



Propaganda and Conflict

War, Media and Shaping
the Twentieth Century

Edited by Mark Connelly, Jo Fox,
Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt

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This volume is dedicated to Professor David Welch, an inspiring colleague, teacher, mentor, collaborator and friend. He is not only a pioneer in the field of propaganda studies, helping to carve it out as a discrete area of investigation in its own right, but also a constant innovator as he developed, refined and reconsidered his approaches.

After starting his academic career at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster), following on from his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Swansea and the London School of Economics, David Welch moved to the University of Kent at Canterbury, where he established the Centre for the Study of Propaganda and Persuasion. The very deliberate inclusion of the terms 'propaganda' and 'persuasion' in the naming of the Centre revealed fully his desire to bring subtlety and depth to the research of these subjects. Under his energetic leadership, the Centre has flourished. Conferences, lectures and seminars are held on a regular basis, and he has attracted a wealth of PhD students. Publications have flowed from members of the centre, with David always generous in his support and encouragement. The Centre now has eleven permanent members of staff and continues to recruit large numbers of masters and research students. Evolving to meet the research interests of its members, the Centre altered its title to War, Media and Society, with propaganda studies still deeply embedded in its remit and approach.

David Welch's work has formed the basis of many of the ideas expressed in this volume. The essays that follow are authored by those tutored or inspired by David, from long-term colleagues to his newly qualified doctoral students. Collectively, they represent a tribute to the extraordinary impact David's work has had on the field in the past, today and into the future.

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It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Virginia Catmur, the model of a copy editor. Her total commitment to this volume, her keen eye for detail and her relentless insistence on linguistic clarity deserve a special note of thanks.

Prologue

‘Power and Persuasion’: Propaganda into the twenty-first century

Mark Connelly, Jo Fox, Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt

In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries declared ‘post-truth’ to be its ‘word of the year’. The compilers suggested that the definition ranged far beyond the ‘circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’; rather, the phenomenon had become ‘a general characteristic of our age.’¹ The politics of passion rather than of informed opinion had become *de rigueur*. Even official sources, including the new US administration under Donald Trump, denounced uncomfortable truths as ‘fake news’, with the effect that policy seemingly no longer required justification or explanation. According to Matthew Norman, writing in the *Independent* in November 2016, ‘The truth has become so devalued that what was once the gold standard of political debate is a worthless currency.’ We are now, apparently, ‘free to choose our own truth’, released from the alleged tyranny of expertise and objective reality.² The *Guardian* reported in September 2016 that the so-called liberal metropolitan elite were left scratching their heads: political campaigning had ‘spiralled into a debate about how to better appeal to “post-truth” citizens, as though they are baffling and lack reason.’³

One might be forgiven for thinking that this is a uniquely twenty-first-century problem brought about by Brexit, the election of Trump to the US presidency, the psychological and hybrid information warfare campaigns orchestrated by Vladimir Putin’s Russia and the resurgence of the far right. Yet the resonance to post-1918 debates is profound. How very different is our current unease over the politics of communication from the emergent propaganda anxieties following the First World War? Arthur Ponsonby’s supposed ‘revelations’ of ‘wholesale lying’ on the part of wartime governments in his 1928 book *Falsehood in Wartime*, itself a work of propaganda, led to intense debates centred on the politics of truth, the place of propaganda in liberal democracies, the role of expertise in guiding the sentiments of the ‘unthinking masses’ and public mistrust in official sources.⁴

Fearful of emerging extremist politics in Europe, progressive commentators during the inter-war years, such as Stephen Tallents, Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays and John Grierson, wrote of the necessity for a new ‘managerial aristocracy’ to guide and manage the ill-informed masses, who, deluged by the flow of information caused by advances in modern communications, required a technocratic elite to ‘supply needed ideas.’⁵ They advocated that democracy was hierarchical, dominated by a cadre of ‘experts’, characterized by Bernays as ‘invisible governors’, who ‘pull the wires which control the public mind’, ‘shrewd persons who worked behind the scene’ engaged in a process of ‘conscious and intelligent manipulation.’⁶ Ultimately, to guide the public in this way, they argued, was to protect democracy. The masses, wrote the psychologist Leonard Doob, were unable to defend themselves against malicious propaganda disseminated by extremists, unless knowledge were interpreted for them by designated propaganda leaders, without whose instruction ‘establishing new social values becomes impossible’. Only with their guidance, he professed, ‘will they be able to destroy the evil and buncombe of society; only then will they be ready to recognize the leaders whose values and whose propaganda are neither deceptive nor illusory.’⁷ In this context, information management was seen not to be weakening democracy but protecting it. For Bernays and his contemporaries in the United States, propaganda became, in the words of historian J. Michael Sproule, ‘mass-mediated democracy’s last, best hope’: ‘from this vantage point, propaganda technique could be seen as a matter of efficaciously solidifying the polity as opposed to wantonly manipulating citizens.’⁸ For this reason, paradoxically, the masses simply had to accept some degree of supervision. As political scientist and communications theorist Harold D. Lasswell remarked, ‘If the mass will be free of chains of iron, it must accept chains of silver.’ Democracy, after all, he claimed, citing Anatole France, ‘is run by an unseen engineer.’⁹

The idea of the ‘unseen engineer’ binding the masses in ‘chains of silver’ caused alarm in the liberal mind of the 1920s and 1930s. Aldous Huxley, the author of *Brave New World*, decried such processes as anathema to liberal democracy. If a state propaganda organization “‘projects” itself skilfully enough’, he wrote,

the masses can always be relied upon to vote as their real rulers want them to vote ... This will undoubtedly make for peace and happiness; but at the price of individual liberty. A really efficient propaganda could reduce most human beings to the condition of abject slavery.¹⁰

Control was not the answer; it was incumbent upon those able to decode the mystic force of propaganda to provide the public with a means of immunizing themselves against its sinister influence. In the United States, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, formed in 1937, devised a seven-point schema to categorize propaganda activity in order to assist a bewildered public to navigate the new ‘treacherous’ communications landscape, much like recent attempts by organizations such as FactCheck.Org to provide ‘strategies to shield yourself from fake news.’¹¹

As the introductions to each of the parts in this volume, and several essays within it, confirm, the scientific and popular study of propaganda, commencing in earnest in 1915, has never really left us: we continue to want to understand propaganda’s inner

workings and, in doing so, to control and confine its influence, reassuring ourselves that we will, in time, become immune to malicious persuasion. We remain anxious about pernicious information warfare campaigns, especially those that seemingly endanger liberal democracy or freedom of thought. Such contemporary widespread propaganda anxieties are not so very different from those in the aftermath of the Great War. Then, as now, as Sproule has noted, liberal democracies struggled to balance 'the right to persuade [and] the right of the public to free choice'.¹² The fear that the masses find themselves in the grip of illogical emotional impulses, that the authorities are losing control of the media environment, that the place of expert opinion in society is contested and that the sheer volume of information ensures that objective facts are buried or lost are at the heart of the decision of the UK Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee in January 2017 to launch a public enquiry into 'fake news' and its implications for the future of Western democratic traditions.¹³ At a more global level, national governments and international agencies such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are keen to assess whether recent cases of hybrid information warfare, for instance in relation to the use of chemical warfare agents in Syria and the attempted assassination, via a nerve agent, of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in the city of Salisbury amount to a major paradigm shift in the practices of propaganda in which any semblance of 'truth' no longer seems to matter to the propagandist; instead, the aim seems to be to confuse the public by 'flooding' the public sphere with 'alternative narratives'.¹⁴

One area of special concern in recent years has been the loss of official control over the basic instruments of mass communication. David Welch, whose work in propaganda studies has inspired this volume, was among the first historians to point to the changing dynamics of communications prompted by the sheer volume and plurality of information circulating in cyberspace, asking whether we are all now propagandists. Welch has questioned whether those participating in the Twittersphere are operating with impunity within a largely lawless environment and how the mainstream media should respond to an online news culture created 'from below'. This dilemma was vividly shown in a compelling exhibit capturing live Twitter feeds from across the world in the British Library exhibition on 'Propaganda: Power and Persuasion' he co-curated in 2013.¹⁵ This is not to suggest that the twenty-four-hour stream of 'infotainment' has negated the prevalence of dominant ideas and ideologies; rather that they converge in an environment where it is increasingly difficult to decipher fact from fiction. This process may well aid the *deepening* of ideological mindsets, where we seek out or are presented with information only from those who already share our views, where we are trapped in a global echo chamber that simply legitimizes rather than challenges our existing patterns of thinking, and where we silence those views we do not endorse. Arguably, this has already damaged the very notion of liberal democratic free speech, normally characterized by a plurality of and regard for alternative opinion. Our stock response to dealing with the circulation of 'fake news', or indeed views that we do not support, is to control the info-sphere further still. Our dilemma – balancing the right to freedom of expression with the need to limit our exposure to harmful views or false information – is not so very different from that of our inter-war predecessors, even though the global scope and scale of communications has changed.

Equally, the social anxiety surrounding ‘fake news’ (the latest label for rumour and ‘black’ propaganda) has, in some senses, become entangled in a post-crisis reconciliation of events, a coming to terms with how and why things happen, just as it did after the First World War. After 1918, propaganda became a comfortable scapegoat for the losses of war, characterized as a mystical, unseen force that prompted nations to eschew rational thought in favour of patriotic fervour. After the war, liberal democracies simultaneously celebrated their propaganda triumphs (in, e.g., the post-1918 writings of Campbell Stuart or George Creel) and chastised themselves for deceptive practices that injected ‘the poison of hatred into men’s minds by means of falsehood’;¹⁶ Ponsonby denounced the use of state propaganda as ‘a greater evil in wartime than the actual loss of life’ and concluded, ‘The defilement of the human soul is worse than the destruction of the human body.’¹⁷

Among the vanquished, the vulnerability of the German forces and home front to Allied propaganda became the standard narrative of the far right, excusing military losses in favour of explanations that prioritized the underhand psychological tactics of the victors. ‘Propaganda’ was a word to conjure with in the aftermath of the Great War. General Erich Ludendorff’s *My War Memories*, published in 1919, described ‘a certain decay of bodily and mental powers of resistance ... resulting in an unmanly and hysterical state of mind which under the spell of enemy propaganda encouraged the pacifist leanings of many Germans.’ At the front, ‘poisonous weeds grew’, for enemy propaganda encouraged revolution, Bolshevism and dissent. ‘We were hypnotised by the enemy propaganda as a rabbit is by a snake’, he proclaimed, since Allied propaganda

was exceptionally clever and conceived on a great scale. It worked by strong mass suggestion, kept in the closest touch with the military situation, and was unscrupulous as to the means it used. The German people, who had not yet learnt the art or the value of silence, had, with their mistaken frankness, shown the enemy propaganda, in their speech, writing and actions, the best line of attack.¹⁸

The veracity of this explanation was taken up by David Welch in his 2000 monograph, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914–1918: The Sins of Omission*. Here, Welch has persuasively shown that not only were the authorities in Imperial Germany fully aware of the need to employ propaganda in wartime, but that they had developed a sophisticated apparatus for doing so, including a mechanism for gauging popular opinion. Indeed, it was German scholars who first started the systematic examination of the relationship between the press and popular opinion.¹⁹ It was not, then, a lack of understanding that resulted in the apparent loss of the propaganda war from 1914 to 1918; rather, German failures, Welch has argued, were characterized by the symbiosis of propaganda and military success and the dominance of the military authorities in the creation of wartime mobilization campaigns. The ‘sins of omission’, he concluded, ‘came unquestionably from above – not from below.’²⁰

Propaganda, then, was and continues to be controversial and contested. But what exactly is it, and why do we need to understand the phenomenon? David Welch has devised one of the few functional definitions of propaganda that stands up to scrutiny: ‘the deliberate attempt to influence public opinion through the transmission

of ideas and values for a specific persuasive purpose that has been consciously devised to serve the self-interest of the propagandist, either directly or indirectly'. He has contended that it is possible to determine what propaganda might be by setting out some basic descriptions, arguing that it is a 'distinct political activity that can be distinguished from cognate activities such as information or education': 'Information and education are concerned with broadening our perspectives and opening our minds, whereas propaganda strives to narrow them and (preferably) close our minds. The distinction', he states, 'lies in the ultimate *purpose*'.²¹ Significantly, Welch has consistently argued that propaganda is an ethically neutral phenomenon: that it has been considered otherwise may be regarded more as a reflection of its historical context (one might, once again, look to the politically charged debates of the 1920s and 1930s as evidence for this) than of its inherent character. Welch's intervention has forced a reconsideration of propaganda's moral baggage and the critical question as to how propaganda came to be regarded as pejorative, forcing scholars to move beyond binary notions of positive and negative propaganda.

Historians' interventions in the field of propaganda studies have long tested theoretical models developed over the twentieth century, and the foundations of a thriving engagement with the history of propaganda were established by Welch and his collaborators, such as Richard Taylor and Philip M. Taylor.²² Their research findings have demonstrated that propaganda is complex and multifaceted: in this sense, to offer any definition was an act of scholarly courage. Doob reluctantly admitted towards the end of his career that 'a clear-cut definition of propaganda is neither possible nor desirable'.²³ More recent historical work is trapped within the same dilemma: how to encapsulate the inner workings of propaganda and its multiple effects on society, culture and politics without artificially constraining them. It is perhaps for this reason that historians of the First World War have sought an alternative vocabulary to capture the diverse nature of propaganda. We would suggest that this is a reinforcement of the need to move away from limited and restrictive definitions. Arguably, as those same historians recognize, the better question is (and always has been) how propaganda works, and here Welch's studies of global propaganda in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries pose a series of questions that challenge scholars to move beyond simplistic notions of cause and effect.

What are the challenges, then, of propaganda studies as it moves into the twenty-first century? Much scholarship remains locked into the study of state-led campaigns. For the Great War, this approach may be limited in some cases by an archival deficit, forcing a more varied consideration of surviving cultural propaganda. Where that deficit is less apparent, as in the case of the historiography of the Second World War, scholarship has suffered from a rigid focus on state-driven activities, performed through formal state agencies and structures. It is certainly easier, from a practical research point of view, to consider propaganda as a 'vertical' and hierarchical process. However, this approach tends to focus solely on the originator of particular campaigns and consequently omits the various agents involved in the transfer and reinterpretation of propaganda, including its 'horizontal' dissemination by different agents across society. This process naturally affects the final format in which propaganda is received and reconfigured. The history of propaganda during the First World War, in particular, is replete with

examples where state-sanctioned propaganda themes were repackaged by multiple propaganda agents – authors, artists, film-makers, advertisers, manufacturers, clergy, journalists – acting on their own initiative to create numerous outlets for dissemination that, due to the variety of form, had a greater chance of tapping into individual and collective pre-existing beliefs, values, desires and predilections. The British and Americans refined this process in the Second World War in which artists and ‘auteurs’ retained their individual creative inputs, but within a wider, more effectively controlled central structure, as is shown in the essays by James Chapman and Richard Taylor in this collection. Such a process also made state-sanctioned propaganda themes ubiquitous, seemingly at a remove from the authorities, allowing the public to retain a sense of scepticism.

The cumulative effect of official and unofficial propaganda created an intoxicating, self-propagandizing environment. In attempting to harness this process, historians face the challenge of locating the wide variety of propaganda sources in circulation, capturing the multiple forms propaganda took, and understanding the dynamics created by the interaction between formal and informal propaganda, specifically how various strands of propaganda reinforced one another or indeed generated frictions. To unlock this historical problem may well involve far greater cross-fertilization between disciplines: scholars need to understand the inherent properties of the propaganda form (such as literature, art, material culture, etc.) before even beginning the process of analysing interactions. That most scholarship continues to work within disciplinary boundaries is all the more curious given propaganda’s interdisciplinary nature: it is simultaneously connected to the fields of political science, international relations, war studies, psychology, social psychology, literary studies, cultural studies, film studies, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics and, of course, history.²⁴ Recent developments in the history of psychology, such as Ben Shephard’s *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914–1994* and Mathew Thomson’s *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth Century Britain*, would suggest the great potential of bringing together studies of mass psychology and propaganda to reveal the deeper mental undercurrents of societies at war.²⁵ Equally, new projects, such as the ‘Hidden Persuaders’ initiative at Birkbeck, University of London, have renewed discussions of the practice and cultural significance of the concept of ‘brainwashing’ which may have implications for the study of propaganda, particularly in the Cold War era.²⁶ In this volume, medical historian Julie Anderson explores the intersections between orthopaedics and film propaganda in post-war Britain, while bioethicist Jonathan Moreno and art historian Katja Schmidt-Mai adopt an interdisciplinary approach in their case study of a wartime medical experiment in the United States.

The dominance of vertical, hierarchical, state-led propaganda in existing scholarship further obscures another of propaganda’s most elusive properties: that it is frequently transnational. Historical analyses of propaganda have often been confined to state and nation, and yet, frequently, propaganda is meant to travel, to influence far and wide and to affect an international target or confront the propaganda of one’s foe, as demonstrated in Edward Corse’s chapter on the cultural propaganda of the British Council behind the Iron Curtain. But how should the historian map those information networks, establish relationships between pieces of propaganda, determine the provenance of particular

propaganda and plot the wider terrain? The interconnectedness that lies at the heart of propaganda becomes a challenge for researchers, especially when it is enmeshed in a global communications network. Moreover, scholars of propaganda are asking one of the most difficult and fundamental historical questions: how do ideas travel?

David Welch has always argued that to determine the success of propaganda is the greatest challenge any scholar of the phenomenon will face. Indeed, at conferences, seminars and workshops, this became his signature question. Scholars now recognize the importance of seeing the transmission and 'reception' of propaganda as a series of flexible interactions that invest both the propagandist and the recipient with considerable agency. While propaganda has the potential to mobilize and contain mass opinion, to provide structure to social relationships and communities and to channel and prompt attitudes and behaviours, as a process it is reliant on a complex dynamic that exists between the originator of the message and the recipient. Peter Hofstätter's identification that 'public opinion and propaganda mutually limit and influence each other' continues to encapsulate both the power of persuasion and the power of the public to accept or reject it.²⁷ As Welch has recognized in his work on the construction of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in Nazi propaganda of the 1930s, propaganda is best characterized as a reciprocal transaction.²⁸ After all, propaganda is, as Terence H. Qualter has aptly put it, an 'ongoing process involving both persuader and persuadee', responding to individual practical, spiritual or philosophical needs and contributing to community formation; it is dynamic and responsive.²⁹ Welch has argued in his seminal works on the propaganda of the Third Reich that persuasive techniques were at their most powerful when sharpening pre-existing beliefs and when they correlated to lived experiences. The implications of this perception are significant and cut right to the heart of intensely political debates over the psychological complicity of the German people in the functioning of the Nazi regime.

Welch perceived that the success of the Third Reich's extensive propaganda operations depended on a complex interaction between the state and its people that, regardless of the original propagandistic intent, ultimately resulted in maintenance of the regime. While failing to revolutionize the national consciousness, the construct of the *Volksgemeinschaft* 'would continue to guarantee at least passive support for the regime' through a process of de-politicization and apathy.³⁰ This indifference, Welch has argued,

proved fatal. The idea of an organic *Volk*, resting on the purity of race and sustained by permanent struggle became progressively exclusionary. Those individuals and groups who did not fit into such a 'community' were ruthlessly suppressed and/or murdered. The concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* represents an abhorrent, utopian vision, yet the reality is that during the Third Reich 'belonging' to such a community remained a powerful integratory force for many Germans.³¹

Such an argument has important implications for the study of propaganda, since it questions the criteria for success. What determines 'successful' propaganda? If we are to judge propaganda by the originators' objectives, then, in failing to enact the promised national revolution, Nazi propaganda did not achieve its intended goal.

Yet propaganda created the unintended consequence of indifference and apathy that provided for the stability of the regime. Here, we are left with the question as to whether the propaganda succeeded or failed, and it seems rather superficial and unsatisfying to simply make this assessment on the basis of the Nazis' own objectives. We are forced to consider the kinds of evidence we seek in pursuit of this question. How do historians access deep, subconscious behaviours or attitudinal change, and how do we locate the point of 'inner acceptance' of a message, campaign or narrative? This methodological problem becomes all the more complex when we consider that not even the message the propagandist projects is straightforward. Gaynor Johnson's chapter reveals this issue by demonstrating how different British agencies recognized a need to deliver a particular message but could not quite define it nor how to express it. A similar theme can be detected in Marina Petraki's exploration of the work of the Special Operations Executive in Greece during the Second World War. Fundamentally, as Ludmilla Jordanova points out, 'There is no such thing as unmediated transmission': 'messages' – a term that implies an uncomplicated communication – are not necessarily imparted, let alone received.³²

There is also the question as to the length of time required for a holistic assessment of success. We suggested earlier that scholars of propaganda should be concerned with how propaganda transcends national borders. But what of the transcendence of chronological boundaries? How long is a 'propaganda memory', and why do some propaganda campaigns remain in the consciousness while others fade? What makes for enduring propaganda tropes? Why would a campaign not only resonate in its own time but also hold additional significance for some future circumstance? These questions resonate in Ulf Schmidt and Katja Schmidt-Mai's chapter on the complex interconnections between Nazi propaganda, the plunder of art during the Second World War and its repercussions today in understanding the provenance and market of cultural artefacts. Arguably, the true success of propaganda might be found in its endurance and how propaganda intended for a specific purpose in a specific historical context might shape subsequent propaganda narratives. Take, for example, British propaganda campaigns centred on the notion of the 'People's War' between 1940 and 1945. For contemporaries, 'People's War' narratives were contested and ambiguous, and exposed tensions. As the historian Sonya Rose has argued, contemporary appeals to class, gender, nation and region could both unite and divide, often at the same time. Similarly, the combatant nations found that, although propaganda campaigns might be highly controlled, the message was often sufficiently ambiguous to speak to most, yet also volatile enough to have potentially adverse consequences, bolstering or triggering currents that ran counter to it.³³

Here Rose considers the volatility of the propaganda message to be an inherent weakness, but it may also be the case that the more multidimensional and unstable the message, the more powerful and enduring the narrative. The many faces of 'People's War' propaganda campaigns, like those associated with the United States' 'Good War' or the Soviet Union's 'Great Patriotic War', allowed for complex, layered propaganda that had the potential to appeal to the mosaic of individual and collective attitudes, values, perspectives and opinions at work within modern societies. Significantly, these campaigns work within, rather than against, cognitive dissonance, permitting

the comfortable coexistence of contradictory views for individuals and the polity as a whole.

Moreover, the effects of inherent tensions were short-lived. Over time, implicit frictions were eroded through the retelling of Britain's wartime story, '[lending] the desperate months of 1940, in retrospect, a "terrible beauty" built of nostalgia' and demonstrating that propaganda's most profound effects may be felt in the longer term rather than in the moment.³⁴ Beyond the immediate historical context, this erosion formed a central component of post-war national identities that increasingly came to stabilize, anchor and explain the present and are remobilized in the service of new conflicts or in order to mitigate the effects of change. These propaganda narratives are at once familiar and nostalgic, a warning or prescient in some way, grounding and disruptive. It is unsurprising to find that, in the aftermath of the 7/7 terror attacks in 2005, the British media turned to familiar visual and textual tropes for comfort. Tony Parsons' piece in the *Daily Mirror* on 8 July 2005 was redolent of Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings's 1940 film *London Can Take It* and the broader propaganda campaigns that surrounded it. Parsons asked readers to

send out the message that they famously hung on the front of a destroyed shopfront in the London of the Blitz – business as normal [*sic*]. Three little words that said: Up yours, Adolf. We will mourn our dead and we will grieve for the families and innocent lives that have been shattered forever. But we will carry on. Business as usual. London can take it. The British can take it.³⁵

Such sentiments were evoked across the national media. Front covers mobilized the Churchillian language of 'we shall never surrender'. The *Star* deployed the word 'blitz' to make the connection to the wartime experience, while the *Express* put the phrase 'business as usual' to work to prompt a calm, stoic reaction among the British people. 'Those three words', its editorial stated, 'summed up that rare quality of formidable strength that Londoners, be they wise-cracking Cockneys or smoothies from Chelsea, manage to summon up when they are threatened – as they were yesterday.' The *Independent* took Noel Coward's *London Pride* for its theme, quoting the lyrics 'London Pride has been handed down to us; London Pride is a flower that's free.'³⁶ This replicated a similar response in the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks of 2001. Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, speaking in October 2002, pronounced:

Although September 11th has taken its place alongside December 7th [the attack on Pearl Harbor] as a date that will live in infamy, the larger lesson we may draw from these attacks, remains unchanged and clear: we must be prepared for surprise – from wherever it may appear and however it may threaten . . . Fifty years ago, when we said, 'home front', we were referring to citizens back home doing their part to support the war front. Since last September, however, the home front has become a battlefield every bit as real as any we've known before. When terrorists attacked, they brought home to us in the most literal sense that our people and our country still remain vulnerable to attack.³⁷

That our politicians and journalists resurrect propaganda narratives, almost intact, at times of crisis speaks to the deeper and long-term psychological effects of specific campaigns and how those narratives continue to meet the emotional needs of individuals and the collective.

Overall, it is more straightforward to look at short-term, rather than long-term, and at direct, rather than indirect, effects of particular campaigns, and to consider single campaigns rather than look at the ways in which campaigns interact – sometimes complementing, sometimes brushing up against one another – to create rather different effects from those intended. In part because of these methodological challenges, much scholarship on propaganda tends to work within existing paradigms rather than shifting them. A shift can be achieved only if scholars break out of current approaches and ways of thinking, if we fundamentally reconceptualize how we think about propaganda as a historical problem, if we open up our understanding of the many forms it takes and the many levels on which it operates without seeking to falsely confine it or limit ourselves to the constant search for new descriptive labels. Scholars need to abandon the search for linear, uncomplicated propaganda narratives that simply tell one version of events from within a hierarchical, vertical structure, and should instead regard propaganda as a complex confluence of ideas, messages and themes, emerging from formal and informal sources, designed to appeal to individual and collective belief systems. Scholars might also be encouraged to move beyond assessing propaganda in the strict confines of its own time, and to think of it as potentially timeless, rather than temporally bound, investigating not only its immediate effect (the primary concern of the propagandist who creates it) but also its afterlife.

Notes

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Part One

The First World War and
inter-war period

Introduction

Mark Connelly, Jo Fox, Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt

It was during the First World War that the modern age of propaganda began. Even though propaganda had a much longer tradition, the years 1914–18 marked a watershed, heralding the onset of ‘the propaganda century’.¹ Propaganda in all its shades – from white to grey and black, from official to commercial and grassroots, from domestic to international – became a central plank of the war effort, increasingly pervading both public and private lives. Propaganda was part and parcel of the totalization of warfare between 1914 and 1918. The term ‘total war’, itself a product of the Great War, was popularized by General Erich Ludendorff during the interwar years. From a political rallying cry in wartime to a figure of memory in the war’s aftermath, the term has mutated in recent years into a heuristic tool that historians use to trace the radicalization of warfare between the 1860s and 1945. In a series of conferences, a group of scholars led by Roger Chickering and Stig Förster has endeavoured to give analytical depth to the concept. Although Chickering concedes that the conferences might have left ‘total war’ more complicated than they had found it, the volume *Great War, Total War* (2000) reveals the centrality of morale, public opinion and the manufacture of consent in wartime.² The connection between propaganda and total war has been explored more systematically in David Welch’s monograph *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914–1918* (2000). Subtitled *The Sins of Omission*, it argues that the government ‘had constructed the means to read the mood of the people, but failed to act upon what it read!’³

Among those who wanted to understand the formation of public opinion in wartime Germany was a small group of enterprising academics. It is common knowledge that university professors participated enthusiastically in the propaganda war; many an academic gave stirring speeches or wrote patriotic pamphlets. What is less well known, but of special significance in the context of this volume, is the fact that some scholars began to examine how the war impacted on the public sphere and vice versa. It was during the war that the contours of a new academic subject – propaganda studies – began to emerge. In 1915, the economist Karl Bücher of the University of Leipzig published a collection of essays entitled *Unsere Sache und die Tagespresse* (Our Cause and the Daily Press).⁴ In the following year, Bücher founded the world’s first journalism school with the aim of professionalising news reporting at a time of national crisis.

In the same year appeared what represents, arguably, the first significant attempt at a study of public opinion in wartime, *Die deutsche Presse im Kriege und später* (The German Press in the War and After). Its author, Aloys Meister, professor of medieval and modern history at the University of Münster, had developed a side interest in media history before the war, supervising the *Habilitation* thesis of Karl d'Estér, the future doyen of journalism studies. Like many of his colleagues, Meister had contributed to the university's series of patriotic lectures at the outbreak of war. Although intended as propaganda, Meister's lecture had a distinct analytical edge. In the pamphlet based on his lecture, *Kabelkrieg und Lügenfeldzug* (Cable War and Lying Campaign), Meister condemned what he saw as an Anglo-French smear campaign against Germany, facilitated by Britain's control over the global telegraph network – a weapon more powerful than the Royal Navy's high-seas fleet. Yet Meister was particularly critical of the German press, its concentration on domestic politics and its failure to create a positive image of Germany in the wider world before 1914. Expanding on these initial thoughts in his 1916 monograph, Meister concluded that Germany required a new system of educating journalists.⁵ Meister was, of course, not the only historian to ponder on the propaganda war; but in contrast to others, such as the French historian Marc Bloch, he combined reflection with impact, initiating a press archive and establishing a commission on newspaper research.⁶ Moreover, Meister's efforts gave an important stimulus to the eventual establishment of *Zeitungswissenschaft* (newspaper science) at Münster and other universities during the interwar years. Thus the scholarly study of the press and the academic training of journalists have their origins in the modern propaganda war.⁷

The roots of disciplines such as communication, media and journalism studies can be traced to the era of the Great War. By no means did all efforts bear fruits. At Cambridge, the university librarian initiated a special 'war collection' of books, periodicals and ephemera, but after 1918 the material simply began to gather dust. In the Anglophone world, the most significant contribution to propaganda analysis stemmed from the pen of a US social scientist, Harold D. Lasswell. However, the author of *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927) himself became entangled in, as Nicholas J. Cull suggests in his chapter, a pre-emptive counter-propaganda war.⁸ Such research was considered relevant outside academic circles and could draw on institutional support from public and private endowments in the years between the world wars. Unsurprisingly, academic interest in the lessons to be learned from the Great War abated with the outbreak of the Second World War, although it survived in pockets. The *Weltkriegsbücherei* (now Library of Contemporary History) in Stuttgart, founded in 1915 to document the Great War of words, continued its work during the Second World War, publishing the final instalment of its periodical, *Bücherschau*, in 1944.⁹

In Britain, Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime* was (too) long considered an invaluable source.¹⁰ Originally published in 1928, it was reissued in 1980 and 1991 by the notorious 'Institute for Historical Review' in California. This book, written by a politician critical of the British involvement in the war, aimed to unmask propaganda lies about German atrocities. In truth, though, *Falsehood in Wartime* is not an exposure of the truth about propaganda lies, it is a propaganda lie.¹¹ Yet comprehensive research

into official propaganda in Britain has been hampered by the fact that the majority of the records of the Ministry of Information were destroyed – in what may well have been an act of propaganda in itself – around 1920. The full story of official propaganda in Britain during the Great War could never be told, noted M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor in *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18* (1982), a book that has remained a standard work of reference.¹² To be sure, important documentation did survive, notably in the form of some 40,000 official photographs preserved in the Department of Photographs at the Imperial War Museum. It was the keeper of that department, Jane Carmichael, who published an as yet unsurpassed account of *First World War Photographers* (1989).¹³ Thus, partly out of necessity, historians of propaganda working in the 1980s were methodologically ahead of their peers who still clung to the written record.

The ‘cultural turn(s)’ since the 1990s have proved both a blessing and a curse, depending on one’s view, for the study of propaganda and the Great War. We now know infinitely more about how propaganda targeted different social groups (such as children), about patriotic rituals (such as ‘tank banks’ in Britain), about material culture (such as trench art), about visual media (such as posters), about underlying gender stereotypes, about differences between town and country, and about national peculiarities and cultural convergences between nations.¹⁴ Important works include Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau’s *La Guerre des enfants 1914–1918* (1993) on how (French) children were caught up in the maelstrom of total war;¹⁵ Hubertus F. Jahn’s *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (1995), which showed that propaganda could be genuinely popular;¹⁶ Jeffrey Verhey’s *The Spirit of 1914* (2000), which examined the making of the myth of ‘war enthusiasm’ during and after the war;¹⁷ and James Aulich’s work on commercial advertising as a form of war propaganda.¹⁸ In addition, George L. Mosse’s seminal study, *Fallen Soldiers* (1990), has stimulated much further research into the cultural aftermath of propaganda during the interwar years.¹⁹

Some of the most innovative research into propaganda has been produced by scholars of the First World War. This area of research is so vibrant and diverse that it is difficult to sum it up in a few words. However, three features stand out: firstly, scholars now tend to de-emphasize the coercive elements of mass mobilization (indoctrination, censorship, surveillance), foregrounding instead the consensual dimension of waging war. Secondly, they attribute agency to civil society, seeing ordinary people not as victims but as participants in and facilitators of propaganda. Thirdly, and paradoxically, they tend to eschew the term ‘propaganda’, which they often (wrongly) associate with a top-down approach. To some degree, ‘propaganda’ has been replaced by concepts such as *culture de guerre*, ‘patriotic culture’, ‘pleasure culture of war’, ‘mental mobilisation’ or simply ‘representations’.²⁰ The new analytical vocabulary is testimony to the emergence of First World War Studies as a distinct, interdisciplinary field of enquiry, with its own association, dedicated journal and regular conferences. Significantly, the *Cambridge History of the First World War* (2014) does not contain a chapter specifically on propaganda – and yet propaganda runs like a red thread through the three tomes.²¹ In short, we are confronted with a paradox: a veritable boom in the study of propagandistic forms, languages and practices has gone hand in hand with the demise of the concept of ‘propaganda’.²²

The chapters included in this part discuss various different media of propaganda, ranging from newspapers and popular books to artworks and exhibitions. Stephen Badsey's chapter offers an in-depth study of the Amiens Dispatch in order to highlight confusion within the British government over propaganda during the first two months of the conflict. Publication of the dispatch triggered the lifting of the news blackout and, unwittingly, became a piece of recruitment propaganda. Antoine Capet examines Churchill's war experience in France during the Great War, how it informed his popular histories published in the interwar period and how a nostalgia for the brotherhood in arms coloured his assessment of France's political stability and defensive capabilities on the eve of the Second World War. In their chapter, Ulf Schmidt and Katja Schmidt-Mai shift the focus from the written word to visual media, exploring, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the connections between Nazi propaganda and art plunder – and their much delayed repercussions in the 2010s.

Notes

- 1 David Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (London, 2013), p. 15.
- 2 Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2000); see also Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 1.
- 3 David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914–1918: The Sins of Omission* (London, 2000); new edition under the title *Germany and Propaganda in World War I: Pacifism, Mobilization and Total War* (London, 2014).
- 4 Karl Bücher, *Unsere Sache und die Tagespresse* (Tübingen, 1915).
- 5 Al[oys] Meister, *Die deutsche Presse im Kriege und später* (Münster, 1916); *Kabelkrieg und Lügenfeldzug* (Münster, 1914).
- 6 See Marc Bloch, 'Réflexions d'un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre' [1921], in *Écrits de guerre (1914–1918)* (Paris, 1997), pp. 169–84.
- 7 Bettina Maoro, *Die Zeitungswissenschaft in Westfalen 1914–45: Das Institut für Zeitungswissenschaft in Münster und die Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund* (Munich, 1987); Bernd Mütter, 'Aloys Meister (1866–1925)', *Westfälische Zeitschrift*, 121 (1971), pp. 173–247.
- 8 Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I [1927]* (Cambridge, MA, 1971); see J. Michael Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1997).
- 9 Weltkriegsbücherei, 'Wichtige Mitteilung an unsere Leser', *Bücherschau der Weltkriegsbücherei*, 24: 1 (1944), p. iv; see also Theo Goebel, *Deutsche Pressestimmen in der Julikrise 1914* (Stuttgart, 1939).
- 10 Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime: Containing an Assortment of Lies Circulated Throughout the Nations during the Great War* (London, 1928).
- 11 Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 41, original emphasis.
- 12 M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18* (London, 1982).
- 13 Jane Carmichael, *First World War Photographers* (London, 1989).

- 14 For starters, see James Fox, *British Art and the First World War, 1914–1924* (Cambridge, 2015); Pearl James (ed.), *Picture This! World War I Posters and Visual Culture* (Lincoln, NE, 2009); Robert L. Nelson, *German Soldier Newspapers of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2011); Nicholas J. Saunders, *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (Oxford, 2003); Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914–1919*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 2007).
- 15 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La Guerre des enfants 1914–1918: Essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris, 1993).
- 16 Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, NY, 1995).
- 17 Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000).
- 18 James Aulich, 'Advertising and the Public in Britain during the First World War', in David Welch and Jo Fox (eds), *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 109–28.
- 19 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990); see also Mark Connelly, *Celluloid War Memorials: The British Instructional Films Company and the Memory of the Great War* (Exeter, 2016); Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge, 2013).
- 20 Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914–1918: Understanding the Great War* (London, 2002); John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997); Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (eds), *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 1999); Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850–2000* (London, 2000).
- 21 Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2014).
- 22 To be sure, Eberhard Demm has produced a new synthesis in his *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History* (London, 2019).

Strategy and propaganda: Lord Kitchener, the retreat from Mons and the Amiens Dispatch, August–September 1914

Stephen Badsey

Among the dramatic events that marked the start of the First World War, British political and military decisions and actions are particularly well documented and researched. These well-known events include the complex political balancing act conducted by Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith in the crisis of July–August 1914, in his successful attempt to minimize resignations from his cabinet and revolts within his Liberal Party, and to lead both Parliament and the country united into the war. They also include the creation before the war and the deployment in August 1914 of the British Army's Expeditionary Force (redesignated the British Expeditionary Force or BEF before the end of the month, which is how it is usually known) and the confirmation of Field Marshal Sir John French as its commander-in-chief. Equally well known is the appointment of Field Marshal Earl Kitchener to the post of Secretary of State for War on 5 August, his call for volunteers to create a new mass British Army and the unexpectedly large popular response. Yet another well-known story is the BEF's first battles at Mons and Le Cateau, the successful retreat from Mons and the decision to turn the BEF to participate in the decisive Battle of the Marne in September. Most accounts that follow the British military story that far – and many do not, preferring to stop with the first declarations for war – also acknowledge the importance of the Amiens Dispatch (sometimes called the Mons Dispatch), a sensational account of the battles of Mons and Le Cateau published in a special Sunday edition of *The Times* newspaper on 30 August, which also features in most accounts of British propaganda in the war, and of the British Home Front. It is often stated as fact both that Kitchener's personal call to arms was the principal motivator of British military volunteerism in 1914 (often if incorrectly called 'the rush to the colours') and that it was Kitchener's personal animosity towards war reporters that largely determined British policy towards the national press's reporting of the BEF's actions in this period. But Kitchener's actions were only part of a more complex story. It is the purpose of this present account to assemble a narrative chronology of these events, so revealing the critical interaction between politics and strategy, military operations and battles,

social and cultural responses at home including volunteerism and both the nature and apparatus of British propaganda.

The first formal War Office recommendations regarding the press accompanying a British Army in wartime date from 1878, while the first regulations for accreditation of newspapermen to accompany a British Army in wartime were established in 1889.¹ Like all subsequent British government regulations, these were based on negotiated agreements with the influential London press rather than on dictated control or censorship. The first large-scale British experience of the problems with such agreements came in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902. In what would be a reoccurring theme of British propaganda up to the present day, an agreement reached between the government and the media in peacetime only through compromises, with both sides making their own interpretations of what had been agreed, broke down rapidly under the immediate pressures of war. Kitchener as commander-in-chief in South Africa for the later part of the Anglo-Boer War was particularly hostile to what he saw as adverse press reporting. In July 1901, he had mused to the sympathetic Howell A. ‘Taffy’ Gwynn, then of Reuters news agency, about one day appointing a solitary official ‘chronicler of the war’, perhaps Gwynn himself, as the only correspondent allowed with a future field army.²

Kitchener played no part in the subsequent development of British government ideas on how to control the press in wartime, which were first prompted by the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5. The chief concerns came from the Royal Navy rather than the British Army and arose in consequence of newspapers reporting the deployment of British warships following the Dogger Bank incident, when, in October 1904, Russian warships opened fire at night in the North Sea on British fishing trawlers, somehow believing them to be hostile Japanese, and causing a brief war scare. From 1905 onwards, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) attempted intermittently to draft legislation ‘for the control of the publication of naval and military information in cases of emergency’ (meaning war) and canvassed the views of numerous national and provincial newspaper editors.³ In March 1910, the CID formed a ‘standing sub-committee regarding press and postal censorship in time of war’, initially chaired by Winston Churchill as Home Secretary, which liaised with government departments including the Admiralty and War Office on planned wartime procedures, and which also considered the possibility of setting up an official Press Bureau in peacetime.⁴ The result of these deliberations was that, as on previous occasions before the Anglo-Boer War, the government found that it was both impractical and politically unachievable to establish in peacetime any legislation and institutions to regulate the press in a future war. Instead, in August 1912, the Admiralty and War Office formed the ‘Standing Committee of Official and Press Representatives to deal with the publication of Naval and Military News in times of emergency’, a decision once more largely prompted by Admiralty concerns over newspapers reporting movements of the fleet – in this case during the 1911 Moroccan Crisis – coupled with government uncertainty and reluctance to use the powers of the new 1911 Official Secrets Act directly against the press.⁵ Shortening its name first to the ‘Joint Standing Committee of Admiralty, War Office and Press Representatives’, and later to the ‘Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee’, the resulting committee met regularly from October 1912 onwards, with

a core membership consisting of Sir Graham Greene, the permanent secretary for the Admiralty; Reginald Brade, an assistant secretary from the War Office (later Sir Reginald and permanent secretary from 1914 onwards); Edmund Robbins of the Press Association as the committee secretary; and representatives of the Newspaper Society, the Newspaper Proprietors Association, the Irish Newspaper Society, the Federation of Northern Newspaper Owners and the Federation of Southern Newspaper Owners; military and naval officers sometimes attended, including Brigadier General Henry Wilson as Director of Military Operations. The chief function of this committee was to provide government advice and guidance to newspapers regarding what might constitute a security risk.

The Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee were chiefly concerned with higher policy and with how newspapers rather than reporters might act. The role of individual reporters if the BEF were mobilized for war fell within the remit of the War Office. In this case also, before 1914 largely informal or negotiated peacetime understandings prevailed, together with some practices established in the Anglo-Boer War, and the continuing 1889 agreement on accreditation of newspaper correspondents. Prior to the war, Henry Wilson's Directorate of Military Operations already contained a small staff group designated MO5(h) which was responsible for overseeing military press and postal functions. Charles Callwell, who had been Assistant Director of Military Operations 1904–7, had retired as a colonel in 1909 and was himself a notable military writer, described in his post-war memoirs the existence in 1914 of a small War Office staff grouping (presumably meaning MO5(h) or part of it) established in 1911 or 1912, with its own transport and clerks, to function as the press escort and liaison for the BEF in the event of mobilization, and headed by Major A. G. Stuart, who 'had been in control of the Press representatives' in the 1912 Army manoeuvres and the smaller 1913 Army manoeuvres, both of which were accompanied by a sizeable number of reporters.⁶

It is quite certain that the events that would lead to the publication of the Amiens Dispatch were not planned or initiated by any official British propaganda organizations, for the simple reason that no such organizations existed at the time. The first government institution dedicated to wartime propaganda, which was based at Wellington House in London, was established only in the week beginning Sunday 30 August 1914, the day that the Amiens Dispatch was published.⁷ But in a manner entirely characteristic of British propaganda organization, although Wellington House came eventually to be designated as the War Propaganda Bureau, it continued to be known in official circles by its earlier name and to do much of its work through informal or semi-official contacts. Indeed, the key to much of British propaganda was the very close informal contacts that existed between members of the government, the civil service and armed forces and the owners or editors of important newspapers, along with other leading figures in society. This included pre-war 'gentlemen's agreements' that were to be severely tested by the pressures of the July–August 1914 war crisis. On Monday, 27 July, the day after the Serbian reply to Austria-Hungary's ultimatum, the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee held a quick meeting at the Admiralty, at which one member, Sir George Riddell as chairman of the Newspaper Proprietors Association, complained that 'it was very easy to make agreements in time of peace,

but when the emergency arrives and the public is avid for news, the situation was difficult.⁸ The result of this meeting was a secret communiqué issued by the committee next day, drafted according to Riddell by himself and Edmund Robbins as committee secretary, addressed to all British newspaper editors and asking them not to report the movements of British warships, troops or aircraft. At a further meeting on Thursday, 30 July, the committee noted that *The Times* had referred to one small naval movement, and that the newspapers were pressuring the Admiralty and War Office with enquiries. But other than these kinds of minor slips and leaks, the communiqué's request was very largely honoured, and in the following weeks British newspapers maintained silence about the BEF as it mobilized and deployed to France. Only on Tuesday, 18 August, the day after the BEF's deployment was completed, did the British press announce that it had crossed to France.

The Thursday, 30 July, meeting of the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee also discussed the matter of war correspondents being sent with the BEF if it should deploy overseas. Robbins as secretary suggested that the War Office should form a small committee with the press to discuss this, Riddell added that they should call for newspapers to provide a register of correspondents to be given accreditation and Reginald Brade for the War Office pointed out that no decision had yet been taken on sending the BEF (in fact a cabinet decision on the previous day had been not to send it, as no war had yet been declared); after this discussion, it was resolved 'to leave the matter over for the present.'⁹ The committee did not meet again until 20 August, by which date both circumstances and its role had changed considerably with Britain's entry into the war and the despatch of the BEF. The meeting on 30 July showed clearly that both the War Office and the newspaper representatives expected accredited reporters to accompany the BEF if it were sent overseas, and that this would be a reasonably straightforward procedure, but that no practical decisions or detailed planning had taken place, contrary to the impression given in Callwell's memoirs.

The formal British declaration of war against Germany came into force at 11.00 pm on Tuesday, 4 August, and the mobilization of the BEF began next day. A severe problem for other major powers in the war crisis, notably for Germany and Austria-Hungary, may have been an excess of influence and authority by senior army officers. But for Great Britain the opposite was true, and the problems lay in military weakness and in a near power vacuum in the military high command. Since the Curragh Mutiny (or Curragh Incident) of April 1914, the post of Secretary of State for War, the political head of the Army, had been vacant, with Asquith notionally carrying out the role himself. Field Marshal Sir John French, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and professional head of the Army, had also resigned over the Curragh, being replaced by the lesser and politically inexperienced figure of General Sir Charles Douglas. French remained through summer 1914 in a kind of military limbo; he had for some years been the designated commander-in-chief of the BEF if it were mobilized, but it was far from clear in the July–August crisis that he would automatically be given the post. Kitchener had arrived in Britain from Egypt on Tuesday, 23 June, to receive his earldom from King George V, and it was largely by accident that he was available to be offered the War Office as a political appointment. Asquith's decision to offer Kitchener the War Office and his confirmation of French as commander of the BEF were entirely politically

based and took place in the context of considerable political and press lobbying. The most cynical view of Asquith's offer to Kitchener was that Asquith wanted a scapegoat at the War Office in case of British defeat. As a less conspiratorial explanation, Asquith needed both men as famous military figures to reassure his cabinet colleagues, so minimizing resignations, and also to reassure the mass of the public.¹⁰

What is also clear, both from the two councils of war held by Asquith on Wednesday, 5 August, and Thursday, 6 August, and from the comments of several cabinet members at the time, is that in comparison to their knowledge of finance or domestic politics most of them had only the most general or vague understanding of the nature of the war on which they were embarking, or of the strengths and weaknesses of the BEF. Recent historical research has identified many of these weaknesses, largely stemming from the small size of the BEF – six infantry divisions and five cavalry brigades – and the Army's efforts before the war to retain even this number by expedients and by duplicating positions and functions.¹¹ The only formation within the BEF that was genuinely fully trained and ready for war was Aldershot Command under General Sir Douglas Haig, which formed I Corps on mobilization, consisting of a higher headquarters who had trained together, two infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade. Otherwise, much about the BEF was a matter of hurried improvisation. The BEF's other four infantry divisions, making up II Corps and III Corps, were to varying degrees underequipped and more heavily dependent on reservists than Haig's I Corps. French's own headquarters staff was hurriedly improvised and changed as the BEF deployed, much to his frustration and annoyance. There were also no pre-war permanent headquarters for II Corps, III Corps or the Cavalry Division (comprising four of the cavalry brigades). Along with other training institutions, the Army Staff College at Camberley was closed down not (as some historians have suggested) from the conviction that this would be a short war with no need for further trained staff officers but because its staff and instructors had crucial designated wartime roles.¹² The commandant at Camberley, Brigadier General Lancelot Kiggell, moved on 5 August to become Director of Military Training at the War Office; Charles Callwell, also, was recalled from his retirement of five years to become Director of Military Operations at the War Office. The pre-war decision to free experienced staff officers familiar with the latest developments in the Army to take positions within the BEF on mobilization, and to replace them at the War Office with others, caused considerable disruption within the War Office itself, even more so as this was combined with Kitchener's unexpected appointment, and with Douglas as an inexperienced Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Neither Kitchener nor Douglas had ever taken the staff officers' course at the Army Staff College Camberley, and so neither of them was 'psc' (for 'passed Staff College'), the basic qualification for a trained staff officer.

Both prior to Asquith's two councils of war and during them, French and Haig separately floated the idea that the BEF's departure should be delayed or its concentration area changed, which would have given more time for its training deficiencies to be made good and perhaps for it to be increased in strength. Despite this, once the decision was made that the BEF was to be sent with immediate effect, the only plan for which the transport and supply had been pre-organized in detail was that which was in fact implemented: a deployment to Maubeuge and advance into

Belgium in support of the French Fifth Army. But there was also a genuine fear within the two councils of war both of a surprise German raid across the English Channel, for which plans already existed to hold a division in reserve, and of possible riots if the British financial system collapsed as a result of the war crisis. The decision that came from the second council of war's deliberations was that the BEF would at first deploy only four infantry divisions and its cavalry division, plus the extra cavalry brigade.¹³ The 4th Infantry Division under Major General Thomas D'O. Snow was held behind to reassure public opinion, deploying first to eastern England, and starting to cross to France only on the night of 22/23 August, about four days behind the main BEF. In consequence of this, the 4th Infantry Division did not arrive in time to take part in the Battle of Mons on Sunday, 23 August. The 6th Infantry Division, the final infantry division of the BEF, made up of troops based in Ireland as well as Britain, did not cross to France until September.

On Friday, 7 August, the day that his appointment as Secretary of State for War became official, Kitchener made his first public call for a mass volunteer army, starting with 100,000 men. This appeared in newspapers in the form of an advertisement:

Your King and Country / Need You. / A CALL TO ARMS. / An addition of 100,000 men to His Majesty's Regular Army is immediately necessary in the present grave National Emergency. / Lord Kitchener is confident that this appeal will be at once responded to by all who have the safety of our Empire at heart.¹⁴

Over the weekend, 8,193 men were attested; there were very few social groups who could volunteer immediately and in a carefree spirit: chiefly, the unemployed from one end of the social scale and the financially self-sufficient from the other, together with anyone without personal or professional commitments to leave behind; there was no immediate 'rush to the colours' on the outbreak of war. Kitchener's cabinet colleagues seem to have been largely bemused by his call for volunteers, some considering it only as a convenient way of absorbing the surplus unemployed in the workforce.¹⁵ But there was a precedent, well known to Kitchener for those who cared to notice, in the rush of British volunteers for the Anglo-Boer War, not so much on its outbreak in October 1899 as two months later in response to the triple British defeats of 'Black Week', a response that produced over 100,000 British volunteers in the course of that war (plus nearly half as many again who failed the Army medical test).¹⁶

Despite his well-known public contempt for the press, Kitchener also knew from his considerable previous experiences how to exploit it. A few days after his appointment, he gave an interview to Colonel Charles à Court Repington, the military correspondent of *The Times*, at the London home of Lady Wantage in Carleton Gardens.¹⁷ The old cliché that in August 1914 the war was generally expected in Britain to be over by Christmas has been convincingly overturned by historians, and the long article by Repington that appeared in *The Times* for Saturday, 15 August, is important evidence of Kitchener's own views on this. The article explained that the call was now for up to 500,000 volunteers, based on Britain expecting to fight a war that 'may be long, very long', and stressed the size and power of Germany and its military forces. The article also made reference to 'the Policy of Pitt', meaning Prime Minister William

Pitt the Younger's strategy in the war against Napoleon, suggesting a chiefly naval war with further trained British troops being deployed to the continent at some time in the future, in support of the BEF. The article stated Kitchener's intention that for 'the Regular Army little or nothing will be changed' and described his plan (which was later overtaken by events) to divide the Territorial Force into two categories, those willing to serve overseas and those volunteering only for home defence. Also, the article continued, 'on this occasion, when public spirit is high and so many hands are thrown out of work by the war, there has been a rush to join, and in a week or a fortnight the first 100,000 will be made up' to join what Repington called the New Army, with Kitchener's estimate that 'the new army may possibly be nearly ready for the field in six months' – enough in itself to disprove the 'over by Christmas' story.¹⁸

The impact of this *Times* article made Repington's prediction self-fulfilling, and by next Saturday, 22 August (the day before the Battle of Mons), 101,939 men had put themselves forward as volunteers. This was between twice and three times as many men as the Army normally had volunteer in a year in peacetime, and already enough to overwhelm the War Office's ability to cope with the probable influx. Obviously, not every volunteer's actions may be attributed solely to Kitchener's call through Repington and *The Times*. Recruiting was at first patchy across the country and across social groups; the relatively low figures from most rural areas in August may simply have reflected the need to gather the harvest. But at least part of the foundation of the belief that the men had all volunteered swiftly and in high spirits was a direct product of Kitchener's need to stimulate recruitment and Repington's obliging propaganda. If there can be said to be a typical response from the British population, it was shock at the news of war, a growing sense of concern at their country in danger, a desire to balance any willingness to volunteer against existing commitments to jobs and families and – in a society that was highly socially structured and deferential – waiting for a lead from their national and local leaders, which was first provided by Kitchener's *Times* interview.¹⁹ Repington later claimed that Kitchener told him that they could have no more direct contact, since he was under pressure through his cabinet colleagues from other newspaper editors, furious that he had given *The Times* such an exclusive.²⁰ On Tuesday, 25 August, Kitchener gave his maiden speech in the House of Lords on the progress of the BEF so far, stressing that as a soldier he belonged to no political party, that 'our troops have already been for thirty-six hours in contact with a superior force of German invaders' and that

the Press and the public have, in their respective spheres, lent invaluable aid to the Government in preserving the discreet silence which the exigencies of the situation obviously demanded, and I gladly take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the value of their co-operation.²¹

To continue the story, it is necessary to return to Monday, 27 July, and the meeting of the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee, where the press agreed to voluntarily submit to restriction of the news in the event of British involvement in the war. With war declared, on Wednesday, 5 August, immediately after his appointment as Secretary of State for War, Kitchener together with Winston Churchill as First Lord of

the Admiralty asked the prominent Conservative member of parliament F. E. Smith to create and head a new wartime Official Press Bureau, to act as a mouthpiece for all War Office, Admiralty and other government department statements relating to the war and as a point of contact for the press to submit pieces for censorship. F. E. Smith was an astute and experienced politician and was not only a friend of Churchill's but even an officer in the same Territorial mounted regiment, the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, meaning that he could take up his post immediately with the acting rank of full colonel. Despite the pre-war plans, the role of the Press Bureau was not well understood or agreed at first. The editor of the *Manchester Guardian* C. P. Scott described Smith 'as press-correspondent in intimate association with the Admiralty and War Office' and his appointment as a minor example of Asquith already creating a coalition government rather than a truly Liberal one.²² Asquith's wife Margot recorded her own understanding of how her husband described this agreement: 'We've had a Press Committee, which we have also decided to have at Committee of [Imperial] Defence, to which papers can send a delegate; and we tell them what they may not publish.'²³ 'Taffy' Gwynn, now editor of the Conservative London daily *Morning Post*, who generally approved of all things military, noted, 'The secrecy is tremendous and quite right.'²⁴ Although increasingly frustrated, newspapers and their owners largely remained sympathetic to the need for security, at least for the first four or five weeks of the war.

The first communiqué from the Press Bureau appeared on Tuesday, 11 August, the day that the first troops of the BEF crossed to France, although the British press continued to observe silence on this matter.²⁵ No accredited reporters crossed with the BEF, and for a little over a week the London press was in a state of confusion as to how to respond to the War Office's behaviour. William Beach Thomas of the *Daily Mail*, who in 1915 became an official war correspondent with the BEF, claimed in his memoirs that his newspaper had no designated war correspondent in August 1914, that the proprietor Lord Northcliffe (who also owned *The Times*) picked the sporting editor as suitable, that the War Office then told the man to buy a horse and that he and other correspondents-in-waiting were seen for a few days exercising their horses in Hyde Park.²⁶ However, no permission to join the BEF as accredited reporters was forthcoming; instead the newspapers' enquiries were met with various responses, the burden of which was that the BEF was moving within a media *cordon sanitaire*, a notional cocoon or bubble surrounding the troops within which any reporters were liable to military arrest. Both at the time and ever since, this has been seen as a deliberate policy laid down by Kitchener. Despite the absence of firm evidence, there seems no reason to doubt that Kitchener's attitude played a very large part in it; but account needs also to be taken of the chaotic state of the War Office at the time, its many higher priorities than worrying about the press and the unfamiliarity of some of its officers with the agreements that the press believed were already in place from before the war.

The response of the London newspapers and their correspondents to their neglect by the War Office (to use no stronger term) has many parallels in the history of war reporting: they went off to war regardless. Despite the self-censorship of the British press, the BEF's crossing to France and deployment had been freely reported in foreign

newspapers, and its general location on the French–Belgian border was known. Some British reporters were already in France or in Belgium, others now journeyed to Paris or attached themselves to the French and Belgian armies; most began to pursue the BEF and a story, taking the prospect of temporary military arrest as part of the game. How close most of them came to the fighting in August is hard to determine, including from their own later accounts. Philip Gibbs of the *Daily Chronicle* claimed in his memoirs that with two other reporters he had interviewed British soldiers retreating from Mons on about the day after the battle; but this account is unsubstantiated and has some discrepancies, and it is likely that the first British reporters arrived with the BEF a few days later, just after the Battle of Le Cateau on Wednesday, 26 August.²⁷

The two weeks following the BEF's concentration at Maubeuge on Thursday, 20 August, and advance into Belgium remained a period of uncertainty for the British public, but there was by no means a complete press blackout. While information reaching even Prime Minister Asquith and his colleagues was limited and uncertain, there were straws in the wind, and astute politicians could see which way that wind was blowing. On the day after Mons, Monday, 24 August, Asquith wrote to his (probably platonic) mistress Venetia Stanley, 'The last thing French said to me when we took farewell in this room, was that we must be prepared for a reverse or two at first. And you know how disgusted I have been with the silly optimism of our press.'²⁸ Late on the same day the Press Bureau released a short communiqué, 'The British forces were engaged all day on Sunday and after dark with the enemy at Mons, and held their ground'; this was picked up next day by most newspapers, together with a second communiqué to the effect that the British had moved to new positions and were being opposed by approximately equal numbers of Germans; *The Times*, although retaining a positive tone when describing the British withdrawal, assessed that across the front, 'The battle is joined and so far has gone ill for the Allies.'²⁹ Also on Tuesday, 25 August, the British government published *The Belgian Official Report*, giving the first account by the Belgian government of German war crimes and attacks on civilians during their invasion of Belgium.³⁰ On the same day, 10,019 men around the country volunteered for the Army, the first occasion on which the daily number had reached five figures. Two days later on Thursday, 27 August, a preliminary meeting took place in the House of Commons, followed by two more meetings over the next three days, that laid the foundations of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, a cross-party committee to coordinate the efforts of local recruiting committees and to start to bring order to the volunteering process.³¹

As is well known, after fighting the Battle of Mons, the BEF became divided at the start of its retreat, leading to its II Corps (3rd and 5th Infantry Divisions) having to stand and fight at the Battle of Le Cateau on Wednesday, 26 August. Most of the fighting troops of Major General Snow's 4th Infantry Division arrived at Le Cateau by train on Monday, 24 August, began advancing towards the rest of the BEF next day and then fell back again to Le Cateau as part of the general retreat, taking up their position with II Corps as part of the British defensive line. Snow's division had suffered from peacetime inadequacies and from its rushed deployment across the English Channel. It fought the Battle of Le Cateau without its divisional heavy artillery, its engineers, its supply train and ammunition column, its field ambulances (medical services), most of

its signallers and its divisional cavalry, who were used for scouting and to give early warning of danger. The division had even deployed without its field cookers, standard equipment used to provide hot meals in the field, and the troops were hungry as well as cold and wet by night, and then hot and thirsty by day from marching under the August sun.³²

The German advance was stopped dead by the British stand at Le Cateau, quite literally in many cases. Having taken the heaviest casualties – 3,158 men (excluding a large number of stragglers who later returned to their units) – of any British division in battle so far, 4th Infantry Division retreated off the battlefield in the late afternoon, as part of the general British plan to halt the Germans, break contact and resume the retreat. But the sight of the British soldiers walking away in groups struck some observers as resembling a disorganized mob. Colonel Victor Huguet, the French liaison officer with BEF headquarters, reported next day that ‘conditions are such that for the moment the British army no longer exists.’³³ There was virtually no effective German pursuit, but, retreating in forced marches through the August heat, soldiers hallucinated from lack of sleep and dehydration, seeing phantom castles and friendly riders nearby. Commanders feared that if their men were allowed to rest they would never get them up again. Some formations of the 4th Infantry Division became detached from the main body for several days. On the day after Le Cateau, BEF headquarters issued orders for its retreating formations to abandon all unnecessary equipment and use the transport to carry their exhausted men; this was misinterpreted by 4th Infantry Division as an order to destroy all equipment as part of a *sauve qui peut* or general flight, and much equipment was burned before the order could be countermanded.³⁴ On the same day, two of 4th Infantry Division’s battalion commanders, who were later court-martialled, attempted to surrender their battalions together with the town of Saint Quentin and were prevented only by the intervention of British cavalry.³⁵

This was the situation when, on Thursday and Friday, 27 and 28 August, two British reporters, Hamilton Fyfe of the *Daily Mail* (who rather than riding a horse drove a Rolls-Royce) and Arthur Moore of *The Times*, came across retreating soldiers of 4th Infantry Division, mostly scattered and trying to find their parent units, but evidently prepared to talk to reporters. The story of what happened next was set out in some detail in the official history of *The Times* in 1952, complete with facsimile reproductions of the critical documents, and is generally supported by other accounts and sources, although there are some difficulties with it that may never be resolved.³⁶ Back at their hotel at Amiens on the morning of Saturday, 29 August, Moore and Fyfe each wrote out his story, and these were sent back together to their respective newspapers. As was common among journalists, Moore’s handwritten dispatch was composed as if he had written it on Saturday afternoon or evening, which is when he knew it would arrive at *The Times*’s headquarters at Printing House Square in London. Caught up in the drama of events, and drawing on what he had heard from lost, exhausted and in some cases traumatized soldiers, Moore identified the men that he had interviewed as from ‘the Fourth Division, all that was left of 20,000 fine troops’ and that it had been ‘thrown into the fight at the end of a long march and had not even the time to dig trenches’. Pleading at the start of his article to the censor to allow its story to be told, Moore painted a vivid word picture of ‘straggling units’, of almost continuous ‘desperate fighting’ from Mons

onwards, and of the Germans daily harassing the retreating British with ‘Aeroplanes, Zeppelins, armoured motors and cavalry’. In fact, the first Zeppelin airship raid took place on the night of 5/6 August on Liege, and the Germans did have some armoured cars, but none were used against the British in the retreat from Mons. ‘I have seen broken bits of many regiments’, Moore continued, and men ‘worn out with marching’ who were nevertheless ‘steady and cheerful, and wherever they arrive make straight for the proper authorities and seek news of their regiment’.³⁷

At Printing House Square, after reading through this dramatic document, which was about two newspaper columns long, *The Times’s* acting editor George Freeman, together with foreign editor Henry Wickham Steed, blue-pencilled those parts of Moore’s account which they believed would not survive censorship and sent the manuscript to the Press Bureau. Significantly for the importance that German war crimes and atrocities were soon to have in British propaganda and recruiting, a paragraph on German atrocities in Belgium was deleted from the version sent to the censor, for reasons of space. After about two to three hours, shortly before midnight, the piece was returned with a note from F. E. Smith himself, actually reinstating several of the self-censored passages, and adding a concluding paragraph, written as a continuation of Moore’s account and as if the author had been a witness to the events, ‘The British Expeditionary Force, which bore the great weight of the [German] blow, has suffered terrible losses’ but ‘it needs men, men, and yet more men’, and that ‘we want reinforcements and we want them now’. Even the identification of the 4th Infantry Division was not censored out, a breach of what would later become established practice. Smith also added a covering note:

I am sorry to have censored this most able and interesting message so freely but the reasons are obvious. Forgive my clumsy journalistic suggestions but I beg you to use the parts of this article which I have passed to enforce the lesson – re-inforcements & reinforcements [*sic*] at once.³⁸

Interpreting Smith’s ‘suggestions’ as a command, *The Times* made the unprecedented decision to run Moore’s piece on the front page of a special edition on Sunday, 30 August, bylined ‘from our special correspondent’ and with the dateline ‘Amiens August 29’ – hence ‘Amiens Dispatch’. Normally, *The Times* ran only advertisements and personal messages on its front page and was not published on Sundays (the *Sunday Times* appeared in the ordinary way on the same day leading with other stories). The headlines for Moore’s story ran ‘Mons and Cambrai / Losses of the British Army / Fight Against Severe Odds / Need for Reinforcements’. The rest of the front page included more general stories about the war in the west and the east, and the naval war. Some editions appear also to have included material from Fyfe’s piece, copied directly from another of Northcliffe’s papers, the Sunday morning *Weekly Dispatch*, which was a sister paper to the *Daily Mail*, with headlines such as ‘German Tidal Wave / Our Soldiers Overwhelmed by Numbers / Plain Duty of the Nation’.³⁹ The next day, Monday, 31 August, over 30,000 men volunteered to join the Army.

What the public, and presumably *The Times’s* staff, could not know was that the publication of the Amiens Dispatch coincided with a crisis in Asquith’s government

over communications between Kitchener at the War Office and Sir John French at BEF headquarters. Over the weekend, Asquith and his wife Margot were away from London, visiting members of her family at her niece's home in Lympne, Kent, and later some wounded soldiers at Folkestone Hospital.⁴⁰ But on the Monday, Asquith and his colleagues found themselves puzzling over a long and rambling telegram sent from Sir John French to the War Office, full of ambiguities, which called for a general attack while simultaneously appearing to demand that the BEF must be pulled out of the line. Asquith had already been facing with annoyance the prospect of complaints in the House of Commons over the decision to suspend the Government of Ireland Act. Now he also found himself facing criticism and demands for information following the special edition of *The Times* with the Amiens Dispatch. He complained to Venetia Stanley that '*The Times* published a most wicked telegram on Sunday from a supposed correspondent at Amiens, describing the rout and desperation of our army', although the report had denied that there had been any rout; Margot Asquith, wrongly attributing the decision to publish to Geoffrey Robinson, *The Times's* editor, who had been absent from Printing House Square that night, complained to the leader of the Opposition, Andrew Bonar Law, of the way that 'the article about our failures, which he [...] published in Sunday's *Times* ([30] August 1914) was translated into every language and widely circulated'.⁴¹ 'Taffy' Gwynne of the *Morning Post* was furious at what he saw as a security breach by *The Times*, writing angry letters to Asquith and to others (including Charles Masterman, who had just been asked to set up Wellington House), as well as denouncing *The Times* in his editorials, to the point at which Robinson asked for a meeting with Gwynne on 'neutral ground'.⁴²

The popular response to the Amiens Dispatch reproduced, on a vastly larger scale, the volunteerism following the defeats of Black Week in the Anglo-Boer War, in reaction to what was portrayed as a defeat and a national crisis rather than in a mood of exuberance. Over the following week up to Monday, 7 September, 174,901 volunteers came forward, by far the largest single number for any week of the war, causing the Army recruiting system to collapse by mid-week, with men's names being taken before they were sent home again because the Army could not process them. This was a formidable piece of recruiting propaganda. But there is good evidence that in passing the Amiens Dispatch and adding his own call for recruits, F. E. Smith (who was, after all, an opposition Conservative member of parliament) had acted without reference to the government, which did not welcome his actions. Following the publication of the special edition of *The Times* on the Sunday morning, at 3.40 pm, the War Office issued through the Press Bureau a communiqué (which according to Asquith was written by Churchill) describing in measured tones the events from Mons to Le Cateau as a 'four days battle' but adding that since Thursday, 26 August, the BEF had been unmolested except by German cavalry patrols and had received twice the number of reinforcements as its losses, ending that 'the army is ready for the next encounter, undaunted in spirit'.⁴³ This was followed by a statement from the Press Bureau at 11.10 pm that though it did not forbid publication of reports from the war zone, such stories 'should be received with extreme caution. No correspondents are at the front, and their information, however honestly sent, is therefore derived at second or third hand from persons who are often in no position to tell coherent stories'.⁴⁴

These Press Bureau correctives appeared in London newspapers on Monday, simultaneously with questions being asked about the Amiens Dispatch in the House of Commons first to Asquith and then in the evening to F. E. Smith. Asquith began by describing the publication as a 'very regrettable exception' to the patriotic restraint shown by the press and announced that the government had that very day made new arrangements for providing the public with information about the BEF; what these arrangements by Asquith and Kitchener would become apparent a week later.⁴⁵ In response to Asquith's criticisms, *The Times* sent a statement to the House of Commons which was read into the parliamentary record, and next day, Tuesday, 1 September, it published additional statements on the circumstances, pointing out that 'we published it in accordance with the official request', although certainly neither Smith nor anyone in government had called for a special Sunday edition to be created for the purpose.⁴⁶ Smith spoke for about an hour, starting by claiming that 'I never sought the office that I hold' and embarking on a history of government–press relations up to that date, starting with the Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee. When he eventually reached the circumstances of the Amiens Dispatch, he pointed out that 'no war correspondents were being allowed at the front, and that there was the greatest anxiety, and legitimate anxiety, to obtain any information as to the fortunes of the campaign', that being passed by the censor did not actually mean government endorsement of the report and that his addition of a call for reinforcements 'was in order to carry out what I knew to be the policy of the War Office'.⁴⁷ Smith was to resign at his own request from heading the Press Bureau at the end of September. The entire sequence of events leading both to and from the Amiens Dispatch arose from confusion within the government over propaganda, and from the lack of a system that had been agreed and understood by the press itself of accreditation for reporters, and of press handling and censorship.

But this is not quite the end of the story. In the heightened atmosphere of Monday, 31 August, a second telegram was received by Kitchener from Sir John French at BEF headquarters just before midnight, which was interpreted as evidence of panic there, an assessment which is contradicted by the evidence of junior officers who noted French's calmness and confidence that day. Of several possible explanations, the most plausible is that French, who was a poor prose stylist, had composed the telegrams himself rather than entrust them to a staff officer. Asquith's response, as he described it to Venetia Stanley, was to send Kitchener out to France 'to unravel the situation and if necessary put the fear of God in them all'.⁴⁸ Kitchener and French met on Tuesday, 1 September; exactly what they said to each other is unknown: Kitchener never spoke of the meeting and French's memoirs are unreliable. But the result was a formal order (or 'instruction', to use the official term) from Kitchener to French that the BEF would cease its retreat and turn to take part in the Battle of the Marne, the decisive French Army counterstroke that ended the German threat to win the war quickly. By remaining in action the BEF also lost in total 31,709 casualties up to 4 October, destroying a large part of the stock of experienced officers who might have commanded the new armies that Kitchener was raising. While obviously the Amiens Dispatch was not the chief factor in this sequence of events, it was an important addition to the general atmosphere of stress and crisis within which Asquith's and Kitchener's decisions were made.

Also on Monday, 31 August, at its third meeting in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee was officially created. Soon famous for its recruiting posters, the main function of this committee was not at first to promote recruiting but to seek to bring to it some kind of order by encouraging and supporting local recruiting committees. While the official and central recruiting system was temporarily in a state of collapse, local recruiters, who believed that they had been given a clear lead, and responding to the press's call for more recruits, temporarily took over the process. It was late September 1914 that saw the great eruption of local and regional recruiting which led to the famous Pals Battalions, infantry units recruited locally, often from friends and workmates. At their high point in October 1914, eighty-four new battalions were raised locally, compared with nineteen raised through the official War Office machinery.⁴⁹

Finally, on Monday, 7 September, which represented the peak of recruiting stimulated by the Amiens Dispatch, the change to government policy on reporters with the BEF announced by Asquith a week earlier came into force. While the details of how the decision was made remain unknown, Kitchener had taken even further his old idea from the Anglo-Boer War, by appointing a serving officer who was also an experienced writer, Colonel Ernest Swinton, to BEF headquarters to write under the byline 'Eyewitness', as the sole British official reporter on the Western Front.⁵⁰ This arrangement, which pleased no one, lasted until spring 1915, when Swinton was at first joined and then replaced by newspaper reporters accredited to BEF headquarters.

Although, as has been repeatedly stressed, the Amiens Dispatch was not the sole cause of any major subsequent event; without its publication, the British news blackout on the Western Front might have continued for much longer than it did. Also, and more speculatively, the BEF might not have fought in the Battle of the Marne; and the Pals Battalions might not have been created in such large numbers.

Notes

- 1 For the 1878 recommendations, see The National Archives, Kew (TNA), WO 33/32, 'Newspaper Correspondents with an Army in the Field and Military Attachés of Foreign Powers at Head-Quarters', 1878. For a reference to the 1889 regulations, see TNA, WO 32/7138, 'Revised Rules for Newspaper Correspondents at the Seat of War', 1899 – the original War Office file of 1889 does not seem to be extant.
- 2 See Stephen Badsey, 'War Correspondents in the Boer War', in John Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War – Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2000), pp. 187–202; the quotation from Kitchener is on p. 201.
- 3 TNA, CAB 17/91, 'Control of Press', which includes a draft parliamentary 'Publication of Naval and Military Information Act' of 1905 with the preamble as quoted.
- 4 TNA, CAB 17/91, 'Control of Press', CID memorandum 'Control of the Press' summarizing these plans, 13 November 1911; and 'Report and Proceedings' of the standing subcommittee, 1913.
- 5 TNA, DEFE 53/1, 'A, WO, AM and PC, Minutes of Meetings 5 November 1912 to July 1939', including the memorandum on the establishment of the standing committee

- (the abbreviation stands for 'Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry [from 1918] and Press Committee'), 5 November 1912.
- 6 Charles Edward Callwell, *Experiences of a Dug-Out 1914–1918* (London, 1920), pp. 258–9; Simon Batten, '“A School for Leaders”: What Did the British Army Learn from the 1912 Army Manoeuvres?' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 93: 373 (2015), pp. 25–47.
 - 7 Lucy Masterman, C. F. G. *Masterman: A Biography* [1939] (London, 1968), pp. 272–3; M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18* (London, 1982), pp. 38–40.
 - 8 TNA, DEFE 53/1, 'A, WO, AM and PC, Minutes of Meetings 5 November 1912 to July 1939'; minutes of the meeting for Monday, 27 July 1914; George Riddell, *Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914–1918* (London, 1933), pp. 1–3.
 - 9 TNA, DEFE 53/1, 'A, WO, AM and PC, Minutes of Meetings 5 November 1912 to July 1939'; minutes of the meeting for Wednesday, 30 July 1914.
 - 10 George H. Cassar, *Kitchener's War: British Strategy from 1914 to 1916* (Washington, DC, 2004), pp. 19–26; Nicholas A. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), pp. 201–2.
 - 11 Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training and Deploying the British Army 1902–1914* (Oxford, 2012); Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army 1902–1914* (Norman, OK, 2012); Stephen Badsey, 'Sir John French and Command of the BEF', in Spencer Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Solihull, 2013), pp. 27–50.
 - 12 Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854–1914* (London, 1972), pp. 295–300; Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace* (London, 2013), p. 303.
 - 13 TNA, CAB 22/1, 'Secretary's Notes of a War Council Held at 10 Downing Street August 5, 1914' and 'Secretary's Notes of a War Council Held at 10 Downing Street August 6, 1914'; Lambert, *Planning Armageddon*, pp. 201–3.
 - 14 An example of this advertisement may be found as 'The Army', *The Times*, 7 August 1914, p. 5.
 - 15 Lambert, *Planning Armageddon*, pp. 232–4.
 - 16 Steven M. Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain's Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899–1902* (Norman, OK, 2007), p. 57.
 - 17 C. à Court Repington, *The First World War 1914–1918*, vol. 1 (London, 1920), p. 21.
 - 18 'Lord Kitchener's Plan by Our Military Correspondent', *The Times*, 15 August 1914, p. 7; Stuart Halifax, '“Over by Christmas”: British Popular Opinion and the Short War in 1914', *First World War Studies*, 1: 2 (2010), pp. 103–22.
 - 19 David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War 1914–1916* (London, 2005), pp. 15–48; Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 143–62; Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 70–111; Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front 1914–18* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 32–60.
 - 20 Repington, *The First World War*, vol. 1, p. 22.
 - 21 Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Lords, 25 August 1914, vol. 17, cc. 501–4, statement by Lord Kitchener.
 - 22 Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott 1911–1928* (London, 1970), p. 100.

- 23 Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock (eds), *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary 1914–1916* (Oxford, 2014), p. 6, entry for 29 August 1914; Margot Asquith's diary was not a day-by-day record but written up at irregular intervals from notes that she kept.
- 24 Keith Wilson (ed.), *The Rasp of War: The Letters of H. A. Gwynn to the Countess Bathhurst 1914–1918* (London, 1988), p. 20, Gwynn to Bathhurst, 5 August 1914.
- 25 Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda*, pp. 19–20.
- 26 William Beach Thomas, *A Traveller in News* (London, 1925), p. 56.
- 27 Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told* (London, 1920), pp. 4–6; Philip Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years* (London, 1946), pp. 143–7.
- 28 Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock (eds), *H. H. Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1982), Asquith to Venetia, 24 August 1914, p. 191.
- 29 'British Army's Stern Fight', and 'Namur Lost', *The Times*, 25 August 1914, p. 6; Martin J. Farrar, *News from the Front: War Correspondents on the Western Front 1914–18* (Stroud, 1988), pp. 16–19.
- 30 Silbey, *The British Working Class*, p. 23; Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, p. 145.
- 31 Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914–16* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 60–3.
- 32 Sir James E. Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1914*, vol. 1 (History of the Great War based on Official Documents; London, 1922), pp. 121–46.
- 33 Quoted in Nikolas Gardner, *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport, CT, 2003), p. 60.
- 34 Cited in many accounts, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 61.
- 35 This is a well-known and now well-documented story which for understandable reasons did not appear in the British official history of the campaign; see the account by the senior cavalry officer involved, Sir Tom Bridges, *Alarms and Excursions* (London, 1938), pp. 85–8; and John Hutton, *August 1914: Surrender at St Quentin* (Barnsley, 2010).
- 36 [Anon.], *The History of 'The Times': The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912–1948*, part I: 1912–1920 (London, 1952), pp. 222–7; Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmworth, *Northcliffe* (London, 1959), p. 469; Farrar, *News from the Front*, pp. 18–23.
- 37 All quotations are from 'Mons and Cambrai', *The Times*, 30 August 1914, p. 1.
- 38 Quotation and facsimile of the letter in [Anon.], *The History of 'The Times'*, part I, pp. 222–3.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 225; the version of the front page of *The Times* for 30 August 1914 held by the British Library does not have these particular headlines.
- 40 Brock and Brock (eds), *Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Asquith to Venetia, 30 August 1914, pp. 139–40; Brock and Brock (eds), *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary*, p. 28, entries for 30–31 August 1914.
- 41 Brock and Brock (eds), *Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Asquith to Venetia, 31 August 1914, p. 209; Brock and Brock (eds), *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary*, p. 32, entry for 4 September 1914.
- 42 Wilson (ed.), *The Rasp of War*, p. 26, Gwynn to Bathurst, 1 September 1914; Brock and Brock (eds), *Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Asquith to Venetia, 31 August 1914, p. 209; Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, Papers of Charles Masterman CFGM 6/5/1/3, Letter H. A. Gwynne to Charles Masterman, 31 August 1914.
- 43 This Press Bureau communiqué is quoted in full in 'British Forces Intact', *The Times*, 31 August 1914, p. 8; the attribution to Churchill is in Brock and Brock (eds), *Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Asquith to Venetia, 31 August 1914, p. 209.

- 44 This communiqué is quoted in full in a later edition of *The Times* on the same day, 'Four Days Battle', *The Times*, 31 August 1914, p. 8.
- 45 Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Commons, 31 August 1914, vol. 66, cc. 372–4, statement by the prime minister.
- 46 'The Attacks on *The Times*', *The Times*, 1 September 1914, p. 9.
- 47 Hansard, HC, 31 August 1914, vol. 66, cc. 454–511, statements by F. E. Smith.
- 48 Brock and Brock (eds), *Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Asquith to Venetia, 1 September 1914, p. 213; for this controversial episode, see Badsey, 'Sir John French', pp. 46–8.
- 49 Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 61–2, 79–80.
- 50 Ernest D. Swinton, *Eyewitness: Being Personal Reminiscences of Certain Phases of the Great War, Including the Genesis of the Tank* (London, 1932), pp. 52–4.

‘Thank God for the French Army’: Churchill on the French Army between the two world wars

Antoine Capet

Following Hitler’s accession to the German Chancellery on 31 January, Churchill said in the Commons on 23 March 1933, ‘I dare say that during this anxious month there are a good many people who have said to themselves, as I have been saying for several years: “Thank God for the French Army.”’ What is interesting in his phrasing, beyond his well-known act of faith in the French Army, is his reminder, ‘as I have been saying for several years’. One must note that he does not say ‘since the war’: this would not be justified, because there was a time after the Great War when he was distrustful of French intentions, fearing that a France reigning supreme militarily on the continent would not resist the temptation of seeking hegemony, imposing policies which adversely affected British interests. Later in his speech, he explained the self-interested reason for his change of heart:

There is another and more obvious argument against our trying to weaken the armed power of France at the present juncture. As long as France is strong and Germany is but inadequately armed, there is no chance of France being attacked with success, and, therefore, no obligation under Locarno will arise for us to go to the aid of France. I am sure, on the other hand, that France, which is the most pacific nation in Europe at the present time, as she is, fortunately, the most efficiently armed nation in Europe, would never attempt any violation of the Treaty which exists or commit an overt act against Germany without the sanctions of the Treaty, without reference to the Treaty, and, least of all, in opposition to the country with which she is on such amicable relations – Great Britain.¹

A few weeks later, on 14 April, he repeated ‘I am glad to say’ in his plea in favour of the British government doing nothing at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva to weaken ‘the strongest military power’ in Europe:

One of the things we were told after the Great War would be a security for us was that Germany would be a democracy with parliamentary institutions. All that has been swept away. You have dictatorship – most grim dictatorship. . . .

I will leave Germany and turn to France. France is not only the sole great surviving democracy in Europe; she is also the strongest military power, I am glad to say, and she is the head of a system of States and nations. France is the guarantor and protector of all these small States I mentioned a few moments ago; the whole crescent which runs right round from Belgium to Yugoslavia and Rumania. They all look to France. When any step is taken, by England or any other Power, to try to weaken the diplomatic or military security of France, all these small nations tremble with fear and anger. They fear that the central protective force will be weakened, and that then they will be at the mercy of the great Teutonic power.²

In *The Gathering Storm* (1948), his memoir of the inter-war years published fifteen years later, Churchill reminisced, 'I remember particularly the look of pain and aversion which I saw on the faces of Members in all parts of the House when I said "Thank God for the French Army."³ We now know that this blind trust in the French Army turned out to have been misplaced, as was demonstrated in May 1940 – but the point is that a keen professional soldier like Churchill should have been so impressed by what he had seen in the war that his admiration lingered into the 1930s.

His experience as a *poilu*⁴ on the actual front from 18 November 1915 to 6 May 1916 – his 'hundred days' in Paul Addison's apt phrase⁵ – of course gave him first-hand knowledge of the appalling conditions which prevailed in the trenches and the tenacious self-sacrifice required if the men were to hold the lines in spite of everything. 'I ... ask you to submit my resignation to the King. I am an officer, and I place myself unreservedly at the disposal of the military authorities, observing that my regiment is in France', he wrote to Asquith, the prime minister, on 11 November 1915,⁶ after concluding that his ministerial career would never recover following the Gallipoli disaster.⁷ The regiment in question was the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, in which he had served since 1902, enjoying its summer camps, officially for training, but also a great annual social occasion. When he disembarked at Boulogne on 18 November 1915, he was greeted by an orderly who took him directly to the commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Force, Sir John French, whose headquarters was in the Château du Hamel, at Blendecques, near Saint-Omer. 'I am staying tonight at GHQ in a fine château, with hot water, beds, champagne & all the conveniences', he wrote to his wife, Clementine, after a fine dinner with the general.⁸ In other words, initially the only inkling that he was in France came from châteaux and champagne. Sir John French suggested that Churchill might receive command of a brigade in due course – but some experience of trench warfare was necessary first. Churchill later wrote, to justify what could appear as undeserved promotion:

Having been trained professionally for about five years as a soldier, and having prior to the Great War seen as much actual fighting as almost any of the Colonels or Generals in the British Army, I had certain credentials which were accepted in military circles. I was not a Regular, but neither was I a civilian volunteer.⁹

As the Second Battalion of the Grenadier Guards was to be sent to the line on 20 November, Churchill was immediately attached to it, with the rank of major. The sector

to be defended lay between Merville and Neuve-Chapelle. Churchill described the grim landscape to his wife:

It is a wild scene. . . . Filth & rubbish everywhere, graves built into the defences & scattered about promiscuously, feet & clothing breaking through the soil, water & muck on all sides; & about this scene in the dazzling moonlight troops of enormous rats creep & glide, to the unceasing accompaniment of rifle & machine gun & the venomous whining & whirring of the bullets which pass overhead.¹⁰

His chance to see the French lines came very quickly. On 4 December, he wrote again to his wife, 'Tomorrow I go to the French 10th army under the chaperonage of Spiers. It will be v[er]y interesting to see the scene of these terrific Arras battles & I shall learn a great deal of their system in the trenches.'¹¹ A London society acquaintance of Churchill's, Captain Spiers, as he then was,¹² spoke perfect French and was serving as liaison officer between the HQ of the British Expeditionary Force and the staff of the French 10th Army. The visit duly took place the next day, and Churchill sent a substantial account of his first meeting with French commanders since he had left the Admiralty in May:

Yesterday I visited the 10th French army. I was received with much attention – more so in fact than when I went as 1st Lord.¹³ Spiers showed me round these terrible battlefields where at least 100,000 men have perished. The Germans considerably refrained from shelling as usual & I was able to visit all the celebrated spots. I lunched with the HQ¹⁴ of the 33rd [French Army] Corps and cheered them all up about the war & the future. The general [General Fayolle¹⁵] insisted on our being photographed together – me in my French steel helmet & to make a background German prisoners were lined up under a gendarme (I will send you a copy). In the evening I called on General D'Urbal¹⁶ to thank him for letting me visit his lines & he made me stay for dinner. He commands 6 army corps.¹⁷

Churchill made much of his gift, in French military nomenclature *casque Adrian modèle 1915*, light blue (the infantry's colours). Apparently, he believed it to be more resistant to penetration than the regulation British Brodie helmet – not yet in regular service in the British Army anyway – as he suggested to Clementine, 'I have been given a true steel helmet by the French wh[ich] I am going to wear, as it looks so nice & will perhaps protect my valuable cranium.'¹⁸ A few days later, he alluded to the *casque Adrian* again: 'My steel helmet is the cause of much envy. I look most martial in it – like a Cromwellian. I always intend to wear it under fire – but chiefly for the appearance.'¹⁹ Indeed, the proud 'French Cromwellian' wore it for two pictures which have become extremely famous: the celebrated photograph with his friend Archibald Sinclair, the future leader of a Liberal faction and future Minister for Air in 1940, taken at Armentières on 11 February 1916; and his oil portrait by Sir John Lavery of 1916.²⁰ In his papers, now at the Imperial War Museum, Lieutenant Colonel C. E. L. Lyne recounts a funny incident connected with Churchill's 'queer attire': at one stage, one of

his artillerymen ‘came into Battery Headquarters in a state of some excitement’. He had an alarming report to make:

I believe we have got a spy in our sector because I have just seen a bloke dressed in a Frenchman’s steel helmet and queer garments and speaking in a guttural [*sic*] voice, who said ‘This is a good place for an OP.’²¹ Actually, ... I thought it was a bloody awful place, so I’m quite sure he is a spy, so let’s go and arrest him.²²

Spiers took Churchill to see General Fayolle again on 29 December at Camblin, where they had dinner and a ‘very interesting conversation.’²³ Churchill confirmed in a letter to Clementine that

we made an expedition to the French lines. I was able to go to the very farthest point we hold on the Vimy Ridge, from which a fair view of the plain of Douai was obtainable. I believe Spiers & I are the only Englishmen who have ever been on this battle-torn ground.

He continued with an instance of what we would now call ‘fraternisation’:

The [German–French] lines are in places only a few yards apart ... The sentries looked at each other over the top of the parapet; & while we were in the trench the Germans passed the word to the French to take cover as their officer was going to order stone shelling. This duly arrived; but luckily it was directed upon the *boyau*²⁴ up wh[ich] we had just come & not on that by wh[ich] we were returning.²⁵

Sir Martin Gilbert reports a conversation with Spears who reminisced about that visit fifty-five years later:

I tried to show him what would interest him. I took him to look down on the plain of Douai. The French would be polite – they always were. But they never took him seriously. He played no part in the military hierarchy, which was the one thing that mattered in the French army. [...]

Mostly, Winston looked. If there was a question to be put, he put it. There was a place I took him to at Notre-Dame de Lorette. It was a ridge and a declivity. The French kept attacking it, but nobody had ever been known to come back alive. This interested Winston considerably. He wanted to know why, why, why. [...]

Winston was very curious, very inquisitive to see what the French were doing. It was a time when they were experimenting with all sorts of devices, like a moving shield which you pushed along in front of the infantry. But when Winston mentioned the idea of tanks, the French said: ‘Wouldn’t it be simpler to flood Artois and get your fleet here?’²⁶

When Churchill received command of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers on 1 January 1916, he made for a place known as Moolenacker farm, near Méteren (Nord), where the officers were billeted. Only ‘somewhat decrepit nags and a few mules’ were

there among dilapidated buildings. The nearest town was Hazebrouck, 10 kilometres away, where he does not seem to have met any French people, except the waiters of the Hôtel de la Gare, where he took twenty of his officers to 'an elaborate feast beginning with oysters & lots of champagne'²⁷ before they marched to the trench lines, on 23 January. On the front line, over in Belgium, at the 'unpronounceable'²⁸ Ploegsteert, soon renamed Plug Street – just as Ypres had become Wipers – Churchill had his lodgings 3 km away at the local hospice, run by Belgian nuns, when not actually on trench duty. He was to serve there until 6 May 1916, with substantial leaves of absence to attend sessions at Westminster, since he had not resigned his seat as an MP, but with no more occasions to meet French generals or see French troops at first hand until later in the year. This 'extraordinary episode' in Churchill's life was now over.²⁹ Having actually lived in the trenches, he felt for the rest of his life that this made him an authority on the subject. Moreover, as a regimental officer, he felt that he knew far more than a staff officer of the same rank – perhaps even more than generals safe in their châteaux in the rear. To this, one must add the Francophilia which he had developed before the war, and which was if anything reinforced by the warm welcome which he received from General Fayolle and others – whether they thought highly of him or not is beside the point: what matters is that he kept a fond memory of the VIP treatment which he received at their hands when serving in the British Expeditionary Force. An army with generals who seemed to recognize his merits could not be a bad army.

His period of purgatory on the back benches ended when Lloyd George made him Minister of Munitions on 7 July 1917, his duties including close coordination of the production of war supplies with his French opposite number, Louis Loucheur. Fortunately, they got along extremely well. Churchill keenly seized all opportunities to fly (his preferred mode of transport whenever possible) – to the Ministère in Paris for talks, but also to the front to ascertain the real needs of the forces on the spot, British or French. From London he kept up a steady correspondence with the French civilian and military authorities, notably on the question of heavy artillery supplies. This made Churchill a natural choice for Lloyd George on 28 March 1918, when – with the war situation extremely worrying for the Allies following the initial success of the great German spring offensive – he took the decision to send a personal emissary to Clemenceau, the French prime minister – the 'Tiger', as he was called – and Foch, the newly created generalissimo.

Churchill never tired of recounting these fateful days, when the outcome of the war hung in the balance, and he was in France, in Paris or when he accompanied Clemenceau on his tour of the battlefield, where they were greeted by Foch. The fullest account appeared in a magazine article of 1926, 'A Day with Clemenceau', which he reprinted in *Thoughts and Adventures*. Churchill proudly gives the answer which he got from the Tiger when he asked the head of the British military mission in Paris to tell him that he had been sent by Lloyd George with full powers to discuss the war situation: 'Not only shall Mr. Winston Churchill see everything, but I will myself take him to-morrow to the battle and we will visit all the Commanders of Corps and Armies engaged.'³⁰ Accordingly, the next morning, 30 March, Churchill duly reported to the Ministère de la Guerre, from where there set off towards the zone of operations the distinguished convoy of five cars 'all decorated with the small satin tricolour of the highest authority',

with Clemenceau in the lead car and Churchill and Loucheur in the next. The first stop was at the Beauvais town hall, where Foch was expecting them so that he could explain his plans to them. Churchill was in thrall at 'his extraordinary methods of exposition, for which 'he had been long wondered at, laughed at, and admired in all the schools of war at which he had been Professor or Chief'.³¹ The generalissimo had prepared a large map of the area affected by the German breakthrough. Unfortunately, Churchill tells us, 'he spoke so quickly and jumped from point to point by such large and irregular leaps that I could not make any exact translation of his words.'³² Foch was in fact trying to get his audience to follow the German advance on the map – at least this was what Churchill gathered, continuing, 'But the whole impression was conveyed to the mind with perfect clearness by his unceasing pantomime'³³ and by his key phrases.³⁴ More precisely, Churchill understood that Foch was narrating the unfolding of the German offensive over the last five days. On each day, they gained less – until on the fifth, the day before the scene in Beauvais, they hardly made any progress: 'his whole attitude and manner flowed out in pity for the poor, weak and miserable little zone of invasion which was all that had been achieved by the enemy on the last day.'³⁵ Then at last came relief, even for those who had been able to catch only a few phrases of his agitated French:

The worst was over. Such was the irresistible impression made upon every mind by his astonishing demonstration, during which every muscle and fibre of the General's being had seemed to vibrate with the excitement and passion of a great actor³⁶ on the stage.³⁷

Even better, Foch promised a turning of the tide: 'Stabilisation! Sure, certain, soon. And afterwards. Ah, afterwards. That is my affair.'³⁸ The final scene as described by Churchill is also worthy of a great drama:

He stopped. Everyone was silent.

