Guide to the Charles B. Burdick War Poster Collection

Collection number: MSS-2010-02-02

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Charles B. Burdick War Poster Collection
Dates: 1914-1979
Bulk Dates: 1914-1945
Collection number: MSS-2010-02-02
Collector: Burdick, Charles Burton, 1927-1998
Collection Size: 122 Folders, 1,452 Posters
Repository: San José State University. Library.
San José, California 95192-0028

Abstract: The Charles B. Burdick War Poster Collection 1914-1979 (bulk 1914-1945) is a graphic art collection of posters documenting World War I and World War II. The collection consists of over 1,400 posters created by both the United States and foreign nations. War posters were used as propaganda to sell the war to the American public. The posters generally defined war as a struggle between good and evil, and featured the sale of liberty bonds to protect American democracy. A broad range of topics are represented in the collection, including war bonds, civilian employment, women's service in the military, food rationing, and fire prevention. The collection also includes posters documenting political subject matter from the 1930s-1970s. This collection is arranged into three series: Series I. World War I Posters, 1914-1918; Series II. World War II Posters, 1939-1945; and Series III. Political Posters, 1930s-1970s.

Physical location: Posters are located in flat file drawers 1-01 through 2-10 in Vault 1.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English, Filipino, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish.
Access
The collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
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Processing Information

Project Information
This finding aid was created as part of the Survey and Cataloging Project, a two-year San José State University Library grant project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The project began in 2008. The Project Director is Danelle Moon. The Project Archivist is Erin Louthen.

Collection Description
Between World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945), the U.S. government used propaganda through the mass production of war posters, pamphlets, billboards, advertisements, and film to foster broad-based support of the two wars. In World War I, the Committee on Public Information (CPI) was organized to shape public opinion in favor of U.S. war aims. Civilian chairman, journalist George Creel, enlisted the creative talent of over 150,000 people to produce over 100 million pieces of literature and visual materials in order to explain the meaning and cause of the war to the American public. During World II, the War Advertising Council (WAC) produced a similar volume of war propaganda materials.

The U.S. government used propaganda posters as a powerful mass communication tool to build support for the war effort. Throughout both wars, posters were created to boost morale, increase patriotic sentiment, promote the purchase of war bonds, offer guidelines for food rationing, and promote civilian and military war work, while demonizing countries such as Germany, Japan, Spain, and Italy. Various government agencies worked closely with private organizations such as the YWCA and the Red Cross to produce a variety of posters that supported the war, and specifically targeted women to conserve, to work in war industries, and to consider military service.

Included in this collection are posters that depict the aggression of the Germans against the vulnerability of neighboring countries, such as the experience of Belgium. One such example graphically projects the imagery of the Belgium people victimized by the Germans as invading Huns. In WWIII, both the United States and England also utilized the “First to Fight” poster campaign to portray the Germans and the Japanese in an unfavorable light. Many of these posters used less offensive techniques to engender support from American women by targeting their responsibilities as patriots through military service as WAVES, WACS, and as Red Cross nurses, while the iconic image of “Rosie the Riveter” and slogans like “Yes We Can!” encouraged both married and single women to enter the workforce in unprecedented numbers.

Bibliography


Scope and Content
The Charles B. Burdick War Poster Collection 1914-1979 (bulk 1914-1945) is a graphic art collection of posters documenting World War I and World War II. The collection consists of over 1,400 posters created by both the United States and foreign nations. War posters were used as propaganda to sell the war to the American public. The posters generally defined war as a struggle between good and evil, and featured the sale of liberty bonds to protect American democracy. A broad range of topics are represented in the collection, including war bonds, civilian employment, women’s service in the military, food rationing, and fire prevention. The collection also includes posters documenting political subject matter from the 1930s-1970s.

Arrangement
This collection is arranged into three series: Series I. World War I Posters, 1914-1918; Series II. World War II Posters, 1939-1945; and Series III. Political Posters, 1930s-1970s.

