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Arthur Willert

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PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS¹

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT, K.B.E.

MY subject is so broad and so complicated that I shall have to be arbitrarily eclectic in my treatment of it and confine myself merely to the three questions which seem, to me at any rate, to be the most interesting of its various facets.

The first question is, how far does the great growth of government propaganda and publicity, which has been such a striking feature of international relations since the War, really influence the news we read or hear from day to day about foreign affairs? The second question is, are we holding our own in the intense competition that now goes on between different countries in the field of national advertisement. The third question is, if we are not holding our own, and I may as well confess that we are not, what can be done about it?

Now, to take the first question, how far is the foreign news we read at breakfast contaminated by the propaganda of governments. I think the best way to approach it is through the relationship of the Press with Foreign Offices. I say that because I feel strongly that, in spite of the progress that the wireless and the cinema have both made as purveyors of news, the Press remains fundamentally by far the most important instrument for that purpose. There are various reasons for this judgment. The wireless is, of course, an unsurpassed medium for emergency propaganda. President Roosevelt and Herr Hitler, unlike as they are in other respects, are past-masters of its use for that purpose. But it will have been noticed that neither of them uses it more than about once a year because they know how easily it can be overdone.

In the matter of routine news the Press still has the advantage. There are obvious reasons why it should. In the first place there is the question of space. I think I am right in saying that the whole of one of the excellent news summaries of the British Broadcasting Corporation goes into something less than two columns of *The Times*. Then there is the question of time. You

¹ Address given at Chatham House on April 5th, 1938; Lieut.-General Sir George Macdonogh, G.B.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., in the Chair.

can read a newspaper article when and how you like. You can read half of it, put it away, finish it at another time, put it in your pocket and discuss it with your friends, and so on. You cannot do that with wireless. You have to be at a certain place at a certain time if you are going to hear its news or views, and if you have not understood what is said the first time, well, you do not get a repetition; at least, not as a rule. It is, from the practical point of view, the same with the cinema, with the News Reel, a very important organ of publicity and propaganda in some ways, but not, from the routine point of view, anything like as important yet as the Press. Then there is another less obvious reason for the pre-eminence of the Press in the realm of news. It is that virtually all the news given out, say, by the wireless, comes in the first instance from the news-collecting organisation of the Press. Such, very roughly, are some of the reasons why it seems best to approach the question of Government propaganda and foreign news by way of the Press.

I have been connected in one way or another with international journalism for over thirty years, and nothing has changed more in regard to it in those thirty years than the relation of Foreign Offices and the Press. In the first decade of the century there was still the same relationship between those two bodies as had existed at any time for the last hundred years. It was casual. Many politicians and officials realised the importance of the Press, but there was no proper organisation for mutual contact. The general feeling on the part of the Press was that the diplomat was an exclusive and rather priggish sort of person who resented anybody trying to break into his laboratory to discover how he performed his mysteries. The average diplomat, on his side, retaliated by treating the emissaries of the Press as nuisances, who, luckily, could usually be avoided. Hence there was not a great deal of contact between the two. I remember when I was at the Foreign Office, I think at the time of the signature of the Treaty of Locarno, having to make some arrangements with one of our office-keepers about the admission of the Press to witness the ceremony. He said to me: "Well, sir, this is a change from what it used to be. Before the War these Press gentlemen used to line up in the courtyard outside the office at about four o'clock and one of us would come out to them and say 'Nothing doing to-day, gentlemen,' and they went away." That, of course, was an exaggeration, but it does rather reflect the sort of impression which I had as a young man of the relations of Foreign Offices with the generality of journalists.

I had, of course, seen something of the way in which the German Foreign Office manipulated the Press; but it was only when I arrived in Washington that I found a Foreign Minister dealing with the Press in the modern manner. Now all Foreign Offices have the organized contacts with journalists which the American State Department had already perfected in the first decade of the century.

