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OSS - The Psychology of War

MORALE OPERATIONS BRANCH

Morale Operations used "black" or false propaganda spread by a variety of creative and devious means. Subversive rumors were spread by agents or planted in news stories. Leaflets were scattered from airplanes, suddenly appearing on the streets of cities as if they had been casually discarded. Some urged resistance or gave sabotage instructions. Others were intended to "generate panic." For example, forged air raid instructions dropped on Japan urged people to flee when they heard the air raid sirens, adding to the confusion and panic generated by the raids. Other forgeries included currencies, train tickets, postage stamps, and military orders and manuals.

Other Morale Operations were designed to encourage resistance movements, by creating the appearance of an organized resistance where there was none. Newspapers and flyers were produced. "Black radio" stations purported to be broadcasting from within enemy territory. Leaflets urged industrial sabotage and explained "simple sabotage" of railways, automobiles, etc. Graffiti was also used to create the impression of an organized resistance.

In its brief history, the Morale Operations Branch was led a succession of individuals including Frederick Oechsner, Kenneth D. Mann, Charles P. Healy, Patrick Dolan, Morton Bodfish, and Herbert S. Little.

Note below that it's not always clear whether a proposed morale operation was ever

approved or implemented.

MORALE OPERATIONS BY COUNTRY

Germany
Italy
Europe and the Balkans
North Africa and the Middle East
Japan
China, Burma and India
Indonesia
Soviet Union

MODUS OPERANDI

Provisional Basic Field Manual
Use of Rumors
Bribery, Blackmail and Subsidy
Forged Documents
Airborne Leaflets
Poison Pen Letters
Coordination with OWI
Planting False Information in the News Media
Black Radio
Motion Pictures and the Arts
Other

During peace time there is ample reason for differences of opinion upon the philosophical question as to whether the end justifies the means. Under normal conditions many of those engaged in M.O. operations would question the religious or ethical propriety of committing acts which in themselves are considered unmoral merely because they serve what is considered a useful or desirable end. In a war, however, which threatens the very existence of our way of life, our civilization, our religious, ethical, educational and other institutions, the end becomes all important. Unless the end is achieved, nothing results but the extinction of our way of living and consequent slavery. It is for this reason that there is virtual universal agreement among all people in our country, both clerical and lay, that the bombing of civilians, though to be avoided whenever possible, is a necessary and inevitable result of all-out-war in order to achieve the earliest possible termination of hostilities and the rebuilding of a peaceful world. Likewise, the general principle underlying M.O. operations is that however unorthodox and distasteful to us during peace time, any means should be employed if it will contribute appreciably to the collapse of enemy resistance. Viewed in the broad perspective of human progress, the greatest good will result from the early and utter defeat of the enemy by whatever means it may be necessary to employ. **Chapter 3: General Principles** (context unknown -- all I know is what is apparent

from document markings, found in RG 226 Entry 92 mixed in with Italy MO)

MORALE OPERATIONS BY COUNTRY (separate webpages)

Germany [77 documents]

Italy [32 documents]

Europe and the Balkans [30 documents]

North Africa and the Middle East [5 documents]

Japan [61 documents]

China, Burma and India [44 documents]

Indonesia [17 documents]

Soviet Union [4 documents]

MODUS OPERANDI

Psychological warfare, as the term is used by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff ... comprises all moral and physical means other than orthodox military operations which tend to destroy the will and ability of the enemy to resist, to deprive him of support of allies or neutrals and to increase in our own troops and allies the will to victory. The implements of psychological warfare are: open propaganda, subversion, special operations (sabotage, guerrilla warfare, espionage), political and cultural pressures, economic pressures. The principal effects sought are persuasion, sympathy, terrorization, confusion, division and physical interference. These operations, ancient in origin, are modernly employed, notably by Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union and other principal powers. The programs are planned more or less centrally in all nations, but executed by a variety of agencies. *Memorandum on Intelligence for Psychological Warfare, by General John Magruder, Feb. 1943*

