

M2108

OSS MORALE OPERATIONS BRANCH PROPAGANDA
SAMPLE BOOKS, 1943–1945

Jodi Foor prepared the introduction and the records for microfilming.

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INTRODUCTION

On the five rolls of this color microfilm publication, M2108, are reproduced the 11 sample books of propaganda materials produced by the Morale Operations (MO) Branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the years 1943–45. These scrapbooks contain samples of propaganda leaflets, stickers, newspapers, sheet music, stamps, post cards, poems, cartoons, and booklets prepared by the Reports Office, and the Marigold, Collingswood, and Squires Projects in the MO Branch. Propaganda was distributed in Italy, Greece, the Balkans, Germany, Central Europe, the Japanese Pacific, China, and French Indo-China. The scrapbooks form the series Propaganda Sample Books, 1943–1945 [A1, Entry 93], in Records of the Office of Strategic Services, Record Group (RG) 226.¹

BACKGROUND

The OSS was the World War II agency responsible, on behalf of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), for the execution of psychological warfare. Its activities included propaganda, subversion, sabotage, and espionage. The MO Branch was established by OSS General Order No. 9 on January 3, 1943, and its mission was clarified by JCS 155/11/D issued on October 27, 1943. It was charged with the execution of all forms of morale subversion by diverse means including false rumors, “freedom stations,” false leaflets, and false documents; the organization and support of fifth column activities by grants, trained personnel, and supplies; and the use of all agents, all for the purpose of creating confusion and division, and undermining the morale of the enemy.

Among the many distinctions drawn between types of propaganda warfare is that between “white” and “black.” The former is actually or apparently objective, admits its source, and conforms to the policies of the government for which it speaks. The latter is subversive by every possible device, disguises its source, and is disowned by the government using it.

“Black” propaganda was always an essential part of OSS Director William J. Donovan’s program for psychological warfare. Donovan felt that persuasion, penetration, and intimidation were the modern counterparts of sapping and mining in the siege warfare of former days and that “white” and “black” propaganda warfare should be conducted in accordance with a single coordinated program. It was eventually established that the OSS was to coordinate “black” propaganda activities in enemy-controlled territory while the Office of War Information (OWI) was to coordinate “white” propaganda activities from American sources outside enemy-controlled territories.

As World War II concluded, the need for psychological warfare waned. When the OSS was abolished on October 1, 1945, parts of its activities were distributed to the Department

¹ Textual record series designators usually consist of the series title with a date span, the finding aid notation, and the Master Location Register (MLR) entry number, shown here in brackets.

of State and the War Department. When the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was established in 1947, many of the records of the OSS were transferred to that agency, including the propaganda sample books. The National Archives and Records Administration received these records in 1985 from the CIA with the understanding that they would be referred to as “OSS records” to keep the records of the original agency and its purpose intact.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The materials are preserved in 11 “sample books” with several documents on each page. Sample books 1–4 measure 13 by 18½ inches, sample books 5 and 6 measure 13 by 20 inches, sample books 7 and 8 measure 13 by 21½ inches, and sample books 9–11 measure 17½ by 25 inches. Pages are not always numbered. While each page contains multiple items, the materials are photographed individually in this publication to allow closer study. The following summaries provide general listings of the materials in each sample book—with some detailed descriptions—but are not comprehensive.

Sample books 1 through 4 consist of propaganda materials produced by the Morale Operations Branch of the Sino-American Cooperative Association (SACO) at its headquarters in Chungking, China, as well as some of its branches in China. OSS personnel cooperated with Chinese writers and artists to produce this “black” information, and Japanese prisoners of war assisted in the production. Distribution in Japanese-occupied territories in China was designed to create confusion among the Japanese forces, lower morale, and stir up dissension. Propaganda was presented in the form of color cartoons lampooning Japanese pretensions to overwhelming military might, encouraging sabotage, picturing Japanese officers dissipating in Shanghai, and depicting puppet rats fleeing a burning building (to discredit the puppet government); posters advertising for coolies (to reveal the alarming destruction of bridges, railway equipment, and the hopelessness of Japanese defense), relief for families of Japanese soldiers (to publicize destruction in Japan), a disease warning for Chinese (citing disease in Japan resulting from bodies unburied in the aftermath of bombing raids), Japanese army leaders viewing Japan in flames (to lay the blame on militarists), and anti-cholera shots being given by the Japanese (to frighten the Chinese); booklets describing how the Chinese have defeated foreign invaders in past centuries; colorful antimilitaristic slogan sheets; illustrated letters portraying the suffering of a soldier’s family in Japan; political cartoons; Mah Jong and Huma Uta cards with slogans detrimental to the Japanese; free railway passes authorizing bombed-out families to travel to new homes (thereby clogging transportation facilities and creating depression); newspapers published in Japanese to stimulate antiwar feelings; and news sheets in Chinese directed against the puppet government.

