

A study about the advertisements and pictorial posters of WWI and WWII

Victor Adir, Industrial Design and Engineering Graphics Department, Faculty of Aerospace Engineering,
University Politehnica of Bucharest, 060042 Bucharest, Romania

Nicoleta Elisabeta Pascu, Industrial Design and Engineering Graphics Department, Faculty of Aerospace
Engineering, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 060042 Bucharest, Romania

George Adir*, Theory of Mechanisms and Robots, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 060042 Bucharest,
Romania

Suggested Citation:

Adir, V., Pascu, N. E., & Adir G. (2021). A study about the advertisements and pictorial posters of WWI and
WWII. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 8(1), pp 70-75. Available
from: www.prosoc.eu

Received from December 20, 2020; revised from February 10, 2021; accepted from June 01, 2021.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof.Dr. Ayse Cakir Ilhan, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.

©2021 Birlesik Dünya Yenilik Arastirma ve Yayıncılık Merkezi. All rights reserved.

Abstract

In this paper, we have tried to evoke the propaganda episode in the First and the Second World Wars (WWI and WWII). It is a small part of our study including only research about images, characters, messages and words (title and text) used to create a mobilising movement of the people during these wars. The purpose was to select elements from the advertisements and pictorial posters and to comment upon the impact of the graphic messages included. During our work, we have identified many interesting things which had the target to mobilise one person against another using graphics and words with a strong patriotic message. This paper presents the interpretation for only a few posters and advertisements (about 48), but relevant for war propaganda.

Keywords: WWI, WWII, propaganda, war, symbols, image, words.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: George Adir, Theory of Mechanisms and Robots, University Politehnica of Bucharest, 060042 Bucharest, Romania.

E-mail address: adirancuta@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

There are a few general characteristics of propaganda during the First and the Second World Wars (WWI and WWII). First was the message which was conveyed 'loud and clear' to the people. The posters contain messages for supporting fights and the efforts for war. Two important aspects have been evidenced: the fight was right and the sacrifices are for the country. And, of course, these sacrifices were equally shared. There are differences between the possibilities to convey messages in these two wars. During the years 1914–1918, the posters were the main vehicle of propaganda and for mass communication. No radio, no television, no cinema, only remarkable posters. And these were everywhere: in city centres, in railway stations, on buses and on walls 'to involve the people in the struggle' when they walked down the streets. The purpose was to keep alive the patriotic flame and to keep together the entire people in the effort to sustain the war. For the WWII, we have seen the implication of other mass media communication: radio, cinema, television and, of course, posters. There was information about the fights on these new media communications which were established to inform the people (Afshar & Terwiel, 2019; Kurt, 2020; Waqar, 2020). But the posters never died and there were many interesting posters all over the countries involved in the war to assure the propaganda activity.

It was necessary to assure a good design for these posters, to be brightly coloured and highly motivated and emotive. The message evoked many times the sense of comradeship. The posters used in the British Empire talked about the rescue of the way of life of the people who lived in the empire. Many posters have identified the soldiers with their own land (Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa) and have promoted a sense of national pride to shared experiences of the war all together. In the United States of America, the propaganda posters presented the struggle as a crusade for democracy (Bakhmat et al., 2020; Capuyan et al., 2021). There were two important directions: to raise funds and to enlist volunteers. These two kinds of posters (for war bonds to sustain the war and the enlists to join the army) were an important feature of propaganda in these two wars.

An interesting aspect for propaganda posters of WWI was the lack of messages to enlist volunteers in France, Germany or Austria–Hungary because in these countries the armies were based on the principle of national services. In addition, in Austria–Hungary, which was a cosmopolitan assembly of many different ethnic groups, there were no posters to encourage folk traditions, regional characteristics and emotional appeals because of the fear not to grow the desire of freedom, autonomy and independence of these ethnic groups. In Germany, the message was clear and authoritarian, targeting the people to obey and not to think and agree.

2. The typology of images, messages and titles in WWI posters

The messages were addressed to young people to join the army, to women as the land army or the factory army and to all the people to pay attention to what they talk because the enemy is watching them. Many posters were about victory, war bonds, enlists and soldiers. The designers created emotional images in posters to achieve the patriotic spirit of the people. In our study, we have seen these images which were precisely targeted.

A famous poster of Alfred Leete, British illustrator and poster designer for the WWI, is about an image of Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of War who confronts the viewer with an accusing finger and the slogan: 'Britons. Join Your Country's Army'. This poster was printed in several versions (e.g., Your Country Needs You) carrying different texts. In 1917, James Montgomery Flagg released a similar poster to Alfred Leete's poster using a person who is looking to the spectator with the same accusing finger and the slogan: I Want You for the U.S. Army, with a supplementary text: Nearest Recruiting Station.

In this paper, we have presented only comments about a few images and messages we have discovered in these posters (Table 1).

