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LIMITED WAR, NATIONAL WILL,  
AND THE  
ALL VOLUNTEER ARMY

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RAMON A. IVEY, AV

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and the term of information to the American public; the effect of changing political views after World War II on the motion picture industry and film themes; the usurpation of the movie industry as a propaganda tool by the new technology of television after 1950 and its effect on the American public; and finally, to draw a conclusion as to the use of the motion picture as a propaganda tool in the future national crisis in America.

*Handwritten notes and a diagram.*  
The diagram shows a central point with several lines radiating outwards, resembling a starburst or a network diagram. The lines are drawn in ink and are somewhat irregular.

UNCLASSIFIED

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

PROPAGANDA TOOL: THE HOLLYWOOD WAR  
MOVIE AND ITS USURPATION BY TV

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Bob Osborne, SC

Lieutenant Colonel R. Eiserman  
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
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THE HOLLYWOOD WAR MOVIE AS A  
PROPAGANDA WEAPON IN AMERICA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Propaganda dissemination can be accomplished by numerous means. The key means include "the spoken word, written messages, and visual portrayal." The transmittal methods include "radio, newspaper, and visual communications." Other methods used include "public addresses, pamphlets, circulars, newsletters, posters, music (songs and scores), art, wearing apparel (i.e., uniforms), costumes, symbols, monuments, scientific accomplishments, cultural exchanges, national sponsored fairs or exhibitions, and conferences." The means are only limited by one's own "imagination" or "initiative." The key denominator for dissemination is the propagandist's decision on which method will be used and the circumstances in which it must be selected.<sup>1</sup>

The communications means selected by the propagandist to disseminate his propaganda to his target will be dictated by four factors. These include "the subject matter to be conveyed, the selected audience, the communications available and the time limit in which the propagandist's desired reaction must be obtained."<sup>2</sup>

Propaganda is usually directed to the "masses"--the mass audience. The propagandist must select "data" on the

audience targeted prior to dissemination. This information must be analyzed as to the target's "attitudes, motivations, listening habits, the degree to which individuals might pass on the information absorbed, the economic and social positions of the target and position in the power infrastructure." Criteria for analysis would include "susceptibility" and "cruciality" of the audience to the subject being propagandized and to the overall propaganda plan.<sup>3</sup>

The propaganda plan must "attract and hold the target audience's attention" in order to influence through a logical message that is "acceptable" and "interesting."<sup>4</sup> To effectively accomplish communicating the message, the propagandist must, according to Leo Bogart's Premises For Propaganda, remain true to six basic premises:

. . . the output must be simplified to be meaningful and to avoid misinterpretation; impact is lost unless a message is confined to only one point or idea and is repeated; the content must be geared to the audience's own experience so it will make sense; if the audience is considered backward abstract thought should not be used due to its susceptibility to misunderstanding; to avoid confusion, do not try to disguise the message; and do not ever presume the audience has the<sup>5</sup> factual background to understand the message.

Timing is most critical in propaganda distribution. As in any deception to be taken by the propagandist, it is a deciding factor as to how elaborate the influencing action or the distribution pattern will be conceived and conducted.



Timing must be planned to prevent discovery of the propagandist's real goal and to not allow the audience to recover from its effects.

#### BACKGROUND

Prior to the mid-1950s, the propagandist's most potent method of visual communications available to disseminate messages was the motion picture. It was the most effective means of addressing mass audiences and played upon the target's emotions. The motion picture was unique in its ability to "penetrate and influence" the target audience's "needs, frustrations, ambitions, and desires." It attacked and influenced social and cultural practices through "styles in dress, mannerisms in speech, drinking" and living styles. In the political arena it could affect public opinion in "nationalism, patriotism, religion, race, property rights, and social status by reinforcing existing attitudes and discouraged any departure from the norm."<sup>6</sup> Its impact could also effectively do the reverse.

According to Terance H. Qualter in Propaganda and Psychological Warfare:

One of the most striking means by which motion pictures has influenced social attitudes has been through stereotypes--conventional figures that have come to be regarded as representative of particular occupations, races, or classes. By the careful selections of appropriate stereotypes, the motion picture producers could go a long way toward directing

large sections of public opinion to specific attitudes to such things as military discipline, national pride, racialism and foreigners.

The motion picture, even in its power as a psychological weapon, had two major weaknesses as a propaganda means. These were its high cost in producing a film and its bottom line of entertainment for profit. These weaknesses were coupled and complicated with the "reluctance of a democratic government" and the American people's value of ethics to dwell into the propaganda arena at all.<sup>8</sup>

Effective prior and during World War II, the motion picture would be challenged as the leading group persuader of propagandist by a new technology, namely, television by the mid-1950s.

Although this study will confine its focus to the Hollywood War Movie as a propaganda tool, it must be noted Hollywood made many other contributions to America's war efforts, especially during World War II. Per David E. Meerse, in his article "To Reassure A Nation: Hollywood Presents World War II," he states:

When the fighting stopped, and Hollywood took a retrospective look at its wartime contributions, it found that it had made significant contributions to the American war effort in a number of areas. Fifteen hundred members of the approximately 10,000-member Screen Actors' Guild entered the armed services, including such stars and leading men as Clark Gable, Jimmie Stewart, Gene Autry, Jackie Coogan, Victor Mature, Tyrone Power, Robert Montgomery, Sterling Hayden and Henry Fonda.

The talents of such directors as Frank Capra, who made the Army's Why We Fight series, of William Wyler, who made the Technicolor feature on aerial operations, The Memphis Belle, of Louis Hayward, who headed Marine combat photographers that produced the graphic With the Marines at Tarawa, and many other film technicians were utilized to make newsreels, documentaries, training films, and films to increase wartime production; . . . the three years after Pearl Harbor, over 3,500 performers made more than 35,000 personal appearances . . . personal appearances went not only to the armed forces but also the folks at home . . . to collect both money and blood for the Red Cross, and, most significantly to raise money in the various bond and war loan drives.

Walt Disney cartoon characters Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck would make their wartime contributions in short feature cartoons. Private "Snafu", a created wartime soldier cartoon character, would make his contribution through Army training films as the outfit screwup emphasizing the "wrong way" to accomplish soldier tasks.

