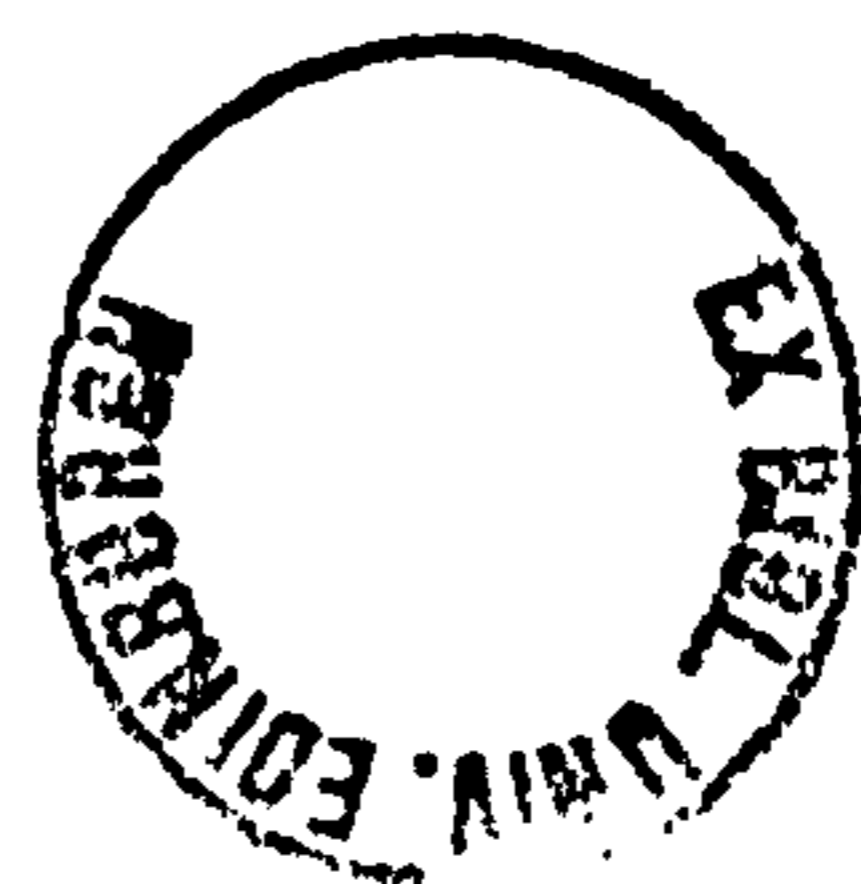


**GEORGE ORWELL, THE B.B.C. AND INDIA : A CRITICAL
STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses attention on the two years that George Orwell spent, between August 1941 and November 1943, at the Indian Section of the B.B.C., producing propaganda talks for listeners in India and elsewhere. It views Orwell's occupation in the context of the growing popularity of radio as the most successful weapon of propaganda war in the late thirties and early forties. The study looks briefly at the changing role of the intelligentsia during wartime, and examines the influence of the B.B.C. and other wartime institutions on Orwell's mind and creativity. Although much of Orwell's own contribution at the B.B.C. had become available after the publication of his war broadcasts and commentaries in 1985, this thesis incorporates fresh material and new documents from the B.B.C. Archives and the Orwell Archive, along with some other essays, journalism and letters, which have not been included in any posthumous collections of Orwell's works.

The second area of investigation is Orwell's relationship with India and the East. Although his concern for India and Burma was always quite intense, his attitude towards their political problems underwent constant changes, thereby creating some inconsistency in his outlook. This thesis brings to light Orwell's acquaintance with several members of the Indian intelligentsia residing in London during the war, and gives particular attention to his friendship with the veteran Indian writer, Mulk Raj Anand, which hitherto has remained largely unconsidered.

Chapter I surveys the propaganda policies of the British and German broadcasting agencies and introduces readers to those factors which led to, and affected, the creation and growth of the Indian Service. An insight into Orwell's mind just before the outbreak of the war explains his reasons for accepting this particular post. Chapter II establishes the biographical details of Orwell's life between 1941 and 1943, and analyses the effect of the bureaucracy of the B.B.C. and M.O.I. on his mind and behaviour. Chapter III contains a taxonomy of his wartime scripts and elaborates upon his social life during the war, including his apparent intimacy with the poet Stevie Smith. The B.B.C. presented Orwell with many ideas and images which contributed to the imaginative setting, characterisation and content of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. A discussion of these is contained in Chapter IV. Chapter V - 'Child of the Raj' - examines Orwell's ever-changing relationship with India in terms of four stages and charts the development of his political, social, economic and cultural responses to the country and its peoples. His friendship with Mulk Raj Anand, and a comparison of their early lives and novels, is the subject of the concluding chapter, which also highlights their shared responses to politics and society in the thirties.

The six appendices that follow substantiate the argument provided in the thesis. Particularly worthy of mention is 'Who listened-in to George Orwell?' which surveys patterns of listening-in to broadcasts from the B.B.C. and other radio stations in India during the war.

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To my parents in India, who have supported me in so many wonderful ways, I offer my gratitude and affection. To Michelle Cooper, and to my friends in India and Scotland, who have helped but who are not named here, my deep thanks.

Finally, words cannot adequately express the debt I owe to my husband, Herman, who traced many of Orwell's friends in India and interviewed or corresponded with scores of Indians who had listened to radio broadcasts from the B.B.C. and other radio stations during the war in India and abroad. During the course of the past few years, he has uncomplainingly accepted Orwell as a house guest demanding our joint attention. To him and to my son Ashwin, who was born during the course of this study, I dedicate this work.

To

Herman and Ashwin

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INTRODUCTION

ORWELL, THE B.B.C. AND INDIA : AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

-Then for two precious years his talents were mainly wasted, his colleagues later agreed, in producing cultural programmes for intellectuals in India and South-East Asia, heard by few and unlikely to have influenced even them.

-Bernard Crick¹

-The key to Orwell's evolution from the slightly pedantic and unpolished author of pre-war days lies in the two years he spent as Talks Producer in the Indian Section of the B.B.C.'s Eastern Service from August 1941 until 1943.

- William West²

-Hundreds of letters by Orwell have survived in the B.B.C. archives, and they tell a dismal story of office drudgery...

Regardless of the response, this routine correspondence was an enormous waste of Orwell's energy, energy which should have been going into more meaningful work.

-Michael Shelden³

The unexpected discovery of George Orwell's B.B.C. scripts and letters, and their subsequent publication as *George Orwell: The War Broadcasts* and *George Orwell: The War Commentaries* (1985) edited by William J. West, opened new vistas of debate for the 'Orwell industry'. Although faulty in editing and erroneous in judgement, the two texts did Orwell some service. They resurrected him in the aftermath of 1984 - a year he had made his own - and confirmed that speculation and research about his life and work would continue for a few more years. Moreover, these texts added to his literary achievement as a novelist, essayist, political satirist, journalist and social critic of the thirties and forties. He could now also be studied as a radio journalist and propagandist.

Over four decades have passed since Orwell died prematurely on 23 January 1950. The B.B.C.'s Indian Service, of which he was the first British Talks Assistant (later Producer), has also celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. In these many years much has been written, analysed, questioned, explained, criticized and counter-criticized about Orwell's life and work. In addition, his friends, colleagues and associates have committed to paper their sweet and sour memories of this difficult and reticent man. While certain aspects of Orwell's achievement have attracted unparalleled interpretation and criticism, there are areas that have suffered neglect. Orwell's broadcasting experience at the B.B.C between 1941-43, and his ever changing relationship with the East are two such areas. Indeed, his wartime friendship with the Indian intelligentsia, particularly with Mulk Raj Anand,

¹ Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life*, (Penguin Books, 1992), p. 413

² William West, *George Orwell: The War Broadcasts*, (B.B.C. Books, 1985), p. 13

³ Michael Shelden, *Orwell; The Authorised Biography*, (London, 1991), p. 373

the veteran Indian writer, has hitherto remained unconsidered.

It is not difficult to identify the reasons why these aspects of Orwell's life have received little attention. Although Orwell had become fairly well known by 1945, two years after he had left the B.B.C., it was not until the year of his death that his name first featured in the British *Who's Who*. Major studies on him began to appear only in the early fifties. At this time, little was known about his life and personality, even less of his work, spanning more than two decades. Although not to the same extent as Dickens and Kipling, writers with whom Orwell had developed a sense of affinity, his achievement was substantial. Besides the nine books and two collections of essays published during his own lifetime, he had written regularly for a variety of journals, periodicals and newspapers between 1930 and 1949. The earliest assessments of him, therefore, sought to introduce his work to a wider audience while providing the hitherto unknown biographical details of his life. One of the first to appear was a literary study by John Atkins which examined Orwell's published work 'both the well known and the obscure and related it to his salient ideas.'⁴ Although Orwell's B.B.C days did not escape Atkins' notice, nevertheless, he gave to this period as limited an exposure as his study could afford. He dwelt upon Orwell's views on the Raj in considerable detail but restricted his examination of the subject to Orwell's time in Burma. Atkins set a trend which was followed more or less by all succeeding critics of the fifties.

In 1954, another book on George Orwell was published, this time by Laurence Brander, his friend and colleague at the B.B.C.⁵ This was again an introductory survey of Orwell's work based on the author's personal impressions of his friend. Brander recalled their shared experience at the B.B.C. but curiously, and rather unfortunately, did not elaborate upon or go into much detail about it; an exercise he could have undertaken without difficulty. Further, Brander made no attempt to establish whether there existed any link between Orwell's Burmese days and his B.B.C experience. His portrayal of Orwell, and some scattered and generalised information about the response of Indian listeners, hardly did justice to this phase of Orwell's life. In my opinion, by disregarding Orwell's broadcasting days, Brander set a precedent that has not so far been questioned.

Two years later Christopher Hollis, a contemporary of Orwell at Eton, published yet another survey. Hollis had met Orwell in Burma and his account of their encounter became an important touchstone in establishing Orwell's dual response to the Empire. Hollis'

⁴ John Atkins, *George Orwell : A Literary Study*, (London, 1971), p. 349

⁵ Laurence Brander, *George Orwell*, (London, 1954)

study, part chronological and part thematic, however, failed in delineating Orwell's relationship with the East. Interspersed amongst Hollis's criticism were his personal memories of Orwell which, although faithful in some respects, were sketchy and even at times faulty. About the B.B.C. Hollis wrote,

In 1941 Orwell undertook temporary work with the B.B.C. in its *Far Eastern service* (my italics), where he served along with Mr. Brander. He worked hard there until *February 1945* (my italics), giving most of the talks to Malaya himself,...He worked in underground bricked-up buildings, in airless rooms lit by artificial light. It was, alas, I fear, the war-time B.B.C. which served him as a model for 1984's Ministry of Truth.⁶

Hollis's passing mention of Orwell's use of the B.B.C. as the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, took up a suggestion first made by T.R. Fyvel in 1950, and reiterated by many future critics. But with the passing of time no serious attempt was made to ascertain how far these suggestions had any genuine link with the B.B.C.

The disregard of the two issues continued well into the sixties. This was the case, perhaps, because, along with the publication of more general studies, critics also embarked upon thematic, genre-based or stylistic interpretations of Orwell's work. The prevailing literary trend led to a further, though unconscious, dismissal of the B.B.C. years as trivial and relatively unimportant. It must be said, however, that imperialism figured as a predominant theme in all the secondary criticism of Orwell, but by building the theme around Orwell's Burmese experience, critics ignored any other evidence that existed either about the B.B.C. or regarding matters concerning his relationship with the East.

In 1961, Richard Vorhees published an interesting book *The Paradox of George Orwell*. The first American to undertake a major study of Orwell, Vorhees focused upon the theme of rebellion and responsibility in Orwell's character. He applied this paradox to Orwell's time in Burma, but failed in extending the pattern to other periods of his life, most conspicuously to the B.B.C. In the same year, a further introductory study, *George Orwell : Fugitive from the Camp of Victory*, was written by Richard Rees, one of Orwell's closest friends. Rees related Orwell's life and literary achievement admirably but did not consider it worthwhile to elaborate upon Orwell's B.B.C. experience. The only reference to broadcasting occurred in the final line of the book which indicates the general opinion widespread during those days. Rees summarised Orwell's broadcasting experience thus: '...between 1942 and 1946 he made a number of broadcasts' - and that was all he deemed

⁶ Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell : The Man and his Works*, (London, 1956), p. 138. The incorrect information given by Hollis was accepted uncritically by succeeding writers. See Robert Lee, *Orwell's Fiction*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 105

important enough to say.⁷

It was George Woodcock's luminous study, *The Crystal Spirit : A Study of George Orwell* (1967), which not only successfully interwove literary criticism with biography, but also revived literary interest in other areas of Orwell's life, including his broadcasting venture. Through their common friend, Mulk Raj Anand, Woodcock had first met Orwell in 1942 and subsequently been invited by Orwell to contribute to the Indian Service programmes. Woodcock recorded, in considerable detail, the production of one of Orwell's 'Voice' magazines and also dwelt upon the larger ramifications of his job by capturing Orwell's ambivalent attitude to the B.B.C.

he [Orwell] would argue that authors should be state-supported, and at other times appear to contradict himself by maintaining that the less a writer had to do with any organised body, the better for him and his work. 'There are always strings attached,' he sometimes said, and then I would know he was thinking of his years at the B.B.C.⁸

Woodcock deserves praise for his freshness of approach. In his study he broke new ground by unveiling Orwell's friendship with Mulk Raj Anand, though only in brief terms. He extended considerably Orwell's relationship with the East from Burma to the B.B.C., and even beyond. He included, for the first time, a discussion of Orwell's essays on Kipling and Gandhi in assessing his response to Imperialism. Woodcock observed:

In my view the best pieces that Orwell wrote about India - which lies at the core of any discussion of British imperialism - were his essays on Gandhi and Kipling...with whom he felt some kind of affinity. Gandhi and Kipling may seem poles apart, but Orwell had something in common with each of them. And both of them had for him the virtue that they belonged in the Indian scene and were not merely laying down the law from the outside.⁹

Woodcock's assessment of Orwell benefited immensely from the publication of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (1968) by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus which made available, to Orwell readers throughout the world, a vast volume of his unknown and un-republished work. However, if Sonia Orwell excelled in reviving Orwell's literary fortunes, and winning on his behalf great accolades, she blocked from view an important period of Orwell's life. Almost deliberately, and ironically too, in the manner of the Ministry of Information, she censored from her prestigious collection the inclusion of Orwell's broadcasting scripts and other related work. Sonia's decision arose

⁷ Richard Rees, *George Orwell : Fugitive from the Camp of Victory*, (London, 1961), p. 156

⁸ George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit : A Study of George Orwell*, (Penguin Books, Canada, 1970), p. 31

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211

from her conviction that the B.B.C. broadcasts were only ephemeral and, as the editor, she wished the readers' attention to remain focused on literary aspects of Orwell's work. However, by eliminating Orwell's broadcasting output, she allowed the anthologies to project, and perpetuate, an unreal unity in Orwell's life and work especially during wartime. In her 'Introduction' she wrote:

The largest excluded section is his [Orwell's] scripts for the B.B.C., where he worked in the Eastern Section, broadcasting to India, from 1941 to 1943. He must have written hundreds of thousands of words during those years and, as his letters show, he tried to keep these broadcasts free from the cant of propaganda and produce honest work on an honest level, but they were oversimplified pieces, written for an audience with a different background from his own and, though not of a different kind they are of a different level from his work for an English or American highbrow magazine, where he had no need to explain his references as he went along. Ian Angus and I have only included one piece, 'The Rediscovery of Europe', in Volume II to give an idea of the kind of work he did for the B.B.C.¹⁰

Indeed, she included not one but five scripts by Orwell, four of which he had written for the Indian Service before actually joining it. All five scripts had been published earlier in the *Listener*. Although, as Mrs. Orwell observes, they do give us a glimpse into her husband's broadcasting venture, they are hardly representative. Scattered amongst the four volumes are Orwell's letters, and other miscellaneous items about the B.B.C. which do raise the reader's curiosity about Orwell's mental state during that period, but hardly satisfy it. The scripts lack context, and therefore, a complete meaning. So also the inclusion of Orwell's wartime diaries and extracts from a manuscript note-book, although containing significant revelations about the B.B.C., exist as mere fences to an empty, colourless and characterless field. Ironically, few critics ever noticed this void and the few who did further presumed that the ground was barren and useless.

It is understandable that Sonia Orwell should have assumed that George Orwell's B.B.C. scripts bore no direct connection with the rest of his work, but she has been proven wrong on two important grounds. Firstly that Orwell's broadcasting experience did after all exert some influence on his growth as a writer; and secondly, as a record of wartime propaganda, his wartime scripts are important evidence in studying the history of the War as fought by the intelligentsia and the role of radio itself during wartime.

Despite *The Crystal Spirit* and *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Orwell studies in the sixties and seventies continued to pay little attention to

¹⁰ Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, (ed.) *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Volume I, p. 15. All subsequent references to this four volume anthology will be made by the letters CEJL followed by the volume number and page.

either the B.B.C. or India. Jenni Calder's engaging study of 1968 continued the thematic trend started by Vorhees. As the title of her book - *Chronicles of Conscience : A Study of George Orwell and Arthur Koestler* - suggests, she was comparing and contrasting the lives and work of two great prophets of the twentieth century. A year later Robert Lee published his genre-based *Orwell's Fiction* in which he drew attention to Orwell's six novels as works of fiction. Although he saw *Nineteen Eighty-Four* rather as 'the inevitable culmination of Orwell's development',¹¹ and argued that the author had progressed inexorably towards the novel since his first essay in 1931, he did not attempt to probe deeper into the B.B.C. period for any significant connections. The same holds true of Keith Alldritt's *The Making of George Orwell, An Essay in Literary History* (1969). Alldritt successfully interwove biography with criticism to emphasize that Orwell's intellectual growth corresponded closely with his systematic rejection of Eric Blair and a corresponding search for a suitable mode of feeling and expression. While Alldritt's is a useful study, especially from the point of view of Orwell's essays, it fails in considering Orwell's wartime occupation as having any influence on his growth as a writer.

The seventies heralded a productive decade for Orwell. The range and scope of research carried out was remarkable. At the outset, Raymond Williams undertook a thematic evaluation of Orwell's life and work.¹² Although valuable for its Marxist interpretation of George Orwell, Williams accepted at face value Orwell's verdict that he had 'genuinely tried to keep the propaganda to India "decent"' and that was the end of the story about Orwell's B.B.C. years.¹³ In the meantime, with a view to setting Orwell's achievement 'in the context of his own period'¹⁴, Miriam Gross edited an interesting anthology of critical essays, partly biographical and partly critical. She included four essays which concentrated upon Orwell's relationship with the East - 'George Orwell and Burma' by Maung Htin Aung, 'Imperial Attitudes' by John Gross, 'A Knight of Woeful Countenance' by Malcolm Muggeridge and one specific and rare, 'Orwell at the B.B.C.' by William Empson, - but all viewpoints subsisted in the book as individual discourses. Further, the layout of the book also made impossible any interlinking between them. However, as in Woodcock's study, Gross's book opened up new approaches which could have been further explored by succeeding critics, but were not. A year later the controversial attempt by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams to write the forbidden biography of Orwell resulted in *The Unknown Orwell* (1972). They restricted their study

¹¹ Robert Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 128

¹² See Raymond Williams, *George Orwell*, (New York, 1971)

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 66

¹⁴ See 'Foreward' in Miriam Gross (ed.) *The World of George Orwell*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971)

to the first thirty years of Orwell's life and stopped immediately prior to the publication of *Burmese Days* in 1934. A discussion of Orwellian themes, therefore, along with the anatomy of the rest of his life, was left for a future sequel.

Three important studies were published in 1974. Alan Sandison's idiosyncratic *The Last Man in Europe : An Essay on George Orwell* attempted to analyse Orwell's moral values by relating him to the Protestant tradition and by exposing 'the nature of his creative vision and the impulse behind it'¹⁵. A completely different account by Jacintha Buddicom, Orwell's childhood friend, was published as *Eric and Us : A Remembrance of George Orwell*. Since Ms. Buddicom had known him only until 1922 'when he was exiled to the Burmese Police',¹⁶ her recollections only helped in eclipsing other aspects of Orwell's life. Like Sandison and Buddicom, Alex Zwedling's expansive *Orwell and the Left* and Raymond Williams (ed.) *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, greatly enlarged the boundaries of secondary criticism on Orwell, but again revealed nothing new about the B.B.C. or India.

The publication of two important studies by Jeffrey Meyers coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Orwell's death. *George Orwell : The Critical Heritage* (1975), assembling some of the earliest and most significant reviews and critical surveys of Orwell's works, and *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell* (1975), a comprehensive critical survey, claimed for Orwell a place amongst the most important writers of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the scope of both books did not allow a serious investigation into Orwell's B.B.C. years or his India connection. Towards the close of the decade Peter Stansky and William Abrahams published *Orwell: The Transformation*, a sequel to their previous book. The principal objective of this study was to examine the transformation of their subject from Eric Blair to George Orwell. However, the authors traced events in Orwell's life only until the Spanish Civil War, perhaps suggesting that if Orwell's life underwent any transformation at all, it was complete by 1936-7.

In 1980, the exhaustive *George Orwell : A Life* was published by Bernard Crick. For the first time Orwell's B.B.C. years were critically examined. In addition a substantial amount of new evidence was presented about his Eastern - both Burmese and Indian - connections. Crick quoted extensively from letters, memoirs and recollections of Orwell's friends and colleagues at the B.B.C. Orwell's scripts, he thought, 'were characteristically

¹⁵ See 'Foreward' in Alan Sandison's *The Last Man in Europe : An Essay on George Orwell*, (London, 1974)

¹⁶ Jacintha Buddicom, *Eric and Us : A Remembrance of George Orwell*, (London, 1974) p. 143

and recognisably his, quirky, lucid and competent, but they rarely matched the best of his occasional pieces for journals.¹⁷ Crick based his verdict upon fifteen scripts by Orwell which were deposited at the Orwell Archive by the B.B.C. Archives. (Incidentally, they form a large part of West's *George Orwell : The War Broadcasts*). Crick concluded, as Orwell himself and many of his close friends also had, that from the literary point of view the war had been unrewarding, and these years were wasted years for Orwell the writer. Unfortunately, however, his acceptance of this view led him to cease further research on the matter. By the time Crick started writing his biography, much of Orwell's B.B.C. work had become potentially available for research. The previously inaccessible B.B.C. Written Archives had been moved from London to their present spacious location in Caversham Park, Reading. One can only speculate, therefore, what shape Orwell studies would have taken had Crick's biography been more comprehensive on the B.B.C. issue.

In 1981, Peter Lewis published *George Orwell : The Road to 1984*, a predominantly biographical study written independently of Crick's biography. Not surprisingly, while Lewis' short and compact interpretation of Orwell's life, from the B.B.C. perspective, had interesting reminiscences and illustrations, it had nothing to add to the picture already painted in some detail by Crick. The same was true of *George Orwell: A Companion : A Guide to the novels, documentaries and essays* (1982) by J.R. Hammond. It must be said, though, that unlike studies in the past, most critiques now started allocating some critical space to the B.B.C. years, if not to India and Burma (apart from Orwell's Burmese experience), but they continued to assume that Orwell's B.B.C. experience was worthless.

Meanwhile, a different angle of interpretation of Orwell's B.B.C. years was provided by T.R. Fyvel in *George Orwell: a personal memoir* (1982). Like Jacintha Buddicom's account, Fyvel's first person narrative of events gave his book a touch of genuineness and sensitivity that was immediately appealing. Fyvel recalled that Orwell had appeared to have 'an agreeable war job', later realising that it was the last thing Orwell would have chosen himself.

I could see that Orwell was different. He could not adapt himself to the mere psychological warfare needs of the war machine. His views on the need for Indian independence was what he saw as the truth : he could not change from it. He could not become a spokesman for a merely cultural British viewpoint, however polite and liberal. This was so especially as he always had in mind that in fighting Hitler and the Japanese, Britain had allied herself with the tyranny of Stalin's Soviet Union. War or no war, he was concerned with the truth as he saw it. He could not be happy in the wartime B.B.C.¹⁸

¹⁷ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 418

¹⁸ T.R. Fyvel, *George Orwell: a personal memoir*, (London, 1982), p. 124

Although Fyvel's portrait of Orwell did nothing to change the existing view of Orwell, he joined the select group of Orwell's friends and colleagues - George Woodcock, William Empson, Julian Symons, Laurence Brander, Mulk Raj Anand, Rayner Heppenstall, John Morris, Malcolm Muggeridge and Mark Benney who, by recording their shared memories, preserved valuable information about the wartime B.B.C. To this select group a few more names were added, when in 1984, Henry Swanzy, Sunday Wilshin, Desmond Hawkins and Henry Dakin in turn spoke to Stephen Wadhams about their memories of Orwell while he worked at the Indian Section.¹⁹

THE JOURNEY TO 1984 AND ITS AFTERMATH.

If ever there was going to be a posthumous milestone erected on the ever growing road of Orwelliana, it was in the year 1984. Towards the end of the seventies and early eighties, aspiring critics and scholars of Orwell (not to mention the well established) escaped into the past - into the thirties and forties - to look for new meanings and fresher approaches to Orwell's legacy. As conferences, congresses and seminars were assiduously organised inside and outside of universities, more and more critical studies came to adorn the windows and bookshelves of shops and libraries around the world. In the run up to 1984, the publishers' brought out an amazing and varied selection of books on the Orwell *oeuvre*. There was John Thomson's *Orwell's London*, Audrey Coppard and Bernard Crick's *Orwell Remembered*, Stephen Wadhams' *Remembering Orwell*, George Woodcock's *Orwell's Message*, Lynette Hunter's *George Orwell: The Search For A Voice*, Daphne Patai's *The Orwell Mystique : A Study in Male Ideology*, Christopher Norris's *Inside the Myth : Orwell, Views from the Left*, W.F. Bolton's *The Language of 1984: Orwell's English and Ours*, and Peter Davison's *Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Facsimile of the Extant Manuscript*. Evidently, while many books had *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as their core subject, some were genre or gender based and others were interesting collections of memoirs. Not all studies took into account Orwell's B.B.C. tenure or his India connection, but those who did have been discussed in the following chapters. Before the year ended, though, a major step towards adequate consideration of Orwell at the B.B.C. was taken when William J. West started work on the publication of Orwell's hitherto unknown B.B.C scripts and letters.

West had visited the B.B.C. Written Archives to check a few references on Basic English. While scrutinising the file on Basic he came across some 'unrecorded letters, a War

¹⁹ See Stephen Wadhams (ed.) *Remembering Orwell*, (Penguin Books: Canada Ltd., 1984)

Cabinet report recommending that Basic should be adopted by the B.B.C. Overseas Services, including the section where Orwell had worked, and a script that Orwell had commissioned on the subject for one of his Indian programmes.²⁰ Instead of filing this talk under the name of Leonora Lockhart, who had written and broadcast the talk, it was curiously filed under the name of Venu Chitale, a Marathi lady employed by the Indian section who had introduced the talk. A closer look confirmed that many more undetected scripts and letters existed. Without losing time, West seized upon the opportunity of publishing them, and did so in 1985 in the two volumes *George Orwell: The War Broadcasts* and *George Orwell: The War Commentaries*. West's attempt to salvage Orwell's undesignated scripts from oblivion was given extraordinary credit by reviewers but, regrettably, his editorial errors were overlooked in the initial euphoria. While the full extent of Orwell's B.B.C. output will be apparent when the remaining volumes of Peter Davison's *George Orwell: The Complete Works* are published, Orwell's broadcasting work has to be examined either in the B.B.C. Written Archives or, less accurately, in West's anthologies. However, it needs to be emphasized that since 1984 no attempt has been made to place Orwell's broadcasting effort in its wider context - in the context of the role of the radio in the Second World War, the use of propaganda as the third arm of warfare, the evolution of Orwell's own propaganda tactics and the influence of the B.B.C. on his mind and work.

Since 1984, five books have appeared - Patrick Reilly's *George Orwell: The Age's Adversary* (1986), Averil Gardner's *George Orwell* (1987), David Wykes *A Preface to Orwell* (1988), Alok Rai's *Orwell and the politics of despair* (1988) and Valerie Myers' *George Orwell* (1991). Arguing, that Orwell's greatness was intimately related to 'the qualities of pluck and sincerity' and that Orwell had the courage to speak the unfashionable unwelcome truth, Reilly thinks that Orwell's victory was not artistic but moral. The purpose of Gardner's critique was to find a pattern of themes and recurring motifs in Orwell's novels, longer non-fiction and essays. David Wykes, like J.R. Hammond, attempted a reference study which provided the perspective and context to Orwell's work. Alok Rai's scholarly study aimed at a literary-critical analysis of Orwell's work and sought to reinterpret its' relationship with his life. Amongst the first four, only Rai claimed to have considered Orwell's B.B.C. output, but because his study was a general critique, the B.B.C. figured only peripherally.

In her exegesis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Valerie Meyers took account of Orwell's B.B.C. experience in order to highlight his satire of the Ministry of Information. She compared

²⁰ William J. West, *op. cit.*, p. 8

Orwell's 'own often tedious work of preparing news summaries and cultural programmes' with the work of Winston Smith; linked his distaste for B.B.C. bureaucrats with Party members of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; and identified newspeak in cablese, the shorthand language used for conveying cable messages at the B.B.C. Meyers frequently quoted from Orwell's diary to weave these themes together. She pointed out that

Orwell's satire is double-edged, directed not only against Eastern Communism, but also against the way wartime restrictions endangered democracy. His job at the B.B.C. gave him insight into the dangers of government control of information, and the power of mass media to limit thought and debase culture...

After years of freelance journalism, Orwell's job at the B.B.C. put him back into a snobbish hierarchy, and seems to have sharpened his distaste for bureaucrats. Winston's colleagues in the canteen, satiric portraits of managerial types, gabble in mechanical professional jargon, contemptuous of the 'greasy prole' behind the counter.²¹

Although Meyers broke the ice on this subject, her interlinking of the B.B.C. and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* only marked the beginning of the seriousness that began to be accorded to this aspect of Orwell's life. Her observations foresaw, and registered the need for, a closer examination of this area. Unfortunately this was not forthcoming from one of the most important publications, not only of 1991 but also of the entire Orwell canon, *George Orwell: The Authorised Biography* by Michael Shelden.

In his 'Introduction' to this highly publicised biography of Orwell, Michael Shelden announced: 'Readers of the previous biographies will find a great deal of new information in this book. In fact, there is something new on practically every phase of Orwell's life'. Shelden, indeed, uncovered much new and interesting material, and quoted from many letters and recollections previously unpublished or unrecorded. From Orwell's B.B.C. days, he quoted an interview with Elizabeth Knight and identified her as one of Orwell's secretaries. But Mrs. Knight's views are too generalised and unrevealing. They hardly alter, or add to, our image of Orwell while he was at the B.B.C. In fact, we do not even know how long Mrs. Knight worked with Orwell. Evidence suggests that Mrs. Nancy Barratt was Orwell's secretary for much of his tenure and at one point there was talk of having her transferred. Since secretaries were in great demand, and Orwell was known to have worked on his own rather than clamouring for one, if a secretary was taken away from him, it is doubtful that Mrs. Knight stayed with him for long. Moreover, the portrait Shelden paints of Orwell while at the B.B.C. is a familiar one, all too familiar if one has only read Crick and West.

²¹ Valerie Myers, *George Orwell*, (Macmillan, 1991), p. 123

After the publication of West's anthologies, it was clear that much needed to be explored, investigated and explained in connection with Orwell's B.B.C. job. Evidently, Shelden was advantageously placed to initiate this research, but the result was rather disappointing. Instead of investigating West's controversial claims, Shelden surprisingly based his own argument on West's findings. No doubt Shelden's assessment of the value of Orwell's B.B.C. years is completely antipodal to West's - while West gives unprecedented importance to them, Shelden dismisses them as irrelevant and sees no need to decipher the true significance of this aspect of Orwell's life. Far from compensating for the editorial errors of West he, surprisingly, manages to get his own facts wrong. In one place he writes, 'He [Z.A. Bokhari, Indian Programme Officer] *must have been pleased with* [my italics] the work because he *recommended Orwell for a full-time job* [my italics] in the Indian Section, and a subsequent offer from the Empire Service was made.'²²

No document, memo or letter at the B.B.C. Written Archives supports this judgement. Even Orwell's personnel file at the Archives, which Shelden has not seen, confirms that it was R.A. Rendall, the Director of the Empire Services, and not Bokhari who was impressed with Orwell, and following an informal interview, recommended him for the job. Rendall's selection of Orwell was kept a top secret. In addition to one or two officials of the Empire establishment, it was disclosed only to M.I.5 and the Overseas Services Controller whose permission was secured, before issuing Orwell the contract of appointment. Nowhere in his recommendations is there any suggestion, either explicit or implicit, that Bokhari had even the slightest knowledge of Rendall's move. In fact, once Rendall received the permission of relevant authorities, he wrote to Bokhari and others, revealing news of Orwell's appointment. Moreover, Shelden incorrectly identifies the designation of Laurence Brander, Orwell's colleague at the department. Shelden informs, 'he [Orwell] learned from *an intelligence officer* named Lawrence Brander, *who worked for the B.B.C. in the East* [my italics], that there were in fact very few Indians listening to the broadcasts aimed at them from London.'²³

Brander did not work in the East but was an employee of the B.B.C. and worked in London. He was sent to India on a special mission to investigate the response of Indian listeners. Shelden, moreover, quotes a questionnaire about 'favourite personalities', and states incorrectly that it was distributed by Brander to various listeners in India.²⁴ Although Brander did initiate this research, it was prepared and distributed not by him but by

²² Michael Shelden, *op. cit.*, p. 371

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 377

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 379. See also Appendix E

Ahmed Ali, the Listener Research Officer in India. What Brander circulated to officials and staff of the Indian Service in London, on 22 September 1943, was a report he prepared after receiving figures from Ali, and acknowledged this by pointing out that 'the results have just come back.'²⁵

Above all, some of Shelden's observations about Orwell's work are quite misleading. In one place he says:

from the start it was unrealistic for anyone at the B.B.C. to imagine that a significant number of Indians would be flocking round the short-wave to hear Stephen Spender speak on 'Poetry and Traditionalism', or Professor Egerton on 'Experimental and Applied Science', or George Orwell on 'British Rations and the Submarine War'. The whole undertaking was marred by an assumption that the subjects which interested a small group of English intellectuals would also interest large numbers of people living thousands of miles away, who would be hearing these highbrow topics addressed to the accompaniment of crackling sounds from the static of a small short-wave radio.²⁶

This paragraph misleads in two ways. If Indians had any reason to reject broadcasts from London, they would have done so more on account of their hostility to British rule, and only marginally because of the high-flown content of programmes. Shelden, like many others, forgets to register the immense attraction of the radio. This wonderful creation of science, inspiring awe and wonder, would have motivated more listening-in (let alone in India but all round the world), even if the subject of talks and discussions was incomprehensible. In his brother's biography, *Balraj - My Brother*, (Balraj worked for the Indian Service) the Indian writer, Bhishm Sahni, revealed that their mother never missed a single broadcast from London all through the war period whether she understood their content or not.

In the evenings, she would sit down by the side of the radio set,...the needle of which had been so adjusted as to receive the programmes from the B.B.C whenever it was switched on; so that she could listen to Balraj's voice whenever he made any announcements during the half hour programme...Mother's timetable remained unaltered throughout the next four years that Balraj and Damyanti stayed in England. She did not miss switching on the radio even for a single day, although she knew that Balraj's voice could not be heard everyday.²⁷

Today, just fifty years later, it is easy to question the impact of Orwell's radio talks owing to the narrow appeal of their subject matter, but is it justifiable to ignore the mass appeal of the medium itself? Secondly, Shelden does not mention the programmes that *were*

²⁵ See 'Preferences of the English Speaking Indian Audience', 22 September 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

²⁶ Shelden, *op. cit.*, p. 378

²⁷ Bhishm Sahni, *Balraj - My brother*, (Delhi: National Book Trust, no date), p. 75

popular, programmes like 'The Debate Continues', 'The Music I love', 'Forces Messages', 'News Commentaries' and 'The News', all but one produced by Orwell. The broadcasting effort of the B.B.C.'s Indian Service was in no way as hopeless as it has been made out to be.

Shelden leads his readers to believe that a good voice ought to have been one of the criteria for Orwell's job. He writes: 'With such a voice Orwell, would not seem to be a likely candidate for a career in broadcasting...no one at the B.B.C. seems to have minded the sound of his voice, and there were no objections when he was offered a position as a Talks Assistant in 1941.'²⁸ This opinion is obviously quite confusing. Shelden forgets that Orwell's job did not entail any actual broadcasting, at least in the beginning. Therefore, the tonal quality, or clarity, of a Talks Assistant's voice was not even a remote consideration for selection. It was only later that some officials woke up to the possibilities of exploiting Orwell's reputation as an anti-imperialist writer in India and gave him additional responsibilities of a broadcaster. Indeed, the production of programmes and reading them on the air were two different assignments; but Shelden makes his readers believe that they were part of the same job.

And again, Shelden indulges in a gross generalisation when he says 'Orwell knew what conditions were like in the East.'²⁹ Orwell's problem was precisely the opposite of this. Having never visited India, he did not have the faintest idea of the real situation there. It is wrong to think that his experience of Burma can be applied to India as well. From all points of view - cultural, political, economic, linguistic and social - there was little in common between India and Burma. For purposes of administration Burma and India may have been one British colony - even the kind of colonial practices may have been similar - but the land and its peoples were starkly different.

Thus, after more than five decades following Orwell's B.B.C. stint, no critical analyses of these two aspects of his life - his B.B.C. and India connection - is available. With the passage of time Orwell has risen eminently in the eyes of both twentieth-century critics and readers. From a struggling and directionless writer of the thirties, he has come to acquire the place of a saint, a prophet, a messiah of the post-war literary and moral world. And yet it seems unfair, and also puzzling, that two important areas of his life have been glossed over. This thesis begins an enquiry into these aspects and hopes, to some extent, to redress the balance.

²⁸ Shelden, *op. cit.* p. 371

²⁹ See Shelden, *op. cit.* p. 378

THE ARGUMENT AND PROGRESSION OF THE THESIS.

The prevailing view that Orwell's broadcasting experience between August 1941 and November 1943 can be written off as trivial and insignificant - in the vocabulary of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 'ungood' - is inadequate and distorting. It is inadequate because Orwell's B.B.C. job should be seen not only in the context of his own life (which has surely been lacking) but also in the larger context of the war, the role played by the radio in fighting the war, and of the history and expansion of the B.B.C. itself. What happened to Orwell was representative of nearly the whole of literary intelligentsia. With the outbreak of war, the direction of the lives of all writers, artists and thinkers had radically changed. War had curbed their creative ambitions and left them with no recognised roles. On the one hand feelings of uncertainty, disorientation, frustration and hollowness had surrounded them, on the other they could hardly afford to sit back, remain detached and idly watch as the whole physical world around them was fighting or lending a hand in fighting. In 1941, *Horizon* raised the dilemma facing writers of the war. In 'Why Not War Writers?', a manifesto signed by Arthur Calder-Marshall, Cyril Connolly, Bonamy Dobree, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell and Stephen Spender amongst others, asking the state to provide them with the same protection and facilities as journalists. It stated: 'with the invasion of Russia, feeling has crystallized. It is no longer possible for anyone to stand back and call the war an imperialist war. For every writer, the war is a war for survival. Without victory our art is doomed.'³⁰

When this support did not come, and as the war drifted into its second and third years, more and more writers realised that finding alternative employment in the British war machine - in the armed forces, the M.O.I., the B.B.C. and other such establishments - was a practical necessity. Orwell found himself at the Indian Service. How Orwell fought the war is not his story alone, but also the story of the war as fought by the B.B.C., by the intelligentsia and by the state. This thesis treats Orwell's B.B.C. employment as a case study and then places his experience in a larger perspective.

The six chapters that follow choose as their focus two areas of Orwell's life - the B.B.C. and his relationship with India. These may appear as separate and mutually exclusive, but both aspects are interlinked and the discussion of one inevitably leads to an examination of the other. There is no denying the fact that the all-pervasive pivot of Orwell's existence between August 1941 and November 1943 was India. Coincidental as it was but his first and last jobs - the only non-literary employments that he ever accepted

³⁰ 'Why Not War Writers: A Manifesto?' *Horizon*, October 1941, p. 236

under his real name of Eric Blair - were connected with India and the Empire. The thesis, therefore, begins by looking into Orwell's B.B.C. years and finishes by considering his friendship with the Indian writer, Mulk Raj Anand.

Chapter one builds the framework within which to consider Orwell's wartime occupation. Describing briefly the political atmosphere of the thirties, it investigates the role of radio as the most important non-military weapon in the Second World War, and examines the propaganda tactics adopted by the British and German broadcasting agencies. However, the battlefield of this war, fought over the microphone, existed not in Europe but in India. A scrutiny, therefore, of Indian politics and developments in the field of broadcasting during the late thirties and early forties follows necessarily. As India prepared to fight Britain's war against the Axis powers after 1939, the B.B.C. geared itself to meet Indian demands for a broadcasting station based in London.

Chapter one shows how the decision of setting up an Indian Section within the Empire (later Overseas) Services was hurriedly taken. A pragmatic move, the birth and growth of the Indian Service was difficult. Not only did personal conflicts of ambitious staff members filter into the pages of a popular newspaper, the question of Indian broadcasting did not ease before it had reverberated in the House of Commons. Orwell was asked to take charge of producing programmes in English for Indians against this background. The chapter concludes by highlighting Orwell's own feelings of frustration, confusion and desperation immediately prior to accepting the offer of employment.

Chapter two explains the world of wartime broadcasting in which Orwell was placed between August 1941 and November 1943. It considers his early enthusiasm for his job and seeks to answer why and how he began to slide into personal despondency. Besides piecing together the biographical details of his life from several sources - letters, wartime diaries, official memos, Orwell's personal file (incorporated for the first time in any study), memoirs and testimonies of friends, the chapter examines the effect, on Orwell's mind, of certain codes and practices developed by the M.O.I. and B.B.C. to deal with the emergency of war. It shows how rules and regulations devised for the smooth functioning of wartime institutions soon degenerated into bureaucratic procedures giving unquestioned authority to a chosen few who were not above abusing it - a theme central to both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Chapter three attempts to develop a taxonomy of Orwell's broadcasts with a view to delineating a pattern of themes, ideas and subjects emerging from Orwell's overall

broadcasting effort. His job was primarily a propaganda job, and he needed to develop his own propaganda policy to strike a fine balance between his quite contradictory public and private views. On the one hand, he was beginning to experience restlessness with the procedures of the M.O.I. and the B.B.C.; on the other, he was wedded in principle to the British war effort and his public sympathy with the cause of Indian independence. Working for the B.B.C. gained him many friends and acquaintances while pressures of work made him irritable, more difficult, hard-hitting and resolute. The latter half of the chapter concentrates upon his social life and discusses the reasons for his apparent closeness, for a time, to the poet, Stevie Smith.

Chapter four is firmly grounded in the belief that Orwell's B.B.C. years had some empirical value. Just as his experience of Burma, London, Paris, Spain, Wigan and Morocco was reflected in his writing of the thirties, his time at the B.B.C. exerted some influence upon his work of the forties, but most specifically on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The three quotations at the head of the 'Introduction' provide a ready reference within which this thesis treats the issue. The first and last opinions - those of Crick and Shelden - do not see much value in Orwell's exposure of the B.B.C., while West sees them as a major intellectual influence. The present thesis attempts to find a place, for Orwell's broadcasting enterprise, among all the other experiences which shaped his literary vision. By linking various images, ideas, characters and themes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with the corresponding situations rooted in the B.B.C., the chapter raises more questions than it answers. It asks, for example, if Orwell's idea of the three superstates had its origins in the theories of both J.F. Horrabin and James Burnham. It wonders if the image of Big Brother could also have been suggested by the poster of Kitchener used in the First World War, and reproduced by the M.O.I. in the second. It surmises that Orwell's experience in room no. 101 in 55 Portland Place on 22 October 1941 may have been so horrifying that it found corresponding similarities with the experience of Koestler's hero in *Darkness at Noon*. The analysis in the chapter challenges the polarisation of existing views which, either by not considering Orwell's impressions as valuable, or by giving undue importance to them, leave us with no balanced opinion on the matter.

The fifth chapter turns to Orwell's relationship with India. It seems curious, but his life appears to have followed a cyclical pattern in regard to India. During the thirties and forties the country had become virtually synonymous with the Empire. Although Orwell never visited India, in spite of a keen desire to do so, he kept himself constantly informed about its political situation, and made moral and political judgements. The chapter scrutinizes his relationship with India in terms of four stages which outline the essential

elements of his ever changing responses to the country. His mental view was affected by his early streak of sentimentalism, his gradual grasp of power politics, the economics of colonialism, his moral humanity and his cultural sympathies. Too often these diverse elements appear to have been in conflict.

If Orwell's gift to India was his unequivocal support for ending her colonial status, expressed with singular honesty in 'The Lion and the Unicorn', India's gift to him was the esteem and friendship of Mulk Raj Anand, widely recognised as the first major Indian novelist writing in English. Chapter six traces the similarities in the early lives of Orwell and Anand and charts the respective courses they undertook to register their moral, political and social objections against the society around them. A comparison of Orwell's *Down and Out in London and Paris* and *The Road to Wigan Pier* with Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie* highlights what their responses had in common, and underlines the high respect and mutual regard they displayed towards each other from the late thirties to the end of the War.

The six appendices that follow substantiate the argument presented in the thesis and provide supplementary information about Orwell's time at the B.B.C. Appendix A reveals the terms and conditions of his employment. Appendix B gives an overview of the range and scope of staff training programme. Appendix C contains the agenda of the meeting of the Eastern Services Committee in Room no. 101, the only meeting he ever attended on those premises. Enclosed also is the summary of proposed programmes submitted by Orwell with corrections in his own handwriting. Appendix D explains the various terms used by the thesis to denote the Indian Service. The crucial Appendix E - 'Who Listened in to George Orwell' - contains the results of a research into the extent and patterns of radio listening in India during the war, especially after 1940. The survey supports the correctness of London in establishing long distance communication with India. The thesis concludes with Appendix F which juxtaposes Orwell's employment at the B.B.C. with critical developments taking place at the same time around the world. By preparing a chronology of events between 1939-43, and by setting out developments in world affairs, in Indian history, in the arena of broadcasting, and in Orwell's life, there is no doubt left about the crucial role played by him in a particularly turbulent period.

My research has made a few discoveries. It elaborates upon and quotes from several wartime documents retrieved from the B.B.C. Written Archives. It takes into account the illuminating contents of Orwell's personnel file at the B.B.C. released only in 1993. It is now known how Orwell got his job, what his annual confidential reports revealed about

his work and character, what his outside activities were and what his superiors thought of his intellectual gifts. On the Indian side, the thesis brings to light Orwell's acquaintance and friendship with several intellectuals from the sub-continent - V.K. Naryana Menon, Balraj and Damyanti Sahni, Ahmed Ali and Mulk Raj Anand. Fortunately, Menon, Ali and Anand were able to talk about their memories of Orwell. Their recollections reveal not only Orwell's closeness to his Indian friends, but also what his Indian friends thought of him and how they valued their mutual friendship. For the first time, it has been possible to understand the background of Orwell's sharp attack on Lionel Fielden's *Beggar My Neighbour* .

Apart from contributing to media studies of the Second World War, and providing a new insight into some aspects of Orwell's life and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this study hopes to enhance his reputation as someone who was deeply concerned about Indo-British understanding during the War. He firmly held the view that cultural sympathies could exist where political sympathies could not, and was probably the only British intellectual to support his Indian friends both culturally and politically without any reservations throughout the war period. In terms of his empathy for India and Indians, he falls in line with Kipling and Forster not only because by writing *Burmese Days* he had derided British Imperialism, but by choosing to side with Indians on British soil in matters of high political and intellectual significance, he compelled others around him to recognise his bold personal and political position. As in many other conflicts, Orwell believed that by displaying firmly what can be called his own idiosyncratic approach to solving India's problems he would help Indians to come nearer to their goal of complete independence.

THE THIRTIES : A TIME OF RECKONING

To the land, sea and air fronts of the first world war, radio has added the fourth - the ether.

- Charles J. Rolo

RADIO : THE FOURTH ARM OF WARFARE

The thirties saw a great expansion in the use of radio. In this decade, it was used, extensively and effectively, as the most popular medium of the propaganda war. In fact, the very art of propaganda was given new dimensions by the power of radio. Many European countries were anxious to exploit the limitlessness of the ether for propaganda purposes; and it was the radio which won the sole option of fighting, on their behalf, a proxy war across the air waves. It successfully fulfilled the new role created for it by the peculiar social, economic and political developments of the thirties.

Its use as an effective instrument of propaganda became evident long before the actual war broke out.¹ Its popularity as a medium of mass communication had already reached great heights in the twenties. Flexible in use, and often stronger in emotional impact than the printed word, it had the power to capture the minds of millions with a single broadcast and at the same moment in time. Its effect was sudden, immediate and mesmerising. Orwell had rightly said that 'in broadcasting your audience is conjectural, but it is an audience of *one*. Millions may be listening, but each is listening alone, or as a member of a small group, and each has the feeling that you are speaking to him individually.'² In the early twenties numerous broadcasting companies commenced operations in North America and Europe. The B.B.C. also started broadcasting in 1922 as the private and commercial British Broadcasting Company; it became the independent British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927.³

The need for reaching out to audiences beyond national boundaries was realised in the thirties. The B.B.C. started its Empire Service on 19 December 1932. It beamed a two hour transmission, at different times of the day, to colonies all around the world amongst which India occupied a special place. The idea was to provide a leisurely

¹ For details of propaganda organisations, policies and their analyses in Britain and Germany during the War, see Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-45*, (London, 1979)

² George Orwell, 'Poetry and the Microphone', *CEJL*, II, p. 377

³ For the history of Radio and its world-wide expansion see Garry Lyle, *Broadcasting* (London, 1953) and Charles J. Rolo, *Radio Goes to War*, (London, 1953).

'home' service for empire listeners. Interestingly, the B.B.C. was not alone in broadening the base of its services. In September 1931, the League of Nations addressed its members 'to create better mutual understanding between peoples'.⁴ As a result, it set up an international committee of experts to draft a broadcasting convention which was presented for debate at a special League of Nations Conference in Geneva in 1936. But much had happened in the intervening years. The political atmosphere in Europe had dragged its member nations closer towards a second world war. Many members, therefore, thought it imperative to lay down rules governing the overall use of world broadcasting. Consequently, an international resolution, the first ever, on radio propaganda was passed. It banned the broadcasting of all material which was detrimental to 'good international understanding', and which incited 'the population of any territory to acts incompatible with the internal order or the security of a territory of a High Contracting Party'.⁵ This resolution also banned all kinds of aggressive propaganda, deliberate misstatements, incitements or insurrections to war; but it was quite unenforceable, had little effect, and Germany and Italy were not among the signatories.

Unrestrained by the norms of propriety, the two countries were seen only too prepared and willing to disregard sensitive propaganda issues. Even as the first laws on radio propaganda were being drafted, alarming reports of the growing menace of German and Italian external broadcasting were causing concern to Lord Reith, the first Director General of the B.B.C. A man of his times, he was preoccupied with the health of the British Empire and was determined to help hold it together by means of strengthened radio links.⁶ If Britain was to make its voice heard effectively in the world, broadcasting had to be expanded and complemented by the use of other languages. With strong support from the Colonial Office, he impressed the Ullswater Committee to recommend that the scope and aims of the Empire Service be broadened in the light of the threatening international climate during the mid-thirties.⁷ Evidently, his thinking about the role of the B.B.C. was slowly moving away from the original concept of the Empire Service.

⁴ League of Nations Assembly Council, 'Circular Letters and Documents 1936-9' quoted in Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told* (London, 1982), p. 40

⁵ League Convention concerning the use of broadcasting in the cause of peace', 23 September 1936, quoted in Gerard Mansell, *op. cit.*, p. 40

⁶ For Reith's interest in the Empire see Mansell, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7 & 35

⁷ The Ullswater Committee was set up to carry out periodic review of broadcasting prior to the renewal of the Corporation's charter. The B.B.C. specially requested the Committee to look into the 'Memorandum on Broadcasting and the Colonial Empire' for suitable recommendations.

Britain adopted a new policy on broadcasting in May 1936 which led to the expansion of the Empire Service. It planned specialised services for various countries considered at high risk from German and Italian propaganda. It recognised the need of urgently addressing the Spanish or Portuguese speaking Latin American countries, and Arabic speaking African and Middle-Eastern countries. Ironically, it thought of India as relatively safe and gave her the lowest priority. It left the task of organising propaganda for the subcontinent to the newly established All India Radio. But with the outbreak of war in 1939, this arrangement proved grossly inadequate and it was compelled to make substantial changes.

If there was one country that became drawn into Britain's war only indirectly, but in a way that was felt to be very controversial, it was India. The issue of Indian independence in the thirties had proved to be one of the most divisive in British politics. On the one hand Churchill was averse to the idea of a free India, and was to publicly declare that he had 'not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire';⁸ on the other, the British left, supported by the *Daily Herald*, the *Mirror* and the liberal *News Chronicle*, *Guardian* and *Observer*, favoured some kind of a solution towards self-government. Particularly pro-Indian was *The New Statesman* and its high-profile editor Kingsley Martin. Although the weekly reached fewer people than the dailies, it exerted greater influence on the left and became more stringent in its outlook once war was declared. It took a leading role in highlighting the excesses of German radio propaganda to India. In May 1941 it said:

German propaganda to-day is immensely active...in India. Germany can point to 150 years of British rule,...can point out that the mass of Indians remain abjectly poor, that 92 percent of them are still illiterate and that by and large Britain has used India as a country for investment, from which she still draws 50 millions in interest alone each year, and treats her as a colony to be administered by civil servants whose pensions the Indian people pay...

If in Britain's greatest hour of need India proves an embarrassment and not an ally,...then the Empire would disintegrate as soon as danger touched its centre.⁹

The paper was not entirely incorrect in its estimation. If India was the most important

⁸ Winston Churchill, 'Speech at the Mansion House', 10 November 1942.

