

# **British Propaganda: An Analytical Evaluation of British Goals, Strategies and Tactics.**

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### Abstract

This paper investigates and performs analysis into the goals, strategies and tactics of British World War Two propaganda. The paper focuses on two main campaigns as case studies. These two campaigns are the British Home Front and Allied Unity (American Division). The author uses key primary sources and educated analysis as the base for his conclusions. The author also uses knowledgeable secondary sources to support his findings and link his ideas to the greater propaganda history. The paper primarily focuses on the various time tested and innovative propaganda tactics used by the British during this time period. The paper also highlights the main idea that the British propaganda was successful because of its customization to the target audience. The author determined that the British propaganda left a considerable mark on history and is a great source for effective propaganda ideas.

Propaganda has been a part of human history in many shapes and forms. As history progressed, governments became increasingly aware of the power propaganda has on determining the success of their goals domestically and abroad. In order for governments to fulfill their plans they must always convince the civilian populations to cooperate. Like Sun Tzu, intelligent governments know the power of civilian populations and the way they act or believe in a conflict can greatly determine the outcome.<sup>1</sup> As historians it is important to not only recognize the power and impact propaganda has on history, but to understand why it is so powerful. Investigating the intricate details and tactics of campaigns can enlighten us as to what works in propaganda and how the propaganda has been able to leave its considerable mark on history. Looking at British propaganda campaigns can also provide historians with a better understanding of the continuity and change that propaganda has gone through and the idea that persuasion is a dynamic element.

A wise place to start in this lesson would be to look at a well oiled propaganda machine. The British during World War Two were masters of all kinds of media propaganda and they provide a variety of lessons into the powerful elements of effective public persuasion. Two major British Propaganda campaigns show these ideas, being the Home Front and Allied Unity (American persuasion unit). Here the British had to influence the minds of their own citizens as well as convince the citizens of the United States to act in optimal ways respectively. Studying these two campaigns will reveal specifically what goals, strategies, and tactics were used with each campaign. Analysis of these two campaigns for their strategies, tactics, goals and

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<sup>1</sup> Sun, Tzu. *Art of War*. [S.l.]: Pax Librorum H, 2009

effectiveness shows that the British government involved a high degree of customization and forethought into their campaigns in relation to their goals of the target audience behavior. The analysis also shows that the two British propaganda campaigns included a variety of both time tested and revolutionary ideas. Ultimately the study of this data supports the hypothesis that these two campaigns are a continuation of past persuasion ideas and contributed unique features of their own. The study of these campaigns for their details fills in the historical record of what mediums and strategies were used in British propaganda during World War Two. This evidence also explains that the British propaganda campaigns were successful because of their knowledgeable and innovative tactics. On a larger scale the conclusions of this study fills in the historical continuum of propaganda history.

The British Home Front propaganda campaign serves as an excellent case study to investigate further into British Home Front style propaganda. In order to better understand the goals, strategies, effects and tactics of British propaganda on the Home Front one must look deeper into the sources of the campaign. This information will shine light into the nature of propaganda and the British goals, strategies and tactics.

The British Home Front campaign had a series of clear goals that they wanted to achieve. Being led by the various ministers of information such as Sir Macmillan, Reith and Bracken, the Ministry of Information's chief goal was to mentally prepare the British people for the inevitable war that would reach their island nation.<sup>2</sup> The MOI also needed to re-spark the feelings of nationalism within its citizens that would allow them to work hard and possibly die for their nation. As the 1930s philosopher Bertrand Russell stated "countries need propaganda

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<sup>2</sup> Michael, Balfour. *Propaganda in War: 1939-1945 : Organizations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

to convince their people to endure hardships and acts of sacrifice for their nation.”<sup>3</sup> The Home Front goals were similar to the theorists such as Qualter who emphasized propaganda to prepare civilians for the horrors of war and to organize them into a single production unit.<sup>4</sup> The British government needed to utilize all of its human resources into joining the war effort. The first goal of the campaign did not need to focus on motivating the British people to fight; the reality of war against the oncoming German war machine was motivation enough. Instead the MOI needed to change the thoughts and actions of the people into wartime appropriate behaviors. In short, the goal of the MOI was to train the people into proper wartime behavior such as recycling, growing their own food and acting properly during an assault.<sup>5</sup> As the propagandist Laswell has stated “wars are won by nations, not armies” and that propaganda is “the war of ideas on ideas to shape how the civilians of the nations act.”<sup>6</sup> The MOI was interested in uniting the British people behind the government as one strong nation to win the war.

The Ministry of Information also displayed their skills in the Home Front Campaign strategy. The first overarching battle plan or strategy put into play by the ministers of information was to use “white propaganda”.<sup>7</sup> This type of propaganda is when the source or propagandist of the public information piece is known by the recipients of the information. The recipients of the information also know the goals of the propaganda. This strategy style is almost always used by a government on its own people because the recipients have to be able to trust the source. This style is best for communicating clear messages to the people.