Then Clemenceau, advancing, '*Alors, général, il faut que je vous embrasse*'.

They both clasped each other tightly without even their English companions being conscious of anything in the slightest degree incongruous or inappropriate.³⁹

It is clear that this scene of public reconciliation – because such it was – made a deep mark on Churchill's view of France. The full conclusions were drawn only later, in *Great Contemporaries* (1937), but the notion that the defence of France – putting Country before Party – had absolute priority over personal and ideological disputes profoundly impressed itself on Churchill's mind – and memory – with disastrous consequences in May 1940, when he misread the nature of the divisions among French élites, which would turn out to be the insurmountable.

In *Thoughts and Adventures*, Churchill insists perhaps more on the military than on the political dimension when he concludes, in respect of that Beauvais scene,

These two men had had fierce passages in the weeks immediately preceding these events. They had quarrelled before; they were destined to quarrel again. But, thank

God, at that moment the two greatest Frenchmen of this awful age were supreme – and were friends. No more was said.⁴⁰

One cannot fail to notice there Churchill's thanks to the deity in a context very similar to that of his later 'Thank God for the French Army'. Churchill's admiration for the 74-year-old Clemenceau appears as boundless when he next describes the dangerous and exhausting foray which they made in the afternoon, not only within the range of German guns but also of their rifles, into the Bois de Moreuil, which had just been retaken by the Canadians. He gave an account of his day in a letter to Clementine written on the morrow:

Yesterday was v[er]y interesting, for I saw with Clemenceau all the commanders ... The old man is v[er]y gracious to me & talks in the most confidential way. He is younger even than I am!⁴¹ and insisted on being taken into the outskirts of the action wh[ich] was proceeding N of Moreuil. . . . Stragglers, wounded horses, blood & explosives gave a grim picture of war. I finally persuaded the old tiger to come away from what he called '*un moment délicieux*'.

We dined with Pétain in his sumptuous train and I was much entertained by Clemenceau. He is an extraordinary character, every word he says – particularly general observations on life & morals – is worth listening to. His spirit & energy indomitable. 15 hours yesterday over rough roads at high speed in motor cars. I was tired out – & he is 76!⁴²

He makes rather the same impression on me as Fisher:⁴³ but much more efficient & just as ready to turn round & bite! I shall be v[er]y wary.⁴⁴

Events proved that Churchill had no reason to be wary, since he was never the object of anything but benevolence on Clemenceau's part then or later, notably in June when, as Churchill recounts in his memoir of the war, *The World Crisis*: 'M. Clemenceau had authorised and even urged me to go everywhere, see everything and "tell Lloyd George what we [the French] are doing."⁴⁵ This enabled Churchill to form an opinion of the preparedness of the French forces facing the German offensive which had reached Château-Thierry, 100 km from Paris:

I visited the armies of Generals Humbert and Deben[e]y, who awaited the expected shock. I knew both these Generals personally, and was still better acquainted with General Fayolle who commanded the Army Group. One could reach the front line from Paris in less than three hours, and I followed with the closest attention the improved methods of defence which the French were adopting.⁴⁶

Generals Humbert (1862–1921), Debeney (1864–1943) and Fayolle (1852–1928) were either dead or far too old to participate in the events of 1940 – but, as in the case of Foch (1851–1929), these French Army commanders left Churchill with a fond memory and an evident nostalgia for the days which he spent at their side during the Great War. He also mentions two generals who were to play a crucial role in the Second World War – though of course Churchill could not know that when he wrote *The World Crisis*. He

has only praise for the first, who stood by Foch through thick and thin, 'a certain young General Weygand, alert, discreet and silent in manner, afterwards to become better known'.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Churchill never took to Pétain, 'a skilful, frigid, scientific soldier' whose 'views differed on important points from those of Foch',⁴⁸ notably on the necessity of keeping reserves to defend Paris instead of sending troops to relieve the British Expeditionary Force – a fact which Churchill never forgot.

Churchill was out of office during what he calls 'General Nivelle's Experiment', to which he devotes a whole chapter in *The World Crisis*. Here, therefore, we do not have Churchill as witness, but Churchill as chronicler from secondary sources. Interestingly, he does not blame Nivelle after the event for the deadly failure of his offensive, in which 'the French troops attacked ... with their customary gallantry',⁴⁹ resulting in a 'slaughter, woeful to the shrunken manhood of France',⁵⁰ but the politicians who trusted him in the first place:

Studying French war politics, one is struck first of all by their extreme complexity. The number of persons involved, the intricacy of their relations, the swiftness and yet the smoothness with which their whole arrangement is continually changed, all baffle the stranger during the event, and weary him afterwards in the tale. The prevailing impression is that of a swarm of bees – all buzzing together, and yet each bee – or nearly every bee – with a perfectly clear idea of what has to be done in the practical interests of the beehive.⁵¹

It now seems evident that he should have borne these words in mind in the 1930s, since his description shows how easily this elaborate and delicate mechanism can break down. It did not, of course, as it turned out, in 1918 – but Churchill's narrative of the conduct of the war shows how often the Allies were on the brink of disaster, not least because of the wrong Frenchmen taking the wrong decisions to promote the wrong French generals, as when the government enthusiastically appointed Nivelle in December 1916. 'On December 27, Joffre was promoted Marshal of France and relieved of his command'⁵² – Churchill starkly writes of the man who left his HQ 'which had nursed so much glory' – to 'some comparatively junior officer ... who had only commanded a single army for five months'. Hence his *ex post facto* judgement: 'The appointment of General Nivelle was clearly a very questionable proceeding.'⁵³

All these blots on the landscape, however, seemed to be deliberately forgotten and ignored later in the 1920s, when Churchill wrote his articles in praise of the two great French leaders of the recent war. Clemenceau's obvious wish to establish the warmest relations with Lloyd George, and Churchill, his occasional personal representative, explain the latter's extremely positive memory of him. This is reflected in another article, taken up in *Great Contemporaries*, in which he was to reiterate his glowing portrait, now with a more political slant:

The truth is that Clemenceau embodied and expressed France. As much as any single human being, miraculously magnified, can ever be a nation, he was France. . . . He represented the French people risen against tyrants – tyrants of the mind, tyrants of the soul, tyrants of the body; foreign tyrants, domestic tyrants,

swindlers, humbugs, grafters, traitors, invaders, defeatists – all lay within the bound of the Tiger and against them the Tiger waged inexorable war. Anti-clerical, anti-monarchist, anti-Communist, anti-German – in all this he represented the dominant spirit of France.⁵⁴

In 1929, Churchill had published an equally favourable article about Foch, also reprinted in *Great Contemporaries*:

His undaunted and ever-flowing combative energy, as a man in contact with other personalities and harrying remorseless detail, as a Commander with a front crumbling under the German flail, was proved inexhaustible even by the Great War. His power of endurance was the equal of his energy. [...]

The magnitude of the events which Marshal Foch directed is of course beyond compare in the annals of war... . In 1914 he had saved the day by refusing to recognise defeat... . But 1918 was created for him... . Then it was that the characteristic genius of Foch attained its full and decisive expression.⁵⁵

Churchill's description of the dual face of France and how it was encapsulated in the contradictory, yet complementary, personality of the two joint saviours of the country in 1918, as he saw them, has never been bettered. After his portrait of Clemenceau and his representation of the dominant spirit of France, Churchill continued,

There was another mood and another France. It was the France of Foch – ancient, aristocratic; the France whose grace and culture, whose etiquette and ceremonial has bestowed gifts around the world. There was the France of chivalry, the France of Versailles, and, above all, the France of Joan of Arc. It was this secondary and submerged national personality that Foch recalled.⁵⁶

The link is cleverly made with the events which eventually led to victory, 'In the combination of these two men during the last year of the war, the French people found in their service all the glories and the vital essences of Gaul',⁵⁷ insisting first on the elements which should have prevented any idea of reconciliation – 'These two men embodied respectively their ancient and their modern history. Between the twain there flowed the blood-river of the Revolution. Between them towered the barriers which Christianity raises against Agnosticism'⁵⁸ – before pointing to the decisive factors of convergence:

But when they gazed upon the inscription on the golden statue of Joan of Arc: '*La pitié qu'elle avait pour le royaume de France*' and saw gleaming the Maid's uplifted sword,⁵⁹ their two hearts beat as one. The French have a dual nature in a degree not possessed by any other great people... . It is an unending struggle which goes on continually, not only in every successive Parliament, but in every street and village of France, and in the bosom of almost every Frenchman. Only when France is in mortal peril does the struggle have a truce. The comradeship of Foch and Clemenceau illustrates as in a cameo the history of France.⁶⁰

Anyone not familiar with Churchill's two articles might easily be excused for thinking that they are the translation of some writings by General de Gaulle – such is the similarity in style and reasoning. Here, Churchill was clearly 'more French than the French'. Indeed, his Francophilia made him seize every occasion to go to Paris, to the French Riviera and to the châteaux of his wealthy British and US friends in France. In the 1920s, on top of his many private visits, his duties as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1925–9) demanded sustained contact with Poincaré (Minister of Finance, 1926–8), since this was the great period of international renegotiation of war debts – and France had heavy repayments to make to the British Treasury. All this was connected with the general question of German reparations and also, indirectly, with the proposals for disarmament, since the money not spent on armaments could be used to accelerate the repayment of foreign loans. Churchill, in spite of his best efforts to obfuscate the issue in *The Gathering Storm*, was closely associated with what was called 'the Ten-Year Rule' – the idea first formulated in 1919 and given a new lease of life by Churchill himself as chancellor in 1928. It was abandoned only in March 1932: ironically, by the government led by the former pacifist and arch-appeaser Ramsay MacDonald – for whom Churchill only had scathing comments in private, in public and in his later writings, one reason among many others being that MacDonald was extremely wary of the French, whom he saw as a greater threat to peace than the Germans in the post-war years.

In spite of pushing for the Ten-Year Rule in order to reduce military and therefore government expenditure, allowing him to contain taxation, Churchill had an innate sense of *Realpolitik* which made him continue to court the company of French military and political leaders. As soon as he became chancellor, he had to go to Paris for a conference of Allied finance ministers on inter-Allied war debts – but he took full advantage of his visit to see important contacts whom he had made in France during the war, as he explained to Clementine on the evening of his arrival:

Even meal times have been devoted to meeting people of consequence. I had an interview with Herriot [Prime Minister] ... We got on well. Tomorrow I am to see President Doumergue [President of the Republic] in the morning ... & visit Clemenceau in the evening & dine with Loucheur.⁶¹

The Churchill Papers contain a 'Note of a Conversation with the President of the French Republic', written on the day of his visit, which shows that there were two great themes in the interview – the war debts, which formed the official reason for the audience, but also, and perhaps above all, the future of relations between Britain, France and Germany. To Doumergue, who insisted on 'the vital importance of an accord between France and England which should convince Germany that she had no chance of splitting the Allies',

I replied that the danger of German aggression in the west would not be so great were it not for the situation in the northern east. Germany would perhaps rest content with the arrangements of Versailles so far as her western frontiers were concerned. I was personally convinced that she would never acquiesce permanently in the condition of her eastern frontier.⁶²

Two days later, back in Westminster, he gave a summary of his impressions to the cabinet, beginning with the favourable financial arrangements obtained for the UK, and continuing,

Speaking generally, I find the French Ministers and politicians depressed. Having seen them so often during the last ten years, often in tragic hours, I have never found them so tame and sad. For the moment there is no resentment towards us. All that has passed to the United States. . . . In my opinion the new attitude of France, amid all her difficulties, deserves recognition at the hands of His Majesty's Government.

The position of France ground between the upper and nether millstones of American avarice and German revenge affords full justification for her present sombre mood.⁶³

Again in January 1927, he writes from Dieppe to Clementine about the conversations which he has just had in Paris: 'Loucheur's luncheon in Paris was a considerable affair. [Aristide] Briand, [Raoul] Peret, Vincent Auriol, about 15 MPs representing leading elements in all parties – & v[er]y advanced politicians.'⁶⁴

In another memorandum to the cabinet after a visit to Poincaré, prime minister, in Paris, again on debts and reparations, he wrote on 19 October 1928,

I think he wants a settlement and is prepared to run risks for it. I do not think there is any danger of the French trying to manoeuvre us into an awkward corner. . . . Everything then will rest with the Germans. It is for them to say what price in prolonged national effort they are prepared to pay for the liberation of their soil and their finances from foreign control.⁶⁵

When Churchill left the Exchequer in May 1929, the question of debts and reparations was still not solved – in fact it never would be. Worse for him, his disagreement over the future of India made him fall out with the other leaders of the Conservative Party, and he did not regain office until the outbreak of the Second World War. He no longer had any opportunity to go to France in an official capacity – but this did not prevent him maintaining his existing extensive network of friends and connections and making new acquaintances among the rising men of French politics – Right or Left – while he continued to cultivate the generals whom he had met as young men, like Gamelin, a former member of Joffre's staff who had stood out during the German spring offensive of 1918.

He continued to be the guest of French leaders even though he could no longer speak on behalf of the British government, or indeed the Conservative Party. The occasion of these lunches, dinners and conversations was provided by his frequent painting trips to France, which inevitably included a day or two in Paris on the way to the French Riviera, usually at the château de l'Horizon, near Cannes, owned by a wealthy American, Maxine Elliott, or to the château of Saint-Georges-Motel, near Dreux (Eure-et-Loir), owned by Consuelo Balsan, née Vanderbilt, who had wed Churchill's cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, in 1895 and divorced in 1921 before marrying the French industrialist Jacques Balsan.

His personal relations with most of his contacts in France followed their own trajectory regarding Germany, rearmament and appeasement. A good example of a deteriorating friendship is that with Pierre-Étienne Flandin, who had been in charge of aviation from 1917 to 1920, and as such had collaborated with his British opposite number, Churchill, Secretary of State for Air and War from 1919 to 1921. It all started well when Flandin became prime minister in November 1934 and Churchill sent him a telegram of congratulation. In July 1935, a month after Flandin's fall, Churchill wrote to invite him, with a reaffirmation of his faith in the Anglo-French entente in the face of the unnamed German threat:

I rejoice that your calm strength is now in the service of France. I feel greatly the dangers which menace both our countries, and indeed what is still called civilisation. But I cannot shake off that feeling which I have always had for the last quarter of a century, namely that England and France will somehow or other come through them together.⁶⁶

In December, during a visit to Paris with Clementine, the Churchills had lunch with him. Flandin became foreign minister in January 1936 (until June), and in March, at the time of the decisive Rhineland Crisis, he went to London, having dinner at Churchill's flat on 12 March, as recalled by the latter in *The Gathering Storm*:

He told me that he proposed to demand from the British Government simultaneous mobilisation of the land, sea and air forces of both countries, and that he had received assurances of support from all the nations of the Little Entente and from other states. He read out an impressive list of the replies received. There was no doubt that superior strength still lay with the Allies of the former war. They had only to act to win.⁶⁷

Churchill was obviously impressed by Flandin's determination – but because the former was being ostracized by the British government, his only room for manoeuvre was to strive to make the French position known to whichever British leaders of opinion he could invite to listen to it, as he explains,

There was little I could do in my detached private position, but I wished our visitor all success in bringing matters to a head and promised any assistance that was in my power. I gathered my principal associates at dinner that night to hear M. Flandin's exhortations.⁶⁸

As it turned out, 'M. Flandin's exhortations' fell on deaf ears when they were repeated to Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, who rejected the idea of any Anglo-French intervention, knowing that public opinion was strongly against it.

Churchill of course never despaired, and he continued to cultivate Flandin's good graces. The culmination of their understanding was reached in May, when Churchill asked Flandin to give him his estimates of French and German forces as they stood, and in his detailed reply, Flandin also said, 'I follow, from afar, your energetic and

courageous action.⁶⁹ Churchill lunched twice with Flandin in the following months on his way back from the French Riviera, first at Flandin's home in Domecy-sur-Cure (Yonne) on 13 September 1936,⁷⁰ and in Paris on 16 February 1937. The turning point in their relations came a year later, and their falling out developed gradually in 1938. Churchill wrote to Clementine from the French Riviera on 8 January 1938 that fences could still be mended: 'Tomorrow I dine with Flandin at St Jean Cap-Ferrat. He has lately been diverging somewhat from the policy in Foreign Affairs wh[ich] I pursue, & I hope to bring him back to the field.'⁷¹ The talks did not go well, as Churchill told her on 10 January:

The dinner with Flandin was very depressing, the food lamentable. But the account he gave of France was most pessimistic. [...] It looks as if these French Right-Wing politicians thought that Germany would become undisputed ruler of Europe in the near future.⁷²

In another letter, on 22 March, he wrote, 'Flandin has been behaving very badly, and doing all manner of harm.'⁷³

The final estrangement occurred on 27 March 1938, when, during another lunch in Paris – at the British Embassy, with Sir Eric and Lady Phipps – Flandin argued that the only possibility of recovery of strength for France was to bring down the Popular Front and introduce government by decree, with Churchill objecting that this 'would alienate all Left sympathies in Great Britain for France.'⁷⁴ In the autumn, Flandin was one of the prominent 'Munichois'⁷⁵ – and all possibility of reconciliation with Churchill was obliterated when he sent a telegram of congratulation to Hitler after Munich. In *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill offers an explanation for that about-turn – which, it can be supposed, applies equally well to other future 'Vichysois'⁷⁶ and collaborationists: at the time of the Rhineland Crisis, when Flandin came to London in March 1936, Churchill advised him to ask to be received by Baldwin, who did everything he could to discourage the French government from any military action against Germany, from which Flandin is reported to have deduced that the only safe course for France was to come to terms with Hitler. At the same time, with a far-reaching retrospective argument, Churchill suggests that Baldwin's weakness was able to prevail over Flandin's apparent wish to intervene because France no longer had leaders of the right mettle: 'Clemenceau or Poincaré would have left Mr. Baldwin no option.'⁷⁷

If relations with Flandin led to disappointment, Churchill had of course many more positive experiences with the men that he had met during the Great War. During his visit to France in September 1936, besides Flandin Churchill also saw his old friend General Georges, who invited him to the military manoeuvres near Aix-en-Provence on 9 September, followed by a visit to the Maginot Line. He duly followed the manoeuvres as a guest of General Gamelin, now commander-in-chief of the French Army. In the evening he wrote to Léon Blum, then prime minister: 'I have had a most interesting day with General Gamelin at the manoeuvres. I was very pleased with all I saw.'⁷⁸ In case one should think this was base flattery, totally insincere, he wrote to Clementine a few days later using almost the same terms:

The manoeuvres were v[er]y interesting. I drove about all day with General Gamelin the Generalissimo, who was communicative on serious topics. [...] To anyone with military knowledge it was most instructive. The officers of the French army are impressive by their gravity & competence. One feels the strength of the nation resides in its army.⁷⁹

On 12 September, he had lunch with General Gamelin at Brignolles and on the following day with Flandin at Domecy-sur-Cure, as we saw. From there, he went back to the embassy in Paris before leaving on the 15th for the Maginot Line with the British Military Attaché. After a ten days' interlude in London, he was back in Paris with Clementine on 24 September, and they had lunch with President Herriot, Flandin and Paul Reynaud, then a backbench deputy for Paris. In the evening, he delivered a major speech in English at the Théâtre des Ambassadeurs on the importance of Anglo-French cooperation in defence of parliamentary democracy and Western civilization, in contrast with 'the doctrines of Comrade Trotsky and Dr Goebbels'.⁸⁰

The next trip of major importance, though much shorter, took place in March 1938, only a few days after the Anschluss. In *The Gathering Storm*, Churchill duly mentions this important visit:

At the end of March, I went to Paris and had searching conversations with the French leaders. The Government were agreeable to my going to vivify my French contacts. I stayed at our Embassy and saw in a continued succession many of the principal French figures.⁸¹

He mentions the friendly atmosphere with Blum and Paul Reynaud. He also confirms his difficulties with Flandin: 'We argued for two hours.' And he suggests that the first cracks in his absolute confidence in the French Army appeared on hearing Gamelin, in contrast with his views after the manoeuvres in September 1936:

Gamelin, who also visited me, was rightly confident in the strength of the French Army at the moment, but none too comfortable when I questioned him upon the artillery, about which he had precise knowledge.⁸²

This was new, because until then Churchill had really been nervous only about the French Air Force. He left Paris uneasy about the political developments there too. Thus it seems clear that by the spring of 1938, behind the façade of absolute faith in French military invincibility in case of attack – he knew of course that what was later called the Maginot mentality precluded any French invasion of Germany – his faith in France's political will to fight and ability to renew the *Union sacrée* (the political truce in the name of the sacred duty towards the nation) of the Great War was no longer unshakeable. Churchill and Clementine went to Paris again in July 1938, as official guests during the Royal Visit, and Churchill continued to follow political developments in France extremely closely. He was once more a guest of honour, on the official podium, for the 14 July military parade on the Champs-Élysées in 1939, when General Gamelin invited him to come again to visit another part of the Maginot Line.

Churchill's last trip to France before the outbreak of war included his visit to the Maginot Line from 14 to 17 August with Generals Gamelin and Georges, which greatly satisfied him, and General Spears, who accompanied him as another old friend of General Georges, noted, 'Winston Churchill was pleased with the aspect of the men, who greatly liked to be inspected by him.'⁸³ Shortening his family holiday in view of the deteriorating situation – the newspapers were full of rumours about a spectacular German–Soviet pact – Churchill stopped in Paris on his way back to England, having lunch once more with General Georges on 23 August. He later wrote,

He produced all the figures of the French and German Armies and classified the divisions in quality. The result impressed me so much that for the first time I said: 'But you are the masters.'⁸⁴

Thus he seemed to have forgotten his earlier qualms, and it is of course too facile to say after the event that Churchill was blinded by his faith in generals like Gamelin or Georges, and that his nostalgia for the brotherhood in arms which had led to victory in spite of all the difficulties in the Great War made him lose his otherwise undoubted profound understanding of military affairs – that in fact he was a victim of his own wishful thinking. What he did not perceive is that the 'dual nature' of France, which his great heroes Foch and Clemenceau had been able to overcome in good time, would resurface with a vengeance, with no men of their calibre being able to silence political divisions in order to encourage the same will to fight in May 1940. It is indeed difficult to explain why his experience of the 'extreme complexity of French war politics' and how it affected the high command, as expressed in *The World Crisis*, does not seem to have made him realize that whatever the prestige of men like Gamelin, Georges or Weygand due to their glorious war record, this carried little weight in 1939–40 in the face of the multifarious undercurrents of French political life, which overtly or covertly promoted defeatism and surrender.

Notes

- 1 Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Commons (HC), 23 March 1933, vol. 276, cols 542 and 547.
- 2 Hansard, HC, 14 April 1933, vol. 276, cols 2792–3.
- 3 Winston Spencer Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 1: *The Gathering Storm* (Boston, MA, 1948), p. 77.
- 4 *Poilu* was the term used to designate French soldiers of the First World War.
- 5 Paul Addison, *Churchill: The Unexpected Hero* (Oxford, 2005), p. 84.
- 6 Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3: *Companion*, part 2: *Documents, May 1915–December 1916* (London, 1972), p. 1250.
- 7 When the Liberal prime minister, Asquith, reorganized his government, in May 1915, following the repeated failure of the Anglo-French fleet to force the Dardanelles Straits, he was compelled to remove Churchill from the Admiralty as the price of Conservative support.

- 8 Letter to Clementine, 18 November 1915, in Mary Soames (ed.), *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (London, 1998), p. 113.
- 9 Winston Spencer Churchill, 'With the Grenadiers', in Winston Spencer Churchill (ed.), *Thoughts and Adventures* [1932] (London, 1947), p. 68.
- 10 Letter to Clementine, 23 November 1915, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 116.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 4 December 1915, p. 126.
- 12 He changed his name to Spears in 1918 and ended his career as General Spears.
- 13 An interesting, if indirect, reflection on the sense of priorities in the two countries. In Britain, the Senior Service was of course the navy – in France (or Germany and Russia) the crucial force was the land army.
- 14 Located at Camblain L'Abbé, north-west of Arras (Pas-de-Calais).
- 15 General Fayolle was then in command of the 33rd Army Corps. He rose to marshal of France in 1920.
- 16 Commander-in-chief of the 10th French Army, who had led the troops during the disastrous Battles of Artois (Arras) in 1915. He fell from favour in April 1916 and never again received command of an army.
- 17 Letter to Clementine, 4 December 1915, in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3: *Companion*, part 2, p. 1314.
- 18 Letter to Clementine, 8 December 1915, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 129.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 12 December 1915, p. 132.
- 20 'Winston Churchill, Wearing a French *Poilu's* Steel Helmet', now at Chartwell, together with the famous helmet exhibited below the canvas.
- 21 A military operation.
- 22 IWM 80/14/1, quoted in Michael Paterson, *Winston Churchill: His Military Life, 1895–1945* (Newton Abbot, 2005), p. 218.
- 23 Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3: *Companion*, part 2, pp. 1345–6.
- 24 A narrow passage leading from one trench to another.
- 25 Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 3: *Companion*, part 2, p. 1347.
- 26 Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3: *The Challenge of War: 1914–1916* (London, 1971), p. 625.
- 27 Letter to Clementine, 23 January 1916, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 159.
- 28 Christopher Isherwood, *Kathleen and Frank: The Autobiography of a Family* (New York, 2015), p. 486.
- 29 Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* [2001] (London, 2002), p. 75.
- 30 Winston Spencer Churchill, 'A Day with Clemenceau', in Winston Spencer Churchill (ed.), *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 123.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 125.
- 33 A term of praise in Churchill's view, since he was a keen admirer of pantomime, as made clear in his essay, 'Everybody's Language', first published in *Collier's* (26 October 1935) and reprinted as 'Charlie Chaplin' in Winston Spencer Churchill, *Great Contemporaries: Churchill Reflects on FDR, Hitler, Kipling, Chaplin, Balfour, and Other Giants of his Age*, ed. James W. Muller [1937] (Wilmington, DE, 2012), pp. 381–9.
- 34 Churchill, 'A Day with Clemenceau', p. 125.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 Again, words of great praise from a Churchill who was an undoubted connoisseur and practitioner. See Jonathan Rose, *The Literary Churchill: Author, Reader, Actor* (New

- Haven, CT, 2014). Rose quotes an unlikely admirer, Neville Chamberlain: 'Winston's [...] speeches are extraordinarily brilliant and men flock in to hear him as they would to a first class entertainment at the theatre. The best show in London, they say' (p. 189).
- 37 Churchill, 'A Day with Clemenceau', p. 126.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Clementine would have known that Clemenceau was in fact thirty-three years older than Churchill and readily understood his figure of speech.
- 42 Clemenceau was born on 28 September 1841 – he was therefore in his 75th year.
- 43 As First Sea Lord, the old Admiral Fisher (born in 1841, like Clemenceau) had had a tempestuous relationship with his theoretical civilian master, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, in 1915, over the Dardanelles.
- 44 Letter to Clementine, 31 March 1918, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 206.
- 45 Winston Spencer Churchill, *The World Crisis* [1923] (New York, 1993), vol. 2, p. 1322.
- 46 Ibid.; see also Robin Prior, *Churchill's 'World Crisis' as History* (London, 1983).
- 47 Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 1325.
- 48 Winston Spencer Churchill, 'Foch the Indomitable', *Nash's Magazine* (July 1929). Reprinted as 'Marshal Foch' in *Great Contemporaries*, p. 188.
- 49 Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 1164.
- 50 Ibid., p. 1166.
- 51 Churchill changed the wording in the 'abridged edition' in one volume which he drafted in 1930. See *The World Crisis: An Abridgment of the Classic Four-Volume History of World War I* (New York, 1992), p. 708.
- 52 A clear example of that 'extreme complexity' of 'French war politics'.
- 53 Churchill, *The World Crisis*, p. 1150.
- 54 Winston Spencer Churchill, 'Tiger of France', *Collier's* (29 November 1930). Reprinted as 'Clemenceau', in *Great Contemporaries*, p. 290.
- 55 Churchill, 'Foch the Indomitable', reprinted as 'Marshal Foch', in *Great Contemporaries*, pp. 184, 190.
- 56 Churchill, 'Tiger of France', reprinted as 'Clemenceau', in *Great Contemporaries*, p. 291.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 As anyone going to see the golden statue on Place des Pyramides (near the Louvre) today will notice, there is no such inscription and she does not brandish a sword, simply holding a standard. She does have a drawn sword on the plain bronze statue of Place Saint-Augustin, however.
- 60 Churchill, 'Tiger of France', reprinted as 'Clemenceau', in *Great Contemporaries*, p. 291.
- 61 Letter to Clementine, 10 January 1925, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 288.
- 62 Churchill Papers 18/21, in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 5: *Companion* (London, 1979); repr. *The Churchill Documents*, vol. 11: *The Exchequer Years, 1922–1929* (Hillsdale, MI, 2009), p. 339.
- 63 Ibid., p. 341.
- 64 Letter to Clementine, 28 January 1927, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 306.
- 65 Churchill Papers 18/21, *The Exchequer Years, 1922–1929*, p. 1363.

- 66 Letter to Pierre Étienne Flandin, 23 July 1935, Churchill Papers 2/236, in Gilbert, *Churchill*, vol. 5: *Companion*; repr. *The Churchill Documents*, vol. 12: *The Wilderness Years, 1929–1935* (Hillsdale, MI, 2009), p. 1215.
- 67 Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 195.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- 69 Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, 1874–1965*, vol. 5: *1922–1939* (London, 1976), p. 738.
- 70 Letter to Clementine, 13 September 1936, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 417.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 8 January 1938, p. 432.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 10 January 1938, p. 433.
- 73 Letter to Ava Wigram, 22 March 1938, Churchill Papers 1/323, in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 5: *Companion* (London, 1979); repr. *The Churchill Documents*, vol. 13: *The Coming of War, 1936–1939* (Hillsdale, MI, 2009), p. 956.
- 74 Sir Eric Phipps to Lord Halifax, 27 March 1938, Phipps Papers, in *ibid.*, p. 961.
- 75 The name given in France to the supporters of the Munich Agreements in 1938.
- 76 The name given in France to the supporters of Pétain's Vichy régime after June 1940.
- 77 Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 198.
- 78 Letter to Léon Blum, 8 September 1936, Spencer-Churchill Papers, in *The Coming of War, 1936–1939*, p. 340.
- 79 Letter to Clementine, 13 September 1936, *Speaking for Themselves*, p. 417.
- 80 Gilbert, *Churchill, 1874–1965*, vol. 5: *1922–1939*, p. 788.
- 81 Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, pp. 281–2.
- 82 *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 83 Gilbert, *Churchill, 1874–1965*, vol. 5: *1922–1939*, p. 1102.
- 84 Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, p. 400.

Art under dictatorship: Propaganda, plunder and provenance

Ulf Schmidt and Katja Schmidt-Mai

The Nazi art trove

In September 2010, during a routine border check, an elderly man, dressed in a fur coat and travelling alone on the train from Zurich to Munich, caught the attention of German officials. Cornelius Gurlitt, born in 1932 in Hamburg, the son of the Jewish art dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt – who had amassed one of the most extensive art collections during the Third Reich – was unable to produce any identity papers; together with the fact that he was carrying €9,000 in cash, the officials at first suspected a case of money laundering across the Swiss–German border. Little did they know that the case would rapidly turn into one of the most profound post-war public relation disasters for the German authorities in respect of dealing with art that had been confiscated, sold and traded during the Nazi period and thereafter. Official checks on Gurlitt's address during the initial money-laundering inquiry revealed that he lived alone, was not registered with the local authorities, neither in Munich nor anywhere else, and had no bank account or social security number, findings which aroused the suspicions of the District Prosecutor of Augsburg. In February 2012, after obtaining a search warrant on the grounds of suspected tax evasion and embezzlement, the authorities searched Gurlitt's flat in the well-heeled district of Schwabing, Munich. What they discovered – and subsequently confiscated – far exceeded their expectations: a treasure trove of 1,224 unframed paintings and drawings originating mostly from the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.¹ For several decades, the apartment had served as Gurlitt's headquarters and warehouse, from which he would travel to Switzerland to sell his treasures to trusted art dealers, and thus fund his reclusive lifestyle.

The resulting media interest was unprecedented. Under the headline 'Art Trove in Germany Abounds in Mysteries', the *International New York Times* published a series of images of the recovered artworks, including paintings by artists such as Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse, Otto Dix and Max Liebermann, and a landscape painting by Canaletto.² Whether the confiscation of one of the largest post-war caches of 'Nazi looted art', as some newspapers called it, was lawful or whether it constituted a case of judicial

overreach has been the subject of debate ever since the magazine *Focus* broke the story in November 2013. Since then, Gurlitt and looted art have been the subject of countless publications and documentary films of diverse quality and scholarly integrity – often by journalists keen to benefit from the publicity they themselves had generated – and were the ‘inspiration’ for the feature film *Am Abend aller Tage* (2017).³ Most recently, his collection has been at the heart of two co-organized exhibitions in Bonn and Bern.⁴ For the general public, on the other hand, the case apparently offered proof that ‘looted art existed in German homes by the bucketful and has fed the descendants of the perpetrators until today’.⁵

The ‘Taskforce’ set up by the Bavarian and federal authorities under the leadership of Ingeborg Berggreen-Merkel and her team of experts to investigate the Schwabinger Kunstfund (Schwabing Art Find) promoted the importance of transparency and art historical research; yet, like the Augsburg District Prosecutor, who was criticized for confiscating the Gurlitt collection illegally, it quickly ran into complex legal territory. Copyright lawyers challenged the Taskforce for publishing online images of those of Gurlitt’s artworks which were ‘suspected’ of being Nazi-looted art, arguing that not only Gurlitt was the rightful owner of the art collection but also that its confiscation had been unlawful. The aim of establishing what constituted looted art and artworks that had been traded by and during the Third Reich, and returning them to their rightful owners, found itself on a collision course with strict German data protection and property laws. When in 2016 the Taskforce reported its findings, the scale of the embarrassment became clear. Out of a total of almost 1,500 artworks, only five items were identified as ‘Nazi looted art’. Summing up the ‘Gurlitt case’, *Die Welt* noted, ‘Once again this great, powerful, prosperous and proud Germany has been unable to come to terms with her past – without demonstrable sovereignty, and with even less intellectual brilliance.’⁶

Propaganda, plunder and provenance – a conceptual triangle

The Gurlitt case raises a series of challenging questions about art under the Third Reich: given the resources and expertise available, why were the Taskforce officials able to shed so little light on the world of German art dealers and the art trade more generally in the first half of the twentieth century? Why did those tasked with investigating the case take such a legalistic and conceptually narrow approach in examining Gurlitt’s collection, thereby overlooking important political, economic and art historical factors? For example, why did the Taskforce use the category of ‘from the Degenerate Art exhibition’⁷ to justify the discontinuation of further research into these artworks? We still know far too little about the art trade under the Nazis, which makes it all the more puzzling that potential lines of inquiry were cut short. How did Hildebrand Gurlitt and other Nazi art dealers acquire artworks that had been confiscated and subsequently exhibited in the ‘Degenerate Art’ exhibition? How did they trade in and with looted art? How did the process of ‘swapping’ and ‘exchanging’ looted art for other types of art work in practice? How did Gurlitt senior access and,

more importantly, bequeath his extensive art collection to his family in the post-war period, out of the public eye, and without any meaningful level of oversight? How do we explain that the victims and their descendants were left for decades in a political and moral vacuum, without recourse to the law or the authorities, and unable to reclaim their artworks from those who had unlawfully obtained them? These are exceedingly difficult and complex questions to answer. They require an interdisciplinary approach combining propaganda studies and the history and politics of cultural plunder by the Nazi regime – itself an integral part of the Third Reich's racial and geopolitical ambitions during the Second World War – with detailed provenance research about the artworks acquired.

This chapter addresses the extent to which the Nazi propaganda campaign, including the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition of 1937, and the administrative machinery which managed propaganda under Joseph Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry, was intricately connected to the Nazi programme of cultural plunder and its associated trade in looted art. It suggests that the two processes, and the underlying organization, need to be seen conceptually and historically together, since the former established the conditions for, and significantly influenced, the latter. The chapter first examines these developments from a temporal perspective – through the inter-war period and the Second World War – before exploring the attempts by the Allied authorities to recover, albeit largely unsuccessfully, looted art from suspected Nazi art dealers. It then discusses the detailed provenance of two paintings in order to illustrate the great complexity of the restitution claims which the rightful owners of the artworks and their heirs had to pursue over several decades. It concludes – as a result of the two case studies – that we need to know the provenance of a greater number of individual artworks handled by the Third Reich if our aim is to understand the trade networks and historical continuities of the art market more clearly. This chapter argues that historians, whether of politics/society or of art, need to take account of the three categories – propaganda, plunder and provenance – as well as historical developments, simultaneously or consecutively, rather than focus exclusively on any one area, to ensure that the political history of propaganda and plunder is closely interwoven with the parallel provenance of individual artworks. Using newly discovered and unusual sources such as invoices, inventories, sales ledgers and exchange contracts, and combining historical with art historical methodologies, it aims to make not only a historiographical but also a conceptual and methodological contribution to the dominant role of propaganda and the shifting political economy of the art market during the Third Reich.

The subject of 'looted art' is rapidly becoming part of, and needs to be integrated in, a cross-disciplinary and global debate that takes account of the international trade in, and exchange of, cultural artefacts. This body of literature looks at the intricate networks linking artists, museums, art collectors, intellectual property, commodity and copyright issues, international restitution agreements and the role and methods of provenance research. The Taskforce addressed hardly any of these issues. The recent publication of a special issue on 'The Restitution of Looted Art in the Twentieth Century' in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, and of the book *Der Gurlitt-Komplex. Bern und die Raubkunst*, shows the growing importance and broadening appeal of the subject among the scholarly community.⁸ This chapter suggests that a lack of understanding about the

way in which the art market and its associated networks functioned before, during and after the Third Reich is responsible for the inability of the German authorities to approach the subject of Nazi-looted art in a more contextualized and nuanced fashion.

Despite multiple studies on the subject, including Jonathan Petropoulos's authoritative *Art as Politics in the Third Reich*,⁹ and his equally important study about the Nazi art world,¹⁰ scholars have not yet examined or fully understood the interconnectedness between Nazi propaganda and its concerted programme of war-time plunder.¹¹ David Welch was among the first to draw attention to the propaganda dimension of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition; yet, scholars failed to link the study of propaganda with the trade in art and culture which accelerated on the eve of the war.¹² Goebbels's well-known diaries, edited by Elke Fröhlich, have likewise not been studied with the expanding market of modern and 'looted' art in mind.¹³ What is more, scholars have almost entirely overlooked the collection of the *Treuhandverwaltung von Kulturgut* (Trusteeship for the Administration of Cultural Assets), located at the Federal Archives in Koblenz, which contains information about dozens of Nazi art traders in occupied Europe and the complex web of financial and non-financial transactions involving looted art during the war. This is not just a story about the seemingly ambivalent 'emotions' of art plunderers and their 'Faustian bargain' with the Nazi regime – this 'psychic drama', as Petropoulos has called it – but also one which takes a closer look at their profound, and often ruthless, financial interests which determined much of their decision making.¹⁴ The previously unexplored sources mentioned above (such as invoices, receipts, inventories, bank statements, ledgers recording acquisitions, sales and exports and exchange agreements) can help us to illuminate, and better understand, that opaque historical and temporal space within which state agencies and art dealers not only obtained valuable artworks but also sold, swapped and traded them across Europe and the world.

The ways in which art dealers acquired artworks in the Third Reich, more often than not illegally, require particularly close scrutiny. For example, we need to explore – through detailed provenance research – what a 'sale for a purpose' really meant, when the sale of artwork was linked to the planned emigration of the seller and his or her family and relatives, or a 'sale under duress', when sellers were placed under undue pressure, threatened or intimidated into selling a particular artwork, often below market value. Scholars also need to study how owners of artworks tried to protect their treasured objects, for example through a 'sale to deny access', when works of art were sold or transferred as a loan to museums and institutions to prevent Nazi authorities from confiscating them. In each of these instances, it is important to understand the context in which a particular artwork was transferred from one owner to another, and whether this transfer, and thus ownership, can be classed as legitimate from a legal and, more importantly, moral perspective.

The main focus of the Taskforce was to determine the extent to which artworks could be classed as 'Nazi looted art' (*NS-verfolgungsbedingt entzogen Kulturgut*). A closer look at the artworks under examination reveals the extent to which the applied categories raise more questions than answers. Out of a total of 1,497 artworks examined,¹⁵ the Taskforce classed 507 as 'from the outset untainted' (*vornherein unbelastet*) because they originated from 'Gurlitt's family property' (*Gurlittschen*

Familienbesitz), a particularly questionable category in the context of the Nazi art trade. Of those 507 artworks, 231 items were identified as having been confiscated by the Nazi regime as part of the 1937 'Degenerate Art' exhibition. In other words, the fact that certain artworks had been forcibly removed was seen as evidence by the Taskforce that these artworks were not 'Nazi looted art', and that no further investigation into their provenance was warranted. This meant that the Taskforce and others saw the Nazi campaign against 'degenerate art' conceptually and historically separate from the Nazi programme of cultural plunder in the occupied territories. Art dealers such as Gurlitt apparently turned into 'perpetrators' (*Täter*) only when they traded in 'looted art' towards the end of the war.¹⁶ Their prior involvement in the confiscation, sale and exchange of 'degenerate art', on the other hand, was not just seen as acceptable and blameless but was also portrayed as an almost heroic act of 'rescuing' mostly expressionist artworks from their otherwise inevitable destruction by the Nazi regime. This is a position which the present chapter aims to challenge.

The Taskforce classified a total of 500 Gurlitt's artworks as 'problem images' (*Problem-Bilder*), and, of these, 5 were identified as 'definitely' belonging to the category of 'Nazi looted art'. Yet in 119 cases, there was either a 'strong suspicion' or 'specific indicators' which seemed to suggest that the artworks were 'Nazi looted art', and in 344 cases there was only poor or no evidence about the provenance of the artworks available. Taken together, in 463 cases, the artworks may well have been stolen, looted, sold under pressure and so forth during the Third Reich. If we add to this list an estimated total of 489 artworks which the Nazis had impounded for the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition,¹⁷ and which mysteriously found their way into Hildebrand Gurlitt's art collection, then we are dealing with almost 1,000 artworks which have to be examined and contextualized within the propaganda history of the Third Reich and the trade in art by Nazi art dealers.

Propaganda: The 'Degenerate Art' exhibition 1937

Given the Nazi attack on modernity and the modernist movement (e.g. expressionism, Dadaism, new objectivity, cubism, futurism, etc.), itself associated with left-wing or liberal politics, it is perhaps not surprising that art and culture were dramatically affected by the Nazi assumption of power. The creation of the Reich Chamber of Culture, which was closely affiliated with Goebbels's Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, spearheaded the envisaged 'reconstruction of German cultural life'. In practice, this meant the financial support, production and promotion of Aryan art 'consistent with Nazi ideals'. Artists and art critics were required to apply for membership of the Reich Chamber. Under Goebbels's leadership, officials such as the SS officer Heinz Hinkel also engaged in a concerted campaign to remove Jews from cultural and artistic life. Divided into seven sub-departments, the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts, headed from 1936 by Adolf Ziegler, was instrumental in confiscating the artworks for the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition which opened at the Hofgarten in Munich in July 1937.¹⁸

The exhibition coincided with inauguration of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) in Munich in order to juxtapose 'degenerate' art with

state-approved German neo-classical art. In his speech at the opening, Adolf Hitler made it plain that modern art had become 'racially corrupted' by depicting 'misformed cripples and cretins, women who inspire only disgust, men who are more like wild beasts'.¹⁹ He called upon the cultural elite to resist the reduction of art to the 'level of fashions in dress' and to reject impressionism, futurism, cubism and Dadaism. Art that was costly and could not be understood by ordinary people was not necessarily good, he argued. Valuable art had to be eternal rather than transitory, in Hitler's view. The Nazis were determined to 'make a clean sweep' of modern art, replacing it with works of art reflecting the 'experiences of the German people'.²⁰ Modern art would not be destroyed, though, but exhibited as 'documents' depicting cultural and racial decline. Hitler not only wanted to educate the German people to collectively reject modern art but also threatened artists with forced sterilization if their 'defects of vision' turned out to be hereditary; if, on the other hand, the artists' 'impressions' were a form of 'humbug' that they themselves did not believe in, they would face criminal prosecution.²¹ According to Welch, even for the Nazis the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition and its associated propaganda represented an 'extraordinary statement ... of art that was to be abominated'.²² The exhibition nonetheless offered art dealers with close connections to the regime an opportunity to acquire some of the most sought-after pieces of modern art at below market-value prices. Having learned to read between the lines, experienced art dealers such as Hildebrand Gurlitt knew that the official rejection of modern art by the regime, and the subsequent dumping of large quantities of art onto the art market, would result in a drop in value of the artworks and the likely emigration of the artists.

Goebbels first conceived the idea for a separate 'Degenerate Art' exhibition representing the Weimar 'era of decay' (*Verfallszeit*) in June 1937, following Hitler's dismissal of the exhibition jury for their selection of artworks for the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German Art Exhibition) – to be held at the House of German Art in Munich – and their replacement by his personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann. Although interested in modern art and art history, Goebbels was careful not to alienate Hitler on issues of culture and taste. On 4 June, after introducing measures to clear out any Jews from the Reich Chamber of Culture – 'There are just too many Jews' – Goebbels pondered about the prospect of a 'Degenerate Art' exhibition 'so the people can learn to see and understand'.²³ The alternative 'Degenerate Art' exhibition was initially meant to be staged in Berlin. The next day, Hitler travelled with his entourage to Munich to inspect the House of German Art and flew into a rage about the paintings selected for the Great German Art Exhibition, telling Goebbels on their train journey to Regensburg that he would rather postpone the exhibition for a year than to 'exhibit such rubbish' (*als so einen Mist aus[zu]stellen*).²⁴ Two weeks later, as Goebbels noted, the Great German Art Exhibition had been reduced to 500 images: 'everything else [has been] thrown out'; this gave him a ballpark figure for the number of artworks to be shown in the alternative exhibition which by now was to be staged in Munich.²⁵ At around the same time, he received a report from Heinrich Himmler about concentrations camps and decided to see one of the camps for himself.²⁶ For the Nazi leadership, measures to 'rid' Germany of Jews, the handicapped and political opponents through discrimination, sterilization, intimidation and imprisonment, and

to 'cleanse' the arts and culture of Bolshevist tendencies (*Kulturbolschewismus*) were part and parcel of its concerted policies of exclusion designed to eliminate all that was deemed to be un-German and unhealthy in society. Initial objections to the exhibition by Hans Schweitzer (Goebbels's Reich Commissioner for Artistic Design, in charge of producing Nazi propaganda posters), Albert Speer (Hitler's architect) and others were quickly overcome.²⁷ For Goebbels, the alternative exhibition was an attempt to conceal profound ideological differences with leading empire builders such as Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg and gloss over the mediocre quality of the artworks exhibited in the Great German Art Exhibition.²⁸ Compared to the relatively modest viewing figures for the Great German Art Exhibition, there is a certain irony in the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition's success: it was seen by more than two million visitors and shown in thirteen venues in Germany and Austria.²⁹

To spread responsibility across the administration for the cultural 'cleansing action' (*Säuberungsaktion*) – that is, the selection of artworks for the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition – while asserting the dominant position of the Propaganda Ministry, Goebbels instructed Ziegler to appoint a commission of leading Nazi artists, art historians and cultural experts.³⁰ On 30 June, Hitler authorized Goebbels to stage the exhibition.³¹ The next day, Goebbels gave the commission the go-ahead to confiscate works of art as yet another measure to force Germany's cultural elite into submission.³² For about two weeks in early July 1937, and under Ziegler's leadership, the five-man commission toured thirty-two collections in twenty-eight cities and initially confiscated 5,328 works of art deemed to represent 'decadence', 'weakness of character', 'mental disease' and 'racial impurity'. Of these, the Nazis exhibited a total of 650 paintings, sculptures and drawings of artists such as Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann, Chagall, Max Ernst, Dix, Paul Klee, George Grosz, Wassily Kandinsky, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Lyonel Feiniger and Franz Marc.³³ The artworks were exhibited in the dark and narrow rooms of the Munich Institute of Archaeology; they were hung close to each other, at times displayed without frames, and derogatory slogans covered the walls. Misleading labels indicating how much money museums had spent for the artworks during the inflationary years of the 1920s portrayed the artists as Jewish-Bolshevist conspirators. As in the field of racial propaganda films, Goebbels's ministry had taken the time-tested – though not particularly subtle – approach of contrasting the alleged aesthetic ugliness and degeneracy of modern art with the idealized health and beauty of neo-classical art exhibited in the House of German Art.³⁴

The confiscation of artworks and cultural artefacts was decided at the highest levels of government. Instructed by Goebbels by telephone to 'cleanse the museums' on 25 July, and authorized by Hitler to 'clear out all museums' days later, Ziegler and his commission continued to confiscate modern art until October 1937.³⁵ By then the commission had confiscated a total of approximately 17,000 artworks from over 100 museums, but had stopped short of plundering private collections. Following a three-hour inspection tour of the confiscated material in the presence of Speer and Ziegler in November, Goebbels was pleased to see that it contained few borderline cases; the rest was 'such crap' (*derartiger Dreck*), he noted, that one could vomit.³⁶ The Nazis subsequently sold off, often below market value, most of the artworks confiscated for the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition; at the end of 1938, Goebbels noted, 'All saleable

pictures will be sold to foreign countries, the other combined in horror exhibitions or destroyed.³⁷ The revenue from auctions and individual sales – about RM 1 million in total – was deposited in a special account controlled by the Propaganda Ministry, and used to compensate selected museums.³⁸ Earlier, in May 1938, the regime retrospectively attempted to place the programme on a legal footing by issuing the ‘Law for the Removal of Degenerate Art’, the execution of which was overseen by a ‘disposal commission’, run by the operating officer Franz Hofmann from the Propaganda Ministry under the chairmanship of Goebbels.³⁹ In March 1939, and in total secret, the Nazis burned about 5,000 artworks classed as worthless from the collection of confiscated material and sold about 3,300 paintings and drawings to foreign countries up until 1942; the remaining pieces, an estimated 8,700 in total, were hidden in storage facilities until the end of the war.⁴⁰

Thanks to the work of the Taskforce, we now know that about 500 artworks from the ‘Degenerate Art’ collection ended up in Hildebrand Gurlitt’s art collection, but how they got there is shrouded in mystery. In some cases, after the bulk sale of previously confiscated paintings for profit had turned out to be problematic for the Nazis, he seems to have taken them on commission or bought them for a fraction of their market value; in other instances, especially during the war, he seems to have taken works of art on commission to sell on behalf of Jews being deported to the East but never seems to have followed through with the sales or passed on any earnings to their rightful owners, knowing full well that they were unlikely to return. We likewise know little about how he retrieved his sizeable collection after the war, and how he expanded it to over 1,500 works of art which, in the end – when investigators discovered them in his son’s flat in 2012 – constituted an unprecedented assemblage of looted, inherited and lawfully and unlawfully obtained artworks. It makes it all the more important to explore Gurlitt’s transactions in more detail.

Plunder: The case of Hildebrand Gurlitt

Born in 1895 into an upper-middle-class family, Gurlitt grew up in Dresden, where his father Cornelius was a professor of art history.⁴¹ It was because of his paternal grandmother, née Lewald, that the Nazis subsequently targeted him and his family, including his brother, a musicologist at the University of Freiburg, because of their ‘Jewish descent’. Surrounded by artistic and academic talent from an early age, and having befriended the painter Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, one of the founders of the group *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), Gurlitt studied art history after the First World War. Through his contact with Schmidt-Rottluff, he is likely to have become interested in the works of expressionist artists such as Kirchner, Nolde, Max Pechstein, Carl Hofer, Erich Heckel, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Beckmann, Dix, Käthe Kollwitz and Otto Müller. Gurlitt’s collection – temporarily confiscated by the Allies after the war – contained artworks by all of the above-named artists, the only exception being works of art by Kirchner, which decades later were discovered among his son’s Munich art trove.⁴² How and when Gurlitt obtained the Kirchner⁴³ artworks is not fully known, or whether he obtained them lawfully, but his keen interest in creating a private collection of

expressionist artworks from the 1920s onwards seems to be beyond doubt. They were the centrepieces of his otherwise eclectic art collection after the Second World War.

In 1925, he was appointed to the directorship of the König Albert Museum in Zwickau; one of his shows there featured works by the Russian painter and art theorist Kandinsky. Dismissed in 1930 for his apparently 'progressive tastes', he then worked at the Dresden Academy of Applied Art and published about artists such as Kollwitz and Nolde.⁴⁴ According to his own post-war recollections, which are not always truthful, he initiated 'public debates against Nazi art' before moving to Hamburg to take up the position of director of the Kunstverein (Art Association). Three years later, following the Nazis' rise to power, he was again dismissed. At the age of forty, unemployed, and with his wife Helene having given birth to their first child Cornelius, Gurlitt found himself in an existential crisis; after the war, he told Allied investigators that the decision to become an art dealer had been made 'very much against my purely scientific intentions' and that the Nazis had taken away his 'good future'.⁴⁵ Attempting to portray himself as a victim of Nazi persecution, he was adamant that he had never benefited from the Nazis financially:

I was well off as director of the Kunstverein Hamburg ... I had an apartment of 12 rooms, a very large library and a nice art collection. I had a good future ahead of me and would inherit one day the house of my mother in Dresden, with the library and collections of my father, his personal fortune and the contents of 14 rooms filled with antique furniture.⁴⁶

Although these fragments have to be read with caution, given the context in which they were produced, they nonetheless provide us with insight into his personality, in which the importance of material wealth and professional advancement went hand in glove with a sense of entitlement and claim to social status.

Gurlitt's extensive contacts with the world of avant-garde art helped to establish him as a successful art dealer who used his *Kunstkabinett* (art gallery) as a venue for exhibiting expressionist artworks which the Nazis attacked as 'decadent' and 'degenerate'. We know relatively little about his business dealings before the opening of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, yet his reputation as a trusted art expert and dealer seems to have extended into the higher echelons of the Nazi regime. As one of only a handful of art dealers, the others being Karl Buchholz, Ferdinand Möller and Bernhard A. Böhmer, Goebbels's ministry appointed Gurlitt to work for the 'disposal commission', which was tasked with selling off on the international art market thousands of confiscated works of modern art from the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition.⁴⁷ A list of firms commissioned by the Propaganda Ministry to undertake the sale of *Verfallskunst* ('degenerate art') suggests that art galleries in Stuttgart, Oslo and Paris, as well as the art dealers Karl Haberstock, Wolfgang Gurlitt and Harold Halvorson, were likewise engaged in the sale of modern art in exchange for foreign currency and artefacts.⁴⁸ Gurlitt had applied for the position, knowing that his work for the commission would offer him a secure income and close connections to the Nazi regime. He may have taken this step as a way of protecting himself and his family against potential threats from Nazi hotheads against Jews and political opponents, as seen during the Kristallnacht in 1938, or he

may have seen this as a way to mend his strained relations with the authorities, and turn his gallery into an 'isle [*sic*] of free thought', as he claimed after the war.⁴⁹ The more likely explanation, however, is that Gurlitt saw his appointment as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gain unrestricted access to an unprecedented cache of modern art which would not only boost his own short-term wealth but in the long run also enable him to create one of the most sought-after and valuable private collections of modern art in the world.

Recent work not only confirms this but also highlights the extent to which art dealers such as Gurlitt, Möller, Böhmer and Buchholz, as well as the art dealers Sofie and Emanuel Fohn, used so-called 'exchange contracts' (*Tauschverträge*) to transfer some of the confiscated modern art into their ownership.⁵⁰ Rather than selling or 'disposing' of the confiscated artworks on the international art market, as intended by the Propaganda Ministry and the 'disposal commission', the dealers offered German museums artworks from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in exchange for confiscated 'Degenerate' art. In addition to receiving financial compensation, we know of eleven museums which agreed to nineteen 'exchange contracts' as a form of compensation.⁵¹ Since all applications for the 'exchange contracts' were decided in close liaison with the 'disposal commission', the art dealers had de facto created a self-serving system by which they could acquire modern artworks not just for a fraction of their value but also through payments in kind.⁵² The relevant written 'agreements' and 'exchange contracts' between the museums and the art dealers gave these transactions a veneer of legitimacy and protected those involved against future claims by third parties, evidence which turned out to be useful in post-war restitution cases against the museums, the dealers and their heirs.

The Schönhausen Palace in the northern district of Berlin Pankow served as the main storage facility for the disposal of confiscated artworks. Gurlitt and his fellow art dealers were instructed to remove 'the white tags with the inventory numbers, as well as any stamps and inscriptions' of the artworks to ensure that their provenance, including any knowledge about the originating museums or their former owners, was erased from the record.⁵³ They and those involved in the operation knowingly became complicit in a concerted cover-up by the Nazi regime. Artworks could either be bought in bulk directly from the Propaganda Ministry or sold on commission. In October 1938, Gurlitt was given unfettered access to the Schönhausen art depot, which included expressionist art he had once acquired for his museum in Zwickau, and began to secretly sell the artworks to trusted colleagues and customers in the basement of his Hamburg gallery.⁵⁴ A previously unknown inventory of artworks from the Schönhausen art depot reveals that Gurlitt purchased five paintings by Kandinsky, including *Composition*, and a painting by Robert Delaunay called *Saint-Séverin* for a combined total of CHF 10,000.⁵⁵ Months later, in early 1939, he sold Kandinsky's *Composition* and Delaunay's *Saint-Séverin* for CHF 11,000, a considerable profit given that he still had four paintings by Kandinsky in his possession.⁵⁶ A colleague later recalled seeing 'paintings by Munch, Corinth and Franz Marc emerging from ... [Gurlitt's] car like some colorful ball of yarn, and it was never quite clear how all of it could have fit into that tiny car.'⁵⁷ Significantly, the inventory also reveals the identity of all the 125 paintings which Theodor Fischer, the 'Aryan' art dealer from Switzerland, had selected and valued in preparation for the

international auction which was held in Lucerne in 1939 to generate additional revenue for the Nazi regime from confiscated or stolen artworks.⁵⁸ Although Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Paul Gauguin* (1888) – which had been confiscated from the Stuttgart Neue Staatsgalerie as late as March 1938 – and Pablo Picasso's *Two Harlequins* were sold for CHF c.60,000 above their valuation, the total amount generated, CHF c.570,000, was hardly impressive, suggesting that potential buyers might not have wanted to be associated publicly with the sale of artworks of dubious provenance or where the revenue was known to benefit the Third Reich.⁵⁹

In May 1939, as Europe was preparing for war, Gurlitt took on over 3,700 works of confiscated art on commission for the Propaganda Ministry and sold the painting *Animal Destinies* by Franz Marc to the Kunstmuseum in Basel for CHF 6,000 (RM 3,381). For this transaction, after having paid the Propaganda Ministry as the listed 'vendor' of the painting, he received CHF 1,000 (RM 563) in commission.⁶⁰ Two points are noteworthy about these transactions. First, they allowed Gurlitt to establish close relations with the secretive Swiss museum and gallery world which helped him, and later his family, to sell individual artworks.⁶¹ Second, in December 1940, he purchased another 1,723 works of art 'on paper' from the Schönhausen art depot, mostly watercolours, prints and drawings by expressionist artists such as Nolde, Heckel and his one-time friend Schmidt-Rottluff. These artworks seem to have formed the cornerstone of his collection, which the Allies temporarily confiscated after the war, and which in later years became an even greater, albeit also more opaque, collection which his family subsequently inherited.⁶²

The process of selling off unwanted 'degenerate' art abroad brought Gurlitt and his fellow art dealers into the murky orbit of Nazi officials, museum directors and private collectors involved in the looting of art and antiquities on the European continent. Attempting to justify his role in these operations, he told Allied interrogators after 1945 that he had been forced to 'decide between the war or work for the museums', yet omitted to mention the fact that the power and privileges and the financial resources available had given him unfettered access to some of the finest pieces available in the European art market. He likewise did not reveal that he had approached Hans Posse – Special Commissioner for the Führermuseum in Linz⁶³ – as early as 1940 in the hope of establishing a close relationship with him. Scholars have previously assumed that Gurlitt became involved in the trade in looted art only after Posse's death in 1942, and after his friend Hermann Voss, director of the Wiesbaden Art Museum, had been appointed Hitler's special commissioner. The evidence discovered reveals, however, that Gurlitt sought to establish contact with influential Nazi art traders years earlier and made unsolicited offers to sell high-value artworks. In December 1940, for instance, he used his assignment by a German corporation to find a 'present' for Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, worth up to RM 25,000, as a pretext to approach Posse and his team.⁶⁴ Shortly thereafter, Posse's connections helped Gurlitt to sell a painting by his grandfather Louis Gurlitt, a nineteenth-century landscape painter, to Albert Speer; in return, Gurlitt offered for sale to Posse artworks worth tens of thousands of Reichsmark.⁶⁵ By the time of Posse's death, their contact had matured into a mutually beneficial business relationship which Posse's successor Voss continued, albeit on a vastly different scale.

In general, Gurlitt showed few moral qualms in touring the occupied countries and purchasing, often at astronomical prices, artworks for Hitler's personal art collection that was to be displayed at the Führermuseum.⁶⁶ Voss's appointment had been engineered by Goebbels to expand his influence over Nazi cultural policy and gain privileged access to valuable artworks from the occupied territories.⁶⁷ Remarkably, during the height of the Nazi trade in looted art, the Propaganda Ministry engaged with Gurlitt in both the selling and buying of artworks.⁶⁸ As a special emissary, Gurlitt was now working indirectly for the office of Reichsleiter Martin Bormann, who, as Hitler's personal secretary, was in charge of the Führermuseum. The financial transactions were made by the Reich Chancellery, headed by Hans Heinrich Lammers, through the private banking house Delbrück Schickler & Co., which made investments with, and looked after, Hitler's personal fortune.⁶⁹ The Führermuseum project, in other words, was paid for out of Hitler's personal account to serve the Nazi propaganda machine which used art and architecture as expressions of an apparently superior German culture. This was a world like no other, in which money was no obstacle and in which Gurlitt could conduct his business affairs free from external control.

From September 1943 to September 1944, he delivered to Voss over 100 artworks with a market value of c. RM 9.2 million.⁷⁰ Most of the paintings he purchased for Hitler's collection were apparently 'rare Italian and Dutch masters' for between RM 25,000 and RM 30,000, but there were also more expensive purchases.⁷¹ In May 1944, he bought several artworks from a Paris broker for over RM 2 million for the Linz Führermuseum.⁷² There was no need to coerce owners into selling their artworks; the war-time economy and insecurity in German-occupied territories had created the perfect conditions for Gurlitt to pick and choose the best pieces of artworks. 'If paintings were pointed out to me as not for sale', he later told officials, 'I did not even ask for the price. I did not need to do so as I had enough offers.'⁷³ He recalled that all transactions were conducted in a 'very friendly spirit' and that he was 'not feared as other dealers were', an assessment which is probably true given that he paid disproportionately high prices which inflated the market: 'But as I had a strong desire to acquire many objects for Linz, I never bargained and paid the prices.'⁷⁴ The suggestion made by some that Gurlitt paid 'junk prices' for the artworks could not be corroborated; on the contrary, resulting from the enormous trade in art during the war, the prices for art increased exponentially from 1943 onwards.⁷⁵ In that year alone, Gurlitt's transactions in France netted him about RM 200,000 in commissions.⁷⁶ As one of Voss's agents, Gurlitt also used various brokers to create additional distance between him and the previous owners of the artworks. He later told investigators that he had

never spoken to anybody about purchases in Paris as a [*sic*] whole the art business is a very secret one. The only Jew I saw in Paris was Mr Engel, but as I, having myself Jewish blood, was in an exposed position, I could not do anything to help him.⁷⁷

This was yet another attempt to portray himself as a victim rather than admitting that he had been an integral part of the regime's policy of plunder.

Rather than relying on chance encounters with potential sellers, Nazi art traders, backed up by a network of informants and advisors, identified and purchased art in the

occupied territories in a systematic and targeted fashion. In July 1943, Erhard Göpel, the General Commissioner for Special Missions in the Netherlands, provided Voss and his team with a comprehensive report about the state of the Parisian art market in which he identified some of the most valuable artworks that were 'likely to come up for sale'; these included paintings by Claude Lorrain, Anthony van Dyck, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Taddeo Gaddi and Lorenzo Credi, as well as a painting attributed to the French Renaissance painter Jean Fouquet.⁷⁸ Six months later, on 17 January 1944, Gurlitt purchased the Fouquet painting known as *Portrait or Head of a Monk* for RM 825,000, an exorbitant sum of money at the time, and sold it three days later to Voss.⁷⁹ Acquired in 1935 by the Demandolx-Dedons family in Marseille, the painting was sold to Gurlitt through the Dutch broker Théo Hermsen, who had previously sold him dozens of paintings from German-occupied France.⁸⁰ Gurlitt received RM 15,000 in commission for the sale.⁸¹

As it turned out, Voss did not want the painting for Hitler's Linz museum, which is why Gurlitt offered it to the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne at the same price. On the initiative of its director, Otto Förster, four Cologne-based companies raised the money as a bridging loan until the city of Cologne was in a position to purchase the painting on behalf of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in February 1944.⁸² Meanwhile, other art dealers were lying in waiting in case the deal fell through – such as Alois Miedl, one of Göring's henchmen, who had forced the Jewish Dutch art dealer Jacques Goudstikker to sell his art collection below market value before taking over his company in Amsterdam, offered to pay Gurlitt 750,000 Gulden for the painting should the city of Cologne be unable to raise sufficient capital. This episode illustrates the extent to which art dealers, banks and museums competed over access to, and ownership of, looted art as it was coming onto the market. Within this complex web of conflicting but powerful interests, Gurlitt not only found himself centre stage but also was able to secure maximum profits and professional prestige.

As the war drew to a close, and with the prospect of further revenue, Gurlitt purchased ever more artwork for Hitler's increasingly unachievable Führermuseum. Copies of invoices and receipts discovered at the Federal Archives in Koblenz reveal that in 1944 Gurlitt bought artworks with a market value of over RM 10 million.⁸³ Most of the purchases were undertaken in France but he also bought artworks in Italy, Belgium and even in Hungary. In June 1944, he bought another cache of art from Hermsen for RM 3,130,000, which included four Gobelins tapestries for RM 2,200,000 alone (see Figure 3.1).⁸⁴ For this transaction, his commission was a staggering RM 156,000.⁸⁵ As the Allies started to occupy cities such as Paris and Brussels, the trade in looted art became increasingly beset by technical problems emanating from large-scale financial transactions in different currencies and across multiple bank accounts; this led Gurlitt's lawyer to claim in early 1945 that Gurlitt had taken 'considerable financial risks' on behalf of Hitler's Special Commissioner during the war, and that he should be exempt from future claims for compensation made by banks or clearing houses.⁸⁶ While the Nazis systematically persecuted and killed millions of European Jews and other victim groups, and while ordinary citizens feared for their lives and livelihoods during relentless bombing raids, Gurlitt used his privileged position to

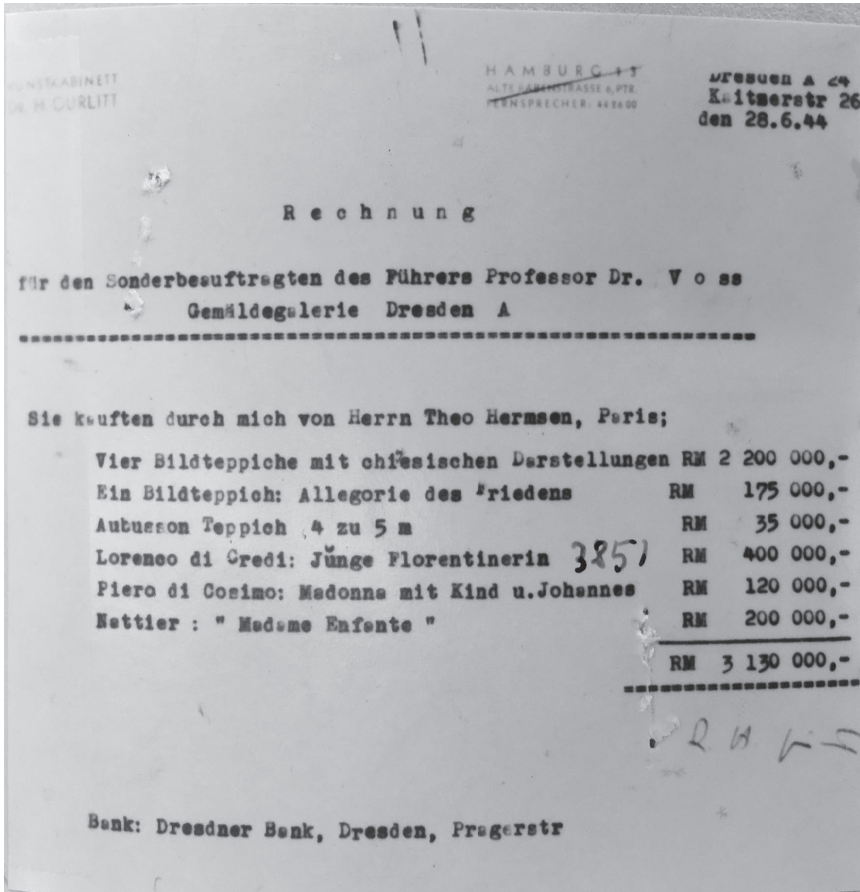


Figure 3.1 Gurlitt's invoice to Professor Dr Voss, 1944.

Source: BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Gurlitt to Voss, 28 June 1944.

amass a personal fortune.⁸⁷ For the one-time art historian, and many others like him, the Nazi conquest of the European continent had become a profitable business model.

Recovery: The Gurlitt collection

How can we explain the quantitative difference between Gurlitt's collection confiscated by the Allies in 1945, which comprised 115 paintings, 19 drawings and 72 various objects, and which was returned to him in the early 1950s, and the collection inherited by his son Cornelius, which comprised almost 1,500 works of art, almost 500 of which originated in all probability from the cache of art confiscated by the Nazis in 1937?⁸⁸ The answer to this question may lie in the fact that Gurlitt purchased more than 1,700 artworks from the Reich 'on paper'. This means that most of the objects that he

bought would have remained at the Schönhausen art depot throughout the war and quite possibly thereafter. The dozens of artworks retrieved from that cache in his 'tiny car' during the war – works by Nolde, Müller, Kollwitz, Dix, Beckmann, Pechstein, Grosz, Hofer, Heckel, Lehbruck and Schmidt-Rottluff – became part of his personal collection confiscated by the Allies in 1945, and which also included items which he had lawfully inherited or bought from members of his family.⁸⁹ It took six years for this collection to be returned to Gurlitt.

Without access to the bulk of his 'personal' collection, but with access to considerable cash and knowledge of the whereabouts of modern art collections, there are several possibilities as to how Gurlitt may have built up his art collection up until his death in 1956. He neatly documented almost all transactions for the numerous artworks he acquired during the war in sales and import/export ledgers, and it is clear from these records, despite the fact that they have been redacted, that only a fraction of these artworks were confiscated after the war; he may have hidden the items in storage facilities unknown to the authorities and subsequently retrieved them. He may also have bought additional pieces from museums, at auctions, and galleries. His records allowed him detailed insight into the whereabouts and ownership of hundreds of valuable modern artworks. Finally, he might have retrieved some or all of the remaining paintings and drawings he had purchased 'on paper' from the Schönhausen art depot, arguing that he was the rightful owner of these artworks. In the post-war transitional environment, German and Allied officials are unlikely to have questioned the narrative of a man with Jewish ancestry who could demonstrate that he had been dismissed by the Nazi government. Taken together, this would explain why in 2012, almost six decades later, the German authorities discovered approximately 1,000 artworks in the flat of Gurlitt's son, which originated from the broader context of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, were looted, or regarding the provenance of which there was little or no information.

Gurlitt's post-war interaction with the authorities was hardly forthcoming or truthful. When asked about the whereabouts of, or trade in, individual paintings and cultural artefacts his sudden loss of memory was remarkable, as he emphasized that he had either forgotten any details or lost relevant evidence in the closing months of the war.⁹⁰ In addition to constructing a smokescreen about his own victimhood, he denied ever having traded in, handled or acquired 'looted' art from German-occupied France. He had apparently 'never seen with [his] eyes' any of the Jewish art treasures which had been confiscated by the Nazis, a statement which, while factually perhaps correct, glossed over the reality that he had bought hundreds of artworks in France through intermediaries involved in the looted art trade.⁹¹ He had apparently never bought art which had not been offered voluntarily to him.⁹² Buying art in bulk in France from established brokers such as Hermsen, Gurlitt believed, and selling it to established German museums, including the planned Linz museum, freed him from any professional or moral responsibility as to the origins of the works.⁹³ Although aware of the storage facilities 'in which the Jewish art possessions were collected', he maintained never having socialized with Nazi officials engaged in the looted art trade. Rumours about French art dealers or private owners being pressured into selling their artworks could apparently not be substantiated, he told officials, although there is also

no evidence that he ever attempted to verify these rumours or to find out how his intermediaries had obtained the artworks in the first place.

Records compiled by the US Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Section show that Gurlitt continued to apply to the Allied authorities to have his collection returned to him.⁹⁴ In June 1948, he asked officials to waive the requirement for a detailed list of artworks he owned because all of his 'business books and correspondence' had apparently been destroyed in the Dresden bombings in February 1945, a statement which was false, given the existence of his recently discovered sales ledgers. When asked about the whereabouts of individual paintings and cultural artefacts, a sudden loss of memory became particularly noticeable. Other statements were equally untrue. A gouache by Chagall was apparently 'an old possession' of his sister, he told Allied officials in 1945, and a painting by Picasso was one he had supposedly 'bought from the artist' in Paris in 1942 for FF 60,000.⁹⁵ (Gurlitt himself produced evidence to the contrary in the form of a letter from Swiss painter Karl Ballmer: see below.) Five years later, on 12 and 13 December 1950, while visiting the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point to reclaim his artworks from the Allied authorities, Gurlitt became distinctly nervous when he was shown the Picasso painting *Portrait of a Woman with Two Noses*.⁹⁶ The notes taken by the Allied official reveal Gurlitt's attempt to reclaim the painting without drawing too much attention to it. At first he gave the 'impression that he did not expect this picture' and made 'some remarks of no importance', yet he had recognized the painting as 'his property', as the official remarked,

Afterwards, when the inspection was over, he twice went back for a short moment to the Picasso picture and looked at it. Then I made a remark that it was dated and back in the office he suddenly said: 'I could tell you a long and funny story about this picture.' I tried to seem unconcerned. First giving us the impression that he did not know any thing of importance about this picture but after an hour being able to tell me a long and apparently complicated story about this picture.⁹⁷

Allied officials had become increasingly suspicious of the veracity of Gurlitt's statements and classed him as a man who did 'not seem very open-hearted'.⁹⁸ However, less than three weeks later, Gurlitt produced the previously mentioned letter from Ballmer, who declared that he had given Gurlitt the Picasso *Portrait of a Woman with Two Noses* and Chagall's gouache *Allegorical Scene with Three Moons* as a present. As the post-war restitution process was now winding down, the statement was deemed sufficient for both artworks to be returned to Gurlitt, adding yet another two very valuable artworks to an already exceptional – though largely unlawfully acquired – art collection. Gurlitt, along with dozens of art dealers, museum directors, agents, middlemen and brokers from Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere in occupied Nazi territories, had skilfully exploited the wartime conditions for their own profit, and had become accomplices and co-conspirators in one of the most unprecedented orgies of art plunder the world had ever witnessed, a history the extent of which is just beginning to emerge and be fully understood. The following two case studies aim to further highlight the complexities which the victims of this history have had to confront.

Provenance: Two case studies

Klee's *Sumpflegende*

The first case study looks at Klee's painting *Sumpflegende* (*Legend of the Swamp*, Figure 3.2), which the Nazis confiscated for the 1937 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, and traces the resulting post-war legal battle over ownership. The second case examines Liebermann's painting *Zwei Reiter am Strand* (*Two Riders on the Beach*, Figure 3.3), which was identified as looted art after it was discovered in Cornelius Gurlitt's flat in 2012.

In 1919, inspired by his travels to North Africa, the Swiss-born Klee completed the painting *Sumpflegende*, a small oil painting on cardboard measuring only 47 × 41 cm, and sold it to Paul Erich Küppers, one of the founders of the Kestnergesellschaft gallery in Hanover. Klee's painting was part of a series of compositions that depicted the formative principle and rules of nature without venturing into a complete abstract oeuvre. On the back of the painting, Klee had added a handwritten note, '1919.163. / Sumpflegende / Klee / sold / owner / Dr. Küppers', clearly identifying the owner of the painting as art historian Dr Paul Erich Küppers.⁹⁹ In 1922, Sophie Küppers, also an art historian, inherited the painting on the death of her husband. Five years later, in

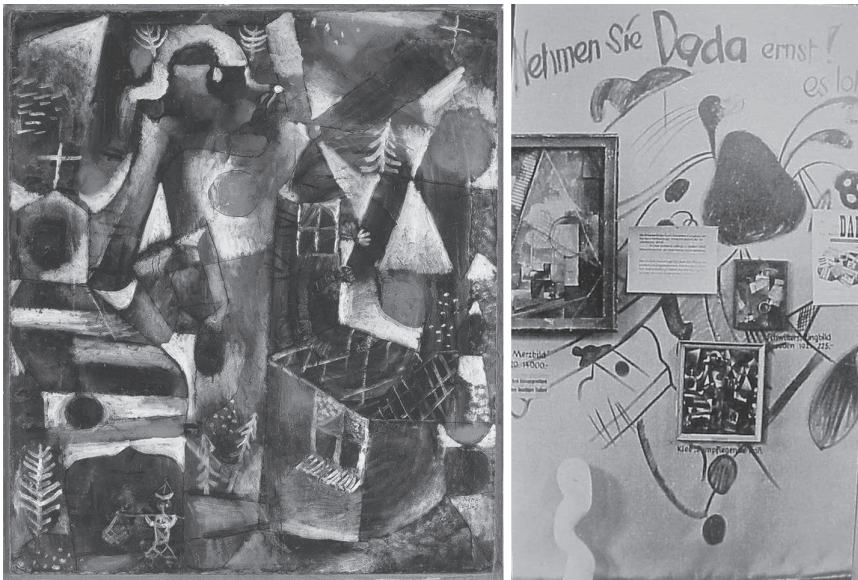


Figure 3.2 (left) Paul Klee, *Sumpflegende* (*Legend of the Swamp*), shown on (right) the so-called 'Dada Wall' (not displayed in its entirety).

Sources: Paul Klee, *Sumpflegende* (*Legend of the Swamp*) / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY-SA-3.0 and Paul Klee, 'Sumpflegende an der Dada Wand', faculty-web.at (Memento vom 26. August 2002 im Internet Archive).

1927, Sophie married the Russian painter and architect El Lissitzky, with whom she emigrated to Russia in the same year.¹⁰⁰ Before leaving Germany, Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers handed thirteen artworks over to the Hanover Provinzialmuseum as a loan, documented by the museum's inventory.¹⁰¹ The Nazis subsequently confiscated all of these artworks for the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition and displayed Klee's painting on the so-called 'Dada-Wall', ridiculed by the slogan, 'Take Dada seriously – it's worth it!' (*Nehmen Sie Dada Ernst – es lohnt sich!*).¹⁰²

What makes the case particularly relevant for our understanding of the provenance of artworks unlawfully obtained during the Third Reich is the fact that the Provinzialmuseum was not the rightful owner of the painting at the time the Nazis confiscated it; the painting had rather been given to the museum as a loan. In March 1941, Gurlitt bought the painting – which had been unlawfully obtained by the regime – for CHF 500 from one of the Nazi art depots.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, the rightful owners of the painting were leading a life of misery and hardship. In 1944, three years after the death of her second husband, Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers and her son Jen were deported to Novosibirsk, Siberia, where they lived in miserable circumstances. Despite several attempts to reclaim her art collection, Sophie died penniless in Novosibirsk in 1978.¹⁰⁴

What exactly happened to the painting after Gurlitt purchased it remains strangely opaque. We know that in 1962 the Lempertz auction house in Cologne sold the painting for an anonymous vendor for DM 85,000 to the art expert Wilhelm Arntz, who bought it on behalf of the Basel-based gallery owner Ernst Beyeler.¹⁰⁵ Whether Gurlitt's son, Cornelius, was the person selling the painting is not known but possible, given that he had inherited Gurlitt's art collection. A year later, the painting was – presumably – bought by an unknown private Swiss collector, making it even harder to trace. A couple of years later, in 1968, Sophie made another attempt to find and reclaim her art collection by writing to the Niedersächsische Landesmuseum, the successor of the Provinzialmuseum which, in the late 1920s, had taken her collection on loan. In response, the museum told her that it had no knowledge of the whereabouts of her collection, except for a painting by her deceased husband El Lissitzky, but that it had considered purchasing the *Sumpflgende* when it was offered for auction by Lempertz.¹⁰⁶

In 1973, the Siegfried Rosengart gallery in Lucerne put the *Sumpflgende* on show; there it remained for the next nine years. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, though, never saw or managed to reclaim any of her artworks; all of her seven applications to leave the Soviet Union between 1973 and her death in 1978 were rejected.¹⁰⁷ In 1982, the painting returned from Switzerland to Germany after it had been bought by the Gabriele Münter and Johannes Eichner Foundations and the City of Munich on behalf of the Lenbachhaus Museum for DM 800,000.¹⁰⁸ Shortly thereafter, in April 1982, Wilhelm Arntz – who had purchased the painting in 1962 – told Armin Zweite, director of the Lenbachhaus, that the painting had been 'seized by the Reich without compensation' (*zugunsten des Reiches entschädigungslos eingezogen*) and that it should be returned to its rightful owners because it had been *de facto* 'confiscated'.¹⁰⁹ However, the Lenbachhaus did not seem to have seen any need to respond to, or act on, these suggestions; meanwhile, Jen Lissitzky, the rightful heir of the painting, who in 1980 had moved to Estonia, was at first unable to reclaim the painting through legal or other means.¹¹⁰

Shortly after German reunification, Jen Lissitzky issued court proceedings against the Lenbachhaus after the latter had rejected an amicable settlement. Ironically, while proceedings were ongoing, the Lenbachhaus displayed the painting at a Berlin art exhibition which displayed the biased and derogatory representation of modern art during the Third Reich through a recreation of the 'Degenerate Art' exhibit.¹¹¹ It allowed Lissitzky's lawyer to obtain a temporary injunction which raised the possibility that a court might confiscate the painting, worth over DM 4 million at this point.¹¹² In its ruling, the Berlin court noted that the case would be the litmus test of whether the 'Federal Republic of Germany, and Berlin as its legal representative, was willing to demonstrate to history that lawlessness can become law again.'¹¹³ In 1993, Lissitzky nonetheless lost the court case against the Lenbachhaus. In its judgement, the court stated that the acquisition of the painting by the Lenbachhaus and others had not been *mala fide* (*bösgläubig*) and that after thirty years the case was now statute-barred.¹¹⁴ Ulrich Drobniig from the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law disagreed, arguing that Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers and her son Jen had not lost their claim to ownership of the painting through the trade and financial transactions to which it had been subjected. According to Drobniig, there were 'overriding reasons' not to have the claim statute barred after thirty years.¹¹⁵ Remarkably, the court also claimed that the German Reich had 'purchased' the painting in 1941. Since the German state (*Fiskus*) functioned as the vendor of the artwork, so went the argument of the court, the buyer had apparently every reason to believe that the vendor was also the owner of the artwork which was for sale.¹¹⁶ Gurlitt had *de facto* become an agent for, and operated on behalf of, the German state and it was this same state which – through a court ruling decades later – retrospectively legitimized Gurlitt's wartime acquisitions, a circular argument *par excellence*.

Five years later, in 1998, the German government signed an internationally binding agreement on looted art, known as the Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art; private museums, private trusts and private collections, however, were exempt from the agreement.¹¹⁷ In Article 7, the agreement states, 'Pre-War owners and their heirs should be encouraged to come forward and make known their claims to art that was confiscated by the Nazis and not subsequently restituted.'¹¹⁸ It could be argued that the agreement did not exist at the time of the court case between Lissitzky and the Lenbachhaus; yet, Lissitzky and his family obviously had a strong moral case for the retrospective application of the principles, given that he and his mother had been reclaiming the work since the 1960s. What complicated matters further from a legal perspective was the fact that the painting had been acquired by the Lenbachhaus, a museum which is not subject to the Washington principles because it is managed by a private trust. Lissitzky and his family were thus reliant on the good will of a private trust and its trustees to abide by the Washington agreement voluntarily, and to resolve the case fairly and amicably, yet for a long time there was no settlement in sight. The Bavarian regional court in Munich has 'rejected returning the Klee painting with constantly changing reasons since 1992'; Christoph von Berg, Klaus Bandekow and Karsten Zorn, the lawyers representing the Lissitzky heirs, told Bloomberg News, 'All attempts by the heirs to reach an agreement have been brusquely brushed aside.'¹¹⁹ In 2012, after negotiations failed, three of Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers's grandchildren filed

a new court case against the Lenbachhaus to have the painting returned to them. The suit put the value of the painting at €2 million. In July 2017, a settlement between the parties which allowed the painting to remain at the Lenbachhaus finally brought to an end twenty-five years of legal dispute.¹²⁰

Hannes Hartung of THEMIS solicitors, representing the City of Munich, put a particular gloss on the dispute, arguing that the painting could not be classed under any circumstances (*auf keinen Fall*) as looted art which had been confiscated from Jewish owners during the Holocaust. Instead, according to Hartung, the painting was an example of 'degenerate art' which 'today is traded everywhere and traded unchallenged' (*wird heutzutage überall und unbestritten gehandelt*).¹²¹ Hartung's failure to appreciate the prolonged injustice caused to the rightful owners of the painting was surpassed only by his portrayal of the 1982 purchase by the Lenbachhaus as 'compensation' (*Wiedergutmachung*) for the defamation of the painting by the Nazis.¹²² In other words, the Lenbachhaus had apparently paid DM 800,000 to a 'renowned Swiss gallery' as a form of 'compensation' so that the painting could from now on reside where it had been created, and be shown to the public from the time of its acquisition by the Lenbachhaus. Even the most even-handed of scholars find it difficult not to see statements of this sort for what they are. Their aim is not only to create retrospective justifications for past misjudgements in dealing with artworks of this nature but also to construct a veneer of moral legitimacy for an art market which has become increasingly corroded by dubious business practices.

Liebermann's *Zwei Reiter am Strand* (*Two Riders on the Beach*)

The second case study looks at one of two similar oil paintings by the Jewish artist Liebermann (Figure 3.3).¹²³ As the influential president of the Prussian Academy of Arts, he promoted French realism and impressionism in Germany. This movement aimed to unite impressionism with German objectivity and the forerunners of expressionism. The Nazis would target this type of 'art cosmopolitanism' and confiscate Liebermann's works during the 'Degenerate Art' campaign. In 1933, Liebermann resigned from the Prussian Academy following the decision not to exhibit any more works by Jewish artists.

The painting to be discussed here shows the influence of Liebermann's impressionistic and fauvist tendencies and depicts two men riding along the sandy beaches of Scheveningen in the Netherlands. Discovered in 2012 among Cornelius Gurlitt's art collection, the Taskforce identified the painting as Nazi-looted art. Questions, though, remain as to how Gurlitt obtained it in the first place, whether he had been 'tipped off' by officials about the painting's existence in Lower Silesia before he purchased it and whether he 'bought' or 'traded' it for other artworks.

The painting stems originally from the art collection of the Jewish factory owner David Friedmann in Wrocław, then known as Breslau, in Silesia. Friedmann acquired the painting in 1905 and owned it until at least 1939.¹²⁴ Other records suggest that Friedmann owned the painting until August 1941.¹²⁵ It seems reasonably certain that Nazi officials had set their sights on the Liebermann painting, as is the case for the previously mentioned work by Fouquet, and on Friedmann's art collection generally,



Figure 3.3 Max Liebermann, *Zwei Reiter am Strand* (*Two Riders on the Beach*) (c.1900).

Source: Sotheby's.

after the outbreak of war. In December 1939, a senior Nazi official from Breslau sent – or planned to send – to the authorities in Berlin a letter headed ‘Seizure of Jewish Art Collections’. In it he wrote that Friedmann, ‘a Jew’, owned a valuable collection of French impressionists and ‘good German’ landscapes and that ‘the painting by Liebermann (*Riders on the Beach*) would likely fetch at least RM 10,000–15,000 abroad’.¹²⁶ Friedmann, who had previously been forced to sell some of his properties, was barred from selling his art collection without permission.

Friedmann died in February 1942. A month later, the Nazis deported his daughter first to Ravensbrück and then to Auschwitz, where she perished. It seems that Friedmann’s death prompted the authorities to auction off not only his villa – and confiscate the proceeds on behalf of the Reich – but also sell off parts of his art collection. In July 1942, the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts, Breslau, which had previously corresponded with Gurlitt about Friedmann’s collection, bought two of Friedmann’s artworks, including the Liebermann painting, from the Hermann Petschel auction house in Breslau.¹²⁷ It is not known whether the auction house sold the painting on behalf of Friedmann’s estate or on behalf of the Reich; given what we know about the forced sale of his villa, the latter seems more likely. A month later, in August 1942, the director of the museum, Cornelius Müller-Hofstede, ‘traded’ the two artworks to Gurlitt, possibly in exchange for other paintings in Gurlitt’s possession.¹²⁸

Whether Gurlitt earmarked certain paintings – in his own mind or in conversations and correspondence with others – which he intended to purchase once they became available because the owners of the artworks had been deported or killed or had forfeited their collections remains speculative, but it is also not beyond the realms of possibility. When it came to high-value artworks, art traders such as Gurlitt knew no moral bounds. In 1947, Gurlitt's secretary Ingeborg Hertmann noted in a witness statement made to the criminal police in Hamburg, 'When the Jews were deported to the Łódz ghetto, they entrusted Gurlitt with their paintings to be sold. After a while, these people wrote, please send us the money, we are starving. Gurlitt then instructed me in a calm and indifferent manner to send RM 10 to the Jew.'¹²⁹

In 1945, the Liebermann painting was confiscated by the Allies and transferred to the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point. The inventory lists the painting as 'WIE 1930'.¹³⁰ Five years later, in December 1950, it was returned to Gurlitt.¹³¹ Over the next decade, the painting was exhibited at various national and international venues.¹³² Following Gurlitt's death, ownership first passed on to his widow, Helene, and then to his son, Cornelius. It was one of the few paintings which the Taskforce classified 'as looted art with the highest degree of probability' (*mit höchster Wahrscheinlichkeit der NS-Raubkunst zugehörig*). In 2015, the lawyers administering Cornelius Gurlitt's estate returned the painting to the heirs of David Friedmann.¹³³

These two case studies illustrate the complicated nature of the Nazi art trade and the long-term legacy of post-war restitution claims against museums and Nazi art traders and their heirs. They highlight the complexity and effects of an often narrowly defined legal framework and demonstrate that for some of the artworks under investigation international agreements are not applicable. The provenance of the first painting shows why the categories applied by the Taskforce and others in relation to 'looted art' had been too narrow to capture the essence of the art trade during and after the Third Reich. The second case, a painting obtained by Gurlitt under questionable circumstances, highlights not only inherent problems of provenance research but also the importance of a painting's provenance in determining its value on the international art market.

Art dealers and the art market: Towards the future

The international art market seems to have profited from the publicity generated by the worldwide debate about looted art, restitution claims and drawn-out court cases, as well as from the sale of artworks associated with Nazi-looted art, in the case of sales that were not challenged in court.¹³⁴ The Liebermann painting is a case in point: in 2009, prior to the discovery of the Munich art trove, Liebermann's painting *Zwei Reiter am Strand*, the one not discussed here, was sold for over £289,000 to a private collector.¹³⁵ Six years later, in 2015, after several years of media attention about Gurlitt and the subject of looted art, Sotheby's sold the restituted Liebermann painting *Zwei Reiter am Strand*, discussed here, to an unknown bidder for £1,865,000, an increase of over 500 per cent for an almost identical painting.¹³⁶ In

June 2017, Sotheby's also sold a draft study for either or both of the paintings for over £284,000.¹³⁷ Whether 'the murkier the better' turns out to be true for the art market remains to be seen. Judging by the number of exhibitions,¹³⁸ restoration programmes, guided tours, conferences, workshops, research projects,¹³⁹ auctions, publications, TV and radio broadcasts and the ever-growing social media presence on the subject, one might be forgiven for concluding that the art world has been stimulated by the debate about Nazi-looted art.¹⁴⁰ While some of this activity is welcome, it also raises questions, for example, why the art market and its transactions continue to be largely unregulated, poorly documented and highly secretive, lacking transparency and accountability at many levels. Whether we look at art dealers and collectors, museums and educational trusts, government-funded programmes or the judiciary, when it comes to the art trade the largely accepted rules of professional and business ethics do not seem to apply.

