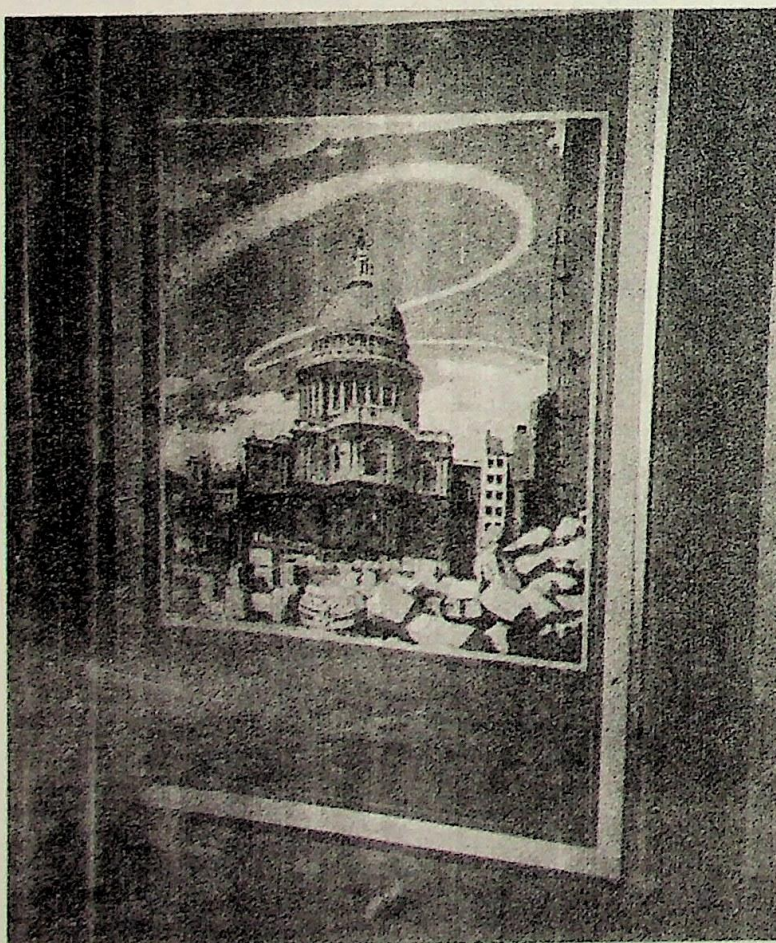


Figure C.36.



this approach ,Spradbery was an official war artist and this series of six posters were his last designs for London Transport, executed in 1944. When commissioning these posters for the London Transport Officer, B.K.Harbour wrote " The motif underlying the drawings would be that in spite of prolonged attack and many greivous scars, London still proudly held its head and carried on... Each drawing would deal with its subject in a realistic fashion and would indicate faithfully the war damage that had been sustained. " Spradbery feared, as anyone would, that these may be the grimmest posters ever issued, but wanted to convey "Some of the indestructible beauty of light and atmosphere-- the sense that havoc itself is passing and with new days comes new hopes". The clarity and simplicity of his water colour style enabled him to achieve this aim; note the atmosphere of calm after storm conveyed by the dark cloud lifting away in this poster (Figure C.35). which shows a view of the Tower of London across Water Lane. The rubble and ruin in the foreground are softened and enhanced by the growth of Rose Bay Willow Herb, a plant which always grows rapidly on waste land. In figure C.36 ,St.Pauls Cathedral stands proudly against a summer blue sky, scribbled with jet trail,oblivious to the surrounding rubble. In these posters Spradbery shows an artful use of contrast in creating unified illustrations by reconciling seemingly opposed images. The use of quotation was typical London Transport practise. "The Proud City" quotations were chosen by Spradbery himself.These posters attracted considerable attention; they were even issued in Arabic and in all, 27,000 copies of them were distributed throughout the world;

There series of posters are of interest because they make their point by arousing the curiosity rather than giving direct information.