The reason for the change is pretty obvious. A good deal of it flows from the War. The War caused governments to organise propaganda on a big scale and though newspaper men always say that they dislike official "hand-outs," I think on the whole they do find that those "hand-outs" rather lighten the labour of news collecting. Then behind that there is the different point of view that now obtains about war, and therefore about diplomacy, whereas war in the past was looked upon rather as a specialists' job, and was not considered very seriously by ordinary people. Everybody everywhere now feels that its recurrence on a large scale would be the final disaster. Hence international relations are no longer looked upon as a field in which diplomacy can be allowed to disport itself as it likes. And behind that obvious consideration, again, you have the result of mass education, the mass-produced Press and so on. All this means that ten journalists now write about foreign affairs as compared with one in the old days. The first international conference that I had anything to do with was the Conference of Algeiras. I was not there; I watched it from Paris; but from what I remember of it I doubt whether there were more than twenty or thirty journalists at it in all. Well, in 1930 or the end of 1929, I was on the Committee which prepared for the Naval Conference of that year in London, and I remember shocking even the imperturbable Sir Maurice Hankey by suggesting that, at our first meeting, I should want as much floor-space for the Press as the rest of the Conference would need for its deliberations. I did not get quite that: but I must have secured a good many thousand square feet in St. James's Palace for the journalists. The only real rebuff I had was over a ban for alcoholic drinks. That was considered to be incompatible with the dignity of the palace. It was left to the League of Nations to make alcohol an official adjunct to the "ploy" of conference news-getting. At a first-class conference you have anything up to five hundred journalists to begin with. They usually dwindle pretty quickly after the first week or two. Then on the Government side there has been a great development of the Press Bureau or Press Department, or whatever you like

to call it (we call it News Department), which the different Foreign Offices maintain. The manner in which those Press Bureaux function is in all cases much the same. You can divide their functions into three parts. There is the giving out of news. There is, I was going to say, the colouring of news, but perhaps that is not altogether seemly; let us say, the serving up of the news with the sort of sauce that the political masters of the particular Press Bureau like us to have with it for breakfast next morning. Thirdly, there is counter-propaganda, that is to say the putting right of stories which other Governments and Press Bureaux, and so on, give out.

The methods of Press Bureaux vary considerably. There is a great difference between the way in which a Press Bureau in a democratic country and a Press Bureau in a dictatorial country carries on its business. So far as the Home Press in a dictatorial country is concerned, the Press Bureau has complete control. There is in, say, Germany or Italy no censorship in the sense that everything that is written must be submitted to the authorities, but the head of the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin or Rome has very definite ways in which he can make editors toe the line. I need not go into that. In the democratic countries, of course, it is a question of suasion. You have got, somehow or other, to persuade your Press, both Home and Foreign, to take the line your masters want. I would add that in the dictatorial countries, as far as the Foreign Press is concerned, it is also a question of suasion, though helped by other factors. For instance *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent, Mr. Gedye, got turned out of Vienna the other day. Mr. Ebbut, the correspondent of *The Times*, was forced out of Berlin about a year ago. The knowledge that this sort of arbitrary intolerance lurks in the background must cramp the style of the Foreign correspondent in dictatorial countries, admirably as most of them refuse to be intimidated. Apart from that the suasion to which the writer on foreign affairs is subjected is exercised in all Press Bureaux in much the same way, namely, by dint of meetings between the journalist in question and some member of the Press Bureau. One might imagine that that would lead to a good deal of colouring of news. Personally, having seen both sides of the game, I do not think it does. I do not think that our Foreign news as it enters, as it were, the international news stream of the world is badly coloured.

There are a great many factors, even in dictatorial countries, which militate against the official propagandist. In the first place, the average correspondent is pretty wide awake. He was

not born yesterday. He has got a good idea of what is likely and what is not. In the second place, in a democratic country, he has had the Opposition Parties and the local Press generally to keep him straight. He lacks that advantage, of course, in the dictatorial countries. But both in the dictatorial and in the democratic countries he has other safeguards. He has his own diplomatic mission. He can go to his own Embassy or Legation and be kept fairly straight from the point of view of his own country. He probably has friends even in dictatorial countries who talk to him pretty frankly and, most important of all, he has his colleagues. In all the big capitals and at conferences there is a great deal of co-operation between the journalists and even between the journalists of different countries. They have to co-operate. The field is too big for any of them to cover single-handed or even for several of them working together in the big newspaper or news agency correspondents' offices to cover. An English correspondent, for instance, will probably get the American or French view in the capital or at the conference from the American or French correspondent who has been in touch with his own people. At a conference, especially after a secret session, you are apt to find delegates as they come out of the meeting surrounded in the lobby by a compact little group of their own national correspondents, telling them how they alone have saved the day and so on. Even the correspondents of dictatorial countries do not take that sort of stuff without a grain of salt. The different nationalities compare notes as to what their delegates have told them and gradually arrive at something which more often than not approximates to even the secret truth. In those and other ways the correspondent generally manages to keep government propaganda pretty well in its place. I do not believe that what I called just now the international news stream is much more contaminated by organised propaganda now than it was by the sporadic and amateurish propaganda of thirty years ago. I say "much more" because, of course, the news sent to the dictatorial countries must for obvious reason be in line with the arbitrary policies of those countries.