⁹ *The New Statesman And Nation*, 10 May 1941, pp. 475-6

jewel in the British Crown, the Axis powers saw it as an equally important target. In September 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan signed a tripartite agreement and, in doing so, assigned India to the Russian sphere of influence. Both Germany and Japan were eager to offer her as a bait to the Soviet Union in order to strengthen their own negotiating power within their separate 'New Order' plans. At the height of the War in 1941, when the Axis powers were dominating, India had become the single most sought after territory. India was at 'the heart of the Empire. For a time, indeed, it seemed to be at the heart of the war'.¹⁰

Indeed, plans to upset British domination of the Indian sub-continent had been under way since the early stages of war. The Axis powers had grasped the fact that any adverse internal propaganda at this time could incite widespread unrest, and anti-British sentiments, lying pent up, could be exploited in tilting the balance in their favour.

India's support to Britain was crucial to the overall Allied effort. Over two million Indian soldiers were fighting a voluntary battle for the Allies in different parts of the world. Ironically, the cause for which the war was being fought reflected sharply upon the country's own colonial status. Leaders of India, specially those belonging to the Indian National Congress, were unhappy that Britain had declared war on India's behalf without her consent, and they would accept nothing less than immediate independence. Their expectations were summed up by Nehru when he declared: 'If we are against Nazism, we are also against Imperialism and we can be no party to it unless it is made clear that the objective is freedom and democracy.'¹¹

The situation for the British in India became more threatening when Subhas Chandra Bose, the radical and revolutionary leftist leader from Bengal, succeeded in stirring anti-British sentiments in an unprecedented manner. He was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 but his differences with Gandhi and Nehru, over India's feeble response to British rule forced him into becoming a rebel.¹² In 1940, he was detained on charges of sedition and confined to house arrest in Calcutta, awaiting

¹⁰ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: The War of Words*, Vol. III., (London: Oxford University Press), p. 504

¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (London, 1958), pp. 422-23

¹² Two informative biographies of Subhas Chandra Bose, apart from Hugh Toye's *The Springing Lion : A Study of a Revolutionary*, (London, 1959), are Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero*, (London: Quartet Press, 1982) and Leonard Gordon's *Brothers Against The Raj: A Biography Of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, (New York, 1990)

trial. On the eve of his trial, he escaped dramatically, thrilling the Indians while horrifying the British. Journeying via Afghanistan and Russia, he reached Berlin on 2 April, and within weeks of his arrival, set up *Radio Azad Hind* - Free India Radio. He addressed his countrymen, particularly Indian soldiers fighting for the British in various parts of the world.

British aggression, which the Indian people have been fighting so long, can be destroyed. In spite of all that British propaganda has been saying, or may say in future, it should be clear to all right-thinking Indians that in this wide world, India has but one enemy, the enemy who has exploited her over a hundred years, the enemy who sucks the life-blood of Mother India, British Imperialism. It is a moral tragedy that some of my countrymen have been so doped by propaganda that they forget who is the real enemy and think it is Japan, Germany or Italy, without enquiring what these Powers' policies towards India really are. Friends, I know something about those Powers and their foreign policies. I can tell you with all seriousness that these three powers want to see India free and independent and mistress of her own destiny. They are determined to defeat and destroy the enemy of India. It is therefore the task of the rising generation of Indians to utilise the present international crisis to bring about the downfall of the British Empire and the rise of a free and united India.¹³

By late 1941, Bose was receiving conspicuous attention in the British press. He was thought to have gone over to the enemy and to have signed a pact to overthrow the British. Launching a propaganda offensive against him, the press equated him with the Norwegian collaborator with the Germans, Vidkun Quisling. *The Daily Mail* carried his photograph with the caption, 'Indian turns traitor', and announced 'Indian Quisling No.1 flees to Hitler'. *The Empire News* went further - 'Subhas Chandra Bose, India's Quisling No.1, is to become the Indian 'Lord Haw-Haw' broadcasting from Berlin.'¹⁴ The Axis powers were quick in realising the fact that, if Nehru was Britain's man in India, Subhas Bose could become theirs, if only outside of India. This view was propounded by the Italian Ambassador in Kabul who first met Bose in April 1940.¹⁵ He, along with his German counterpart, was instrumental in persuading Russia to allow Bose into its territory and arrange for him to escape to Germany. Once in Berlin, he was accorded a private audience with Von Ribbentrop, Hitler's Foreign Minister.

This was an important development. At a stroke, Germany realised its hopes of

¹³ Subhas Bose's radio recording quoted as 'A Talk in English' in *Talking to India*, p. 158

¹⁴ Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero* (London, 1982), pp 187-88

¹⁵ He was Pietro Quaroni. He later reported to his minister in Rome. 'Two things are necessary to make revolution - men and money. We do not have the men to start a revolution in India, but luck has put them in our hands. No matter how difficult Germany's and our monetary situation is, the money that this movement requires is certainly not lacking. It is only a question of valuing the pros and cons and to decide on the risk.' See Mihir Bose, *Ibid.*, p. 160-2.

transmitting propaganda to India which was to be produced by Indians, and broadcast in their native voices. Without losing time, the German Foreign Office Broadcasting Bureau, *Rundfunkstelle*, drew up an elaborate eight-page plan on radio propaganda to India. The officials concluded that India had over 120,000 sets, 30,000 of them on short-wave frequency, and mostly owned by people who were strongly nationalistic. The broadcasts, the Germans instructed, should be aimed at them in their own regional languages - chiefly Hindustani, Bengali, Telegu and Tamil.¹⁶ Although Von Ribbentrop supported Bose's idea of a clandestine medium-wave broadcasting station located in the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province, or even in Kabul, operational facilities favoured a station based in Berlin. Von Ribbentrop agreed with Bose that radio propaganda could not alone bring about a revolution but it could quite definitely foment discontent, and that, in itself, was going to be an important achievement.

Such elaborate plans from Germany were matched by the Italians who had been in constant touch with their partners. They lavishly financed, at one stage at the rate of £10,000 a month, a black propaganda station, Radio Himalaya, to lower the morale of the British troops. The station was, in fact, run from Rome by a man called the Fakir of Ipi who pretended to be broadcasting from India. He argued a separatist 'Pakistan' line and denounced Gandhi and Nehru in the most absolute of terms.

Although these clandestine radio stations were able to heighten provocative radio activity on Indian soil, grounds for the eventual success of Axis propaganda had been prepared by the single most important efforts of the German Broadcasting Company in the late thirties. Its broadcasts were spearheaded by Lord Haw Haw, the notorious William Joyce, who had defected to Germany at the outbreak of war.¹⁷ Among other things, he had started a direct broadcasting service to India.

Joyce was realising the hopes of Adolf Hitler who had developed a precise view of the concept and functioning of radio propaganda. Hitler had long ago determined the role

¹⁶ Mihir Bose, *Ibid.*, p. 181

¹⁷ William Joyce, (1906-46). He was of Irish origins and born in America, but educated in England. In 1933, he joined Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. He left Mosley's party in 1937 and founded his own Hitler-worshipping British Nationalist Socialist Party. He fled to Germany and, from September 1939 to April 1945, broadcast propaganda from Radio Hamburg. Each broadcast was heralded by the characteristic 'Chairmany Calling' in a famously distinctive voice. Joyce inherited the title 'Lord Haw-Haw' from a previous broadcaster with an upper class drawl. In 1945, he was captured by the British at Flensburg, tried at the Old Bailey, London, convicted and executed.

which radio was to play in the approaching conflict. 'In war words are acts', he had written in *Mein Kampf*. As early as in 1933, in conversation with Hermann Rauschning, he had outlined his propaganda policy. He had formulated the idea that the psychological dislocation of the enemy was a necessary preliminary stage in any military offensive. 'Our strategy is to destroy the enemy from within, to conquer him through himself. Mental confusion, contradictions of feeling, indecision, panic - these are our weapons.'¹⁸ His policy was echoed by his like-minded Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Paul Goebbels, who controlled all broadcasting operations from Germany, including the official *Reichs Rundfunk Gesellschaft* - The German Broadcasting Company - and a host of other 'black' broadcasting stations. He said in *Der Angriff*, 'My object is to arouse outbursts of fury, to get men on the march, to organise hatred and suspicion - all with ice-cold calculation.'¹⁹

The war of words, therefore, had begun long before the outbreak of field warfare, and radio propaganda was given the status of a decisively effective weapon against the enemy. In an article on the work of the B.B.C.'s Overseas Services, the Controller Sir Stephen Tallents, conceded that 'so far radio, in the first great war in which it has been available, has come near to being a fourth armament.'²⁰ The radio had thus come to enjoy an enviable status during the war. It had become 'the fourth arm of modern warfare', along with the conventional three - the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Unlike Hitler, Churchill believed that the war must be won by deeds, not words, and saw war-time radio in an entirely different way. In an important broadcast speech of 12 November 1939, he said, 'If words could kill, we would be dead already.'²¹ It is not known whether his statement was meant to be an answer to Hitler and his propaganda machine. Nonetheless, it did reflect Churchill's personal dislike of Axis propaganda and advocated the opposite of the German Fuhrer's doctrine. In line with official policy, the B.B.C. was not inclined to accept deceitful propaganda as a publicly declared option. This is not to say that the government did not resort to 'Black propaganda.' In fact, Churchill himself took great personal interest in the creation of

¹⁸ Hitler in conversation with Hermann Rauschning quoted in C.J. Rolo, *op. cit.*, p. 18. At the first Nazi radio exhibition in 1933, attended by Hitler, Goebbels had prophesied that 'the radio would be to the twentieth century what the press had been to the nineteenth.' See E.K. Bramsted, *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda* (London, 1965) p. 63. A photograph of Hitler at the exhibition is printed in the *B.B.C. Yearbook 1934*, p. 294

¹⁹ Goebbels quoted in Rolo, *op. cit.*, p. 20

²⁰ See Stephen Tallents, 'The Work of the B.B.C.'s Overseas Services', *London Calling*, 30 June 1940, No. 37, p. 9

²¹ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 4

the secret radio station *Aspidistra*, which carried out black broadcasting for Britain,²² but the B.B.C., backed by the government, distanced itself from it. It adhered to the principle of producing programmes based on evidence rather than the fabrication of evidence; 'no permanent propaganda policy can in the modern world be based upon untruthfulness', said Harold Nicolson, M.P., then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Information.²³

The contrasting opinions of the war-time Heads of States to propaganda shaped, to a large extent, the broadcasting policies of the warring nations. The expansion of the B.B.C.'s Empire Services was largely a defensive measure. At no stage did the Corporation show an overt desire to use the B.B.C. to launch a propaganda war based on the deliberate perversion or fabrication of truth. 'Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda', remarked Asa Briggs, 'served not as an example but as a warning, and the Nazi talk of "fighting on the battlefields of the mind" provoked little sense of the need for retaliation'.²⁴ However, the situation in India was steadily deteriorating. German propaganda had become too aggressive to be ignored. In December 1939, Lionel Fielden, the Director of Broadcasting in India wrote to Frank Ogilvie,²⁵ the Director General of the B.B.C.:

As you can imagine, this is an extremely fruitful ground for propaganda. The recent introduction - which I always foresaw - of a daily Hindustani news bulletin from Berlin which is received here on 19 and 31 metres more strongly than Daventry falls undoubtedly upon very fruitful soil. It is widely listened to and there is a very definite tendency to regard it as more truthful than the English version.

For the past fortnight the Germans have continually harped upon the number of ships which they have sunk and I, most quite candidly confess that by the sheer fact of listening in to a lot of these broadcasts, have almost been convinced myself that we have lost six hundred thousand tons. What then of the average Indian?²⁶

A report in *The Hindustan Times* dated 1 December 1939 supported Fielden's claims.

²² 'Like the Germans, the British devised 'black Propaganda'- the creation of fake 'underground radios, the forgery of documents, the fabrication of rumours' - justifying this on the grounds that such lies were necessary if a Nazi regime based on lies was to be defeated.' Angus Calder, *The People's War 1939-45*, (London, 1969) p. 502. For the operations and history of British subversive activities through its secret radio station 'Aspidistra', see Peter Black, *The Biggest Aspidistra in the World*, (London, 1992)

²³ Harold Nicolson, 'Propaganda' in *B.B.C. Yearbook 1941*, p. 30

²⁴ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 6

²⁵ Frederick (Wolff) Ogilvie, (1893-1949). He succeeded Sir Reith (later Lord Reith) as the Director-General of the B.B.C. in 1938 and stayed in office until 1942. He had been Professor of Political Economy at the University of Edinburgh, 1926-34; and President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University, Belfast, 1934-8.

²⁶ Lionel Fielden to Sir Frank Ogilvie, 6 December 1939. B.B.C. Archives

In order to make the listening familiar with actual events as they occur, so that they may help to spread accurate news, it is essential that broadcasts in Hindustani should be radiated from the B.B.C. As things are, Germany is busy propagating all sorts of stories through the ether.²⁷

The Times of India went a step further and exhibited its impatience with Britain's inadequate broadcasting measures. 'A demand for Hindustani broadcasts has been repeatedly submitted to the Government of India and to the British Government since war began. When are they going to heed it?'²⁸

These sentiments were matched by reports of British correspondents based in the sub-continent. 'German propaganda in English excellently received. Listeners await vainly for refutation from London or Delhi', cabled a *Daily Telegraph* correspondent on 6 October, 1939.²⁹ 'Newspapers reflecting strong feeling, nothing done to counteract German wireless propaganda', cabled another correspondent from New Delhi to the India Office in Britain. These reports inevitably caused anxiety to the M.O.I. which, at that time, was unaware of the greater dangers to come from Free India Radio and Radio Azad Hind. However, it did prioritise its plans and took prompt action in starting a direct broadcasting service to India from London. In the B.B.C. Board meeting of 19 January 1940, the Director-General reported 'a proposal to broadcast in Hindustani half an hour daily'

³⁰ He confirmed that all scripts including news would be handled by the B.B.C.'s Hindustani Unit. On 21 March 1940, the Assistant Controller (Overseas) informed the board that Fielden, who had accepted appointment as sub-editor, would be arriving in England in April. He would be followed by the Editor, Malcolm Darling, who would arrive on 1 May. These appointments were facilitated only because a few months earlier, the B.B.C. had instituted the expanded Overseas Service in place of the Empire Service. Stephen

²⁷ Report from *The Hindustan Times*, 1 December 1939. Hindustan Times Archives, New Delhi.

²⁸ Report from *The Times of India*, 29 November 1939. *The Times of India* Archives, New Delhi.

²⁹ Reports in B.B.C. Archives.

³⁰ See Minutes of the B.B.C. Board Meeting, 19 January, 1940. B.B.C. Archives. The term Hindustani was lifted from the Indian language, Hindustani, popularly used on the sub-continent. It was built on the simplest grammatical framework common to Urdu and Hindi and comprised a selection of approximately 1000 words from the common stock of the two languages. Although the B.B.C. gave the impression of organising programmes only in Hindustani, the service also broadcast in English and other Indian regional languages. By far, the most dominant language was English.

Tallents, who had been the Director General Designate of the B.B.C., was made its first Controller.³¹

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE INDIAN (Hindustani) SERVICE

As stated earlier, the idea of Indian broadcasting had been on the Government's agenda since 1936 when it drew up its first plans for the B.B.C.'s Empire Service. In fact, the subject had been introduced long before by John Reith himself. His particular interest in India had led him, as early as in 1923, to press upon the authorities in London and New Delhi the advantages of talking to the sub-continent directly on short-wave. When unsuccessful, he wrote in his diary 'There is neither vision nor recognition of the immense potentialities of broadcasting...no ethical or moral appreciation, just commercialism. It is an unparalleled opportunity for service to India, but they have let the chance go.'³² Reith had wanted to offer himself to run Indian broadcasting, when in 1934, Lord Wellington requested the British Government to help establish a service in India. He had even harboured thoughts of becoming the Viceroy, after putting Indian broadcasting on its feet, but was dissuaded by J.W. Whitely, the then Chairman of the B.B.C.'s Governors.³³ The coveted job went to Lionel Fielden, a senior and much respected member of the Talks Department, who also enjoyed Reith's support.³⁴ He left for India in 1935 and stayed there until the spring of 1940, first as Controller and later as Director General of Broadcasting.

While in India, Fielden had become one of the most ardent listener-critics of the Empire Service and sent regular analyses of its shortcomings to London. He wrote a 'Memorandum on the Empire Service' on 15 July 1937 in which he was particularly critical about the performance of its planners and broadcasters. The Service, he said

³¹ Sir Stephen Tallents (1884-1958) Before joining the B.B.C. in 1936 as Controller (Public Relations), Tallents had been a notable pioneer in the field of official propaganda. He had been secretary of the Empire Marketing Board and had taken the unit with him when he moved to the Post Office. He had also served, for a time, as Director-General Designate of the shadow Ministry of Information in 1938 and early 1939. In May 1940, he became Controller (Overseas) and was responsible for much of the reorganisation of the Service. He resigned from the B.B.C. in 1941.

³² J.C.W. Reith, 'Diaries', 10 April 1925, B.B.C. Archives. He later remarked that 'if broadcasting had been taken seriously in 1924 subsequent events in India might have been different.' See J.C.W. Reith, *Into the Wind*, (London, 1949), p. 113

³³ See, J.C.W. *op. cit.*, p. 207

³⁴ 'Two men from the B.B.C. eventually sent to the High Commissioner...Both experienced and competent; radically different in outlook and method. There was risk with one; he was brilliant but impetuous on occasion. I hoped he would be chosen. He was, and the Viceroy was pleased.' See J.C.W. Reith, *op.cit.*, p. 232

'was not within miles of catching the ear of young students in India, who are certainly the most important audience with which it has to deal in that part of the world.' England was projecting the worst of its culture and a major revamping of the Service was needed to make an impact. He recommended that the B.B.C. should

concentrate on giving the world the best of England's writers, poets, musicians, engineers, actors, playwrights, philosophers etc. This surely is the best propaganda that any nation could do for itself. If it [the Empire Service] is really intended to be, a World Service, of the first importance reflecting England's attitude and culture, then surely it must be put over with tremendous drive and imagination.³⁵

In September 1939, Fielden wrote a series of letters urging the B.B.C. and M.O.I. to start broadcasting to India in Hindustani.

What the B.B.C. can do is very different from what All India Radio can do...The Government of India has little talent available. (It does not possess a M.O.I.)...There will be no available speaker for eye witness accounts of war, of life under the Nazi regime, & so on. Delhi cannot cope with Berlin; but London should be able to do so.³⁶

Fielden offered himself as the candidate for spearheading the formation of the Indian Service and emphasised the importance of having broadcasters from India. He thought this not only because the staff of All India Radio was trained in broadcasting, but also because they were 'pensionable government servants whose efficiency and discretion' could have been relied upon.³⁷ His views were warmly supported by some officials in Britain as well as in India. ³⁸ However, in his memorandum of 1937, Fielden had disapproved of the method of J.B. Clark,³⁹ then Assistant Controller of the Overseas Services, and Clark, now Controller of the Overseas Services, was determined not to allow him have this top job.⁴⁰ The Secretary of State conveyed Clark's views in a long and explanatory telegram to the Home Department of the Government of India. He

³⁵ 'Memorandum on the Empire Service', by Lionel Fielden, 15 July 1937, B.B.C. Archives.

³⁶ Letter from Fielden to Hodson, 24 September 1939. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, B.B.C. Archives.

³⁸ Despite Fielden's impetuosity, P.J. Grigg of the War Office liked him 'I do not find myself unduly put off by the small tiresomenesses which are inseparable from genius.' he said in his letter to Ogilvie, 25 January 1940, B.B.C. Archives.

³⁹ John Beresford Clark (1902-68) virtually built up the B.B.C.'s Empire Service. He became the Assistant Controller (Overseas) in 1941, and Controller in October 1941, after Tallent's departure. Immensely experienced in B.B.C. affairs, he played an important part in transforming the Empire Service into a World Service with distinctive regional sections.

⁴⁰ Fielden's memorandum of 1937 was directly aimed at J.B. Clark, apparently pointing to the lack of creative ability in him but the latter's position was loyally defended by his superior, Cecil Graves, then Controller of the Empire Services. B.B.C. Archives. See also Gerard Mansell, *op. cit.*, p. 36 & 206

asserted:

The B.B.C. are quite firmly of the opinion that the circumstances and scope of the contemplated Service indicate an I.C.S. officer of long-standing experience as the type of man required for Editor rather than Fielden whose undoubted qualities lie more in the direction of broadcasting technique than in the sphere of Indian politics.⁴¹

The Viceroy had already recommended Sir Malcolm Darling, a retired civil servant of the Revenue Department, who had also served as the Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab University. Fielden fought hard until the last minute to impress authorities in London of his suitability; he campaigned and sent frantic letters and telegrams to Ogilvie, J.B. Clark and Hodson, Director of the Empire Publicity Division amongst others but Clark was adamant. With much reluctance Fielden accepted the post of sub-editor under Darling's editorship. He, nevertheless, had the full support of the Indian Programme Officer, Zulfiqar Ali Bokhari, who had been one of the father-figures of Indian Broadcasting. He had become the Bombay Station Manager in 1935 and had come to London in 1937 for a training course at the B.B.C., similar to the one Orwell attended in 1941.

For his B.B.C. job in 1940, Bokhari arrived with the highest recommendations from Fielden. On 3 January 1940, Fielden wrote to Ogilvie,

Bokhari left by air for England yesterday. The whole point of a Hindustani Service from London is that it should be seen through the eyes of, and edited by, an Indian... I don't care how long an Englishman has been here - he does not and cannot see things through Eastern Eyes; he simply has not got the associations...Bokhari has real imagination, vigour and broadcasting ability.⁴²

Two days later he reiterated, 'I have sent my best man to England, and the service here will miss him greatly.'⁴³

The composition and manner of the Hindustani Service was greatly influenced by the views of its founding members, often greatly contradictory. Darling wanted the service to be 'courteous and non-committal' whereas Fielden preferred a more direct approach, somewhat confrontational in tone.⁴⁴ His views were compatible with Bokhari's, who

⁴¹ 'Cable from Secretary of State for India to Government of India,' Home Department, 28 February 1940. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴² 'May I ask you to extend a warm welcome to him [Bokhari]?' Fielden to Ogilvie, 4 December 1940. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴³ Fielden to Ogilvie, 6 December 1940. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁴ Fielden expresses his views about Darling's time at the Indian section in his

produced two interesting memoranda on 'Publicity Plans for India'. Enumerating Indian attitudes towards the war, Britain and Germany, he urged:

Indian opinion is not altogether sure of the grim necessity of the war, and a considerable section of it has doubts about its justice. Before Indian opinion comes over wholeheartedly to the allied side the triple barrier of ignorance, apathy and instinctive hostility has to be overcome.⁴⁵

Above all, a 'Government of India Memorandum' from New Delhi dated 4 April 1940 directed the B.B.C., in great detail, concerning the nature and scope of the proposed Hindustani Service. It reinforced the point that although the Indians were against German Fascism, they were also not in favour of British Imperialism. They were incited by German propaganda which was asking why Indians should die for Britain, a hypocritical country, talking of democracy while keeping India a subject nation.⁴⁶ The Memorandum asserted that there was certainly a need for propaganda but 'any suspicion that the Hindustani broadcast was being used as an instrument of propaganda in favour of a particular policy in regard to the constitutional relations between Britain and India would destroy its war value.'⁴⁷ Bokhari supported this view and thought that propaganda ought to be veiled. It needed to provide an intellectual stimulus and should be 'leftist' in sentiment to be convincing. He wanted people like H.N. Brailsford, Margaret Bondfield, Harold Laski and Ellen Wilkinson to broadcast to India.⁴⁸

The Indian Service started at short notice on 10 May 1940 with a ten-minute daily broadcast. Although plans for expansion were already under way, clouds of personal suspicion were gathering over it. Sharp differences of opinion and judgement between Tallents and Fielden on the one hand, and bitter animosity between Fielden and Darling on the other, developed.⁴⁹ Fielden felt betrayed by the B.B.C.'s choice of

autobiography, *The Natural Bent* (London, 1960), p. 219. See also below no. 49.

⁴⁵ 'Memorandum on Publicity Plans for India' 13 January 1940, by Z.A. Bokhari, B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁶ 'Government of India Memorandum on the proposed Hindustani Service by the B.B.C., 4 April 1940, B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁷ Letter from F.H. Puckle to Findlater Stewart', 16 February 1940, B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁸ 'Note by Z.A. Bokhari', 8 September 1940. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁹ 'I had never been friendly with Sir Stephen Tallents, now Director of Overseas Programmes. After a good deal of unpleasant fighting [with Tallents and others], Zulfaqar and I managed to start a service to India...We had made a careful study of the German broadcasts to India, and the means of offsetting them...the service which we started then was on the right lines...It was rude and lively. But when Sir Malcolm Darling...reached England about ten days later, he made it clear that this would not do at all. And who shall blame him?' See Lionel Fielden, *The Natural Bent*, (London, 1960), p. 218-9.

Darling to head the Section. The war of words, especially between Tallents and Fielden, hitherto private, soon became public. It spilled on to the pages of *The New Statesman*, adversely affecting the general morale and spirit of the Section.

On July 5 1941, *The New Statesman* wanted to know if the B.B.C. had formulated a specific propaganda strategy to counteract the menace of German radio assault.⁵⁰ This led Tallents to reply, furnishing relevant information, and praising Darling's efforts for putting Indian broadcasting on a firm footing.⁵¹ Tallent's letter offended Fielden and triggered off a bitter controversy which resulted in a series of charges, counter-charges, explanations and arguments concerning Indian broadcasting, also involving in the process, E.M. Forster, Desmond Hawkins and several Indian residents.⁵² Fielden, who had by then left the Section, wrote a confrontational letter to the editor and chose to bring his grievances out in the open. It is worthwhile to quote substantially from the letter because it shows how the Indian Service, in its very infancy, was grappling as much with internal infighting as with external enemy propaganda. Fielden complained:

Having looked after broadcasting in India for five years and spent six unhappy months in the Hindustani service of the B.B.C., I wonder if I might add a footnote to Sir Stephen Tallent's comments...Sir Stephen is perfectly right in saying that an excellent *English* programme for India has been built by an Indian; but it is burking the point...The fundamental mistake...is that "foreigners can't be trusted"; and the result...is dull and uninspired bulletins in anglicised language. With all due respect, Sir Stephen cannot put anyone else's experience of broadcasting to India against mine, because I happen to be the only Englishman who has done it. The B.B.C. Hindustani service was instituted (at the request of the Government of India) to counter the very able German one : neither it, nor other similar services, will succeed in this, unless and until natives of the country concerned, who are also able interpreters and producers, are allowed to weave what news there is into the quantitative and qualitative pattern of their own idiom and associations.⁵³

Tallents was infuriated by Fielden's attack. He immediately published a counter statement immediately and fiercely defended his earlier statement.

Mr. Fielden's main ammunition for his attack on the B.B.C.'s Hindustani service of to-day is a single sixteen-month-old panegyric of Berlin's Hindustani service... The distinguished public servant of long experience in India who leads our Indian team requires no defence from me against Mr. Fielden...It is also an insulting charge to bring against a service in which men and women of more than 30 different nationalities are

⁵⁰ See 'Strategy of Propaganda', *The New Statesman*, 19 July 1941. p. 34

⁵¹ See *The New Statesman*, 'Indian Broadcasting', 19 July 1941. p. 61

⁵² See *The New Statesman*, 'Indian Broadcasting', 26 July 1941. p. 83, and 'Indian Broadcasting', 9 August 1941, p. 137

⁵³ See *The New Statesman*, 26 July 1941. pp. 83-4

working on terms of mutual confidence and regard with their British fellows. His suggestion that our colleagues from India and Ceylon are regarded as foreigners is equally foolish and yet more mischievous.

No one engaged in the B.B.C.'s overseas services imagines them to be perfect. They have had to be built up at speed and in difficult conditions. We have much to learn in all of them, including our services to India; and the team of men and women, so varied in their gifts and experience, upon which these services depend, are working constantly for their improvement.⁵⁴

Along with Tallents, there was a brief supportive letter from Forster who 'found no traces of British parochialism' in the office and 'was much impressed by the intelligence and initiative of its Indian staff.'⁵⁵ Subsequently, Desmond Hawkins also applauded the English programmes for having a 'vitality which some other departments might well imitate.'⁵⁶

Asa Briggs in his *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (1971) writes that 'India had been such a cause of contention in British politics during the 1930s and its political future was so uncertain during the early years of the war that these personal struggles behind the scenes had more than local significance'.⁵⁷ Elsewhere he emphasised that 'given the challenge to the service and the importance of the Indian audience, it was a matter of national concern that conflicts inside the B.B.C. were not stilled.'⁵⁸ A major revamping of the Service had become a vital necessity. Tension was partially eased when Fielden resigned in November 1940,⁵⁹ but Darling, still anxious to remain in control, was hostile to Bokhari for a time and threatened to resign more than once if Bokhari's powers were extended. Eventually, neither Darling nor Bokhari secured the control of the Service. In September 1941, it was made directly responsible to the newly appointed Eastern Services Director, Prof. Rushbrook Williams.⁶⁰ Darling's responsibilities were limited to the organisation of the Hindustani news and

⁵⁴ See *The New Statesman*, 2 August 1941. p. 111-2

⁵⁵ See *The New Statesman*, 2 August 1941. p. 112

⁵⁶ See *The New Statesman*, 9 August 1941. p. 138

⁵⁷ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 506

⁵⁸ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 507

⁵⁹ 'As second-in-command of a tiny Indian section, I was a nobody, and it's quite difficult for any of us to come down to being a Nobody, if we have been a Somebody Somewhere...he [Darling] wished to stand well with Authority, as represented by Ogilvie, Tallents, and the India Office. I was the nigger in the woodpile...I became a useless fool and in November 1940 I resigned.' See *The Natural Bent*, p. 218.

⁶⁰ Prof. Rushbrook Williams. India-born Williams was appointed, on 29 September 1941, as the Eastern Services Director of the B.B.C.'s Overseas Services. He came to the B.B.C. from the Ministry of Information where he had been head of the Middle East Section. Before that he had had a distinguished career in India. Earlier in 1941, efforts had been made to secure Prof. J.R. Firth of the School of Oriental Studies for William's post.

news talks, and Bokhari was given complete charge of other programmes in English and Hindustani.

Bokhari's resourcefulness and ambition were evident from the very outset. He drew up a detailed plan to expand the Service and lost no time in securing eminent people, both British and Indian, to broadcast for him. With Fielden's departure and Darling's transfer, his position within the Indian Section acquired pivotal importance second only to Rushbrook Williams's. Very soon it was felt that he could not 'assume full Indian Programme organiser duties until he has an assistant who will ultimately become a substitute for him in his work on English talks for Indians.'⁶¹ Evidently, search had begun for a suitable talks assistant who possessed the right credentials for this important post.

In a significant memo, J.B. Clark, Controller of the Overseas Services confided to R.A. Rendall, Director of the Overseas Services:⁶²

For this job of looking after the English talks Bokhari himself suggests Stephen Spender. I am inclined to think that somebody with Indian experience would be better but we are learning how difficult they are to find and Bokhari's view that a man with a distinguished name in contemporary English literature would give our service prestige in India amongst those Indians who are likely to listen to English programmes, is no doubt a sound one. Perhaps the DG could be consulted about this?⁶³

Since the beginning of 1941, officials of the Indian Service had been searching earnestly for suitable people to join the section as full-time assistants, and as freelances. Darling had written to his old student of the Punjab University, Mulk Raj Anand who had politely declined the request.⁶⁴ It was during this period that R.A. Rendall spotted Orwell as someone eminently suitable for the job.

Orwell's chance arrival at the Home Service was a fruitful co-incidence for the Indian Service. The Home Service had contacted him in September 1940 to discuss 'a series of

⁶¹ Memo from R.A. Rendall to J.B. Clark, 19 May 1941, B.B.C. Archives.

⁶² Rendall and Clark made an effective team. Rendall was deeply committed to the B.B.C. and served as Director of the Overseas Services at a crucial time. He took charge of the Empire Service in 1940 and rapidly moved to redefine its objectives. By 1941, he claimed that the Service had become, in effect, a World Service with its four components; each under a separate director and having its own distinctive character. He remained as Controller throughout the period that Orwell worked there.

⁶³ Memo from Rendall to Clark, 19 May 1941. B.B.C. Archives. Rendall was probably referring to Darling's offer of the job to Mulk Raj Anand and the latter's refusal in his letter of 22 March, 1941.

⁶⁴ See Chapter VI, pp.194-5

talks on writers and writing which was being planned for the autumn'.⁶⁵ His first talk, 'The Writer in the Witness Box', was recorded on 6 December 1940 at a fee of ten guineas. It was a scripted conversation between Desmond Hawkins and himself which was broadcast as part of the general series 'The Proletarian Writer'. The talk was subsequently published in the *Listener* on 19 December 1940. It is not certain whether Bokhari heard this talk or was introduced to Orwell by Hawkins who regularly advised him on cultural talks for India,⁶⁶ but he seems to have clinched the opportunity of asking Orwell to broadcast for the Indian Service. On 17 March 1941, Orwell sent him synopses of four talks on literary criticism. 'I really don't know whether this is the sort of thing an Indian audience is interested in but you told me to talk on the lines along which my own interest lies and naturally I am glad of an opportunity to do that', he confessed.⁶⁷

Within three days the I.P.O. sent his reply. 'Your synopsis is excellent. When would you like to start?'⁶⁸ The talks were recorded the following month and broadcast in April and May as part of the general programme 'We Speak to India'. All four talks - 'The Frontiers of art and Propaganda', 'Tolstoy and Shakespeare', 'The Meaning of a Poem' and 'Literature and Totalitarianism', - were printed in the *Listener*. In June, he was once again approached to participate in a discussion 'What's wrong with the short story?', along with V.S. Pritchett and Desmond Hawkins for the programme 'Turning over a new leaf'.

During this period, officials of the Empire Service had focused their attention on this exceptionally tall man and were watching his performance with interest. Once convinced of his suitability, they made secret moves to draw him into their fold. Three factors determined his selection - his 'great gifts as a writer', his leftist inclinations and his India connection. In a private and confidential memo of 25 June, Rendall sought the opinion of J.B. Clark regarding Orwell's employment. Although Rendall had found Orwell highly suitable, he also outlined the danger in employing him. He concluded that Orwell, at some point, may find himself at odds with the Government's policy on India. Whether Rendall was simply desperate to fill the vacancy or was too impressed with Orwell's talents, it is difficult to judge, but he moved hurriedly in proposing

⁶⁵ C.V. Salmon to Orwell, 16 September 1940. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁶ Hawkins was well known for his contributions on the Home Service. He had the reputation of bringing eminent speakers to record talks for the radio when others had failed.

⁶⁷ Orwell to Bokhari, 17 March 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁸ Bokhari to Orwell, 20 March 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

Orwell's candidature. He sent the following memo to J.B. Clark:

B.B.C. Internal Circulating Memo

Private and Confidential

Subject: E.A. Blair

From: D.E.S.

To: C.(O).

25th June 1941

I have now seen a much more likely candidate - George Orwell, the writer. He was for six years in the Indian Imperial Police, serving throughout in Burma. He comes of an Anglo-Indian family and was born in India. He is a distinguished writer - one of the same group of Left Wing writers as Spender, who was at one time suggested for this job. I have passed his details to Empire Ex. for submission to "the College". I was much impressed by him. He is shy in manner but extremely frank and honest in his interview. He has held strong Left Wing opinions and actually fought for the Republican Government in Spain. He is of opinion that that may be held against him, though when I questioned him closely about his loyalties and the danger of finding himself at odds with policy, his answers were impressive. He accepts absolutely the need for propaganda to be directed by the Government and stressed his view that in war-time discipline in the execution of Government policy was essential. His past experience and his interest in India and Burma, his literary abilities and contacts, and his personality, which seemed to me to be strongly marked and attractive in spite of a very diffident and not very impressive manner in the initial stages of our interview, all marked him out as a very suitable person to work on English talks, etc., intended for Indian listeners, particularly Indian students.

I did not, of course, commit myself and he is I think half expecting that his previous political associations may go against him. He said that the War Office has said that had he been fit they would have taken him and his participation in the Spanish War would not have excluded it. He also mentioned that some years ago when he was thinking of going to India to work on a newspaper, he got in touch with Joyce and found that there was no objection on part of the India Office to his going to India.

I feel quite sure that provided that "the College" are agreeable we need have no misgivings on this score, though I would of course have a word with Joyce. Subject to "the College's" and to Joyce's agreement, would you agree to my going ahead with this appointment?

R.A. Rendall⁶⁹

He sent a similar letter to the Empire Executive:

B.B.C. Internal Circulating Memo

Subject: Candidate For Talks Assistant Specialising on Eastern Transmission: Eric Arthur Blair (George Orwell)

25 June, 1941

I have seen and been favourably impressed by this man and I am likely shortly to recommend that he be appointed as Talks Assistant specialising on talks to India and Burma. Would you please arrange for his name to be submitted to "the College" as soon as possible? Details are as follows:-

Name: Eric Arthur Blair (widely known under the pen name of George Orwell)

⁶⁹ R.A. Rendall to Sir Stephen Tallents, 25 June 1941, B.B.C. Archives.

Born: 25th June, 1903, at Motihari, Bengal, India.

Nationality: British

Father: British born

Mother: Born French Wife: British born

Address: 111 Langford Court, Abbey Road.

Registration Number DFHA 97/1

Career: Indian Imperial Police 1922-8, since then author and freelance journalist. Fought in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republican Government. Has lately done one or two odd jobs for the Ministry of Information.

Exempt from military service on medical grounds.

R.A. Rendall

The approval of "the College" - almost certainly M.I.5 - took over a month to come by, not until Rendall had send a reminder 'to hurry up',⁷⁰ although A.H. Joyce of the India Office, already familiar with Orwell's background, took little time in clearing his candidature.⁷¹ When Rendall received approval from both ends, he requested, on 2 August, the Overseas establishment to 'arrange for Blair to be interviewed and appointed as soon as possible.'⁷² Consequently, a telegram was sent to him immediately - 'Please phone wel 5743 soonest possible fix interview concerning offer of appointment.'⁷³ The interview, only a formality, took place in the late hours of 13 August at Bedford College. On the morning of 14 August, the interviewing officer submitted the following report:

Record of INTERVIEW at Bedford College

with Mr. E.A. Blair

on the subject of his appointment

Date 14th August, 1941.

I saw Mr. Blair yesterday and went over the points of the contract with him.

Home Guard

He explained that he was a member of the Home Guard and asked whether it would be necessary to transfer to a B.B.C. unit or whether he could remain with his own unit. I said that I would go into the matter.

Medical Category

He stated that his medical category was "D" and asked whether, with this category, the B.B.C. appointment would be considered reserved. I said I could give no ruling but

⁷⁰ The Director-General of the B.B.C. complained that M.I.5 was too slow in giving clearance to artists and the M.O.I. insisted on checking all broadcasters, including musicians, which led to considerable delay and an excess of record programmes.' See, Robert Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-45* (London, 1977), pp. 18-9

⁷¹ See Chapter V. p.151

⁷² R.A. Rendall to Empire Executive, 2 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives. The Empire Executive, in turn, wrote to the Accounts Department if approval could be given in 'the Empire Department of a Talks Assistant, Grade B1, and of a secretary Grade B2W. It is intended to appoint E.A. Blair (George Orwell) who will be recruited to work on English talks for India...A typewriter will be required for his secretary.' Letter from Acting Empire Executive, 6 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷³ Telegram to Orwell sent by D. Pearson Smith, 12 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

he would be informed about this.

Staff Training Course

He said he would be available to report for the start of the training course on the 18th August - next Monday.

His Pen-Name

He mentioned that "George Orwell" was the name he used for his work and agreed that his own name, "E.A. Blair" should be used ordinarily within the Corporation. He hoped, however, that where the name was to receive publicity his widely-known name of "George Orwell" should be used. I said that I thought that that would be to our mutual advantage.

D. Pearson Smith

Department of Staff Administration⁷⁴

When asked, to provide 'for record purposes', names of three referees 'of British nationality, but not relations of yours',⁷⁵ Orwell promptly sent in names and addresses of three people. His choice of referees was peculiar. All three names were somewhat obscure; none was known to be a close friend or was known to have been connected with his work intimately, or for that matter even remotely . These were D.C. Wells, of 2 Garden Court, Abbey Road, NW8 (Wells might have been a neighbour at his Langford Court house); Sir Arthur Keith of Buckstone Browne Research Farm, Kent; and L.P. Moore of The Ride, Gerrards Cross, Bucks. The Empire Establishment sent letters to them on 20 August to ascertain whether they considered him suitable for the job.

Orwell's pen-name, although acceptable to the B.B.C., was not easy to manage, as officials soon found out. Sir Arthur was the first to be confused by it. He wrote back politely, 'My memory may be at fault, but it refuses to trace Mr. E.A. Blair's name in my acquaintances. There may be a mistake somewhere perhaps in my recollection. If I know details I might be able to give a helpful answer.'⁷⁶ The Overseas Establishment Officer was sympathetic: 'Just prior to the receipt of your letter regarding our enquiry concerning Mr E.A. Blair, Mr Blair informed me that it was possible that his name would convey nothing to you, as apparently he is known to you only under his pen name of George Orwell.'⁷⁷ Keith was embarrassed. 'It was very stupid of me to forget that my friend George Orwell was named Blair.' He, however, was all praise for his friend's abilities. 'In my opinion Mr. Blair is one of the most vigorous thinkers and effective writers on the younger generation. He has a wide knowledge of countries, of peoples and of their ways of thinking. He is loyal and very sincere in his thoughts,

⁷⁴ Orwell's interview record, B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁵ Letter from D. Pearson Smith, Acting Overseas Establishment Officer to Orwell, 14 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁶ Arthur Keith to D. Pearson Smith, 21 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁷ D. Pearson Smith to Arthur Keith, 26 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

speech and acts.⁷⁸

L.P. Moore had perhaps some other Blair in mind when he wrote

'I have known E.A. Blair for about twenty-five years both as a friend and during the last war, in the Army. He was a sergeant in the same regiment as myself, the Artists Rifles, and for a considerable period, was an instructor in No. 15 (Artists) OCB.' Mr. Blair is an artist by profession; is a good linguist and, so far as I can judge of your requirements, his wide general knowledge should make him particularly suitable for employment on your staff.⁷⁹

What the authorities made of Moore's record is not known but they must have been pleased with D.C. Wells' opinion. 'I have known this gentleman for sometime and feel he should be an excellent choice for the post you refer to. His cultural and literary qualifications are of a high order and incidentally, he is one hundred % behind the National effort.'⁸⁰

Orwell was formally inducted into the Indian Service on 18 August 1941, when he was requested to sign a contract with the Empire Department to work as Talks Assistant at an annual salary of £640. ⁸¹Neither Blair, nor members of the Empire Service were clear at this stage 'whether he will ultimately be attached to the Talks Section [of the Empire Service] or to the Eastern Section.' All that was known was that he 'will concentrate on English talks for India' and in the beginning, 'at least, he will be working largely with the I.P.O.' If necessary, he could be transferred over to the Talks section at a later stage.⁸²

To Orwell, the opportunity to take up full time appointment must have come as a great relief. He had tried desperately to get real war work, and besides was hard-up, stranded in Wallington with his wife working for the Ministry of Food in London. To begin with, it was not entirely uncongenial to Orwell's sensibilities as a writer. There was room for activity and interaction. He was going to experiment with a new medium and invite writers, poets, literary critics and members of the intelligentsia to discuss a wide variety of subjects and have talks recorded. It is highly unlikely that in accepting the job he was mindful of the prestige attached to radio personalities in

⁷⁸ Arthur Keith to D. Pearson Smith, 29 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁹ L.P. Myers to D. Pearson Smith, 25 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁸⁰ D.C.H. Wells to D. Pearson Smith, 22 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁸¹ Coincidentally, two of Orwell's closest colleagues, Rushbrook Williams and Laurence Brander, joined the B.B.C. at the same time as he did.

⁸² R.A. Rendall to the Empire Executive, 2 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

those days,⁸³ but, almost certainly, he would not have ignored its financial implications. In a letter to Dorothy Plowman just before joining the B.B.C., he had talked about the difficult times he was facing, virtually living a 'hand-to-mouth existence'.⁸⁴ By past standards his income now was handsome. Understandably, he moved from 18 Dorset Chambers at Chagford Street - 'the most miserable two-room fourth-floor flat, above shops, backing on to garages in a mews, with no lift, little light, cheap second-hand furniture, gas water-heater and shared bathroom'⁸⁵ - to a 'large, and pleasantly well-appointed, block of flats off the Abbey Road, 111 Langford Court' in St. John's Wood.⁸⁶

WAR AND THE LITERARY INTELLIGENTSIA

Orwell's employment at the B.B.C. exemplified the mass displacement of the literary intelligentsia into government quarters. The First World War was a writer's war; it had inspired both pen and sword to contribute to the nation's glory. But the Second World War looked all set to confine the writer's vocation. It saw a dramatic decrease in literary activity. Newsprint was in short supply and many literary journals, including Eliot's *Criterion*, *The London Mercury*, *The Cornhill*, *Fact*, *New Stories*, *New Verse*, *Purpose*, *Twentieth Century Verse*, *Wales*, *Welsh Review* and *The Voice of Scotland* were forced to close down between 1939 and 1940. Although poetry continued to be written and published, the scope for writing novels diminished considerably. The vacuum created in the literary profession had to be filled by other activities.

It was at this juncture that the government and literary intelligentsia met. They had hitherto been diametrically opposed groups but the pressure of war brought them together, and bound them into working for the nation's interest. With the war, most writers too found themselves in a difficult situation. Because of the wartime break with the past, their imagination had been dislocated. The economic depression, mass unemployment and disappointment of the Spanish War had receded into the background. However, even this phase was short-lived and the atmosphere of uncertainty was dramatically reversed, when in 1940, Britain mobilised her national

⁸³ Radio announcers enjoyed special prestige and popularity during wartime. From time to time, *London Calling: The Overseas Journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, printed photographs of B.B.C. announcers and made copies available to enthusiasts and fans at a nominal sum.

⁸⁴ Orwell to Dorothy Plowman, 20 June 1941, *CEJL*, II, p. 166

⁸⁵ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 389

⁸⁶ John Thomson, *Orwell's London* (London 1984), p. 51

resources against Hitler's dictatorial threat. A great surge of patriotism swelled across the country and contributing to the war effort became a paramount consideration. It became important for all thinking men to reach an accommodation with the state, which itself was willing to seek their co-operation. Two institutions opened doors to writers without any hesitation - the B.B.C. and the newly created Ministry of Information. Orwell summed up this phenomenon thus:

The tendency of the modern state is to wipe out the freedom of the intellect, and yet at the same time every state, especially under the pressure of war, finds itself more and more in need of an intelligentsia to do its publicity for it. The modern state needs, for example, pamphlet-writers, poster artists, illustrators, broadcasters, lecturers, film producers, actors, song composers, even painters and sculptors, not to mention psychologists, sociologists, biochemists, mathematicians and what-not. The British Government started the present war with the more or less openly declared intention of keeping the literary intelligentsia out of it; yet after three years of war almost every writer, however undesirable his political history or opinions, has been sucked into the various Ministries or the B.B.C. and those who enter the armed forces tend to find themselves after a while in Public Relations or some other essentially literary job.⁸⁷

The list of literary figures joining state-owned institutions is extensive. J.B. Priestley extended his reputation during wartime by broadcasting on the B.B.C.'s Home Service. William Empson produced programmes for the Chinese Service until 1945. John Morris accepted work at the Japanese section and became the Head of the Overseas Service. Rayner Heppenstall found employment with the political intelligence department and later joined the Overseas Service. G.M. Young, the noted historian, advised Governors of the B.B.C. on delicate matters of policy. In addition, he was paid £500 a year to check the usage of English in B.B.C. news bulletins. Evelyn Waugh made his way into the M.O.I. and wrote about its absurdities in his novel *Put Out More Flags* (1942). Graham Greene turned his experiences of the M.O.I. into a short story, 'Men at Work' describing a futile day of memo and meetings.⁸⁸ Malcolm Muggeridge was one of the earliest to join the M.O.I. and shared his memories of that time in his two-volume autobiography *Chronicles of Wasted Time*. Geoffrey Grigson, the former editor of *Verse* found a job in the Monitoring Service. In one of his 'London Letters' to *Partisan Review*, Orwell referred to Dylan Thomas's war employment, 'he is physically unfit and is doing jobs for the B.B.C. and the M.O.I. So is nearly everybody that used to be a writer, and most of us are rapidly going native'⁸⁹

⁸⁷ George Orwell, 'Poetry and the Microphone', *CEJL*, II, p. 381

⁸⁸ Graham Greene, 'Men at Work', *Penguin New Writing*, No. 9 (1940), reprinted in *Collected Stories*, (London, 1972).

⁸⁹ George Orwell, 'London Letter to *Partisan Review*', *CEJL*, II, p. 214

Whereas the war curbed literary thought and activity, it promoted great organisational changes within the B.B.C. A new Ministry of Information was created to facilitate smooth functioning between the Government and the media. The B.B.C. added new services with a rapidity that was unmatched in the whole history of broadcasting. In 1940, 'it was broadcasting in as many as thirty-four languages, of which twenty-four had been added since the war began'.⁹⁰ Its staff rose from 4, 889 in September 1939 to a 'peak figure of 11, 663 in March 1944'.⁹¹ Its programme staff alone increased from 103 in 1939 to 1,472 in 1941.⁹² Few, other than the technical staff, had any knowledge or experience of broadcasting. Its broadcasters included 'a sheik, a bullfighter, several characters from the bazaars of Cairo, and a professor from every university in Europe.'⁹³

Orwell's willingness to join the B.B.C.'s Indian Service, despite his professed anti-imperialist stance and sympathy with India's freedom struggle would have appeared to many as paradoxical, as it certainly did to George Woodcock who attacked him not long after he had joined the Corporation. Woodcock called him 'Comrade Orwell who returns to his old imperialist allegiances and works at the B.B.C. conducting British propaganda to fox the Indian masses!'⁹⁴ Although Orwell was able to provide a more than satisfactory answer to his anarchist critic, (they became friends thereafter and Woodcock also broadcast for him), his decision to accept employment at the B.B.C. was directly related to the experiences of his past and also his ever fluctuating response to war in the thirties. A brief critical look at his background will clarify his motivation.

ORWELL AND THE WAR

For Orwell, the thirties had been a turbulent decade. It was a time in which he experienced intense personal struggle, apprenticed himself as a writer, abandoned his baptismal names Eric Arthur Blair in favour of the more English-sounding George Orwell, participated in the Spanish Civil War and emerged as a writer with strong convictions and acute political judgement. It was a period in which he schooled himself to transcribe the metamorphosis of thought and feeling he had experienced in the preceding years. However, he was an isolated man for much of the decade; and one

⁹⁰ B.B.C. *Yearbook* 1941, p. 9

⁹¹ Asa Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 18

⁹² Gerard Mansell, *op. cit.*, p. 95

⁹³ C.J. Rolo, *op. cit.*, p. 142

⁹⁴ George Orwell, 'Pacifism and the War,' *CEJL*, II, pp. 258-9

crucial decision, made in the twenties, had radically excluded him from the literary generation of his time.

After leaving Eton in December 1921, he could have proceeded to Oxford or Cambridge, as many amongst his generation did; but he neither showed an aptitude for higher education, nor had any private money to fund it. He, therefore, drifted into following his father's kind of career and agreed to sit for the India Services Examination. His choice of this career was crucial. A career in the Police Service led him, quite unconsciously, to break away from the general consciousness and sensibility of his literary generation. Whilst he had been experiencing, in near isolation, the evils of colonial rule in Burma, his generation was grappling with problems of a different kind at home and in Europe. They were being influenced by the General Strike of 1926, the failure of democracy in England, the futility and anarchy of contemporary history, and the emergence of new political régimes in Europe. Quite a few writers were beginning to lean towards Marxism or Communism, and their common experience at Oxford, Cambridge and London was giving them a unity and a frame of mind that would later make them the 'thirties generation', figuratively excluding Orwell in the process.

Orwell was able to participate in the literary ethos of his country only in 1927 after he returned from Burma. Having decided to resign from the Burma Police Service, he committed himself to creative writing irrespective whether it was going to be publishable or not. A writer friend helped him find a room in Notting Hill Gate where he tested his own determination to be a writer. Between 1929 and 1931 he made frequent journeys amongst the tramps and proceeded to live an anonymous life amongst the down and out in London and Paris, till about the end of 1931. Driven by poverty, he was forced into taking up a teacher's job in Hayes which lasted till the end of 1933. This was followed by a part time job at selling second hand books for another two years. Throughout this period he struggled to familiarise himself with the sensibility of his estranged literary generation. By the time he made fresh contacts, the difference in his background was already manifest. Whilst many contemporary writers had already established their literary credibility, he was still an unknown figure. Politically, they had committed themselves to the far Left, he was still a sceptic. The only thing he had in common with them was a sense of apprehension of the impending crisis, a feeling of sympathy for the poor, the deprived, and a 'desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other people's idea of the kind of society that they should strive after.'⁹⁵

⁹⁵ George Orwell, 'Why I Write', *CEJL*, I, p. 26

It was Spain that placed Orwell onto the platform of his generation. It not only linked him to the mainstream, but gave him a position of advantage. Most writers who had gone to Spain joined the International Brigade which was specially formed for people from abroad. Because of his links with the Independent Labour Party, Orwell joined the P.O.U.M which was eventually suppressed by the Communists. In his own words, he was amongst those who started off fighting 'by being heroic defenders of democracy' but 'ended by slipping over the border with the police panting on our heels'.⁹⁶ His experience of the Spanish Civil War made him vindictive in his stance against Communism. While many of his friends were renouncing Communism in a mixed vein of disbelief and disillusionment, he was attacking it with a ferociousness and conviction he had never exhibited before.