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<sup>3</sup> Lynette, Finch. "Psychological Propaganda", *Armed Forces & Society*26(2000);312-67. 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Finch, 312-67.

<sup>5</sup>Balfour, 3-300

<sup>6</sup> Finch, Lynette 312-67

<sup>7</sup>Balfour, 3-300

An example of this would be the MOI film "Salvage with a Smile." This film explains exactly how and what should be recycled for the war effort. In this source the people know that the government has made this film and what its goals are because it is labeled (Crown Films Unit) and states them clearly in the script.<sup>8</sup> They can watch the film and easily follow its instructions on recycling metals, paper, etc. The second part of this strategy was to identify and utilize any medium that could easily communicate a direct government method. The MOI discovered all the major sources of media such as radio, newspapers, films, etc and began to create propaganda pieces that would fit those mediums. These mediums were most likely direct mediums or mediums of communication that are controlled or sponsored by a government organization<sup>9</sup>. For example, many films were made by the Crown Films Unit (and others just like it) who worked directly under the MOI. In all, the strategy of the MOI on the Home Front was to get government messages to the people as directly as possible.

To fully understand the specific tactics used by the MOI Home Front Campaign it is imperative to analyze primary source information. After evaluation of these sources it is clear to see the main tactics used by the MOI to complete their goals. The first tactic used by the MOI to effectively complete their goals was to incorporate white propaganda techniques. Much like the Home Front strategy, this tactic focused on changing key civilian thoughts or actions. This tactic focused on direct information where the recipients of the propaganda knew the goals

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<sup>8</sup> National Archives. "Workers Weekend." *Worker's Weekend*. British National Archives, 2011. Accessed June 22, 2011. <[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/films/workers\\_week.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/films/workers_week.htm)>.

<sup>9</sup> Finch, 312-67.

and authors of the piece. This tactic was perfect for directly communicating messages to the people.<sup>10</sup>

The perfect example of this would be the Ministry of Information films that were made about key topics. For example "Dig for Victory" which was sponsored by the Ministries of Information and Agriculture. This film is about the benefits of citizens growing their own vegetables.<sup>11</sup> The film displays images of happy citizens growing their own food while the commentator delivers his lines. The script of the film is written in a plain and simple way clearly telling the listener that growing your own food will aid the country. The film also goes on to say that growing food can be fun for social events. This is a direct use of the tool "social-psychological" adaptations.<sup>12</sup> The messages and information are shaped around the unique social and mental makeup of the British culture. The propagandists were British and thus knew the intricacies of British culture; like the need for social events and framed the information around this. The film says that gardening is a great way to socialize during the blitz, thus convincing the people to act a certain way and motivates them via unique social-psychological needs. Along with socialization, the film openly states that all citizens are doing this digging. "Old men in their eighties...even school boys have it in their daily routine," this shows that the government was flat out telling the nation that this act of digging is for every single citizen.<sup>13</sup> This type of propaganda that strings together several social groups is what propagandists call a tent alliance. A tent alliance is when propaganda brings people together by using propaganda that appeals to and motivates large amounts of different social groups (such as ethnic groups,

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<sup>10</sup> Finch, 312-67

<sup>11</sup> National Archives. "Dig for Victory". *The National Archives*. British National Archives, 2011. Accessed June 23, 2011. <[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/films/dig\\_victory.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/films/dig_victory.htm)>.

<sup>12</sup> Lee. "Analysis of Propaganda: A Clinical Study." *The American Journal of Sociology* 51.2: 126-35. Web. 2011.

<sup>13</sup> National Archives. "Dig for Victory".

age, class, etc.)<sup>14</sup> In addition the film also clearly indicates that gardening is a patriotic act and is vital for the war effort. As stated in the film "food is as much a weapon of war as guns"<sup>15</sup>, a line designed to make civilians see the importance of their work on the war effort. This film was not in the typical film entertainment style and is in the public notice style of filming, indicating that the civilians would be fully aware that this film had been created by the government to deliver a clear message. The effects of this film were great as it helped spark and support the movement for citizens to grow their own food. In all the film had been effectively used as a source to turn the population of Britain into a production unit and is a perfect example of a white propaganda tactic.

British World War Two propagandists also executed white propaganda well with other forms of media. Posters were intelligently designed because of their short snappy texts and powerful images. This form of propaganda was not as good at portraying a slew of information; however a picture (and a clever text) can say a thousand words and can change recipient's thoughts and behaviors just the same. As films did, propaganda posters in Britain used direct or white propaganda. People knew who made the posters and what they were trying to achieve. The most iconic primary source of this idea is the "Keep Calm and Carry On" poster issued by the Ministry of Information in 1939. Although this poster was never formally used, it still represents the idea of white propaganda posters perfectly. The primary goal of the piece was to remind and influence the British people to remain calm, not panic and to continue on their

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<sup>14</sup> Lee, 126-35.