The real danger from propaganda, if I may speak frankly, lies much closer at home so far as we are concerned. It comes from the play of proprietorial prejudices and Party politics. It is after it arrives in the newspaper office that the foreign news is apt to get a particular twist put upon it, either by headlines, or by leading articles, or by prunings and partial suppressions. And that is where the foreign propagandist can get in his work, and

especially the propagandist of the dictatorial countries. You find those countries quietly sending efficient people here and to other capitals to make touch with journalists and key politicians (both practising politicians and amateur politicians) and nobble them in one way or another and thus influence public opinion. And you find the same thing abroad. Directly one of our politicians, in or out of office, develops a tendency to travel the propagandists abroad are out to collar him. That, I think, is where the danger lies more than in the foreign news which comes into the country.

My second question concerned the extent to which we in Great Britain are holding our own in the very intense competition that now goes on in national advertising. There the situation is disquieting. But, first of all, what is this international publicity and propaganda? As I see it, it divides itself roughly into two broad categories. There is news and there is everything that goes under the name of cultural propaganda, which really means everything from the production of the sort of national super-film the Russians get out down to the presenting of a boys' school in Bolivia with the *Boys' Own Paper*.

Let us look first at the news side of international propaganda. Let me start by a glance at the very important news collecting and distributing organisation called the News Agency. Everybody knows what News Agencies are and why they are. They came into being during the last century to supplement the endeavours of individual newspapers to cover the rapidly growing field of world news. What with the telegraph, the filling out of the world and so on, no newspaper, however rich, could possibly collect all the news it wanted every day all over the globe through its own staff. At first the News Agencies collected news and sold it in their own countries. Then the larger ones amongst them started to branch out and sell in other countries as well. The leader in all this development was *Reuters*, the great English Agency, and very close behind it came the great French News Agency, *Havas*. At one time *Havas* and *Reuters* sold their news, so far as the outer part of the world went, by drawing a dividing line between the two hemispheres. *Reuters*, if I remember rightly, took, roughly speaking, Asia and the Far East and *Havas* took Latin America. That, however, is a thing of the past. There is going on now at the present moment a very keen fight, between the different News Agencies of the different big countries, to sell news, especially in the outlying parts of the world. And this fight is not progressing in a particularly satisfactory way for Great Britain.

The reason for this is that there are two types of News Agency, commercial and State-controlled, or at any rate State-aided, News Agencies. Of the commercial News Agencies *Reuters* here, the *Associated Press* and the *United Press* in America are the chief examples; among the State-controlled or State-aided Agencies you have the new German Agency, the *Deutsche Nachrichten Buro*; the French Agency, *Havas* (*Havas* is not State-controlled but it is State-aided); you have the Italian *Stefani* which is definitely State-controlled, you have *Domei* the Japanese Agency, *Tass* the Russian Agency, and so on. All those Agencies are being helped on a very large scale by their Governments to spread their own national news over the world. The result of that is that the British Agencies, of which *Reuters* has by far the biggest foreign service, are at a disadvantage. *Reuters*, though it is a very strong and well-organised Agency, is having a difficult time in holding its own in the vast area over which it used to distribute news in the Far East, in the teeth of the new subsidised competition of its Japanese, German and French rivals. In South America we hardly distribute any news at all. There the field is bitterly disputed between the American Agencies which have been established there for some time and *Havas*, who has lately been pouring out money in order to push into that part of the world. That will hit us hard in the event of another war. Propaganda is going to play a very important part in warfare in the future. And to my mind, though everybody will not agree with me, you cannot improvise channels of propaganda at the last moment. People who think that we can are, I believe, deluded by their memory of the last war. It was a different thing then, because the large-scale propaganda field was virgin soil, and it was quite easy then to improvise. But, if there is another war, it will be quite different because all the channels of propaganda will have been pre-empted. People in different countries will have got used to taking their news from the existing sources, and it will be very difficult for new streams of news from England or anywhere else to break into South America or to the Far East or anywhere else. So we are falling behind, I am afraid, in an extremely important aspect of "preparedness."