The material presented here has shown, first and foremost, that the term 'looted art' requires conceptual reframing and also broadening in order to capture the great range of, and linkages between, different types of injustices committed by the Nazi regime in the field of art and culture. The term should, for instance, encompass the Nazi policy of confiscating, and subsequently trading in, thousands of artworks as part of the 'degenerate art' exhibition, a policy which was unlawful then and needs to be classed as unlawful now, given that it was carried out by a criminal regime en route to waging one of the most brutal wars in modern history. This chapter has not only demonstrated the value of integrating the subject of looted art within the broader conceptual triangle of propaganda studies, the history of plunder and art historical provenance research but has also shown that the historically fashioned networks of art traders, art experts, museums and collectors require scholarly and public attention; they epitomise important continuities and disciplinary legacies which extend into the present day. These networks established and maintained trading routes through which cultural artefacts moved largely unchecked from one place to another in return for financial capital throughout the twentieth century; they provided access to expertise and logistical support and created a secretive environment – an economic and legal grey zone – within which the trade with art proceeded outside international regulatory frameworks. Instead of embracing a robust and transparent self-regulatory system, art traders and auction houses have operated in 'overlapping networks' in which regulatory loopholes in the trade in cultural artefacts can be exploited for illegal activities such as tax evasion, price-fixing, fraud, embezzlement and money-laundering.¹⁴¹ In the case of Switzerland, powerful interest groups linked to the Swiss art trade have recently prevented a reform of the so-called *Zollfreilager* (customs-free zone) in which the storage and sale of goods can take place anonymously, as if they were islands 'cut off from ordinary jurisdictions'.¹⁴² Calls to place such tax havens under the jurisdiction of the relevant money-laundering laws have so far gone unheeded.¹⁴³ Some experts have even claimed that the entire sector has deteriorated into a 'criminal organisation'.¹⁴⁴ It is incumbent on scholars and investigative agencies such as the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (*Bundeskriminalamt*) to shine a bright light on the dubious business practices of the global art trade, which feeds on secrecy and discretion as

does fire on oxygen.¹⁴⁵ In the case of Nazi-looted art, there is compelling evidence that post-war auction houses, museums and art experts, especially in Southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria, had detailed knowledge of the whereabouts and provenance of the Gurlitt collection for many years.¹⁴⁶ But instead of working towards the return or restitution of looted art, they profited from its sale.¹⁴⁷ A professional duty of care towards the artworks and their rightful owners is often non-existent in these enigmatic, well-endowed circles. To this day, as Stefan Koldehoff has argued, the art market lacks a sense of guilt (*Unrechtsbewußtsein*) for its involvement with the Nazi regime and is unwilling to come to terms with the past.¹⁴⁸

Despite steps in the right direction, for example through Web-based portals and databases such as *lootedart.com* and *lostart.de*, and the creation of the International Research Portal for Records Related to Nazi-Era Cultural Property,¹⁴⁹ experts are only just beginning to recognize the international dimension of the subject. Often the political and legal complexities turn restitution claims into drawn-out processes without the prospect of mediation or compromise. National laws, as they stand, are rarely appropriate instruments for dealing with lost or looted art. In the Third Reich, as we have seen, retrospective laws and decrees became cynical instruments for constructing a veneer of legitimacy for state-sanctioned policies of expropriation, expulsion and mass murder. Lawyers who today argue that the confiscation and expropriation of artworks was lawful because it was based on existing legislation, and that their sale was therefore legal, are not only retrospectively sanctioning the activities of one of the most criminal regimes in modern history but are also denying victims and their descendants their right to justice. In light of the German government's recent experience of establishing compensation schemes for the victims of companies accused of using forced and slave labourers during the Nazi period,¹⁵⁰ the German authorities would be well advised to take a more proactive approach in the field of art and culture, for example by setting up a state-funded office of international experts, backed by statute, for the investigation of art under the Third Reich.

Where does all this leave Cornelius Gurlitt, the 'Nazi treasure hoarder', who lived his entire adult life as the custodian of his father's art collection? Art must have been for Gurlitt both a substitute for human relations and a dreadful curse. Hildebrand Gurlitt's art collection remained with him, even during the last days of his life. In a suitcase underneath his hospital bed, his court-appointed carer found a painting by Claude Monet worth millions of pounds, a sad end to an unimaginably lonely life.¹⁵¹ Despite being vilified in the media and online, the image of Gurlitt as a frail, old man who was unable to defend himself publicly not only reveals the moral ambiguity of the case but also serves as a canvas on to which to project the cultural-political shortcomings and legal barriers which make the process of coming to terms with the history of Nazi-looted art so problematic. This chapter, by throwing these failings into stark relief, makes clear that the legacy of the 'Gurlitt case' extends well beyond being a 'lesson in dealing with the Nazi period' in today's unified Germany, as Thomas Schmidt recently argued in *Zeit Online*;¹⁵² instead, it needs to be seen as a watershed moment in how society and the general public – and not just art experts – view, and deal with, artworks and their provenance as a reflection of Europe's fractured history.

Notes

- 1 Taskforce Schwabinger Kunstfund, Fact Sheet: http://www.taskforce-kunstfund.de/fileadmin/_downloads/factsheet_de.pdf. The German authorities confiscated a total of 1,224 artworks in Cornelius Gurlitt's Munich apartment, seized 239 artworks at his house in Salzburg and examined 34 artworks as part of his estate following his death in May 2014.
- 2 Melissa Eddy and Alison Smale, 'Art Trove in Germany Abounds in Mysteries', *International New York Times*, 6 November 2013.
- 3 See, e.g., Stefan Koldehoff, *Die Bilder sind unter uns: Das Geschäft mit der NS-Raubkunst und der Fall Gurlitt* (Berlin, 2014); Johannes Heil and Annette Weber (eds), *Ersessene Kunst – Der Fall Gurlitt* (Berlin, 2014); Anders Rydell, *Hitlers Bilder: Kunstraub der Nazis – Raubkunst in der Gegenwart*, transl. A. Brunstermann (Frankfurt, 2014); Birgit Schwarz, *Auf Befehl des Führers: Hitler und der NS-Kunstraub* (Stuttgart, 2014); Susan Ronald, *Hitler's Art Thief: Hildebrand Gurlitt, the Nazis, and the Looting of Europe's Treasures* (New York, 2015); Catherine Hickley, *The Munich Art Hoard: Hitler's Dealer and His Secret Legacy* (London, 2015); Meike Hoffmann and Nicola Kuhn, *Hitlers Kunsthändler: Hildebrand Gurlitt 1895–1956* (Munich, 2016); Oliver Meier, Michael Feller and Stefanie Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex. Bern und die Raubkunst* (Zurich, 2017); Maurice Philip Remy, *Der Fall Gurlitt: Die wahre Geschichte über Deutschlands größten Kunstsandal* (Munich, 2017); see also the documentaries Maurice Philip Remy, *Der seltsame Herr Gurlitt* (Arte, 2013); Katja Lüber and Jörg Jung, *Gurlitt: Der Skandal um die NS-Kunst und seine Folgen* (WDR, 2017) and Dominik Graf's feature film *Am Abend aller Tage* (Leitwolf, 2017).
- 4 See the co-organized exhibitions in Bonn (*Dossier Gurlitt: Nazi Art Theft and Its Consequences*) and Bern (*Dossier Gurlitt: 'Degenerate Art' – Confiscated and Sold*): Kunstmuseum Bern and Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (eds), *Bestandsaufnahme Gurlitt* (Munich, 2017); also Melissa Eddy, 'First Public Showing of Monet, Rodin and Maillols from Gurlitt Trove', *New York Times*, 27 June 2017.
- 5 Thomas E. Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne', *Zeit Online*, 30 September 2017.
- 6 Hans-Joachim Müller, 'Der Fall Gurlitt – ein deutsches Trauerspiel', *Die Welt*, 17 January 2016; also Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne'.
- 7 Die Ausstellung 'Entartete Kunst' (The 'Degenerate Art' Exhibition), 19 July to 30 November 1937, was organized by artist and politician Adolf Ziegler. It showed 650 works of art confiscated from German museums.
- 8 Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*. See also in particular Bianca Gaudenzi and Astrid Swenson, 'Looted Art and Restitution in the Twentieth Century – Towards a Global Perspective', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 491–518; Jason Lustig, 'Who Are to Be the Successors of European Jewry? The Restitution of German Jewish Communal and Cultural Property', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 519–45; Jonathan Petropoulos, 'Art Dealer Networks in the Third Reich and in the Postwar Period', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 546–65; Inês Fialho Brandão, "'What's in Lisbon?' Portuguese Sources in Nazi-Era Provenance Research', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 566–87; Sophie Cœuré, 'Cultural Looting and Restitution at the Dawn of the Cold War: The French Recovery Missions in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 588–606; Christine Kim, 'Colonial Plunder and the Failure of Restitution in Postwar

- Korea', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 607–24; Andrew Bellisari, 'The Art of Decolonization: The Battle for Algeria's French Art, 1962–70', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 625–45; Cynthia Scott, 'Renewing the "Special Relationship" and Rethinking the Return of Cultural Property: The Netherlands and Indonesia, 1949–79', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 646–68; Laetitia La Follette, 'Looted Antiquities, Art Museums and Restitution in the United States since 1970', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52: 3 (2017), pp. 669–87. See also Richard Evans's lecture 'Looted Art and Its Restitution', Third Lee Seng Tee Distinguished Lecture, Wolfson College, Cambridge, 7 June 2010: <http://www.richardjevans.com/lectures/looted-art-restitution/>; and his lecture 'Corruption and Plunder in the Third Reich' (n.d.): <http://www.richardjevans.com/lectures/corruption-plunder-third-reich/>.
- 9 Jonathan Petropoulos, *Art as Politics in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996).
 - 10 Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (London, 2000).
 - 11 In addition to the two works by Petropoulos cited above, see Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State*, transl. Jefferson Chase (New York, 2007); Nancy H. Yeide, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Goering Collection* (Dallas, TX, 2009); Ronald, *Hitler's Art Thief*.
 - 12 David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London, 1993).
 - 13 Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Sämtliche Fragmente*, part 1: *Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941*, vols 1–4 (Munich, 1987), hereafter *TJG: SF*, part 1; part 2: *Diktate 1941–1945*, vols 1–15 (Munich, 1993–6).
 - 14 Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, pp. 2ff.
 - 15 See note 1.
 - 16 See also Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne', where he claims that Gurlitt became a 'perpetrator' only as late as 1943, with his active involvement in looting art.
 - 17 Taskforce Schwabinger Kunstfund, Fact Sheet. The Taskforce identified 231 artworks as belonging to the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition and classified 252 artworks as 'belonging mostly to the 'Degenerate Art' confiscation process.
 - 18 See note 7. The Reichskammer der bildenden Künste (Reich Chamber of Fine Arts) was headed by Eugen Hönig between 1933 and 1936, by Adolf Ziegler between 1936 and 1943, and by Wilhelm Kreis from 1943 until 1945.
 - 19 Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 207; see also Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 19 July 1937.
 - 20 Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 206.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, p. 207.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
 - 23 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 5 June 1937; also Peter Longerich, *Goebbels: Biographie* (Munich, 2010), pp. 346ff.; Ralph Georg Reuth, *Goebbels: The Life of Joseph Goebbels, the Mephistophelean Genius of Nazi Propaganda*, transl. Krishna Winston (New York, 1993), pp. 226ff.
 - 24 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 6 and 7 June 1937.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 19 June 1937.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 22 June 1937.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, 12 June 1937; Reuth, *Goebbels*, p. 227.
 - 28 Longerich, *Goebbels*, pp. 347–8.
 - 29 *Ibid.*; also Welch, *The Third Reich*, p. 203.
 - 30 The commission consisted of Wolfgang Willrich, a Nazi artist whose paintings of heroic 'Nordic' men and women were later exhibited at the Great German Art

- Exhibition; Hans Schweitzer; Klaus Graf von Baudissin, an art historian and SS officer who had replaced Ernst Gosebruch as director of the Folkwang Museum in Essen; Otto Kummer, a representative from Bernhard Rust's Ministry of Science, Education and National Culture; and Robert Scholz, Alfred Rosenberg's leading art expert.
- 31 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 30 June 1937; Longerich, *Goebbels*, p. 347; Reuth, *Goebbels*, p. 227.
 - 32 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 1 July 1937.
 - 33 Longerich, *Goebbels*, p. 348.
 - 34 See also Ulf Schmidt, *Medical Films, Ethics and Euthanasia in Nazi Germany: The History of Medical Research and Teaching Films of the Reich Office for Educational Films/Reich Institute for Films in Science and Education, 1933–1945* (Husum, 2002).
 - 35 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 25 and 28 July 1937; 1 August 1937; Longerich, *Goebbels*, p. 349.
 - 36 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 5 November 1937; see also Longerich, *Goebbels*, p. 349, who erroneously claims that the confiscated artworks were shown to Goebbels in November 1938.
 - 37 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 13 November 1938; Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (London, 2002), pp. 151–68.
 - 38 For example, in 1942, the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne received RM 31,370 and a series of paintings from Hildebrandt Gurlitt as a form of compensation for the confiscated artworks: correspondence of Dr Marcus Leifeld, Cologne, with the authors, 4 July 2017; see also Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, pp. 102–6; for recent work on the history of compensating museums affected by the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition, see Johanna Poltermann, 'Die Entschädigung der Museen nach der Beschlagnahme entarteter Kunst 1937' (Master's dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2013); Johanna Poltermann, "'Wiedergutmachung' für deutsche Museen? Die Beschlagnahmen "entarteter" Kunst in den Bayerischen Staatsgemäldesammlungen 1937/38 und deren Entschädigung', in Bernhard Maaz (ed.), *Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Jahresbericht 2016* (Munich, 2017), pp. 136–52.
 - 39 Gesetz über Einziehung von Erzeugnissen entarteter Kunst, 31 May 1938, *Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt 1938*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1938), p. 612; Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 13–15 January 1938; Longerich, *Goebbels*, p. 349. For the make-up of the 'disposal commission', see Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, p. 83; Poltermann, 'Die Entschädigung der Museen', note 41, p. 150.
 - 40 Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, p. 108.
 - 41 Hildebrandt Gurlitt has become the focus of considerable attention among art experts and the public; for some of the recent literature, see Ronald, *Hitler's Art Thief*; Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*; Kunstmuseum Bern and Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (eds), *Bestandsaufnahme Gurlitt*; see also the databases lootedart.com and lostart.de, which contain dozens of newspaper articles, blog posts and bibliographical references about the 'Gurlitt case'.
 - 42 Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933–45 (hereafter lootedart.com), Gurlitt Case: Hildebrandt Gurlitt: Allied Documents, Interrogation and Collection List 1945–50, at www.lootedart.com/QDES4V964951; also Monuments Men Foundation, 'Update on the Cornelius Gurlitt Collection', 2 December 2013: <https://www.monumentsmenfoundation.org/news/update-on-the-cornelius-gurlitt-collection>.

- 43 For the provenance of the drawing *Two Nudes on a Bed* by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, which Hildebrand Gurlitt ‘purchased’ in 1940, see Michael Kimmelman, ‘The Void at the Heart of “Gurlitt: Status Report”’, *New York Times*, 19 November 2017.
- 44 Hildebrand Gurlitt, *Aus dem Käthe Kollwitz-Werk* (Dresden, 1930); Hildebrand Gurlitt, ‘Zu Emil Noldes Aquarellen’, *Die Kunst für alle*, 44 (1928–9), pp. 41–4.
- 45 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement Written by Dr Hildebrand Gurlitt, 8–10 June 1945.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, p. 83.
- 48 Ibid., pp. 67–8.
- 49 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 50 Poltermann, ‘Die Entschädigung der Museen’; Poltermann, ‘“Wiedergutmachung” für deutsche Museen?’; see also Andrea Bambi, ‘“Nicht pinakothekswürdig”: Ernst Buchners Museumspolitik und ihre Folgen: Tauschgeschäfte und Ausstellungen in den Pinakotheken 1933–1945’, in Bernhard Maaz (ed.), *Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Jahresbericht 2016* (Munich, 2017), pp. 126–35; for Buchholz, see also Ingeborg Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis: Von Hannover nach Sibirien. Die tragische Geschichte der Kunstsammlerin Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers und ihrer geraubten Bilder* (Springe, 2015), pp. 321–2.
- 51 Poltermann, ‘“Wiedergutmachung” für deutsche Museen?’, p. 136; Poltermann, ‘Die Entschädigung der Museen’; see also Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York, 1994), pp. 24–5.
- 52 See also Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, pp. 108–9.
- 53 Spiegel Staff, ‘Phantom Collector: The Mystery of the Munich Nazi Art Trove’, *Spiegel Online*, 11 November 2013.
- 54 Ibid.; also Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BAB), R55/21015, Galerien Gurlitt in Berlin und Hamburg. Schriftwechsel, 1938–42. Liste Bestand Niederschönhausen, pp. 26–50.
- 55 BAB, R55/21015, Galerien Gurlitt in Berlin und Hamburg. Schriftwechsel, 1938–42. Liste Bestand Niederschönhausen, pp. 26–50. Gurlitt purchased the following paintings by Kandinsky: *Wunder der Tiefsee* (Inv. No. 1344); *Gebirgslandschaft* (Inv. No. 6998); *3 Klänge* (Inv. No. 10928); *Composition* (Inv. No. 11252); and *Blauer Berg Dresden* (Inv. No. 13679). He also bought the painting by Robert Delaunay: *Saint-Séverin* (Inv. No. 6077).
- 56 See Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste (hereafter DZK), *Kunstfund Gurlitt, Einkaufsbuch Verkaufsbuch (Sales Ledgers) 1937–41* (http://www.lostart.de/Content/041_KunstfundMuenchen/_Buecher/Buch1_download.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=9), Book 2, 1939, p. 6; Book 3, 1939, p. 2.
- 57 Spiegel Staff, ‘Phantom Collector’.
- 58 BAB, R55/21015, Galerien Gurlitt in Berlin und Hamburg. Schriftwechsel, 1938–42. Liste Bestand Niederschönhausen, pp. 26–50; for Fischer’s role in trading in ‘looted art’, see Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, pp. 30, 70, 91.
- 59 Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, pp. 106ff.
- 60 See DZK, *Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers*, Book 2, 1939, pp. 30–1; Book 3, 1939, p. 2; for Gurlitt’s relationship with the Propaganda Ministry, see Ronald, *Hitler’s Art Thief*, p. 209.
- 61 See Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*.
- 62 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.

- 63 Hitler's plans for a Führermuseum – part of a cultural complex in Linz – were never realized.
- 64 Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BAK), B13323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Gurlitt to Posse, 10 December 1940; Wiedemann (on behalf of Posse) to Gurlitt, 12 December 1940; Gurlitt to Posse, 14 and 19 December 1940.
- 65 BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Gurlitt to Posse, 15 January 1941; Gurlitt to Posse, 19 March 1941; Posse to Gurlitt, 21 March 1941; Gurlitt to Posse, 10 September 1941; Gurlitt to Posse, 25 September 1942; also Ronald, *Hitler's Art Thief*, p. 209. For the post-war sale of items from Speer's art collection, see Koldehoff, *Die Bilder sind unter uns*, pp. 14ff.
- 66 BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5; B323/147; B323/98 and B323/99; also Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'.
- 67 Fröhlich (ed.), *TJG: SF*, part 1, vol. 3, 3 and 8 February 1943.
- 68 See, e.g., DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 2, pp. 26–8, and Book 3, p. 2.
- 69 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement; also BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, B323/173, B323/153 and B323/154.
- 70 Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'.
- 71 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 72 See DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 72.
- 73 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 See Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'; see also Petropoulos, *Art as Politics*, pp. 235–6.
- 76 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 BAK, B323/147, Göpel to Voss, 1 July 1943, 'Die Lage des Pariser Kunstmarktes', 5 July 1943; Göpel to Voss, 7 July 1943.
- 79 See DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 70; Site Rose-Valland – Musées Nationaux Récupération, MNR 599: http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/mnrbis_fr; lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 80 See DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 70; see also Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 2, 1942, pp. 74–9. Gurlitt's import/export ledger for the year 1944 suggests that he paid Hermsen RM 825,000; Hermsen, in turn, seems to have paid FF 800,000 to the Demandolx-Dedons family. Alternatively, the French authorities may have erroneously recorded French francs instead of Reichsmark; see Site Rose-Valland – Musées Nationaux Récupération, MNR 599.
- 81 See DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 74.
- 82 BAK, B323/134, Reimer to Gurlitt, 14 April 1944; see also Site Rose-Valland – Musées Nationaux Récupération, MNR 599; also Roland Krischel (Head of Medieval Department, Wallraf-Richartz Museum) to authors, 30 June 2017. Following the purchase of Fouquet's painting by the city of Cologne, the Wallraf-Richartz Museum listed the painting under inventory number 2707. On 7 October 1949, the painting was returned to France as part of the restitution process.
- 83 Statistical data about Gurlitt's purchases compiled from invoices, receipts and correspondence; see BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Beauftragung von Dr. Hildebrand Gurlitt im Rahmen des Sonderauftrags, 1944 (u.a. Paris und Brüssel).
- 84 Ibid.; see also DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 74. After the war, Gurlitt erroneously claimed that these had been Beauvais tapestries. lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.

- 85 BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Gurlitt to Voss, 28 June 1944; also DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Book 3, 1944, p. 70.
- 86 BAK, B323/134, vol. 6, 1940–5, Bericht über die finanzielle Abwicklung von Bilderkäufen für den Sonderauftrag Kunstmuseum Linz durch Herrn Dr. H. Gurlitt, 22 January 1945.
- 87 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 88 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Supporting Documentation Provided by Gurlitt and Related Documentation from the Allies Regarding the Collection (Gurlitt Coll[ection]), 1950–1.
- 89 Gurlitt's sales ledgers contain numerous entries of purchases of art from his family for himself: DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Sales Ledgers, Books 1–3.
- 90 BAK, B323/331, Aussagen und Erklärungen von Händlern und Verkäufern (A–J) 1947–54, Gurlitt to Edgar Breitenbach, 28 February 1949; Gurlitt to Gerda Koester, 5 August 1951.
- 91 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 BAK, B323/331, Aussagen und Erklärungen von Händlern und Verkäufern (A–J) (1938–42) 1947–54, Information by Dr Gurlitt, pp. 254–7.
- 94 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Gurlitt Coll[ection]; also Nick Enoch, 'How U.S. Military Quizzed German Dealer of £1bn Nazi Art Loot Just after the War ... but then Let Him Go (along with the Odd Chagall and Matisse)', *Mail Online*, 9 November 2013.
- 95 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Translation of Sworn Statement.
- 96 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Gurlitt Coll[ection].
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 The Lenbachhaus has confirmed (e-mail, Dr Hoberg to authors, 7 May 2018) that the handwritten note by Paul Klee states the following: '1919.163. / Sumpflgende / Klee / verkauft / Besitzer / Dr. Küppers'. See also Datenbank national wertvolles Kulturgut: Paul Klee, Sumpflgende (1919): http://www.kulturgutschutz-deutschland.de/DE/3_Datenbank/Kulturgut/Bayern/02805_117.html. The information listed in the database ('1919.163 Sumpflgende Klee; 1919/163 gespalten 1_iv') is incorrect. Also see Melissa Müller and Monika Tatzkow, *Verlorene Bilder. Verlorene Leben – Jüdische Sammler und was aus ihren Kunstwerken wurde* (Munich, 2009), pp. 98–114; Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, p. 324.
- 100 Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Maler, Architekt, Typograf, Fotograf* (Dresden, 1967).
- 101 Ulrich Krempel, *El Lissitzky, Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers: Von Hannover nach Moskau* (Göttingen, 2015), pp. 8–9, 120–1; Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, pp. 311–12, 321.
- 102 Beschlagnahmeinventar-Datenbank der 'Forschungsstelle Entartete Kunst': <http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/khi/ressourcen/diathek/beschlagnahmeinventar/index.html>. In total, the Nazi regime confiscated an estimated 141 artworks by Klee. Of these, fifteen artworks are known to have been destroyed, and another fifty-nine artworks have vanished without a trace; for Klee's persecution by the Nazi regime, see Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*, pp. 221–30. The slogan has been cut off in Figure 3.2.
- 103 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, pp. 324–5.
- 104 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, pp. 258ff.; Krempel, *El Lissitzky, Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers*, pp. 174–9.
- 105 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, p. 325.

- 106 Ibid., pp. 325–6.
- 107 Krempel, *El Lissitzky, Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers*, pp. 178–9; Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, pp. 263–4.
- 108 Ibid., p. 326; see also THEMIS Partners, ‘Sumpflgende’: www.themis.partners/highlights/sumpflegende/.
- 109 Wolfgang Kohrt, ‘Ein Gemälde von Paul Klee in München, die Geschichte des Verbannten Jen Lissitzky und die Debatte um geraubte Kunstwerke. Schatten über einem Bild’, *Berliner Zeitung*, 20 January 1999.
- 110 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, p. 326.
- 111 Kohrt, ‘Ein Gemälde von Paul Klee’.
- 112 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, p. 329.
- 113 Kohrt, ‘Ein Gemälde von Paul Klee’.
- 114 Prior, *Sophies Vermächtnis*, pp. 330–1; see also THEMIS Partners, ‘Sumpflgende’.
- 115 Ibid., pp. 330–1.
- 116 Ibid., p. 331.
- 117 Gunnar Schnabel and Monika Tatzkow, *Nazi Looted Art: Handbuch Kunstrestitution weltweit* (Berlin, 2007), p. 289; Commission for Looted Art in Europe (CLAE), Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art: <http://www.lootedartcommission.com/Washington-principles>; also Evans, ‘Looted Art and Its Restitution’.
- 118 CLAE, Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art.
- 119 Catherine Hickley, ‘Nazi-Seized Klee Goes to Court after Munich Rejects Talks’, *Bloomberg Business Week*, 27 March 2012: <https://plone.unige.ch/art-adr/news-actualite/nazi-seized-klee-goes-to-court-after-munich-rejects-talks>.
- 120 Rose-Maria Gropp, ‘Restitutionsstreit: Klees “Sumpflgende”. Schritte in die richtige Richtung’, *FAZ.net*, 6 May 2013; Spiegel Staff, ‘Streit um Klee-Bild beendet’, *Spiegel Online*, 26 July 2017.
- 121 THEMIS Partners, ‘Sumpflgende’.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 The two oils are *Zwei Reiter am Strand* (c.1900; erroneously dated 1901 by the Taskforce, Lost Art ID 477892: <http://www.lostart.de/DE/Fund/477892>) and *Zwei Reiter am Strand* (1901). The painting discussed here is the former. One way of distinguishing them is by the forelegs of the second horse: both can be seen in the former painting. For ease of reference and to avoid confusion, we have consistently referred to both paintings as *Zwei Reiter am Strand*, although other authorities refer to the painting discussed here as *Zwei Reiter am Strand nach links*. See Sotheby’s, ‘Property from a German Private Collection, Max Liebermann, *Zwei Reiter am Strand nach links – Studie (Two Riders on the Beach Turned to the Left – Study)*’, 22 June 2017: <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/impressionist-modern-art-day-sale-117008/lot.369.html>. We are grateful to Sotheby’s for granting us permission to use their high-resolution image of the paintings for this publication.
- 124 Sotheby’s, ‘Property Restituted to the Heirs of David Friedmann, Max Liebermann, *Zwei Reiter am Strand nach links (Two Riders on the Beach to the Left)*’, 24 June 2015: <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/impressionist-modern-art-evening-sale-115006/lot.27.html>; Lost Art ID 477892: <http://www.lostart.de/DE/Fund/477892>.
- 125 DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Schlussbericht Max Liebermann ‘Reiter am Strand’, ‘Zwei Reiter am Strand’: http://www.taskforce-kunstfund.de/fileadmin/_downloads/TFK_2014-07-25_Schlussbericht_Liebermann_Reiter_am_Stand.pdf, pp. 5–10;

- see also Schlesische Kunstsammlungen, 'David Friedmann': <http://www.schlesischesammlungen.eu/Kolekcje/Friedmann-David-1857-1942-Breslau>; draft (?) letter 'Betrifft: Sicherstellung Jüdischen Kunstbesitzes' from Oberregierungsrat Dr Westram to Reichswirtschaftsminister, Breslau, 5 December 1939, in Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu (Wrocław National Archives), Nr. I/9971: <https://www.welt.de/kultur/gallery121776044/Auf-den-Spuren-der-Nazi-Raubkunst.html#cs-zgbd5-6cnpnfu0pfsv48x675-original-jpg.jpg>.
- 126 Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'. See also draft (?) letter 'Betrifft: Sicherstellung Jüdischen Kunstbesitzes'.
- 127 Sotheby's, 'Property Restituted to the Heirs of David Friedmann'.
- 128 Ibid.; see also Lost Art ID 448871 (<http://www.lostart.de/DE/Fund/448871>), Kunstkabinett Dr H. Gurlitt [*sic*], Hamburg, to Provinz Museum, Breslau, 9 June 1941, in Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu (Wrocław National Museum), Gabinet Dokumentów, Schlesisches Museum für bildende Künste Breslau, Veräusserung und Umtausch von Kunstwerken, 1920–44, II/145, p. 154; Johanna Klapproth, 'Tauschbilder. Zur Entschädigung der Museen nach der Beschlagnahme 1937' (Master's dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2013).
- 129 Staatsarchiv Bamberg, Spruchkammer Bamberg Land G 251, Polizei – Kriminalamt, Witness Statement Ingeborg Hertmann, 27 November 1947; also Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'; Ronald, *Hitler's Art Thief*, p. 210, provides a poor and misleading translation of Hertmann's witness statement to the criminal police in Hamburg in 1947.
- 130 lootedart.com, Gurlitt Case: Gurlitt Coll[ection], Collecting Point Wiesbaden, Collection Gurlitt: Hamburg, Inventory Number WIE 1930.
- 131 DZK, Kunstfund Gurlitt, Schlussbericht Max Liebermann, p. 15.
- 132 Boris Pofalla, 'Der Schatz und seine Hüter', *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 9 November 2013: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunst/der-fall-gurlitt/fund-von-muenchen-der-schatz-und-sein-hueter-12656198.html>; Taskforce, Lost Art ID 477892.
- 133 Berner Zeitung Staff, 'Rückgabe von Bild aus Gurlitt-Sammlung steht offenbar bevor', *Berner Zeitung*, 20 March 2015: <https://www.bernerzeitung.ch/kultur/kunst/Rueckgabe-von-Bild-aus-GurlittSammlung-steht-offenbar-bevor/story/23683127>; copied in <http://www.lootedart.com/R5TNSK806211>; Doreen Carvajal, 'Painting Recovered from Gurlitt Trove to Be Auctioned in London', *New York Times*, 22 May 2015; Spiegel Staff, 'Phantom Collector'.
- 134 Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*.
- 135 Sotheby's, 'Property from a Private Collection, Max Liebermann, *German, Zwei Reiter am Strand nach links (Two Riders on a Beach)*', 3 June 2009: <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2009/19th-century-european-paintings-including-german-austrian-central-european-paintings-the-orientalist-sale-spanish-painting-and-the-scandinavian-sale-l09661/lot.14.html>.
- 136 Sotheby's, 'Property Restituted to the Heirs of David Friedmann'; Stephanie Pieper, 'Millionenerlös für Bild aus Gurlitt-Schatz', *Tagesschau*, 25 June 2015.
- 137 Sotheby's, 'Property from a German Private Collection'.
- 138 Eddy, 'First Public Showing'.
- 139 See, for instance, Getty Research Institute, German Sales Catalogs, 1930–1945: Art Works, Art Markets, and Cultural Policy: German Sales Phase II: 1901–1929: http://www.getty.edu/research/scholars/research_projects/index.html#germansales.

- 140 Ibid.; Kate Connolly, 'German and Swiss Galleries to Display Gurlitt's Nazi-Era Treasure Trove', *Guardian*, 5 April 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/05/german-and-swiss-art-galleries-display-cornelius-gurlitt-nazi-art>.
- 141 See also Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, p. 9, who refers to a 'clandestine postwar network of former Nazi art experts'; and Petropoulos, 'Art Dealer Networks in the Third Reich and in the Postwar Period', in which he refers to a series of 'overlapping networks'.
- 142 Thomas Buomberger, 'Ein Risiko für den Ruf der Schweiz', *Beobachter*, 30 March 2015.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 Hans-Peter Riegel, 'Kunstmarkt ist ein Tummelplatz für Geldwäscher', *Die Welt*, 29 October 2014: <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article133765120/Kunstmarkt-ist-ein-Tummelplatz-fuer-Geldwaescher.html>; Buomberger, 'Ein Risiko für den Ruf der Schweiz'.
- 145 For the role of secrecy within the art world, see Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain*, pp. 63ff.
- 146 Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*; Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne'; Georg Leyrer, 'Kunstfund: Alliierte hatten nach Krieg Werke beschlagnahmt', *Der Kurier*, 6 November 2013. Also in November 2013, the Austrian art expert and Deputy Director of the Belvedere in Vienna, Alfred Weidinger, commented that the 'Gurlitt case' was hardly surprising and that whole affair had been blown out of proportion: 'That this [Gurlitt] collection existed was no secret. In fact, every significant art dealer in Southern Germany was aware of its existence – and even of its scale': Nikolai B. Forstbauer, 'Sammlung Gurlitt in Bern und Bonn: Spektakel war gestern', *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 1 November 2017: <https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.sammlung-gurlitt-in-bern-und-bonn-spektakel-war-gestern.93f6e7da-853a-488a-a90c-2d2f145f9802.html>.
- 147 Meier, Feller and Christ, *Der Gurlitt-Komplex*; Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne'.
- 148 Koldehoff, *Die Bilder sind unter uns*, p. 18.
- 149 lootedart.com, 'International Research Portal for Records Related to Nazi-Era Cultural Property', 9 May 2013: www.lootedart.com/OTR6DU975691.
- 150 See, e.g., Gregor Neil, 'Daimler-Benz, Forced Labor and Compensation', *Dimensions*, 13: 2 (1999), pp. 25–30; Wilfried Reininghaus and Norbert Reimann (eds), *Zwangsarbeit in Deutschland 1939–1945: Archiv- und Sammlungsgut, Topographie und Erschließungsstrategien* (Bielefeld, 2001); Andreas Frewer and Günther Siedbürger (eds), *Medizin und Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus. Einsatz und Behandlung von 'Ausländern' im Gesundheitswesen* (Frankfurt and New York, 2004); Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York, 2006).
- 151 Matt Schudel, 'Cornelius Gurlitt, Hoarder of Valuable Art Collection, Dies', *Washington Post*, 6 May 2014; Spiegel Staff, 'Monet-Gemälde in Gurlitts Koffer entdeckt', *Spiegel Online*, 5 September 2014.
- 152 Schmidt, 'Schuld und Sühne'.

Part Two

The Second World War

Introduction

Mark Connelly, Jo Fox, Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt

The bibliography relating to propaganda and the Second World War is immense and has a long history. Almost as soon as the war ended, journalists and academics began discussion on the nature of the propaganda output of the combatant states, its diversity, quality and impact. One of the first into print was Admiral Sir George Pirie Thomson in 1947 with his *Blue Pencil Admiral: The Inside Story of the Press Censorship*.¹ A year later appeared the first English-language editions of Goebbels's diaries translated by Louis P. Lochner, a US journalist.² As a selection from the diaries, the publication was by no means aimed at understanding Goebbels's role solely as propaganda minister, but it nonetheless provided insights into his thinking and sentiments. Journalists proved particularly keen to move from news disseminators to historians in the years immediately after the war, as many military correspondents reflected on their war experiences. However, these works tended to be general overviews of particular battles or campaigns rather than analyses of the way they gathered and submitted their copy and the process behind its subsequent appearance in print.³

With most of the state archives closed until the 1970s, the interpretation provided by personal accounts dominated the field. Thus, by the late 1970s, the groundwork on mechanisms had been laid, reflected in such works as Ian McLaine's *Ministry of Morale* (1979), a book which is fascinating for having been written as the relevant archives were being opened up to the wider public.⁴ For current readers, its lack of footnotes, and yet clear knowledge of the official sources, makes it seem like a hybrid form of official and academic history. Occasionally, this took the form of seemingly overarching accounts written from a position of perspective and distance when they were, in fact, driven by personal experience. For example, Michael Balfour's *Propaganda in War 1939–1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* is a fascinating comparative study of British and German approaches which was informed throughout by his own direct experience in the General Division of the Ministry of Information (MOI) during the conflict.⁵ Published in 1979, the same year as McLaine's work, Balfour's dense, highly structured account systematically explored a huge range of propaganda campaigns and responses to specific themes such as British bombing and reactions to the capitulation of Nazi forces at Stalingrad. Although somewhat uneven in nature due to the profusion of vignettes, Balfour's work nonetheless made a hugely

important contribution to overall understandings of the workings of propaganda in the Second World War.

As can be readily understood, these early histories also tended to be macro-scale overviews of the governmental propaganda machines and were often far more about policy, mechanisms and personnel than analyses of the actual output. These pioneering studies therefore provided the essential skeleton for later more detailed work on particular aspects of propaganda. They also ensured that for a very long time, and arguably this is still the case, Second World War propaganda has been conceived of as a state-driven exercise through formal state agencies and structures.

However, nuance has been brought to the field by studies not solely focussed on propaganda but engaging with it as part of a wider argument. Ian Kershaw's work on Nazi Germany has stressed the idea that Hitler's officials sought to interpret his sometimes vague ideas and at the same time curry favour by being seen as ideologically sound Nazis. This created internal competition between officials and ministries leading to more and more radical plans in a process labelled 'working towards the Führer'.⁶ Similarly, Richard Overy's work on the bombing of Germany has shown that external pressure from Allied military action may have made people more likely to accept or conform to the propaganda ideals disseminated by the government.⁷ In many ways, these interpretations build upon Angus Calder's pioneering work, *The Myth of the Blitz*, in which he blurred deliberately the idea that the state instructed people what to do and think. Instead, Calder argued that the relationship between individual and state was a much more fluid and elastic one and had far more to do with individual agency accepting and complying, or possibly rejecting, and yet still engaging with the message.⁸

With the maturing of Second World War propaganda studies, the way was opened for more detailed studies of particular media forms and outputs. By contrast, as these studies have evolved, explorations of Second World War propaganda in which the newspaper forms the main focus of attention have declined, which makes it very different from explorations of Great War propaganda and public discourse. Instead, cinema has become an extremely important topic. David Welch pioneered close analysis of Nazi cinematic propaganda in his 1985 work, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945*.⁹ Analysing both production organizations and the films themselves, this represented a major step forward in foregrounding the propaganda output itself. In 1998, James Chapman took a similar approach in his *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939–1945*.¹⁰ As the title makes clear, Chapman wanted to explore the relationship between the state and the cinema industry in its attempt to respond to a national demand. Films are analysed for their content and style and therefore open up the question of impact and audience response. In between Welch and Chapman, Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards built upon their pioneering histories of British cinema with their *Britain Can Take It: Cinema and Society in the Second World War* (1986).¹¹ Aldgate and Richards were concerned to answer questions about what the films said about the British people's experience of the 'People's War' set within the wider framework of the concerns of the MOI.

Hollywood's contribution to the United States' war effort was also opened up in the 1980s. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black produced a detailed insight into

the film policy of the Office of War Information and explored many films along the way in their *Hollywood Goes to War* (1987).¹² Like those of Aldgate and Richards and of Chapman, their study explored the macro-workings of the state propaganda mechanisms, the interactions with the commercial cinema industry and the nature of the cinematic output. With studies of cinematic propaganda bursting into vigorous life, the radio, arguably the key communications media of the Second World War, has not gained similar attention. However, there are notable exceptions. Sian Nicholas's thorough study of the BBC's wartime operation, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45* (1996), revealed much about its delicate relationship with the government, being nominally independent but deeply related to the state.¹³ The inability to block radio waves made it a valuable way to influence the enemy, as Martin Doherty explored in his *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (2000).¹⁴ Another theme of Nazi broadcasting to Britain, and to occupied nations, was explored in Horst Bergmeier's 1997 monograph *Hitler's Airwaves: Jazz, Swing, and Nazi Radio Propaganda*.¹⁵ Most recently, Will J. Studdert has added to our knowledge of the use of music as propaganda in his comparative study *The Jazz War: Radio, Nazism and the Struggle for the Airwaves in World War II* (2017).¹⁶ It complements Frank Rybicki's exploration of the way the Nazis attempted to utilize radio for both domestic and foreign consumption in his *Rhetorical Dimensions of Radio Propaganda in Nazi Germany 1939–1945* (2014).¹⁷ For Rybicki, the removal of the visual forced the imagination to the fore and created a more dynamic relationship between audience and producer.

Words and images come together in the propaganda posters of the conflict. Given the ubiquity of posters as a medium of information during the Second World War, it took a remarkably long time for them to become the focus of critical attention. Indeed, it can be argued that in Britain it took until Joseph Darracott and Belinda Loftus of the Imperial War Museum produced their booklet, *Second World War Posters* (1972), that they were finally given a status in their own right.¹⁸ Rebecca (Bex) Lewis's 2004 PhD thesis, 'The Planning, Design and Reception of British Home Front Propaganda Posters of the Second World War', explored a series of themes and campaigns in detail but has not yet been published.¹⁹ Serious study of posters took an equally long time to appear in the United States and continental Europe. The delay was probably driven by the gradual development of research methodologies and approaches. As with cinema, many historians, and others interested in Second World War propaganda, needed time to engage with the techniques of art history and film studies and adapt and deploy them to their own work.

By the same token, it took art historians some time to turn to the official war art programmes of the Second World War. Until relatively recently, the war art of the First World War has dominated interest largely because its quantity, quality and diversity monopolized attention. Similarly to the development of studies on cinematic propaganda, those behind the studies of war art tend to be driven either by the aesthetics and the place the output has within the media or genre, with the wider contexts given second place, or vice versa, depending upon the precise background of the author. However, unlike in studies of cinema, the vast majority of the literature is

produced by art historians who specialize in this area, rather than historians interested in propaganda and persuasion.²⁰ This is an issue addressed in Part One of this particular volume in the contribution of Schmidt and Schmidt-Mai, where a historian of propaganda and an art historian have collaborated in a piece of research likely to stimulate new engagement and fruitful debate in this field.

The chapters which make up this part reveal a range of preoccupations, leading themes and questions, reflecting the maturing of Second World War propaganda studies. Richard Taylor and James Chapman's chapters reveal something of the auteur approach, exploring as they do how two great artists and technicians – the poet Dylan Thomas and the filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock – had to balance their individual interests and desire for artistic freedom within the structures of government propaganda agencies and policies. A different approach is taken by Jeffrey Richards, who reveals the truth of Siegfried Sassoon's claim that 'in remembering we forget much' through his analysis of films that dealt with darker or controversial issues during the war but have failed to make it through to the accepted canon of wartime 'greats'. Marina Petrakis picks up on a theme of great interest during the Cold War, which has been revitalized in our age of Putin and post-truth, namely, the covert propaganda campaign designed to encourage some, while misleading and demoralizing others. This element also infuses Gaynor Johnson's contribution. Her study of the British Foreign Office's reaction to the Katyn massacre explores the impact of competing pressures and agendas, and the extent to which expediency demands a highly controlled interpretation of a particular event. All of these contributions reveal the intensity of the challenges thrown down by the second, great total war of the twentieth century and at the same time reveal much about the maturing field of propaganda history and studies.

Notes

- 1 George P. Thomson, *Blue Pencil Admiral: The Inside Story of the Press Censorship* (London, 1946).
- 2 Louis P. Lochner (transl. and ed.), *The Goebbels Diaries* (London, 1948).
- 3 For examples see Fred Majdalany, *The Monastery* (London, 1946); Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London, 1952).
- 4 Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London, 1979).
- 5 Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War, 1939–1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London, 1979).
- 6 See Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London, 1998); *Hitler, 1936–1945: Nemesis* (London, 2000).
- 7 Richard Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe, 1939–1945* (London, 2013).
- 8 Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1991).
- 9 David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945* (Oxford, 1985).
- 10 James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939–1945* (London, 1998).
- 11 Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: Cinema and Society in the Second World War* (Oxford, 1986).

- 12 Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (London, 1987).
- 13 Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939–45* (Manchester, 1996).
- 14 M. A. Doherty, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 2000).
- 15 Horst Bergmeier, *Hitler's Airwaves: Jazz, Swing, and Nazi Radio Propaganda* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1997).
- 16 Will J. Studdert, *The Jazz War: Radio, Nazism and the Struggle for the Airwaves in World War II* (London, 2017).
- 17 Frank Rybicki, *Rhetorical Dimensions of Radio Propaganda in Nazi Germany 1939–1945* (Saarbrücken, 2014); Will J. Studdert, ‘“We’ve Got a Gig in Poland!”: Britain and Jazz in World War II’, *Jazz Research Journal*, 7 (2013), pp. 79–111.
- 18 Joseph Darracott and Belinda Loftus, *Second World War Posters* (London, 1972).
- 19 Rebecca Lewis, ‘The Planning, Design and Reception of British Home Front Propaganda Posters of the Second World War’ (PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2004).
- 20 For examples see Monica Bohm-Duchen, *Art and the Second World War* (London, 2013); Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War* (London, 1994); Laura Brandon, *Art or Memorial? The Forgotten Story of Canada's War Art* (Calgary, 2006).

‘False hopes and airy visions’? Dylan Thomas and British film propaganda in the Second World War

Richard Taylor

Swansea’s ‘golden boy’, Dylan Thomas (1914–1953), is best known for his poetry, his short stories, his radio play *Under Milk Wood* and his overgenerous, and eventually fatal, consumption of alcohol, but his contribution as a scriptwriter for British propaganda films in the Second World War has been generally overlooked and largely undervalued. It is the purpose of this chapter to rescue this part of his career from its undeserved relative obscurity (and it seems appropriate to dedicate the essay to the one former student who has made a successful academic career in the study of propaganda, Emeritus Professor David Welch).

Dylan Thomas was not far short of his 25th birthday when war broke out in September 1939. In the course of that quarter-century, he had left his home town in 1934 to develop his bohemian lifestyle in London, met (1936) and married (1937) Caitlin Macnamara, fathered a son (1939) and moved, at least temporarily, to the Carmarthenshire town of Laugharne (1938). As far as the wider world was concerned, he was known for his first collections of poetry (*18 Poems*, 1934; *Twenty-Five Poems*, 1936; and *The Map of Love*, 1939, which also included some short stories) and his first radio broadcast (*Life and the Modern Poet*, 1937).

His only published writing on film by this time was a very short article for his school magazine in 1930:

When English producers turned back to their trade in 1919 they found that America had got complete hold over the world and dominated every market. It was not until two or three years ago that England woke up to the fact that English producers were bringing forth many fine films. Up to then the public had been so used to seeing thousands of American pictures and occasional and almost invariably bad English ones that they did not get to know that there were some really intelligent producers at work in England.¹

He began his concluding paragraph with a sentiment that the Soviet avant-garde, and particularly Sergei Eisenstein, would have agreed with:

Synchronised films up to 1930 have been distinctly disappointing. Crudity was expected, but both American and English producers have taken sound for granted, and have been over-confident of themselves. The older and established producers, especially, have merely added it to their screen-properties, without realising that it is something new which cannot be tackled by any old methods but which requires a special method of approach. Even film-pioneers must start at the beginning of sound-film production, and learn what there is to be learnt.²

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that Thomas was as avid a filmgoer as any teenager at the time, but the kind of films he would have been exposed to in the local cinemas in Swansea would have been very much those described in his schoolboy piece. In his quasi-autobiographical radio feature *Return Journey*, broadcast in June 1947 and presaging the style of *Under Milk Wood*, the First Voice remarks of Swansea's Uplands district, where Thomas grew up: 'Here was once the flea-pit picture-house where he whooped for the scalping Indians ... and banged for the rustlers' guns.'³ But there is also some evidence to suggest that the range of foreign programming for local audiences might well have been rather broader than later generations have come to expect.⁴ In a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, written in the form of a comic playlet *Spasma and Salnady* (a title derived from loose anagrams of the two correspondents' names), Salnady (i.e. Dylan) remarked,

Among the few films I have enjoyed are: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Atlantic/Atlantik*, *Student of Prague*, *Edge of the World*, *Vaudeville*, *Waxworks*, *The Street*, *M* and *The Blue Angel* (all German); *Sous les toits de Paris*; *Potemkin* (Russian).⁵

This certainly displayed a working knowledge of European films of the period, which told their story primarily through images rather than words. Such, as so many film historians have noted, were the advantages of silent cinema.

Thomas's interest in film continued while he lived in London. Indeed his first biographer Constantine Fitzgibbon remarked,

All his life Dylan was a passionate film fan. He would give himself up completely to whatever film he was seeing, would not only laugh aloud at the funny ones but would cry without shame when the actors demanded this of him. He had a fan's hero-worship for the stars, which persisted even when he was famous himself, and his pride and delight at being invited to Charles Chaplin's home was enormous and genuine... I think that he derived more sheer pleasure from being treated as an equal by Charlie Chaplin than he would have done had he been so treated by T. S. Eliot or W. B. Yeats. The world of poets was the world he knew: that other world was the infinitely more attractive world of dreams.⁶

That 'infinitely more attractive world of dreams' was to appear even more infinitely attractive when war broke out in Europe in September 1939. Dylan Thomas was by no means alone among intellectuals in preferring the world of dreams to the real world of war. He wrote in a letter to his friend, the critic and screenwriter John Davenport,

on 14 September 1939, 'I am trying to get a job before conscription, because my one-and-only body I will not give ... all I want to do is write poems ... Soon there will not be a serious paper paying inadequately for serious stories and poems.'⁷ Augustus John, a fellow Welshman, suggested writing to Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, Surveyor of the King's Pictures and, somewhat improbably perhaps, also Director of the Film Division at the Ministry of Information (MOI), to ask if there were any possibility of a 'reserved job' at the ministry, particularly in the Film Division.⁸ This direct approach failed, so the launch of Thomas's scriptwriting career depended on a more indirect series of encounters that led him to Donald Taylor, whose company, Strand Films, was, like the Crown Film Unit, centrally involved in the making of documentary films for the MOI and for that matter also employed Graham Greene as a scriptwriter.⁹

Writing film scripts also suited Thomas because, although his employer and therefore his source of a reasonably regular income were in London, he could spend much of his time doing the actual writing with his young family in Wales. Thomas made very clear in his correspondence that he did not like London at all. In a letter to the actress Ruth Wynn Owen provisionally dated May 1942 he wrote, 'I wish you were in London, where even the sun's grey and God how I hate it.'¹⁰ In a letter to his wife Caitlin the following year, he was even more explicit about his disaffections:

And I cannot come down this weekend. I have to work all day Sunday. I am working, for the first time since I sold my immortal soul, very very hard, doing three months' work in a week. I hate film studios. I hate film workers. I hate films. There is nothing but glibly naive insincerity in this huge tinroofed box of tricks. I do not care a bugger about the Problems of Wartime Transport.¹¹

Taylor's scriptwriters sometimes worked individually but more often as a team, as did the company as a whole. Many of the films had the same director (John Eldridge or Alan Osbiston), cameraman (Jo Jago), composer (William Alwyn) and conductor (Muir Mathieson). Unfortunately, the files of Strand Films have been destroyed, making it difficult to ascertain precisely what Thomas's contribution to team-scripted projects was. In this essay, I shall therefore focus primarily on films that are clearly written by Thomas: the eight which are publicly available on DVD from the official collection of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London,¹² and three others.¹³ Although these films vary in length, it is worth pointing out that the average lasted 12.75 minutes, so we are examining here short documentaries rather than feature-length films. In January 1942, Thomas wrote to John Summerfield, novelist and fellow documentary scriptwriter, 'I'm still helping to produce ... the series of priggish, facetious shorts extolling the virtues of sad girls in unfitting uniforms and the vices of happy thinking, moving and x-ing – the word I must use.'¹⁴ (One instance of the 'sad girls in unfitting uniforms' may well have been *Balloon Site 568*, discussed later.)

These documentary films played a specific part in wartime propaganda under Kenneth Clark and his successor Jack Beddington:¹⁵ for them, documentary film helped to boost and maintain morale through a focus on various aspects of the realities of the war effort and the post-war settlement that justified and motivated that effort,

while feature films provided much-needed escapism from those realities.¹⁶ This suited Thomas, as it suited those who had previously been active in the British documentary film movement.

Some scripts were never completed, some scripts were completed but the films never made, some scripts were completed but the films based on them were not and Fitzgibbon recalls one film that was completed but never released because the MOI was 'scandalised by its eccentricity'.¹⁷ This was *Is Your Ernie Really Necessary?* (1943), a parody of the wartime slogan 'Is your journey really necessary?', in which all the parts were played by a single actor. The first successful film listed by Fitzgibbon was *The Conquest of a Germ*, released in February 1942. However, the most authoritative and detailed study of Thomas's scripts by John Ackerman lists this as his ninth work, released in 1943.¹⁸ I shall take his list as definitive, or as near definitive as we have. Ackerman lists twenty-three scripts, from *This Is Colour*, made for Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in 1942, to *Rebecca's Daughters*, written in 1948 but not actually made until 1992. Only fourteen of those scripts were written during wartime and not all of those could necessarily be considered 'war films', *This Is Colour* being one. So we are left with about a dozen 'war films': eight of those are on the IWM DVD; the following four are not: *Young Farmers* (1942), *The Unconquerable People* (1944), *Our Country* (1944) and *Fuel for Battle* (1944).

The first of these 'war films', as far as we can see, was *New Towns for Old*, six minutes long and directed by John Eldridge in 1942 for Strand Films from a script by Thomas. It was set in Sheffield, thinly disguised as Smokedale; a local councillor (trilby, tweed jacket, pipe and Yorkshire accent) is proudly showing a visitor, effectively the 'man from the ministry' (bowler, greatcoat and received pronunciation), what the city council has achieved in the twenty years since the Great War to clear slums and implicitly to build the 'homes fit for heroes' that were promised during that war to the returning soldiers and their families. The new housing, emancipated from the shadow of the steel plants and factories, is light, airy, spacious, surrounded by a green belt and provides a better environment for the younger generation to grow up in. It is the creation of 'the new council', presumably Labour, elected by a small majority after the Great War, and this particular 'new town for old' clearly also provides the inspiration for the post-war settlement to come. At the end of the film, in response to the visitor's question 'Who's going to make these plans come true?', the councillor turns to the audience and points at them with his pipe, rather as Kitchener pointed from the Great War recruitment poster: 'They are! You are! You're 'tonly folk that can make these plans come true. Not only plans for this town. But for every town. For *your* town. Remember! It's *your* town!'¹⁹

Thus an essential element of post-war welfare provision for the masses was already being promoted on film in 1942, the year the Beveridge Report was published, although Winston Churchill remained opposed to any promise of post-war improvements. As late as 12 January 1943, he argued,

Ministers should, in my view, be careful not to raise false hopes as was done last time by speeches about 'Homes for heroes, etc.'. The broad masses of the people face the hardships of life undaunted but they are liable to get very angry if they

feel they have been gulled or cheated ... It is for this reason of not wishing to deceive the people by false hopes and airy visions of Utopia and Eldorado that I have refrained so far from making promises about the future.²⁰

However, a rising feeling of suspicion and disquiet had been identified in a Home Intelligence report of May 1942:

There is growing evidence of a feeling among certain sections of the public that 'everything is not fair and equal and that therefore our sacrifices are not worthwhile'. In particular there is some belief that the rich are less hit by rationing than 'ordinary people'.²¹

The matter was resolved at a meeting of Home Front Ministers in March 1943, who felt 'that on various post-war topics extreme views seem to be catching the public imagination; and it was thought to be high time that the balance should be redressed by gaining a hearing for more moderate and realist views'.²²

So, the efforts of the MOI, Strand Films and Dylan Thomas were already somewhat ahead of their time and raised for a number of diehards the spectre of some kind of endorsement of socialism. This spectre had, after all, haunted the British establishment throughout the inter-war period. The Tory MP Bob Boothby famously remarked, 'The MOI did not win the war, but it certainly won the election for Labour'.²³

The *Documentary News Letter*, which provides us with a consistent contemporary view of these films, praised the propaganda value of *New Towns for Old* as 'very good for the Home Front, particularly since the film makes it clear that plans for the future are bound up with the war effort which we are all engaged in here and now'.²⁴

The next film was *Balloon Site 568*, slightly longer at just over eight minutes, directed by Ivan Moffat and co-scripted by Moffat and Thomas. It was a straightforward, and perhaps rather predictable, recruitment film for the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), depicting four women from different walks of life, and with somewhat unreliable accents, during their training and integration as balloon operators so that men could be released for other, implicitly more masculine, duties. This represents the social cohesion of the prospective post-war settlement. The film relies on staged interviews in the style of Humphrey Jennings's documentaries to explain the context and it is in these that the unreliability of the accents becomes obvious. The film was seen as moving on from *Squadron 992*, made during the 'phoney war' and now considered dated. The *Documentary News Letter* observed,

A job, which the film admits must at times be hard, even depressing, is shown to be an inviting one. Burdensome military discipline is not to be seen – but the girls drop their sing-song in the recreation hut quickly enough when an operational order comes through. The films should bring recruits to the Service ... We have moved a little since *Squadron 992* so pleasantly mirrored our then conception of total war.²⁵

The following film, *CEMA*, also released in 1942 and, at seventeen minutes, just over twice as long, was devoted to the activities of CEMA, the Council for the Encouragement

of Music and the Arts, chaired at the time by the economist John Maynard Keynes, and the forerunner of the Arts Council. To emphasize its educational purpose, the film was introduced by R. A. Butler, the then president of the Board of Education, who expresses CEMA's remit as 'to bring the best to as many people as possible to cheer them on to better times'. It was, rather extraordinarily for such a short film, co-directed by five men, including Dylan Thomas and Alan Osbiston. Examples of 'the best' include a performance by a harp trio of Ralph Vaughan Williams's arrangement of 'Greensleeves' in an idyllic English parish church, surrounded by blossoming fruit trees in spring, the time of renewal and hope. This is followed by rehearsals for a performance by the Old Vic Company of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in a provincial industrial town. The one member of the rehearsal audience, the theatre cleaner, is riveted by the story that unfolds on stage, and the full house for the performance proper is completely engrossed.

The film cuts to an exhibition, in what appears to be a factory, of work by living artists 'just to let you and me have a chance of seeing what kind of pictures are being painted in England [*sic*] today at war!'. The dialogue between a man named in the script as Newton and a worker (3rd Man) is significant:

Newton: What do you think of this one?

3rd Man: 'S' not too bad, but what's the point of it all these 'ere art? Pretty pictures don't win anything. Not now anyway.

Newton: We all know what we're fighting against, but don't you think we sometimes forget what we're fighting for?

3rd Man: Not pretty pictures!

Newton: Yes, but they're part of it. We've got to fight because, if we didn't, we wouldn't be free. Free to work, to play, to listen, to look at what we want to.²⁶

The climax of *CEMA* is a performance in an armaments factory canteen of the rousing first movement of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no. 1, which captivates the workforce and, of course, represents Britain's then wartime ally, the Soviet Union. As the music concludes, we see tanks rolling off the production line, emphasizing the close connection between the arts, civilian morale and the war effort on the Home Front.

Young Farmers (twelve minutes, 1942), which I have not seen, showed, according to the synopsis, the efforts of a school in County Durham to help children to appreciate the importance of the land and of work on it.²⁷ The film concludes with this clear propaganda message:

We believe that everyone, wherever they are, whatever they are, should learn to love the land. The children, boys and girls of today, [are] our future citizens and farmers. We can help them realise, as this war has already shown, what a great and worthy future lies in the land. We must help them to learn to care for, value, and respect it. The land must never become spoiled, neglected, or forgotten again.²⁸

It is, of course, significant that the MOI tried to cover all parts of the UK in its documentary films and to reflect regional and national difference through variations

in both language – accent, intonation and usage – and landscape and architecture. So, *Young Farmers* was set in the north-east of England while the film that followed it focussed on Dylan Thomas's homeland, Wales.

Wales – Green Mountain, Black Mountain, twelve minutes long and again directed by John Eldridge in 1942, is important not only because it depicted recent and contemporary life in Wales as part of the MOI's 'Pattern of Britain' series but also because it marked a significant step in the development of Thomas's own scriptwriting style. Those who are familiar with what was later to become the radio play *Under Milk Wood* will recognize elements of the commentary in the *Wales* film.²⁹ The film, unusually, has two narrators, William Griffiths and David Raymond, and, even more unusually, was also made in a Welsh-language version (which I have not seen, if indeed it still exists). The commentary opens with what by today's standards would be regarded as an exaggerated, almost 'cod' Welsh accent, relishing the rolled consonants like 'r' and 'll'.³⁰ (But then the accepted 'received pronunciation' of English on stage, radio and screen was equally exaggerated and 'cod' by today's standards!)

The synopsis underlines the film's commitment to what Churchill, as cited above, was to call 'false hopes and airy visions of Utopia and Eldorado':

Wales is a country of great contrast. On the green hills are the farms; in the valleys the black mining villages. Before the war, in many parts of Wales, young men waited in vain for work; now all who can are working hard digging coal out of the rich mountains, rearing sheep on mountain slopes which new-sown grasses have made good pasture again. In town and village, in the mines, foundries and shipyards and on the farms, life throbs with work for all. Never again must there be young men with no work in derelict towns.³¹

The film's title and the opening words of the commentary spell out the structure of the content focussed on oppositions that underlie the notion that 'Wales is a mountain of strength'.³² Morning mist over Snowdonia recalls past struggles between Wales and England and contrasts with the 'yellower and greyer' mist over the industrialized valleys characterizing 'the terrible near war of England and Wales and her brothers and sisters all over the earth, against the men who would murder man'.³³ The people are driven forward by their memories of the sufferings of the recent past and by their hopes for a better future:

Remember the procession of the old-young men.

It shall not happen again.

It must not happen again . . .

Britain at war has asked these once-denied, helpless and hopeless men for all their strength and skill at the coal seam and the dockside, the foundry and the factory. The world shall know their answer, and the world shall never deny them again.³⁴

Thomas's script combines the realist tradition of the British documentary film movement with the romanticism of much of his poetry.

Just as the films discussed so far showed different social classes within the UK pulling together as part of the war effort, so the next film *The Battle for Freedom* (fifteen minutes, 1942, directed by Alan Osbiston) depicted the nations of the British Empire and Commonwealth pulling together with the UK and its allies (Russia, the United States and China) in the common struggle against Germany and Japan. Thomas's script for this film was read by Kent Stevenson, a BBC war correspondent, in the declamatory style so typical of newsreels of the time.³⁵ The film contrasts the brutal slavery of the enemy with the enlightened trusteeship of the British and their allies. It steers a careful line between the old idea of Empire and the emerging concept of the Commonwealth, where the old 'white' Dominions (Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand) were benevolently preparing the more 'backward' parts of Empire (Africa, Malaya and the Indian subcontinent) so that 'they [might] achieve full independence and self-government'.³⁶ The barbarism and greed of the Axis powers – Germany and Japan, and here Italy is mentioned too – are contrasted with the civilizing mission of the self-styled United Nations. Canada receives special mention as a place where refugees from occupied Europe have found particular refuge and been welcomed and integrated into the social fabric and where airmen from all over the Commonwealth are trained to fight in the war in Europe and the Far East. 'All the free peoples of the world hear Canada's fighting voice!'³⁷ The commentary ends with a rousing call to arms:

Liberty against butchery, against the German locust and the mechanised plague of Japanese annihilation.

In England now, the free men of the Empire are preparing to attack; preparing with all their will and skill and strength for the attack which must come.³⁸

The prospect was now being dangled before the audience of a better post-war world on a global, as well as a national, level.

The Battle for Freedom was followed by what is probably the best-known war film associated with Dylan Thomas, *These Are the Men* (fifteen minutes, 1943), devised and compiled by Osbiston and Thomas and using excerpts from Leni Riefenstahl's 'documentary' of the 1934 Nazi Party Rally in Nuremberg, *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935), to parody the Nazi leadership. A similar technique had been used in *Germany Calling*, a two-minute film released through the newsreels in 1941 in which newsreel footage of the Nazi leaders was altered to match the music of the 'Lambeth Walk' to rather greater comic effect than in *These Are the Men*.³⁹ The opening titles of this latter film are played out against external shots of the Zeppelinfeld to the accompaniment of the SA marching song. The film proper begins with footage of ordinary people, universalized images of labour. The poetic commentary opens,

Who are we? We are the makers, the workers, the bakers,
Making and baking bread all over the earth in every town and village.

Shots of the bakers give way to those of workers and then to scenes of war:

We are the makers, the workers, the wounded, the dying, the dead,

The blind, the frostbitten, the burned, the legless, the mad . . .
Who sent us to kill, to be killed, to lose what we love?
Widowed our women, unfathered our sons, broke the hearts of our homes?
Who dragged us out, out of our beds and houses and workshops
Into a battle-yard of spilt blood and split bones?
Who set us at the throats of our comrades?
Who is to blame?
What men set man against man?
Shout, shout, shout out their name!

This is precisely what the rest of the film does in a commentary that bears the unmistakable stylistic imprint of Dylan Thomas.

The remainder, and bulk, of the film uses footage from the Riefenstahl film with a new soundtrack that lampoons the grandiose claims of Hitler, Goebbels, Göring, Streicher and Hess by imposing a would-be English translation that substitutes negative assertions for the bombast of the Nazis. So, when the crowd screams 'Heil!', it appears to be endorsing the British propaganda assertions, rather than the Nazi claims, and this underlines the notion that the common people have been led astray by their leaders: 'These are the men – these are to blame.'⁴⁰ After Rudolf Hess has finished speaking, the camera shows the young men who have been led astray: 'You obeyed your leader's word. You must suffer his reward. And the betrayers are betrayed, and the promises of victory turn stale and sour under African sun and Russian snow.'⁴¹ We see frozen corpses in the snow and then the mass graves of German soldiers. The commentary tells us that some young Germans will escape from their horrific past and 'May yet be our comrades and brothers, workers and makers, after the agony of the world at war is over.'⁴² *These Are the Men* ends with a warning to the enemy:

But for those who taught them the business of death,
Who crippled their hearts with cruelty, never, never, never
Shall there be pardon or pity: no hope of a new birth.
They shall be put down. Forever.⁴³

The last shots are of Hitler screaming 'We are the men' as the image fades to a phrase from the Horst Wessel song, the anthem of the Hitler Youth. The *Documentary News Letter* remarked that 'Dylan Thomas's verse frequently cuts like a knife into the pompously bestial affectations of this race of supermen.'⁴⁴

After *These Are the Men*, Thomas wrote two scripts for films that are not included on the IWM DVD. One of them, *The Unconquerable People* (1944), was a celebration of the people's victory, working through the Resistance, using four different numbered voices (the first time Thomas had used this device so central to his later script-based work) to indicate the different contributions made and the social cohesion brought about by the war in the occupied countries across Europe:

We were an *Army* who were once a rabble
Of fighters who had only faith,

Faith in the masterless will of the people
 To drive our enemy off the earth –
 Out of the light of the sun.
 We were the People's Army: and we won!⁴⁵

This script does not appear to have been made into a film and Thomas told Taylor in September 1944 that writing *The Unconquerable People* 'was made more difficult by my not knowing for what countries the film is intended, nor whether it will be shown before the war is over or after'.⁴⁶

Our Country, at forty-five minutes a much longer film, was actually made for distribution in the United States⁴⁷ and directed by John Eldridge with a score by William Alwyn. As a prestige product, it was premiered at the Empire Cinema, Leicester Square.⁴⁸ This film is not on the IWM disc but it is available elsewhere⁴⁹ and it is such an important film that I have decided to include it in my discussion.

According to Ackerman, the original commentary by Stanley Holloway was rejected and Thomas was commissioned to write the replacement, which he did predominantly in verse.⁵⁰ The film is set within a frame, with an introduction by serving USAF lieutenant Burgess Meredith,⁵¹ who was already an established Hollywood actor, and a concluding reference to the D-Day landings, and within this frame there are further framing shots of the sea. Starting and finishing in Aberdeen, *Our Country* covers the whole of Great Britain – England, Wales and Scotland – pulling all the various parts into a single narrative through the journey of a merchant seaman on leave, played by David Sime. In each place, he fleetingly shares the everyday lives of the people he meets.⁵² These snippets illustrate the variety of life in wartime Britain and include one of the first portrayals of black musicians, although these may well be part of the US fighting forces involved in D-Day. Nonetheless, they are part of the perceived realism of the film.

There is also a clear influence of Soviet cinema, especially documentary, in the way the film is made. There is no dialogue, even though we see the characters on screen speaking to one another; the film is driven forward by the commentary and the imagery. The scenes of tanks moving forward above the White Cliffs of Dover and of the celebrations after the apple harvest in Kent, and the use of panning shots, are all redolent of Soviet cinema, in particular Ivan Pyriev's *Tractor Drivers (Traktoristy, 1939)*, although this was a collective-farm (*kolkhoz*) musical and far from being a documentary. In fact, *The Times* criticized *Our Country* for its lack of realism and remarked rather sniffily that 'the commentary consists of free verse written by Mr Dylan Thomas, which may be good – a few lines suggest it is – but which is recited with such a monotonous emphasis that it soon ... becomes a barrier between spectator and screen'.⁵³ On the other hand, Edgar Anstey, himself a leading documentary film-maker who had worked under none other than John Grierson, commented in his *Spectator* review, 'All that has been said and written about the deadening effect which official sponsorship might have upon the arts is challenged by *Our Country*' and concluded by remarking that it 'represents the most exciting and provocative film ... for many a long day'.⁵⁴

After *Our Country*, Thomas returned to scripts for home consumption. By this time, Strand Films had become Gryphon Films but it still consisted of the same team working together. The last two strictly war films on the IWM DVD both date from 1945, the last year of the Second World War, and both deal with the consequences of that war. *A City Reborn* (originally entitled *Building the Future*)⁵⁵ was in some ways a companion piece, almost a coda, to *New Towns for Old*: whereas Smokedale (Sheffield) needed planned reconstruction after the ravages of the industrialization that had actually created the city, Coventry, the subject of *A City Reborn*, needed planned reconstruction after the ravages of the wartime bombing that had interrupted the long and continuous history that the film traces back to medieval times. *A City Reborn*, twenty-three minutes long and again directed by John Eldridge, opens on the train taking a soldier on leave and two 'directed workers', one male, one female, to Coventry.⁵⁶ Released in the final months of the war in 1945, the film uses these characters, and the soldier's girlfriend, to show how the city has been physically devastated by the German bombing raid in November 1940, but also how its population has coped psychologically and practically with the destruction and dislocation and is preparing for a better peace. In particular, the soldier and his girlfriend walk round the city looking for possible places to live after hostilities have ceased and this leads to a humorous discussion (is the garage or the nursery more important?) of the 'prefabs' that are already being built in the city's own factories. The amicable discussion between the engineers about the future development of the city allows the first engineer to propagate quasi-socialist views of the advantages of public urban planning. The self-sufficiency of the city's inhabitants is also a response to the reminder from the councillor at the end of *New Towns for Old*: 'Remember, it's *your* town!'

The last of the wartime films was *A Soldier Comes Home*, five minutes long and also directed by John Eldridge. It dealt with what was then (November 1945) a significant social problem: the psychological readjustment needed for wives and husbands who had been separated from one another during the war. In this case, the soldier in question, Jack, has returned after four years' service in Burma, a place of which his worshipping son Jim has only highly romanticized notions: 'Is the Irrawaddy as big as the Thames? I bet there are no barges on it. I wish there were crocodiles in the Thames.'⁵⁷

The wife, who, significantly, is the only one of the three central characters to have no name, is more resentful: of the fact that Jack has to return to army service, although the war is now over; of the fact that he talks all the time about his 'pals out there and what is happening to them'; and of the fact that other soldiers have already been demobbed. 'I shall be alone. Charlie in the pub talking about going back to his job, and Harry demobbed. Why can't you go back to your job?' To which Jack responds simply, 'That is my job.'⁵⁸ The film concludes with the wife apologizing for her selfishness. The situation remains as unresolved in the film as it was in real life at the end of that momentous year. *A Soldier Comes Home* was not well received. The characters were not fully developed, which is scarcely surprising in such a short film, and the psychological dilemma at the heart of the film was not adequately situated in its historical context. As usual, the *Documentary News Letter* put it succinctly: 'the film turns out to be an emotionally muddled rough sketch of a film yet to be made.'⁵⁹

By this time the wartime leader Winston Churchill had been unceremoniously discarded by the electorate and Clement Attlee's Labour government had been elected by a landslide to enact the promises that had been made to that electorate, at least in part through the documentary films made for the MOI.

Where did the contribution of Swansea's 'golden boy' fit into British documentary films during the Second World War and, more specifically, into the wartime propaganda process? If we define propaganda as an intentional process of persuasion,⁶⁰ it is clear that the documentary film-makers knew very well what they were doing, despite, and perhaps partly because of, Churchill's efforts to discourage them, and whatever their personal motives for engaging in this kind of work. Paul Jackson has described Dylan Thomas as 'the Anti-Fascist Propagandist',⁶¹ but that epithet can be applied not only to almost everybody, if not all those, working in British wartime propaganda but also to those who had worked in the pre-war British documentary film movement, such as John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings and Edgar Anstey.

Dylan Thomas would have been familiar with their work and the assumptions that underlay it. In fact, he used the techniques employed in both streams of the documentary movement: sometimes the straightforward reportage of facts with a commentary, sometimes the poetic recreation of apparent reality, often including staged reconstructions of dialogue and the events themselves.⁶² The interest Thomas showed in film in his earlier contribution to his school magazine continued throughout his life until his last public appearance eleven days before his untimely death in New York, at a symposium in that city on 'Poetry and Film', also attended by Maya Deren, Arthur Miller and Parker Tyler.⁶³ Of the scriptwriter's contribution as poet, he remarked that 'the right words might be only a grunt':

I'm not at all sure that I want such a thing ... as a poetic film ... Just as a poem comes out ... one image makes another in the ordinary dialectic process ... in a film, it's really the visual image that breeds another – breeds and breathes it.⁶⁴

Donald Taylor described the war films produced by Strand as helping people 'to see on the screen the fine part that their native land is playing in helping to win the war' and added that they 'will make people all over the world, as well as the inhabitants of this country, appreciate for what we are fighting'.⁶⁵ 'For what we are fighting' was precisely what Dylan Thomas's scripts were intended to illuminate, whether for Britain as a whole or Wales in particular. Thomas and the people he worked with did not regard their work as promoting 'false hopes and airy visions' and nor did the British electorate in the 1945 General Election.

Notes

I should like to thank Professor Jeffrey Richards, Lancaster University, and Gary Gregor and Gareth Evans of Swansea for their assistance and advice in the preparation of this essay.

- 1 Dylan Thomas, 'The Films', *Swansea Grammar School Magazine*, 27: 2 (1930), pp. 54–6, reproduced in Walford Davies (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Early Prose Writings* (London, 1971), pp. 87–9; punctuation as in the original.
- 2 Ibid.; compare Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov, 'Statement on Sound' (1928), in Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, vol. 1: *Writings, 1922–34*, transl. and ed. Richard Taylor (London and Bloomington, IN, 1988; rev. edn, London and New York, 2010), pp. 113–15. The first English translation of this declaration appeared as 'The Sound Film. A Statement from USSR' in the London-based *Close Up*, October 1928, pp. 10–13. It is just about possible, although highly unlikely, that Thomas might have been aware of it.
- 3 Reprinted in Dylan Thomas, *The Dylan Thomas Omnibus* (London, 2014), p. 322; broadcast dated from Paul Ferris, *Dylan Thomas: The Biography* (Harmondsworth, 1978), p. 223; rev. edn (Talybont, 2006), p. 237; Fitzgibbon dates the broadcast on the BBC Welsh service as 9 May 1947: Constantine Fitzgibbon, *The Life of Dylan Thomas* (London, 1965), p. 397. A close friend of Dylan Thomas, Swansea's 'other poet', Vernon Watkins (1906–1967), also recalled the influence of the Uplands cinema, especially the Saturday afternoon serials, and dedicated a poem to the memory of Pearl White, who starred in many of them: Jeff Towns (ed.), *Vernon Watkins' Swansea. 'Salzburg-on-the-Tawe'* (Swansea, 2006), pp. 10–12, 20–2.
- 4 Richard Taylor, 'The Social History of a Postcard', *Swansea History Journal – Minerva*, 17 (2009–10), pp. 10–21, esp. pp. 17–18.
- 5 Davies (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Early Prose Writings*, p. 142. The films mentioned are *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920, starring Conrad Veidt); *Atlantic/Atlantik* (E. A. Dupont, 1929, a British-German co-production filmed in England); *Der Student von Prag* (Henrik Galeen, 1926, also starring Conrad Veidt); *Am Rande der Welt* (Karl Grune, 1927); *Varieté* (E. A. Dupont, 1925, starring Emil Jannings); *Das Wachsfingernkabinett* (Paul Leni, 1924, starring Emil Jannings and Conrad Veidt); *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923); *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931, starring Peter Lorre) and *Der blaue Engel* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930, starring Emil Jannings and Marlene Dietrich); *Sous les toits de Paris* (René Clair, France, 1930) and *Bronenosets Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1926).
- 6 Fitzgibbon, *Life of Dylan Thomas*, p. 64.
- 7 P. Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters* (new edn, London, 1987), p. 410.
- 8 Fitzgibbon, *Life of Dylan Thomas*, p. 270. Thomas also approached Stephen Spender to intercede on his behalf, see Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, p. 444.
- 9 Fitzgibbon, *Life of Dylan Thomas*, pp. 277–8.
- 10 Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, p. 496.
- 11 Ibid., p. 504; the reference is almost certainly to the filmed but unreleased project *Is Your Ernie Really Necessary?* (1943), on which more later.
- 12 *Dylan Thomas: The War Films Anthology* (2007).
- 13 *Young Farmers* (1942); *The Unconquerable People* (1944); *Our Country* (1944).
- 14 Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, p. 495.
- 15 Jack Beddington (1893–1959) had previously been publicity director for Shell and, as director of the MOI Films Division from April 1940 until 1946, was more responsible for wartime output than Clark.
- 16 Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford, 1986), ch. 1.
- 17 Fitzgibbon, *Life of Dylan Thomas*, pp. 281–2.

- 18 John Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Complete Screenplays* (New York, 1995), pp. v, 45–52.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 20 Cited in Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London, 1979), p. 183.
- 21 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 177.
- 22 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 181.
- 23 Cited in Nicholas Pronay, ‘“The Land of Promise”: The Projection of Peace Aims in Britain’, in K. R. M. Short (ed.), *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II* (London, 1983), p. 72.
- 24 *Documentary News Letter*, 3: 6 (1942), p. 94. The publication, edited by John Grierson, ran from January 1940 until 1949 and promoted the ideas and practices of the British Documentary Film Movement, who effectively constituted its editorial board.
- 25 *Documentary News Letter*, 3: 7 (1942), p. 100.
- 26 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 20.
- 27 Frances Thorpe, Nicholas Pronay and Clive Coultass (eds), *British Official Films in the Second World War. A Descriptive Catalogue* (Oxford and Santa Barbara, CA, 1980), pp. 107–8.
- 28 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 25.
- 29 In fact the original version of *Under Milk Wood* was being read by Thomas to his friends as early as 1933: David N. Thomas (ed.), *Dylan Remembered*, vol. 1: 1914–1934 (Bridgend, 2003), p. 165.
- 30 Giles Goodland identifies this as ‘a distinctively South Welsh accent’; see Giles Goodland, ‘Dylan Thomas and Film’, *New Welsh Review*, 9 (1990), p. 18. In more than forty years in South Wales, I have never heard anything remotely like it.
- 31 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 26.
- 32 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 35 Stevenson had also read the commentary to *Common Heritage* (1940) with Leslie Howard. He had joined the BBC in 1941 and was shot down while on a raid over Germany in 1944: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/corporate2/broadcastinghouse/memorial.html#heading-kent-stevenson> (last access 7 May 2018).
- 36 *Documentary News Letter*, 2: 12 (1941), p. 223; Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 33.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 39 Details of *Germany Calling* are based on Thorpe, Pronay and Coultass (eds), *British Official Films*, p. 81.
- 40 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 41.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Documentary News Letter*, 4: 3 (1943), pp. 145–6.
- 45 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 62.
- 46 Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, p. 521.
- 47 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, pp. 62–3, mistakenly claims that the film was made for distribution in the USSR. The ‘Introduction’ makes it obvious that the

- film was intended for the United States. Ackerman makes several uncharacteristic errors in his coverage of this particular film.
- 48 Goodland, 'Dylan Thomas and Film', p. 18.
 - 49 Panamint Cinema PDC 2027.
 - 50 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 64.
 - 51 Burgess Meredith (1907–1997) was married at this time to Paulette Goddard, following her divorce from Charlie Chaplin and was later also placed on the Hollywood blacklist. He would have been a familiar figure to US movie audiences at this time and, as a serving US officer in the UK, a highly suitable actor to put *Our Country* in its wartime propaganda context.
 - 52 The episode called 'The Girl's Story' by Ackerman and 'Clocking Off' on the DVD was once more set in Sheffield, where the girl in question had been spotted by Eldridge purely by chance, talking in the street to a friend; see Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 64.
 - 53 *The Times*, 27 June 1945, p. 6.
 - 54 *The Spectator*, 19 June 1945, p. 594.
 - 55 Ferris (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters*, p. 514, n. 1.
 - 56 The soldier was played by Bill Rowbotham (1914–1999), better known to later generations as Bill Owen, the actor who played Compo in the long-running British television sitcom, *The Last of the Summer Wine*.
 - 57 Ackerman (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: Screenplays*, p. 100.
 - 58 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
 - 59 *Documentary News Letter*, 51 (1945), p. 8.
 - 60 Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London, 1979), p. 28; David Welch, 'Powers of Persuasion', *History Today*, 49: 8 (1999), pp. 24–6.
 - 61 Paul Jackson, 'Dylan Thomas: The Anti-Fascist Propagandist', in Hannah Ellis (ed.), *Dylan Thomas: A Centenary Celebration* (London, 2014), pp. 87–101.
 - 62 Julian Maclaren-Ross recalled the further influence of the scripts printed in Sergei Eisenstein's *The Film Sense*, ed. Jay Leyda (New York, 1942); Julian Maclaren-Ross, *Memoirs of the Forties* (London, 1965), pp. 129–30.
 - 63 Maya Deren (1917–1961), US experimental film-maker; Arthur Miller (1915–2005), US playwright; Parker Tyler (1904–1974), US author, poet and film critic.
 - 64 'Poetry and the Film: A Symposium', *Film Culture* (Summer 1963), cited in Goodland, 'Dylan Thomas and Film', p. 17.
 - 65 *Kine Week*, 25 July 1940, p. 21, cited in Goodland, 'Dylan Thomas and Film', pp. 17–18.

Hitchcock as propagandist

James Chapman

Alfred Hitchcock is cinema's pre-eminent auteur: a master craftsman whose films exhibited an extraordinary degree of thematic and formal consistency across a long career that spanned half a century (Hitchcock directed his first film, *The Pleasure Garden*, in 1926, and his last, *Family Plot*, in 1976) and three national cinemas (Germany, Britain and the United States).¹ Hitchcock is admired for his mastery of film-making technique and for his ability to generate suspense: Andrew Sarris called him 'the supreme technician of the American cinema.'² And he has also been claimed as one of cinema's great moralists, whose films explore profound existential and psychological questions. Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, whose original auteurist study remains one of the milestones of Hitchcock scholarship, saw Hitchcock as a Catholic artist who used cinematic form to construct a 'moral universe' that is 'a thousand times more perilous, if not more fatal, than that of ancient tragedy'.³

Yet the focus on Hitchcock as auteur has tended to overshadow other contexts for his films: and one of these was his work as a propagandist during the Second World War. Like many of his contemporaries in the film industry, including Alexander Korda, Noël Coward and Leslie Howard, Hitchcock was actively involved in propaganda work both in the United States and in Britain. This work involved the production of three US feature films – *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), *Saboteur* (1942) and *Lifeboat* (1944) – and two short films made in Britain on behalf of the Ministry of Information (MOI): *Bon Voyage* (1944) and *Aventure Malgache* (1944). As Alain Kerzoncuf and Charles Barr have established, Hitchcock was also involved in re-editing two British documentary films for their release in the United States, *Men of the Lightship* (1940) and *Target for Tonight* (1941), in the initial preparation of the 'Hollywood British' feature film *Forever and a Day* (1943), and directed a US public service film promoting War Bonds, *The Fighting Generation* (1944).⁴ His wartime propaganda work culminated in his role in the making of an unreleased documentary about the German concentration camps in 1945. While the three feature films all fit, more or less comfortably, into the conventional critical construction of Hitchcock as auteur, however, the other projects remain for the most part unknown and neglected, largely because they are not typically 'Hitchcockian'.

The contexts for Hitchcock's role as a wartime propagandist were a combination of personal and professional circumstances. By the late 1930s, Hitchcock was firmly established as Britain's foremost motion picture director. His international reputation was built on the critical and commercial success of the cycle of polished thrillers he directed for the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation between 1934 and 1938: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), *Young and Innocent* (1937) and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938).⁵ These films brought Hitchcock to the attention of Hollywood as they were seen as matching the narrative pace and production values of US films: the US trade paper *Motion Picture Daily*, for example, recognized Hitchcock as 'a director with an American sense of box-office values.'⁶ Hitchcock, for his part, was attracted by the prospect of working with the bigger budgets and technical resources of the US film industry. In July 1938, following lengthy negotiations, Hitchcock signed a contract with Selznick International Pictures, and after one last British film, the costume drama *Jamaica Inn* (1939), moved with his family permanently to Hollywood in March 1939.⁷

The timing of Hitchcock's departure for the United States six months prior to the outbreak of the Second World War later brought accusations from some quarters of the British film industry that he had deserted his native country in its hour of need: that he was one of those who – as it was put at the time – had 'Gone with the Wind Up'.⁸ It was not that Hitchcock or other members of the British colony in Hollywood – including actors Charles Laughton and Laurence Olivier – were being accused of cowardice but rather that they should have been working in Britain making films to support the British war effort. In the event several of the 'Hollywood British' did return home: David Niven rejoined his army regiment and starred in *The Way Ahead* (1944), Laurence Olivier joined the Fleet Air Arm and made the patriotic epic *Henry V* (1944) and Leslie Howard directed and starred in *Pimpernel Smith* (1941) and *The First of the Few* (1942). Hitchcock's decision to remain in California prompted an angry response from his old friend and mentor Michael Balcon, who had given the director his first break at Gainsborough Pictures in the 1920s. Balcon fired a broadside at his former protégé in a Sunday newspaper article entitled 'Deserters!'; in which he referred to 'a plump young junior technician ... whom I promoted from department to department. Today, one of our most famous directors, he is in Hollywood, while we who are left behind are trying to harness films to the great national effort.'⁹

However, Balcon's attack on Hitchcock as a 'deserter' was unfair in several respects. For one thing Hitchcock's decision to relocate to Hollywood was something he had planned since the mid-1930s rather than a panicked response to the worsening international situation in 1939.¹⁰ And for another thing the British government had stated publicly that British actors and film-makers working in Hollywood could best serve their country by making films promoting the British cause in the United States – especially given that the United States remained neutral until December 1941. The British ambassador in Washington, Lord Lothian, more or less told the British Hollywood community to stay put

because they are consciously championing the British cause in a very volatile community which would otherwise be left to the mercies of German propagandists,

and because the continuing production of films with a strong British tone is one of the best and subtlest forms of British propaganda.¹¹

This was a time when ‘Hollywood British’ films – US films with a strong British flavour – were popular: these ranged from literary adaptations such as *Wuthering Heights* (1939) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1940) to swashbuckling adventure films such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940).¹²

Hitchcock’s first US films can be located within the ‘Hollywood British’ cycle. *Rebecca* (1940), the first film under his contract with Selznick, was an adaptation of a novel by a British author (Daphne du Maurier) with English locations (albeit shot entirely in the studio) and a predominantly British cast.¹³ For his second picture, Selznick loaned Hitchcock to independent producer Walter Wanger to direct *Foreign Correspondent*, an international espionage thriller in the mould of his Gaumont-British films. Wanger was one of Hollywood’s more liberal and internationalist producers – his films included *You Only Live Once* (1937), *Blockade* (1938) and *Stagecoach* (1939) – and *Foreign Correspondent*, which was very loosely based on Vincent Sheean’s memoir *Personal History*, was something of a pet project for him.¹⁴ Wanger had already commissioned scripts from writers John Howard Lawson and John Lee Mahin before Hitchcock became attached to the project after he finished shooting *Rebecca*. Hitchcock threw out the existing scripts and worked on his own treatment with his assistant Joan Harrison. They recast Sheean’s rambling memoir into a fast-paced thriller based on the adventures of an opinionated US reporter. Their first treatment begins:

This is the story of a young American newspaperman who goes to Europe with certain fixed ideas of what is right and what is wrong. In his opinion Europe in the year 1939 has only itself to blame for its political troubles and the rapidly approaching war crisis. He learns, however, through bitter experience that European life is more complex than he had imagined and that methods and ideas which may be perfectly right for a new nation and continent cannot always be applied in a more sophisticated civilization.¹⁵

Hitchcock therefore fashioned the story into a narrative of ideological conversion that would contrast US and European values before the protagonist learns to curb his chauvinism. This is achieved through his romance with a young Englishwoman – whose father, ostensibly the idealistic leader of a peace party, turns out to be the instigator of a plot to kidnap a Dutch statesman – and his developing friendship with an apparently effete English journalist, whom he initially dislikes. Hitchcock and Harrison had a real-life model for the latter character: ‘The American meets several of the other foreign correspondents, among them one on the English “Times”, Ian Fleming, whom he rather despises, for his apparent effeminacy, suede shoes and affected drawl.’¹⁶ ‘Ian Fleming’ became Scott Ffolliott in the film.

The script of *Foreign Correspondent* went through many revisions: among the writers who contributed to the screenplay were Charles Bennett (author of the play *Blackmail* – the source of Hitchcock’s, and Britain’s, first talking picture in 1929 – and collaborator on five of Hitchcock’s Gaumont-British thrillers), the British author James

Hilton (whose novels *Lost Horizon* and *Goodbye, Mr Chips* had recently been made into films) and US humorist Robert Benchley (who would have a cameo role in the film as an amiably drunken reporter). The most significant change during the scripting process was the rewriting of the protagonist. The character of Johnny Jones – surely a reference to George M. Cohen’s musical *Little Johnny Jones* – was transformed over the course of various drafts from a knowledgeable if opinionated political commentator to a naïve American abroad. Thus in the first ‘White Script’ he is described as ‘a very smart political observer, with a couple of books to his credit, and the ability to set down his ideas in honest, straightforward language’. The ‘Yellow Script’ (26 March 1940) includes the following exchange between Johnny and his editor:

Powers: You give quite a lot of thought to European politics, don’t you?

Johnny: If you can call that shilly-shallying they’re doing over there ‘politics’.

At this point, however, it was evidently decided that Jones should not be so politically aware, as in the ‘Pink Script’ (23 April 1940) the scene has changed entirely:

Powers: What do you think of the present European crisis, Mr Jones?

Johnny: What crisis?

Powers: I’m referring to the impending war, Mr Jones.

Johnny: Oh that. (*He smiles*). To be very frank, sir, I haven’t given it much thought.¹⁷

This is the scene as it appears in the finished film. The production records do not indicate the reason for the change but it is reasonable to speculate that the decision to make Johnny Jones unaware of events in Europe was in order to turn him into more of a US everyman type. All the evidence suggests that at this time the majority of Americans outside the large metropolitan centres of the East and West coasts were not well informed about the European situation. This persisted even after the United States’ entry into the war. In 1943, the British Consul-General in Chicago reported: ‘The majority of people in the Middle West are ill-informed and ignorant ... they have little interest in anything outside America.’¹⁸

The propaganda theme of *Foreign Correspondent*, then, was to challenge Americans’ perceived ignorance about world affairs. To this extent, it was ideologically at odds with the prevailing mood: in 1940, political and public opinion in the United States was very strongly isolationist. There was support for Britain and the Allied cause at the top of government – President Franklin D. Roosevelt was a noted Anglophile – though this support fell a long way short of intervention in the war. US isolationism had historical and ideological roots: the experience of the First World War had left many Americans embittered – there was a widely held view that the United States had been tricked into the war through Allied (and specifically British) propaganda – while the economic and social problems of the Great Depression had turned the United States into a more inward-looking nation. In this climate, Hitchcock and Wanger had to tread carefully. Hence the publicity materials for *Foreign Correspondent* set out to downplay its political elements. According to a report in the *New York Times*, ‘*Foreign Correspondent* will have as little political significance as it has to the Vincent Sheean

book, which is none at all [*sic*]. The title was changed from *Personal History* because of Wanger's refusal to compromise the Sheean yarn or profit from the mislabeling.²¹⁹

To a large extent the reception of *Foreign Correspondent* in the United States, where it was released in August 1940, suggests that it was seen as an entertainment rather than as a propaganda film. The US exhibitors' journal *Harrison's Reports*, for example, called it 'a thriller of the first order ... The story has a significant political angle; but it is of secondary importance to the melodramatic action, which is absorbing.'²²⁰ However, it was a different matter when the film was released in London two months later. Its British release coincided with the height of the Blitz: the concentrated air raids carried out by the Luftwaffe against British cities. In this context, the ending of the film had acquired a particularly topical angle. After the completion of principal photography, Hitchcock had added a short coda to the film – scripted by Ben Hecht – in which Johnny (played by Joel McCrae), now a fully fledged war correspondent, broadcasts to the United States from London during an air raid. When the lights go out in the studio, Johnny stays by the microphone and appeals directly to his listeners:

It's as if the lights are out everywhere. Except in America. Keep those lights burning. Cover them with steel. Ring them with guns. Build a canopy of battleships and bombing planes around them. Hello America, hang on to your lights – they're the only lights left in the world!

This was clearly intended as a message for the United States to prepare itself for war: it stops short of calling for US intervention in Europe and therefore is finely calculated not to offend isolationists. In Britain, it was understood in a different way. The documentary film-maker Paul Rotha took exception to the speech which he felt revealed 'a grave lack of knowledge of public opinion here in Britain' and 'implies that the British people no longer have faith in democracy in their own country'. In a letter to the journal *Documentary News Letter*, he protested:

I can assure these leaders of the British documentary film that the people who are really suffering as well as fighting this war do not share this view that the lights are even dimmed in Britain. If they did, the Fascist propagandists might well claim to have already won the war ... In their editorial the Editors of *DNL* rightly divide the British nation into two camps of US and THEM; I invite these leaders of the documentary group to remember that democracy in practice needs only one camp – WE.²¹

Rotha's letter – which was counter-signed by other film-makers including Michael Balcon and documentarist Alberto Cavalcanti, critics Ritchie Calder and Dilys Powell and Labour MP Michael Foot – was prompted by the journal's positive review of *Foreign Correspondent* in its previous issue: *Documentary News Letter* – a small but critically influential publication that represented the progressive voice within British film culture – was not habitually given to praising Hollywood films.²² His objection to *Foreign Correspondent* should be understood in the context of the journal's left-leaning politics and its advocacy of the idea of the 'people's war': Rotha evidently felt that the

ending of *Foreign Correspondent* went against the spirit of documentary films such as *Britain Can Take It!* (1940) – released at the same time as *Foreign Correspondent* – with its emphasis on stoical British resistance to German air raids.

