

# The War Bond Poster: State Fundraising and National Cohesion Through Mass Media During the World Wars

Hunter Hollins

## Introduction

During the World Wars, the executive branch of the United States government successfully marshaled American public sentiment and funding to support the war efforts. The primary medium for that communication was the poster. This article will focus on four noteworthy examples from the collections of the National Air and Space Museum: two posters from World War I and two from World War II. It examines the work of the governmental departments that recruited the posters and identifies and explores the personal and social background experiences of the four artists who created them. This investigation provides insights into the poignancy of the posters' messages and how they helped mobilize public opinion and thus accomplish the complex transition of the United States from a nation focused on domestic reform and economic revitalization to one mobilizing rapidly for war.

Posters, both past and present, are visually stimulating pieces of art. Why, though, are posters valuable historical documents? Their historic value lies in their



Figure 3: Georges L. Schreiber; "Keep him flying! Buy War Bonds," ink on paper, 29 by 23 inches. The Treasury created this poster for the First War Loan, November 30–December 23, 1942, with the slogan, "Remember Pearl Harbor." The Japanese flag emblems on the aircraft signify that this American pilot shot down six Japanese fighter planes.

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Hunter Hollins is a museum program specialist in the Space History Department, National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC. He wishes to thank the Writers' Group at the National Air and Space Museum for its support. He also thanks Benjamin Guterman, editor, *Federal History* journal, and Dominick Pisano, curator of Aeronautics and Posters at the National Air and Space Museum for their editorial suggestions.

ability to afford the contemporary viewer a succinct view of a past era, a representation of its contemporary public values, ideologies, and common goals. Pearl James writes that the poster, with its idealized theme, allows us to identify an underlying pattern of shared vision within a mass culture.<sup>1</sup>

During World War I, as discussed herein, the initial theme that resonated with the public was one of youth and beauty going forth to battle, followed by a darker, more sinister theme of threat to life and liberty. During World War II, the themes illustrated were heroic defense and might through common cause. Through the study of these posters and themes, we can see a successful path to national cohesion during wartime. The artists who illustrated these themes fashioned persuasive images using their experiences and interpretive and artistic skills. We can begin to see that their life experiences—for some as refugees from despotism and war—profoundly influenced their work and enabled them to compose images that so powerfully conveyed the messages that U.S. officials sought to convey.

Discussion of these artistic motivations and interpretive contributions are generally absent from the historiography. Who the artists were and why they gave their time and talent to a government cause provide further insight into the power of their imagery, into why and how they were able to visually inspire the public imagination and thus the hearts and minds of the American people.

## **World War I**

From the Industrial Revolution to the start of the First World War, western nations increasingly coalesced into nation-states, in which industry and government unified the people around a common will, separating outsiders as “foreign.” According to Jeffrey Schnapp, new forms of mass communication multiplied during that period. Commercial, social, and state organizations all needed ways to reach the populace. While literacy was growing, governments could not count on their citizens to read public messages, and before the advent of electronic media, the poster proved to be a successful communication tool.<sup>2</sup> During the war, states used posters to reinforce the notion that their side was right and the other evil. Again according to Schnapp, the poster served as a mythmaker, elaborating “idealized images, allegories of the nation, and stereotypes of the soldier, citizen, or collectivity; or of monstrous doubles—

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<sup>1</sup> Pearl James, “Introduction: Reading World War I Posters,” in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, ed. Pearl James (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 1–36.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “Epilogue,” in *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*: 369–75. The rise of the nation-state is discussed by R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World, Since 1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950).

the enemy combatant, the foe as faceless hordes.”<sup>3</sup> By World War I, the poster had evolved into an effective advertising tool and artistic medium. According to James, in addition to mobilizing citizens, posters also nationalized civilian populations. The content of the poster effectively captured and evoked a sense of national identity and one’s place in the collective war effort.<sup>4</sup>

President Woodrow Wilson won reelection in 1916, vowing neutrality in the European conflict; however, Germany forced the United States into the war through the sinking of ships and by inviting Mexico to join them in a fight with the United States. Congress declared war on April 6, 1917. Seven days later, President Wilson established the Committee on Public Information (CPI) through an executive order to create consensus and build support for U.S. entrance into the war after years of neutrality. Under the CPI was the Division of Advertising, chaired by the president of the American Association of Advertising Agencies and other leaders in advertising. Their job was to secure donated placement of government advertisements.<sup>5</sup> George Creel chaired the CPI jointly with the Secretaries of State, War, and the Navy. Creel, with the passion of a zealot, attacked the problem:

[D]uring the three and a half years of our neutrality the land had been torn by a thousand divisive prejudices, stunned by the voices of anger and confusion, and muddled by the pull and haul of opposed interests. These were conditions that could not be permitted to endure. What we had to have was no mere surface unity, but a passionate belief in the justice of America’s cause that should weld the people of the United States into one white-hot mass instinct with fraternity, devotion, courage, and deathless determination. The war-will, the will-to-win, of a democracy depends upon the degree to which each one of all the people of that democracy can concentrate and consecrate body and soul and spirit in the supreme effort of service and sacrifice. What had to be driven home was that all business was the nation’s business, and every task a common task for a single purpose.<sup>6</sup>

Under the CPI, America created more posters than any other nation in World War I. According to Creel, “The printed word might not be read, people might

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>4</sup> James, “Introduction,” 2.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice I. Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council,” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1953), 25.

<sup>6</sup> George Creel, *How We Advertised America: The First Telling of the Amazing Story of the Committee on Public Information that Carried the Gospel of Americanism to Every Corner of the Globe* (1920; reprint, International Propaganda and Communications, New York: Arno Press Inc., 1972), 5.

not choose to attend meetings or to watch motion pictures, but the billboard was something that caught even the most indifferent eye.”<sup>7</sup> Creel did not want standard advertising posters; he wanted posters that “represented the best work of the best artists.” To this end, he created the Division of Pictorial Publicity, and he stated that “painters, sculptors, designers, illustrators, and cartoonists rallied to the colors with instancy [*sic*] and enthusiasm, and no other class or profession excelled them in the devotion that took no account of sacrifice or drudgery.”<sup>8</sup> Charles Dana Gibson, the elder statesman of popular art at the time, volunteered on April 17, 1917, to lead the division in New York City. According to Creel, Gibson had to spend “days in Washington actually begging for the privilege of ‘submitting sketches’ from men and women whose names stood for all that was finest in American art.” Finally, “the importance of the offering penetrated the official consciousness, and that which had been ignored came to be wildly pursued.”<sup>9</sup>

According to James, the poster assumed the viewer had the power of choice and aimed to affect that choice. During World War I, posters served to both instruct and seduce, mixing fact with emotion.<sup>10</sup> The war came after a long period of increasing centralization of national power and identity. It was the first “total” war, waged not just by soldiers but also by the home front.<sup>11</sup> The war poster altered the course of war by igniting passions on the home front, particularly reinforcing national identity to bring the populace together to fight the war. Mass-produced, full-color, large-format war posters were signs and instruments of “two modern innovations in warfare—the military deployment of modern technology and the development of the home front.”<sup>12</sup> A war in which an estimated nine million soldiers would die required nations to harness the will of their entire population, and to do this governments needed to provide information to citizens that could persuade as well as inform. Initially, governments spread information through the traditional means of newspapers, proclamations, and notices, and then through newer media such as film and posters.

The selling of government bonds was not a new concept or particular to the United States, but during World War I, the U.S. government used it very effectively. World War I was expensive; the United States had to ship troops and materiel to Europe,

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>10</sup> James, “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

and as it was a modern war, the armies used expensive artillery, tanks, ships, and airplanes. In 1917 Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo had estimated the total costs of fighting the war at \$8.5 billion. Six months later, his estimate had risen to \$15 billion, and by the end of 1918 to \$24 billion; the eventual total was \$31 billion. McAdoo had studied how the federal government had covered the war costs of the Civil War, the only comparable military effort, and deduced that taxes could cover about one-third of the costs—U.S. citizens would need to lend the government the remainder.

McAdoo secured citizen loans by appealing to Americans' patriotism. He asked the public for massive financial support at the very beginning to prepare them for the magnitude of the war, which proved even greater than anticipated.<sup>13</sup> Eighteen days after the declaration of war, Congress passed the Liberty Loan Bond Bill, and on May 15 the campaign began, with 2 million posters produced. During the war, the Treasury issued three additional Liberty Loan Bonds through the Division of Pictorial Publicity. Division artists produced approximately 700 different posters during the war, with individual print runs exceeding 100,000.<sup>14</sup> The second campaign ran from October 1 to October 17, 1917 (5 million posters), the third from April 6 to May 4, 1918 (9 million posters), and the fourth from September 28 to October 19, 1918 (10 million posters).

For the Third Liberty Loan campaign, Howard Chandler Christy created his "Fight or Buy Bonds" poster (figure 1). Christy was born in 1872 in Morgan County, Ohio. At the age of 16, he left for New York City to study art. He grew to become a successful illustrator, and he traveled to Cuba and Puerto Rico to document the Spanish-American War. Following the war, he returned to Ohio and developed his sensual depictions of women known as "Christy Girls." He returned to New York in 1915, and during the war created many posters for recruitment as well as bond campaigns.<sup>15</sup> In "Fight or Buy Bonds," Christy used a female figure to represent "Liberty," a young woman with an American flag in her raised right hand. Christy used the composition as well as the imagery of Eugene Delacroix's "Liberty Leading the People" from 1830. Delacroix's female "Liberty" is bare-breasted, which would not have worked for an American audience, but the idea of

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<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Hormats, *The Price of Liberty: Paying for America's Wars* (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 115–23.