Subject Headings
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

World War, 1914-1918 -- History
World War, 1914-1918 -- Posters
World War, 1914-1918 -- United States
World War, 1914-1918 -- United States -- Posters
World War, 1939-1945 -- History
World War, 1939-1945 -- Posters
World War, 1939-1945 -- United States
World War, 1939-1945 -- United States -- Posters
World War, 1939-1945 -- Propaganda
World War, 1939-1945 -- Women -- United States
World War, 1939-1945 -- War Work -- United States
World War, 1939-1945 -- Food Supply -- United States
United States -- Naval Reserve -- Women's Reserve
United States -- Office of Civilian Defense
United States -- Office of War Information
United States -- War Food Administration
United States -- War Manpower Commission
Creel, George, 1876-1953
Committee on Public Information -- United States

Series I: World War I Posters 1914-1918
Physical Description: 86 Folders, 991 Posters

Series Scope and Content Summary
The material in this series consists of poster campaigns for the U.S. and foreign nations involved in World War I. The bulk of the series documents propaganda in the U.S., France, and Great Britain, but include smaller representations from Canada, Germany, Poland, and Russia. A broad range of topics are represented in this series, including war bonds, civilian employment, food rationing, military enlistment, and conservation of specific resources, such as oil and rubber.

Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by country. Posters are located in flat file drawers 1-01 through 1-12 in Vault 1.

Folder 1-2 Canada
Physical Description: 2 Posters

Folder 3-24 France
Physical Description: 313 Posters

Folder 25-29 Germany
Physical Description: 50 Posters
Folder 30-37  **Great Britain**  
Physical Description: 63 Posters

Folder 38  **Poland**  
Physical Description: 12 Posters

Folder 39  **Russia**  
Physical Description: 5 Posters

Folder 40-85  **United States of America**  
Physical Description: 531 Posters

Folder 86  **U.S.: Women's Posters**  
Physical Description: 15 Posters

Series II:  **World War II Posters 1939-1945**  
Physical Description: 41 Folders, 361 Posters

Series Scope and Content Summary  
The material in this series documents poster campaigns for several countries involved in World War II. The bulk of the series documents U.S. propaganda campaigns, but includes examples from Belgium, Great Britain, Canada, Hungary, the Philippines, and the USSR (Russia). A broad range of topics are represented in this series, including war bonds, civilian employment, women's service in the military, food rationing, conservation of natural resources, and fire prevention.

Arrangement  
This series is arranged alphabetically by country. Posters are located in flat files drawers 1-13 and 2-05 through 2-08 in Vault 1.

Folder 87  **Belgium**  
Physical Description: 1 Poster

Folder 88  **Canada**  
Physical Description: 6 Posters

Folder 89-92  **Great Britain**  
Physical Description: 21 Posters

Folder 93  **Great Britain: Women's Posters**  
Physical Description: 6 Posters
Series II: World War II Posters 1939-1945
Folder 94 Hungary
Physical Description: 1 Poster

Folder 95 Philippines
Physical Description: 2 Posters

Folder 96 Spain
Physical Description: 1 Poster

Folder 97 USSR (Russia)
Physical Description: 3 Posters

Folder 98-126 United States of America
Physical Description: 297 Posters

Folder 127 U.S.: Women's Posters
Physical Description: 23 Posters

Series III: Political Posters 1930-1979
Physical Description: 10 Folders, 100 Posters

Series Scope and Content Summary
The material in this series consists of various poster campaigns from Great Britain, Cuba, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, and the USSR (Russia) promoting specific political parties, figures and national ideologies.

Arrangement
This series is arranged alphabetically by country. Posters are located in flat file drawers 2-09 through 2-10 in Vault 1.

Folder 128 Cuba
Physical Description: 2 Posters

Folder 129 Germany
Physical Description: 13 Posters

Folder 130-131 Great Britain
Physical Description: 32 Posters

Folder 132 Hungary
Physical Description: 1 Poster
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