In the event, however, this was little more than a storm in a teacup. *Documentary News Letter* was a small-circulation magazine that was probably not widely read outside the film industry and was certainly not reflective of popular film taste. British audiences do not seem to have been put off by the falseness that Rotha detected in *Foreign Correspondent*: according to the trade press, it was the second most popular general release in Britain in 1940 (the first was *Rebecca*).²³ Wanger and Hitchcock both had good reason to be satisfied with the film, which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture – losing out to *Rebecca*, for which David O. Selznick, as producer, accepted the Oscar – and was a popular success on both sides of the Atlantic. It also received an endorsement from a most unlikely quarter. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in Hitler's Germany and an avid cinephile himself, saw *Foreign Correspondent* (probably, as Hitchcock speculated, acquiring a print through neutral Switzerland) and evidently liked it, describing it as '[a] masterpiece of propaganda, a first-class production which will no doubt make a certain impression upon the broad masses of the people in enemy countries.'²⁴

Saboteur (1942) was another loan-out from Selznick – this time for producer Jack Skirball at Universal Pictures – and in certain respects can be seen as a companion piece to *Foreign Correspondent*. The film's production history spanned the United States' entry into the war, and the development of the script reflected the changing ideological context. Hitchcock began working on the script in the summer of 1941, again with Joan Harrison, sketching out an original story about a young munitions worker who is innocently implicated in arson and finds himself on the run from the authorities while seeking to expose a ring of saboteurs in the United States.²⁵ This was a formula Hitchcock had used before, notably in *The 39 Steps*, though to see *Saboteur* as essentially a remake of *The 39 Steps* is to ignore the very different contexts of the two films. Hitchcock and Harrison's treatment was fleshed out into a full screenplay by Peter Viertel, a young writer on Selznick's payroll who was son of the Austrian émigré director Berthold Viertel – the elder Viertel had made several films for Gaumont-British in the 1930s – with an uncredited contribution from John Houseman, co-producer of Orson Welles's *Mercury Theater on the Air*. It is entirely a matter of speculation that the protagonist's name (Barry Kane) was Houseman's reference to Welles: Houseman had been involved in the early development of *Citizen Kane* (1941).²⁶ The humorist and short-story writer Dorothy Parker was then drafted in to add scenes and polish the dialogue. The untitled 'White Script' of 12 December 1941 is credited to Parker, Harrison and Viertel. At this point, there was no indication of the nationality of the saboteurs though there was a suggestion that their motivation might have been mercenary rather than ideological: Barry remarks that the character called Fry 'is a saboteur – a man that doesn't mind killing Americans for money.'²⁷

The script was barely completed, however, before it was overtaken by events. On the morning of 7 December 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise aerial attack on the US Navy base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The attack – without a formal declaration of war – precipitated the United States' entry into the Second World War: the United

States' subsequent declaration of war on Japan (8 December) was followed by Japan's allies Germany and Italy declaring war on the United States (11 December). It was on 12 December 1941 – only five days after Pearl Harbor and one day after Germany's declaration of war – that the script of *Saboteur* was submitted for approval to the Production Code Administration (PCA). At this point, official policy regarding the role of the film industry in supporting the war effort had yet to be determined: it was not until June 1942 that an Office of War Information (OWI) was established.²⁸ In the absence of any official guidelines for film propaganda, the PCA took it upon itself to ensure that movies supported a patriotic outlook and did not contain anything that might be deemed defeatist or subversive. And in this context *Saboteur* presented certain problems. The PCA told Universal that 'the basic story seems acceptable under the provisions of the Production Code.' 'However,' it added, 'there is one disturbing element which appears, from time to time, throughout this script and that is the great number of seemingly anti-social speeches and references. It is essential that such statements be rewritten to avoid giving this flavour.' Among the lines it singled out were one that cast aspersions on the wealthy ('Just because he's got a big ranch and a fancy house and a million-dollar swimming pool – that doesn't say he's a good guy') and another that suggested defiance of the law ('I have my own ideas about my duties as an American citizen. They sometimes involve disregarding the law').²⁹ With the United States now a nation at war, it seems that the PCA was not willing to countenance any suggestion that all Americans were anything but law-abiding patriots.

Hitchcock and Universal realized that the United States' entry into the war made *Saboteur* a timely and topical picture: the imperative now was to press ahead as quickly as possible. The script was hurriedly revised in the early weeks of 1942. The 'anti-social speeches' noted by the PCA remained, but they were now counterbalanced by the addition of several set-piece speeches asserting the virtues of the United States and its democracy. In the 'Blue Script' of 8 January 1942, the scene where Barry encounters a circus troupe who hold a vote on whether to hand the fugitive over to the police was revised to include a reference to the wartime context:

Bones: In this situation I find a parallel for the present world predicament – we stand defeated at the outset – you, Esmeralda, have sympathy, yet you are willing to remain passive and let the inevitable happen. I have a belief, yet, I am tempted to let myself be over-ridden by force. The rest of you, with the exception of this malignant jerk here, are ignorant of the facts, and therefore confused.³⁰

Given the historical context, it is difficult to read this as anything other than a commentary on the United States' entry into the war: many Americans were indeed confused and knew little of the international situation. The 'malignant jerk' is an antagonistic midget – known in the film as 'The Major' – who rejects the democratic process ('No vote: I'm against voting!') and is subsequently denounced as a 'fascist'. Another addition was a speech by Barry in which he responds to the villain-in-chief Tobin's declaration of support for totalitarianism ('When you think about it, Mr Kane, the competence of totalitarian nations is much higher than ours') with a rousing defence of democratic values:

Barry: Let me tell you something. The last four or five days I've learned an awful lot ... I've met ruthless guys like you ... and I've met a whole lot of others ... people that are warm and helpful and eager to do the right thing – people that are alive – people that get a kick out of helping each other. They feel proud to be fighting the bad guys. Love and hate – the world is choosing up sides. I know who I'm with, and I know there are a lot of people on my side – millions of us in every country, and we're plenty strong. We'll fight standing up on our feet, and we'll win. Remember that Mr Tobin. We'll win no matter what you guys do. We'll win if it takes us from now until the cows come home.³¹

This speech would be slightly shortened and modified in the finished film, but it is entirely characteristic of the propaganda strategies of US cinema of the Second World War: it would become common practice to insert into films of all genres a set-piece speech affirming faith in the United States and its democratic values. In any event, these amendments satisfied the PCA: its comments on the revised script no longer focussed on the 'anti-social speeches' but rather that some of the dialogue between Barry and heroine Patricia was 'overly sex suggestive and must be rewritten to avoid this flavour'.³² When the completed film was reviewed by the PCA on 25 March 1942, it was awarded a seal of approval without any cuts.

Hitchcock was later dismissive of *Saboteur*, telling François Truffaut that 'it was cluttered with too many ideas ... Looking back at *Saboteur*, I would say that the script lacks discipline. I don't think I exercised a clear, sharp approach to the original construction of the screenplay'.³³ He was also dissatisfied with the casting of Robert Cummings as Barry Kane ('a competent performer, but he belongs in the light-comedy class of actors') and Patricia Lane as the heroine ('She simply wasn't the right type for a Hitchcock picture').³⁴ From an ideological point of view, however, *Saboteur* is not without its points of interest. Unlike other films dealing with German espionage in the United States, such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) and *The House on 92nd Street* (1945), the conspiracy threat is not from an external source but originates within the United States itself. *Saboteur* posits the existence of a group of fifth columnists within the upper echelons of US society: Tobin (Otto Kruger) is a wealthy rancher and his co-conspirator Mrs Sutton (Alma Kruger) an esteemed society hostess. A recurring theme of *Saboteur* is the refusal to accept that people like Tobin or Mrs Sutton can possibly be traitors: Patricia is sceptical ('It's hard to believe that about any American') and Barry's attempts to warn Mrs Sutton's guests that they are in the middle of 'a hot bed of spies and saboteurs' are met with disbelief as he is assumed to be drunk or playing a practical joke. Hitchcock averred that Tobin and his supporters were based on the so-called 'America First' factions: 'We were in 1941 and there were pro-German elements who called themselves America Firsters and who were, in fact, American Fascists. This was the group I had in mind while writing the scenario'.³⁵

Although there is no hard evidence, it is possible that *Saboteur* may have been made in response to an official mandate. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, J. Edgar Hoover, the powerful Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), campaigned energetically to persuade the US public in general and policymakers in particular of the danger of a 'fifth column' in the United States. Francis MacDonnell attests that

Hoover 'repeatedly characterized America's "Trojan Horse" as a serious threat to national security'.³⁶ In hindsight, it is apparent that Hoover significantly exaggerated the threat of an Axis fifth column in the United States: the real aim of his campaign had been to whip up hysteria in order to build up the FBI – which expanded from 898 agents in 1938 to 4,886 by 1945 – and to consolidate his own power base. In fact the only significant German spy ring in the United States, the Duquesne ring, was rounded up within a month of Pearl Harbor.³⁷ Nevertheless, *Saboteur* is so insistent on the threat of the enemy within – and the complacency of the US public – that it seems reasonable to speculate that it might have been influenced by Hoover's rhetoric.

If *Foreign Correspondent* and *Saboteur* have generally been regarded as relatively minor Hitchcock films – entertaining but essentially unimportant pictures – the same cannot be said of *Lifeboat* (1944), which Hitchcock directed on loan to Twentieth Century-Fox. *Lifeboat* has often been analysed from the standpoint of a technical exercise: the challenge of shooting a film entirely in close-ups. As Hitchcock told Truffaut:

I wanted to prove a theory I had then. Analyzing the psychological pictures that were being turned out, it seemed to me that, visually, eighty per cent of the footage was shot in close-ups or semiclose shots. Most likely it wasn't a conscious thing with most of the directors, but rather an instinctive need to come closer to the action. In a sense this treatment was an anticipation of what was to become the television technique.³⁸

Hitchcock often liked to set himself technical challenges: later he would shoot *Rope* (1948) in continuous long takes in order to replicate 'real time', while *Rear Window* (1954) was for the most part confined to the point of view of a protagonist confined to one room. Yet to see *Lifeboat* solely as a technical exercise misses the point that it was also conceived, quite explicitly, as a propaganda film. Hitchcock consciously set out to use the story of a group of survivors cast adrift in a lifeboat as an allegory of the war between fascism and democracy: while the democracies would be represented by a diverse group of passengers and crewmen, fascism would take the character of the cunning and resourceful German U-boat captain who is picked up and who nearly succeeds in overcoming the others. It is important to recognize that the reading of *Lifeboat* as a wartime allegory was intended from the outset and is not a case of an interpretation subsequently overlaid onto the film by critics or historians. To quote Hitchcock again, 'We wanted to show that at that moment there were two world forces confronting each other, the democracies and the Nazis, and while the democracies were completely disorganized, all of the Germans were clearly headed in the same direction.'³⁹

Hitchcock spent most of 1943 preparing and shooting *Lifeboat*. He first approached Ernest Hemingway to write the script: when Hemingway was unavailable, John Steinbeck, whose novel *The Grapes of Wrath* had been turned into an Academy Award-winning picture by John Ford for Twentieth Century Fox in 1940, came on board to write the first draft, which he did in the form of a novelette which was to have been published to coincide with the film. Steinbeck was no stranger to propaganda work: in

1942, he had published an account of the training of a bomber crew (*Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team*) and the novel *The Moon Is Down*, a tale of the Norwegian Resistance, which was made into a film, also by Fox, in 1943.⁴⁰ Steinbeck felt that Hitchcock's and Jo Swerling's revisions changed his original story so completely that he later publicly distanced himself from the project. He particularly objected to what he considered was Hitchcock's demeaning characterization of the crewmen: in one letter, he labelled Hitchcock 'one of those incredible English middle class snobs who really and truly despise working people.'⁴¹ The writing credits for *Lifeboat* were also the subject of a lawsuit alleging plagiarism of a newspaper story: the case was rejected as it was clear that the finished film equally reflected the contributions of Hitchcock, Steinbeck and Swerling.⁴²

Lifeboat would prove to be one of Hitchcock's most controversial films. The OWI took objection to the script on the grounds that it highlighted social and class differences between Americans (reflected in the tension between the proletarian 'oiler' Kovac and the millionaire industrialist Rittenhouse) and because the US and British characters were represented as weak and disunited. It particularly disliked the character of news correspondent Connie Porter – a role written specifically for Tallulah Bankhead – as 'a selfish, predatory, amoral, international adventuress'. But most of all the OWI objected to the characterization of Willy, the German U-boat captain, who is shown to be more resourceful and cool-headed than the other survivors. The OWI felt that *Lifeboat* was better propaganda for the Nazis than for the Allies because its theme seemed to have become 'the triumph of Nazism over democracy'.⁴³ Hitchcock made some changes to pacify the OWI, but the charge that *Lifeboat* was to all intents and purposes a piece of pro-Nazi propaganda persisted when it was released in January 1944. Bosley Crowther, the senior film critic of the *New York Times*, called *Lifeboat* an 'appalling folly' and felt that it was ill-judged as propaganda: 'Unless we had seen it with our own eyes, we would never have believed that a film could have been made in this country in the year 1943 which sold out the democratic ideal and elevated the Nazi "superman."' Crowther was particularly critical of the fact that 'none of the democratic folks possess resource or ability, or the confidence of all the rest' and asked rhetorically, 'Is this the conception of ourselves we want to show abroad? Is this a picture of civilians which we want our soldiers on the front to see?'⁴⁴ Crowther's review prompted a response from producer Kenneth MacGowan which, somewhat disingenuously it has to be said, claimed that the film had not been intended as a war allegory:

Lifeboat began simply as Hitchcock's suggestion that we should lay an entire picture in a lifeboat and thus turn out the first one-set feature film ever made ... Up to that point – indeed, far beyond it – we had not the slightest notion of building a theme. We built it, however, quite unconsciously, and suddenly awoke to that fact. Unwittingly we had set images of the 'soft democracies' into a little world dominated in will and purpose by an aggressor. We found them steering themselves past a sort of Munich only to run smack against a Warsaw.⁴⁵

The controversy over *Lifeboat* – which also attracted criticism from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People due to its characterization of the

black seaman Joe – might explain why *Lifeboat* did not win any of the Academy Awards it was nominated for, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Cinematography, though Tallulah Bankhead was voted best actress by the New York Critics' Circle.

For contemporaries, then, *Lifeboat* failed as propaganda: its allegory was too muddled and it was too insistent upon the social and political divisions between the 'good' characters. There are certainly elements in the film that run against the ideological grain of officially mandated film-making during the Second World War. It is one of the few wartime films, for example, to address the disenfranchisement of African Americans: 'Do I get a vote too?' asks the stoker Joe (Canada Lee) as the others forget to ask his opinion when debating what to do with the German. Another reason for its negative contemporary reception was the film's ambivalent ending: characteristic for Hitchcock but unusual for wartime US cinema. The survivors have more or less allowed the German Willy (Walter Slezak) to take control of the lifeboat: he is better able to navigate (unbeknown to the others he has a compass) and seems stronger (again, unbeknown to the others, he has a hidden water flask and energy pills) and is rowing them in the direction of a German supply ship. It is only when they learn that Willy has pushed the delirious Gus (William Bendix) overboard during the night that they turn upon him and as a group beat him to death. It is a moment of frenzied violence than in its suddenness and brutality anticipates scenes in later Hitchcock films such as the murder of Marion Crane in *Psycho* (1960) and the killing of security agent Gromek in the Cold War spy thriller *Torn Curtain* (1966). On one level, the killing of Willy might be read as the other characters overcoming their differences and uniting to defeat the enemy: the democracies – when roused to anger – are stronger than Nazism after all. But on another level, the killing of Willy, without recourse to due legal or judicial process, is tantamount to murder: the sort of atrocity usually attributed to the Nazis. Robin Wood's analysis of the ending of *Lifeboat* highlights its moral and ideological contradictions:

At the end, the camera pulls back to reveal Joe standing apart, the only non-participant: as an American black he knows all about lynch mobs. Which of course brings home to the audience precisely what is going on here: one form of Fascism is being answered by another of its manifestations.⁴⁶

The controversy over *Lifeboat* has strong parallels with another wartime feature film that also drew criticism for its ideologically problematic content. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) is notorious as the film that Winston Churchill wanted to suppress.⁴⁷ Like *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, which is insistent that in order to defeat Nazism it is necessary to cease playing by 'the National Sporting Club rules' and adopt the ruthless tactics of the enemy, *Lifeboat* demonstrates that in the last resort the democracies are capable of such behaviour. 'What are you so squeamish about? We're at war!' declares Kovac (John Hodiak) as he argues in favour of throwing the German overboard. It is perhaps no coincidence that both films were by auteur directors who both distanced themselves to an extent from the prevailing ideological orthodoxy of wartime film-making in Hollywood and Britain. It is also significant that in hindsight both films seem more mature and

considered than many of the more didactic wartime films that insist upon ideological conformity and consensus.

Immediately following *Lifeboat*, Hitchcock returned briefly to Britain where early in 1944 he made two short propaganda subjects for the MOI at the invitation of its films advisor Sidney Bernstein.⁴⁸ *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache* were French-language films intended for screening in Francophone territories: Bernstein, a cinema exhibitor who had overseen the release of MOI films in the United States during the early years of the war, held a new brief to supervise a film programme in preparation for the Allied liberation of Europe. Hitchcock said that he undertook the assignment because

I felt the need to make a little contribution to the war effort ... I knew that if I did nothing I'd regret it for the rest of my life; it was important for me to do something and also to get right into the atmosphere of war.⁴⁹

There were possibly other factors at play. Hitchcock was keen to free himself from his Selznick contract: he and Bernstein had discussed for some time going into partnership as independent producers after the war and the twelve-week visit to London over the winter of 1943–4 was a good opportunity to move this plan forward now that an Allied victory seemed rather more than a distant hope. The trip also meant that Hitchcock was able to stall the preparation of his next film *Spellbound* as part of his negotiations with Selznick.⁵⁰

The conditions under which Hitchcock made the two MOI shorts could not have been more different from those he enjoyed in Hollywood. *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache* were shot quickly and cheaply at Welwyn Studios in Hertfordshire using non-professional actors (a French theatre troupe known as the Molière Players) and a small crew. *Bon Voyage*, written by Angus MacPhail (Hitchcock's friend and collaborator from his Gaumont-British days) and J. O. C. Orton from an earlier draft by V. S. Pritchett, dramatizes the escape of an RAF airman from a prisoner-of-war camp spirited home by the French Resistance: a twist reveals that his fellow escapee, a Pole, is actually a Gestapo agent who has set up the escape in order to uncover the Resistance group. Hitchcock and cinematographer Günther Krampf – a German émigré who had photographed *Pandora's Box* (1928) for G. W. Pabst – made a virtue of the minimal sets by shooting the film in an expressionist style replete with tight angles and menacing shadows. *Bon Voyage* was listed as one of seven 'Ministry Special Productions' included in the MOI's *Catalogue of Films for Liberated Territories* published in September 1945: it is specified as being 'for France and Belgium only'.⁵¹ Evidence regarding the extent of its distribution at the time is patchy in the extreme. Truffaut recalled seeing it 'in Paris toward the end of 1944':⁵² this might have been at the Radio Cité Bastille cinema, where a preview was held in October 1944 and the manager reported that his audience 'who had no advance notice of the film, gave it a very good reception'.⁵³

Aventure Malgache – the second of the two films in conception though it may have been shot first – proved to be much more problematic. It grew out of Hitchcock's experience of making *Bon Voyage*. As Hitchcock told it:

It [*Bon Voyage*] was a four-reel picture and the Free French forces provided me with technical advisers ... We used to work on the screenplay in my room at Claridge's, and there was a whole group of French officers, including a certain Commander or Colonel Forestier who never agreed to anything the others suggested. We realized that the Free French were very divided against one another, and these inner conflicts became the subject of the next film, *Aventure Malgache*.

One of the men there was an actor and a lawyer whose Resistance name was Clarousse. He was in his late sixties, but he had lots of energy and he was always at odds with his Free French companions who finally threw him in jail, in Tannarive [*sic*]. It was a true story and Clarousse told it himself. But when it was finished, there was some disagreement about it and I believe they decided not to show it.⁵⁴

In a perverse sort of way, it is the emphasis on disagreement and dissent with the Resistance that now makes *Aventure Malgache* seem a more significant film: even though it was never seen publicly at the time, it now has historical interest as a record of internal divisions within the Free French that would not be acknowledged in a standard propaganda film.

It has always been assumed that the reason not to release *Aventure Malgache* was a political one: that it simply would not have been in anyone's interest to show a film focusing on internal divisions. The 'myth' of the Resistance that quickly emerged in post-war France would also have militated against a reissue. The National Archives in London reveal that the controversy surrounding *Aventure Malgache* persisted for half a century and that the film was actively suppressed by the British Foreign Office. The official reason seems to have been the potential threat of libel as the film was based on the experiences of a real individual: a French lawyer practising in Madagascar called Jules François Clermont. In a note of October 1963 in response to a request to allow it to be shown as part of a Hitchcock season at the Belgian Film Archive, an official within the MOI's successor organization, the Central Office of Information, recorded that 'I viewed the film with Miss Cargill of the Foreign Office and we were both doubtful of the wisdom of releasing it because of the potentially libellous material it contains.'⁵⁵ In this regard, the official view remained consistent. As late as 1979, a request from the National Film Theatre to screen *Aventure Malgache* as part of its season to mark Hitchcock's 80th birthday was declined on the grounds of

the sensitivity [which] arises because the film's subject is the take-over by the Free French forces of Madagascar from the Vichy French. Real people are depicted – and not in the most polite terms! Some still live – or at least – their relatives do and hence the possibility of libel!⁵⁶

It was not until 1993 that *Aventure Malgache* was exhibited in public when it was shown on a double bill with *Bon Voyage* at selected cinemas prior to its release on video cassette.

The 'discovery' of the two 'lost' Hitchcock films inevitably attracted much interest: Hitchcock scholars have sought to locate them in Hitchcock's *œuvre* by

finding thematic or formal links to other films.⁵⁷ The scene of Jeanne's murder in *Bon Voyage*, for example, shot in close-up while she was making a telephone call, has some parallel with the attempted murder of Margot Wendice in *Dial M for Murder* (1954), while the 'old Gestapo trick: shoot one of your own people to prove that you're not one of them' is referred to in *North by Northwest* (1959). The long camera takes (up to two and a half minutes) and tracking shots Hitchcock employs in *Aventure Malgache* in preference to his usual montage-based technique might be seen as anticipating the formal experimentation of *Rope*. At the same time as highlighting their 'Hitchcockian' characteristics, however, it should not be forgotten that *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache* were foremost propaganda films rather than Hitchcock films. In this context, the use of non-professional actors was consistent with other wartime British films, especially the story-documentaries of the Crown Film Unit, including *Men of the Lightship*, *Target for Tonight*, *Coastal Command* (1942), *Fires Were Started* (1943) and *Western Approaches* (1944), while the two films may also be seen as more realistic variations of the Resistance stories turned out during the war by British studios such as *Secret Mission* (1942) and *The Flemish Farm* (1943). *Bon Voyage* has some more specific parallels with Powell and Pressburger's similarly themed escape narrative *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (1942).

Sidney Bernstein was also the prime mover in the project that marked Hitchcock's last contribution to Anglo-US film propaganda during the Second World War. Early in 1945, Bernstein, in his new role as Films Officer of the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), hit upon the idea of making a film about the Nazi atrocities that had come to light as a consequence of the liberation of Europe. Bernstein tasked Sergei Nolbandov, a White Russian émigré who had directed *Ships with Wings* (1941) and *Undercover* (1943) for Ealing Studios before joining the MOI, with sorting through the actuality footage of the liberation of German concentration camps taken by British and US service and newsreel cameramen. The first indication that a compilation film was to be made comes in a memorandum from Nolbandov on 22 February 1945 requesting approval of funds to make prints of the raw footage:

I have discussed the question of the German atrocities material with Mr Bernstein and I am instructed by him to say that this material is being collected with a view to preparing a film which will show the German atrocities committed in many parts of the world. The basic idea of the film is to present an objective report, almost like a criminal investigation report, which would demonstrate the terror methods used by the Germans in Occupied Europe, Russia etc.⁵⁸

The MOI authorized the film though with caveats. A note from the Director of the Finance Division states:

I approve the project but the film will only proceed if the available material proves to be adequate. At that stage it should be looked upon as being for Non. T. [i.e. non-theatrical] distribution in Liberated Territories but it may well have a wider use.⁵⁹

The scope and nature of the 'German Atrocity Film' was transformed following the liberation of the Belsen concentration camp in April 1945. Nolbandov informed the War Office on 20 April that 'we have been instructed by the Allied Command to prepare a film immediately on this subject': his request for the dope sheets of the cameramen of the Army Film and Photographic Unit was tagged as 'urgent'.⁶⁰ Bernstein, who visited Belsen on 22 April, immediately tasked Paul Wyand of British Movietone to record 'sound interviews of the British officials and German SS men etc at the Belsen concentration camp'.⁶¹ This was followed by a 'Special Coverage Motion Picture Team' from the US Army being dispatched to film at the Dachau concentration camp.⁶² The plan that was now emerging was that the MOI would produce the film in collaboration with the OWI on behalf of SHAEF. To this extent the 'German Atrocity Film' would be a combined Anglo-US initiative on a similar basis to *The True Glory* (1945), the official film of the liberation of Europe compiled by Britain's Carol Reed and the United States' Garson Kanin. The MOI declared that '[this] work should be given top priority'.⁶³ However, Bernstein sounded a note of caution about the time needed to prepare the film in a 'secret – priority' telegram: 'We are undertaking to produce a film on German atrocities in camps and after having seen film already taken on this subject realise that first grade job cannot be put together in hurry'.⁶⁴ Bernstein was particularly concerned that the visual material for the film must be thoroughly and meticulously documented in order to prevent the possibility of any later accusations that it had been faked: hence, he issued detailed instructions for cameramen regarding the filming of material and the imperative of ascertaining its authenticity.⁶⁵

It is unclear when Hitchcock first became attached to the film. Patrick McGilligan's biography of the director places it as early as February 1945 and suggests that Hitchcock 'had committed himself to the project early enough to give Hitchcockian instructions to some of the first cameramen entering the concentration camps'.⁶⁶ However, this is not corroborated by other sources: in any event, the official directives to cameramen came from Bernstein. The most fully documented account of the history of the 'German Atrocity Film', that by Kay Gladstone of the Imperial War Museum, suggests that it was in May 1945 that 'Hitchcock's name is first mentioned'.⁶⁷ As Hitchcock – then involved in the preparation of *Notorious* – could not travel to Britain until June, Bernstein sounded out another British director, Sidney Gilliat, to oversee the compilation of the film: Gilliat, however, was committed to a feature film at the time (probably *The Rake's Progress*) and had to decline.⁶⁸ The first confirmation of Hitchcock's involvement comes in a memorandum from Bernstein to the MOI's Finance Division on 23 July:

Mr Alfred Hitchcock has been appointed to direct the film, and he has been working on it since he arrived. He will not take a fee for his work. We find that commissioning of one writer to help Mr Hitchcock in this work would not answer our purpose, and we propose to use more than one writer and/or expert in the preparation of the treatment and commentary. This will also speed up the work. The film is 5/6 reels in length, and the work involved is very considerable.⁶⁹

The two writers recruited to the project were Colin Wills, a war correspondent for the *News Chronicle* who had been present at the liberation of Belsen ('His first-hand

knowledge of the situation is extremely valuable'), and Richard Crossman, deputy editor of the *New Statesman* and a member of the PWD of SHAEF who had also visited the camps ('In addition to having been an eye-witness, his knowledge of German propaganda, German mentality and German language would be invaluable for us'). A third expert was the scientist Professor Solly Zuckerman as 'scientific (and medical) adviser'.⁷⁰

The extent of Hitchcock's role in the preparation of the 'German Atrocity Film' has also been questioned. In his study of the film editor Stewart McAllister, for example, Dai Vaughan avers that he did little more than 'cast his professional eye over the thing and ensure that it would turn out a real film and not a jumble of sequences'.⁷¹ There is evidence, furthermore, that the film was to be cut in order to fit the script rather than the commentary added after compilation of a rough cut. On 16 July 1945, Colin Wills delivered his

treatment and commentary for the Concentration Camp film. In order to place it in your hands before I depart for Paris to-morrow, and so that Mr Hitchcock can get to work at once, seeing his time is so limited, I have been working on it without cease since my last conference with him.⁷²

Nevertheless, it seems that Hitchcock did have a significant input into the film. According to editor Peter Tanner, who worked alongside Hitchcock and Stewart McAllister, when he was interviewed for the British television documentary *A Painful Reminder* (1985),

Hitchcock's main contribution to the film was to try to make it as authentic as possible. It was most important that everybody, particularly the Germans themselves, should believe that this was true, that this horror had happened, that people had suffered to that extent. And I can remember him strolling up and down in the suite at Claridge's and saying, 'How can we make that convincing?' We tried to make shots as long as possible, used panning shots so that there was no possibility of trickery – and going from respected dignitaries or high churchmen straight to the bodies, corpses, so it couldn't be suggested that we were faking the film.⁷³

The use of long takes to preserve spatial integrity was a feature of the realist film theory that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s through the work of the influential French critic André Bazin, as well as a device that Hitchcock would employ, extensively, in *Rope* and, to a lesser extent, in *Under Capricorn* (1949), the two features he made for Transatlantic Pictures, his post-war venture into independent production with Sidney Bernstein.

Hitchcock worked on the 'German Atrocity Film' for around one month (July 1945): by this stage, there were already indications that the production was running into problems. Indeed, Bernstein had complained to his US colleague Davidson Taylor at the end of May that '[the] present production position is most unsatisfactory'. Not only had there been delays in obtaining actuality footage shot by the US Army Pictorial Service but also the footage itself was deemed unsatisfactory: 'The material so far

received is not in line with the directive; it completely lacks the factual, corroborative material which is so necessary.⁷⁴ There is some suggestion that by the summer of 1945 the Americans were less than fully committed to the joint Anglo-US film and may have deliberately held back the best footage to include in their own film about the concentration camps. The first indication of this is a cable from Davidson Taylor to Bernstein on 18 June, when he suggested that Billy Wilder might be available to make the 'atrocities film' in Munich.⁷⁵ This did not meet with the approval of Sergei Nolbandov, who was adamant that the MOI should retain control of the film: 'If I may express an opinion, after my various conversations with Mr Wilder, it would, I think, be preferable from the point of view of the film, if this were to be made here under our supervision.'⁷⁶ Three weeks later William Patterson, head of the OWI's Films Division, told Bernstein that due to 'prior commitments, including joint activities' – this was probably a reference to *The True Glory*, which was then at the editing stage – 'OWI is unable to provide either personnel or facilities for the full length atrocities film ... We have prepared, as you know, a newsreel type compilation on the atrocities material which is being screened in Germany.'⁷⁷ In a follow-up letter, Patterson amplified:

The response to the two reel atrocities film we made for the American zone in Germany has been so satisfying that the informational authorities there have requested us to expand it immediately to three reels ... I feel that this work which we plan to turn out quickly does not conflict with the detailed feature-length documentary you have in hand but will, in fact, complement it by bridging the time gap for you with a newsreel type treatment which will also help prepare the German mind to receive the probing editorial treatment you plan for this all-important subject.⁷⁸

The US film, entitled *Death Mills (Die Todesmühlen)*, evidently took priority for the OWI, and without its involvement in facilitating the release of US-shot actuality footage the planned joint film was always going to be difficult to complete. To this extent the 'German Atrocities Film' became the victim of inter-Allied institutional rivalries and tensions. Although the MOI intended to continue with the film, which was included in its *Catalogue of Films for Liberated Territories* under the title *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* ('This will be a full length, historically documented and definitive account of the German concentration camps as they were uncovered by the British, US and Russian armies of liberation'), in the event the film was not completed and remained in the film archive of the Imperial War Museum until it was broadcast on the Public Broadcasting System in the United States under the title *Memory of the Camps* in May 1985 to mark the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.⁷⁹

Hitchcock's career as a wartime propagandist therefore ended with a whimper rather than a bang: from a purely historical perspective, the 'German Atrocities Film' may have been the most important project he had ever undertaken but its effective suppression meant that its significance as the first major film record of the Holocaust was not recognized until much later. Yet in certain respects it provided a fitting conclusion to Hitchcock's wartime work that had sometimes proved controversial, as in the cases of *Lifeboat* and *Aventure Malgache*, and at other times, as in *Foreign*

Correspondent and *Saboteur*, had been ideologically against the grain. Hitchcock's greatest critical and commercial successes were still ahead of him, but his important, if at times problematic, contributions to wartime propaganda cinema in Britain and the United States show that there is rather more to Hitchcock's achievements than his popular reputation as 'the master of suspense' would suggest.

Notes

- 1 The critical literature on Hitchcock is vast; see Jane A. Sloan, *Alfred Hitchcock: A Guide to References and Resources* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), for a bibliography of books and journal articles that at the time of publication included over 850 items. The classic auteur studies are Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock: The First Forty-Four Films*, transl. Stanley Hochman [1957] (New York, 1988) and Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films* (London, 1965). See also Wood's *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* (New York, 1989). Raymond Durnat's *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock: Or, The Plain Man's Hitchcock* (London, 1974) offers a characteristically idiosyncratic alternative to the critical orthodoxy, while Robert E. Kapsis, *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation* (Chicago, 1992) is a valuable historical study of the critical reception of Hitchcock's films and how he promoted his own biographical legend as 'the master of suspense'.
- 2 Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929–1968* [1968] (New York, 1996), p. 57.
- 3 Rohmer and Chabrol, *The First Forty-Four Films*, p. 114.
- 4 Alain Kerzoncuf and Charles Barr, *Hitchcock Lost and Found: The Forgotten Films* (Lexington, KY, 2015), pp. 123–4.
- 5 For discussion see Tom Ryall, *Alfred Hitchcock and the British Cinema* (London, 1986), pp. 115–40, and Charles Barr, *English Hitchcock* (Moffat, 1999), pp. 132–202.
- 6 *Motion Picture Daily*, 24 June 1935, p. 22.
- 7 See Leonard J. Leff, *Hitchcock and Selznick: The Rich and Strange Collaboration of Alfred Hitchcock and David O. Selznick in Hollywood* (London, 1988), pp. 20–35.
- 8 The phrase 'Gone with the Wind Up' – a reference, of course, to David O. Selznick's production of *Gone with the Wind* (1939) – is generally attributed to the veteran actor Sir Seymour Hicks, though I have been unable to identify the original source.
- 9 Quoted in Charles Barr, 'Deserter or Honored Exile? Views of Hitchcock from Wartime Britain', *Hitchcock Annual*, 13 (2004–5), p. 5.
- 10 Patrick McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light* (Chichester, 2003), p. 198.
- 11 Quoted in Nicholas John Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign against American 'Neutrality' in World War II* (Oxford and New York, 1995), p. 50.
- 12 H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film, 1939–45* (Manchester, 1999).
- 13 Laurence Olivier, George Sanders, Nigel Bruce and C. Aubrey Smith were all British, while Joan Fontaine had British parents but had lived in the United States from childhood.
- 14 Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 157–62.
- 15 Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, Alfred Hitchcock Collection (hereafter AMPAS Hitchcock) f. 238, 'Personal

- History*: Original Story by Alfred Hitchcock and Joan Harrison Suggested by Vincent Sheean's book of the same name, 1st complete line, 20 November 1939, p. 1.
- 16 Ibid. Ian Fleming, the future creator of James Bond, had been a foreign correspondent for the Reuters news agency during the early 1930s – he covered the Moscow show trial of six British engineers from the Metropolitan-Vickers Company accused of espionage in 1933 – and was known for his somewhat affected manner.
- 17 AMPAS Hitchcock f. 239, *Personal History*. Shooting script, undated but including revision pages dated 3 March, 18 March, 26 March, 30 March, 23 April and 24 May 1940.
- 18 Quoted in Susan A. Brewer, *Selling War: British Propaganda in the United States during World War II* (Ithaca, NY, 1997), p. 80.
- 19 *New York Times*, 14 April 1940, p. 129.
- 20 *Harrison's Reports*, 24 August 1940, p. 134.
- 21 *Documentary News Letter*, 1: 12 (1940), p. 6.
- 22 Reading between the lines of the letter, Rotha also seems to have believed, erroneously, that John Grierson had a hand in writing the speech at the end of *Foreign Correspondent*. Grierson, who had established the Empire Marketing Board (later General Post Office) Film Unit in the 1930s, had taken up a new post as head of the National Film Board of Canada shortly after the outbreak of war. Rotha had never been one of Grierson's inner circle: they were not antagonistic but held very different views on the role and nature of documentary.
- 23 *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1940, p. 34.
- 24 Quoted in Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society 1939–52* (London, 1979), p. 14.
- 25 AMPAS Hitchcock f. 631, 'Untitled Original Treatment by Alfred Hitchcock and Joan Harrison', 20 August 1941 (including later pages dated 22 September 1941).
- 26 McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, p. 295.
- 27 AMPAS Hitchcock f. 633, 'Untitled Hitchcock Original. Screen Play by Dorothy Parker, Joan Harrison & Peter Viertel', 12 December 1941.
- 28 Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (London, 1987), pp. 56–60.
- 29 AMPAS MPPA, PCA, *Saboteur*: PCA to Jack H. Skirball, 16 December 1941.
- 30 AMPAS Hitchcock f. 633, 'Untitled Hitchcock Original': 'Blue – Changes', 8 January 1942.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 AMPAS MPPA, PCA, *Saboteur*: PCA to Maurice Pivar, 26 January 1942.
- 33 François Truffaut, with Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock* [1968] (London, rev. edn 1986), pp. 212–14.
- 34 Ibid., p. 205.
- 35 Ibid., pp. 205–6.
- 36 Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York, 1995), p. 159.
- 37 Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *Spy Book: The Encyclopedia of Espionage* (London, 1997), pp. 179–80.
- 38 Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, p. 221.
- 39 Ibid., p. 222.
- 40 Maria A. Judnick, '“The Name of Hitchcock! The Fame of Steinbeck!": The Legacy of *Lifeboat*', in Mark Osteen (ed.), *Hitchcock and Adaptation: On the Page and Screen* (Lanham, MD, 2014), pp. 193–4.

- 41 Quoted in Jackson Benson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer* (New York, 1984), p. 542.
- 42 McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, pp. 335–6.
- 43 Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 312–13.
- 44 *New York Times*, 23 January 1944, p. X3.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Robin Wood, 'Hitchcock and Fascism', *Hitchcock Annual*, 13 (2004–5), p. 59.
- 47 James Chapman, 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943) Reconsidered', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 15: 1 (1995), pp. 19–54.
- 48 McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, p. 346.
- 49 Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, p. 228.
- 50 Leff, *Hitchcock and Selznick*, pp. 122–3.
- 51 The National Archives, Kew, London (hereafter TNA), INF 1/636, *Catalogue of Films for Liberated Territories* (MOI, September 1945).
- 52 Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, p. 228.
- 53 Kerzoncuf and Barr, *Hitchcock Lost and Found*, p. 157.
- 54 Truffaut, *Hitchcock*, pp. 228–30. In fact, *Bon Voyage* was a three-reeler (2,415 feet).
- 55 TNA, INF 6/2470, F. W. Coldham to Mr Wheeler, 7 October 1963.
- 56 *Ibid.*, Mr White to Mr Kelly, 14 August 1979.
- 57 See Brett Wood, 'Foreign Correspondence: The Rediscovered War Films of Alfred Hitchcock', *Film Comment*, 29: 4 (1993), pp. 54–8; Sidney Gottlieb, 'Hitchcock's Wartime Work: *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*', *Hitchcock Annual*, 3 (1994), pp. 158–67; and Justin Gustainis and Deborah Jay DeSilva, 'Archetypes as Propaganda in Alfred Hitchcock's "Lost" World War II Films', *Film and History*, 27: 1 (1997), pp. 80–7.
- 58 TNA, INF 1/636, Sergei Nolbandov to George Archibald, 22 February 1945.
- 59 *Ibid.*, Archibald to Welch (MOI), 23 February 1945.
- 60 *Ibid.*, Nolbandov to Ronald Tritton (War Office), 20 April 1945.
- 61 *Ibid.*, Sidney Bernstein to Paul Wyand, 22 April 1945.
- 62 *Ibid.*, PWD SHAEF MAIN to 21 Army Group, 27 April 1945.
- 63 *Ibid.*, Handwritten note by Archibald headed 'Approved' on memo from Nolbandov, 21 April 1945.
- 64 *Ibid.*, PWD SHAEF MAIN to PWD SHAEF REAR, 27 April 1945.
- 65 *Ibid.*, Bernstein to Lt Col J. R. Foss (US Army Film, Music and Theatre General Section), no date.
- 66 McGilligan, *Alfred Hitchcock*, p. 373.
- 67 Kay Gladstone, 'Separate Intentions: The Allied Screening of Concentration Camp Documentaries in Defeated Germany in 1945–46: *Death Mills* and *Memories of the Camps*', in Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (eds), *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933* (London, 2005), p. 54.
- 68 TNA, INF 1/636, Sidney Gilliat to Bernstein, 25 May 1945.
- 69 *Ibid.*, Bernstein to O'Connell (MOI), 23 July 1945.
- 70 *Ibid.*
- 71 Dai Vaughan, *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor* (London, 1983), p. 155.
- 72 TNA, INF 1/636, Colin Wills to Nolbandov, 16 July 1945.
- 73 Quoted in Kerzoncuf and Barr, *Hitchcock Lost and Found*, p. 186.
- 74 TNA, INF 1/636, Bernstein to Davidson Taylor, 30 May 1945.
- 75 *Ibid.*, Taylor to Bernstein, 18 June 1945.

- 76 Ibid., Nolbandov to Bernstein, 20 June 1945.
- 77 Ibid., William D. Patterson to Bernstein, 9 July 1945.
- 78 Ibid., Patterson to Bernstein, 16 July 1945. Patterson's letter concludes, 'Monty advises that because of our production program for Germany, he has no-one to spare to assist you on this full-length film.' It is unclear whether the 'Monty' referred to is Field Marshal Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, the field commander of SHAEF, though if it was indeed Montgomery then it is ironic in the extreme that he should have driven the final nail into the coffin of the 'German Atrocity Film'.
- 79 Kerzoncuf and Barr, *Hitchcock Lost and Found*, p. 184.

The films we forgot to remember: The other side of Second World War propaganda

Jeffrey Richards

The received view of British wartime cinema was established as early as 1947 when Roger Manvell wrote that 'the war film discovered the common denominator of the British people'. He pointed to 1942 as the turning point in the emergence of a new populist documentary-style British cinema to replace the outdated and class-bound melodramas of the early war years. The keynote of the films from 1942 to 1945 was seen to be strict accuracy in the depiction of warfare; the highlighting of personal issues of 'comradeship, bravery, fear, tension, endurance, skill, boredom and hard work'; the absence of blatant heroics and jingoistic self-display; and a projection of a national image of reticence, wry humour and stolid determination.¹

Manvell proposed a canon of quality British films which in pursuit of this ideal had succeeded in creating a peculiarly British cinematic poetry. Among war films, he singled out *In Which We Serve* (1943), *The First of the Few* (1942), *The Gentle Sex* (1943), *Millions Like Us* (1943), *San Demetrio-London* (1944), *The Way Ahead* (1944) and *The Way to the Stars* (1945) and, among non-war films, *The Stars Look Down* (1939), *The Proud Valley* (1940), *Love on the Dole* (1941), *This Happy Breed* (1944), *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945) and *Brief Encounter* (1945). The common features of these films were realistic contemporary settings, ordinary people and emotional restraint.

Manvell's pantheon constituted just the sort of film productions that the Ministry of Information (MOI), overseer of British wartime cinema, required for propaganda purposes both at home and abroad. It was the ministry which formulated and promoted the concept of 'The People's War' and encouraged the production of films dramatizing the themes of how we fight, why we fight and the need for sacrifice if the war is to be won.² These are the films that are regularly revived and are part of the collective memory of wartime cinema. But there was another side to wartime cinema, produced by the commercial film industry in Britain and the United States, a vast hinterland of films that remain unknown, unseen and are never revived. They are the films we forgot to remember.

Many of them are B pictures because they could respond quickly and on short shooting schedules to current events and they aimed to take their stories directly from the headlines. However, this topicality and the changing fortunes of the war sometimes

caught the film-makers out. *49th Parallel* (1941) was made with the explicit intention of bringing the United States into the war. By the time the film was completed and released, the United States was already in the war. *Let George Do It* (1940) was set in unoccupied Norway; by the time the film came out, Norway had been occupied. Then there is *Chetniks!*, produced by the 20th Century Fox B unit in 1943. The foreword sets out the film's political position:

This picture is respectfully dedicated to Draja Mihailovich and his fighting Chetniks – those fearless guerrillas who have dedicated their lives with a grim determination that no rest shall prevail until the final Allied victory, and the liberation after resurrection of their beloved fatherland – Yugoslavia – has been achieved.

The real-life figure of General Mihailovich, the leader of the Chetniks – the royalist guerrillas opposing the German occupation of Yugoslavia – was played by the Dutch actor Philip Dorn. He is shown in the film nobly and heroically resisting the Germans under Gestapo Colonel Bockner (played by Martin Kosleck, Hollywood's perennial Goebbels lookalike). He rescues prisoners being transported to a concentration camp, supplies food to the starving local population and relieves his home town from German occupation. The film ends with Mihailovich, flanked by two Orthodox priests, announcing that he will fight on until Yugoslavia is liberated. Unfortunately for the film, in 1943 the Allies shifted their support from the royalist Chetniks, accused of collaborating with the Nazis, to the Communist partisans under Marshal Tito. Mihailovich was eventually captured and executed by the partisans, as a collaborator and a traitor. This seriously limited the film's reissue value.

British relations with France have been problematic since at least the Hundred Years War. The situation was exacerbated by the French Revolution. Before Hitler, Napoleon was Britain's biggest bogeyman. In the nineteenth century, war with France was far more likely than war with Germany. But it was in the interests of Britain and the Free French to boost the idea of French resistance to the Nazis. The authorities were sufficiently aware of French sensitivities to veto the proposed film version of Shaw's *Saint Joan*, deeming it impolitic to remind the French that the English had burned their national saint alive, albeit in the Middle Ages.³

After the fall of France, the tendency both in US and British films was to focus on the heroic resistance to the Nazi occupiers, in films such as *Paris Calling* (1941), *Paris after Dark* (1943) and *Paris Underground* (1945). But one film took a different and decidedly downbeat view of the French and that is another never revived film. *This Was Paris* (1942), made in Britain by Warner Bros, is devoted totally to showing how a fifth column infiltrated and demoralized France, softening her up for conquest. The focus is on a British intelligence agent Captain Bill Hamilton (Griffith Jones), investigating a Paris fashion house, suspected of fifth-column activities. The house is run by a German, Madame Florian, and backed by a Dutch businessman (who is in fact a German agent) and a French aristocrat (Count de la Vague) who at one stage explains that he believes in Franco-German cooperation to oppose the spread of communism. Hamilton joins forces with US dress designer Anne Morgan (Ann Dvorak) to thwart

the fifth columnists. But they fail. The Germans invade, the disillusioned Count shoots himself and Anne and Bill join refugees fleeing from Paris. The film ends with the title 'France will rise again.' But the picture it paints of France is almost wholly negative.

Then there is *The Man from Morocco* (1944). Directed by German Jewish émigré Max Greene (real name Mutz Greenbaum), written by Austrian Jewish émigré Rudolph Cartier (real name Rudolf Kacser) and starring Austrian Jewish émigré Anton Walbrook (real name Adolf Wohlbrück), *The Man from Morocco* (1944) is a hard-hitting anti-Fascist thriller featuring members of the International Brigade (described as 'the vanguard of the United Nations'), led by Czech sculptor Karel Langer (Anton Walbrook) and including a Scot, a Canadian, a Dutchman, an Austrian, a Russian and a black American. The film begins in the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and moves on to an internment camp run by a sadistic French fascist in 1939, thence to forced labour on the railway in French Morocco from where Langer escapes to London with a list of loyal Frenchmen for the Free French and finally to North Africa after the Allied landings in 1942 for a final reckoning with the French fascist villain. It is a rarely seen example of a film utilizing the Spanish Civil War as a background, and highlighting French fascism. There are a couple of sympathetic French characters (the doctor who dies helping Langer escape from Morocco, the camp guard who won't use his Christian name Pierre because he shares it with the Vichy prime minister, Laval). But the principal French character is the ruthless fascist camp commandant, Captain Ricardi.

Both Britain and Hollywood had largely steered clear of the Spanish Civil War when it was actually being fought. The only serious film on the subject, *Blockade* (1938), scripted by an avowed communist, John Howard Lawson, was so completely emasculated that it is never made clear which side is which.

Another controversial aspect of Britain's relationship with France was the bombardment and effective destruction by the Royal Navy of the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir on 3 July 1940, which followed France's surrender to Germany on 22 June and was intended to deny a military asset to the enemy. In this operation, 1,297 French naval personnel were killed and it created great hostility towards the British.

This formed the background to a pacy B picture made in Hollywood by 20th Century Fox – *Tonight We Raid Calais* (1943). British commando Geoffrey Carter (John Sutton) is landed on the French coast with the mission to identify a Germany factory producing anti-tank shells and to signal its presence to a Royal Air Force (RAF) raid. He seeks refuge with a French peasant family the Bonnards but encounters hostility from the daughter of the family Odette (Annabella) because her brother Pierre, serving with the French Navy, was killed in the naval bombardment. Pierre's wife then died in childbirth and the Bonnards are now raising his baby. She continually wants to give Carter up to the Germans but her father insists that he pose as Pierre in order to complete his mission. When the Germans arrest her parents, the Germans promise her their lives if she gives up the Briton. She does but then the commandant forces her to watch her parents – along with other neighbours – being shot by firing squad. She now turns to vengeance against the Germans, and together with a widow and her three daughters, helps Carter escape. They set fire to the fields to signal the location of the factory, which is duly bombed by the RAF; Carter returns to England with the baby, and the women remain to fight. The moral is that whatever the British did, the

Germans are much worse. It presses all the right emotional buttons. Germans shoot the local village priest and later torture prisoners and execute old men and women. One of the Germans seeks sex from Odette in return for privileges. At the start when Carter is asked where his home is, he replies 'Coventry'. Nothing more needs to be said. The audience know what Coventry means.

Republic Pictures, who were best known for B westerns, made a contribution to the war effort with a trio of films set in Britain, tackling subjects no one else did. The most remarkable of the three is *Secrets of Scotland Yard* (1944). At the time when codebreaking was a closely guarded secret, Republic made a film about British codebreakers, based in Room 40 of the Admiralty. It opens in Berlin in 1918 with the German High Command declaring that they have been beaten by the British codebreakers and when the next war comes, they must have an agent in Room 40. Cut to 1939, war is declared and the codebreakers are at work in Room 40. They listen to the King's speech on the radio – an authentic recording – and stand for the national anthem before getting to work, with blackboards and chalk deciphering the German messages. With the exception of one newly recruited woman, not very graciously received, they are tweedy, pipe-smoking, tea-drinking middle-class Englishmen. The code-deciphering scenes punctuate the film. The somewhat fanciful plot has codebreaker John Usher (Edgar Barrier) murdered and his place taken by his identical twin brother, a Scotland Yard inspector, who eventually solves the murder of his brother and later of Sir Christopher Pelt (C. Aubrey Smith), head of Room 40, and unmasks the traitor, Waterlow (Lionel Atwill), the man who had taken over from Pelt and is half-German. The film is given a topical edge by references to the sinking of the *Athenia* and the pursuit of the *Graf Spee* and culminates in the saving from sabotage of a plane-load of top brass flying to Warsaw for a high-level meeting. Room 40 of the Admiralty became celebrated as the centre of government codebreaking during the First World War. But in fact in 1919 it was merged with the War Office cryptographic branch and renamed the Government Code and Cypher School and by 1939 was located in Bletchley Park, whose activities remained secret not only during the war but also for decades after it. Denison Clift, the scriptwriter of *Secrets of Scotland Yard*, has merely projected forward to 1939 the codebreaking situation from 1918. The US Office of War Information (OWI) submitted the project to the British MOI that apparently raised no objection to it, as it hardly reflected current codebreaking practices.

During the war, the National Gallery evacuated its art treasures to a salt mine in North Wales and Republic's *Scotland Yard Investigator* (1945) has a wealthy, deranged art collector Carl Hoffmeyer (Erich von Stroheim) steal the *Mona Lisa* from the mine. Sir James Collinson, Director of the National Gallery, played by the recently knighted Sir C. Aubrey Smith, retrieves it and returns it to the director of the Louvre. The *Mona Lisa* was hidden from the Nazis during the occupation but not in Wales. It was moved from place to place within France.

In February 1942, the British newspapers were full of the story of a serial killer, dubbed 'The Blackout Ripper', who murdered four prostitutes in the space of a few weeks. He was caught, turned out to be RAF officer cadet Gordon Frederick Cummins and was hanged.⁴ Republic rushed out a lively B picture, *The London Blackout Murders* (1942), but with a twist. The victims of the man dubbed 'The Blackout Jack the Ripper'

are all traitors or subversives working for the Germans and seeking to influence the British government to go for a negotiated peace. The culprit turns out to be a doctor – Jack Rawlings – who after a trial in a basement courtroom during an air raid (an authentic touch) is condemned to death and told by the judge that the law is the basis of the civilization they are fighting for. He embraces his fate willingly. The film confronts the ethics of killing your enemies by extrajudicial means. It attracted the attention of Ulric Bell of the OWI, who was particularly concerned by the implication that the British government might consider a negotiated peace. He recommended denying the film an export licence, to prevent it being shown in Britain. But Republic had cannily acquired an export licence before the OWI saw it and the Office of Censorship was unwilling to withdraw it.⁵

Rumour was one of the problems that the government in wartime faced because of its effect on morale. In the early years of the war, several powerful rumours gained currency: that Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose and elements of the government had fled to Canada, that General Gamelin, the French commander, had committed suicide and that the Germans were preparing to install the Duke of Windsor as a puppet ruler. The Home Intelligence unit reported,

The rumour situation is becoming so serious that it becomes imperative for the whole matter to be discussed in detail. It is useless to warn people against *repeating rumours*; most people only repeat what they believe to be true and they repeat it because they have nothing more positive to talk about.

So an Anti-Lies Bureau was set up to counter false rumours. Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 5 July 1940 ordered the MOI that ‘a wide campaign should be immediately put in hand against the dangers of rumour’. This led to a poster campaign urging people to ‘join Britain’s Silent Column’ and to ‘keep it under your hat’.⁶

But some rumours proved fruitful plot devices for films. One was the persistent rumour that German agents were transmitting information through musical codes over the radio. This provided the central plot point to such espionage films as *Let George Do It* (1940), *International Lady* (1941) and *They Met in the Dark* (1943). But one figure who gained a reputation for omniscience and whose reports were initially much discussed was ‘Lord Haw-Haw’, William Joyce, an Irish-American Mosleyite fascist who went to Germany and became a major propaganda broadcaster from 1939 to 1945, delivering news in English in a drawling upper-class voice. At one time, an estimated 50 per cent of radio listeners tuned in to his broadcasts. He became a character in films in his own right. In *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), the great detective seeks to solve the question of Lord Haw-Haw-type broadcasts by the ‘Voice of Terror’ predicting acts of sabotage, bombing raids and so forth with uncanny accuracy. Holmes (Basil Rathbone) proves the broadcasts are coming from England and the ‘Voice of Terror’ is Sir Evan Barham (Reginald Denny), a member of the Inner Intelligence Council, who is really Heinrich Von Bork, German master spy.

Columbia Pictures’ *Appointment in Berlin* (1943) worked a twist on this by making the broadcaster a double agent. Wing Commander Keith Wilson (George Sanders) is first seen in 1938 denouncing Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement and because of

this is recruited into counter-espionage. He is disgraced and sent to prison for trying to obtain secret military information, a situation contrived by the authorities to endear him to the Germans. He defects to Germany and starts broadcasting anti-British propaganda as 'The Voice of Truth'. But in fact he is sending secret information in code to British intelligence in the broadcasts. He is about to be exposed when he learns the starting point for the planned invasion of Britain, so he flees to Holland, hijacks a plane, flies towards England, broadcasting the location – the Frisian Islands – before he is shot down. The RAF destroy the invasion force and he gets a posthumous medal.

But William Joyce himself is a character in *Passport to Destiny* (1944), an endearing curiosity in which a cockney charwoman Ella Muggins (Elsa Lanchester) travels to Germany with the intention of killing Hitler. She gets a job as a cleaner in the Reich Chancellery and there encounters Lord Haw-Haw himself (Gavin Muir). He is told by his German superior that he is to be taken off the air as the British people no longer believe his broadcasts. He begs Ella to help him escape from Germany but is arrested before he can get away. Ella teams up with two anti-Nazi Germans; they are arrested but escape when the prison where they are being held is bombed by the RAF. They hijack a plane and fly to England.

Radio messages also figure in *Berlin Correspondent* (1942), a fast-moving, far-fetched, comparatively light-hearted B picture from 20th Century Fox, which nevertheless includes some grim realities (concentration camp, torture, euthanasia). A US news correspondent Bill Roberts (Dana Andrews) is broadcasting from Berlin to the United States in November 1941, just before the United States enters the war. He paints an upbeat picture of conditions in Germany. He declares that there are no air raids on Berlin, only for his broadcast to be interrupted by one. But he is also broadcasting accurate information by code to his newspaper which then publishes the truth. Colonel von Rau of the Gestapo (Martin Kosleck) seeks the source of the information the newspaper is printing. He traces the source to an anti-Nazi German called Rudolf Hauen who is arrested and tortured but will not speak. So he is sent to an insane asylum where 'mercy killings' eliminate the unfit and the subversive. Bill rescues Hauen from the asylum but is then himself arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp. The Nazis are planning to use an actor to impersonate Bill's voice on the radio and make him into 'an American Lord Haw-Haw'. But Bill escapes from the concentration camp, drives to Berlin in a breakneck car chase and, together with Hauen's daughter Karen, with whom he is now in love, he hijacks a German plane and flies to freedom, having heard the news of Pearl Harbor.

The contribution of the film-making team of Herbert Wilcox and Anna Neagle to the war effort was a series of escapist musicals (*Irene*, *Sunny* and *No, No, Nanette*) and a brace of uplifting dramas about female heroines with Anna in the leading roles. She played the title role in *Nurse Edith Cavell* (1939), the story of the woman shot by the Germans in the First World War for helping Allied prisoners to escape, and she played pioneer aviatrix Amy Johnson in *They Flew Alone* (United States: *Wings and the Woman*) (1941). There was one oddity among these offerings and that is the little remembered but ingenious thriller *The Yellow Canary* (1943). Deftly scripted by Miles Malleon and DeWitt Bodeen, it was given a breathless topicality by the incorporation of contemporary events such as the bombing of Buckingham Palace by a lone German

raider in September 1940 and the evacuation of women and children to Canada. Set in 1940, the film had Anna Neagle cast against type as Sally Maitland, an apparent Nazi sympathizer, recruited by a German spy ring in Canada. The character of Sally was evidently inspired by the upper-class English fascist sympathizer Unity Mitford. Sally is the socialite daughter of an admiral, had spent the late 1930s in Germany and had returned to England to voice opposition to the war and admiration for Hitler. She is dubbed 'Ribbentrop's Girlfriend' and 'Sally from Unter Den Linden' and is shunned by the public. She is deported to Canada. There she is courted by a charming Polish officer Jan Orlok (Albert Lieven) who turns out to be a leading figure in a German spy ring, planning to blow up Britain's Atlantic convoy in the harbour of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Once she is made aware of the plan, Sally is revealed as a British agent and she succeeds in foiling the plot, with the aid of British intelligence agent Lieutenant Commander Jim Garrick, played by Richard Greene, who was released by the Army specially to play the part in what was evidently regarded as a film with particular propaganda value.

The film contains several messages for audiences. It stresses the role of the Commonwealth, with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canadian naval intelligence cooperating with British intelligence to thwart the German plot. It warns against the danger of fifth columnists with Canadian hotel workers, customs officers and Polish refugees revealed to be working for the Germans. It demonstrates the calmness of the British under fire, with an opening scene in which two members of the Observer Corps discuss whether or not Bacon wrote the plays of Shakespeare while they watch for German bombers approaching London and Cyril Fletcher performs comic monologues in a night club while an air raid is in progress.

The extent to which Anna Neagle's role wrong-footed audiences is revealed by a story she tells in her autobiography:

I was so busy that I did not see the finished film for nearly a year. Then I caught up with a *matinée* performance in Newcastle. Sitting in front of me were two ladies, one very elderly and rather deaf, so that her companion was constantly explaining what the film was about, to the accompaniment of low moans from her elderly friend. 'Oh no. Tch-tch', she muttered, 'Oh dear me *no*, Anna Neagle would never do that.' When I finally appeared in my WRNS uniform, and all was made clear, she gave a very relieved sigh. 'There', she said, turning in triumph to her patient neighbour, 'I *told* you Anna Neagle wouldn't do things like that.'⁷

What of the topics that did not appear? The greatest dearth of film subjects is the extermination of the Jews. The question of how much was known about the Holocaust, when it was known and how far it was believed is still a matter of heated debate. From an exhaustive investigation of the evidence, Richard Breitman has argued,

The press published considerable information about Nazi mass killings and government insiders had access to additional reports and conversations. But many people could not 'know' something that tested the limits of their comprehension. For some it did not register until the end of the war, when photographs and newsreels provided gripping images of the horror.⁸

Almost from the start of the war, there were mass shootings of Jews by *Einsatzgruppen* (operational groups) and *Ordnungspolizei* (order-keeping police) in occupied Poland, Bohemia, Ukraine and Russia, although the Nazis sought to keep the extent of the atrocities a secret. Allied access to intercepted German radio intelligence exchanges and detailed reports from Polish and Czech underground sources confirmed the reality of these mass shootings. There were regular reports particularly in the US newspapers detailing what was going on. In November 1941, the *New York Journal American* reported on the murder of 52,000 people in Kiev and in March 1942 the *New York Times* reported that the Gestapo had murdered 240,000 Jews deported from Germany and the Eastern Ukraine.⁹

Soon after the decision by the Nazis to implement systematically the 'final solution', generally believed to date from the Wannsee Conference in 1942, the Allies were receiving evidence of the construction of extermination camps at Auschwitz and Treblinka. On 15 November 1942, the Polish underground reported that tens of thousands of Jews and Soviet prisoners of war had arrived at Auschwitz 'for the sole purpose of their immediate extermination in gas chambers'.¹⁰ This report went initially to the Polish government in exile in London and was passed on to the Allied governments. It was evidence like this that convinced the Allies to issue in December 1942 the first official declaration accepting the reality of the 'final solution'. Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union confirmed that the Germans were carrying out Hitler's intention to exterminate the Jews of Europe, condemned their actions and pledged themselves to punish those responsible. The declaration did not, however, mention the gas chambers. Foreign Secretary Sir Anthony Eden read out this statement in the House of Commons on 17 December 1942, denouncing the 'barbarous and inhuman treatment of the Jews', and the MPs stood for two minutes' silence. Leading British newspapers reported that over a million Jews had been murdered since the start of the war. The 'final solution' was thereafter regularly reported. In 1944, for instance, President Roosevelt called the 'wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe ... one of the blackest crimes of all history'.¹¹

So why did the cinema not make more of this? First, there was still anti-Semitism in British and US society. George Orwell reported, 'It is generally admitted that anti-Semitism is on the increase, that it has been greatly exacerbated by the war, and that humane and enlightened people are not immune from it'.¹² In the United States, an opinion poll in 1942 showed that 40 per cent of Americans believed that the Jews had too much power and 18 per cent supported Hitler's measures against them. US anti-Semitism grew worse during the war.¹³ Senior officials, perhaps influenced by anti-Semitism, in Britain and the United States persisted in thinking the atrocity reports exaggerated and for a long time doubted the existence of the 'final solution'. Second, after the exposure of some First World War atrocity stories as myths, people were inclined to regard such claims with scepticism. Third, traditionally Hollywood had sought to avoid depictions of the Jews. The movie moguls, most of them Jewish, did not want to draw attention to their Jewishness fearing that to highlight Jewish life or Jewish heroes might provoke an anti-Semitic backlash. Famously the 1937 Warner Bros. film *The Life of Emile Zola*, which dealt with the Dreyfus affair, made no mention of the anti-Semitism that lay behind it and had no character utter the word 'Jew'. The only

mogul to make films that were wholeheartedly and unapologetically pro-Semitic was Darryl F. Zanuck and he was the only studio boss who was not Jewish. His productions *Disraeli* (1929), *The House of Rothschild* (1934) and much later *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) stand out by virtue of their rarity. The timidity of the film industry seems to have continued into the war, despite the compelling evidence of anti-Jewish persecution.

Lester Friedman emphasized the economic motivation of the moguls in his book *Hollywood's Image of the Jew*:

Since they knew films with Jewish characters would prove difficult to market overseas, even if these characters lived in fictive locales and existed centuries ago, the Hollywood chieftains hedged their bets by creating as many nationless, raceless and religionless characters as possible. Like the hard-headed businessmen they were, studio heads usually placed their pocket books above their principles or even their personal convictions. This fact, at least in part, accounts for the lack of screen Jews in the thirties, since the inclusion of even minor Jewish characters might well eliminate a film from distribution in the lucrative markets abroad.¹⁴

During the 1930s, 40 per cent of Hollywood companies' revenues came from overseas distribution and every country had its censorship code. Once the Nazis came to power in Germany, all films featuring Jewish themes and Jewish actors were routinely banned.

The uncertainty of markets abroad contributed to the evaporation of Jews from American movie screens, but it was not the only cause. At home, the market for films about Jews seemed equally small. Thirties studio heads believed films with Jewish characters in central roles were too specialized, too exotic, for their now largely Gentile audiences.¹⁵

Concentration camps featured in films such as *Escape* (1940), *Pastor Hall* (1940), *Pimpernel Smith* (1941), *Berlin Correspondent* (1942), *The Seventh Cross* (1944) and *The Mortal Storm* (1940), but not extermination camps. On the whole, wartime propaganda depicted the Japanese as infinitely more bestial and sadistic than the Germans. It was not until after the war that cinema in Britain and the United States acknowledged the extermination camps in *Frieda* (1947) and in Orson Welles's *The Stranger* (1946). Only one full-length British feature film dealt with the persecution of the Jews in Germany and it has been completely forgotten and never revived. Directed by Harold French and based on a novel by the Jewish writer Louis Golding, *Mr. Emmanuel* (1944) is set in 1936 and features the journey of elderly Jew Isaac Emmanuel (played by Felix Aylmer with great dignity and sensitivity) from the north of England to Germany to discover the fate of the mother of a German boy refugee, suicidal because of the lack of news about his mother. His father had been killed by the Nazis because of his 'political views' (presumably left-wing). When Emmanuel traces the mother, she is now married to a high Nazi official and rejects her son; so Emmanuel tells the boy she too is dead. There are some implausibilities in the film. Emmanuel, after several beatings by the Gestapo, looks unmarked and a subplot features a Jewish singer, mistress of a Nazi minister, who helps Emmanuel to get out of Germany. The minister in an authentic echo of

Goebbels actually says when challenged about the mistress: 'I am the one who decides who is a Jew and who is not.' But the film paints a grimly realistic picture of the state of fear, terror and suspicion existing in German society in the years before the war with the torture and execution of Jewish prisoners by the Gestapo dramatized. By contrast, Emmanuel is fully accepted in British society.

The nearest US equivalent of *Mr. Emmanuel* is *Address Unknown* (1944), based on a bestselling book by Kressman Taylor. Directed by the celebrated art director William Cameron Menzies, it is very much a designer's film. Shot entirely in the studio and utilizing highly stylized sets and settings, expressionist lighting and intense brooding close-ups, it provides an appropriately stark and alienating context for Paul Lukas's outstanding psychological study of a decent man, corrupted by ambition and opportunism and eventually destroyed by his terror of the regime he has supported. Set like *Mr. Emmanuel* in the 1930s, it opens in San Francisco, where German Martin Schultz (Paul Lukas) and his Jewish partner Max Eisenstein (Morris Carnovsky) run an art gallery. They are hoping that their respective children will marry. But Max's daughter Griselle (K. T. Stevens) wants first to establish herself as an actress on the German stage. Martin also returns to Germany to purchase paintings and there falls under the influence of the suavely sinister Baron von Freische (Carl Esmond) who draws him into the Nazi regime by explaining Hitler's mission to spearhead national regeneration. Martin gets a job at the Ministry of Culture and writes to Max explaining that Hitler is good for Germany and the Jew-baiting of the regime is a minor aberration. As we hear his words spoken, we see Jews cowering in the ruins of their shop wrecked by Brownshirts. Eventually, Martin writes to terminate their communication on the grounds that Max is a Jew.

The most powerful sequence in the film follows. Griselle is rehearsing in a play, which resembles Max Reinhardt's celebrated production *The Miracle*. In a cathedral set, surrounded by nuns, Griselle recites the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount ('Blessed are the meek, etc.). She is interrupted by an officious Nazi censor who demands that the lines be cut. But during the actual performance, she restores them. The censor stands up in the audience, denouncing her as a Jew, and the audience storm the stage, clawing at the safety curtain which has been lowered to get at the hated Jew. She flees and is later seen staggering across a muddy field, pursued by Stormtroopers with dogs. She reaches Martin's villa and seeks sanctuary but he turns her away and locks the door. There is a burst of gunfire, signalling her death, and just a bloody palm print on the wall to proclaim her fate. Martin writes Max a curt one-line note to tell him his daughter is dead. But his life begins to unravel as he receives a series of letters, apparently in code, implicating him in Resistance activities. He swears that he is not involved but is dismissed from his job and placed under surveillance. His wife leaves him and takes the children to Switzerland. He writes to Max, whom he suspects of sending the letters, begging him to stop writing. But still they come. He contemplates suicide but then hears the Gestapo arriving to arrest him. A final letter from the United States is returned marked 'Address Unknown'. Max, it turns out, has not sent them. They were sent by Martin's son Heinrich to avenge the death of Griselle, whom he loved.

Then there is desertion, a subject rarely treated in wartime films – and if so, as in *Waterloo Road* (1945) or *The Way Ahead* (1944), explained on compassionate grounds.

By October 1944, 80,000 men from the Army alone had gone absent without leave. The peak year 1941 saw one in ten of the entire armed forces deserting.¹⁶ The most hard-hitting film to tackle the subject was 20th Century Fox's adaptation of Eric Knight's novel *This Above All* (1942), the title a quotation from *Hamlet*: 'This above all, to thine own self be true.' The film focuses on working-class Clive Briggs (Tyrone Power), who joined up on the first day of the war and served in France but has now deserted. He reasons that what England means to him is poverty, hunger, men begging for work, his experience in the 1930s. He believes this is what it will be like after the war too. He meets an upper-class girl, Prudence Cathaway (Joan Fontaine), who has joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and who tries to explain what England really means and how Germany cannot be allowed to win. He goes on the run but an encounter with a one-armed rector and a discussion on faith clears his mind. He determines to rejoin the Army, fight for victory over Germany and then fight for a better England after the war. The film articulates, tackles and resolves the question of a class-divided society and the need for all classes to unite to defeat the enemy.

Another Hollywood film on a subject not tackled in British cinemas is *The Hour before the Dawn* (1944). This completely forgotten and never revived film, based on a novel by Somerset Maugham, explores the even thornier question of conscientious objection. In the Second World War, 59,192 people in the UK claimed to be conscientious objectors: only 3,577 were given unconditional exemption. Half were registered on condition they took up approved work, generally in agriculture. A fifth, 12,204, were turned down altogether and were liable for call-up.¹⁷ In *The Hour before the Dawn* deputy headmaster Jim Hetherington (Franchot Tone) becomes a pacifist, for reasons of boyhood psychological trauma rather than principle. He goes before a tribunal and then seeks work in agriculture. He endures insults, white feathers and rejection by society. He marries an Austrian refugee Dora (a miscast Veronica Lake) but she is in fact a Nazi agent, and when one of her friends gets Jim to contact pre-war appeaser Sir Leslie Buchanan about the possibility of arranging a negotiated armistice with Germany, Buchanan declares they are all behind Churchill now and appeasement is dead. Jim becomes suspicious and eventually finds his wife signalling Nazi bombers on their way to destroy the aerodrome where his brother serves as a wing commander. In the book, he strangles her and then shoots himself. The film required a more upbeat ending so after he kills her, Jim overcomes his pacifist scruples, enlists in the RAF and is last seen flying on a bombing raid to the strains of 'There'll Always Be an England'. The film carefully details the plight of the conscientious objector but, as with that of the deserter, resolves it in favour of commitment to the war effort.

These are just some of the films we forgot to remember; they give a much more complex and varied picture of wartime cinema than the one to which we have become accustomed.

Notes

- 1 Roger Manvell in Michael Balcon et al., *Twenty Years of British Film 1925–1945* (London, 1947), pp. 84–5.

- 2 Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford, 1986); James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939–1945* (London, 1998).
- 3 Donald P. Costello, *The Serpent's Eye: Shaw and the Cinema* (Notre Dame, IN, 1965), p. 112.
- 4 Donald Thomas, *An Underworld at War: Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers & Civilians in the Second World War* (London, 2003).
- 5 H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film, 1939–45* (Manchester, 1999), p. 194.
- 6 Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London, 1979), pp. 80–1.
- 7 Anna Neagle, *There's Always Tomorrow: An Autobiography* (London, 1974), pp. 143–4.
- 8 Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York, 1998), p. 8.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 12 Cited in Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–45* (London, 1969), pp. 574–7.
- 13 Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (London, 1987), p. 283.
- 14 Lester Friedman, *Hollywood's Image of the Jew* (New York, 1982), p. 84.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Calder, *The People's War*, pp. 388–9.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 571.

The Special Operations Executive and covert propaganda during the Greco-Italian War, 1940–1

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On 26 May 1940, Major Ian Pirie arrived in Athens from Egypt, ostensibly as head of Air Raid Precautions (ARP), but in fact as second-in-command of Section D, which would carry out propaganda, sabotage and other such irregular warfare activities. Pirie's post-war account of these activities provides much of the material for this chapter.¹

In July 1940, following the German occupation of France and the Dunkirk evacuation, a new secret organization – the Special Operations Executive (SOE) – was officially formed from the amalgamation of existing espionage and sabotage groups such as Section D of MI6 and MI(R). The purpose of the new organization, which was headed by Minister of Economic Warfare Hugh Dalton, was to 'co-ordinate all action by way of subversion, sabotage and underground propaganda against the enemy overseas.'² It was divided into Section SO1, responsible for the coordination of subversion and black propaganda, and Section SO2, responsible for sabotage and, at the same time, for providing the means for carrying it out.³ The secret organization, which was ordered by Churchill to 'set Europe ablaze', aimed to prepare, support and encourage the people of occupied Europe to resist. This necessitated great caution because of the difficulty in recruiting suitable agents and acquiring materials like radio transmitters, explosives and small arms.

Greece had several advantages over the rest of the Balkans in respect of the recruitment of agents. In July 1940, it was still a free country professing neutrality and so preparations could be made relatively easily for post-occupation resistance in advance of a German attack; and it held a somewhat romantic appeal to young British candidates seeking 'an ideal escape from peacetime routine or frustrations.'⁴ According to Antony Beevor, 'the diversity of their characters should be a warning against too simple an analysis. They ranged from Philhellenic dons to well-connected thugs, with many variations in between including a handful of good regular soldiers, romantics, writers, scholar gypsies and the odd *louche* adventurer.'⁵ Patrick Leigh Fermor, an SOE agent, wrote of himself and other SOE 'improvised cave-dwellers' that

it was the obsolete choice of Greek at school which had really deposited us on the limestone. With an insight once thought rare, the army had realised that the Ancient

tongue, however imperfectly mastered, was a short-cut to the modern: hence the sudden sprinkling of many strange figures among the mainland and island crags.⁶

Thus, the recruitment of agents in Greece (for both military and secret missions) employed a somewhat eccentric approach. Operatives were 'almost literally recruited on an "old school tie" basis, the main centre of recruitment popularly believed to be the bar of White's Club.'⁷ The Balkans and Middle East Section headquarters of the SOE was based in Cairo, with a branch in Istanbul, and its chief became Arthur Goodwill, already working for Section D in the London Office.⁸

Section D had begun to operate in Greece in May 1940 when Goodwill, who was touring the Balkans, arrived in Athens. He approached the British minister Sir Michael Palairet and asked for his cooperation in recruiting personnel from the British Legation and the Consulates in Athens and Salonika in order to make serious preparations for post-occupation resistance and sabotage. Palairet declined any involvement and participation by the Legation or Consulates with Section D or any other secret activities that would jeopardize the existing good relations between the British and the Greek governments. Instead, he suggested that Goodwill turn to successful British businessmen residing in Athens. It should be stressed at this point that official propaganda activities in Greece, which emanated from the Greek Section of the British Ministry of Information (MOI)⁹ and the Foreign Office, were at this stage and, until the Greco-Italian war broke out, very discreet. Its main task was to promote the values of the British Empire and to justify the British cause. Propaganda material like posters, photographs and articles from British newspapers as well as newsreels, which were sent on a regular basis to the British Legation in Athens and directed towards the Greek public, were considered quite satisfactory by Palairet, who was trying to maintain this level of propaganda without getting involved in secret operations.

So Goodwill began to seek suitable operatives among prominent English businessmen established in Athens who would be willing to offer their services. After numerous attempts at contact, Goodwill succeeded in setting up a secret organization of five 'exceptionally able and entirely trustworthy Englishmen of the commercial world'¹⁰ known as the 'Apostles'.¹¹ The head of the Apostles was the Secretary of the British Legation in Athens H. J. Sinclair, who was also the Chief Engineer of the Athens and Piraeus Tramways Trust and head of the Power and Traction Company. Goodwill was convinced that 'the qualities of this man were so exceptional that, in the initial stage at any rate, it would be a pity to use him as anything but No. 1'.¹² The other members were R. M. Meikle and L. C. Kemp, a Mr Saunders, who was an agent for Lloyd's,¹³ and Stanley Bailey, who was the head of the Lake Copais Reclamation Company. Bailey was described as 'a very stout fellow, who has a number of English engineers working under him and because of his work at reclaiming land, he had at his disposal many workers and explosives'.¹⁴

In Salonika, Goodwill recruited Major Menzies, a Canadian, who was a representative of the Imperial War Graves Commission.¹⁵ Other members of the Organisation in Salonika were a Mr Donaldson, who worked at the British consulate and was responsible for matters concerning the area from the town of Volos to the Albanian border, and a Mr Wilkinson, who was in charge of a considerable land

reclamation contract in Ioannina and would thus have easy access to Italian-occupied Albania.

Although the British Legation was aware of all these developments, when Goodwill tried again to obtain its open support Minister Michael Palairt again refused to countenance any involvement with the Apostles, maintaining that this could jeopardize the Legation's good relations with the regime of Ioannis Metaxas, who at the time professed neutrality.

Apart from securing new operatives for Section D, Goodwill managed to secure a cover position for an agent who would act as Sinclair's second-in-command and liaison between the Apostles and Section D. With the help of the British Legation, a position of full-time secretary to the British ARP voluntary organization – under the supervision of Harold Caccia, the First Secretary of the British Legation – was made available. In this way, Section D's no. 2 would arrive in Athens as an ARP executive.¹⁶

At the end of May, after Goodwill left for Cairo, Ian Blacklaws Mason Pirie, 'a former Oxford history scholar and bantamweight boxing blue',¹⁷ under the cover of adviser to the British community as head of ARP, arrived in Athens and became Sinclair's secret assistant. The original choice for second-in-command was A. W. Lawrence, a younger brother of T. E. Lawrence 'of Arabia', who had left London for Alexandria by special plane on 26 May 1940. However, Goodwill was not convinced that he was the suitable person for the job.¹⁸ Pirie's official duties included lectures to the Athens Fire Brigade and the installation of air-raid shelters at various neutral legations.

At the same time, the War Office was working on the formation of a 'Shadow Mission' to travel to Greece with the aim of preparing the ground for future military operations if and when Greece were occupied by the Axis powers. It was suggested that four radio transmitters should be dispatched to fulfil the needs of the mission; furthermore, three members of MI(R) who had good knowledge of Greek affairs were, after a 'rushed course in explosives',¹⁹ sent to Greece to form the aforementioned Shadow Mission. These were the Greek-speaking Cambridge don Nicholas Hammond, the archaeologists John Pendlebury and David Hunt and a businessman from Zagreb,²⁰ as the team would act as liaison between Greece and Yugoslavia. In spite of Palairt's objections to the War Office, as he considered 'the value of such activities under the present circumstances highly problematic',²¹ the Shadow Mission arrived in Greece.²² Given the Greek government's refusal to allow any British action which might jeopardize its neutrality, they were refused entry: their cover of 'businessmen' and 'civil servants' was not convincing. Pendlebury, a former curator of Knossos, was allowed to cross to Crete, his cover being that of additional Vice-Consul at Heraklion; the others carried on to Egypt and were attached to the 1st Battalion of the Welch Regiment in Alexandria.²³

In August 1940, a meeting of all Section D representatives took place in Istanbul to coordinate the activities of the organization in the Balkans for the coming winter. Among the participants were Sinclair and Pirie. Pirie was put in charge of the Greek operations, a decision which was not disclosed to the other members 'in order not to ruffle the feelings of the Apostles'.²⁴

As the threat of an Italian attack on Greece, especially after the sinking of the *Elli* on 15 August, became apparent, Pirie began to build up his connections in order to

organize an effective network for a subversive propaganda campaign in Greece and suspended all sabotage activities that were due to take place; for had any such come to light, they would have given the Italians a pretext for invasion.

Because of strict Greek censorship regulations, underground propaganda, which could not be handled by the MOI as this would expose the British government and cause tension in Anglo-Greek relations, had to be dealt with in utmost secrecy. Thus, securing operatives who would be involved in setting up a satisfactory propaganda network had to be dealt with especially cautiously. A new recruiting effort for 'suitable' personnel began in Athens, which proved very successful. Pirie's first and most significant connections were with the Athens Consulate. First to be approached were Consul-General Graham Sebastian, 'a man of great character who knew the Balkans well';²⁵ and his Honorary Vice-Consul Thomas Bowman, a successful businessman, who owned the concession of the marble quarries at Dionyssos and had lived in Athens for thirty years. He spoke excellent Greek and had connections in high places such as Constantinos Maniadakis, Metaxas' notorious Minister of Public Order.²⁶ The propaganda 'team' included Harold Caccia, the First Secretary of the British Legation, Gerard Young, the Director of Publicity and pre-war head of the British Archaeological School in Athens, and the Press Attaché, David Wallace. Among the most effective recruits were a Monsieur Routier, a French Levantine who had been involved in French underground propaganda, but had lost his position after the armistice, and ran a small office from which he conducted an indeterminate business, and a Herr Altmayer, the former editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* who had escaped the Nazi regime and become a German refugee in Yugoslavia. He was an expert in subversive propaganda and now lived in Athens.

All of the Apostles' activities before the Italian attack were planned under the assumption that Metaxas' government would most probably make concessions with the Axis, as had the government of Romania. The mission's work was thus to establish channels whereby propaganda could be circulated in occupied Greece after the forced withdrawal of the British Legation. In view of this possibility, the SOE operatives were determined not to disclose any of their activities to the Greek government or to any other authority, thereby jeopardizing the operation and exposing the agents to the enemy, as had happened in Romania. According to Pirie, secret activities in Romania and plans to destroy the country's oil fields 'came to nothing' as government policy changed following the invasion by Germany and agents were exposed, arrested and 'ill treated'. It should be stressed, however, that, following Greece's entry in the war, SOE agents in charge of organizing post-occupation and resistance trained a large number of Greek saboteurs (around 400, many of them communists) and succeeded in 'smuggling' into Greece five tonnes of explosives and other ammunitions before Germany's invasion.²⁷

The first propaganda attempt was made just before the Italian attack with the distribution of 30,000 copies of an anti-Italian poem *To the Heroes of Corfu* (1869) by the Greek poet Achilleas Parashos, which was distributed all over Greece and had an immediate success. The poem, which was quickly translated into English and distributed among the British residing in Greece, was received with great enthusiasm by the Greek people.²⁸ Its success troubled the Italian Ambassador, who protested to

Metaxas, only to receive the reply 'it is very difficult to suppress a Greek classic.'²⁹ This first propaganda coup, however small, boosted the organization's morale, which was low after a number of unsuccessful attempts at sabotage in Albania, and encouraged the agents to proceed with further plans for producing and distributing propaganda material. In this respect, Routier's participation proved very useful. With his help Pirie and Wallace gained access to newspaper and news cuttings and telegrams that had been rejected by the censors, making at the same time good use of his connections for the dissemination of subversive propaganda. Sinclair's services would also prove very successful on the distribution side, as he was able to collect and disseminate information around the bus and tram depots and into small cafés frequented by tram and bus drivers.³⁰

At the same time, emphasis was given to avoid any propaganda that would undermine the 'Fourth of August Regime',³¹ as long as this served British interests, underlining instead the regime's democratic elements and stressing the importance of a British victory against the Axis. At the same time, due to Greece's economic dependence on Germany, which imported most of the country's agricultural products within its clearing system, Metaxas was obliged to follow a balanced policy towards both Britain and Germany and professed neutrality until the Italian attack of 28 October 1940.³²

The Italian attack on Greece and the unexpected Greek victories put a new perspective on the Apostles' propaganda activities, which intensified. The new objectives were twofold: to keep up Greek resistance by bolstering their fighting spirit and undermining the Italians, and to produce an effective pro-British counter propaganda against Germany, whose black propaganda and whispering campaign consisted of rumours which 'exposed' the British, their lies and fake solidarity with the Greeks.³³ The main difficulty Pirie encountered as the war progressed and the Greeks were winning, was that, while the British were trying to fight fascism, Metaxas' regime was stressing that they were fighting the Italians and not fascism. To this end, instructions were given by the Greek censors that the word 'Italian' always preface the word 'fascism'.

During this period, Greek control of printing material directed against Germany was very strict as the government tried to avoid any action that would openly provoke the Germans. Thus, many propaganda projects were halted; the Greek police exposed others. Just before Christmas, an attempt was made to forward 50,000 copies of an anti-Hitler postcard to Belgrade. This was a coloured cartoon with a caption in Serbo-Croat, for distribution through the Serbian Peasant Party. The postcards, which depicted Yugoslavia as Little Red Riding Hood and Hitler as the Big Bad Wolf, were discovered by Greek police; after an inspection of several printing houses in Athens both the printer and Routier, who had placed the order, were arrested. Bowman's intervention with Maniadakis secured their release.

The 'Big Bad Wolf' incident enabled Bowman to discuss propaganda activities with Maniadakis, including the production of postcards that would undermine the enemy's spirit and bolster the Greeks. Maniadakis was enthusiastic about the idea and the SOE immediately arranged for six designs of Christmas cards to be printed with captions in Greek, emphasizing Anglo-Hellenic cooperation and solidarity.³⁴ In no

time, 230,000 of these cards were ready. The intention was to distribute them free to the Greek troops, who could post them home for Christmas. In that way, Pirie argued, 'we should be using the Greek Post Office to distribute pro-British propaganda into every village and home in Greece'.³⁵ When the postcards were shown to Maniadakis, he was so pleased with the result that he commandeered an army lorry to take them straight to the front for distribution, while asking Bowman to place an order for a million more.³⁶ The idea of producing pro-British postcards with the consent of the regime was taken up commercially by Greek firms, and several dozen designs which emphasized Anglo-Greek friendship and solidarity, at the same time ridiculing the enemy, were soon on sale in shops in Athens. In fact, Pirie wrote, 'I think we might claim to have put the comic postcards industry on its feet in this country'.³⁷

At the end of January, Metaxas died and SOE propaganda was stepped up. Printed material like posters and cartoons that ridiculed Mussolini and leaflets against fascism began to circulate more freely. Sinclair and other SOE members were furnished with large numbers of cards and photographs with captions in Greek stressing Britain's support for the Greek cause. These were placed on notice boards and on the walls of cafés and factory canteens, and in public places. Many of those photographs were forwarded by Routier to journalist friends and found their way into the press from time to time. He also managed to get photographs displayed in the lobbies of the three new cinemas in Athens and furnished various clubs with photograph albums, to which a regular supply of photographs was sent.

Propaganda activities included the financing of a weekly newspaper for the Greek troops, entitled 'Thunder', in Argyrokastró in Albania. The paper was edited by the Archbishop of Argyrokastró, a rabid Greek patriot and an anglophile, who had acquired a printing press captured from the Italians. Pirie's team made sure that a regular flow of pro-British and anti-German articles was sent to the bishop. 'In that way', Pirie wrote, 'we shall have control of a pro-British newspaper circulating throughout the Greek troops, ... and no doubt we can disseminate a reasonable amount of anti-German propaganda also'.³⁸ Two more papers were financed by the organization; one was the weekly *Dodekanisiaki*, the organ of the Youth Organisation of the Dodekanese, and the other the *Ethniki Amyna* (National Defence), a paper with strong army connections circulating widely among the troops. It was edited by a General Angeliotis, who had strong connections with the Greek royal family and was 'extremely pro-British'.³⁹

As German propaganda was intensified and became more effective, an important issue which rose high on the SOE propaganda agenda was the scheme of dropping anti-German pamphlets directed at the morale of the Italian troops at the front. After discussion with the MOI, the SOE put forward a plan for the production and dropping of pamphlets which stressed the difference between the Italian Army and Mussolini and asked questions like 'How many letters have you had from your wife since the Germans occupied Italy?' This question was based on plausible reports that German troops had been seen in many places in Italy; these were most probably members of the Afrika Korps moving south.⁴⁰ Others stressed German arrogance, depicting starving Italians next to the healthy-looking Germans who had deprived them of their food. These pamphlets would, according to the instructions of the MOI, 'contrast the bright picture of well-fed Germany with the sombre Italian picture as result of the

official rationing due to the fact that Germany has taken a good proportion of her food stocks.⁴¹ However, this proposal met with the constant refusal of the Royal Air Force (RAF). It was not until the end of February 1941, when the German invasion of Greece was imminent and the British Expeditionary Force to Greece was on its way, that the RAF was persuaded to undertake this operation.⁴² All squadrons received orders which 'reminded them of the importance that the War Office attached to pamphlet dropping'.⁴³ Ironically, by that time the Greek sky was 'raining' anti-British German and Italian propaganda pamphlets with exactly the same depiction and messages stressing British arrogance as the reason behind the starving of Greek children and the deaths of soldiers who were fighting not for the Greek flag but for the British Empire's interests.

Together with the dropping of pamphlets at the front, distribution of pro-British and anti-German pamphlets to Italian prisoners of war in Greece began to take place with the hope that the message would be communicated back home. In addition, loudspeakers were set up in the prison camps, with members of the Apostles broadcasting news bulletins from Athens, Cairo and London in Italian.⁴⁴

Although the subversive propaganda activities concerned mainly the Balkans, the SOE also undertook the anti-Italian propaganda aimed at Italians living in Egypt. Because of the military operations, it was very difficult to ensure that anti-German propaganda material sent by the MOI to Cairo arrived in time. This vacuum was filled by SOE agents from Greece, Cairo and Malta: they undertook the production and distribution of pamphlets stressing the friendship between the Italian and the British peoples which had been destroyed by the Duce's arrogance. When war broke out between Greece and Italy, the British propaganda effort towards Italians in Egypt changed; it now stressed the Germans' exploitation of Italy, appealing at the same time to the Italians' democratic feelings and asking them to revolt against fascism.⁴⁵

One of the most important struggles of SOE propaganda operatives in Greece was against fifth columnists and the German whispering campaign targeted against the British. Reports from Greece and several other sources that reached the War Office underlined the danger of German covert propaganda stressing at the same time the insufficiency of British propaganda to counteract the very strong German whispering campaign. These reports put the British authorities on high alert. Orders were issued which 'urged strongly the need for vigorous pro-Ally and anti-German campaign by every method possible. . . . Unless something is done immediately there is danger that every growing fear of Germany may be seriously exploited to our disadvantage'.⁴⁶

By the end of 1940, a certain 'KRUGER', described by Pirie as 'chief of the German Fifth Column',⁴⁷ had returned to Greece from Berlin as Secretary to the German Consul in Salonika. Immediately, a large-scale German propaganda and whispering campaign was launched in Macedonia. The German Consulate employed more than 200 people and 'invested' large sums of money in the whispering campaign, which described as false promises made to the Greeks by the British, and encouraged them, with German intervention, to agree terms with the Italians.⁴⁸ To emphasize the destructiveness of this 'unnecessary war', the whisperers often made mention of the disabled and wounded soldiers who were arriving from the front.

The rumours disseminated by enemy-paid municipal employees and civil servants spoke of Germany's decision to extend bombing to all points where the British were

located. One of the most effective and threatening rumours circulating in Salonika and the northern towns was that of an imminent Bulgarian attack on Greece; this brought back bitter memories of past Bulgarian aggression, which was supposedly being restrained at the time by Hitler, 'who loved Greece'.⁴⁹ However, the whisperers warned, 'If the British continued to use Greece for the realization of their plans, then the Germans would help the Bulgarians to get access to the Aegean.'⁵⁰

In addition to German whispers, defeatist letters – penned by Kruger's propaganda office, forwarded by Greek agents and transported by lorry drivers, to avoid censorship – circulated in northern towns.

All of this put Pirie's agents on alert. The key role in handling the organization's covert propaganda in Macedonia was of his agent Menzies, who proved to be very successful. Menzies' first act was to increase the number of his operatives. Apart from the full-time agents that he employed, there were 300–400 part-time employees working for him for expenses only; this ensured that there were about 70–80 men at work at any given time. Then he tracked down and exposed the enemy's subversive propaganda machine in Thrace and Macedonia. As he discovered, it was composed of four branches.⁵¹

Military Branch: The aim of this branch was to promote and underline the supremacy and power of Germany with the help of printed material and statistics, providing information on any military questions that the Greek people might have. This branch was run by ex-military personnel with an ex-colonel, Georgios Poulos, as its head.

Intelligence Branch: This branch was very effective in conveying the enemy's propaganda as it employed influential professors, teachers and prominent members of the municipalities. Merchants were especially vulnerable as very effective propaganda was directed towards them, particularly in respect of their trade. They were encouraged to consider such important issues as 'Who buys your tobacco? Who imports your expensive goods? We do, not the British.'⁵²

Third Branch: Its propaganda was aimed especially at those who lived in villages and small communities. Among their employees were school teachers, ex-officers and policemen. They conveyed their propaganda skilfully by exploiting 'all the unsettled questions of each village, attacking the government, wealthy classes and finally England.'⁵³ Head of this branch was a very capable lawyer, a certain Lefakis.

Fourth Branch: This branch was of great importance as it dealt with monitoring the lives and actions of persons of special significance. Its agents were intellectuals, members of the Greek police, teachers and labourers. Head of this branch was the German Consul himself.

The structure of the German propaganda machine was attacked by Menzies in the following way. After ascertaining the names of the members of these branches, Menzies' agents circulated true and false reports that incriminated the enemy whisperers, accusing them at the same time of being in the pay of the Germans. These allegations were aimed especially towards the lower class and the peasants, who were the most vulnerable targets of the propaganda.

The SOE whisperers constantly toured all the northern towns where German propaganda was thriving and stressed the fact that the British would never be defeated,

often bringing up their heroic resistance during the Blitz, and likening it to the situation in Greece. At the same time, they underlined British (moral and material) support for Greece, strengthening their arguments with the circulation of the appropriate printed material.