Contact with underground movements through Foreign Nationalities Branch, through Labor Desk, SI, through independent emigres in this country (Mrs. Rado), through eventual MO Representatives in London, Stockholm, etc. Bribery and subsidies, maintain contact names index file, and work through MO Foreign Representatives and their agents. Blackmail -- maintain contact names index file and work through MO Foreign Representatives and their agents. Counterfeiting. Currency reference for Mr. Healy's James Hecksher and Mr. Shubart, Bank of the Manhattan Company, regarding foreign currencies, ration cards, passports, personal papers of the enemy prisoners or dead. Rumor and whispering campaigns -- see special memo on these. Abduction -- see Sedgwick proposals. Chain letters with cupidity, superstition and fear as main employed motives. Poisoning (tricks and toy gadget) instructions as to how to

make or use these things in enemy occupied or enemy countries, actual distribution. Assassination by suggestion or agents. Illness and epidemics by suggestion or contagion. Diver's manipulations: black market in neutral countries, discrediting by cartoons (Artsybasheff and Szyk). *Possibility for MO Activity, by Frederick Oechsner, April 21, 1943*

Instrumentality and media: open propaganda (radio, press, films); subversive: black propaganda, rumor spreading, "poison pen", bribery, etc., physical destruction, guerrilla operations, etc., aimed to induce confusion, uncertainty, and fear; combat psychological warfare: activities carried on within the military ranks (radio, prisoner indoctrination, panic-production, etc.); economic pressure; diplomatic pressure; social contacts. Psychological warfare tactics: fraternization or neutralization, conversion (appeals to belief), soporifics (alleviation of anxieties), appeasement (appeals to expediency); disruption or attack, terror (aims to frighten), vilification (aims to undermine self-respect), confusion (aims to stir up conflicts between groups, over ideologies) *Factors to be Considered in Planning Psychological Warfare Strategy, Nov. 3, 1942*

The Operational Use of MO Material, circa 1944

The Morale Operations Branch should function largely as a planning unit and must rely upon SO and SI in the field for the activation of its plans. *PW Operations - Future Operations as Affected by Current Military and Political Events, August 9, 1943*

Provisional Basic Field Manual

Provisional Basic Field Manual -- Morale Operations, Dec. 21, 1943 (first 36 pages)

I have but one suggestion to make, which I believe will be an improvement by way of eliminating the present ambiguity in the text in the use of the word "Subversion". The word is used in three places ... without other qualifying or modifying language. In each such instance it is immediately followed by a description of activities which are instantly recognized as those of the SO Branch. However, at two places in the text ... the word "Subversion" is followed by the expression "other than physical", and here too immediately follows a description of the duties and activities of SO. *Memorandum from Charles Pratt Healy on Provisional Basic Field Manual, Psychological Warfare, May 24, 1943*

Subversion operations, other than physical, will be conducted within enemy countries, within enemy-occupied or controlled countries and within other areas where action or counter-action may be effective against the enemy. Such operations have for their purpose: inciting or spreading dissension, creating confusion and disorder, encouraging and supporting resistance and revolt against the enemy and the enemy government. The means (other than open propaganda) for carrying out the above operations are: by rumors and black propaganda; by contact with and manipulation of individuals and underground groups. *Excerpts from "Provisional Basic Field Manual -- Psychological Warfare" with regard to MO, May 1943*

The OSS Planning Group in its meeting Monday, May 31, discussed the desirability of the preparation by the MO Branch of basic doctrine for MO operations. ... The Planning Group also suggested that the preparation of such doctrine by the MO staff should be done in close liaison

with the Psychological Warfare Staff, which it is believed has already done some work on such a project. *MO Doctrine, June 1, 1943*

Use of Rumors

There are tens of thousands of rumors in the OSS files. Those listed in the country-specific webpages are either from sustained campaigns, or are novel in some way. Rumors were designed to achieve long-range MO objectives, but were normally related to current events. Rumor themes were orchestrated by the "MOPO Committee" and coordinated with rumor campaigns of the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE). The British referred to rumors as "sibs".

The following are the more important strategic uses of rumor for subversive purposes: Dividing the enemy by means of fostering distrust and suspicion between enemy allies, the enemy and collaborationists or within the enemy population itself. Terrorization by means of circulating rumors of a terrifying character. Certain rumors of this type when properly timed may be employed to precipitate panic. Arouse unwarranted optimism. This strategy is most effective in order to pave the way for the greatest psychological impact of impending defeat upon the enemy. Thus hopes are raised only to be precipitously dashed. Deception. Here rumors are circulated primarily with the aim of deceiving enemy intelligence. *Rumor Lecture for MO Course, circa 1943*

The Criteria of a Successful Rumor, June 12, 1943 (12 pages)

