

World War II U.S. Posters: Volume I 'Keep Your Mouth Shut': 75 'Keep Your Mouth Shut' Posters

Allen R. Glanze

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During World War II there were certain major propaganda themes pursued by the Office of War Information (OWI). One of the most important themes, especially at the start of the war, was managing vial information such as ship sailings and troop and war material movements. The most popular slogan was 'Loose Lips Sink Ships.' This book is about that theme and divided into four sections of posters.

The first section deals with posters about 'Loose Talk. These posters were displayed in shipyards, military posts, restaurants, bars, clubs, and on waterfront locations. They warned of carless and non-thinking conversation about ship and other transport movements.

The second section shows posters that are directed at preventing careless information spread around about ships; their movement and cargo. Of particular interest was the threat of Japanese and German U-Boat submarines. Japanese subs sank 184 merchant ships during the entire war while U-boats posed a greater threat. During the German Navy's 'Operation Drum Roll' five U-boats sank 20 merchant ships off America's east coast. In 1943 the OWI started showing corpses and other human disasters to intensify the war effort.

The third section shows posters that caution about 'Silence.' 'Keep Your Mouth Shut' is a central theme throughout all these posters but here they make the statement that no one is going to overhear anything if you again 'keep your mouth shut.'

The fourth and last section deals with taking a pro-active role in restricting your conversation by being aware that 'They Are Listening.' The enemy is always out there waiting and listening for a careless word to use against us. It makes the statement that our freedom and security depends on vigilant silence.



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