<sup>14</sup> O. W. Riegel, "Introduction," in *Posters of World War I and World War II in the George C. Marshall Research Foundation*, ed. Anthony R. Crawford (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1979), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Biographical information from AskArt. <http://www.askart.com/askart/artist.aspx?artist=23477>, (accessed fall 2014).

feminine beauty hoisting the flag and leading the troops did. The Statue of Liberty, created by French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi and installed in New York harbor in 1886, also depicts “Liberty” as a woman but with a torch instead of a flag. The Statue of Liberty was a symbol that captured Americans’ hearts, and was a symbol that other war bond artists used to garner support for war bonds.

The airplane played a serious fighting role in World War I. In 1917 the United States set up the 94th Aero Pursuit Squadron under Maj. Raoul Lufbery at the aerodrome near Villeneuve, France, about 15 miles from the front lines. On April 14, 1918, the American pilots flew their first combat missions. One of the pilots was Eddie Rickenbacker, who garnered fame for his success in the air. In his autobiography, Rickenbacker wrote that prior to his first successful combat mission, “The image of a Liberty Bond poster popped into my mind. It was a beautiful girl with outstretched arms. In big black letters were the words ‘Fight or Buy Bonds.’ Well, I did not have much choice.”<sup>16</sup> The 94th Aero Pursuit Squadron created an insignia called “Hat in the Ring,” with a top hat adorned with the stars and stripes encircled with a ring. Pilots also customized their aircraft. Christy’s Liberty Bond posters were affixed to the upper-right and lower-right wings of Rickenbacker’s Nieuport aircraft.<sup>17</sup> Whether the image of liberty or of a beautiful girl, this is one remarkable example of a private and public ritual display of a



Figure 1: Howard Chandler Christy, “Fight or Buy Bonds,” ink on paper, 30 by 20 inches. The Division of Pictorial Publicity of the CPI created this poster for the Treasury’s Third Liberty Loan campaign in 1918. This poster was applied to the wings of World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker’s aircraft.

<sup>16</sup> Edward V. Rickenbacker, *Rickenbacker, An Autobiography* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), 125.

<sup>17</sup> Jon Guttman et al., “94th Aero Squadron, ‘Hats in the Ring,’” *Over the Front* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 155–82.

poster. Following the end of hostilities, the War Department ordered Rickenbacker back to the United States to promote the Fifth Liberty Loan Drive.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Christy, Joseph Pennell used the image of Liberty in a somber tone for his Fourth Liberty Loan poster (figure 2). Pennell was born in Philadelphia on July 4, 1857, from a long line of Quakers.<sup>19</sup> He attended art school and became a prolific printmaker and illustrator. He and his wife, Elizabeth Robins Pennell, traveled with authors who wrote about travels in Europe. Pennell was in Germany when an assassin killed Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, and before he could return to London, Germany and Russia were at war. He knew Europe intimately, and according to his wife, he felt tremendous emotional wounds with every report of war destruction.<sup>20</sup> In 1916, Pennell took it upon himself to make drawings of the great munitions works in England. Elizabeth Robins Pennell wrote, “He believed, not that his drawings could help to win or end the war, but

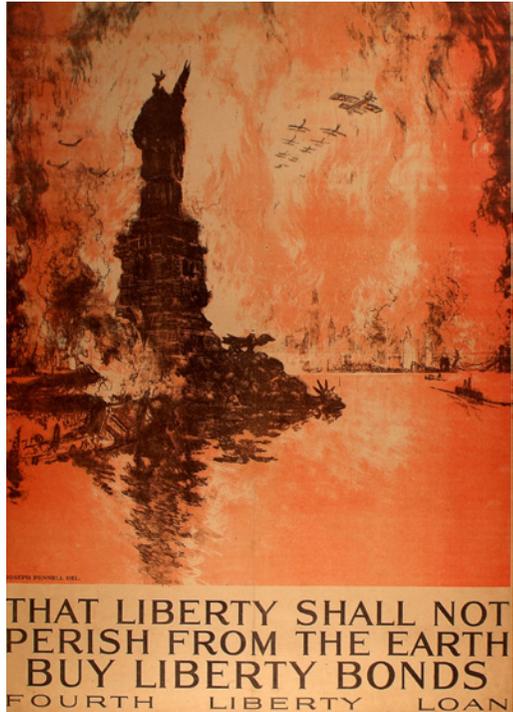


Figure 2: Joseph Pennell, “That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth, Buy Liberty Bonds,” ink on paper, 41 by 28 inches. The Division of Pictorial Publicity, Committee on Public Information created this poster for the Treasury’s Fourth Liberty Loan campaign in 1918.

that, if people could be made to realize the expenditure of labour as well as life war today demands, it would be the last time they would permit their Government to plunge them into it.”<sup>21</sup> The drawings did not have the role that he had anticipated.