There is the trade aspect too. It was always said in the old days that trade followed the flag. In these days it is becoming more and more obvious that trade also follows news. And it follows from what I have said that there is very little straight English news now in South America, for instance. Most of the news about us there comes through the French or American

Agencies. I do not for a minute want to suggest that *Havas* or the American Agencies are unfair to us. I do not think they are, but obviously the Americans are going to specialise in American news and stress American trade, and *Havas* is going to do the same with things French. Also in times of political crisis, whether national or international, we need our own media of news distribution. We do not want to rely on the best and most friendly foreign news services. It is never the same thing.

Next to the News Agencies comes the spoken wireless as a means of news distribution.

There also we have not been doing any too well. If you travel in the United States you find that the Germans are pouring out rather good wireless propaganda. They give good musical and entertainment programmes, ingeniously interlarded with tendentious stuff. You get the Italians doing the same sort of thing for the whole of the Western Hemisphere. I imagine it is the same in the Far East. I know from listening to the European wirelesses that the Old World is criss-crossed by wireless propaganda. Much of this is part of the immense drive which the totalitarian countries, Germany, Italy and Russia, have been making with regard to short-wave emission in foreign languages. I think I am right in saying that those countries send out programmes in practically every conceivable language. I remember hearing during the Abyssinian crisis that the B.B.C. were mystified for some days by a broadcast from Berlin which none of their people could understand, and which turned out to be Zulu. I have never checked that story so I will not answer for it, but there is no reason why it should not be true. Lately, we have been doing something also in the foreign-language line, stirred up by the notorious Bari Wireless which the Italians used, until the recent *détente*, to make propaganda against us in the Near and Middle East in the appropriate languages. The B.B.C. now emits messages in Spanish and Portuguese for the Western Hemisphere and in Arabic for the Near and Middle East. And in about a year it will be able to increase this service, when the new transmitters which are being put up at Daventry are ready. Also the B.B.C.'s Empire Service has a good national advertisement value. Nevertheless for the present our use of the radio in that field is not what it might be.

We come next to the question of cultural propaganda. There again other countries have got ahead of us. We used to try to do a little cultural propaganda in my days at the Foreign Office, but only on a very limited scale, for the good reason that we were

never allowed to spend any money. While the French Government were spending, for instance, over a million sterling a year the most that we could get was a few thousands. Now, I am glad to say, things are better. We are now forging ahead a little, again stirred up by what the totalitarian countries are doing. We have started, as is generally known, an organisation called the British Council. That organisation, if I may say so, was a Foreign-Office invention. Unable to get as much money as they wanted from the Treasury, from the Government, the Foreign Office hit upon the idea of extracting what money they could from those sources and then trying to supplement it from private sources. So they set up, naturally with the consent of the Government, the British Council. The Council consists partly of officials, representatives of various Government departments, and partly of non-official people endowed with the many sorts of special knowledge which the Council needs. It was started at the end of 1934 and its chairman has always been non-official. Its first chairman was Lord Tyrrell after his retirement from the Paris Embassy. Then came Lord Eustace Percy and now Lord Lloyd.

The British Council does excellent work, the nature of which can be gathered from the little brochure which it puts out. Besides its Executive Committee it has a number of smaller committees with their various cultural propagandist activities, such as the encouragement of British Institutes abroad of Anglo-Foreign Societies, and so on. It founds or helps English Professorships and lectureships abroad. It helps British schools abroad. It builds up British libraries. It sends out British periodicals. It tries to get over here as many foreign students and teachers as it can. It arranges lecture and concert tours, exhibitions of British Art, documentary and other films abroad.

Such are some of the very useful avocations of the British Council. But it ought to function on a much larger scale if it is to compete with the similar activities of other countries. Compare, for instance, what it spends with what other countries pay out for the same sort of work. Last year our Government gave sixty thousand pounds towards its expenses. This year it is hoped that it will give, I think, a hundred and ten thousand pounds. The Council at the same time gets, as I have said, what money it can from private sources. But not probably much more in all than the Government contribution. And what do other countries spend? Well, we know that both the French and the Italian Governments are spending, are going to spend this year, well over a million sterling, and we suspect that they really spend

