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Steinberg's Wartime Cartoons

Anti-Nazi Propaganda Found at the Archives

By Norman D. Atkins

A portfolio of more than 60 Saul Steinberg cartoons, created for propaganda purposes during World War II, has been found among recently declassified CIA documents at the National Archives.

Steinberg, the widely acclaimed artist whose elaborate, often bizarre drawings appear frequently in *The New Yorker*, was recruited by Office of Strategic Services director William "Wild Bill" Donovan to work for the OSS Office of Morale in Washington. His cartoons, dropped behind enemy lines, were aimed at ridiculing Hitler and inspiring anti-Nazi resistance.

The drawings were first printed in *Das Neue Deutschland*, a German newspaper created by the OSS "to represent a fake peace party inside Germany." OSS files indicate that Steinberg's drawings were used for a wide range of purposes; some attempted "to stimulate unity and confidence in the fight against the enemy." One, for example, depicts Hitler's face, behind which lurk skulls; another shows Mussolini, with one maniacal eye protruding from a twisted head. Some of the works, such as an array of Nazis atop a gun turret, have distinct Steinbergian touches.

The newspaper was exposed as an OSS ploy by Heinrich Himmler, then head of the German High Command, near the end of the war.

Born in Romania in 1914, Steinberg studied philosophy in Bucharest and earned a degree in ar-

chitecture from the University of Milan in 1939. He became an American citizen in 1943, and served as a Navy lieutenant, junior grade, and

an explosives expert in the Far East, where he was discovered by Donovan.

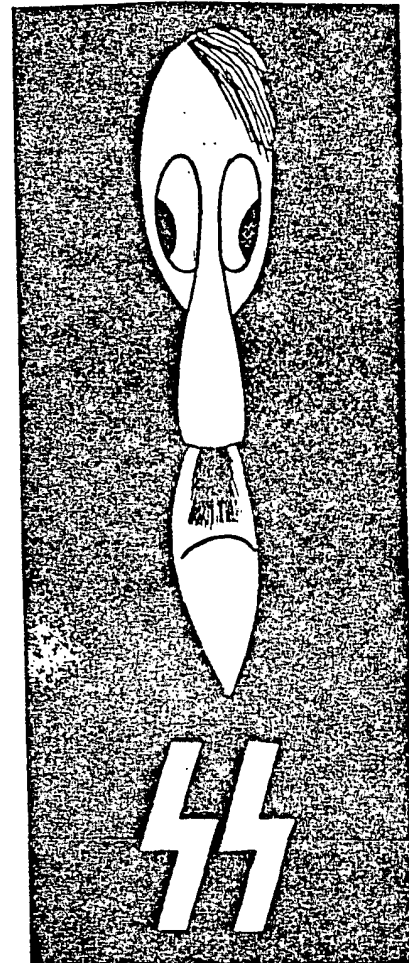
But Georgetown resident Kay Halle, who worked for the OSS Office of Morale, thinks that Donovan may have forgotten about Steinberg after recruiting him. She recalls that she kept noticing the artist, in his Navy uniform, just sitting in the corridor outside her office.

"What are you doing?" she remembers asking him, and recalls that he said, "Nothing."

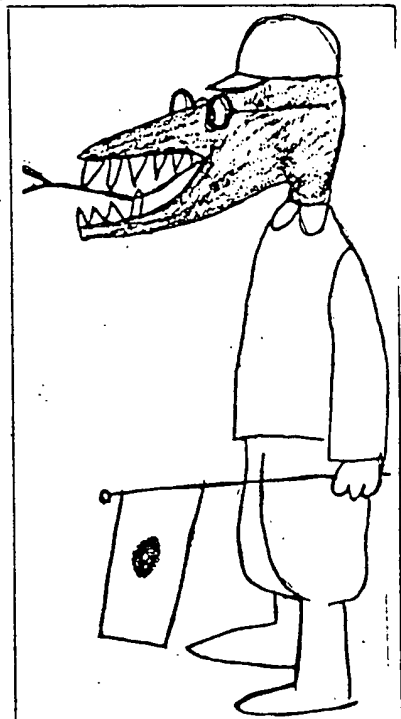
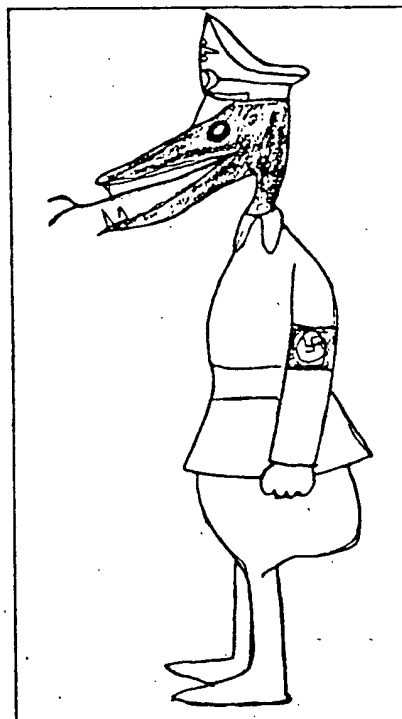
"When I found out he could draw," Halle recalls, "I said, 'Look, we need you.'"

After the war, Halle saved many of Steinberg's OSS drawings, keeping originals for herself and storing photostat copies in the archives.

Attempts to reach Steinberg, who turned 70 earlier this month, were unsuccessful. Since the war, he has lived mostly in New York. In 1967 he served as a visiting artist-in-residence at the Smithsonian.



A cartoon of Hitler by Steinberg



Steinberg cartoons that were dropped behind enemy lines in World War II