<sup>18</sup> W. David Lewis, *Eddie Rickenbacker: An American Hero in the Twentieth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 229.

<sup>19</sup> During his life, Pennell stated that his date of birth was July 4, 1860, as the records of his birth were lost. His wife found documents after his death ascribing his birth to 1857. See Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Pennell*, Vol. 1 (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Pennell, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Pennell*, Vol. 2, 142.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

Officials of the Munitions Department convinced him to show them to Prime Minister David Lloyd George who wanted to exhibit them not just in England but also in France, Spain, and the United States for propaganda purposes, illustrating the power of the British war industry.

By February 1918, Pennell was deep in work for the Division of Pictorial Publicity in New York. Gibson held meetings every Friday at Keen's Chop House in the Herald Square Theatre District. Pennell was a perfectionist regarding the printing of his work. The U.S. government requested such a large run of Pennell's Fourth Liberty Loan poster that printers needed to use two separate facilities; one in Philadelphia and one in New York. Pennell exhaustingly oversaw printing at both facilities to ensure that the colors were true. He described his poster thus:

New York City bombed, shot down, burning, blown up by an enemy. A fleet of aeroplanes fly over Lower Manhattan, flames and smoke envelope the burning skyscrapers, in the foreground Liberty, from a pile of ruins, rises headless on her pedestal, her torch shattered.<sup>22</sup>

H. G. Wells had foreshadowed Pennell's image in his 1907 novel *The War in the Air*, in which German airships reduce New York City to flames and rubble. Wells wrote, "To Europe she [New York City] was America, to America she was the gateway to the world."<sup>23</sup> The title Pennell suggested for his poster was, "Buy Liberty Bonds or You Will See This," but the CPI changed the title to "That Liberty Shall not Perish from the Earth. Buy Liberty Bonds." The CPI replaced Pennell's words with the words from President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Sociologist Barry Schwartz has written that Abraham Lincoln symbolized human dignity for Americans at the beginning of the 20th century when historical figures were highly revered.<sup>24</sup>

Following the fourth campaign, Henry Minor, editorial chief of the War Loan Organization of the Treasury, wrote an editorial summing up the campaign:

Some ten million of Liberty Loan posters were sent out by the Treasury Department. These were put up on monster billboards in cities and in numerable shop windows; in the smaller towns and country districts they

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> H. G. Wells, *The War in the Air* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1908), 181.

<sup>24</sup> Barry Winkler, "Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (Oct. 1966): 908–27.

appeared on the walls of stores and other public places. It was almost impossible for an American Citizen, no matter where he lived, to venture along any public road in the United States without seeing a Liberty Loan poster to stir his patriotism and to appeal for his support for the Loan.<sup>25</sup>

According to James, “the unprecedented numbers of posters produced and displayed across the combatant nations attest to the fact that governments, charitable and other private organizations, and manufacturers all perceived the medium as a critical and effective link to the public.”<sup>26</sup> According to the Treasury Department, over 21 million Americans purchased Liberty Bonds during the fourth campaign alone, providing the government with almost \$7 billion to fund the war.<sup>27</sup>

## World War II

In mid-December 1941, shortly after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, New York advertising executives banded together to provide advertising services for the war effort. In February 1942 the group incorporated as the Advertising Council and harnessed every medium at its disposal—newspapers, radio, magazines, and both indoor and outdoor posters and billboards—to support the war effort.<sup>28</sup> Although advertising for perceived public good had been used in World War I, public service advertising in the United States developed fully during World War II, and it has remained part of government efforts ever since. Maurice Mandell has defined public service advertising as advertising that “has as its main purpose the dissemination of information on a public problem and in the public interest.”<sup>29</sup> The Advertising Council’s first effort was to work with Archibald MacLeish, director of the Office of Facts and Figures, to combat hoarding of goods needed by the military, followed shortly by an

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Minor, “Editorial,” *Army and Navy News*, Nov. 18, 1918. Fourth Liberty Loan Literature, Vol. 1, Records of the Bureau of the Debt, Record Group 53, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>26</sup> James, “Introduction,” 6.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1918,” 1. The United States Treasury Department houses all of its annual reports electronically on their Fraser system through the St. Louis office of the U.S. Federal Reserve. [https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR\\_TREASURY\\_1918.pdf](https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR_TREASURY_1918.pdf) (accessed fall 2014).