It is significant that in spite of starting life at about the same time as many of his contemporaries, especially the Auden-Spender circle, he never became, or was never made a part of his generation. He, however, criticised his generation and became its greatest contemporary critic and commentator. It is no surprise then that Meyers called Orwell the 'Conscience of his age' and 'a literary nonconformist'; Bernard Bergonzi, 'the inveterate nonconformist'; Jain, the 'Witness of an era'; Reilly, 'a heretic'; and reflecting upon the nature of the thirties and Orwell's place in it, Julian Symons passed the judgement - 'The Forties were Orwell's decade'.⁹⁷

The approaching war had gripped his imagination as soon as he was back from Spain in 1937, but his response to it was inextricably governed by three things. In chronological order, it was his participation of his generation's collective experience of the Great War; his physical absence from England during much of the twenties and presence in colonial Burma instead; and his experience of the Spanish War and the politics involved in it. These three individually distinct experiences had telescoped in his memory some time around the second half of 1937, in such a way as to elicit a peculiar response from him towards the coming war. As Crick has subtly put it, 'To Orwell, the [second world] War became, from school days, the 'supreme sacrifice'; from Burma days, the final round of 'the great game'; and from Spanish days, it was 'the last fight' against Fascism.'⁹⁸

⁹⁶ George Orwell, 'Letter to Rayner Heppenstall', *CEJL*, I, p. 311

⁹⁷ Jeffrey Meyers, *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell* (London, 1975), p. 64 ; Jasbir Jain, *Witness of an Era* (Jaipur, 1984); Patrick Reilly, *George Orwell: The Age's Adversary* (London, 1986), pp. 4-5; Julian Symons, *The Thirties and the Nineties* (London, 1990), p. 169

⁹⁸ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 380

He shared the general view of the country that the war was inevitable. In a letter to Rayner Heppenstall in July 1937, he wrote 'I am rather glad to have been hit by a bullet because I think it will happen to us all in the near future'.⁹⁹ He believed in fighting and not resisting the drive to war. In the same letter, he added that he did not agree with the pacifists. 'I still think one must fight for Socialism and against Fascism, I mean fight physically with weapons.'¹⁰⁰ His choice of the words 'fight for Socialism and against Fascism' is very important. These very words sum up his entire war ideology.

Clearly, he was aware of the horrors of the Left as well as the Right. He knew, from his experience in Spain that Russian Communism was as bad as German Fascism. In Spain, the Liberal-Communist alliance had proved to be a counter-revolutionary force, in that it had stamped out the Spanish workers' resistance against Franco. He had seen the Russians imposing a different kind of Fascism on the Spanish workers - 'a reign of terror' under the pretence of fighting against Franco's Fascism. They had imposed 'forcible suppression of political parties, a stifling censorship of the press, ceaseless espionage and mass imprisonment without trial.'¹⁰¹

Orwell feared that the same Communists, in alliance with the bourgeois and the moneyed class in Britain, would crush the interests of the British working class (this also included the colonies' struggle for freedom) in the same way as they had done in Spain. He believed resolutely that England and Russia would form an alliance. In 'Spilling the Spanish Beans', he said: 'It is a mistake to think that this [Communist anti-revolutionary propaganda] has no relevance in England, where the Communist Party is small and comparatively weak. We shall see its relevance quickly enough if England enters into an alliance with the U.S.S.R.'¹⁰² Then, although Britain would be 'one step nearer to the great war 'against Fascism," it 'will allow Fascism, British variety, to be slipped over our necks during the first week.'¹⁰³

He felt justified in holding such a grim view of Russian Communism. Before arriving in Britain he had sent a telegram to *The New Statesman* to ask if it would accept his

⁹⁹ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer, *CEJL*, I, p. 312

¹⁰⁰ George Orwell, *Ibid.*, p. 313

¹⁰¹ George Orwell, 'Spilling the Spanish Beans', *CEJL*, I, p. 302

¹⁰² George Orwell, *Ibid.*, p. 306

¹⁰³ George Orwell, *Ibid.*, p. 309

article on the Spanish War. On his arrival in Britain he was told that his area of investigation - the story of the P.O.U.M.'s suppression - could not be published as it 'controverted' the paper's editorial policy, in Orwell's words 'blew the gaff on the Communist Party'. To his fury, he was sent 'hush money' for the unprinted article and requested instead to review *The Spanish Cockpit*. (He did review the book not for *The New Statesman*, but for *Time and Tide*.) This incident led him to mount a bitter attack upon what he called 'the lies and suppressions in the English press' about the communist atrocities in Spain.¹⁰⁴ Later, he asserted that 'virtually the whole of the left-wing intelligentsia, via their mouthpieces in the *News Chronicle*, the *New Statesman*, *Reynolds*, etc.', was indulging in a secret propaganda drive to forge 'a Popular Front government as a prelude to war against Germany'.¹⁰⁵ It was this war, and the ideology behind it, that he was determined to oppose. He regretted the sinister fact that

our ruling class is becoming pro-Russian, it is certainly not becoming pro-Socialist. It may be that we are headed for a military alliance with the U.S.S.R. which would give the National Government, or some faked-up Popular Front government, the one perfect alibi for an imperialist war.¹⁰⁶

It was the 'capitalist-imperialist war' as against a 'democratic-socialist war against fascism' that he woefully expected to take place. The Popular Front, with the support of the Communist Press and Party, was aiming to work in favour of British Fascism as against German Fascism. He explained what he meant by British Fascism in a letter to Geoffrey Gorer.

What they [the left wing press] are aiming to do is to get British capitalist-imperialism into an alliance with the U.S.S.R. and thence into a war with Germany...After what I have seen in Spain I have come to the conclusion that it is futile to be 'anti-Fascist' while attempting to preserve capitalism. Fascism after all is only a development of capitalism, and the mildest democracy, so-called, is liable to turn into Fascism when the pinch comes. We like to think of England as a democratic country, but our rule in India, for instance, is just as bad as German Fascism, though outwardly it may be less irritating. I do not see how one can oppose Fascism except by working for the overthrow of capitalism, starting, of course, in one's own country. If one collaborates with a capitalist-imperialist government in a struggle 'against Fascism', i.e. against a rival imperialism, one is simply letting Fascism in by the back door.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ For George Orwell's account of Spain and his experience with the British press, see 'Letter to Rayner Heppenstall' & 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL*, I, pp. 312-4. For Kingsley Martin's account of the incident see his autobiography, *Editor* (Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 229-30 & *Kingsley: The Life, Letters and Diaries*, (ed.) C.H. Rolph, (London, 1973), pp. 225-9

¹⁰⁵ George Orwell, 'Letter to the Editor of the *New English Weekly*', *CEJL*, I, p. 367

¹⁰⁶ George Orwell, 'Review of *Journey to Turkistan*', *CEJL*, I, p. 320

¹⁰⁷ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL*, I, p. 317-8

Orwell's ideological opposition to a capitalist-imperialist war, motivated him 'to start organising for illegal anti-war activities',¹⁰⁸ for he did not want the people of Britain to be deceived by the anti-fascist stuff and walk straight into war when it came. He confided this in a letter to Herbert Read with whom he was hoping to start an underground campaign against what he had called 'austro-fascism', a process which meant 'wage-reductions, suppression of free speech, brutalities in the colonies', and led to an authoritarian regime, all in the name of war against Nazi Germany.¹⁰⁹

Bernard Crick believes that Orwell was influenced by the I.L.P. and Trotskyite doctrine that the War 'would be an imperialist struggle for markets between Britain, France, Germany and Italy...If it was to drag on, the democratic superstructure of British capitalism would turn Fascist and a grimmer counter-action would be necessary'.¹¹⁰ This view, reflected in the pamphlets that Orwell had then been collecting, was often referred to as the pacifists' view, but Crick more accurately thinks that it was 'anti-militarist'. It is important to remember that Orwell was opposed to pacifism as well as the extreme Left and Right. He was not opposed to the physical act of fighting in the war as much as the ideology for which the war would be fought. For even before he was planning to forge an illegal underground organisation for producing anti-war pamphlets, he had insisted, as stated earlier, that 'one must fight for Socialism and against Fascism, I mean physically with weapons, only it is well to discover which is which.' Orwell's attitude was accurately worded some years ^{before} ^ by Julian Bell, who in his 'Introduction' to *We Did Not Fight* (1935) said, 'But those of us who care about the human race and what happens to it have come to believe that only effective action counts.'¹¹¹ Orwell's preparedness to fight was very much in accordance with the I.L.P. theory, which believed in being prepared to fight a revolutionary war. The contents of 'Not Counting Niggers', published in July 1939, is another indication of the I.L.P.'s influence on him. In it he combines his anti-imperialist views with the economic profitability of the empire.(This essay will be discussed at length in Chapter 4)

The British-Russian alliance he had mentally opposed and had long feared never materialised. On the contrary, things became congenial when the tactical Russo-

¹⁰⁸ George Orwell, 'Letter to Herbert Read', *CEJL*, I, p. 415

¹⁰⁹ George Orwell, 'Letter to Herbert Read', *CEJL*, I, p. 425

¹¹⁰ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 365

¹¹¹ Julian Bell, (ed.), *We Did Not Fight*, (London, 1935), p. xviii

German Pact was signed in August 1939. Stalin's change of policy had led to an overnight change of heart in Orwell - 'even the Chamberlain Government was assured of my loyalty', he sardonically declared.¹¹² He felt none of the enthusiasm of 1914; he was simply relieved that 'the long-dreaded war' was, at last, approaching. Nonetheless, he did not fail to recognise that he was fiercely 'patriotic at heart, would not sabotage or act against my own side, would support the war, would fight in it if possible.'¹¹³

He knew that the war would still be fought along imperialist lines but the combined power of the two totalitarian regimes was undoubtedly the greater evil at that time. Besides, he had retained a small glimmer of hope that the pressure of war at home might bring about a positive change in the Empire. On the other hand, if Fascism were to overrun Britain, a death knoll would be sounded for the colonies. He, therefore, asked himself the urgent question - 'Do we fight Hitler or surrender?' His patriotic fervour had swelled to the point of drowning all doubts and anxieties; in one moment he had committed himself to fighting Hitler in mind, spirit and action.

Immediately after the outbreak of war Eileen had taken up a job in the Department of Censorship and had moved to London while Orwell stayed at his Wallington cottage in the hope of obtaining some war-time employment. The thing he most wanted to do was to fight in the army but was turned down partly because of the bullet wound he had received in Spain and partly because of a poor chest record. By the middle of May 1940, he decided to shift to London. However, despite zealous efforts he was unable to secure suitable war employment.

What is so terrible about this kind of situation is to be able to do nothing. The gov[ernmen]t won't use me in any capacity, not even a clerk, and I have failed to get into the army because of my lungs. It is a terrible thing to feel oneself useless and at the same time on every side to see halfwits and profascists filling important jobs.¹¹⁴

When he saw he couldn't fight within a front-line situation, he joined the Home Guard at the first opportunity. Then known as the Local Defence Volunteers, it was created in the June of 1940, when Britain was facing the threat of German invasion. Over 250,000 men had enrolled within twenty-four hours. Orwell lost no time in volunteering himself for recruitment because, this time, he was determined not to allow poor health ruin his chances. His commitment to the Home Guards was exceptional, but it was

¹¹² George Orwell, 'My Country Right or Left', *CEJL, I*, p. 591

¹¹³ George Orwell, *Ibid.*, *CEJL, I*, pp. 590-1

¹¹⁴ George Orwell, 'Letter to John Lehmann', *CEJL, II*, p. 45

entirely voluntary, and he was unhappy that he was inadequately employed. He wrote in his war time diary in August 1940:

The money situation is becoming completely unbearable.....Wrote a long letter to the Income Tax people pointing out that the war had practically put an end to my livelihood while at the same time the government refused to give me any kind of job. The fact which is really relevant to a writer's position, the impossibility of writing books with this nightmare going on, would have no weight officially...Yet I would give my life for England readily enough, if I thought it necessary. ¹¹⁵

Before the war he had depended upon journalism - writing book reviews, occasional essays and other articles for an irregular but steady, if low income. He had also written eight novels in the past eight years, but had little economic success. With the outbreak of war, there was no motivation for embarking upon a new novel, the sales of his last novel *Coming up for Air* (1939) had been poor, newsprint was in short supply and many journals were closing down. There were few options for him, although literary life continued in a limited way.

He wrote for *Horizon* fairly consistently after 1940. He reviewed books and films for *Time and Tide*. After January 1941, he started writing a regular 'London Letter' for the *Partisan Review* of New York which continued until about the summer of 1946. Most importantly, he turned to essay writing - 'a genial labour of love' which brought him enduring admiration and recognition. His first volume of essays *Inside the Whale*, published in March 1940 was well enough received but Orwell wanted something more. His efforts at serving 'H.M. government in any capacity' through a full time job had not yielded success well into the second year of war.¹¹⁶ He was still waiting for suitable employment, when in April 1941, 'a letter from the Air Ministry informed him that there was no vacancy in the office of the Director of Public Relations.'¹¹⁷ At one time he tried to join a 'Gov[ernment] training centre & learn machine draughtsmanship' but without success.¹¹⁸ It seemed he had 'entered on a period of waste and frustration'¹¹⁹.

With the passing of time, he became increasingly frustrated because he could neither pursue writing nor serve his country. Another fact that had contributed to his despondency was his wife's ill health about which he thought he could do nothing

¹¹⁵ George Orwell, 'War-time Diary: 1940', *CEJL*, II, pp. 414-5

¹¹⁶ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL*, I, p. 450

¹¹⁷ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, pp. 391-2

¹¹⁸ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL*, I, p. 578

¹¹⁹ Ian Angus in 'Appendix II: Chronology' *CEJL*, I, p. 601

until he had secured a job. She was working tirelessly at Whitehall and needed a break. In a letter of 3 April 1940 he revealed to Geoffrey Gorer, 'Eileen is still working in a Gov[ernmen]t department but if we can possibly afford it...I want to get her out of it, as they are simply working her to death besides its making it impossible for us to be together'.¹²⁰

Eventually, a job did come Orwell's way - more by accident than application - and although it was a job he had never aspired to, or dreamt about, it was to become his main occupation for the next two years.

¹²⁰ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL, I*, p. 578



ORWELL'S WAR

One of the most horrible features of war is that all war propaganda, all the screaming and lies and hatred, comes invariably from people who are not fighting. ...It is the same in all wars; the soldiers do the fighting, the journalists do the shouting, and no true patriot ever gets near a front-line trench, except on the briefest of propaganda tours. Sometimes it is a comfort to think that the aeroplane is altering the conditions of war. Perhaps when the next great war comes we may see that sight unprecedented in all history, a jingo with a bullet-hole in him.

Here I am in the B.B.C. less than 5 years after writing that. I suppose sooner or later we all write our own epitaphs.

- George Orwell, quoting from *Homage to Catalonia* in his 'War-time Diary', 1 April, 1942

Orwell's initiation into the B.B.C., this great war machine, was by way of attending a crash course at Bedford College, in Regent's Park, in the last two weeks of August 1941. The course aimed at training intellectuals, many of whom were experts in their own subjects but with little experience of radio journalism, to cope with the exacting task of producing programmes. Revived after the outbreak of war, they were 'streamlined and business-like', and lasted for two or three weeks 'instead of six months'. They enabled participants 'to work out solutions for themselves in whatever specialised services they were engaged'.¹ Orwell's course covered a vast ground. The original timetable and instruction notes, fortunately available in the Orwell Archive, and enclosed in Appendix B, give an exhaustive picture of its scale and scope. Orwell received lectures on technical aspects of broadcasting like acoustics, the use of studios and transmission equipment; for these he was expected to go to the B.B.C. studios on Delaware Road in Maida Vale and the Monseigneur at Marble Arch. Besides, there was instruction on various procedures of programme production, distinction between types of programmes, and guide-lines about the internal administration of the B.B.C.²

Attending the course with him, amongst others, were William Empson, Louis MacNeice and Henry Swanzy. In a warm tribute to Orwell, Empson called the Bedford College course 'the Liar's School'. Henry Swanzy, who worked for the B.B.C. long after Orwell had left it, thus recalled his time at the College.

I must have been the only person among the twenty odd people on the course who did not know that "E.A. Blair" was George Orwell. As a consequence, I treated him as a normal person, not with the somewhat hushed wariness, not to say obsequiousness, that

¹ See E.A.F. Harding (then Director of Staff Training) 'The Past and Future of Staff Training, *B.B.C. Yearbook* 1947. pp. 29-33

² See Appendix B

some at least of our companions showed. He then enjoyed a rather curious status: well-known as a journalist and writer, but rather looked down upon by the pundits, and particularly by the poets, whom he resented. This direct, human treatment seemed to please him. For instance, I remember our going on the top of a bus to Marble Arch, as part of a programme exercise, and talking about the fringe problems of class - being the "poorest boy in the school", which he knew at Eton, and I at my own school, about the mass media, and various kinds of snobbery...I can remember the distortion in his voice, caused by the wound in Spain, and the drawling "You see" at the end of every generalisation, as he rolled his cigarettes in a little machine.³

When Orwell finished the course, he was asked to work both for the Empire Talks Department and the Indian Service. (These were two separate departments but had more or less similar functions) Orwell was expected to provide a harmonious link between them. In a memo of 22 August, to Bokhari and Darling, R.A. Rendall, the Director of the Overseas Services, sought to ease the tension pervading the Empire Service. Orwell probably knew ^{but made nothing of,} the turbulent history of the department. But behind the scenes, Rendall was performing a major balancing act by trying to appease both the Indian Programme Officer and the Empire Talks Director. He said that although Blair would be a member of the Empire Talks Department under Darling, 'he will specialise on English talks to India, Burma and Malaya. He will therefore have to work in very close co-operation with I.P.O. and will, I hope, have a particular responsibility for the new series "Through Eastern Eyes", which the I.P.O. is planning.' Although 'the ultimate responsibility' for all talks in English rested with the Empire Talks Director, Rendall instructed that 'the I.P.O. will act as an adviser throughout and may on occasion take an executive responsibility by arrangement with the E.T.D.' He added that 'Blair should also be available to help with the Indian vernacular Newsletters as they are introduced.'⁴

An eager Indian Service awaited Blair's arrival. Bokhari was keen to get the English transmission on its feet before October, the time when the Service was planning an expansion. Programmes in English, under the new schedule, were expected to cover forty-five minutes each day. In a letter of 23 September, Bokhari presented a detailed outline of programmes, to be produced on different themes and subjects, but to go on the air every day at the same time under two titles - 'We speak to India' and 'Through Eastern Eyes'. The phrase 'Through Eastern Eyes' was coined by Fielden, in his letter to Ogilvie on 2 January 1940; however it was Rendall who recommended it to the Indian Service. In a letter of 16

³ Henry Swanzy's letter to Bernard Crick, 26 October, 1972. I am indebted to Professor Crick for sharing with me his correspondence and important documents related to Orwell's broadcasting days.

⁴ Rendall to Bokhari and Darling, 22 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

July 1941, he urged:

I would like you as soon as possible to arrange for the inclusion, in the Eastern transmission, of a regular series of talks with...the title "Through Eastern Eyes" in which the speakers would all be Indians, speaking in English, about life in Britain. In the revised Eastern Service schedule,...there will, I hope, be several such series each dealing with particular aspects of English life, and will provide an admirable field for experiment with speakers, subjects. etc.⁵

Bokhari made no secret of his happiness at having such a distinguished writer recruited for his Section. 'I am delighted and flattered to have your assistance. I know I shall always enjoy working with you', he stated.⁶

Orwell's life, between 1941-43, contrasted sharply with that which he had earlier led and liked. Characteristically, the Orwells moved to London when other people were moving out; it was a matter of duty; they could not have left when people were going through the ordeal of the Blitz.⁷ London presented the picture of a war torn city with real war and images of war revolving around the lives of people. For Orwell, there was no more the quiet of Wallington, of living in near anonymity, the pleasure of gardening, of growing potatoes and vegetables, of feeding ducks, hens and chickens, of milking Muriel the goat and writing in solitude. Quite the opposite, he was living under the full glare and din of hectic city life. London had everything he disliked - 'big towns, noise, motor cars, the radio, tinned food, central heating and 'modern' furniture.'⁸ He was interacting daily with an army of people from different backgrounds - intellectuals, philosophers, poets, authors, members of parliament, musicians, technicians, sound engineers, news readers, administrators, censors, various departmental secretaries, studio and telephone operators, canteen workers, those serving in the Home Guard; and his exposure to this wide variety of people and experiences was immediately stimulating.

Broadcasting House at 55 Portland Place had seen much of the war-time expansion of broadcasting services. The Indian Service was also housed there, but the building came under heavy bombing in October 1940 and April 1941. As a result, many departments

⁵ Rendall to Darling and Bokhari, 16 July, 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶ Bokhari to Orwell, 23 September 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷ Julian Symons specifically talked about this aspect of Orwell's character. 'My own feelings were so unheroically opposite to these that I goggled at him. But he was perfectly serious. It was necessary to stay in London, to set an example.' See Julian Symons, 'Orwell: A Reminiscence' in *London Magazine*, September 1963, Vol. 3, No 6, p. 39.

⁸ Orwell, 'Autobiographical Note' *CEJL*, II, p. 39.

had to be shifted elsewhere. The Empire News department and Hindustani section (staff broadcasting in Hindustani and other regional languages like Bengali, Tamil, Marathi and Gujarati as opposed to English)⁹ were moved to Wood Norton at Abbey Manor and Evesham respectively. The transfer proved beneficial for the Indian Service and reduced much of the tension caused by earlier infighting. (It also explains Orwell's close association with some Indians - Anand, Menon, Tambimuttu and Venu Chitale who worked with him in the same premises, as opposed to the Sahnis, who worked at Evesham and remained only distant admirers.) The English talks department was retained in the Portland Place building.

In the meantime, search had been going on for a place from where broadcasting could carry on, regardless of air-raids and bombing. Two buildings were finally selected - Bush House and 200 Oxford Street. The latter, formerly a Peter Robinson departmental store, was to accommodate the entire Overseas Services. Situated on the corner of Great Portland Street and Oxford Street, its entrance was opposite Studio One Cinema. It had an impressive exterior and its extensive lower ground and basement floors were secure from bombing. The Indian Section collectively moved there on 7 July 1942.

Orwell was given an office on the second floor of the building.¹⁰ His secretary accompanied him to the new premises, and a telephone, Euston 3400 - extension 180, was added to his privileges. His room, no 314, one of the numerous make-shift cubicles made of lath and plaster walls, was a typical example of wartime economy. It was only just overhead high in the great high-ceilinged store. Interesting information exists about the functioning of 200 Oxford Street. John Thomson writes that 'producers were to sit *next* to their secretaries when dictating, not opposite; the telephones were to be muted, but only when the GPO could get round to it.'¹¹ Mansell says that

typewriters, telephone bells, telex machines, footsteps reverberating in narrow passages, the sound of secretaries receiving dictation and the murmur of ordinary conversation produced a strange cacophony that at once had the blessed effect of mildly sedating the tenants and offering a perpetual challenge to mental concentration.¹²

Owing to the shortage of studios, the rehearsal of talks and features in various

⁹ The B.B.C. introduced broadcasts in Tamil in May 1941, Bengali in October, Gujarati in March 1942, and Marathi in July of the same year.

¹⁰ Before shifting to 200 Oxford Street, Orwell's room was no. 218, at Egton House.

¹¹ John Thomson, *Orwell's London*, (London, 1984), p. 64

¹² Information to Mansell from T.R.P. Hole quoted in *Let Truth Be Told*, p. 117

oriental languages added to this background noise. Orwell was exasperated by it all. John Morris, who did not have a particular liking for him, noted that

it was difficult and at times impossible to carry on a telephone conversation and my earliest recollection of Orwell is of him standing, with that curiously crucified expression which seemed never to leave his face, in the aperture (there was no door) which separated his room from mine. 'For God's sake shut up,' he would say in his rather harshly petulant voice, and then return to his telephoning. Sometimes he would come back a little later; he would never apologise for his outburst, but, as though to hint that he bore no ill-will, would offer me one of the horrible cigarettes which he himself made from a particularly pungent and acrid shag. I would take a puff or two and then, because it started a paroxysm of coughing, would stub out the beastly thing. This would always cause Orwell to smile in a rather contemptuous manner. Nothing was ever said but I think we both knew that my inability to enjoy his filthy cigarettes was symbolic; it represented other things which made any sort of intimacy between us quite impossible.¹³

William Empson, who had a room next door, also recorded Orwell's distinctive behaviour, but his recollection brought out some of the more appealing aspects of Orwell's personality. Empson drew attention to Orwell's peculiar way of dealing with his lesser-known Indian contributors. -

At first the visitor would do most of the talking, with George increasing his proportion gradually; no doubt that he had to lure the visitor into providing an entry for the tremendous remark which one learned to expect towards the end of the interview. 'The FACK that you're black,' he would say, in a leisurely but somehow exasperated manner, immensely carrying, and all the more officer-class for being souped up into his formalised Cockney, 'and that I'm white, has *nudding whatever to do wiv it.*' I never once heard an Indian say 'But I'm not black'...They thought he was a holy saint, or at least that he must be very high-minded and remote from the world.¹⁴

The B.B.C. provided the first time and the first place (also probably the last) for Eric Blair, the official appointee to the post of Talks Assistant, to confront the ambivalence of also happening to be George Orwell. For, never had the two images of the same man come face to face, in fact, sometimes to the point of overlapping and merging publicly. He handled the problem of dual identity with tacit practicality. In formal practice, he signed his letters to contributors as Eric Blair, but once they discovered his *nom de plume* he had little hesitation in identifying himself as Orwell. Sometimes, he disclosed his adopted name voluntarily, especially when he felt comfortable in the company of his contributors. This is noticeable in his two letters to Hsiao Chien. The first, dated 15 March 1942 and addressed to Dear Mr. Hsiao Chien, is signed Eric Blair.

¹³ John Morris, 'Some Are More Equal Than Others', *Penguin New Writing*, No. 40. 1950, p. 91

¹⁴ William Empson, 'Orwell at the B.B.C.', *The World of George Orwell*, (ed.) Miriam Gross, (London, 1971), p. 96

The second, written on 25 March, says 'Dear Hsiao Chien, (I think we might drop the 'Mr', might we not ?)', and ^{is signed} Geo. Orwell.¹⁵ Another letter that he wrote to Desmond Hawkins is even more revealing. As Hawkins' interpretation of Orwell's letter suggests, the name Orwell was not just a simple pseudonym for him, but much more than that:

It's on B.B.C. notepaper, and it has a reference up in the corner; 'E.B.' The letter was signed 'George Orwell,' and I think he typed it, since the typing isn't very good. And 'E.B.' was undoubtedly Eric Blair. This was a complex man, you felt. He had these two identities in him all the time, and he was constantly adjusting them, tuning them, and in a small way this illustrated it to me.¹⁶

However, for all official purposes, he continued to write Eric Blair, as much as was possible. Even his resignation letter was signed Eric Blair.

Two things need to be emphasised here. The first is that Eric Blair saw his job very much as a temporary wartime occupation, unconnected with his career as a writer, and independent of his image as George Orwell the writer, at least to begin with. But, no sooner had he completed his first year at the B.B.C. than the officials began to see the interconnection between Blair and Orwell. It was Lawrence Brander who adroitly suggested to Rushbrook Williams that Blair be allowed to use his pen name.

In conversation with Mr Eric Blair this morning, I discovered that he writes our Saturday Weekly News Letter which is read by some Indian. The audience in India supposes that the reader is the composer, and the present audience is small. As you know the universal demand amongst our audience is for well-known Englishmen. If, therefore, it could be arranged that this News Letter be no longer anonymous, but the known work of 'George Orwell'...it would be looked forward to with very great interest, as few names stand so high with our Indian audience at present as that of George Orwell.¹⁷

Williams, in turn, asked for Blair's reaction and consulted the India Office who immediately realised the importance of Blair being Orwell. His report to Clark, in October '42, is revealing of the change in the British Government's propaganda policy towards India. Earlier, Orwell had been seen as an unsuitable man for the literary editorship of the *Pioneer* because he was then seen as anti-establishment. He had not known that a secret file on him had become necessary at the India Office. By 1942, this very image had become a useful asset in the Government's battle against Berlin and

¹⁵ See Orwell's letters to Hsiao Chien. 15 and 25 March 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

¹⁶ See Desmond Hawkins speaking to Stephen Wadhams in *Remembering Orwell*, (B.B.C. Books, Canada, 1984), p. 127.

¹⁷ Lawrence Brander to Rushbrook Williams, 8 October 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

Subhas Bose. Now, the Government had awoken to the fact that Orwell's presence on the Indian Service would convince the Indians of Britain's honest intentions. The man employed by the B.B.C. was Eric Blair but the voice the Indians would hear across the seas would be that of George Orwell. Williams explained :

I have consulted Mr Joyce and his colleagues and they feel it would be useful to take advantage of Orwell's name. In view of the fact that several people whose books have fallen under the displeasure of the G[overnment] of I[ndia] do in effect speak for us, and that their contributions are appreciated, Mr Joyce feels that it would be mistaken to refer the matter specifically to the G. of I. If *asked* the G. of I. might feel called upon to adopt a critical attitude. If the question is not raised, Mr Joyce thinks they are very unlikely to object!¹⁸

Subsequently, Blair was persuaded to use his literary name on the air. For the first time the name 'George Orwell' figured in *London Calling*. On 9 October 1942, the programme 'Voice', transmitting Part I of 'a story by five authors', listed George Orwell as the reader. A photography session was conducted on 1 December and a group photograph with Mulk Raj Anand, Naryana Menon, J.M. Tambimuttu, Venu Chitale, T.S. Eliot, William Empson and Cedric Dover was printed on 15 February. Throughout this time, Orwell was acutely aware of the inherent contradictions of his position. He appeared not altogether willing to trade his literary legacy for the British Government's propaganda policies. He made this clear in his letter to Williams -

From: Eric Blair, Indian Section
Subject: Weekly News Commentary
To: Eastern Service Director

15 October 1942

With reference to the suggestion that I should write and broadcast the weekly news review in English over my own name, i.e. George Orwell. The four speakers who are at present doing this in rotation have contracts up to 7 November, after which I will gladly take this on. But there are one or two points which it would be better to define clearly beforehand.

If I broadcast as George Orwell I am as it were selling my literary reputation, which so far as India is concerned probably arises chiefly from books of anti-imperialist tendency, some of which have been banned in India. If I gave broadcasts which appeared to endorse unreservedly the policy of the British Government I should quite soon be written off as 'one more renegade' and should probably miss my potential public, at any rate among the student population. I am not thinking about my personal reputation, but clearly we should defeat our own object in these broadcasts if I could not preserve my position as an independent and more or less 'agin the government' commentator. I would therefore like to be sure in advance that I can have reasonable freedom of speech. I think this weekly commentary is only likely to be of value if I can make it from an anti-Fascist rather than imperialist standpoint and avoid mention of subjects on which I could not conscientiously agree with current Government policy. I do not think this is likely to cause trouble, as the chief difficulty is over Indian

¹⁸ Rushbrook Williams to J.B. Clark, 29 October 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

internal politics, which we rarely mention in our weekly news commentaries. These commentaries have always followed what is by implication a 'left' line, and in fact have contained very little that I would not sign with my own name. But I can imagine situations arising in which I should have to say that I could not in honesty do the commentary for the week, and I should like the position to be defined in advance.¹⁹

Yet the irony of the situation remained that, on the one hand, the B.B.C. officials saw Blair as harmlessly intelligent, a person capable and trustworthy enough to be able to organise propaganda for India; on the other, they were only too aware of his reputation as George Orwell, the reputation of a potential trouble-maker, of a man with extremist views; and yet they were prepared to hire his image to gain favour with alienated Indians.

Secondly, once the voice of George Orwell found expression, his literary conscience was also awakened. He had invested too much in his name to part with it. He associated it with personal integrity and political liberty, and at no cost was he willing to compromise values he had nurtured and cherished. Once he had come out openly as Orwell, it came naturally to him to assert himself as a literary rebel. It was then that his troubles began, as will become abundantly clear.

The duties of Talks Assistant demanded a fine combination of administrative and creative qualities. Bokhari had re-directed his correspondence with various speakers to Orwell and expected him to enlist new ones. Orwell, in turn, was required to motivate them into producing effective scripts, often entailing the writing of copious letters and reminders. He had to obtain approval of the Eastern Services Committee before going ahead with production. Behind the scenes, much of his work was dull, mechanical and unproductive. He had to get scripts passed through censors for 'policy censorship'²⁰, to book studios in advance, to see to the payment of broadcasters, to ensure that passes were ready and sent to the persons concerned, and to take responsibility for last minute changes. He was also responsible for the provision of 'Ice-box' talks if, in case, scheduled broadcasters failed to turn up or an unforeseen emergency shelved off usual proceedings. Nevertheless, he seemed quite content during the first couple of months at the B.B.C. and projected a sense of outward ease.

His first year, particularly from about August '41 to September '42, was largely a time of enthusiasm and achievement. The large-scale expansion of the B.B.C. had altered,

¹⁹ Orwell to Rushbrook Williams, 15 October 1942. *CEJL*, II, pp. 281-2

²⁰ See Chapter III, p. 98

beyond recognition, the very concept of programme production. War had resulted in decentralisation of work and delegation of responsibility to individual departments. Despite receiving contradictory directives from the top, producers enjoyed freedom of thought, and experimented with new ideas, although in principle they were handcuffed by censorship. Orwell's earliest opinion of the B.B.C. was generally condescending. 'I believe that the B.B.C., in spite of the stupidity of its foreign propaganda and the unbearable voices of its announcers, is very truthful. It is generally regarded here as more reliable than the press'.²¹

Indeed, Orwell's estimation of the B.B.C. remained unchanged even when critics started clamouring about its shortcomings. Critics maintained that confusion and chaos was reigning in matters of organisation, policy, programme monitoring and censorship. Above all, differences of opinion and style developed between the established staff and newcomers. Before the war, the B.B.C., as an institution, had been the monopoly of a chosen few. But now, its authority was slipping away into the hands of a majority who had little experience in broadcasting.²² People from all walks of life - foreigners, nationalists, creative writers, university professors, scientists, and psychologists had been hurriedly recruited and hurriedly trained. Although most new employees worked under heads who were products of the peace-time B.B.C., they often had to change their jobs and faced new challenges. But all this does not seem to have ruffled Orwell. His reaction, when it came, was flippant, The atmosphere of the B.B.C., he joked, 'is something halfway between a girls' school and a lunatic asylum'.²³ He was enjoying the experimental opportunities offered by his job, the 'very real opportunity both for creative excitement and the exchange of ideas, by the feeling of communication not only with one's kind but with invisible audiences at home and overseas, and by a sense of immediacy and urgency in relation to the war effort'.²⁴

The earliest evidence of Orwell's ease with his new job surfaced in his 'Trial Period Report'. His appointment had been subject to three months probation and his performance, between 18 August and 17 November 1941, had been under close scrutiny. In October, Rushbrook Williams and R.A. Rendall were asked to give their verdict. The

²¹ Orwell, 'London Letter to *Partisan Review*', *CEJL*, II, p. 139

²² See Asa Briggs, *Ibid.*, p. 28. Even Lionel Fielden, who had worked with the B.B.C. in its pioneering days could not help commenting about the change in the B.B.C.'s environment. 'I felt like an unwelcome stranger in the B.B.C. The staff had increased and changed enormously since I had gone to India...I felt rather as if I had been transferred from the Traveller's Club to the RAC', he noted in *The Natural Bent*, p. 218

²³ Orwell's War-time Diary, 14 March 1942. *CEJL*, II, p. 465

²⁴ Asa Briggs, *Ibid.*, p. 22

new Eastern Services Director was full of praise: 'What I have seen is extremely good - indeed out of the ordinary. I should certainly recommend continuation of the engagement.' Rendall agreed with the E.S.D.²⁵ On 21 October a continuation of Orwell's services was recommended.

His indispensability to the Empire Service was put to the test in February 1942 when Major H.F. Hayward of D.S. Company, Home Guard, requested the B.B.C. to release Orwell if the Home Guard were to be mustered in a state of emergency. Earlier, the B.B.C. War Services Officer had written to the Ministry of Labour and National Service to highlight the importance of Orwell's B.B.C. job.

Reference: AS/WRB

19 August, 1941

The Manager,
Ministry of Labour and National Service,
St. Mary's Road,
Harlesden, N.W.10

Dear Sir,

Name: Eric A. Blair
Date of Birth: 25.6.1903
Registration No: EXX.31191

Mr. Eric Arthur Blair, whose date of birth and registration number are shown above, joined the staff of the Corporation on 18 August 1941.

We certify that his appointment is correctly placed in our "Administrative and Executive Grade". We shall therefore be glad if you will kindly confirm that the necessary alterations have been made on his papers, and that as he is in a reserved occupation, he will not be called up for military service.

Yours faithfully,
W.R. Baker
(War Services Officer)

Although, in his letter of 9 February, Major Hayward had made reference to the War Office Regulations of 22 January, he expressed his willingness to defer Orwell's calling-up for forty-eight hours as Orwell was doing 'vital war work'. Hayward wrote:

However vital his [Orwell's] civil employment, every member of the Home Guard will have to report for duty within 48 hours, if the Home Guard is mustered and it will then be for the Military Commander to decide whether he should return to work or remain on duty with his unit.²⁶

When Hayward's letter reached Orwell, he was only too eager to support the cause of the Home Guard as opposed to that of the Corporation. In a note to Rushbrook

²⁵ Orwell's Trial Report, 10 October 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

²⁶ Major H.F. Hayward to the B.B.C., 9 February, 1942.

Williams he commented: 'I assume that in the case of the Home Guard being called out it will be possible for me to report for duty immediately. The Department can get on without me.'²⁷ The Eastern Services Director, however, felt otherwise. Williams responded sympathetically to Hayward's letter, the more so since he was appreciative of the voluntary commitment of the Home Guard. But highlighting the importance of Orwell's war work, he indicated that 'while every endeavour will be made to release Mr Blair immediately should a state of emergency require the Home Guard to be mustered', it might become 'necessary from the standpoint of the maintenance of vital broadcasting services to the East,...to apply for the deferment of Mr Blair's calling-up for 48 hours.'²⁸ Hayward was not pleased. He wanted Orwell's services in the field, and not in the B.B.C. studios. He wrote a persuasive letter:

The real test for deferment is not whether his [Orwell's] work is of national importance but whether it would be vital to national security in the event of an invasion. For instance, if German air-borne troops landed in the London area, would the country be better served by Mr. Blair attacking the enemy with his comrades in the Home Guard or endeavouring to continue with his civil employment. As a further guide, Civil Servants, including Postmen, are available for duty immediately the Home Guard is mustered. Will you kindly reconsider your previous request and I trust you will agree to the immediate release for active duties of Mr. Blair in an emergency.²⁹

Williams was still unconvinced. He wrote back firmly but politely - 'Mr. E.A. Blair, whatever his merits as a soldier, is a key man in the Eastern Service.' He left it to the Major to judge whether the value of his potential contribution to the defence of Britain superseded the importance of his duties at the Indian Service - service which might prove more 'crucial from the stand-point of maintaining the morale of the British Empire in the East'.³⁰ Hayward seems to have given in to William's wishes because there is no further correspondence on the matter. Fortunately any emergency, requiring a mustering of the Home Guard, never materialised. By invading Russia, just two months before Orwell had joined the B.B.C., Hitler had changed the fortunes of the warring world forever. A new chapter had opened in the history of the war. Even the Indian Service entered into a new phase.

In September 1942, Orwell was promoted to the post of Talks Producer. (It appears he

²⁷ Manuscript note by Orwell on the covering letter sent to the B.B.C. by the Home Guard, 11 March 1942.

²⁸ Rushbrook Williams to H.F. Hayward, 13 March 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

²⁹ H.F. Hayward to Rushbrook Williams, 16 March 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁰ Rushbrook Williams to H.F. Hayward, 30 March 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

was informed of his promotion earlier, probably verbally, because he started signing his letters as Talks Producer as early as May) However, he seems to have attached little importance to his post, either in terms of prestige or power. It was nevertheless an important appointment. Charles Hill, the 'Radio Doctor', has written convincingly of the crucial role producers played in ensuring the effectiveness of the war-time B.B.C.: 'I never came into contact with the higher, august echelons. As far as I could see, the responsibility for talks rested entirely on the producer of a particular talk or series and, because of the remarkably high quality of producers, the system worked very well.'³¹

Orwell would certainly qualify as a competent Talks Producer if Hill's criteria were to be applied to him. He handled the broadcaster 'with skill and courtesy',...suggested alterations 'rather than insisted upon' them and with 'such careful regard for the sensibilities of the broadcaster' that his modifications were accepted 'without the slightest hesitation.'³² A good number of speakers stayed with him once they had joined the Service. Orwell seems to have great faith in their ability in handling their subject over the microphone. He only provided the organising link, giving general directions, and leaving them to work out their respective talks. Not only was he supportive, he was fiercely protective when it came to the rights and integrity of speakers. In 1942, he had commissioned Anand to contribute a talk on the Spanish Civil War to a six-part series on Fascism. The censors referred Anand's talk to the M.O.I. who banned it entirely. Orwell chose to confront the authorities in this case and wrote a bold memo, insisting that Anand be paid for the work he had done - 'I suggest that as Dr Anand had taken a good deal of trouble over his talk, he might be paid a proportion of the fee.'³³ He was paid eight guineas instead of thirteen.

Despite bronchitis and poor health, he constantly overworked himself. In July '42 he recorded that he was not writing his diary because he literally had no spare time. His work demanded long hours and late nights. Lawrence Brander recalls meeting him walking down Regent Street one early winter morning after a night on duty, wrapped up in a trench coat and gauntlet gloves. Brander paused to make contact, but Orwell, too engrossed and lost in thought, saw nothing and passed by. Orwell once cancelled his appointment to dine with Cyril Connolly because he had to take up night duty

³¹ See Charles Hill, *Both Sides of the Hill*, (London, 1964), p. 118

³² *Ibid.*, p. 118

³³ Orwell to Miss Boughen, Talks Booking, 10 December 1942.

unexpectedly.³⁴ He rehearsed and recorded a programme with Eliot on 19 September '42, a Sunday, because Eliot was too busy during the week to find time.³⁵

Orwell was neither pleased with the privileges of the job, nor was he unhappy if they were taken away from him. In March 1942, the Empire Talks department proposed to transfer Mrs Barratt, Orwell's secretary, to William Empson for three days a week. Whilst Orwell was only too happy to shoulder the additional burden, Bokhari was unconvinced that the move would not prove detrimental to the smooth running of the department. He wrote a furious note to the Empire Executive's Office.

I think I must bring it to your notice that there's a lot of administrative work connected with the programmes entrusted to Blair - Contracts, Studio Bookings and all the other things that are necessary - and if a whole-time secretary is taken away from Blair at any date, I should think twice before I accept the responsibility for the smooth running of this office.³⁶

He added: 'I expect I may be crying before I am hit, but its no good crying afterwards.' There is no record whether Mrs Barratt eventually stayed with Orwell, but in a photograph, printed in *London Calling* in February 1943, she stands next to him, and is described as his secretary.³⁷

Every fortnight he attended the meeting of the Eastern Services Committee, the nodal body, which governed the smooth functioning of the Indian Service with regard to government policy and propaganda. He presented, for the Committee's approval, a summary of the projected programmes along with names of prospective speakers. Rushbrook Williams, the Eastern Services Director, chaired the meeting. Other members came from different organisations. From the India Office came A.H. Joyce, the M.O.I. was represented by R.W. Brock and Professor Firth was the guest nominee from the School of Oriental Studies. Malcolm Darling, the Empire News Editor; Z.A.

³⁴Orwell to Connolly, (no date, 'perhaps post September 42', Archivist's remark) Orwell Archive. Even Mark Benney in *Almost A Gentleman* writes: 'Eric's programme at the B.B.C. kept him till late in the evening, and on that night of the second bombing we had delayed dinner so that he could join us.' p. 167

³⁵ See correspondence between Orwell and Eliot in Eliot's file. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁶ Bokhari to Mrs. Hunt (Empire' Executive's Office), 3 March, 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁷ Information about Orwell's secretary has been scant and misleading. A secretary's post was sanctioned when a place for Orwell was created in June-July 1941. William West points to Mary Blackburn as Orwell's programme assistant but she was, in fact, Bokhari's secretary (her designation was Assistant (Programmes)), and assisted Orwell in his English talks. Sheldon mentions Elizabeth Knight as his secretary but her name seems to be missing from the B.B.C. employment files. Almost certainly Mrs. Nancy Barratt was his secretary.

Bokhari, the Indian Programme Officer; Lawrence Brander, the Eastern Intelligence Officer, and other Talks Assistants like Balraj Sahni and Iqbal Sarin, were also members. The first meeting was held on 8 October at 55 Portland Place. Orwell was absent but minutes of the meeting reveal Bokhari's ambitious plans for the Service, Brock's intervention in matters of Government policy and censorship, and Joyce's role in linking public opinion in India with policy formulation in Britain. For the entire duration of the war, and possibly even after, Joyce advised the Indian Service and sifted important telegrams from the Government of India, for the private information of the Eastern Services Director. Orwell was present in the second meeting. 'E.A. Blair to bear in mind using information from surveys of Foreign Press.' From this very moment his apprenticeship in handling and creating propaganda had begun. His time would now be increasingly spent in becoming 'propaganda-minded' and developing 'a cunning' for strategies 'one did not previously have'.³⁸

The newly created B.B.C. Monitoring Service was the greatest compliment that the Overseas Service could ever hope to receive. It transmitted, to the Overseas Intelligence Department in London, vast amounts of raw material containing exhaustive accounts of foreign broadcasts, which it monitored at its headquarters at Wood Norton. Then the Overseas Intelligence Department, overnight, produced the *Daily Digest* 'averaging 100,000 words'. In addition, the department also produced 'the Monitoring Report' - a shorter version of the *Digest* - and incorporated the *Digest's* most important items. Apart from containing a carefully researched weekly analysis of events, the Report also contained specialised studies on various aspects of broadcast propaganda. Orwell received daily supplies of this material. He was expected to study it carefully before taking decisions about various programme series. His access to, and knowledge of, such sensitive reports became even more obligatory because he was the sole British Talks Producer at the Section.³⁹

The visit of Lawrence Brander, the Eastern Intelligence Officer, to India in the spring of 1942, to assess the effects of the B.B.C. broadcasts, became the turning point in Orwell's broadcasting career. Brander dispatched a series of discouraging reports which, for the first time in the short history of the Indian Service, cast doubts over the wisdom of organising talks for India from London. The news from India disappointed

³⁸ Orwell's 'War-time Diary', *CEJL, II*, p. 465

³⁹ Orwell gave indications of his access to various wireless recordings. On 22 May 1942, he noted in his wartime diary: 'I wish I could spare a week to go through the Russian and German broadcast of the past year and tot up their various claims'. *CEJL, II*, p. 482

everyone at the Section, most of all Orwell. Brander thought that the British were not 'winning the radio war that rages every night' and gave a variety of reasons. There were only about 121,000 receiver sets owned by Indians - 'a very small number among three hundred million people.' Programmes, with a weak signal, were beamed at a time of the day when few people were listening. The English programme had ignored the needs of the rest of the audience. The British broadcasting effort had proved quite inadequate, the more so because of widespread hostility to imperial rule. He wrote:

There is great hatred of the British in this country. One does not see how this hatred can be removed in the near future, or even after the war, unless a real attempt is made at dispelling the strong suspicion which exists in the minds of most Indians that all Englishmen and women are just exploiters and therefore bad. I know that it is not true, and many others in India and England know it is not true but the average Indian does not know. How can he? No attempt has ever been made to disprove his suggestion.⁴⁰

In another report he said:

My servant this morning says that the bazaar is full of German and Japanese warnings to Indians to make peace before a very horrible war comes to them. Nothing comes from our side but the B.B.C. Hindustani half hour.

Moreover, the Axis powers were targeting their propaganda 'with skill and energy, following the 'Old Crewe House propaganda rule' - concentrate it where the enemy is weakest. The Axis powers were increasingly successful in getting their message across to India. A very disappointed Orwell wrote in his diary:

His [Brander's] conclusions so depressing that I can hardly bring myself to write them down. Briefly - affairs are much worse in India than anyone here is allowed to realise, the situation is in fact retrievable but won't be retrieved because the Government is determined to make no real concessions, hell will break loose when and if there is a Japanese invasion, and our broadcasts are utterly useless because nobody listens to them.⁴¹

However, not everything coming from Brander was depressing. He praised the B.B.C. news for being popular with all sections of Indian society. He found the Forces' programmes attractive, particularly those containing messages for relatives and friends. Despite his criticism of 'Through Eastern Eyes', Brander was hopeful that the series had 'a definite and large audience in northern India...and will have at least three months more.' Even Orwell's news commentary, read by E.A. Montague on 22 July (and believed to be written by him) was hailed by *The Times of India* as 'the most

⁴⁰ All reports concerning Brander's visit are in the B.B.C. Archives.

⁴¹ Orwell's 'War-time Diary,' *CEJL, II*, p. 507

interesting item of the week'.⁴²

He advocated, amongst other things, the need for greater publicity. Accordingly a sub-committee for advanced publicity was immediately formed in London with Brander, Darling and Blair as members. The Indian Service printed publicity leaflets and pamphlets accompanying specialised programmes. It sent them to India, well in advance of broadcasts, along with extra copies of *London Calling*. The daily schedule and timing of programmes was revised bearing in mind peak listening hours and the needs of special listening groups were taken into consideration. *London Calling* was made visibly more attractive. In order that it appeared more appealing, photographs of contributors were included alongside their contributions with a brief introduction. Brander set up a Listener's Research Office in Delhi to monitor the response of the Indian audience and to send regular feedback to London. Blair announced a monthly competition for Indians to write critical essays in English.

A decade later, Brander wrote about the time he spent at the B.B.C. Although not making any specific mention of Orwell's work, or his own visit to India in his book, *George Orwell* (1954), Brander was generally appreciative of his friend:

I was always grateful to Orwell while we worked together in the B.B.C. He laughed very readily at the nonsense that went on, and made it tolerable. This did not interfere with his sense of responsibility, for he knew how important radio propaganda could be, if intelligently organised and he worked very hard on his own talks, which were always good and usually brilliant.⁴³

In addition to Brander's visit, Orwell encountered several other unpleasant experiences at the B.B.C. As the war drifted into its fourth year, his early enthusiasm gave way to bitterness, and finally to disillusionment. Firstly, he was driven more and more into affairs of the administration that drained him of his creative energies. He encountered several administrative problems at the B.B.C. Fortunately, a memo has survived which reveals his frustration and anger at being held responsible for mistakes that were not of his making. In an explanatory letter, in July 1942, concerning a broadcast by Lady Grigg, the wife of Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War, Orwell complained to Rushbrook Williams:

From: Eric Blair, Indian Section, 200 O.S.
Subject: Lady Grigg's Broadcasts (Women Generally Speaking)

⁴² Brander's report. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴³ Lawrence Brander, *George Orwell* (London, 1954) pp. 8-9

To: E.S.D.

I wonder if it would be possible for us to get Lady Grigg's broadcasts somewhat more under our own control, as we have to bear the responsibility for them.

This morning everything went wrong that could have gone wrong. The talk had not been properly timed and was far too long. When I pointed out that it was too long and had better be cut I was told this had been timed to 12 1/2 minutes. I then said that I would signal if it were going to over-run and had to be cut. After about two pages I saw that it must over-run considerably and prepared a cut and went in with this to Lady Grigg. She offered it to Sir James who refused to take it and cut it himself in transit, with the result that Lady Grigg's closing announcement was cut out and there was a lot of rustling and whispering. In addition, Sir James referred to the sinking of H.M.S. "RENOWN" (instead of the REPULSE) at Singapore. This was in his own script and it had been copied from that into the censored script. He read from his own however.

I don't, in most cases, see Lady Grigg's scripts before transmission, as Tuesday is supposed to be my day off, and they are not usually in before then; I think it would be better if it were made a rule that Lady Grigg's scripts were always in not later than Monday, and also that the Talks Producer could have some control over the way they're put on.

We had trouble only a week or two ago as can be seen from the attached memo. On another occasion, when Miss Ellen Wilkinson was broadcasting she did not follow her script at all but composed a fresh talk on the spot. I know, of course, that eminent speakers have to be given more latitude but it is difficult for us to bear the responsibility when the speaker is practically not under our control.

Eric Blair⁴⁴

To encounter anomalies, as the one presented by Lady Grigg's transmission, may have been a routine matter for many producers at the B.B.C. during wartime, but to Orwell, who had little experience in handling such bureaucratic procedures and who, by disposition, did not much like getting involved in matters of administration, the strains must have been hard to bear. It must have become increasingly clear to him that he was not, and could never have become, a part of the establishment. He vented his frustration in his war-time diary:

I am doing nothing that is not futility and have less and less to show for the time I waste. It seems to be the same with everyone - the most fearful feeling of frustration, of just footling round doing imbecile things, not imbecile because they are a part of the war and war is inherently foolish, but things which in fact *don't* help or in any way affect the war effort, but are considered necessary by the huge bureaucratic machine in which we are all caught up.⁴⁵

Ironically, around the same time, his way of functioning was questioned by four of his immediate superiors - Clark, Rendall, Collins, and Bokhari - and his relations with them came under increasing strain. Here the testimony of Mark Benney, one of his close friends at that time, who was working for the Ministry of Fuel and Power, is important.

⁴⁴ Orwell to Rushbrook Williams, 7 July 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁵ Orwell's 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 494

Benney claimed, convincingly enough, that Orwell knew very few persons in the B.B.C. This is particularly true of Orwell's colleagues in the administrative section. He 'had little access to the informal networks of gossip and speculation which often substitute for overt expressions of policy in a large Corporation, and so found little occasion to identify with their purposes.'⁴⁶ Thus as Orwell started his second year at the B.B.C., troubles began to surface and made his life increasingly difficult.