Pre-releases through sib agents, Feb. 26, 1944

Pre-releases through sib agents, Feb. 24, 1944

Open Channels for Rumor Dissemination, et. al., Oct. 1, 1943

Planned Rumors, July 30, 1943

Planned Rumors, Aug. 11, 1943

Rumors for Dissemination, Dec. 7, 1943

Sib Committee, Oct. 11, 1943

For your information, I am sending you a duplicated copy of the minutes of the first "Sib" Committee meeting. ("Sib" is British term for "rumor.") This new committee is composed of the several Area of Operations Officers of the M.O. Branch, or their designated representatives. They meet twice a week and concern themselves solely at these meetings with framing of rumors to be sent to our field offices for dissemination. *Memorandum from Lt. Patrick Dolan to Lt. Col. Edward W. Gamble, Sept. 3, 1943*

5th Meeting of "SIB" Committee, Sept. 15, 1943

Sibs, Dec. 6, 1943

Rumors

Airborne Leaflets

At present the R.A.F. will have nothing to do with the dropping of black printed matter the reasons being (a) that any of the crews captured in possession of such material would probably be shot and (b) S.O.E. is afraid that if such stuff were dropped it would lodge in trees, on roofs, etc., and give away the show. *Memorandum from Rae Smith to Patrick Dolan, July 31, 1943*

MO Progress Report 16 - 28 March 1945

Please send us by the truck that is returning to Rome, one bomb fully packed, less explosives, of CORNFLAKES, one bomb, fully packed, less explosives of PIG IRON. *Memorandum of Robert M. Allen, April 27, 1945*

Coordination with the Office of War Information

Recommendation: That permission be requested from S.I. and R&A to release to O.W.I recent reports on anti-Fascist activities in Italy. O.W.I does not have an intelligence set-up comparable to O.S.S. and we can further M.O.'s aims by giving them some of our intelligence. The reports might be given them for background information or for quotation -- in the latter case, the source must not be given. Furthermore, a great number of the latest reports on Italy bear directly on O.W.I's field. *Secret Memorandum from V. Taylor to MOPO Committee, June 23, 1943*

To hasten dissemination of this propaganda, it is now proposed to fake a leaflet, supposedly spread by the Italian Underground, and to hand the text of the fake leaflet to OWI for broadcasting. In this way, we'll reach our target quicker. *Secret Memorandum from Eugene P. Warner to MOPO Committee, June 23, 1943*

You will be interested to know that we have struck a deal with Doob of O.W.I. whereby he now is able to plant selected rumor items in O.W.I. for newscasts. ... We are continuing to supply Doob with a considerable amount of material and are greatly encouraged over the use of it. Incidentally, the programs are rebroadcast by B.B.C. Naturally this arrangement with Doob is on a purely informal and unofficial level and should be kept within the family. *OWI Aid in Dissemination of Rumors, Oct. 4, 1943*

NAME

NAME

OWI Leaflets, circa 1943

NAME

Messages Home From Italian Soldiers Campaign, circa 1943

Rumor Policy - Russia-Japan, April 10, 1945

Planting False Information in the News Media

Dr. Embree has just passed me a note informing me that he has accidentally learned that OFF is in the process of preparing a report in which they intend to make suggestions regarding what the American public should be told about Japan. He expresses the feeling that the suggestions may be quite naive and may show a rather shallow understanding of the complexity of the Japanese-U.S. relations. Is there any instrumentality by which information on foreign countries coordinated by COI may be communicated to OFF for domestic consumption? **Memorandum from Robert C. Tryon, Chief, Psychology Division, to Mr. Baxter, Jan. 29, 1942**

The British say that they do not like plants in British open channels and seldom use them. Occasionally the rumor will make a circuit and come home to roost in the form of a story in the newspapers, but there is very little direct implantation. **Memorandum from Frederick Oechsner to Robert H. Knapp, Oct. 18, 1943**

Confirming our conversation of this date I suggest that an inquiry be made relative to the foreign circulation of such periodicals as the *New York Times*, *Life* and *Time Magazine*, *Army* and *Navy Journal*, *Inventors Journal*, etc. It is obvious that if these periodicals are dispatched by airmail to Lisbon, for example, the German authorities there will immediately relay the periodicals to the proper authorities in Berlin. If it is possible; if it has not already been done; and if it is within our province I suggest that we could utilize this situation to our advantage by "planting" articles in such foreign edition for the benefit of enemy consumption. **Interoffice Memo From Maj. Gen. George H. White, Jan. 18, 1944**