<sup>28</sup> The Ad Council is difficult to research, unless one has access to its archives located at the University of Illinois at Urbana. The superior reference is Maurice I. Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council.” However, the only available copy is in Urbana, and it does not cover Ad Council history after 1952. For a more contemporary and easy-to-find history of the Ad Council, see Wendy Melillo, *How McGruff and the Crying Indian Changed America: A History of Iconic Ad Council Campaigns* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council,” 2.

overarching directive to communicate to the American public the gravity of the war situation and to ensure their needed sacrifice. World War II was everyone's business. According to William Bird and Harry Rubenstein, "government agencies, businesses, and private organizations issued an array of posters linking the military front with the home front—calling upon every American to boost production at work and at home." Wartime poster campaigns altered people's expectations of their responsibilities during wartime.<sup>30</sup>

On June 13, 1942, through executive order, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI) by consolidating a group of lesser offices, such as the Office of Facts and Figures. He created the OWI much as Wilson had created the CPI, to foster consensus and enthusiasm for the war within the United States. As historian Allan Winkler states, the OWI needed to communicate America's efforts in the war and to "convey to audiences at home and abroad the ideals that could give rise to a peaceful, democratic world," as the CPI had attempted to do during World War I.<sup>31</sup> Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans were predominantly isolationist and apathetic toward becoming involved in another global war. Congress and the press were wary of another organization like CPI that might regulate information and create an internal system of propaganda, and the American people were aware of the force of propaganda and were wary of its consequences.<sup>32</sup> The propaganda machine of Nazi Germany was also well known, and Americans were intolerant of any emulation of that system. However, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt saw a need to coordinate and disseminate information to the American public, a need that was compelling enough to override fears of propaganda. Roosevelt entrusted the OWI leadership to nationally respected journalist Elmer Davis. The Advertising Council followed its existing governmental relationships and aligned with the OWI under Davis.

Elmer Davis was little interested in a propaganda or advertising campaign. He pushed for "information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the

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<sup>30</sup> William L. Bird and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942–1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Government.”<sup>33</sup> The executive order, however, also required the OWI to develop campaigns to secure public support. Davis and the OWI would have to produce propaganda more in the manner of Creel than he preferred. The OWI Bureau of Publications and Graphics contained many of Archibald MacLeish’s first recruits, who had worked fervently to arouse outrage at the early Nazi advances before Davis took over the consolidated information office. These writers were more interested in conveying the demands of wartime to the public than simply reporting the facts. Much like Creel’s committee, the OWI faced partisan conflicts on Capitol Hill. The OWI’s efforts played an important role in the war effort, but in a more constrained fashion that had to take into account multiple viewpoints and the complexities of modern warfare.

War Bond posters in particular offer the historian a glimpse into the relationship between the government and its people during the war. Particularly during World War II, the American people and their representatives in Congress were wary of the perceived nefarious nature of propaganda. As James Kimble notes, the World War I Liberty Bond drives operated as domestic propaganda campaigns aimed at promoting patriotic motives. However, during World War I, the public and Congress perceived the CPI, not the Treasury, as propagandistic. Then, during the Second World War, as the OWI struggled under suspicions held over from the CPI, the Roosevelt administration turned to the Treasury to communicate war messages to the public, as citizens and Congress did not single out war bond appeals as official propaganda.<sup>34</sup>

To fund the Second World War, the Treasury, led by Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., conducted the Victory Fund Drive, later known as the First War Loan, from November 30 to December 23, 1942. According to the Treasury, the three major objectives of the First War Loan were “to increase public interest in the war bond program, to siphon off into savings the increased worker earnings resulting from constantly expanding war production, and to provide the people with a reservoir of personal savings for the postwar period.”<sup>35</sup> According to Kimble, an additional goal was to “increase popular support for the war by allowing the average home

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 4–6.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1943,” 282. [https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR\\_TREASURY\\_1943.pdf](https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR_TREASURY_1943.pdf) (accessed fall 2014).

front citizen to participate in the struggle.”<sup>36</sup> The financial cost of World War II was astronomical; four months of fighting in World War II equaled the entire cost of World War I.<sup>37</sup> Morgenthau conceived of utilizing payroll deductions to purchase war bonds, and he asked the newly formed Advertising Council to promote that effort. This was the Advertising Council’s first campaign for the Treasury. The Advertising Council distributed Treasury-selected advertisements to newspaper owners who then sold space to local businesses to run the advertisements.<sup>38</sup> This arrangement allowed the business owners to both help the war effort and promote their enterprises. The “War Bonds – In Action” poster, sponsored by the Wickwire Steel Company for the fourth campaign that ran from January 18 to February 15, 1944, fits this model (figure 4).