It appears that Norman Collins, the Empire Talks Manager and erstwhile company secretary to Victor Gollancz, had not been favourably disposed towards Orwell. However, in June '42, things became more complicated when Orwell and he became embroiled in a controversy concerning a talk by Gilbert Murray which had been recorded for the Home Service and sent to the Indian Section for rebroadcast. Having accepted the talk, the Indian Service included it in its schedule of transmission, but just half an hour before going on the air, the department learnt that the talk could not be located in the relevant disc. The discrepancy was brought to Orwell's notice who immediately decided to report it to Collins. He requested, in rather firm terms, where the responsibility lay 'when the scrapping of one talk and the recording of another under the same disc number, is not reported to the responsible producer'. Collins replied blaming Orwell, in part, for not 'obtaining the disc until apparently half an hour before the broadcast'. Orwell, in turn, wrote a severe, if not harsh reply, and demanded that relevant procedures be set right.

It appears from what Recorded Programmes Library say that it is the responsibility of either Programme reporters or the Recording Engineers, to inform them if what is on the disc does not correspond with the title of the talk. If this is not done, R.P. Library have no regular machinery for checking it...'⁴⁷

Collins was not pleased with Orwell's reply, and his unhappiness at Orwell's style of functioning reflected strongly in a memo he wrote to Rushbrook Williams six months later. This time Collins was reacting to Orwell's summary of proposed programmes and speakers for week 51 in 1942.

From: Empire Talks Manager
Subject: Mr. Blair's speakers in the Eastern Service
To: Eastern Services Director

8 December 1942

A copy of Mr. Blair's memo of the 7th December (of which you have been sent a copy) has just reached me. I notice one thing in it which suggests that Blair is working rather

⁴⁶ Mark Benny, *Almost A Gentleman*, (London, 1966), p. 168

⁴⁷ An exchange of three letters between Orwell and Collins, June 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

too independently of the existing organisation.

On Tuesday, the 15th December there is a talk on Plastics by Dr. Yarsley: on Monday of this week there was a talk on the same subject by C.F. Merriam. It may well be the Dr. Yarsley's talk is better than C.F. Merriam's (or vice-versa), but it certainly seems extravagant from the point of view of the Corporation that we have paid for two talks on the same subject within little more than a week.

I wonder if the situation could be met by someone from Mr Blair's department attending the Daily Talks meeting. I had thought that Mr Weymouth would cover such points, but I gather that now Blair does not refer his arrangements to him.

Similarly Blair's note of the 5th December regarding the new series of talks to cover the set books in the B.A. course in English Literature at Calcutta University mentions T.S. Eliot and refers to fixing up other speakers. To avoid duplication of approaches made I suggest that Blair should fall in line with the usual procedure whereby talks producers refer to my office to know if anyone else is approaching these speakers round about the same time. (I know you will understand that this is simply not red tape, but to prevent one speaker from getting two letters from the Empire Service on the same day.)

Norman Collins⁴⁸

Orwell had probably not known but the establishment, by this time, had grown considerably wary of his method of functioning. The period between December 1942 and March 1943 proved quite critical, and Orwell's independence as a producer had to stand trial. In February, Orwell provoked the anger of R.A. Rendall when he sent in a routine and apparently perfectly harmless note about the appointment of two new contributors in the series 'In your Kitchen'. Disapproving severely of Orwell's attitude, Rendall wrote harshly to Williams.

This is the third of these notes that I have received recently. I don't like the look of them because it suggests that Blair is setting up an independent business as an Eastern Services Director. I have a high regard for his general abilities and I know that he would not deliberately attempt to do this in a self-advancing or separatist way: and I know that you have been badly affected with illness in your department. But I must point out (i) that I have more than once asked to be consulted in advance on new series (ii) that co-ordination and general notification is Collins' job and he really should be informed in advance...(iv) that Blair is not a policy scrutineer, nor has he shown himself particularly sensitive to considerations of broadcasting technique...⁴⁹

There is little doubt that Norman Collins had shared with Rendall his uneasiness about Orwell's conduct, and Rendall's letter had confirmed their mutual unhappiness to Williams in the clearest of terms.

The fact that Bokhari and Orwell had been dovetailing their leave, in late '42 and early '43, would make it appear to others that the two colleagues were working in

⁴⁸ Collins to Rushbrook Williams, 8 December 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁹ Rendall to Williams, 3 February 1943. B.B.C. Archives. The date of this important letter has been incorrectly printed as 3.2.42 in William West's *The War Broadcasts*, (London, 1985), p. 49

harmony, but this had not been the case. Two of their close associates have confirmed that Orwell and Bokhari did not much care for each other's company.⁵⁰ A situation of direct confrontation between them had always been averted because of their mutual division of work and different work places. Their differences did not surface until towards the end of Orwell's second year but once they did, the now obvious animosity became unpleasant and quite bitter. Bokhari had been tolerant of Orwell's independent behaviour, but by June 1943, he had become quite exasperated with what he saw as the aimlessness of the English broadcasts. In an attempt to establish new co-ordination, he wrote a vigorous letter to Orwell. He sent copies of it to many others in the department, including Clark and Williams, a move that must not have much pleased Orwell. Bokhari wrote:

I think I have hit upon an idea. I will just give you the outlines of it. Please work it out and let us discuss it. I am sick of having unconnected talks; frankly I don't like living from day-to-day. Here is an idea for our new schedule:

'The World We Hope For'⁵¹

Orwell carried out Bokhari's proposal but chose not to spare him now that he had finally decided to leave the B.B.C. In September, he published a savage review of *Beggar My Neighbour*, a book written by Lionel Fielden, and dedicated to Bokhari. Orwell bitterly criticised Fielden's portrayal of 'an imaginary Indian' who denounced 'western civilisation with all the shrillness of a spinster of thirty-nine denouncing the male sex.' (Incidentally, Orwell had just completed 40 years when he wrote the review) He quoted from Fielden to indicate how Fielden's method had actually aggravated British annoyance rather than winning British support by praising

...an Indian who is intensely proud of his own traditions, and regards Europeans as barbarians who are continually fighting, who use force to dominate other peoples...he will say that to sit in the water in which you have washed, instead of bathing yourself in running water, is not clean but dirty and disgusting; he will show, and I shall agree with him absolutely, that the English are a dirty and even a smelly nation compared with the Indians; he will assert and I am not at all sure that he is wrong, that the use of half-washed forks, spoons and knives by different people for food is revoltingly barbaric when compared with the exquisite manipulation of food by Indian fingers; he will be confident that the Indian room, with its bare walls and beautiful carpets, is infinitely superior to the European clutter of uncomfortable chairs and tables, etc. etc. etc.⁵²

The fact that Fielden and Bokhari were close friends was common knowledge. They

⁵⁰ Interview with Mulk Raj Anand and Naryana Menon, Delhi 1991.

⁵¹ Bokhari to Orwell, Internal Memorandum, June 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁵² Orwell's 'Review of *Beggar My Neighbour* by Lionel Fielden' in *CEJL, II*, pp. 349-59

See also pp. 170-2

had shared a flat throughout Bokhari's residence in London. Fielden's characterisation of 'the imaginary Indian', especially his poignant references to intimate details of cultural and biological behaviour, in all probability, were based on his own observations of Bokhari's personality. Given Orwell's idiosyncratic views about people's behaviour and attitudes, his dismissal of Bokhari's flamboyance and statesmanship does not come as a surprise.⁵³ Existing differences between the two had further widened when Bokhari supported the idea of an independent Pakistan, which Orwell had always strongly opposed. (Bokhari migrated to Pakistan after the partition and rose to become the Director-General of Pakistan Radio)

In 1943, the Indian Service was substantially reorganised on the basis of recommendations made by Brander and Bokhari, both of whom had returned from their extensive tours of India. Brander wrote an in-depth analysis of 'The 45 Minutes to Indians' (meaning 'Through Eastern Eyes' and other programmes largely produced by Orwell) and sent copies of his report to Williams and Orwell. He emphasised

...it should not be forgotten that the Indian listener, like his English brother, wants entertainment...The Indian listener is not so serious-minded as to consider listening in to good entertainment beneath his dignity and to like only heavy programmes, on the assumption that the heavier the programme the better its quality and therefore the greater the value he gets out of his set...

The talks especially meant for students are a good idea because they are beginning to work for their exams.

But music is the greatest favourite, especially when it happens to be good music.⁵⁴

Brander said that the Listener Research Office in Delhi was receiving letters which, contrary to what the British broadcasters had been saying, asserted that Germany displayed 'a higher cultural level by broadcasting the best music of all 'civilised' countries'. In two separate and private memos he specifically targeted 'Through Eastern Eyes'. In the first he noted: 'on merits as a programme "Through Eastern Eyes" ranks, very, very low.' He quoted Ahmed Ali as saying that what Indians 'wanted was the B.B.C. Home programme. That to them was good wireless and though they listen habitually to our Eastern service in preference to A.I.R., they would like the Eastern Service to maintain Home standards'. He added,

I think that the few Indians who have sets are far in advance of the Europeans. They get the enormous fun on the air word battle, and I think that if we washed out the

⁵³ Michael Meyer, who came to know Orwell fairly well during the B.B.C., days recorded that Orwell had 'a peculiar revulsion towards homosexuality', which he thought 'was odd in such a liberal-minded man'. See *Remembering Orwell*, p. 133

⁵⁴ Laurence Brander's report, B.B.C. Archives.

present programme directed at them and put in something more efficient and amusing we have a chance of a big audience there.⁵⁵

In another report he wrote:

English Programmes to India:

This has been the most damaging failure. It was a daring decision to attempt to catch the young Indian intellectual. Unfortunately, it was believed that in order to do so it was necessary to put over programmes which could not attract the rest of our audience.⁵⁶

As a result, Orwell's 'Through Eastern Eyes', a programme which was initially considered successful, was scrapped. Even the second series of 'Voice', to be produced in 1943, and so announced in the English broadcasts, was also abandoned. The entire programme schedule was revised and more programmes on music, of a more universally popular nature, were introduced. In his war-time diary, Orwell referred to the 'long talk' he had had with Brander in October 1942. He noted that Brander had wanted the Indian Service to broadcast only 'news and music and nothing else.' He mused: 'This is what I have been saying for some time past.'⁵⁷

Another series, 'The Saturday News Review', which Orwell had been writing since December 1941 and reading since November 1942, was abruptly dropped in March '43. On the one hand, Brander no longer supported the purpose of the War Commentary, on the other, J.B. Clark brought to light the unsuitability of Orwell's voice over the microphone. Clark wrote a strong memo to Rendall and Rushbrook Williams.

From:- Controller (Overseas Services)
1943

19 January,

Subject:- George Orwell
To:- 1. A.C.(OS) 2. E.S.D.

I listened rather carefully to one of George Orwell's English talks in the Eastern Service on, I think, Saturday last. I found the talk itself interesting, and I am not critical of its content, but I was struck by the basic unsuitability of Orwell's voice. I realise, of course, that his name is of some value in quite important Indian circles, but his voice struck me as both unattractive and really unsuited to the microphone to such an extent that (a) it would not attract any listeners who were outside the circle of Orwell's admirers as a writer and might even repel [sic] some of these, and (b) would make the talks themselves vulnerable at the hands of people who would have reason to see Orwell denied the microphone, or of those who felt critical of the B.B.C. for

⁵⁵ Laurence Brander's report, 15 June 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

⁵⁶ Laurence Brander's report, B.B.C. Archives.

⁵⁷ Orwell's 'War-time Diary,' CEJL, II, p. 507

being so ignorant of the essential needs of the microphone and of the audience as to put on so wholly unsuitable a voice.

I am quite seriously worried about the situation and about the wisdom of our keeping Orwell personally on the air.⁵⁸

A similar opinion was expressed by John Morris.

Although he [Orwell] wrote so well, he was a poor and halting speaker; even in private conversation he expressed himself badly and would often fumble for the right word. His weekly broadcast talks were beautifully written, but he delivered them in a dull and monotonous voice. I was often with him in the studio and it was painful to hear such good material wasted: like many other brilliant writers, he never really understood the subtle differences between the written and the spoken word, or, if he did, could not be bothered with them.⁵⁹

The convergence of Clark's objections, with those of Brander, was purely coincidental, but the cumulative result was the dismissal of Orwell's key series in English. (Peter Davison thinks Orwell continued writing the 'News Review' for broadcasts to Malaya and there is evidence that the review may have been used by the vernacular newsletters.)

Evidently, Orwell lost interest in producing programmes he had created and industriously organised in the past twelve months. Apart from his disenchantment and internal disagreements, there were also some other external reasons. By March 1943, the threat of Japanese invasion on India had also receded. Radio Azad Hind had lost its teeth because Bose had left Germany. For the first time, the real intent of setting up the Indian Service - i.e. boosting the morale of Indians and wooing them to contribute to the war effort - was no longer apparent. The M.O.I. now refocused its attention on colonial India, for the danger ensued no longer from the Axis powers, but from the very root cause of India's independence struggle. Moreover, Brendan Bracken, Churchill's former parliamentary secretary, and then Minister of Information, completely supported Churchill's hard-line policy. The idea of having independent-minded people like Orwell, working for the Indian Service, would have been anathema to him, as it would have been to the others controlling.

Yet Orwell continued commissioning talks and executing additional duties given to him. As a member (at times Convenor) of the India Business Advisory Committee, he undertook a variety of liaison work : making enquiries and arranging 'to endow a Chair

⁵⁸ J.B. Clark to Rushbrook Williams, 19 January 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁵⁹ John Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

of Indian History in an American University'; impressing upon the Government of India the need to insert "War in Pictures" strip cartoons in national newspapers, thus providing instructions for civil defence work; having the Indian business community provide funds for All India Radio; passing suggestions of the India Business Advisory Committee to the Commercial Distributing Committee for follow-up action; receiving 'criticisms and suggestions of the Eastern Services' on behalf of its Director; informing the panel about other multifarious things - future training of Eastern Staff Employees, the B.B.C.'s Indian Service and Brander's report on Indian Broadcasting. The India Advisory Committee met once a month at the Ministry of Information and Orwell alone represented the Indian Service on it.⁶⁰ In April 1943, he 'was exploring the intrinsic cost of clearing...the right of All India Radio to record' and rebroadcast programmes produced by the B.B.C.⁶¹ In 1943, the Indian Service got many of its programmes printed as pamphlets and Orwell played a key role in their publication. In July, he reported to the Eastern Services Committee that he had published two pamphlets and a further two were in print. (It appears that more than four pamphlets were published but none of them have survived) He also edited a collection of wartime talks under the title *Talking to India*.

However, it was not the physical work, for Orwell was known to enjoy working under strained physical conditions, but the mental exhaustion of having to fight in so many tight corners - the bureaucracy, the red-tape, the censorship, the regimentation, the 'pressing' order, to name but a few, that combined to affect his morale. Further, he was being tormented by a deepening sense of guilt at having to continue the same dirty work of the Empire that he had earlier carried out in Burma. As Mark Benney recalled:

He used to tell me, too frequently and defensively to be wholly convincing, that there was no 'propaganda' in his particular slot - it was all modern poetry and belles-lettres; but he was all too ready to concede that at other hours and in other hands a stream of poisonous misrepresentation might be piped into the good middle-class homes of Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay. His was, indeed, as strange and unrewarding a job as mine.⁶²

Orwell's deteriorating health did not help either in alleviating his low morale. In his first and last years at the B.B.C., he suffered considerably from bronchitis. Given his 'workaholic' nature, it is surprising that he was forced to remain on leave for eleven days in October 1941. In December again he had to be away for eighteen days and

⁶⁰ See India Business Advisory Committee papers. B.B.C. Archives. Some minutes of the Committee meetings have survived. It appears that a meeting was held on every last Friday of the month at the Ministry of Information.

⁶¹ See Minutes of the Eastern Services Committee. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶² Mark Benney, *op. cit.*, p. 168

travelled to Dorset to recover from bronchitis where he received a letter of good wishes from Rushbrook Williams.⁶³ 1942 was relatively mild on his health. Apart from taking his annual leave, between 29 June and 13 July, there is no record of his going on sick leave. In 1943, he was again gripped by several bouts of bronchitis. He went on sick leave from 23 January to 11 February and his physician, Maurice O'Regan, of 48 Belsize Avenue, confirmed to the department that his patient had again been suffering from bronchitis. In a letter to Rendall, Williams noted the 'difficulties arising out of the protracted absence of Mr. Blair on sick leave'⁶⁴ His mood of disenchantment, aggravated by his breaks from work owing to illness, is reflected in his letters. He wrote to Reginald Reynolds: 'I have just heard from Cedric Dover, who is in the Army, apparently in Nottinghamshire. He doesn't seem to be enjoying it but then who does.'⁶⁵ As the year drew to a close, his letters to contributors became shorter and shorter, and contained only the barest of information. Instead of co-ordinating programmes himself, he delegated responsibility and asked people like Herbert Read, Edmund Blunden, Mulk Raj Anand and J.D. Bernal to conduct various series.

As ever, he turned to journalism to fill in the vacuum created by a reduction in B.B.C. work. It also provided him a temporary escape from the highly bureaucratic and politicised world he had become a part of. Besides reviewing Fielden's book, he published reviews of Thomas Mann's *Order of the Day* (*Tribune*), Louis Levy's *France is a Democracy* (*Observer*), Harold Laski's *Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (*Observer*), and Ramsay Muir's *A Better Britain in a Better World* (*Observer*). (All these reviews still remain uncollected and unre-published)⁶⁶ The *Listener* commissioned him to review C.E.M. Joad's *Young Soldier in search of a Better World*. The manner in which Orwell informed the Overseas Services Establishment Department about his intention to publish these articles had now changed. He no longer sought their permission as before but merely informed them, in somewhat arrogant terms, about the impending publication of his work.

His desire to deny the M.O.I.'s strict censorship policy was never so overpowering as in the last few months of his employment with them. He decided to raise the question of freedom by commissioning a series of five talks by none less than the daunting and irrepressible Kingsley Martin. Martin, still the editor of *The New Statesman*, was a

⁶³ Rushbrook Williams to Orwell, 16 December 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁴ Rushbrook Williams to Rendall, February 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁵ Orwell to Reginald Reynolds, 29 March 1943. Orwell Archive.

⁶⁶ See Orwell's letters to the Publications Department, 22 and 28 August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

well known figure in India. His first two talks caused no problems. There, he had discussed the Labour Party Conference with Princess Indira and had provided an account of various governments in exile. In his third talk on education, he disregarded all censorship rules. Not only did he deviate from the producer's briefing, he deliberately slanted his commentary in the direction of the extreme left. Orwell tried to intervene and telephoned to have the broadcast censored but had little success. The incident caused huge outrage and both Martin and Orwell were taken to task for flouting security rules. J.B. Clark complained to Rushbrook Williams that Blair had showed 'scant respect for the normal courtesy and discipline appropriate to an organisation such as ours'.⁶⁷ Martin's talk 'supposed to deal with Norwood Report (on secondary schools) but which makes considerable reference to the Government White Paper, drags in a lot of personal views and reminiscences with a disturbing result'. What followed was 'a thorough enquiry into the matter', an exchange of argumentative letters between Williams and Clark over Orwell's consultation duties and 'the extreme importance of clear briefs to speakers'.⁶⁸ The heat generated by the matter was quite unusual and Williams was left with no option but to pass on a last minute desperate manuscript note to Darling. 'Would you please keep a fatherly eye on this matter of briefing? We cannot risk any more trouble over Kingsley Martin: and I'd be grateful if you would get Blair's co-operation to ensure that the suggested precautions are in fact observed.'⁶⁹

Nothing stopped Orwell from going ahead with the rest of Martin's talks. 'Journalism' and 'The Freedom of the Press' were broadcast on 12 and 30 August 1943 respectively. Precautions were taken, indeed, not only by Darling but the Eastern Services Director himself. Besides the censor's stamp, his talks were now approved by two senior staff members junior only to the Director-General. However, by now Orwell had taken the irrevocable decision of resigning from the B.B.C. He expressed his disillusionment and frustration in a letter to Rayner Heppenstall :

you'd be cynical yourself if you were in this job. However I am definitely leaving it in ab[ou]t 3 months. Then by some time in 1944 I might be near-human again & able to write something serious. At present I'm just an orange that's been trodden on by a very dirty boot.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Clark to Williams, 5 August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁸ See exchange of letters between Williams and Clark during July and August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁹ Manuscript note from Rushbrook Williams to Malcolm Darling, 16 August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁰ Orwell to Rayner Heppenstall, 24 August 1943. *CEJL*, II, p. 349.

He proceeded on annual leave for two weeks at the beginning of September and returned in the third week, only to have a private meeting with Rushbrook Williams, and appraise him of his resignation. In his formal resignation letter he explained :

I am not leaving because of any disagreement with B.B.C. policy and still less on account of any kind of grievance. On the contrary I feel that throughout my association with the B.B.C. I have been treated with the greatest generosity and allowed very great latitude. On no occasion have I been compelled to say on the air anything I would not have said as a private individual. And I should like to take this opportunity of thanking you personally for the very understanding and generous attitude you have always shown towards my work.

I am tendering my resignation because for some time past I have been conscious that I was wasting my own time and the public money on doing work that produces no result. I believe that in the present political situation the broadcasting of British propaganda to India is an almost hopeless task. Whether these broadcasts should be continued at all is for others to judge, but I myself prefer not to spend my time on them when I could be occupying myself with journalism which does produce some measurable effect. I feel that by going back to my normal work of writing and journalism I could be more useful than I am at present.⁷¹

Orwell's resignation came as no surprise to members of the Indian Service, as Williams later wrote to the Assistant Controller,

it has been plain to both of us [Williams and Rendall] for sometime that B.[lair] has been pining to revert to whole-time journalism. I think we should accept the resignation.

By his contract, B[lair] must give us two months notice. But he has served the Corporation well; I have nothing but praise for his personal and professional integrity; and I recommend that he should be released before the expiry of his notice, if that will help him.⁷²

His 'Leaving Note' records his 'resignation in order to go back to writing and journalism.' However, after having known what had happened in the last few months, it is difficult to accept his reasons for resigning at face value. It was quite characteristic of Orwell to make light of grave situations, and deny publicly his personal grievances. (He had done similarly when resigning from the Burma Police) With hindsight, one might say that his annoyance for the most part was not with the B.B.C. but with the dictatorial M.O.I. The B.B.C. did not much sin, it was more sinned against. It is true, as he himself claimed, he had never been forced to say anything on the microphone with which he had disagreed in principle. Even six months after

⁷¹ Orwell to Rushbrook Williams, *CEJL, II*, pp. 360-61. Almost coincidentally, Malcolm Darling also resigned from the B.B.C.'s Talks Department in November 1943, although like Fielden, he continued broadcasting as a freelance.

⁷² Rushbrook Williams to the Empire Executive's Office, 25 September 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

leaving, his opinion of the B.B.C. approximated to his earliest opinion of 1941.

I repeat what I had said before - that in my experience the B.B.C. is relatively truthful and, above all, has a responsible attitude towards news and does not disseminate lies simply because they are 'newsy'. Of course, untrue statements are constantly being broadcast and anyone can tell you of instances. But in most cases this is due to genuine error, and the B.B.C. sins much more by simply avoiding anything controversial than by direct propaganda...its reputation abroad is comparatively high...Even in India, where the population are so hostile that they will not listen to British propaganda and will hardly listen to a British entertainment programme, they listen to B.B.C. news because they believe that it approximates to the truth.⁷³

Although he tendered his letter of resignation letter in September, he stayed with the B.B.C. until the end of November. On his last working day, he dutifully attended a meeting of the Eastern Services Committee. The minutes recorded:

'Mr Lawson Treece reported with regret that Blair had resigned from the Corporation. The meeting expressed its appreciation of Mr. Blair's work in handling the English programmes to India during the past eighteen months. No successor had yet been appointed...'⁷⁴

Despite the public acknowledgement of his vital contribution to the Indian Service, few of Orwell's colleagues stood by him when he finally left the B.B.C. The only exception was Rushbrook Williams, who never once erred in his estimation of his quite exceptional colleague. Quite the opposite, his respect and admiration for Orwell grew with time. In the first Annual Confidential Report of 1 September 1942 Williams expressed strong approval of Orwell. 'Good, sensitive, loyal work. He has strong convictions but is never too proud to accept guidance.'⁷⁵ After another year of working together, he was adequately equipped to write a frank and intimate appraisal of Orwell's personality.

He has great facility in writing, and a literary flair which makes his work distinguished.

Conscientiously as he endeavours to achieve objectivity, he finds it difficult to realise the shock which certain sentiments, to him plain matters of fact, may cause to the conservatively-minded. For which reason, his scripts require close scrutiny : and he is himself a poor judge of "political expediency".

He supports uncomplainingly a considerable burden of poor health. This never affects his work, but occasionally strains his nerves.

I have the highest opinion of his moral, as well as of his intellectual capacity. He is transparently honest, incapable of subterfuge, and, in early days, would have been either canonised - or burnt at the stake! Either way he would have sustained with stoical courage.

⁷³ Orwell's 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 155.

⁷⁴ Minutes of the Eastern Services Committee, 24 November 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁵ Orwell's Annual Increment Report, 1 September 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

An unusual colleague : but a mind , and a spirit, of real and distinguished worth.⁷⁶

This report exists as one of the most objective and honest evaluations of Orwell's mind and spirit. It is uniquely important, not only because it enshrines on record, for the first time, some of the qualities for which Orwell would be remembered after his death some seven years later, but also because it is the only surviving record of his performance by a senior colleague. It is remarkable that, despite being a man of the establishment and having been swamped with complaints against Orwell, Williams possessed the sensibility and the courage to understand and appreciate - even salute - a member of staff whom others had found difficult and stubborn. On his 'Leaving Note', Williams re-iterated his appreciation of Orwell. 'I cannot speak too highly of his character or of his attainments. He is of a rare moral dignity: his literary and artistic taste is unerring. He leaves at his own request to the regret of the whole Department.' When asked, if he would recommend Orwell for suitable re-employment, he wrote 'Without reservations.'⁷⁷

Immediately after resigning, Orwell joined the *Tribune* as its literary editor. More importantly, he started work on *Animal Farm* which was to become his first major successful book. His next novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, was going to be a major landmark, not only in Orwelliana but also in twentieth century English literature and post-war political history of the world. Indeed, it remains to be seen whether the 'two wasted years', as Orwell had himself described them, were really fruitless or whether they exerted some influence on his growth as a writer. It needs to be examined whether his perception of events and expression of themes did undergo a change in such a way as to contribute effectively to the making of his last two, and most successful, books.

⁷⁶ Orwell's Annual Confidential Report, 7 August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁷ Orwell's 'Leaving Note'. 20 November 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

ORWELL AT WAR

Indeed the very word 'wireless' calls up a picture either of roaring dictators or of genteel throaty voices announcing that three of our aircraft have failed to return. Poetry on the air sounds like the Muses in striped trousers.

George Orwell, 'Poetry and the Microphone'.

Orwell's job was essentially a propaganda job. Here the use of the term propaganda needs explaining. It is often claimed, not least by the B.B.C., that whereas the Axis powers broadcast propaganda in the sense that it sought 'to pit group against group,...to undermine the individual's faith in his habitual standards of judgement, to arouse in each man's heart disillusionment, uncertainty, and eventually panic',¹ the B.B.C. broadcast only the truth because it maintained parity between real events and their subsequent reporting. This view is contradicted by Maurice Gorham, Head of the North American Service during the War. He interprets the term differently; 'even the most truthful broadcasting becomes propaganda as soon as it sets out to influence listeners thinking, attitudes, and actions...'² Whether the real intention is disseminating information or providing entertainment, boosting the morale or counter-propaganda, as long as there is a desired motive to broadcasting, however just or noble, the end result is propaganda.

The Indian Service aimed at propaganda along the lines Gorham has suggested. The key word pervasive during the time when the Service was created was 'propaganda'. Even Bokhari appealed to the B.B.C. in propagandist terms. He wrote a letter to Rendall, outlining the 'method of work' for the Indian Service, and sent copies of it to Clark and Tallents. In it he stated,

The people in Great Britain in general, and the B.B.C. in particular, must realise that India is not a bore and that, if it is a bore, it can be changed and it must be changed...They must do their best to see that it does not slip out of their hands any further, and the part that has slipped out - mentally if not physically - must be brought back into the fold.

If ever therefore there was a time for you to make an effort to win over the hearts of the Indians ...it is now. Let us realise that broadcasting is the most effective means for this purpose. The days of iron are gone. These are the days of ether. Propaganda means creating a demand for certain ideas and supplying them. Let's have those ideas and let's supply them.³

¹ C.J. Rolo, *Radio Goes to War*, (London, 1943), p. 20. See also *B.B.C. HandBooks 1940-42 and B.B.C. Yearbooks 1943-46*.

² Maurice Gorham, *Broadcasting and Television since 1900*, (London, 1952), p. 10

³ Letter from Bokhari to Rendall, 22 May 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

It is to this sense of the word 'propaganda' that Orwell's work corresponded. However, the Service realised the impossibility of evolving a definitive policy, a long term vision of how propaganda to India should be masterminded. To begin with, programmes were devised according to recommendations made by R.W. Brock, Head of the India Section of the M.O.I., in early 1941. He had found three sections of Indian society particularly worthy of special consideration - groups whose support was crucial in relation to the British war effort. Brock identified them thus,

1. The intelligentsia, with whom political considerations are predominant.
2. The commercial and industrial elements, most of whom are engaged directly or indirectly in supplying war materials.
3. The Fighting Forces and the sections of the population from which these are recruited: chiefly of course the Punjab.⁴

Two more groups were added to the target audience once the actual broadcasting commenced - students, and women living in towns and cities. Indeed, all these listeners had requirements in common, but it was considered essential to include material with a special appeal to each.

In his early days, Orwell seemed to have been unaware of the veiled objectives of his job. He, however, soon realised them, formulated his own propaganda policy and got on with the task entrusted to him. He was given no responsibility for talks during the probation period. Rendall ensured 'that he spends the intervening time in planning the "Through Eastern Eyes" series with the assistance of the I.P.O., and in completing his training by watching some of the more experienced Empire Talks Assistants at work.'⁵ In the winter of 1941, he was put in charge of all programmes going out to India in English.

His talks were broadcast under the successive titles of "We Speak to India" and "Through Eastern Eyes" ... everyday between 14.30 and 15.15 GMT. They were introduced when the third expansion of the Indian Service came into operation. Bokhari had nurtured ambitious plans for the Service from the very start. By August '41, the Service had doubled its May output of ten-minute broadcasts, and by October, this had been increased to forty-five minutes. In the new schedule ten minutes were

⁴ R.W. Brock's 'Memorandum' titled 'B.B.C. Programmes for India: Sections of the Population to be Influenced', 20 February 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

⁵ Rendall to Darling, 28 August 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

allocated to topical news and the remaining time was given to talks, interviews, discussions, eye-witness accounts and commentaries on subjects of Indian interest. At first, it borrowed many programmes from other Services (for example a programme called 'My life in the Theatre' was borrowed every Monday from the American Service), but once Orwell took over, programmes began to be produced indigenously and the momentum of production built up steadily. He looked after contributions emanating from two different sources. On the one hand, he had talks from the I.P.O.'s department, on the other he worked with Darling in organising talks generally intended for the Empire Service, which the Indian Service was happy to borrow. With the passing of time, Bokhari became virtually in control of all broadcasts to India, especially after the Indian Service moved to 200 Oxford Street. It was Williams who effected the redivision of work. He proposed to Rendall that it was 'logical to concentrate the programme work of the Hindustani Service i.e. everything except news and news commentary - in the hands of the I.P.O.'⁶ Darling seems to have been content with the supervision of news and news related talks for the Empire.

The Hindustani Service, like the B.B.C., brought together two hostile groups on one platform. It compelled fierce patriots from Britain and India to come face to face with each other. While the British were propelled by the immediate urgency of war against Fascism, the Indians were preoccupied by the long drawn battle for independence. The British wanted victory, the Indians demanded freedom. The two views were not necessarily convergent, but it was the political urgency of the situation that motivated them to work in unison.

Broadly speaking, Orwell's programmes fell into six categories.⁷ The first, and largest of all, comprised programmes of a general nature. The content was invariably an appreciation of British and Indian values with the view to celebrating and complementing the usefulness of the two countries to each other. These broadcasts allowed producers to be flexible and experimental in their approach. The series "How it Works" discussed the functioning of the British Museum, Hospitals, Courts, The House of Lords, Rural District Councils, the Home Guard, the British Press and the Post

⁶ Williams to Rendall. 14 May 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

⁷ All programmes listed above have been carefully compiled from *London Calling: The Overseas Journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, published weekly, and cross-checked with the existing record in the B.B.C. Archives. Many scripts of programmes have survived on microfiche catalogues. A record of them also exists in the form requisition slips made for studio bookings. Most requisition slips can be found enclosed in files of individual speakers.

Office. In "Meet My Friend" and "A Day in my Life", Mulk Raj Anand initiated a series of interviews and brought to the microphone a British soldier, a munitions worker, an Indian technician, a canteen worker, a merchant seaman, a farm worker and a hospital nurse. The series 'The Man in the Street' had J.M. Tambimuttu, the Ceylonese poet, speaking on Boys Weeklies', and Venu Chitale interviewing Kingsley Martin. The programme 'I'd like it explained' discussed wide ranging subjects like 'Desert and Poles', 'Air Transport', 'Public Health and War', 'Education', 'Aviation', 'Female Emancipation', 'Co-operative Movement', and 'Future of Parliament'. Then there was 'Anniversaries of the Month' which commemorated special dates throughout the year. Noel Sircar ran a long-running 'Film Commentary'; Sridhar Telkar discussed people, places and events in 'Behind the Headlines'. Ideas like Liberty, Democracy, Trade Unionism, Nationalism, Progress, and Dietetics were discussed in 'What It Means to Me' and 'Today and Yesterday'. In the series 'My Debt to India' people like E.M. Forster, April Darling (daughter of Malcolm Darling), and businessman A.P. Blair shared their experiences and fondness of India directly with Indians.

It was the second category that delighted Orwell the most. Designed to project the best of British life and literature, these programmes were predominantly literary. A good number of series like 'These Names will live', 'Masterpieces of English Literature', 'Modern Poetry', 'Calling All Students', 'Great Dramatists' and 'Landmarks of American Literature' were produced for students of Indian Universities, particularly those of the Punjab, Lahore and Calcutta which had well established courses on English literature. Having procured the syllabi of these Universities, Bokhari had handed them over to Orwell. Further, there were programmes like 'These Names Will Live', 'Some Books', 'Books that have changed the World', 'Literature Between the Two Wars' and 'Voice', which targeted both students as well as the intelligentsia. An indulgent producer, Orwell was brimming over with ideas for such programmes and organised discussions, poetry reading, short story reading, and exercises in literary and textual criticism and assembled a coterie of talented people. From the contemporary literary world, he had writers contributing like E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot, Herbert Read, William Empson, Cyril Connolly, George Woodcock, John Lehmann, Reginald Reynolds, John Atkins, Mulk Raj Anand, Cedric Dover, Naryana Menon, K.S. Shelvankar, Rayner Heppenstall, Jack Common and Alex Comfort. Well known poets like Stephen Spender, Henry Treece, Edmund Blunden and Inez Holden, (he once got the actress Vida Hope to recite poems of Holden because her voice was found unsuitable for the microphone) contributed, although Michael Foot and Osbert Sitwell, however,

declined Orwell's invitation; and when asked to permit the use of an excerpt from *The Doctor's Dilemma*, Bernard Shaw replied, 'I veto it ruthlessly.'

The socio-political-cultural category was markedly different from the first two. The seven part 'Story of Fascism' carried insights into the history of Fascism. This was supplemented by 'The Rise of the Nazi Party', 'New Weapons of War' and 'The Leaders'. Orwell organised discussions on social changes brought about by the war in talks on rationing, clothes, food habits and popular literature through talks like 'Money and Guns' and 'English War Conditions'. Programmes like 'The Future of India', 'India 2000', and 'India and the Four Freedoms' focused on the future of India, tactfully by-passing her present problems. The series 'Open Letters' addressed letters to 'an Indian Quisling', 'a Marxist', 'a Conservative', 'a Chinese Guerrilla' and 'a Pacifist'. The aim of 'In the Public Eye' was to bring distinguished celebrities over to the microphone. Under 'Imaginary Interviews' Orwell made up a conversation with Jonathan Swift; Monica Dickens with her grandfather Charles Dickens; Professor Andrade with Issac Newton; Robert Neumann with Goethe; Ivor Brown with William Shakespeare; and Julian Huxley with his grandfather T. Henry Huxley.

Otherwise a shy man and not frequently seen in the company of women, Orwell interacted with many women contributors. He had Lady Grigg, wife of Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War, broadcasting a weekly programme titled 'Women Generally Speaking'. The intelligent Princess Indira of Kapurthala was the only Indian woman to be a House of Commons' lobby correspondent at that time.⁸ Her weekly discourses on the House of Commons were popular with Indian audiences. She 'is doing extraordinarily well in all her broadcasts', wrote the head of an aristocratic family in Simla. 'The speaker seemed to have a very good command of English', wrote another listener from Poona.⁹ Other series for women consisted in programmes like 'In Your Kitchen' and 'Women in the West'.

Music proved to be the greatest favourite of listeners. Initially it received limited time on the air, but gained unprecedented space in the second and third years of the Service. In 1943, Brander insisted on broadcasting more music to beat Germany's claims that the Germans displayed a higher cultural level because they broadcast 'the best music of all

⁸ Princess Indira was the daughter of His Highness Tikka Sahib of Kapurthala, Punjab.

⁹ 'Internal Circulating Memo' from Laurence Brander to E.S.D. titled 'Reactions to "The Debate Continues"', 6 January 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

civilised countries.¹⁰ Musical programmes at the Indian Service were compered by Princess Indira and Naryana Menon. Whereas the Princess was well versed in western classical and popular music, Menon was more interested in highlighting the differences between Western and Indian music. The credit of introducing Carnatic music, the classical music of South India, to the B.B.C. goes to Menon. Series like 'The Music I like', 'Favourite Movements', 'Musical contrasts', 'Great Violinists', and 'Discussions on European and Indian Music' were beamed in regular succession. Another popular production was 'Radio Theatre'. It broadcast one-act plays, excerpts from classical British and Indian drama, and adaptations of short stories and other popular fiction. There was an adaptation of *Malati Madhav*, a Sanskrit play written by Bhavbhuti; *Vision of Vasvadtta*; Anatole France's *Crainquebelle*; Ignazio Silone's *The Fox* and *The Emperor's New Clothes*. (In 1946, the Service produced an adaptation of Orwell's *Animal Farm*.) Every week Bokhari organised classes for English enthusiasts with R.W. Brock in 'I Speak English'.

The fourth group was represented by specialised series covering technical subjects. These included programmes on science for which Orwell had an equally impressive list - Professor Gordon Childe, J.D. Bernal, Joseph Needham, A.C.G. Eagerton, Ritchie Calder, J.G. Crowther, C.H. Waddington and Amabel Williams-Ellis. For his talks on geography, Orwell introduced Horrabin as the man who had drawn maps for Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*. He persuaded some Indian newspapers to publish world maps coinciding with Horrabin's talks. This proved a fruitful exercise. Many listeners were motivated to listen in to Horrabin and appreciated him. A report from Delhi stated that 'the talker had an extremely interesting manner of explaining the background of war in terms of geography.' From Trichinopoly came another report - 'Horrabin's talk "The World is Round" was of outstanding interest'.¹¹ Every fourth Tuesday of the month, the Indian High Commissioner, Sir Aziz Ul Haque talked about 'The Indians in Great Britain.' Every Sunday 'The Brains Trust' was broadcast. Whenever occasion demanded, King George VI; the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill; and the Secretary of State for India, Leo Amery spoke to Indians.

The last and most important group was directly related to politics. Programmes like 'The Debate Continues', News, War Commentaries, political discussions and transmission of war developments targeted political propaganda at what was thought a hostile, misinformed, uninformed, but often highly intelligent audience. Programmes

¹⁰ Brander's report, 17 February 1944. B.B.C. Archives.

¹¹ Orwell's Letter to Horrabin, 11 May 1942. B.B.C. Archives

of this nature were overtly propagandist, in that, they were written from the Allies' point of view and sought to clarify and justify the Allied conduct of war.

Thus Orwell made an immense if unspectacular contribution to the Indian Service. He commissioned scripts, edited them, rewrote some and introduced many like the series 'My Debt to India'. He adapted plays and short stories to suit broadcasting specifications of the wartime B.B.C. Every individual programme or series had a distinct flavour of its own and Orwell had to consider other technical, stylistic and linguistic limitations apart from conforming to censorship regulations. With regard to the short story, he explained to Heppenstall, 'The chief difficulty [in featurizing a story] is picking suitable stories, as they must be *a.* approximately right length, *b.* have a strong plot, *c.* not too many characters & *d.* not be too local, as these are for India.'¹²

The original number of scripts written by Orwell was far greater than the sixteen printed by William J. West as *George Orwell: The War Broadcasts*. Many are lost and the few that survive are not all likely to see the light of the day simply because their filing was erroneous and their authorship is difficult to ascertain. For instance, included within the scripts of Sridhar Telkar, there is^a separate page that reads: 'This programme was broadcast on 24 April 1942, Eastern Services, Red Network. It consisted of Talks on Sir Stafford Cripps by Sridhar Telkar, Shakespeare by William Empson, Hitler by George Orwell.'¹³ It records that the talks were followed by readings from *Mein Kampf* by Marius Goring and *Shakespeare* by Godfrey Kenton. The script of Orwell's talk was not found despite elaborate search. Evidently, what West has published is only a representative selection of surviving talks by Orwell.

One of Orwell's most important contributions, in the political category, was the writing of the 'Weekly War Review.'¹⁴ The production of this thirteen minute talk, broadcast

¹² Orwell, 'Letter to Rayner Heppenstall, *CEJL, II*, p. 348

¹³ 'A Note' listed within the scripts of Sridhar Telkar. B.B.C. Archives.

¹⁴ Other terms were used to describe the News Review. In 1985, W.J. West published 46 scripts of Orwell as *George Orwell : The War Commentaries*. The B.B.C. used the term 'News Review' for Orwell's Saturday War Commentaries. Even *London Calling* listed them as 'Weekly War Review'. Peter Davison thinks that a third term, 'Newsletter', was simultaneously used. Perhaps, this is only partially true. In the beginning the term newsletter was used as a synonym for what West calls the war commentaries. However, by 1942, the Indian Service was broadcasting in as many as five Indian regional languages - Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati and Punjabi. The term newsletter was gradually adapted to refer to the Hindustani Service's regional broadcasts. Amongst other things, they included translations of Orwell's news reviews. This is abundantly clear from

on Saturday afternoons, (to be heard in India in late evenings) formed one of the most consistent and least publicised aspects of his job. The suggestion of starting a war commentary to India came from J.R. Firth, and coincided with Orwell's arrival at the Section. Having established a warm relationship with the newly appointed Eastern Services Director, Firth enumerated his views about Indian broadcasting in a letter to Rushbrook Williams which Williams passed to Bokhari. An 'excellent idea, Indian war commentary is needed', agreed the I.P.O.¹⁵ He suggested that 'data must be supplied to the Indian or Indians who will give us talks in the series.' Who started writing the commentary in the beginning, it is not known, but the task was soon transferred to Orwell and became an inherent part of his job.

From the political point of view Orwell's entry into the Indian Service was of great importance. In July 1941, Hitler's forces invaded Russia. Although war on the Russian front was distant and remote as far as India was concerned, its consequences on the sub-continent were far reaching. Almost overnight, the British Government changed its official policy towards the Communist Party of India. A B.B.C. internal circulation memo titled 'India - Relaxation on ban on Communist Party' sent by Rushbrook Williams to the Indian Editor and the Indian Programme Officer, amongst other departments, said

The following guidance has been received from the India Office:

2. The Communist Party in India differs from the Congress Party in its methods rather than in its objectives. It has not rallied to 'British rule': but to the war effort.
3. The announcement [made by the Government of India about the Communist Party] illustrates:
 - (a) The manner in which the Government of India is giving opportunity to every shade of opinion which is prepared to support the war effort.
 - (b) The manner in which opposition to the Congress Party's passive policy is showing itself on the Left as well as on the Right.¹⁶

Bokhari's letter to Telkar, dated 20.2.42. 'My dear Telkar', it says, 'Early in March we hope to start the Marathi Newsletter and we are planning to broadcast this Newsletter on Thursdays at 4.15 to 4.30 p.m. B.S.T... The English version will be prepared by Eric Blair and you will be asked to translate it into Marathi and read it over the air.' In an explanatory note in his manuscript diary of 1949, Orwell wrote: 'In 1943, when I was working for the B.B.C., one of the weekly 'newsletters' I was responsible for was the Marathi one. these newsletters - actually news commentaries issued once or twice a week in minor languages in which it was impossible to broadcast daily - were composed by someone in the B.B.C., then translated by a speaker of that language & broadcast by him, under the supervision of a censor'. See *CEJL, IV*, pp. 576-7.

¹⁵ Bokhari's manuscript note on Firth's letter dated 31 October 1941 to Williams. B.B.C. Archives.

¹⁶ Internal Circulating Memo from E.S.D., 22 July 1942. B.B.C. Archives

More importantly, Russia revealed to Britain the hitherto classified and jealously guarded information about Subhas Bose and his journey to Berlin. Bose's activities had persistently intrigued the B.B.C. and it spared no effort in tracing his whereabouts. In a significant entry in his War-time Diary, Orwell manifested his own fascination with Bose's activities besides also revealing the desperation of the B.B.C. officials:

The mystery of Subhas Chandra Bose's whereabouts remains impenetrable. The leading facts are:

1. At the time of his disappearance, the British Government declared that he had gone to Berlin.
2. A voice, identified as his, broadcasts on the Free India Radio (Germany)
3. The Italian radio has claimed at least once that Bose is in Japanese territory.
4. Indians here seem on the whole to think that he is in Japanese territory.
5. Escape to Japanese territory would have been physically easier than escape in the other direction, though the latter would not be impossible.
6. The Vichy report of his death in a plane accident between Bangkok and Tokyo, though almost certainly mistaken, seemed to suggest that Vichy quarters took it for granted that he was in Japanese territory.
7. According to engineers it would not be impossible to broadcast his voice scrambled from Tokyo to Berlin and there unscramble and rebroadcast it.

There are innumerable other considerations and endless rumours. The two questions hardest to answer are: if Bose is in Japanese territory, why this elaborate effort to make it appear that he is in Berlin, where he is comparatively ineffectual? If Bose is in German territory, how did he get there? Of course it is quite reasonably likely that he got there with Russian connivance. Then the question arises, if the Russians had previously passed Bose through, did they afterwards tip us off when they came into the war on our side?¹⁷

Like other British members at the Empire Section, Orwell took an immediate dislike to the Bengali leader. Not surprisingly, he called Bose 'potentially as important a quisling as Laval or Wang Ching Wei.'¹⁸ What is most interesting is that Bose came to assume the role of Orwell's benefactor almost by default. His appearance, on Free India Radio, gave to Orwell's political broadcasts a purpose and a direction which they would have otherwise lacked. Although Orwell never once mentioned Bose by name in his War Reviews, his political argument almost always appeared to answer Bose and his German counterparts.

Mutual suspicion and rivalry between Berlin and London surfaced in the games that the propagandists played from across the channel. Assuming that Bose was in Japan, Orwell attacked him in April 1942, as one of Japan's 'paid Indian mouthpieces'¹⁹.

¹⁷ Orwell, 'War-time Diary, CEJL, II, p. 476-7.

¹⁸ Orwell, 'Introduction', *Talking to India*, (London, 1943), p. 8

¹⁹ Orwell's 'War Review' 4 April 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

Within a month Bose retaliated by using literally the same terminology but without referring to its origin. He defended himself: 'Britain's paid propagandists have been calling me an enemy agent,' and insisted that he needed no credentials when he spoke to his countrymen. Bose's whole life - 'one long persistent, uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism' - was the best guarantee of his '*bona fides*'.²⁰ Although his talk was addressed to Indians, it was as much an answer to Orwell and the B.B.C. as it was to his primary audience.

That Orwell accepted Bose as his political adversary was revealed by him, by his own admission, in *Talking to India*. This book, containing some talks produced by the Indian Service, was edited by him and published in 1943. One section of the book carried a representative selection of the Indian Service's non-political talks while the other was devoted to discourses of 'a more definitely political type.' In this section Orwell chose to print five extracts from his Saturday War reviews, and 'for the purpose of comparison', included a talk by Bose. He gave his reasons:

This has been chosen because it represents, as it were, the high-water mark of Axis propaganda. The general run of Axis propaganda to India is poor stuff, but Bose...is in a different category, and his speech is worth examining in detail...

There is a difference between honest and dishonest propaganda, and Bose's speech, with its enormous suppressions, obviously comes under the latter heading. We are not afraid to let these samples of our own and Axis broadcasts stand side by side.²¹

Orwell's scripts were characteristic of his earlier work. Straightforward, documentary and factual, they were subtly anti-fascist and lacked the rhetoric and emotional tone of Bose's broadcasts. Orwell had genuinely come to believe that Bose ought to be opposed because not only was he doing harm to the chances of Allied victory, but also hampering the cause of India's Independence. At this stage, Orwell's anti-fascist sentiments became an overriding obsession, so even when he was vehemently opposed to the British Government's India policy, he supported in principle the need for broadcasting political propaganda to India.

From the point of view of the war, the timing of Orwell's appointment was even more significant. No sooner had he completed six months at the B.B.C. than a second dangerous front opened in the Far East. On 7 December 1941, Japan bombed Pearl

²⁰ Subhas Chandra Bose's radio recording quoted as 'Talk in English' (Berlin, May 1942) in *Talking to India*, pp. 158-9

²¹ Orwell, 'Introduction', *Talking to India*, pp. 8-9. Orwell's War-time diary has several allusions to Bose. Clearly Bose's activities intrigued him but he chose not to refer to him by name in his war reviews, despite having substantial knowledge of his work.

Harbour and blew up the American battleship *Arizona* resulting in the death of 2,403 men. The British navy also received significant set-backs. The battleship *Prince of Wales* and cruiser *HMS Repulse*, were sunk. An angry America entered the War. As well as becoming the scene of physical warfare on a large scale, the Far East perhaps heralded the worst phase of the war for the Allies. Within days Japan captured Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaya, Borneo, Thailand, Singapore and Burma. Her northerly advance, along the west coast of the Pacific Ocean, continued unabated until she brought war to India's doorstep.

A great sense of emergency was created in India, Britain and the B.B.C. Not only was Britain confounded by the victories of Japan, she had to take urgent action to deal with India's fierce resentment of Imperial rule which itself had become a great force to reckon with. Brander's letters, copiously recording negative feelings of Indians, even tested the patience of Rushbrook Williams and obliged him to be apologetic. 'It is regrettable that Axis broadcasts are so popular but the side that looks like winning always is popular until the tide turns.'²² As a cumulative result of the impact of German propaganda including Bose's broadcasts, Japan's military victories, the deteriorating political situation in India and strong British public opinion against the Raj, Churchill was forced to send Stafford Cripps to New Delhi with a package of reform measures.

The Cripps mission was the most crucial war-time attempt to end the Indo-British stalemate. Cripps himself wrote a personal letter to the M.O.I. in order to give his visit salience on the air. 'In view of Axis propaganda attempting to prejudice my mission, it is essential that the best possible presentation should be given every day from the B.B.C. and on Indian broadcasts from Delhi.' He wanted the Indian Service to combat the Axis propaganda effectively, and therefore suggested entrusting broadcasting to speakers who spoke fluent Hindi and Urdu. He urged, 'I beg of you to give this matter your personal and immediate attention.'²³

The mission invited intervention at the very highest level. Norman Collins sent strict directions to all talks producers of the Empire Service, including Orwell, William Empson and Gerard Bullet,²⁴ to refer to the E.S.D. 'any reference whatsoever to

²² Rushbrook Williams to Brander, 24 June 1942, B.B.C. Archives

²³ Stafford Cripps' letter to the Minister of Information, March 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

²⁴ Gerald Bullett. (1893-1958) A writer, he was employed between 1940-43 as Talks producer in the B.B.C. Talks Department. He organised talks for the African Service.

Stafford Cripps or to his mission...before being allowed on the air.'²⁵ Rushbrook Williams set up a special cell, 'a skeleton organisation' as he called it, and made Anthony Weymouth the "Project Manager" to oversee the mission.²⁶ He circulated a carefully constructed two-page document on Cripps' background to the staff and wrote a memo a day, sometimes even two or three, with elaborate instructions. Orwell was perhaps the first producer to talk about Cripps, and devoted considerable space to him in his 'War Review' of 14 March 1942. (It was sent to the special cell for scrutiny) It is interesting to deconstruct Orwell's reporting of the Cripps mission with a view to delineating just how much his view of Cripps was based on his own judgement and how much was coloured by, or dependent on, the B.B.C. directives.

Orwell opens his 'Review' by highlighting the importance of the mission. 'The most important event of this week is not military but political.' In keeping with the E.S.D.'s directive of 11 March, asking all producers 'to refrain from any...discussion of or enlargement on the PM's announcement' [of Government plans following Cripps arrival in India], he steers clear of any involvement in policy matters. '...it would be unwise to make a guess at them', and comes directly to the point of building Cripps as the most suitable man to conduct the negotiations. Orwell's reconstruction of 'Notes on Stafford Cripps' sent by the E.S.D., demonstrates the ease with which he incorporated his own vision of Cripps in his script, as much as it displays the journalistic speed with which he produced it. He wrote it within 24 hours, had it typed, and dispatched it to the Special Cell whilst continuing to oversee his normal scheduled programmes.

Whereas the 'Notes' report Cripps as belonging to no political party, Orwell recognises him 'as the ablest man in the British socialist movement', giving away 'most of his earnings to the support of his weekly socialist paper, the *Tribune* (also dear to Orwell). Whereas the 'Notes' provided an elaborate profile of Cripps along lines that Indians would have liked to hear - 'He is a teetotaler [sic] and a vegetarian. He eats neither meat nor fish, nor even eggs. Simplicity, almost austerity, is coupled with a deeply religious outlook on life. He is a member of the Church of England, but believes in religion rather than in dogma',²⁷ Orwell preferred to summarise his character in a line. 'He is a man of great personal austerity, a vegetarian, a teetotaller and a devout practising Christian.' Evidently, the soul of Orwell's reporting is brevity, a skill he was going to make good use of while writing his best work, *Animal Farm*.