Factory workers would be required to view special showings of War Information Films, such as Tanks, Bomber, Women In Defense, and The Hidden Army, during lunch breaks or shift changes. These films were specifically designed to "demonstrate the relationship of the war worker to the fighting men in all corners of the globe," thus enhancing the workers' war production effort and building their morale.<sup>10</sup>

. . . Military service, combat photography and documentary film productions, troop entertainment and

civilian morale building, and war finance encouragement were all substantial contributions to which the film industry could justifiably point with pride.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Terance H. Qualter, Propaganda And Psychological Warfare, p. 100.
2. Ibid., p. 101.
3. Robert T. Holt and Robert W. VandeVolde, Strategic Psychological Operations and American Foreign Policy, pp. 6-7.
4. Leo Bogart, Premises For Propaganda: The United States Information Agency's Operating Assumptions In The Cold War, p. 152.
5. Ibid., p. 53.
6. Qualter, p. 94.
7. Ibid., p. 95.
8. Ibid., pp. 96-98, 122.
9. David E. Meerse, "To Reassure A Nation: Hollywood Presents World War II," in Film and History, Vol. 6, No. 4, December 1976, p. 80.
10. "Army Films For Industrial Audiences," Business Screen Magazine, Issue 4, 1943-44, p. 20.
11. Meerse, p. 80.

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS PROPAGANDA?

Any form of communications in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, whether directly or indirectly.

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The word propaganda tends to imply "negative, evil connotations." Yet its first use can be traced back to religious origins under Pope Gregory XV in 1622 when he decreed the formulation of the "Congregatio de Propaganda Fide" or translated, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>1</sup> Its charter was to spread the doctrines and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the known world at the time.

Per LTC John Shotwell in his thesis, Fog of War, the actual practice of propaganda can be traced back further than the court of Pope Gregory XV.

. . . Christ could be considered one of the best known and skillful propagandists, though Saint Paul's direct mail campaign to the early Christian churches was probably more influential than Jesus' own sermons in propagating the Christian faith. After victorious battles, Julius Caesar paraded slaves and pending sacrificial victims through the streets of Rome baring banners stating 'Veni, Vidi, Vici' to arouse support among the Roman citizens. Like past Caesars, he ensured his likeness was engraved upon the Empire's coins. The pyramids themselves could be considered as a costly propaganda campaign to

advertise the powers and immortality of the Pharohs . . . as well as the construction of awesome cathedrals and massive castles conveying the powers of church and state to peasants unable to comprehend written propaganda.<sup>2</sup>

The systematic propagation of Catholic doctrine as decreed by Pope Gregory XV had two longlasting effects not originally intended. First, it would establish "a precedent to be practiced with an intent to control" others' minds; secondly, it would become "the term as we know in modern times describing the practice of controlling public opinion." Where it had once been applied to groups organized to "propagate a doctrine," propaganda is now known as the "doctrine" itself combined with the "techniques" or methods with which it works to influence.<sup>3</sup>

#### PROPAGANDA DEFINED

The meaning of propaganda has continually been redefined by man for centuries. It has been expressed in terms of passing information considered to be interesting with no references to its reliability or validity of being true or false, fact or opinion. It has also been referred to as a form of persuasion in which the primary interest of the persuader is deliberately concealed from those he wishes to influence. Symbols of civilized society, such as justice, security and education, became manipulative propaganda sources as well as an array of human emotions, such as love, hate and

fear to the power of suggestion.

Terence H. Qualter has studied the formation and development of propaganda through the past centuries and into the modern times of the twentieth century and probably defined propaganda better than most. In looking into the variances of propaganda means he concludes, "the definition of propaganda must be sufficient to cover every activity of those recognized as propagandists, to see what is common to this activity, and to exclude all else."<sup>4</sup> He therefore defined propaganda as:

. . . the deliberate attempt by some individual or group to form, control, or alter the attitudes of other groups by the use of the instruments of communication, with the intention that in any given situation the reaction of those so influenced will be that desired by the propagandist.

However, the definition of propaganda for this study will be simplified as "the attempt to influence behavior in the direction of some relatively specific and explicit goal by affecting, through the use of mass media communication, the manner in which a mass audience perceives and ascribes meaning to the material world." Three aspects of this definition need to be remembered during this study. These are: (1) the mass audience involved; (2) what attempts to influence behavior; and, (3) not that propaganda is evil, false, true, or its being right or wrong, but only its intention to influence public opinion and how they receive

it.<sup>6</sup>

Before going further, the distinction between "direct" and "indirect" propaganda must be made. Propaganda is direct when "the immediate response desired by the propagandist is made explicit" to the target audience. An example would be "domestic political" information or advertising techniques we see and hear on a daily basis. Indirect propaganda is an "attempt to influence a behavioral or attitudinal response of the audience" without their realization such as "international propaganda" or "institutional advertising."<sup>7</sup>

#### AMERICANS AND PROPAGANDA

Liberal democracies, such as the United States, have chosen to use information in place of the term propaganda. This is especially the case in political circles. This asserts the premise "the other side (adversary) uses only propaganda, while one's own side uses information."<sup>8</sup> Advertising agencies are masters at using this philosophy. They firmly believe "that contemporary society should not recognize information components as ideas, facts, or allegations for one's own cause, but as values which everyone shares by common consent."<sup>9</sup> In other words, "affirm", not "convince." Are not then advertisers practicing the art of propaganda using mass suggestion? The conclusion using this analysis would be yes.<sup>10</sup>

Our society is built on certain principles. Those being



"freedom, equality and justice." Most importantly, we have the ethic of fairness."<sup>11</sup> Democracies protect the right of its citizens to "think, speak and write" their beliefs--the basic freedoms of expression--and distrust governments which "drive into public minds the single, official point of view." Basically, they do not like being duped by propagandists!<sup>12</sup>

Yet, all governments require the loyal support of their citizenry for legitimacy.<sup>13</sup> This support is national will and its reading gauge is public opinion.

