

P.W.E. TRAINING SCHOOLTHE PROPAGANDA SHELL

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The distribution of tactical leaflets by the way of shells has up to the present time been restricted as the technique is not yet fully developed and because the circumstances in which they can be usefully employed are comparatively rare.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH LEAFLET SHELLS ARE USED.

Successful distribution of leaflets by shells can only take place under certain conditions – the ideal being static warfare – as, for example, at times during the campaign in Tunisia.

Shells are filled and leaflets printed close to the frontline. They are fired by units of artillery which are in range with the enemy over long periods when it should be possible to arrange regular shooting plans. It is interesting to note that during a period when over sixty million leaflets were dropped from the air – in North Africa – only 265,000 leaflets were fired from guns. These figures might give the impression that leaflet shells are of little importance but they are in fact of great value for the distribution of leaflets aimed at a particular unit or a particular target. In Italy, once the Salerno bridgehead had been established, the enemy were withdrawing too rapidly to make this possible. An officer was sent out daily but even when he reported a battery in range of the enemy it had usually lost contact by the time the shells arrived. It is therefore to be supposed that in the invasion of Europe we shall have few chances of using leaflet shells unless the enemy manages to establish himself firmly on certain predisposed lines of defence, such as the Rhine or the Siegfried Line.

If any future extensive use of shell leaflets is made, the following recommendations have been put forward:

- (a) the supply of range tables for the 25 pounder base ejection shell (School of Artillery Constantine);
- (b) the supply of shells suitable for medium artillery;
- (c) the production of equivalent American equipment.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Army had to borrow two 25 pounder guns from the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, on the only occasion when use was made of leaflet shells in Italy, at the request of General Clark. They were actually fired by the 56<sup>th</sup> Division.

## II. DISCRPTION OF THE LEAFLET SHELL.

Leaflets are naturally tactical and have a local value. They may give names of officers of an enemy unit or names of some of their comrades who have been taken prisoner. They may tell the enemy a bad piece of news for him at a critical moment, or they may be safe passes with which individual soldiers will be able to come over to our lines unharmed.

The leaflets are either 4½ x 7 inches (2 rolls per shell) or 9 x 7 inches (one roll per shell). The same sized leaflets have also been used in the 105mm shell but an extra 2½ inches has to be filled with cardboard washers. They are packed in rolls of 225 (this figure varies according to the thickness of the paper). One man can fill 30 shells in an hour with ready rolled leaflets or make 50 rolls an hour. I have seen leaflets which have been fired by guns. They are crumpled up and the edges are generally scorched by the explosion but they are quite readable. The shell should explode over a camp, a gun-site or a trench and leaflets are showered down on the men.

This is about all the information that can be given at the present time on the propaganda shell which, I wish to emphasise again, is a very special and occasional way of distribution.

Until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1943 P.W.E. had distributed 479,000 leaflets by shells and another 220,000 by patrols. A word about the latter. They are also tactical leaflets of a local value, which are given to certain units who send out patrols at night. The men leave the leaflets where the enemy can find them in the morning.

Both the propaganda shell and the patrol leaflets are devices to overcome the problem of drift when leaflets are dropped from aircraft.

*(Circa late 1943/early 1944)*