In his postwar study of the bond drive marathons done by radio personality Kate Smith in 1943, Robert Merton discusses Smith’s use of “Sacred” and “Profane” themes to sell bonds. In Smith’s final 24-hour marathon, she was able to sell \$39 million dollars in bonds, and as Merton notes, Smith relied primarily on the “Sacred.” Studies showed that for a majority of listeners, the idea of economic return cast a spell of commercialism that they found repugnant. In his study, Merton breaks down Smith’s campaign rhetoric into the “Sacred” categories of sacrifice, participation, family, and personal, and two “Profane” categories: competition and facilitation.<sup>39</sup> In a 1948 paper, Gordon Streib of Columbia University completed a larger study of the different strategies used to promote war bonds.<sup>40</sup> Similarly to Merton, he breaks down the strategies into the Sacred and the Profane, but explores them more deeply. For Merton, Sacred includes “Patriotism” (participation, sacrifice, and victory), “Familial” (emotional ties to family members fighting the war and to the very future of family life), “Fear and Hatred” (suffering at enemy hands and the diabolical nature of the enemy), “Personal” (honor and duty), and “Ideals” (liberty and democracy). Profane includes “Economic” (return on investment, insurance, and reducing inflation), “Facilitation” (varied denominations and purchasing opportunities), and “Miscellaneous” (services,

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<sup>36</sup> Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Edmund J. Linehan, *A History of the United States Savings Bonds Program*, 50th Anniversary Edition, (Washington, DC: U.S. Savings Bond Division, Department of the Treasury, 1991), 23.

<sup>38</sup> Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council,” 82.

<sup>39</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Mass Persuasion: the Social Psychology of a War Bond Drive*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1946).

<sup>40</sup> Gordon F. Streib, “Idealism and War Bonds: Comparative Study of the Two World Wars,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 272–79.

prestige in ownership, and purchasing competition).<sup>41</sup> The slogans created for each bond campaign illustrate the changing nature of war funding and the adaptations in the use of those themes required to ensure continued participation.

The slogan for the First War Loan from November 30 to December 23, 1942, was “Remember Pearl Harbor,” and the financial goal was to raise \$9 billion for the war effort. Sales however, brought in almost \$13 billion. The “Keep him flying!” poster (figure 3) by Georges L. Schreiber was part of this campaign. The poster depicts an American pilot getting into his fighter plane to shoot down Japanese invaders. On the fuselage of his plane, Japanese emblems illustrate that he has already shot down six Japanese fighters, illustrating the patriotic theme of victory. Schreiber was born in Brussels, Belgium, in 1904. He created illustrations for German newspapers during the late 1920s before immigrating to the United States in 1933. In 1936, he enrolled in the Federal Arts Project, a work program for visual artists under the Works Progress Administration, and spent the next three years illustrating scenes of American life. During those times of drought and unemployment, his art depicted comforting portraits of everyday Americans continuing their rural traditions. As a European-born American, Schreiber felt the pain of the suffering in his homeland. His 1941 painting “The List” depicts women and girls reading a list of dead and recoiling at their loss. He illustrated in the painting the idea that every soldier’s life has meaning.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the heroic pilot in “Keep him flying!” symbolized the commitment of every American called to duty.

For the second campaign that ran from April 12 to May 1, 1943, the slogan was “They Give Their Lives—You Lend Your Money.” Sales for the Second War Loan from April 12 to May 1, 1943, were as successful as the First. The goal was \$13 billion, but almost \$18 billion was raised. For the second campaign, the Treasury created the War Finance Division of the Office of the Secretary to consolidate the sale of securities; this included the Publicity and Promotion Division to formulate publicity and promotional campaigns. During the second campaign, the Treasury made efforts to sell bonds to individuals, rather than to commercial banks, minimizing the risk of inflation by removing dollars from circulation, a tactic deduced by British economist John Maynard Keynes in 1940.<sup>43</sup> Sales

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 273–74.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous, Figge Art Museum, <http://www.figgeartmuseum.org/getdoc/4bcd202d-5866-4b46-87d5-176ae600ef05/S.aspx?page=2> (accessed fall 2014), and Thomas B. Cole, “The Cover,” *JAMA* (Oct. 20, 2010, 304), no. 15 (reprint): 1664.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1945,” 44. [https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR\\_TREASURY\\_1945.pdf](https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR_TREASURY_1945.pdf) (accessed fall 2014). Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 19. See John Maynard Keynes, *How to Pay for the War: A Radical Plan for the Chancellor of the Exchequer* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1940), iv.