<sup>15</sup> National Archives. "Dig for Victory."

paths in the event of an attack on Britain.<sup>16</sup> The poster clearly shows white propaganda traits as it is plain red with the words “keep calm and carry on” on it. The poster is clearly and simply portraying a message from the British government to its people during wartime conditions. The British government effectively used white or direct propaganda as a chief home front tactic.

The second tactic that was employed in British home front propaganda was the use of emotional propaganda. This tactic calls upon the source to use people’s emotions like fear, hate, love and hope as a vehicle for their messages to effectively impact the recipient. Emotional propaganda has been a powerful and well used tactic in many propaganda campaigns of the past.<sup>17</sup> The British fine tuned their government public information messages to meet the unique characteristics of their people. Known as the social-psychological approach, this tactic of propaganda targets the society’s unique emotionally patriotic elements that make their people overcome with loyal feelings and devoid of reason.<sup>18</sup> In this state of mind the propaganda can communicate powerful messages that will get swept up with patriotism and will significantly influence the recipient’s thoughts. This emotional tactic capitalizes on the core overpowering emotions that all human beings have: fear, hope, love and hate. Radio propaganda displayed the social-psychological approach perfectly. In Winston Churchill’s “We Shall Fight on the Beaches” speech, the British prime minister gave an emotionally charged patriotic speech. The Prime Minister was channeling a message of hope to his nation. With historically patriotic passages that touch upon Britain’s defeat of the Napoleon naval threat, the Prime Minister use what the propagandist Aldous Huxley would refer to as the use of patriotic

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<sup>16</sup> Tames. "Posters, British." *History Today* 48.4: 2-4. 2011.

<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/action/showAdvancedSearch>>.

<sup>17</sup> Edward L Bernays and Mark Crispin Miller. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Pub., 2005

<sup>18</sup> Lee. "Analysis of Propaganda: A Clinical Study." *The American Journal of Sociology* 51.2: 126-35. 2011.

<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/action/showAdvancedSearch>>.

symbols.<sup>19</sup> Such specifically British symbols like the defeat of Napoleon and the French threat were designed by the Prime Minister to muster and link the feelings of national pride to the prime minister's message of "never surrender." Churchill also used specific British targeted language to persuade the people to follow in his message. With powerful passages like "defend to the death their native soil," Winston Churchill was clearly using emotional tactics in his radio persuasion.<sup>20</sup> Churchill clearly used key language and historical references to stir the emotions of the British citizens listening so that they may effectively receive his message of keep fighting.

British authorities also used this emotional hook in their posters. Many posters aimed for powerful images that would draw on historical, patriotic or emotional ties of the citizens. A great example of this would be the poster "We Beat 'em Before, We'll Beat 'em Again" poster. This poster used a powerful image of two soldiers proudly standing their ground against an oncoming battle. The title of the piece, reflecting the only text on the page, is a clear reference to the First World War where Britain was able to defeat the Germans.<sup>21</sup> Emotional hooks were and still are utilized by propagandists to unify a target group under a common historical aspect. In this case it is uniting Britons around the fact that they as a nation have already defeated this enemy in World War One. This is a great tool to create a stronger, more unified nation that can be patriotic under their government. The image and the text are also designed to spark that patriotic image of the British defeating their enemies in the past and insinuating that they can do it again. The British government used a sociological tactic in its rendition of the past. This idea is also closely tied to the emotion of hope to get the British civilians believing that they

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<sup>19</sup> Slattery. "Propaganda, British." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 12.3: 18-69. Web. 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Churchill. "Winston Churchill 'We Shall Fight on the Beaches.'" *Youtube.com*. 2011. 2011. <[www.Youtube.com](http://www.Youtube.com)>.

<sup>21</sup> National Archives. "We Beat Em Before." *We Beat Em Before*. British National Archives, 2011. 2011. [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/home\\_front/INF3\\_0136.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/home_front/INF3_0136.htm)

could win the war.<sup>22</sup> The poster uses distortion and simplification to illustrate a snapshot recall of the past. That past being the simple fact that the British defeated the Germans in World War One, giving the readers that message when recalling history and thus confidence to fight the same enemy again. Even though the reality of history says that it was a tough and close war, the poster instills the quick version of the history that will be more appealing to the British civilian mindset as they prepare for war.