Table 1. Comments about a few images and messages

No.	Poster/year	Image/illustration	Title/message
1.	Great Britain/1915	A line of soldiers and between them a place reserved for a fit man to join	There is still a place in the line for you
2.	Great Britain/1915	Mother, daughter and son looking at the soldiers who are passing on the road	Women of Britain say: GO
3.	Great Britain/1915	A daughter asks her father what did he do in the Great War	Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?
4.	Great Britain/1915	An army cap	If the cap fits you, join the army today
5.	South Africa/1916	A soldier face to face with an enemy (poster addressed to New Zealand, Australia and Canada soldiers)	Are you helping your Overseas Pals in the Final Knock-Out?
6.	Australia/1918	A bloody beast with German cap over our planet	It is only a question mark, no title
7.	Great Britain/1915	A five shillings coin falling down on a German soldier (in India was the same poster but the coin was one rupee)	Lend your five shillings to your country and crush the Germans
8.	Great Britain/1915	A cavalry soldier in attack	Forward! Enlist Now
9.	Canada/1917	Four mariners on a ship	The Navy Wants Men
10.	France/1916	A soldier in attack yelling for victory	On les aura! (Let's get them)
11.	Austria-Hungary/1916	A double-headed eagle with a sword in its claws	Subscribe to the war loan
12.	Great Britain/1915	Silver coins which are falling from hands and becoming bullets	Turn Your Silver into Bullets
13.	Germany/1918	A lot of money which are throwing in a military cap	The best savings bank-the war loan
14.	Austria-Hungary/1916	A young warrior woman with a sword and a crown of laurels	Subscribe to the Austrian war loan
15.	Austria-Hungary/1918	A soldier with a coin as shield in front bayonets which are damaged	Subscribe to the war loan
16.	Australia	A little girl who tightens to the chest a war loan bond	My Daddy bought me a War Loan Bond. Did Yours?
17.	Russia/1916	A woman working at a lathe	All for war-Subscribe to war loan
18.	Russia/1917	Russian soldiers with rifles and flags in their hands	Freedom loan
19.	USA 1917	A mariner uniform on a chair	It Takes A Man to Fill It. Join the Navy
20.	Germany/1917	German soldiers in trench	Imperial and Popular Charity Fund for the Army
21.	Great Britain/1917	A horse, a plough and the woman who drives it	National Service-Women's Land Army
22.	USA/1918	American cavalry in background and a basket with fruits and vegetables in front	Food is Ammunition. Don't waste it
23.	Great Britain/1916	Working women to make munitions	These women are doing their bit. Learn to make munitions
24.	USA/1918	A sole shoe step on the Kaiser	Help Uncle Sam Stamp Out the Kaiser!

We have noticed that many titles were written with capitals letters and with different characters to underline a special target. For example, YOU is written differently from the other capital letters,

sometimes in red colour (in a lot of titles). In the famous posters of 1914 and 1917 (designers Alfred Leete and James Montgomery Flagg), the word YOU is special. We have seen the connection between the message (by titles) and the image.

3. The typology of images, messages and titles in WWII posters

There are posters for war loans, for recruiting people and for the mobilisation of women force in factories to sustain the war effort. We have noticed a novelty, namely posters about the vigilance and silence, because there were many enemy spies all over the countries and it was especially important not talking to somebody.

A famous poster of WWII is about a woman who has become a feminist icon. The image talks about a working woman with muscular arm, saying that they can do the men's work to save the country. It was released in 1943 for Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company to show the involvement of the company in the war effort using women force.

The slogan We Can Do It! was one of the important slogans in USA in WWII. In Table 2, we have made a few comments about posters of WWII.

Table 2. Few comments about the posters of WWII

No.	Image/illustration	Title/message
1.	Three cobras having German, Italian and Japan symbols	This is the enemy
2	A palm of a hand over a mouth of an American citizen	Quiet! Loose talk can cost lives
3.	A pilot having as background stripes and stars	Join US Army Air Corps
4.	A fist on the Nazi symbol (swastika)	Buy War Bonds and Stamps
5.	Two American hands put a bonnet on the head of a young woman	Become a Nurse. (It is about recruiting medical personnel)
6.	A woman in front of factories which manufacture tanks and airplanes	Women of Britain. Come into The Factories
7.	An American Eagle	We've just begun to fight!
8.	A soldier counts on his fingers the good news from the country	Good news from home. Tanks, planes, guns, ships
9.	A woman with a pitchfork in her left hand looking to the wheat field	Join the Women's Land Army
10.	Shoulder to shoulder, soldiers from the British Commonwealth of Nations	The British Commonwealth of Nations Together
11.	A young woman in military uniform (in background is the USA Flag)	Join the WAC Now!
12.	A mysterious person with a set of inhuman eyes under a strange helmet	He's watching you! (vigilance poster)
13.	A parrot	Free Speech doesn't mean Careless Talk!
14.	A farmer who carry tools and goods from the field	Dig on For Victory
15.	A scene of tenderness between a soldier and his girl friend	Buy War Bonds
16.	An American child with a German cap, with Nazi symbol, on his head	Is he your child? You don't want this! Buy War Bonds before is Too Late
17.	A sole shoe step on the Nazi symbol	Step on It. Join the Army
18.	A caricatured Japanese mouse catches in a mouse trap	Jap Trap
19.	A plaster on a person mouth.	Closed for The Duration. Loose Talk Can Cost Lives
20.	A soldier woman who put a finger on her lips	Silence Means Security
21.	A woman with her finger on lips	Don't Talk!