## CONCLUSION



Art has been propagandistic since ancient times and whether or not the propaganda content of art reduces its aesthetic value is not important. The value of propaganda in art over rides this. The visual image can help to make abstract political ideas understandable. In posters this is usually done by an association of symbols with a textual message. Visual images can suggest allegories, such as good overcoming evil, and thus may serve as a universal language, they also help to simplify abstract political theories. Further if the audience is persuaded to equate (or confuse) the things represented in design with the actual political reality behind it, poster propaganda has succeeded in both its artistic and political sense in becoming an effective means of arousal and persuasion.

While studying these posters it became apparent that in the years prior to the Second World War a greater sense of aesthetic values was developing. Artists could not have been uninfluenced by modern architecture, painters, engineers and decorators and their aesthetic findings. Good designers had to keep up with contemporary thought and progression. The graphic poster could no longer be ignored so it became established as the vital expression of contemporary life.

In the beginning of the Second World War commercial propaganda was hesitant, illuminated sky signs were incompatible with the black-out. Display windows shrank in area as protective shutters turned them into peepholes, but apart from these measures which were dictated by military necessity, commercial propaganda did not immediately alter in character. The continuation of life, in as normal a manner as possible, eased the work task of those who created commercial propaganda, and the public grew more imaginatively responsive to the whole idea of carrying on. This was probably due to the fact that in the years immediately preceeding 1939 commercial propaganda was attuned to the deep desire of the public that the world should remain normal and that people should be allowed to conduct their business in peace. So many posters worked at extolling the merits of the goods and services which made life healthier, easier, gayer and generally more agreeable... British propaganda posters were sober, retrained and well planned. No poster issued by the government contained threats; suggestions were made rather than instructions given.

The poster, generally a combination of appropriate type and



forceful illustration became a significant public art form with a specific and unique function in the spectrum of communications. Not everyone bought the papers or listened to the radio, but the poster could not be avoided. So though the war changed the manner and matter of the presentation of the poster, the standard of illustration, typography and display improved. Designers took tremendous liberties with the scale of objects, also colour and detail, they learned that the function of a designer was not to show how realistically something could be presented, he was not concerned with realism at all, but to show how clearly a given sequence of pictorial images could be woven together into one coherent whole. They learned to abstract form from life and to combine them together into a sort of sign language, the skill of the designer lay in knowing what to select that was capable of being reduced to simple pictorial terms and quickly comprehended shapes. This use of graphic imagery enabled the artist to isolate the dramatic form of an idea diminishing much of the detail which used to be considered necessary to the establishment of the situation up to then. This simplification led to the development of many new techniques which are now common. Whereas the more illustrative type of drawing relied for its interest on complexity of detail, the more exposed form of the modern drawing called for greater ingenuity and variety of execution.

As an ideal weapon, during the Second World War the poster gained wide support by appealing to attitudes and concentrating on specific issues, but its over-riding concern was of persuasion. Posters were viable as communication during the war because of the existence of a universal response to a repertory of visual images, comprehensible at a glance. They had the effect of bringing civilians together in a common fight against the enemy. They were bearers of hope that sought to unite men around an ideal, calling upon moral values; courage and brotherhood.

The part British propaganda played in weakening the resistance of the civil population of Germany has been recognised, and even admired as a technical performance by Nazi specialists in propaganda. The British campaign against civilian morale was even imitated with characteristic variations in the form of appeal by the propaganda organisation directed by Dr. Goebbels.

When Britain "stood alone" the radio speeches of Winston Churchill were extremely effective in bridging the gaps of class and culture and in generating a feeling of national purpose.



In this situation posters produced by the Ministry of Information and other ministries, served to re-inforce these themes and to provide essential and useful items of information.

The British nation saw themselves as an Empire fighting to preserve decency freedom and honour, they felt they were shouldering a world responsibility; the defenders of liberty. On June 4th 1940 Mr. Winston Churchill said in the House of Commons; "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."

This was the spirit the poster designers of all nations sought to evoke, and as we have seen in the British case, were often successful in making their designs into really effective contributions to the victorious war effort.



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