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SCRUTINY

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Edited by

D. W. HARDING

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DENYS THOMPSON

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PREAMBLE TO A GREAT ADVENTURE

We'll cut the cackle about attainment
And overhaul the chassis and accessories.
You are accustomed to wear a reticulated
Monocle and see the earth in
Strategical areas ; acquire
A habit of thinking of men as a
Fluctuating pattern in fours. Your
Ears have been established from birth
As delicately graduated filters, and your range
Of wave-lengths severely limited, but do not
Forget the efficacy of cotton wool.
I should advise you to instal
A panatrope in your lungs furnished
With tungstyle needles and twenty
Long-playing records guaranteed by
A professorial committee to perpetuate
The national gentlemanly sporting spirit
Of test matches and military tattoos.

Make no mistake about colour.
Offered an array of bonbons at a fashionable
Tea-party select the pink carmine-filled,
Toy with the white and show a marked
Distaste for gamboge and chocolate.
(Tactful hostesses indeed omit the last.)
Tricoloured hard centres are perhaps
To be preferred above all.
It is a precautionary measure
With many employers to submit applicants
To an automatic phonetic tester which
Deletes those not favoured with a cleft palate.
But this for you is an easy hurdle.

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Turn yourself daily on the new lathe
 Distributed gratis with every penny newspaper
 Through the personal beneficence of
 Directors of the leading armament firms ;
 Strive to shape the grooves as spirals
 Flowering into the upper air—
 An image antique, beautiful and Greek ;
 The chemist will supply you with a ballast
 Of explosive pellets for your nerves.
 If your mind generates timid leprosy,
 Slimy nightmares, or any other form
 Of thought, give it a scouring with
 Some healthy narrative of life
 In the Foreign Legion.
 Endless probings along corridors, sudden
 Drops towards cess-pools, the embrace
 Of giant squids are common derangements :
 Cure them with the Book of the Month.

Make ready the firm unseeing mind
 And the strict co-ordination of muscle, pack
 The hypodermic syringe.
 There is no dialectic but death's,
 And the spider weaves over tomorrow.
 There is no grasping of Valhalla,
 No mitigation of purgatory,
 No merging into Nirvana,
 But allegiance to the wind that is sown
 And joyful faith in the whirlwind that shall be reaped.
 Man maimed and bleeding is a symbol
 Firing us against calumny, yet of all
 We do not exact heroics. For the high
 There are glittering prizes,
 And the low have some honour. Sacrifice,
 The quiet submission to bacilli,
 To throttling, lung-rotting gases, to the great
 Will of the people, we readily accept.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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PROPAGANDA AND RATIONALIZATION IN WAR

WITH the certainty that any future war will depend enormously on propaganda—for both its initiation and its prosecution—the idea is naturally strong that resistance to propaganda might provide one at least of the many bulwarks that are needed against war. Or, better, that resistance to *war* propaganda is needed. Propaganda as such can hardly be resisted wholesale ; other people's opinions and persuasions, supported by little or less proved fact, fill too important a place in our lives for that to be possible. But propaganda for a particular end might be resisted, and it is worth while asking what it would mean to resist war propaganda ; how simple or complex an undertaking it might be.

It is tempting as an optimistic beginning to forget that we are still the same people who in the last war found mass enthusiasms infectious and believed the atrocity stories. But the permanent appeal of adventurous comradeship in a good cause can hardly be doubted by anyone who remembers the premature vacation of Cambridge in 1926, when vast numbers of students went off to break the general strike. Would they have gone less readily if the dangers had been greater and the enemy a foreign power? Who can suppose it! Fortunately the consequences weren't so serious then except that some were said to have got syphilis. As for atrocity stories we have—most of us—the more recent evidence of our own impulses to credit the stories of Nazi concentration camps for Jews which extremely responsible papers published. They may have been true ; but the evidence in support of them was not one tenth as impressive as the apparatus of affidavits and circumstantial details which supported the famous Bryce Report in our last war. Naturally we are all sceptically impervious to propaganda until the circumstances which produce it have arisen.

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Only one book that I know of has attempted to treat the psychological nature of war propaganda at all systematically: H. D. Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (Kegan Paul, 1927). As a systematic study it is comparatively rudimentary, but for its collection of material and its cool good judgment in presenting it this book is invaluable. Almost all the information in this article is drawn from Lasswell, though not always with the implications that he gives it. Among other books that bear on the topic are Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in Wartime* and J. A. Hobson's *Psychology of Jingoism*. F. E. Lumley's *The Propaganda Menace* (1933), though useful on general propaganda, has admittedly nothing to add to Lasswell on the propaganda of war.