The British propaganda campaign also used written sources that employed the emotionally patriotic hook to spur on ideas and actions in the people to fight for the cause. The British government did this by openly displaying key individuals who were “fighting for their country” or “sacrificing for the cause.” These articles were designed to tell dramatic tales of heroes who fought to save their country. The government’s goals in using this tactic were to gain the people’s attention by telling these tales of the heroes and saying that “this is how citizens should act in these perilous times.” Thus, the government was using the story to hook the readers and delivering a powerful message. A brilliant document that demonstrates this idea perfectly is the St. George Cross story. This newspaper story depicts Leonard Harrison performing an exceptional act of bravery by defusing unexploded live German bombs. The story makes sure to use key words and narrative tools to play up the valor and tension of Harrison’s deeds.<sup>23</sup> They obviously depict Harrison as a great hero and credit to his country. The St. George Cross, issued by the government to exceptional civilians during wartime, was a perfect way for the British authorities to single out and physically label persons as being exceptional. In

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<sup>22</sup> Tames. "Posters, British." *History Today* 48.4: 2-4. 2011.  
<<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/action/showAdvancedSearch>>.

<sup>23</sup> "Bomb Expert Wins St. George Medal." *News Chronicle*, January 4, 1941.

doing so it allowed them to show the rest of the country how the government thinks people should act during war time. The newspaper article also used its power to depict the story in a way the government saw fit to further these ideas. This depiction would obviously stir up the patriotic emotions of readers and influence them to do the same. Again the British used tailored emotional (social-psychological) hooks in this story and the medal giving in the hopes of hitting the uniquely British motives to induce persuasion. The direct effects from these forms of emotional propaganda are unclear as it is an inaccurate and difficult idea to measure. However, it is safe to conclude from the civilian actions that the propaganda had at least moderate effects and the British government was able to shape the minds of the people to some extent.

The British Ministry of Information also had another campaign that illuminates the nature of British propaganda during World War Two. This campaign was the propaganda war to convince countries to ally and join in the cause with Britain, most notably the United States. This unique campaign to bring the United States into World War Two consisted of several key goals. The goals of this campaign were to convince the American people to join on the side of the Allies and aid them in some form. Propaganda that aims to persuade other nation's civilians to act a certain way takes a different style of persuasion. To convince another nation's people to join their side, the propagandists needed to use abstract ideas or reasoning.<sup>24</sup> In this particular case the people of the United States (pre 1942) were not in direct danger and thus were prone to have unsatisfactory responses if the propaganda tried to sell the idea that they

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<sup>24</sup> Edward L Bernays and Mark Crispin Miller. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Pub., 2005.

could be in danger. Instead, the propaganda to achieve its goals largely focused around abstract ideas such as “democracy is at stake” or “tyranny and evil is spreading.”<sup>25</sup> This type of motivation could and did convince peoples of other nations to help their allies. In this case it convinced the United States to join the Allies. The second goal of the campaign was to not allow the Americans to join on the side of the Axis or go into total isolation via German propaganda or having the British propaganda backfire.

The British Propaganda strategy in this campaign focused on several aspects. The first strategy was structuring of the propaganda. The MOI had no formal authority in the United States to conduct open propaganda. Thus the MOI had to establish a network of covert propagandists who worked in the United States. This network known as “The American Division” was headed by Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador to the United States. Lothian was the informal director of the group and used his power to bring in other propagandists to infiltrate the American media. The second strategy the American Division had was to use grey/black propaganda. The American public after World War One were heavily disgusted with the British propaganda to bring them into the war. Veterans of that war and their supporters were vocal in telling other citizens of the dangers of European propaganda and even had several laws passed to protect the American people from those types of media, for example the Foreign Agents Act.<sup>26</sup> This act blocked all foreign public speakers from discussing or debating political issues. In response, the campaign aimed at using propaganda pieces that the American public would not see as British propaganda. As Edrita Fried stated, people naturally distrust

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<sup>25</sup> Bernys, *Propaganda*.

<sup>26</sup> Eitan, Bar-Yosef. "British WW1 Propaganda." *Year: 2001* Published In: *Journal of Contemporary History* 36.1: 87-109. *Jstore*. <<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.uwec.edu/action/showAdvancedSearch>>.

anything they see as blatant propaganda from an untrustworthy source (for example a foreign government).<sup>27</sup> Propagandists must blend their persuasion pieces with the culture, morals and customs of the society in which the propaganda piece takes place in. Thus the British used indirect mediums to convey their messages. Indirect propaganda is the idea to use a trusted media to carry an endorsement or message of another party.<sup>28</sup> In this form, recipients of the information are more unaware of whose message they are receiving. The overall strategy of the American Division campaign was to secretly infiltrate and propagandize the American public to join the allied cause.