In the Athens area, Sinclair employed over thirty part-time agents to work for expenses only. When the enemy whisperers were located, Sinclair put his own agents on their tail and applied the following technique:

When one of those German agents starts putting out German propaganda in a café, or another place, our agent accuses him of having an Italian wife. This simple accusation seems always to discredit the German agent and several cases have been reported in which these men have been set upon by their audience.⁵⁴

In addition to all the above, the SOE financed, at the low cost of 5,000 drachmas per month, a 'certain amount of entertainment' of Greek intellectuals, particularly from the universities, who were doing 'excellent work' in circles often thought to be pro-German.⁵⁵ At the same time, Bowman used his influence over Maniadakis to press for the withdrawal of allegedly pro-German elements from the government and other administrative bodies.⁵⁶

In Piraeus, German subversive propaganda attacked the British by exploiting the bad behaviour of the British armed forces emphasizing through their whisperers the arrogant and autocratic British attitude. These British forces, which included RAF personnel who had arrived in Greece in November 1940 and sailors from naval vessels that carried aid to assist Greece's war effort, were often drunk and abusive towards the local population.⁵⁷

According to Pirie, his operatives attempted to combat this enemy 'technique' by 'removing the handles the enemy used'.⁵⁸ Working closely with the Consulate, both in Athens and in Piraeus, these incidents – 'which undermined British prestige' – were dealt with straight away by representations to the British authorities and, most importantly, by cash payments through the Consulates for damage caused to premises by British servicemen. Such an incident concerned the killing of a Greek citizen in a café brawl. The serviceman was duly convicted by the British authorities of manslaughter. A heavy claim was put forward, and, following a personal request by Maniadakis to Bowman, the RAF paid 50,000 drachmas in compensation to the dependants of the deceased; a further 50,000 drachmas was made available to Bowman 'to enable British prestige to come slightly better out of a most unfortunate incident'.⁵⁹

In southern Greece, German whispering was not so apparent although there were some Greek agents working for the Germans and known to be in their pay. Covert propaganda work in this area was handled by two distinct organizations, one run by Sinclair, who employed a number of whisperers, and the other by Routier. Routier had a vast number of contacts to whom he passed on the whispers which were put out by Pirie. As the organization often faced a shortage of agents – many of them had been called up – steps were taken to replace them by part-time employees who worked for a nominal fee.⁶⁰

An effective propaganda medium which was introduced by Pirie's team at the end of 1940 was the establishment of a pan-Balkan radio broadcasting service from Greece,⁶¹ which would manipulate public opinion on the British side. 'Special attention', according to Pirie, should be given to broadcasts aimed at the Yugoslavian people who – because of the war in Albania – had 'common frontiers with ... the hated Italians'; such broadcasts should emphasize all the time the Italians' failure to win 'and the good example of the Greek officers and soldiers in defending their motherland'.⁶² After some difficulty, Pirie's team managed to get permission from the Greek Minister of Propaganda to use Athens Radio to broadcast to the Balkan countries in their own languages. With the help of Greek journalists Haniotis and Selenos (the latter being the Greek Chief Censor, brought into SOE pay at 4,000 drachmas per month), the broadcasts were successfully put into operation; all the broadcasters were Pirie's agents. These Balkan broadcasts, which stressed the miserable conditions in the occupied countries and the need to resist aggression, were very well received in neutral countries like Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey.⁶³ Altmayer was put in charge of broadcasts in German from Athens Radio. These broadcasts appealed to 'the German world of culture and science to understand the cause of Greece, cradle of Western (including Nordic) civilisation'.⁶⁴ However, strong German influence in the Greek Ministry of Propaganda succeeded in getting Altmayer replaced by another German, a Herr von Steiner. Pirie's team managed to persuade the Greek authorities that he was a German agent and he was therefore dismissed.⁶⁵ All this time the German propaganda machine was very active. On 2 March, the German Legation showed 'to a hand-picked Greek and diplomatic audience' the film about 'the conquest of France (*Victory in the West*)' which had, according to Pirie, 'a great effect'.⁶⁶

At the end of March, as the German invasion was imminent, Pirie's team received instructions from the MOI to establish an independent radio service in Greece, controlled entirely by the British, which would broadcast 'the Voice of Britain speaking from Greece to all countries in Southeastern Europe'.⁶⁷ After much effort the first broadcast in the 'Yugoslav language [*sic*]' took place on 7 April, by which time the German invasion of Greece had already begun.⁶⁸

A few days before the invasion, the Apostles started to prepare material which would be left behind and distributed to the Greeks upon the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force. This material (mainly posters) stressed the following points: first, that no trust could be placed in any offer by Hitler; second, that the interests of Hitler and Mussolini were identical; third, that the Germans' occupation would be sorely felt.

By 5 April, as Pirie's team was preparing for evacuation, the anti-German posters were ready. Pirie's agents managed to place 120,000 in the centre of Athens, while 60,000 were sent to the countryside. According to Pirie, these posters, 'which depicted HITLER and MUSSOLINI as partners in butchery and crime',⁶⁹ were of high quality, with images that ridiculed the enemy and underlined the brutality of the 'partners':

They had been designed by the two best political cartoonists in Greece in three colours. The order was put with the ELKA-ASPIOTIS Works which printed the Greek Bank notes. So good were they that the American Minister applied to the Greek Ministry of Propaganda for some copies. The Minister repudiated all connection

with them and referred them to the British Legation Publicity Department, who of course equally repudiated them.⁷⁰

When these posters were displayed, Theologos Nicoloudis – the Minister of Propaganda – protested strongly to Maniadakis and sent round his own men to paste over these posters with others that had been prepared to advertise Easter activities and religious services. The following night members of the Apostles covered Nicoloudis's posters with the remaining 80,000 posters. The minister now had no posters left and sent his men out to scrape off the offending ones, 'a lengthier and more tedious process'.⁷¹ The Greek population thus had access to posters which ridiculed both Mussolini and Hitler and whose captions warned the Greeks not to trust Hitler, and that the German occupation would prove very hard to bear. A few days later, after the SOE and the British Expeditionary Force were evacuated, these warnings would become a terrifying reality, lasting four years.

The SOE's activities in Greece differed from those in other countries because of Greece's professed neutrality and Britain's strategic need for the country to remain under British influence, and because there was room for serious preparation for subversive activity in advance of a German attack. The first attempt towards not only establishing a resistance network but also preparing an effective propaganda machine that would underline the Anglo-Greek alliance and undermine the Axis powers was made in May 1940 by Section D and MI(R), two of the most important constituent organizations of the SOE. The activities of the SOE in Greece from the beginning of 1940 to November 1942, chronicled by Major Ian Pirie, were mostly known to the British Legation as well as to Greek officials. Pirie's work, described as a 'first class history',⁷² sheds light on the role of the SOE in Greece and the effect these activities had on the local population and the war effort. After the German occupation of Greece, SOE agents continued to operate from Cairo and played an important role in organizing Greek resistance and subversive activities.

Notes

- 1 The National Archives (TNA), HS 7/150-1, Major Ian Pirie, 'SEO Activities in Greece 1940-1942' (hereafter Pirie).
- 2 Richard Clogg, *Anglo-Greek Attitudes: Studies in History* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 63.
- 3 The SOE was controlled by the Minister of Economic Warfare, the Minister of Information and the Foreign Secretary. On the SOE, see M. R. D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46* (London, 1999). On MI6, see Keith Jeffrey, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949* (London, 2011).
- 4 Antony Beevor, *Crete: The Battle and the Resistance* (London, 1991), p. 23.
- 5 Ibid. Many university dons and archaeologists with a knowledge of Greek had been suitable candidates for recruitment to MI(R).
- 6 Quoted in *ibid.*
- 7 Clogg, *Anglo-Greek Attitudes*, p. 65.

- 8 The SOE in Cairo covered the Balkans, as well as the Middle East: Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, Libya and Malta.
- 9 The head of the Greek Section was John Stavridis. For a full account of the activities of this section, see Marina Petraki, *Bretaniki politiki kai propaganda sto ellinoitaliko polemo* [British Politics and Propaganda in the Greco-Italian War] (Athens, 2011).
- 10 Pirie, p. 1.
- 11 Named after the 'Cambridge Apostles', a secret association established in the nineteenth century.
- 12 Pirie, p. 2.
- 13 According to Pirie, Saunders had 'agents in every port and [was] a veritable fund of information on shipping problems', p. 2.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 The Commission was set up in May 1917 to maintain the graves of all Commonwealth soldiers who had lost their lives in the First World War.
- 16 An office was put aside for him in the building of the Athens and Piraeus Electricity Company. Theodoros Sabatakakis, *Taftotites praktoron kai kodika onomata* [Identity and Code Names of Secret Agents] (Athens, 2006), p. 111.
- 17 Clogg, *Anglo-Greek Attitudes*, p. 68. A 'blue' is someone who has represented Oxford or Cambridge University in a match against the other university. Pirie was once described as 'not unlike a grown-up Cupid in well-cut clothes': Beevor, *Crete*, p. 27.
- 18 Pirie, p. 15.
- 19 Beevor, *Crete*, p. 4.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 TNA, FO 371/24922/R6544, 'Shadow Missions – Greece and Yugoslavia', July 1940.
- 22 They left England by flying boat from Poole Harbour on 4 June and reached Athens after a difficult journey.
- 23 Beevor, *Crete*, pp. 4–5. See also all relevant telegrams exchanged between the Foreign Office and Palairet, who categorically denied any involvement with these activities: TNA, FO 371/24922/R6584, June 1940.
- 24 Pirie, p. 21 and Clogg, *Anglo-Greek Attitudes*, p. 69.
- 25 Pirie, p. 21.
- 26 Ibid., p. 30.
- 27 Ibid., p. 28; and Clogg, *Anglo-Greek Attitudes*, p. 70.
- 28 Pirie, p. 28.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p. 27.
- 31 The 'Fourth of August Regime' pursued a policy of close relations with Britain, resulting in British guarantees to Greece in April 1939 against growing Italian aggression.
- 32 On Metaxas and his regime, see Marina Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth: Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece* (London, 2005).
- 33 These rumours aimed at spreading widespread defeatism among the Greek population and emphasising the need to come to terms with the Italians and renounce British help: TNA, FO 371/24867/R351 and TNA, FO 371/24867/R1206, 'Propaganda in Greece', November 1940 and February 1941.
- 34 Christmas cards as well as other postcards and specially designed leaflets were sent to the front to encourage soldiers to keep fighting and keep their spirits high.
- 35 Pirie, p. 62.
- 36 Due to the shortage of time, only 100,000 of those were produced before Christmas and sent to the front: Pirie, p. 62.

- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 69, 78.
- 39 Ibid., p. 78.
- 40 Ibid., p. 66.
- 41 TNA, FO 371/24921/R8549, 'Propaganda for Italy', December 1940.
- 42 Pirie, p. 78.
- 43 Ibid., p. 79.
- 44 Ibid., p. 61.
- 45 David Garnett, *The Secret History of PWE: The Political Warfare Executive 1939–1945* (London, 2002), p. 65.
- 46 TNA, FO 371/24925/R1631, 'Propaganda in Greece', February 1941.
- 47 Pirie, p. 67.
- 48 Before Greece entered the war, a considerable proportion of the expenditure of German propaganda was borne by Greek tobacco merchants (Germany imported most of Greece's tobacco). After Italy's attack, all expenditure was undertaken by the German Consulate in Salonika.
- 49 Pirie, p. 68.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 67–78.
- 52 Ibid., p. 71. As noted above, Germany imported most of Greece's luxury agricultural products, especially tobacco. Despite Metaxas' efforts to persuade the British to import more tobacco so that Greece's economy became less dependent on Germany, this was not achieved. BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, BBC War Files, News Overseas, E920 (formerly OS148), 14 November 1940.
- 53 Pirie, p. 72.
- 54 Ibid., p. 73.
- 55 Ibid., p. 76.
- 56 After Metaxas' death, the SOE and Palairret believed that this was an opportunity to broaden the Greek government with more democratic elements, but the Greek king refused.
- 57 Pirie, p. 73.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid., p. 75.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., p. 61.
- 62 Ibid., p. 84.
- 63 Ibid., p. 63.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid., p. 82. The film was *Sieg im Westen* (1941).
- 67 Pirie, p. 86.
- 68 Ibid., p. 85.
- 69 An article in *The Times* of 8 May 1940 referred to these posters and the effort of the Minister of Propaganda to destroy them. Pirie, p. 89.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., pp. 89–90.
- 72 Comments by a Colonel Taylor of the Foreign Office dated 17 November 1945, in the preface to Pirie's 'History'.

The interplay between diplomacy and propaganda: The Foreign Office and the discovery of the Katyn massacre, 1943

Gaynor Johnson

With the exception of the Holocaust, the Katyn massacre is the most widely analysed war crime committed in Europe during the Second World War. It has been the subject of numerous books, journal articles, documentaries, even movies and novels. The timeline is relatively straightforward. It is known that the Soviet Security Service, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), was responsible for massacring approximately 14,700 Polish officers and policemen taken from the three prisoner-of-war camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov during April and May 1940 (the Soviet Union had invaded and occupied Poland in September–October 1939). Of this number, it was the prisoners transported from the first of these camps, around 4,400 in number, whose remains were disposed of in the Katyn forest near Smolensk. The whereabouts of the bodies of the remainder of the officers and policemen are not known. The decision to murder a large number of senior members of the Polish Army and policemen was taken on 5 March 1940 by the politburo of the All-Union Communist Party (the Bolshevik party) by direct instruction of Stalin. However, news about the massacre reached Western Europe only when, in the spring of 1943, the remains of some of the Polish officers were discovered by German forces during their continuing invasion of the Soviet Union. The find prompted calls for an international commission of enquiry to be established under the auspices of the International Red Cross (IRC) to identify the victims. Stalin's response was to announce the immediate suspension of Soviet diplomatic relations with Poland (after the fall of France in 1940, the Polish government had been in exile in London). Considerable mileage out of the discovery was made by Joseph Goebbels's Ministry for Propaganda as proof of the barbarity of the Slavonic *Untermensch* against which the Nazi regime was fighting, as a means of diverting attention away from rumours about German atrocities in the same region. The news of the find also had long-term implications for the relationship between the British, Polish and Soviet governments for the remainder of the war and in the years that followed.

One focus of existing studies has been the deafening silence of the British government concerning well-substantiated information in its possession about Soviet culpability. In many respects, this remains a current issue. The Foreign Office has adopted a variety of tactics over the years, including placing the evidence in the public domain, without formally commenting on its significance. It has been argued that this tactic stems from an unwillingness not to confront a state that, since 1943, has moved from being an uneasy ally to a Cold War adversary and then a semi-rogue state with a complex and tense relationship with Western Europe. The long passage of time and the thorny nature of the foreign policy of the Putin regime suggest that the matter will not be raised by the British Foreign Office any time soon. This is much to the chagrin of the vocal body of scholars and war memorialists who believe that the Polish people have been ill served by the failure of both the British and US governments to bring the Russians to book. An argument often made is that the British consciously sacrificed Polish interests for the sake of cohesion of the alliance against the Axis powers. This analysis will argue that, while there is some truth in this, it does not paint the whole picture. Foreign policy formation does not operate in a world of black and white certainties, especially during a long and complex war. British policy towards the Katyn question was no exception to this. By examining the evidence from the Foreign Office files and others relating to them that date from the spring of 1943, it is clear that some officials favoured backing the Polish position against that of the Soviet. This was not always a consistent line of argument, but it was, nonetheless, visible and important and made by senior specialists in Soviet and Polish affairs.

The historical literature on the Katyn massacre has largely been the preserve of Polish and Russian scholarship and has primarily focussed on issues of motive and planning. A number of important gaps remain; for example, whether the Polish officers were murdered where they were buried or killed elsewhere. However, the question of Soviet responsibility, suspected since 1943 but lacking verification in Russian archive evidence, became clear through documents released by the Gorbachev and Yeltsin governments in the late 1980s and the 1990s.¹ That said, the public record is not as full as it could be. The opening of the archive revealed that many files relating to prisoner-of-war testimony contemporaneous to the massacre were destroyed by the Khrushchev regime in the 1950s. There are few English-language studies, although the most important recent scholarly account is by the Anglo-Polish scholar George Sanford.² Written in English, his work demonstrates Soviet culpability. But his main aim is to argue that Poland has been let down by the unwillingness of the international community to hold the Russians accountable. Consequently, his analysis is tempered with an emotive hue that assumes that the Western democracies cared little for the plight of Poland both during the Second World War and after it.

This chapter attempts to move away from this quasi-subjectivity and to examine what the British government knew in 1943 and how it processed this information. What emerges is that the diplomatic options open to the British were far from straightforward. In reality, British diplomatic reaction to the discovery of the massacre operated on two levels; the first was the political, in the persons of the prime minister, Winston Churchill, and the foreign secretary, Antony Eden. To them in 1943, the coherence and survival of the wartime alliance, which included the Soviet Union,

was vital to the successful prosecution of the war. Consequently, all other diplomatic considerations had to be subordinate to that, regardless of their nature. A British confrontation with the Russians over Katyn could have only negative consequences for the war effort. Sanford and others view that argument as an indication of British diplomatic spinelessness and as a betrayal of the Polish government-in-exile in London. But what has hitherto been overlooked is a second strand, the reaction of the officials within the Foreign Office, which offers a more complex and varied picture. In the spring of 1943, the permanent officials within the Central Department, the Foreign Office desk that dealt with Eastern European relations, adopted a variety of tactics to try to make Stalin take a more lenient approach to Polish requests for information about Soviet involvement in the massacre.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it will attempt to examine the massacre against this international framework. Second, it will be used as a template the reaction of the British Foreign Office to the discovery of the massacre in 1943 and the various strategies it adopted to bury some of the information that came across its desks. As such, it provides an interesting and important insight into how the British Foreign Office viewed the use of propaganda as a tool both for its own use and for its use by other agencies. The reaction of the democratic powers to Soviet responsibility for the Katyn massacre poses a number of key questions, only two of which can be tackled in this chapter. The first of these is, to what extent should wartime allies suppress knowledge of their partners' breaches of international laws on human rights and genocide in times of war? Second, how much of this information should be kept from the electorate in a democratic state? These are large questions, and their importance is furthermore enhanced by their relevance to how we continue to judge the ethical conduct of regimes around the world.

During the first eighteen months of the Second World War, the Foreign Office expanded the number of its departments. This involved an alteration in the remit of established units and the addition of extra ones whose brief specifically related to the operation of the war, for example, the Prisoner of War Department. The initial purpose of what had been named the Central European Department had been to handle correspondence relating to Germany and Austria, although some aspects of the enforcement of First World War peace settlements were dealt with by other departments. By 1943, the department's remit had long since expanded to include Poland, the Low Countries, League of Nations affairs and, less logically, Spain and Portugal. Its superintendent was William Strang, although the running of day-to-day business fell to the acting head, Frank Roberts. Their four permanent subordinates were Geoffrey Harrison, Denis Allen, Patrick Hancock and Michael Williams, their number mirroring the size of the department when it was created in 1919. Then League affairs had been the province of the Western Department with the Southern Department managing Britain's Iberian diplomacy. The increase in workload brought about a need to specialize; it is notable that only the views of Roberts and occasionally Harrison appear in the records with any degree of regularity. The majority of the documents were shared, inevitably, with the Northern Department, which was responsible for Soviet affairs. The high profile of the views of Christopher Warner and Orme Sargent, the Northern Department's head and superintendent, respectively, in the Foreign

Office documentation illustrates not only that the diplomatic fallout from the Katyn massacre was seen as belonging equally within the province of both departments but also that such a joint arrangement of responsibility and discussion was bureaucratically possible.

At the heart of the Foreign Office's response was the thinking of Frank Roberts. Born in 1907, and educated at Rugby School and at Trinity College Cambridge, Roberts entered the Foreign Office in 1930. By 1943, he had risen to the rank of first secretary and was later to become a noted specialist on Eastern European diplomacy, his career culminating in a stint as British ambassador to Moscow, between 1960 and 1962. However, in 1943, he was a much more accomplished commentator on Britain's relations with the Arabic-speaking Middle East than on European diplomacy. This appears to have encouraged in him an open-mindedness that might not have been so apparent if he had had more experience of Central and Eastern European diplomacy. He was less persuaded by the Great Power diplomatic arguments that dominated the thinking of Churchill and Eden. To him, it was incumbent on Britain to adopt a moderate approach in dealings with the members of the grand wartime alliance; the same was also true of relations with the Polish government now in exile in London. Poland 'look[ed] to us for a sensible middle course and it seems important that we should not discourage them from looking to us by running too obviously after the Russians and Americans and possibly eventually falling between all possible stools'.³ He thought that the smaller powers had yet to be convinced that the British government would adopt this role, but that it was vital that such assurances should be forthcoming. Roberts's view was not without its critics. Gladwyn Jebb, a senior figure in the Department of Economic Warfare, believed that Polish fears that the interests of the small powers would be subsumed by Great Power politics were exaggerated. He urged the Foreign Office not to be 'moved by such clamour'.⁴ Reflecting on the likely composition of the post-war Security Council of the United Nations, Jebb cautioned against offering small countries permanent seats because of their concerns about diplomatic marginalization.⁵ Those responsible for making peace after the Second World War should learn the lesson of the interwar period, during which many of the smaller powers proved to be poor allies to Britain and France.⁶ Thus, Roberts and Jebb formed the two opposing camps within the Foreign Office on how to handle relations with Poland over discovery of the massacre.

The views of Roberts, Jebb and their colleagues, however, need to be understood against the wider context of Anglo-Soviet-Polish relations, specifically the kinds of psychological techniques each country used to convince the others of its diplomatic and political position. The two principal methods – commenting on propaganda and appeals for humanitarian aid – had strong emotive dimensions and were therefore susceptible to the personal dynamics of individual politicians, diplomats and officials. Neither of these factors appealed to the British government's preferred method of a slow, dispassionate consideration of the impact of a course of action on Britain's strategic interests and priorities. Nor was the Foreign Office comfortable with or experienced in dealing with the full force of the Soviet propaganda machine, whose prime rationale was to wage ideological war. Yet it was through the medium of propaganda that the British government was forced to view Russian relations with the

Poles in the spring of 1943. The British embassy in Moscow sent weekly syntheses of the Soviet press to the Foreign Office, offering enthusiastic and lengthy comment on their credibility. In March 1943, a counsellor at the embassy, the splendidly named Lacy Baggallay, despatched two stories from the *Moscow News* that caused consternation in London because they implied that the Russians were encouraging Poles to rebel against the Germans so that they could 'find immediate relief for the eastern front'.⁷ More important was the long-held Soviet belief that the Polish government-in-exile was exercising 'malign influences' in Whitehall and thus delaying the opening of a second European front. Central to this conspiracy theory was the leader of the Free Poland government-in-exile, General Sikorski. Baggallay was convinced that most of these rumours were unfounded but nonetheless recommended that the Polish embassy in London be checked for leaks. Soviet sources believed that the presence of the Polish government in the British capital compromised its independence and 'greatly complicated' Soviet relations with Britain and the United States.⁸ Baggallay advised that the Russians were unlikely to allow Sikorski to return to Poland after the war because he would not 'suit the Soviet government'; that instead a series of provisional local councils would be set up to govern the country. It was 'easy to imagine' how these would be 'transformed into a Soviet-controlled government', although he doubted whether Stalin had planned that far ahead.⁹ This paints a more nuanced picture than Sanford's claim that, by this juncture, Stalin had 'imposed his control over the Poles' and was searching for a 'pretext' for breaking off diplomatic relations with Poland.¹⁰

The principal issue that concerned Foreign Office's relations with the Polish government-in-exile in the spring of 1943 was the provision of relief for a quarter of a million displaced people in Poland. These requests were made not via Roberts's department but to Eden in a series of meetings with his Polish opposite number, Count Edward Raczynski. They knew each other well; Raczynski had been ambassador to London, from 1932 to 1939. The Pole painted a picture of a country on the brink of economic and political collapse, stating that Polish relief organizations had been broken up by the Russians. He appealed to the British government to intervene but urged that too much credence should not be attached to press reports concerning disputes between the Polish and Soviet governments.¹¹ Raczynski wanted the British and US governments to put pressure on the Russians to allow humanitarian agencies to administer aid to a further 200,000 Poles living in the Soviet Union.¹² Eden undertook to examine these proposals 'urgently and sympathetically' but held out little hope of the Soviets agreeing to allow such organizations to operate in territory they controlled. His cautious mood increased when Raczynski asked whether the Allies would agree to accommodate 50,000 Polish refugees who were fleeing the Russian advance. Eden anticipated that such a step would likely 'raise very considerable difficulties'.¹³ In pushing for 'an early decision' on these issues, Raczynski then raised the question of Soviet propaganda regarding Polish affairs. He asked Eden to do what he could to rein in the publication of *Soviet War News*, compiled by the Soviet embassy in London, because it was consistently hostile to Polish issues. Similarly, the British press should be encouraged to be more 'sympathetic to the plight of Poland'.¹⁴ Eden stated that he had already taken up the matter with the Russian ambassador to London, Ivan

Mikhailovich Maisky, and was confident that the matter could be resolved, although the 'difficulties in the press had by no means been all on one side'.¹⁵

Roberts thought that it would be difficult for the Russians to attack Sikorski's government openly but warned that it would be 'hard to avoid serious trouble if the present tension in Polish-Soviet relations continues'.¹⁶ He also predicted that the discovery of the remains in the Katyn forest would 'bring matters to a head one way or the other'. At the same time, the Russians were 'deceiving themselves' if they believed that the people of Poland would tolerate being governed by a regime imposed on them from Moscow.¹⁷ Roberts's colleague, Roderick Dew, agreed, noting that 'the Russians might be tempted to set up a rival Polish government if the [existing] Polish government were to break off diplomatic relations ... but not I think short of that'. At present, he believed that the Russians were too overstretched by the war to take preemptive action against the Poles.¹⁸

This was the situation when, on 13 April 1943, Radio Berlin announced that the local population had indicated to the German occupying authorities the location of a Soviet execution site in the Katyn forest, west of Smolensk. The corpses were stacked in twelve layers in a large pit 28 metre long and 16 metre wide. The men, still wearing their military uniform, had been executed by a single shot to the back of the head. Initial reports suggested that all of the missing 10,000 or so Polish officers had been murdered there, a figure enhanced, either through error or by design by the Germans, to between 11,000 and 12,000. But closer examination demonstrated that the figure was much smaller. Roberts felt that the Poles had missed a major opportunity to score political points over the Russians by allowing the Germans to break the news of the discovery. As he later told Eden, 'The Polish case has tended to go by default owing to the circumstances in which the Katyn question first became public knowledge'.¹⁹

So, what did the Foreign Office know about the status of Polish prisoners of war in the Soviet Union at the time of the discovery of the remains in the Katyn forest? Summary documents prepared for meetings between Churchill and Sikorski reveal that the Foreign Office had fairly full information at its disposal as early as April 1940. Then, the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* had published a report that there were 189,000 Polish prisoners of war in Russia. Of these, the officers were mostly held in camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov. In early spring 1940, they had been moved to an unknown destination. After the Russo-Polish Agreement of 30 July 1941, the Russians had released significant numbers of junior ranks but very few officers. The Polish military authorities subsequently claimed that the whereabouts of between 7,000 and 9,000 were unknown; the matter was then raised by the Polish embassy in Russia with the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. In December 1941, Sikorski had handed Stalin a list of names of 4,664 missing officers. However, his only response was that all Polish officers had been released, but their whereabouts were unknown.²⁰

This remained the state of Foreign Office intelligence until the news of the discovery of the remains in the Katyn forest was first made known through a press summary made by a Mr Lancaster on 12 April 1943.²¹ Roberts was initially struck by rumours that the Poles were planning to hold a state funeral in Warsaw; his first act, however, was to prepare a brief on the discovery for Eden, who was due to meet the Allied foreign ministers on 15 April, at which meeting the matter would inevitably be raised. Roberts

also arranged to receive an advance copy of a statement on the story that was being prepared by the Polish Minister of Information for despatch to Eden. It is interesting that informing the British ambassador in Moscow, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, of the news was not foremost in Roberts's mind; Clark Kerr just needed to be given 'briefly the facts'.²² That said, Roberts believed that it was now 'more than ever essential for the Russians to make some gesture to the Poles' and that the British government should do everything possible to facilitate this.²³ Consequently, he made the extraordinary request that the Polish press be asked not to publish any inflammatory articles relating to the discovery of the remains. However, the best that the Foreign Office's News Department was able to secure was a twenty-four-hour delay on the release of the story.²⁴ Mr Balinski, a counsellor at the Polish embassy in London, suggested a compromise which Roberts thought 'very reasonable'.²⁵ This involved Polish newspapers being asked to avoid anti-Soviet bias when breaking the Katyn story and to use an anti-German spin. If, as it was rumoured, the Germans had actually known the whereabouts of the remains for more than two years, why had they chosen the present time to make the information public? Equally, Roberts's conversation with Balinski made it clear that knowledge of the massacre was actually widely known within the Polish community in London. Therefore, any prolongation in the release of the story would probably be interpreted negatively by the Poles. Although still uneasy, Roberts felt reassured that the situation was under control and that 'we should now let matters take their course'.²⁶

What Roberts and the Foreign Office underestimated was the vehemence with which the Polish government-in-exile would reject Russian claims that the Germans were responsible for the massacre.²⁷ On 15 April 1943, the Polish Cabinet decided to set out its version of the facts based on its own intelligence sources with the Soviet Union.²⁸ This coincided with a short article in the newspaper *Dziennik Polski* that claimed that the discovery was 'another lie put out by German propaganda in order to spoil Polish-Soviet relations'.²⁹ On the same day, Clifford Norton, the British consul in Berne, informed the Central Department of rumours that the IRC had received a request from the Poles to investigate the discovery of the Katyn remains.³⁰ Roberts's view here is not consistent. On 20 April, he minuted that the Polish press statement was 'precipitate and somewhat ill-considered' and that little could be gained by counselling against making recourse to the IRC.³¹ The following day, his attitude had mellowed:

Since the Germans are speaking to the world, we cannot expect the Russians and the Poles to keep quiet ... I am not sure that a policy of complete censorship, which would leave only the Germans free to speak to the world, might not do more harm than good.³²

The Polish decision to involve the IRC does not appear to have formed a major talking point between Churchill and Polish political and diplomatic representatives in London. Concurrent with Roberts's reflections on the most recent strategies adopted by the Poles, Sikorski handed Churchill a paper detailing current intelligence about the massacre and pressed for British support in bringing the perpetrators to justice.³³ Meanwhile, the news from Geneva was not good; the IRC declined the Polish request

for an investigation 'in conformity with general policy of declining all unilateral requests of this kind'.³⁴

In the light of this news, the Central Department underwent a strategic shift in its thinking to deflect attention away from what it saw as precipitate Polish action. Once again, there is a curious ambiguity in Foreign Office policy that makes it unclear where official British loyalties actually lay. This change of approach had within it a number of dangers, the greatest of which was that it risked directly antagonizing the Russians. Nevertheless, in a lengthy memorandum, Roberts concluded, 'The only way to combat the German story about the discovery of bodies of Polish Officers and intelligentsia is for the Soviet authorities to produce the live bodies.'³⁵ Significantly, this was a train of thought that he was also prepared to share with the US government, forming as it did guidance to Viscount Halifax, the British ambassador to Washington, on 16 April.³⁶ Yet this willingness to confront the Russians was markedly absent from a round-robin telegram the Central Department sent to all major British embassies and legations the following day. This outlined two points of instruction. First, to 'avoid commenting but if pressed [to] point out ... the matter is ... one between the Polish and Russian governments exclusively'. In outlining the second point, the focus shifted towards German motives for spreading the Katyn story, not to Russian responsibility. Diplomats needed to be aware that the Germans had begun to spread the Katyn story 'as part of Goebbels' whitewashing campaign' to deflect international attention away from the Germans' own atrocities in Eastern Europe; as 'a last resort' attempt 'to split the United Nations' because the Germans knew that hopes of a victory were futile; and finally, to detract attention from Germany's military reverses.³⁷

The ability of the Foreign Office to steer between two controversial positions was made more difficult when reports that the US president, Franklin Roosevelt, and Eden had reached an agreement to restore the Polish-Soviet border after the war appeared in the Egyptian press, much to the dismay of the Polish government.³⁸ Initially, the leak was thought to have come from the United Press' London censor. Roberts's reaction was characteristically phlegmatic: 'The harm has been done, those responsible seem suitably repentant.'³⁹ His colleague, in the Foreign Office, Mr Harrison, however, was angrier: 'Everything conspires to make the prospect of our being able to do any good with the Russians more remote. I should have thought someone at the Censorship should be sacked for this.'⁴⁰ Roberts's more measured reaction stemmed from his knowledge that the leak had actually come from the US embassy in London. It would have been counter to his strategy of persuading the US government to take a more favourable view of the Polish plight to have revealed the real source of the leak. As an extension of this thinking, he was also keen to ensure that the Foreign Office did not associate the Polish government with the disclosure.⁴¹

At the same time, Roberts continued his strategy of limiting the fallout from the Polish press statement about the massacre: a pronouncement that resulted in a 'sweeping denial' of the 'German lie' from the Soviets.⁴² On 16 April, Roberts claimed that Foreign Office analysts of the Polish statement now viewed the Polish broadcast as 'bad propaganda'. The British government should do all that it could to prevent the broadcast of further similar statements by the Poles. However, the Foreign Office News Department doubted that such a strategy would work.⁴³ A compromise solution was

proposed by the Political Warfare Executive, that the statement be broadcast only on Polish radio stations.⁴⁴ Roberts noted with satisfaction that this solution was accepted 'very willingly'. It is significant that the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, advised 'against our saying anything to the Russians'. Roberts made it clear that Cadogan had taken this decision purely to enable the continuation of the negotiations concerning the plight of Poles still in the Soviet Union. 'I could not conceal ... that the line taken in the communiqué and particularly the appeal to the IRC might seriously embarrass us in approaching the Russians.' Roberts advised the Poles against making further public statements, a request that met with a mixed response.⁴⁵ Stalin's reaction, in contrast, was 'predictable, rapid and ruthless'.⁴⁶ To him the Poles and the Germans were in league to discredit the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ On 19 April, *Pravda* attacked what it termed 'Hitler's Polish collaborators'.⁴⁸

The same day, Roberts drafted a telegram to Clark Kerr warning him of a likely Soviet backlash. It was important to realize that German claims regarding the identity of the perpetrators of the massacre were simply part of a new propaganda line 'that Germany is defending European interests and civilisation from external, and particularly from Russian, dangers'.⁴⁹ The telegram went on to update Clark Kerr on the events of the preceding four days. The fact that Roberts adopted this approach suggests that the use of traditional British diplomatic channels in Moscow was not at the forefront of his strategic thinking. Otherwise expressed, if the preservation of good British relations with the Russians had been Roberts's priority, he would have communicated with Clark Kerr more frequently during this period of tortuous relations with the Poles. But Clark Kerr had other channels of communication open to him. A close confidant of Eden, the ambassador told the foreign secretary that Russian protestations of innocence were so frequent and so vehement as to convey the opposite view:⁵⁰ that Katyn was 'disturbing for it is uncomfortable to reflect upon the consequences of an enquiry which might show that guilt was there'.⁵¹ Clark Kerr was to be criticized by a later generation of Foreign Office commentators for not playing a more active role in conveying British disquiet to the Soviets.⁵² The evidence appears to suggest, however, that, rather than being passive, Clark Kerr's understanding of the British government's dilemma was well articulated.⁵³ Others at the Foreign Office, such as Roberts, were content to use Clark Kerr to keep their options open in negotiating with the Soviets.⁵⁴

On 19 April, the British War Cabinet met to discuss the Polish-Russian question. Eden believed that the Poles should be encouraged to take a broad view, not to allow an emotional response to the massacre to stand in the way of the longer-term objective of securing the evacuation of the remaining Polish troops and their families from Russia.⁵⁵ However, Roberts thought that the Poles were unlikely to view the situation in those terms: 'The trouble is that the Poles are not sufficiently hopeful of any improvement inside Russia to prevent them saying something about their officers'.⁵⁶ That said, the news from Moscow was heartening. Clark Kerr reported Soviet and Polish intelligence that suggested that 'the Poles would go to almost any lengths in order to avoid an open clash ... [and] it is not at this that [the] Russians are aiming'.⁵⁷ He recommended that any further suggestion about making recourse to the IRC should be firmly resisted by the British government, 'for it is uncomfortable to reflect upon the consequences of an enquiry which might show that guilt was there'.⁵⁸ An international investigation of this

nature might 'court something little short of a disaster'.⁵⁹ Clark Kerr also advocated a measured British approach in dealing with the Soviets and the Poles, advice which Harrison thought dangerous: 'The danger of waiting is that one side or the other may in the meantime take some irreparable step.'⁶⁰ However, Roberts appreciated that the adoption of a more unhurried approach would give Churchill the opportunity to make the intervention to Stalin that he had recently promised on behalf of Sikorski.⁶¹ Churchill had also wanted to know the views of Roosevelt before speaking to Stalin.⁶² Roberts was concerned that this extra step would cause a dangerous delay.⁶³ Mr Warner, his colleague in the Central Department, however, had other concerns. By inviting the IRC to investigate the contents of the Katyn graves, the Poles would unwittingly be giving credence to the German propaganda. In other words, the credibility of the German propaganda would have been more effectively undermined if the Poles had remained silent. If relations with the Soviet Union were to be improved, the Poles must be prepared not to comment if accused of being part of an anti-Soviet conspiracy with the Germans. In future, 'we must extract an undertaking from Gen[eral] Sikorski ... to be guided by our advice.'⁶⁴ William Strang, the Superintendent of the Central Department, had some sympathy for this line of argument but believed that the Foreign Office's focus should be not so much on reining in the Poles but on making sure that Churchill's wishes about greater consultation with the Americans came to pass. But once again, the focus within the Foreign Office was how difficult the Poles had made British relations with the Soviets. There is something more than condescending about Strang's comment: 'I see no harm in telling the Polish government that the episode of the murdered officers, and their reaction to it, and the Russian counter-reaction, make our proposed approach to the Russians infinitely more difficult.'⁶⁵

Roderick Dew saw other dangers. Referring to an editorial in *Pravda* on 19 April, Dew stated that he believed that the Soviets were using the discovery of the remains 'to distinguish between the Polish government and the Polish people' and that Stalin 'cherish[ed] hopes of the establishment of a new Polish government close to the Soviet form.'⁶⁶ Dew's pessimism also stemmed from press reports received from Baggallay in mid-April 1943 that implied that the current poor relations between the Soviet Union and Poland stemmed from a 'pre-arranged agreement between the German invaders and the pro-Hitlerite elements in Sikorski's ministerial circles.'⁶⁷ The same report criticized the Poles for appealing to the IRC to investigate 'what never occurred, or rather what was committed by the Berlin masters of foul deeds and then cunningly put at the door of the Soviet organisations'. The Polish government was 'inexcusably entrapped in the net of the Goebbelses and provocateurs'; consequently, the Polish appeal to the IRC amounted to 'direct and open support of the Hitlerite provocateurs in the fabrication of their foul invention.'⁶⁸

Securing the support of the US government did not prove difficult, much to Roberts's relief as he busied himself with preparing instructions for Halifax.⁶⁹ His work was, however, partly comprised by the publication of a note by Stalin claiming that the Soviet Union was the aggrieved party in all of the accusations that were flying between his government, the Poles and the Germans.⁷⁰ On 21 April, he announced the severing of diplomatic relations with Poland because of the 'vile fascist calumny against the USSR'.⁷¹ Churchill was willing to support Stalin in opposing further IRC involvement

in the investigation of the Katyn massacre.⁷² On 25 April, Clark Kerr explained Stalin's intervention in terms of a desire to apply pressure on Churchill and Roosevelt to reach agreement on the position of the Polish frontier with the Soviet Union after the war.⁷³ The ambassador recommended that the Foreign Office give serious thought to accommodating Stalin on this matter in return for buying time to reconcile the current difficulties between Poland and the Soviet Union, to 'dispose of this matter once and for all'.⁷⁴ Orme Sargent, the Superintendent of the Northern Department, which dealt with, *inter alia*, Anglo-Soviet relations, agreed with Clark Kerr's analysis but felt that a stumbling block was Stalin's decision to sever diplomatic relations with Poland.⁷⁵ Stalin would probably agree to reinstate relations with Poland only if the frontier question were resolved to his satisfaction and if the British and US governments provided an undertaking to abide by it when the war was over.⁷⁶ In a rare minute intervention, Eden noted his agreement with Sargent's analysis: 'Yes; this is possible, even probable.'⁷⁷

But all of this was to no avail, and on 25 April 1943 the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, issued the formal statement breaking off Soviet diplomatic relations with Poland. Cadogan believed that the British government should give serious consideration to Stalin's likely terms for reinstating relations. He told Eden, 'We should not get Soviet-Polish agreement during the war save by a settlement of this problematic [border] problem.'⁷⁸ After all, 'it might be a good thing to get from the Russians an admission that they would be satisfied with something'. It was 'still a long way ... before they are actually overrunning that region, and perhaps more besides'. But he thought that Roosevelt was unlikely to agree.⁷⁹ The background to this discussion was a long memorandum by Sargent on when and how post-war territorial agreements should be discussed between the British, US and Soviet governments. In a conversation between Roosevelt and Eden on 16 March 1943, the president had suggested that, through a post-war border settlement, Poland should acquire East Prussia and some parts of Silesia. Sargent's observation was part of a much longer analysis of the consequences for the British government of making *ad hoc* concessions to the Soviets to smooth wartime relations concerning issues relating to the post-war peace-making process. The Foreign Office should reflect on three questions:

How would we reconcile an attempt to settle one of the frontier questions created by the war with the principle which we have laid down and which I think the US government have endorsed, that we are not willing to discuss frontier questions during the war and that they must be reserved for the general peace settlement? If we are ready in this instance to make an exception, is the present moment opportune for starting negotiations with the Soviet government? And lastly, if we do negotiate how far are we prepared to go and what are we prepared to concede?⁸⁰

In answering these questions, Sargent believed that it was important to remember that neither Britain nor the United States had territorial claims in Europe, while the Soviets had 'made it abundantly clear that they intend as a result of this war to advance their European frontiers westwards'. An ability to reach an agreement with Stalin about his likely post-war territorial objectives at the present time 'should go a long way to reassure the Poles'. If such an agreement was not forthcoming, the pressure placed

on Russo-Polish relations 'may well hamper the general war effort at a moment when united action in Europe may be of the utmost importance'. In the climate immediately before the discovery of the Katyn remains, there had been, in Sargent's view, every reason to 'assume that Stalin [was] ready to negotiate with HMG in this subject',⁸¹ although *post hoc* there was little reason to believe that it would place a major barrier to long-term diplomatic negotiations between the Russian and US governments.

In Moscow, on 26 April 1943, Clark Kerr had a meeting with Molotov, who refused to delay the public announcement of the rift between the Russians and the Poles.⁸² Clark Kerr used 'every argument' to persuade Molotov to delay publication 'in order to give HMG time to seek a solution and so to avert a disaster'. But Molotov remained implacable, arguing that 'no self-respecting government could act otherwise than the Soviet government were doing'. Clark Kerr reported that Eden and Churchill had been 'greatly surprised and distressed' by the news and that 'only Hitler would be pleased' by it.⁸³ The ambassador then offered his own analysis of the Russian government's strategy. Stalin 'did not understand how seriously HMG took this matter', but that severing of diplomatic relations with Poland was 'part of a preconceived plan' towards the creation of 'a Polish government in Russia with which they [the Soviets] would establish diplomatic relations'. Clark Kerr recommended that Churchill and Roosevelt send a sternly worded personal message expressing their dismay at Stalin's actions.⁸⁴ Roberts was happy to approve Clark Kerr's 'language to Molotov'.⁸⁵

The above analysis gives a flavour of the mindset of the British Foreign Office at the time of the discovery of the Katyn massacre and the immediate diplomatic fallout from it. This chapter has highlighted the role played by the Central Department in analysing the evidence surrounding the discovery. However, there is one further strand that needs to be explored that demonstrates that ambiguity of the Foreign Office's position. It is not Roberts whose name is most associated with the official Foreign Office response to the Katyn massacre. That accolade fell to Owen O'Malley, who produced two influential reports on the evidence, in May 1943 and in February 1944. It is perhaps tempting to assume that Roberts was not selected to write the Katyn reports because he felt too strongly about the matter. That is to forget that O'Malley was hardly an objective commentator. While he was undoubtedly a 'Foreign Office man', he was also British ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile and an expert on Eastern European affairs, having also been attached to the British embassy in Moscow in the 1920s and in charge of the British Legation in Budapest until the outbreak of war in 1939. Thus, the Foreign Office deliberately put itself in a position where the adoption of an anti-Soviet stance was impossible to avoid, even if that was only to be conveyed implicitly.

O'Malley's first memorandum was produced less than a month after the discovery of the remains.⁸⁶ Historians place a great deal of emphasis on it; for example, Sanford has described it as 'the single most important document in the Katyn controversy'.⁸⁷ It was released into the public domain only in 1972, under the terms of the British Thirty-Year Rule. O'Malley made it clear that he was convinced of Soviet guilt, a conviction of which he was still more persuaded by the time of the publication of his second report, in February 1944. Soviet evasiveness in responding to Polish questions about the whereabouts of the missing officers pointed, in his view, to evidence of guilt.

O'Malley devoted thirteen paragraphs to analysing the evidence and concluded that the remains discovered in April 1943 were indeed those of some of the missing Polish officers. This evidence included a forensic discussion of clothing found on the corpses and the fact that none of the families of those missing had heard from their relatives since the spring of 1940. Denis Allen described O'Malley's analysis as 'brilliant', 'unorthodox' and 'disquieting'.⁸⁸ Roberts was less willing to gush, describing O'Malley's conclusions as 'very odd and disingenuous'.⁸⁹ O'Malley recommended that the British government should revisit its assessment of the morality of Soviet diplomacy but not in a way that would lead to a change in British policy; that a moral shift should take place, not a diplomatic one.⁹⁰ Roberts wondered where this left the future of Anglo-Soviet relations, given the Allied governments' intention to prosecute war crimes after the war.⁹¹ Because of the many bones of contention he thought the report threw up, he recommended that only the narrative sections be circulated to the War Cabinet. However, he was overruled by Strang, who oversaw the circulation of the whole report to the King and to the War Cabinet. The effect of the debate on O'Malley's findings in May 1943 resulted in what Cadogan later described as a Foreign Office 'presumption of Soviet guilt'.⁹²

This belief that the Soviets were responsible for the Katyn massacre has remained the unspoken consensus of opinion in the British government. In February 1944, O'Malley produced a second lengthy analysis of the evidence, which was widely circulated within the Foreign Office.⁹³ This was largely in response to the Germans' decision to invite an international panel of pathologists and criminologists to examine the evidence, the results of which were released to the Polish government.

The announcement by the Soviets of the creation of a commission to evaluate the Katyn evidence provided part of the context to O'Malley's second report. The Burdenko Commission consisted of eight officials aided by five medics. The Foreign Office produced a document evaluating the evidence presented to the commission in a memorandum on 17 February 1944. It was written by Professor B. H. Sumner, a distinguished scholar of Russian history and culture.⁹⁴ It concluded that the Russian investigation added nothing new to what was already known, especially on the failure of the Soviets to produce evidence that the Polish officers were alive. Significantly, however, Sumner was partly persuaded by the Burdenko Commission's conclusion that the Katyn massacre had been perpetrated by the Germans; that there was insufficient evidence of German innocence. His conclusions caused a furore within the Foreign Office. Cadogan and Allen thought that both the Burdenko investigation and Sumner's assessment of it were robust and sound. Roberts's view was characteristically more nuanced. He was concerned that 'this useful paper fastens on the weaknesses in the German case, which indeed have always been apparent, but it does not to my mind dispose of the weaknesses in the Russian case'. Oliver Harvey, an official at the Foreign Office, thought Sumner's paper provided a useful balance to O'Malley's open hostility to the Russians. Yet it was Sir William Malkin, the Foreign Office's legal adviser, who made sure that his colleagues did not allow the Sumner report to bring about a shift in overall British position.

O'Malley devoted much attention to comparing the methodologies of the German and Soviet panels of experts. However, despite the wealth of new evidence at his

disposal, he decided that 'no definite conclusion' could be drawn from it. That said, he continued to believe that the Soviets were probably responsible for the massacre primarily because of their unwillingness to share the findings of the Burdenko Commission outside the portals of the Kremlin.⁹⁵ He found a number of important discrepancies between the German and Soviet forensic evidence and consequently dismissed 'as more or less unreliable the verbal accounts of supposed witnesses and the findings of the scientific commissions on both sides.'⁹⁶ He was particularly struck by the Burdenko Commission claim that, far from being dead, the Polish officers in question were all working in the Smolensk region, although, strangely, 'not a single one ... was ever seen or heard of alive again.'⁹⁷ 'The defective nature' of the Burdenko Report made O'Malley's 'doubts even stronger than before.'⁹⁸

The official political and diplomatic reaction of the Foreign Office to O'Malley's two reports was one of studied neutrality. Both Churchill and Eden were keen to keep the Katyn question off the agenda in their dealings with the Soviets. As the Western Allies prepared to open the long awaited second front in northern France, both men were anxious not to antagonize Stalin, who believed that the start of this offensive was long overdue. Churchill took a practical view; to him, the evidence was genuinely inconclusive. The Katyn massacre was 'not one of those matters where absolute certainty is either urgent or indispensable.'⁹⁹ Eden was more convinced of Soviet culpability but nevertheless believed that in the face of such conflicting evidence 'we shall probably never know.'¹⁰⁰ Churchill did not raise the matter with Stalin at their subsequent meeting at Yalta, primarily because he feared the consequences both for the wartime alliance and for Soviet relations with Poland. 'This is the only line of safety for the Poles and indeed for us ... there is no use prowling morbidly round the three year old graves of Smolensk.'¹⁰¹ This desire to bury the issue was at the heart of his reactions to O'Malley's two reports, especially the second, circulation of which he was keen to restrict only to the Foreign Office and to himself. As the prime minister prepared to meet Stalin at Tehran in December 1943 to agree, *inter alia*, the post-war position of the Polish frontier, it was important that O'Malley should be allowed to express his views only 'very secretly.'¹⁰² He made it clear that O'Malley's findings would never form the basis of British criticism of the Soviets: 'All this is merely to ascertain the facts, because we should none of us ever speak a word about it.'¹⁰³ Eden was less comfortable with this course of action. While he believed O'Malley's second report to be 'prejudiced', it was also 'pretty explosive.'¹⁰⁴ It therefore deserved a wider audience than Churchill was prepared to countenance, a view, not surprisingly, shared by O'Malley himself.¹⁰⁵

When the British government was confronted with how to prosecute war crimes at Nuremberg in 1946, the O'Malley reports produced a lively debate within the Foreign Office. There were those, such as Denis Allen, who took the view that 'the Russians have produced prima facie evidence in support of their case.'¹⁰⁶ While Patrick Dean, a future ambassador to Washington, recommended that the Nuremberg lawyers should do all that they could to avoid raising the Katyn question in any of their official discussions with the Germans, Dean's colleague, Thomas Brimelow, indicated a reason why the Foreign Office thought the matter best avoided:

The Soviet investigations inculpate the Germans without entirely exculpating the Soviet authorities ... we cannot do more than say that there is a *prima facie* case against the Germans. We may feel that there is also a *prima facie* case against the Russians, but we cannot say so.¹⁰⁷

This line continued in March 1948 when, as part of the Nuremberg trials investigations, the Polish government handed the Foreign Office copies of documents relating to missing prisoners of war.¹⁰⁸ Robin Hankey, attached to the British embassy in Warsaw, was disconcerted when the gesture resurrected Soviet interest in the Katyn question. He advised, 'The whole thing stinks. But we can't butt in.'¹⁰⁹ The situation was made worse because, as the trials continued, the patterns of evidence appeared to make Russian responsibility for the massacre less clear. As Hankey told Raczynski, the British lawyers had 'been impressed by the weight of evidence produced by the Russians to show that it had in fact been done by the Germans and that the Russians had very much the best part of the argument.'¹¹⁰ This development in the Foreign Office's view of the evidence remains an anomalous part of the picture that emerges from the archives.¹¹¹

Space does not permit a full discussion of how the Foreign Office treated the Katyn question after the Second World War, although it is an interesting and revealing story. It was the US government, not the British, that took the first post-war initiative to keep the matter alive in the minds of the international community. In 1951, the US House of Representatives voted to create a select committee to conduct a reappraisal of all the evidence.¹¹² Conducting its investigation at the height of the Korean War, the Foreign Office had little confidence in the committee's ability to deliver an objective report.¹¹³ Thus, when the interim report pointed to NKVD responsibility for the massacre, the Northern Department was encouraged by the British embassy in Washington to view it as having 'an obvious political [that is anti-Soviet] bias.'¹¹⁴ Five years later, the Katyn question re-emerged on to the Foreign Office agenda briefly, when an official visit to London from the Russian president, Nikolai Khrushchev, produced an instruction to all officials not to raise the matter with the Soviet delegation.¹¹⁵ In the two decades that followed, at the height of Cold War politics, there was little appetite within the Foreign Office to help the Soviets conceal their war crimes. But rather than taking the form of open criticism of the Soviets, the Foreign Office expressed this shift through direct sympathy for the Polish position. This was largely the purpose behind the memorandum produced by the Foreign Office's historical advisor, Rohan D'Olier Butler, in 1972, which reviewed all of the evidence in the light of the Thirty-Year Rule release of the Foreign Office General Correspondence files.¹¹⁶ This assessment, although not without its critics, has formed the mainstay of subsequent British government reviews of the Katyn evidence until the 1990s, when the fall of the Soviet regime briefly yielded new opportunities for scholars to examine official archives from the communist period.

The principal aim of this chapter has been to revisit the response of the British Foreign Office to the discovery, in 1943, of the remains of the Katyn massacre some three years earlier. The picture is complex, with the majority of officials favouring suppressing the growing body of evidence of Soviet guilt. This has been explained and was seen at the time as necessary to the successful prosecution of the war and

the maintenance of the alliance between Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. However, this chapter has also presented evidence to suggest that some key figures, such as Frank Roberts, whose views have not been examined in detail before, were sympathetic to offering open support for Polish claims that the Russians were guilty of a war crime. This analysis has also provided a useful case study of the way in which a British government department handled foreign propaganda during the Second World War. Furthermore, the Katyn example demonstrates the willingness of the Foreign Office to pursue a unique diplomatic strategy, that of non-recognition. But the advisability of adopting such a strategy must be questioned and can be seen as somewhat self-defeating. The failure of the British government to make a statement about how it viewed the events of 1940 and then 1943 has kept the Katyn issue in the historical spotlight rather than the opposite. The Foreign Office (now the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, FCO) has not been shy about publishing and commenting on the key documentation in its collection but has done so only from a strictly narrative-based, historical perspective: stating the facts rather than analysing their significance. It seems that it is for historians to make up their own minds about the value of this information. This is rightly the case, of course, but it still allows the FCO to cling to its own strategy of deafening silence. The evidence surrounding the Katyn massacre has now been extensively picked over and one wonders what further there is to say except about the wider diplomatic and political fallout from the attitudes of the international community to it: how, for example, did the Foreign Office's – and then the FCO's – studied unwillingness to discuss the massacre openly after 1946 impact on Britain's relations with Poland during the Cold War era and beyond?

Notes

- 1 George Sanford, *Katyn and the Soviet Massacre of 1940* (London, 2005), pp. 1–2.
- 2 Ibid. Other useful English-language sources include P. M. H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear* (London, 1990), pp. 109–27, and Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's* (New Haven, CT, 2015), pp. 505–10.
- 3 The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), FO 371/34568/C4263/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 13 May 1943, on Minute by Roberts, 14 April 1943. Cf. Bell, *John Bull*, p. 116.
- 4 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4263/258/55, Minute by Jebb, 10 May 1943, on Minute by Roberts, 14 April 1943.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 127.
- 11 TNA, FO 371/C4020/258/G55, Eden to O'Malley, 9 April 1943.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.

- 15 Ibid. See also TNA, FO 371/34568/C4048/258/55, Baggallay to Foreign Office, 30 March 1943.
- 16 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 17 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 17 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 24 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 18 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, Minute by Dew, 18 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 19 TNA, PREM 3/353, Minute by Roberts, 7 June 1943 on O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 20 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4230/358/55, Annex, 15 April 1943, on Note to Churchill by General Sikorski, 15 April 1943. See also TNA, FO 371/34568/C4230/358/55, Foreign Office to Clark Kerr (British ambassador in Moscow), 20 April 1943.
- 21 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4478/258/55, Foreign Office Minute by Lancaster, 13 April 1943.
- 22 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4478/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 15 April 1943, on Foreign Office Minute by Lancaster, 13 April 1943.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4478/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 14 April 1943.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Sikorski Institute, London, Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations (hereafter DPSR), 1, no. 307, Soviet Information Bureau communique.
- 28 DPSR, no. 307, Minister of National Defence Communiqué. TNA, FO 371/34568/C4278/258/55, Communicated to the British government in Minute by Polish ambassador, 15 April 1943.
- 29 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4331/258/55, Minute by Polish ambassador, 15 April 1943, *ibid.* The text was communicated in O'Malley to the Foreign Office, 17 April 1943.
- 30 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4364/258/18, Norton to the Foreign Office, 15 April 1943. Norton's views carried weight because he had spent much of the late 1930s attached to the British Legation in Warsaw and was thus viewed as an expert on Polish affairs, although here his involvement stemmed from the fact that the IRC was headquartered in Switzerland.
- 31 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4364/258/18, Minute by Roberts, 20 April 1943, on Norton to the Foreign Office, 15 April 1943.
- 32 TNA, FO 371/34570/C4664/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 21 April 1943, on Minute by Ridsdale, 21 April 1943. Cf. Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 129.
- 33 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4230/358/55, Note to Churchill by General Sikorski, 15 April 1943.
- 34 TNA, FO 371/C4316/258/55, Norton to the Foreign Office, 18 April 1943.
- 35 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4234/258/55, Foreign Office Minute, 16 April 1943.
- 36 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4234/258/55, Foreign Office to Halifax, 16 April 1943. The following day, the Foreign Office gave Halifax the impression that there was also doubt about the scale of the atrocity. 'It is probable that the Germans have discovered bodies of individual Poles, some of them identifiable.' TNA, FO 371/34569/C4479/258/55, Foreign Office to Halifax, 17 April 1943, in Minute by Roberts, 16 April 1943.
- 37 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4234/258/55, Circular Foreign Office telegram, 17 April 1943.

- 38 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4244/258/55, British Minister in Cairo to Foreign Office, 17 April 1943.
- 39 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4244/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 19 April 1943, on British Minister in Cairo to Foreign Office, 17 April 1943.
- 40 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4244/258/55, Minute by Harrison, 17 April 1943, on British minister in Cairo to Foreign Office, 17 April 1943.
- 41 Minute by Roberts, *ibid.*
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4479/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 16 April 1943.
- 44 Some authors blame the *Daily Telegraph* for breaking the news of the Polish request to the Red Cross on 16 April 1943 ahead of the planned Polish timetable for releasing the news. Alexandra Kwiatkowska-Viatteau, *1940–1943, Katyn: L'armée polonaise assassinée* (Brussels, 1982), pp. 22–3.
- 45 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4479/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 17 April 1943 on Minute by Roberts, 16 April 1943.
- 46 Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 129.
- 47 *Inter alia*, DPSR, no. 309, Raczyński to Bogomolov, 20 April 1943.
- 48 Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 129.
- 49 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4230/358/55, Foreign Office to Clark Kerr, 19 April 1943.
- 50 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Clark Kerr to Eden, 21 April 1943.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, History Notes, *Katyn: British Reactions to the Katyn Massacre, 1943–2003* (London, 2003), p. 9. My thanks to Professor Erik Goldstein for sending me a copy.
- 53 See also TNA, FO 371/34568/4057/258/55, Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 52 (43), 12 April 1943.
- 54 TNA, FO 371/34568/4057/258/55, Minute by Harrison, 13 April 1943, on Extract from War Cabinet Conclusions 52 (43), 12 April 1943.
- 55 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4454/258/55, Extract from War Cabinet Minutes, 19 April 1943.
- 56 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4454/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 22 April 1943 on extract from War Cabinet Minutes, 19 April 1943.
- 57 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Clark Kerr to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Minute by to Harrison, 21 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 61 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 21 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Minute by Warner, 22 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 65 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4396/258/55, Minute by Strang, 22 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 66 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, Minute by Dew, 21 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 67 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, *Soviet Monitor: Radio Bulletins from the USSR*, 20 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.

- 68 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4130/258/55, *Soviet Monitor: Radio Bulletins from the USSR*, *Pravda* editorial, 19 April 1943, on Baggallay to Foreign Office, 13 March 1943.
- 69 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4550/258/55, Halifax to Foreign Office, 21 April 1943; Minute by Roberts, 24 April 1943, on same.
- 70 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4550/258/55, Minute by Sargent, 24 April 1943, on Halifax to Foreign Office, 21 April 1943.
- 71 TNA, FO 371/34569/C484569258/55, Stalin to Churchill, 21 April 1943.
- 72 DPSR, no. 312, Churchill to Stalin, 24 April 1943.
- 73 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4644/258/55, Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 25 April 1943.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4644/258/55, Minute by Sargent, 27 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 25 April 1943.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4644/258/55, Minute by Eden, 27 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 25 April 1943.
- 78 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4133/258/55, Minute by Cadogan to Eden, 20 April 1943, on Foreign Office Minute by Sargent, 15 April 1943.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 TNA, FO 371/34568/C4133/258/55, Minute by Sargent, 15 April 1943.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4646/258/55, Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 26 April 1943.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 TNA, FO 371/34569/C4648/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 27 April 1943, on Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 26 April 1943.
- 86 TNA, PREM 3/353/C6160/258/55, O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 87 Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 170.
- 88 TNA, PREM 3/353/C6160/258/55, Minute by Allen, 25 May 1943, on O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 89 TNA, PREM 3/353/C6160/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 25 May 1943, on O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 90 TNA, PREM 3/353/C6160/258/55, O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 91 TNA, PREM 3/353/C6160/258/55, Minute by Roberts, 25 May 1943, on O'Malley to Eden, 24 May 1943.
- 92 See 'The Katyn Massacre and Reactions in the Foreign Office: Memorandum by the Historical Adviser', printed for internal circulation in the Departmental Series of the Eastern European and Soviet Department as DS 2/73, dated 10 April 1973 ('Butler Memorandum'), p. 12. The Butler Memorandum is available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110413142005/http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/our-history/historical-publications/research-projects/katyn/the-butler-memorandum/>; last access 16 August 2018.
- 93 TNA, FO 371/39390/C2099/8/55, O'Malley to Eden, 11 February 1944.
- 94 TNA, FO 371/39393/C2957G/8/55, 4 March 1944. This is reproduced as Annex B of the Butler Memorandum, pp. 1–8.
- 95 See also Sanford, *Katyn*, p. 145.
- 96 TNA, FO 371/39390/C2099/8/55, O'Malley to Eden, 11 February 1944.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 TNA, PREM 3/353. M1777.4, Churchill to Eden, 25 February 1944.

- 100 TNA, PREM 3/353 PM/44/100, Eden to Churchill, 26 February 1944.
- 101 TNA, FO 371/34571/C4798/258/G55, Churchill minute of 28 April 1943 to Eden.
- 102 Churchill had inquired of Eden on 15 July 1943 whether the first O'Malley report had been sent to Roosevelt. Eden replied the following day that he was against sending it officially through the Washington embassy – 'if it were to find its way into unauthorised hands, the reactions on our relationship with Russia would be serious': Record of Churchill–Roosevelt–Stalin conversation, Soviet embassy, Tehran, 1 December 1943, Foreign Office, Historical Papers, no. 48, 'Churchill and Stalin: Documents from the British Archives 1943'.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 TNA, FO 371/34580, Eden, 16 July 1943.
- 105 TNA, FO 371/47734/N16482/664/55, O'Malley to Cadogan, 13 April 1944.
- 106 TNA, FO 371/2309/N16482/664/55, Memorandum by Allen, 25 October 1945.
- 107 Annotation to *ibid.*
- 108 TNA, FO 371/71610/N2599/108/55.
- 109 TNA, FO 371/564/N4406G/108/55, Annotation of 10 April 1946.
- 110 TNA, FO 371/71610/C2599/2599/55, Hankey to Raczyński, 5 March 1948.
- 111 K. Duke (Eastern European Research Department) later recalled that what the British legal team had thought of the Soviet evidence at Nuremberg was now 'rather different'. TNA, FCO 28/1946, Bullard to Brimelow, paper on Butler Memorandum, 16 October 1972.
- 112 *The Katyn Forest Massacre: Interim Report of the Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre Pursuant of H. Res. 390 and H. Res. 539*, House of Representatives report no. 2430, 82nd Congress, 2nd session, Washington DC, US Government Printing Office, 2 July 1952, p. 3.
- 113 Louis FitzGibbon, *Unpitied and Unknown: Katyn – Bologoye – Dergachi* (London, 1975), pp. 206–393; TNA, PRO371/86679, Minute by Maddocks, 20 May 1950.
- 114 TNA, FCO 28/100719/1662/17/52, Littlejohn-Cook to Northern Department, 30 July 1952.
- 115 TNA, FO 371/122671/NP1661/3, Minute by Haigh, 23 April 1956.
- 116 Butler Memorandum.

Part Three

Postwar and Cold War

Introduction

Mark Connelly, Jo Fox, Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt

We are living in a society which is profoundly wrong, Tony Judt, the author of *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (2005), has poignantly pointed out, with its relentless consumerism and material interests.¹ Ideas and ideologies do not seem to matter any longer. In our world today, people no longer ask whether a thing is good, fair or just; or whether it improves the lives of the many, not the few; or whether it is true or untrue. Our relativist, post-modern, post-Cold War world has not only left behind ideologies and theories but also has become 'post-ethical', Judt argues. Compared to the Cold War, a term first popularized by the journalist Walter Lippmann in his 1947 book *Cold War*, ideas and ideologies may no longer arouse the same level of passion among large swathes of an internet-addicted populace interested in 'infotainment' by means of (anti)social media.² Yet, in the 1950s and 1960s, widely held beliefs in the superiority of the capitalist or communist models of society constituted the *raison d'être* for why entire nations threatened each other with Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). The spectre of total nuclear annihilation within a matter of minutes led not only to a 'battle of nerves', and a concomitant acceleration in civil defence spending and military preparedness, but also to the exploitation of the 'communications revolution' – especially of radio, film, TV and the emerging 'new media' – for propaganda purposes. Responding to the lessons learned from the Second World War, all major powers invested heavily in propaganda infrastructure to sell their way of life domestically and discredit the enemy at home and abroad.

Much of the field's early literature focussed on American and Soviet diplomacy and propaganda, including Donald Dunham's *Kremlin Target: USA – Conquest by Propaganda* (1961) or Frederick Barghoorn's book on *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (1964), in which he argued that the Soviet Union had attempted, but failed, to 'sap the faith of Americans in their leaders and their institutions'.³ In 1968, in response to complaints about an assumed 'propaganda gap' which apparently existed alongside a 'missile gap', Thomas Sorenson, the former deputy director of the US Information Agency (USIA), published *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, detailing the work of the agency from its inception in 1953 until the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.⁴ The Cold War and its perceived threat of total destruction not only provided Western and communist governments with a strategic and moral justification for the

development of weapons of mass destruction but it also created, above all, a climate of fear and paranoia in which governments attempted to win over hearts and minds. As early as 1950, President Harry S. Truman had described the ideological contest as a 'struggle above all else, for the minds of men.'⁵ Studies such as John Clews' *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (1964) and Luca Scott's *Freedom's War: The US Crusade against the Soviet Union, 1945–56* (1999) reflected this sentiment by analysing the different techniques and media forms employed since the end of war.⁶ Nicholas Cull's work on US public diplomacy (2014) and on US 'counter-propaganda' in this volume shows the extent to which scholars continue to explore the subject from this perspective.⁷

During the Korean War (1950–3), propaganda came to play an instrumental role in the ideological struggle between the United States, the Soviet Union and communist China for domination of the Korean peninsula. This was an international war by proxy, as William Stueck's *The Korean War: An International History* (1995) makes plain.⁸ North Korean and Chinese allegations about 'germ warfare' and other 'atrocities' were met by the US 'Campaign of Truth' and the revival of the Voice of America (VOA) which broadcast to over a hundred countries in dozens of languages. The Soviet Union responded by broadcasting thousands of hours a week on enhanced short-wave radio programmes. Significantly, the US military used the 'germ warfare controversy' – which happened against a backdrop of greater state surveillance of scientists and civil servants suspected of communist sympathies, particularly in the United States and Canada – as a pretext to increase preparations for nonconventional warfare, arguing that the Western Allies needed to develop an extended weapons programme so that they could retaliate if necessary.

Given the political climate at the time, it is hardly surprising that experts engaged in studying the methods and means employed in propaganda campaigns. At one end of the spectrum, journalistic, sociological and anthropological studies explored the relationship between individuals and the modern state to gain a better understanding of how best to manage and manipulate public opinion through the use of mass media. The idea of propaganda as the 'magic bullet' and a 'hypodermic needle' for the control of public opinion was increasingly challenged by accounts which stressed the limited effects of propaganda, building on the work of authors such as Walter Lippmann, author of *The Phantom Public* (1925), who saw propaganda more as a 'mechanism for engineering public opinion and consent.'⁹ Highlighting the complex interactions between opinion leaders and people in 'need for propaganda', and by departing from Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's idea of 'manufacturing consent', the French sociologist Jacques Ellul argued convincingly in *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (1965) that propaganda is 'most effective when it reinforces previously held opinions and beliefs'.¹⁰

Whereas most commentators agreed that propaganda 'confirms rather than converts', experts in the behavioural and psy-sciences (psychology, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, etc.) developed rather crude, albeit long-lasting, models about the nature of man by alleging the communist 'brainwashing' of American POWs. Coined by the journalist Edward Hunter in 1950, and then used in his book *Brainwashing in Red China* (1951), the term initially referred to the idea that the communist bloc possessed some sort of technique to 'erase and repattern human thought processes'.¹¹ It not only

found traction in popular culture and feature films such as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), and was later appropriated within the post-1989 discourse about consumerism, but it also accelerated civilian and military studies in the behavioural sciences.¹² In addition, Western governments funded and utilized the writings of dissidents such as the Czechoslovak émigré Edward Táborský, who applied the concept in his pamphlet *Conformity under Communism: A Study of Indoctrination Techniques* (1958) to warn against the ‘engineering of consent’ in communist Europe.¹³ As the Cold War heated up, and unpersuaded by the negative findings of social science studies about the conceptual utility of ‘brainwashing’, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in close collaboration with the US military intelligence community, established a far-reaching experimental programme to test mind-altering drugs on non-consenting participants.¹⁴

Post-war debates about communist ‘brainwashing’, irrespective of their limited currency within the academic community, gave additional impetus to theories of totalitarianism, as advocated by Hannah Arendt in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) to describe both Nazism and Stalinism as totalitarian movements.¹⁵ In response, political scientists and authors such as Robert J. Lifton, known for his work on ‘thought reform’ in communist China (1961), examined the psychological causes and effects of modern conflicts.¹⁶ His book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (1986) paved the way for greater engagement with the history of Nazi medicine, which included the study of film as vehicles of propaganda and persuasion, and with the psychology of Nazi perpetrators, for example in Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men* (1992).¹⁷ At the same time, scholarly interest in understanding the nature of the Nazi regime was reflected in the *Historikerstreit* (‘historians’ dispute’) in the years 1986–9 and saw intellectuals from both ends of the political spectrum clash over different interpretative models, most notably in the debate over ‘intentionalism’ versus ‘structuralism’. The concept of ‘Working towards the Führer’, first developed in Ian Kershaw’s book on *Hitler: 1889–1936. Hubris* (1998) to find a middle ground between the opposing positions, also enriched the field of propaganda studies.¹⁸ The release of new source collections such as Goebbels’s diaries (*Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*), edited by Elke Fröhlich in the years 1987–96, enabled experts to highlight the central role of Nazi propaganda and mass media within the mainstream debate about the Third Reich.¹⁹ It is within this broader context that David Welch’s seminal study on *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (1993) established essential ground work for propaganda studies, resulting in a new body of work which moved beyond the realm of politics, for example by examining the role and image of women in the entertainment and film industry, as in Jo Fox’s study on *Filming Women in the Third Reich* (2000).²⁰

During the Cold War, cultural propaganda, frequently referred to as cultural or public diplomacy, took centre stage in promoting ideas and values across the ideological divide. Cultural propaganda was seen as an effective tool to complement psychological warfare, for example through the dissemination of cultural products such as films, TV and radio programmes, music, theatre and language teaching, as well as through the proliferation and distribution of a certain type of memorial and heritage culture that was reflected in museum exhibitions, artefacts and public events. Whereas Britain engaged in a concerted post-war ‘re-education programme’ to ‘sell

democracy' to the German people, as Philip Taylor has argued in *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (1999), the United States broadcast American jazz and rock music across the 'Iron Curtain', or what some see more as the 'Nylon Curtain', to sway public opinion towards the American 'way of life', discussed in Walter Hixson's *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (1997).²¹ Studies such as Reinhold Wagnleitner's *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War* (1994), on the other hand, looked at the extent to which cultural products and brands such as Coca-Cola, Levi's and McDonald's served broader cultural propaganda aims to 'homogenize the world into a global village dominated by American values'.²² Within the field of propaganda studies, cultural activities and their products are all nowadays subjected to critical analysis, from comic strips, fast cars, design and architecture to photography and video recordings.

More recently, international trade fairs and exhibitions have been examined not just from the perspective of Cold War competitors showing off material progress and technological innovation, as in the case of the notorious 'Kitchen Debate' between the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and the US Vice President Richard Nixon at the American National Exhibition in Moscow (ANEM) in 1959, but also in an attempt to assess audience responses and their impact on popular opinion. In staging the *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970* (2008) exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, David Crowley and Jane Pavitt explored architecture, film, literature, computer, art, design and technology as vehicles of Cold War cultural propaganda.²³ Significantly, their work's concluding chapter, 'Cold War Landscapes', discusses the extent to which American counterculture and the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s employed posters, film, architecture and 'design vehicles' for raising environmental awareness, as in the case of the celebration of 'Earth Day' in 1970 or 'Drop City' in Colorado.²⁴ Susan Reid, in 'Our Kitchen is Just as Good' (2008), looked at Soviet responses to 'representations of modern American domesticity'.²⁵ Documenting and assessing the landscapes on which the Cold War 'propaganda war' took place is also the focus of Dara McGrath's prize-winning *Project Cleansweep* (2019).²⁶

The chapters in this section look at the issues raised through the use of interdisciplinary methodological and historiographical perspectives, encompassing the role of photography, film, education, diplomacy and print media as vehicles of propaganda and persuasion. In their chapter about a US wartime medical experiment as propaganda, Katja Schmidt-Mai and Jonathan Moreno combine their historical analysis with a detailed art historical description of photographs of a *LIFE Magazine* article which was submitted as exonerating evidence in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial of 1946–7. Julie Anderson, meanwhile, takes the British documentary film *The Undefeated* (1950),²⁷ which informed viewers about the support available for disabled ex-servicemen, as her starting point to examine the relationship between the emerging post-war welfare state, information agencies and the general public. Having examined the effectiveness of the British Council's cultural propaganda campaign during the Second World War in his book *A Battle for Neutral Europe* (2012),²⁸ Edward Corse looks in more detail at the extent to which the conceptual distinction between the terms 'cultural propaganda' and 'propaganda', and the use of the former, helped the British Council to promote British life and culture in Poland during the early Cold

War period. James Farley's chapter, on the other hand, explores the representation of the communist 'model worker' in Chinese propaganda films, and how his or her depiction in the style of socialist realism compared to Soviet propaganda promoting the 'New Soviet Man'. While drawing attention to certain similarities, Farley also highlights distinct differences in 'revolutionary experience' which shaped the approach to, and content of, Chinese film propaganda. In his study of US public diplomacy during the Cold War, Nicholas J. Cull argues that all propaganda attempts to portray itself at some point as 'counter-propaganda' – much in the same way that increased military preparedness is described as a 'defensive' response to the threat of an external aggressor – and explores the evolution and nature of US counter-propaganda. Peter Johnston examines different print media used during the Cold War to recruit members to the British armed forces as a way of conceptualizing the blurred boundaries between propaganda and advertising. Finally, reflecting on the making of the documentary series *Love, Hate and Propaganda*, Fabrice d'Almeida provides us with a witness account of his collaboration with David Welch: the two were senior consultants for the Canadian TV series broadcast in both the English and French languages. His chapter offers insights into debates about the role of academia and public history in historiology and thus serves as a conceptual bridge to the epilogue.

Notes

- 1 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005).
- 2 Walter Lippmann, *Cold War: A Study in US Foreign Policy since 1945* (London, 1947); for an excellent synthesis of how propaganda was disseminated during the Cold War, see Daniel Leab, 'Cold War (1945–1989)', in Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003), pp. 92–4; and David Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (London, 2013), pp. 104–12.
- 3 Donald Dunham, *Kremlin Target: USA – Conquest by Propaganda* (New York, 1961); Frederick Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton, NJ, 1964).
- 4 Thomas Sorenson, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda* (New York, 1968).
- 5 David Welch, 'Opening Pandora's Box: Propaganda, Power and Persuasion', in David Welch (ed.), *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion: From World War I to Wikileaks* (London, 2014), p. 9.
- 6 John C. Clews, *Communist Propaganda Techniques* (London, 1964); Luca Scott, *Freedom's War: The US Crusade against the Soviet Union, 1945–56* (Manchester, 1999).
- 7 Nicholas J. Cull, 'The Tragedy of American Public Diplomacy, 1989–1999: The Last Decade of the United States Information Agency Reconsidered', in David Welch (ed.), *Propaganda, Power and Persuasion*, pp. 113–26; see also his essay, 'Counter-Propaganda: Cases from US Public Diplomacy and beyond', in this volume.
- 8 William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ, 1995).
- 9 Welch, 'Opening Pandora's Box', p. 9; Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York, 1925).
- 10 Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, transl. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner (New York, 1965); Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky,

- Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, 1988); Welch, 'Opening Pandora's Box', p. 3.
- 11 Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China* (New York, 1951); Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing: The Story of Men Who Defied It* (New York, 1956); Susan Carruthers, 'Brainwashing', in Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003), p. 47.
 - 12 *The Manchurian Candidate*, dir. John Frankenheimer (USA, 1962).
 - 13 Edward Táboriský, *Conformity under Communism: A Study of Indoctrination Techniques* (Washington, DC, 1958).
 - 14 Ulf Schmidt, *Secret Science: A Century of Poison Warfare and Human Experiments* (Oxford, 2015).
 - 15 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951).
 - 16 Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China* (London, 1961).
 - 17 Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (London, 1986); Ulf Schmidt, *Medical Films, Ethics and Euthanasia in Nazi Germany: The History of Medical Research and Teaching Films of the Reich Office for Educational Films/Reich Institute for Films in Science and Education, 1933–1945* (Husum, 2002); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1992).
 - 18 Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London, 1998).
 - 19 Elke Fröhlich (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Sämtliche Fragmente*, part I: *Aufzeichnungen 1923–1941*, vols 1–4 (Munich, 1987); part II: *Diktate 1941–1945*, vols 1–15 (Munich, 1993–6).
 - 20 David Welch, *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* [1993] (2nd edn, London, 2002); Jo Fox, *Filming Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford and New York, 2000).
 - 21 Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh, 1999); Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (Basingstoke, 1997).
 - 22 Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, transl. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994); David Welch, 'Cultural Propaganda', in Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003), p. 101.
 - 23 David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (eds), *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970* (London, 2008).
 - 24 David Crowley, 'Looking Down on Spaceship Earth: Cold War Landscapes', in *ibid.*, pp. 249–67.
 - 25 Susan Reid, 'Our Kitchen Is Just as Good: Soviet Responses to the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959', in *ibid.*, pp. 154–62.
 - 26 Dara McGrath, *Project Cleansweep: Beyond the Post-Military Landscape of the United Kingdom* (Berlin, 2019).
 - 27 *The Undefeated*, dir. Paul Dickson (UK, 1950).
 - 28 Edward Corse, *A Battle for Neutral Europe: British Cultural Propaganda during the Second World War* (London and New York, 2013).

A wartime medical experiment as propaganda: The malaria case

Katja Schmidt-Mai and Jonathan D. Moreno

A medical experiment involving the deliberate exposure of vulnerable people to a dangerous parasite sounds like a recipe for the kinds of horrific practices associated with Nazi concentration camps. It would be natural to suppose that the subjects of these experiments must have either been physically coerced or threatened in a manner that made refusal to participate even more unappealing than the experiment itself. Moreover, such an experiment would surely be one that authorities would prefer to have suppressed, or at least not to have widely publicized, if only so as not to stimulate lingering public sympathy for the experiment's victims, an outcast population of convicts.

Yet these intuitions turn out to be both anachronistic, reflecting a twenty-first-century perspective, and to have been decisively refuted in at least one remarkable case. In that instance, the experiment was sponsored at the highest levels of the US government during the Second World War, involved prisoners who were not in any obvious way coerced or threatened and was made the object of a vigorous publicity campaign in the pages of one of the most widely circulated magazines in the country. This magazine article was also unique in its graphic portrayal of the experiment, including several iconic images that were sure to appeal to a readership that, while patriotic, was growing tired of war and its price in blood and treasure. Indeed, the spare text of fewer than 200 words was more than matched in its propaganda value by the power of the images themselves. In yet another odd twist, the article and its photographs nearly upended what many scholars regard as the most important international legal case in history, and certainly a landmark in the history of medical ethics: the trial of Nazi doctors who had participated in what were judged to have been crimes against humanity.

A White House experiment

Anticipating an invasion of the home islands of Japan in late 1945 or early 1946, the US military faced a medical crisis. Tens of thousands of soldiers and marines were at

risk of malaria during deployments in Asia but the Japanese had made it impossible to obtain the standard treatment, quinine. Operating under the highest auspices of the US government, the Committee on Medical Research (CMR) was charged with developing cutting-edge treatments against the diseases that most threatened the American fighting forces. Malaria was at the top of the CMR's list, comprising 22 per cent of its \$25 million wartime budget; other projects involved sexually transmissible diseases like gonorrhoea (a significant cause of absence from duty, especially in the US Navy). In this research, which involved the use of prisoners as experimental subjects, the investigators considered both safety and consent issues. For malaria, the CMR set up the Malaria Research Program in 1944. Run in the main by the Army, research took place at several sites: the Penitentiary in Atlanta, the New Jersey State Reformatory in Rahway and the US Army disciplinary barracks in Green Haven, New York.¹ The CMR also contracted with the University of Chicago, where the malariologist Alfred Alving was on the staff. As his research site, Alving chose the nearby federal penitentiary at Stateville, Illinois. The Stateville research unit was staffed by Army medical officers.

Over the next two years, 500 white, male prisoners volunteered for experiments that involved the induction of *Plasmodium vivax* and various prophylactic and treatment measures.² Though *P. vivax* is not the most dangerous form of malaria and is not generally fatal, it can lead to an enlarged spleen. The prisoner volunteers were exposed to the bite of mosquitoes that had fed on the blood of mental hospital patients who had been treated with malaria, apparently as a now-obsolete (but often temporarily effective) therapy for the psychotic symptoms associated with tertiary syphilis. Among the several experiments conducted were a study to assess chemical analogues of pamaquine to prevent relapses and one to challenge the prophylactic effects of pentaquine at high doses, which resulted in unanticipated adverse reactions.

Scholars have in the past debated the ethics of the Stateville malaria experiments.³ Key issues include whether the consent was truly voluntary, whether dose levels were known to be safe and whether scientists were prepared to terminate an experiment if it turned out to be more dangerous than anticipated. These were among the standards established later by the Nuremberg Code written by the judges at the trials of Nazi doctors and other officials implicated in the concentration camp experiments. One of these was a malaria experiment at Dachau. Though the conditions of the Dachau experiment were vastly different from those at Stateville, the publicity surrounding the US studies, as we shall see, created a rhetorical opening for the legal defence of the Nazis. In both cases, an important background condition for the experiments and the attendant propaganda (on the US side) was the exigencies of wartime.

Our focus in this chapter is neither on resolving the ethical issues of the malaria experiments nor on analysing the way that perceived military considerations affect ethical standards, but rather on the role of the US experiment as a unique case of wartime propaganda. In order to reconstruct, in detail, the propaganda value and content of the photographic images of a magazine article in which the Stateville experiments were made public, we will offer, for the first time, a historical analysis combined with a detailed art historical description and investigation of the photographic images. While photographs undoubtedly can reflect what is in front of the camera, viewers also need to be aware that photographs possess the ability to interpret and manipulate reality. This

approach will allow us to showcase how the use of photographs as potential historical sources was exploited for an article with considerable wartime propaganda value.

Paul Fussell has described the Second World War as the most carefully managed war in human history.⁴ It was a time of widely circulated magazines and newspapers capable of carrying impressive images as well as of unprecedented newsreel film depictions of actual combat. These media were complemented by radio broadcasts. The contrast between this well-organized reporting and the utter chaos and barbarism of the war itself presented an interesting dilemma and opportunity for those who were in a position to determine how the war should be depicted both on the home front with such campaigns as 'war bonds' and 'victory gardens', and to the fighters themselves with carefully calibrated dispatches about the progress of the struggle. At mid-century, control of these media was still possible partly because they had not yet achieved a level of technology and portability that would allow them to be deployed by just anyone who wished to record events. Journalists and their employers were far more willing to subject themselves to management by authorities during the Second World War than was the case even a few years later during the Korean War.⁵ Moreover, command systems were in place to ensure that only desirable and morale-boosting information was made generally available. It was during the Second World War, for example, that every American general officer was assigned a public relations specialist. The arrangements at Stateville and the attendant publicity must be seen in this light.

Stateville

By the time war broke out in 1939, malaria was a century-old obsession in both Europe and the Americas. For armies, the parasite was a greater threat than the enemy and frustratingly resistant to any medical treatment, excepting only regions where the mosquito population itself could somehow be abated. And there was another complication: although there were thousands of compounds with the potential for treating the disease, they required testing in human subjects, a scarce resource. In the United States as elsewhere, the mentally ill were an attractive research population not only because they were captive and subject to the authority of hospital superintendents but also because experiments on them could be justified on the basis that the high temperature induced by malaria had proven to ameliorate the symptoms of tertiary syphilis, which resembled the behaviours of the severely mentally ill. This rationalization only went so far, however, until it stimulated too many ethical reservations. In any case, still more human material was required than were available in insane asylums. Prisoners were the obvious alternative.

Though Stateville housed the most violent offenders in one of the most secure, forbidding and militarized prisons in the United States, the University of Chicago's Alf Alving was fortunate in one respect. The prison had entered a period of reform with the appointment of Joseph Ragen as warden. When Ragen arrived, the prison yard was a chaotic array of crude shacks 'ruled by gangs who pimped out young offenders as prostitutes, grew marijuana, gambled, and made alcohol in stills using potatoes and sugar stolen from the kitchen.'⁶ Ragen imposed discipline, enhanced security, rewarded

loyal employees and made the parole process more humane. Morale at Stateville was fairly high as a result.

Stateville's most famous prisoners were Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, bright and affluent University of Chicago graduate students who were less than 20 years old when, in 1924, they committed what newspapers called 'the crime of the century'.⁷ For the thrill of it, the two lovers kidnapped, tortured and killed Loeb's 14-year-old cousin and then demanded a ransom from his father. The police easily solved the case, ending the young men's ambition to commit the 'perfect crime'.⁸ Although the public cried out for revenge, the judge gave them a life sentence. A few years into his sentence at Stateville, Loeb was killed by another inmate whom he had tried to force into sex. Leopold survived to become a key member of Alving's experimental team. Warden Ragen arranged for Alving to meet with Leopold and several other influential prisoners to explain that the malaria experiment was important to the war effort. Alving said he needed 200 prisoner volunteers; Leopold accurately predicted that he would get two or three times as many. In the end, 487 convicts volunteered.

Leopold was one of about two dozen inmates who were trained as technicians in the experiment. On 'biting days', they pressed jars of female anopheline mosquitoes onto the volunteers' skin. The malaria symptoms were too much for one man, who died early in the project due to an undiagnosed heart condition. News of the death travelled quickly in the prison and thousands of the convicts demanded answers. Rather than rebel openly, after the circumstances were explained to them and the national importance of the research re-emphasized, not only did the prisoners cease their protests but the number of volunteers actually increased.

Proud of his men, Warden Ragen encouraged the visit by the *LIFE Magazine* crew. It was a win-win for both the prison and the US government, as *LIFE* was at that time a prominent national publication. Virtually every American would read it and see its photographs, whether in their homes or in their doctors' surgeries or hair dressers' shops. Journalist David Plotz has observed,

[t]he most popular magazine in America, *LIFE* circulated 4 million copies a week, and was read by 13.5 million people – 10 percent of the population. The largest weekly magazine now, *People*, has a smaller circulation than *LIFE* even though the US population is 2.5 times as large as it was then. And in an age before TV, *LIFE*'s photographs were a dominant way that Americans saw the world.⁹

LIFE Magazine promised that it would enable its readership

to see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things – machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man's work – his paintings, towers and discoveries; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms, things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and to take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed.¹⁰

In 1936, *LIFE Magazine* was bought by Henry Robinson Luce and relaunched as a weekly news magazine with a strong emphasis on photo reportage. As a publisher of magazines such as *Time*, *LIFE* and *Fortune*, and an important Republican figure and philanthropist, Luce has been described as one of the most influential private citizens in the America of his day who 'relentlessly lobbied for greater American involvement in the affairs of China and its neighbours'.¹¹ He also seems to have had access to classified information which he used to good effect in some of his publications, and presided over an influential network including members of the American Congress, philanthropists and business leaders as well as people in Hollywood and the arts more widely.¹² Luce was born in China in 1898 to missionary parents. His father, Henry Winters Luce, was a Presbyterian missionary who was keen 'to save China through a combination of Christianity, modern science, democracy, and the sorts of freedoms enshrined in the US Constitution'.¹³ Luce wanted to follow in his father's footsteps to continue his mission. Influenced by his upbringing in China as well as by Roosevelt and Wilson's internationalism, he 'argued that the United States had both the right and the moral obligation to use its military and economic might in the service of promoting higher ideals of freedom and democracy around the world'.¹⁴ Luce therefore used his publishing empire to promote US politics and overseas involvements.

LIFE Magazine became the most read of any of Luce's publications. Its development as a photo magazine was a great success with readers: a photographed scene or an event could be viewed as the equivalent to actually being there, 'allowing' readers to see otherwise inaccessible locations and events. Over time, photographs and illustrations became even more important than text that was condensed into small sections, with almost fifty pages per issue dedicated to photographs printed on nicely coated paper. This concept proved to be an instant hit, with the magazine selling almost 1 million copies within four months of its relaunch. *LIFE's* motto 'To see life; to see the world' attracted some of the best photographers and photojournalists to work for it, from Edward Steichen to Lee Miller, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, Alfred Eisenstadt and Margaret Bourke-White, whose photographs have also been highly influential in the world of fine art photography. *LIFE Magazine* not only dominated the way Americans saw the world but also offered a far-reaching and controllable way of publicizing the malaria experiments. *LIFE's* 4 June issue was the only one in 1945 that was published without a cover photograph. Instead the cover page displayed an appeal to the American people to invest in War Bonds and help the war effort. The content of this issue mirrored the cover appeal. Readers would find articles like 'Battered Face of Germany', 'Nazi Poison Vials' and 'US Bases in the Post-War Pacific'¹⁵ nicely combined with more entertaining subjects like 'Bulb Sized Sun' and 'Fashion on Dolls'.¹⁶ On page 43, a photo essay entitled 'Prison Malaria. Convicts Expose Themselves to Disease So Doctors Can Study It', which consisted of five photographs, fused propaganda elements with entertainment and introduced readers to the malaria experiments in Stateville Penitentiary.

The photographs were taken by the then 26-year-old Myron Davis, who had dropped out of his last year at the University of Chicago in 1940 and became, when hired a year later by *LIFE*, the youngest photographer to work for the magazine. In 1943, Davis worked as a war correspondent photographer assigned to General Douglas

MacArthur's command in the southwest Pacific, where at one point he got infected with malaria and had to resign. Two years later, in 1945, he was commissioned by *LIFE*'s editorial board to cover the malaria experiments in Stateville Penitentiary.¹⁷

In general, the selection of images for publication in a magazine like *LIFE* was influenced by several criteria: the entertainment value of the images, their political and propaganda value, their documentary value and the formal and technical quality of the photographs. Photographers would receive precise instructions about the desired layout of the article and, consequently, the number and size of publishable photographs. The report about the experiments consisted of only 169 words next to the heading and was neatly placed below one of Davis's 9 × 7 inch photographs. The photograph (Figure 9.1) depicts the inmate Richard Knickerbocker, who was serving a



Figure 9.1 *LIFE Magazine*'s original caption: 'Army doctor watches malaria-carrying mosquitos bite stomach of Richard Knickerbocker, serving 10 to 14 years at Illinois State Prison.'

Source: *LIFE Magazine*, 4 June 1945, p. 43.



Figure 9.2 Postcard of Panoptic guard tower and interior view of cell house, new Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville, IL (probably 1940s).

Source: Scanned from the postcard collection of Alex Wellerstein (copyright expired). Available at <https://prisonphotography.org/2010/08/21/stateville-prison-joliet-il-art-object/> (last access 27 June 2018).

lengthy prison sentence, on ‘biting day’. He is apparently lying in a bed in the hospital ward of Illinois State Prison.

Because the experiments were conducted in the prison hospital, participating inmates could escape the so-called ‘roundhouse’ of Stateville (Figure 9.2). Through its design as a panopticon, a circular structure containing several tiers of cells that were monitored by a watch tower in the centre, prisoners were isolated in their cells under constant surveillance with no privacy at all. Participation in the malaria experiments would not only offer the possibility of a reduced sentence by a more sympathetic parole board, it also offered the chance to escape the isolation and surveillance which some of the inmates had endured for years. Being transferred to the hospital ward improved their living conditions at least for a short while and made their life more humane and decent.