Motion Pictures and the Arts

Communication Channels (1), June 8, 1943

The motion picture is one of the most powerful propaganda weapons at the disposal of the United States. Motion pictures are an unparalleled instructional medium - they can present new facts concerning important problems on which people are ignorant and on which they ought to be informed; they can clarify complicated problems on which people are confused. Motion pictures are a potent force in attitude formation, and attitudes are the basis of action and morale. Motion pictures can stimulate or inhibit action. Motion pictures can contribute to the building and maintenance of morale by: (1) Dispelling doubt and uncertainty, and allaying anxiety. (2) Providing a unique and valuable form of recreation. Motion pictures can orient the individual to affairs beyond his personal experience by providing opportunities for vicarious participation. Newsreels, for example, are the best medium for giving the remote civilian the "feel" of front line combat. **The Motion Picture as a Weapon of Psychological Warfare, circa 1943**

Herewith is a report outlining the Musac Project for recording songs in German to be played to German troops over a black radio station in ETO. This work is being done at the request of our London office. [Musac Project, July 13, 1944](#)

Your increasing awareness of the relative importance of the artist in your program is encouraging. How much else you've learned of their problems - I don't know. Setting an artist down in a strange country with adequate art supplies is not in itself going to produce art for you. OWI combat team in Assam - with all their efficiency learned that the hard way. And the need for accuracy is greater with us than OWI. [Memorandum from Sam Berman, June 22, 1945](#)

Bribery, Blackmail and Subsidy

[Bribery, Blackmail and Subsidy, July 16, 1943](#)

[Comments on Implementary Course, July 17, 1943](#)

The Bazooka - Secret Weapon of Psychological Warfare

[Ordinance Materiel for Psychological Warfare Purposes, March 31, 1943](#)

[Plan for a Subversive Campaign Involving U.S. Weapons, March 24, 1943](#)

[One Man "Tank-Busting" Gun is Newest U.S. Secret Weapon, March 28, 1943](#)

Other

[Poison Scissors, Aug. 20, 1943](#)

[Psychological Use of Occupational Money, Feb. 23, 1943](#)

[Atabrine as a Weapon of Psychological Warfare, May 10, 1943](#)

Unsorted

[Proposed plan for classifion of MO Matierial at Co. C Packing Station, April 2, 1945](#)

Mr. Rae Smith has suggested that to avoid any confusion with the British, who are also using the code "Etna" for one of their campaigns, the M.O. Branch adopt American slang tags for its campaigns. Accordingly, listed below are the new code names for all M.O. Campaigns:

Etna Campaign	"Beans"
Italian Crisis Campaign	"Cripes"
Evil Eye Campaign	"Jinx"
Save Train Campaign	"Scram"
W For Why Campaign	"Whiz"
Hitler Campaign	"Heel"
Scorched Earth Campaign	"Heat"

(Note: these were apparently the first major M.O. campaigns. As the war progressed there would be many more.) Code Names, Aug. 10, 1943

The Functions and Organization of the Morale Operations Branch of the Office of Strategic Services European Theater, July 31, 1943

The copies of your manuscript on the above subject have been received and distributed to the several members of the M.O. staff. Planning Unorthodox Military Tasks for M.O., June 7, 1943 [manuscript not found]

Minutes of 199th Meeting of Planning Group for Psychological Warfare, Sept. 6, 1943

Suggestions for Weekly Black Cable, March 15, 1945

Project for a Secret Printing Press, July 13, 1942

OSS/MO Cable to be sent 12 September, 7 September 1944

Intelligence Material, Jan. 13, 1945

Ideas for an Outline on Psychological Warfare

Morale Operations, May 8, 1944

NAME, Nov. 15, 1943

NAME, Jan. 18, 1943

Memorandum Covering Conversation between Mr. James MacPherson, Mr. DeVecchi and Mr. Hughes, Aug. 1, 1944

Observations on Possible MO Operations, Dec. 29, 1943

MO Recording Project, Sept. 14, 1944

Proposals for Joint MO, PWE, SOE Planning and Operations in the Field of Psychological Warfare in Southeast Asia

Sonics, June 30, 1944

NAME, Jan. 8, 1944

British deception devices, 1943

Letter from Alfred A. Gross, Dec. 18, 1941

NAME, Jan 15, 1942

NAME, Oct. 5, 1943

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