In National Security Policy Formulation: Institutions, Processes And Issues (1984) public opinion is represented thus:

Public opinion represents an expression of attitudes and preferences of the nation's citizenry. This public is formed in many ways, one of which is through the enculturation of attitudes and orientations that are widely shared among the populus. One aspect is the political culture and how people are raised to view politics and political activities. Beliefs in subscribing to the Constitution and its Bill of Rights. They feel (1) free speech and association should prevail, (2) every adult should have the right to vote, and (3) people should seek legal and political redress for their grievances.<sup>14</sup>

The question can be raised, however, is the above always true? Is public opinion this spontaneous from the populus? Or do we just react "to selective information provided by institutions and individuals,"<sup>15</sup> such as "influential leaders and the mass media?"<sup>16</sup>

The mass media has the ability to be selective of the information it disseminates, what it will emphasize, stress, and amount on any subject, or event.<sup>17</sup> We can't be everywhere at once--know, see, or hear everything around us--so we rely on mass media to furnish us the happenings around us. But one must remember--"no source of information is free from bias." For the "very act of deciding what is important and how to present it skews reality and fosters misperceptions."<sup>18</sup> Through selection and the use of bias in supplying information to audiences cannot it be said the mass media does practice propaganda activities as this study defines?

Why, then, has the word propaganda tumbled into the gutter of our vernacular skid row? Possibly because the twentieth century has seen a greater use of propaganda in adversary relationships which necessitate simplistic, slanted diatribes against an opponent rather than a balanced pitch for a particular cause . . . or action. In a simple equation: We tell the truth; they lie. We persuade; they propagandize. Therefore: propaganda = lies.<sup>19</sup>

Americans regard propaganda with deep suspicion and fear. They thrive on access to information, but expect it to be free of flaw--factual and straight, not tainted.<sup>20</sup>

Being in an open and free society, Americans seldom get away by telling "untruths" nor do they expect their leaders or institutions to. Basically--we are just bad liars; it is not in our ethics.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, propaganda to Americans is just a dirty word.

Even when our adversaries use our media communications to undermine the values within our own country, we still feel we should "refrain from propaganda, counter-propaganda and even our practice of using truth as a propaganda weapon."<sup>22</sup>

This is the principle "that all good propaganda must be factually true, that one should never make statements that might later be refuted."<sup>23</sup>

However, when national security is at risk it requires the total support to accomplish the tasks of maintaining that security and the protection of American liberty and freedoms. This will necessitate "sacrifice and active involvement" of a unified populus.<sup>24</sup> This realization is known to our leaders in government and they will use propaganda means (as the motion picture) to influence public opinion in order to obtain national will of its citizenry and "military morale."<sup>25</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

1. "Propaganda," The World Book Encyclopedia, 1976, Vol. 15, p. 725 (hereafter referred to as "Propaganda").
2. John M. Shotwell, LTC, Fog of War: An Analysis of the Impact of Spanish Civil War Propaganda in the United States, pp. 6-7.
3. Terence H. Qualter, Propaganda and Psychological Warfare, p. 4.
4. Ibid., p. 27.
5. Ibid.
6. Robert T. Holt and Robert W. VandeVolde, Strategic

Psychological Operations and American Foreign Policy,  
pp. 27-28.

7. Ibid., p. 28.

8. Qualter, p. 100.

9. Ibid., p. 101.

10. Gary Evans, John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda, p. 11.

11. Deanne J. Boling, CPT, Operational Law In Support of Public Affairs And Psychological Operations, p. 1.

12. "Propaganda," p. 727.

13. Amos A. Jordan and William J. Taylor, Jr., American National Security: Policy And Process, p. 11.

14. National Defense University, National Security Policy Formulation: Institutions, Processes And Issues, p. 127.

15. Jordan and Taylor, p. 104.

16. National Defense University, p. 128.

17. Jordan and Taylor, p. 114.

18. National Defense University, p. 128.

19. Shotwell, p. 7.

20. Robert E. Summers, America's Weapons Of Psychological Warfare, p. 48.

21. Edward W. Barrett, Truth Is Our Weapon, pp. 129-130.

22. Ibid., p. 205.

23. Qualter, p. 123.

24. Jordan and Taylor, p. 11.

25. Summers, p. 48.

### CHAPTER III

#### HOLLYWOOD--WARTIME PROPAGANDA MACHINE

Hollywood would, during World War II, make a valuable contribution as a link between the American populus and its government. Through dramatization and action war movies, it would be a conduit to "explain the causes of war, the evil nature of the enemy," the "sacrifice" of the American people themselves, and "home front" importance. Hollywood would attempt to create images of reality relating to the war through special effects and the use of combat photographers' war film footage. These efforts were to "provide an explanation of America war efforts to the public" as Hollywood became "an unofficial government agency" in its efforts.<sup>1</sup> At no time in American history was the Hollywood contribution to the molding of the American national will more visible or direct than the period 1939-1945, as America prepared and eventually entered World War II.

Movies produced during the period 1939-1945 would show the Axis powers maligning American values as they attacked such symbols as "mother, home, justice, health, beauty, love, money, security and education." These symbols were held in extreme value by Americans and they would react to their degradation especially when shown being destroyed by an

enemy's "acts of cruelty and barbarity."<sup>2</sup> The Hollywood movie would mold national will by swaying public opinion into a patriotic, willing war machine.

### Hollywood And Government Influence

Hollywood went to war with gusto. Blatant morale-building propaganda was a staple of its plots, speeches, and visual images. A marine, having just dispatched a horde of treacherous Japanese attackers, pauses to utter a paean to democracy. A young mother newly widowed when her husband was killed in combat, chokes back the tears and tells her infant son that daddy died so he could have a better future.<sup>3</sup>

The exceptional power of Hollywood productions was recognized by the American government in the mid-1930s as a unique propaganda means to effect public opinion toward any war effort. It was a grand mobilizer of national will. The government, realizing America would be thrust into conflict against the Axis powers within the near future, mounted actions to cultivate Hollywood into its mobilization policies and to "mold the content" of film productions to its national needs. The Office of War Information (OWI), "the government's propaganda agency," would become intimately involved with film production story lines and scripts, and would publish directions which would outline guidelines for war effort assistance through feature films. They would also have the ability to kill scripts which were objectionable to the war effort and would be the speech writers for key

patriotic oratories of the films' stars. These actions were carried on through Hollywood's own Office of Censorship which "issued export licenses for film features and controlled the exhibition of American films."<sup>4</sup>

One must remember the motion picture industry is profit motivated and deals in a medium that provides entertainment to provide those profits.