The photograph of Knickerbocker (Figure 9.1) shows him lying in a clean hospital bed with a woollen blanket tucked around his lower body. Only the barred windows and mesh wire behind his head provide an indication that we are not looking at a normal hospital ward. On the left side, his head close to Knickerbocker’s stomach with two jars containing the mosquitoes, sits an army doctor monitoring the experiment. On Knickerbocker’s forehead a sticker displays the following letters and numbers: ‘M31-35 First. M36-40 Second’, referring to ‘the mosquito lot’ the prisoner was exposed to. Every ‘patient’ received ten infected mosquito bites with a *P. vivax* malaria strain.¹⁸

The photographs

Davis carefully composed his photograph as a two-point perspective containing two vanishing points, one behind the head of the army doctor and the other behind Knickerbocker's head. Consequently, the eye of the viewer is immediately led to the focal point of the image: the two glass containers on Knickerbocker's stomach. Davis achieved this composition by directing his 'sitters' into particular positions: Knickerbocker's right arm and hand are bent back to hold onto the metal bedframe, thus allowing the army doctor sufficient space to lean over with his arms crossed on the mattress close to the mosquito jars. Second, and significantly, it is clear that the photograph that was printed in the article had its edges cropped by Davis to ensure that the viewer was not distracted by the excess of detail the image might otherwise reveal. Furthermore, both men appear to be looking intently and calmly at the mosquitoes at work, underlining the desired message to the effect that both researcher and research subject are helping the war effort in a serene and controlled way. At the same time, by virtue of his participation in the experiment, the image seems to suggest that the subject does not have to endure unreasonable suffering.

Reducing the space devoted to text, Davis's photograph became the main reference source for the malaria experiment and the image therefore obtained a position of supremacy over the written word. With its emphasis on photographs, *LIFE Magazine's* editorial policy relied strongly on the photographers to produce the most powerful and eloquent images for the article. For the following pages in this 4 June 1945 issue, the editorial board would choose four more images by Davis to illustrate the experiment. It is reasonable to assume that all of these photographs had been substantially cropped, not only to create compositions with a strong focal point but also to allow sufficient space for the advertisements next to the images.

On examining the photographs selected for publication in the article, one notices that the images document the different stages of the experiment. The reader becomes a witness to how the experiment is monitored by army doctors and how prisoners are examined for 'ill effects' (Figure 9.3). Readers are able to look inside the hospital ward where prisoners accompanied by a doctor are exposed to mosquitoes (Figure 9.1) and they are shown the photographs of two inmates infected with malaria who suffer from 'a violent chill' and 'high fever' (fourth and fifth photographs, page 46 of the article, not reproduced in this chapter). The malaria sufferers are depicted sleeping peacefully in their hospital beds, well cared for with hot water bottles or cushions filled with ice cubes; in both cases, the images – representing just the upper body – focus on their calm faces, their eyes closed.

The viewer gains the impression through Davis's photographs that the different stages of the malaria experiment at Stateville are being carefully monitored and documented. Yet the caption of the fourth photograph, page 46 of the article, reveals that this is a depiction of an inmate of Atlanta Penitentiary, where malaria experiments were also carried out by the CMR. With regard to the malaria sufferer in the fifth photograph, page 46 of the article, we have no information about the place of his imprisonment.



Figure 9.3 *LIFE Magazine's* original caption: "Testing new drugs, prisoners are examined for ill effects. Convict assistant second from left is Nathan Leopold, still imprisoned for his part in the Leopold-Loeb case.' Astonishingly, the Getty archive was able to provide Davis's original, that is pre-cropped, version of this image. The vertical lines represent the cropping lines: within these lines is the image that was published in *LIFE Magazine*, 4 June 1945, p. 44.

Source: Photo by Myron Davis/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.

However, it is important to remember that these images cannot be seen as neutral documentary photographs. Instead, they are designed and constructed for maximum effect. When we 'read' a photograph, we must first be aware that the photographer imposes his or her compositional order on the image by choosing a vantage point, a frame and a moment of exposure as well as his or her selection of the plane of focus. Second, while it might be thought that only digital photos can be altered, analogue photographs too offer considerable possibilities for manipulation, for example by retouching the print, cropping the image and changing tones and contrast in the darkroom. Third, in order to allow for a well-informed 'reading' of the photographs, the viewer needs some essential background information about the photographer, the date, location and circumstances of the images, information that we now provide in this chapter. Fourth, it also matters whether the photographs are commissioned and intended for publication or just snapshots for private use. Finally, the relationship between the photographer/camera and the subject before them needs to be considered: is the subject aware or unaware of the camera? Is the subject cooperating willingly or is s/he

under duress? Is the depicted scene candid or staged? Given that most people have a natural tendency 'to trust their eyes', and therefore accept photographic depictions as factual and truthful, photography is the perfect objective foundation for documentary images used in a propaganda context.¹⁹

On analysis of Davis's photographs, it becomes evident that they had become inaccurate representations because of the manipulative processes that are assumed to have taken place, such as cropping, and changing the contrast and light of the negative through masking and dodging.²⁰ Furthermore, Davis's photographs need to be seen and analysed in conjunction with historical circumstances and the technical development of cameras and, in this particular case, in light of the history of medical ethics: in 1947, the *LIFE Magazine* article about the malaria experiments was submitted as evidence in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial (officially *United States of America v. Karl Brandt, et al.*) by the German defence attorney Robert Servatius.

Photojournalism

When Henry Luce relaunched *LIFE* in 1936, he was convinced that not only could photographs 'describe' stories better than words but that they would also sell more copies. Luce was proven right; *LIFE*'s success story convinced other magazines such as *LOOK Magazine*, founded in 1937, to apply a similar concept. Consequently, illustrated magazines and photojournalism expanded rapidly in the 1930s and early 1940s and it soon became clear that a code of conduct was needed for this new form of 'visual journalism'.

The debate surrounding such a code of conduct had started far earlier and has to be seen in connection with the development of the handheld camera, so much more portable and concealable than its predecessor, which was mounted on a tripod. Already in 1890, Henry Harrison Suplee had written in his article 'The Ethics of the Hand Cameras' about the increasing numbers of photographers who would be tempted 'to photograph anything and everything, regardless of the approval or the wish of the subject, and in many cases without informing him of the fact that he has been photographed at all'.²¹ With the rise of more and more illustrated magazines, photographers came under pressure to produce the right images and so more guidance was needed in how to create photographic works that aspired to be honest, accurate and truthful. In 1939, Laura Vitray, a script editor for the US Office of Education; John Mills Jr, an employee of the Eastman Kodak Company and former staff photographer for the *Washington Post*; and Roscoe Ellard, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri, published 'Pictorial Journalism', outlining the ethical dimension of photojournalism and the legal implications of unethical photographic representations.²² In 1946, the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) was founded, articulating the values, ethics, responsibilities and the legal and moral obligations of photojournalism.²³ This development needs also to be seen in conjunction with the return to civilian life of war photographers; these were in need of guidance on ethical and legal issues surrounding photographs. However, a proper and binding code of conduct for photojournalism did not come into being at this stage.

Today, many would argue that the aim of documentary photographs used in photojournalism is 'to inform' readers in an unbiased and objective fashion. The chosen photographs should try to illustrate the story in all its facets and avoid under all circumstances turning the matter into something banal or entertaining. In this case, the editorial board of *LIFE Magazine* chose photographs that underlined the fact that no one was harmed and everyone, even a convicted murderer like Nathan Leopold, would be able to do his bit to help the war effort. But what was required of a photojournalist like Davis in 1945 in terms of 'photographic illustration'? John G. Morris, the photo editor of *LIFE Magazine* from 1938 to 1946, explained, 'We always looked for the best photographers and the quality and impact of the pictures were the core of the success.'²⁴ There were no guidelines about ethics, accuracy and manipulation in documentary photographs at the time. However, the technical equipment photographers used not only determined the appearance of the photographic composition but also the photographer's conduct. In this case, Davis worked with a large-format 4 × 5 camera with a tripod, mainly the Speed Graphic camera, and a battery-powered flashgun fitted with a reflector. This meant that the inmates and doctors in the ward were certainly aware of the equipment and the photographer. These were no snapshots. People needed direction and would know that they had been photographed when the flashlight went off. In today's terms, we would refer to the depicted images as staged photographs with a documentary purpose.

This becomes particularly clear when we take a closer look at the photograph with Nathan Leopold (see Figure 9.3). We are fortunate to have access, via Getty's archive, of Davis's original photograph, which is reproduced here with lines added to show where the photograph was cropped when it was printed in *LIFE Magazine*. The image can be divided more or less diagonally into two zones: foreground and background. The main focus in the foreground is a triangle of three figures. On the far left, we see a man dressed in a dark army shirt holding a pen and a clipboard. Next to him, to his right, stands Nathan Leopold; he is wearing a white shirt with a dark handkerchief in his shirt pocket and beige trousers. (*LIFE Magazine* was printed in full colour; our reproduction is in grey scale.) He seems to be engaging with the officer, looking down at the sheet of clipboard. On the right side, we have a man sitting on what appears in the uncropped image to be the end of a bench; he is dressed in a white T-shirt and beige trousers. He is holding a white plastic cup in his left hand and seems to be chewing on a small wooden stick. Behind him sits another man dressed in institutional clothes, like the rest of the group in the background (who are standing).

The background of the cropped photograph depicts a group of four men of seemingly white American origin and ten men of seemingly African-American origin; the uncropped photograph depicts a total of twenty-six prisoners, comprising twelve white Americans and fourteen African-Americans (there are also a female nurse and another army officer on the right, who is taking notes). So while Davis and/or the *LIFE Magazine* editor might not have intended to portray a higher proportion of African-American prisoners, the cropping process has resulted in this impression. The photographer has furthermore chosen a section of the image in which the barred windows of the room are invisible.

The photograph was cropped in such a way that the viewer has to focus on Nathan Leopold. This effect was enhanced by the white and beige clothes that Leopold is wearing, given that our eyes generally focus on the lightest spot in a visual representation. Leopold is the only person in the photograph who is depicted full-length dressed in what appear to be civilian clothes. His posture, standing and looking down at the clipboard, and his lighter-coloured clothes compared to those of the other prisoners, give reason to suggest that he is in charge in some way. As a result of the cropping process, viewers can hardly see that the person to the left of Leopold is an army officer; rather, they see somebody who is taking down dictated notes. Leopold has certainly dressed up for the occasion, a fact that is underlined by his white shirt with a pocket handkerchief, folded carefully with the point showing. He confidently displays an accessory of the bourgeois elite, referencing his descent from a very wealthy, well-educated immigrant German family. By the time Leopold committed the murder, he had completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Chicago, gaining the highest honour, 'Phi Beta Kappa', from the Greek initials of the motto 'Love of learning be the guide of life'. This honour is awarded to the most outstanding and exceptionally talented students of arts and sciences at American colleges and universities.

A further element underlining the fact that the photograph was staged is that all the prisoners in the background can be clearly seen. This was achieved by directing the prisoners in the back row to stand on a bench. The viewer also focuses on Leopold, because five prisoners in the background and the two in the foreground are looking in his direction while he is engaged with the paperwork and the spectator of such a photograph will naturally follow the motion of the gaze of these prisoners.

We do not know for sure whether Davis gave the prisoners, doctors or officers any directions while taking these photographs. One might speculate that he asked them to take up a particular posture, directed people to a certain point and told them not to look directly into the camera. What we can say is that Davis probably interfered in the darkroom, highlighting some parts and darkening others; and he certainly applied cropping in at least one case; his interventions thus produced strong compositions with explicit focal points. The question remains, though, what one can expect in this case from a photographer commissioned to document such an experiment accurately and 'truthfully'. The photographic medium has many contradictions. The camera allows an almost instantaneous and easy record to be made of what is before it. However, the photographer imposes his set of choices for the composition of an image, negating its apparent objectivity. The first step is choice of vantage point, frame, moment of exposure and plane of focus. The second step would be to undertake manipulations in the darkroom, for example by dodging, burning or masking.²⁵ By making parts of the photograph lighter, darker, sharper or adding more contrast, the photographic composition can substantially change. Such darkroom manipulations allow the photographer to accentuate some compositional elements while, at the same time, making others almost disappear. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the photographic medium offers the photographer endless possibilities for manipulating what has been 'documented' by the camera after the shutter has been released. Finally, one has to take into account the editors

of *LIFE Magazine*, who chose photographs without commenting on any suffering or the death of one inmate.

The malaria experiment in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial

No one associated with the Stateville experiments could have been expected to anticipate the role the *LIFE Magazine* article would play in the trial of twenty-three doctors and functionaries accused of war crimes in connection with concentration camp experiments. The trial at Nuremberg, known informally as 'the medical case', began in December 1946. The US Army lawyers prosecuting the case had every reason to think that many of the defendants would ultimately be found guilty; the trial itself would not be a lengthy affair. Many documents about the experiments intended for destruction had instead been recovered by the Allied armies. Meticulous analysis by a court-appointed expert, the German-Jewish neurologist Leo Alexander, seemed to make it clear that horrible crimes had been committed on innocent men, women and children.²⁶ The fact that so many medical doctors were involved only added to the sense that moral culpability needed to be assigned. As the prosecution maintained, this was a murder trial.

However, the defendants were able to call upon able legal counsel who managed to shift the burden of prosecution, at least for a time. Besides asserting that their clients were obliged to act according to the orders of their superiors – a common line of defence in the various war crimes trials – the defence lawyers also argued that the experiments themselves were not out of line with medical experiments conducted by the Allies themselves during, for decades before, and even after the war. For this purpose, it was possible to refer to human experiments in the published medical literature and, in at least one famous instance, in the popular press. For this argument, the *LIFE Magazine* article provided a key example.

Defence lawyer Robert Servatius made it a point to question a prosecution witness closely about the Stateville experiment. The Allied prosecution team had chosen German psychiatrist and medical historian Werner Leibbrand, from the University of Erlangen, as a medical expert to give evidence during the Doctors' Trial in order to establish the unethical nature of the Nazi experiments. It was the first of twelve trials for war crimes committed by German doctors that the US authorities held before US military courts in their occupation zone in Nuremberg following the Second World War.

Allied legal advisers hoped that a German medical expert 'might not only strengthen the case of the prosecution, but facilitate the process of denazification.'²⁷ But Servatius turned the tables in his cross-examination of Leibbrand by reading out the text of the *LIFE Magazine* article before the court and then inducing him to label the Stateville malaria experiments as a violation of medical ethics. On 27 January 1947, Servatius asked Leibbrand during cross examining, 'Witness, are you of the opinion that a prisoner who had over ten years' sentence to serve will give his approval to an experiment if he receives no advantages there from? Do you consider such approval voluntary?'²⁸ Leibbrand confirmed that experiments on prisoners could not be

voluntary given that owing to the circumstances of their imprisonment, they were in 'a forcible situation' and unable to take an informed decision based on free will.²⁹ He went on to point out that prisoners had no medical knowledge and therefore 'no possibility at all to weigh the consequences of such interference'.³⁰ As the cross-examination of Leibbrand went on Servatius, who had prepared his argument carefully, introduced the *LIFE Magazine* article about the malaria experiments to the witness. Servatius began by reading out the entire article in court and described each photograph in detail, also reading out all the captions. He then turned to Leibbrand: 'Now, will you please express your opinion on the admissibility of these experiments?'³¹ Leibbrand explained the consequences of a malaria infection which 'always have the therapeutic possibility of death'.³² Leibbrand therefore concluded, 'In consequence, such experiments should be carried out on guinea pigs and not on human beings'.³³ By now it was clear to everyone in the courtroom that the Allied prosecution team had underestimated the evidence that could come to light through a cross-examination of Leibbrand. Leibbrand's testimony had in essence put American medical science in the same moral category as German medical science before American judges.

Also present in the courtroom that day in January 1947 was a key prosecution expert on medical ethics, Dr Andrew Ivy. Ivy was the vice president for medical affairs at the University of Illinois, the same state in which the federal prison was located. As the American Medical Association's (AMA's) handpicked representative at the trial, Ivy seems to have immediately appreciated not only that the Nazis' lawyers had identified a weakness in the prosecution's line of argument but also that the medical profession more generally – and the American profession in particular – might be called to account for longstanding transgressions of the very ethics that had been violated by the Nazis. It fell to him to protect the good name of American medicine.³⁴

Several months before Leibbrand's damaging testimony, Ivy had sent the AMA a list of principles of ethics for human experiments which were immediately published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.³⁵ Publication of these principles allowed Ivy to assert in his testimony a few months later in June 1947 that there were established rules for conducting human experiments in the US medical profession. In his testimony, however, Ivy came perilously close to perjury when he made that assertion, in which he also claimed that those rules had been well known on an informal basis. Before giving his testimony, Ivy made another key move. He approached the governor of Illinois to request that a committee be created to sanction the ethics of the Stateville experiments. That committee did so in short order, though with Ivy himself as the chair it seems to have existed mainly on paper and never to have actually met.

Thus was US medical ethics protected from an unwelcome association with Nazi crimes, despite doubts that might have been harboured about the Stateville experiments. Perhaps the most important moral distinctions were not fully captured in the formal context of the trial, namely that, unlike the concentration camp inmates the Stateville prisoners were truly criminals; that unlike in the Nazi experiments death was not an acceptable endpoint for any of the US experiments; and that Dachau and other Nazi experiment sites were death camps while Stateville was part of a normal prison system. More importantly, though, from the standpoint of the significance of this episode to

posterity, Ivy's *JAMA* principles were incorporated by the three American judges into the ten-point medical research ethics document known as the Nuremberg Code.³⁶

Conclusion

It is remarkable enough that a potentially dangerous medical experiment became a significant public relations tool for a national government that was prosecuting a desperate war. There are few other cases, if any, in which an experiment was cited in an affirmative context to stimulate patriotic sentiment rather than as an example of an enemy's inhumanity. Still more exceptional is the fact that this event was embodied in an exercise of sophisticated photojournalism featured in one of the most popular magazines in the world which was later admitted as court evidence in the trial of Nazi medical doctors and officials. Servatius, the defence lawyer, tried to use the malaria article and its photographs to substantiate the impression that German and American scientists were working to similar ethical standards. We could argue that a complete analysis of the photographs and their genesis would have caused even more problems for the Allied prosecution team, given that the manipulative nature and staged character of these images would have come to the forefront. Typically, the court would consider witness testimony as more important than photographic evidence. Photographs could be of relevance in a courtroom if they might make any fact at issue in the court case more or less credible. Today, with the greater awareness of analogue and digital manipulation of photographs, a court would review any potentially misleading photographic qualities before allowing them as evidence. In that sense, the published staged photographs could have helped the Allied prosecution team to reference 'the human conditions' for the prisoners who took part in the experiment. However, this certainly did not happen; instead, the prosecution was keen to prevent this becoming a trial against American medical research practices and therefore realized that they needed a substantial medical ethics code in order to show up the significant differences between German and American research practice. Therefore, perhaps the most astonishing twist is that the *LIFE Magazine* article became such a controversial item in the trial of Nazi medical doctors and officials that it might have influenced, albeit indirectly, the crafting of the most important medical ethics code in history.

Notes

- 1 Nathaniel Comfort, 'The Prisoner as Model Organism: Malaria Research at Stateville Penitentiary', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 40: 3 (2009), pp. 190–203.
- 2 Karen Masterson, *The Malaria Project: The U.S. Government's Secret Mission to Find a Miracle Cure* (New York, 2014).
- 3 See Jonathan D. Moreno, *Undue Risk: Secret State Experiments on Humans* (New York, 2001), pp. 32–4.

- 4 Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York, 1989).
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 143 and *passim*.
- 6 Masterson, *The Malaria Project*, p. 273.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 David Plotz, 'The Greatest Magazine Ever Published', *Slate*, 27 December 2013.
- 10 P. B. Kunhardt Jr (ed.), *Life: The First 50 Years (1936–86)* (Boston, MA, 1986), p. 5.
- 11 Robert E. Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce, Time and the American Crusade in Asia* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 1; see also Office of the Historian, 'Henry Luce and 20th Century US Internationalism', Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State, available at <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/internationalism> (last access 27 June 2018).
- 12 Herzstein, *Luce, Time and the American Crusade in Asia*, p. 1.
- 13 Office of the Historian, 'Henry Luce and 20th Century US Internationalism'.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *LIFE Magazine*, 4 June 1945, pp. 21–8, 32, 81–7.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 51–5, 77–81.
- 17 Jennifer Delgado, 'Myron Davis, 1919–2010: Life Magazine Photographer', *Chicago Tribune*, 21 April 2010, available at http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-04-21/features/ct-met-0422-davis-obit-20100421_1_mr-davis-life-magazine-photographer-chicago-sun-times (last access 27 June 2018).
- 18 Alf S. Alving et al., 'Procedures Used at Stateville Penitentiary for Testing of Potential Antimalarial Agents', *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, 27 (May 1948), p. 3.
- 19 Anthony R. Fellow, 'History of Journalism: 1861–1930', in Christopher H. Sterling (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Journalism*, vol. 2 (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2009), pp. 701–7; David Culbert, 'Photography', in Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003), pp. 297–9.
- 20 'Masking' gives texture so that blacks and shadows look completely dark or sharpens the image so that the contrast of the image changes when the image is printed; 'dodging' decreases the exposure of areas of the print, making them lighter.
- 21 Henry Harrison Suplee, 'The Ethics of the Hand Cameras', *Photographic Times*, 19: 429 (6 December 1889), p. 608.
- 22 Laura Vitray, John Mills Jr and Roscoe Ellard, *Pictorial Journalism* (New York and London, 1939).
- 23 National Press Photographers Association: <https://nppa.org/about>; https://nppa.org/code_of_ethics; of particular interest is a circular letter from Burt Williams on behalf of the organizing committee of the fledgling association to all working photographers in the United States: https://nppa.org/sites/default/files/NPPA_Organizing_Committee_Letter.pdf.
- 24 José Manuel Serrano Esparza, 'John G. Morris: An Interview with the Most Influential and Experienced Photo Editor in History', 28 November 2009, available at <http://elrectanguloenlamano.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/john-g-morris-interview-with-most.html> (last access 28 June 2018).
- 25 'Burning' increases the exposure of areas of the print, i.e. making them darker.
- 26 For Leo Alexander's role at Nuremberg see Ulf Schmidt, *Justice at Nuremberg: Leo Alexander and the Nazi Doctors' Trial* (Basingstoke and New York, 2004).
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

- 28 Klaus Dörner and Angelika Ebbinghaus (eds), *The Nuremberg Medical Trial 1946/47. Transcripts, Material of the Prosecution and Defense, Related Documents* (Munich, 1999), Documents and Material, Document Karl Brandt No. 1, fiche 146, frames 02067f.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid., frame 02070.
- 32 Ibid., frame 02071.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Jon M. Harkness, 'Nuremberg and the Issue of Wartime Experiments on US Prisoners', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 276: 20 (1996), pp. 1672–5.
- 35 'Supplementary Report of the Judicial Council', Proceedings of the AMA's House of Delegates Annual Meeting, 9–11 December 1946, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 132 (1946), p. 1090. See Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments, *Final Report* (New York, 1996), ch. 2.
- 36 Ibid.

The Undefeated: Propaganda, rehabilitation and post-war Britain

Julie Anderson

In 1950, newspapers announced the release of the film *The Undefeated*, a documentary which focussed on the state's support for disabled ex-servicemen. Commissioned by the Ministry of Pensions and produced by the Central Office of Information (COI), the film centred on a pilot who became disabled as a result of injuries sustained in a wartime glider accident. The film follows 'Joe Anderson's' journey from hospital to workplace through the rehabilitation process, highlighting the Ministry of Pensions' work and the state's responsibility to its war wounded.

This chapter explores post-war British propaganda in film and focusses on *The Undefeated* to examine the series of relationships between the state, the public and information programmes. Starting with the seminal work of David Welch, historians have explored war and film propaganda during the Second World War, demonstrating that the relationship between propaganda and the state was often highly complex.¹ Welch observes in his most recent book on British propaganda that, at the beginning of the war, the Ministry of Information (MOI) was often the subject of ridicule and goes on to note that some politicians saw the MOI, and those that ran it, as agents with dangerous leftist views.² James Chapman argues that the concerns over one-party states and their use of propaganda meant that the British government was unwilling to employ the same coercive powers as dictatorships.³ This tension between political ideology and film propaganda in the national contexts of Britain and Nazi Germany is explored in Jo Fox's masterful study. She states,

In understanding the inherent tensions within films, even the tensions perhaps between ideological and propagandistic intent and contradictory and sometimes incoherent meanings and messages, combined with an appreciation of the cultural, social, economic and political space in which these films were conceived, produced, filmed, edited and received, the film historian comes not only closer to understanding the films themselves, but their role within society.⁴

It is from this standpoint that this chapter explores the complex construction of propaganda in 1950s Britain. It focusses on post-war propaganda, noting the way

aspects of wartime propaganda were repurposed to fit a peacetime narrative, and uses *The Undefeated* to explore the tension surrounding post-war propaganda, its continued employment after the war and the impact of the film. It supports arguments that the Attlee government found propaganda an expedient way to inform the public and promote the state's post-war work. Rather than using propaganda to maintain morale during conflict, the state recruited similar propaganda tools to support newly emerging welfare reforms. Films such as *The Undefeated* informed and persuaded people of the government's willingness to assist individuals and highlighted the systems established to aid them to train for work and re-establish themselves in economic and social life. However, in an ironic twist, *The Undefeated's* message of medical, social and financial support for disabled veterans by a caring ministry which put their welfare foremost threatened recruitment numbers to the Forces in a new Cold War conflict.

Post-war propaganda

In 1945, the Labour Party under Clement Attlee was elected on a manifesto of social transformation. The welfare state was a central platform for change, yet its smooth establishment was hampered by a combination of opposition to reform and the perilous state of Britain's finances.⁵ Propaganda, which was employed so effectively during the war to maintain the population's support in a long and protracted conflict, became central to the new government's message. William Crofts argues that the 'Attlee government's propaganda campaigns remain a unique attempt in a parliamentary democracy to mould public opinion in peacetime'.⁶ In contrast to propaganda which stressed Britain's wartime strength in the face of the enemy, welfare state propaganda focussed on post-war rebuilding and plans designed to inform the public on health matters, assistance programmes and legislation. Books, magazines and other popular media informed the public about William Beveridge's vision, published in 1942,⁷ and the function of the welfare state. The post-war implementation of these programmes was treated with suspicion by the press and the Conservative opposition, who argued that public funds earmarked for rebuilding the nation should not be spent by the state to highlight its efforts. However suitable – within reason – a wartime environment was to a propaganda programme, there was greater opposition to and suspicion of these techniques to influence public opinion after the war.

The production and distribution of post-war propaganda required administrative support. In 1946, the COI replaced the wartime MOI. There was little difference between the two administrative departments. Mariel Grant notes, 'The wartime coalition and post-war Labour governments, far from regarding the MOI as a failure or propaganda as a necessary evil, drew upon the experience of the MOI in determining how best to administer official information with the return to peacetime conditions'.⁸ The dissemination of 'information' was a preferred British term, and the renaming of the administrative structure, in taking away its ministerial title and replacing it with a central office, served to downplay fears surrounding the importance of propaganda messages after the war.

The locus of propaganda dissemination centred around the cinema. In 1950, the English (i.e. not including the Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish) public averaged twenty-eight cinema visits per year, so film remained a crucial means to communicate the state's message.⁹ Furthermore, the cinema industry's enthusiastic support for government programmes was longstanding; Robert James notes that throughout the 1930s the editorial board of *Kinematograph Weekly* believed in the cinema's importance in propaganda and education.¹⁰ With this broad-based support, the COI commissioned a number of films immediately following its establishment. Under John Grierson's directorship, the COI maintained its commitment to documentary film, commissioning a number of feature-length pictures, three of which were released in 1950 – *Life in Her Hands*, *Out of True* and *Four Men in Prison* – and produced under Crown.¹¹ It also released a number of second features and featurettes, which included *The Undefeated*. The film industry continued to accept the COI's influential role, reporting in November 1950 that 60 per cent of the 28 million individuals who attended the cinema each week saw a COI film and that 'the kinema industry responded well to the government's request that one COI film each month is given a commercial distribution'.¹²

While the cinema industry responded favourably to the COI's propaganda films, discussions in the House of Commons concerning propaganda were generally critical of departments that supported the government's scheme. Similar to the reaction to the MOI during the war, criticism of the COI and its potentially threatening propaganda message galvanized the government to establish a Committee of Enquiry into the home information services. The French Committee reported to the government in 1949.¹³ Its report supported the continued operation of the COI but made suggestions about more effective and appropriate types of propaganda; it found that 'specific action' types of propaganda were preferable to 'general exhortation' or the transmission of information.¹⁴ Moreover, the committee recommended that reductions be made to the home services, particularly films.¹⁵ *The Undefeated* was already in production when this new directive was announced, so it escaped the financial cuts to film production.

Propaganda remained a contentious issue throughout the life of the Attlee government. In December 1950, a heated debate in the House of Commons over a film about nationalization by the Ministry of Transport caused one member to ask if it was not 'very improper for public funds to be used for the production of a film which at least half the Members of the House of Commons would regard as intensely controversial political propaganda'.¹⁶ Debates surrounding the appropriateness of propaganda continued even after the Labour government was voted out of power. In December 1951, in a parliamentary debate about Information Services, member for Renfrew Major Guy Lloyd asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury John Boyd Carpenter about the costs associated with government information services. Lloyd then declared,

The truth is that we get far too much propaganda, far too much propagandists [*sic*], and far too many apologists. Most of these Departments, organisations, and individuals, costing in total many million pounds, are apologists in some shape

or form for the Government who employ them. But they do not apologise to the taxpayer who pays for them.¹⁷

However, unpopular propaganda remained in post-war Britain; it was used to inform the public about the government's efforts on their behalf. *The Undefeated* embodied this transmission of information specifically in relation to disabled veterans.

The Undefeated

On 25 June 1949, C. L. Paine from the Film Division of the COI wrote to the independent production company run by James Carr, World Wide Pictures, asking them if they were interested in compiling a report and investigation to produce three reels of film on 'pensions'.¹⁸ Much of World Wide Pictures' early work had been undertaken on behalf of the Armed Services and the COI, and the company agreed to the £100 sum offered.¹⁹ Funding was still available to make films supporting the government aims, and the commissioning of the proposed film came prior to the reductions in services recommended by the French Committee. World Wide Pictures was familiar with the terms that 'it shall be a Condition of Contract that copyright in the work shall rest in the Controller, HM Stationery Office, and that no communication regarding it shall be made to any person with a view to publication'.²⁰

Initially, the proposal of a film whose subject was the Ministry of Pensions' work was met with criticism in the press. In particular, films perceived as propaganda depicting the work of specific ministries were viewed with suspicion, as they fell into the French Committee's dispreferred categories of 'general exhortation' or 'transmission of information', and not the preferred type of 'specific action' propaganda.²¹ Newspapers continued to voice opposition to the Attlee government's actions, and a proposal for a film was no exception. In 1949, when news of a potential film about pensions emerged, the *Evening Post* reported that questions had been raised in parliament regarding the costs of the film. The film's purpose also came under criticism; the *Evening Post* reported that there were concerns that the film would be 'Party political propaganda'.²²

The Undefeated was the first documentary at World Wide Pictures for director Paul Dickson. Dickson had learned his craft at Paul Rotha's company Films of Fact, before moving to World Wide Pictures in 1948. Straddling the genres of a feature film and a documentary, *The Undefeated* employed a fictional narrative which follows the experience of Joe Anderson, a glider pilot, who loses both his legs in a crash at a Rhine crossing in March 1945. The film follows Joe Anderson through his Ministry of Pensions journey and documents his progress through his physical and emotional rehabilitative process.

The Undefeated employed groups of non-professional actors, whose presence lent authenticity to the film. The lead character of the story, Joe Anderson, was played by Gerald Pearson, a Board of Trade official. Newspapers reported that Pearson modestly declared he was selected because 'my name was first to come out of the Ministry files with the necessary qualifications'.²³ Pearson was born in India but had lived with his grandmother in England and postponed his degree course at the University of Cambridge

to serve with the South Wales Borderers. Like his character Joe Anderson, Pearson lost both his legs during the war. His limb loss lent validity to his role in the film, and to the part of Joe Anderson. The non-professional ex-servicemen actors in *The Undefeated* provided interesting asides and a wide range of stories with which the ministry was able to detail its work and provide information to the public. The film employed humour and showed off individual skills; in one of the scenes when Joe Anderson goes into a lift, a man demonstrates his ability to light a cigarette with one hand.

The question of the central character's service role was not raised in the communication between World Wide Pictures and the Ministry of Pensions in 1950. However, the choice of a pilot as the main character in *The Undefeated* by Paul Dickson resonated with the public in a number of ways. The majority of civilians who had witnessed and experienced combat during the war had done so through aerial attacks, so aircraft were a potent reminder of the war.²⁴ The representation of pilots who had publicly fought skirmishes above Britain's skies in the summer of 1940 became very powerful, particularly after awareness was increased by the Air Ministry's publication of a thirty-two-page booklet, *Battle of Britain*, in 1941. Its publication was followed by a longer book *The Battle of Britain, 1940*, which provided a more detailed version of events.²⁵ Indeed, Richard Overy argues that the Battle of Britain was one of the key 'moral moments' of the war, during which uncertainties 'gave way to a greater sense of purpose and a more united people'.²⁶ *The Undefeated* employed a wartime narrative that many of the watching public understood, and for some awoke feelings of wartime patriotism, which informed many individuals' feelings after the war. Patriotism, argues Geoff Eley, was not 'straightforwardly conservative' but had strong leanings to the left, which included

the egalitarianism of the World War II, the achievement of the welfare state, and a complex of democratic traditions stressing decency, liberalism, and the importance of everyone pulling together, in a way that honoured the value and values of ordinary working people.²⁷

The Royal Air Force (RAF), more specifically Fighter Command, was foremost in the public's memory, as it – or rather its pilots – had taken centre stage during the war. They were a minority in the RAF, yet it was the pilots who represented the RAF in the minds of the public and influenced the culture of the service.²⁸ Pilots were particularly revered for their bravery in the skies during the Battle of Britain. Individual pilots were not identified during the battle; however, it was difficult not to associate the image of the lone fighter pilot, and the one-on-one nature of skirmishes between fighter aircraft, with anything other than individual bravery and endeavour. Their efforts and skill were the subject of newspaper articles which detailed successful nightly bombing raids on German targets. Consequently, the pilots' exploits were an important tool for the maintenance of morale; reports detailing the bravery, loyalty and selfless duty of RAF pilots were used endlessly, and 'the cult of the warrior hero became an important element of the propaganda war'.²⁹ As Martin Francis notes, 'The general public remained wedded to an affecting image of fresh-faced young men living life to the full in the precious intermissions between active duty, reckless sensualists under constant sentence of death'.³⁰

The RAF was vital as a propaganda vehicle during the war. Arguably, the RAF – and especially the pilot – reflected the propaganda message that all citizens were fighting the war together on an equal footing, regardless of limiting factors such as class. Jeremy Crang argues that the comradeship in the RAF partly transcended social origins.³¹ The emphasis on comradeship and the lack of emphasis on hierarchy reinforced the RAF's popularity, which made it the perfect vehicle for propaganda. As the war progressed, Bomber Command and the Air Ministry collaborated to produce propaganda messages through films and newspaper reports demonstrating the RAF's powerful public role in disseminating propaganda.³² Jo Fox recognizes that 'not only did air power pervade the everyday space but it also came increasingly to dominate the cinematic space.'³³ Feature films and documentaries provided the vehicle for this message. Mark Connelly notes that the film *Target for Tonight* (1941) reinforced the message that the Air Ministry wished to portray to the public. The reaction to the film was unanimous praise.³⁴ Other feature films that celebrated the Battle of Britain were produced during the war, including *The First of the Few* (1942), which starred the highly popular British actor Leslie Howard, and cemented the heroic efforts of the RAF in the public's mind. It was the most successful film screened in Britain in 1942.³⁵

Pilots and the RAF maintained their cultural relevance after the war. Owing to the prominence of the pilots during the conflict, and their central role in the propaganda war, the audiences of *The Undeclared* were able to conceptualize an airman's story as it was easy to separate the pilot from the many thousands of individuals in the RAF. A number of feature films made in Britain featured RAF pilots in a heroic role. Indeed, it has been argued that the 1950s were the 'heyday of the British war picture.'³⁶ An exception to the pilot as hero was the film *Cage of Gold* (1950), which featured an ex-wing commander as a blackmailer. Other films such as *Landfall* (1949) dealt with a pilot wrongly accused of sinking a British submarine. Later films such as *The Dam Busters* (1955) and *The Sound Barrier* (1952) were about technology; *The Sound Barrier* was about the scientific achievements made in flying after the Second World War, and *The Dam Busters* celebrated aircraft technology, flying skills and heroism. It related the story of a wartime success: the breaking down of dams in order to sabotage Germany's wartime production. In particular, *The Dam Busters* focussed heavily on individual bravery, the relationship between the pilots and crew and their strength of character when faced with the ultimate sacrifice. The theme of stoic, silent acceptance in the face of danger and death was prevalent in many war films, and the *Dam Busters'* pilots epitomized these quintessentially British heroic traits. These films combined the scientific knowledge of the backroom boys with the bravery and 'derring-do' of pilots. Christine Geraghty notes that 'the fifties war film tends to place an emphasis on a small male group, largely made up of officers and boffins.'³⁷ *The Undeclared* exploited this interest in war and the public's memory of civilian bombing in the Second World War.

The Undeclared and the Ministry of Pensions

The Ministry of Pensions' film output was relatively small compared to other ministries that engaged public interest, such as the Ministry of Health. When a film

about 'pensions' was commissioned, the Ministry of Pensions stipulated that one of the objectives of *The Undefeated* was to demystify the process of seeking support for disabilities caused by war.³⁸ The ministry was established during the First World War and had a poor reputation during the war and in the inter-war period for its miserly award of pensions to the war disabled. Support for the war disabled was garnered from charitable donations and the efforts of pressure groups such as the British Legion.³⁹ Much of the public remembered the difficulties encountered by veterans in gaining support owing to administrative complexities and harsh medical committees, so the Ministry of Pensions endeavoured to transform its reputation for unfairness. Indeed, in 1946, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour and National Service, noted that after the First World War voluntary associations had been responsible for the welfare for disabled people, and that after the Second World War the government wanted to make disabled people's support a 'state responsibility'.⁴⁰ *The Undefeated* reminded viewers that the sacrifices of those who had fought in the First World War were not forgotten, and that support was available for them. In particular, the state no longer wanted to ignore the needs of those who had fought and given their bodies and minds in its service. In one scene, a veteran from the First World War attends a Ministry of Pensions office, where he is informed that he will be able to make a retrospective claim as a result of his war service. This scene specifically addressed the commonly held and often truthful perception that First World War veterans were treated poorly by the state. *The Undefeated* demonstrated the post-Second World War Ministry of Pensions' positive response to the war disabled, partly to erase the memory of an unfair and miserly ministry, and demonstrated the caring face of the modern post-war state for all veterans (see Figure 10.1).

Support for veterans was reinforced by acts of parliament. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act of 1944 was a landmark piece of legislation, which assisted disabled people to find work, as employment was considered fundamental to disabled people's self-esteem and value to his/her fellow citizens and the state. The National Advisory Council on the Employment of the Disabled, which was established in 1945, the same year the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act was enacted, supported legislation through exhibitions and films in various locations around the country. In 1945, 230,000 people in six cities saw the *Back to Work* exhibition.⁴¹ The Act encouraged all disabled people to register; however, disabled veterans were given preferential treatment through reserved occupations, loans and support for personal aids and home adaptations. Despite the protected occupations of car park attendant and lift operator not being considered very challenging jobs, disabled veterans were entitled to more assistance under this legislation than their civilian counterparts.⁴² *The Undefeated* underpinned this message of special support for veterans. The state demonstrated its commitment to disabled veterans through the establishment of specific systems of infrastructure and benefits, which *The Undefeated* illustrated as Joe Anderson progressed through it. Employment was seen as the final successful outcome of rehabilitation, and *The Undefeated* reflected this concentration on useful work as the culmination of the rehabilitative process (see Figure 10.2). In the film, it is finally revealed that Joe Anderson is a Disabled Resettlement Officer at the Ministry of Pensions, which supported the success of the regime and demonstrated the efficacy of the rehabilitative process.



Figure 10.1 First World War veteran: A First World War veteran with worsening bronchitis attends a Ministry of Pensions local office to gain assistance with his pension.

Source: *The Undefeated*, World Wide Pictures, Central Office of Information and Ministry of Pensions, Director: Paul Dickson, 1950.

However positively the state wanted to make the application for fiscal support for disabled veterans, it proved challenging to produce a compelling film which focussed on form filling and the eligibility criteria that governed the application and administration of pensions. In one scene, the director Paul Dickson circumvented this by using comedy, as an administrator in a Ministry of Pensions Office looked for the details of a client named 'J. Smith'. Despite World Wide Pictures' initial brief of 'pensions', it was to the process of rehabilitation which *The Undefeated* devoted itself. During the war, rehabilitative regimes were systematized in order to achieve the highest levels of functionality after wounding.⁴³ Indeed, this organized, modern state apparatus, underpinned by caring attitudes and appreciation for those disabled in war, was what the government wished the public to see and appreciate through films like *The Undefeated*.

The film focussed in detail on the therapeutic practices that disabled servicemen experienced while in hospitals and rehabilitation units. Much of the filming was done on location at three of the largest and most important rehabilitation centres, Roehampton Hospital outside London, Rookwood in Cardiff and Stoke Mandeville in Buckinghamshire. After wounding, Joe Anderson goes to Roehampton, which had been established in 1915 as a limb-fitting hospital for amputees from the First World



Figure 10.2 The end: Joe Anderson at work as a Disablement Resettlement Officer with a client.

Source: *The Undefeated*, World Wide Pictures, Central Office of Information and Ministry of Pensions, Director: Paul Dickson, 1950.

War.⁴⁴ The camera takes the audience into a gymnasium where men were exercising their stumps. The regimented way that the patients, who were all male, raised their stumps up and down in unison to build up muscle maintained the connection between rehabilitation and military service. Rehabilitative treatment remained closely allied to exercise regimes in the Forces, and that connection between discipline and military service demonstrated that rehabilitation had purpose and meaning in a way that those who had been in the Forces related to. Although the scene was central in demonstrating the physical regime of rehabilitation reminiscent of the Forces, a small percentage of cinema goers interviewed as part of the survey said they found the scenes of men exercising their stumps in a gymnasium upsetting (see Figure 10.3).⁴⁵

During the war, Britain established itself as leading the medical field in rehabilitation. There were a number of conferences hosted in Britain during and after the war, and representatives of different nations came to Britain to see rehabilitation in practice. In 1945, the British Council for Rehabilitation was established to coordinate rehabilitative therapies.⁴⁶ After the war, rehabilitation centres remained a central core of the physical and emotional regimes which encouraged the reintegration of disabled people into work and social life. *The Undefeated* delivers a nationalistic propaganda message as it depicts Britain's status as a leader in rehabilitation; in the film, a group of international



Figure 10.3 Gymnasium: The gymnasium where men exercise their stumps.

Source: *The Undefeated*, World Wide Pictures, Central Office of Information and Ministry of Pensions, Director: Paul Dickson, 1950.

visitors watch the therapeutic process to learn from the British method. Yet as the public saw when they watched Joe Anderson's endeavours, rehabilitation was more often the story of individual and personal success. The individual nature of experience in the system of rehabilitation reminded the public of private struggle, which brought a humanizing aspect to the story. This was reflected in reports on *The Undefeated*. In a piece on a screening of *The Undefeated* to a War Pensions Committee, the *Yorkshire Post* highlighted the experience of a local man who was infected with polio while serving. He was reported as being a 'typical Ministry of Pensions case', as he had taken up a post as a lecturer at a university, yet still underwent rehabilitative treatment at a Ministry of Pensions hospital.⁴⁷ The message of *The Undefeated* was Britain's leadership in an international field of therapy as reflected in the success of rehabilitation, and the way that disabled British veterans, with their unique set of characteristics, negotiated their way through the regime and emerged triumphant.

Probably one of the most surprising aspects of *The Undefeated* was its focus on mental trauma. War trauma, known as battle fatigue in the Second World War, remained an issue for the Forces and resulted in significant numbers of discharges. In the Second World War, one of the purposes of the systemized rehabilitative process was the regaining of mental health through physical activity.⁴⁸ The Ministry of Pensions had come under criticism regarding its treatment of those who suffered shellshock in the

First World War, so *The Undefeated* was the perfect propaganda vehicle for improving its reputation in relation to mental trauma in war.

In *The Undefeated*, Joe Anderson's mental trauma is demonstrated through his inability to speak as he believes that his co-pilot Lofty had been killed in the crash in which Anderson lost his legs. Anderson's particular manifestation of mental trauma, the loss of his voice, as opposed to some other type of behaviour, demonstrated British resilience in the face of a highly traumatizing experience, maintaining the wartime notion of keeping a stiff upper lip, even when faced with the loss of a comrade. This stoic attitude, it was believed, had served Britain very well during the war, and its persistence provided continuity to British self-identity. Andy Medhurst notes that stoic silence in the face of war trauma was a common trope in cinematic films after the war. He argues that British actors such as John Mills, John Gregson and Kenneth More rehearsed their 'tropes of masculine emotionlessness' in films such as *Scott of the Antarctic*.⁴⁹ It was more British to lose one's voice and be inarticulate about feelings than it was to be overly emotional. When Joe Anderson is confronted towards the end of the film with his friend Lofty, very much alive, he regains his voice immediately. This part of the film provided a sense of drama which humanized Joe Anderson and reminded audiences that war remained a highly traumatizing experience, yet it could also be overcome. Moreover, as Pearson – a civil servant – was not a professional actor, his silence for much of the film made his job easier and ensured that the film maintained a professional veneer. Instead, the film was voiced by Leo Genn. The sense of drama was maintained through technical means; Dickson employed what he termed 'the Lady in the Lake technique early on with point-of-view shots', which hid the identity of narrator until the final reveal, when the audience realizes that it was Joe Anderson who is actually narrating the story.⁵⁰

The Undefeated mirrored the experience of many servicemen who had returned from the conflict. It focussed not only on the nature of physical trauma but also on the emotional trauma that many suffered as a result of war. Those fighting men who had experienced it, and the families of those who returned traumatized by war, understood the connection between physical and emotional trauma. Therefore, Joe Anderson's physical wounding and associated mental trauma resonated with audiences. His overcoming of physical disability by learning to walk on his artificial limbs, and the regaining of his voice once he realized that his friend Lofty had not actually died in the glider crash, demonstrated the power of this combination of practices to assist in the rehabilitation and creation of another useful citizen for the nation. This made the film resonate with the public, as many of them related to this wartime experience of overcoming the trauma of war on a personal and individual level.

Another war

In June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea and, in its support of the United States, Britain found itself embroiled in a conflict less than five years after the end of the Second World War. Although Britain's contribution of men and weapons in Korea remained relatively small, the nation's economy – already saddled with war

debts incurred during the Second World War – was strained by the significant cost of its support for NATO Cold War defences in Europe.⁵¹ Yet Britain owed a fiscal and military debt to the United States. Hasty arrangements were made to support the conflict; a British brigade was created from troops stationed in Hong Kong and sent to Korea.⁵²

The government was aware of the influence of films on public consciousness and their potential to affect opinion. The conflict in Korea had unforeseen implications for *The Undefeated*, a film produced to elicit positive attitudes about the Ministry of Pensions and its support of disabled servicemen. After production was completed, *The Undefeated* was shown privately on a number of occasions, including to Members of Parliament in March. It was screened at the Edinburgh Film Festival in August 1950, when an initial survey was taken to assess its suitability for general audiences. Reception to these early screenings was generally positive, but *The Undefeated* was not placed on general release. In an article in the *News Chronicle* in October 1950, film critic Richard Winnington reported that following *The Undefeated's* screening before 'an appreciative audience of MPs in the House of Commons' in March, there had been a 'blackout' on putting it on general release, despite Associated British-Pathé's acquisition of screening rights for the film as a supporting picture.⁵³ He called on the COI and Associated British-Pathé to give 'a clear statement when or if it will be shown to the public who paid for it.'⁵⁴ Winnington reinforces the sense of public ownership of the information produced for its consumption which mirrored Sir Henry French's view: 'The citizen has a right to be told, and the Government has a clear duty to tell him, what it is doing in his name, and with his money and why.'⁵⁵ The cinema industry appeared oblivious to issues surrounding the film's release; the *Kinematograph Weekly* announced in November 1950 that the film was to be released as one of four films produced by the COI, without making any reference to its controversial nature.

Winnington repeated his accusations regarding the state's concern about the film's impact on willing recruitment to the Armed Services more forcefully in another film review in December's *Sight and Sound*, where he stated, 'Films now must not only fight their way through the industry and through the intransigence of distributors: they must also face vague but powerful political pressures.'⁵⁶ He argued strongly that the reason for the few screenings of *The Undefeated* was because depictions of disabled soldiers damaged the recruitment drive for the Korean War.

The question of whether *The Undefeated*, with its 'first class object lesson in the comparative values of courage',⁵⁷ affected recruitment for the conflict in Korea concerned the government, which worried about the resilience of the public, although there was no official statement in this regard from any minister or from the government. In October 1950, a survey of public reactions was taken in order to ascertain whether or not the film should be made widely available to commercial cinema, in view of its potential appeal to the public. The role of surveys was central in ascertaining the public's opinion and had been used extensively during the war. By 1950, the Social Survey was well established in British social life. The reason for a survey to gauge the public's reaction to *The Undefeated* was to find out if viewing the war disabled was upsetting, or indeed, as Winnington had pointed out, if the film produced a negative response to National Service, which was extended from eighteen months to 2 years in

1950 as a consequence of British involvement in the Korean War. In order to assess *The Undefeated's* suitability for full release, the film was shown in thirteen locations between 16 and 18 October 1950, and surveys were taken following the screenings in Wigan, Huddersfield, Ipswich and Plymouth.⁵⁸ The reason for the choice of locations for the surveys was not explained.⁵⁹ In total, 161 interviews of people who had seen the film were completed, and these were compared with a control group of 160 who knew nothing about the film and had not seen it.⁶⁰

In part, Winnington's accusation of state concerns surrounding the potential impact of *The Undefeated* on recruitment for the Forces was correct. The final report published from the survey taken in October stated, 'It might cause discomfort ... and the sight of disablement might lead to some adverse effect upon the recruiting drive, or cause worry among parents and relatives undergoing their period of National Service.'⁶¹ Richard Vinen notes that newspapers including the *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* attacked conscription, and from that he concludes that 'readers of newspaper articles might well have got the impression that peacetime conscription was almost universally unpopular.'⁶² Yet, Gallup polls taken in the first six months of the war reported broad-based support for the conflict in Korea.⁶³

The response to *The Undefeated* was generally positive among the two groups, those who had seen the film and those who had not (to whom the outline of the plot and the story was explained). Although some members of the public found the film upsetting, many of those surveyed felt that it was a lesson for them to be reminded about the plight of those disabled as a result of war. The Social Survey report noted,

It seems true to say, for many who found the film at all disturbing or moving, the experience of seeing it was felt to be salutary – a reminder of things too easily forgotten, perhaps an assuagement of an unconscious sense of guilt arising from the disturbing subject of war disablement.⁶⁴

From the responses, it is apparent that many individuals related to the characters and the situations in *The Undefeated*. A significant number of adults had served in the Forces or as part of the war effort, or had been affected by bombing, disruption and privations, so the impact of the war resonated with them. Furthermore, in the case of men who were surveyed, the locations, experiences and characters were familiar, reminding them of their wartime service. As Raymond Durnat points out, two world wars and post-war conscription framed many of the social experiences of men,⁶⁵ and this was evident in some of the responses. One 55-year-old shift foreman who served in the Second World War said the film 'made me feel a bit shaky; and I think it brought a lot of memories back'. A retired Army captain said, 'You couldn't help crying, it touched you so bad.'⁶⁶

Responses from the survey reinforced the Ministry of Pension's successful transmission of its message. One respondent to the survey, a housewife of age fifty-seven, said, 'Should be shown to help other Service men and women, and give the general public a good idea of what is done for ex-Service people who are disabled.'⁶⁷ Another said, 'Well I reckon it was marvellous work to see how the men persevere. In fact, I saw a lot of it again. They did an excellent job. I can't put it into words really.

The money wasn't wasted.⁶⁸ The state's message through films such as *The Undefeated* ensured that the public remained positive about levels of support for disabled servicemen, which may have inspired confidence if a soldier was wounded and disabled in the Korean conflict.

The state's concerns that the depiction of disabled war veterans might affect the numbers of recruits for the Korean War were evident in the questions asked in the survey. Three of the eleven questions were framed around the impact of the film on recruitment. However, a significant percentage of the survey's respondents answered that the film would have little impact on the numbers of volunteers to the Services. Indeed, 68 per cent of those who saw the film said it would have no impact on recruitment, and 60 per cent of those who had not seen the film agreed with them. The report concluded that screening *The Undefeated* would have 'no important influence upon recruitment to the Services, although there is a possibility that it might have some effect upon a few, marginal, potential volunteers.'⁶⁹

The positive response to the film from the surveys undertaken in the four locations ensured a full Associated British Cinema release. *The Undefeated* was screened throughout the country in 1951 and early 1952. After its general release, reviews of the film were good, and there was no further mention in the press that the film might have an adverse impact on the numbers of men volunteering for the Services. *The Undefeated* was compared favourably to contemporary Hollywood films such as *The Men* and *Bright Victory*, which appeared in 1950 and 1951, respectively. Moreover, the British press considered *The Undefeated* more authentic than the two Hollywood productions. *The Times* reported that the two American films did not have 'the courage to go through to the end ... without the help of a fictional story, a romantic interest.'⁷⁰ Instead of a passionate love interest and the added thrill that provided to audiences, Joe Anderson is married and his wife attends medical appointments with him (see Figure 10.4); she speaks to doctors regarding her concerns about Joe's emotional trauma, manifested in his voice loss. In *The Undefeated*, there were few roles for women: they played wives and helpers and were not portrayed as romantic love interests or central characters. It was noted in one newspaper that, unlike *The Men*, *The Undefeated* 'deals with the technical and surface sides of the subject, rather than the inner conflict of the disabled.'⁷¹ Other reviews, while praising the film, also pointed out the limits of its documentary style. One review noted, 'It does not quite succeed in achieving the very difficult transition – the problem of all documentary – between the impersonal, authoritative explanation of the Ministry's work, and the personal study of individuals.'⁷² Leo Enticknap notes,

The 'documentary realist' tradition had been heavily promoted by commentators and press critics as an expression of indigenous cultural values in a propaganda context, both in the promotion of non-fiction films themselves, and the incorporation of themes and styles deemed to be more 'real' than the alternative of Hollywood escapism.⁷³

This concentration on the detail of disabled veterans' physical rehabilitation meant that some reviewers described *The Undefeated* as 'grim'. However, *The Times* defended the film's approach, reporting in 1951,



Figure 10.4 Couple: Joe Anderson and his wife leaving Roehampton Hospital.

Source: *The Undefeated*, World Wide Pictures, Central Office of Information and Ministry of Pensions, Director: Paul Dickson, 1950.

The Men was a full-scale fictional film, while *The Undefeated* runs for half an hour or so and could be regarded simply as an advertisement for the work done by the Ministry of Pensions. Indeed, if it were a bad, an insensitive, a sentimental film, that is precisely what it would be, but while the Ministry of Pensions plays a considerable part in it, it is a great deal more than that.⁷⁴

While recognizing the propaganda message of the film represented by the central role of the Ministry of Pensions, the journalist in *The Times* acknowledged the skill in making a propaganda film that was acceptable for the public. Indeed, the powerful message of *The Undefeated* was so realistic that the authorities were concerned about its upsetting subject matter, its impact on National Service and public attitudes to the Korean War.

Conclusion

Despite the delays in its release, its documentary style and the grim nature of its subject, *The Undefeated* was critically acclaimed and won the BAFTA for Best Documentary in 1951. Government propaganda was vital to the delivery of information in post-war

Britain, and the established channels opened during the war continued to serve the needs of the post-war Attlee government after 1945. In order to appeal to audiences, director Paul Dickson employed a wartime narrative familiar to an audience whose experience of the conflict was at the forefront of recent memory. *The Undefeated* detailed Joe Anderson's rehabilitation, which reflected the experience of significant numbers of individuals after the conflict. Although *The Undefeated* was a relatively short documentary film, it was found to be superior when compared to feature films from Hollywood, with their concentration on internal emotional struggles and romantic relationships. The irony of *The Undefeated*, which was produced as a propaganda documentary drama whose purpose was to inform the public about the work of the Ministry of Pensions, and its ongoing support for the disabled veterans from the First and Second World Wars, was its potential to be a propaganda film affecting the number of recruits for the war in Korea. Without the Social Survey – which reassured the authorities that *The Undefeated* would not impact on support for the conflict in Korea – the film would not have achieved commercial release. The tension between public 'ownership' of government productions, a powerful propaganda message and the potential impact of that message on another conflict was played out through *The Undefeated*.

Notes

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- 2 David Welch, *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War II* (London, 2016), p. 16.
- 3 Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 4.
- 4 Fox, *Film Propaganda in Britain*, p. 4.
- 5 See Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945–1951* (London, 1993), pp. 87–118.
- 6 William Crofts, *Coercion or Persuasion? Propaganda in Britain after 1945* (London, 1989), p. 12.
- 7 William Beveridge, 'Social Insurance and Allied Services', Cmd. 6404 (London, 1942) (the 'Beveridge Report').
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- 9 Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London and New York, 1994), p. 83.
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- 11 Jack Ellis, *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence* (Carbondale, IL, 2000), p. 258.
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- 13 The French Committee, 'Cost of Home Information Services,' Cmnd. 7836 (London, 1949).
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- 20 TNA, INF 6/553, Letter from C. L. Paine to the Secretary, World Wide Pictures Limited, 8 July 1949.
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- 25 Hilary Aidan St George Saunders, *The Battle of Britain, August–October 1940: An Air Ministry Record of the Great Days from 8th August–31st October 1940* (London, 1941); J. M. Spaight, *The Battle of Britain, 1940*, with a foreword by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Viscount Trenchard (London, 1941); see S. P. MacKenzie, *The Battle of Britain on Screen* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 25.
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- 27 Geoff Eley, 'Funding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II', *American Historical Review*, 106: 3 (2001), pp. 818–38.
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The British Council behind the Iron Curtain: Cultural propaganda in early Cold War Poland

Edward Corse

Introduction

The British Council had been formed by the British government in 1934 to 'promote British life and thought' abroad. As I set out in my *A Battle for Neutral Europe*, which examined the work of the British Council during the Second World War in Europe, the Council often shied away from using the term 'propaganda'. It proactively made a distinction between its work and propaganda in the 'generally accepted derogatory sense of that word'. However, many, including Lord Lloyd of Dolobran (British Council chairman from 1937 to 1941), accepted that, despite disliking the word itself, the Council's purpose in promoting British life and thought was propaganda of a sort, and that applying the term 'cultural propaganda' to the Council's work was a helpful distinction from the more bombastic political kind.¹

In my analysis of the term 'cultural propaganda', I identified a number of existing definitions. For example, Philip M. Taylor had defined propaganda as 'the promotion and dissemination of national aims and achievements in a general rather than specifically economic or political form, although it is ultimately designed to promote economic and political interests.'² Other historians, notably David Welch, Nick Cull and David Culbert, recognized cultural propaganda as a 'long-term process intended to promote a better understanding of the nation ... with a view to creating goodwill.'³

I concluded that through its work the British Council, at least during the Second World War in Europe, fitted within these definitions of cultural propaganda. Other terms may be preferred such as 'cultural diplomacy' or 'soft power', but these terms are essentially interchangeable or have similar purposes.⁴ I also developed a model of cultural propaganda based on three pillars – 'perception', 'substance' and 'organisation' – all of which I suggested are required for cultural propaganda to function effectively.⁵

Just prior to the Second World War, the British Council had put in place the organizational framework for promoting cultural propaganda through opening a number of offices and institutes across Europe such as in Portugal, Poland, Romania

and Yugoslavia in order to disseminate cultural propaganda. However, many of these offices and institutes, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe, had to be closed rapidly again as war raged across the continent from 1939 onwards, limiting its ability to carry out cultural propaganda to the neutral countries of Spain, Portugal, Turkey and Sweden.

While the Council had its critics, particularly in the form of Lord Beaverbrook (who held four ministerial roles during the Second World War and was a major newspaper proprietor owning, among other titles, the *Daily Express*), many did see some value during the war of creating sympathy for Britain in neutral countries. However, the immediate peacetime prospects for the Council did not look promising. The prime minister, Winston Churchill, stated to the foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, in November 1944, that the British Council 'are certainly one of the objects ripe for retrenchment when the war comes to an end'.⁶ A fuller review of the Council's work was conducted in early 1945 by Findlater Stewart and although his report was neither accepted by the Foreign Office nor seen by the British Council, it was clear that the future of the Council and the role of British cultural propaganda were uncertain in the post-war world.⁷

However, following the conclusion of the war the Foreign Office, at least, was keen for the Council to regain the ground that it had lost and even looked for it to expand into countries it had had little or no opportunity to influence previously. Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent undersecretary at the Foreign Office, stated in early 1945, just over a month after Churchill's dismissive statement,

Our [the Foreign Office's] opportunities for exercising direct political influence in most of the countries of Eastern Europe are likely to be limited. Indirect means of influence such as the long-term work of the British Council, will, therefore be very valuable.⁸

Poland was one country where the Council had opened one of its very first institutes prior to the war, and where both the Foreign Office and the Council wished to reopen activities. Poland had been devastated by the Second World War and there remained significant social dislocation and lack of basic needs throughout the country, not least in the capital itself, which had been the subject of a suppressed uprising, shelling and general bombardment.⁹ Poland had also moved westwards, not only taking its border with Germany up to the rivers Oder and Neisse but also losing a vast swathe of territory in the East to its so-called liberator, the Soviet Union. In short, it was a very uncertain post-war situation for both the Council and for Poland in new territory and new circumstances, with both taking a leap into the unknown.

Already by the summer of 1945, the British ambassador to Poland, Victor Cavendish Bentinck, had made a plea to the Council for them to send a representative to the country, stating that the representative 'will find himself almost embarrassingly popular ... all sorts have expressed to us their desire for a speedy resumption of cultural relations with the West'.¹⁰ In October 1945, David Shillan, who had been posted to the Council's offices in Lisbon during the Second World War, made an exploratory visit to Poland 'to examine the possibilities of Council work and to advise as to what was

needed to carry it out'. Building on the initial work of Bentinck, Shillan spent a month in Warsaw and Krakow building up relationships, which could then be developed further by a more permanent representative in the country.¹¹

Early years

The British Council identified George Chandos Bidwell as the right man to lead its team in this new Poland as the British Council's representative. Bidwell was born in Reading in 1905 and during his early career had written articles for papers and magazines such as the *Reading Standard* and *Good Housekeeping*. Once war had broken out in December 1939, he joined the army and took part in the North African campaign before joining the British Council in the Middle East.¹²

In Cairo, Bidwell had gained a reputation as an effective manager, and his reputation was furthered by his role as acting British Council representative in Persia for four months in the summer of 1945. In October 1945, he was promoted to assistant representative in Warsaw and travelled to Poland on 8 January 1946, then appointed representative later that year.¹³

In Bidwell's first report back from Poland in February 1946, he gave a description of the conditions in Warsaw:

The three London Appointed members of the Council's staff in Warsaw are housed in three small bedrooms in the partly restored Hotel Bristol. The hotel has no water, primitive sanitation and indifferent cleaning service. In the passages are gaping holes and heaps of rubble ... Warsaw is, literally, a ruin.¹⁴

Despite the conditions, the British Council was most definitely in demand, as Bentinck had predicted. Bidwell noted that already 750 copies of *Britain To-day* (the British Council's newsletter), 100 copies of *Monthly Science News* and fifty copies of the *British Medical Bulletin* had been ordered. He stated that during the recent war the Germans had deliberately destroyed Polish libraries and were determined to particularly eradicate British books, which meant that 'the calls for presentations [was] exceptionally heavy ... [and that it was] hard to refuse so many deserving appeals'. Bidwell had to necessarily prioritize his efforts and concentrated on building up the universities of Warsaw and other major cities, as well as schools and societies.¹⁵

It was not just the practical issues of building up libraries and coping with Warsaw's devastation that was a problem, however. Clearly there was a broader political issue, not only with Poland but also with all of Eastern Europe, in that the Soviet Union and not Britain was the 'liberator' of these countries. Churchill and Eden had agreed with Josef Stalin at the Fourth Moscow Conference in October 1944 that Poland would move westwards as described above, and that the rest of Eastern Europe (except Czechoslovakia) would be carved up along the lines of the 'percentages agreement' nominally recognizing de facto Soviet control over most of the land that it had 'liberated'.¹⁶ Attempts were made in 1944 to draw together the Polish

government-in-exile based in London and the Soviet-backed government¹⁷ but these attempts could only go so far when Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe was near absolute.

Bidwell noted that, in recognition of this situation, the Council's work 'must be done quietly and cautiously. Friends – both English and Polish – frequently emphasize that point. There are powers and influences to which our work, if not unwelcome, is at least a cause of suspicion.'¹⁸ On 11 July 1946, he reported that there was a new ruling in Poland, which meant that all matters to do with foreign organizations of any kind had to be approved by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 'Political trends', he noted, 'have tended to make results more difficult to achieve.'¹⁹ The immediate 'political trend' that Bidwell was referring to was the People's Referendum (also known as the 'Three Times Yes' referendum, as three constitutional questions were asked) which took place on 30 June 1946, in which the results are widely regarded to have been falsified.²⁰ The nationalization decree (adopted January 1946) and Three-Year Plan (adopted September 1946) also led to ever-increasing control by the Soviet-backed authorities.²¹

In his first annual report in early 1947, Bidwell gave a description of the conditions under which the Council was working in Poland:

The problems are ... constant anti-British press campaigns, the ill-disguised watch kept on us by the Secret Police, the fear of our contacts that too open association with us will have serious consequences for them (one at least now languishes in gaol), and the certainty that any tactical error we may make will be pounced upon and used against us – these factors do not make for any easy atmosphere in which to carry out cultural work ... It is hoped that a cultural convention may remove the official barriers. If that should fail, only a policy of seeking and exploiting the gaps in the fences remains.²²

But the political winds were not necessarily all driving in the same direction. In November 1946, Bidwell reported that there was a split in opinion about the British Council in Polish ministerial circles, with the Polish prime minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski (who was at this time a socialist rather than a communist) opening the Tate Gallery Exhibition organized by the Council, but the Minister of Culture refusing to attend. Bidwell was frustrated by the Polish government generally dragging its feet on all important decisions, owing to struggles between the various factions alive in Poland. In particular, it took many months to get a final decision on whether the Council could occupy certain premises or not.²³ He stated,

We are conscious that we can only put out our maximum effort and achieve an optimum result when we are welcomed and assisted as much by the Government as by the people.²⁴

In Bidwell's January 1947 report, it was clear that things had changed rather dramatically. There had been increasing anti-British sentiments emanating from the Polish government in the run-up to the elections due on 17 January. On 14 January, the Starosta (mayor) and Militia turned up at the British Council offices with a

presidential eviction order which demanded that the ground floor of their offices should be evacuated immediately. As a result of government in-fighting, the order was then postponed after an appeal, with the Polish Ministries of Education, Culture and the Socialist Party supporting the Council's position. The order came into force, eventually, on 31 January.

There were clearly tensions within the Polish government and its policy was not uniform. Remarkably, the Council was up and running again by 9 February, and Bidwell was able to predict that the election and the appointment of the Polish Cabinet showed indications that there were elements of the Polish government who wanted a closer and more friendly collaboration with the Council.²⁵ Indeed, in his March 1947 report, Bidwell noted that actually the events of January 1947 appeared to be rather transient. He noted 'the difficult conditions experienced during and immediately after the election period are steadily receding ... the whole atmosphere is easier and more favourable to our progress'.²⁶ A year later Bidwell was reporting that, while the situation of the Council's premises remained unresolved, there had been significant growth in the Council's activities.²⁷ A few months after that the Council successfully negotiated the reconstruction and lease of a new property at 59 Aleje Jerozolimskie, where the Council was until 2015.²⁸ It appeared that the events of January 1947 were firmly in the past, at least for now.

Bidwell's defection

The next crisis the Council faced in Warsaw was caused not by the Polish authorities but by their own representative. Bidwell announced in letters to the chairman of the British Council, Sir Ronald Adam, on 2 June and to the new British ambassador to Poland, Sir Donald St. Clair Gainer, on 4 June 1949 that he had become a Polish citizen and resigned.²⁹ With his letter to Adam he enclosed his statement to the press that was to be issued on 5 June and then asked for reimbursement of untaken leave of at least ninety days – a number so large that it can surely only be regarded as provocative.³⁰

Bidwell's resignation itself, the manner in which it occurred and the fact that Bidwell made a statement to the press which received wide publicity in Poland and the Soviet Union clearly created a deep suspicion that his move was politically motivated. Gainer's initial analysis was that the statement

purports to justify his action in terms of Communist claptrap of the vulgarest [*sic*] and most blatant kind – including not only the usual vituperation of the United States but equally grotesque and slanderous attacks on H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment], the Foreign Service and the British Council itself, whose work here may of course be very seriously, and perhaps irretrievably damaged by Bidwell's performance.³¹

Gainer was clearly, and understandably, angry. But he was also confused and shocked. He wrote to the Foreign Office stating '[t]he shock ... to me of Bidwell's totally unexpected action was very severe'. He judged that Bidwell's action was something that

'none of us could have foretold' and wanted to believe it was caused by a personal issue rather than a political one.³² Confusion and shock were shared by the Foreign Office in London. J. P. G. Finch wrote to Gainer on 16 June declaring that Bidwell's actions had 'naturally caused us considerable disquiet. This is the most deplorable affair.'³³ There was clearly a lot of head-scratching around Bidwell's motives. G. A. Carey-Foster, head of the Security Department at the Foreign Office, noted in a letter to the embassy in Vienna that Bidwell was regarded by the Council as one of its 'best men in the field' and despite being known to have some 'rather leftish sympathies' and his suspicious marriage to a Polish woman, 'his work did not suffer and he was on good terms with the Ambassador and his various other British colleagues.'³⁴

Adam also wanted to believe that Bidwell, whom he regarded as a personal friend (having visited Bidwell in Warsaw himself in April 1948),³⁵ would not have resigned if it were not for 'matrimonial entanglements', and that he had not made a political defection. He had to be persuaded by the Foreign Office that sending a reply to the letter he had received from Bidwell, let alone one which wished that he be 'happy and successful in his new life', was inadvisable.³⁶

So what had been going on? The excuse both Adam and Gainer, as well as many officials at the Foreign Office, wanted to believe was that the defection had something to do with Bidwell's marriage arrangements. It is true that a complicated situation had arisen when he had divorced his first British wife in Poland (which was recognized in Polish but not British law) before marrying his second, Polish, wife. Bidwell had then tried to make his second wife a British subject, but she had been refused by the British authorities on the grounds that under British law she could not be his wife. The only way he could regularize his marriage and legitimize any children was through becoming a Polish citizen. Indeed, some months later, both MI5 and the Foreign Office appeared to be working on the assumption that his defection was caused by personal circumstances and was not political.³⁷

But was there more to it than that? Gainer had clearly forgotten that he had himself noted his concern about Bidwell some seventeen months previously in January 1948. While not predicting a defection, Gainer had demonstrated that Bidwell was struggling to maintain a pro-British message while maintaining popularity with the Polish authorities, and that Bidwell considered the latter to be more important.³⁸

Indeed, in his letter to Adam, Bidwell actually denied it had anything to do with his marriage and its complications, pointing to his press statement as explaining his motives. It is worth, therefore, taking a moment to consider Bidwell's statement. On closer inspection, it could appear to be more anti-British – or at least anti-British establishment – than anti-British Council, which is an important distinction. On the British Council, Bidwell stated,

[A]ny work which the Council can attempt [is made] farcical ... I have come to the conclusion that the British Council, even though it is by intention a non-political body, may at any moment find itself working against the interests of the government of any country whose ideology is different from that of the United Kingdom ... [T]he British Council cannot escape confusion with the British Government [and therefore] my work here is no longer possible.³⁹

It would seem that he was still a supporter of the British Council's stated purpose of extending cultural ties in a non-political context but believed it was being used as an anti-communist tool of the British government, a move that he did not support.

Having said that, the Foreign Office noted that, following his defection, Bidwell had taken up a new translation job and had written articles for the Polish press. Officials were relieved to report that, despite what appeared in his press statement, 'none of these [new articles] so far has been particularly anti-British in tone or content.'⁴⁰ In fact, according to intelligence received from observers of Bidwell in his new job, it was reported that he was advising Polish radio *not* to ridicule the Royal Navy in one broadcast because it would go down badly in Britain. He was overruled by his Polish bosses, but, still, he had made the stand.⁴¹

So although he claimed he had defected because the British Council was being too political and perhaps too British, his initial actions – at least following his defection – suggested he was not being active against Britain. It could appear from this that Bidwell had made his move due to his marriage situation and that his press statement, far from being a statement to be taken at face value, was designed to make himself attractive to the Polish authorities. He was, after all, deciding to spend the rest of his life as a Polish citizen. It could seem through his actions that he was not necessarily turning his back on the purpose of the British Council, or indeed on Britain, and wholly defecting to Poland in a political sense.

The Foreign Office certainly wanted to believe that that was the case, but it became more and more difficult for that view to remain plausible. In 1950, Bidwell published a book in Polish – *Wybrałem Polskę* – which translated as 'I chose Poland'.⁴² The impression the book gives was that, despite his previous protestations and the analysis by the Foreign Office and MI5, it was not just personal difficulties Bidwell was trying to resolve by becoming a Polish citizen but that the move also had political reasoning behind it. Again, it could be that he recognized that he needed to do something quite radical, such as publishing this book, to ensure he was accepted by his adopted homeland, rather than being genuinely political: it is difficult to be sure. But through publishing his book, and the detail into which it went, it was becoming more and more difficult to accept that his was not a political move.

The Foreign Office carefully analysed the book and its reviews. It was reported that Bidwell believed that behind the noble slogans of the British Council

there [was] nothing except the cruel interests of the British bourgeoisie, that anybody who tried to implement the official slogans of that cultural outpost would soon be disarmed by representatives of the British regime. But his acquaintance with Poland, with her new life, created by the hands of the working class, enables him this time to draw different conclusions from a better society.⁴³

The claim in Bidwell's book – that the British Embassy in Warsaw wanted him only to cultivate relationships with those who were deemed to be favourable to Britain and to understand the subjects occupying the attention of Polish scientists which were needed for intelligence purposes – was not denied by the embassy. The Foreign Office acknowledged that there was a difference of opinion between himself and the embassy

about the object of the British Council's work.⁴⁴ The focus of Bidwell's claim was the recollection of a conversation at his flat in February 1947 between himself, Frank Ashton Gwatkin (a Foreign Office inspector) and Kenneth Johnstone (director of the European Department of the British Council) during which it was made clear that the Council was to aim to influence as many people as possible in favour of the UK, so as to have supporters in Poland in time of war. The embassy in Warsaw now admitted '[a]s you will see Mr Bidwell's book is not based entirely on fiction.'⁴⁵ Perhaps his defection should not have come as such a surprise at all.

Whether Bidwell's actions were a surprise or not, and whether his was a political move or not, the Foreign Office considered a range of options to try to ensure that this was an isolated incident. In response to suggestions that the Council should be closed down entirely in Eastern Europe for fear of similar incidents elsewhere, Gainer noted that he did 'not regard the folly and treachery of an individual as any reason for not doing our utmost to keep going the very useful work which the Council, in spite of everything, has done in this country.'⁴⁶ Carey-Foster agreed, noting,

I do not think there is any question of [the Council being closed down]. The British Council has on the whole done useful work in [Soviet] orbit countries where it is the main, or only, agency for attempting to publicize the British as opposed to the Eastern way of life.⁴⁷

Interestingly, however, Carey-Foster suggested that

these recent events [will mean that] it is no longer very probable that the British Council will for much longer enjoy the reputation in Satellite countries of being the spearhead of the British Intelligence Service. This is unfortunate but there does not seem to be any way of keeping up the pretence.⁴⁸

It would be clear enough, he thought, that, if questioned by the Poles, Bidwell knew very little about British activities in Poland outside of the work of the Council.

Efforts to contain Bidwell's defection were largely but not entirely effective. For example, one British Council-sponsored lecturer and his wife in Finland were quickly found to be Communist Party members.⁴⁹ The Foreign Office also decided to keep an eye on Rhys Ellias in Budapest; he had been a close associate of Bidwell while in Poland.⁵⁰ But the Foreign Office's efforts could not prevent a second defection just eight months later, on 4 February 1950, by a British Council doctor in Prague, Dr Arna Rides. Rides defected to the Czechoslovak Communist Party and attacked the Council for conducting an anti-Czech policy backed by the Foreign Office. She stated that she

was worried by the not sincere [*sic*] policy of the British Council. Employees of the British Council maintained contact exclusively with enemies of the people's state. [The British Government maintains] activities directed against USSR and against other peace-loving countries. The British Council is the instrument of such a policy.⁵¹

It was a view not dissimilar to that stated by Bidwell the previous year, and indeed Rides referenced Bidwell in her press conference. Any further defections were, however, prevented. This was partly due to the efforts of the Foreign Office and the British Council but also, as we shall see, because in most parts of Eastern Europe the Council was soon to be expelled entirely.

Activities of the British Council

So what were the activities of the British Council that were under so much debate? During the immediate post-war years, the British Council's activities in Poland concentrated on science, music and art, the teaching of English as well as other subjects at Polish universities, building up its own library, distributing books and providing film showings.

In the monthly reports, science featured particularly prominently with statistics provided of the number of journals received and distributed, contacts made and so forth.⁵² The Council reported in its first annual report from Poland that it was cooperating closely with the Polish scientific and technical press, with British technical articles being accepted by 60 per cent of Polish scientific journals. Radio Polski accepted the Council's proposals for a series of popular broadcasts on British science. Nearly 1,000 copies of *Medical Science News* and 6,500 copies of *Britain To-day* had been distributed in the first twelve months.⁵³ In 1947 and 1948, Dr Robert Cruikshank, of the National Health Laboratory; Dorothy Keeling, formerly of the National Council of Social Service; and Dr E. A. Carmichael, director of the Neurological Research Unit, all visited Warsaw and other cities. Sir Harold Spencer Jones, the Astronomer Royal, visited Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, Poznań and Toruń in 1948, where he gave lectures and held discussions on a range of astronomical topics.⁵⁴

For the promotion of music and theatrical productions, piano recitals of English music were given by Noel Mewton-Wood and Angus Morrison; and the Sadlers Wells Ballet Company toured Europe including Poland in September and October 1948.⁵⁵ James Whitehead performed the Elgar Cello Concerto in a range of Polish cities and attendance at the concerts he gave was reported to be good.⁵⁶ A Shakespeare Festival was held among Polish theatrical groups, which competed for the prize of best production at the Teatr Polski in Warsaw.⁵⁷

For promoting art, Sir Eric Maclagan, the former director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, gave lectures on Fine Art in Warsaw and Kraków in September and October 1946. John Rothenstein, director of the Tate Gallery, visited Warsaw, Kraków and Katowice twice in the autumn of 1946 to organize a Tate Exhibition on modern British painting that was visited by 42,000 people in under a month.⁵⁸

At the universities, British Council lecturers Edgar McGahan and Ian Jago were attached to the University of Warsaw and the Catholic University at Lublin, respectively, to teach English. During the 1947/8 academic year at the University of Warsaw, McGahan devoted seven hours a week to public lectures, four hours to seminars on both linguistic and literary subjects and two hours to his English-speaking and play-reading circles.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, eventually there was a Polish government decree that removed the right of Polish universities to autonomously choose their staff, and

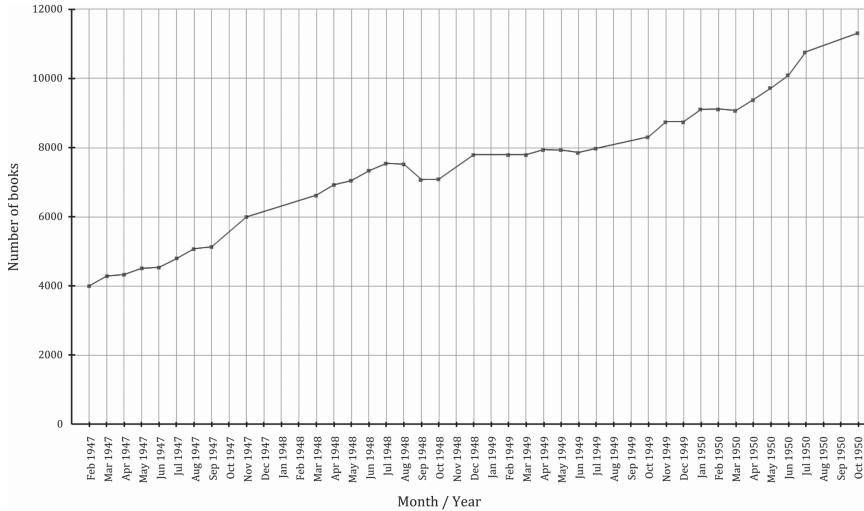


Figure 11.1 Number of books, British Council library in Poland, 1947–50.

Source: Figures taken from various British Council monthly reports between February 1947 and October 1950 in TNA, BW 51/9.

control shifted to the Polish Ministry of Education. McGahan was told that in early 1949 his contract with the University of Warsaw would be allowed to lapse. McGahan was transferred from the university to the Council's Warsaw staff and continued to lecture at the English College, to the Warsaw English Teachers' Circle and in the British Council Institute but clearly no longer being posted in the university itself was a huge blow. Jago's post was also later withdrawn from the Catholic University at Lublin on the grounds that the English Department was too small to justify his presence.⁶⁰

The British Council's library, however, steadily increased both in number of books available and number of members over the early part of the Cold War, with no appreciable lack of interest in the use of the library as a result of any interference from the government or from Bidwell's defection (see Figures 11.1 and 11.2).

The Council distributed books, periodicals and other publications – some presented, some sold – to a wide variety of institutions. Given the state of Polish libraries in the immediate post-war period, many of the books were provided as much-needed gifts to make up for losses during the war.⁶¹ The Council noted, however, in 1949 that the distribution of free material had fallen in the 1948/49 reporting year (see Figure 11.3, to the end of 1948) – and that this was 'a healthy sign indicating the gradual passing of the rehabilitation period',⁶² with more institutions being able to pay for material and the immediate need to stock libraries having reduced. Indeed, the Council was slowly changing its role into being a facilitator rather than a provider of materials. Declines in the numbers of books and periodicals being distributed therefore should not be taken at face value as a reduction in success, but as a result of changing needs.

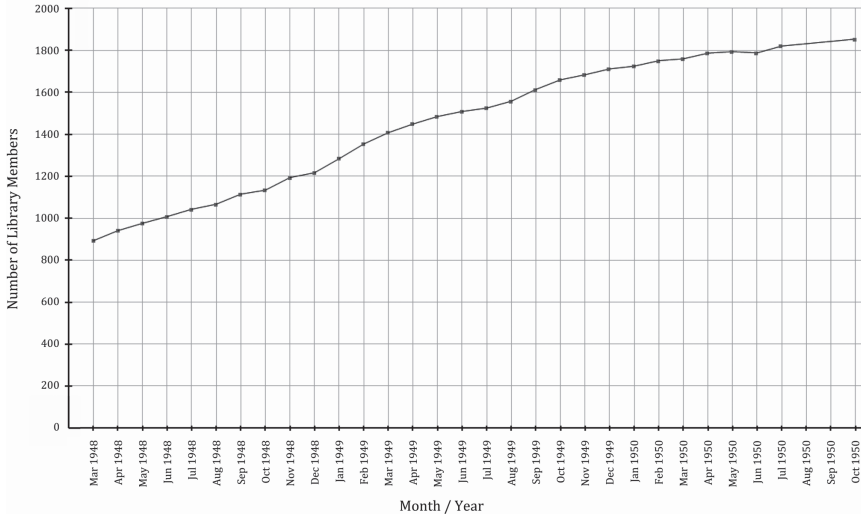


Figure 11.2 Number of library members, British Council library in Poland, 1948–50.

Source: Figures taken from various British Council monthly reports between March 1948 and October 1950 in TNA, BW 51/9.

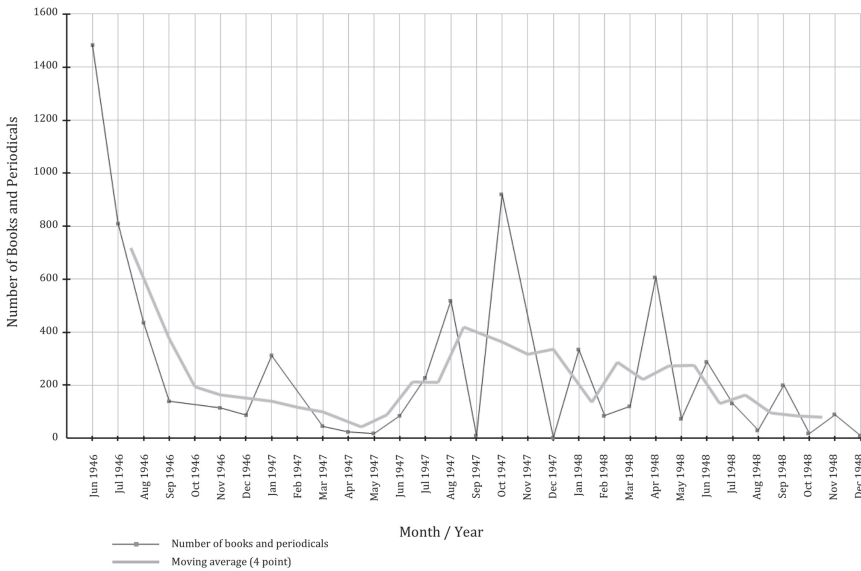


Figure 11.3 Total books and periodicals presented by the British Council to Polish institutions, 1946–8.

Source: Figures taken from various monthly reports between June 1946 and December 1948 in TNA, BW 51/9.

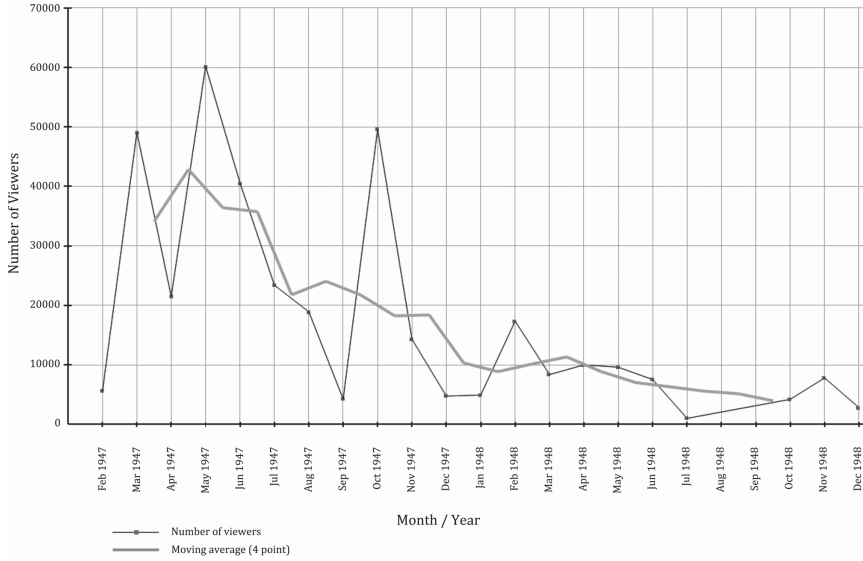


Figure 11.4 Viewers at British Council film showings in Poland, 1947–8.

Source: Figures taken from various monthly reports between February 1947 and December 1948 in TNA, BW 51/9.

Films were considered by Bidwell to be ‘by far the most popular of functional wares’,⁶³ and in the early years the Council was able to loan out equipment and films to institutions, which proved very popular in the long, dark and cold winter evenings. In a similar way to book and periodical presentations, the numbers of viewers of the British Council films decreased over time (see Figure 11.4). This was no doubt partly due to governmental pressure, but it was also because films were becoming more readily available and the demand for the British Council as one of the few film providers immediately after the war had declined.

None of these activities were particularly different from the types of activities the British Council had carried out in other countries such as Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey during the Second World War. As elsewhere, the Council was in Poland looking for pro-British friends to influence in the first instance. These pro-British Poles would have greater influence on their more sceptical compatriots than the Council would have done if it had tried to influence Poles directly.⁶⁴ Bidwell’s claim that the Council was there for a broader purpose and not just cultural exchange was of course true, but it was open in carrying out this broader purpose and it was aligned with the types of activities it did elsewhere.

Comparisons to other countries behind the Iron Curtain

In March 1950, the foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, approached the British Cabinet with a paper entitled ‘The British Council in Russian Satellite Countries’.⁶⁵ In essence,

it outlined that the situation in Eastern Europe was becoming ever more desperate for the Council. The Council had already left Romania and in Hungary the government had requested that the British Council withdraw. It was becoming clear too that the Czechoslovakian authorities were becoming increasingly hostile. Arna Rides' defection the previous month had also focussed minds.

Bevin put two options to the cabinet: first to be proactive and withdraw the British Council from all the remaining Iron Curtain countries – that is, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Poland; or, second, to wait until withdrawal were demanded by the governments concerned. He recommended the second option. He noted that 'it is fairly clear that the Czechoslovak Government intend, if possible, to stultify the Council's work and would like to drive it out altogether, and for this purpose may be expected to resort more and more to police methods with consequent danger to the Council's personnel'. It was agreed a note should be sent to the Czechoslovak government expressing the concerns of the Council although recognizing that this might precipitate a request for withdrawal.⁶⁶

Bevin recognized that the situation more generally across the Iron Curtain countries could in time mean that if the Czechoslovakian government sought the British Council's withdrawal (as indeed happened very shortly afterwards),⁶⁷ the governments in Poland and Bulgaria could also request that the activities of the British Council be reduced or ceased altogether. However, he was more hopeful about reports from Warsaw and Sofia, in respect of which he stated 'the Council's prospects in those countries have not yet deteriorated sufficiently to justify a voluntary withdrawal'.⁶⁸ Bevin was keen not to be seen to be doing the Kremlin's work for them and withdraw prematurely.

Bevin's paper built on the work carried out the previous year, during which the Council had concluded that, while the situation was becoming more difficult, there were three reasons for maintaining the presence of the Council in Eastern Europe: first, that the Council's presence was 'a sign to the Western-minded that they are not abandoned'; second, the Council acted as 'a means of displaying the advantages of Western life'; and last the Council's presence was 'a card of re-entry in case things get better at some future time'.⁶⁹ The three reasons remained valid even after Bidwell's and Rides' defections.

Bevin stated that there was no reason to believe the Polish police were likely to act against the Council 'without having some grain of fact as their starting point'. He noted that '[t]here have been indications of the possibility of "incriminating" documents being planted on the Council's premises; but he believed that attacks were not likely without prior attacks on British consulates, which currently were being left alone.⁷⁰ A letter sent by Bidwell's successor, John B. S. Jardine, gave a run-down of activity by the secret police and their attempts to bribe various members of the locally employed Council staff and their associates in an attempt to plant documents in the Council's safe. It appears that through maintaining a high degree of vigilance all the secret police's attempts were thwarted.⁷¹

Soon after the Council was requested to withdraw from Prague in May 1950, the Bulgarian government followed suit in June, asking the British Council to withdraw from Sofia. Ignoring Yugoslavia, as it was not under Soviet control, this left only the British Council's work in Poland intact behind the Iron Curtain beyond June 1950.⁷²

So why was Poland different? Interestingly, Poland was not the country that had captured the largest share of the Council's budget in Eastern Europe in the 1949/50 financial year, and there were fewer visitors from Poland to Britain under Council auspices than from Czechoslovakia.⁷³ Indeed, the British Council representative's annual report for 1950/1 suggested that Jardine was as surprised as anyone that the British Council had not been expelled from Warsaw, as it had from other Eastern European capitals. Jardine wondered whether this was because either that the Polish Institute in London perhaps held some significance for the Polish government (and did not want it closed in a tit-for-tat action) or that the Polish government just had not got round to expelling the British Council.⁷⁴ It had already been noted by a Council report on the activities of the Cominform (the Soviet-dominated organization of Communist parties in the Eastern Bloc) that Poland had been slower than other countries in Eastern Europe to clamp down on Western influence. The non-renewal of McGahan's post at the University of Warsaw was seen as one of the starting points for a general move to follow the lead of other Eastern European countries, but there was perhaps a general reluctance to move too quickly.⁷⁵

To an extent many parallels can be drawn with the events of 1956 that followed Nikita Khrushchev's speech denouncing the policies of Josef Stalin. Poland was able to achieve a degree of autonomy from Moscow under Władysław Gomułka, whereas in Imre Nagy's Hungary similar attempts to gain a degree of self-determination attracted a Soviet invasion. Johanna Granville states that Poland had 'developed a strong sense of unity and grim determination to survive at any cost, which helped the British Council's case. However, she goes on to say that 'had the Soviet leaders not decided to intervene in Hungary, they [might] well have intervened in Poland instead'.⁷⁶ So, perhaps Poland was not that different but just 'lucky' to have the Soviet focus on Hungary.

Nevertheless, Poland never looked in danger of leaving the Soviet's Eastern Bloc, despite taking a noticeably different line to the rest of the Communist countries, and had continued to stress the need for the Red Army to be based on Polish soil in case of a new German threat. Both East and West Germany refused to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as the (East) German-Polish border until 1950 in the case of the East (under the Treaty of Görlitz) and for many decades in the case of the West, and there continued to be an underlying fear of Germany in Poland.⁷⁷ In contrast to Nagy's demands in 1956, Poland was not asking for radical change by seeking to leave the Warsaw Pact and becoming a neutral country.

That being said, the Soviets probably also recognized privately that the history of Russian-Polish relations and the events of 1939, in particular, caused all Soviet influence to be treated with an even greater degree of suspicion in Poland than in other countries. Although a lot of things had happened since 1939, it was still only a decade or so ago. It was also partly a question of demographics. Poland had a population of *c.*25 million in 1950; Czechoslovakia's was *c.*12 million; Hungary's *c.*9 million; Bulgaria's *c.*7 million; even geographically large Romania had a population of only *c.*16 million.⁷⁸ Taking on Poland would always have been a different task for Moscow from that of taking on any of the other countries in the Eastern Bloc, and the Soviets did not want to antagonize the Poles if they did not need to do so.