The American Division used a variety of time tested tactics such as emotionally hooking propaganda. These emotional hooking tactics once again used the core emotions such as fear, hope, hate and love. Much like the overall theme of British propaganda however, this emotional propaganda was customized and personalized to the American citizenry. The British knew that the best way to gain American support and end their neutrality was to have them be emotionally invested in the British people's struggle in the war. This tactic of persuasion heavily relied on socially iconic and nationalistic images of the host nation to customize the propagandist's message to fit into the host nation's norms. This style also relied heavily on wording which was a vital tactic to use in these situations. As learned from the past, in order to convince allies to join a nation's side when they are not directly under threat takes more abstract ideas to persuade them to fight. These abstract ideas are made all the more meaningful with strong feelings that are brought out through this form of propaganda.

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<sup>27</sup> Frederick Elmore Lumley. *The Propaganda Menace*, (New York: Century, 1933) 15-385.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

The first historical evidence to clearly demonstrate this idea is the radio propaganda put out by Edward Murrows. During the Battle of Britain, Edward Murrows worked with the British government to create a live report of the battle. This served to get Murrows a prime topic to report on while also informing eager American audiences of the state of affairs in war torn Britain. The British government saw this especially as a bonus because the radio narrator, Murrows, had an American accent which made him more appealing and credible to American audiences. The emotional hook came in the presentation and uniqueness of the radio broadcast. Murrows not only reported what was going on during the Battle of Britain but reported *in* the Battle of Britain. Murrows stood in Trafalgar square as civilians moved to shelter, anti-air defenses went off and bombers roared overhead.<sup>29</sup> All of the sounds of the war were clearly audible and Murrows made sure to describe every detail and feeling of what it is like living in a city being bombarded night after night by the Germans. Murrows used a mild form of exaggeration as his chief tool. Murrows focused the listener's attention on the German bomber's destruction and the British civilians.

By framing his report using this type of word choice the Germans are projected as the faceless destroyers and the British civilians are the calm coolheaded defenders protecting their land. This tactic is classified as exaggeration because out of the entire story that was available to Murrows if he was a truly bias reporter (the German side, negative British qualities, etc) he choose to focus on the negative German and positive British qualities.<sup>30</sup> Thus he exaggerated by focusing the entire report on those two elements and not on the larger picture of the event,

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<sup>29</sup> "Ed Murrows Broadcast History." *NPR*. 2011. 2011.  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1872668>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

putting favor in the listeners with the British defenders. Murrows made American audiences feel as if they were a British citizen in the blitz. At the very least this report created empathy, or the ability to stand in the British citizen's shoes and feel what they felt. This allowed Americans, who some viewed the war as far away and none of American business, to feel that the war was real. In response Americans were more apt to side with the British defending their homeland and support aid to the British so that they could continue to do so. Murrows also was aware of the key tool of communication options. The radio was the most popular form of news sources for pitching emotional or shocking information.<sup>31</sup> Murrows knew that this report would be many times more effective over the radio where the listeners can hear the bombs and sirens as compared to writing it down in a newspaper.

The second primary historical source that effectively used emotional hooks was the realm of film. The movie "London Can Take It" was an emotional hook masterpiece. Created by the Ministry of Information under the GPO film unit the film aimed to show American audiences the reality and struggles the British civilians were going through to win the Battle of Britain and to preserve their country.<sup>32</sup> The film also showed signs of being customized to the American audience. First off all it was narrated by Quentin Reynolds who had an American accent and thus was more appealing to Americans. He is also sure to report that "I am a neutral reporter" giving off the vibe of not being bias to American viewers even though he clearly was. This is a clear use of the "psychological" tool of propagandists to adjust the propaganda

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<sup>31</sup> Lee, Alfred McClung. *How to Understand Propaganda*. (New York: Rinehart, 1952).

<sup>32</sup> NationalArchives. "London Can Take It." *Youtube*. The National Archives, 2008. Web. 2011.

message to fit the target audience.<sup>33</sup> In this case, Americans would be more apt to listen if the reporter was also American and in tune with the dominant culture's beliefs, in this case relative neutrality. The footage and narrator start off with a powerfully emotional concept. The footage shows civilians coming home from work while the narrator describes how the British people are fighting hard against the invaders even though they know they must live through the raids that will kill many people, and as the narrator says "kill some of the people you are watching right now".<sup>34</sup> This is an incredibly powerful message that the American viewers are watching the struggles and possibly the last night of British citizens who must live through the invasion.

The film also focused on the struggles of daily civilian life and the hardships that the British people had to live through. The narrator at one point describes the British people as going to work and spending the night at their respective war posts. This was aimed at Americans who also had a large civilian working base who could relate to images of British people going to work and become moved by the thought of serving every night at a war post. Sections of the film were also created to demonstrate to the "safe" American audience that this war was real. During the film there was a healthy mix of real war footage, sounds and the narrator blatantly pointing out "this is not a Hollywood soundtrack...that was a bomb."<sup>35</sup> The film also goes for images that were designed to make an impact on American feelings towards the war. One part of the film showed an elderly couple and small children trying to sleep while bombs are being dropped outside their shelter. Images like these were and are enough to gain the empathy or at least the attention of any viewer. These images also made the British people

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<sup>33</sup> Edward L Bernays and Mark Crispin Miller. *Propaganda*. 37-153.