As noted by Gregory D. Black and Clayton R. Koppes in their book, Hollywood Goes To War:

Since foreign exhibition often made the difference between profit and loss for a picture, studio executives found it quite expedient to follow the OWI's advice. This factor coupled with its influence in production the government was to exercise considerable influence over the content of wartime Hollywood movies.<sup>5</sup>

In 1939, the messages of impending war became intense in Hollywood feature films. This subject matter was "irresistable" to Hollywood filmmakers, but acting as a conduit for propaganda to awaken the American public would step across the line of "pure entertainment" for profit. Hollywood did recognize, however, that if America entered the war, it would be total war for survival not a mere conflict. Hollywood accepted its role and became "the prime instrument for public persuasion," producing entertaining feature films as "propaganda vehicles."<sup>6</sup>

The films produced by Hollywood would take on an intraventionalist role prior to 1941. But with war clouds

gathering on the horizon of American shores, the tone of films would take on a more preparedness message up to Pearl Harbor and thereafter till the end of the war would be a morale multiplier for the American people.

#### Intravention And Preparedness

As the Axis powers conquered more of the European and Asian continents in 1939-1941, foreign film markets began to close their doors to American movies, Hollywood would turn more internally with its messages of intervention and preparedness. Hollywood studios would release over fifty of these type films during this period. Most notable of these productions were Confessions Of A Nazi Spy, Nurse Edith Cavill, Four Sons, The Mortal Storm, Escape, and Man Hunt. These films told of Nazi atrocity, barbaric acts of cruelty and deceit. They were effective as Americans began to look upon Germany with disdain. A remake was made of the 1930 hit All Quiet On The Western Front and released in 1939. This production was accompanied by a dramatic oratory and newsreel commentary depicting "pre-war and post-war (World War I) Germany and directly slanted toward the Nazi leadership." This production was followed by the release of The Fighting 69th in 1940. This was a patriotic, all American film of the exploits against Germany during World War I. With government persuasion, it was considered "suitable for showing at schools, libraries and churches."



Hollywood was taking past glories and military victories to arouse the emotions and patriotic values within America--and was quite effective.<sup>7</sup>

The most famous of the interventionalist films released prior to America's entrance into World War II was the epic saga Sergeant York, premiering at the Astoria Theatre, New York City, 1 July 1941.

Sergeant York purported to be the story of Alvin York, a famous pacifist who became an instant hero in World War I when he killed some twenty German soldiers and captured 132 others in the Argonne. There were two key transitions undertaken in the movie; first, the transformation of York from hellion to pacifist; and second, pacifist to super warrior. The second was the most difficult. Expressing sincere doubts to his commander that he can kill anyone, York impresses his commander with his sincerity. He is sent home to Tennessee on furlough to think over his dilemma and he's ordered by his commander to read, along with his Bible, the story of the United States and its history of struggle to be free. He returns to his unit after coming to grips with his beliefs, prepared to go to war and fight.

The American public flocked to attend showings of Sergeant York. Those who had felt as York before seeing the movie (and were converted) found the Army waiting outside the theatres with a massive recruitment effort which proved to be successful.

Sergeant York was a landmark in American feature films as it placed them directly into the political workings of the country. From once "fearful" of becoming political activist,

Hollywood was firmly entrenched in "political interventionism."<sup>9</sup>

Although not directly involved in conflict in early 1941, many Americans had joined the Canadian and British Forces fighting the Nazis. The first film to depict this direct involvement of American citizens was the feature film A Yank In The RAF released in mid-1941. President Roosevelt had reinstated the draft and the lend lease program to support the British efforts. Hollywood would assist the recruiting effort of the American Armed Forces by releasing two patriotic recruiting films in 1941. These films were entitled I Wanted Wings and Dive Bomber. America was beginning to take more effort in preparing for war and Hollywood would continue to be a forerunner.<sup>10</sup>

But there were dissenters as to Hollywood's motives and participation in interventionism and preparedness activities. These were "isolationists." Through political pressure, isolationists would force congressional hearings to investigate Hollywood propaganda efforts and "warmongering" activities. December 7, 1941 ended this controversy, as Japan launched a savage and brutal sneak attack on naval vessels of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. There was no longer talk of Hollywood's right or wrongdoings, America was in total war, and all efforts toward victory would be considered appropriate.<sup>11</sup>

Although the non-interventionist position had little credibility nor support by late 1941, the issue of how the

feature film messages were determined was of lasting importance. Movie audiences were receiving a constant, one-sided dose of interventionist propaganda--direct and indirect. Newsreels as shorts, shown prior to any feature film, ranged from battle news from Europe or Asia to productions in equipment for Roosevelt's lend lease initiatives. The feature following the shorts would be anti-Nazi, glorification of the armed forces, or involvement. Gregory Black and Clayton Koppes summed up the impact of the interventionist and preparedness era as follows:

. . . building on the interventionist feeling belatedly dug in 1939-1941, motion picture crews went on to create the most explicitly political films in Hollywood's history. Their chief concern was proclaiming 'the virtues of the true American way'--as subject that continually sparked controversy. Hollywood opinion overwhelmingly rejected isolationism in private and, after the Senate hearings, found the isolationists an irresistible public target. Beyond that theme, the interpretation of America and the war was up for grabs. The industry watched with a mixture of eagerness and wariness as the Roosevelt administration tried to sort out what role propaganda was to continue to play.