22.	Russian soldiers in attack	All for battle front, all for victory!
23.	A mother lies dying near her village on fire and her Russian girl asks for revenge	Father, kill the Germans!
24.	A Nazi dagger spears an exposed claw like hand	Fatal European Adventure (a warning to the Allies on mainland Europe)

We have noticed that many titles are written with capitals letters and some suggestive words are written with different colours from the other letters or are bigger than others. The title is in connection with the image, with many urges to join, to fight, to do, to stop, to kill etc.

4. Conclusion

As we already said, this paper is a small part of our research study. Only few posters were included to pay attention to the hard work to investigate the propaganda in war times. We have noticed a connection between messages and images. The purpose of images was to mobilise the people to fight against the enemy, to work hard for the war effort and to believe in victory. We have seen, many times, similar messages and images in the posters of WWI and WWII. We have identified symbols and colours used in the posters graphics which is a distinct part in our study. In the times of war, the designers have created interesting posters with accurate target. In a future paper, we shall present other determinations of our research.

References

- Afshar, V., & Terwiel, C. (2019). Art for peace. *Global Journal of Arts Education*, 9(2), 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjae.v9i2.4417>
- Bakhmat, N., Liubarets, V., Bilynska, M., Ridei, N., & Anhelina, S. (2020). Digital transformation of preparation of the future: Specialists in the economic industry in conditions of dual professional education. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(3), 242–251. <https://doi.org/10.18844/prosoc.v7i3.5258> (Original work published December 1, 2020)
- Capuyan, D. L., Capuno, R. G., Suson, R., Malabago, N. K., Ermac, E. A., Demetrio, R. A. M., Aburayya, A. M., Concordio, C. T., Arcadio, R. D., Medio, G. J., & Lumantas, B. C. (2021). Adaptation of innovative edge banding trimmer for technology instruction: a university case. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues*, 13(1), 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v13i1.5361>
- Kurt, H. S. (2020). Psychological contract violation and turnover intention: Employee-perceived loyalty as a mediator. *Global Journal of Psychology Research: New Trends and Issues*, 10(2), 160–169. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjpr.v10i2.4566>
- Livingston, A., & Livingston, I. (2012). *Dictionary of graphic design and designers*. Thames & Hudson Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19235003.2012.11428500>
- Posters of the First World War. (2015). Imperial War Museum.. [https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=A3kZCgAAQBAJ&lpg=PR6&ots=PbT4ZAiRxX&dq=Posters%20of%20the%20First%20World%20War%20\(2015\)%2C%20Imperial%20War%20Museum%20Publisher%2C%20Londondon.&lr&pg=PR9#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=A3kZCgAAQBAJ&lpg=PR6&ots=PbT4ZAiRxX&dq=Posters%20of%20the%20First%20World%20War%20(2015)%2C%20Imperial%20War%20Museum%20Publisher%2C%20Londondon.&lr&pg=PR9#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Posters of the First World War. https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=pSlmBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT8&ots=oD_JEVjQit&dq=Posters%20of%20the%20First%20World%20War%20&lr&pg=PT8#v=onepage&q=Posters%20of%20the%20First%20World%20War&f=false
- Posters of the Second World War. https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/618883/1/LEWIS%20_X_%20Full%20Draft%20-%20Vol%201%202004%208%2015.pdf

Adir, V., Pascu, N. E., & Adir G. (2021). A study about the advertisements and pictorial posters of WWI and WWII . *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 8(1), pp 70-75. Available from: www.prosoc.eu

Tony Husband, T. (2014). *Truth and lies in times of conflict*. Arcturus Publishing Limited. [https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=IjapBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT6&ots=ZA_MHbN6yY&dq=Tony%20Husband%2C%20T.%20\(2014\).%20Truth%20and%20Lies%20in%20Times%20of%20Conflict%2C%20Arcturus%20Publishing%20Limited%2C%20Ed.%20Propaganda.%20London.&lr&pg=PT6#v=twopage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.gh/books?id=IjapBAAAQBAJ&lpg=PT6&ots=ZA_MHbN6yY&dq=Tony%20Husband%2C%20T.%20(2014).%20Truth%20and%20Lies%20in%20Times%20of%20Conflict%2C%20Arcturus%20Publishing%20Limited%2C%20Ed.%20Propaganda.%20London.&lr&pg=PT6#v=twopage&q&f=false)

Waqar, A. (2020). Impact of humorous advertising on purchase decision: In context of Pakistan's telecom industry. *Global Journal of Business, Economics and Management: Current Issues*, 10(2), 144–150. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjbem.v10i2.5089>