more. The German figure is difficult to get at, but it is certainly bigger, probably between two and three millions. You realise what this discrepancy means sometimes when you are abroad. I have already spoken of the drive of foreign propaganda that you find on the other side of the Atlantic. I was in Rome the other day, and was much struck by the importance of what they call their Ministry of Popular Culture, which, of course, does a great deal of Italian home propaganda as well as foreign propaganda. Every other Palace in Rome seems to be taken up by its offices. On my arrival I wanted to see an old friend who is now head of the section which looks after the Foreign Press. I vaguely told my taxi-driver to go to the Ministry of Popular Culture. We visited three or four vast propaganda buildings before I found the one I wanted. The activity emanating from all those buildings was immense. Every sort of Italian patriotic society at home or abroad is now under the control of and being helped by the Ministry. The Italian Dante Society has a membership of well over half a million, very largely abroad. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Propaganda stresses the use that the foreign organisations of that society had been in counteracting the hostility aroused by the Abyssinian affair. Then there is a great organisation for Italian classes and courses abroad. I think there is a course in Berlin attended by about seven or eight thousand Germans. There is one in Buenos Aires to which two or three thousand people go, and so on. When I have been lecturing in the United States I have come across the track of Italian lecturers, and indeed the lecturers of other countries, over there, one imagines, largely at the public expense.

I rather think, if I may put it brutally, the best illustration of our standing as propagandists abroad and that of other countries was to be found at the Paris Exhibition last summer. The contrast between our shoddy little building and the Italian, Russian and German pavilions gave me the key. I happened to be at the Exhibition on July 14th and I spent a good deal of time in the Russian and German pavilions, listening to the comments of the great crowd of French provincials who had come up for the day and realising what really telling propaganda those buildings were doing for their countries.

Well, what can one do about it all? One does not want to go in for cultural or any other sort of propaganda on the scale on which it is being done by the continental countries. I should hate to see us, for instance, set up a Ministry of Propaganda such as the Germans or the Italians have got. It would be a great

mistake to do so. It would, for one thing, almost inevitably make propaganda a subject of Party manipulation and controversy. I believe that as far as cultural propaganda goes we are on sound lines with the British Council, which is a curiously characteristic English compromise of the official and the unofficial. But I do think, as I have already indicated, that its activities ought to be greatly enlarged. There should be no question of its having to eke out its funds by private subscriptions. The Government should be made to realise that propaganda is an essential part of military preparations and is worth the cost each year of the tenth of a battleship or so. In the same way, I should like to see the Government forego part of the money which the Post Office collects from the B.B.C. and allow the B.B.C. to spend it on foreign broadcasts and on carefully considered, honest, straightforward propaganda. Then I take it that something ought to be done to increase the ability of our News Agencies to compete with the agencies of other countries in the distribution of news. That also would help enormously in getting the propaganda side of "preparedness" up to the level of our other "preparedness." I know there are people who say that one cannot possibly compete with certain other countries, that one could not sink to the level of misrepresentation, and so on, to which they have descended. I agree. I do not think it would pay us so to compete. I believe that in the long run the truth systematically and consistently propagated will beat even the cleverest campaign of misrepresentation. I was struck by that in the United States last year. As I was saying, the Germans are putting out a very efficient trans-Atlantic wireless propaganda on the short wave which is not usually too outrageously tendencious. But it was losing ground to our Empire news service, the service emitted by the B.B.C. People, I found, made a point of listening to the Empire service because it was trustworthy. I heard it, indeed, favourably compared with some of the American programmes. That is a fairly good answer to the defeatists who say that it is no good trying to make the truth prevail in propaganda, that a lie once circulated can never be knocked on the head, and so on. I see no reason, in fact, why we should not do as good national advertisement as any other country, if we will wake up and remedy defects in our methods, such as those which I have tried to indicate.

Finally, I would like to say this: Personally I am more worried by the ultimate effects of the home propaganda of countries like Germany and Italy than I am by their propaganda

abroad. Obviously the thing which counts now in world affairs in these days more than anything else is the tremendous drive of the new totalitarian States. Somebody, I noticed, spoke the other day of the majestic tranquillity of Hitler's diplomatic progress. It sounds rather an odd phrase in view of the noisiness of his methods, but I am not at all sure whether the ultimate historian will not approve of it. Germany has gone on from objective to objective doing exactly what she wants and humiliating (is it too strong a word, I do not think so) the democracies at every turn. Well, one of Herr Hitler's great allies in that progress, so to speak, is undoubtedly this new totalitarian mass hypnotism, mass suggestion which he, like Signor Mussolini, is so successfully employing. It makes their nations compact instruments to their hands. I had an astonishing example of what it can do when in Italy the other day.