### Hollywood As A Weapon

President Roosevelt realized the motion picture, with Hollywood's help, was a vital weapon of war. He appointed Lowell Millet to oversee motion picture production immediately after the Japanese sneak attack at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Millet would use the Motion Picture Committee Cooperative

for National Defense (MPCCND) as the coordinator and base for all film production, not only Hollywood, but "educational and industrial film producers" throughout America's wartime efforts.<sup>13</sup> It would also coordinate, censor and clear government and armed forces film efforts while developing distribution schedules and plans of feature and short films to "inform and instruct the public" during the war. It became the overall "clearing house" and approval authority to Hollywood, private, public and governmental film production during the war.<sup>14</sup>

Millet also collocated elements of the War Activities Committee (WAC) in Hollywood to coordinate efforts with the MPCCND and Hollywood studios. Its specified purpose was "to channel government suggestions for film projects to the studios without having to take direct control" of the studios themselves.<sup>15</sup> WAC would be the shaper of "style and content" during the war--with special emphasis on war films. These films would take on basic story plots. They would be confined to "the issues of the war, the enemy, the allies, the production (industrial) front, the home front (populus), and the fighting forces."<sup>16</sup>

In June 1942, the Government Information Manual For The Motion Picture Industry was produced. This manual gave the policy guidelines to be followed for the rest of the war by film producers. There were four premises to be adhered to. They were:

I. The overwhelming majority of the people are behind the government in its war program but they do not have adequate knowledge and understanding of this program. In the United States we are not for "blind followers." Unless the people adequately understand this program a few military reverses can shatter the high morale of the American people. Unless they adequately understand the magnitude of the program the people will not willingly make the additional sacrifices that they shall be called upon to make in the prosecution of total war and total victory.

The government of the United States has an unwaivering faith in the sincerity of purpose and integrity of the American people. The American people, on the whole, are not susceptible to propaganda. They prefer the truth as the vehicle for understanding. The government believes that truth in the end is the only medium to bring about the proper understanding of democracy, one important ingredient that can make democracy work. Axis propagandists have failed. They have not told the truth, and their peoples are now beginning to see through this sham. If we are to keep faith with the American people, we must not resort to any devious information tactics. We must meet lies with a frontal attack with the weapons of truth.

II. We believe that mass opinion is intelligent and will support an intelligent program--if informed.

III. The people will support a program of decency and integrity, idealism, and enlightened selfishness--if adequately informed.

IV. We believe that support of Fascism can be marshalled only from the ignorant, the frustrated and the poverty-stricken. We must keep these groups in mind constantly and try to overcome their ignorance, their frustration, and their want.

Hollywood was now totally submerged in the war. Films were being turned out quickly--some taking a little over nine

weeks to produce. The norm for films before the war had been nine months. The first film to be produced was A Yank On The Burma Road released in February 1942. Other memorable films released in 1942 were Mrs. Minerva and Casablanca.<sup>18</sup>

Both releases fell under the premises of the Government Information For The Motion Pictures Industry and guidelines of the WAC. Mrs. Minerva was "unique" in that it fell under the confined category directed by WAC--"the allies."

The character of Mrs. Minerva, a courageous mother who holds her family together in the teeth of the Blitz, symbolized in personal terms Britain's lonely heroism in stemming the Nazi tide. It symbolized that the war was a war of the people--of all the people--and it must be fought not only on the battlefield but in the cities and the towns, in the factories and on the farms, in the home and in the heart of every man, woman and child who loves freedom.<sup>19</sup>

Casablanca was in theme with a Hollywood favorite--the heroism of the underground guerilla fighters known as the "resistance." It was a film classic, and became one of the most renown Hollywood epics of all time. It was entertaining with a direct message of the evil of the Nazis, their deceit and their defeat by determined anti-Fascists supported by freedom-seeking fighters.<sup>20</sup>

These earlier film features were of small scale production, and mainly fictional with little fact involved. There is no doubt they were made to make a quick profit, but were also "consciously designed to lift the morale of

the nation" and influence the national will of the public. But Pearl Harbor and the events of the war that would follow soon after would provide adequate plots for the Hollywood film effort. These productions would solidify American patriotism and war effort goals. One such success was Wake Island.<sup>21</sup>

In 1941, few films were released that actually depicted American fighting forces in battle. The only means to view such scenes were newsreels and maybe Life Magazine. These were distorted in that very few shorts or photos were actual combat scenes--some would even question their reality. As of yet America had not won any victories, only suffered defeat in holding actions (especially the Pacific Theater). Although fictional and filmed in a California public park, Wake Island was produced with little factual record of the marines' stand before being overrun by a superior Japanese force. The film created the "super marine" image and was successful beyond all hopes as a recruiting vehicle.<sup>22</sup> It was also effective in "rallying civilians and the military" to throw out old arguments of conflict and bond with one goal in mind--"defeating the enemy."<sup>23</sup>

Wake Island was a classic in influencing the public to work even closer with government authorities to destroy their enemies. Its plot was simple and effective:

The opening sequences established the Japanese perfidy by showing Tokyo's smiling diplomatic contingent enroute

to Washington to talk peace, being hosted by the Marines of Wake. The movie soon veers into the combat scenes which continue without end until the last Marine is killed. The men of Wake fight to the last man, which was seen as a heroic defense of freedom and democracy-- not an indication that American troops were suicidal and fanatic. For dramatic purposes the film developed antagonism between the Marines and a civilian construction crew building a landing strip. Bickering arose over which had the most important mission. But when war came, the antagonism quickly evaporated as both construction crew and marines put aside their differences and combined into a single fighting force.<sup>24</sup>

Americans had learned the enemy was not invincible and enjoyed the action movies. Defeats at Wake, the Phillipines, Corregidor and Bataan were turned into victory on the home front. These themes became a staple propaganda menu of Hollywood producers.<sup>25</sup>

As the tide began to turn in favor of the allied powers in Europe and the Pacific Theaters, factual events were turned into dramatic film features in 1943 and 1944. Such classics produced during this period were Guadalcanal Diary and Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo. Other films included Action In The North Atlantic, North Star, Hitler's Children and The Hitler Gang. These feature films dealt with convoy actions against German U-boats, the Soviet Union's part in the European Theater, and know-your-enemy propaganda premises. As the war came to conclusion in 1945, some of the best production propaganda action features were released. Of



those produced, Objective Burma, The Story of G.I. Joe, and They Were Expendable were the most notable.<sup>26</sup>

Hollywood had successfully accomplished its propaganda mission through entertainment--molding American public morale and opinion into a strong national will.