²⁵ Internal Circulating Memo by Norman Collins. 20 March 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

²⁶ Rushbrook Williams letter to C.(O.S.) 16 March 1942, B.B.C. Archives

²⁷ 'Notes on Stafford Cripps', (no date) from E.S.D. B.B.C. Archives.

He then goes on to elucidate Cripps' relationship with the Labour Party, which, although forming excellent propaganda material for India, would have not made the best of broadcasts on the Home Service at that particular time.

The outstanding thing about Sir Stafford Cripps, however, has always been his utter unwillingness to compromise his political principles. He has sometimes made mistakes, but his worst enemy has never suggested that he cared anything for money, popularity or personal power. About seven years ago, he became dissatisfied with the too cautious policy of the Labour Party, and founded the Socialist League, an organisation within the Labour Party, aiming at a more radical Socialist policy, and a firmer front against the Fascist aggression... This brought him into conflict with the official heads of the Labour Party, who did not at that time grasp the full menace of Fascism... However, when the Churchill Government was formed in 1940, it was recognised on all sides that no one was as suitable as Sir Stafford Cripps for the British Ambassadorship in Moscow... Everyone in Britain is delighted to see such an important mission as the one which Cripps is now undertaking conferred upon a man whom even his critics admit to be gifted, trustworthy and self-sacrificing.²⁸

Despite supporting the British Government's India policy on Cripps, Orwell's private opinion was different. Like some of his Indian friends, he felt that an amicable settlement was possible, but he was also aware of the incongruities. Significantly, he started a second war-time diary on 14 March 1942, presumably a day or two after he had written his first story on Cripps. In his first entry, he wrote an important aside on the situation and criticised the 'provincialism of the British people who can't grasp that India is of any importance.' His suspicion even extended to the honesty of the British Government. He wrote,

Those who may know something [about Cripps' powers] will disclose nothing and one can draw hints out of them only by indirect means. E.g. I propose in my newsletters, having been instructed to give Cripps a build-up, to build him up as a political extremist. This draws the warning, 'don't go too far in that direction', which raises the presumption that the higher-ups haven't much hope of full independence being offered to India.²⁹

Consistently, his diary recorded the upheavals associated with the problem of India in general and the Cripps mission in particular. On 21 March, he received a memo from Williams to 'now start building up Cripps not so much as a person as the exponent of

²⁸ See Orwell's 'War Review', 14 March 1942. B.B.C. Archives. Orwell genuinely believed in the leadership of Cripps even before he was sent to India. He thought that Cripps was a 'gentleman' and wrote to *Partisan Review* that the British people saw 'a potential leader in Cripps'. He voiced the possibility of Cripps' becoming the premier if Churchill had to go and discussed reasons for the Socialist Leader's popularity. See pp. 243-45 and 249-50

²⁹ See Orwell's 'War-time Diary', 14 March 1942, *CEJL*, II, p. 464

HM G[overnment]'s policy, with the entire goodwill of the Gov[ernmen]t and British people behind him in seeking a solution of the problem.'³⁰ Orwell wrote,

News coming in from all parts of the world testified to the goodwill with which Sir Stafford Cripps' mission to India is regarded...It is generally felt here that if any man has the ability and the insight to approach India's constitutional problem in the right spirit, that man is Sir Stafford Cripps. The British Cabinet has shown the highest political wisdom in making the appointment. When Sir Stafford meets the Indian leaders, they may find themselves to be really kindred spirits, working together for the defence of India and for a better world.

...He carries with him the united support and good wishes of the whole government and people of Britain.³¹

Orwell's review of 28 March had nothing to say on Cripps. He left the issue entirely in the hands of fellow broadcasters and concentrated on other pressing matters. In the next week he returned to Cripps, but only to discredit the Japanese.

Should the negotiations end in a satisfactory settlement the Japanese,...will open up a campaign of libel against Pandit Nehru and the others,...Should the negotiations fail, they will praise Pandit Nehru to the skies as the man who was not deceived by British promises and who is struggling for the independence of the Indian peoples. Which line they take will depend on the outcome of the negotiations, but...it is important for Indian listeners to be prepared for it, and not deceived by it.³²

As Orwell had expected, when negotiations broke down and the mission was unsuccessful, he received the following memo from Williams:

B.B.C. Internal Memo
Follow up guidance from the India Office
Suggestions for treatment of Indian affairs.

13 April 1942

1) We should avoid a defensive attitude and should stress the positive gains of the Mission.

a) The ground has been cleared for a future settlement.

b) Political opinion in India has been converted to the importance of resisting a Japanese invasion: and Japanese "Asia for the Asiatics" propaganda has received a severe setback in India...

d) The excellent tone and temper of the reactions has cleared the political atmosphere in India.³³

Within hours of receiving them, Orwell carefully prepared his 'Review'. Although the tone of his interpretation accords with the B.B.C.'s point of view, his philosophy

³⁰ Internal Circulating Memo from Williams, 21 March 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

³¹ Orwell's 'War Review' 21 March 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

³² Orwell's 'War Review' 4 April 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

³³ B.B.C. Internal Circulating Memo from E.S.D. 13 April 1942. B.B.C. Archives

and reasons for propaganda stem from an honest and earnest understanding of the Indian situation. He takes this opportunity of exposing Japanese strategy.

there is a general feeling that the failure was not complete, in so much that the negotiations have clarified the issue...there is no ill-feeling on either side and no suggestion that either Sir Stafford Cripps or the Indian political leaders were acting other than in good faith...Even Mr, Gandhi, though remaining faithful to his programme of non-violence, has not suggested that he wishes to see the Japanese in India...Mr. Nehru has not ceased to be anti-British, but he is even more emphatically anti-Japanese...For even at the worst, India may get its independence from Britain, whereas the idea of India...winning its liberty in a Fascist-ruled world is laughable.³⁴

He goes on to prove that his were 'not empty words', and that the attitude of the Indian masses 'can undoubtedly make a great difference to the outcome of the war.' He quotes as exemplary the Chinese peasants' resistance to Japan's invasion of 1937, and likewise invokes 'Indian popular enthusiasm...to be a thorn in the Japanese side' in winning the present war.³⁵

Orwell listened in to Cripps' broadcast speech from All India Radio (re-broadcast by the B.B.C. for Britain) and thought that some of the 'more exalted passages' in Cripps' speeches appeared to have 'caught certain inflexions of voice from Churchill'. He connected this to Churchill's personal influence on Cripps, but more importantly, to the fact that Cripps had agreed to visit India because of Churchill's persuasion and had carried 'such bad terms to offer.'³⁶ When Cripps returned, Orwell went to the House of Commons to hear the India debate and was suitably impressed with Cripps' speech. Subsequently, he met Cripps on two occasions. Interestingly, they talked about Bose whom Cripps described as 'a thoroughly bad egg.' When Orwell said that he thought Bose was 'subjectively pro-Fascist', Cripps remarked that the Bengali leader was only 'pro-Subhas. ...He will do anything he thinks that will help his own career along.' Orwell was not quite sure. He demurred - 'I am not certain, on the evidence of B[ose]'s broadcasts that this is so.'³⁷ Evidently, one great patriot was saluting the other, no matter how great

³⁴ Orwell's 'War Review' 18 April 1942, B.B.C. Archives. His personal opinion, however, was different. In the *Partisan Review* he wrote that Cripps went to India with an offer which was bound to be turned down. 'I can't put in print the little I know about the inner history of the Cripps-Nehru negotiations, and in any case the story is too complex to be written about in a letter of this length.' *CEJL, II*, p. 244. Orwell did know the inside story but was prevented in disclosing it because of censorship regulations.

³⁵ As a direct outcome of this, Orwell wrote an article 'Asia for the Asiatics' in the *Observer*, May 1942. A copy of the article was still awaited when the thesis was submitted.

³⁶ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL, II*, p. 473.

³⁷ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL, II*, p. 481

his ideological differences were with the other. When Orwell went to see Cripps the second time, he took William Empson, Norman Cameron and Guy Burgess with him.

Throughout the period of his 'War Reviews', Orwell attended to a third front. He had to satisfy the minds and hearts of thousands of Indians who were anxiously monitoring the progress of the War in North Africa and the Mediterranean where a great number of Indian troops were fighting a long drawn ^{out} battle with ^{Germany} and Italy. The fortunes of the Allies greatly fluctuated in these regions, but it was also here, in the sands of the Libyan Desert, that Britain won her first major victories and the performance of Indian soldiers was commendable. Ironically though, in November 1942, when Orwell was just beginning to feel despair in his war work, events seemed to be favouring Britain and helping the B.B.C. in its propaganda efforts. For the first time Brander also rejoiced. The contents of one of his letters towards the end of 1942 to Williams reflected the rising morale of the Indian Service. 'Today we can have every set in India tuned in to the B.B.C. ...Listeners will tune in to London for the latest news. The news is of victory.'³⁸ However, Orwell's commentaries were soon going to be discontinued and figuratively, he was going to exclude himself from the celebrations.

Although Orwell's 'Weekly War Reviews' are supposed to have started in November 1941, it is highly unlikely that he wrote scripts for the first few transmissions. He had been on sick leave between 14 and 27 October and again between 1 and 27 December. (The second time, as we have seen, he was away in Dorset) Certainly the broadcast of 20 December 1941, mentioned as the first in the series in *George Orwell : The War Commentaries* (1985), could not have been his work. Peter Davison, who is preparing an eleven-volume edition of *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, thinks that West's reproduction of Orwell's news commentaries is inaccurate for a number of reasons.

His collection omits texts for three broadcasts (29.11.41, 7.3.42, and 21.11.42); includes three scripts which cannot, or can only doubtfully, be attributed to Orwell (2.5.42, 23.5.42, and 11.7.42); fails to note that the script for 6.6.42 was not transmitted; and does not record five or six occasions when newsletters were broadcast to India for which scripts have not survived. Orwell seems to have been responsible for 54 or 55 scripts for transmission to India, not the 46 of the 49 printed by Mr. West.³⁹

Davison also writes that apart from his usual news reviews, Orwell wrote thirty commentaries for Malaya (of which he read twenty-eight), and nineteen for Indonesia (of which he read seventeen), besides also writing commentaries in English for

³⁸ Brander to E.S.D., 9 November 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

³⁹ Peter Davison, 'George Orwell : Dates and Origins', *Library*, Vol. 13, No 2, p. 145.

vernacular newsletters on 'at least 112 occasions.' He wrote his last news review a day before actually leaving the B.B.C.

Certain practices at the Indian Service, as with other services, were not spelt out. It was an accepted norm to read other people's work. The general rule was to allow Indians to read as much as was possible in order to give the impression that all programmes beamed by the B.B.C. were written by them. Introducing 'Through Eastern Eyes' in his broadcast, 'The Next Three Months' on 1 February 1942, Orwell said,

Today for the first time - and I think it will probably be the only occasion - we are breaking our rule of having oriental speakers in this series. The reason is that today we are starting 'Through Eastern Eyes' on its new schedule, and we wanted to give a sort of preliminary talk to let you know what the new schedule will be like and what subjects it would cover. I have been picked out to do this because I have had a good deal to do with arranging the schedule. But I should like to let you know in passing that I am the only European in the Indian Section of the B.B.C.. All the others are Indians, and the Section is presided over by Z.A. Bokhari, whose voice I think you all know.⁴⁰

While many programmes written by Orwell were read by others - 'The Meaning of Sabotage' was read by Balraj Sahni and weekly newsletters by Bokhari and others - there is evidence that Orwell, in turn, read scripts written by others. 'The Maharao of Cutch' (20 January 1942) and 'Life in Chungking' (14 January 1942) could not have been written by him.

Transmissions to India attempted to be personal; and speakers were encouraged to establish rapport with their Eastern audience. When Bokhari proceeded on long leave, it became necessary to have other speakers to read Orwell's commentaries. In her programme preview of the first week in August, Chitale said: 'Our listeners in India must have missed Z.A. Bokhari's voice last Saturday in the news review period. Mr. Bokhari is very pressed for time, and he has consequently, had to pass this task of reviewing the events of the week to others. Sridhar Telkar, Noel Sircar, Bahadur Singh⁴¹ and Homi Bode are the competent men, who will share the responsibility' of the weekly news review.⁴² (Her script contains corrections in Orwell's hand-writing.) Later that year, all speakers were replaced by Orwell.⁴³ When, due to illness, Orwell

⁴⁰ Orwell, 'The Next Three Months', 1 February, 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴¹ See Bernard Crick's correspondence with Bahadur Singh in *op. cit.* pp. 416-7

⁴² Venu Chitale, 'Programme Preview' broadcast on 4 August 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

⁴³ The last time that *London Calling* printed Bokhari's name as the person who read the 'War Review' was on 1 August 1942. Between 8 and 29 August no name of the reader was printed; on 5 September Bahadur Singh was mentioned but on 12 and 19 September no name was given. Orwell's name was first printed on 19 December although he had started

was away for a time in February, Chitale said, 'George Orwell, who has been away, is back with us again and will be giving his weekly news commentary on Saturday.'⁴⁴ Indeed the B.B.C. was susceptible to propaganda opportunities and it encouraged famous personalities to broadcast, especially if they were sympathetic to the Indian Independence movement.

All programmes produced by the B.B.C. were subject to censorship. During war-time, censorship worked in two ways. 'Security Censorship' was designed to stop the broadcasting of information helpful to the enemy or harmful for one's own people or against military interests. This included facts about weather, munitions and their development, troop movements, movements of royalty and the Prime Minister, visits to London by military personnel and so on. The other was 'Policy Scrutiny' which aimed to exclude from broadcasts anything that might encourage the enemy or alienate neutrals, allies or troops in the field. In this category came diverse items such as emphasis on Christianity in broadcasts to non-Christian countries, mention of anti-war movements in Britain, references to Americans as Yankees etc.

Security censorship was exercised according to rules laid down by the B.B.C. It appointed its own officials to be delegate censors who vetted scripts of programmes in advance. They took care of future deviations by sitting in studios and comparing the speakers' words with their censored scripts. They had a special switch to hand with which they immediately cut the speaker off if he departed from his script. Almost all producers in the Overseas Service had their own censor's stamp and received the daily lists of 'Stops' and 'Releases', the study of which was nearly a full time job. Policy scrutiny was more a matter of discretion for there were no rules, and the limits of what could be said depended upon the needs of individual departments which, in turn, changed according to the oscillating course of the war. It imposed far more strain on the B.B.C. producers who had to exercise it, as they had to use their own powers of persuasion and induce broadcasters to say what the Government wanted them to say.

The extraordinary supervision of the M.O.I. during the war raises an important question. To what extent can the work of B.B.C. broadcasters be accepted as theirs in terms of the genuineness of the subject matter, choice of language and style? It is true official intervention exerted some restraint on contributors - it never permitted them to

broadcasting much earlier. The Review was discontinued on 13 March 1943, but *London Calling* continued printing his name for two more weeks until 27 March.

⁴⁴ Venu Chitale, 'Programme Preview' broadcast on 16 February 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

speaking on politically sensitive issues in absolute terms or to express themselves in a vocabulary unintelligible to the average listener. Orwell had justly remarked that the 'audience dictated' the technique of producers to some extent.⁴⁵ Moreover, the fact that producers and broadcasters worked under pressure, in abnormal circumstances and suffered from lack of time and space, made their work mass produced. About his scripts, Orwell wrote that he 'had to write them in desperate haste' and 'in each case could only give a day to the job.'⁴⁶ But the art of broadcasting was (and still is) a personality show, many speakers were able to escape the shackles of censorship. Many, in the most adverse circumstances, were able to win a fair degree of latitude within their own territory. This was exactly the case with Louis MacNeice who prospered in difficult war-time conditions.

Orwell was no MacNeice, but his case was also no different. Of course none of his B.B.C. scripts has great literary value, nor can any be regarded as truly representative of his work either from the point of view of content or style. (In his war reviews, for instance, he gave unqualified support to the Soviet Union) Some of his most well written scripts have inherent flaws. They appear somewhat muted, contrived, pre-fabricated, watered down - even written under compulsion. There is an air of futility pervading them, a sense of inevitability as if they formed part of a job done well - more mechanically and less creatively. Orwell rightly commented that 'To compose a propaganda pamphlet or radio feature needs just as much work as to write something you believe in, with the difference that the finished product is worthless.' He believed that writers 'will come out of the war with nothing to show for their labours and with not even the stored-up experience that the soldier gets in return for his physical suffering'⁴⁷ but he was only partially correct. He did get the soldier's stored-up experience of suffering - not physical but mental - and was able to transmute parts of it in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Besides, his broadcasting venture aroused in him a succession of thoughts and ideas, revealed so poignantly in his war-time and post-war essays and journalism, but most singularly in his 'As I Please' columns.

With only minor interruptions, the column flowed effortlessly in the middle pages of the *Tribune* between 3 December 1943 and 16 February 1945. The influence of radio journalism on Orwell's style, both in terms of the versatility of his subject matter as well as the fluctuations in his tone and humour, was evident enough. His tendency to

⁴⁵ Orwell, 'Poetry and the Microphone', *CEJL*, II, p. 374

⁴⁶ Orwell, 'Letter to Rayner Heppenstall', B.B.C. Archives.

⁴⁷ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 293

assemble, compress or expand on diverse information, although present in his earlier work, had never been so ripe and mature as came to be the case in 'As I Please'. During this period, his powers of fusing the mundane with the serious-minded and the profane with the aesthetic reached fruition. The range of his subjects was enormous. They included light-hearted discussions of Bernard Shaw's criticism of the British National Anthem, the menace of "doodle bugs", the use of foreign words in English, his observations while on bus no 53, the mispronunciation of Indian names by British Nazi propagandists from Berlin, a conversation between two American soldiers in a tobacconist's shop, the art of writing short stories, popular names of flowers juxtaposed with their colourless Greek names, the rude behaviour of shopkeepers and housing shortage after the war to the more serious and reflective discourses on anti-semitism, freedom of expression, the effect of censorship, socialism, capitalism, totalitarianism, a critique of James Burnham and re-analysis of his war-time diaries. Whilst his commonplace observations foreshadowed the coming of *Animal Farm*, his more serious objections to the way society was developing in the forties carried the germinating seeds of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In the forties, one of Orwell's chief preoccupations was not the criticism of the B.B.C. but that of the M.O.I. In spite of his temporary outbursts of fury against the B.B.C. - 'God knows I have the best means of judging what a mixture of whoreship and lunatic asylum it is for the most part',⁴⁸ - he was generally appreciative of its truthfulness and even went to the extent of defending it from its critics. He applauded the impartiality of its news and praised many programmes, including the Brains' Trust (the panel of which he thoroughly disliked), 'as a symbol of freedom of thought', presumably because it was uniquely unscripted.⁴⁹ He thought the B.B.C. did not deliberately disseminate lies or invent propaganda to win over arguments. It merely avoided 'anything controversial' and glossed over awkward facts in order to retain a clean image. He thought it had 'developed quite early on an attitude of suspicion towards...unreliable sources'⁵⁰ and made efforts to sift official lies before transmitting them on the air. Characteristically, some of the issues affecting the B.B.C. continued to float in Orwell's mind long after he had left it and appeared in *Tribune*. Here is one example:

In your opinion, are the B.B.C. news bulletins truthful? Are they more or less truthful than those of other belligerent countries? Have you checked this by comparison?

⁴⁸ Orwell, 'Letter to Alex Comfort', *CEJL*, II, p. 348

⁴⁹ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 202

⁵⁰ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 156

Have you any ideas about the possibilities of the radio play, the short story, the feature, the discussion? If so, have you bothered to find out which of your ideas are technically feasible?

Do you think the B.B.C. would benefit by competition? Give your opinion of commercial broadcasting.

Who controls the B.B.C.? Who pays for it? Who directs its policy? How does the censorship work?

What do you know of B.B.C. propaganda to foreign countries, hostile, friendly or neutral? How much does it cost? Is it effective? How would it compare with German propaganda? Add some notes on radio propaganda in general.

I could extend this considerably, but if even a hundred thousand people in England could give definite answers to the above questions it would be a big step forward.⁵¹

Orwell, however, did not spare the M.O.I. He reserved his harshest indictment for its war-time controls. The Ministry, he thought, did not have a constructive agenda. It did not see its proper duty of raising British morale during wartime. He pointed out, 'the Government has done extraordinarily little to preserve morale: it has merely drawn on the existing reserves of goodwill.'⁵² As if the Ministry preferred not to depend upon the common sense, calmness and courageousness of the British middle class, it devised the most effective means of influencing wider public opinion. It managed to exercise control over the press and media without actually meddling in their affairs. Firstly, it managed to win over the loyalty of the governing classes who, in turn, used covert tactical means to achieve the suppression of 'undesirable or premature' opinions. Orwell believed that at every given moment in time there existed an orthodoxy that silenced intellectual dissent with surprising effectiveness. He attacked the intellectual cowardice of the governing classes most vehemently in 'The Freedom of the Press', an essay occasioned by the successive refusal of publishers to print *Animal Farm*. Although written in 1945, it was first published in 1972. In it he highlighted

The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary. Unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept under dark, without the need for any official ban...because of a general tacit agreement that "it wouldn't do" to mention that particular fact. So far as the daily newspapers go, this is easy to understand. The British press is extremely centralised, and most of it is owned by wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on certain important topics. But the same kind of veiled censorship also operates in books and periodicals, as well as in plays, films and radio... It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that or the other, but it is "not done" to say it, just as in mid-Victorian times it was "not done" to mention trousers in the presence of a lady.⁵³

⁵¹ Orwell, 'As I Please', *Tribune*, 21 January 1944, p. 10

⁵² Orwell, 'Propaganda and Demotic Speech', *CEJL*, III, p. 168

⁵³ Orwell, 'Freedom of the Press', *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 September 1972, p. 1037

Elsewhere, he suggested a brilliant analogy to illustrate the systematic suppression of intellectual rebellion.

The M.O.I. does not, of course, dictate a party line or an *index expurgatorius*. It merely 'advises'. Publishers take manuscripts to the M.O.I. and the M.O.I. 'suggests' that this or that is undesirable, or premature, or 'would serve no good purpose'. And though there is no definite prohibition, no clear statement that this or that must not be printed, official policy is never flouted. Circus dogs jump when the trainer cracks his whip, but the really well-trained dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip.⁵⁴

Secondly, the Ministry ensured that information, at best equivocal and only partially correct, was propagated as the absolute truth only because it served the immediate aims of the Government. In his war-time diary Orwell recorded his exasperation with one such directive. The B.B.C., he said, was taking advantage of Nehru's anti-Japanese utterances and quoting them 'without mentioning the anti-British passages, whereat Nehru complains (quite justly) that he has been misrepresented.' He added, 'A recent directive tells us that when one of his speeches contains both anti-British and anti-Japanese passages, we had better ignore it altogether. What a mess it all is.'⁵⁵ The particular directive to which Orwell had alluded in his diary has fortunately survived and is worthy of quotation:

Internal Circulating Memo Private and Confidential

15th April 1942

Subject: Sir Stafford Cripps: Follow up Guidance from the India Office

1. In general, we should let Congress leaders and their speeches gradually fade out of the picture - unless there is anything obviously useful for the war-effort.
2. While anti-Japanese utterances are useful, they should not be carried if they are tied up with bitter anti-British sentiments. We cannot fairly carry one without the other.
3. But if the transmission is for India, it is worth remembering that anti-British sentiments by Congress leaders are nothing new: while the anti-Japanese outbursts of such leaders may have an excellent effect. So speeches can be carried.⁵⁶

The 'truth' as espoused in the Ministry's directives only meant a judicious selection of facts which served only short term ends. Clearly, Orwell did not approve of such practices. He compared the M.O.I.'s handling of artists with the treatment given to literary intelligentsia in totalitarian countries. He termed the M.O.I.'s conscription of artists as the process of 'totalitarianisation'. He lamented,

⁵⁴ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 212

⁵⁵ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 474

⁵⁶ Internal Circulating Memo' sent by the E.S.D. 15 April, 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

When you see what has happened to the arts in the totalitarian countries, and when you see the same thing happening here in a more veiled way through the M.O.I., the B.B.C. and the film companies - organisations which not only buy up promising young writers and geld them and set them to work like cab-horses, but manage to rob literary creation of its individual character and turn it into a sort of conveyer-belt process - the prospects are not encouraging.⁵⁷

Like Orwell and other members of intelligentsia, Winston Smith was bought by Big Brother to rewrite history for his Party.

In a critique of the PEN symposium on the Freedom of Expression (commemorating the tercentenary of the publication of Milton's *Areopagitica*) titled 'Milton in Striped Trousers', Orwell struck at the bankruptcy of the literary intelligentsia in failing to criticise the subversive influence of the M.O.I.

Here are some of the subjects that were *not* mentioned, or barely mentioned [in the symposium]:- The centralised ownership of the British press, with its consequent power to suppress any bit of news that it chooses; the question of who really controls the B.B.C.; the buying-up of young writers by film units, the M.O.I. etc.; the methods by which British correspondents in foreign countries are squeezed into telling lies or concealing truths...⁵⁸

He was also struck by the mindlessness of the masses who showed a remarkable incapacity for doubting the validity or coherence of official propaganda. What he said, in June 1944 of the British people, was equally true of the proles of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. 'For quite long periods, at any rate, people can remain undisturbed by obvious lies, either because they simply forget what is said from day to day or because they are under such a constant propaganda bombardment that they become anaesthetized to the whole business'.⁵⁹

During these years of action and anxiety, Orwell ceased to be a solitary person. This is not to say he became truly gregarious, for he still kept his numerous relationships in closed compartments, but he did nurture some close companionships which remained dear to him until the very end. He benefited immensely from the distinctive social life that emerged during the war years. The B.B.C. men, partly due to the nature of their

⁵⁷ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 266

⁵⁸ Orwell, 'Milton in Striped Trousers', *Tribune*, 12 October 1945, p. 12

⁵⁹ Orwell, 'As I Please', 2 June 1944. *CEJL*, III, p. 195

work and partly due to social and domestic convenience, frequented restaurants and pubs more than usual: 'The pubs represented an escape into a world that defied the increasing limitations of official wartime controls; the emphasis was on individuality and personality, on the outrageous as opposed to the routine.'⁶⁰

Anthony Powell remembers meeting Orwell at the Café Royal and at a 'very crowded Greek restaurant in Percy Street'.⁶¹ Michael Meyer, translator and biographer of Ibsen and Strindberg, recalls a 'little French restaurant in Soho' where Orwell once took him to meet with Malcolm Muggeridge and Anthony Powell.

We all sat at a long table and everybody talked all the time except George and me. George would occasionally try and put in a word, but it was the sort of conversation, the sort of noise, where you just had to bulldoze your way through, and George with his weak voice couldn't do that, so he would just quietly stop in midsentence.⁶²

Tosco Fyvel, who worked for the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office ^{what during the war years became known as} recalls seeing Orwell in pubs in Fitzrovia⁶³ combining Fitzroy Square and Belgravia. Woodcock writes about going to a 'public house in Great Portland Street, frequented by B.B.C. men' after recording a programme with Anand, Empson, Read, Blunden and Orwell.⁶⁴ David Astor also recalled having met Orwell 'in a restaurant near Portland Place'.⁶⁵ Orwell lunched with Forster at the Ariston more than once.⁶⁶ He particularly enjoyed the Barcelona Restaurant at 17 Beak Street, Soho, where Anand also accompanied him several times.⁶⁷ Orwell took T.C. Worsley there on a Tuesday in July 1942 and C.H. Waddington on 23 March 1943. His physical appearance and clothes, however, rarely changed. He was always seen wearing an old brown tweed jacket, leather patched at elbows, and loose baggy trousers.

⁶⁰ Robert Hewison, *Under Siege*, pp. 64-5.

⁶¹ Anthony Powell, 'George Orwell: A Memoir', *Atlantic Monthly*, 1967, October Vol. 220, p. 64

⁶² Stephen Wadhams, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁶³ Fitzrovia was the 'territory bounded on the south side by Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square, to the north by Goadge Street, its approaches to east and west guarded by Broadcasting House and the Ministry of Information. At the centre the restaurants, pubs, clubs and brothels of Soho.' This 'became known unofficially as Fitzrovia'. See Robert Hewison, *Under Siege*, p. 57

⁶⁴ George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 14

⁶⁵ Audrey Coppard and Bernard Crick (ed), *Orwell Remembered*, (London, 1984), p. 184

⁶⁶ See Orwell's letter to Forster, 5 April 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁶⁷ Anand in his interview to me, New Delhi, January 1992.

Every fortnight E.M. Forster wrote and broadcast 'Some Books', in which he discussed topical books on India and the War. In the beginning Orwell approached this veteran novelist with reserve (he addressed his letters to Forster as 'Mr. E.M. Forster) but quickly became friendly with him. He arranged for books to be sent to Forster from the B.B.C. library and saw him frequently during lunch breaks. They exchanged ideas and shared thoughts 'meant solely for each other's ears.' Forster once expressed his willingness to discuss fresh books on the Indian situation 'only if I am allowed sufficient freedom of relevance'. He explained, 'Will discuss with you when we meet next what sufficient is'.⁶⁸ In October '43, Forster declined Guy Burgess' offer to broadcast similar talks for the Home Service, stating that he was quite happy at the Indian Service which gave him 'more freedom to say what he wants than would the Home Service.'⁶⁹

Venu Chitale, an Oxford student, was one of the earliest to broadcast for the section (in September '40 on Bokhari's request). She enjoyed a good working relationship with Orwell. She was formally taken on the Indian Section and given complete charge of programmes in Marathi besides assisting Orwell. Interestingly, she approached Eileen Blair to contribute to the 'Kitchen Front' series. 'Thank you very much for the recipes you sent me. I know that anything which has to do with pancakes and fritters will of course be most welcome. Scones and biscuits - things made on the top of the heat sound simply ideal. Any recipes in that line are just fine and the sort of thing an Indian housewife would like to try out.' she wrote to Eileen.⁷⁰

Another friendship he made at the B.B.C. was with the poet Stevie Smith. They probably met the first time at the PEN World Congress in September 41, where Arthur Koestler, Cyril Connolly, Inez Holden, Stevie Smith, Orwell and others lunched at the same table. In her diary, Inez recorded how Koestler had bet five bottles of burgundy in favour of Orwell who he said would become 'the greatest best seller in five years time.'⁷¹ Two months later, she wrote about having had dinner with the Orwells. The two ladies and Orwell were soon joined by a fourth friend, Mulk Raj Anand, who has himself recalled having mutual meetings either at the Orwells', or at Inez's, who having been bombed out of her house, had been renting a flat situated over H.G. Wells' garage in his Terrace House, or at Anand's Regent Park Road home. Inez and Anand

⁶⁸ Postcard to Orwell, 26 October 1943. Orwell Archive.

⁶⁹ Guy Burgess' letter to Registry dated 19 October 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁰ Chitale to Eileen Blair, 23 October 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

⁷¹ Inez's diary quoted in Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

had been broadcasting independently for the B.B.C.,⁷² it was Orwell who apparently decided to bring them together in one of his 'Voice' magazines.

At his request, Stevie Smith sent Orwell some of her poems and waited for his reply. To her anger, she discovered that the programme had been produced without her (with Herbert Read reading her poems) and would have also gone on the air without her knowledge, but for the last minute post card she received from Orwell. Suspecting him of deception, she replied in annoyance. 'I did not hear one word about that last broadcast until 20 minutes before it went on the air. Jolly good show, B.B.C.! And if you want to know what I feel about you at this moment, take a look at the drawings on p. 54.' She was referring to the drawings in the enclosed proofs of her new book of poems, *Mother, What is Man?* of a hungry wolf and a thin-faced angry looking man illustrating a poem that read, 'I was consumed by so much hate.' Humiliated, but still feeling close, she ended, 'Love and fond messages'.⁷³

However, it was Orwell's reply, especially his manner and tone, that was to infuriate her.

17 October 1942

Dear Stevie,

I don't know what you are grizzling about! I told you a long time back that we hoped you would take part in that programme and gave you the date verbally. We then picked the poems you were to read and you typed out a copy and sent it to me. A few days before the broadcast, my secretary sent a PC reminding you of the date and time, to the only address of yours which she had. I suppose the fact was that the address which you had previously given us was Inez's. My secretary did not know that you worked at the Newnes' until I told her so on the actual morning of the broadcast. I assumed that you knew all about it and merely sent the PC as a formality. I am sorry about this, but the programme went off all right and Read read your poems quite nicely.

Yours

(Eric Blair. Talks Assistant)⁷⁴

The explanation did not satisfy her. Unforgiving, she wrote another scornful letter.

⁷² For Inez's view of wartime London see her journal published as *It Was Different At That Time*. (London, 1943). Bernard Crick informs that Gollancz had intended to publish a joint war-time journal of Orwell and Holden, but only managed to publish Inez's views.

⁷³ Stevie Smith to George Orwell, 14 October 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁴ Eric Blair to Stevie Smith, 17 October 1942, B.B.C. Archives.

Dear George,

Lies are the most irritating thing in the world and would make an angel grisel [sic] and you are the most persistent liar and these fibs are always coming back to me from other people. You never gave me the date for the bloody broadcast or breathed one word about my reading my own poem. I sent the poems to you from this address and also the three short stories you've had since last March. I never gave you Inez's address, why the hell should I, specially as she was on the point of leaving? I'm sorry about it, but not very, as I 'm sure Read read better than I should as I've never broadcast before or had a rehearsal. I'm bored to death by lies.

Stevie⁷⁵

Having repudiated him thus, she was nonetheless soon willing to help him. For his Christmas special 'Voice', she provided him a list of readings from Saki, Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Dickens, Elizabeth Bowen, children's singing games, sea-shanties, and included extracts from her own work and that of Inez . Orwell thanked her for her assistance but apologised for not including them due to shortage of time. His 'Voice' Christmas special contained a collection of carols.

The relationship between Stevie Smith and Orwell has stimulated an extraordinary amount of speculation. Anthony Powell and Malcolm Muggeridge have recorded similar conversations they both had with Orwell about the latter having 'a woman in a park'.⁷⁶ Although the story was discredited by Kay Dick and Sally Chilver, close friends of Stevie's as fictional, Bernard Crick suggests that in male literary circles the name of Stevie Smith was 'persistently linked with this tale.'⁷⁷ During the years Stevie knew Orwell, she wrote a poem called 'Conviction' and illustrated it by drawing a couple making love in the woods in the presence of an animal. Whether the contents of the poem had anything to do with Orwell is not known but there may have been a connection, whether real or fictional, between the drawing and the incident.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Stevie Smith to George Orwell, 20 October, B.B.C. Archives. The incongruity in their letters is noticeable. Whilst Stevie addressed him as George, he prefers to write to her as Eric Blair. Moreover, their conversation, especially Orwell's admission of 'verbally' informing her of the date, his knowledge of her work place, his further acknowledgement that he thought she knew about the programme, indicates some kind of contact between them involving matters others than broadcasting.

⁷⁶ Anthony Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 64

⁷⁷ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 423

⁷⁸ Stevie's poem, 'Conviction (iv)' reads like this:

I like to get off with people,
I like to lie in their arms,
I like to be held and tightly kissed,
Safe from all alarms.

I like to laugh and be happy
With a beautiful beautiful kiss,

Stevie's biography, published in 1983, quotes Veronica Wedgwood of Cape as saying that, at one time, her fondness for Orwell 'went very deep'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Stevie's friend, the publisher Norah Smallwood, talked about her confession of a difficult but intimate relationship with Orwell. Stevie said to Norah 'I was living with George Orwell and it wasn't easy.' Norah presumed that as Stevie neither left her aunt nor her Palmer's Green home, Stevie might have been referring to 'lunch-time trysts and the like.'⁸⁰ In Crick's biography Lettice Cooper, a close friend of Eileen's, remembers Eileen telling her that Stevie and Inez sobbed on her 'not entirely unsympathetic shoulder about their unrequited loves for George.'⁸¹ A recent more exhaustive biography of Stevie by Frances Spalding, enumerates the reasons for Stevie's attraction for Orwell and discusses the intellectual aspects of their relationship. Spalding believes that the 'incisiveness' of Orwell's thought and his 'sceptical agnosticism' would have appealed to Stevie's sharp mind. He states that Stevie herself encouraged surmise when she confided in a friend about Orwell making a pass at her in her office. To another she said that he had 'once followed her at night down a hall of Bush House - naked'. Spalding is confident that an affair between them cannot be dismissed and supports his view by quoting Orwell's housekeeper, Susan Watson, who remembered Orwell entertaining Stevie in a rather special manner when she visited him after the War. A public show of affection, especially towards a member of the opposite sex, was quite uncharacteristic of Orwell. Equally unusual was Stevie's particular affection for Richard, Orwell's adopted son.⁸²

Whatever the truth, evidence suggests that of the two, Stevie was more enamoured of, and emotionally involved with him, whilst Orwell may have temporarily been drawn towards her despite his characteristic aloofness and reticence. Possibilities exist of the anger and vengeance expressed in their letters being veiled and misdirected, as in the case of Stevie's semi-autobiographical novel *The Holiday* in which she confessed splitting Orwell's character between Basil Tate and Tom Fox and satirising them both.

I tell you, in all the world
There is no bliss like this.

⁷⁹ See Jack Barbara and William McBrien, *Stevie : A Biography of Stevie Smith*. (London, 1985) p. 141.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁸¹ Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 424

⁸² Francis Spalding, *Stevie Smith : A Critical Biography*, (London, 1988), pp. 151-6.

In *The Holiday* Basil goes to Eton and fights in the Spanish Civil War, quite like Orwell. Celia the first-person narrator of the novel, supposedly Stevie, is irritated by Basil's idiosyncratic monologues and by his habit of passing moral judgements all the time.

Basil said that eventually England would have to choose between money and kids, because under capitalism people would not have kids, it was too much to ask, and he began to inveigh against our ex-Ally which put me for once in a good humour with them. He said that America would be the ruin of the moral order, he said that the more gadgets women had and the more they thought about their faces and their figures, the less they wanted to have children, he said that he happened to see an article in an American woman's magazine about scanty panties, he said women who thought about scanty panties never had a comfortable fire burning in the fire-place, or a baby in the house, or a dog or a cat or a parrot...

Or a canary, I said.

Or a canary, went on Basil, and he said that this was the end of the moral order.⁸³

Celia is furious with him because he has held on to her drawings for a long time without selecting any for the book of drawings he was planning. This incident may well have some bearing on the 'Voice' episode. Spalding mentions that the manuscript of *The Holiday* has the line 'this icy feeling between Basil and me, come by the drawings and the income tax', deleted in the published version.⁸⁴ Moreover, Celia asks Basil to entrust the task of selecting her drawings to Raji, a character she bases on Mulk Raj Anand. Interestingly, her criticism of Basil contrasts sharply with the warmth with which she portrays the character of Raji.

'Our friend Raji is... the most intelligent Indian in London...Raji has this fine intelligence and a warm heart. He is an honest person upon a centre fixed. This is rare, and rare indeed in an Indian. He has been in an English prison-camp in India and has been beaten up by the Indian police...

Raji makes us laugh...

It is wonderful that Raji can be so generous and so free, for his upbringing was in an oppressed atmosphere.⁸⁵

Raji has written a book 'so true about India' which Celia thinks 'English people ought to read' but 'do not want to read.' The reference is to Anand's *Letters on India* in which 'one of the most oppressive things the English have brought to India is the sense of secret opulence in a land of poverty'.⁸⁶ Raji is supported by 'a young violent English person' who declares that 'no easy feeling of equality between the intellectual Indians

⁸³ Stevie Smith, *The Holiday*, (London, 1949), p. 69

⁸⁴ Francis Spalding, *op. cit.*, p. 153

⁸⁵ Stevie Smith, *The Holiday*, (London, 1949), p. 13

⁸⁶ Stevie Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

and English people was possible in India as long as this evil thing [the British Raj] was still in existence.'⁸⁷ This English person was indeed George Orwell. The plot of *The Holiday*, woven around Basil, Lopez (supposedly Inez Holden), Raji and the narrator Celia, gives credibility to Anand's recollection of the closeness of these four friends during much of 1941 and '42. Anand had interviewed Inez Holden in the programme 'Meet My Friend' in June 1942 and Orwell's 'Voice: A story by five authors' had successive contributions from Anand, Inez and himself. Despite her earlier fondness for Orwell, Stevie Smith was bitter about him a decade later. She agreed with the critical view Sean O'Casey took of Orwell in his book *Sunset and Evening Star*. She wrote 'And dead right is he about George Orwell and his sick-man fancy of a pool of self-abasement for all the world to dip in, and his sick man's lust for extreme future cruelty. And will he not be a disappointed ghost if 1984, when it comes, comes with the Bank rate at four per cent...'⁸⁸

If Orwell found Stevie difficult on the personal front, he found G.M. Young, the noted historian and educationist, rough on the professional. Young had been working for the Home Service since 1935. Besides performing manifold duties for the B.B.C., he had also been contributing to 'The Freedom Forum' of the Overseas Service. In July 1942, Orwell requested Young to discuss the Press with H.N. Brailsford. When he declined, Orwell suggested another subject - education - and proposed a debate between him and T.C. Worsley, the Wellington schoolmaster. He sent Worsley's script to Young for his opinion and received an outright rejection by telegram: 'Afraid Worsley's approach too abstract and declamatory to suit my style of discussion, in any case feel doubtful whether suitable for India'.⁸⁹ Undaunted, Orwell found N.C. Fisher, who read Worsley's script and accepted participation in Young's place. The programme was satisfactorily produced and broadcast, but Orwell's relationship with Young always remained tenuous. A forceful Tory, Young never forgave Orwell for the line he took on English education and criticised him and his method of work in his reports. He commented,

Really and truly, the B.B.C. were, apparently, quite prepared to tell the dusky myriads (a) that in England we have a rigid caste system (b) that in the last forty years our schools have been occupied in awarding status rather than imparting knowledge (c) per consequence, and over this same period, we have lost our independence of character and (d) we are "engaged in an impotent struggle to defend a dying status quo".

⁸⁷ Stevie Smith, *Ibid.* p. 96.

⁸⁸ Stevie Smith 'Books: *Sunset and Evening Star*', *Other Voices*, 28 January 1955. p. 3

⁸⁹ Young's telegram to Orwell. B.B.C. Archives.

Now all this could be censored into harmlessness, but what really horrifies me is that it should have been allowed to go so far that I was allowed to see it, and the utter irresponsibility of mind it disclosed.⁹⁰

In another letter, this time to Director-General Foot in July 1943, he specifically targeted Orwell,

I now come to my specific charges.

(1) The most reckless vilification of English Institutions:

(a) I would ask you to get from Mr. Orwell the script of a talk on Public Schools by Mr. T. Worsley...

In my judgement, with the script before me, it was a reckless vilification of an institution much in the public eye, the nature of which is widely misconceived.⁹¹

Whether any action was taken as a result of Young's criticism is not known, but Orwell always ignored him as 'the ordinary silly-clever "intelligent" conservative whose habitual manoeuvre is to deal with any new idea by pointing out that it has been said before.'⁹²

Although ideological differences between Young and Orwell persisted and are reflected sharply in Orwell's letters and 'As I Please' columns,⁹³ it is interesting that both were concerned with much the same issues. Both felt equally strongly about the B.B.C.'s use of language and about the content of its broadcasting. While Young's criticism was meant for the private ears of the Board of Governors, Orwell, more humbly, attempted through his repeated attacks on the misuse and abuse of language, in his exhaustive articles, to impress a different set of audiences. Orwell's writings are relevant even to this day, almost half a century after their original date of publication.

Like Young, Orwell defended vigorously the B.B.C.'s handling of news and thought that news was its 'greatest victory'. 'The B.B.C., so far as its news goes, has gained prestige since about 1940. "I heard it on the wireless" is now almost equivalent to "I know it must be true"', he wrote in 1944.⁹⁴ He emphasized further, 'Ask any refugee from Europe which of the belligerent radios is considered to be the most truthful. So in Asia. Even in India where the population are so hostile they will not listen to British

⁹⁰ Young's report to the B.B.C. B.B.C. Archives.

⁹¹ Young to Director General Foot, 3 July 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

⁹² Orwell to C.H. Ogden, 1 March 1944, Orwell Archive.

⁹³ See 'As I Please' Columns, *CEJL*, III, p. 202, 304, 316, 422.

⁹⁴ Orwell's 'As I Please', *Tribune*, 7 April 1944. p. 10

propaganda and will hardly listen to a British entertainment programme, they listen to B.B.C. news because they believe it approximates to the truth.'⁹⁵

Both Young and Orwell were equally critical of Basic English. Young disliked it for a number of reasons, but was extraordinarily critical of its one particular characteristic - its limited vocabulary. He called Basic 'a code composed by the constriction and deformation of the English language'. It was like 'a stunted acrobat, whose contortions may be excused, laughed at, or pitied, but are certainly not to be imitated by those who are born to the free enjoyment of their natural strength.' Although Young questioned the validity of Basic English, he was willing to allow it some merit, and to 'watch its progress with interest and impartiality'.⁹⁶ Orwell, however, was absolutely unconvinced of its desirability ever since he rejected Basic in principle. In fact he was altogether opposed to the idea of any artificial language, let alone Basic, becoming a universal language. His final, ruthless verdict came in the shape of Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Many friends of Orwell, including Anthony Powell, Malcolm Muggeridge, George Woodcock and Mark Benny have recalled the time they spent with Orwell while he was at the B.B.C. It was T.R. Fyvel, who as early as 1950 first saw some of the origins of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in Orwell's broadcasting experience. He wrote:

I have the feeling - that the harmless Overseas Branch of the B.B.C. in Oxford Street with its life full of directives, conferences and canteen meals, served as a model for the nightmare picture of the Ministry of Truth in 1984; the patriotic wartime propaganda line he had to put out, exaggerated a hundred times, became the totalitarian distortion and suppression of news and fact in 'Ingsoc' he imagined.⁹⁷

Indeed, Orwell's B.B.C. days have much to answer for in terms of the conception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and its technique. In his anti-Utopian novel he was able to deliver his absolute judgement, the judgement of a patriot, on wartime Britain, her allies and their politics. A detailed investigation of this will form the subject of the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Orwell, 'As I Please', *Tribune*, 21 April 1944, p. 12. A correspondent disagreed with Orwell's judgement and questioned, 'Would Orwell suggest that anybody now looks upon the B.B.C. as they did in the days of Sir John Reith? Hardly.' See 'Those Press Lords' *Tribune*, 21 April 1944, p. 14. Orwell was not convinced and defended himself in 'As I Please' published in the same issue.

⁹⁶ See G.M. Young 'Basic' in *Last Essays*, (London, 1950), p. 94

⁹⁷ T.R. Fyvel, 'George Orwell - A Personal Memoir' in *World Review*, June 1950, p. 19

THE B.B.C. AND NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR

I find that anything outrageously strange generally ends by fascinating me even when I abominate it.

George Orwell -'Why I Write'

The fact that the original conception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, although written in 1946-47 and published in 1949, dates back to 1943, is now widely accepted.¹ In a notebook in the Orwell Archive (also printed as Appendix A in Bernard Crick's *George Orwell: A Life*), Orwell jotted down a number of thoughts which became the framework for the novel he titled then as 'The Last Man in Europe'. Nearly all thoughts recorded in the notebook appear in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; and their inclusion in the book proves, beyond doubt, that certain ideas and images haunted Orwell inescapably towards the end of 1943. They stayed in his mind long enough to reappear as potent themes and images in the novel as we see it today.

In this connection, Orwell's letter of 22 October 1948 to his publisher Fred Warburg is particularly relevant. In it he records that the idea of writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four* had first occurred to him in 1943. 'I first thought of it in 1943. I think it is a good idea but the execution would have been better if I had not written it under the influence of T.B. I haven't definitely fixed on the title but I am hesitating between 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' and 'The Last Man in Europe'.²

The association of the year 1943 with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or what would have been 'The Last Man in Europe', is significant because the actual physical development of the novel started then, at a time, when Orwell had just finished working for the B.B.C. and his broadcasting experience was still fresh in his mind. This is particularly relevant for a writer like Orwell whose inventive and imaginative powers were not as sharp as his powers for recollection and adaptation. In the autumn of 1945 he went to live in Jura, a sparsely inhabited Hebridean island, where he wrote the entire novel. In doing so, he isolated himself from external influences and his physical link with the outside world depended on occasional visitors and the mail, often late and erratic.

¹ See 'Introduction', *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Facsimile of the Extant Manuscript*, (ed.) Peter Davison, (London, 1984), p. ix-xvi. 'The first striking characteristic is the consistency of Orwell's conception of his work...all the changes were directed towards the refining of an original conception as revealed in the earliest stages of the composition of the novel, and even in that 1943-4 outline.' p. xvi. 'Each of Orwell's previous books had arisen from his immediately previous experiences and was highly autobiographical.' Bernard Crick in *George Orwell: A Life*, p. 387.

² Orwell to F.J. Warburg, 22 October 1948, *CEJL*, IV, p. 507

Since its publication, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been the subject of close scrutiny.³ Its origins have been traced to various phases of Orwell's life and the books he copiously read for writing reviews. Whilst most major ideas and concepts that went into *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were previously foreshadowed or formed in Orwell's earlier writings, the B.B.C. created more of the incidents and details of the imaginative setting of the plot and content of the novel than previous writers have imagined. Orwell's borrowings for the novel were innumerable, varied and complex. The primary concern of this chapter is to highlight the importance of his B.B.C. experience in the making of his 'flawed masterpiece'.

I have classified Orwell's borrowings under five heads. 1) imagery, 2) characterisation, 3) thought, content and subject matter, 4) language, 5) the actual exposition of the novel i.e. its presentation and form.

The book's setting is evidently based on wartime and immediate post-war London. The opening pages are full of images that conjure up the total atmosphere of war, especially as Orwell saw it between 1940-45. His London, the capital city of Oceania, suggests familiar sights to many people who lived through the war. The bombed sites covered with willow herb, the dilapidated and wretched nineteen-thirties blocks of flats, the lifts that do not work, the squalid hallways smelling of boiled cabbage and old rag mats, the rockets unexpectedly crashing down and the numerous propaganda posters meeting the eye everywhere - all these images would have been familiar to Orwell's readers. Nevertheless, it needs to be underlined that during the most crucial period of the war Orwell was working for the B.B.C., and wartime London formed the backdrop of his broadcasting career. His perception of the city was contiguous with a whole range of other ideas and images falling within the periphery of his experience. Similarly, the city in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* forms the pivot of Winston Smith's experience and contains his entire world.

The London of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has four important buildings which tower over the rest of the city. These are the Ministry of Truth which creates fabricated reality,

³ See William Steinhoff, *The Road to 1984*, (London, 1975); Irving Howe, *Orwell's 1984: Text, Sources, Criticism*, (New York, 1963); Harold Bloom (ed.) *George Orwell's 1984*, (New York, 1963); Jeffrey Meyers, *A Reader's Guide to George Orwell*, (London, 1975); Raymond Williams (ed.), *George Orwell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (New York, 1974); Alan Sandison, *The Last Man in Europe: An Essay on George Orwell*, (London, 1974); George Woodcock, *Orwell's Message*, (London, 1984); Samuel Hayes, (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 1984*, (New York, 1971).

the Ministry of Peace which conducts war, the Ministry of Plenty which organises scarcity of essential things, and the Ministry of Love which maintains law and order through cruel and barbarous means. The Ministries are a reconstruction of the four most active Ministries during wartime - the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Supply and the Home Office.

The B.B.C. and the Ministry of Information provided Orwell with models for the Ministry of Truth and Ministry of Love - Minitrue and Miniluv - in *Newspeak*. Their physical appearance draws upon three actual wartime buildings - The Senate House of the University of London in Malet Street which housed the Ministry of Information; Broadcasting House at 55 Portland Place where the Indian Section operated until June 1942; and 200 Oxford Street which housed the entire Overseas Service from July 1942 onwards.

The appearance of the Ministry of Truth is 'startlingly different' from the rest of the city. Its eminence is stressed by its imposing outer facade and its well maintained surroundings. 'It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, three hundred metres into the air...The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said three thousand rooms above ground level, and corresponding ramifications below.'⁴ Winston thinks 'it was too strong, it could not be stormed. A thousand rocket bombs would not batter it down.'⁵ It contrasts sharply with the wretched description of London provided just a few lines before. The 'vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions', create an uneasy balance between the city and the sight of the four Ministries. Like the rest of the ministries, Minitrue is also endowed with an aura of superficial grandeur and superimposed prestige.⁶

Orwell chose the Senate House of the University of London as the model for the Ministry of Truth. Known as the Big House in Bloomsbury, it was designed by Charles Holden and completed in 1937. Like the Ministry of Truth, it was the tallest building at that time. Bernard Crick points out that 'the actual 64.5 metres of Senate House falls short of "three hundred metres" but it was the tallest building in London until the

⁴Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four, The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume Nine*, (London, 1987), pp. 5-6

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5

1950's.⁷ There is an interesting anecdote about the Senate House in Graham Greene's *Ways of Escape*. Greene, who had been working for the Ministry of Information, was exasperated by the illumination of the building after dark. He thought that it served as 'a beacon guiding German planes towards King's Cross and St. Pancras Stations'. He recollected: 'Hardly a night passed without the blackout being ignored, and in my area we suffered for it.' Enraged, he wrote a letter to the *Spectator* with the title 'Bloomsbury Lighthouse'. Subsequently, a policeman visited the Ministry and 'the lights were dimmed'.⁸ Orwell's encounters with this tall building were frequent. It was situated in close proximity to the British Museum and his Oxford Street workplace. He visited it for several meetings and official engagements, including meetings of the India Advisory Committee and the Eastern Services Committee. Both its exterior as well as interior structure would have been all too familiar to him.

The interior of the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for the most part, is a recreation of the actual interior of 200 Oxford Street. Like Orwell's Indian Section, the physical space occupied by the Records Department in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is small. Winston is intimidated by the presence of numerous other unknown departments in the huge building.

And this hall, with its fifty workers or thereabouts, was only one sub-section, a single cell, as it were, in the huge complexity of the Records Department. Beyond, above, below were other swarms of workers engaged in an unimaginable multitude of jobs. There were the huge printing shops with their sub-editors, their typography experts and their elaborately-equipped studios for the faking of photographs. There was the tele-programmes section with its engineers, its producers and its teams of actors specially chosen for their skill in imitating voices.⁹

Winston works in a tiny cubicle which is a recreation of Orwell's own cubicle no 310 at the Indian section.¹⁰ The atmosphere of the Records department has a strange correspondence with the atmosphere of the Orwell's own Indian Section.

