

SPECIAL OPERATIONS RESEARCH OFFICE

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

4501 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington 16, D. C.

4 June 1958

Dr. Wesley R. Fishel
Department of Political Science
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

Dear Dr. Fishel:

Because of your knowledge and experience with regard to Vietnam, we feel that you could make important contributions to one or more phases of SORO's current research on Project PROSYMS (see enclosed "General Introduction for New SORO Consultants"). We therefore would like to know whether you would be willing to serve as one of our consultants. Compensation will be determined according to government rates.

If you are able to serve as a consultant, we would call upon your services one or more times during the next three months, possibly within the next few weeks. The research forms would be sent to you and returned to us by mail. Since these forms are not classified (for security purposes) it will be possible for you to work on them in your home at your convenience, if you care to do so. The number of hours required to complete the forms will vary from one phase of the research to another, and the amount of work you are given will depend partly upon our needs and partly upon the amount of time you are able to devote to the project. Although there is some flexibility in our schedule, we naturally would like to have each of the forms completed and returned to us in as short a time as possible for analysis purposes.

We would like to assure you that all of the information and comments you supply on the research forms will be used anonymously. Your answers will be combined with those of other consultants, and you will not be personally quoted in any way.

If you are interested in our research and would be willing to serve as a consultant in Project PROSYMS, would you please complete the enclosed SORO Form 100 and return it to us as soon as possible. We are also enclosing forms on which you may nominate any other persons you think might be qualified to serve as consultants on our project.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Kai Rasmussen
Kai E. Rasmussen
Director

KER:mh

Encls:

General Introduction
SORO Form 100:1
Nomination of Other Consultants
Stamped Envelope

Stuffy aint it!
Kai

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT PROSYMS FOR NEW
SCRO CONSULTANTS

I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary research objective of Project PROSYMS is to develop appeals and symbols of tested effectiveness for communicating psychological warfare messages to members of important target groups in each of the subject countries of the project. The auxiliary objective of the project is to provide a body of stylistic and format principles for effectively communicating appeals to each of the important target groups in the subject countries.

In addition, some things to avoid in psychological warfare will be identified. First, appeals and symbols that may evoke a boomerang effect will be ear-marked. Second, the stylistic and format characteristics of messages that may evoke adverse effects will be specified.

II. RESEARCH APPROACH

The central research question which faced the PROSYMS staff at the outset of the project was: What is a propaganda symbol? What are the characteristics of propaganda symbols that differentiate them from other classes of symbols? In short, what definition of the term propaganda symbol can be constructed that will make it possible to secure the desired end-product of Project PROSYMS? It was recognized that: (1) the definition of propaganda symbol which was formulated would dictate the research design; (2) the fruitfulness of the design would depend upon the adequacy of the definition.

Propaganda Symbol, or Key Symbol, was defined as the element (or elements) in a psychological warfare appeal that is (or are) especially significant in evoking the desired effect. This definition required that the research be designed to secure psychological warfare appeals. To secure psychological warfare appeals required that psychological warfare tasks be specified for target groups of potential military importance in the subject country. Therefore, target groups must first be selected.

The research approach thus starts with a subject country assigned to SORO. The next step is the selection of target groups of potential military importance. For each selected target group appropriate psychological warfare tasks must then be specified. For each task, appeals must be developed. Finally, the key propaganda symbols in each appeal must be identified. The consultant will note that in the Appeal Development Phase, the research moves from country to targets; from targets to tasks; from tasks to appeals; from appeals to key propaganda symbols: the desired end-product of the project.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The methodology which has been developed to accomplish the objectives of Project PROSYMS has two major characteristics. First, the methodology pinpoints the research. The focus is upon: (1) those target groups within each of the subject countries of Project PROSYMS which are considered most likely to be critical in the event of war; (2) those psychological warfare tasks which are judged feasible for each of the selected target groups. It would be impractical to attempt to cover all possible target groups and psychological warfare tasks. Further, the attempt to cover all possible situations which might arise would

slight those situations which are most likely to occur. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that for any given target group the psychological warfare appeals and key symbols which will be derived for specific psychological warfare tasks may prove to be applicable to more than one task. Indeed, the appeals may be useful for accomplishing tasks not now envisaged which may emerge in the future.

The second major characteristic of the methodology is the use of consultants as the primary source of PROSYMS data. (Other supplementary research is being conducted at the same time). In the consultant approach, the vast reservoir of experience and knowledge which area experts have accumulated is tapped systematically. Consultants to Project PROSYMS are carefully selected. The SCRO Consultant Background Data Form is first completed by a potential consultant. It is then examined at SCRO to determine whether the consultant possesses the required competence and to judge at what stage in the research he can most fruitfully be employed. In selecting the consultants for a given country, an effort is made to secure a group of consultants with diverse backgrounds of experience and training and one that represents the different theoretical persuasions and interests which exist. The use of groups of consultants that are heterogeneous with respect to background and theoretical interests should minimize the effect of consultant bias upon the final research findings. The research instruments that have been developed make it possible to secure data from consultants through correspondence. (Supplementary approaches will also be emphasized in the study of those countries for which a sufficient number of consultants is not available).

IV. RESEARCH PROCEDURES: CONSULTANT APPROACH

The discussion below will consider each procedure in turn, so that the consultant can see where his contribution fits into the overall

research process for Project PROSYMS.