During the first three years of the war the film industry produced a total of 1,313 feature films, of which 374 (28.5%) dealt with why America was fighting the war. Of these feature war connected films, 43 (12%) dealt with why America was fighting the war, while 107 (28.6%) dealt with the enemy. Of this latter group, the majority dealt with Axis sabotage and espionage in the United States, a totally unrealistic focusing of attention on a relatively minor aspect of the war which probably resulted from the easy adaptability of the pre-war 'mystery story' formula to a wartime setting. A third group of 68 films (18%) dealt with spies, saboteurs, and agents behind enemy lines, some of the best Hollywood efforts were of this category. Only 21 films (5.6%) dealt with home front production of war materials, while an additional 40 (11%) treated such home front wartime activities and problems as housing shortages, Red Cross work, and the duty of air raid wardens. This left 95 pictures (25.4%) or 7.23% of all feature-length films, to deal with the traditional subject<sup>29</sup> of war movies, the American fighting forces.

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CHAPTER IV  
MOTION PICTURE PROPAGANDA DECLINE  
1950s - 1970s

Immediately following World War II, Hollywood production of movies began to take on more human nature themes and liberalization toward war and the nature of war itself. The enemy soldier of World War II began to take on human qualities. Human feelings in soldiers such as fear, the sense of being alone, frustration, living conditions and remorse were story plots in war movies. The war was becoming a "memory," shadowed by time and "nostalgia for a conflict whose issues and dangers" were forever focused.<sup>1</sup>

War movies were still being produced, but in fewer quantities. Most were centered around the soldier coming home and his adjustments back into society and society's adjustments to the soldiers. But this era in filmmaking was to be short-lived, as the Korean War burst into American lives in the mid-summer of 1950.<sup>2</sup>

Hollywood's Korean War Efforts

The Korean War burst onto the American scene when families were beginning to rebuild lives in the five years since the end of World War II. There was remorse that the nation was again involved in conflict abroad, but this was the era of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and communism.

Senator McCarthy was on his crusade to uncover and blacklist communists found in American society. Due to Hollywood liberalism that was emerging they had become a logical target.

Michael Paris, in his article "The American Film Industry And Vietnam," explains the mood of the time:

The Korean War was dealt with in much the same way as the World Wars and if that conflict was less clearly defined than World War II, the House of Representatives Un-American Committee and the Hollywood witch-hunts of the period made dissent impossible. Even if films had been made which questioned American involvement, they would have found little support in the market place; traditional values and belief in the 'American Dream' were still too deeply entrenched.

As a war, the Korean conflict never received full American public support, nor was it a favorite of Hollywood producers, due to the nature of our participation and issues surrounding the war. Korea was labeled a "police action"; World War II had been for national survival. When Americans questioned our involvement as stalemates dragged on, then how could Hollywood portray the right of our involvement? There was no clear cut reasoning between right and wrong, nor the struggle for national survival of our society as was faced against the Axis powers.<sup>4</sup>

Hollywood did, however, jump on the hoopla over the war at first. Noted films released during the war were two-- Steel Helmet and Bridge At Toko-Ri. Steel Helmet was made

in much the same way as Wake Island during the first weeks of the war. Fictionalized, and with a moral line intended to outline our involvement. Bridge At Toko-Ri, released in 1954, also tried to justify involvement, but became more of an anti-war theme and emphasized the "futility of war." However, the stereotype of the American soldier was still positive--as hero, and human, with high values and qualities to be admired.<sup>5</sup>

Considerations in keeping the "image of the armed forces" were not all patriotic to the Hollywood filmmakers during the 1950s as explained by Lawrence Suid in Guts And Glory:

To be sure, practical considerations contributed to Hollywood's positive image of the armed forces during the 1950's. Given the high costs of filmmaking, few studios cared to gamble large sums of money on unconventional or controversial films . . . . Moreover, because of the unique requirements of large scale movies dealing with military subjects, and the expense in trying to fulfill them through civilian channels, filmmakers preferred traditional stories about men in war, ones that would guarantee Pentagon cooperation. At the same time, the political climate of the early 1950's discouraged the production of any movie that might call a filmmaker's loyalty in question.

Attitudes were changing with the times. New liberalism in politically thinking producers and conflicts of images to be portrayed were to drive a wedge between Hollywood and the political establishment in the 1960s and 1970s.

### Vietnam-Anti-War Themes

The early 1960s brought yet another unpopular conflict, Vietnam, which entangled American society and would rip apart her values. Hollywood would shun America's involvement, but filmmakers would continue to make profitable World War II epics such as The Longest Day and Patton. These sagas were more biographic and historic, but would examine the ironies of war with new "sophistication."<sup>7</sup>

New factors began to affect the Hollywood scene indirectly, and would be an effective force in eliminating its previous support in wartime--"justifying, explaining, and encouraging the war effort"--a propaganda tool to strengthen national will. They would continue to produce action war films, but not related or located within Vietnam. This scenario would be learned through hard failure.<sup>8</sup>

The film producers would try to produce their first true pro-Vietnam film in 1965. It would be in the traditional war movie format, good versus evil, and have as its locale Vietnam's theater of war.<sup>9</sup> The first film to be produced was To The Shores Of Hell--it would fail miserably:

This was very much the propaganda film. . . . The film was poorly made, a low-budget feature, but one . . . that underlines many of the key elements of propaganda cinema. The evil nature of the enemy is revealed and the oppressed are duly grateful for American intervention. Americans who opposed the war are dismissed as 'indoctrinated beatniks,' and the overwhelming superiority of American arms implies throughout the film total victory.

The only film to meet success in patriotic terms released during the Vietnam conflict was a self-produced John Wayne epic in 1966, The Green Berets. Film critics would chastise its production qualities, but the public would flock to the theaters making its production profitable. Americans enjoyed the movie as entertaining, however political infighting and poor decisions in continuing to support an unpopular view were affecting America's will to stay the course. Vietnam would "end America's glorification of war and the virtue of dying for one's own country" for over a decade.<sup>11</sup>

Hollywood became heavily involved immediately after the war in anti-war themes that were popular with the American society--a society which was tired of a prolonged war and more concerned with internal domestic problems and social programs. The movie industry was becoming more involved in directing its efforts towards failure in government policy and programs, their effects on society and the government's need to reform. Hollywood had shifted from conservative to liberal. Movies produced between 1977-1982 were all anti-war and attacked establishment policies reaching into the Vietnam era for their story lines, such as Coming Home, First Blood, and Taxi Driver. These type films centered on "returning veterans, depicting situations on lost souls, renegades, and psychotics." Films such as The Boys In Company C, Go Tell It To The Spartans, The Deer Hunter

and Apocalypse Now (all produced in 1978-1979) continued the anti-war and futility of war themes.<sup>12</sup>