to individuals gleaned the \$5 billion difference between the two campaigns.<sup>44</sup> That year, the Advertising Council changed its name to the War Advertising Council to align its work closer to the war effort and asked businesses to devote one-third of all advertising to war messages.<sup>45</sup> By September 1943 American businesses had donated approximately \$200 million worth of advertising for the war cause. On September 8, 1943, Italy surrendered, a positive event in the war but possibly problematic for the War Loan campaign as the third campaign ran from September 9 to October 2, 1943. The War Advertising Council immediately created one of the most successful slogans in all the campaigns—“Back the Attack,” which it wired to over 1,700 newspapers.<sup>46</sup> The slogan was so successful that Morgenthau wanted to use it again, but the War Advertising Council wanted something new. Treasury strategist Ted R. Gamble, who directed the program, found a compromise for the next two campaigns.<sup>47</sup> The slogan for the fourth campaign, which ran from January 18 to February 15, 1944, was “Let’s ALL back the attack.” This was the slogan used in the “War Bonds – In Action” poster created by Boris Artzybasheff (figure 4). For the fifth campaign that ran from June 12 to July 8, 1944, the slogan was “Back the Attack – Buy More Than Before.” The goal for the Fifth



Figure 4: Boris Artzybasheff, “War Bonds – In Action,” ink on paper, 43 by 21 inches. The War Advertising Council created this poster for the Treasury’s Fourth War Loan campaign that ran from January 18 to February 15, 1944. The campaign slogan was “Let’s ALL Back the Attack!” The Wickwire Spencer Steel Company sponsored its placement.

<sup>44</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury . . . fiscal year ended June 30, 1943,” 36–38.

<sup>45</sup> Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council,” 107.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 119–20.

<sup>47</sup> Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 68.

campaign was \$16 billion, with a quota of \$6 billion for individuals. The Treasury surpassed the individual quota and collected over \$20 billion.<sup>48</sup>

Artzybasheff was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, in 1899. After fighting with the Ukrainian army against the Communists during the Russian Revolution, he fled to the United States in 1919. In New York City he found work engraving and illustrating for commercial design before turning his attention to illustrating children's books. In 1940 *Fortune* magazine asked him to design a cover. Soon after, *Time* magazine contracted him to do covers. Before his death in 1965, he had illustrated over two hundred covers for *Time*. Even before the war broke out, however, Artzybasheff began creating drawings that anthropomorphized machines, particularly machines of war. His drawing of a Japanese battleship for the cover of *Life* magazine in 1941 created a bizarre caricature of the deadly machine.<sup>49</sup> Weapons in his art are animated, yet robotic and destructive. His image of the “bond-feathered” eagle of the United States attacking the rat symbolizing Japan and the snake symbolizing Germany in “War Bonds – In Action” does not have his signature mechanized style (figure 4). It does, however, rely on symbols and allegory that the American people could understand; each feather represented a personal stake in the war. According to Kimble, prior to the fourth campaign, representation of the enemy in any fashion in official posters was nonexistent.<sup>50</sup> In a country grown weary of war, his theme of power through group participation is easy to understand quickly, even without reading the text.

In summer 1944 the War Advertising Council devised a new plan to ensure that business would support the war cause through to the end, and so actually increase ad sales. Its executives found a way for businesses to incorporate national war themes into their advertising posters to varying degrees. The first tier was the “All Out”—a full war-themed poster with only the sponsor's name. An example of this tier is the “War Bonds – In Action” poster, sponsored by the Wickwire Spencer Steel Company (figure 4). The next three tiers were the “Double Barreled,” in which half of the poster was war-related and half devoted to the product or service; the “Sneak Punch,” which illustrated how

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1944,” 45. [https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR\\_TREASURY\\_1944.pdf](https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/docs/publications/treasar/AR_TREASURY_1944.pdf) (accessed fall 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Domenic J. Iacono, “The Art of Boris Artzybasheff: A compelling mid-20th-century vision of the machines of war and peace,” *Scientific American* 269, no. 5 (Nov. 1993): 72–77.