Poland on its own

The Council's work in Poland was far from easy despite being allowed to continue. Norman Tett, who had recently taken over from Jardine as representative, noted in his 1951/2 annual report that

no one in public life [in Poland] dare associate himself with Council activities. All that extension of the Council officer's work through local nationals, which is probably our most effective technique in many countries, is impossible, and the only lectures we can sponsor are those by our own officers, in English.⁷⁹

Much of the work that the Council had managed to do in the late 1940s had dwindled, particularly with regard to scientific exchanges and the provision of periodicals. Contact with universities had practically ceased to exist.⁸⁰ McGahan, following his departure, even began to be described by his former colleagues at the University of Warsaw as a lecturer who 'poisoned' the minds of Polish students.⁸¹

The Council really did stand pretty much alone in the early 1950s. The Institut Français closed in 1949, BBC broadcasts in Polish had been jammed, the British correspondent of the Associated Press had left, Vincent Buist of Reuters had been expelled and the US Information Centre and Reading Rooms had closed. The only other major non-Communist institution that survived throughout this period was the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, Tett noted, 'It is surprising that the British Institute is still permitted to work here.'⁸²

Now practically alone, and rather astonished that the British Council had not yet been asked to leave, Tett noted that no one had been persecuted for visiting the British Council's premises – despite the Polish government's negative attitude. The situation was different for visitors to the US Reading Room, who were frequently followed by the police, arrested and interrogated. The *fear* of persecution had, though, kept many away from the British Council, at least initially after it had been forced out of other countries in the Eastern Bloc.⁸³

Nevertheless, the apparent removal of all other Western influence appeared to actually increase the importance of the British Council's work. The library was well used and the cinema was always full, despite having few exciting documentaries. Tett considered '[t]here is the duty to help keep alive the flame of independent thought.'⁸⁴ Interestingly, it appears that Bidwell and Rides in Czechoslovakia were actually right in the sense that the Council was no longer just promoting British culture but also proudly standing as a non-Communist outpost looking for ways to resist the desires of the Polish government where it could without being expelled.

Over time, the work of the Council began to recover. In 1953, the Council noted that many of those who had been scared off visiting the institute, and who now realized that it was still open for business, gained enough courage to visit it again. Poles considered that if the Council had survived through these dark years, unlike the French and US institutes, then they could have faith that it would keep going. Borrowings from the library increased; film viewer numbers climbed to 14,000 in 1953 compared with 9,000

and 5,000 for the previous two years.⁸⁵ In 1954, Tett reported that '[a]lmost every week someone not having used the Institute since 1950 begins to do so again and a few more youngsters take a chance, come to a film, find they can get away unmolested, and continue as regular visitors.'⁸⁶

Having survived, the Council was in a good position in 1956 – with Khrushchev's destalinization speech and the rise of Gomulka – to increase its activities in Poland.⁸⁷ The Polish people were keen to engage effectively with the Council. The numbers of visitors and book borrowers increased and meetings took place with the Polish authorities, who actively encouraged the British Council to operate to the full, to the extent that the staff – whose numbers remained constant – could not initially cope with the interest.⁸⁸ By May 1958, the Council was able to organize a visit by Sir John Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra to Poland with the blessing of the Polish Ministry of Culture and the Polish State Artistic Agency; this was combined with a visit by the Hallé to the Prague Festival. The report of the visit noted that it 'has exceeded our fondest hopes in the goodwill won for Britain (and the British Council)', although the 'work involved in getting the Hallé to and from Poland' was 'fairly considerable'. Not only were there concerts (two in Warsaw and one in Łódź) but also social engagements and a press conference – unthinkable only a few years beforehand.⁸⁹

Visits and the work of the Council in the 1960s continued to flourish. Professor Colin Cherry of Imperial College travelled to Warsaw, Gdańsk and Kraków in 1962 to give a number of lectures on telephone usage modelling and information theory. His report of his visit and correspondence demonstrate that he was well received at his lectures and maintained direct contact with Polish scientists following his visit.⁹⁰

Similarly, Luton's Borough Librarian, Frank M. Gardner, provided a glowing report of the Council's library activities in Warsaw following his visit in 1966. He reported that it was 'one of the best [he had] ever seen, with a good, attractive and representative stock ... and [it] was very busy whenever [he] went in.'⁹¹

Prior to the Soviet invasion, Nagy's Hungary had appeared to show signs of wanting to restore relations with the British Council. For example, there were a few exchanges of books with Hungary between 1953 and 1955, and the Deputy Minister of Culture (and later prime minister), Gyula Kállai, made an unofficial visit to the Foreign Office in London in June 1956 to make it clear that he wished to increase Hungarian–British cultural relations.⁹² W. R. L. Wickham at the British Council considered that he was 'satisfied', in the aftermath of Kállai's visit,

that the old charges of espionage were no longer believed in, though not formally retracted [by the Hungarian government], and that, if reasonable freedom of access and movement by Council staff in Hungary were to be made a prerequisite of the resumption of normal cultural relations, that freedom would be granted.⁹³

There were signs too that the Romanians were also interested in expanding cultural relations following the invitation of Muir Mathieson, the Scottish conductor, to Bucharest in 1956.⁹⁴

Although there were signs of improvement, Council activities outside of Poland remained scanty throughout the 1950s. Conditions had improved enough in the 1960s

for the British Council to start stationing officers at the embassies in Prague, Budapest and Bucharest, though not to open Council offices. Things were still difficult and contact was limited. For example, in Romania one of the Council's local staff was 'assumed to be still in gaol' and therefore the Council suspended operations in Bucharest, despite a formal invitation to resume contacts. In Budapest, it was decided that a limited annual British Council 'work-plan' should be initiated by the Hungarian government, with the Council having the ability to unilaterally withdraw if conditions were not right.⁹⁵ Often choices were made between one book exhibition or one theatrical visit a year for each country owing to budget restrictions.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, visits that had worked well in Warsaw – such as that of Sir John Barbiroli – were tried in other cities such as Prague, which, at least in the case of Barbiroli, were a great success, with further trips considered.⁹⁷

Although this may look like a large expansion in activities, the scale of the work being proposed should be compared with that at the time of Bidwell's defection. In 1960/1, the Council's budget for the 'satellite countries' (which included Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania but excluded Poland) was £15,000. In 1949/50, the budget had been around £96,000 for just three of the same four countries (Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria – with operations in Romania already suspended).⁹⁸ When inflation is taken into account, the decrease in expenditure was starker than these figures suggest. The programmes of work were significantly more limited than they had been previously and it is unclear how much of an impact such a small operation could have achieved.

However, it was a start; and the Council recognized in a meeting in 1959 that it should keep 'in view that the ultimate aim, at some future date (not necessarily near), would be the return of the Council to these countries.'⁹⁹ The key point was that this was going to be a long-haul re-establishment and that the Council was not expecting a miraculous change in circumstances to increase relations with these countries immediately. It chose to strike a balance between being 'aggressive' and 'furtive' and, given the previous expulsions from Budapest, Prague and Sofia in 1950, 'the Council's name would be used sparingly', and not in a way that might attract unwanted attention.¹⁰⁰ Following a reconnaissance trip to Prague and Budapest by the director of the Council's East European Department, Brenda Tripp, it was concluded that 'there is not likely to be any prospect of the return of the British Council as a separate representation [to Prague] in the immediate future', and no 'large scale opening up' of contacts. It was a similar picture in Budapest, despite the fact that the Italians and the French were pressing ahead with establishing cultural institutions of their own in the city.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Despite being expelled from most of the Eastern Bloc in the early 1950s, the British Council was able to continue its cultural propaganda activities in Poland. The Council in Poland not only survived during the 1950s, following the defection of its representative, George Bidwell, but did so with a separate office and library, which

attracted visitors throughout the period. Unlike in surrounding countries, the Council managed to maintain an open window onto the British way of life for a society that restricted the freedoms of its citizens.

In terms of the model of cultural propaganda that I developed in *A Battle for Neutral Europe*,¹⁰² it was only in Poland that all three pillars – Perception, Substance and Organization – existed.

The *Perception Pillar* (i.e. the way in which cultural propaganda needs to be presented) was fulfilled by the Council in a number of ways. For example, it demonstrated the Handicap Principle in that, despite the difficulties it faced, the Council remained in place, keeping the flame of British thought alive in Communist Poland. It was also a benign and subtle organization, which was attractive to those who used its library services, and it worked incrementally to build up relationships one at a time over a relatively long period, with increasing numbers of visitors using its services even during the most difficult years. Despite the defection of Bidwell, the Council also generally had the right personalities with the stamina necessary to keep the Council going in such circumstances.

The *Substance Pillar* (i.e. the actual content of the cultural propaganda) was also fulfilled. For example, as in the neutral countries during the Second World War, the Council focussed on facts of conservative substance, where British personalities could show that they were experts in their field with whom the Polish people would want to engage. In the early years, there are many examples of this, from the visits of Carmichael, Spencer Jones, Maclagan and Rothenstein to the lecturing by McGahan and Jago in the universities. As the atmosphere became more difficult, the Council relied on its mainstay of libraries and film shows, which the people of Poland could elect to visit if they wanted to, and thereby fulfil their intellectual needs – but the Council's propaganda was far from being imposed in a proactive way.

Most important, however, was the fulfilment of the *Organization Pillar* (i.e. the need for a vehicle to encourage and direct propaganda). The fact that the British Council could continue to exist and operate in Poland, albeit for a period in a severely limited way, was clearly absolutely essential; this was not possible in other Eastern Bloc countries.

As to why the Council was able to maintain activities in Poland, when it could not do so elsewhere, three reasons present themselves. First, the Soviet–Polish relationship was different to other Soviet relationships in the Eastern Bloc. Poland still felt it needed protection from all quarters against any new German threat. It was not going to antagonize its Soviet 'liberator' to the extent of trying to exit the Eastern Bloc; the Soviets knew this and therefore could provide Poland with more leeway in its internal affairs than they could to others of their satellites. Second, the Soviets knew that Poland was larger demographically than other countries and so could not be intimidated as easily as the other satellites – and even perhaps recognized that Poland had not been treated fairly by themselves in 1939. In short, for these two reasons, Poland could get away with a bit more than the Soviets would allow elsewhere. The third reason was more about the attitude of the Poles themselves. It certainly seemed a surprise to the British Council that it was able to operate in Poland and not elsewhere. It could have been that the Polish Institute in London was important to the Poles for various reasons;

or that the Poles just had not got round to closing the Council. Perhaps there was a genuine belief on the part of enough Poles that maintaining links with Britain, as long as these did not undermine their security for some reason, was something worth doing. After all, Britain was not a real threat to Poland: Britain had entered the Second World War as Poland's ally on the occasion of the German invasion in 1939, and many Poles had fought alongside Britain against Germany between 1939 and 1945. If there was no real reason to sever relations with its recent ally, then it may have been that the Poles felt minded not to do so, regardless of any pressure put on them by the Soviets.

Whatever the reasons, and although its work in the early 1950s was extremely limited, the Council was in a good position in 1956 to take advantage quickly of the new political circumstances presented by the rise of Gomułka, to the extent that its staff were initially overwhelmed by the interest the Poles showed in what the Council had to offer. Even in the face of the tensions and difficulties to follow the Council was able to stay in Poland, and indeed in the same building that it occupied until 2015, for the whole of the Cold War.

Notes

- 1 Edward Corse, *A Battle for Neutral Europe: British Cultural Propaganda during the Second World War* (London and New York, 2013), pp. 5–6, 8.
- 2 Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 125–6; also see Corse, *Battle for Neutral Europe*, p. 8.
- 3 Nicholas Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2003), p. 101; also see Corse, *Battle for Neutral Europe*, p. 8.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 183–94.
- 6 The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 924/17, Winston Churchill to Anthony Eden, 26 November 1944.
- 7 Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London, 1984), pp. 132, 140. Findlater Stewart (formerly permanent undersecretary of state for India 1932–45) was appointed by Eden to the task of reviewing the council's work.
- 8 TNA, BW 69/10, Finance and Agenda Committee (109th meeting), paper A, 2 January 1945.
- 9 See the first report of George Chandos Bidwell, British Council representative to Poland, TNA, BW 51/9, Bidwell, 'Report on British Council Work in Poland, January and February 1946', 28 February 1946.
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- 12 See 'Bidwell Chandos George', available at <http://jbc.jelenia-gora.pl/Content/211/Bidwell.html> (last access 18 July 2018; in Polish); George Bidwell, *Ani Chwili Nudy: Autobiografia* (Katowice, 1976), pp. 67, 144.
- 13 TNA, FO 924/761, G. P. Wethered, FO, letter to H. Christopher Beaumont, British Embassy, Vienna, 27 October 1949.

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- 18 Bidwell, 'Report on British Council Work in Poland, January and February 1946'.
- 19 TNA, BW 51/9, Bidwell, 'British Council, Warsaw, Monthly Report, June 1946', 11 July 1946.
- 20 Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56* (Harmondsworth, 2012), pp. 206–7. The three questions were around (a) abolishing the Polish Senate, (b) nationalization of basic industries and (c) recognition of the western Polish border on the Oder–Neisse line.
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- 28 TNA, BW 51/9, Bidwell, 'Monthly Report of the British Council, Warsaw, March 1948'.
- 29 TNA, FO 688/78, Bidwell to Adam, 2 June 1949; Bidwell to Gainer, 4 June 1949.
- 30 TNA, FO 688/78, George Bidwell to Sir Ronald Adam, 2 June 1949.
- 31 TNA, FO 688/78, Telegram from Gainer to FO, 5 June 1949.
- 32 TNA, FO 688/78, Gainer, Letter to C. F. A. Warner (assistant undersecretary, FO), 10 June 1949.
- 33 TNA, FO 688/78, J. P. G. Finch (FO) to Gainer, 16 June 1949.
- 34 TNA, FO 924/761, Carey-Foster, Letter to Beaumont, British Embassy, Vienna, 21 July 1949.
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- 42 George Bidwell, *Wybrałem polskę* (Warsaw, 1950).
- 43 TNA, FO 688/78, FO translation of book review in *Nowa Kultura* (dated 10 September 1950) of Bidwell, 'I chose Poland', with covering note dated 21 September 1950.
- 44 TNA, FO 688/78, R. H. S. Allen, British Embassy, Warsaw, to K. G. Younger MP, 20 June 1950.
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- 52 See e.g. TNA, BW 51/9, Bidwell, 'British Council, Warsaw, Monthly Report, June 1946'.
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- 59 TNA, BW 51/17, 'British Council Poland: Annual Report 1947/1948'.
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- 61 TNA, BW 51/17, 'British Council Poland: Annual Report 1947/1948'.
- 62 TNA, BW 51/17, 'British Council Poland: Annual Report 1948/1949'.
- 63 TNA, BW 51/17, 'British Council Poland: Annual Report 1947/1948', p. 5.
- 64 This model of influence is explored in Corse, *Battle for Neutral Europe*, p. 7.
- 65 TNA, CAB 129/39, Cabinet Paper entitled 'The British Council in Russian Satellite Countries: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', 20 March 1950.
- 66 Ibid.
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- 68 TNA, CAB 129/39, 'The British Council in Russian Satellite Countries'.
- 69 TNA, FO 924/773, 'British Council Activities in Iron Curtain Countries', undated but references in document suggest early 1949.
- 70 TNA, CAB 129/39, 'The British Council in Russian Satellite Countries'.
- 71 TNA, BW 51/10, Jardine, Confidential letter to Division C at British Council, dated 10 March 1950.
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- 73 TNA, FO 924/773, 'British Council Activities in Iron Curtain Countries'. Budget estimates below are extracted from same document, with population figures taken from United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*. vol. 3: *Analytical Report* (New York, 2004), available at http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2002/WPP2002_VOL_3.pdf (last access 19 July 2018), Table I.2: Population of the World by Country, Estimates and Projections According to Variants: 1950, 1975, 2000, 2025 and 2050. These data show that, in real and in proportional terms, spending on Czechoslovakia was higher than for Poland.

Country	Budget estimate 1949/50	Population (million)	Budget per person
Poland	£38,000	c.25	c.£0.00152
Czechoslovakia	£53,000	c.12	c.£0.00442
Hungary	£30,978	c.9	c.£0.00344
Bulgaria	£12,019	c.7	c.£0.00172

- Also see TNA, FO 924/773, 'Note on Visitors from East Europe in 1947/48 and 1948/49'.
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- 75 TNA, FO 924/773, 'The Cominform and Education in East Europe', 14 December 1948, pp. 5-6.
- 76 Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station, TX, 2004), pp. 38-9.
- 77 Gerald H. Hughes, 'Unfinished Business from Potsdam: Britain, West Germany, and the Oder-Neisse Line, 1945-1962', *International History Review*, 27: 2 (2005), pp. 259, 268.
- 78 United Nations, *World Population Prospects*, Table I.2; Czechoslovakia total arrived at by adding Czech Republic and Slovakia estimates.
- 79 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1951-2'.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1950-1'.
- 82 Ibid.; TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1951-2'; also see TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1954-5'; also see 'Poland Expels Newman', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1950.
- 83 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1950-1'.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1952-3'.
- 86 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1953-4'.

- 87 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1955/6'.
- 88 TNA, BW 51/17, 'The British Council, Poland: Representative's Annual Report, 1956/7'.
- 89 TNA, BW 51/15, C. Robinson (British Embassy, Warsaw), 'Report on the Visit of the Hallé Orchestra to Poland, May 27th–30th 1958', 3 June 1958.
- 90 Imperial College Archives, BI CHERRY, 10/B/19/1, 'British Council: Correspondence 1961–70'; in particular Colin Cherry to Professor Smolenski, 29 September 1961; and Colin Cherry to Professor Rajski, 13 March 1962.
- 91 Bedfordshire and Luton Archives, X812/13/8, 'Visit to Czechoslovakia and Poland, September 26th–October 17th 1966 by Frank M. Gardner, O.St.J., F.L.A. on behalf of the British Council', p. 15.
- 92 TNA, BW 1/328, Draft Note entitled 'Work in Iron Curtain Countries', undated, but among papers dating from June and July 1955; also see TNA, BW 1/328, 'Visit of the Hungarian Deputy Minister of Culture, 15th June 1956: Record of Conversation'.
- 93 TNA, BW 1/328, Letter from W. R. L. Wickham (British Council) to A. A. F. Haigh (Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office), 28 June 1956.
- 94 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Mr. Muir Mathieson: Visit to Rumania 1956: Record of Conversation at British Council on 19 June'.
- 95 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Note of a Meeting Held at 11 a.m. on Friday, October 28th [1960] to Discuss Council Work in the Satellites'.
- 96 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Note of a Meeting Held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, July 14th [1960] to Discuss Council Work in the satellites'.
- 97 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Note on Meeting Held of 10th June [1960] to Consider Manifestations for USSR and Satellites in 1961–2'.
- 98 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Summary of Proposed Expenditure on the Satellites 1960/61'.
- 99 TNA, BW 1/328, 'Notes of a Meeting to Discuss Council Work in the Satellites', 26 August 1959.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 TNA, BW 1/328, Brenda Tripp, 'Report on Visit to Prague by Director, East Europe 19th–23rd October, 1959'; Tripp, 'Report on Visit to Hungary by Director, East Europe 9th–19th October, 1959'.
- 102 Corse, *Battle for Neutral Europe*, p. 184.

From Civil War to Cold War: The Model Worker in Chinese film propaganda

James Farley

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong stood in Tiananmen Square with his fellow citizens and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). This was to be the start of a new era of peace, a 'New China', dedicated to rebuilding the country following the previous decades of foreign occupation, war and Civil War. Conflict had defined China at the start of the twentieth century. The new era, ushered in by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), promised a new beginning for the people, a new society guided by the ideology of Marxist–Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. This new society, as it eventually transitioned to communism, would bring the 'era of perpetual peace for mankind'.¹ However, as Mao argued in *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*, in 1965, this would be possible only when 'classes and states [were] eliminated'.² Both classes and states existed at the time of the founding of the People's Republic and, consequently, the new state was born into a world of conflict, defined by the close of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War. As a proto-socialist state, China was unlikely to remain neutral during this period of conflict. Although the country's relationship with the Soviet Union was, from the start, complex, Mao argued that China would 'lean to one side' as it allied itself with the Soviet Union.³

Through 'leaning to one side', the new Chinese government could take advantage of and emulate parts of the Soviet propaganda system. Chinese artists were educated in the style of socialist realism and film-makers were urged to study from renowned Soviet directors such as Sergei Eisenstein, the Soviet film director and theorist who had produced world-famous films such as *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). One of the key tools utilized by the CCP during this period for the purposes of propaganda was the 'Model Worker', the subject of this chapter. In order that a new society be built, new citizens were needed. Heroic, fighting individuals from China's recent past were selected to represent the aspirations of the new society, presented to the population as 'Model Workers'. Although this propaganda shares some similarities with the 'New Soviet Man', there are also significant differences caused by variations in revolutionary experience: primarily the effect of imperialist occupation and a belief that reform of behaviour in society was crucial in building a successful 'New China'. In addition, an

examination of the structure of the new society, built upon the values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, provides further insight into the fundamental differences between the methods of Soviet propaganda and its goals and those of the CCP.

It was not simply the threat of external conflict that defined propaganda through the post-Civil War period. By 1949, the Communist Party had pushed its Civil War rivals, the nationalist 'Guomindang', out of mainland China, but the battle for the hearts and minds of the people was only just beginning. Film propaganda played a key role in the mission to redefine what it would mean to be a Chinese citizen. Indeed, the purpose was to create a new citizen, who would counter specific problems that were believed to have been contributing factors to China's subjugation by foreign powers. Prior to gaining power in 1949, the CCP, through the theoretical work of Mao Zedong, had already developed a blueprint for national reconstruction following a successful revolution. The first of these documents, 'In Memory of Norman Bethune', was written in 1939; the second, 'Serve the People', in 1944, the third, 'The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains', in 1945; and the fourth, 'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art', in 1945.⁴ The political ideology developed by Mao was intended to address three key problems that faced China: national unity, social development and the implementation of a new economic system. The purpose of post-Civil War film propaganda was consequently not only to capture the hearts and minds of the public but also to create a new citizen, a 'warrior', able to construct a new society and defend it from attack.

The founding father of the Chinese Republic, Sun Yatsen, argued that a commitment to the ideology of nationalism was essential for the people of China to be emancipated. However, the CCP's commitment to the use of nationalism for nation-building goes rather deeper than emancipation of the people from foreign rule. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, in their work *Nationalism*, offer insight into the highly complex and subjective nature of its study. They agree with Sun Yatsen that 'freedom and sovereignty' are the key aspects of any nationalist cause but add that this doctrine is underpinned by three elements, 'autonomy', 'unity' and 'identity'.⁵ The nationalist aspect of film propaganda contains these three elements. The ability for the nation to act autonomously, without the assistance or control of others is a major theme. The unity of the people when facing either foreign or class enemies is a significant component. And the third element, 'identity', is addressed in film propaganda in a number of ways, particularly by the use of historical figures to promote a collective history.

The cause of social and cultural reform in China had been a preoccupation of intellectuals and governments throughout the early twentieth century. Successor to Sun Yatsen and leader of the 'Nationalist Party' (Guomindang), Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek) was also keen to enact policies that would address social and cultural issues that the country was facing. His 'New Life Movement', established in the 1930s, was intended to provide solutions to the perceived problems within society but had largely failed.⁶ CCP propaganda that dealt with social and cultural reform took a different approach and focussed mainly on instruction by example and encouragement. Film propaganda was crucial here as the people were presented not simply with mythical heroes but also as contemporaries, individuals who had engaged in battle, with the

reactionary forces either of the Guomindang or of imperial Japan. The CCP's social reform agenda focussed on the promotion of six specific behaviours: empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and the desire to fight.

Subsequent to the revolution, the development of socialism and eventual transition to communism was a core aim of the new Chinese state. Film propaganda featuring Model Workers was employed in support of this effort. Models were selected from the social classes established by the People's Democratic Dictatorship, which was introduced in the precursor to the first constitution of the PRC, 'The Common Programme', adopted in 1949.⁷ Article 1 stated that China was a 'People's Democratic state', led by the working class, based on an alliance of workers and peasants united with all democratic classes and nationalities in China. This alliance included the national bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie; indeed, they are represented in the flag of the PRC, itself a symbol of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. Propaganda related to models from these social classes served two functions. First, it provided citizens of 'New China' with role models for the social class to which they now belonged. Second, the system, supported by Model Worker propaganda, demonstrated to citizens what was expected of them, by countering perceived existing social problems.

The CCP was not slow to utilize film for propaganda purposes. As Paul Clark states in his work on Chinese cinema and politics, 'From February 1953 onward, all production of "the most important art" was in party hands. A process which had taken over 10 years to complete in the Soviet Union in China took a mere three.'⁸ Model Worker films of the post-Civil War period focussed to a great extent on conflict, both historical and contemporary. The core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were embedded in each film.

In this chapter, three films are analysed to demonstrate the extent to which film propaganda was guided by these principles. The first film features the peasant Model Worker Liu Hulan. It was produced at the start of the post-Civil War period and focusses on the conflict of the previous decade as well as on the war with Japan. The second also focusses on the same period but from the perspective of a soldier of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Dong Cunrui. *Shan Gan Ling*, the third film, was produced slightly later, in 1956, and follows the story of a fictional Model Worker, a commander in the army during the Korean War.

Liu Hulan (1950)

*We have won the war, now we have more confidence in ourselves.*⁹

Liu Hulan was produced by the Changchun Film Studio and released in 1950. It focusses on the heroic actions of Model Worker Liu Hulan. Her story was used to demonstrate how conflict had produced a new type of citizen-soldier in China, loyal to the Communist Party and inspired by the words of Mao Zedong. The film emphasizes how the conflict in which Liu was involved helped to shape her into a new type of individual, one who was not only dedicated to the resurgence of the Chinese state but who also represented the new cultural norms the party was intent on establishing.

The Changchun Film Studio had experience working with Model Workers prior to making *Liu Hulan*. In 1950, the film *Zhao Yiman* was released.¹⁰ It focussed on a member of the national bourgeoisie, one of the social groups of the newly created People's Democratic Dictatorship. By contrast, *Liu Hulan* focussed on the adventures of a member of the peasant class. Conflict, in Liu Hulan's case both external and internal, and the importance of establishing new cultural norms provided the vehicle by which the three key values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were meant to be promoted.

Liu Hulan was a fourteen-year-old girl from Shanxi province who had worked as a spy for the Communist Party during the Civil War. She was eventually captured by the Guomindang, tortured and executed, but not before, according to legend, stating that victory would shortly belong to the Communist Party. From the beginning, even as a child, Liu is defiant. She confronts the exploitative landlord and his wife and celebrates the eventual arrival of the People's Army. She works to undermine the Japanese occupation and later the Guomindang forces before being captured and executed. The way in which the film addresses conflict is worthy of further attention. Liu had fought primarily against the Guomindang, her fellow citizens. This clearly presented problems, as depicting those loyal to the Guomindang was obviously a sensitive issue. Consequently, as with other films of this era, considerably more screen time is dedicated to the war against Japan than to that against the Guomindang. Indeed, the film changes focus to the Civil War only in the final twenty minutes. Thematically, *Liu Hulan* is complex as it deals with the benefits of socialism and the creation of a new kind of Chinese culture. In order to win over the soul of the people, the CCP continuously used depictions of the pre-revolutionary system of exploited and exploiters, thereby demonstrating the extent to which society had changed since liberation.¹¹

Nationalism in *Liu Hulan* is based primarily on the concept of national unity. However, this unity was also exclusionary, as those who were not part of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, for example the 'landlord' class, were singled out as betrayers of the nation, in league with imperialist powers. Indeed, throughout the film it is made exceptionally clear who is responsible for the problems that China was facing. The poor are oppressed and the rich are cruel collaborators who share little in common with their countryside kin. The director portrays those who worked with the Japanese, in this case a landlord, as being not only beyond redemption but also as appearing to be distinctly 'foreign'. Early in the film a thunderstorm erupts upon the arrival of the Japanese forces. This is repeated when the landlord returns to oppress the people after their temporary liberation by the PLA. Consequently, a clear connection is made between the collaborator and the imperialist oppressors; they are one and the same. Indeed, the link between the 'class enemy', the Guomindang and Jiang Jieshi in particular, is made explicit early in the film. When the People's Army arrives, its commander proclaims, 'We are the Red Army, we journey to eastern China to resist the Japanese invaders, we aim to annihilate Japanese imperialism and overthrow the quisling Jiang Jieshi and help you to defeat the rich.'¹²

Major events, such as the defeat of the Japanese, are credited solely to the actions of the Communist Party. Indeed, two-thirds of the way through the film, word comes that the Japanese have been defeated with the assistance of Soviet forces in the north.

The soldier bearing the news then states that Mao has demanded that they seize the guns abandoned by the Japanese enemy and use them to take control of the country's major cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Nanjing.¹³ It is implicitly indicated that the Japanese have surrendered to the People's Army, but there is no mention of the role that the United States or the Guomintang forces had in the defeat of Japan. The propaganda message is clear; only those aligned with the Communist Party were true patriots. The film closes with a song, 'we will surge forward for our national liberation, we must defeat the aggression of Jiang Jieshi and America.'¹⁴

Liu Hulan tackles several social and cultural issues that were thought to be problematic, particularly in the countryside, and especially on issues of perceived female inferiority. Prior to liberation, Liu can be seen undertaking heavy manual labour. Liu's grandfather engages in conversation with a neighbour and laments his 'bad luck' at having a granddaughter. Although the neighbour argues that this 'deficiency' could be remedied by Liu marrying a wealthy man, it is not enough for her grandfather who states, 'when she grows up, she becomes another family's; a daughter is always a loss.'¹⁵ It is through this dialogue that the director drives the social reform agenda. By the end of the film, Liu is a confident, successful young woman, depicted in the film as being rather older than she was in reality. She succeeds in her mission independent of any male assistance. As the anti-Japanese war rages, Liu can be seen dutifully taking care of her family and of the needs of other villagers. She displays empathy for their suffering and donates food from her own family to those with starving children. She is selfless and unafraid of hard work. Moreover, in what was to become a common theme in later films, Liu works so hard that she collapses. When offered additional food to aid in her recovery, she refuses it and states that it would harm the socialist spirit of the community.

Conflict plays a central role in Liu's story as the social reform agenda is driven by her struggle against oppression. At a preparatory session of the Chinese Political Consultative Congress in September 1949, Mao had stated that the Chinese people had 'stood up.' Liu Hulan personifies this concept.¹⁶ This point is made explicit when Liu states, 'We have won the war, now we have more confidence in ourselves.'¹⁷ This new-found confidence, inspired by the party, is then demonstrated in the subsequent Civil War. Liu helps wounded (PLA) soldiers while evading enemy sentries. During engagements with enemy forces, she is confident and highly proficient in the use of grenades and rifles, despite appearing to have had no prior experience; she is the ideal peasant-soldier.

Liu has clearly 'stood up' and, despite being captured and executed, her spirit is unbroken. Chinese film historian Yingjin Zhang argues that execution scenes in Chinese films during this period served to fulfil two functions: first, to incriminate the class enemy and second to strengthen the resolve of the revolutionaries to overthrow their oppressors.¹⁸ While these two points are certainly valid, I would argue that these scenes also serve a third function: to reverse the idea that China was the 'sick man of Asia' by demonstrating that its people had value, a fighting spirit and a social and moral conscience. Liu Hulan's resolute actions were the ideal antidote to the humiliation of the past century; these were warrior-citizens whose actions would capture the hearts and minds of the masses and prepare them for the Cold War struggle ahead.

The promotion of socialism focusses largely on land ownership and the eventual benefits of socialist liberation. The release date of the film and its relationship to the start of the 'Land Reform' campaign (1947–52) is no coincidence. *Liu Hulan* served to reinforce the need for this campaign by depicting the horrors of class conflict within the 'old society'. The film begins with the miserable exploitation of the peasants and their slavish existence. Following liberation, the same fields are worked by happy, motivated peasants. The heavy work is performed by animals while the peasants each gain an equal share from their labour and boast to each other about how much land they now have. Liu herself states that it was because of the liberation by the People's Army that the villagers could have hope again and that the ideal of socialist equality could be realized.¹⁹

On the surface, it would appear that *Liu Hulan* should have fulfilled the criteria for creating a successful film based on the concept of the Model Worker. However, responses recorded in the cinema magazine *Dazhong Dianying* were rather negative. The film appeared on the cover of the October 1951 issue. It was subject to criticism in several articles. One such criticism by a worker was that the depictions were not vivid or passionate enough. Another worker stated that 'this film hasn't shown us the passion and love between Liu and the people from her social class.'²⁰ The depiction of Liu was clearly not heroic enough and had failed to successfully communicate the values of the peasant-soldier.

Dong Cunrui (1955)

*Forward for the New China.*²¹

The 'Model Worker' theme was developed further in *Dong Cunrui*, directed by Guo Wei and released in 1955 by the Changchun Film Studio. The film was successful and won the Ministry of Culture Award for best film in 1957.²² Film historian Jay Leyda notes that by 1955 films produced by the major studios in China had become more warlike.²³ The Korean War was not long concluded and these films reflected an environment in which there was a genuine fear of further conflict. Model Worker films such as *Dong Cunrui* and the later *Shang Gan Ling* were clearly designed not only to continue the nation-building efforts of earlier films like *Liu Hulan* but also to create confidence in the people that they would be protected. Indeed, when interviewed, Zhang Liang, the actor who portrayed Dong, claimed that the director Guo Wei had told the film crew that the aim of the film was to inspire those 'fighting to liberate Taiwan', that they would 'gain some strength after watching this film'.²⁴ Yingjin Zhang argues that Chinese cinema became increasingly nationalistic during the 1960s.²⁵ While this may be true, earlier films also contained extremely strong elements of nationalism and used recent conflicts to illustrate the need not only for nationalism but also for social reform and the development of socialism.

Dong Cunrui was born in Hebei province in 1929. During his adolescence, he experienced the effects of the Japanese occupation of China and resolved to join the resistance. *Dong Cunrui* features something that many other Model Worker films of

this era lacked: significant and meaningful character development. Ban Wang argues that films of this era focussed on 'development from a private "self" into a collective "self" engaged in the movement of national liberation.'²⁶ While this is an attractive idea, this development is rather muted in many Model Worker films. *Dong Cunrui* is the exception as there is clear evidence of his development from 'private self' to 'collective self'. The plot of *Dong Cunrui* services this development as the audience experiences Dong's growth from glory-seeking nationalist to self-sacrificing hero of the revolution. By comparison, Liu Hulan is essentially a paragon throughout her experiences. In *Dong Cunrui*, the audience witnesses the tempering of the protagonist's spirit as he joins the army and learns that the revolution is meant to serve the people and not an individual's ego. His journey from 'private self' to 'collective self' is completed by self-sacrifice when he detonates handheld explosives to prevent the Guomindang's advance. Dong Cunrui's development epitomizes how a warrior-Model expresses the core principles of the party. Dong served to inspire the individual by demonstrating that any person could become a hero of the nation if they followed the directives of the party in order to improve themselves.

Conflict and the glorification of war are central to the plot of *Dong Cunrui*. The way in which this is presented differs considerably to earlier films as the focus, at least initially, is not on the brutality of occupation but on the heroic and noble nature of those who have joined the PLA. The film opens with happy villagers celebrating liberation by the PLA and with flower-bearing girls surrounding the soldiers as they depart. Dong makes a personal choice to join the fight. His village has been liberated, but, fuelled by nationalist, anti-Japanese rhetoric, he joins the army.

Depictions of the enemy remain consistent with earlier portrayals. As in *Liu Hulan*, most of the fighting is between the PLA and Japanese soldiers. Only at the end is a brief reference made to the Civil War. As before, this is significant as Dong sacrifices himself in the Civil War of liberation. However, the main focus is once again on the anti-Japanese war and therefore an external enemy which, in contrast to that in *Liu Hulan*, is faceless and anonymous. Each scene featuring the Japanese is dark in colour tone and often includes foreboding storm clouds overhead. The director uses shifting colour tone to achieve this. The Japanese and the US enemy appear inhuman, attacking and killing civilians with no respect for the conventions of war. In one sequence, the PLA fight the Japanese with the Great Wall in the background; the message is clear: the enemy are the same as the barbarians of history. Only the People's Army stand as protectors of the nation against the inhuman monsters that threaten it.

As in earlier films, there is a very clear distinction made between the loyal soldiers of the People's Army and the traitors of the Guomindang. *Dong Cunrui* aligns Jiang Jieshi, and by extension the Guomindang, explicitly with foreign aggressors. When the film turns to the Civil War, the Guomindang attack the villages from the air. Dong notices the US insignia on the planes, and then in the next shot a different plane bears the emblem of the Guomindang. After the attack, the commander tells the survivors that the bombardment is caused by Jiang Jieshi and the United States and makes a speech wherein he explains to the survivors of the bombardment, 'The hatchet man of the USA, Jiang Jieshi, is throwing bombs towards our heads!'²⁷ In order to sidestep the awkward problem of disunity caused by the Civil War, the solution is simple: those who

fight the People's Army are not loyal citizens; they are being controlled by foreigners. The mission of Dong and his comrades is clear: they are the unifying fighting force of a new China, dedicated to sweeping away the humiliation of the past and establishing a new order.

One of the propaganda strengths of *Dong Cunrui* was the amount of time dedicated to character development. Although the nationalist theme is exceptionally strong, it never overshadows the importance of social reform and the development of the self in service to the nation. In *Dong Cunrui*, there is a particular focus on the concept of self-criticism and selflessness. As the film begins, Dong wants to join the fight to fulfil his own desire to be a hero. He is instructed repeatedly by older soldiers who question his mentality and ask him to consider why he wants to fight. His desire to be a hero results in some incidents where his actions damage the rest of the group. Commander Zhao, played by Zhang Song Yang, represents the party and acts as a father to Dong, offering gentle criticism, encouragement and wisdom. He states, 'To win the battle we must correct our thoughts.'²⁸ Dong's 'conversion' to the 'correct' mode of thinking occurs when he eventually joins the party. His 'conversion' is quasi-religious as he states, 'I know joining the Party is just the beginning, there will be more tests during our struggle.'²⁹

Dong achieves his goals through hard work and the education provided by the party. However, it is made clear that slavishly following orders will not achieve success. At one point, Dong argues with a senior officer and disobeys orders. His actions result in success and he is awarded a medal, while the more timid senior officer is excluded from the celebration. Clearly, education can take an adherent only so far; passion, a fighting spirit and decisive action are also the hallmarks of a Model Worker. In addition, and in contrast to the cruel enemy that they were facing, the soldiers are exceptionally empathetic to those around them. Soldiers build relationships with the peasants, and orphaned children are cared for by the community. The unified humanity of the soldiers is particularly apparent whenever a comrade falls in battle. Following the instruction of Mao in 'Serve the People', whenever a soldier falls, his compatriots take time to remove their caps and mourn his passing.³⁰ This instructional technique is used extensively in later films, such as *Shang Gan Ling*.

In contrast to the themes identified above, there is limited promotion of the benefits of socialism. In marked contrast, the film focusses on the concept of serving the people and the benefits of land reform for the peasants. Soldiers speak frequently of the need for revolution but never discuss the justification for it beyond the message of anti-imperialism and national self-determination. The importance of socialist development is linked, as in *Liu Hulan*, with the benefits of the Land Reform and Collectivisation Campaign. This campaign began in 1947 and was the process by which land was forcibly redistributed to peasants from the landlords who had previously owned it. Because of the complex social stratification of the countryside, the campaign was particularly difficult to implement, as classifying individuals was far from straightforward. These difficulties were naturally not detailed in propaganda and instead only the perceived benefits of the campaign were highlighted. In *Dong Cunrui* the campaign is only hinted at, with subtle references to the benefits for the peasant soldiers that were to be achieved from the establishment of a socialist society. Issues of social stratification

are dealt with more clearly, as the film often dwells on elements of social levelling. Commanders and regular soldiers talk with each on the same level, share jokes and use nicknames, thus demonstrating the way in which the party was attempting to establish a classless society.

Dong Cunrui was clearly an important film for the CCP's Central Propaganda Department. It featured on the cover of *Dazhong Dianying* in 1956. It was frequently advertised inside the magazine with both colour shots from the film and artistic portrayals of Dong. In addition, Zhang Liang detailed his experiences playing the role and how Dong's actions had strongly affected him. This is an interesting piece of supplementary propaganda, as Zhang spends a great deal of time detailing the reasons for Dong's actions, reinforcing the desired message, that when he sacrificed himself he was thinking of 'the country, people, life and victory'.³¹ Articles like these were clearly intended to remove any ambiguity from the minds of readers about the meaning of what they had witnessed on screen.

As an instrument of supplementary propaganda, *Dazhong Dianying* evolved considerably over the first decade of CCP rule. Earlier articles reviewed films more critically and allowed readers to make their own judgements about the films. Later pieces became progressively more didactic.

Shang Gan Ling (1956)

*Our soldiers, the privates under the leadership of the CCP, everyone one of them may fight tens of, or hundreds of enemies.*³²

Following the success of *Dong Cunrui*, Changchun Film Studios developed the military Model Worker theme further in a new film by utilizing the more recent external conflict in Korea. The film was entitled *Shang Gan Ling* and it was directed by Sha Meng. It starred Gao Bao Cheng in the central role of Model Worker Zhang Zhongfa. Zhang was a fictional character; thus, his portrayal represents a propaganda composite of the ideal leader. Another Model Worker, Huang Jiguang, was present at the eponymous battle. He sacrificed himself by blocking a machine gun nest with his body. Although this is referenced in the film, his actions are instead undertaken by another fictional character, Yang De Cai who is inspired by the leadership of Zhang Zhongfa to sacrifice himself.

Dong Cunrui was, in part, a reaction to the Korean War. *Shang Gan Ling* was based on a real incident, known to the United Nations forces as the Battle for Pork Chop Hill.³³ The nationalist theme was developed considerably in this film with a particular focus on the unity of the people, the evil nature of the foreign threat and the superiority of Chinese military professionalism and technology. In addition, *Shang Gan Ling* develops a nationalist theme introduced in *Dong Cunrui*: the beauty of the Chinese countryside and its status as Motherland of the people. The film demonstrates the extent to which the idea of a unified China, not just of the people but also of territory, combined with correct leadership, was central to the implementation of the Model Worker movement.

The Battle of Shang Gan Ling took place between 14 October and 28 November 1952. The film opens with an explanation of the situation, in which the blame for the conflict is firmly placed on the United States. Zhang Zhongfa leads a small team of soldiers on a relief mission to assist the Chinese forces at Shang Gan Ling hill. When they arrive, the commander, soon to be relieved, refuses to withdraw, stating, 'I can never leave here, as long as I am alive, I'll never leave this position.'³⁴ However, he is eventually forced to abandon the position after being shot and blinded by enemy gunfire. This is followed by scenes in which the PLA heroically attempts to hold its position. Inevitably, the PLA soldiers are forced to retreat because of the overwhelming numbers of enemy soldiers who storm their position. The remaining soldiers retreat to a cave where they learn from their leader the importance of unity and positive attitudes in battle. Led by their heroic leader Zhang Zhongfa, they successfully reclaim the hill. While all three themes – nationalism, socialism and social reform – permeate *Shang Gan Ling*, nationalism is the primary driving force of the film.

The promotion of the nationalist theme in *Shang Gan Ling* can broadly be divided into four categories: anti-Americanism, unity of the people, the beauty of the Motherland and the superiority of Chinese weaponry and technology. Although the first three aspects were also common in the earlier films, the addition of numerous scenes detailing the performance of Chinese weaponry would appear to indicate a new level of confidence in this aspect of the nation's ability to defend itself, or at least a desire to project an air of confidence. The audience is exposed to the cruel nature of the foreign enemy from the outset. For example, US soldiers are shot at by their officers to make them advance, when they had been forced to retreat. To further underline the propaganda message, US soldiers can be seen laughing as they use flame throwers to attack Chinese soldiers. The depiction of US soldiers in other parts of the film was clearly intended to demonstrate the ways in which Chinese society was morally superior. The US soldiers are easily defeated; they advance in enormous numbers, seemingly without any leadership or instinct for self-preservation. When they eventually manage to overrun the Chinese position, they spend their time smoking and looking at pictures of semi-clad women. They are thus portrayed as being more than simply barbaric; they are degenerate, decadent and so – by extension – is the culture they represent. The Chinese soldiers are not only presented as being physically and mentally superior, they are also shown to be morally more advanced than their American adversaries.

The plot of *Shang Gan Ling* is unmistakably designed to assist in promoting another important aspect of nationalism, the unity of the people. As Paul G. Pickowicz notes, there are no examples of any kind of ethnic divisions in the Chinese Army, and the enemy is commonly referred to as being 'di ren' (the enemy) rather than of a specific nationality.³⁵ Consequently, this creates a clear 'us versus them' dialectic, the type that propagandists had been attempting to emphasize since the beginning of the Model Worker project. The soldiers are forced together by circumstances into an unpleasant location, but they work selflessly together to turn probable defeat into victory. Zhang Zhongfa helps to foster this spirit of unity. Resources are diverted to help the wounded, and traditional Chinese stories are told to encourage the soldiers. This is an interesting aspect as in later films the words of Mao would no doubt have been invoked to inspire, but in *Shang Gan Ling* the soldiers look to their nation's history for inspiration.

In *Dong Cunrui*, it is possible to see the way in which scriptwriters had decided to incorporate the geographical and natural environment of the countryside into the nationalist message. In *Shang Gan Ling*, this is taken a step further as soldiers frequently mention their homeland. This culminates with a montage scene in which the soldiers sing the song 'My Motherland' while a succession of pictures of China come into view.³⁶ This song is sung prior to the soldiers returning to battle. Thus, it would appear that they draw strength from the concept of nationhood rather than from a specific ideology or leadership principle. However, this is not to dismiss the importance of the party. While the promotion of the country as being the 'Motherland' is obvious, it is the father, in this case the party, that gives the soldiers further inspiration and guidance by which they can achieve success. This success is also achieved by another aspect absent from earlier films. In *Shang Gan Ling*, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the military firepower in the hands of the People's Army. Artillery strikes are frequently mentioned and, in an interesting juxtaposition, it is the Americans who use human wave tactics while the Chinese use superior weaponry and technology to overcome their opponents.

In summary, the nationalist message that the propagandists of the Changchun Film Studio were attempting to communicate to the audience was multifaceted, but hardly complex. By viewing *Shang Gan Ling*, the audience were intended to feel confident that China was more than capable of waging war. The Korean conflict provided propagandists with the opportunity to demonstrate the values of 'New China' by highlighting in their portrayal of the enemy everything that the new state was not. The US enemy was degenerate and dishonourable. By contrast, the PLA was noble, united, morally superior and gained strength from their Motherland. The soldiers of the PLA used this strength, combined with the latest technology, to fight the despicable barbarian horde intent upon destroying the newly formed nation.

Although *Shang Gan Ling* lacks the character development of *Dong Cunrui*, the core elements of social reform are still relevant. Zhang Zhongfa was a composite film 'character' and this initially makes his imperfect portrayal a little confusing. His only real character 'flaws' are his extreme enthusiasm for combat and his slightly outdated thinking regarding the inclusion of women on the frontline. He displays a great deal of empathy for the commander he replaces and is sensitive to the needs of the less experienced soldiers in his unit. In addition, he is personally responsible for inventing a new battle strategy but refuses to take the credit for it, instead choosing to share the honour with his unit. Comradeship and community spirit seamlessly run through the film. Following the conclusion of a successful battle, Zhang Zhongfa is presented with some apples as a gift from the leadership. He immediately offers them to the wounded soldiers. However, they also reject the fruit and state that they would rather it went to those who were still fighting to secure everyone's freedom.

Zhang Zhongfa's background story is also used to present the ideal career trajectory of a Model Worker. This is seen when a soldier explains to a female nurse the details of Zhang's journey from new recruit to veteran soldier. This journey culminates in an audience with Chairman Mao. The message is made very clear to the audience: live the ideal life and you will be rewarded. Pickowicz argues that Zhang Zhongfa is not a perfect hero because of the tensions that exist within his character.³⁷ These tensions

exist, so he argues, because although he is supposed to be a dedicated Leninist he still questions authority. While Zhang is most certainly not 'perfect', the 'tensions' that exist are superficial. Dong Cunrui went through a journey that fundamentally changed his character; in contrast, Zhang Zhongfa has already achieved heroic status from the beginning of the film. He may question orders and is critical of the leadership, but in a manner similar to that of Dong. Indeed, like Dong, he is awarded a medal for his bold actions. Zhang was clearly completely loyal to the central leadership of the party, but in Maoist fashion this did not mean his immediate superiors were beyond criticism. He is devoted to the central authority but critical of local leadership.

References to the benefits of the socialist system are limited in *Shang Gan Ling*. What little evidence exists is confined to the promotion of comradeship and equality of the sexes. One of the most prominent characters in the film is a nurse named Wang Lan, played by Liu Yu Ru. Zhang is initially unhappy about allowing her to join the war effort; he states, '[a] woman comrade is still a woman.'³⁸ He is admonished for this comment and eventually places her in command of the medical unit inside the cave.

By contrast to both *Zhao Yiman* and *Liu Hulan*, the amount of coverage given to *Shang Gan Ling* in the film magazine *Dazhong Dianying* is rather limited. The film is featured on a 1956 cover and in several colour advertisements inside the publication.³⁹ *Shang Gan Ling* demonstrates the fundamental change in the way in which a military Model Worker and Chinese society were to be portrayed during a contemporary rather than historical conflict. The battle gave Sha Meng the opportunity to create a 'palate cleanser', designed to wash away the bitter taste of the previous century.

Conclusion

The development of post-Civil War film propaganda was clearly intended to answer the question of how China could once again be 'great'. Chinese cinema was influenced by a desire not just to re-model existing Chinese society but also to provide a re-evaluation of the historic past. This re-evaluation was designed to counter the perceived continuous 'humiliation' by foreign powers since the late nineteenth century and was achieved by depicting Model Workers as soldiers engaged in heroic military acts during historical conflicts. However, this was not the sole function of the Model Worker in cinematic propaganda. To confront the challenges of the Cold War and create a 'new China' based on the ideology of Marxist-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, a new type of citizen was required. Consequently, Chinese propaganda not only focused on exhortations to increase productivity and build a new socialist economy but was also primarily intended to change the way in which citizens perceived the world around them. The new citizen would arrest the perceived decline of the nation through enthusiasm for change based on the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

In addition to demonstrating to citizens what was expected of them, propaganda films of this era used depictions of the enemy not only to further the cause of national unity but also to define what the new Chinese state was not. In each of the

films studied, there is a very clear line that exists between the oppressed and their oppressors. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the featured enemies is the way in which they were portrayed as being particularly inhuman. This conceivably fulfilled two functions, first to thoroughly demonize those who opposed the People's Republic and second to help further define the humanity of the Model Worker and the way in which the new nation was morally superior. Indeed, in films presenting the Civil War, Chinese nationals who served with the Guomindang are either never seen or are closely associated with the hated Japanese, thus making it clear that they are not genuine members of the nation.

Mao's insistence – that the message of socialism presented through propaganda must be simple and easy to understand for the masses – clearly influenced the films of this era, particularly those featured in this chapter. Indeed, socialism as a concept is rarely, if ever, explored or explained. References are made to land reform and the equality of the people in earlier films, but they are largely ignored in later ones. The focus shifts to what was to be expected of an ideal socialist citizen. The use of Model Workers to promote certain ideas or cultural norms was hardly a new concept, but why did Chinese propagandists embrace it to such a great extent? The politics of Chinese nationalism are complex, but with regard to Model Workers they featured three interesting concepts: iconoclasm, rebounding from humiliation and the unification of the people. In consideration of these themes, the Model Worker was the ideal agent of change. The concept provided a canvas upon which the propaganda departments of the CCP were able to paint its vision of what a perfect 'new citizen' should be. Film, in particular, gave the propaganda department the opportunity to depict historical events as they arguably would have liked them to have been, and to remove elements of Chinese culture (iconoclasm) that were believed to be unsuitable. In addition, the actions of the Model Workers presented in these films were 'enhanced' (rebounding from humiliation). This was so that they might better serve to counter not just the social problems that were believed to exist in society but also to demonstrate the inherent worth of the people.

The importance given to cinematic propaganda is evident in the ways in which it developed and in which any deviations from the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were met with severe criticism. As Mao's vision of how to create a perfect China evolved, so did portrayals of the perfect Model Worker. Heroes such as Liu Hulan demonstrated optimism for a more socially equal future while Dong Cunrui represented the uncertainty – and optimism – of the post-Civil War period. The fictional Zhang Zhongfa of *Shan Gan Ling* served to display the extent to which propagandists wished their audience to know that 'new China' was willing and able to engage in external conflicts. The propaganda message was clear: with the guidance of the CCP provided through the emulation device of the Model Worker, and by adherence to the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, Chinese society had progressed significantly. The nation was now technically, spiritually and morally superior to any imperialist enemy. By emulating the heroes of the recent past, the people would be guaranteed a secure and prosperous future ready and able to face the challenges of the Cold War.

Notes

- 1 Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 1: *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War* (Peking, 1965), p. 183.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Mao Zedong, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung: 'On the People's Democratic Dictatorship'* (Peking, 1967), p. 306.
- 4 Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 2: *'In Memory of Norman Bethune'* (Peking, 1965), p. 337; Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 3: *'Serve the People'* (Peking, 1965), p. 227; Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 3: *'The Foolish Old Man Who Removed The Mountains'* (Peking, 1965), p. 321; Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 3: *'Talks at the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art'* (Peking, 1965), p. 69.
- 5 John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds), *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), p. 5.
- 6 Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford, 2005), p. 111.
- 7 Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, 1990), p. 515.
- 8 Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 38.
- 9 *Liu Hulan* (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, Changchun Film Studio, 1:00:57.
- 10 *Zhao Yiman* (1950), Directed by Sha Meng, Changchun Film Studio.
- 11 For the CCP, 'liberation' meant the overthrow of imperialism (in the Sino-Japanese war), and of feudalism and capitalism (in the Civil War against the Guomindang). CCP Model Worker propaganda often blurred the line between Guomindang and Japanese forces.
- 12 *Liu Hulan*, 10:03.
- 13 Ibid., 59:40.
- 14 Ibid., 1:24:50.
- 15 Ibid., 15:40.
- 16 Timothy Cheek, "'The Chinese People Have Stood Up', September 1949', in Timothy Cheek (ed.), *Mao Zedong and China's Revolutions: A Brief History with Documents* (New York, 2002), p. 125.
- 17 *Liu Hulan*, 1:00:57.
- 18 Yinjin Zhang, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002), p. 177.
- 19 *Liu Hulan*, 51:00.
- 20 'Criticism from the Workers about the Film *Liu Hulan*', *Dazhong Dianying*, 28 (1951), n.p.
- 21 *Dong Cunrui* (1955), Directed by Guo Wei, Changchun Film Studio, 1:39:01.
- 22 Yingjin Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao, *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Film* (London, 2014), p. 146.
- 23 Jay Leyda, *Dianying/Electric Shadows – Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), pp. 213–15.
- 24 Zhang Liang, 'My Experience Playing the Role of Dong Cunrui', *Dazhong Dianying*, 5 (1956), n.p.
- 25 Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London, 2004), pp. 57–8.
- 26 Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth-Century China* (Redwood City, CA, 1997), p. 140.

- 27 *Dong Cunrui*, 59:00.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 36:18.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 1:02:20.
- 30 Zedong, *Selected Works*, vol. 3: 'Serve the People', p. 227.
- 31 Zhang, 'Role of Dong Cunrui'.
- 32 *Shang Gan Ling* (1956), Directed by Sha Meng, Changchun Film Studio, 45:00.
- 33 An American film was also made detailing the events of the battle: *Pork Chop Hill* (1959), Directed by Lewis Milestone, United Artists.
- 34 *Shang Gan Ling*, 16:53.
- 35 Paul G. Pickowicz, 'Revisiting Cold War Propaganda: Close Readings of Chinese and American Film Representations of the Korean War', *Journal of American–East Asian Relations*, 17: 4 (2010), p. 357.
- 36 Created in 1956, the song was written by Qiao Yu and speaks of the beauty of the Chinese nation, the people, the country and its strength.
- 37 Pickowicz, 'Revisiting Cold War Propaganda', p. 356.
- 38 *Shang Gan Ling*, 40:00.
- 39 James Farley, 'Constructing a New Citizen – The Use of Model Workers in "New China" 1949–1965' (PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2016).

Counter-propaganda: Cases from US public diplomacy and beyond

Nicholas J. Cull

In some circumstances god respects an appropriate time for falsehood.

—Aeschylus (525–456 BC)¹

One of the oddities of mass political persuasion – propaganda – is that the single most powerful driver of its evolution has been the desire to combat the advance of the ideas of others, which is to say that much of what we consider to be propaganda can also be understood as counter-propaganda. The word ‘propaganda’ originated in the middle of the sixteenth century in the vocabulary of the Jesuit order as a way of speaking of their organized attempts to ‘propagate’ the Catholic faith in response to the encroachment of Protestantism: the so-called ‘Counter-Reformation’. The massive US information campaign of the Cold War was called into being as a response to the perceived threat of communist propaganda from the Soviet Union, and in our own time the contemporary large-scale expenditure of China in the realm of cultural outreach and international broadcasting is conceptualized by Beijing as a corrective to the Western bias of the standard global media outlets. It would seem that all propaganda at some point characterizes itself as counter-propaganda in much the same way as militaries are justified as defensive. This chapter will examine the evolution and nature of counter-propaganda, drawing particularly on the history of the phenomenon in the United States.

Counter-propaganda can be segmented into two core approaches: tactical counter-propaganda and strategic counter-propaganda. Tactical counter-propaganda is a message or set of messages or activities deployed to push back against a specific message from an adversary, as when the United States Information Agency (USIA) sought to expose specific Soviet disinformation rumours in the 1980s. This tactical-level counter-propaganda is so dominant in some connections of the topic as to exclude any wider concept.² Strategic counter-propaganda is an entire communication policy devised as a response to an adversary’s propaganda activity, as when during the 1930s the British government launched the British Council and BBC foreign language broadcasts as a riposte to the perceived encroachment of totalitarian propaganda of

right and left in the Middle East, Latin America and elsewhere.³ Claiming a campaign as counter-propaganda has moral implications. Some political cultures which are uncomfortable with state-sponsored propaganda are nevertheless willing to launch *counter-propaganda* and may even demand it, as in the United States during the run-up to the passage of the Smith–Mundt Act of 1948, the act which remains the legislative authority for most US exchange and information work.⁴

Counter-propaganda has historically included a spectrum of methods. The most basic is the negative act of censorship: forcibly preventing the adversary's ideas from circulating within one's own society through press restrictions, radio jamming, laws, internet walls or similar activity.⁵ An extension of this has been the dramatic expedient of reaching into the adversary's society to forcibly silence the source of the propaganda. Extreme examples of this include the murder of the BBC Bulgarian service broadcaster Georgi Markov by the Bulgarian secret service in September 1978 or the Romanian secret service's bombing of the headquarters of Radio Free Europe (RFE)/Radio Liberty's headquarters in February 1981. One might also see the US government's decision to target the Al-Qaeda propagandist Adam Gadahn in January 2015 or NATO's bombing of Serbian state television's headquarters in April 1999 as a form of counter-propaganda. If such direct actions are impossible, ineffective or considered morally unacceptable, the spectrum extends to active interventions in the information space.

While most counter-propaganda initiatives take the form of messaging of some kind, there is also a category of broader responses which seek to alter the environment in which the messages circulate. These environmental interventions may include attempts to distract from the adversary's message or to dilute the message by ramping up the availability of entertainment (as seems to be the case in contemporary China). One of the most common counter-propaganda strategies is to generate messaging at a broader environmental level. A state may add a wide range of alternate messages to muddy the waters (which, as Peter Pomerantsev has demonstrated, seems to be the favoured tactic of contemporary Russian international media)⁶ or launch a general campaign to demonize, ridicule or stigmatize information from a particular source without specifying a particular piece of propaganda or story they wish to rebut.

A good case of a counter-propagandist taking on a whole category of information rather than a single story may be found in mid-eighteenth-century England when, in 1758, the great wit and polemicist Samuel Johnson decided to respond to the outrageous patriotic propaganda generated by his own country's press in its coverage of the French–Indian Wars then raging in North America. Rather than naming names or publications or taking on specific stories of distortion such as atrocity reporting relating to the capture of the French fort of Louisbourg by the British in July 1758, he observed,

Among the calamities of war may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth, by the falsehoods which interest dictates, and credulity encourages. A peace will equally leave the warrior and relater of wars destitute of employment; and I know not whether more is to be dreaded from streets filled with soldiers accustomed to plunder, or from garrets filled with scribblers accustomed to lie.⁷

The lack of specificity gave the observation a much longer shelf life than a specific rebuttal of a biased account. In a similar vein, a century later the great British advocate of trade as a path to peace, John Bright, observed, 'You will find wars are supported by a class of argument which, after the war is over, the people find were arguments they should never have listened to.'⁸ Dr Johnson's observation found its echo in the well-worn meme that 'in war truth is the first casualty'. This quote was in circulation among anti-war (and anti-propaganda) activists as far back as 1916. It was widely used in the 1920s during the period of reflection on why the world fought the Great War, and was revived in the Vietnam era.⁹ It has now attained the status of an aphorism, circulating as a kind of folk remedy to propaganda.¹⁰ Other linguistic cultures had reached similar conclusions. German folk culture has: 'Kommt der Krieg ins Land / Gibt's Lügen wie Sand.' (When war comes to the land, the lies [pile up] like sand.)¹¹ Spain has 'En tiempo de guerra, mentiras por mar y por tierra.' (In wartime, lies [come] by sea and by land.)¹² The Chinese sage Han Feizi observed some 2,300 years ago that 'nothing is too deceitful in war', a phrase which may have begun as extending licence for a ruler but which lives on as a warning to the public.¹³

There are other examples of aphorisms serving as a counter to media bias of various kinds. These include the British saying born of the advent of the popular press – 'You can't believe *everything* [that] you read in the papers' – or the African-American 'dozen' (a street quip) common in the mid-twentieth century: 'You talk more shit than the radio.'¹⁴ The internet age has thrown up a fascinating meme which makes the same point with a quote in large font – 'Don't believe everything you read on the internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it' – alongside a photograph of and attribution to Abraham Lincoln.¹⁵ The existence of this kind of folk wisdom is an asset which cannot be underestimated. Political communication works best when connecting to ideas and feelings which people already have and recognize as true. The reminder of a folk aphorism against propaganda may blunt the force of an otherwise powerful piece of propaganda seeking to connect to such reliable pre-existing ideas as mistrust of foreigners or love of home.

While logic suggests that counter-propaganda requires an enemy campaign to react against, that campaign does not have to be contemporaneous. Strategic counter-propaganda campaigns frequently react against the memory of past campaigns considered especially damaging. The Nazi propaganda strategy in Germany during Hitler's rise to power was counter-propaganda devised in response to the memory of the Allied psychological assault on the Central Powers during the Great War. The most significant American reaction was, however, the massive intellectual mobilization against propaganda launched by American intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s in response to the perceived role of British propaganda and vested domestic US interests in drawing the United States into the Great War. That effort bears close examination.

Counter-propaganda in the inter-war United States

The earliest exponents of the US counter-propaganda effort of the inter-war years were the public intellectual Walter Lippmann, whose book *Public Opinion* in 1922 coined

the term 'stereotype', and Harold Lasswell at the University of Chicago, who in 1927 published *Propaganda Technique in the World War*.¹⁶ Books which rang the alarm bell on foreign propaganda specifically included H. C. Peterson's *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914–1917* (1939).¹⁷ Influential books from the UK finding a US audience included Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time*. The collective intellectual effort in the field of propaganda studies developed into a full-blown exercise in pre-emptive counter-propaganda with scholars working to protect the United States from future war propaganda in exactly the way an epidemiologist seeks to inoculate a population against a future plague. The effort is now recognized as a major moment in the evolution of the discipline of communication studies in the United States. By the mid-1930s, the work was a favourite for funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. Projects supported included the path-breaking media effects work of the Radio Research Project directed by Austrian émigré Paul Lazarsfeld, first at Princeton and later at Columbia. Other milestones included the foundation of the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* by US covert intelligence pioneer (and veteran of early anti-Bolshevik propaganda work) DeWitt Clinton Poole Jr in 1937 and creation of an Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in New York City that same year under the leadership of an education professor from Columbia University named Clyde R. Miller and a Harvard geologist and activist for academic freedom, Kirtley F. Mather.¹⁸

The IPA set about circulating a regular *Propaganda Analysis* bulletin to opinion formers within the United States, including editors and college presidents, to ensure that they were on the lookout for propaganda. Its first edition included what would be one of its most famous formulations, seven basic propaganda devices which recur in the literature of propaganda like the seven deadly sins: *Name-Calling* (tarring an adversary with a word calculated to lower their prestige or credibility like 'Fascist' or 'Warmonger'); *Glittering Generality* (presenting one's agenda in a vague but enticing form as when promising 'a shining city on a hill'); *Transfer* (unjustifiably associating an argument with an admired category of thought such as religion or patriotism); *Testimonial* (enrolling or citing an intermediary with some special credibility to the audience); *Plain Folks* (identifying the speaker or position being promoted with folk wisdom and familiar home values); *Card Stacking* (creating a false comparison to give an illusion of a balanced argument and introducing a disproportionate quantity of information on your side); and *Band Wagon* (engineering the appearance of a large number of people already conforming to the view you wish to promote to take advantage of the well-known social pressures to conform). The institute's output deepened to include a number of books and school texts including *The Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis* (1938), *Propaganda: How to Recognize and Deal with It* (an experimental unit of study materials in propaganda analysis for use in junior and senior high schools) (1938), *The Fine Art of Propaganda: A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches* (1939), and Harold Lavine and James Wechsler's *War Propaganda and the United States* (1940).¹⁹

The 'discovery' of the susceptibility of populations to propaganda and readiness of governments to engage in it was widely covered in the US media. The *Saturday Evening Post* ran a three-part story on the dangers of propaganda in the summer of 1929 and the whole of the 1930s was characterized by a widespread 'propaganda phobia'

and propaganda panic.²⁰ One offshoot of this fear was the creation of committees of the House of Representatives to root out foreign influence starting with the McCormack-Dickstein Committee of 1934–7 (more properly the ‘Special Committee on Un-American Activities Authorized to Investigate Nazi Propaganda and Certain Other Propaganda Activities’) and then the ultimately notorious House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), established in 1938 to root out foreign fascist and communist propaganda under the chairmanship of Martin Dies. The investigations led to a legal intervention in the communication environment in the form of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which required all foreign publicists operating in the United States to be documented and their publications labelled and shared with the Department of Justice. US anxiety reached such levels that the British government decided that any attempt to directly influence American public opinion would be counterproductive. The British Council did not operate in the United States until the 1970s. The British approach to US opinion focussed on answering questions and cultivating American journalists in the United States and the United Kingdom.²¹

Against rumours in wartime

The outbreak of the Second World War in Europe prompted a redoubling of research into both propaganda and counter-propaganda. The Rockefeller Foundation launched foreign radio monitoring and analysis projects at Princeton and Stanford (for the Pacific Theatre) and a project to study ‘Totalitarian Communication in Wartime’ at The New School in New York overseen by Ernst Kris and Hans Speier (in cooperation with Britain’s BBC). In time, the US government subsumed this work into a formal Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). A particular area of concern was how best to respond to the circulation of rumours, both spontaneous and deliberately engineered as a viral form of propaganda. The US government was convinced that the promulgation of Nazi rumours had played a key role in the fall of France in 1940 and the German success in the Balkans. The US Office of War Information (OWI) drew up a typology of the six kinds of Nazi rumour:

- (1) Mousetrap – raise false hope – damage morale when proves false (i.e. Hitler nervous breakdown).
- (2) Defeatist – used in France.
- (3) Slanderous – undermine faith in institutions.
- (4) Strategic – rumour of attack in wrong location, that is, rumour = Balkans, reality = Scandinavia.
- (5) Confused – two or more stories on the same general subject, in contradiction with each other. Designed primarily to create confusion of mind; and if possible to destroy the faith of a people in the reliability of its own news services. Effectively used in conjunction with the mousetrap rumour to cause a people to believe that its own government is intentionally misleading it.
- (6) The recurrent rumour – repetition of the above, that is, peace offensive, Hitler/ army split.²²

The propaganda scholars swiftly noted that propaganda rumours work even when presented in a negative frame: repeat a rumour even as you deny it and you run the risk of further advancing the rumour. More than this, a denial can be understood by an audience as strong evidence that the rumour is true, hence the aphorism 'there is no smoke without fire'. With this in mind, the Morale Division of the US government's OWI wisely decided not to go forward with a national radio programme exposing German propaganda rumours, on the grounds that the rumours were more colourful, memorable and impactful than a boring old fact could ever be. They did however track rumours carefully, collecting them systematically from a national network of teachers, barbers, beauty shop workers and others exposed to public discussion. The OWI used the information collected to help shape its priorities and approaches in public information.²³

The operation proved to be a learning process, more especially as it enlisted some of the stars of American psychology, including Harvard's Gordon W. Allport. The OWI began with the assumption that people spread rumours for a range of reasons. The initial list of motives was as follows: 'exhibitionism, reassurance and emotional support, projection (wish fulfillment or rationalization), aggression (malicious gossip), [or to] bestow a favor.'²⁴ As the operation progressed, the OWI gained further insight into the psychology of the rumour-monger. An OWI bureau of intelligence survey conducted between 3 and 15 August 1942 established a correlation of rumour-mongering with people who were intelligent and generally well informed, sociable, employed, but experiencing emotional tension. It was also obvious that people spread rumours that fitted their pre-war prejudices and that most rumours were not designed or promulgated by Nazi agents but were the product of local imaginings concocted to fill a gap in the news.²⁵ Surveys consistently found that rumours in the United States – like the US culture which gave birth to them – had a peculiar obsession with speculation on internal racial and ethnic politics. Early examples included widespread stories that African Americans were organizing to press for racial reform and that Jewish Americans were excused military service.²⁶ The emphasis on national coherence and domestic diversity within US wartime propaganda was a response to this. There was also a general attempt to alert citizens to the dangers of rumour-mongering. The OWI persuaded Walt Disney to make the short film *Chicken Little* (1943) with this in mind.²⁷

The OWI resolved that the best place to engage a rumour was locally, within the community in which it was already endemic. The agency established (or in some cases established authority over) a network of *rumour clinics* which identified rumours and placed counter-material in the local newspaper.²⁸ The director of the Boston office – psychology scholar Robert Knapp – published his findings in 1944, including a list of six succinct directives for effective rumour control:

- (1) Assure good faith in the regular media of communication.
- (2) Develop maximum confidence in leaders.
- (3) Issue as much news as possible, as quickly as possible.
- (4) Make information as accessible as possible.
- (5) Prevent idleness, monotony, and personal disorganization.
- (6) Campaign deliberately against rumour-mongering.²⁹

The directives still make a lot of sense for those seeking to rein in rumour in the internet era.

At the end of the Second World War, the United States undertook an unusual programme of mass counter-propaganda in the 're-education' of Germany and Japan. While both campaigns began on the basis that the two societies which had played host to totalitarian propaganda were inherently sick, approaches diverged. In Germany, the approach retained an inherently democratic model focussing on the nurturing of a free press, liberal education and civil society. In Japan, the perception of an imminent regional threat from the USSR foreshortened the activity and it was characterized rather by simply running new fluid through the old pipes and redirecting the imperial propaganda machine to new democratic purposes. There were attempts in both societies to develop free media. One of the most fascinating side notes in Japan was the US occupation's decision to launch the radio game show as a genre to promote the idea of the individual and competition as an antidote to a past diet of centralized imperial propaganda.³⁰

The Cold War and the backfire effect

The Cold War – as already noted – drew forth a massive ideological mobilization on the part of the United States in the name of counter-propaganda. One major insight was the understanding that the credibility of a message often hinged not on its inherent content but on the nature of the messenger, with a messenger bearing the most similarity to the audience enjoying considerably enhanced credibility. This underpinned a number of counter-propaganda initiatives, including the sponsorship of a range of radio stations under the brand of RFE in which émigrés were employed to provide an open media source in the local language for major nations behind the 'Iron Curtain'. Two particular challenges for the United States in its counter-propaganda were to contest the association of the USSR with peace and with the intellectual community. One of the effective mechanisms for combating the latter idea was the publication in 1949 of a book of autobiographical essays entitled *The God That Failed*, written by intellectuals who had once identified themselves as communists but had later rejected the philosophy.³¹ The collection was the brainchild of the British MP and veteran of Second World War propaganda, Richard Crossman, who served as editor. Crossman brought together six writers – Louis Fischer, André Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender and Richard Wright – spanned a number of nationalities and ethnicities (if not gender), and had unquestioned credibility with audiences. The major contribution of the US (and UK) government was to ensure that the book was translated and available as widely as possible around the world.³²

Counter-propaganda capability was one of the rationales used to bolster the argument that the mainstream international broadcasters operated by the US and UK governments – Voice of America and the BBC – should be allowed to develop credibility through balanced news coverage. This credibility was however sensitive to attempts to cash in on a reputation for objectivity and sell a lie. The US government was caught out in 1960 when President Eisenhower insisted that an American aerial

reconnaissance aircraft lost over the USSR was a civilian weather plane, only of course to have Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev expose the lie by producing the pilot of the plane in question, Gary Powers. It is hard to do counter-propaganda, but doing it with a lie makes one hostage to the fortunes of future evidence.

The domestic Cold War generated some spectacular examples of propaganda and counter-propaganda. Some of the pre-war propaganda analysts were still on the scene. In 1947, Walter Lippmann actually coined the term 'Cold War'. Clyde Miller reworked his old propaganda analysis recommendations to create the pamphlet *What Everybody Should Know about Propaganda; How and Why It Works* in 1948.³³ His partner, Kirtley Mather, campaigned against McCarthyism in academia. McCarthyism – a spectacular example of propaganda in the name of counter-propaganda – demonstrated the astonishing ability of a meme – in this case that of a vast anti-communist conspiracy – once launched to gain currency through a mixture of conformity with pre-existing fears and prejudices and intimidation against breaking ranks. However, as in the Hans Christian Andersen story of 'The Emperor's New Clothes', the case of McCarthyite propaganda showed the disproportionate power that a single credible voice could have in disrupting a collective attitude of acceptance. The equivalent to the little boy calling out that the emperor was naked was CBS broadcaster Edward R. Murrow's exposé of McCarthy's bullying techniques on his *See It Now TV* show in March 1954. The disproportionate impact of a single dissenting counter-propagandist voice in breaking the spell of acquiescence in a group was demonstrated convincingly in social science by Solomon Asch as early as 1951.³⁴

While it is tempting to think that Asch or the Murrow case demonstrate that the right piece of counter-propaganda can be a magic bullet against propaganda, subsequent experiences have found this not to be so. It is clear that most audiences do not appreciate having their errors flagged, and that a powerful argument against a political point can actually be counter-productive. This is more than the simple recirculation of a problematic claim. Social psychologists have identified what is commonly known as the backfire effect, a marked response of holding more firmly to one's initial position (i.e. the position of the original propaganda) and rejecting the new position (that of the counter-propaganda) with considerable vehemence.³⁵ One explanation for this phenomenon is what is termed the 'confirmation bias' – the tendency of individuals to prefer information which confirms the first thing they are told on any subject; but the deeper currents suggest that this is not merely about timing but also about emotional attachment to the original explanation, most especially when it becomes a component of the individual's self-perceived identity. In terms of the Hans Andersen story, the fact that people were getting a pay-off from pretending to see the emperor's invisible clothes – being able to include themselves among the intelligent people of the kingdom – makes the child's observation less likely to break the spell in reality than in the fairy story. As the social psychologist Kelton Rhoads has noted,

I submit that in a real Emperor's New Clothes situation, with the population being fully invested in the emperor's clothes, ... the little kid would have been shushed up; an IRS [Internal Revenue Service] audit brought down on his parents;

and somewhere, an apologist would be making the case that 'At this point, what difference does it make whether the emperor has clothes or not?'³⁶

The backfire effect suggests that a sustained and explicit counter-propaganda campaign may be a counterproductive path to take.³⁷

In the middle years of the Cold War, the concept of counter-propaganda remained current. It was part of the annual budget justification of the USIA and inspired some particular campaigns. From 1954, the agency circulated a bulletin three times a week tracking Soviet bloc propaganda under the title *Soviet Orbit Propaganda*, which must have seemed ironic when the Soviets achieved their greatest propaganda coup by actually putting something in orbit. The bulletin ended the decade as *Propaganda Intelligence Review*.³⁸

The USIA's famous worldwide publicity theme of 'People's Capitalism', as launched in 1956, was explicitly designed to rebut Soviet claims that the US system benefitted only a few. Similarly, the great USIA photo exhibition 'The Family of Man' countered the Soviet claim to have a monopoly on the 'brotherhood of humanity' concept. There was more to come.

US counter-propaganda in the 1960s and 1970s

The Kennedy administration imagined itself as coming from behind in a war for men's minds. Kennedy alluded to this in his inaugural address. His administration devoted much attention to rebutting the idea that the Soviet Union was the wave of the future and the best model for third-world development. Besides the communication initiatives undertaken by the USIA, it is possible to see key policies of the 1960s as partially driven by the need to provide counter-propaganda by deed. The space programme, the Peace Corps, the military commitment to Vietnam and aspects of the federal response to the Civil Rights issue were strongly driven by counter-propaganda concerns. Without a background of Soviet propaganda and a contrasting Soviet example, US policy would have unfolded very differently.³⁹

The Vietnam War brought obvious challenges for US counter-propaganda. The Cold War research-driven methods developed to that point were ill-suited to the realities of war in the developing world. In the spring of 1964, the CIA helpfully suggested that the US embassy in Vietnam begin analysing 'local Viet Cong' propaganda themes so that effective counter-themes could be devised. With some irritation the ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, reminded Washington that when a guerrilla enemy is conducting propaganda through face-to-face conversation, the process left few documents to study.⁴⁰ The US government also was soon aware that the best voices to counter domestic and foreign scepticism about the war (including those from the pioneer of propaganda study Walter Lippmann) would have been to find a way to empower the South Vietnamese to explain the war themselves. Despite the appeals from the bureaucracy of US public diplomacy, the eventual leadership of South Vietnam remained largely silent on the international stage.⁴¹ The North Vietnamese were more

forthcoming and much more credible than the US government in talking about a war in their own country.

In tactical counter-propaganda, the defender is forced to fight on terrain picked by his adversary, but sometimes the adversary chooses badly. This proved to be the case in the early Nixon period when the Soviet media began drawing attention to the continued problems of Civil Rights in the United States. In 1970, Soviet outlets around the world – and especially in Africa – directed particular attention to the pursuit, arrest and trial of Angela Davis, a young African-American academic, Civil Rights activist and Communist Party member. She was accused of supplying a handgun to militants who later used the weapon in a deadly courtroom shooting. The Soviet propagandists predicted what amounted to a legalized lynching. The USIA flagged the case for its Public Affairs Officers (PAOs), noting, ‘While on the surface the Davis case seems made to order for hostile propaganda, the facts are pretty disarming and offer plenty of ammunition to counter Communist propaganda.’⁴² The USIA used the Davis case to demonstrate the virtue of the US open legal system, contrasting the rights extended to Angela Davis with those denied to defendants in the USSR.⁴³ The USIA sent legal experts to the field to speak directly to African audiences about the case and arranged for a party of African jurists to monitor the trial for themselves. The clincher of the counter-propaganda value of the case came when the all-white jury acquitted Davis. Similar decisions in parallel cases, such as the trial of the so-called Soledad Brothers and several Black Panther trials, put the lie to Soviet predictions.⁴⁴

The process of détente in the mid-1970s brought an interlude in which the architects of US public diplomacy considered developing an entirely new model of outreach; however, the coincidence of a lack of bureaucratic imagination, a desire to protect the bureaucratic status quo and – ultimately – a resurgence of Soviet adventurism brought a return to counter-propaganda as the *raison d'être* of US foreign public engagement. But the threat was shifting. As the Soviet Union moved into economic stagnation in the later 1970s, it became harder to sell its system in terms of positive benefits or virtue, and the Kremlin’s propagandists increasingly trusted to the circulation of fabricated rumours or ‘disinformation’. When the Soviet campaign ramped up in the early 1980s, the USIA coordinated an inter-agency response which is now considered a classic counter-propaganda campaign. Key elements included systematically tracking and exposing Soviet rumours and faked evidence as they appeared – this was done in a newsletter circulated within the US government called *Soviet Propaganda Alert* – and collating the material in the full-scale reports of the inter-agency (USIA/Department of State) Active Measures Working Group. As the campaign progressed, it became obvious that there was particular value in sharing an example of propaganda with an audience other than the intended one, as the approach would seem awkward, obvious and even humorous and would serve to undermine the overall credibility of its originator. The USIA’s master of counter-propaganda – Herbert Romerstein – had great fun showing European audiences examples of the Soviet ‘ethnic bomb’ rumour crafted for the developing world. The idea of a bomb which killed black people but left white people unharmed was terrifyingly plausible in the global South but absurd to Europeans, more especially in its Middle Eastern incarnation, in which the bomb killed Arabs but spared Jews.⁴⁵

There are other examples of counter-propaganda by selective republication. Sometimes, creative reframing or recontextualization can help. Hence, in 1917, British propagandists made much capital in the United States by mass-producing and recirculating a German medallion related to the sinking of the Cunard ocean liner RMS Lusitania. The medal had originally been struck as one of a private series of artistic pieces. In the British reframing it became a crass official stand-alone souvenir created by the German government to celebrate the death of hundreds of innocents.⁴⁶ Similarly, in the Second World War, the US government routinely used Nazi propaganda against purpose, peppering its 'recruit orientation' *Why We Fight* films with clips from films like *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935), though always taking care to use only brief clips lest the film somehow regain its original purpose and inflate the image of the German military. Finally, in our own time, those sympathetic to Israel have understood the value of taking anti-Israeli or pro-Jihadi propaganda produced for a local audience and recirculating it outside the Middle East region. The most successful agency doing this work is the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), founded in Washington, DC, in 1998 by a veteran of Israeli military intelligence named Yigal Carmon. MEMRI translates and circulates online examples of propaganda from the region. A piece which achieved particular prominence was a clip from a Palestinian children's television programme, *Pioneers of Tomorrow*, from 2007 in which Farfour, a character who strongly resembled Mickey Mouse, was punched to death by an Israeli government official.⁴⁷

The post-Cold War period and the war on terror

Like the entire apparatus of US foreign public engagement, the counter-propaganda/counter-disinformation element of US public diplomacy did not prosper in the years following the Cold War. Despite valuable work tracking and heading off enemy distortion during the first Iraq War and the distortions from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the USIA dwindled. Its staff eventually retired or were transferred to unrelated duties. A capability developed *ad hoc* during the NATO campaign in Serbia/Kosovo, and the Clinton administration attempted to promulgate a comprehensive reform of strategic information, including a counter-propaganda capacity, under Presidential Decision Directive 68 of December 1999.⁴⁸ The new structure – known as the International Public Information (IPI) structure – was designed to address what the 'National Security Strategy for a New Century' called an 'obligation' to 'counter misinformation and incitement, mitigate inter-ethnic conflict, promote independent media organisations and the free flow of information, and support democratic participation helps advance U.S. interests abroad'. Despite the gravity of this task, it became mired in turf wars. Budgets and infrastructure continued to decline. The terrorist attacks on America of 11 September 2001 ('9/11') found the country essentially unprepared to combat disinformation or any other form of propaganda, foreign or domestic, and at the very moment when the internet gave rumour-mongers their biggest boost since the invention of the telephone a century before.⁴⁹

The years following 9/11 have seen the slow process of rebuilding the US government's international communication capacity. Counter-propaganda has not been a particular strength. The careful counter-rumour strategy of the OWI's Robert Knapp contrasted starkly with the response of the US undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, Karen Hughes, during the middle years of the George W. Bush presidency. She forbade her staff from engaging rumours – such as those alleging US complicity in 9/11 – lest the rumour merely gain greater currency, but without the important follow-up of local pushback. The US government failed to attempt even the broadest descriptions of the true motives behind such core policies as its support for Israel.

Counter-propaganda remains a major driver of US public diplomacy. During the early Obama years, public diplomacy was framed as a necessary response to the Chinese charm offensive of Confucius Institutes, mega events and expanded broadcasting. Responding to issues of counter-radicalization became a particular priority. Instruments included a cross-agency Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications – established in 2011 – with the State Department as the lead agency.⁵⁰ 2016 saw the creation of a Global Engagement Center, also under the State Department.⁵¹ The later Obama years and Trump presidency were dominated by the need to respond (or to be seen to be responding) to both the so-called Islamic State and to Russia and by controversy over the shortcomings of that response. Are there any policy recommendations which can be extracted from this century of experience?

- (1) The systematic study and discussion of media bias and propaganda is an important part of any counter-propaganda strategy and may be seen as equipping a population with an important tool of citizenship.
- (2) Rumours/fabrications need careful handling to avoid their simple perpetuation. A multi-tiered approach is necessary, and explicit counter-messaging should be restricted only to communities/networks in which the rumour is already endemic.
- (3) More can be achieved by communicating a greater positive than by grappling explicitly with the negative and sparking a 'backfire effect'.
- (4) Well-chosen deeds can be more eloquent in rebutting propaganda and negative images than well-chosen words.
- (5) Sustained listening is an essential foundation to all public diplomacy, including counter-propaganda.

Finally, it is worth noting that not all propaganda is best countered in the communication sphere. Like pain in the body, hostile propaganda is not necessarily best understood as a phenomenon in its own right but rather as a symptom of an underlying issue. Just as treating the whole body can remove local pain, so addressing the source of the propaganda can prove an effective strategy for counter-propaganda. In the late 1980s, the US government was able to end the widespread Soviet dissemination of the claim that AIDS was created in a US biological warfare laboratory by threatening to end scientific cooperation with Soviet researchers in the field of AIDS research. Diplomats noted that the story disappeared from the media as effectively as if someone

had turned off a tap.⁵² It may thus be that the ultimate answer to propaganda is to work with the propagandists to give them a greater stake in the truth than in continued deception and deceit.

Notes

This is an expanded version of an essay originally commissioned by the Legatum Institute, London, in 2015 as part of its Transitions Forum and is reused here by kind permission.

- 1 This quote (from *Fragments*, ed. and transl. Alan H. Sommerstein (Loeb Classical Library, 505; Cambridge, MA, 2008), Fragment 302, p. 295) is included as a corrective to the misattribution to Aeschylus of the famous saying that in wartime truth is the first casualty. It is as close as Aeschylus comes to expressing that thought.
- 2 A readily available example of this limited conception is the current Wikipedia page for 'Counterpropaganda'.
- 3 The standard source on this initiative is Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 1981).
- 4 This entire campaign is the subject of Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (New York, 2008); discussion of the Smith–Mundt debate is on pp. 36–7.
- 5 The most thoroughly documented example of this kind of counter-propaganda is Paweł Machcewicz, *Poland's War on Radio Free Europe, 1950–1989* (Palo Alto, CA, 2014).
- 6 For a sustained discussion of this, see Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York, 2014).
- 7 *The Idler*, no. 30, 11 November 1758.
- 8 The Bright quote is cited as an epigram by Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime: Containing an Assortment of Lies Circulated throughout the Nations during the Great War* (London, 1928).
- 9 The quote is used by Philip Snowden, in his preface to the counter-propaganda treatise by his fellow MP and Quaker anti-colonial activist E. D. Morel, *Truth and the War* (London, 1916), p. vii, available at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t5x649v02;view=1up;seq=14> (last access 24 July 2018). For verifiable examples of early usage of the quote, see http://www.barrypopik.com/index.php/new_york_city/entry/the_first_casualty_of_war_is_truth/ (last access 24 July 2018).
- 10 British politician Arthur Ponsonby was one of the popularizers of the 'Truth is first casualty' quote – its repetition was part of press coverage of his anti-war campaign. 'Ponsonby Sees War Based In Falsehood: "Truth Is First Casualty" In Any Conflict, Says British Labor Party Leader', *New York Times*, 7 February 1927, p. 18.
- 11 This aphorism is recorded by the Belgian author Fernand van Langenhove at the opening of his study of German rumours of atrocities committed by Belgians at the beginning of the First World War: *Comment naît un cycle de légendes* (Paris, 1916), p. 1.
- 12 I owe this saying to Catalan scholar of propaganda, Marc Argemí Ballbè.
- 13 The Chinese original is '兵不厌诈'. I owe the quote to the Chinese scholar of public diplomacy, Zhou Xinyu.

- 14 'More shit than the radio' is noted in Roger D. Abrahams, 'Playing the Dozens,' in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (Oxford, MS, 1973), pp. 295–310.
- 15 <http://weknowmemes.com/2012/07/dont-believe-everything-you-read-on-the-internet/> (last access 24 July 2018).
- 16 Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (London, 1922); Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in World War I* [1927] (Cambridge, MA, 1971).
- 17 H. C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914–1917* (Norman, OK, 1939).
- 18 The archives of the IPA are at the New York Public Library, available at <http://archives.nypl.org/mss/1513>.
- 19 IPA and Violet Edwards, *The Group Leader's Guide to Propaganda Analysis* (New York, 1938); IPA, *Propaganda: How to Recognize and Deal with It* (New York, 1938); Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee, *The Fine Art of Propaganda: A Study of Father Coughlin's Speeches* (New York, 1939) (Charles Edward Coughlin, 1891–1979, was a controversial Roman Catholic priest who used radio broadcasts to support anti-Semitism and the fascist policies of Hitler and Mussolini); Harold Lavine and James Wechsler, *War Propaganda and the United States* (New York, 1940).
- 20 For an intellectual history of the propaganda phobia, see Gary Brett, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York, 1999).
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- 22 Library of Congress, Archive of Folk Culture, AFC 1945/001, World War II Rumor Collection (hereafter LoC, WWII RC), box 1, folder 2, 'A Project for the Analysis of Rumors', 17 January 1942, available at <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/guides/rumors.html> (last access 25 July 2018).
- 23 Ibid. A draft OWI memorandum on 'Rumor Control Groups' of 29 December 1942 summarized the dangers of anti-rumour activity as follows: 'Programs which are conducted without an awareness of the inherent and potential dangers of anti-rumour activity may tend to: a) Circulate the very rumours which are being denied, b) Circulate more rumours than are effectively denied, c) Make the community too "rumour conscious," d) Create widespread uneasiness, which is fertile soil for more rumours, e) Exaggerate the danger of enemy propaganda – creating unnecessary fears about the enemy's cleverness or propaganda success in the United States, f) Deny only certain kinds of rumours, allowing other rumours to circulate more freely, h) Monopolise rumour-fighting by a given group so that the rumours denied are simply those which offend the particular sensibilities or interests of the group – ignoring those rumours which the group does not recognize as rumors or as dangerous.' See LoC, WWII RC, box 2, folder 9.
- 24 LoC, WWII RC, box 1, folder 2, 'A Project for the Analysis of Rumors', 17 January 1942.
- 25 LoC, WWII RC, box 1, folder 1, undated memo, 'Rumor Combating Projects'.
- 26 LoC, WWII RC, box 1, folder 4, includes a compilation of rumours from the South concerning fears over the status of African Americans, including rumours that they had organized into secret Eleanor Clubs (named for the First Lady), and from Alabama that 'the federal government is going to try to use Negroes in the army to subdue the south and impose a second reconstruction on us'. See Eugene Katz (Chief,

- OWI Special Services Div.) to Will Alexander (War Manpower Commission), 28 August 1942.
- 27 Disney's cooperation is noted in LoC, WWII RC, box 1, folder 5, Katz to Keith Kane (Asst. Dir., OWI), 5 October 1942.
 - 28 Procedures are set out in LoC, WWII RC, box 2, folder 9, 'Memorandum on Rumor Control Groups', 29 December 1942. The OWI learned that printed denials had to be handled carefully, even down to the use of type face, noting, 'Research shows that it is best to use the same face-type of the same size for both the rumor and the denial of the rumor. Tests show that where rumor (or rumor denials) are printed in bold-face, italics, or special face-type, readers fall into the habit of reading all the rumors and few (or none) of the denials.'
 - 29 Robert H. Knapp, 'A Psychology of Rumor', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 8: 1 (1944), pp. 22–37. The quotes are from pp. 35–7.
 - 30 On the game show story, see Ji Hee Jung, 'Playing with New Rules: Radio Quiz Shows and the Reorientation of the Japanese under the US Occupation, 1945–1952', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 34: 4 (2014), pp. 568–85.
 - 31 R. H. S. Crossman (ed.), *The God That Failed: Six Studies in Communism* (New York, 1949; London, 1950).
 - 32 For an overview of the literary element in early Cold War propaganda, see Andrew Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945–1953* (London, 2004).
 - 33 Clyde R. Miller, *What Everybody Should Know about Propaganda: How and Why It Works* (New York, 1948). The pamphlet was produced for and by the Commission for Propaganda Analysis and Methodist Federation for Social Action.
 - 34 Solomon Asch, 'Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments', in H. Guetzkow (ed.), *Groups, Leadership and Men* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1951), pp. 77–190.
 - 35 On the backfire effect, see Craig Silverman, 'The Backfire Effect: More on the Press's Inability to Debunk Bad Information', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 17 June 2011, available at http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/the_backfire_effect.php?page=all (last access 25 July 2018).
 - 36 Rhoads to author, March 2015.
 - 37 Medical communicators have found it best not to reiterate the MMR vaccination/autism controversy when trying to persuade parents to vaccinate their kids, but rather to speak only about the benefits of vaccination and majority compliance with the procedure, plays which build on the readiness of people to go along with the group in their beliefs or behaviours: the bandwagon effect.
 - 38 On the disposition of the records of these bulletins at the US National Archives (USNA), see http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/schedules/departments/departments-of-state/rg-0306/n1-306-96-003_sf115.pdf (last access 25 July 2018).
 - 39 A major review of US propaganda in 1960 noted that only a really dramatic achievement, like manned flights to the Moon or Mars, could counter Soviet propaganda, given their image of technological superiority. See Eisenhower Presidential Library, Papers as President of the United States, 1953–61 (Ann Whitman file), Administration Series, box 33, Sprague Committee file 1, 'Conclusions and Recommendations of the President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad', December 1960, section IV.
 - 40 USNA, Department of State Central Files (RG59), CPF 1964–66, box 417, INF 8 Viet S, Saigon 1637, Rusk to Saigon; INF 6 Viet S, Saigon 2052, Lodge to State, 24 April 1964.