I was in Northern Italy when Mr. Eden resigned. The whole atmosphere changed. One gradually realised that everybody in Italy had thought that Mr. Eden was master of Great Britain, that his sole policy was to attack Italy directly we were strong enough to do so and to revenge himself for his Abyssinian humiliation at the hands of Signor Mussolini. This was the result of the propaganda which Rome had been putting out in the Press, on the wireless and in a whispering campaign for the last two years, and it had produced a situation in which anything like good Anglo-Italian relations could not even be thought of so long as Mr. Eden remained in office. In Rome, indeed, I was told that even people high up in the Fascist organisation were obsessed by this "myth." The ease with which this sort of thing can be done in a totalitarian State gives one a good deal to think about. It means that propaganda can give that type of State an effective solidarity, and therefore a prestige abroad, such as we with our free institutions and freedom of thought and debate cannot often emulate. What is the answer?

Was Lord Baldwin right when he said that democracy must always be two years behind dictatorship? I do not think he was. I do believe that the unsucess of our foreign policy lately has been less due to inevitable popular indifference or slowness of thought than to the fact that Lord Baldwin and our other political leaders have not been particularly educative, or clear-cut or convincing in their approach to external problems. Even totalitarian opinion is at a loss when its leaders hesitate or are inconsistent. I saw that also in Italy the other day, when circumstances forced Signor Mussolini to proclaim that the Germanisation of

Austria had been beneficently ordained in spite of the fact that he had been ready to fight to prevent it less than four years ago. Italians were just as much bemused by that spectacular change of direction as our people have ever been by the chops and changes of our politicians over, say, collective security.

But I do not want to become political. What I have tried to do to-night is to indicate very superficially the case for greater interest in national advertisement and propaganda. Our weakness in that field has been largely inherited from the nineteenth century when we were top-dog to such an extent that we did not have to do any propaganda at all. Things are very different now. I like to think that the activities of the British Council, the foreign language programme of the B.B.C. and such things as the committee which the Government recently set up to co-ordinate different forms of British advertising and propaganda abroad, do mean that our rather careless complacency is vanishing and that we are realising that we have got to look upon better publicity and propaganda as an essential part of rearmament, that we have got to organise our preparedness on the psychological as well as on the physical side.

Summary of Discussion

SIR JOHN POWER said that he agreed with everything that the lecturer had said concerning propaganda. He was, himself, an officer of the British Council. It was to be hoped that the British Council would be continued on the lines on which it had been started, both Government and private, because it had certainly met with a good deal of success. It had the support of every Party in the House of Commons, and there would be no difficulty in gaining the assent of that body to any grant which the Treasury might care to make. In fact, the only question ever raised by any member of Parliament on the subject was: why did the Government not give the British Council more money?

The British Council had made arrangements for something like eighty-two foreign students to take courses at various universities. It was, however, difficult to get professors to go abroad because the salaries offered were often not sufficient for a decently qualified man to live upon, and the tenure of office was not long enough to enable the right people to be chosen. Consequently the Council had first to guarantee them a living wage, and secondly it had to guarantee them a decent tenure of office. The number of projects before the Council was staggering.

MR. CLEMENT JONES said that twenty years ago an important Senator had arrived from the United States and a luncheon party had

been given in his honour by Lord Curzon. Towards the end of luncheon the Senator had been explaining how potent and excellent was the German propaganda in 1918 in the States, how wonderful it was, how it stretched from Maine to Mexico. Lord Curzon then asked the Senator what he thought of the British propaganda, and the Senator answered that it was "very dignified!" Whereupon Lord Curzon had quickly replied that by that he supposed he meant that it was "wholly impotent."

Now it seemed, after twenty years, that with regard to this German propaganda in the United States and the relative position of British propaganda matters were almost exactly the same and, to modify Lord Curzon's words, British propaganda was relatively impotent. The lecturer had said that, in his opinion, the Press was more important than the wireless, and this had always been the opinion of the speaker on his many visits to the United States. Could not this fact be made use of? When there was all this talk of going to war, it was necessary to think of the probable belligerents and neutrals, and particularly of the probable neutrals when it came to the question of propaganda. The United States was the important neutral for Great Britain to consider. Could anything be done as man to man and democracy to democracy between the Press of Great Britain and the Press of the United States to help this situation?

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT replied that, for the moment, he was not particularly encouraged as to the prospects of being able to do anything through the Press in this direction, because there were two fundamental difficulties in the way of a really good American opinion about Great Britain. One was the War Debt, and the other was Sir John Simon, Mr. Stimson and Manchuria. Possibly the last-mentioned matter might be cleared up through the Press. The lecturer thought that Sir John Simon had been put in rather a false position, especially by a rather gratuitous communiqué put out at the time which said that the British Government was not worried about the possibility of Japan grabbing Manchuria. This had never been forgotten in the United States, and caused British policy still to be regarded with undue suspicion which, however, it ought not to be impossible to allay.