<sup>50</sup> Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 61.

the business related to the war effort; and the “Plug with a Slug,” in which the product or service was advertised, but the advertisement mentioned the war effort.<sup>51</sup> These four types allowed the War Advertising Council to insert war messages to the degree that individual businesses were willing to pay. A sixth campaign ran from November 1, 1944, to January 2, 1945, using “Lend Over Here Till It’s Over, Over There,” and “All Out for the Mighty Seventh” was the slogan for the seventh campaign that ran from April 9 to July 9, 1945.<sup>52</sup> The sixth and seventh campaigns brought in almost \$22 billion and over \$26 billion, respectively.<sup>53</sup> During those drives, the Treasury continued to adapt the types of loans to attract various classes of investors. The 1945 annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury stated, “The purpose of this policy was not only to obtain the largest volume of sales possible, but also to insure the maximum contribution of the public debt to reconversion and to the flexibility of the economy in the postwar period.”<sup>54</sup> In 1943 the Treasury began planning for converting the national wartime economy back into a peacetime economy, an effort termed “reconversion,” in which funds held as public debt would be gradually returned to the investors.<sup>55</sup> The Treasury also insured individuals from future loss, which had happened in 1920, to encourage them to lend the government a larger proportion of their savings to support the war effort.<sup>56</sup>

Following the Japanese surrender, President Harry Truman abolished the OWI on August 31, 1945. Unfortunately, that closure coincided with the launch of the Treasury’s Victory Loan campaign. The Treasury and the OWI arranged for the War Advertising Council to take over its recently vacated offices to ensure that the campaign would be successful. Both the government and the War Advertising Council agreed that an advertising council would remain an important asset for the government. In October 1945 the Council reverted to its original name, the Advertising Council, Inc. (Ad Council), and President Truman asked the council to continue its public service work supporting the government during and after conversion to peace.

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<sup>51</sup> Mandell, “A History of the Advertising Council,” 113–14.

<sup>52</sup> Campaign slogans are found in Hugh Lynch, “Participation of the District of Columbia in the Government’s Finance Program, May 1941 to April 1946,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Washington, DC, Vol. 48/49, (1946/1947), pp. 97–102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40064084?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury . . . fiscal year ended June 30, 1945,” 39.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard M. Baruch, “Reconversion to a Peacetime Economy after World War II,” [www.fofweb.com](http://www.fofweb.com) (accessed fall 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Anonymous, “Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury . . . fiscal year ended June 30, 1945,” 41–42.

## Conclusion

During the World Wars, the war bond poster was a highly effective communication tool for the U.S. government. The artists discussed in this article captured popular attention with their posters, helping the government to focus support into a powerful home front to sustain the war efforts. The artists' unique backgrounds and commitment to liberty motivated them to help their country and informed their ability to illustrate themes that inspired the public. Their themes helped rally emotional and psychological support for the war efforts and garner billions of dollars for the national war chest.

The theme of purity, represented by youth and beauty, resonated with the public during the First World War. Howard Chandler Christy, so successful in creating covers for magazines, was a cultural maven, able to illustrate the democratic spirit of America that Americans wanted to see. Christy represented America as a beautiful young woman, leading her armies to victory. Joseph Pennell followed Christy with a dark and sinister theme of threat to life and liberty. With his mastery of landscape illustration, Pennell could depict a world torn apart—a faceless enemy that ravaged his America almost beyond recognition. These artists' visions enabled them to portray messages that held fundamental civic meaning and were vital for mobilization during World War I.

World War II war bond advertising was more complex. Artists explored different themes that resonated with the public, such as heroic defense and might through common cause. Both Georges Schreiber and Boris Artzybasheff were born in Europe before the First World War, and both struggled through the Great War. When the Second World War broke out, they were in the United States, but the lands of their birth faced annihilation. The Nazi army crushed Schreiber's Belgium in 1942, and he gave Americans a hero, a strong "everyman" flying off to defeat the aggressors. Artzybasheff's Ukraine, first consumed by Communism, battled the Nazis on the Eastern Front. For him, America's strength derived from individuals nationwide acting in unison to defeat their wretched foes. Those sacred themes built national identity and illustrated the citizen's role in the war effort.

Examining the collaboration between the Treasury Department and the Committee on Public Information and then the Office of War Information illustrates the U.S. government's need for the emotional, psychological, and financial support of its citizens to win the World Wars. Combining a review of those efforts with a study of the posters used to garner that support—looking

not only at the pictorial content, but also at the thematic content provided by the artists—creates a window into the hearts and minds of Americans mobilizing for those great wars. In the end, we also gain a fuller picture of the national mobilization process in 20th-century America, a more complex view of how popular mobilization was planned and achieved.

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*Photo credits:* All images courtesy of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM). Figure 1: “Fight or Buy Bonds,” NASM Catalog No. A19990258000; Figure 2: “That Liberty Shall Not Perish from the Earth, Buy Liberty Bonds,” NASM Catalog No. A19900883000; Figure 3: “Keep him flying! Buy War Bonds,” NASM Catalog No. A20000560000; Figure 4: “War Bonds – In Action,” NASM Catalog No. A19900857000.