- 41 A lament along these lines may be found in LBJ Presidential Library, WHCF CF, box 135, CF USIA 1967, Leonard Marks (USIA Director) to President, via [Staff Assistant Charles] Maguire, 14 February 1968.
- 42 Cited in Cull, *The Cold War*, p. 318.
- 43 The USIA's acting director Henry Loomis authorized the agency to 'discreetly note President Nixon's acknowledgement that his early comments on the charges against Davis should not have been made'. In the United States, despite Nixon's comments, the accused was innocent until proved guilty. USNA, Records of the USIA (RG 306), 87.0018, Director's Subject Files, box 24, 3 REA – Foreign Audience Characteristics, Jenkins to all USIA PAOs, 4 February 1971; Loomis, 'Infoguide No. 71–3: The Angela Davis Trial', 21 January 1971 with attachment by Ruddy, 13 January 1971. Cited in Cull, *The Cold War*, p. 318.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Accounts of this campaign can be found in Cull, *The Cold War*, pp. 407–9, 425, 432–4, 444–6, 457–60; also in Alvin A. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War: An Insider's Account* (New York, 1995), pp. 93–125. Romerstein's papers have been archived at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University and include both publications and internal USIA documentation dealing with the struggle against disinformation.
- 46 The story of the medal is told in chapter 21 of Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime*. Today, it is not uncommon for an independently produced piece of propaganda to be mischievously linked to an official source. The government of Iran spoke of the commercially produced motion picture *300* (Zack Snyder, 2006) in these terms, and the same could be said of the pernicious YouTube video *The Innocence of Muslims* (Nakoula Basseley Nakoula as 'Sam Bacile', writer, producer, director, 2012).
- 47 <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1497.htm> (last access 25 July 2018).
- 48 Federation of American Scientists, International Public Information (IPI), Presidential Decision Directive PDD 68, 30 April 1999, available at <http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-68.htm> (last access 25 July 2018).
- 49 For a sustained discussion of this period – including the PDD 68 structure – see Nicholas J. Cull, *The Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency: American Public Diplomacy, 1989–2001* (New York, 2012).
- 50 For discussion, see Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS' Message', *New York Times*, 16 February 2015, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html?_r=0 (last access 25 July 2018).
- 51 See Craig Timberg, 'Effort to Combat Foreign Propaganda Advances in Congress', *Washington Post*, 30 November 2016, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/effort-to-combat-foreign-propaganda-advances-in-congress/2016/11/30/9147e1ac-e221-47be-ab92-9f2f7e69d452_story.html?utm_term=.2f8fbb8172a1 (last access 26 July 2018).
- 52 Cull, *The Cold War*, pp. 474–5.

‘Men of Action’: Printed propaganda in the recruitment of the regular British armed forces, 1960–85

Peter Johnston

The Second World War, the experience of a second global conflict within a generation, followed by the imminent ideological confrontation with the Soviet bloc, convinced the British establishment that they needed to maintain a substantial standing military. Indian independence in 1947 and the retreat from Empire also deprived Britain of manpower resources that had proven so significant in both world wars. In order to plug the gap, and guarantee that Britain could field a force large enough to defend it across multiple fronts and in every theatre, National Service, Britain's first form of peacetime conscription, was introduced in 1948. However, as Britain's position in the world changed in the wake of the Second World War, the need for substantial armed forces was considerably reduced, and National Service was ended gradually from 1957. Call-ups formally ended on 31 December 1960, and the last National Servicemen left the armed forces in May 1963. At a strategic and operational level it was decided that, rather than rely on often unwilling conscripts, British military capability would be better served by an all-volunteer, fully professional force.

Prior to National Service, and especially after its abolition, the British military became much like any other major employer. It too needed to attract enough employees to fill the gaps that threatened its operations. But instead of being provided with bodies to fill uniforms and the ranks, the military would have to compete in the labour market with other civilian employers for men – and women – to join the ranks and serve Britain's operational military need. In order to avoid a manpower shortage, it began an active campaign in collaboration with the Central Office of Information (COI, the UK government's marketing and communications agency) to ensure it still fulfilled its obligations from before the end of National Service, and to recruit the best possible candidates to fill the ranks.

In this, propaganda and advertising were fused together in order to present the British military in the best possible light to prospective recruits. A note on terms is important. Advertising is most commonly defined as activities surrounding drawing attention to a particular product or service; propaganda was best described by Philip

Taylor when he wrote that it was ‘the *deliberate* attempt to persuade people to think and behave *in a desired way*’.¹ While propaganda is a loaded term based on the experience of the twentieth century and its role in dictatorships and global conflict, it is in fact a neutral process that can be harnessed for positive or negative outcomes. Propaganda and advertising are, in fact, in the modern era, practically indivisible. Indeed, Taylor even refers to advertising as ‘economic propaganda’.² Thus, it is clear that, while the British COI and Ministry of Defence (MoD) utilized all the techniques and hallmarks of an advertising campaign, because the end goal was to boost recruitment they were in fact simultaneously engaged in creating and disseminating propaganda.

All branches of the armed forces engaged heavily in these campaigns, and the output was impressive. Between 1960 and 1985, the most common form of propaganda being disseminated was printed – posters and pamphlets in particular, but also more ephemeral items such as wall calendars. Posters were designed to grab the attention and punch home the information quickly. However, pamphlets – designed to be taken away and consumed slowly and more thoroughly – contained far more information, which is why both sources are explored here. All this material – designed to present a career in the armed forces in the best possible light – was produced and supplied to recruiters, and refreshed and updated on an annual basis. The scale of publication was huge, encompassing all branches, all trades and all recruitment pathways.

Yet this activity was essential. As Hugh McManners has written, ‘Joining the armed forces in peacetime, with no immediate prospect of having to go to war, is presented by recruiters as a career like any other.’³ Significantly, the majority of the roles that needed to be filled could, at that time, be carried out only by men, and so they dominate the imagery and were clearly the main target audience. But the women-only branches of the service also had their own recruitment targets and produced their own material, though in smaller quantities. There was no single factor motivating enlistment for either men or women. People joined the different branches of the British armed forces for a variety of reasons; but most recruits wanted to travel or improve themselves by gaining useful qualifications. That this could be attained within a salaried position, along with the sense of adventure that came with being in the military, and with a pension at the end of service, made the armed forces look like a very promising career to young people leaving school, either with or without qualifications. In order to fully inform prospective recruits of these opportunities, advertising was essential, and the production of propaganda therefore a necessity.

With a myriad of roles to fill, there is little surprise that there were extensive differences across the armed forces as to what benefits and aspects of the services were stressed and marketed, which will be detailed below. However, there were several salient themes that appeared regardless of branch. These included the ideas of adventure, professionalism and foreign travel, the possibility of active service and the opportunity to utilize the cutting edge of modern technology. Remarkably, patriotism, driven by a desire to defend Queen and Country, was rarely featured.

This chapter will explore the different methods, themes and imagery used by the British armed forces to recruit a professional military and investigate how the British military sold itself to prospective recruits. It is concerned with the regular forces only; the Territorial and Reserve forces have their own imagery and traditions that merit

specific study outside the scope of this work. The slogans, the tag lines, the half-truths that were used to encourage and motivate British civilians to join the full-time armed forces are analysed and compared, and the perceptions of the services that these created are highlighted through oral history testimony from those who consumed this media and chose a military career in preference to any other. Analysing and exploring this output tells historians as much about how the British military – and contemporary society – was changing and evolving as it does about what the military was attempting to achieve.

Sport and physical training

The most consistent and heavily used theme employed in recruitment literature was sport, and it remained a dominant and recurring topic throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This was a continuation of a trend that had begun in the late nineteenth century, when sport as recreation became a key part of British popular culture, with the result that working-class men were just as interested in exercising their athletic prowess as were the middle and upper classes. The access to facilities and equipment provided by the Army, in particular, alongside the amount of time actually given over to sport as part of conscious attempts to improve the conditions of service, was appealing to soldiers from all classes.

The First World War had taught the Army that, at a time when it was the largest it had ever been, sport was a great way to occupy those citizen-soldiers who would otherwise become quickly bored. The language of sport had been heavily used to recruit men into uniform and motivate them throughout the conflict.⁴ In the aftermath of that war, it was clear that, in times of peace and without a specific enemy, it was difficult to recruit men on ideological grounds to fill the ranks of a far smaller army. Those motivated purely by patriotism, without the existential threat of invasion or war, were also proving to be rare. Therefore, sport was increasingly used as an incentive to attract recruits. A 1920s-era poster for the Royal Munster Fusiliers, for example, promised potential recruits, 'A good clean sporting life is offered with an assured future.'⁵

After the Second World War, and with the end of National Service, sport was once again heavily used by all three branches of the armed forces in recruitment literature as a major incentive for enlisting. Indeed, a 1972 recruitment pamphlet for the Army boasted that 'you would have to be a very rich civilian indeed to take part in all the sports available to the average Infantryman.'⁶ In some cases, the topic of sport even merited its own specific sections in the recruitment material. Yet rather than just a hobby or recreational activity, sport was also stressed as a vital and important part of being in the professional military. The 'Commission in the Household Division' pamphlet, issued in 1975, stated,

As a civilian you have to struggle to come by your games and your sport, apart from Saturday afternoons. In the Army, as it is part of your job to keep yourself fit, so it is part of your duty to play games in working hours.⁷

To add an extra point of difference with the civilian world, exotic sports not widely available in the UK were also promoted, such as big-game fishing, sky diving and waterskiing, as well as the more common ones such as rugby, football, boxing, cricket and hockey. Significantly, it is clear that this was a theme that prospective recruits were extremely receptive to, thus it was very valuable to promote. As Steve Newland, who served in 42 Royal Marines Commando, said,

The only thing I was really good at at school was sport ... so for me to get a job if you like, if you want to call it that, where it involved lots of sport, well the service, or the Forces, was a good option.⁸

The theme of sport was also married to that of foreign travel, and the idea of doing both familiar and unfamiliar sports abroad was also promoted in order to appeal to the prospective recruit. The concept of 'adventure training', whereby soldiers could participate in physical activity in extreme environments, was, and remains, a major recruitment tool.

On occasion, the types of sport depicted in these pamphlets revealed a strong class bias in the organizations that were recruiting. Typically, the main sports advertised in the recruitment pamphlets of units such as the Parachute Regiment or the Royal Marines included the usual rugby, football and boxing. Being an amphibious force, the Royal Marines also often used sports such as waterskiing. However, a 1975 recruitment pamphlet for the Guards actively invoked the sense that the contemporary Guards officers, in particular, were of a different social class. In this pamphlet, for example, the image used to illustrate the 'Recreation' section was that of Household Division officers playing polo at Windsor.⁹

Yet sport was much more than just a hook on which to catch interested applicants. The idea of sport and a physical challenge was used by the more elite units of the British military, the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines, in their recruitment as an introduction to their highly selective units. For example, the Royal Marines argued that 'physical education is an essential part of Royal Marines training'.¹⁰ It was not just about sport; it was about learning new skills and transforming oneself into a Royal Marine. The Royal Marines specifically recruited men who wanted the physical challenge of a difficult training regime, and the status of elite troops that came with it. The provision of competitive sport was the perfect introduction to this and the best way to ensure they attracted men of suitable character. This in particular attracted men who had been good at sport at school and wanted to utilize those feelings of success earned through hard work. For Andy Stone, for example, the additional duration and physical and mental difficulty of the training required to become a Paratrooper – the infamous P-Company testing process – that gave the Parachute Regiment its elite status made it a particularly attractive choice for him: 'You don't just walk into the careers office and join the Parachute Regiment. You have to go through a selection process and that's what appealed to me.'¹¹

Similarly, the renowned physical difficulty of the Royal Marines' training course at Lympstone served to inspire many recruits to join. Indeed, the Royal Marines Commando training course was designed to build professional, dedicated men who

were both physically and mentally suitable for service with the corps, and it was no secret how difficult and challenging this course was, culminating later in the famous '99% need not apply' adverts of the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The dominance of physical activity, and the concept of a test and a challenge, created demand, attracting the right type of applicant. Commando training was a fundamental aspect of the unit's culture, and Lympstone was very much a foundation stone in building that. A recruitment pamphlet of 1973 stated,

The 'instant' Marine does not exist. He is built in body, mind and character. As a Commando he has to be strong; he has to think for himself, work alone or with a companion, or maybe in charge of others with no one around to 'hold his hand'. Training provides this kind of man. A man of action and skill, who can be relied upon in all situations to be a professional at his job. It is a job for men who like challenge, change and the promise of adventure.¹²

This created a mythology around the Royal Marines that served to act as a further recruitment incentive. For example, being told that it was too tough for them by friends, family and civilian work colleagues provided a major incentive for Royal Marines Danny Marshall, Ray Mead and Dave Barrett to apply and complete the demanding course in the 1960s and 1970s. The propaganda was also true: the course was extremely tough and to pass and to become a Royal Marine was a source of enormous pride; Marshall, for example, still ranks becoming a Royal Marine as one of the greatest and proudest achievements of his life.¹³ Lympstone also left a lasting impression on Dave Barrett: 'How do I look back on Lympstone? I think it's an amazing place, and it does a wonderful job, but it still scares me.'¹⁴

Foreign travel

There can be no doubt that the incentive of foreign travel was another major attraction for prospective recruits to join the British armed forces, and it was a major feature of the recruitment literature produced by the MoD throughout the post-war period.

The Royal Navy in particular benefitted from this and used the incentive of foreign travel extensively. While the British Empire was in decline, the Royal Navy would still visit exotic places around the world, including those – such as the Far East – that remained beyond the reach of ordinary people even with the advent of mass tourism. As a recruiting tool, this held a major resonance with prospective recruits. Chris Howe, for example, believed the travel potential offered by the Navy was among the deciding factors in convincing him and a friend to sign up: 'We didn't know what we were going to do. We liked the sound of travel, we didn't fancy staying in our home towns so we just joined the Navy.'¹⁵ Phil Russo similarly recalled that the idea of travel offered by the Royal Navy certainly appealed to him and specifically remembered the images used in the recruitment office: the sailor in a foreign country wearing a smart uniform, drink in hand.¹⁶ In the age before mass commercial travel, and with the ongoing economic and social depression of the 1960s and 1970s, it is no surprise that such an advertising

policy was a great success. Significantly, the Royal Navy was able to promote this aspect of the service as it was true – it was not a distortion or a falsehood created purely for propaganda purposes. For example, Kevin Smith, similarly unsure about his future, likewise found the travel aspect as being among the most appealing positives about life in the Navy. Smith believed that ‘there was a certain amount of romance involved in it all, and all the fantastic places you were going to go and visit ... that had a major part of the attraction for joining’.¹⁷ Shortly after finishing training, Smith ‘lived the dream’,¹⁸ sailing to Portugal, Majorca and Gibraltar, places he could not have gone to without being in the Royal Navy.

The other branches of the military also made use of the idea of foreign travel. The Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC), in one piece of their literature, stated, ‘[T]ravel opportunities are almost unlimited in the RAOC!’¹⁹ However, from the literature it is clear that the places that the Army was travelling to did not share the variety of those enjoyed by the Royal Navy. To compensate, the Army used the idea of foreign travel and physical activity to challenge perceptions of what service in the Army actually entailed. In a 1968 poster, for example, images of the Army in action in various locales were used with the tag line ‘Infantry: We drive, ski, float, fly, jump. And sometimes we even march!’²⁰

Technology, trades and embracing modernity

As technology advanced in the later twentieth century, so too did the armed forces become more technical in outlook and approach. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Royal Navy and aviation sides of the British defensive forces.

As the Royal Navy became an increasingly technological force in the post-war era, there was a concerted drive from recruiters for engineers to oversee the use of and maintain this equipment in a way unmatched in the less technologically demanding Army or Royal Marines. This was reflected in the extensive propaganda produced to further these aims, and there was a real explosion in material of this type. The benefits of having skills and qualifications in engineering in a civilian world – when the sailor’s period of service was over – were also stressed and used as an incentive: completing the training ‘can be considered as good as serving a full trade apprenticeship’.²¹ This was something the Royal Navy had always used in order to appeal to recruits; as a 1960 pamphlet stated,

Clearly the young man who has the desire to acquire a skill or a trade – who wants to excel in something – is excellent material for a Service that, in its growing technical complexity, is making increasing demands on brains rather than brawn.²²

Artificers were highly sought after in the recruitment literature circulated by the Royal Navy, even before the end of National Service. In 1958, one pamphlet stated,

In return for their skill and knowledge, Artificers receive higher pay than other naval ratings and quicker advancement ... To boys of the necessary quality, the Artificer Apprentice entry into the Royal Navy offers a career of outstanding

opportunity, with the age-old attractions of Naval life, such as travel, plenty of sport and occasional excitement, providing a welcome bonus.²³

The same pamphlet was reprinted and reissued five years later, with almost exactly the same text, the only change being the drawing of attention to Britain's growing fleet of nuclear submarines, armed with Polaris missiles.

The growing influence of technology found its way into the recruitment literature of other branches, including that of the Seaman Branch. In 1964, one pamphlet pointed out,

Unlike the Jack Tar of earlier years the Seaman today has a specialist job – typical of the age in which we live. He has, in fact, a dual role in the Fleet. He is both a man of technical skill and a man of the sea ... His is an increasingly technical job, calling for intelligence and a high degree of technical skill. And it is a tough job; a man's job.²⁴

Indeed, the title of this pamphlet was 'It's a Man's Job ... In the Seaman Branch of the Royal Navy'. Thus, there was also an undeniable link made between service in the Royal Navy and masculinity. It wasn't until 1990 that women could serve at sea, and so men were the exclusive target of this material.

Keeping up with technological change proved a challenge for the Royal Navy, as can be seen in the enormous turnover in material that was produced. Indeed, this need was adopted in the recruitment literature itself, with the Royal Navy identifying that, in order to cope with the increasing pace of technological change, it should

seek men with the salt of the sea in their veins who can cope with the quickening pace of technological developments ... They must feel as much at home in an instrument-packed Operations Room as their forebears did on the gun deck of an old 'man o' war'.²⁵

Yet despite this growing technological trend, the Navy was also keen to point out that old incentives for joining up still remained as relevant as ever, claiming that 'some elements of naval life remain timeless: the travel and adventure associated with life at sea; the companionship of a happy ship's company'.²⁶

This idea of embracing modernity is an important feature of the recruitment literature and is best embodied by the role of the growing submarine fleet in recruitment propaganda. In contrast to the surface fleet, the submarine division of the Royal Navy was on the front line in the Cold War against the Soviet Union as the main responsibility for Britain's nuclear deterrent was moved from aircraft to Polaris boats from 1968. Submarines became an increasingly dominant aspect of naval recruitment literature, as the MoD prioritized this aspect of operations.

The introduction of nuclear submarines resulted in a very different tactical and operational role in contrast to that of the surface fleet. The appeal of the new gave the submarine fleet an almost glamorous aspect, as well as appearing to herald the future. Colin Way, who joined the Navy surface fleet as a clerk ('writer' in Navy parlance) in

1965, transferred to submarines in 1967 and spent a further thirty-four years in the service. Way recalls thinking that ‘it was the new thing, really. It seemed to be the way the Navy was going. It was the future of the Navy and the in thing.’²⁷ Similarly, Jonathan Powis had always wanted to join submarines, initially as a doctor, but then he decided that he wanted to command ships:

I did join the Navy expressly to join nuclear submarines . . . I think if you’d joined the Army in 1943 you would have wanted to join the tank corps because it was the latest and greatest thing. I felt exactly like that, and I certainly never regretted it.²⁸

Such attitudes were very much fostered by, and reflected in, the recruitment literature produced by the MoD. For example, in the 1956 pamphlet, ‘The Royal Navy as a Career: An Admiralty Booklet about the Life and Opportunities of Ratings in the Royal Navy’, the main images were an idealized artwork of a sailor in front of a British ensign on the front cover and the cruiser HMS *Belfast* in the rear. The sailor wore a hat marked ‘HMS *Eagle*’, which was an aircraft carrier in service with the fleet at the time.²⁹ The text of this booklet was the same as its 1950 equivalent.³⁰ However, in the 1962 version, the cover image was not of a battleship or aircraft carrier, but instead the focus was very much on submarines, reflecting the changing nature of British naval defence policy: HMS *Dreadnought*, Britain’s first nuclear-powered submarine, was due to be launched in 1962. The cultural memory of the Second World War, and the perception of the Royal Navy, had been superseded. By 1976, the Submarine Service was specifically recruiting and producing its own pamphlets.³¹ Submarines represented the cutting edge of technology, and this held considerable appeal for some men. Peter Harris, for example, grew up in rural Devon, and when he joined the navy he made the transition ‘from turnips to turbines’.³²

Technology and modernity were obviously dominant features when it came to military aviation. Since the 1920s, aviation had been used across European and Western culture to herald the future: a service in which man and machine could defy limitations like never before, and whose pilots embodied traits that ordinary people longed to possess.³³ In the military, potential recruits could participate in aviation across the armed services, in the RAF, the Army or the Royal Navy. However, in order to attract men to military aviation, similar tactics were used across the services, and the same key areas were targeted for the aviation branch as for the regular form of that service, such as sport and travel, that could be enjoyed as part of the work. In its 1976 recruitment pamphlet, for example, the Army Air Corps wrote that ‘life is not all work and duties. There is another side to it as well. Nowhere are the opportunities for sport and games better than they are in today’s Army.’³⁴ However, the Fleet Air Arm, RAF and Army Air Corps also had the added advantage of being able to offer the exciting prospect of flight on top of these incentives, and the ability to work with highly complex machinery that required specialist skills and provided rare social distinction. As the 1971 ‘Flying for Real’ RAF pamphlet stated, ‘The Aircrew officer is someone special in our society. Not a superman, but a man who has been trained to the highest standards of professionalism.’³⁵ With the advances in jet fighter technology, an aircrew officer would be one of ‘The New Men – the Aerocrats’.³⁶ The cultural memory of the

Second World War was pervasive. The celebrated heroism of 'the Few', the pilots of RAF Fighter Command from the 1940 Battle of Britain, continued to imbue military aviators with the same sense of glamour.

There was an acknowledgement within the armed forces that life as an aviator was more exciting than that of the normal serviceman.³⁷ The Army Air Corps, for example, extolled the virtues of working with the advanced technology used by the Corps as part of the attraction for a 'young progressive corps with a great future', as well as stressing the variety of flying roles that were available within the Corps, such as pilot, observer and airgunner.³⁸ The recruitment literature also described how those from ground employments could go on to be accepted for aircrew training, moving from being an observer to airgunner, and also to pilot, and thereby laying out a clear path of career progression for those who aspired to be a pilot but did not have the right qualifications to join pilot training immediately. Thus, the Corps laid out a path of advancement that would ensure manpower retention and prevent the costly turnover of having experienced men leave after only a few years to be replaced by inexperienced new recruits. Indeed, it is noticeable that the pamphlets that dealt with flight in the Army, the Royal Navy and the RAF all laid out the career paths far more than did most non-flying Army pamphlets – which barely mentioned them.

The wider Army also stressed elements of modernity and dynamism in its recruitment literature. Likewise, as technology advanced, more skilled recruits were needed to fill roles such as those of signallers – something which was promoted in the specific recruitment propaganda that related to them, along with images such as of satellite dishes.³⁹ In a 1983 poster, for example, the Royal Signals were advertised as 'Today's communicators equipped for tomorrow's world' (Figure 14.1). The poster combined a futuristic font with three photographic vignettes, demonstrating the work of the Corps: a sergeant with telecommunications equipment, a soldier erecting signal equipment in the field and others repairing equipment on a Royal Air Force (RAF) base.⁴⁰ Indeed, a 1969 poster described the Royal Signals as 'space age', stressing the modern technology that they used, which had only become more important by 1983.⁴¹ Fortunately, as technology advanced, this theme never became outdated and, if anything, was self-validating.

It was not only the technical trades of the Army that embraced this idea. A 1965 poster for the Parachute Regiment described them as 'soldiers of the future' and was illustrated by troops advancing into battle after a mass parachute drop.⁴² The designers can hardly be blamed for glossing over the facts that mass parachute drops were already an obsolete form of tactical movement, or that the Parachute Regiment has to date not jumped into battle since Suez in 1956. They were, however, correct in predicting the regiment's durability while many other, more long-standing, regiments were being amalgamated or falling entirely beneath the axe of successive spending cuts.

Variety of roles

As the armed forces were diverse organizations, there were an enormous variety of roles to be filled. Not all roles would appeal to all prospective recruits, and in some

ROYAL SIGNALS

Today's communicators equipped for tomorrow's world

Do you want a career in Worldwide Military Telecommunications? The package includes full training, to TEC Diploma in Electronics for Technician Engineers – In Languages for Electronic Warfare Operators – or simply for HGV driving if that's what you're into. You'll also be a fit soldier with responsibility and job satisfaction – **Interested?** – Then go to the nearest Army Careers office – They're in the phone book – and ask to join the Royal Signals!

Figure 14.1 'Royal Signals: Today's communicators equipped for tomorrow's world', 1983.

Source: National Army Museum, London.

cases particular skills were required. Propaganda would be needed to advertise all of these roles as well as to break the idea that military service was homogenous.

The military used pamphlets to introduce recruits to the diversity of roles that they could fill, in order to appeal to the widest possible pool of applicants. The Army, for example, regularly profiled different regiments and corps, such as the Parachute Regiment, the Guards, the Army Air Corps or the Royal Armoured Corps; these were all highlighted individually, as were specific branches such as the Infantry.⁴³ However, as the military was a closed institution, it needed all the apparatus of civilian society as well as its war-fighting functions. This was particularly true in the Royal Navy, as warships were portable, mobile, self-contained communities. Thus, as in the other branches of the armed forces, there was a call in the Navy for ordinary peacetime roles, such as cooks, stewards and dentists.⁴⁴ The major difference that was stressed between fulfilling these roles in the civilian sphere and the military was that these roles could all be carried out while enjoying the wider benefits of military life, such as foreign travel. In fact, one RAF pamphlet described the RAF dental officer as 'a man to be envied. Unlike his civilian colleague he is the dentist with the time needed for each patient, with time to study and with time to specialize. He enjoys complete clinical freedom – his standards are never lowered.'⁴⁵

Part of this was also about advertising the diverse roles available within the military and restating its professionalism to include all of the different roles and specialisms. For example, medical officers, veterinarians, fitters, bakers, drivers, divers, bandsmen, were all catered for by the military recruitment propaganda. Similarly, those with different aspirations or educational attainment were approached, with separate pamphlets outlining the different entry routes that were available to them. Lack of education and grades did not need to be a barrier to entry into the military, and entry at the bottom of the rank structure could be achieved without much in the way of grades, but those with the necessary qualifications could enjoy an improved experience on joining the armed forces as an officer.⁴⁶

Stressing the variety of roles available also ensured the military could provide realistic aspirations. Successful propaganda must be truthful, and it would have been detrimental for the British military to claim that all who joined had unlimited opportunities. Thus, highlighting and extolling the variety of roles available, and all the attendant benefits of service, still made joining the armed forces seem like a sensible option. One particular place where this was necessary was in military aviation. Flying aircraft was enormously difficult and necessitated a certain level of education attainment before training could even begin. However, while undoubtedly one of the most glamorous aspects of military service, only a small proportion of those in the military actually flew. In order to fill the vital roles necessary to sustain the aviators, the propaganda needed to similarly stress their importance at a strategic and functional level, much as the RAF attempted to do. A typical quotation from an RAF propaganda pamphlet stated that 'for every man who flies in the Royal Air Force, between 30 and 40 men and women are needed on the ground to keep him flying'.⁴⁷ The RAF presented these myriad of support roles as exciting, vital to the strategic objectives, and an opportunity to prevent people becoming bored in their job – something that would never happen in a military environment but was a constant risk in the civilian world.

Yet the propaganda was not always honest. There was little or no mention of just how dangerous it was learning to fly fighter aircraft, and the possibility of death was,

unsurprisingly, not included in any recruitment literature. This was something that those who were training to become pilots became aware of, as David Morgan, who trained with the RAF and flew with the Fleet Air Arm in the Falklands War, stated in his memoir,

There is probably only one constant when you fly fighter aircraft: Pilots die. They die at the most unlikely times, in the most benign of circumstances. It doesn't matter what aircraft you fly, whether you are young or old, experienced or a rookie, whether it is peacetime or war. It is the constant that everyone is aware of and no one dares contemplate.⁴⁸

Active service

The British armed forces were actively engaged in different operations across the world between 1960 and 1985, and the possibility of active service played an interesting role in recruitment literature. Deployments were used as an attractor, and some recruits were enthused by the possibility. But some branches of the military placed much less emphasis on active operations. The likelihood of operations, and the form that active service would take, had an important impact on the ways in which the different branches of the British military recruited.

British servicemen have taken part in operations every year since the end of the Second World War. Thus they, and any prospective recruits, must have 'always had the thought and likelihood of combat in the forefront of their minds.'⁴⁹ The possibility of active service, of actually doing something, was a theme that the Army and the Royal Marines actually seized upon as a positive in their recruitment propaganda, with the Royal Marines calling themselves the 'Men of Action' for several consecutive years.⁵⁰ It was these branches of the British armed forces that used this theme and factor most in their recruiting propaganda.

As the Army's commitment to Northern Ireland increased from 1969, so was this commitment recognized in propaganda recruitment literature. The COI even went so far as to produce a pamphlet for the MoD in 1975 entitled 'Northern Ireland: What Is It Like for Soldiers?'⁵¹ While not every recruit would have seen pamphlets like this, the fact that the MoD was producing them demonstrates that they were trying to educate recruits as to the likelihood of active service. Those that did see the pamphlet could have no doubt that they would be expected to serve in the province. One pertinent question regarding soldiers and Northern Ireland covered in the pamphlet was, 'Are they allowed to refuse to serve there?', to which the answer was, 'No. Soldiers know they have to go where they are needed.'⁵²

This pamphlet aimed to explain how and why the soldier would operate in Northern Ireland. However, it also exploited the opportunity to extol some of the benefits of taking part in active service. It took the potential negative of active service – risk of injury or even death – and put a positive spin on it, presenting it as an opportunity to utilize all the skills learned during training in order to challenge oneself and act as a force for good by peacekeeping. This had a major impact on recruits to the Army at this time. In the infantry, without a conventional war until the Falklands conflict in 1982,

service in Northern Ireland was seen as 'the proving ground, if not the culmination' of military training, and as a test to be passed.⁵³ The propaganda took this cultural value from the Army and pushed it out to attract new recruits to the organization.

However, it is remarkable that the concept of active service, of engaging in conflict, was virtually invisible in the recruitment propaganda produced for the Royal Navy's surface fleet in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, which undoubtedly created an impression that the possibility of seeing any action at all was extremely unlikely. Kevin Smith, for example, said that, when considering whether to join the Royal Navy, the idea that he would ever be involved in a war never crossed his mind, whereas he knew that if he joined 'the Army or the Marines then it would be a definite'.⁵⁴ Similarly, as John Wingate said, 'I had no sort of feelings when I was joining the Navy that it might be because I would have to go to war or get in any conflict. It didn't cross my mind'.⁵⁵ While this may seem bizarre for a military force, Alistair Finlan has argued that even though men and women 'joined a profession in which the fundamental purpose is to apply violence (often lethal) to achieve political ends', they rarely practised the skills that they had learned, and this is particularly true of the Royal Navy in the period 1960–82.⁵⁶ As the surface fleet was not extensively engaged in active operations, in contrast to the Army, they did not feature in its recruitment propaganda.

The Cold War is also seemingly a startling omission from the recruitment literature. Despite being the focus of British defensive operational strategy between 1945 and 1990, there is little direct reference to aspects of the Cold War in military recruitment literature. Yet this can be explained through a variety of factors. First, the recruitment campaigns were primarily advertising. They therefore stressed the positive aspects of military service. It was widely acknowledged by the British Army in Germany that, should the Soviet Union launch an attack on Western Europe, they would be able to do little to stop them, and probably be overrun in a short space of time. Putting this in a recruitment pamphlet, however, would not inspire confidence or encourage any new members to join. Instead, the positive aspects of service – the training, the travel, the sport – were all used as incentives. Second, in order to produce successful and effective propaganda, there was a need to present imagery that resonated with what recruits already wanted and expected. It is clear from the testimony of service personnel who joined the armed forces in this period that the idea of fighting in armed conflict barely registered in the minds of any of them; rather, they were interested in foreign travel, sport and the opportunity to learn a trade.⁵⁷ Thus, these aspects were stressed, rather than the negative hypothetical of war with the Soviet Union. In contrast, when Northern Ireland – something very real – became an increasingly significant part of the British Army's deployment, the recruitment literature began to confront this issue head on, in order to brief recruits before they joined up.

Gender

One group that merits particular attention in the military recruitment propaganda produced in this period is that of military women. While women were a formal part of the British military throughout this period, they were segregated into different

organizations by gender. Therefore, women were the recipients of specific propaganda geared exclusively at them. Very rarely did men and women share the same spaces in the propaganda produced.

Significantly, the volume of propaganda for women was also far lower, and men remained the dominant gender in terms of target audiences, which reflected the demographics of the armed forces throughout the period. In 1980, for example, there were 14,500 women in the British armed forces – just 5.1 per cent of the total strength.⁵⁸ As such, it was logical that they featured less in the propaganda produced. However, gender discrimination regarding roles and opportunities available to women also certainly played a role, and sometimes women were notable for their absence. As the Army looked to recruit graduates, for example, in the 1970s, it is remarkable that in the ‘Graduates in Arms’ pamphlet not one of the profiled officers was a woman, despite a section on the Women’s Royal Army Corps (WRAC) in the same publication describing it as an ‘integral part of the Army’.⁵⁹

The WRAC did feature in the Army’s official calendar for 1975. However, whereas the infantry regiments are mostly shown carrying out exciting duties in foreign countries, the WRAC representative is a demure driver. There is even an explanation of the cap badge, and that it features a lioness, ‘the female counterpart of the lion which appears in many Regimental badges’.⁶⁰ The message is clear. The WRAC is part of the Army, but women are apart from the more recognizable aspects of soldiering. Despite claims to the contrary, the women’s military units were separate organizations. For example, the Women’s Royal Air Force (WRAF) stated with much pride that it was to be integrated as fully as possible with the RAF, with all new entrants being commissioned or enlisted in the RAF, taking the same oath as the men and subject to the same conditions of service and disciplinary code. Indeed, the RAF’s officer graduate pamphlet of 1975 has a section entitled ‘What does the RAF offer to women?’ The answer: ‘[T]he main thing is – equality with men. “Women’s Lib” has been a fact of life for a long time.’⁶¹ However, women were excluded from combatant duties, and so certain roles were not available to them, and it was only in 1968, for example, that female officers in the WRAF were authorized to even use the same rank titles as their RAF counterparts.

The strict limitations – imposed by the military authorities – on what women could do in the British armed forces and on the roles that they could fulfil had a major impact on what could be used to advertise the careers of the military. Even when women appeared on the same posters and in the same advertising space as their male counterparts, their inclusion was minimal. In a 1974 poster, ‘Train for a trade in the RAF’, men and women of the RAF and WRAF are shown together. However, the trades shown as examples are exclusively those available to men, such as weapons technician, pilot or engineer. Quite what trade any prospective WRAF recruit could become involved in was not specified.⁶² Where women did appear, this was sometimes only for the benefit of men: they were used as an attractor. For example, an RAOC pamphlet stated that ‘in the RAOC you will serve not only with soldiers of other regiments of the Army but also with the girls of the Women’s Royal Army Corps’.⁶³

Despite these differences, however, several of the same themes that were used in the recruitment of men were also used in the recruitment of women. For example, the

ability to learn a trade and gain qualifications while working and earning was stressed, in particular when it came to nursing. Similarly, foreign travel and the ability to staff the military hospitals in Germany, Cyprus and Hong Kong are used as an attractor: 'if you'd like to travel, there's no more secure, more rewarding way of doing it than by being a member of the QAs.'⁶⁴ In addition, the chance for women to join the military and, in particular, to do something different was heavily promoted and presented as being the 'smart' choice when deciding on what career to pursue.⁶⁵ As in the male recruitment propaganda, the options available to military women as opposed to those in the civilian world – learning new skills, such as Morse code, or the opportunity to travel – were used as incentives to join. The impression created was that these skills would mark a woman out from her civilian counterpart, and as the decades passed and women became more recognized in terms of equality, joining the military was marketed as a more intelligent choice for those looking to make their own way in the world.⁶⁶ The Women's Royal Naval Service, or WRNS, in particular pushed this idea, with a 1969 poster proclaiming, 'WRNS: Be a Wren – be someone special.'⁶⁷ Similarly, the Army highlighted how women in the WRAC were different from their civilian counterparts, in terms of both job prospects and opportunities.⁶⁸

The posters produced relating to women's service show their place in the military hierarchy. One 1963 poster for the WRAC tells women that 'you'll be happy in the WRAC' as it is a place where 'a girl *can* be independent and *not* be alone' (emphasis in original).⁶⁹ Just to reinforce that message, the poster depicts a WRAC soldier operating some technical equipment – but under the watchful eye of a supportive male officer with a clipboard.

While some of the themes and imagery used in the propaganda aimed at women were frequently similar to those aimed at men, those that were different are remarkable. For example, sport was never used, and there are virtually no images of women participating in sporting activity. However, showing a consciousness towards fashion did appear, with one 1970 poster for the WRAC confidently stating, 'and NOW – attractive new uniforms.'⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that the previous incarnation of the WRAC, the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), had also initially struggled in the Second World War to recruit women due to a perception that the uniforms were unflattering.

Overall it is clear that, before the late 1980s, service in the Army did not radically challenge wider British society's views of established gender roles. In the preceding decades, the roles played by women were fixed, and no illusions were given that the military would be a gender-equal society. But by 1990, the Army was able to play on the idea of what a woman's role could be and challenge the perception and stereotype of what serving in the Army was like for a woman. A poster that year, for example, stated, 'As a woman in the Army, you'll be expected to cook, clean and do the dishes', and showed a female soldier cooking field rations for herself on exercise, cleaning an SA80 rifle and repairing a satellite dish.⁷¹ Yet even this was only a nod to increased opportunity. It was only in the mid-1990s that gender segregation ended in the British armed forces and that female military units were fully integrated with their male counterparts – even if some roles were still closed to them.

Conclusions

Despite the enormous annual turnover of pamphlets and posters produced by the British armed forces in the period 1960–85, there was a remarkable and strong consistency in the themes, and accompanying images, that were used. Foreign travel, sport, the learning of a trade and variety of roles appeared in virtually every publication. From the reactions of service personnel recruited during this time, it is clear that these messages had an impact and were something that potential recruits would respond to, hence their continued inclusion in recruitment propaganda.

However, there were some variations in the applications of themes, and the emphases given to them, across the armed forces in this period. The Army and Royal Marines were eager to stress the importance of sport and physical activity, and the possibility of active service, as reasons for joining up. In contrast, the Royal Navy stressed the technical aspects of service, and the benefits of foreign travel, without any real reference to the possibility of active service. The recruitment propaganda aimed at women, who were excluded from many activities that the military participated in on the grounds of gender, likewise stressed different themes, but, as the decades progressed, it is possible to chart the changing social attitudes towards women, demonstrating how responsive to its audience the military were.

Underlining all of these, and perhaps the most dominant theme, was the professionalism that came with being part of the regular British armed forces. After the break from National Service and a military composed predominantly of conscripts, the British armed forces were attempting to remake themselves as dedicated, highly skilled professionals. This underpinned every variation in theme, image and type-font, and was a vital message conveyed by the British armed forces as they competed to attract the best possible applicants to fill their regular ranks and help them fulfil their strategic obligations.

Notes

- 1 Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Era* (Manchester, 1995), p. 6; original emphasis.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (London, 1994), p. 72.
- 4 See Jay Winter, 'Popular Culture in Wartime Britain', in Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (eds), *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 330–48.
- 5 National Army Museum (NAM), 1983-05-29-1, 'Royal Munster Fusiliers, the Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare Regiment' recruitment poster (Aldershot, c.1920).
- 6 The National Archives (TNA), INF 13/87/2, 'This Is the Infantry' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1972).
- 7 TNA, INF 13/93/11, 'A Commission in the Household Division' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1975).
- 8 Steve Newland, interview with author, 3 August 2009.
- 9 'A Commission in the Household Division' recruitment pamphlet.

- 10 TNA, INF 13/270/7, 'Men of Action: The Royal Marines' recruitment pamphlet (Southampton, 1964).
- 11 Interview with Andy Stone, quoted in P. A. Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing: The British Armed Forces at War in the Falklands' (PhD thesis, University of Kent, 2013), p. 24.
- 12 TNA, INF 13/37/4, 'What It Takes to be a Royal Marine' recruitment pamphlet (Westerham, 1973), p. 6.
- 13 Interview with Danny Marshall, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 14 Dave Barrett, interview with author, 15 September 2009.
- 15 Interview with Chris Howe, quoted in Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing', p. 39.
- 16 Interview with Phil Russo, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 40.
- 17 Interview with Kevin Smith, quoted *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 TNA, INF 13/93/9, 'Royal Army Ordnance Corps' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1975).
- 20 TNA, INF 13/79/1, 'Infantry: We Drive, Ski, Float, Fly, Jump. And Sometimes We Even March' recruitment poster (COI, 1968).
- 21 TNA, INF 13/14/2, 'Go Far in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1958), p. 3.
- 22 TNA, INF 13/18/3, 'They're Training for a Technical Career in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1960).
- 23 TNA, INF 13/14/1, 'A Leaflet about Artificer Apprenticeships in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1958).
- 24 TNA, INF 13/23/11, 'It's a Man's Job ... In the Seaman Branch of the Royal Navy. Age of Entry, 15-28' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1964), pp. 1, 5.
- 25 TNA, INF 13/25/3, 'Shaping Up to the '70s' information booklet (Southampton, 1965).
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Interview with Colin Way, quoted in Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing', p. 46.
- 28 Interview with Jonathan Powis, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 29 TNA, INF 13/10/2, 'The Royal Navy as a Career: An Admiralty Booklet about the Life and Opportunities of Ratings in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1956).
- 30 TNA, INF 13/4/3, 'Here Is the Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1950).
- 31 TNA, INF 13/41/1, 'Deep Navy' recruitment pamphlet (Huntingdon, 1976).
- 32 Peter Harris, interview with author, 25 September 2009.
- 33 Robert Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920-1950* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2005), pp. 2-3.
- 34 TNA, INF 13/95/9, 'Army Air Corps' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1976).
- 35 TNA, INF 13/112/5, 'Flying for Real' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1971).
- 36 TNA, INF 13/112/14, 'The New Men - the Aerocrats' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1971).
- 37 Interview with Robin Kent, quoted in Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing', p. 51.
- 38 'Army Air Corps' recruitment pamphlet.
- 39 TNA, INF 13/84/10, 'Royal Signals' recruiting pamphlet (London, 1970).
- 40 NAM, 1984-04-158-1, 'Royal Signals: Today's Communicators Equipped for Tomorrow's World' recruitment poster (HMSO, 1983).
- 41 NAM, 1985-11-60-37, 'Space Age Signaller' recruitment poster (HMSO, 1969).

- 42 NAM, 1985-11-60-31, 'Parachute Regiment: Soldiers of the Future' recruitment poster (HMSO, 1965).
- 43 For example, TNA, INF 13/93/4, 'The Parachute Regiment' recruitment pamphlet (June 1975); TNA, INF 13/84/5, 'The Guards' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1970); 'Army Air Corps' recruitment pamphlet; TNA, INF 13/86/4, 'Men – Armour – Action: Royal Armoured Corps' recruitment pamphlet (Ipswich, 1971); and 'This Is the Infantry' recruitment pamphlet.
- 44 For example, TNA, INF 13/23/1, 'Serve as a Steward in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1964); TNA, INF 13/36/7, 'A Cook in the Royal Navy' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1971); and TNA, INF 13/18/8, 'The Royal Navy as a Profession: The Naval Dental Officer' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1960).
- 45 TNA, INF 13/110/5, 'Portrait of a Royal Air Force Dental Officer' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1960).
- 46 'A Commission in the Household Division' recruitment pamphlet.
- 47 TNA, INF 13/112/12, 'Smart Girl: She's Joined the WRAF' recruitment pamphlet (Nottingham, 1971).
- 48 David Morgan, *Hostile Skies: The Falklands Conflict through the Eyes of a Sea Harrier Pilot* (London, 2006), p. 97.
- 49 McManners, *The Scars of War*, p. 100.
- 50 'Men of Action: The Royal Marines' recruitment pamphlet.
- 51 TNA, INF 13/91/1, 'Northern Ireland. What Is It Like for Soldiers?' information pamphlet (London, 1975).
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Antony Beevor, *Inside the British Army* (London, 1991), p. 33.
- 54 Interview with Kevin Smith, quoted in Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing', p. 39.
- 55 Interview with John Wingate, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 56 Alastair Finlan, *The Royal Navy in the Falklands Conflict and the Gulf War: Culture and Strategy* (London, 2004), p. 1.
- 57 Johnston, 'Culture, Combat and Killing'.
- 58 Government Statistical Service, *Defence Statistics 1992* (London, 1992), p. 29.
- 59 TNA, INF 13/93/6, 'Graduates in the Army' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1975).
- 60 TNA, INF 13/93/15, *The Army Calendar*, 1975.
- 61 TNA, INF 13/112/20, 'RAF Officer Graduate: 20 Questions for the Graduate, the Professional Man and the Student' recruitment pamphlet (London, 1975).
- 62 TNA, INF 13/112/37, 'Train for a Trade in the RAF' recruitment poster (COI, 1974).
- 63 'Royal Army Ordnance Corps' recruitment pamphlet.
- 64 TNA, INF 13/93/7, 'Thank You, Nurse' recruitment pamphlet (Birmingham, 1975). The 'QAs' were members of Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.
- 65 'Smart Girl: She's Joined the WRAF' recruitment pamphlet.
- 66 NAM, 1984-01-74-17, 'Smart ... Smarter' recruitment poster, 1978.
- 67 TNA, INF 13/31/3, 'WRNS: Be a Wren – Be Someone Special' recruitment poster, 1969.
- 68 For just two examples, see NAM, 1993-11-1-58, 'Nine Good Jobs Your Agency Couldn't Offer You' recruitment poster (1980) and NAM, 1983-11-65-1, 'The Girls in Lovat Green Enjoy a Colourful Life' recruitment poster (1968).
- 69 NAM, 1993-11-1-133, 'You'll Be Happy in the WRAC' recruitment poster (COI, 1963).
- 70 NAM, 2011-11-16-1, 'She Chose the WRAC' recruitment poster (1970).
- 71 NAM, 1994-11-26-1, 'As a Woman in the Army, You'll Be Expected to Cook, Clean and Do the Dishes' recruitment poster (1990).

Love, Hate and Propaganda: Reflections on the making of a documentary series

Fabrice d'Almeida

Decision making and the transmitting of information lie at the heart of politics. Letting people know what you are doing is as important as the actual deeds themselves. This simple reality was the starting point for David Welch's work on the Third Reich. The Nazis' obsession with propaganda took many forms – pictorial, architectural, musical and of course cinematic. All of these dimensions worked together to form consensus and create the illusion of a 'national community'. What was true for the Nazis applies to other totalitarian regimes, and, let us admit, to democracies, too. Propaganda and techniques of mass communication are, therefore, at the heart of political identities in the twentieth century. Looked at together, they allow us to sketch out a different history of the contemporary world, in which appearances are discussed, and dismantled, so that the strategies employed by states and political forces are laid bare. And, at the heart of this history, are to be found feelings.

Thus, David Welch and I, among others, were asked to work as consultants for a major television series – *Love, Hate and Propaganda* – for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Société Radio-Canada in Montreal and CBC in Toronto), to be broadcast in French and English. (The two versions, while being very similar, differed in some aspects.) This experience is the subject of this chapter – a testimony rather than an analysis – and it shows both a common vision of the twentieth century and our insistence that history should not be confined to the academic elite, but that the wider public should also feel part of it. Therefore, we would be analysing both how to produce a discussion of the past – what I call a historiology – and some elements of the history of propaganda needed to explain our choices.

The project: Re-reading the Second World War

David Welch and I were very aware of the importance of documentary films in history writing, but when we were contacted by Radio-Canada/CBC we did not realize quite how great was the organization's wish to produce a serious work of reference, nor how extensive were its means. (I had been put in touch with the team thanks to the film

director Léon Laflamme. He passed on my name to Peter Ingles, the producer and head of the project. Shortly thereafter, I receive an unexpected telephone call.) For me, my first discussion with the producer was a delight. I had been working on visual images, media and propaganda for 15 years,¹ and suddenly a producer called me to ask if a film on this subject would be likely to show the Second World War in a different light. The idea was to show the full breadth of the conflict and its violence through the interpretative screen of the tragic methods used to convince the people. I was not only convinced but enthusiastic.

And so in spring 2008 work began with this strange transcultural Radio-Canada/CBC team. First of all, we had to provide the journalists and producers with some ideas to help them construct their series. They needed guidance in three areas: dates and turning points that we considered essential, small individual stories and depictions of ordinary people which would enable viewers to identify with past events and the names of colleagues who could contribute to this documentary. So, that was the simple, modest task they set us!

It was a very ambitious undertaking, and this informed all of our decisions. To understand how ambitious a project it was we need to go back to its genesis, when Marc Starowicz, the person in charge of documentaries at CBC, started discussions at the beginning of 2008 with Jean Pelletier about how to kick off commemorations in 2009 for the 70th anniversary of the Second World War.² They wanted something to make a strong impact on the public spirit at a time when the last witnesses to and survivors of the conflict were disappearing. It seemed to them all the more important since each new generation, in Canada as elsewhere, is less directly concerned by the dramas experienced by their ancestors. So, the two people in charge of intercultural programmes, Sue Dando at CBC and Peter Ingles at Radio-Canada, were asked to find an angle on the Second World War that would appeal as much to children as to their parents and indeed grandparents. We found this out when we had already become part of the team. They had discussed several ideas: young people in the war, asking celebrities or using the cinema to relate the war ... Each idea had its drawbacks: too one-sided for some, too narrowly focussed for others ... What should be the main subject?

The second ambition helped decide the main subject: those in charge, like the team of journalists which was being lined up, wanted a critical dimension to the project. Through the series, the viewer had to be given the opportunity to discuss the choices made by those in charge of politics and by partisan organizations. It was not enough just to broadcast an educational programme; what was required was to expose the institutional and social mechanisms which had been capable of producing effects as serious as those experienced in the Second World War. Thus emerged the idea of criticizing the manipulation of information, leadership cults and the role of visual images in the moulding of public opinion. Naturally, the concept of propaganda came out of these exchanges. People associate the term 'propaganda' with ideology and the blinding of a population by a totalitarian regime. At the same time, they see the logic of censorship, of control and mobilization of the masses as a consequence of war.

The two pillars of the nascent documentary series were, then, the ability to speak to a young audience and to sharpen their critical faculties. The idea was not to commemorate the path to freedom in hallowed terms but to show the history of the war

through propaganda. There was to be no hagiography; we would also have to evaluate the sometimes doubtful practices of the Allied forces during the conflict. Finally, a consensus emerged that we had to present incontestable facts as well as choosing others, less well known, but which showed the involvement of ordinary, anonymous people. So there could be a sequence on Leni Riefenstahl, and another on an ordinary nurse during the Blitz, or perhaps a passage featuring the life of a Canadian worker obliged to work on a mass production line.

So the English- and French-language teams set to work on the first six films of *Love, Hate and Propaganda*, dealing with the Second World War.³ David Welch's and my roles were parallel. We began to reread the synopses, and we indicated the points that we thought should be re-examined, suggesting solutions. Then we passed on the names of colleagues who could help, often confirming choices already made by the journalists and producers, who had by now practically become experts through devoting so much time to the project. We had formed friendly relations with these people and met with them if they came to London or Paris for business regarding the series. I particularly remember a lively discussion with Claude Berardelli in the Café Select in Montparnasse and a session in the hotel-room-cum-film-studio where the French contributors were filmed. Aurélie Luneau, a historian who has become a leading light on the France Culture radio station, was one of the discoveries of the series. Another was the young author of an excellent book on war propaganda, Aristotle Kallis.⁴ Then we met the whole team – in Toronto for David Welch and Montreal for me. Often we had to make adjustments to our contributions, to fill in missing information or to liven up the tone. Then we checked the films during editing for possible problems.

The presenters were chosen by the TV channels only later, with the aim of creating a tone that would appeal to and retain young viewers. The two rising stars chosen were Catherine Mercier for French-speaking Canada and George Stroumboulopoulos for the English speakers. The series was finally broadcast between March and April 2010, so meticulous was the verification of all the work.

It was a success with viewers, and this success was repeated in festivals. It was praised in the TV journals and was well received in the area of historic documentaries, in particular at the New York professional festival. We were proud of this success because our aesthetic choices were bold and the tone finally adopted was lighter and livelier than that in classic works. Subsequently, the series was shown in other countries, such as in France on Télé Monte Carlo (TMC, a subsidiary of the TF1 group), where it was very well received. However, legal constraints limited broadcasting, since rights to use archival footage for worldwide distribution had not been acquired.

Ready for the follow-up: The Cold War

Thanks to this success, the two Canadian channels decided to make a sequel to this project. We chose to deal with a period nearer the present day, rather than going back to the Great War. The reason was simple: commemorations for the First World War would not begin until 2014, leaving us time to examine other periods. We decided

as a team on the Cold War. No fewer than four films would cover this period, and we prepared papers showing the purpose and main elements of these films. We met with the producers in Montreal before launching the operation, and it was decided to follow similar work processes to those in the first series.

For *The Cold War*, the crucial thing was to present events often considered as of minor importance, having less impact on collective memory than a traditional 'open' war with clearly defined enemies. For the distinctive feature of the Cold War was that it exported conflict from the West and maintained a strange peace between the main protagonists, the USSR and the United States. We took into account famous people as well as the lives of exemplary figures, such as Artur London, whose experience of captivity and torture in the USSR enabled insight into Soviet manipulation of justice in show trials. As an example of American manipulation of justice, we used the case of President Arbenz of Guatemala. The Space Race also had an important place, but for me the sequence most emblematic for the angle we had chosen was the Kitchen Debate of 1959 (a series of impromptu exchanges, through interpreters, between then US vice president Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow). This involved archive images, a reference to youth movements, analysis of national leaders' actions and commentary from the historians, all shedding light on how political ideas interfered with daily life. We were mindful throughout to avoid bias, and that we had to allow every actor the opportunity that he had enjoyed, in real life, of convincing his listeners.

The Cold War series took shape, with its visible stand-offs and its secret antagonisms underpinning the protagonists' strategies for global influence. Basically, this long stretch of time, 1945–90, gives us a remarkable insight into the propagandists' behind-the-scenes activity. The series yet again was very favourably received and had international success. This time CBC and Radio-Canada had anticipated success and had sold the rights in many countries, so it was broadcast and retransmitted several times.

Terrorism in images

The adventure continued with *The War on Terror*. This time the two consultants, David Welch and I, had a hand in the editing and in deciding the approach we would take, working alongside those in charge, the journalists and producers. At the meeting in Montreal, the stakes were high as no history of the recent terror attacks had as yet been undertaken. It was 2011 and the wave of ISIS attacks in Europe was yet to take place. The interest in the subject was mainly prompted by the 11 September 2001 attack in New York, whose tenth anniversary was about to be commemorated. The key issue was to remain committed to a history that dared to show the links between causality and consequence, at the risk of appearing positivist. Our journalist colleagues were also aware of the political risks of the programme at a time when populist movements were rearing their heads.

For David Welch, the essential thing was to reveal the lies and strategies of all those involved, and this determination followed on from the unmasking of the lies of the

Bush and Blair administrations. A classic historical question had to be addressed. When to start the analysis of the series of events which culminated in 9/11? An initial hypothesis was to start with the event itself, then to look at its effects on the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. A second possibility was to start the action earlier, with the development of international terrorism – especially the PLO and Carlos ‘The Jackal’ – at the end of the 1960s. The disadvantage of this more Eurocentric vision was that Islamist terrorism became somewhat diluted, mixed in with other movements, most notably the far-left proletarian ones of Italy and Germany, whose kidnappings, executions and random attacks constituted a sort of propaganda.

At last a third way emerged, which we kept to: to take as a starting point the changed situation which gave rise to jihadist Islamic movements and their entry into conflict with the west. Al-Qaeda was to be a point of reference for the editing. So we moved the discussion to the trigger point. Should we talk about how it was formed to oppose the Soviet Union in Afghanistan? Would a sentence be enough or was a long sequence needed? The threat posed by Al-Qaeda to the West began when America stationed extra troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. Who was responsible? There again, the subject itself imposed a logic: terrorism should be explained as a means of propaganda and a subject of interest to the media. The triggering of this conflict gave rise to a powerful campaign in America to influence opinion, and it did succeed among a public initially hostile to a new conflict. Thus, Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait and the American reaction became our point of departure. We then moved forward to those strange individual attacks known in the Anglo-Saxon world as ‘lone-wolf’ attacks, a concept that has since been discredited by short-sighted journalists who refuse to accept the local origin of the aggressors.

Watching *The Cold War* again today what is apparent is its historical balance, and the neutral stance of the makers, when there could have been a distinct pro-Western bias, if not in fact an attempt to downplay the responsibilities of one side or the other for acts of violence. Once again, the series was very successful and was broadcast internationally.

The First World War

Only the First World War remained to wrap up this series, which closely examined the twentieth century through its dramas and its most manipulative activities. The script was written. Peter Ingles had asked me for a synopsis in order to justify the development phase. We knew that the approaching centenary would ensure that the programme would feed off the passion for this collective memory, which nourishes so many associations, and the channel directors and unit heads agreed to proceed. But then the Canadian government launched drastic budget cuts, and CBC and Radio-Canada had to make their sacrifices on the broadcasters’ altar of the balanced budget. The intercultural service was the first victim of this pressure, which led to a reduction in high-quality operations even when audience figures were good. Sue Dando and Peter Ingles announced this premature ending to us with frank kindness. They shared our grief.

Three contributions to the knowledge of propaganda

In all, no fewer than twelve films were made for *Love, Hate and Propaganda*: six for *World War II for a New Generation*, four for *The Cold War* and two for *The War on Terror*. Like David Welch, I'm very proud of this work. It allowed us to share an interpretation of propaganda and to give a platform to young (sometimes less so) historians. But the contribution of this series goes beyond that. I have watched the episodes again, and looked again at the critiques, and it seems to me that in historiological terms it is particularly valuable, and to conclude I'd like to stress this contribution.

The first contribution of the series is that it helped rehabilitate the concept of propaganda. Let us not fool ourselves. In the Anglo-Saxon world from the 1960s, and with a slight delay in the French-speaking world, the concept of propaganda was considered outmoded with regard to describing the practices of governments and advertising, or indeed of militant journalists. It was filed on the shelf of intellectual obsolescence, and those who studied institutions and political actors who in their own age had used such vocabulary, such as Nazis, fascists or communists, were seen solely as historians, incapable of contributing to an understanding of the present, or of the structures which shape the future.⁵ This movement to discredit the study of propaganda was particularly strong in the 1990s, when all the parties and trade unions were winding up their propaganda structures and replacing them with communications or public relations departments. So, propaganda disappeared and was relegated to the past.

David Welch and I were not, in fact, that obsessed by the concept of propaganda, but retaining the study of it was a way of showing how underlying the democratic world there are strategic tensions which can pervert behaviour. Our belief in the power of analysis through propaganda was strengthened when we witnessed, from 1989, during the Romanian revolution, the flourishing of the old methods of censorship and consensus building based on false news.

The series, by taking up again the word 'propaganda' after the lies of the Iraq invasion of 1990 and more importantly of 2003, renewed links with an intellectual tradition that naïve exponents of 'communications' thought they could get rid of by sheer force of will.⁶ For David Welch and myself, we saw what we had been advocating in the academic world confirmed on the television scene.⁷ It's not hard to imagine our satisfaction.

Second, the series put the accent on political feelings, and emotions. There again, we were delighted that it fully complied with our historiographical approach.⁸ The series used the concepts of hatred and love as a filter through which to interpret the history of the twentieth century. In this way, it went beyond physical conflicts and ideological differences. Propaganda transcends national, religious and sentimental differences and it has to be weighed up against the need for the freedom of the individual. In ethical terms, our series quite simply defended the right to fair and correct information.

Finally, the series was richly illustrated with archival images and on-the-spot filming of events. It might seem like a truism, but for researchers like us whose work has been devoted to the history of the fixed and moving image, this approach had to be fundamental to the series, since our films were analysing propaganda acts and

their effects on the mindset of the public. So it was taken as given that graphic and cinematographic representations were key factors in the creation of mental images. The critical part of the series consisted in using the history of these representations as the main conduit for critical analysis. Hence, expert commentary on the filmed documents, while imparting knowledge and historical elements, was at the same time able to make the viewer beware of taking what the images depicted as gospel truth. In short, there was an educational purpose underlying the documentary series.

What can I say about this experience, other than that it provided the opportunity for visual images to show ideas and facts crucial to our history, ideas and facts not always seen as an integral part of political history? Undoubtedly, to be perfectly truthful, I must add that this was also the opportunity for me to meet David Welch, the man hidden behind the historian.

Notes

- 1 My first book on the topic was *Images et propagande* (Paris, 1995).
- 2 Statement by Peter Ingles, 15 May 2017.
- 3 As this was the first of the sub-series within *Love, Hate and Propaganda*, it did not have a subtitle at this stage. It was later known as *World War II for a New Generation*.
- 4 Aristotle A. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 2005).
- 5 See Fabrice d'Almeida, 'Propagande – Histoire d'un mot disgracié', *Mots*, 69 (July 2002), pp. 137–48.
- 6 See David Welch and Jo Fox (eds), *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age* (Basingstoke, 2012); and David Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (London, 2013).
- 7 For my part, Fabrice d'Almeida, *Propagande, une histoire mondiale* (Paris, 2015).
- 8 Since then Anthony Rowley and Fabrice d'Almeida, *Quand l'histoire nous prend par les sentiments* (Paris, 2013), has appeared.

Epilogue

‘We are all propagandists now’: Propaganda in the twenty-first century

David Welch

*Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies . . .
May I, . . .
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.*

—W. H. Auden, 1 September 1939

A new century has brought with it new questions, propelled not least by astonishing technological developments, and these have reshaped the relationship between politics, propaganda and public opinion. Enormous social and technological changes have profoundly changed our lives over the past 150 years. The essays in this volume reflect both the subtlety and complexity of the term ‘propaganda’ and demonstrate the impact that changing technology has had on its dissemination. I have spent my academic life attempting to show how the dissemination of propaganda has changed (or not, as the case may be) as a result of these developments – in times of both war and peace. Focussing largely on the twentieth century, I have identified four key themes: the importance of nationhood and leadership, how states have attempted to promote and maintain a healthy population, how wars have been justified and how perceived enemies have been targeted in order to mobilize mass support in times of war.¹ In this epilogue, however, I would like to reflect on changes that have taken place in the twenty-first century, on the manner in which such changes produce new phenomena, and on the challenges that we currently face and are likely to experience in the future.

Measuring the impact of propaganda is problematic and it is not my intention to analyse it here, nor to scrutinize the historiographical debates that have ensued about the success or otherwise of specific propaganda campaigns. Instead, I want to address how technological developments in the twenty-first century have changed the relationship between politics, propaganda and public opinion and to reflect briefly on a new phenomenon known as ‘fake news’ – or ‘post-truth’.

A recurring theme in my work has been the role played by propaganda in times of war. In the twenty-first century, especially since 9/11, there has arisen a new form of conflict known as 'asymmetrical warfare', a term which has become part of our vocabulary. The advent of Total War in the First World War changed forever the relationship between the media and old-style diplomacy and need for secrecy, since the 'new' media had the power to shape public opinion, which politicians most fear. The Second World War reinforced these trends. The changing nature of international crises from the Cold War to a post-Cold War context, together with rapidly changing technology, has transformed both the nature of warfare and its reportage. The Vietnam War was arguably a watershed, particularly the way it was covered by television.² At the end of the 1980s, as the Cold War was coming to an end, the term 'information warfare' started to gain currency. In subsequent 'limited' and 'asymmetric' wars, and in the 'war on terror', discussion has shifted to the importance of 'soft power' (information operations), 'psyops' (psychological operations), public diplomacy and the appropriation by the military of public-relations and strategic communications approaches.

Partly as a result of America's defeat in Vietnam in the 1970s, military psychological warfare had entered a period of decline and discredit. President Reagan was responsible for revitalizing US psychological operations in the 1980s. At a strategic level, this involved flooding the Soviet bloc with Western propaganda – especially after the arrival of satellite TV and new communication technologies such as video cassette, fax and mobile phones. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, President George H. W. Bush was persuaded to incorporate psyops as an integral part of Operation Desert Storm. As a result, psyops came of age. Operation Desert Storm is commonly associated with modern media technology ('media war'); however, one of the oldest forms of propaganda devices – the leaflet – was extensively employed by psyops. More than 29 million leaflets (approximately 29 tons) were disseminated between 30 December 1990 and 28 February 1991. Sixty-nine thousand Iraqis surrendered or deserted (invariably carrying 'safe conduct' passes which were part of the dropped leaflets) – many more than were actually killed. The leaflets were crude and no more sophisticated than those employed in the First World War.

Revealingly, the Second Gulf War in 2003 continued where Operation Desert Storm left off. US and British 'Coalition' forces intensified the use of psychological operations. The United States has a long tradition of radio psyops that can be traced back to the Vietnam War. Similar broadcasts were used in campaigns in Afghanistan to persuade citizens to reveal Taliban and Al-Qaeda factions. In the Second Gulf War, the United States engaged in a comprehensive airwaves campaign to soften its enemy and soothe its population at home. Spearheading the electronic propaganda campaign were converted C-130 cargo planes from the US Air Force Special Operations Command fleet, transmitting a mixture of Arabic and Western music and spoken announcements to the troops and citizens of Iraq, urging them not to fight and telling them how to surrender. The planes were the Coalition's weapons of mass persuasion. The radio transmissions were backed up once again by an intense leaflet-dropping campaign. Over 17 million leaflets were dispersed in the first week of the war, offering detailed information on how to signal surrender to advancing Coalition troops. Warnings on

the leaflets included the following: 'Attacking Coalition aircraft invites your destruction. Do not risk your life and the lives of your comrades. Leave now and go home. Watch your children learn, grow and prosper.' Thus, persuasion was employed in association with force.

If the war in Kosovo (1998–9) marked the decline of the 'old news' (network television, broadsheet newspapers and current affairs journals) in favour of 'new news' (satellite and cable television, tabloid newspapers and television and radio chat shows), the military itself became increasingly concerned about image management and with 'information control'. Professional military communicators have recognized that technology has not only freed the media from the physical constraints under which war correspondents used to labour but also that, with twenty-four-hour rolling news and the proliferation of international news agencies such as Al Jazeera, the world media is going to be present at sites of conflict in large numbers and must therefore be factored into their own strategic thinking. Moreover, globalization has thrown up new challenges to the West's previous domination. Al Jazeera is an example of this impact on the Arab world. What we are now witnessing is a more volatile news environment and this will profoundly affect foreign affairs as well as journalism – and propaganda.

The Second Gulf War, for example, produced a number of technological shifts in the reporting of war, particularly the decision to 'embed' reporters and television journalists as actual members of the invasion forces, allowing on the one hand a direct immediacy never before possible, and on the other hand introducing a new intensity of information overload. The multitude of news channels beaming constant images attracted two different types of criticism. Some critics suggested the twenty-four-hour news channels were little more than purveyors of 'war porn' for the manner in which they broadcast relentless images without context or explanation. Other critics feared that too much reality could have serious effects on morale. To put such fears in historical context: how long could the governments of Asquith and Lloyd George have maintained the war effort had the public been able to see live coverage from the First World War? Imagine the carnage of the Somme on Sky and BBC News 24; and would it have been possible to evacuate 300,000 troops from Dunkirk under the scrutiny of twenty-four-hour rolling news?

In contemporary warfare, governments have attempted to influence the media through what the military termed 'perception management' – a euphemism for propaganda. In terms of military–media relations, one of the consequences of the increasing sophistication of the military's media operations that we have witnessed since the lessons learnt in the aftermath of the Vietnam War is the accusation of 'spin' or manipulation. The rise of professional military communicators since 2001 (and the shift to what the Pentagon termed 'perception management') created a situation whereby the media became part of the problem and not the solution. At the time of the First Gulf War in 1991, the military was firmly in control of the media; but by 2003 and the invasion of Iraq, power had shifted to politicians who were now in control of state–media relations and the information environment. The years of fruitless war in Afghanistan, together with the contested history of the Iraq War (the Second Gulf War), have resulted in an unprecedented concentration of 'communication power' within a political elite. Furthermore, the current 'war on terror' continues to shape domestic

public and political perceptions toward a chronic sense of insecurity. Following the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, the question of 'security' largely shaped the political debate in the latter half of the June 2017 British general election campaign.

But what do we mean when we speak of a 'war on terror' – which has now lasted for over eighteen years? Following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration justified its response by announcing the 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT), arguing that it had the right and ability to pursue Al-Qaeda and any other state or group which harboured them and their leader, Osama bin Laden. By declaring a global *war* on terror, the West invoked Article 51 of the UN Charter, that is the right to self-defence, and in the process empowered the terrorists with the status of 'warriors' – something that groups such as Al-Qaeda shrewdly exploited in their own counter-propaganda against the West.

The long information war is a war of ideas, a global struggle for hearts and minds. The GWOT is a battle of indefinite duration – although it has taken the West a long time to recognize this. For the West (led by the United States), it was conceived against the backdrop of 9/11 (which represented an extraordinary David versus Goliath propaganda coup for Al-Qaeda) and terms such as 'Operation Infinite Justice' and 'Operation Enduring Freedom' framed the immediate response in Afghanistan and Iraq. 'Islamofascism' was defined in the United States as a dangerous, militant ideology on the march worldwide – preying on the disadvantaged and deluded – not dissimilar to communism in the Cold War.

The decision to extend the war from Afghanistan to Iraq represented a major propaganda error (leaving aside the moral arguments) on the part of the Bush administration. Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States had an opportunity to tap into the groundswell of positive world opinion that was exemplified by *Le Monde's* famous front page: 'We are all Americans now.' By claiming that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and had links with Jihadist groups, the American-led invasion confirmed all that Osama bin Laden had said since his Jihad against the United States in 1998. The United States talked about 'infinite justice' and 'enduring freedom' (liberal, Western values) but Al-Qaeda presented the Americans not as liberators intent on bringing democracy but as invaders intent on occupying and destroying the Muslim world. The invasion therefore represented a wonderful opportunity for Al-Qaeda propaganda. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 ('Operation Iraqi Freedom') allowed bin Laden to declare Baghdad as the centre for the new Caliphate, and foreign Muslim fighters responded. The GWOT now had a new battlefield and at the same time it emboldened the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Did news media instigate a *debate* to justify the war in Iraq? Essentially no – such questions were viewed by the Bush administration as unpatriotic (underpinned by the shock and magnitude of 9/11). The cudgel of patriotism prevented the healthy dynamism needed between political leaders and public atrophies. Following 9/11, the larger public was generally under-informed about the nature of the war in Iraq. The great failing of US media coverage was its complicity – the circumstances that led to 9/11 and justification for war merited critical, detached, scrutiny.

The toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad was intended to be a symbolic act that represented the swift conclusion to a campaign of 'shock and awe' (which hardly squared with slogans such as 'enduring freedom'). It mimicked events in

the Second World War when US marines planted the stars and stripes on Iwo Jima, or when Soviet troops unfolded their flag from the smouldering Reichstag in Berlin. The event was depicted in the Western media as widely celebrated by frenzied Iraqis, yet in retrospect we know that it was largely constructed and editorialized by the US military. The images and the accompanying rhetoric suggested that a short war was over rather than the truer picture that a long war was only just beginning.

Technology may have changed the way in which wars are now reported, but it has also introduced new tyrannies: the need to service twenty-four-hour rolling news channels ('the tyranny of time'), editorial interference from a distance, greater visual gimmickry and less interest in the wider context. The coverage of the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein is a case in point. This has led to charges that current war journalism (often referred to as 'infotainment') produces less detailed and analytical information than in the past.

It is also true that fundamental changes in the nature of warfare have affected both the ability to cover wars and the style of reporting. Asymmetric warfare is going to be the dominant form of conflict in the modern age, simply because of the lack of enemies capable of contemplating a conventional war against the major industrial powers. So, in the face of conventional firepower, the weaker state or organization uses different weaponry. Al-Qaeda is the first guerrilla movement to migrate from physical space to cyberspace. We are now entering a new phase in which small groups, operating without overt state sponsorship, are able to exploit the vulnerability of 'open' societies. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and more recently ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also known by its Arabic-language acronym DAESH) represent a new and profoundly dangerous type of organization, 'virtual states', borderless but global in scope. Al-Qaeda and ISIS now have access to the means of communications through the internet (and other social networks), and this changes the dynamics of the propaganda war. The internet has provided terrorists with a vast cyber-recruitment arena. Internet chat rooms are supplementing and replacing mosques, community centres and coffee shops. Al-Qaeda's main propaganda outlet is its media production house As-Sahab ('The Clouds'), whose overriding aim is that of promoting global Jihad. Distributed through Arab TV networks (Al Jazeera, Al-Arabia, local Pakistani television stations), As-Sahab uploads its propaganda, known as the 'martyrdom videos', on to YouTube – a format favoured by younger audiences. The numbers and quality of these videos have increased and improved incrementally since 2005 and have been widened to include documentary-quality films, iPod files and mobile phone videos.

More recently, ISIS has gained prominence and started to employ propaganda even more widely than Al-Qaeda. ISIS's Amaq news agency is notorious for its execution videos. However, together with the hard-core battle footage, Amaq also attempts to depict what everyday life is like in the so-called Islamic State in idyllic terms. The Islamic State has long issued a steady torrent of sophisticated propaganda to demonize its enemies, inspire its followers and advance its cause in general. To this end, Amaq is just one element in ISIS's propaganda machine that includes a sophisticated glossy-style magazine, *Dabiq*, which is published online and in multiple languages and replaced by *Rumiyah* in 2016. ISIS propaganda portrays the Islamic State as they see

themselves: boasting of their victories and painting a romantic image of the restoration of an Islamic golden age and the heralding of a new caliphate based on holy war. In 2016, a pocket-sized fifty-five-page guide for information warfare entitled *Media Operative, You Are a Mujahid* provided advice as to how Islamic State media operations should be constructed, claiming, 'Media weapons [can] actually be more potent than atomic bombs.' Underpinning Islamic State's impressive outreach success in attracting recruits and inspiring terror attacks, it now recruits Jihadi 'media operatives' to disseminate its message: 'It is no exaggeration to say that the media operative [can] actually be more potent than atomic bombs' and has 'far-reaching potential to change the balance in respect to the war between the Muslims and their enemies'. The booklet continued, 'Media operatives are at the forefront of the conflict, in the heart of the war, within the furnace of its battles. They participate alongside their brothers, fighting against the enemies of Allah on the Earth and raising aloft the flag of Jihad.'³ In short, for terrorist and aggrieved groups who want to destroy the status quo, cyberspace is now a major battlefield, and the 'war' is one of ideas.

Since early 2009, the 'War on Terror' has been downplayed in official documents both in the United States and the UK, as it was recognized that, through the amplification provided by global media channels, it was fuelling the terrorists' rhetoric of a Western 'crusade' against Islam. In March 2009, the US Defense Department officially changed the name of operations from 'Global War on Terror' to 'Overseas Contingency Operation', and President Barack Obama stopped referring to a 'war on terror' in his speeches. The killing of bin Laden in May 2011 by US Special Forces represented a major propaganda coup for the president. This was timely, as for some time the West had been losing the propaganda war against Al-Qaeda and, more recently, ISIS. The death of bin Laden, together with events following the Arab Spring, weakened (at least in the short term) Al-Qaeda's fundamentalist propaganda appeal to sections of the Muslim world. The subsequent military incursions of ISIS in Iraq and its aggressive recruitment programme, together with its sustained terrorist activities in the Middle East and Europe, have challenged once again the way in which, in the past, governments could largely control the coverage and shape the narrative. (Revealingly, both Russia and China appear to be bucking this trend by continuing to shape the wider media narrative through their insidious anti-Western propaganda and their censorship of social media and the conventional media.)⁴ For this reason, we cannot understand terrorism in the twenty-first century – let alone counter it effectively – unless we understand the rapidly changing process of communication and the nature of the propaganda that underpins it.

'There are no longer readers, only writers': Is *everyone* a propagandist now?

And what of the role of citizens in all this? Have the 'new media' freed them from the tyranny of oppressive government? How is propaganda changing with the internet, social media, mobile technology, advertising and the press? Can propaganda still be

identified, given the prevalence of communication methods and the sophistication of the originators? In the age of Facebook, Twitter and internet bots (applications that perform automated tasks – also known as Web robots), is everyone a propagandist? What is the role of state propaganda in the twenty-first century and where does it go next? Is our democracy moving into cyberspace and will the values of the internet prevail? We have seen in recent times that virtual campaigns on Facebook and Twitter have resulted in a number of witch-hunts which at times appear to be above the law (veritable global megaphones for gossip). Bots have been used to launch malicious and inflammatory attacks on individuals, groups and government and to spread so-called 'fake news' (more of this later).⁵ Edges are dangerously blurred between what happens online (the lawless place we call the internet) and mainstream media. The Labour Party's 2017 election campaign successfully mobilized large numbers of young voters through its extensive and coordinated use of social media and mobile technology demonstrating not only a growing age divide when it comes to accessing 'information' but also the ineffectiveness of mainstream media (certainly as far as the young are concerned) in a digital age.⁶

In governmental departments all over the globe, teams are now assembled whose sole responsibility is to monitor the world according to social media. Thus, the traditional flow of information from news providers to the reading/listening public has been inverted. So is *real* power shifting from a judicious mainstream to the texting and Twitter mob? In some ways, there is purity in 'virtual democracy': it reflects the public mood in real time – it is difficult to rig and sometimes 'truth' is flushed out. However, politics by Facebook and Twitter rarely adds up to considered, rational debate. It is a visceral, communal response, and governments are becoming extremely scared by it. Old-fashioned focus groups in a room appear irrelevant against thousands of tweeters suddenly getting angry about something. With politics conducted on social media sites and with no judicious rules applying, it is almost inevitable that standards and values that underpin civilized behaviour in the real world do not always apply. It is now possible to 'google' any accusations made against individuals, governments and companies without the need to verify the facts.

We have, on the other hand, witnessed the positive aspects of the new media. The Arab Spring which started in Tunisia in December 2010 resulted in a wave of uprisings and regime takeovers in the Middle East. The new media (particularly the mobile phone) is credited with facilitating growing citizen discontent in the region. Former dictators were simply unable to control the speed and flow of information. Similarly in the fields of health or the provision of aid to counter natural disasters, non-state players and individuals may contest government decisions, or criticize the lack of resolve at state level. Social media can therefore generate a spontaneity that may lead to direct action. Equally, the internet and social networks have allowed individuals and groups to challenge medical orthodoxy and provide 'alternative' advice and treatments. Generally speaking, these can only be positive developments, in that they provide different layers of information. The problem arises from the sheer plurality of sources and the volume of information in cyberspace. How can one navigate such a vast reservoir of information and verify its authenticity?

‘Fake news’ and ‘post-truth’

The internet and social media have transformed communication, giving disinformation and deception in markets and politics added potency. Deep professional and ethical concerns deter mainstream media from resorting to such practice and adopting the values of the internet, although there are troubling signs that the mainstream media is edging in that direction. If democracy completes its journey into cyberspace, there will remain huge questions about what the nature of this democracy will be.

Such questions and concerns have recently been given added urgency by the rise of a new phenomenon variously referred to as ‘fake news’ and/or ‘post-truth’ that has arisen on social media. Indeed, the Oxford Dictionary’s Word of the Year for 2016 was ‘post-truth’, which it defines as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. ‘Fake news’ is related, though not identical, to the concept of ‘post-truth’ and has been defined as ‘news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false – particularly with political implications, and especially those that gain enormous traction in the popular imagination.’⁷ Concerns about ‘fake news’ or ‘post-truth’ persuaded the House of Common’s Culture, Media and Sport Committee in January 2017 to launch an inquiry into the issue.⁸

The current resurgence of the term began soon after the US presidential election on 8 November 2016, with speculation that false news stories concerning the two main candidates could have had an impact on the outcome of the election. The stories in question included – among many others – claims that Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump for the presidency, that Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton had sold weapons to ISIS, that Trump supporters were engaging in racist chants at an election victory party. An analysis by *BuzzFeed News* has claimed that ‘in the final three months of the US presidential campaign, the top-performing fake election news stories on Facebook generated more [reader] engagement than the top stories from major news outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, *NBC News* and others.’⁹

‘Fake news’ has come into the spotlight because of the role it is alleged to have played in the US presidential election and in the UK’s Brexit result in the referendum on the European Union. However, it has not been convincingly demonstrated that it had a decisive role in determining the outcome of the 2016 presidential election and there are good reasons to be wary of suggestions that a democratic outcome was the result of people being duped by ‘fake news’. Most of these items came from opaque and hitherto unknown media outlets. Among the most widely shared were stories that made false claims about Hillary Clinton and her campaign team. In the UK, the Brexit result has sometimes been attributed to ‘fake news’. However, the examples of ‘fake news’ repeatedly cited are politicians’ campaign statements (such as the ‘£350m a week for the NHS [National Health Service]’ claim) and partisan press coverage, which do not fall within any rigorous definition of ‘fake news’.¹⁰

‘Fake news’ is not a new term, nor is there anything new in revelations that politicians and governments have been shown to have lied to their people (especially in times of war). What is new is the public’s response to it. We evidently are quite happy to believe

untruths and the concomitant replacement of verification with media algorithms that tell us what we want to hear. Where, therefore, do we find the roots and antecedent of this resurgence of 'fake news'? Some academics and journalists attribute this new concept to the rise of a new kind of 'post-truth' politics – an expression of frustration and anguish from a liberal class discombobulated by the political and economic disruptions of 2016. I would suggest, however, that the recent phenomenon of 'fake news' began with the disinformation ('spin') that accompanied the Iraq War (2003). The continuous claim on the part of the perpetrators that they acted in good faith, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, convinced the public that indifference to truth by the political establishment had become the norm in politics. This resulted in a long-term toxic mistrust of government and so-called experts. The fact that former prime minister Tony Blair and senior figures of his government continue to remain in stubborn denial suggests not only a 'hyper-reality' – that evidence and 'truth' are irrelevant in the face of an unbending instinct – but also gives rise to the conviction that reality is shaped through the exercise of power. As Blair stated in his speech to the Labour Party conference in September 2004, 'I only know what I believe.'¹¹

What is the nature of the sites on social media disseminating 'fake news'? 'Fake-news' sites are staffed not by journalists but by individuals who see a commercial, political or other opportunity in gaining the algorithms Facebook, Google and other networks and platforms use to connect their users with news stories. 'Fake news' travels fast on social media, where algorithms connect users (mainly the younger generation) to news by second-guessing what the user might like, rather than assessing the quality of the source. As it thrives, it attracts advertisers hungry for audiences in the digital environment. Digital programmatic advertising follows these people with their own algorithms that track their 'clicks', 'shares' and 'likes' and places advertising wherever they browse. Internet and social media have transformed communication, giving disinformation and deception in markets and politics added potency. This may partly be explained by the economics of information. Social media provides not only individual platforms to express views and prejudice and conspiracy theories but also an economic platform as well. Witness the trend in the wake of the June 2017 Manchester bombings, where, using social media and driven by an insatiable desire to register more 'hits' on their individual sites, people started spreading 'fake news' claiming to have been present and capitalizing on the event, oblivious to the suffering of victims' families. Such 'fake news' is almost entirely governed by a desire for personal aggrandizement. Truth and evidence are secondary to the expression of individual prejudices that encourage similarly minded people and groups to coalesce around blinkered messages in a sort of news in a fact-free vacuum.

'Fake news' combines or contains elements of propaganda, conspiracy theory and rumour. In a very basic sense, 'fake news' is 'information' known by its creator or disseminator to be false, masquerading as a genuine news story. 'Fake news' or 'post-truth' can fend off even incontestable facts (the so-called 'backfire effect'). It is designed to mislead or misrepresent. Like propaganda, 'fake news' is dynamic and flexible, and, like propaganda, the problem is not primarily definition but function and effect. False news has always been present in the form of rumour. However, it is now more visible, through the manifold and diverse media channels available to and created by the

public and through the extensive publicity given to the phenomenon of 'fake news' in the mainstream media. One consequence of this is the emergence of the notion of 'denialism', which challenges accepted authoritative opinion with a 'better', more acceptable truth (Holocaust denial would be a good example). Denialism has moved from the fringes to the centre of public discourse, largely due to new technology, which has allowed previous marginal voices to access information more easily and to disseminate it more widely.

There is a danger in overreacting to 'fake news'. Overreaction is likely to intensify existing fascination with it and may incite deep mistrust of government if the proposed solutions are considered excessive or anti-democratic. The concern, and this partly explains why the British government launched its enquiry into 'fake news', is that these unexpected shifts occurred because reason had been subverted by demagogues deploying new information technologies and because voters disregarded argument, reason and evidence in favour of manipulated emotion and 'fake news'. A closer analysis of recent political events suggests far more complex explanations, with social media and mobile technology being one – albeit an important – factor. In a post-Brexit Britain, so-called 'fake news' can be found right across the political spectrum. Most attention has been given to the Brexit campaign's 'direct lie' that a vote to leave the EU would provide £350 million a week for the NHS. Subsequent critical scrutiny of this claim has not ostensibly damaged politicians who voted to Leave, which suggests that many of their supporters did not take such promises literally and that they were propelled by two other, interrelated factors, immigration (EU nationals 'flooding' into the country) and nationalism (regaining of borders and sovereignty).

For their part, the government and the Remain campaign chose not to concentrate on the advantages of remaining a member of the EU but immediately launched 'Project Fear', an emotional appeal about the dire economic and financial consequences of leaving the EU. The campaign deployed unverifiable figures to substantiate a vision of Armageddon. One could argue that while some voters were guided by their own values, others were undoubtedly swayed by the propaganda (one way or the other) and a large minority used their vote to leave, imagining it would be a protest against what was widely perceived to be a cynical political exercise and an expected outcome that Britain would remain in the EU.

But this does not mean that the historic shifts of 2016 were engineered by cyber-leaks or psychometric profiling. While propaganda played an important role in explaining Brexit and Donald Trump's (unexpected) victory, both outcomes were as much a product of the long-standing despair of large numbers of people who feel economically marginalized by a failing liberal democratic system as they were of 'fake news'. This partially explains why a third of those who participated in the French presidential election in May 2017 voted for Marine Le Pen, while more than one in ten went to the ballot box only to submit a spoilt or blank vote. 'Post-truth' politics and 'fake news' too often absolve so-called 'liberals' from responsibility for their defeats and past failures.

However, genuine concerns remain and need to be addressed. The economics of the Web is destroying the possibility of financing serious news and raises the question of whether readers want a cautious fact-checked article when it is cheaper and much

more profitable to follow partisan media outlets such as Breitbart or the Canary.¹² Second, recent political events suggest a rise in anti-intellectualism that feeds popular movements; that at pivotal moments in Western democracies, citizens are increasingly suspicious of so-called 'experts'. There are no longer facts, only interpretations.¹³

Third, there are genuine concerns about what are sometimes referred to as 'digital echo chambers' that are characteristic of internet use. There is evidence to suggest that audiences are increasingly sceptical about the messages which they receive from the media – both online and offline. In times of crisis and uncertainty, some of them turn to voices that echo their own concerns and fears, even if they are strident, extreme, ill-informed and divisive. In this context, the social media have become a platform for reinforcing our opinions, while ignoring points of view we disagree with. 'Fake news' is a modern manifestation of the historic phenomenon of 'improvised news': the process by which individuals spread rumours in order to express emotional reactions, to reinforce the existing prejudices of a targeted audience, test political views and make sense of the world around them.¹⁴ It is connected to inherent behaviours in human communications, especially at times of crisis or uncertainty. What has changed, however, is the scale and speed of transmission. The challenge is to engage with, identify and expose 'fake news' without compromising liberal democratic freedoms. Again, this challenge is not new: it was faced by successive wartime governments.

The problem of 'false news' is set against a backdrop of a changing news culture. The concentrated media landscape that prevailed in the post-war period has given way to a more polarized political culture in which individuals with different political views are less likely to agree on 'facts' or their relative importance. The growth of the internet and mobile technology has created an atomized news culture in which individuals can find evidence to support their conspiracy theory of choice and in which the mechanism for the mass dissemination of 'information' is in the hands of the many with few restrictions or controls. One of the major consequences of the World Wide Web is that there are (largely) no gatekeepers who insist on accuracy before publishing, and lies and conspiracy theories are given the same status as 'truth'.

In this Information Age, it is not unreasonable to expect governments and other groups to conduct propaganda and censorship – in times of both war and peace (e.g. the Bush administration's ban on photographing coffins returning to the United States with the bodies of soldiers killed in action in Afghanistan and Iraq, or generally denying terrorist groups the oxygen of publicity). Equally, citizens and consumers should be able to hold the global elite media to account by demanding viewpoints and perspectives from across the spectrum of public opinion, disseminated by open and diverse channels of communications.

Arguably, propaganda is most effective when it is less noticeable. In a totalitarian regime – indeed in any closed society – propaganda is more obvious and visible and largely tolerated for fear of the consequences of objecting to or questioning the 'message'. In a so-called open society, propaganda is much more problematic when it is hidden and integrated into the political culture. Once exposed, people feel duped and betrayed, and this serves only to reinforce the pejorative association with the practice of propaganda, deemed to be at odds with that open society. Too often, *effective* propaganda is associated with the control of the flow of information and with duplicity

and falsehood. But propaganda has the potential to serve a constructive purpose. Writing in 1928, Edward Bernays, who did so much to frame the nature of modern advertising, argued, 'Propaganda will never die out. Intelligent men must realize that propaganda is the modern instrument by which they can fight for productive ends and help to bring order out of chaos.'¹⁵

Perhaps the key here is the multiplicity of voices. While the opportunities for the sharing of plural viewpoints are greater than ever before, social networks encourage us to spend more time in discussion with those who are likely to share our prejudices and preconceptions. This reinforces pre-existing belief systems that determine whether we choose to accept or reject the information we receive. At the same time, the declining readership and financial pressures faced by newspapers, partly a result of the loss of advertising revenue to the internet, combined with the pressure to break a story in the age of twenty-four-hour rolling news, have discouraged costly investigative reporting and reduced incentives to check information. The growth of the internet has exacerbated the problem of 'fake news' rather than created it. Falsehoods do not rely on the internet to spread but can circulate in print media or as the result of traditional political campaigning. It is perfectly possible to argue that in democracies politics has nothing to fear from propaganda. Propaganda is merely a process of persuasion that forms a normal part of the political dynamic and, as such, it could be argued that we need more propaganda, not less. Citizens have to be more informed and arm themselves with a greater understanding of the nature and processes of the Information Age. Whatever definition of propaganda we choose to use or, indeed, whether we need more or less propaganda – we have been living through *the* age of propaganda. The relationship between politics, propaganda and public opinion is both complex and controversial. It is a relationship that has changed in the light of new technology and different types of warfare. But throughout, propaganda, power and persuasion are all about winning hearts and minds, and that remains as relevant today as it always has. On a positive note, the only lasting solution to the issues outlined above may be found in long-term integrative educational programmes, both on how we receive news in the digital age and on the fundamental belief systems that underpin our democracy. Every generation must refight the battles of the Enlightenment.

Notes

- 1 See, in particular, David Welch, *Propaganda: Power and Persuasion* (London, 2013); *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War II* (London, 2016) and *World War II Propaganda: Analyzing the Art of Persuasion during Wartime* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2017).
- 2 Cf. Daniel C. Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam* (Oxford, 1986) and William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence, KS, 1989) with Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford, 2009).
- 3 Lizzie Dearden, 'Isis Claims Propaganda "More Powerful than Atomic Bomb" as Group Forms Strategy for Survival', *Independent*, 14 February 2017, available at <http://>

www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-propaganda-atomic-bomb-survival-strategy-iraq-syria-islamic-state-icsr-report-amaq-rumiyah-al-a7579511.html (last access 28 July 2018).

- 4 For a perceptive analysis of the Russian experience see Arkady Ostrovsky, *The Invention of Russia: From Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War* (London, 2015). Some would suggest that the insidious propaganda methods of Russia and China have diminished the role of diplomacy in international negotiations. But equally President Trump's instinct to by-pass such well-established channels in favour of more spontaneous and less reflective social media resulted in his extraordinary response to North Korea's 'major' missile launch in September 2017. Admonishing South Korea for attempting to 'appease' a 'rogue nation,' Trump tweeted that 'they [North Korea] "only understand one thing!" ... Fire and fury like the world has never seen': Amy Davidson Sorkin, 'Donald Trump's Reckless Response to North Korea's Nuclear Test', *New York Times*, 3 September 2017.
- 5 A recent study prepared by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom) into Russian attempts to destabilize western Baltic nations considered Twitter-mentions of NATO and one or more of the host countries Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in the period 1 March–30 August 2017. It discovered that two in three Twitter users who write in Russian about the NATO presence in Eastern Europe are robotic or 'bot' accounts. Together, these accounts created 84 per cent of the total Russian-language messages. The English-language space is also heavily affected: one in four active accounts was probably automated and was responsible for 46 per cent of all English-language content. Including bots, Russian-speaking users are thus, on average, twice as active as their English-speaking equivalents. StratCom's headline finding was that 70 per cent of accounts active in Russian were predominantly automated. The equivalent for English-language content is 28 per cent. The report concluded starkly that 'the democratising possibilities of social media appear – at least in the case of Twitter in Russia – to have been greatly undermined. The findings presented have practical implications for any policy maker, journalist, or analyst who measures activity on Twitter. Failure to account for bot activity will – at best – result in junk statistics.' StratCom, *Robotrolling*, 1 (2017), available at <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/robotrolling-20171> (last access 28 July 2018).
- 6 The *Observer* editorial characterized the press and TV as being 'left firing analogue bullets in a digital age': *Observer*, 10 June 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/10/observer-view-general-election-theresa-may-debacle> (last access 28 July 2018).
- 7 This is the definition offered by Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, 'Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31: 2 (2017), pp. 211–36.
- 8 Together with Jo Fox and David Coast, I submitted a written report that can be found on: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/culture-media-and-sport-committee/fake-news/written/48239.html> (last access 28 July 2018). The submission includes historical examples of 'fake news.' I have used some of the points we made in our submission in the following analysis.
- 9 Craig Silverman, 'This Analysis Shows How Viral Fake Election News Stories Outperformed Real News on Facebook', *BuzzFeed News*, 16 November 2016, available

- at <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook> (last access 28 July 2018).
- 10 For three analyses in the spate of the Brexit result and Trump election victory see Matthew d'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London, 2017); James Ball, *Post Truth: How Bullshit Conquered the World* (London, 2017); and Evan Davis, *Post-Truth: Why We Have Reached Peak Bullshit and What We Can Do about It* (London, 2017).
 - 11 The phrase he used in context was, 'Instinct is not science. I'm like any other human being, as fallible and as capable of being wrong. I only know what I believe.' For the full speech, see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3697434.stm (last access 28 July 2018).
 - 12 Ball, *Post Truth*, is particularly strong on explaining the economics of the Web.
 - 13 Witness Kellyanne Conway's (Counsellor to President Trump) use of the phrase 'alternative facts' to explain events that never occurred. Conway's phrase, which does not stand the test of rational analysis, reminded many critics of 'Newspeak', the obfuscating language in George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* (1949).
 - 14 Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (New York, 1966).
 - 15 Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York, 2005), p. 168.

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