<sup>34</sup> NationalArchives. "London Can Take It." *Youtube*. The National Archives, 2008. Web. 2011.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

very relatable to American audiences and thus easier to sympathize with. This is in direct opposition to the way the film shows the Germans bombers described as “creatures of the night...scurry back to their own shores”, making them seem very inhuman.<sup>36</sup> To make the Germans seem even more evil the narrator and film crews were clear to show the targets of the German bombers, being “churches, hospitals, flats” or in other words innocent civilian or religious centers. This is another example of emotional propaganda’s favorite tool of exaggeration. It was true that these civilian centers got hit; however the film focuses on that aspect as if it was the German’s only target. This would make the German attack seem all the more cruel and make Americans furious or at least uncomfortable. This would create the effect once again to have the Americans be emotionally charged and side with the British. The emotion that was targeted was the American fear of the Germans and their capability to ruthlessly attack.

The film also target hatred for the Germans by showing pictures such as bombed out churches. This pointing out of the enemies wrongdoings is also known as the “hot potato” technique.<sup>37</sup> This technique calls on the propagandist to direct the attention of the viewers to the negative aspect of the enemy to make themselves look good by comparison. When this is done, the enemy will look even worse if they refute the point in the wrong way. Furthermore, the claim of the wrongdoing will most likely stigmatize the enemy with that bad image. So when the British propagandists showed the Germans bombing churches, it will always stay in the minds of the watchers. In addition, the Germans could not blatantly claim that as false (as it

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Edward L Bernays and Mark Crispin Miller. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Pub., 2005.

was proved) nor could they create a cover up or reason why they did what they did. Thus the technique will make the Germans look bad no matter what they do or do not do. The film narrator is also very keen to point out that the “civilian army” is made up of all citizens from all professions and that they work to save their country. To the narrator, they are “heroes by night.”<sup>38</sup> Again this is a huge appeal to American civilians who would now see the British civilian army as hard working fighters to save their communities; something almost all Americans during World War Two could relate to. The film makes its final blow with the line “when that comfortable world came to an end, when the invaders began to attack the last strongholds of freedom”.<sup>39</sup> This is again customized to the democracy loving people of America to see the British struggle as one to save freedom as well as their homeland from the invaders. This would clearly make most Americans very internally invested in the British struggle and influence them to support the British aid. To encourage Americans to support the British aid the film makes note to say that the British are still fighting strong against the invaders. Once again the British propaganda tactic was to emotionally hook the American civilians so that they would feel what the British feel during those raids and care about the wellbeing of the British civilian population. The hopes and aims of the MOI was that this film would have American minds focused on Britain and invested in the outcome of the battle. The film also wanted to change the emotional response to how Americans see the British people. Before the war, many Americans associated Britain with imperialism. However the emotionally churning images of this film surely changed Americans to think of the British as hardworking defenders of freedom. All of these little mini tools show that the British government had shaped a propaganda piece to perfectly fit their

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

American demographic to emotionally hook them into the war. This tactic of emotionally hooking Americans into the side of the British was well planned and could possibly have had a huge impact on U.S support of Britain.

The second main tactic of the American Division was closely related to the overall strategy to use covert propaganda in the United States. The United States in the years leading up to World War Two were geared toward anti-European intervention. Survivors of World War One and their relatives despised European propaganda to convince them to join the war. This is evident in many movements and legislation to end European propaganda such as the Foreign Agents Act which limited the number of foreign public speakers operating in the U.S that had clear propaganda intentions.<sup>40</sup> Although this style of propaganda is by nature hard to detect, there are pieces of historical evidence that strongly suggest that there was a network of British propagandists working on various projects to covertly supply the United States with biased information. This is seen easily in the MOI authors planning committee, chaired by Raymond Needhad. This committee used well liked and known British authors to write pieces in books, magazines, pamphlets, etc to convince the American people to join the allied cause. For example authors like Delafield and Bowen wrote poetry and short stories geared towards the hardships of women during the London Blitz.<sup>41</sup> These authors also were one of the first to employ these new ideas and tactics of persuasion. These documents are a great example of fabrication propaganda. Although the fabrication was obvious as most of their stories were fiction, the idea and feelings the readers felt stayed with readers and may have subconsciously

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<sup>40</sup>Robert Calder. *Beware the British Serpent: the Role of Writers in British Propaganda in the United States, 1939-1945*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004. 39-151.