The 1960s had awakened America to the power of a new media--one which could portray images, ideas, give explanations, and the realities of war vividly. Most important, you did not have to go to the theater and pay to see films--you could sit at home in your living room, den or bedroom to see movies and men at war--real images live!<sup>13</sup> This was television. Its challenge to the motion picture "in presenting the image of war" and as a tool of persuasion was in its infancy, but would mushroom quickly as more Americans purchased television sets and tuned in.<sup>14</sup>

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## CHAPTER V

### TELEVISION--USURPATION AND TAKEOVER

Like telephone and radio, television began in 1951 as a relatively aimless technical invention and as a luxury consumer commodity. Gradually, borrowing heavily in production techniques and programming concepts from media predecessors, it emerged into a mass-entertainment medium. This, to a large extent, is the television we watch today: part<sup>1</sup> radio, part cinema, part theater. . . .

Television--the tube or persuader, as it may be called, is the purveyor of all we want or will want. Masterful in marketing, informative as to events through newsbroadcasts, and cause crusader through talk shows and interviews. It is the "purveyor of social rules, attitudes, and information as well as entertainment." Television images and narratives look at our institutions and their inner workings, show us "how social rules interact," advertise products that serve our needs, and influence our emotions and values. It interacts with all phases of our social, business, political, and cultural lives.<sup>2</sup>

#### Television Takes Over

The most persuasive medium within our society is television. It molds together our society within our continental borders and makes it viable through information

and idea flow which is simultaneously broadcast into the living rooms of all America twenty-four hours a day. It simplifies to the public the complex world within which it lives. All this "for the price of a television set", as each member of the public receives "information to an extent unprecedented in human history."<sup>3</sup> It has become the primary controlling information source to all America--persuading viewpoints, through visual images, provocative commentary, and realism.<sup>4</sup>

Where the home, school institutions and religious instruction were the main purveyors of American values and attitudes, television may very well have taken over this cherished role. It is not to say that America has forgotten these institutions of our forefathers, but in the arena of "specific information on current public issues and views of the public, television has had more direct impact". . . through relating and exploiting American values using its "preferences, fears, and expectations."<sup>5</sup> As Charles D. Ferris concluded in his article "The FCC Takes A Hard Look At Television:"

Television has become the teacher, shaping the American society. It teaches young people how we as a nation think about ourselves and our place in the world. It affects the way we<sub>6</sub> behave, both as individuals and a nation.

Changes in technology will always affect our society norms--whether social or political. Literacy of entire

populations were affected positively by Gutenberg and his press; continents were tied together in minutes where it once took months by "electromagnetic" waves of radio and voice generated power of telephones. We now have television which ties nations together through satellite links in seconds. World affairs are affected by visual image. Its power lies in its ability to transmit events as they happen to all ends of the planet and the "fact that more people can have this instantaneous access to the same event" at once. They experience reality together--not hours or weeks apart--but simultaneously!<sup>7</sup> This technological capability "affects and is affected by the culture of television, which in turn has an impact on overall social change."<sup>8</sup>

As a medium of power to force change, both social and political, television is unique in "that it can reach greater masses than all other mass media combined," while providing the public entertainment and information. Entertainment may be dramatic, or strictly informational. Both can be done using accurate facts or fictionalized plots, and both can be done with slanted views (bias). This information desired to be passed to the watching public can be done in either a "direct" or "indirect" method. Some would speculate, "it propagandizes visually and without regard for the feelings of its chosen viewers."<sup>9</sup>

Erik Barnow, in Douglass Carter and Richard Heller's book, Television As A Social Force: New Approach To TV

Criticism, sums up its propaganda potential thus:

It can cause doubts in our established institutions, their policies and programs, and in the values of our society. It can glorify or undermine our political system and our accomplishments as a nation. What we call entertainment . . . is really a tremendously complicated experience, that touches all kinds of hidden springs and relates to our personal experiences, our past, and also the society and our place in society. . . . I think that politics on television has not been primarily in speeches, but in dramatic material. One of the fascinating things about television is the continued overlapping of everything. Drama is inevitably propaganda, it's politics, it is also merchandising. It continually sells a way of life or pattern of consumption.

Images and portrayals in dramatic performances on television have addressed social issues such as abortion, child abuse, crime, homelessness and a sundry other elements within our social and cultural well-being. The images visualized by its audience have mentally affected how Americans perceive their responsibilities from the work ethic to their involvement in political and national policies. It has definitely affected their thought processes, biases, and fundamental values toward these processes. Of all the means used by television to provide information to form these values in the American citizenry none is more effective than the news media through prime time newscasts, documentaries, special reports or splintered interviews and talk shows.

### TV News--Its Persuasion

There is no greater mobilizer of public opinion than television and especially the news media which is invited into our homes nightly with what they consider the latest in important events and information selected to be reported.

Paul Weaver sums up its power as follows:

. . . television is all mobilization; it seems to lack the liberal, privatizing characteristics of print journalism--the discontinuities, the randomness, the ambiguities, and the diversity which give the ideal of individualism real substance. The television news emphasis on spectacle, its reliance on the single omniscient observer, and its commitment to the notion of a unified, thematic depiction of events, all make TV an extraordinary powerful mobilizer<sub>1</sub> of public attention and public opinion.