A. Procedures for Determining Important Target Groups and Appropriate Psychological Warfare Tasks.

Two criteria are employed initially by the PROSYMS staff in determining the importance of target groups in a subject country. (The military forces will receive separate and special attention.) First, a target group is considered important to the extent that it can accomplish effectively psychological warfare goals by reason of its function, position, or power in the country under consideration. Second, a target group is judged important for psychological warfare purposes to the extent that it can be persuaded through appeals to facilitate the ends of psychological warfare. The important target groups and the appropriate psychological warfare tasks for each group are to be determined through the progressive research process as described below.

1. Based on analysis of country studies and other supplementary literature, target groups within a country which are believed by SORO to be potentially important are identified. These are described in terms of observable and objective characteristics. This initial list of target groups is then given to consultants selected because of their expert knowledge of the subject country. A consultant is first asked to assess the adequacy of the descriptions and the completeness of the initial SORO list. He is invited to nominate additional target groups which he believes are important in terms of the criteria of effectiveness within the country and of susceptibility to United States psychological warfare propaganda. In addition to the Target Group Appraisal Form, Phase One, used by the consultant in this first step, he receives a list of research assumptions, and the list of SORO definitions of basic psychological warfare terms. He is instructed to use these as guides in arriving at his judgments. These assumptions and definitions should give all consultants a common frame of *reference*

throughout their work on the PROSYMS Project.

After the completed Phase One forms have been returned to SCRO by the consultant, Phase Two of the Target Group Appraisal Form is sent to him. The consultant is now asked to rank target groups in terms of effectiveness, using the specific criteria of effectiveness as given in the instructions of the Target Group Appraisal Form. He is also asked to rank each target group on overall susceptibility to United States propaganda appeals. At this time, the consultant is further asked to rate himself on his knowledge of each target group. This self-appraisal will permit the PROSYMS staff to adapt subsequent data gathering forms to the special target group competency of each consultant.

After analysis of the data collected through the Target Group Appraisal Form, the PROSYMS staff will be able to rank order the target groups for each subject country according to their estimated relative importance, based on the criteria of effectiveness and susceptibility. In addition to the two research criteria of effectiveness and susceptibility, other pertinent factors are used by the PROSYMS staff to select the SCRO set of target groups for each country.

2. Consultants will next be asked to complete a Task Appraisal Form in which they will rate the susceptibility of each selected target group for each of a number of psychological warfare tasks. A particular consultant, however, will be asked to rate only those target groups about which he has previously indicated he possesses special knowledge.

3. After an analysis of the data obtained from the Target Group Appraisal Form and the Task Appraisal Form, the PROSYMS staff will have determined: (1) the target groups which are to be dealt with in a subject country; (2) the psychological warfare tasks for which to develop psychological warfare appeals and symbols for each of the selected target

groups.

B. Procedures for Determining the Primary Objective: Tested Psychological Warfare Appeals and Key Symbols.

1. After the selection of important target groups and appropriate psychological warfare tasks, the PROSYMS staff will prepare the Appeals Development Form data sheets. These are designed to elicit effective psychological warfare appeals and key propaganda symbols. Each of these forms will be tailor-made in the sense that a particular consultant will be asked to devise appeals only for those target groups about which he is knowledgeable. The consultant will be requested to produce for each of the selected tasks one or more psychological warfare appeals. He will be asked also to identify the key propaganda symbols or critical elements in each appeal he devises. The consultant is also asked to indicate the kind of psychological reaction he believes the appeal will evoke in the members of the target group, and the socio-cultural values of the target group which make that appeal particularly persuasive.

2. Next an Appeal Rating Form will be prepared at SORO. The contents of the Appeal Rating Form will be based on the analysis of the data from the Appeals Development Phase. It will also contain appeals which have been obtained through the use of other research methods developed by SORO personnel. Each consultant will be asked to rate the persuasiveness of each appeal on a five-point scale. At the same time, consultants will be asked to indicate which, if any, of the appeals might have "boomerang" effects. Again, the Appeal Rating Form will be tailored to the target group competency of the consultant. To eliminate bias, no consultant will be permitted to rate his own appeals.

3. Appeals which have been judged to be effective, together with their key symbols, will next be field tested on samples or proximate representatives of the target groups. Patently, the persuasiveness of psychological warfare appeals can be critically evaluated only in a war situation. The next best estimate of their persuasiveness can be obtained through an analysis of the responses of pertinent representative members of the target groups. In field validation, the interest is in securing measures of such appeal factors as comprehensibility, attention value, acceptance, appropriateness of response, etc.

V. RESEARCH PRODUCT

The data for each country obtained from the preceding research procedures (including the supplementary approaches) will be subjected to analysis and compiled into a country catalog of appeals and a glossary of key symbols.

It is recognized that the catalog of appeals and the glossary of key symbols which will appear in the final PROSYMS reports for each subject country should be periodically reviewed for current applicability. It is assumed that the psychological warfare appeals and key symbols developed in Project PROSYMS will have more or less enduring applicability.

However, it is recognized that marked changes in the structure and organization of a society will bring about changes in culturally defined predispositions. Changes in the culture will make some appeals obsolete and require the development of new appeals. In addition, the relative importance of the target groups in any country may change in the future because of technological advances, changes in the power relationships of groups in the society, and other social, economic and political developments.