<sup>41</sup>Calder, 39-151.

convinced readers to favor the British in the war. This is also a great example of British propagandists using the communication tool. Here the British knew they were limited in their way of communicating their messages so they created new ways to persuade Americans. These groups of informal propagandists were no random assortment of communication soldiers. The MOI was always organized in some way and was careful to monitor who was speaking on the British people's behalf. Since the MOI had no formal jurisdiction, Lord Lothian, British Ambassador to the United States took many liberties in organizing the groups of propagandists coming to the United States. This is evident from Roald Dahl's life story. After recovering from an injury in the RAF, Dahl was employed by the British government and led by Lothian to establish himself as a British spy to watch the American politicians to see if they would join the war. Dahl also wrote for many magazines and stories advocating for the British cause in some way, shape or form.<sup>42</sup> Under Lothian's loose directions, groups of writers, speakers and film makers fed a steady supply of anti-Nazi and pro-British information to the American public. Lothian and the British government had shown their firm control over who was speaking on their behalf from the Sir Beecham case. He was a British public speaker that was damaging the image of the British in the United States and was thus removed from his tour by the British government.<sup>43</sup> The British also had to customize this grey/black propaganda to the United States as they did with all of their campaigns. This is clearly seen by the British author Margret Kennedy. Kennedy's work "Where Stands a Winged Sentry" is a great example of British articles being read in the United States that were written for Americans. Kennedy writes about how it

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<sup>42</sup>Jennet Conant. *The Irregulars: Roald Dahl and the British Spy Ring in Wartime Washington*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. 179-293.

<sup>43</sup> Cull, Nicholas John. *Selling War: the British Propaganda Campaign against American "neutrality" in World War II*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.5-126.

was a shame that Britain and the States had fought together before and never understood each other's quest to defend democracy.<sup>44</sup> This argument and language was designed to convince Americans to join the British. This idea is also seen in many other British works in the states. These propaganda pieces served as relatively new methods of convincing the population of another state to join a foreign cause.

The article and later book "For What Do We Fight?" is a particularly fantastic example of British writers supplying biased views in American media. Originally published in the New York Times this article by Angel was written to combat the pro neutrality forces in the United States and to encourage the United States to accept the idea of fighting Germany. The article uses language to specifically hook Americans. A main argument of the article is to fight for the freedom of those under German control and nations that could fall under German power. The article clearly hints that the United States has an obligation as the "beacon" of democracy and freedom to aid other democratic nations such as France and the Britain to fight the tyranny of the Germans. The article also hints that not challenging Germany would be accepting German power and authority over the conquered nations such as Poland. Angel states that by not going to war, it is to accept the rape of Poland and the possibility of fascism spreading.<sup>45</sup> Here Angel is using his tools of wording and exaggeration. Angel is not making up the fact that Poland was under distress while in German hands, but he is clearly focusing all of the reader's attention on that aspect of the Polish wellbeing. The author also used a unique tool of propagandists known as "screaming headlines."<sup>46</sup> Although this tactic is primarily targeted towards lower class

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Angell, Norman. *For What Do We Fight*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1939

<sup>46</sup> Lee, Alfred McClung. *How to Understand Propaganda*. New York: Rinehart, 1952

peoples and uses more profane headlines, the author still uses a striking heading to catch the public's attention. "For What Do We Fight" holds real power and has the ability to attract the most entrenched neutralists to at least read the article. In addition, this propaganda piece also uses the key tool for propaganda outside one's nation citizens by taking the moral high ground. Many of the arguments in the article such as the British fighting for freedom and claiming the Nazis were planning on taking over the world. This again, is the use of exaggeration to make the Germans seem more blood thirsty than they may have been. This allowed the propagandists to project the British as being the morally superior nation in the conflict and thus make it more appealing for the United States to join their side.<sup>47</sup> Finally the article expresses that by not fighting today, it leaves the burden of fascism the imminent German threat to our children and those unborn. All of these points made by Angel are powerful points and are designed to jolt any audience into action. In addition, the wording, content and publisher were all chosen by the propagandist Angel to have maximum effect on the target audience to achieve his goals.

One great example of American division film propaganda that used covert or black propaganda is an Alfred Hitchcock movie called "The Foreign Correspondent." Alfred Hitchcock worked during the war on propaganda films. Two of which were direct propaganda films for the MOI and many more were grey propaganda films, most likely influenced by the British government. The Foreign correspondent was a "Hollywood style" film aimed to capture the attention of American audiences and prime their minds to see the Allies as "good" and the Axis (Germans) as "bad."<sup>48</sup> The film was classic grey propaganda as it covertly hid its propagandist

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<sup>47</sup> Angell, Norman. *For What Do We Fight*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1939