In the long, windowless hall, with its double row of cubicles and its endless rustle of papers and hum of voices murmuring into speakwrites, there were quite a dozen people

⁷ Bernard Crick (ed.), *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, (London, 1984), p. 431. Even the newly built Broadcasting House at 55 Portland Place, only a subsidiary model for the Ministry of Truth, was also a tall eight-storeyed building. It was also spectacularly white, especially in 1932, when its construction had just been completed.

⁸ Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape*, (Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 86-7.

⁹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 45

¹⁰ Orwell was in cubicle no. 310, Rushbrook Williams in 114, R.A. Rendall in 103, Malcolm Darling in 120, Laurence Brander in 217, Z.A. Bokhari in 322, Naryana Menon in 322 and Venu Chitale in 308.

whom Winston did not even know by name, though he daily saw them hurrying to and fro in the corridors.¹¹

Winston remarks that 'Everyone in the Records Department worked eighteen hours in twenty-four, with two three-hour snatches of sleep. Mattresses were brought up from the cellars and pitched all over the corridors...'¹² Antonia White in an article on the wartime expansion of the B.B.C. portrays a similar picture.

Broadcasting House turned overnight into a fortress. The work had to go on and beds had to be provided for staff working late or who could not get home because of the raids. Wandering through the basements at night you saw corridors littered with mattresses on which tired men and women were trying to snatch a few hours' sleep. Some slept in their offices, others in rows on the floor of the Concert Hall.¹³

Orwell's impressions of the inner environment of the M.O.I. also seems to have contributed to the Ministry of Truth. This is confirmed by the vivid accounts of Malcolm Muggeridge who was one of the earliest to join the hurriedly improvised M.O.I. He writes

I found the place teeming with people, all moving about energetically and purposefully; like an airport. Some were in uniform, most carried brief-cases,...the only familiar sight being the commissionaires in blue, who sprang up from an apparently inexhaustible supply whenever and wherever a new Ministry is instituted.¹⁴

It doesn't surprise then that Winston and Julia wear 'blue overalls', the uniform of the Party. Winston always carries with him 'a black, shabby brief-case with two straps.' He is told that he should leave his brief-case at home the day he was going to receive Goldstein's notorious book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, banned by the Party. It will be delivered to him in another similar brief-case. Muggeridge also recollects that the Ministry was a well provided place - that it had 'even tea trolleys and biscuits.'¹⁵ Orwell's Ministry of Truth is similarly privileged. It serves meals which consist of 'sandwiches and Victory Coffee wheeled round on trolleys by attendants from the canteen.'¹⁶

¹¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 44. A similar expression was used by Laurence Brander in describing the atmosphere at the B.B.C. 'Impressive processions of literary men and professors were hurrying through the B.B.C...' in *George Orwell*, (London, 1954), p. 8

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 190

¹³ Antonia White, 'Bombs on the B.B.C.' *London Calling*, 1942, No. 118, January 11-17. p. 3

¹⁴ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Chronicles of Wasted Time*, Vol. II., (Fontana Books, 1981), pp. 81-2.

¹⁵ Malcolm Muggeridge, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹⁶ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 190

The Ministry of Truth has an overcrowded, dirty and grimy, 'Low-ceilinged canteen, deep underground' where partymen go to eat in intervals of work. Like Winston, Orwell had often been a member of 'the lunch queue jerking slowly forward' in the basement canteen of 200 Oxford Street where John Morris recollects having tea with his colleague.¹⁷ The stew served in Winston's canteen has 'a sour metallic smell'. George Woodcock shares similar memories of having had 'bitter dishwashings passed there for coffee'.¹⁸ In an 'As I Please' column, Orwell reminisced: 'Just about two years ago, as we filed past the menu board in the canteen, I said to the next person in the queue: "A year from now you'll see 'Rat Soup' on that board, and in 1943 it will be 'Mock Rat Soup'".¹⁹ Ironically enough, he transported the repulsive image of the rat to the torture chamber of the Ministry of Love where Winston is emasculated.

The Ministry of Love is even more secretive and dangerous than the Ministry of Truth. Its formidable external appearance incites fear instantaneously. It is

a place impossible to enter except on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors and hidden machine gun-nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.²⁰

Gerard Mansell gives a similar description of the exterior of 55 Portland Place. He states that 'the entrance to Broadcasting House was protected by a wall of sandbags and guarded by armed and helmeted sentries; while on the roof the B.B.C.'s own air raid wardens looked out for enemy aircraft and falling bombs.'²¹ The interior of the Ministry, however, recreate the atmosphere of the recording studios of the Broadcasting House. Miniluv is 'a high-ceilinged windowless cell with walls of glittering white porcelain' and 'concealed lamps' flooding its space 'with cold light'.²² Its insulatedness is as piercing as of the ever lit and windowless recording studios of Broadcasting House, situated in the basement and isolated from the general flow of

¹⁷ John Morris, 'Some Are More Equal than Others', *Penguin New Writing*, 1950, Part 40, p. 43.

¹⁸ George Woodcock, *Orwell's Message*, p. 84. The canteen, despite its limitations, thinks John Thomson, was 'agreed to be the best the B.B.C. had. It was designed to cater for a hundred at a time, but it could barely cope: apparently people from up the road at Broadcasting House were using it too.' See *Orwell's London*, p. 65.

¹⁹ Orwell, 'As I Please', 31 December 1943, *Tribune*, p. 12

²⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 6

²¹ Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth be Told*, pp. 112-13. The black uniforms of the guards suggest the uniform of the Gestapo, Hitler's secret police. Black is symbolic of darkness, gloom, and all that is sinister and evil. It contrasts sharply with the white building of the Ministry of Love and the white porcelain interiors of the Ministry of Love.

²² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 237

everyday life on the streets above.

One of the most horrifying features of the Ministry of Love is Room no. 101. It forms the single most powerful image of cruelty and torture in Part III of the book. A grim foretaste of the room is given to readers in the particular pronunciation of the words - 'room one-oh-one', which Winston 'overhears amid the din of voices' in the Ministry in Part II of the novel. The room is 'many metres underground, as deep down as it was possible to go'.²³ Its emptiness is highlighted with the description of two small tables, the only piece of furniture it contains. 'Covered with green baize', they occupy the centre of the room and a thick ray of floodlight falls upon them. It is striking that Orwell should transport the furniture of his broadcasting studios to Room no. 101 of his novel. All tables and chairs in the newly built studios of Oxford Street had been specially covered with 'green baize to keep down accidental noise' from busy surroundings.²⁴

It is difficult to avoid the conjecture that the precise number and symbolic function of the room were suggested by Room 101 of 55 Portland Place where the Eastern Services Committee met fortnightly. Room no 101 could either have been the Committee Room on the first floor of Broadcasting House (each floor had a separate committee room for departmental meetings) or the Council Chamber, also situated on the first floor, could have been the more likely model. The Chamber was 'a dignified room intended for meetings of bodies such as the B.B.C.'s Advisory Councils...' Radiator grills and lighting pillars illuminated 'the entire room by reflected light', a characteristic which it shared with Room 101.²⁵ During the nineteen forties, reflected lighting was the most modern device used in prestigious buildings and Orwell would have been sufficiently impressed with reflected lighting in order to make it a prominent characteristic of Room no. 101

The first meeting was held on 8 October 1941 when Orwell was absent. He attended the second, on 22 October 1941; and the agenda and minutes of this meeting have fortunately survived.²⁶ The Indian Section at this time was still in its infancy. Understandably, the Committee discussed the various aspects of each of its services.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 296

²⁴ John Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

²⁵ *Broadcasting House*, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1932), p. 17. The book contains an impressive portrait of Broadcasting House. See also *Broadcasting House and Maida Vale*, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1936).

²⁶ See Appendix C.

The agenda, distributed to all members in advance, manifested Orwell's active participation in policy formulation. As expected, the minutes record him reporting the detailed summary of his prospective programmes and accepting responsibility for their thought content. It is curious that Orwell attended only one meeting of the Eastern Services Committee in Portland Place. He sent apologies for all further meetings with remarkable consistency, until July 1942, when the Indian Service was transferred from Portland Place to Oxford Street. He then resumed participation and was present fairly regularly. It is difficult to surmise if Orwell's maiden experience at Room 101 was so unfortunate as to make him abstain from visiting Room 101 forever; but it is highly likely that given his independent style of thinking, he would have been prone to disagree with his colleagues vehemently on subjects like propaganda, policy, censorship and the choice of speakers. In principle, the committee juxtaposed men of the establishment with those belonging to the anti-establishment who, like himself, not only felt mentally vulnerable to the collective might of the opposite side, but also experienced frustration when their efforts at doing something different were checked. Such feelings of frustration might well have given him a sense of identification with the far more traumatic experiences of the victims of totalitarian interrogation, expressed in Winston Smith's convictions that the party's aim was

simply to humiliate him and destroy his power of arguing and reasoning. Their real weapon was the merciless questioning that went on and on, hour after hour, tripping him up, laying traps for him, twisting everything that he said, convicting him at every step of lies and self-contradiction.²⁷

It is not necessary to speculate. Orwell's feelings of disillusion and frustration with the B.B.C., are vividly expressed in a long rambling entry in his wartime diary.

The thing that strikes one in the B.B.C...is not so much the moral squalor and the ultimate futility of what we are doing, as the feeling of frustration, the impossibility of getting *anything* done, even any successful piece of scoundrelism. Our policy is so ill-defined, the disorganisation is so great, there are so many changes of plan and the fear and hatred of intelligence are so all-pervading, that one cannot plan any sort of wireless campaign whatever. When one plans some series of talks, with some more or less definite propaganda line behind it, one is first told to go ahead, then choked off on the ground that this or that is 'injudicious' or 'premature', then told again to go ahead, then told to water everything down and cut out any plain statements that may have crept in here and there, then told to 'modify' the series in some way that removes its original meaning; and then at the last moment the whole thing is suddenly cancelled by some mysterious edict from above and one is told to improvise some different series which one feels no interest in and which in any case has no definite idea behind it. One is constantly putting sheer rubbish on the air because of having talks which sound too

²⁷ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 254

intelligent cancelled at the last moment.²⁸

Orwell's peculiar use of vertical distance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* - especially in describing room 101's secret location - is significant. The image of the 'deep deep underground room 101' is a microcosm in itself. The picture of the room is painted with microscopic detail and the horror associated with it is conveyed in magnified terms. It bears some resemblance to 'the top most room near the roof top' where O'Brien questions Winston. When Winston is tortured, he falls 'backwards, into enormous depths...through the walls of the building, through the earth, through the oceans, through the atmosphere, into outer space, into the gulfs between the stars...He was light-years distant.'²⁹

If there is one omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is Big Brother. His intimidating and piercing look 'so contrived that the eyes follow you' wherever you go is introduced to the readers in no later than the eighth line of the book. Winston watches the poster carrying Big Brother's face on every floor of Victory Mansions, the building he lives in. He is awed by the presence of this face all around the city. It depicts 'an enormous face, more than a metre wide : the face of a man about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features.'³⁰ Big Brother is the invisible ruler of the Party, he is the life and soul of the state, he epitomises everything noble that is happening in Oceania, he is the saviour of the proles. Although Big Brother's face has often been compared with the "good old Uncle Joe" face of Stalin, his personality owes much to the collective character of superhuman fuehrers, common enough in the early twentieth century, including Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. In a letter of 19 May 1944 to H.G. Willmet, Orwell observed that 'all the National movements everywhere,...seem to take non-democratic forms, to group themselves round some superhuman fuehrer (Hitler, Stalin, Salazar, Franco, Gandhi and De Valera are all varying examples) and to adopt the theory that the end justifies the means'.³¹ He made Big Brother symbolise this superhuman fuehrer.

However, Big Brother's face is astonishingly similar to the face of Lord Kitchener as depicted in one of the Great-War posters. During the Second World War, the M.O.I. re-used some of these posters for contemporary propaganda. The famous poster of Kitchener carried only a face, the solid face of a man with fierce eyes and domineering

²⁸ Orwell, *War-time Diary*, CEJL, II, p. 489

²⁹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 300

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3

³¹ Letter to H.J. Willmet, 18 May 1944, CEJL, III, p. 177

black moustache. It had another feature - a hand pointing at the reader's face and compelling him to read the words "Your country needs YOU", anticipating BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.³²

The memory of Kitchener had stayed with Orwell since his school days. While at St. Cyprian's he had participated in a poetry competition organised to mark the death of this warlord. His poem entitled 'Kitchener' was published in *Henley and South Oxfordshire Standard* in July 1916.³³ Although he had praised Kitchener's heroism, Orwell's feelings towards the Great War, and its heroes, had become ambivalent in later years. Orwell's memory of Kitchener, or the Kitchener poster, may have asserted itself during the second war. Co-incidental it is, but the similarities between Big Brother and Kitchener are astonishing. Big Brother does not borrow Kitchener's military cap and his hand but it does mirror Kitchener's face, his ruggedly handsome features and heavy black moustache. There seems every likelihood that Orwell had this poster in mind, besides other similar images, when drawing the image of Big Brother.³⁴

Winston first meets Julia outside the Ministry of Truth in 'Victory Square' which immediately brings to mind the scene around London's Trafalgar Square. He wanders round a huge monument with lions at the base and 'an enormous fluted column' on the top which has Big Brother's statue gazing 'southward towards the skies where he had vanquished the European aeroplanes in the battle of Airstrip One.'³⁵ Big Brother replaces Nelson's south-facing statue. The battle of Airstrip One corresponds to the battle of Trafalgar in which Nelson, as the Commander-in-chief of the Royal Navy had defeated the formidable forces of Napoleon's France. The crowd of people gathered at Victory Square must have its origins in meetings like the one on 26 July 1942 in which tens of thousands of people had assembled in Trafalgar Square to agitate for a second front against Germany. In his diary, Orwell had speculated about the number of people attending the meeting - 'The crowd at the Second Front meeting in Trafalgar Square yesterday estimated at 40,000 in the right-wing papers and 60,000 in the left-wing. Perhaps 50,000 in reality.'³⁶ 'Victory Square' is also the place for the execution

³² Records of War-time posters in the B.B.C. Written Archives. See also Keith Hooper, 'Posters of this War and the Last' *London Calling*, No 59, 17-23 November 1940, p. 7.

³³ Orwell's poem 'Kitchener' is quoted in Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁴ In this respect it is also significant that Orwell's essay 'Propaganda and Demotic Speech', published in *Persuasion* in March 1944, was illustrated by the Kitchener and other wartime posters.

³⁵ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, pp. 119-20

³⁶ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 496.

of criminals and prisoners of war in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Was it more than a coincidence that in his diary Orwell had noted that the German wireless had urged Londoners to hang Churchill in Trafalgar Square?³⁷

Images of India and Asia abound in the book. Winston watches 'endless columns of the Eurasian Army' marching on the telescreen 'row after row of solid-looking men with expressionless Asiatic faces'.³⁸ He listens to a newsflash on the telescreen just 'arrived from the Malabar front. Our forces in South India have won a glorious victory'.³⁹ The same image recurs when the announcer on the telescreen in the crowded canteen praises 'the heroes on the Malabar front'.⁴⁰ He is fascinated with a paper-weight in Charrington's junk shop. 'At the heart of it, magnified by the curved surface, there was a strange, pink, convoluted object' - a coral - which Charrington says 'must have come from the Indian Ocean'.⁴¹ Julia brings Winston a 'little packet of tea'. 'There's been a lot of tea about lately. They've captured India, or something,' she thinks.⁴² The 'islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans' are always objects of contention between Oceania and Eurasia. They 'are constantly being captured and recaptured'.⁴³

Other miscellaneous images connected with broadcasting filter into *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There is a 'Comrade Ogilvy' whose heroic death is commemorated by Big Brother. Frederick (Wolff) Ogilvy became the Head of the B.B.C. after J.W.H. Reith retired in 1940 but only served in his post for the next two years. Unlike the real Ogilvy, who was knighted in 1942, Orwell decides that Comrade Ogilvy should not be awarded 'the Order of Conspicuous Merit' because 'of the unnecessary cross-referencing that it would entail'.⁴⁴ The term 'Oceania' was consistently used, during the period 1940-42 by *London Calling, the B.B.C.'s Overseas Journal* when listing its programmes, hours and short wave bands to overseas countries,⁴⁵ though, of course, Oceania only referred to the group of islands situated in the South Pacific Ocean, to the east of Australia and New Zealand which received the B.B.C.'s 'Pacific and Central Transmissions.' In Oceania, morning exercises are a compulsory ritual of life. Party

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 410

³⁸ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 15

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 148

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 195

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50

⁴⁵ See *London Calling*, 1940-43.

members are obliged to exercise according to instructions given on the telescreen. The B.B.C. broadcast morning exercises six days a week throughout the war, just before the seven o'clock news except on Sundays. The B.B.C.'s underlying philosophy is amiably expressed by the instructress on the telescreen: 'We don't all have the privilege of fighting in the front line, but at least we can all keep fit. Remember our boys on the Malabar Front!'⁴⁶

The terms 'Minitrue' and 'Miniluv' have their origins in 'MINIFORM', the telegraphic address of the Ministry of Information printed boldly on all its official stationery. Sitting in the canteen, Winston's eyes fall upon a man from the Fiction Department whose eyes appear as 'two blank discs'.⁴⁷ The 'stream of sound' pouring out of his mouth is completely inaudible, 'it was just a noise, a quack-quack-quacking', like one of the many jammed sounds Orwell must have heard on the air.⁴⁸ Winston nicknames his wife, 'the human sound-track'.⁴⁹ The voice speaking from the telescreen has a 'fruity voice'. Orwell frequently commented in print on the quality, tone and accent of the voices of B.B.C. announcers: 'the unbearable voices of its announcers'⁵⁰; 'If you talk with a B.B.C. accent you can get jobs that a proletarian couldn't get.'⁵¹; 'The first sign that things are really happening in England will be the disappearance of the plummy voice from the radio.'⁵²; 'it is a nightly experience in any pub to see broadcast speeches and news bulletins make no impression on the average listener, because they are uttered in stilted bookish language and, incidentally, in an upper-class accent.'⁵³ By making the speaker's voice on the telescreen 'fruity', Orwell was not only deriding the tonal quality of the announcer's voice but also releasing his contempt for voices of position, power and authority.

However, not all B.B.C. images in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are gloomy. From the room above Charrington's shop Winston watches the brave prole housewife pinning drapers

⁴⁶ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 39

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57. The phrase appears again in his essay 'Politics and the English Language' (1946) 'one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into black discs which seem to have no eyes behind them.' *CEJL*, IV, p. 165.

⁴⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 57

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69

⁵⁰ 'London Letter to *Partisan Review*', *CEJL*, II, p. 139

⁵¹ 'The British Crisis', *CEJL*, II, p. 242

⁵² 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, pp. 403-4.

⁵³ 'Propaganda and Demotic Speech', *CEJL*, III, pp. 162-3

on a washing line and singing an 'opeless fantasy'.⁵⁴ The song fills him with happiness and hope. Orwell's description of the scene has the same romantic quality, the same buoyancy of spirit, that he had felt while listening early in the morning to the singing of charwomen at the B.B.C. He recorded those invigorating moments in his diary.

A huge army of them arrives all at the same time. They sit in the reception hall waiting for their brooms to be issued to them...and then they have wonderful choruses, all singing together as they sweep the passages. The place has a quite different atmosphere at this time from what it has later in the day.⁵⁵

The development of Winston's character and the reader's understanding of its development is the main structural force in the book. He is part of a debased structured society and yet he is out of it. In the author's eyes, he alone retains the individuality which other party members are devoid of. He, as the last European, is representative of the moral conscience of Oceania, which is inevitably connected with Orwell's own self-image of a free individual who could not have been bound to any authority, whether in Burma or at the B.B.C. One of the main themes, therefore, of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the power to be different. However, it is explored and better understood in terms of Winston's capitulation. The whole book is an exposition of how a person is conventionalised and forced into accepting the order of the society he lives in. There are three stages of Winston's metamorphosis - learning, understanding and acceptance. The last stage in Winston's life - his re-integration - contrasts sharply with Orwell's own rebellion both in Burma and the B.B.C. Like Smith, he had learnt and understood the system well, rather too well, but unlike Smith, he refused to acquiesce. The B.B.C. and the M.O.I., therefore, became models of state-controlled institutions which coerced people into following policies with which they wholly or partially disagreed. Even after going through a period of stress and meeting fierce resistance from many quarters, Orwell prized individual freedom too much to give in. At the cost of resigning, he salvaged the freedom to exercise normal common sense, to see clearly what was to be seen, not to be taken in by subtlety and mis-directed intelligence. 'Freedom', writes Winston Smith in his diary, 'is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that

⁵⁴ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 144

⁵⁵ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p, 486.

*is granted, all else follows.*⁵⁶

It is this freedom - the freedom of thought and judgement - that Orwell thought was being eroded by the Government-controlled B.B.C. His attack on the M.O.I.'s policy of reconstructing and deconstructing propaganda is best reflected in the theory of 'Doublethink'.

Doublethink is a mental technique devised by the Party that forces its members

To know, and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully-constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them; to use logic against logic,...to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed.⁵⁷

Although the origins of doublethink predate the B.B.C. period and can be traced as early as to the Communist propaganda in Spain, the B.B.C.'s clever use of this strategy may have been equally suggestive. In a diary entry of 14 March 1942, Orwell amplified a propaganda strategy which he had used in one of his news reviews, and which clearly contains some of the elements of doublethink. In an exercise of self-introspection and self-analysis, he discloses that he was gradually becoming 'propaganda-minded and developing a cunning one did not previously have'. He says that he was alleging regularly in his war reviews that the Japanese were plotting to attack Russia. He categorically adds:

I don't believe this to be so, but the calculation is:

If the Japanese do attack Russia, we can say 'I told you so'.

If the Russians attack first, we can, having built up the picture of a Japanese plot beforehand, pretend that it was the Japanese who started it.

If no war breaks out after all, we can claim that it is because the Japanese are too frightened of Russia.

All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth.⁵⁸

Winston's gesture of writing his diary is a virtual re-enactment of Orwell's own diary writing act - an act of clarifying memory, of asserting individual freedom and the right of free expression.⁵⁹ It was during the war that Orwell first used the diary form for

⁵⁶ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 84

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8

⁵⁸ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 465.

⁵⁹ Papers at the Orwell Archive include a collection of literary notebooks, political diaries and domestic diaries which he rather haphazardly maintained. Until 1938, he only kept literary notebooks and domestic diaries. He started what he called 'a political diary' in Morocco (1938-9) which is an informative and factual account of life in Morocco.

multiple purposes of refuge, comfort, solace, rebellion and personal documentation - all at the same time. Winston's diary contains all these elements and can be compared with Orwell's two war-time diaries which cover the periods 28 May 1940 to 25 August 1942, and 14 March 1942 to 15 November 1942. The second diary particularly, is an off-the-record account of the subtle and minute observations he made at the B.B.C. about himself, his work and the organisation - thoughts that were too private and personal to be shared publicly. Given the delicate nature of his job, even the thought of putting some of these observations into print would have been outrageous at that time. As well as becoming a powerful symbol of mental rebellion and individual reaction, Winston's diary tells the reader a parallel story which exists only in his own individual mind. It establishes the importance of private memory over public knowledge.

Winston knows that cowardly and frail men are incapable of standing on their own. The Party exerts fierce control over them by exploiting horror, fear and torture, both real and contrived. The means the Party adopts are ends in themselves. The image that O'Brien gives of the future is a savage one: 'If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - for ever.'⁶⁰ The action of 'stamping with' or 'stamping on', usually involving a face, had long been an Orwellian expression of physical brutality. Variations of this image occur in the whole body of Orwell's work. He however, explains it in detail in 'The Lion and the Unicorn.'

The goose-step...is one of the most horrible sights in the world, far more terrifying than a dive-bomber. It is simply an affirmation of naked power; contained in it, quite consciously and intentionally, is the vision of a boot crashing down on a face. Its ugliness is part of its essence, for what it is saying is 'Yes, I *am* ugly, and you daren't laugh at me', like the bully who makes faces at his victim.⁶¹

Elsewhere he stated that 'giants stamping on pygmies is the characteristic pattern of our age.'⁶² Once he described a disgusting scene from a crime novel in which the hero is 'stamping on somebody's face, and then, having crushed the man's mouth in, grinding his heel round and round in it.'⁶³ Orwell was obsessed with this image but rarely extended it to anybody who was known to him, least of all to himself, except

Strictly speaking, it is not a political diary because it records facts about the Moroccan people, their way of life, culture, agriculture, army and other miscellaneous things. With the outbreak of war, he started writing a journal which for the first time had a marked political bend.

⁶⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 280

⁶¹ Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn', *CEJL*, II, p. 81.

⁶² Orwell, *Manchester Evening News*, 5 May 1944.

⁶³ Orwell, 'Raffles and Miss Blandish', *CEJL*, III, p. 253.

significantly in a letter to Rayner Heppenstall he wrote: 'At present I'm just an orange that's been trodden on by a very dirty boot.'⁶⁴ It is ironical that to describe his own feelings at the time he left the B.B.C., Orwell chose an expression which was to portray the ruthlessness of O'Brien's character in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Interestingly, Orwell's experience of bureaucracy and his membership of several committees at the B.B.C. also suggested material for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston describes elaborately how he is appointed 'to a committee of a sub-committee'.

There were days when they assembled and then promptly dispersed again, frankly admitting to one another that there was not really anything to be done. But there were other days when they settled down to their work almost eagerly, making a tremendous show of entering up their minutes and drafting long memoranda which were never finished - when the argument as to what they were supposedly arguing about grew extraordinarily involved and abstruse, with subtle haggings over definitions, enormous digressions, quarrels - threats, even, to appeal to higher authority.⁶⁵

That *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has traces of Orwell's life is clear enough. Winston Smith is thirty-nine years old, an age Orwell attained at the B.B.C.⁶⁶ Like Orwell, 'Winston's greatest pleasure in life was in his work.'⁶⁷ Like Orwell, Winston often has violent coughing fits; once 'it emptied his lungs so completely that he could only begin breathing again by lying on his back and taking a series of deep gasps.'⁶⁸ Like Orwell's work at the Indian Section, Winston's work is crucial for the Party's survival. Like Orwell, he has a 'never ending round of work, bed and food' at the Ministry. His few hours of sleep are often disturbed by dreams of his estranged father, loving mother, younger sister and a wife, from whom he has failed to have a child. Winston's love for his mother is reminiscent of Orwell's own fondness of his mother who, with her younger daughter, Avril had moved to London during the War to contribute to the war effort and lived in a flat not far away from the Orwells. When Mrs. Blair died on 23 March 1943 Orwell had been present. Curiously enough, Orwell makes Winston remember 'the selfish way' in which he had treated his mother and sister. The novel ends significantly with Winston's recollection of his mother - just one last time - the image

⁶⁴ Orwell, 'Letter to Rayner Heppenstall', *CEJL, II*, p. 349. Heppenstall further confirms Orwell's sense of disgust when he quotes the latter saying that William Empson had 'sunk like a stone to the bottom of the sea' in choosing to continue working for the B.B.C. See Rayner Heppenstall, *Four Absentees*, (London, 1960), p. 163.

⁶⁵ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 308

⁶⁶ Footnote deleted

⁶⁷ *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 46

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4

of his loving mother with her 'two children in the dark, cramped bedroom.'⁶⁹

The relationship between O'Brien and Winston seems to have parallels in the real-life relationship between Rushbrook Williams and Orwell. Very early on at the B.B.C, Orwell had started acknowledging Williams as his immediate superior, ignoring Bokhari, and had preferred reporting his grievances directly to Williams. Winston, similarly, tells Julia 'of the strange intimacy that existed, or seemed to exist, between himself and O'Brien, and of the impulse he sometimes felt, simply to walk into O'Brien's presence' to communicate his internal feelings to him. The faith Winston puts in O'Brien brings to mind the trust Orwell seems to have put in Williams. Winston's secret visit to O'Brien's house along with Julia, and his naive, well-meaning and passionate confession to O'Brien about his disagreement with the Party's policies, has a strange correspondence with a particular incident that happened to Orwell at the B.B.C.

As seen earlier, Orwell's duties had also included the production of newsletters in Indian regional languages. For the Marathi newsletter Orwell depended upon a man called Kothari who translated and broadcast the English newsletter in Marathi. Orwell thought he was quite reliable because he was genuinely anti-Nazi and pro-Allied. The arrangement with Kothari worked satisfactorily for some time but

Suddenly, the so-called 'College', the mysterious body which had to O.K. all broadcasters, got on to the fact that Kothari had been in prison... At once Kothari was banned from the air on the ground that no one who had been in prison could be allowed to broadcast. With some difficulty we got hold of another youth named Jatha, & all went well for some time. Then, after this had been going on for some months, my Marathi assistant, Miss Chitale, came to me & suddenly revealed with great secretiveness that Jatha was not actually writing the broadcasts...Kothari was actually doing the translations & he & Jatha were splitting the fee. I felt it my duty to tell my superior, Dr. Rushbrook-Williams, ab[ou]t this. As it would be very difficult, if possible at all, to find another Marathi broadcaster, he decided that we must wink our eye at what was happening. So the arrangement continued, & we did not officially know anything ab[ou]t it.⁷⁰

Orwell never had any public disagreement with Williams but in private he was harsh in what he said about Williams. He referred to the 'hollow rubbish trotted out by Rushbrook-Williams' to which Orwell and others had 'had to listen and keep straight faces' when Williams justified General de Gaulle's decision of permitting no Allied

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 309

⁷⁰ 'Extracts from a Manuscript Note-book', 1948-49. *CEJL*, IV, p. 577

treaty with Syria.⁷¹ Orwell's dual response to his superior, or rather the duplicity of the superior's response to his subordinate, becomes the key feature of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is striking that the novel begins by Winston grouping all characters he interacts with into two categories - the ones whom he instinctively trusts and the others whom he decisively mistrusts. As the novel progresses, there is a reversal in the roles of these two groups. In the beginning Winston admires the integrity of O'Brien and Charrington; he never ever questions their motives, but they deceive and betray him, and strike at everything he believes in. Similarly, he conceives of Julia as being a Party spy at the outset but she becomes his only confidant, his love in part two of the novel.

Many themes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* spring from strictly literary influences, such as the works of James Burnham, H.G. Wells, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Jack London's *The Iron Heel*, Yevgeny Zamayatin's *We*, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Equally, of course, Orwell had earlier had much experience of the miseries of servitude and degradation, portrayed in *Down and Out in London and Paris* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*, not to mention the traumatic impact of what happened in Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War. What the B.B.C. did expose Orwell to was what he perceived as another form of servitude, though paradoxically combined with a genuinely stimulating intellectual experience, requiring him to attend to a variety of subjects whose value did not remain restricted to broadcasting alone. He constantly absorbed the many ideas generated during his discussions with contributors, or while editing their scripts. Altogether, the B.B.C. itself, along with other war-time organisations, completed his vision of a modern authoritarian society. Thus many such themes, lying dormant, sprang to life once he started constructing his picture of totalitarianism towards the end of 1943.

One of the possible sources, of Orwell's idea of the world divided into three Superstates - the states of Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia in perpetual war with one another, apart from the Tehran Conference of 1943 and the works of James Burnham, may have come from his close association with J.F. Horrabin. A B.B.C. veteran, Horrabin prepared scripts for television and radio even before the war. When contacted by Orwell, in early 1942, to do a series on world geography, he wrote four talks discussing the main areas of war, the strategic importance of islands and inland seas, and the opportunity provided by geographical back doors and side entrances in changing the shape of war.⁷² Orwell's awareness of world geography grew

⁷¹ 'War time diary' CEJL, II, p. 504.

⁷² See Chapter III, pp. 86

substantially in Horrabin's company. Not surprisingly, Winston admits 'the geographical knowledge that one needed in transferring the war from one part of the world to another was considerable.'⁷³ In his cubicle Winston fiddles with geographical information in altering the course of war between the superstates.

Horrabin's second series, elaborating upon the first but concentrating 'primarily on the strategy of war' and 'raw materials situation', proved immensely helpful in giving Orwell a basis for his own theory of war. The 'Three Great Superstates' echo the title of Horrabin's first talk, 'The Three Great Oceans'. Horrabin contended that control of the great oceans was imperative if victory over countries lying beyond them were to be achieved.⁷⁴ 'The fighting', says Goldstein's book, 'takes place on the vague frontiers...round the Floating Fortresses which guard strategic spots on the sea lanes.'⁷⁵

The war in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is nihilistic. Not one of the three superstates can conquer the other two because, in terms of their raw material situation, they are 'too evenly matched'. Eurasia's asset is its 'vast land spaces', Oceania's advantage is its strategic location in the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean and Eastasia has endless reserves of human energy. What in Horrabin's synopsis was the predominant reason for warfare - the control of various industrial areas - was no longer an issue in Orwell's novel. 'There is no longer, in a material sense, anything to fight about. With the establishment of self-contained economies, in which production and consumption are geared to one another, the scramble for markets...has come to an end.'⁷⁶

Orwell identified the cause of war with the domination of the thickly populated areas of the world - equatorial Africa, or the countries of the Middle East, or Southern India or the Indonesian Archipelago - areas which also yield important vegetable products such as rubber. While concluding his second series, Horrabin had enunciated the same argument but somewhat circuitously. He took Japan's case and said that although her primary reasons for expansion were the availability of raw materials, she first needed to conquer the vast population of the countries in question.

Japan has industrial organisation, but lacks essential materials. Hence her seizure of Manchukuo and northern China (coal and iron); and now her thrust at East Indies (rubber, tin and oil). To secure these for herself she must dominate all lands of S.E.

⁷³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 190

⁷⁴ See Horrabin's synopsis 'World Geography and the War'. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁵ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 194

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194

Asia. Will the millions of their people stand for this?⁷⁷

What in Japan's case was a bonus - the boundless energy of the peoples of south-east Asia - became the determining factor of war between Orwell's superstates. 'In so far as the war has a direct economic purpose, it is a war for labour power.'⁷⁸ Besides, the 'northern ice-cap' is also an attractive territory for conquest. This can directly be linked to a manuscript note that Orwell wrote on the back of Horrabin's letter expressing his curiosity about colonising the deserts and the poles.

Q. 2b) Polar regions - Are these inhabitable to any extent? Have any of the Arctic or Antarctic areas a summer during which cultivation could be practised? Is anything being done in this line now? Are the polar regions fully explored? What about the northern polar area as a means of communication between the new and old worlds?⁷⁹

Horrabin eventually broadcast a talk on 'Deserts and Poles' along the lines suggested by Orwell on 16 December 1942.

Then there is the Book. Orwell's decision to include Emmanuel Goldstein's book, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* as part of the novel's content has been controversial. Although Goldstein's book appears as a digression to the main plot, it forms an important milestone and accelerates the pace of the plot. Like Room 101, it emerges as powerful symbol and plays an important role in Winston's development. Its revolutionary contents purport to change his life and vision forever. The very fact that the book physically exists and he gets to read it, had a profound impact upon his life. Winston hopes it will answer all his questions about the secret operations of the Party and its dubious policies; he knows that the acquisition of the book has accelerated his journey on the road to rebellion. The kind of importance Orwell accords to Goldstein's book resembles the importance given to books in a talks series produced by Orwell called 'Books that changed the World'. In this speakers were asked to discuss books like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, and to show how they altered the very shape of human civilisation. Even Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was included as a book that had helped to create Nazi Germany.

In 1949, Orwell answered some questions about the purpose of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Among other things, he said that the novel should be read as a satire and that its contents should not be taken literally, but only figuratively. He categorically denied

⁷⁷ See Horrabin's synopsis, p. 3. B.B.C. Archives.

⁷⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 194

⁷⁹ Orwell's Manuscript note on the back of Horrabin's letter to Orwell. B.B.C. Archives.

that

the kind of society I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe that something resembling it *could* arrive. I believe also that totalitarian ideas have taken root in the minds of intellectuals everywhere, and I have tried to draw these ideas out to their logical consequences.⁸⁰

Basically the idea of leaping into the future and drawing logical inferences from the given state of affairs was well illustrated in a series of talks called 'India of the Future' and 'A.D. 2000'. The second series, produced in 1943, was particularly considered so relevant that a committee was set up within the Indian section to monitor and co-ordinate its production. Each talk contained views of specialists analysing what India would be like in the year 2000 A.D. in relation to its agriculture, industrialisation, education, religion, population and so on. As in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the series did not make predictions about India's future but it indicated the general direction in which the country was going.

Orwell's programmes on science fed his prolonged interest in the development of science in different political systems. He had been specially intrigued by the use of science in Soviet Russia. This became the subject of discussion in Professor J.G. Crowther's talk, 'Science in the U.S.S.R.' Crowther, a widely travelled man and eminent scientific scholar, had written many books on science including *Science in Soviet Russia* and *Industrialisation and Education in Soviet Russia*. Another talk by Prof. Joseph Needham on 'Science in Capitalism and Fascism' balanced Crowther's perspective by elaborating upon the growth of science in other countries. Besides, he asked C.H. Waddington to explain the nature of scientific research in 'I'd like it explained'. Waddington wrote another talk on the influence of science on literature in the years before the War. Orwell's insight into Soviet Russia, as a mechanically perfected model of a totalitarian state, was much enhanced by such first hand sources which explained how U.S.S.R. invested in science to further its political prowess. Possibly, these discourses contributed to his conception of mechanically controlled life in Oceania.

Through his portrayal of the Ministry of Truth and Thought Police, Orwell satirised the three main bodies he had interacted with during the War - the B.B.C., the Monitoring Service and the Ministry of Information. This is not to say that he satirised the B.B.C. almost exclusively, or that his criticism of Spain, the U.S.S.R., or Nazi

⁸⁰ Orwell, 'Letter to Francis A. Henson,' *CEJL*, IV, p. 564.

Germany had become less important; it is only that what Orwell could not expose at the B.B.C. - its hierarchy, its regimentation, its half truths and its unpleasant behind-the-scenes manipulation, became important targets in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In this respect a retrospective observation Orwell made in 1945 about the B.B.C. is relevant. Talking about the freedom of expression, he noted:

On the one hand there is the general drift toward a planned and centralised but not democratic society, in which the writer or journalist tends to become a sort of minor official. On the other hand, there is the pressure of totalitarian propaganda. How many people, making their living out of writing, can afford to insult simultaneously the M.O.I., the B.B.C., the British Council, the press lords...Yet you have to insult all of those if you want to speak up for the freedom of the press.⁸¹

Thus *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is an exposition of the tormented way in which political systems can suppress individual thought and emotion. The cruelty of the state represents man's inhumanity to man. The Monitoring Service secretly and elaborately recorded the policies, functions and broadcasts of all enemy countries and the British Government acted on the M.O.I.'s interpretation of these classified reports. Although nothing as organised as the Thought Police existed in Britain, internal surveillance at the B.B.C. was rife. Orwell was always conscious of the fact that higher officials were watching his actions, and censors were scrutinising his spoken and written words. He knew that his life as an independent author, for a time, had ceased. Once he had an heated argument with Bokhari when the latter enquired if Orwell had obtained the censor's permission before having his articles published. In a confidential note to E.S.D., which has found a place in Orwell's staff file, Bokhari reported:

From: Indian Programme Officer
Subject: Mr. Blair's Outside Activities
To: E.S.D.

August 17th 1943

As instructed by you, I had a word with Blair yesterday, and asked him whether he had taken the permission of the Corporation for publishing his articles in the various papers recently - for example, the *Observer* and the *New Statesman*. His answer was, "No; I did it in the beginning but I can't be bothered with it any more. In any case, I intend to leave the Corporation as soon as possible." I hope you will take the necessary action...Mr. Blair, or anybody else, can't have the best of both worlds: he can't be working for an organisation whose policy is well known and also try to please the Leftists.⁸²

Z.A. Bokhari

⁸¹ Orwell, 'Milton in Stripped Trousers', *Tribune*, 12 October 1945, p. 12

⁸² Bokhari's Memo to Rushbrook Williams, 17 August 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

Orwell reserved his harshest treatment for the M.O.I. Its counterpart in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Minitrue exercises direct control over all newspapers, 'books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs - to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance.'⁸³ One of the functions of Minitrue is also to 'supply the citizens of Oceania with newspapers, films, textbooks, telescreen programmes, plays, novels - with every conceivable kind of information, instruction or entertainment.'⁸⁴ Muggeridge writes that the particular department he was attached to, in the Ministry of Information, was responsible for producing feature articles 'calculated to raise enthusiasm for the Allied cause' all over the world, and that he often used to talk about this' with Orwell who was 'similarly engaged'.⁸⁵ Winston's work deals with the correction of existing records. His job of re-writing information is modelled on the M.O.I.'s work of reconstructing propaganda, and Orwell's own exercise of summarising heaps of recorded material produced by the Monitoring Service. In his diary Orwell discussed the equivocal nature of B.B.C. policy guidelines. He found it hilarious that whilst he had been reiterating in his Indian broadcasts the 'suggestion that Japan is going to attack U.S.S.R.,' Empson, his counterpart at the Chinese section, had been following a strict ban on this subject.⁸⁶

He thought that the bureaucrats of the M.O.I. had an insatiable appetite for power and authority, and so made them a special target of ridicule and criticism. Winston finds all members of the inner party one, uniform and homogeneous. No official, with the sole exception of O'Brien, is portrayed with any individuality. While at the B.B.C. Orwell rarely met officials who were in actual command of the situation. Like Smith he received directives from elsewhere - 'somewhere or other, quite anonymous there were the directing brains who co-ordinated the whole effort and laid down the

⁸³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 42

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 45

⁸⁵ Malcolm Muggeridge, *op. cit.*, p. 82

⁸⁶ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 466

⁸⁷ Footnote deleted

lines of policy which made it necessary that this fragment of the past should be preserved, that one falsified, and the other rubbed out of existence.'⁸⁸ Like Winston, he often found himself powerless to act otherwise.

In the Fiction Department, Julia produces novels mechanically on a novel-writing machine. The general directives are 'issued by the Planning Committee down to the final touching-up by the Rewrite Squad'.⁸⁹ Although she enjoys work, she is not intelligent enough to enter the Rewrite Squad. She does not care much for reading and treats books like commodities 'that had to be produced, like jam or bootlaces.'⁹⁰ Indeed, to arrive at Julia's point of view, a literary mind with Orwell's commitment and integrity would have needed a role-model in real life. In his essay, 'Prevention of Literature' (1945), Orwell suggested where he had found these role-models.

It would probably not be beyond human ingenuity to write books by machinery. But a sort of mechanizing process can already be seen at work in the film and radio, in publicity and propaganda, and in the lower reaches of journalism...Radio features are commonly written by tired hacks to whom the subject and manner of treatment are dictated beforehand: even so, what they write is merely a kind of raw material to be chopped into shape by producers and censors. So also with the innumerable books and pamphlets commissioned by government departments. Even more machine-like is the production of short stories, serials, and other poems for the very cheap magazines.⁹¹

The theme of 'Not Counting Niggers'- connecting war-time ideology with the exploitation of cheap labour from the colonies - recurs in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The disputed territories for which the three superstates constantly fight 'contain a bottomless reserve of cheap labour'. The power that controls the densely populated areas of human habitation among which southern India is prominent, also disposes of 'the bodies of scores or hundreds of millions of ill-paid and hard-working coolies.'⁹²

Orwell's experiments with language continued unabated at the B.B.C. One of his earliest experiments resulted in the production of a talks series, significantly called 'New Weapons of War', in which he collaborated with Anand to give talks on expressions used regularly in newspaper articles or radio broadcasts without necessarily being well understood. He wrote talks on the phrases 'Scorched Earth' and 'Sabotage', and asked Anand to discuss 'Fifth column', 'Living Space', 'Propaganda',

⁸⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 45

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136

⁹¹ Orwell, 'Prevention of Literature,' *CEJL*, IV, pp. 92-3.

⁹² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 195

'New Order' and 'Plutodemocracy'. The exercise of producing such series influenced him into using language more directly, and more overtly, for propaganda purposes. Many of his programmes conveyed a specific message to a specifically targeted audience. During the course of their production, Orwell was delineating for himself the subtle interconnection between art and politics on the one hand, and literature and propaganda on the other. He was, in effect, testing and justifying the validity of his maxim made in 1941. "All art is propaganda...On the other hand, not all propaganda is art."⁹³

If the meaning of words was a theme close to his heart, the ground covered by its vocabulary was even closer. While at the B.B.C., he became deeply interested in the artificial language Basic English. He saw, however, its shortcomings and made it the single most important object of satire in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.⁹⁴

Basic English was created by C.K. Ogden in the early twenties. It comprised a scientific selection of 850 words fundamental to English which could be used as effectively as the vocabulary of 20,000 words. Basic aspired to become an international language because it was comparatively easy to learn and yet had terms to cover specialised areas like science, commerce and travel. Support for Basic grew steadily in the two decades before the War. The philosophy of I.A. Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* co-authored with Ogden, had links with Basic. The Orthological Institute, under Ogden's directorship, published more than two dozen books and pamphlets on Basic.⁹⁵ In 1940, the Cambridge University Press printed *The New Testament* in Basic. During the War, its military and cultural use became widespread amongst the polyglot Allies. Its influence even reached the B.B.C. and permeated the literary world.

One of its earliest enthusiasts was William Empson who, in his radio talk in 1940 on Basic English and Wordsworth, praised it not only as an instrument for understanding poetry, but also for creating poetry.⁹⁶ Ezra Pound found it 'a magnificent system for

⁹³ Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', *CEJL*, I, p. 492.

⁹⁴ Although Newspeak also borrowed elements from Lancelot Hogben's *Interglossia* and F.A. von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, the major chunk of Newspeak's theoretical and operational principles derive from Basic.

⁹⁵ Publications of the Orthological Institute included *The Basic News*, *Basic English*, *The Basic Words*, *The Basic Dictionary*, *The ABC of Basic English*, *Basic Step by Step*, *Basic for Science*, *Basic for Economics*, *Basic for Business*, *Basic for Geology*, *Basic by Pictures*, *Basic by Isotype*, *Basic in Teaching*, *A Basic Astronomy*, *Everyday Basic*, *Brighter Basic*, *Word economy*, *Statement and Suggestion*, *Symbolic Distance* and *International Picture Language*.

⁹⁶ William Empson, 'Basic English and Wordsworth', *Kenyan Review*, II (1940), pp. 449-

measuring extant works...as a training exercise for young poets, as a means for the diffusion of ideas...'⁹⁷ Bernard Shaw condescended to have *Arms and the Man* published in Basic. Basic found its greatest advocate in H.G. Wells who in *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) made special mention of the language. He showed how Basic had become the lingua franca of his utopian world in 2020, and how it had differed from 'the English of Shakespeare, Addison, Bunyan, or Shaw.'⁹⁸ Extracts from the book were printed in a pamphlet called *Basic* which Orwell had possessed.⁹⁹ (His voluminous pamphlet collection also had editions of *The Basic News*)

The fortunes of Basic rose unprecedentedly when Winston Churchill delivered a speech at Harvard University in September 1943 and praised its workability as an international language. He said 'Such plans [for making Basic universal] offer far better prizes than taking away other people's provinces or lands, or grinding them down in exploitation. The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.'¹⁰⁰ He 'persuaded the British Cabinet to set up a Committee of Ministers to study and report upon Basic English.' The Government purchased rights to Basic and recommended that a substantial output of the B.B.C.'s Overseas programmes be translated into Basic English.

The wave of Basic only ebbed with time, but Orwell, in the early forties, rode high on it. It is a matter of conjecture if Orwell's interest in Basic resulted from its popularity inside and outside of the B.B.C., or from his fellow producer Empson's influence on him, or from a combination of these factors; but somehow he whole-heartedly came to rest his faith in the virtues of Basic. He contacted Leonora Lockhart, an expert on the subject to broadcast a talk on 2 October 1942. His early enthusiasm was strongly reflected in his letter to Lockhart:

57.

⁹⁷ Ezra Pound quoted in C.K. Ogden, *Basic*, (1939)

⁹⁸ H.G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, (London, 1933), p. 418. Some relevant pages of Well's book were also quoted in *Basic English*.

⁹⁹ Orwell collected pamphlets assiduously between 1935-45 and came to possess some 4,000 odd which he donated to the British Library. He himself got interested in the pamphlet form as a literary genre. In "Why I Write" (1945), he acknowledged that he had been 'forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer.' In 1939, he wrote an anti-war pamphlet. In 1940, he wrote pamphlets published as 'Searchlight Books'. In 1942, he wrote an essay on "Pamphlet Literature." At the Indian Service he edited and published a number of pamphlets. In 1945, he thought of publishing *Animal Farm* as a pamphlet when he had no success in persuading publishers to print it.

¹⁰⁰ Winston Churchill, 'Speech at the Harvard University', and other views quoted in *Basic*, (1939)

...what I am chiefly concerned with is to popularise the idea that Basic English will be particularly useful as between Indians, Chinese and other Orientals who don't know one another's language...I am particularly anxious to have this subject put on the map, with a view to dealing with it more elaborately later.¹⁰¹

When Orwell did not take any further initiative as promised in his letter, C.K. Ogden approached him to see if they could jointly pursue Basic in Indian broadcasts. Orwell replied:

When we did Miss Lockhart's talk my idea was, if possible, to follow this up sometime later by a series of talks giving lessons in Basic English which could afterwards be printed in India in pamphlet form. I still have not given up this project...If, at any time, it seems possible to do something about Basic English on the air again I will of course get in touch with you.¹⁰²

Despite willingness on both sides to propagate Basic, Orwell could not proceed with further talks. His interest, however, continued for he asked Ogden for a pamphlet on Basic which he promptly received in March 1944. Orwell thanked Ogden and admitted (now that he had left the B.B.C.) why Basic had been unpopular at the Indian Service. 'I rather gathered that its chief enemies were the writers of English textbooks, but that all Indians whose English is good are hostile to the idea, for obvious reasons.' He added that he had had 'great difficulty' in broadcasting Lockhart's talk on the air.¹⁰³

Having left the B.B.C., Orwell could now devote himself to those subjects he had found most interesting all his adult life. One of the things he came to scrutinize more closely was the structure and composition of the English language, particularly in relation to Basic and other artificial languages. Orwell's views on Basic were dramatically affected by the discussion of Basic in the columns of *Tribune*. As the literary editor, he encouraged the debate on Basic and published an article entitled 'Basic English and the Modern World' by William Empson.¹⁰⁴ The response to this article was immense and before long Orwell was writing that 'the *Tribune* may print one or more articles on Basic English.' In early 1944, Orwell still believed firmly in the virtues of Basic and talked about the 'fantastic misconceptions' of those people who thought 'that the advocates of an International language [i.e. of Basic] aim[ed] at suppressing the natural languages, a thing none has ever seriously suggested.' It needs to be said, however, that

¹⁰¹ Orwell, 'Letter to Leonora Lockhart', B.B.C. Written Archives.

¹⁰² Orwell, 'Letter to Ogden', B.B.C. Written Archives.

¹⁰³ Orwell, 'Letter to Ogden', B.B.C. Written Archives.

¹⁰⁴ See William Empson, 'Basic English and the modern World', *Tribune*, 18 February 1944, p. 18

he was beginning to wake up to the long-term implications of Basic and dismissed suggestions, including his own, that Basic could ever become a universal language. 'If any language is ever adopted as a world-wide 'second' language it is immensely unlikely that it will be a manufactured one, and of the existing natural ones English has much the best chance, though not necessarily in the Basic form.'¹⁰⁵

In 'The English People', an essay he wrote about the same time, he elaborated upon the extraordinary qualities of English.

It is capable of endless subtleties, and of everything from the most high-flown rhetoric to the most brutal coarseness...It is the language of lyric poetry, and also of headlines...It can also for international purposes be reduced to very simple pidgin dialects, ranging from Basic to the 'Bêche-de-mer' English used in the South Pacific. It is therefore well suited to be a world lingua franca.¹⁰⁶

Although he was beginning to shed his early enthusiasm for Basic, he was stating a typical Orwellian paradox. His appreciation of Basic was leading him on to the recognition of those very characteristics of Basic which he was going to criticise in future. It was by way of approval that he was going to discover the restrictive aspects of Ogden's artificial language.

One argument for Basic English is that by existing side by side with Standard English it can act as a sort of corrective to the oratory of statesman and publicists. High-sounding phrases, when translated into Basic, are often deflated in a surprising way. For example, I presented to a Basic expert the sentence, 'He little knew the fate that lay in store for him.' - to be told that in Basic this would become 'He was far from certain what was going to happen'. It sounds decidedly less impressive, but it means the same. In Basic, I am told, you cannot make a meaningless statement...¹⁰⁷

It was his use of the term 'deflated' in praise of Basic that became the crux, the theoretical basis of his later criticism of Basic. Newspeak was the deflation of Oldspeak. It was founded on the same principle as that of Basic. In Basic, English was reduced to the point where it was thought that its vocabulary had become more comprehensible for non-English speakers. Similarly, Newspeak entailed the shedding down of Oldspeak to the point where the power of thought was diminished. The aim of Newspeak was to bring men down to a near uniform level so that their ability to think and express themselves was reduced. Syme, the lexicographer and philologist friend of Winston says to him:

¹⁰⁵ Orwell, 'As I Please' *CEJL*, III, p. 108

¹⁰⁶ Orwell, 'The English People', *CEJL*, III, p. 41-2.

¹⁰⁷ Orwell, 'As I Please', *CEJL*, III, p. 244.

'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly *one* word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten.'¹⁰⁸

By aiming to reduce the vocabulary of language, the Party aspired to control the minds of individuals. For instance in doing away with words like freedom, democracy, honour, justice and religion, the Party had stamped out of existence the very ideas these words embodied. Its aim was to ensure that 'thoughtcrime' - any criticism of the Party - was made completely impossible. Dutifully obedient to the party ideology, Syme corrects Winston by pointing that he should appreciate 'the beauty of the destruction of words' and not 'the beauty of distinction and discrimination'.

