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PROPAGANDA IN WAR AND CRISIS

materials for American Policy

edited

with an introduction



by Daniel Lerner

研究生書

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a Policy Sciences Book



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**PROPAGANDA
IN WAR
AND CRISIS**

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To
THE MEMORY OF
ALBERT A. WEINSTEIN
*for whom
the arts of persuasion
served
the purposes of justice*

THE CONTRIBUTORS

WALLACE CARROLL, an officer of the Overseas Branch of OWI, has written an account of his propaganda experience in World War II entitled *Persuade or Perish*.

RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN, Labor M.P. from East Coventry and an editor of *New Statesman and Nation*, was Deputy Chief of Psychological Warfare Division (SHAEP).

ELMER DAVIS, newsman and radio commentator, was Chief of OWI during World War II.

HENRY V. DICKS, medical psychiatrist associated with the Tavistock Clinic in London, was a senior intelligence officer in the British Directorate of Army Psychiatry.

LEONARD DOOB, Professor of Psychology at Yale University and author of *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, held several important posts in OWI.

LEWIS F. GITTLER, field intelligence officer (OWI-PWD) in World War II, collaborated on the book *German Psychological Warfare*.

MURRAY I. GURFEIN, formerly public prosecutor and now practising attorney in New York City, was Chief of Intelligence in PWD.

MARTIN F. HERZ, Chief Leaflet Writer at PWD, is now a Foreign Service Officer with the American Embassy in Paris.

CHARLES D. JACKSON, Deputy Director of PWD, has recently taken leave as Publisher of *Fortune* Magazine to direct the Committee for Free Europe.

MORRIS JANOWITZ, intelligence analyst at PWD, is now Assistant Professor of Social Science at the University of Chicago.

ERNST KRIS, Visiting Professor of Psychology in the New School for Social Research, was co-author of *German Radio Propaganda*.

HAROLD D. LASSWELL, Professor of Law at Yale University, opened a new field of research with *Propaganda Technique in the World War*; during World War II he directed the Experimental Division for the Study of Wartime Communications at the Library of Congress.

NATHAN LEITES, formerly with OWI and now with The RAND Corporation in Washington, has published *Some Psychological Hypotheses on Nazi Germany* (with Paul Kecskemeti) and *The Operational Code of the Politburo*.

DANIEL LERNER, Visiting Professor of Sociology at Columbia University (on leave from Stanford University), has described PWD operations in *Sykewar: Psychological Warfare Against Germany*.

PAUL M. A. LINEBARGER, Professor of Asiatic Politics at the School of Advanced International Studies, has published a synoptic account of World War II propaganda in *Psychological Warfare*.

ROBERT BRUCE LOCKHART, Director-General of Britain's Political Warfare Executive in World War II, has reviewed this experience in *Comes The Reckoning*.

MARGARET OTIS was, for several years, Press Analyst at the American Embassy in Paris.

SAUL K. PADOVER, Dean of the School of Politics at the New School for Social Research, has recounted his experiences as field intelligence officer (OSS-PWD) in *Experiment in Germany*.

JAMES RESTON has been a "number one voice" in *The New York Times* for many years.

EDWARD A. SHILS, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, was a senior intelligence officer in the formative period of PWD.

HANS SPEIER, Director of Social Science in The RAND Corporation, held several important government posts connected with international propaganda during World War II and is co-author of *German Radio Propaganda*.

PAUL R. SWEET, Professor of History at Colby College, was a field intelligence officer (OSS-PWD) and is now on a State Department mission concerned with documentation of the Nazi period.

JAMES P. WARBURG, an officer in the Overseas Branch of OWI, has published *Germany, Bridge or Battleground* and *Unwritten Treaty*.

ELLIS M. ZACHARIAS, Retired Admiral of the U. S. Navy, has evaluated his World War II propaganda operations to Japan in *Secret Missions*.

INTRODUCTION

Some Problems of Policy and Propaganda

By

DANIEL LERNER

THE VOICES here mingled are soloists. They perform on a variety of themes, and their individual tones have been only lightly orchestrated for this performance. Their effect, nevertheless, is choral. The careful listener will detect that they are rendering different passages in the same score. Some program notes on the score and its present performance may help to delineate the pattern.

I. The Book

We have in hand the first collection of writings on the use of propaganda in war and crisis, recently rebaptized psychological warfare. They have been selected and arranged with the aim of clarifying some key problems that confront American policy in the present time of high tension. A variety of hands were needed for this purpose, as the subject has many dimensions and no one man has yet covered them all.

The contributors are men with wide and varied experience in the matter. Represented here are social scientists who have contributed to a theoretical framework for systematic inquiry into the propaganda process. Represented, too, are those social scientists who have codified their own experience in particular propaganda operations to illuminate general aspects of the process.