The question of the War Debt was far more difficult. It was a question of money talking. The average American brushed aside difficulties of transfer, of their own high tariff wall and so on. He (the American) heard members of our Government constantly proclaiming that Great Britain was the richest and most powerful and most respected country in the world and he asked himself why, then, could she not pay her debts. The War Debts question was, in fact, a great handicap to Anglo-American relations.

COLONEL MEDLICOTT asked whether it was not a great handicap in the matter of successful national propaganda to have people in the Houses of Parliament who put Party before State. The talk in Parlia-

ment, the fact that there was no unanimity frequently misled the foreigner concerning the real opinion of the mass of British opinion.

Secondly, could the lecturer say how he thought the Bari broadcasts now stood in relation to the British counter-propaganda? He had heard that the British broadcasts in Arabic were dull and were followed by boring gramophone records which the Arabs liked a little less even than the English.

Thirdly, he referred to Herr Hitler's chapter on propaganda in *Mein Kampf*, wherein British propaganda during the War was compared very favourably with German.

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT said that he absolutely agreed with what had been said about Herr Hitler and his chapter on propaganda in *Mein Kampf*. Herr Hitler had also said that the greater the lie the greater the chance of its being believed. In addition, he had pointed out that the simpler the slogan the greater its effect. Simple slogans were much more difficult for us with our party system and constant party controversy, which enabled the foreign propagandist to find a text in *Hansard*, for instance, for almost anything he wanted to have believed about us. That was one of the reasons why it would help us so much in these days if we could get back to our old, much-vaunted continuity of foreign policy.

The Italian broadcasts in the Near East were certainly more imaginatively conceived than those relayed by the B.B.C. But there was now a truce, at any rate, in that particular field of competition; and anyhow perhaps in the end we should have been able to make truth more interesting than fiction. The Government should see that receiving sets capable of reproducing the British news were supplied in the East. The Italians had been practically giving sets away, and much more initiative was required on the part of Great Britain in that sort of thing. Our propaganda during the War had, the lecturer thought, been good, but Herr Hitler probably did not realise how often we had scored by knowing when not to make it rather than by making it.

A MEMBER said that only one reference had been made to industrial propaganda. The lecturer had said that trade not only followed the flag, it also followed the news. No department of British propaganda was so backward as industrial propaganda. The Department of Overseas Trade was practically forbidden to undertake propaganda. In what direction and along what lines did the lecturer think that more propaganda might be done in order to expand British trade abroad? Political propaganda was largely concerned with the struggle between the two ideologies of Fascism and Democracy. Cultural propaganda dealt with the civilisation and mode of life of Democracy versus Fascism. The fact that Great Britain depended ultimately on her export trade should be considered together with this matter of intensi-

fyng and increasing the present very poor propaganda for British industrial products abroad.

GENERAL POPE-HENESSY said that he had discussed the question of propaganda during war with one of the best German Generals two and a half years after the termination of the Great War. The latter had complained rather bitterly of the quality of the British propaganda, saying how vicious and deadly it had been, and when the speaker had tried to find out the essential reason for this deadly and vicious quality, he had found that it lay in the fact that the British had nearly always told the exact truth concerning a situation, and Germany, on her side, had taken the two or three important steps necessary to convince the world that she was in the wrong. She herself had been the best propagandist for the Allies. For instance, Germany, not Great Britain, had invaded Belgium. When it had come to sinking neutral ships, Germany had done it with the greatest amount of publicity and filled her newspapers with the glorification of those who drowned sailors, women and children. The more truth there was in propaganda the more deadly it became, the more imagination the more futile. That was why the inventions of Bari would be, in the long run, much less powerful than such fragments of truth as the British might put across. It was not a question of enlarging the volume and scope of propaganda, but the quality which should be kept high and such that nobody could question its truth.

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT said that he agreed absolutely with the last speaker. That was why he had said that the best British propaganda during the War had sometimes been no propaganda. He had been connected with what had not been done in the first three years of the War in the United States, and British, French and Belgians had all tried to restrain their nationals there from doing anything, telling them to keep quiet and to let the Germans hang themselves by the rope of their clumsy propaganda.

Concerning commercial propaganda, surely the greater part of it should be done by the commercial houses themselves, by the quality of goods which they sent abroad and by the way in which they were advertised, and so on?