By enunciating the principles of Newspeak in an appendix to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell satirised Ogden's method of language manipulation by scientific means. Explaining the functioning of Newspeak, Orwell referred to two specific characteristics, which were common to both Newspeak and Basic. He pointed out: 'Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself, and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive.'¹⁰⁹

Orwell's idea of the Dictionary of Newspeak may have come from its equivalent in Basic. *The Basic English Dictionary* had been issued after a long period of research. In the 'Introduction' to the Dictionary, Ogden had stated that 'the results of a ten year study led in 1928 to a professional system which left less than fifteen percent of the vocabulary in doubt; the Dictionary itself marks the final, definitive stage of the entire research.'¹¹⁰ 'The Eleventh Edition', says Syme, 'is the definitive edition' of the dictionary of Newspeak.. It 'won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.'¹¹¹

Orwell divided the vocabulary of Newspeak into three groups - 'A' for everyday life; 'B' 'deliberately constructed for political purpose', and 'C' consisting of Scientific and technical terms. Ogden had similarly divided Basic into specialised vocabularies; the

¹⁰⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 55

¹⁰⁹ Orwell, 'The Principles of Newspeak', in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 313

¹¹⁰ C.K. Ogden, *Basic Dictionary*, (London, 1932), p. x.

¹¹¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, pp. 53-4

Basic of 850 words was complimented by a further selection of 50 international words. Ogden had also provided an auxiliary *Applied Science Dictionary*. In Basic, derivatives from nouns could be formed by adding *-ing* to form participle and gerund; *-or* to denote the 'thing or person performing the operation; and *-ed* to form a past participle.¹¹² Orwell proposed an almost identical rule: he added '*-ing*' to the noun-verb to form the present participle; '*-er*' to form the verbal noun, the doer of the operation; and '*-ed*' for the past tense or the past participle. Ogden achieved the reduction in vocabulary by suppressing all but ten verbal operations from English. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Syme says 'Of course the great wastage is in the verbs...' Orwell adopted Ogden's cancellation of several variant verb-forms. In Newspeak 'the *shall*, *should* tenses had been dropped, all their uses being covered by *will* and *would*'¹¹³ in the manner of Basic which 'makes no distinction between *shall* and *will*,...The distinction between...*should* and *would* can also be neglected.'¹¹⁴

The particular use of prefixes and suffixes is common to both Newspeak and Basic. 'It was also possible...to modify the meaning of almost any word by prepositional affixes such as *ante-*, *post-*, *up-*, *down-*, etc. By such methods it was found possible to bring about an enormous diminution of vocabulary.'¹¹⁵ The fifty qualifiers of Basic which 'form negatives, coinciding in many cases with the opposites, by adding the prefix *un-*...e.g. *undependent*, *unprobable*...departures from standard English...'¹¹⁶ are carried even further in Newspeak. By exaggerating the Basic rule Orwell heightened the effect of the unnatural in Newspeak. Syme tells Winston:

'If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well - better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning; or "doubleplusgood" if you want something stronger still.'¹¹⁷

Besides making language one of the main themes of the novel, Orwell resorted to differential use of language, almost with clinical perfection, to bring about changes in the mood of the novel. His description of the totalitarian state of Oceania is direct, concrete and pays careful attention to detail. He gives his imaginary world a rough and

¹¹² C.K. Ogden, *Basic*, (1939), p. 33

¹¹³ Orwell, 'The Principles of Newspeak', in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* p. 316

¹¹⁴ C.K. Ogden, *Basic*, (1939) p. 57

¹¹⁵ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 315

¹¹⁶ C.K. Ogden, *Basic*, p. 51

¹¹⁷ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 54

sordid existence. The political purpose in his narration is evident from the very opening of the novel. He distinguishes the dry and impersonal world of Oceania from the dreamy, sensuous and personal world of Winston and Julia, both in the 'golden' countryside and in the room above Charrington's shop. In describing Winston's involvement with Julia, Orwell allows himself the luxury of a poetic style which contrasts sharply with his manner in the rest of the novel. Winston's imagination flares up when he gazes into the glass paperweight searching for a world of affection and security

There was such a depth of it, and yet it was almost transparent as air. It was as though the surface of the glass had been the arch of the sky, enclosing a tiny world with its atmosphere complete. He had the feeling that he could get inside it, and that in fact he was inside it, along with the mahogany bed and the gate-leg table, and the clock and the steel engraving and the paperweight itself. The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral was Julia's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at the heart of the crystal.¹¹⁸

Nineteen Eighty-Four was not the first novel in which Orwell achieved variation of narration and language. *Animal Farm*, written immediately after resigning from the B.B.C., also displayed perfection of narration, style and form which had never been characteristic of his previous work.

William West's view that 'Orwell's evolution from the slightly pedantic and unpolished author of pre-war days lies in the two years he spent as a Talks Producer'¹¹⁹ may appear to be an overstatement, but that he was exposed to a wide variety of stylistic techniques at the B.B.C. is a fact that cannot be ignored. Producing a programme did not just entail writing a script and having it read over the air. It also meant extensive re-writing, editing it to a precise length, moulding its form to suit the personality of the speaker, and more importantly, in transmitting a clear message to an unknown and sceptical audience. Evidently, the execution of each programme required a different production technique which suited its particular form and content. Orwell's handling of the 'Voice' magazine was very different from his production of talks for women, or on science, or in his war commentaries.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 154 .

¹¹⁹ William West, *George Orwell: The War Broadcasts*, (Penguin Books 1985), p. 13.

¹²⁰ Fortunately, two recollections have survived about Orwell's apprenticeship to the use of various stylistic techniques. In the first Woodcock recalls the peculiar mood created by Orwell's sudden selection of Byron's 'Isles Of Greece' in trying to establish empathy with his Indian audience in one of his 'Voice' programmes. See George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit*, p. 14

On another occasion Sunday Wilshin, a colleague of Orwell's at 200 Oxford Street,

Orwell came to include various extraneous devices in the production of his talks. These consisted of music, sounds, background effects, and use of the dialogue format as opposed to straightforward reading, already popular at the B.B.C. This was confirmed by Naryana Menon who provided background music for some of his talks.¹²¹ The use of literary devices like slogans, songs, imagery and symbolism is common to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the B.B.C.

Both novels are markedly different from his earlier work in terms of the exposition of a well-defined structure and plot. Whereas *Animal Farm* is an animal fable with a circular chain of events leading to the same juncture where the story began, the action in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* follows the triangular pattern of exposition, a climax and a denouement. Part one unfolds the world Winston lives in, Part II exposes his will for rebellion and his love for Julia, and Part III contains his forced surrender to the party. To delineate this action, Orwell makes conscientious use of the tools available to him. The particular way in which he handles imagery, symbolism, characterisation and plot has already been considered, what remains to be seen is his precise use of the slogan and the song.

First the slogan. The three slogans inscribed outside the Ministry of Truth - WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH are intricately woven into the plot of the novel. They are often repeated in the book. Their meaning is explained ironically not by the party, but by Goldstein's secret book. *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* appears to satisfy Winston's theoretical quest - 'I understand HOW: I do not understand WHY',¹²² but he still has to wait and undergo all that torture in Room 101 to be able to discern the difference between subjective and objective reality. It is through Winston's emaciation that readers are made aware of the inherent link between the three slogans and their actual manifestation in the Party philosophy.

The remaining 'special effect' is song. In both *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell includes the use of song to denote mental and physical rebellion. Winston is

revealed in an interview to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that Orwell was a novice when it came to making use of 'effects'. She thought that he was an intelligent man with great ideas for programmes but 'when it came to actually being in the studio, he needed someone to guide his hand.'¹²⁰

¹²¹ Naryana Menon, in an interview to me, New Delhi 1991

¹²² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 83

haunted by

'Oranges and Lemons', say the bells of St. Clement's,
'You owe me three farthings', say the bells of St. Martin's.¹²³

It reminds him of the church bells of old London now made silent by the Party. He improvises upon the tune and sings it when suddenly, he sees Julia approaching along the road. He reconsiders his opinion of her and symbolically, absolves her of being a Party spy. Later they sing the same song together in the room above Charrington's shop as if in a joint act of solidarity and rebellion against the Party. When Winston visits O'Brien, and foolishly shares the song with him, his fate is sealed for ever. His deception and ignorance continues when O'Brien completes the stanza for him.'

'When will you pay me?' say the bells of Old Bailey,
'When I grow rich', say the bells of Shoreditch.¹²⁴

The placing of the song is well adapted for use in a radio programme.

Orwell had never viewed his time at the B.B.C. with esteem. In 1943, he wrote to Philip Rahv that he had 'left the B.B.C. after two wasted years'.¹²⁵ In April 1946, in a letter to A.S.F. Gow his classical tutor at Eton, he wrote that he had been doing essentially 'hackwork' and that he had been writing 'enough rubbish (news commentaries and so on) to fill a shelf of books'. He, however, admitted that one of the advantages of doing hackwork for radio and journals was that he had become more widely known. 'When I do publish a book it sells a lot more than mine used to before the war', he claimed. ¹²⁶ In the same month, he wrote another apologetic letter about his hack journalism, this time to Stafford Cottman, and spoke about 'all the bilge I had to write for the B.B.C. for two years.'¹²⁷

In terms of their overall literary merit, Orwell's B.B.C. years were unproductive just as they had been for all other writers similarly engaged. He did not write, nor he could have written, a novel or earn his living through writing during the war. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that whilst the B.B.C. was able to make good use of his literary

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 102

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186

¹²⁵ Orwell, 'Letter to Philip Rahv', *CEJL*, III, p. 71

¹²⁶ Orwell, 'Letter to A.S.F. Gow', *CEJL*, IV, p. 178

¹²⁷ Orwell, 'Letter to Stafford Cottman', *CEJL*, IV, p. 180

talent and skills Orwell, like other fellow intellectuals, gained significantly from his broadcasting experience. The time he spent at the B.B.C. had enormous practical value. In linear progression, it falls in line with his time in Burma, in Paris, in London and in Spain. Whereas his past experiences had given him the insight and impetus to write documentary accounts, the Corporation's unique atmosphere and ethos furnished him with the raw material as well as some of the tools 'to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole' and 'to make political writing into an art.'¹²⁸ Of employer and employee at the B.B.C., therefore, there is never any doubt as to who finally had the greater profit.

¹²⁸ Orwell, 'Why I Write', *CEJL*, I, p. 29 & 28.

CHILD OF THE RAJ ?

One of the striking features of Orwell's personality was his unabashedly idiosyncratic view of people, places and events. Just as his tirades against totalitarian regimes continued ever unabated, his sympathy with the underdog at home and abroad never once wavered. His opinion of the Spanish Civil War was little affected by his disagreement with contemporaries. Similarly he developed, and stubbornly adhered to, certain characteristic views of some nation-states, which occupied not only a certain geographical position on the globe, but also embodied a distinct political, social, economic and moral image. For him, England was 'My Country Right or Left', on which he lavished a warm patriotism even as he criticized it for its class consciousness; 'A large family with wrong members in control', he called her. The Soviet Union was always an object of denunciation. His hatred for it showed no signs of mitigation, even when it became Britain's ally in the war against Fascism.

Like England and the Soviet Union, India and the East¹ also occupied a considerable space in his life; a fact never wholly registered by Orwell's critics. That the Indian connection proved crucial in his formative years, and the East exerted significant influence on his growth as a writer, were facts that always appeared to escape notice. Almost all studies of Orwell have considered his biographical link with the East, but none has seriously attempted a critical, or thematic, appreciation of this relationship. No study, including the most comprehensive by Meyers, Woodcock, Hammond, Reilly - even Sheldon's authorised biography - has recognised the fact that India did not just step in and out at certain stages of Orwell's life. The thought of India was a constant preoccupation with him, and 'loomed far larger in Orwell's moral imagination', as Crick has recently agreed.²

Two things need to be emphasized about Orwell's relationship with the East. The first is that Orwell's concern for India, as a British colony, was a matter of personal anxiety

¹ The term 'India' here denotes the undivided Indian sub-continent of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It includes the present India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and also Burma. Parts of Burma had come under British control after the first Burman War of 1826. However, it was the second Burman War of 1852, that marked the real beginning of British rule in Burma. In 1886, when Upper Burma was annexed, the British domination of Burma was complete. Since then Burma was considered a part of India and governed as an Indian Province. It was only in 1937 that Burma was separated from India, and given the status of a separate dominion.

² Bernard Crick, 'Afterthoughts And Aftermatter', *George Orwell: A Life* (London, 1992), p. 596

throughout his life. The second is that his views on the subject fluctuated greatly and were often inconsistent with each other. The latter fact has, indeed, led to much confusion and misapprehension. Critics have made claims and counterclaims on his stance on Imperialism and other related themes, because they have either failed to see how Orwell's viewpoint developed, or compartmentalized his experiences in such a manner that they mistook his ideas at one particular stage in life as also true of the others. His relationship with the East can be studied in terms of four phases.

The first phase began with Orwell's birth, on 25 June 1903, in the Indian town of Motihari in Bengal (now in Bihar) where his father, Richard Walmesley Blair was working as a Deputy Officer in the Opium Department. During the days of the Raj, Motihari enjoyed an enviable status. It was the most important town *en-route* from India to Nepal, a country with whom Britain maintained cordial relations. Since all troops heading for Nepal, or travelling between north and south Bengal, had to cross Motihari, it became a key administrative and military centre. In some novels of Tagore, Motihari features as a health resort which people visited to recover from illness. It appears that the lakeside town was affluent and prosperous during the time Walmesley worked there. However, Orwell seems to have retained no childhood memories of Motihari, or of India at all, because his mother Ida Mabel Blair took him to England, along with his elder sister Marjorie, before he was two years old.

Orwell's family had a history of distinct connections with the East. When young, his paternal grandfather had served in the Indian Army. His maternal grandfather, a teak merchant in Burma, also descended from a family having a connection with the East over three generations. His grandmother lived in Burma for forty years - a fact that proved a turning point in Orwell's life. Once in England, Orwell's link with the country of his birth consisted only in his Anglo-Indian background and the general atmosphere prevailing in the Blair household with Mr. Blair still at work in India. Nevertheless, the image of India crept into his mind when he read the work of Rudyard Kipling at the tender age of six.³ Kipling was one of his four favourite boyhood authors, the others being Ian Hay, Thackeray and Wells. (Two out of the four - Kipling and Thackeray - were born in India) In a candid appraisal of Kipling's position and work, he wrote :

In the average middle-class family before the War, especially in Anglo-Indian families, he had a prestige that is not even approached by any writer of today. He was a sort of household god with whom one grew up and whom one took for granted whether

³ See Orwell, 'Such, Such, were the Joys', *CEJL*, IV, p. 394

one liked him or whether one did not.⁴

Whatever his reasons for reading Kipling, Orwell's identification with his childhood hero went much deeper. He naturally developed a sense of affinity with the man whose early life bore some resemblance to his own. Both were of English parents living in India and each came to England at an early age where he suffered at the hands of repressive authority - Orwell at his preparatory school at St. Cyprian's, and Kipling boarding in Southsea at the house of his foster parents. Both returned to India, Kipling as the privileged outsider to work as a journalist in Lahore, and Orwell as part of the imperial machinery to govern an empire in Burma, becoming increasingly ungovernable. In 1937, Orwell was offered a job by the same Lucknow-based newspaper the *Pioneer*, for which Kipling had successfully worked in the eighteen-eighties and nineties. Orwell deeply valued and shared Kipling's sense of decency. He highlighted it as one of the more important characteristics of Kipling's character. He concluded, 'It was still possible to be an imperialist and a gentleman, and of Kipling's *personal* decency there can be no doubt'.⁵ Orwell pointed out that 'Kipling is the only writer of our time who has added phrases to the language',⁶ evidently not anticipating that some of his own phrases - terms like 'Big Brother', 'Thought Police', 'Thought Crime', 'Doublethink', 'Two plus Two make Five', and 'Some are more equal than others' - were to define an entire age during the cold-war period.

During the forty-seven years of his life, Orwell returned to Kipling time and again, and the story teller remained close to his heart as his ideal of a 'good-bad literary hero'. On his death in 1936, Orwell paid an emotional farewell to Kipling : 'For my own part I worshipped Kipling at thirteen, loathed him at seventeen, enjoyed him at twenty, despised him at twenty-five, and now again rather admire him. The one thing that was never possible, if one had read him at all, was to forget him.'⁷

It is interesting that the extremes of opinion, he had for Kipling's work, are symptomatic of his own mental view of the Empire. It was through a semi-conscious identification with Kipling that Orwell was able to evaluate his own position within the Empire, and reflect upon the changing nature of imperialism. Kipling had enjoyed privilege and power. The natives revered him, and he became involved in their affairs

⁴ George Orwell, 'On Kipling's Death', *CEJL*, I, p. 183

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 184

⁶ George Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling', *CEJL*, II, p. 224

⁷ George Orwell, 'On Kipling's Death', *CEJL*, I, p. 183

though with a sense of benevolent superiority. During Kipling's time, the Empire had been a symbol of British pride and glory. Orwell therefore endorsed, though not without reservations, his role as 'the prophet of British imperialism in its expansionist phase'.⁸ Later, he disconnected Kipling with the Empire and appreciated his worth as an independent writer. In a mixed vein of apology and justification he wrote:

If he had never come under imperialist influences, and if he had developed, as he might well have done, into a writer of music-hall songs, he would have been a better and more lovable writer... But now that he is dead, I for one cannot help wishing that I could offer some kind of tribute - a salute of guns if such a thing were available - to the story-teller who was so important to my childhood.⁹

That Orwell's earliest views on the Empire, in some part, were coloured by his childhood reading of Kipling, is undeniable. The Kiplingesque romanticism had been instrumental in taking him to Burma. Sir Steven Runciman, one of his close friends at Eton, vividly recollected this aspect of his personality.'...all through his school days...He wanted to get back to the East. I think that was the only thing he really felt sentimental about.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, his decision in 1922, to take the India Examination remains somewhat inexplicable. Tom Hopkinson is of the view that he did so on the advice of a tutor at Eton. 'Don't go up to Cambridge...Take a job abroad (the Burma Police was suggested) and see something of the world. By the time you're forty, you'll have reached a high position and qualified for a good pension. Then you can write, or do whatever you please.'¹¹ Others, including his childhood friend Jacintha Buddicom, suggest that it was largely Orwell's father's decision imposed upon him,¹² but evidence to prove any one of the reasons as wholly convincing is lacking. What is true, however, is that a career in the Indian Civil Service was considered highly attractive and his decision 'to go East' had the support and weight of family approval. He received rigorous tutoring for six months and passed the Indian Police Examination, with 8464 marks out of a possible 12,400, a score sufficiently good to secure him the place he had listed as his first choice - Burma. He gave reasons for his preference -

⁸ George Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling', *CEJL*, II, p. 217

⁹ George Orwell, 'On Kipling's Death', *Ibid.*, p. 184. Compare this with Orwell's 'In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer.' 'Why I Write', *CEJL*, I, p. 26

¹⁰ Sir Steven Runciman, 'A Contemporary in College' in *Orwell Remembered* by Audrey Coppard and Bernard Crick, (B.B.C. Books, 1984) p. 52. See also Sir Steven's recollections in *Remembering Orwell* (ed.) by Steven Wadhams, (Penguin Books, 1984) pp. 20-2

¹¹ Tom Hopkinson, 'Dark Side Out', *Cornhill*, 1953, Part 166, p. 455

¹² See Jacintha Buddicom, *Eric And Us*, (London, 1974)

'Have had relatives there'.¹³ On 27 October 1922, he set sail for the East on S.S. Herefordshire, and travelled between Birkenhead and Rangoon to take up duties in the Indian Imperial Police.

Exactly a month later, on 27 November 1922, Orwell arrived as an apprentice in Burma; and saw, for the first time, the way the Empire worked from close quarters. He was expected to perform the routine functions of a police officer and follow the rules instituted by the old hands. As he set about governing the lives of the Burmese, he realised that they had been made slaves of the Empire against their will. For the first time, he was able to comprehend the inherent contradiction between his own position and that of Kipling's. And although he went on with his job projecting an image of outward conformity, he was tormented more and more by an inner conflict. This change of heart developed only gradually during the course of an uninterrupted five year stay in Burma. After initial training at Mandalay and Maymyo, he was posted to as many as six towns between January 1924 and July 1927 : Myaungmya, Twante, Syriam, Insein, Moulmein and Katha. As the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Orwell had privilege and power - he was even entrusted with summary jurisdiction - but he neither showed an appetite for authority, nor conducted himself in the manner of a 'pukka sahib'. Internally, he had rejected the Empire, and distanced himself from it. This dislike gradually crystallised into a steady hatred of imperialism.

The Empire also was no longer the same as it had been during the days of Kipling. By the nineteen-twenties, relations between the British and Burmese, like those between the British and Indians, had deteriorated considerably. The wave of nationalism had spread through the entire country and natives were no longer tolerant of British excesses. Most significant was the British decision, of 1919, to exclude Burma from the Government of India Reforms Act. Orwell was perturbed by, and disillusioned with, the plight of both the parties concerned. He neither saw any justification in maintaining the Empire, nor did he feel much sympathy with the manner and expression of Burmese opposition. His response became even more complicated when he found himself secretly sympathising with the plight of the colonised.

Burma brought to foreground one of the most striking characteristic traits of Orwell's personality. It was the curious combination of responsibility and rebellion that developed, matured and became, for the rest of his life, an inherent part of his

¹³ Orwell's 'Indian Police Appointment' papers, 1922. Orwell Archive.

personality. While in Burma, Orwell vacillated constantly between covert patriotism and covert revolutionism. On the one hand he saw Imperialism as a well orchestrated system devised to exploit the coloured peoples of Asia and Africa for the economic superiority of the West; on the other, he shared the imperial attitudes and anti-Burmese sentiments of his contemporaries.

I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts.¹⁴

This view is reiterated by Christopher Hollis who had been two years Orwell's senior at Eton. Hollis describes a meeting with him in Rangoon, in the summer of 1925, when 'he was at pains to be the imperial policeman, explaining that these theories of no punishment and no beating were all very well at public schools, but that they did not work with the Burmese'. It was only after having read 'Shooting an Elephant', and *Burmese Days* at a later stage, that Hollis realised that while in Burma Orwell had been undergoing 'a struggle of two minds and what he had seen that particular day was only one side of it'.¹⁵

Orwell decided to renounce the Empire when he returned to Britain, in July 1927, on five months' leave. On 1 January 1928, he resigned from his job and stayed behind. His repudiation of the Empire thus marked the end of the first stage of his relationship with the East. He had been fascinated with India and drawn into a relationship that had dramatically changed the course of his life. By dismissing the Empire, Orwell had broken away from his family aspirations. He had unconsciously disowned his Anglo-Indian background which was deeply rooted in class consciousness. It is significant, that at this juncture, he decided to make a complete break with the past even though it meant experiencing rootlessness and alienation, however temporary.

The second phase began at the time when Orwell announced his decision to become a writer which, as he says in 'Why I Write', was his childhood ambition. Besides, during the time he apprenticed himself as a writer, he was also engaged in acts of expiation. He had volunteered to live the life of a down and out in London and Paris, with the double intention of expiating his guilt and gathering material for his literary

¹⁴ George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant', *CEJL*, I, p. 266

¹⁵ Christopher Hollis, *A Study of George Orwell*, (London, 1956) pp. 27-28

pursuits. Therefore, the dominant features of his writing, during this period, are disgust with power, hatred of the Empire and concern for the poor and oppressed. However, Orwell's approach is primarily that of a sentimentalist who was torn by an intense sense of guilt and remorse. His work strongly mirrors his cathartic motives. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, he confesses:

For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces - faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage - haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate. I suppose that sounds exaggerated; but if you do for five years a job that you thoroughly disapprove of, you will probably feel the same...I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants.¹⁶

By 1930, Orwell was writing regularly for the *Adelphi*, and occasionally for the *New English Weekly* and the *New Statesman*. Clearly, he was drawing upon his own experiences for subject matter, and the theme of imperialism had made its presence felt. It was through internal reflection and self-introspection that he was trying to come to terms with various aspects of colonialism. One of his earliest essays - 'A Hanging' - was written during this period.

The incident in 'A Hanging' (1931) is the execution of an anonymous Indian for an offence that is never mentioned. The detailed and precise act of hanging takes precedence over the circumstances of the crime and ^{is aimed} at exposing the cruel and barbaric nature of Imperialism. The inhuman state machinery is represented by the mechanical jail superintendent who is in total charge of the situation. He rules that breakfast be given to other prisoners only after 'this job's over'. His associate, the fat Dravidian jailor Francis, is happy to comply with the orders of his master - 'all has passed off with the utmost satisfactoriness', he says, after the execution is over. The ritual of hanging, with its planned precision, the use of rifles, fixed bayonets, the eight o'clock bugle call, the forty yards walk to the gallows and its final clinical execution - the noose, the steady and rhythmical chanting of Ram! Ram! by the prisoner, the swift signal of hanging, the twisted rope and the inspection of the dead body are sharply juxtaposed with the meaningless and futile death of the prisoner. Even in the face of death, the Indian retains an extraordinary level of consciousness. Orwell expresses

¹⁶ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier, The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume Five*, (London; Secker and Warburg, 1986) p. 138

covert sympathy with the doomed man by giving due notice to the stray dog who interrupts the procession to the gallows and licks the face of the prisoner, as if in an act of vain solidarity. 'A young Eurasian jailor picked up a handful of gravel and tried to stone the dog away, but it dodged the stones and came after us again. Its yaps echoed from the jail walls'.¹⁷ But, it is apparently the small and insignificant act of the condemned man - his stepping aside to avoid a puddle - that brings out Orwell's characteristic humanity, and conveys the core message of the essay:

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realised what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working - bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming - all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live...He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone - one mind less, one world less.¹⁸

The execution torments the observer as much as it tortures the dying man. In a spiritual and individual sense, Orwell annihilates the existence of the inhuman and corrupt world. It is through the association of 'He and We', and the recognition of a human society bereft of 'one mind less-one world less', that he brings out the irony of a common destiny for the colonised and the coloniser. The irony of the situation is further aggravated by the superintendent's remark that the dead man is 'all right' when nothing is left of him except his hollow footprints on the wet soil.

Another essay that Orwell based on the theme of imperialism was 'Shooting an Elephant'. It forms a statement of singular honesty and brings out unequivocally the paradoxical position of a white sahib in the imperial set-up. The central incident is about an elephant which has broken loose, ravaged huts, and trampled a coolie to death. When summoned to deal with the situation, Orwell sends for an elephant rifle, solely for self defence, but the emotionally charged crowd that follows him, assumes that he is taking them for a shooting spectacle.

It is while marching down the hill, 'looking and feeling a fool', that the real mystery of man's dominion over man is revealed to him. Finding the elephant browsing calmly, and looking 'no more dangerous than a cow', he is convinced that he should not shoot it,

¹⁷ George Orwell, 'A Hanging', *CEJL*, I, p. 68

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9

but he is forced to surrender his rational and better judgement to the collective will of a jeering crowd. The two thousand strong 'sea of yellow faces', jostling behind him compel him, irrepressibly and irrevocably, to take the decision.

And, it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd - seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib...He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant...To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing - no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.¹⁹

The death of the elephant is described with compassionate detail, and forms a psychological extension of the death of the unknown prisoner. The dying prisoner also symbolises the dying Empire. Unlike Forster, Orwell is not concerned with the emotional and psychological impact of the Raj on the subject peoples; instead he is preoccupied with the machinery of imperialism itself and also its corrupt manifestations. If he sympathises with the elephant or the prisoner, it is from the viewpoint of the a moralist, who is ashamed of the degeneration of the authorities. He thinks that the onus and vindication of cutting short the life of the elephant, or that of the prisoner, necessarily lies with the oppressive system.

'Shooting an Elephant' has many traits in common with 'A Hanging'. Both essays are narrative accounts of incidents, recollected vividly and intensely, though not without hindsight, and contain moral, social and ethical dicta. Written from a subjective point of view, they delineate the pressure and the trauma exerted by the incidents on the narrator's mind rather than on that of the victims. They are poignant expressions of the conflict experienced by the narrator when he struggled hard, in vain, to find a worthy and justified place for himself in an unjust world. They project the same sense of hopelessness at a life cut short for reasons inherently unjustifiable. Even the opening sentences resemble each other in their depressed tone:

It was in Burma, a sodden morning of the rains. A sickly light, like yellow tinfoil, was slanting over the high walls into the jail yard. We were waiting outside the condemned cells, a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like animal cages.²⁰

¹⁹ George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant', *CEJL, I*, pp. 269-70

²⁰ George Orwell, 'A Hanging', *CEJL, I*, p. 66

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people - the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter.²¹

It does not go unnoticed that the degree of confrontation with the natives varies in the two essays. In 'A Hanging', the narrator continues to be an observer 'waiting outside', whereas in 'Shooting an Elephant', he is the 'I' standing face to face with a hostile crowd. Their content and manner, including the five-year time interval between their publication dates, is symbolic of the gradual change in Orwell's attitude to the Empire. The incident in 'A Hanging' is indicative of his preliminary encounters with the hateful aspects of the Empire. It reflects the emergence of a conflict in the mind of the observer. He is gnawed at by the thought that he is a tyrant and yet his sense of duty overpowers him to accept the situation passively. The narrator is unable to summon enough courage to declare himself openly with those on the other side of the bars. But, by the time he shoots the elephant, his sense of alienation from his environment is complete. At a very personal level, he is no longer guilty of declaring his support in favour of 'the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British.'²²

The Empire forms the common subject of scrutiny for both Kipling and Orwell. Kipling looks for righteousness in it; he upholds it, glorifies it, and sings its praise. Orwell, however, smells decadence in it, denounces it and calls for its abolition. His mental viewpoint remains closer to Kipling than to Forster, because despite sharing Forster's dislike of the Empire, he stops short of taking the necessary vital step, a step that Forster had taken almost a decade ago, even before Orwell had begun writing, that of bringing to light the anguish and suffering of the colonised. Despite being on their side in sentiment, Orwell maintains an intellectual distance from the human predicament of the natives. This is also true of *Burmese Days*, a novel Orwell wrote after his two essays, in which he portrayed no character in a positive light. The only exception to this is the character of Dr. Veraswami, and even he is shown as timid and gutless.

The novel was conceived during the aftermath of Orwell's Burmese crisis. He began drafting the character of Flory as early as in 1927-28, but wrote the novel primarily between 1930-33.²³ It was published in 1934 in America, and the following year, in

²¹ George Orwell, 'Shooting an Elephant', *CEJL*, I, p. 265

²² *Ibid.*, p. 266

²³ See Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, p. 118 & 132

Britain. The novel aims at presenting the fictional world of colonial Burma, although Orwell wrote to Tennyson Jesse that 'much of it is simply reporting of what I have seen.'²⁴ He scatters his experiences amongst the many characters of the novel but lets his ideological concerns reverberate in Flory's mind. The British are portrayed as an alien race. Flory has a low opinion of colonial rule and English civilisation in Burma, 'What a civilization is this of ours - this godless civilization founded on whisky, *Blackwood's* and the Bonzo Pictures! God have mercy on us, for all of us are part of it.' He is disgusted that the Sahibs are perennially living under a white lie

that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. I suppose it's a natural enough lie. But it corrupts us, it corrupts us in ways you can't imagine. There's an everlasting sense of being a sneak and a liar that torments us and drives us to justify ourselves night and day. It's at the bottom of half our beastliness to the natives. We Anglo-Indians could be almost bearable if we'd only admit that we're thieves and go on thieving without any humbug.²⁵

Orwell's sympathy for the prisoner and the elephant reappears in Flory's friendship with Dr. Veraswami 'for the Englishman was bitterly anti-English and the Indian fanatically loyal'.²⁶ Like the prisoner and the elephant, Dr. Veraswami is betrayed in the end and Flory's remorse, at being a coward, haunts him to the last. Orwell's ambivalent feelings towards the Burmese - his constant vacillation between his sympathy and hatred for them - surfaces in the uneasy and ill-starred relationship of Flory and Elizabeth. Flory continues to speak 'in favour of Burmese.' His attitude contrasts sharply with hers for whom the Burmese are just natives, 'finally only a 'subject' people, an inferior people with black faces'.²⁷ It is unacceptable to her that he should 'admire people with black faces, almost savages, whose appearance still made her shudder!' Flory continues further, oblivious of the fact that his deliberate attempts at getting her interested in things oriental, would strike her only as 'perverse, ungentlemanly, a deliberate seeking after the squalid and the 'beastly''.²⁸ The murder theme recurs in the novel when Maxwell is murdered. But this time the act has a twist to it. It speaks of the atrocious tyranny of English rule through reversal of roles. '...the unforgivable had happened - a white man had been killed...Eight hundred people, possibly, are murdered

²⁴ See also 'Letter to F. Tennyson Jesse', 4 March 1946, *CEJL*, IV, p. 142, and Maung Htin Aung 'George Orwell and Burma' in *The World of George Orwell* (ed.) Miriam Gross (London, 1971) pp. 20-30

²⁵ George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, *The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume Two*, (London, 1986), p. 47

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137

every year in Burma; they matter nothing; but the murder of a *white man* is a monstrosity, a sacrilege', thinks Flory.²⁹ Apparently, Orwell sees the murder of the prisoner and the elephant, as just two of the eight hundred.

Burmese Days seems to have been strongly influenced by *A Passage to India*, which was published in 1924, when Orwell was serving in Burma.³⁰ In both novels, the exclusive English club occupies the centre-stage. The plot in both focuses on an Englishman's friendship with an Indian doctor, and a young girl who visits the colony but feels insecure in the wild expanse of her eastern habitat. Both novels portray a lack of understanding between the English and the natives which leads to a show of physical unrest and turmoil. The whites in both are portrayed as corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. However, although Orwell is closer to Forster in taking up an ideological position opposite to that of Kipling's, his manner of exposing the colonial conflict, as mentioned earlier, takes him farther away from Forster.

Burmese Days has an air of the grotesque. It is a far more pessimistic novel than *A Passage to India*. It brings out the ugliness of Burma and depicts the negative traits of the English and the Burmese alike. No character is gifted with the redeeming qualities of Mrs. Moore and Fielding, who keep alive the hope of a civilised society through sheer force of character. Forster is concerned primarily with human values. He brings together Fielding and Aziz in a compassionate relationship and pits it against the corruption and intrigue of the Empire. Fielding dares to break the iron rule - 'The English always stick together' - which in *Burmese Days* has just the opposite effect on Flory. Fielding not only dares to defend Aziz against the unanimous opposition and mockery of the club, but faces isolation by staking his reputation and integrity on his friend's innocence. Flory timidly signs the petition against Veraswami's entry into the club and indulges in self pity as he tries to justify his actions: 'If I'd stuck out against signing the notice I'd have been in disgrace at the club for a week or two. So I funk'd it, as usual.'³¹ Incidentally, the club in *Burmese Days* is merely a feeble version of the one in *A Passage to India*. Orwell never allows 'alliance' or 'partnership' in the way Forster does. Flory withdraws when the time comes to defend Veraswami: 'The doctor

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 247-8

³⁰ There is no evidence that Orwell had read *The Passage to India* immediately after it was published in 1924, but the similarity between Forster's novel and *Burmese Days* supports the view that he must have had. He reviewed *A Passage to India*, in 1936, for the *New English Weekly*. 'A *Passage to India* is not the perfect novel about India, but it is the best we have ever had and the best we are likely to get.' *CEJL*, I, p. 261

³¹ George Orwell, *Burmese Days*, p. 151

was a good fellow, but as to champion him against the full fury of pukka Sahibdom - ah no, no', he says. Like Orwell, Flory hates to see the English humiliating the Burmese, but recognises the fact that 'even friendship can hardly exist when every man is a cog in the wheels of despotism.' He, therefore, is more concerned with the machinery of the Empire than with the moral or human implications of its existence.

Regarding Orwell's portrayals of the Empire, the views of Malcolm Muggeridge seem to be quite apposite. Muggeridge believed that Orwell admired Kipling to the end of his life, and also 'his romantic sense of the White Man's destiny, to bring order and peace to Asia'. Thus

what he criticises in the British in Burma is, not so much their imperialist pretensions, as their provincialism, their shoddy tastes and philistine values, their fatuous insistence on their innate superiority to the "natives", their arid isolation as Sahibs in an ancient land which they govern but never bother to understand.³²

Like Kipling, Orwell makes poignant use of animal imagery to bring out the subtle nuances of the Empire's workings. The stray dog in 'A Hanging' is the only friend of the prisoner. The death of the elephant embodies, in totality, the crisis of the Empire. The hunting expedition in *Burmese Days* symbolises the manhunt of the Sahibs. It is striking that the hands of Flory and Elizabeth meet over the body of the jungle cock which she has shot.³³ Flory casts off his Burmese mistress, Ma Hla May unashamedly, but his dog Flo runs up to her and confirms their association in front of the whole community.³⁴

The view, that the two essays and novels are strictly non-autobiographical, continues to remain a matter of debate and argument. There are two schools advocating opposite views. Critics like Meyers, Trilling, Woodcock, and Rees believe that his Burmese experience gave him material for his two admirable essays and his first novel; while Crick, although revising his earlier opinion, that they were all essentially fiction - a theory, he writes, was 'killed by a fact, or rather by an elephant', still thinks that there is a case for reading 'Shooting An Elephant' as a good short story.³⁵

³² Malcolm Muggeridge, 'Introduction', *Burmese Days* (London, 1952) pp. vii-viii.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 174

³⁴ George Woodcock's has devoted considerable space to the exposition of animal imagery in his in-depth study of Orwell's work in *The Crystal Spirit*, (Penguin Books, 1976) pp. 67-70, 79-83 & 154-7.

³⁵ See Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, pp. 586-89

Orwell is well known for the ease with which he could throw smoke-screens when it came to personal revelations, as much as he could be singularly honest, at times, about his sentiments and loyalties. Looking back on his experiences in Burma, he wrote in the *Partisan Review*, 'I am against imperialism because I know something about it from inside. The whole history of this is to be found in my writings, including a novel...'³⁶ Although there is danger in accepting these writings as concealed autobiography, what is also certain is that they present a case, a situation, an argument, with an honesty which is truly representative of Orwell, the more so, when he is writing from his own experience. He had remarked that he had once seen a hanging. Flory, the hero of *Burmese Days* takes pride in impressing Elizabeth by the fact that he had killed an elephant. Textual evidence, therefore, does give credence to the theory that some such incidents as he describes did take place, either in his presence or in the presence of reliable witnesses.³⁷

Between 1927 and 1935, Orwell's ideas on Imperialism stemmed from his Burmese experiences. In the late thirties, there was a perceptible shift in his literary thinking and expression. Earlier, his reaction to things had been more sentimental and less radical. He coped with the harsh realities of his times by retreating into the private inner world of ideas. But now Orwell wanted to confront these realities and, whenever chance permitted, wished to address them directly. His negative outlook on life changed into something much more aggressive and positive. This transformation was not gradual; it came about suddenly, and with an immediacy, that can be attributed to one of the most important events of the period - the Spanish Civil War. Orwell's participation in the Spanish War brought him out into the open. His vision of life had completely changed when he returned to England after narrowly escaping political prosecution at the hands of the Spanish police. From about the summer of 1937, he did not see himself as the guilty police officer who 'underwent poverty and the sense of failure'.³⁸ Instead, he emerged as a conscious political writer who seems to have taken upon himself the task, as he later said, of making political writing into an art. 'My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice...there is some lie

³⁶ George Orwell, 'London Letter to *Partisan Review*', *CEJL*, II, p. 264

³⁷ Autobiography or fiction, one thing that the two essays and novel clearly demonstrate is Orwell's familiarity with Indian names and terms. He had once said. 'In my life I have learned seven foreign languages, including two dead ones'. Elsewhere, he wrote of his disapproval of his grandmother's disinclination to learn the local language, despite having lived in Burma for decades. His facility with the Burmese and Hindustani languages is amply exhibited by his frequent use of native words and expressions throughout these writings.

³⁸ Orwell, 'Why I Write', *CEJL*, I, p. 26

that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention and my initial concern is to get a hearing.'³⁹

Since his time in Burma, Orwell had developed a natural antipathy to authority in all its forms. However, it was the Spanish experience that provided the political motivation for the rest of his life. After Spain he was able to understand effectively the mechanics of power politics and could identify the socio-political and economic causes of inequality. Having seen enough of the life of the colonised, the victimised, and the tramps from inside, Orwell was now looking to Socialism to provide him with satisfactory solutions. He took the decisive step of joining the Independent Labour Party in 1936. Besides, for the first time, he also developed a positive attitude towards solving India's imperial problem. He enunciated it in one of his finest essays, 'The Lion and the Unicorn'.(1940).

The third phase began with his return to England from Spain. Between 1937 and 1940, Orwell saw himself revising his views on British Imperialism, especially in relation to German Fascism and Russian Communism. This exercise of weighing and balancing various political doctrines, evident in his letters and book reviews of that period, also facilitated the shedding of his guilt and subjective hatred of the British Empire. Orwell's first objective comment on the problem of India was a brief and indirect reference contained in a letter to Geoffrey Gorer in 1937. He equated British Imperialism with German Fascism and did not see any justification in collaborating with the British Government against Hitler. War to Orwell was essentially an imperialist manoeuvre and, as such, he was determined not to support imperialism either at home or abroad. He wrote,

We like to think of England as a democratic country, but our rule in India, for instance, is just as bad as German Fascism...If one collaborates with a capitalist-imperialist government in a struggle 'against Fascism', i.e. against a rival imperialism, one is simply letting Fascism in by the back door.⁴⁰

About the same time, he was offered the assistant editorship of the Lucknow-based newspaper, the *Pioneer*. The newspaper's editor, Desmond Young, had written to him asking if he would be willing to join. Orwell showed remarkable keenness in taking up the offer, but his appointment had to be vetted by the India Office in London. A.H. Joyce, the Information Officer there, requested him to write the reasons for his going.

³⁹ George Orwell, *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁴⁰ George Orwell, 'Letter to Geoffrey Gorer', *CEJL*, I, p. 318

He replied:

My object in going to India is, apart from the work on the *Pioneer*, to try and get a clearer idea of political and social conditions in India than I have at present. I shall no doubt write some book on the subject afterwards, and if I can arrange it I shall probably contribute occasional articles on Indian affairs to *Time and Tide* or some other English paper.⁴¹

It is possible that Orwell's motivation may have come, in part, from an unfulfilled desire to inherit Kipling's place at the *Pioneer*. But despite his inclination to go, and Young's desire to take him, the India Office suspected that the Government of India might not welcome the idea of Blair taking up an assignment, that could later prove to be an embarrassment to it or - unknown to Orwell - to the Government subsidised newspaper. It was also feared that, should his appointment be terminated, Orwell might just drift towards extremist political work in India, and it might then become difficult to get him back. When, in 1938, Young came to London to discuss the matter with Joyce, he was privately conveyed the message and Blair was unanimously 'turned down on medical grounds.'⁴²

This event seems to have brought him closer to the political developments on the sub-continent. By this time, moreover, the issue of India had begun to attract political debate in Britain. Nearly all major British political groups were beginning to propagate their respective views on India. No thinking man, it appears, at that point could afford to stay neutral about the problem.

In March 1938, Orwell reviewed, for the *Listener*, a book called *Trials in Burma*, written by Maurice Collis. He used this opportunity to voice his opinion on colonialism, and raised two important questions. The first related to the paradoxical position of British officers within the Empire, basically an extension of the central theme in 'Shooting An Elephant'. The second concerned the treatment of political prisoners in the colonised countries, a sensitive issue which built upon the sentimental sympathy expressed in 'A Hanging' and 'Shooting An Elephant'.

Identifying with the predicament of Collis, a district magistrate of Rangoon around 1930, Orwell discussed the trial of Sen Gupta, a popular Congress Leader from Calcutta. The magistrate had sentenced him to a mild punishment of ten days' imprisonment

⁴¹ George Orwell, 'Letter to A.H.Joyce, *CEJL*, I, p. 337

⁴² The details of this incident are quoted in Bernard Crick's biography, pp. 354-8. I am grateful to him for sharing with me his original research on the matter.

thereby denying him the opportunity of martyrdom. Later, he arranged a private meeting with the Bengali leader to talk the affair over. Orwell appreciated this gesture and thought that, by reducing political hostilities through tactical personal mediation, Collis had set an example of decency and humanity. Orwell's favourable response to the magistrate's diplomacy was a direct result of the objectivity he had recently acquired. It enabled him to adhere to an anti-imperialist stance without necessarily being a part of it. He stated:

The description of the Indian and the Englishman meeting in perfect amity, each fully aware of the other's motives, each regarding the other as an honourable man and yet, in the last resort, as an enemy, is strangely moving and makes one wish that politics nearer home could be conducted in an equally decent spirit.⁴³

The theme of 'Not Counting Niggers' (1939) is a fuller exposition of what Orwell had briefly stated in his letter to Gorer. Reacting to ideas presented by Clarence K. Streit in his book *Union Now*, he questioned the viability of Streit's suggestion that all democratic nations of the West, along with their dependencies, should come together in the form of a political, economic and military union against the Fascist States, chiefly Germany, Italy and Japan. The theory advocated was that the peace and prosperity, existing within such a Union, would provide it with an enviable status, much to the discomfort of the Fascist States. Its examination led Orwell to comment upon the status of what Streit had intermittently referred to as 'dependencies'. They were the subject races - the coloured inhabitants of Asia and Africa - whose natural and human resources, under the Union, were going to be pooled with those of the member states. Orwell pointed out that although the theory was valuable in some respects, it nonetheless failed to consider, or highlight, the unequal ratio of population between residents of the union and its dependencies. He cited India's example : it 'contained the whole of the 'fifteen democracies' put together', but she was given 'only a page and a half' in the book simply because she had the status of a dependency. At this point, Orwell was moved to define what Streit had meant by the Empire, 'in essence nothing but a mechanism for exploiting cheap coloured labour'. Orwell dismissed any suggestion that the British and French Empires, as part of a larger Union, should continue to benefit from the sweat and toil of the 'six hundred million disfranchised human beings' living in Asia and Africa. He wrote indignantly:

what we always forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in Britain, but in Asia and Africa. It is not in Hitler's power, for instance, to make a penny an hour a normal industrial wage; it is perfectly normal in India, and we

⁴³ George Orwell, 'Review of *Trials in Burma*', *CEJL*, I, p. 341

are at great pains to keep it so. One gets some idea of the real relationship of England and India when one reflects that the *per capita* annual income in England is something over £80, and in India about £7.⁴⁴

He argued in the essay, and never abandoned the view, that Britain's fight against fascism would entail supporting a greater evil elsewhere.

Orwell's attitudes find their clearest expression in the image of the coolie, a powerful symbol of exploitation, greed and colonial domination. His selection of the image was deliberate; it had a horrid personal experience behind it. His unpleasant encounter with the coolie occurred as he soon as he set foot on Burmese soil. He witnessed, while disembarking from his ship, the ruthless flogging of a coolie by a white sergeant for a trivial offence.

One of the coolies had got hold of a long tin uniform-case and was carrying it so clumsily as to endanger people's heads. Someone cursed at him for his carelessness. The police sergeant looked round, saw what the man was doing, and caught him a terrific kick on the bottom that sent him staggering across the deck. Several passengers, including women, murmured their approval.⁴⁵

Shocked by the barbaric punishment, Orwell gradually reasoned that this kind of discrimination was motivated by the colonial belief that the stronger race had every reason to exploit the weaker. 'It is the invention not of conquered nations but of conquering nations. It is a way of pushing exploitation beyond the point that is normally possible, by pretending that the exploited *are not human beings*.'⁴⁶ The theory was intentionally built by white administrators, and turned upon the supposed differences between their own bodies and those of the orientals.

The image of the coolie recurs throughout his work: The coolie is a condemned man. His 'black Dravidian' body is stamped upon by an elephant.⁴⁷ The British have starved him to the extent that it 'is quite common for an Indian coolie's leg to be thinner than the average Englishman's arm.'⁴⁸ The standard of living of the trade-union workers [in Britain] has depended upon 'the sweating of Indian coolies'.⁴⁹ A regular 'stream of dividends' has flowed 'from the bodies of Indian coolies to the banking accounts of old

⁴⁴ George Orwell, 'Not Counting Niggers', *CEJL*, I, p. 437

⁴⁵ George Orwell, 'Notes on the Way', *Time and Tide*, 30 March 1940. p. 336

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336

⁴⁷ George Orwell, 'Shooting An Elephant', *CEJL*, I, p. 267

⁴⁸ George Orwell, 'Not Counting Niggers', *CEJL*, I, p. 437

⁴⁹ George Orwell, 'Lion and the Unicorn', *CEJL*, II, p. 113

ladies in Cheltenham'.⁵⁰ The coolie is ignorant and subservient, and the British believe in keeping him thus; 'if you can induce the Indian to remain 'spiritual' instead of taking up with vulgar things like trade unions, you can ensure that he will always remain a coolie.'⁵¹ Even in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the power which controls southern India besides other areas of dense human population, also disposes of 'the bodies of scores of hundreds of millions of ill-paid and hard-working coolies.'⁵²

Orwell's anti-war stance just before the outbreak of war is strongly reflected in 'Not Counting Niggers'. It is strange but not entirely incomprehensible that he should have opposed the war, and espoused the need for a strong anti-war movement in England till the Russo-German pact was signed in 1939. On a purely intellectual level he had begun to equate British Imperialism with German Nazism and Russian Communism. A mental rejection of one had necessarily entailed the repudiation of the others. Even if Orwell did differentiate between the political ideologies, (this will be evident in his work of the forties) it was instantaneously blurred by his sense of outrage at a trait they all had in common - blatant misuse of power. However, his refuge in the anti-war camp was short lived and succeeded by a vigorous sense of patriotism. As observed earlier, his zeal to fight Hitler made him abandon, not only his pacifism, but also a peaceful country life at Wallington. He migrated to London in search of a meaningful war job. But once again, his patriotism did not blind him to those features of the English political and social life which he had bitterly opposed in the past. Amongst them, the most prominent was British imperialism. He stated:

If I side with Britain and France, it is because I would sooner side with the older imperialisms - decadent, as Hitler quite rightly calls them - than with the new ones which are completely sure of themselves and therefore completely merciless. Only, for Heaven's sake let us not pretend that we go into this war with clean hands. It is only while we cling to the consciousness that our hands are *not* clean that we retain the right to defend ourselves.⁵³

In 1941, he published 'The Lion and the Unicorn', a polemical pamphlet which contained much serious thinking. It was the first volume of the 'Searchlight Books' on democratic war aims to be jointly edited by him and T.R. Fyvel. In it, he seized the opportunity of stating in detail, some of the important aspects of the mental conflict he had then been experiencing. The essay is both creative and critical; it shows Orwell

⁵⁰ George Orwell, *Ibid.*, p. 123

⁵¹ George Orwell, 'Review of *Beggar My Neighbour*', *CEJL*, II, p. 358

⁵² George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, p. 195

⁵³ Orwell, 'Notes on the Way', *Time and Tide*, p. 337

thinking about issues, questioning their veracity and resolving them, in the very process of writing. In the first section, he analyses his reasons for loving England, defines what patriotism means to him, and provides an elaborate account of the English national character. His study makes fascinating reading, and stands out for its honesty and depth of observation. He is appreciative of the simplicity and moral goodness of the English common man - his gentleness, anti-militarism, respect for constitution, belief in law and justice, liberty and objective truth. However, he is quite critical of some of the negative aspects of the English class system, decay in country life, sham feudalism, and above all, the hypocritical English attitude towards the Empire.

In the second section, he grapples with the more intricate task of providing definitions of words and doctrines made commonplace by the war. This leads him to an examination of the principles of Socialism, Fascism, Nazism and Capitalism. He wants his countrymen, not only to fight the war effectively, but also to eradicate the abominable class structure by introducing radical economic reforms based on socialism and planning.

In the third and final section, he evaluates war 'as the greatest of all agents of change'; one that 'speeds up all processes, wipes out minor distinctions, brings realities to the surface'.⁵⁴ But he wants the British people to define their war aims and rouse maximum public opinion in support of those aims. He, therefore, proposes a six point programme as a clear guide-line to bring about fundamental changes in the English national character. Two out of the six points specifically relate to the problem of India.

He begins by making a bold statement:

What we must offer India is...alliance, partnership - in a word equality. But we must also tell the Indians that they are free to secede, if they want to. Without that there can be no equality of partnership, and our claim to be defending the coloured peoples against Fascism will never be believed.⁵⁵

He honestly admits that 'for at least eighty years England has artificially prevented the development of India', as a direct result of which the country had neither been able to feed nor defend itself. India's vast size had made her greatly dependent upon British administration. Her greatest danger came from Japan who would take her over

⁵⁴ Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn', *CEJL*, II, p. 117

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122

the moment Britain withdrew. So what India needed was the time and 'power to work out its own constitution without British interference, but in some kind of partnership that ensures its military protection and technical advice.'⁵⁶ This was imperative for both countries because:

The moment that England ceased to stand towards India in the relation of an exploiter, the balance of forces would be altered. No need then for the British to flatter the ridiculous Indian princes,...to prevent the growth of the Indian trade unions, to play off Moslem against Hindu, to protect the worthless life of the money-lender, to receive the salaams of toadying minor officials, to prefer the half-barbarous Gurkha to the educated Bengali. Once check that stream of dividends that flows from the bodies of Indian coolies to the banking accounts of old ladies in Cheltenham, and the whole sahib-native nexus, with its haughty ignorance on one side and envy and servility on the other, can come to an end. Englishmen and Indians can work side by side for the development of India, and for the training of Indians in all the arts which, so far, they have been systematically prevented from learning.⁵⁷

By the time *The Lion and the Unicorn* was published (February, 1941), Orwell had entered into a new relationship with India. With his first broadcast talk 'The Proletarian Writer' going on the air on 6 December 1940, he had embarked upon a career in broadcasting. His performance in this field impressed the officials sufficiently to ask him to enter into a permanent contract. It is strange, that in the last phase of his association with the East, he was once again a servant of the British Empire. But this time, there was a marked difference in his position. With a decade of testing his skills at writing and conscious of the role of the artist as a propagandist, Orwell was willing to accept the challenge of his new job. He went into the contract willingly, fully aware of the stakes involved. For even as he was, in fact, a servant of the British Empire, he was no longer a servant of British Imperialism. A great motivating factor in his acceptance of the offer, besides his patriotism, had been his genuine interest in the defeat of Fascism. The job presented an excellent opportunity to mount a verbal battle on Fascism. Years later, he disclosed: 'I hate[d] to see England either humiliated or humiliating anybody else. I wanted to think that we would not be defeated, and I wanted to think that the class distinctions and imperialist exploitation of which I am ashamed would not return.'⁵⁸

From 1941 onwards, Orwell emerged as a political propagandist on the one hand, and a cultural mediator between India and Britain on the other. At no stage in his life had he come so close to India as during his broadcasting years. India became the focal point of

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123

⁵⁸ George Orwell, 'London Letter to *Partisan Review*', *CEJL*, III, p. 339

much of his correspondence and conversation. He was increasingly in the company of people whose Indian association was exceptional. Malcolm Muggeridge had lectured in Travancore in Kerala. 'We often used to talk about India, having that obsessive interest in the country which no Englishman who has lived there ever wholly shakes off.'⁵⁹ E.M. Forster had been the principal aide of the Maharajah of Dewas long before writing his India novels. Laurence Brander had taught English Literature in the United Provinces for twelve years. Cedric Dover was an Indian born Eurasian. J.B.S. Haldane was going to accept Indian citizenship. Tom Wintringham was the chairman of the 'Freedom Defence Committee' for India. Moreover, Orwell communicated and closely worked with many Indian intellectuals who were brought together by the Indian Service.