Sample books 5 and 6 consist of “black” propaganda produced in Rome, directed toward enemy groups in Italy consisting of German, Italian, Russian, Polish, Mongol, Czech, and Austrian troops and fascist civilians in Italy; German and Austrian troops as well as German puppet troops and pro-Nazi civilians in the Balkans; and German and puppet troops as well as pro-Nazi civilians in Central Europe. Also targeted were pro-Allied groups in enemy-occupied territory consisting of Italian, Slovakian, Yugoslavian, and Greek partisans, and anti-Nazi civilians in Italy, Germany, Central Europe, Greece,

and the Balkans. The materials include newspapers, news sheets, and leaflets in several languages with instructions for distribution; letters; political cartoons; posters; popular music; postcards; photojournalism; surrender leaflets; slogans; and language guides.

Sample book 7 consists of “black” propaganda picturing the production route from author to completed project including research, translation, art, music, editorials, and radio; detailed description of humorous, poetic pamphlets designed to intensify disaffection between the Gunbu and the rest of the Japanese and to create hope for a free, democratic Japan; inexpensive cartoon leaflets and stickers for use by the Japanese underground in China; and satirical poems of an off-color nature designed to impress troops.

Sample book 8 consists of “black” propaganda materials produced by Nisei for distribution to Japanese soldiers that include cartoons of poor conditions in Japan, a song to be sung by the People’s Chorus on the radio for the home front and the front lines urging the Chinese to resist the Japanese, a message to be inserted in rice cakes used by Japanese in occupied territories, a dramatization in comic leaflet style preparing Japanese soldiers to surrender, leaflets distributed to the Thai and Chinese peoples urging them not to serve the Japanese, radio newscasts for Japan aimed at the liberal underground, instruction in the Japanese language using terms to create disaffection, and letters to Japanese soldiers from children with thoughts interjected to create concern for the soldier’s home and family.

Sample book 9 consists of “black” propaganda materials used in China and Japan that include a poster for the Nanking area depicting a puppet soldier in need of food, clothing, and arms; posters urging that Japanese deserters be turned in, suggesting methods of sabotage, and calling attention to mines in the Kowloon dock area; pamphlets describing desertion of Chinese and Korean soldiers who had served the Japanese; a song of the 5th of May by a Hamper-the-Traitors group; a newspaper describing hopeless situations; a proclamation denying rumors that Russia has given Japan 20 days to surrender or they will enter the war; notices to the Chinese purportedly from the Japanese commander in chief requiring all Chinese to cooperate in every way with Japanese officers; a suicide note by a Japanese soldier; duplication of a puppet newspaper with rewritten, slanted news stories; leaflets describing how Chinese will not fight Chinese; a tribute to Mussolini and Hitler designed to spread the word about the failure of the Axis Powers; maps of gains and losses by Japanese; a cartoon weekly; and cartoons depicting the Japanese as locusts.

Sample book 10 consists of “black” propaganda materials used in China and Japan that include radio broadcasts, posters, leaflets, announcements from the Japanese Army suggesting that insignia of the Iron Blood Anti-Japanese Society be painted throughout villages with accompanying slogans, counterfeit money, suggested methods of sabotage, news releases, newspapers, poems, comic pages, information about havoc and destruction in Japan, mimeographed sheets delivered daily, surrender leaflets, letters from a soldier’s home, and a message to puppet troops.

Sample book 11 consists of “black” propaganda used in China and Japan including surrender passes, newspapers, posters, forged orders, postcards, leaflets, letters from

a soldier's home in Japan, news releases, poems, reports of Japanese POW camps in America, surrender appeals, a diary from the front, notices to puppet troops and Koreans, a slanted Korean/Chinese phrase list, a Japanese officer's statement that he wants to build a new Japan, cartoons, and slogans.

RELATED RECORDS

RECORDS OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT GENERAL AND SPECIAL STAFFS,
RECORD GROUP (RG) 165

Military Intelligence Division (MID)

Propaganda Branch

Reports Directives, Bulletins and Other Papers Dealing with Psychological Warfare and Propaganda Activities in Overseas Theaters, 1939–1945 [NM-84, Entry 172]²

RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION, RG 208

Overseas Operations Branch

Bureau of Overseas Intelligence

Records of the Director, 1942–1945 [NC-148, Entry 1]

Records of the Office of Facts and Figures, Decimal File of the Director, 1941–1942 [NC-148, Entry 5]

Office of Facts and Figures, Alphabetical Subjects File, 1941–1942 [NC-148, Entry 7]

Reports on Japanese Propaganda Lines, 1942–1945 [NC-148, Entry 551]

RECORDS OF THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES, RG 226

Morale Operations Branch

Propaganda Samples, Point of Origin, 1942–1944 [A1, Entry 112]

RECORDS OF ALLIED OPERATIONAL AND OCCUPATION HEADQUARTERS,
WORLD WAR II, RG 331

Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF)

Psychological Warfare Division

Subject File, 1945 (Correspondence, Posters, and Publications Relative to Propaganda Activities in Norway, 1945) [NM-8, Entry 161]

General Records; Periodicals, 1944–1945 (Leaflets, Newspapers, and Periodicals Issued For Propaganda Purposes, 1944–1945) [A1, Entry 93A]

Leaflets, 1944–1945 (Leaflets, Newspapers, and Periodicals Issued for Propaganda Purposes, 1944–1945) [NM-8, Entry 93]

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ROLL LIST

ROLL	CONTENTS
1	Sample Book 1 to Sample Book 4
2	Sample Book 5
3	Sample Book 6
4	Sample Book 7 to Sample Book 9
5	Sample Book 10 and Sample Book 11