

During World War I, the United States established a department of the government whose sole purpose was to convince Americans that they should support the war effort. Posters were made, songs were written and performed, films were produced, and advertisements were produced that all had the same message: support your troops and your government...to do otherwise would be traitorous.

Of course, other countries were also active in producing propaganda for their own citizens, and for enemy soldiers. Below are two examples of propaganda dropped behind American lines by German pilots, the first of which is targeted towards American soldiers of German descent. The second is written to African-American soldiers.

### **#1 - "To the American Soldiers of German Descent..."**

You say ... that you serve in an honorable way in the U.S. Army. Do you think it honorable to fight the country that has given birth to your fathers or forefathers? Do you think it honorable to fall upon any country after it has heroically defended itself for four years against a coalition of peoples tenfold its superior in numbers? Look at the map and compare that tiny little spot representing Germany with the vast territories assigned to Russia, England, and the United States, to mention only the biggest of Germany's adversaries, and you cannot remain in doubt that the heroism is entirely on Germany's side.

We are fighting for everything dear to us, for our homes, our very existence. What are you fighting for, why did you come over here, 4,000 miles away from your own home? Did Germany do you any harm, did it ever threaten you? Your leaders are MisLeaders; they have lied to you that we are slaves of a tyrant, and you are guilty of gross ignorance if you believe one word of it! Everybody knowing anything about human nature and the history of

European nations will tell you that slaves can never stand up against the whole world of fierce enemies; only free men fighting for their happiness in life will endure so many years of fighting against the most colossal odds that ever a nation encountered!

An everlasting shame it is that 20 millions of German-Americans could not prevent that man Wilson, who never was a genuine American but rather an English subject in disguise, to raise his hand against their mother country! Read George Washington's Farewell Address and imagine what he would have to say of the total collapse of real Americanism in our days. His golden words to his fellow citizens to only mind their own business have been thrown to the winds by the present administration.

Go and repent ere it is too late! We shall welcome every lost sheep that finds its way back to its herd. There is more freedom in Germany indeed than in the land of Dictator Wilson. We do not try to deceive you, we do not promise you a farm, but we assure you that every honest man willing to work has infinitely better chances in Germany where we do not suffer corrupt politicians, deceiving land speculators, nor cheating contractors. Lay down your gun, your innermost soul is not in this fight. Come over to us, son of Germany, you will not regret it!

### **#2 - "To the Colored Soldiers of the U.S. Army"**

Hello, boys, what are you doing over here? Fighting the Germans? Why? Have they ever done you any harm? Of course, some white folks and the lying English-American papers told you that the Germans ought to be wiped out for the sake of humanity and Democracy. What is "democracy"? Personal freedom; all citizens enjoying the same rights socially and before the law! Do you enjoy the same rights as the white people do in America, the land of freedom and Democracy, or are you not you rather treated over there as second-class citizens?

Can you get into a restaurant where white people dine? Can you get a seat or berth in a railroad car, or can you even ride in the South in the same street car with white people? And how about the law? Is lynching and the most horrible crimes connected therewith, a lawful proceeding in a Democratic country?

Now, all this is entirely different in Germany, where they do like colored people; where they treat them as gentlemen and as white men, and quite a number of colored people have mighty fine positions in business in Berlin and other big German cities. Why, then, fight the Germans only for the benefit of the Wall Street robbers, and to protect the millions that they have loaned to the English, French, and Italians?

You have been made the tool of the egotistic and rapacious rich in America, and there is nothing in the whole game for you but broken bones, horrible wounds, spoiled health, or – death. No satisfaction whatever will you get out of this unjust war. You have never seen Germany, so you are fools if you allow people to make you hate us.

Come over to see for yourself. Let those do the fighting who make the profit out of this war; don't allow them to use you as cannon fodder! To carry a gun in this service is not an honor, but a shame. Throw it away and come over to the German lines. You will find friends who will help you!

1.) Read the two German-produced propaganda pieces. Highlight or underline each instance where you can find an example of the tools used by wartime propagandists.

2.) What are the *objectives* of the German propagandists?

3.) Given your prior knowledge of both the reality of second-class citizenship for African-Americans in the home country they were fighting for, and the anti-immigrant/anti-German feelings dominant among native-born Americans during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, would these propaganda pieces entice you to switch sides? Why or why not?

4.) Do you think wartime propaganda is most often based on factual information? Why or Why not?

5.) Do you think advertising and wartime propaganda are similar or different? Explain.