THE MEMBER who had spoken previously agreed, but said that there was little co-ordination between the British business houses and organisations compared with their German competitors for example.

A LADY MEMBER said that she agreed with what had been said about the predominance of Italian propaganda in the Near East, but that the German public were reading a great many more English newspapers than they ever had before, and were therefore a great deal better informed than many might think.

Secondly, she considered that the propaganda now indulged in

by Germany was only an extension of the propaganda which had always gone on in that very undemocratic country.

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT said that he had asked a member of Dr. Goebbels' Staff about English newspapers being circulated in Germany, and he had replied that they did not matter very much, as so few people read them that they really did not touch the masses. Again, he had pointed out that the reproduction of extracts from them was controlled. This was a very important point.

MR. A. L. KENNEDY said that he had travelled back from Austria a few days ago, stopping at different places, and buying whenever possible the local newspapers, and he had been amazed at the completeness and rapidity with which the standardisation of the Austrian Press had been accomplished by the Nazis. All news was completely uniform and non-objective, and all the papers had been filled with expressions of admiration for Hitler and the Greater Germany. Any articles had been concerned with tales of joy-rides taken by Austrian workmen to Berlin, etc. There certainly was a greater circulation of British newspapers in Germany since the Nazi régime, but even now only a small section of the population, relatively, read English newspapers, and in many small places they were not obtainable.

MRS. PICKETT asked whether there could not be more propaganda in the Dominions. When she had been in Australia two years earlier she had found in the Press a strong feeling against Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden.

A GUEST said that perhaps the main trouble in Great Britain was that most people wanted a certain amount of publicity, but did not want to have any publicity with it!

Was not the effect of the Press sometimes counteracted by the effect of the film? The minimum number of people visiting a West-End cinema theatre was fifty thousand a week.

Subsidised Foreign News Agencies had been mentioned. The Dominions often found themselves in a serious position in this matter. There were several newspapers in Africa, for instance, which were too poor to pay for a really good news service and who had to obtain their news from any news service who would supply them.

With regard to the radio, the speaker considered that stations such as Luxemburg had done a great deal of harm by mixing so much advertisement with their programmes.

SIR ARTHUR WILLERT said that until a short time ago, he, too, had thought that advertising in radio programmes would not go down well in England, but he had been told at lunch that very day, by a foreigner interested in the matter, that the taste for advertisement in radio programmes was growing in England.

THE HON. MRS. ALFRED LYTTTELTON asked whether indirect propaganda such as what was organised by the British Council did not often have a greater effect than direct propaganda. The misapprehension in many countries as to what England was doing was due to the fact that the people in those countries did not in the least understand what queer creatures the English were. It would be of more value to make other countries realise what the English characteristics were, their peculiar faults and their peculiar virtues, than to try to spread a great deal of direct propaganda.

A MEMBER said that from the nature of his own job he knew that what the lecturer had said had been fundamentally correct. He agreed that there was no propaganda so effective as the truth. It was the quality of propaganda which mattered, not the quantity. The speaker was not at all impressed by the huge sums of money which were being spent by the totalitarian and other countries. A very good case could be put across with far less money, providing of course that there was a good case to put across. It was not necessary to propagate the truth at the rate of fifteen thousand words a day. If truth were expressed and circulated at the rate of five thousand words a day, a very good day's work would have been done; and for this a great deal of money was not required. The speaker was not concerned with cultural propaganda, but with foreign news service.

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH (in the Chair) said that personally he felt certain that there was no need for anxiety in regard to the capability of Great Britain to compete with any foreign Power in the matter of propaganda. During the Great War they had done as well and better in this field than any other Power, and he felt sure they would do so again. Propaganda was started at G.H.Q. France at the very beginning of the War, and it is probable that the first use of wireless for that purpose was that made of it about October 1914, when broadcasts in German were issued from British Army Wireless Stations. By 1916, when he went to the War Office as Director of Military Intelligence, British propaganda had reached a very high development.

He agreed with the speaker that South America as a whole was ill-provided with British news. When he was in Venezuela in 1925, he found that there was a great deal of American and, especially, French news, but hardly anything about affairs in Great Britain. He was, however, interested to find that a remembrance of British War propaganda still existed, and he had found in far-away parts of Venezuela copies of a magazine *America Latina*, which had been issued by the British Propaganda Agencies during the War.

He would also like to support what had been said about the British Council. It was doing very good work with the small funds at its disposal, and he hoped that additional money would be forthcoming, so that it might extend its activities.