Important witnesses are those men who were responsible for the conduct of various psychological warfare activities in World War II. Elmer Davis was Chief of OWI; Wallace Carroll and James P. Warburg were responsible officers of its Overseas Branch. C. D. Jackson and Murray Gurfein were top officers under General Robert A. McClure in the Anglo-American Psychological Warfare Division of General Eisenhower's headquar-

ters staff (SHAEP). Richard Crossman was the senior British officer in this Division, and Bruce Lockhart was Director General of the British PWE. Their influence upon American operations, as that of Dr. H. V. Dicks, was so large as to justify their inclusion in this otherwise All-American collection.

Some of our valuable insights come from those rare operating propagandists who can both exercise symbol skills and talk about them descriptively. Martin Herz was our Chief Leaflet Writer in Europe, and Ellis M. Zacharias broadcast a top-level series of talks to Japan, during World War II. James Reston knows how to sociologize political behavior as well as journalize it.

We have, then, an abundant spectrum of skills focussed in this volume upon the problems of psychological warfare. It is a rare subject which brings together such a variety of expert consultants from the academy and the world of affairs. Well represented are the communication industries—publishing (Jackson), films (Gittler), and the “working press” (Carroll, Davis, Reston). The professions represented include the legal (Gurfein), medical (Dicks), economic (Warburg). Spokesmen from the government community include an elected legislator (Crossman), an executive official (Lockhart), intelligence specialists (Herz, Otis), and a military officer (Zacharias). The academic delegation includes historians and political scientists (Lasswell, Leites, Linebarger, Padover, Sweet), psychologists (Doob, Kris), and sociologists (Janowitz, Lerner, Shils, Speier). Too often talk within such groups is strictly intramural. Here they confront each other in public.

The papers here assembled reflect the range and habitat of their authors. Several items were prepared especially for this volume; others are declassified war documents here printed for the first time. A substantial number are reprinted from the learned journals and from specialized volumes designed to reach only small professional groups. We have made no fetish of using only inaccessible materials, however; several items were taken from current publications because they were most relevant to the problem at hand.

We have, in short, made our selections with a resolute eye on the book's purpose: to assemble and arrange “materials for American policy.” The problems of policy we consider as three-fold: to clarify goals; to organize the best available means of

reaching those goals; to evaluate, continuously and rigorously, the degree to which past and present activities are contributing to these goals. We turn next to summarize briefly the bearing of these policy problems on propaganda operations in war and crisis.

2. *The Problems*

Psychological Warfare is the phrase current in American usage for propaganda designed to achieve national policy goals in the world political arena. The term may be misleading: decisions about propaganda are no more (and no less) "psychological" than decisions about boycotts or bombings; and international propaganda is by no means confined to "warfare." We may get the sort of effects on morale sought by "psychological warfare" when, in peacetime, Gromyko walks out on the Security Council; or when a gift of American hydro-electric equipment brings power to Italian farmers for the first time. Yet, these are political and economic activities. The distinctive propaganda function is to emphasize, by talk, the effects on audience morale which such activities are designed to produce. What we are talking about, then, when we speak of "psychological warfare," is the use of symbols to promote policies, i.e., *politics*.

The British, with greater candor, designate these activities as "political warfare." Why the Americans have sought refuge from this term is an interesting question, on which Professor Lasswell offers enlightenment in the present volume (chapter 12). This is perhaps another illustration of that pervasive American antipathy to theory and generality which often misleads us into preferences for whatever can be made to seem technical and "empirical." We are not here directly concerned with American culture traits, however. Our interest in such traits is to see how they, among other factors, affect our ability to use propaganda in effective support of our policies. One consequence is expressed wittily by Colonel Gurfein (chapter 9), who calls the term "an unhappy one in that it brings to mind the picture of unsoldierly civilians, most of them needing haircuts, engaged in hypnotizing the enemy."

The point to be emphasized is that concentration on technique often obscures the fact that propaganda, in war or peace, is first and always an instrument of policy. Propaganda is politics conducted by the symbolization of events. It differs from

other instruments of policy which act directly upon the material environment (e.g., battles, boycotts, blockades). Propaganda manipulates only the *language* in which such activities are talked about.

However, manipulation of the symbolic environment can itself produce major *events* in the political life of the world. Hitler drew world attention to his pronouncements, and so at various times did Wilson, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and Truman. James Reston's discussion of "The Number One Voice" (chapter 18) indicates that such claims upon the world focus of attention are a function of power and purpose. Public utterances are widely attended events when they are felt to be auguries of the future.

This is a central lesson of the volume at hand. Policy is the continuous effort to shape the future by decisions in the present. What is meant by "confused policy" is the failure to *clarify* in present actions the future toward which one is moving. A "faulty policy" is one that fails by present actions to *achieve* desired events in the future. "Sound policy" integrates all available means in making decisions which increase the likelihood that the future will conform to postulated goals.

One requirement of sound policy is the *clarification* of goals; a second is their *instrumentation*. The two interact incessantly in the course of political life. Goals without instruments constitute utopianism; instruments without goals is nihilism. The art of democratic politics consists in discovering those alternatives which make the most of "what is possible" with the least compromise of "what is desirable." Hence, the "soundness" of any policy decision is to be judged by its effectiveness in modifying given conditions toward desired goals, as Dr. Hans Speier demonstrates in his analysis of "War Aims in Political Warfare" (chapter 5).