<sup>48</sup> *The Foreign Correspondent*. Dir. Hitchcock. Perf. Joel McCrea, Laraine Day. 1940

nature behind a Hollywood action title, yet most people could assume that the film was not without bias. Thus the civilians knew that the film was not a strait neutral movie, but they did not pick up on its powerful propaganda undertones to support the Allies. When performing analysis on the film it is easy to reach those conclusions. The overarching plot of the film is about an American foreign correspondent that goes to Europe for news on the impending war. The correspondent gets caught up in a mysterious spy scheme and must escape mainland Europe from enemy agents. An important message that the film was trying to hammer across was the idea of an “unavoidable war,” as the film explains, Europe “haven’t declared war yet.”<sup>49</sup> This served as a possible jolt to American audiences to get them to see that war in Europe was real and about to happen. In the film, the characters that the film portrays as being good are all from Allied nations. The main character is an American while the other characters are from Netherlands, Belgium and Britain. The Germans on the other hand are always mysterious and portrayed as hungry for war. It is no great leap to conclude that Hitchcock had strong motives for making a bias film. Hitchcock used key film propaganda tools such as archetypes. This tactic focused on simplifying characteristics of people into clearly stated roles.<sup>50</sup> For example “the soldier” and “the civilian.” These archetypes were made to deliver clear messages about how certain groups of people act or should act. This was clearly seen in “The Foreign Correspondent” as the characters clearly represented their nations. The American characters represented the United States investigating the European wars, and the German characters represented the war hungry Nazi spread. Being a British citizen who had previously worked

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<sup>49</sup> *The Foreign Correspondent*. Dir. Hitchcock. Perf. Joel McCrea, Laraine Day. 1940.

<sup>50</sup> Slattery. "Propaganda, British." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 12.3: 18-69. 2011.

with the MOI in making films for them is evidence enough to conclude that Hitchcock could easily make a grey propaganda film to convince Americans to side with the allies.

British influence over the content of North American news sources is also evident from other newspapers at the time. An article from Monday, November 25, 1940 in the *Milwaukee Journal* shows signs of British influence on American newspapers. The article entitled "Britain Wants Financial Aid" was a great piece of grey propaganda. The short article was written by an American newspaper so that Americans reading it would not think it was over British propaganda. However, the article derives and focuses much of its information on Lord Lothian the British ambassador and known friend to British propagandists. Thus it is safe to conclude that the information he was supplying the newspapers was what he wanted the American public to hear. This is a well used tool today, a source reports "tilted" information in which the newspapers report with and the receivers of the propaganda are unaware they are reading bias information.<sup>51</sup> Lothian in the article made sure to deliver the feeling and message that with America's help, Britain can do well in the war, thus encouraging Americans that U.S aid to Britain would be well worth it.

The British also used black propaganda to achieve their persuasion goals. Black propaganda to most theorists is defined as propaganda where the recipients do not know the propagandist or his or her goals. This is usually done by a propagandist supplying tainted information to a credible source. The source then unknowingly reports the biased information and the readers think that the source is telling the story from a neutral point of view.<sup>52</sup> This was

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<sup>51</sup> "Britain Wants Financial Aid Lothian Says." *The Milwaukee Journal* 25 Nov. 1940

<sup>52</sup> Bernays, Edward L., and Mark Crispin. Miller. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Pub., 2005

done many times during World War Two. Many American newspapers wanted war coverage on what was going on in Europe and the British government was more than willing to take news sources on tours of the battle front. Of course these tours were geared to show a particular perspective on the war and the tour guides were eager to project their image of the war onto the newspaper writers. A source of analysis would be the Poland photos case. In this particular case, the British forces had somehow gotten their hands on photos taken from the German invasion of Poland. These photos showed people being hung and executed. The title of the photo was "German demands living space...this is how she gets it."<sup>53</sup> These powerful images were given to American newspapers to be published. Thus the British supplied information that was clearly giving a negative image of the Germans to American trusted news sources. Thus the sources report with the information and the American recipients of the news stories are given black propagandized information. This is just one of the many ways that the British tried to include propaganda into the American media sources to convince them to join the war.

In the history of the world there have always been forms of propaganda. From rumors to elaborate films, human beings have always sought to control the thoughts and actions of others in conflicts. If governments can control the minds of their people and their allies then they can have civilians work better as a unit and thus be more productive in large scale conflicts. The pen has truly proven mightier than the sword as time after time propaganda persuades nations of people to dedicate their lives to a cause. After studying British propaganda during World War Two it is easy to see why the British propagandists were the elite

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<sup>53</sup>Cull, 5-126.

in the field during this time in history. Both of their Home Front and American division propaganda campaigns used customized goals, strategies and tactics to achieve their goals. After performing analysis on the primary sources produced by the British government the data produced supports the notion that the British used various custom, time tested and innovative tactics to win over the hearts and minds of their citizens and allies. These studies help historians understand the details of British propaganda during World War Two and why it was so effective. This information also helps historians understand in greater detail the nature of propaganda.

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