Television is simpler to understand than newspaper and magazine articles as it requires no disciplining of the written word, but only the emotions in receiving verbal communications from the commentator or video reports through expression, tone of voice, images or body language.<sup>12</sup>

Some TV critics believe the television news has taken from the citizens their actual role in government participation. As it selects the information to be reported it has personalized power, and by immediacy through quick and short statements on events and their possible consequence, it has conditioned the audience to want "immediate answers" to social and political issues. Our impatience--an American

trait--is constantly played upon as television news seems to be "intolerant of reasonable discourse." It relies on an "emphasis of visual and visceral image, not rational." The means is not acceptable to a democracy, whereas, answers to problems take time using an open means of communicating ideas and "public debate on matters of consequence."<sup>13</sup> This action is basically the power of television news. With it, television news could possibly, and at times does, dictate the political issues Americans become involved with. Anne Saldish classifies it as "tyranny" in that:

Television has a potential for tyranny. Networks have taken over what political scientists call gate keeping (control of access to power), setting the nation's political agenda being a court of last resort (a corridor to power, for many shut out of our political process) such as anti-war protestors, minorities, etc.) and a conduit for TV diplomacy.<sup>14</sup>

Through this means groups with little political significance or power can and do at times dictate our directions through programs and views in policy which can be detrimental to our government's response to international and national issues. This affects our social and political order on a national level in that:

The public interest may be viewed as the well-being of the American people . . . the national interest is concerned with the well-being of American citizens . . . outside the United States and thus beyond the administration jurisdiction of the U.S. government. Obviously, the public interest and the national interest are not mutually conclusive. The public interest

is heavily influenced by the nature of the international environment in which the U.S. interacts, particularly when there is a threat of war; similarly, the national interest is strongly influenced by the degree of social stability and political unity prevailing within the country at any specific time.<sup>15</sup>

Competition between groups for their fair amount of air time to voice their opinions or views continues within a free society, but news spokesmen must be selective in their choice due to their weight in influencing public debate and national events. A prime example in the arena of national commentation is that of terrorism. This type of political activity is bait for the spectacular--a television phenomenon. Any reporting affects the American emotion of anger as terrorist actions go against all American values and ethics. Publicity rendered will inflate the terrorist act and encourages the terrorist actions for publicity.<sup>16</sup> The act itself and terrorist cause can also be emphasized by biased reporting in whether the government takes an action or is seen to be inactive in its response. Emotions of the audience are also influenced by the use of video portrayal of the act.

To most Americans, television news is the most credible and is their prime source of information as events and issues unfold around them. Their interest is especially keen in social and political conflicts. Television is aware of this dependency and places special interest in reporting these



events--no matter how small or large the issue's importance. Using "powerful audio-visual" abilities and "epidemicity" the effect on the less astute has been their questioning of their own understanding of the political system.<sup>17</sup>

Biased reporting on political issues can either be negative or positive and can sway a viewing audience overtime. Positive reporting can reinforce the legitimacy of the government and its agencies while negative reporting can cause distrust in the system, undermine its legitimacy, and cause social and national unrest. This unrest plays on the greatest weakness of the American citizenry--that of impatience. Impatience, combined with America's need to avoid force, can "produce a public outcry for the cessation of American involvement . . . demanding self-sacrifice unrelated to any clear vision of overriding national interest." This can be seen in the biased negative reporting by television news during the Vietnam Conflict, 1966-1970.<sup>18</sup>

Can it be said that television with its imagery, visibility and vivid portrayal of events within the American culture conveys propagandized information? Can it sway public opinion? Most would say yes, even to the point it may be undermining our own "national sense of legitimacy" in our social structure and systems.

The erosion in public trust and public confidence has been more the product of the imparities . . . of an innocent

pursuit of truth . . . specifically, the public has come to believe that things are worse than they were--that all this misery and misfortune is new to America and the world. The images of television have somehow persuaded the public that the society is coming apart, moving downward from where it once was.

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## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Since the time of the conquering Roman Legions, the means and desires of government leaders to influence the opinion of the mass populus have been present. Techniques have varied, but the desired results have always remained the same. Whether called propaganda or information, leaders have used its power to effect their cause, either in direct or indirect ways. This same technique is not foreign to the commercial world. Although in their terms it is called advertising, it is still propaganda in that the advertiser's goal is swaying consumers to buy his particular product or service.

During the 1930s a new technology innovation was coming into its own and beginning to develop into a viable industry here in the United States and abroad. This new innovation was the sound motion picture. It would revolutionize the movie making industry and become the master propaganda medium during World War II to sway public opinion. Germany and Japan had already discovered its powerful means to influence mass audiences during the mid-1930s. The United States and her allies would soon follow suit.

Prior to the entry of the United States into World War II, there was great concern among the leaders of the nation

of how to mold the opinions of the American populus into a national will of strength. Knowing that the American movie industry (Hollywood) was developing into a viable industry since the close of World War I and of the success of the Axis powers using this medium to address and win over the emotions and support of its populus to their cause, steps were taken to recruit Hollywood into the efforts to prepare the American people for a war that was sure to come.

Although taking a non-committal stand at first, Hollywood soon relented as it watched its foreign markets dry up as the Axis powers slowly took over their foreign markets and the dissolving of its profits. For Hollywood was a business with a bottom line--profit!

Hollywood movies were produced using fictional plots and at times were based on actual war facts. Each would play on the values and emotions of Americans. They were aimed at America's sense of fair play, closeness of home and family, and love of country. They would also take aim at the brutality of the enemy, the cruelty of conquerors, and death. It would arouse America to make sacrifices toward the war effort and bond her will into a solidified nation but with one goal--victory over the Axis!

After World War II, the marriage between Hollywood and the government had the potential to go on indefinitely, but social and political beliefs were changing and Hollywood began to liberalize. Hollywood was also beginning to be

usurped by a new medium in the 1950s, a medium that brought live entertainment, news events, and even movies into the American home. This medium was the television; for the price of a television set the entertainment became free.

Television also had the means to bring events of national importance from around the world in a matter of hours. It could bring the realities of war firsthand into the family's living room by means of videotape. People no longer needed to go to theaters to see the effects or realities of war--they just had to turn on the switch in their own homes.

Television also brought with it the persuasiveness of the newscaster, commentator and reporter. Journalism had found a more provocative means of informing the public on all issues affecting the social and political culture of the country. More and more of the public bought televisions and tuned in nightly to prime time entertainment, drama and commentary on the times--all on the news.

The effect of television on the nation continues to grow as more of the public turns to the television for their information needs.

The movie industry has begun to rebuild its audiences with more productions, but will never overtake the influence that television continues to have on the public opinion in America.

There is no doubt that the motion picture will play a

role in affecting American public opinion in the time of a prolonged conflict and where a profit is involved, but will never have the impact it once had on molding national will as a propaganda tool. Especially not as long as we have the television!

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