Lasswell tends to countenance the simple notion that there are just two distinct parties to propaganda: the propagandists and their public. And in cruder minds this soon amounts to the idea of propagandists as machinating bogies who deliberately lure away the public from its own peaceful courses. Lasswell's material, however, suggests that the situation is much more complex than that. In particular one has to distinguish between the witting propagandist of popular imagination (who does admittedly exist) and the well-intentioned rationalizer of his own war-favouring opinions who is indistinguishable from the public he forms part of. Of the former kind an example is the British intelligence officer who invented the story of the German corpse factory (Lasswell p. 207, Ponsonby p. 102). Consider, on the other hand, the following quotation from Lasswell (p. 91): 'In what purported to be a scientific treatise on the *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London, 1917), Trotter solemnly said, "The incomprehensibility to the English of the whole trend of German feeling and expression suggests that there is some deeply-rooted instinctive conflict of attitude between them. One may risk the speculation that this conflict is between socialized gregariousness and aggressive gregariousness."' It is unlikely that there was any conscious dishonesty in this rationalization of Trotter's, and although, as Lasswell sees, it has the same *effects* as witting propaganda, it ought nevertheless to be distinguished from that. The same applies to the justification of their nation's part in the war by academic people on either side, and the idealistic interpretations of the

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war given by musicians, educationists, and the clergy. Lasswell quotes many examples of this, recalling for instance how 'German scholarship leapt to the colours in the last war in the famous and unforgettable manifesto, signed by ninety-three of her most illustrious intellectuals' (p. 51). He notes too (p. 73) that 'It was of some advantage to the war party in Britain to have such a statement as the following, from the Bishop of Hereford: "Such a war is a heavy price to pay for our progress toward the realization of the Christianity of Christ, but duty calls, and the price must be paid for the good of those who are to follow us. That better and happier day when the people now under militarist rule shall regulate their own life is doubtless still so far away that an old man like myself can hardly hope to see it dawning, but amidst all the burden of gloom and sorrow which this dreadful war lays upon us we can at least thank God that it brings that better day a long step nearer for the generation in front of us."' (London *Times*, August 12th, 1914).'

Between the extremes of witting propaganda and unconscious rationalization lie the many cases where official propagandists take advantage of circumstances that have arisen spontaneously. Governments abstain from denying useful false rumours that have been generated unofficially; aid is given to organizations in neutral countries which have tended to favour the belligerent's cause; distinguished people are encouraged to visit neutral countries and help a cause which they no doubt want to help in any case. 'All countries found that an effective carrier of propaganda for their cause in America was the titled foreigner who said nothing whatever for the public prints, but who talked privately and casually of the war. The sheer radiation of aristocratic distinction was enough to warm the cockles of many a staunch Republican heart, and to evoke enthusiasm for the country which could produce such dignity, elegance and affability.' Britain was especially adept in this method. 'A sidelight on the method is contained in a letter from Sir Edward Grey to Theodore Roosevelt, dated September 10th, 1914: "My dear Roosevelt—J. M. Barrie and A. E. W. Mason, some of whose books you no doubt have read, are going to the U.S. Their object is, as I understand, not to make speeches or give lectures, but to meet people, particularly those connected with universities, and explain the British case as regards this war

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and our view of the issues involved." ' (Lasswell, p. 157). Evidence of this kind—and Lasswell offers heaps of it—puts it beyond question that much activity which is indistinguishable in effect from completely witting propaganda must be regarded as the public's spontaneous justification of an attitude that it is—or wants to be—committed to.

How the original committal to a war attitude comes about obviously involves problems that are too large to be even touched on here. In any case it is advisable not to look for causes of war but to consider instead predisposing conditions—economic, political, psychological—in the absence of any of which war would be less likely. On the psychological side two factors, both significant for the propagandist, have received most attention; first, the aggressiveness of human nature; second, the unaccustomed but extremely welcome sense of unity with others which a common enemy produces.

There need be no doubt that aggressiveness is a usual compound of human nature, and it is plausible to suppose that without a background of habitual competitiveness and aggression in both individual lives and international relations there would be no war. There is clearly enough brutality and venom in ordinary lives to prevent our feeling any incredible discontinuity between people at 'peace' and at war.

The second psychological fact—the sense of unity which war can bring—is very widely agreed on; many people who (consciously) shrink from the brutalities of war are nevertheless conscious of some satisfaction in being members of a warring nation. The sense of unity is possible, of course, because a *simple* aim has become comprehensive and urgent enough to involve everybody. 'For the preponderating majority in any community the business of beating the enemy in the name of security and peace suffices. This is the great war aim, and in single-hearted devotion to its achievement they find that "peacefulness of being at war," of which Principal Jacks once wrote. In 1915, he glanced back over the first twelve months of the Great War, and observed that "the life of Great Britain has been acquiring a unitary aim of purpose. The aim itself is warlike; but it has been attended with some increase of mental peace."' ' It is not merely that peaceful civilized lives involve immense strain as a direct result of their

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complexity ; there is also the less direct penalty that as our activities grow more complex so it becomes increasingly difficult to find sympathetic understanding and genuine social sanction for them. The direct strain of complex activities and the secondary strain of pursuing them in a largely indifferent social setting are alike relieved by war.