The step from clarification of goals to their instrumentation requires, in the first instance, adequate intelligence of the conditions which are "given." This crucial service rendered to policymaking by the intelligence function is perhaps the most serious area of ignorance in our present understanding of the political process. Clarification of this function is a central purpose of Policy Science and should be among the problems which concern all social scientists. We call particular attention to Part

II of this volume—on “Policy, Intelligence, and Propaganda Strategy”—as a modest contribution in this direction.

The instruments of policy activate policy decisions by continuously modifying present conditions toward future goals. Policy specifies the desired ends; intelligence appraises the available means. Each of the policy instruments—propaganda, diplomacy, economics, war—has its distinctive techniques, but all are to be appraised by the criterion of effectiveness. A treaty is “good” if it effectively furthers a determinate policy; it is “bad,” however admirable the contracting diplomats, if it does not. Similarly a propaganda Strategy of News is good if it activates current policy decisions more effectively than available alternatives; if it does not, it should be replaced immediately, despite the discomforts virtuous propagandists may suffer from the use of ideas instead of “facts.” Part III therefore treats the problems of organizing the purposes and persons concerned with propaganda operations so that policy is served most effectively.

The evaluation of propaganda effectiveness involves some of the knottiest problems confronting social scientists and policy-makers. Nothing less than a comprehensive conception of the future is needed to give perspective to questions about effectiveness. Whether effects are to be long-range or short-range, whether they are to result in action, whether submission or revolt or apathy are the effects desired—all these are policy questions regarding the future. Such questions must be answered before it is possible to evaluate the extent to which the effects desired have been achieved. Systematic analysis of this sort lies in the future. The distinctive contribution of Professors Shils and Janowitz (chapter 23) toward this end is to demonstrate what can be done by bringing relevant data to bear systematically upon one short-range propaganda goal, formulated *a posteriori*. The USSBS report (chapter 22), apart from the technical interest of its procedures for gathering and processing data, is a useful reminder that morale is a continuing process involving multi-dimensional situations. Since systematic analysis must isolate variables, we welcome a study whose design emphasizes that variables are interactive in “real life.” The appraisals concluding the volume specify some of the many dimensions on which alert political analysts wish to have information. The study of Aachen by Professor Padover and his associates (chapter 25), for

example, brings to focus on a concrete situation the very factors which are isolated in his subtle and sensitive portraits of individual German personalities (chapter 8). These chapters are clues, therefore, to problems with which systematic students of effectiveness will be concerned in the future.

3. Acknowledgments

I wish to thank here the contributors and their publishers, named elsewhere, for generous permission to borrow their past writings for the present volume. Whether our common purpose has been served will be determined by the future activities of those for whom the book is intended.

Professors H. H. Fisher and C. E. Rothwell, officers of the Hoover Institute and Library, showed their usual uncommon generosity with materials in that treasure-house of modern history. Stanford University granted me a leave which substantially advanced the completion of the book. Professors P. F. Lazarsfeld and R. K. Merton, my present colleagues, made suggestions which were used. So, vigorously, did Dr. Leo Rosten.

I wish to thank especially the editors of the Library of Policy Sciences. From Saul K. Padover I have learned to clarify values and goals which reach beyond the limits of this volume. Joseph M. Goldsen helped to specify the function of this book and exerted himself to increase its utility. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the extraordinary fact that my intellectual debt to Harold D. Lasswell continues to grow with the years.

As always my wife, Jean Lerner, stood by.

DANIEL LERNER

Columbia University
March, 1951

Part I

THE 20TH CENTURY BACKGROUND

THE PROPAGANDA one nation directs toward another is limited by many factors beyond the immediate control of propagandists. These limiting factors are the "given conditions" which propagandists may seek to modify as their goal, but which they must take into their initial calculations as to means. Chief among these limiting conditions are: the current and impending world political situation, the characteristics of the propagandizing society, and those of the audience society. To illustrate, we may specify a few relevant factors.

In the world political situation, a controlling factor is the current balance of power and impending changes (or expectations thereof) in the balance. It makes an enormous difference to propagandists whether they speak for the most powerful nation (or coalition) in the balance, or for the chief contender for this role, or for the powers receding toward the periphery of the balancing process. Top power position is not invariably the most desirable spot for the propagandist: e.g., for two centuries the aspiring United States spoke to the world confidently as the embodiment of a revolutionary new ideology on earth; for the past two decades the world-powerful United States has felt itself forced into a defensive ideological posture viz-a-viz world opinion.

With respect to the social structure of either party to the propaganda process—whether sending or receiving—the following factors will constitute limiting conditions: the prevailing system of values and goals which compose the social myth; the structure and stability of political institutions; the pattern of educational practices; the condition of technology, and particularly of communications industries.

The opening chapter by Speier elaborates and analyzes the conditions of modern life which define the scope and limits of propaganda, particularly in wartime. Lasswell's analysis of Soviet propaganda strategy sets its past development in a context