

“Keep Calm and Carry On” Propaganda Case Study

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Who: British Government, British Ministry of Information. Unknown who actually came up with the design of the poster.

What: “Keep Calm and Carry On” Poster. This Poster was created to be a “morale boosting poster” that would be displayed across the British Isles during the war.

When: 1939, during WWII preparing for German attack.

Where: Britain

Why: It was feared that in the early months of the war Britain would be subjected to gas attacks, heavy bombing raids and even invasion. The posters were intended to offer the public reassurance in the dark days that lay ahead.

How: At the end of August 1939 three designs went into production with an overall print budget of £20,600 for five million posters. The 1st poster was carried a slogan suggested by a civil servant named Waterfield. Using the crown of George VI as the only graphic device, the stark red and white poster read ‘Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution will Bring Us Victory’ and was had 1 million printed copies. A similar poster, of which around 600,000 were issued, carried the slogan ‘Freedom is in Peril’. But the third design, of which over 2.5 million posters were printed, simply read ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’.

Propaganda Techniques:

- Transfer: The use of the crown of George VI
- Virtue Words: Attempt to keep the citizens Britain calm with the “Keep Calm and Carry On” saying.

Interesting Story: The posters were never displayed in Britain. It is believed that most of the Keep Calm posters were destroyed and reduced to a pulp at the end of the war in 1945. However, nearly 60 years later, a bookseller from Barter Books stumbled across a copy hidden amongst a pile of dusty old books bought from an auction.

Target Audience: The citizens of Britain... But in this century the target audience is everyone. Now used as a meme and a recurring image on all kinds of products, in campaigns, and companies.

Successful? In 1939, the posters were actually never posted anywhere. But now, the posters and saying is a very popular.