With the possibility of war in sight the task of the propagandist and rationalizer is pre-eminently to simplify ; the complexities of life must be swept away for the defence of some simple fundamental which nobody can question. The leaders of the country and their semi-official propagandists naturally have to manipulate the facts before this impression can be convincingly conveyed, but experience suggests that their work is always partly done for them : people are craving just that sense of unity for which propagandists are providing an excuse. It seems of great significance that among the events preceding a war fervent appeals for unity among classes and parties should make their appearance as promptly as they do. ' As early as the 29th July, 1914, [when *The Daily News* and other papers were still vigorously opposing British entry into the war] the London *Times* called upon all parties to " Close Ranks." The Kaiser united his people behind him, when he declared that he knew no party more. The Fascio came in Italy and the " Union sacrée " was proclaimed in the French Parliament. The sensational appeal of Gustave Hervé to the ranks of Labour was broadcasted far and wide. Hervé was a notorious *sans-patrie* who had belittled patriotism as an implement of capitalistic exploitation. On the very brink of the War he changed the name of his paper, *La Guerre Sociale*, into *La Victoire* and pleaded with all the ardour of his fervent spirit for unity . . . ' (Lasswell, p. 55). An interesting point here is that this appeal for unity seems to have been effective at the first hint of a common danger and was even worth making some time before the majority of people were convinced of the danger they stood in. Lasswell ignores this point and in fact implies (p. 54) that the call for unity comes only after hatred of the enemy has been aroused ; but the dates of his quotations from the English papers suggest that this is not so.

It seems at least highly probable that an unconscious craving for unity will partly account for the collapse of opposition from

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discontented parties and races which characterized the beginning of the last war. It might even be argued that those who are already attached to a highly coherent sub-group with well-defined aims may be particularly susceptible to mass movement ; their appetites have been whetted for unity and the conviction of rightness. Dame Ethel Smyth's account (in *Female Pipings in Eden*) of the suffragettes' feelings at the beginning of the war is relevant to this. She describes the readiness with which most of the suffragettes switched over their enthusiasm from one simple cause to another—this one so simple as to blot out the difference between them and the rest of the community. She and Mrs. Pankhurst were in France, and she writes :

‘ . . . we were none too certain that England would come in ; and I remember feeling that if she didn't, there would be only one thing for an English woman stranded in France to do— leap off those cliffs into the sea . . . Mrs. Pankhurst declared that it was now not a question of Votes for Women, but of having any country left to vote in. The Suffrage ship was put out of commission for the duration of the war, and the militants began to tackle the common task.’

Mrs. Pankhurst's abandonment of the complexities of judgment was felt by her friends to have gone too far a little later when she plunged into a scheme for looking after the illegitimate babies which were beginning to accumulate ; but she had always been ahead of her followers.

The simple unifying aim which was provided for the English at the beginning of the last war was that of safety. ‘ Masterly appeals to the national interest, after the style of *The Times* on 31st July, were necessary to carry conviction to the more articulate elements of the community that Germany should be treated as an immediate and overwhelming menace. It argued :

“ A German advance through Belgium to the north of France might enable Germany to acquire possession of Antwerp, Flushing, and even of Dunkirk and Calais, which might then become German naval bases against England. That is a contingency which no Englishman can look upon with indifference

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. . . . Even should the German navy remain inactive, the occupation of Belgium and Northern France by German troops would strike a crushing blow at British security . . . ”’
(Lasswell, p. 52, shortened).

A phenomenon that reflects, and probably reinforces, a sense of unified activity against a vividly realized danger is the spy mania which occurred in the early days of the war in most countries. ‘The peasants of Germany were excited by the wild tales of yellow automobiles which were supposed to be dashing from France across Germany, laden with gold for Russia. They stretched iron chains across the roads and made it unhappy for many a poor tourist. Military despatch riders in Great Britain were frequently stopped and lodged in gaol during the feverish days of the War. The spy mania is a great inconvenience to many people, but it helps to arouse the community to a deeper sense of the necessity for joint action in the crisis’ (Lasswell, p. 106).

For the more cultured members of the nation the simplicity of the immediate aim offered to the country has to be shown to be nevertheless in the service of quite subtle ideals. Appeals in the name of democracy against military despotism and appeals for the sacredness of international law helped in the task of justifying the last war in the light of the ideals of peace. ‘H. G. Wells may be taken as an example of the pacifistically inclined Liberal, more gracefully articulate than most, whose support of the War came at the cost of inner struggle, and whose enthusiastic aid in a prolonged contest depended upon an elaborately rationalized cluster of war aims . . . Wells, of course, saw in “German militarism” one of the most colossal obstacles to the achievement of a better world order. His attitude of mind is precisely the one to be striven for by the inventor of war aims; set up an ideal which will arouse the enthusiasm of those elements in the nation whose support is desired, and make it clear to them that the chief immediate stumbling block is the military enemy. This permits the scrupulous to kill with a clean conscience; or, at least, to admonish the younger to do so.’ (Lasswell, p. 62)

That intellectuals should give way to a popular war stampede ought not to seem inexplicable, for nothing is easier to dissociate from the rest of one’s life than intellectual activity; we all know,