The war had a sobering effect upon his bitterness over the Empire. Whilst the problem of dismantling the Empire continued to be one of his preoccupations, it is true that it no longer deeply engaged his imagination as the war moved into its final years. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell portrays India as a colony and a reservoir of slave labour when, by then, she was already independent. Although politically Orwell maintained that the battle against Amery was the same as the battle against Hitler, intellectually, he thought that the latter battle should take precedence over the former. British imperialism was undoubtedly evil but it was less evil than Nazism and Fascism. The greater evil had to be suppressed at any cost or else it would establish its supremacy over the rest of the world. In a letter to Willmetts, he wrote: 'It is a choice of evils -...I know enough of British imperialism not to like it, but I would support it against Nazism or Japanese imperialism, as the lesser evil.'⁶⁰

Much has been observed about the ambivalence in Orwell's attitude towards the Empire during the war years. In 'The English People' (1943) he observed that 'the whole British Empire, with all its crying abuses, its stagnation in one place and exploitation in another, at least has the merit of being internally peaceful.'⁶¹ In his essay on Kipling, he is appreciative of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Indians for being the 'people who did things. It may be that all that they did was evil, but they changed the face of the earth...'⁶² In 'The Ruling Class', he struck the same note: 'The Empire was peaceful as no area of comparable size has ever been...[The] British ruling

⁵⁹ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Esquire*, March 1969 p. 13

⁶⁰ George Orwell, 'Letter to H.J. Willmetts', *CEJL*, III, p. 178

⁶¹ George Orwell, 'The English People', *CEJL*, III, p. 47

⁶² George Orwell, 'Rudyard Kipling', *CEJL*, II, p. 219

class had their points. They were preferable to the truly modern men, the Nazis and Fascists.⁶³ It is curious that as early as in 1936, Orwell had anticipated, in the rise of Nazi Germany, the mellowing of the excesses of Imperial Britain. 'I did not even know,' he said, that 'the British Empire...is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it'.⁶⁴

However, it is important that Orwell's softening attitude to the Empire was complemented by a growing commitment towards India's independence. He showed remarkable consistency in maintaining parity between these two seemingly disparate positions. Whatever the consequences, Britain needed to withdraw from India. In taking this view, the many sides of Orwell's character surfaced. Sometimes, he was the patriot-propagandist who saw in India an important ally and desired her friendship, her consent, her willing participation, and not her subservience and muted compliance. Sometimes again, he was the patriot-moralist who was worried that the British reputation had deteriorated considerably, and could no longer be put at risk. At other times, he was the democratic socialist who thought that India's independence would greatly further the cause of working classes at home.

Orwell was aware that certain issues had to be settled, before agreeing in principle, to free India. The standard of living in Britain had to be lowered and people would have to prepare themselves for making sacrifices. He maintained this view until as late as 1946. In an essay "Do Our Colonies Pay", he stated, 'If we are very lucky our standard of living may not suffer by the liberation of the colonies, but the probability is that it will suffer for years, or even for decades. You have got to choose between liberating India and having extra sugar. Which do you prefer?'⁶⁵ Three years earlier he had expressed concern about a Socialism that taught people to think in terms of material benefit. He asked: 'How would the British worker himself behave if told that he had to choose between keeping India in bondage and lowering his own wages?'⁶⁶ His second anxiety surrounded India's defence status. He thought that she was unlikely to remain an independent country, in a full sovereign sense, because she was unable to defend herself. Fortunately, in both cases, his fears proved overstated.

In the forties, Orwell attitude to India became very detached and distinctly

⁶³ See George Orwell, 'The Ruling Class', *Horizon*, December 1941. pp. 321-2

⁶⁴ George Orwell, 'Shooting An Elephant', *CEJL*, I, p. 266

⁶⁵ Orwell, 'Do Our Colonies Pay?', *Tribune*, 8 March 1946. p. 11

⁶⁶ George Orwell, 'Letter to an Indian', *Tribune*, 19 March, 1943. p. 15

unsentimental. He was certainly not impressed by the kind of high praise showered upon the country by the intelligentsia. It was this quality in Lionel Fielden's *Beggar My Neighbour* which irritated him the most. Orwell's review of the book, the longest ever written by him, appeared in *Horizon* in September '43 as 'Gandhi in Mayfair'. In it, Orwell's criticism of Fielden's method was unsparing.

His attack on Fielden is as dramatic as the opening of the review. He compares Fielden's position with that of a toothpaste advertiser and shows how Fielden had failed in advertising his product - the freedom of India - through his book. He quotes a paragraph to demonstrate that any praise showered upon India's 'spiritualism', at the expense of the West's 'materialism', was bound to have a negative impact. Rewriting it from the Englishman's point of view, Orwell argues that, in his opinion, the 'nagging, hysterical note' that 'the East is Good and the West is bad', was unlikely to strike a sympathetic note with the reader. Fielden, unlike other propagandists, had failed to understand that propaganda for India needed to be discriminating. The apparent aim of the book was to win British public opinion in favour of Indian independence, which it was unlikely to achieve.

Clearly the review appears to be settling some old scores. Orwell discusses the India of the future as seen by Gandhi, and ratified whole-heartedly by Fielden. Gandhi's vision, he believes, was completely unreal because he wanted India to be independent, de-industrialised, de-militarised and self-reliant at the same time - a situation not pragmatically possible within the modern industrialised world. In taking up this position, Orwell comes out as a shrewd propagandist well armed with all the tools needed to argue his case. With adequate access to secret background information about the politics of the war, he strikes at Gandhi's philosophy and Fielden's uncritical adoption of it. He writes:

In a world in which national sovereignty exists, India cannot be a sovereign state, because she is unable to defend herself. And the more she is the cow and spinning-wheel paradise imagined by Mr Fielden, the more this is true. What is now called independence means the power to manufacture aeroplanes in large numbers...On a long-term view it is clear that India has little chance in a world of power politics, while on a short-term view it is clear that the necessary first step towards Indian freedom is an Allied victory...One must conclude that for the next few years India's destiny is linked with that of Britain and the U.S.A.⁶⁷

Orwell's treatment of the problem of India is dispassionate. It carries not a shred of the

⁶⁷ George Orwell, 'Review of *Beggar My Neighbour*', *CEJL*, II, p. 353

sentimentality, so explicitly evident in his earlier work. In fact, this is the very trait he criticises in Indian Nationalism. He believes that the response of Indians to their freedom was emotional, romantic - even chauvinistic - and worked indirectly in favour of Fascism. Not that he was being unsympathetic. Indian Nationalism, he argued, might well be coloured by the 'hysteria and short-sightedness' produced by decades of subjugation and colonial oppression. But he quickly distances himself from this controversy, and once again, reiterates his stance on Indian independence. His propaganda emerges as completely different, in spirit and style, from that of Fielden's.

Either power politics must yield to common decency, or the world must go spiralling down into a nightmare of which we can already catch some dim glimpses. And the necessary first step,...is that Britain shall get off India's back. This is the only large-scale decent action that is possible in the world at this moment. The immediate preliminaries would be: abolish the Viceroyalty and the India Office, release the Congress prisoners, and declare India formally independent. The rest is detail.⁶⁸

Orwell asserts that the first step in this direction was to win as many British supporters as was possible by making them 'see that India matters, and that India has been shamefully treated and deserves restitution.' Such a thing would not be accomplished by any propaganda that 'irrelevantly abuses every English institution, rapturizes over the 'wisdom of the East'...and mixes up pleas for Indian freedom with pleas for surrender to Hitler.'⁶⁹

Orwell's criticism of Fielden is sharp. He spares nothing that Fielden embraces and espouses. He is particularly critical of Gandhi, suggesting that both Gandhi himself and Fielden were ambivalent in their attitude to war. Gandhi was described as both a 'pure pacifist' and 'a Japanese agent'; he had been making conflicting pronouncements on war; lending and withdrawing his 'moral support' to the Allies; harbouring thoughts of compromising with the Japanese, while simultaneously wishing to oppose them by non-violent means; urging Britain to give up the battle in the West while also declaring that he does not want Allied troops out of India. Likewise, Fielden's views were also ambiguous. From the book, Orwell deduces that Fielden was a 'parlour anarchist' who wanted 'a compromise, a negotiated peace', but failed to demand this unequivocally. By attacking the materialism of the West, Fielden was committing yet another crime, available only to a well-privileged person. He was practising the creed of 'transferred Nationalism'. By transferring his allegiance to India in place of England he, a secure comfortable English gentleman, was criticising the very system

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 355

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 356

that had given him the material security and intellectual license in the first place. Orwell finds Fielden's motives highly confusing and calls *Beggar My Neighbour* 'a mischievous book, which will be acclaimed in the left-wing press' and welcomed by the 'more intelligent Right' for quite different reasons.⁷⁰

The review is important for several reasons. It reveals some of the important preoccupations of Orwell, the writer and propagandist, just before or during the period he was writing *Animal Farm*. His two years at the B.B.C. had given him a clear idea of what propaganda was actually about, what tools were available to a propagandist, and how best he could employ them. The review foreshadows the compactness of *Animal Farm*, and contains some key elements of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, born out of Orwell's temporary marriage with the British war machine.⁷¹ It also reflects Orwell's disagreement with the British Government's India policy. His comparison of Fielden and Gandhi becomes the basis of his later essay on Gandhi.

Between September 1943 and October 1944, Orwell reviewed as many as four books on India and examined in each the author's handling of propaganda. Since the Indian problem was still one of the most sensitive issues of the day, he looked closely into the form, content, and presentation of each book to see if it conformed to the demands made on the propagandist. In contrast to *Beggar My Neighbour* he reviewed *Subject India* in *The Nation* in November 1943. Orwell thought that, unlike Fielden, Henry Noel Brailsford was not interested in passing moral judgements. He was only attempting an exposition of the country's problems and her economic exploitation. The book, therefore, presented a balanced account of the strengths and weaknesses of British rule. *Subject India* created a favourable impression, not only because it was 'transparently honest', but also because it was 'a good-tempered book'. Once again Orwell is worried

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 359. Fielden was enraged by Orwell's reaction to his book. In his autobiography, he wrote: 'Eric Blair, otherwise George Orwell, who had a particular dislike of me, wrote no less than 6,000 words about it in *Horizon*, tearing it to bits and calling his article 'Gandhi in Mayfair'. I thought that this was too much, and asked the Editor, Cyril Connolly, whether I could write 6,000 words in reply. Cyril, a very fair man, agreed, and I did my best to stab Orwell in all his vulnerable points. He then asked Cyril for another '6,000 words to reply to me, but Cyril, quite rightly had had enough. See *The Natural Bent* p. 228.

In his reply titled 'Toothpaste in Bloomsbury', Fielden not only defended himself vigorously, but also accused Orwell of getting his facts wrong. He concludes that Orwell's article 'will certainly show all Indians who read it how profoundly he despises them'. See *Horizon*, vol. 8, November 1943. p. 356.

⁷¹ 'The world would be split up between three or four great imperial powers.' Orwell had said in the review. Evidently, his ideology about the three superstates had begun to take concrete shape. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

about British public opinion. Through covert comparison with Brailsford, he passes judgement on Fielden in absentia, 'Brailsford is writing primarily for the ordinary British public, the people who before all others have the power and the duty to do something about India, and whose conscience it is first necessary to move.'⁷²

Like *Subject India*, Orwell finds Louis Fischer's *Empire* equally worthy, and highlights the socialist propaganda contained in the book. Fischer was 'not trying to stimulate anti-British prejudice' but aiming at the uninformed reader, and creating awareness about the excesses of Imperialism. The British had strangled the growth of Indian industries; its policy of self-protection had not only led to 'divide and rule' but also fostered ignorance and superstition, much to its disadvantage. Besides, the author had taken pains to show that the Empire had not benefited the average British, the material wealth from the colonies had flowed 'into the pockets of a few thousand persons who control[led] government policy and own[ed] all newspapers.' The review carries some of the ideas Orwell was then preoccupied with - that Imperialism was inherently undesirable; that it was the ruling class that benefited the most from Imperialism and not the colonising country as a whole; that favourable public opinion in Britain was a potential weapon in India's fight for independence; and that India's sovereign status was at risk.⁷³ (The fourth book, *Letters on India* is discussed in chapter VI.)

While at the Indian Section, Orwell aimed at practising his belief that 'cultural sympathy can exist where political sympathy cannot',⁷⁴ and took upon himself the task of bringing Britain and India closer at a time when political differences were tearing them apart. He welcomed the emergence of Indian writing in English and thought it 'will have its effect on the post war world.' At one stage he tried to give a helping hand in the publishing world to his Indian friends. These included Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali, Naryana Menon, J.M. Tambimuttu and Cedric Dover.⁷⁵ He devoted his essay 'They Throw New Light on India', published in the *Manchester Evening News*, to the exposition of trends in Anglo-Indian writing since Kipling. As he put it,

The advantage that these writers derive from their double Orientation is that they

⁷² George Orwell, 'Brailsford on India'. Review of Henry Noel Brailsford's *Subject India* in *The Nation*, 20 November 1943., Vol. 157, no. 21, p. 589

⁷³ George Orwell, 'Empire and India'. Review of Louis Fischer's *Empire* in *The Nation*, 13 May 1944, Vol. 158, no. 20. pp. 572-3.

⁷⁴ See Orwell's 'Review of *Indian Writing, Vol. I*, the *Listener*, 6 June 1940, p. 1103

⁷⁵ J.M. Tambimuttu: Popularly known as Tambi, he was a Ceylonese poet who edited the journal *Poetry* (London) between 1939 and 1945.

can bring the real India direct to the British public. The "Sahibs", who used to loom so large in Anglo-Indian literature, but who in fact make up less than one in a thousand of India's population, do not dominate their stories.⁷⁶

He requested *The Partisan Review* to consider publishing the work of these writers. In July 1943, he recommended Anand and others to Alex Comfort for inclusion in *New Road*, a journal he had been editing. He explained his reasons for promoting them:

It is tremendously important from several points of view to try to promote decent cultural relations between Europe and Asia. Nine tenths of what one does in this direction is simply wasted labour, but now and again a pamphlet or a broadcast or something gets to the person it is intended for, and this does more good than fifty speeches by politicians.⁷⁷

Indeed, Orwell's openness and concern resulted in many warm relationships and won him the admiration of many Indians. His intimate friendship with the ^{now} veteran Indian novelist, Mulk Raj Anand, was probably the most notable outcome of this period. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Another Indian to come close to him was V.K. Naryana Menon,⁷⁸ the Carnegie scholar, who had been awarded a Ph.D. by Edinburgh University just before the outbreak of war. Unable to return home, Menon accepted an offer from the Indian Service to broadcast. Menon's love of music complemented his love of literature, and Orwell commissioned him to write an increasing number of talks on music. At first Menon got his talks recorded in the Edinburgh studios of the B.B.C. A keen talks producer, Orwell

⁷⁶ George Orwell. 'They Throw New Light on India', *Manchester Evening News*, 9 August 1945, p. 2

⁷⁷ George Orwell. 'Letter to Alex Comfort', *CEJL*, II, p. 348. In 1944, Orwell defended Suresh Vaidya, an Indian journalist and a regular contributor at the B.B.C. Vaidya was arrested on charges of not contributing to the war effort because he had refused to join the military service. Orwell thought that by imposing conscription rules to Indians, the British Government was antagonising the whole Indian community in Britain. 'One Indian war-resistor victimised does us more harm than ten thousand British ones. It seems a high price to pay for the satisfaction the Blimps probably feel at having another "Red" in their clutches.' See Orwell's 'As I Please' *Tribune*, 28 January, 1944. p. 10 Orwell also possessed a pamphlet on Vaidya's case titled 'Should Suresh Vaidya fight?'

⁷⁸ Naryana Vatakke Kurupath Menon. (1911- ?) Born in the southern-most Indian state of Kerala, Menon served as the Director-General of All India Radio, 1965-68; and became the Director of the National Centre for Performing Arts, 1968-82. He was awarded the prestigious civilian title "Padma-Bhushan" He served as President of the International Music Council, UNESCO, 1966-68. For a time, he was Chairman of the 'Sangeet Natak Academy' (Academy of Music and Drama), New Delhi, where he now lives. His books include *Kerala, A Profile*; *Balasaraswati*; *The Communications Revolution* and *The Development of William Butler Yeats*.

was happy to make extra arrangements. In a letter of 7 May 1942, he wrote:

I am arranging for the music you asked for to be sent to Edinburgh...

I shall be glad if you will let me have the scripts as soon as possible, then I can get it censored down here and pass it on to our Edinburgh office. If you are arranging to record a talk on Edwin Muir at the same time as the talk on Walton, of course I shall need that soon too. In any case, it is best if you can let me have the script of the recorded talk at least ten days in advance.⁷⁹

Occasionally Menon commuted to London, but moved permanently when the music department of the Indian Service employed him. He was given an office on the third floor of 200 Oxford Street, where Orwell often escaped, when in need of temporary release from work in his office on the second floor. Menon recollected that Orwell was often aggravated by certain policies of the B.B.C and felt quite uncomfortable in the domineering presence of Bokhari.⁸⁰ What impressed the young Indian was his talks producer's fearlessness and his stubborn refusal to give in to pressure from higher authorities.

Both Orwell and Menon were steadily opposed to Fascism. Orwell's radical essay, 'W.B. Yeats', was occasioned by his reading of Menon's book *The Development of William Butler Yeats* (1942). In it, he fuses his own criticism of Yeats with other issues like the role of the literary artist in the thirties, and Menon's own treatment of the Irish poet. Orwell was visibly impressed by Menon's analyses of Yeats' biography and 'philosophical system', but what he found particularly interesting was that, like himself, Menon should be wary of the growing power of Fascism and echoing, at the end of the book, his anxiety at Yeats' fascist tendencies. Orwell observed:

'...I would greatly like to see Mr Menon go ahead and write another book on Yeats, starting where this one leaves off. 'If the greatest poet of our times is exultantly ringing in an era of Fascism, it seems a somewhat disturbing symptom,' he says on the last page, and leaves it at that. It is a disturbing symptom, because it is not an isolated one...The relationship between Fascism and the literary intelligentsia badly needs investigating, and Yeats might well be the starting-point. He is best studied by someone like Mr Menon, who...knows that a writer's political and religious beliefs are not excrescences to be laughed away, but something that will leave their mark even on the smallest detail of his work.'⁸¹

Hidden in Orwell's concluding remark is a reflection of his own relationship with

⁷⁹ George Orwell, 'Letter to Naryana Menon', B.B.C. Archives.

⁸⁰ Menon in an interview. January 1991. New Delhi

⁸¹ George Orwell, 'W.B.Yeats', *CEJL*, II, pp. 316-7

Menon. Both were thinking men, both were anti-establishment, and both used their writing as a medium of opposition. The statement supports Menon's recollection that Orwell's volatile bursts of anger against authority in Menon's room were never in isolation. Menon always shared and supported them.

Menon lived on the third floor of the same tenement where Balraj and Damyanti Sahni lived.⁸² The couple were employees of the Indian Section⁸³ but did not see much of Orwell as they were recording programmes in Hindustani. Notable was the programme 'Forces Messages' compered by Balraj. (Orwell included a photograph of the same in his *Talking to India*, 1943.) The Sahnis developed great admiration for the tall and unusual Talks Producer and asked Menon to arrange a meeting over lunch at their place. Unfortunately, Menon could not recall the nature, or content, of the many meetings he or the Sahnis had with Orwell either personally or professionally. The couple participated in Orwell's 'How It Works' on 14 December 1941, speaking about the effectiveness of the theatre. The Sahnis returned to India, not long after Orwell had left the section. Balraj became a distinguished actor on the Indian stage and in the cinema. On learning about Eileen's death, he wrote a warm letter to Orwell

Bombay 20.11.45

My dear George,

Dammo [Damyanti] and I were extremely sorry to learn about your wife's death from Mulk. We saw very little of you two but you endeared yourselves to us greatly, through your work and your sincerity. This news has made us very sad indeed. I hope your adopted child is doing well and is being properly looked after...

We are now both working in the Indian People's Theatre movement about which Menon can tell you. The work doesn't bring us money but a lot of happiness. We make our living by acting in films and in the professional stage.

Later I may send you more details about the People's Theatre,⁸⁴ which is a powerful

⁸² Balraj Sahani. (1913-1973) Noted film and theatre personality, his work occupies special place in the history of Indian theatre and cinema. Awarded, more than once, the National Award for outstanding performance, he worked in Hindi, Marathi and other regional films. While in London, he wrote and produced programmes in Hindustani and Punjabi.

Damyanti Sahani (? - 1947) was asked by Bokhari to broadcast in September 1940. She was taken on at the Indian Service formally on 14 August, 1941. Reputed to be one of the most popular broadcasters, she was responsible for much of the B.B.C.'s entertainment for the Indian Forces in the Middle East. Her programme, 'Mamoo Khairoo's World Tour' - the tale of a Punjabi peasant who sets out to see the world and is thrown into unfamiliar circumstances - was one of the most popular programmes of the war-time Hindustani Service.

⁸³ Balraj Sahani was spotted by Fielden in 1940 when he went to 'Sevagram', Gandhi's Ashram in Wardha, to meet with Gandhi before leaving for Britain. Balraj had then been editing a paper called *Nai Talim*, (New Education). The Sahanis came to Britain in 1940.

⁸⁴ IPTA - The Indian People's Theatre Association played a significant role in the social

cultural movement. In the last one year nearly fifty new plays were written and performed to a total audience of more than a million people.

Mulk is away touring in the north. I haven't seen much of him yet. Hoping to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

Balraj.⁸⁵

In his autobiography, *Meri Filmi Atmakatha* (My Cinematic Autobiography, 1974), Balraj Sahni talked about his time in London. He wrote how he had established warm relationships with many writers and intellectuals, including George Orwell, T.S. Eliot, Harold Laski, Lionel Fielden, and Gilbert Harding. Amongst other things, he observed how his British friends used to become intensely involved with their respective assignments and worked, literally, like machines. From them, he had learnt the lesson that inspiration did not come from heaven (*Divyalok*) but had to be cultivated through discipline, determination and hard work. It was while at the B.B.C. that his expectations of himself rose unusually high. (He noted that when on his return from London when he learnt that some of the plays produced by the Hindustani Service had been popular in India, he was immensely happy.)⁸⁶

There is evidence that Orwell was fairly comfortable in the company of another Indian, Ahmed Ali, who became a close friend in extraordinary circumstances. During his India trip of 1942, Laurence Brander selected Ali to head the newly established Listener's Research Office in New Delhi.⁸⁷ The Office monitored the response of audiences listening in to B.B.C. broadcasts in India. Ali had been a lecturer in English at the University of Lucknow and Brander had probably known him since his own time at teaching English in the United Provinces. From his new office Ali was expected to send detailed reports to authorities in London about the response of Indian listeners. Naturally, many of his letters reached Orwell, and Orwell seems to have established his own private correspondence with Ali. Although little evidence of their association exists, a brief mention of their correspondence is contained in Orwell's review of Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*, but a detailed excerpt, quoted by Orwell in his war-time diary, gives some idea of their mutual trust and compatibility:

and cultural life of independent India. Linking itself closely with the lives of common people, and drawing upon the folk forms of Indian dance, song and drama, the IPTA revived and developed the tradition of social drama in India.

⁸⁵ Balraj Sahani, 'Letter to George Orwell', Orwell Archive, London.

⁸⁶ See Balraj Sahani, *Meri Filmi Atmakatha*, (Delhi : Rajpal and Sons. 1974), p. 39.

⁸⁷ See also, Brander's article on the novels of Ahmed Ali in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, no. 3, 1967. pp. 76-86

22 July

From Ahmed Ali's last letter from India:

Here is a little bit of old Delhi which might interest you.

In a busy street a newsboy was shouting in Urdu: 'Pandit Jawaharlal saying his rosary the other way round.' What he meant was that he had changed his attitude towards the Government. Questioned he said: 'You can never be sure of him; today he says side with the Government and help in the war effort, tomorrow just the opposite.'...

Other newsboys selling Urdu papers: 'Germany has smashed Russia in the very first attack.' Needless to say I read just the opposite in my English papers the next morning...

One day going in a 'tonga' I heard the driver shout to his horse as he shied: 'Why do you get back like our Sarkar! Go forward like Hitler,' and he swore.

It's rather fun going out to the bazaars and markets and listening to the loud gossip - provided, of course, it is not unbearably hot. I shall tell you more from time to time, if you are interested.⁸⁸

Apart from his other creative writing, Ahmed Ali has written three novels - *Twilight in Delhi* (1941), *Ocean of Night* (1964), and *Delhi* (1973). Presently, he is one of the finest Urdu poets of Pakistan and has published several anthologies. In a letter dated 7 July 1990, he recalled at length the time he had spent with Orwell.

I did know George Orwell, having met him as a fellow-contributor to John Lehmann's *New Writing*, at one of the Hogarth Press evenings at 4 Mecklenburgh Square in 1939. I had come to know him earlier through his *The Road to Wigan Pier* which someone had sent me in 1937 together with *Down and Out in London and Paris*. That had struck a very sympathetic chord of ideas in me, as I was myself having a bitter squabble over the cynical and false proletarian approach and the socialist-political role of the writer in creating literature.

Thus, when I met him in London, I felt that I had known him for sometime: and his Indo-Burmese background, his anti-Fascist and anti-totalitarian views, and his sense of guilt at his country's imperialism, were wholly conducive to the eradication of foreign-ness in his relations with his Indian friends and acquaintances.

It was during the B.B.C. years that he and I came more closely in contact. While he was running the Third Programme [sic], and arranging broadcasts to India by literary men and professors, I was doing Listener Research and keeping a finger on the pulse of public opinion as Listener Research Director and Representative. With his faith in radio propaganda and his original and inquisitive mind, Orwell was always coming up with new ideas and problems about the broadcasts in English...⁸⁹

Ali and Orwell corresponded over a long period of time. In his letter, quoted above, Ali regretted that all letters from Orwell were lost during the displacement caused by the Partition. Even letters from Ali could not be traced at the B.B.C. Written Archives. With the lapse of more than fifty years, and in the near total absence of evidence, it is

⁸⁸ George Orwell, 'War-time Diary: 1942', *CEJL, II*, pp. 493-4

⁸⁹ Ahmed Ali's letter to me dated 7 July, 1990.

difficult to delineate the depth of Orwell's involvement with his Indian friends, but there is little doubt that his relationships were intense. He lost their company when, in November 1943, he left the B.B.C. Further, many of his Indian friends returned to India, and drifted away from him.

Indeed, Orwell's preoccupation with India curiously formed an entire life-cycle. It began with Kipling and ended with Gandhi. 'Reflections on Gandhi' was the last major essay he wrote after completing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is the only essay devoted by Orwell to a public figure whose human interest derives not from his art but from his politics. Orwell's affinity with Gandhi, as with Kipling, has been pointed out by many critics, but if Orwell's overtly critical and negative statements about Gandhi are an indication, it is a case of identification through paradox.

Orwell came to know Gandhi through his early biography, *My Experiments with Truth*, a book he had read in Burma. (The book remained on Orwell's shelf throughout his life; it now lies in the Orwell Archive.) His early opinion of Gandhi owed much to the generally negative view of the Indian leader widespread in Burmese official circles. It was at the B.B.C. that he developed a more personal opinion of Gandhi's actions and motives, though it was still coloured by the bias contained in the monitoring reports and M.O.I. directives. The reports were quite confusing, and not very generous to Gandhi, as opposed to those concerning Nehru, which were often quite positive.

It is surprising that Orwell's estimation of Gandhi retained a kind of consistency not usually exhibited by him in the rest of his work. He spoke unequivocally of his dislike of the Mahatma throughout his life; it was only towards the end that he changed his criticism into a somewhat qualified admiration.

Gandhi has been regarded for twenty years by the Government of India as one of its right-hand men. I know what I am talking about - I used to be an officer in the Indian police. It was always admitted in the most cynical way that Gandhi made it easier for the British to rule India, because his influence was always against taking any action that would make any difference.

(Letter to Iowarth Jones, 8 April 1941)

As an ex-Indian civil servant, it always makes me shout with laughter to hear, for instance, Gandhi named as an example of the success of non-violence. As long as twenty years ago it was cynically admitted in Anglo-Indian circles that Gandhi was very useful to the British Government.

('Pacifism and the War', *Partisan Review*, Sept-Oct, 1942)

There is indeed a sort of apocalyptic truth in the statement of the German radio that

the teachings of Hitler and Gandhi are the same.
(Review of *Beggar My Neighbour*, 1943)

I must say that in spite of all their elegies I retain dark suspicions about Gandhi, based only on gossip, but such a lot of gossip that I think there must be something in it.
(Letter to Julian Symons, 20 April 1948)

I have never been able to feel much liking for Gandhi, but I do not feel sure that as a political thinker he was wrong in the main, nor do I believe that his life was a failure.
(Reflections on Gandhi, 1949)

Gandhi's death in 1948, like Kipling's in 1935, called for inner reflection, and on both occasions the outcome was a brilliant essay. Like Kipling, Orwell eventually settled down to a reserved liking of Gandhi. His reasons for doing so are not difficult to understand.

Besides being a critique of Gandhi's personality, 'Reflections on Gandhi' is also a self-analysis. Like Gandhi,^{al} though Orwell 'came of a poor middle-class family, started life rather unfavourably, was probably of unimpressive physical appearance, he was not afflicted by envy...'⁹⁰ This statement is more of a self estimation. 'Reflection on Gandhi' was conceived, and written, immediately after his writing, or more likely revision of, 'Such, Such Were the Joys' whose main concern was an examination of the negative forces in his own early life. Orwell shared Gandhi's 'ethical rather than religious outlook', and praised his 'natural physical courage', humanism, honesty and personal integrity. The more controversial aspects of Gandhi's personality - his penance, self torture, masochism, austerity, and self-starvation - are reminiscent of Orwell's own self-affliction. His complete self-denial of material comforts, his total disregard for basic physical needs and medical care, his tramping days and his adverse final retreat to Jura, have something in common with Gandhi's example. One of his most profound statements about Gandhi was so true of himself - like Gandhi, Orwell's 'whole life was a sort of pilgrimage in which every act was significant.'⁹¹ Could it be a mere coincidence, that writing his obituary in the *New Statesman* a year after this essay was published, V.S. Pritchett called Orwell 'a kind of saint'?⁹²

The importance of 'Reflections on Gandhi' goes beyond the above stated considerations. At the core of the essay lies Orwell's final views on Imperialism. The essay vindicates his stance of the early forties. British Imperialism had, indeed, proved to be a lesser

⁹⁰ George Orwell, 'Reflections on Gandhi', *CEJL*, IV, p. 524

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 523

⁹² V.S.Pritchett, *The New Statesman*, 1950

evil. Its domination was coming to an end. It was truly being supplanted by other empires that were more evil, because they were even denying the basic right of free expression. He asked,

It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the régime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary. Is there a Gandhi in Russia at the moment?⁹³

The British Government had granted India her independence. A major task was achieved largely due to the influence of the British people, which in turn, had been motivated by 'Gandhi's personal influence'. He concluded,

And if, as may happen, India and Britain finally settle down into a decent and friendly relationship, will this be partly because Gandhi, by keeping up his struggle obstinately and without hatred, disinfected the political air?...regarded simply as a politician, and compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind!⁹⁴

Thus, in his final analysis, Orwell comes full circle and ends up where he had begun. In 1949, he wrote the synopsis and some pages of the short story, he called 'A Smoking Room Story'. In it, the main character, Johnson, journeys on a ship, with 'a party of Indian Christians', from Colombo to Port Said. Scattered on the deck are 'forlorn-looking Indians', while some women roll out 'curry paste for the evening meal.'⁹⁵ Undoubtedly, there is a class war on the ship. With 'A Smoking Room Story' Orwell had hoped to return to the East, but he was taken seriously ill, and had to abandon his work. He died on 21 January 1950, two years after Gandhi's death and, like him, passed into history.

⁹³ George Orwell, 'Reflections on Gandhi', *CEJL*, IV, p. 529

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 531

⁹⁵ George Orwell, Notes on 'A Smoking Room Story'. Orwell Archive.

UNUSUAL CONTEMPORARIES

ORWELL AND MULK RAJ ANAND : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

In Leftist English literary circles before and during the war, Mulk Raj Anand was a figure valued not only as a novelist, but for the generosity and enthusiasm of a personality untouched by the period's fierce political infighting.

- Julian Symons ¹

This strange un-British Englishman, a rare human being, stood for rights of men to be ensured everywhere, in freedom without the restrictions of the State.

-Mulk Raj Anand on Orwell²

Both George Orwell and Mulk Raj Anand were rebels, non-conformists and brave embodiments of moral courage. Both chose to identify and sympathise with the oppressed. Naturally, they were both possessed with a passionate sense of social injustice, and recognised well, the denial of basic human rights to the common people in their respective countries. Both opposed Imperialism and Capitalism. And although they travelled different roads, their paths converged at a momentous time in history, and made them friends - one the author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whose place in the literary and cultural history of Britain shows no signs of diminution; the other - veteran Indian writer and critic, author of over two dozen novels, of collections of short stories, of essays on literature, art and politics, founder and editor of the prestigious art journal *Marg*, and crusader for international peace and freedom. At the age of eighty-nine, Mulk Raj Anand is still agile and writing.

As a young college student in Amritsar, Anand participated in anti-British campaigns and went to prison more than once. Disowned by his father and his community, he suffered even further through a failed love affair. With a background of rebellion thus stamped upon his character at the age of twenty, he determined to flee from India and travel, ironically, to England where he decided to pursue research in Philosophy. Without losing much time, he registered himself at University College, London, and studied under the supervision of the well-known realist, Professor G. Dawes Hicks. By the time he completed his work in 1929, he had established valuable relationships. He was corresponding with Bonamy Dobree and Herbert Read, and writing short notes on books for T.S. Eliot's *Criterion* while also working on *Persian Painting*, a book published by Faber and Faber in 1930. He frequented the British Museum, a place where he met eminent artists and writers. In his unfinished biography, *The Strings are*

¹ Julian Symons, Review of *Untouchable* entitled 'The evil that men do' in *The Sunday Times Weekly Review*, 22 November 1970, p. 32

² Mulk Raj Anand, in a letter to me dated 21 February 1990

False, Louis MacNeice wrote:

It was outside the British Museum that I met Mulk Raj Anand, a young Indian novelist. Mulk was small and lithe and very handsome, wore shirts, ties and scarves of scarlet or coral, talked very fast and all the time, was a crusader for the Indian Left. A conversation I had with him about Yeats brought up the subject of spiritual India... Mulk was one of the few people in London who still had public enthusiasms. The books of the Left Book Club, which by now were mainly of academic interest for the English, were for him more functional, alive, because he could make them applicable to India.³

During the thirties, Anand's literary circle grew with remarkable speed. By the time he met Orwell, some time between late 1934 and early 1935, he had published five books and even Orwell's first two novels, *Burmese Days* and *Down and Out in Paris and London*, had appeared.⁴ In spite of immense differences in their cultural and historical backgrounds, they found profound similarities in their outlook on life and literature. Because they shared a number of common characteristics, they took little time in identifying with each other's work. Both were professed anti-imperialists, and whilst neither was a confirmed socialist, both inclined strongly to the Left. If Orwell's enemy was the class system in England, Anand was vehemently opposed to the caste system in India. Even the contents of their first novels, Anand's *Untouchable* and Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, revealed their shared attitudes. Both had turned their back on their middle class backgrounds to write about the poor and under-privileged. Orwell was appreciative of Anand's struggle in getting *Untouchable* printed. Written in 1933, it was to be turned down by nineteen publishers before being finally published in 1935.⁵

The most striking feature common to both novels is the delineation of abject poverty and other things associated with it - hunger, squalor, destitution, demoralisation, shame and moral degradation. Anand's hero is an untouchable - a sweeper called Bakha whose work begins with the dawn of each new day. He cleans three rows of public toilets repeatedly until every sepoy in the British cantonment of Bulashah has performed his morning rituals. Born into the lowest of the low castes in India, he is an outcast from Hindu society. However, despite inheriting humiliation and servitude, Bakha is 'possessed with an overwhelming desire to live a good life'. His escape from

³ Louis MacNeice, *The Strings Are False*, (London, 1965), p. 209.

⁴ Anand's first five books are : *The Lost Child and other Stories*, *The Golden Breath*, *Persian Painting*, *The Hindu View of Art*, and *Curries and other Indian Dishes*.

⁵ The novel was written in Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram in 1930, and revised substantially in 1932-33. It is now a Modern Penguin Classic and has been translated into over twenty languages.

the world of subjugation takes the form of an eccentric identification with the life of a Tommy. He manages to buy a jacket, an overcoat, a blanket, some red lamp cigarettes and secures a pair of breeches and boots. Bakha derives immense satisfaction by indulging in 'fashun' by which he understands the art of dressing like a Tommy. This extravagance earns him the distinction of being called a sahib - no matter if he is only '*Pipali Sahib*' (imitation sahib). The irony of the situation lies in the fact that except in his temporary lapses into the world of 'fashun', he has nothing comfortable in life. Bakha earns food for himself and his family by begging, and digests piercing recriminations on the way. The agony of his own hunger is best expressed in his subdued and polite mumbling 'Bread for the sweeper, mother.' His dutiful warning to the people around him of his presence on the street by constantly uttering - 'Posh-Posh sweeper coming' - is a compulsive self-infliction, a reminder of his mendicant and pitiful status in life.

The fate of Sohini, his graceful and beautiful sister, is no better. She is also a victim of the hierarchical order of her low caste. She is abused by higher-caste women as she approaches the well to fetch water. Not allowed to set foot on the surrounding platform, she waits for the bounty of some well meaning person who will pour water into her pitcher. The temple priest Kali Nath, obliges her, but enamoured of her youthfulness, he asks her to clean the courtyard of his house later during the day where he molests her. When she screams for help, he accuses her of polluting him. Bakha, coincidentally present at the temple, witnesses the spectacle. He is enraged at the priest's hypocrisy but his sense of fear and low self-esteem cowers him and prevents him from retaliating:

He felt a wild desire to retaliate, retaliation meaning to him just doing anything to the man, from belabouring him with blows to killing him if need be...
And yet there was a futility written on his face. He could not overstep the barriers which the conventions of his superiors had built up...He could not invade the magic circle which protects a priest from attack by anybody, especially by a low-caste man. So in the highest moment of his strength, the slave in him asserted itself, and he lapsed back, wild with torture, biting his lips, ruminating his grievances.⁶

His sorrow is poignantly highlighted when he stands - a distant and silent spectator - while the girl he so admired and felt deeply for, gets married. No wonder he is surprised at being treated with kindness at Havildar Charat Ram's. When he returns home at night - dejected and forlorn - his father reprimands him for idling away during the day and drives him from the house.

⁶ Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, (London : Wishart Books Ltd. 1935) pp. 95-96.

Down and Out in Paris and London is also about the abandoned sections of society - abandoned by class and deprived of opportunity. The first half deals with the life of a man reduced to a penniless existence with no forthcoming income 'at last genuinely down and out'. He accepts a plongeur's job to buy himself out of the state of desperate starvation only to realise that 'a plongeur is a slave, and a wasted slave, doing stupid and largely unnecessary work.' Unlike Anand, who restricts the action of his novel to a single day in Bakha's life, Orwell's documentary portrays the plongeur's experiences over a prolonged period of time. He takes life as it comes and suffers varied dehumanising experiences in the Coq d'Or quarter where he rents a room in a 'dark rickety warren'. After having been robbed of his money, pawning his clothes for a few francs, going without food for many days, and leading an aimless life, he finds great relief when he secures a dishwasher's job at Hotel X, and later, at the Auberge de Jehan Cottard. Much to his amazement, he confronts an elaborate and compartmentalized 'caste system' in the hotel. At the highest level is the all powerful Patron who ruthlessly swindles the customers and staff alike. Beneath him is the manager, Maitre d'Hotel, head cook, chef du personnel, other cooks, waiters, laundresses, and finally, the plongeurs who can aspire to a job no higher than that of a lavatory attendant. Each one in the hierarchy exploits his subordinates. As a result, Orwell encounters, and endures, physical and psychological exploitation at all levels:

Our staff, amounting to about a hundred and ten, had their prestige graded as accurately as that of soldiers, and a cook or waiter was as much above a *plongeur* as a captain above a private. Highest of all came the manager, who could sack anybody, even the cooks. We never saw the *patron*, and all we knew of him was that his meals had to be prepared more carefully than those of the customers.

He adds: 'We of the *caf terie* were the very dregs of the hotel, despised and *tutoied* by everyone.'⁷ The theme of class exploitation is further dramatised by the juxtaposition of the luxury and squalor of the grand hotels where the rich customers are served not very far away from the disgusting filth of the kitchen. For all the money that they pay, the food often contains the cook's spit and the waiter's hair grease. This stark contradiction provokes him to comment ironically - 'Roughly speaking, the more one pays for food, the more sweat and spittle one is obliged to eat with it.'⁸

In the second half of the novel, he returns to England where he spends an intermediate

⁷ George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London, Volume One*, (London, 1973), pp. 69-70

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 79

time sharing life with tramps and living in common lodging houses and casual wards in the east end of London. Here he adopts the role of observer and recorder, as opposed to that of participant in the first half. His descriptions of the suffocating environment of the lodging houses, foul linen, grimy bathing areas, bug-infested rooms and the general tawdry and wretched living conditions convey a sense of helplessness and apathy. He is very critical of the system that spends £1 a week a head on keeping workless men moving from spike to spike, clad in rags and fed on meagre food, sleeping in discomfort, and never given the opportunity to work.

A tramp tramps, not because he likes it, but...because there happens to be a law compelling him to do so. A destitute man, if he is not supported by the parish, can only get relief at the casual wards, and as each ward will only admit him for one night, he is automatically kept moving. He is vagrant because, in the state of the law, it is that or starve. But people have been brought up to believe in the tramp-monster, and so they prefer to think that there must be some more or less villainous motive for tramping.⁹

Both Orwell and Anand are eager to suggest solutions to the problems raised in their books. Bakha meets Colonel Huchinson of the Salvation Army who offers him emancipation by converting him to Christianity. He next listens to the words of Gandhi who describes the untouchables as men of God, implying that he treated them as human beings beyond the narrow considerations of caste and creed. Then, there is the poet Iqbal who prophesies that future society with a modern sanitary system and the use of the flush will automatically ensure the rights of sweepers 'as useful members of a casteless and classless society.' The vision of a better future stirs Bakha although his immediate task is to return to the mundane world of abuse and drudgery.

Orwell's suggestions for the alleviation of poverty are both practical and prudent, but he believes that clarifying common misconceptions about the down and outs is the first necessary step towards the complete eradication of the evil. He explodes many common prejudices by explaining them. He suggests making casual wards more comfortable, and urges the need of finding suitable employment for tramps. However, Orwell's most radical statement on the problem calling for the welfare and financial security of this class, although implicit in this book, is not stated until the publication of *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

Anand's next novel, *Coolie* was published in 1936 - the same year in which Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* appeared. Thematically, the two books form extensions of the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204

earlier works and the action in both is dominated by the course of a journey - literal as well as figurative. *Coolie* follows the experiences of Munoo, the young and spirited hillboy, who in his youth is made to leave the relatively secure home of his uncle in the hills to work as a servant at the house of a bank clerk in the plains. There, he is victimised and ill-treated by the shrewish housewife and forced to flee. His next benefactors are Prabha and his wife at their primitive pickle factory at Daulatpur. Destiny tricks him again when Prabha becomes bankrupt and Munoo is forced into becoming a coolie - first in the grain market and next at the station. Finally, he reaches Bombay the city where 'you have to pay even for the breath that you breathe.'¹⁰

A large part of his life is spent in Bombay living on pavements, in slums, working in George Cotton mills, venturing into the red-light areas, getting embroiled in Hindu-Muslim confrontations and befriending Hari, Lakshmi and Ratan. His entire life is wasted in his enforced journeys, covering immense distances from Simla to Bombay, extensive in time and space. It ends at the pretentious Mrs. Mainwaring's house in Simla where he works as her page and rickshawpuller. There, he dies of consumption watching the serenity of the hills and valleys he had originally deserted. Munoo has an endearing character - his warm-heartedness and kindness, his comradeship and love, his irrepressible curiosity and zest for life deserves a better reward. Yet, he lives and dies a destitute hero, beaten from pillar to post and endlessly exploited.

The Road to Wigan Pier is an account of Orwell's first socialist expedition to Wigan to find out just who lived in those unknown districts, and how. He had been assigned by the Left Book Club to report on living conditions in the depressed areas of northern England. However, the purpose of the book turned out to be two-fold. Orwell was also exploring the road to Socialism. Although the first half of the book is a description of the physical journey to the mining areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the latter half is a debate about how Socialism, as it stood then, was unable to override the distinctions of class and rank. The socialist movement, he thinks, would have to find ways and means of bringing the working class together with the middle class, at least where the interests of both coincided. He expected fascism to spread in England very soon and wanted reform to occur at the earliest possible moment. Therefore, there is a kind of solemnness and urgency in his plea.

¹⁰ Mulk Raj Anand, *The Coolie*, (London : Lawrence and Wishart, 1936) p. 188. Like *Untouchable*, *The Coolie* is also a Modern Penguin Classic and has been translated into many European languages.

The book opens with his stay at the house of Brookers in wretched conditions. The examiners run a lodging house, a tea and tripe shop and exploit those weaker than themselves. The invalid Mrs. Brooker lying permanently on a 'shapeless sofa' and the bedridden pensioner Hooker refusing to die, along with other occupants, speak a sordid story of misery and squalor. He ventures down a coal mine and comes out believing that 'it is only because miners sweat their guts out that superior persons can remain superior.' He explains who he means by 'superiors'.

You and I and the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and the Nancy poets and the Archbishop of Canterbury and comrade X, author of *Marxism for Infants* - all of us really owe the comparative decency of our lives to poor drudges underground, blackened to the eyes, with their throats full of coal dust, driving their shovels forward with arms and belly muscles of steel.¹¹

The coal mine is no better place than hell with its immeasurable 'heat, noise, confusion, darkness, foul air' and 'cramped space' but the miners are flung into this hell and destined to live there as long as the civilised society above them needs to grow and prosper. The miners, like the coolies, lead pitiable lives. Their houses resemble dilapidated shacks and their food is woefully inadequate. For all their sweat and toil, and the highly skilled nature of their work, they receive a meagre wage and have no satisfactory cover for the numerous fatal accidents they are exposed to down the mine.

Both Orwell and Anand are preoccupied with the psychological effects of poverty and destitution. 'In one family I visited', says Orwell, 'there were a father and mother and a son and daughter round about seventeen, and only two beds for the lot of them. The father slept with the son and the mother with the daughter; it was the only arrangement that ruled out the danger of incest.'¹² Munoo, although poor and 'born to toil', is in love with life - 'and he still regarded the trappings of civilisation, black boots, watches, basket hats and clothes, with all the romantic admiration of the innocent child.'¹³ Admiring the clothes of his employer -the 'Angrezi babu' [Englishman] - he speaks to himself: 'If only I had had black boots like that, I would have walked much quicker and my feet would not have blistered.'¹⁴

However, similarity of thought shared by the two writers contrasts sharply with a

¹¹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier, The Complete Works of George Orwell, Volume Five*, (London : Secker and Warburg, 1986) p. 30.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹³ Mulk Raj Anand, *The Coolie*, p. 302

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

difference in style. Orwell's approach is documentary, empirical and pragmatic. He provides essential information and incorporates useful suggestions. Writing in an autobiographical mode, he makes a conscious effort to dive into the lower depths of society. His decision to go tramping, as well as travelling to Wigan, is a wilful act. Even during the most self-gratifying moments, when he thinks he has merged completely with the lower classes, he is conscious of the great divide between himself and his alien world. He knows he can withdraw from self-imposed tramping at any time, and he actually does that. The work of Anand, on the contrary, unfolds a world of fiction, of prototypes, of dreams built, and aspirations shattered. Born into the lowest ranks of society, Bakha and Munoo aspire to lift themselves out of it. Although Anand gives a touch of tragic futility to the lives of his hopeful heroes, his novels are life-upholding. In sharp contrast, Orwell's documentaries are life-denying; they build a picture of eternal gloom and despair. His heroes are doomed to failure. However, all four books appear as severe indictments against society as a whole - a society that breeds inequality, prejudice, cruelty and selfishness.

Both Orwell and Anand were perhaps unaware that there was a striking similarity between the experiences of their early lives. It was actually the crisis of their adolescent experiences, and their reaction to the political developments of their age, that generated similar attitudes. They were contemporaries in a curious way. Both were born in India - Orwell in 1903 at Motihari in Bihar, and Anand in 1905 at Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province. Both were children of the Raj and their lives were indelibly affected by it. Orwell's father had worked in the Indian Civil Service whereas Anand's father, Lal Chand, a coppersmith by family tradition and kshatriya (warrior) by caste, had joined the Indian Imperial Army. He fought for the British during the Great War and worked his way to become the Head Clerk in the 38th Dogra Regiment. His loyalty to the British was extraordinary. 'I have served the Sarkar all these years and I shall not betray the salt I have eaten.'¹⁵

Each boy had suffered a strained and uneasy relationship with his father. Orwell barely saw Blair during his childhood. When the old man returned from India in 1911, Orwell was away at boarding school, and their subsequent meetings were short and uncomfortable. To him, his father remained 'simply as a gruff-voiced elderly man forever saying 'Don't.'¹⁶ His decision to take the India examination, instead of going to Cambridge after finishing from Eton, was largely influenced by his father's

¹⁵ Mulk Raj Anand, *Seven Summers*, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1951) p. 120.

¹⁶ Orwell, 'Such Such were the Joys' *CEJL, IV*, p. 412.

expectations who had desired, quite along his own lines, a career for his son in the Indian Civil Service. Anand had also faced a similar situation. To begin with, he was influenced by his father's blind admiration of the British, in the same way as young Eric was attracted to the Kiplingesque romanticism of the East. In *Seven Summers*, he writes how, as a child, he naively aped 'Europe through an exaggerated respect for hats, top boots, hockey sticks, cricket bats, shorts, trousers, push-bikes' etc. But as he grew up, he became more and more alienated from his early fascination with English lifestyle, and also from his father's priorities in life - money, false prestige and subservience to the Sahibs. The distance between father and son further increased when Lal Chand's plans for his son's career did not match Anand's own aspirations. 'My only ideal, if ideal it can be called, was one which my father had accepted as a gift from the benign Sarkar - to pass all examinations and to secure a good subordinate job in the pay of the Government.'¹⁷ He rebelled against this unceasing tradition of inheriting British servitude generation after generation. He first left his father's house and next his home country. He came to Britain, neither in search of knowledge, nor with the intention of creating awareness about India, but to escape from his father and from

the tedium of an empty banal life, bound and constricted on every side, where growth and self-awareness were thwarted from the start and the vast bulk of the people condemned to ignorance and a sub-human life, while the few privileged persons preyed upon others like strong birds on the weaker members of the flock.'¹⁸

Both boys grew up without imbibing any faith and, before long, had started questioning everything in their background. Both regarded as reactionary the religion of their respective societies and believed in humanism rather than in their prescribed religions. They shared a reflective bent of mind and read voraciously outside their school curriculum. Anand had read Shakespeare, Dickens, Thackeray and Gorki before he was fourteen years old. Orwell's list was longer - he had Shakespeare, Swift, Dickens, Thackeray, Kipling and H.G. Wells. Both undertook journeys when they were nineteen or twenty years of age. Orwell travelled to Burma in 1922 and Anand came to England in 1925. Both had disquieting encounters in countries they visited and revolted against the prevailing establishment. Orwell experienced his first taste of imperialism in Burma. His self-disgust, as observed earlier, at being an active tool of the vast imperial machine, gave him a distaste for all forms of power.

The process of Anand's enlightenment was the reverse of Orwell's. His participation in

¹⁷ Anand, *Apology for Heroism*, (London : Lindsay Drummond, 1946) p. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

the general strike of 1926 reminded him of the slave status of India, in which he had grown up, and of all the humiliations his generation had suffered at the hands of the British. He began to see that the notions of Empire and freedom were inherently contradictory and that the rule of one people by another was not freedom but slavery. The strike showed him 'categorically that Britain was organised and run in the interests of a small minority which could suppress the majority as violently at home as it did in the Empire.'¹⁹ Like Orwell, Anand's experience of imperialism abroad made him acutely aware of the misery and humiliation suffered by fellow countrymen because of the all pervading caste system.

I did not let my imagination blind me to the fact that my hatred of imperialism was bound up also with my disgust for the cruelty and hypocrisy of Indian feudal life, with its castes, creeds, dead habits and customs, and its restrictive religious rites and practices...I was one of many groping young men of my generation who had begun to question everything in our background, to look away from the big houses and to feel the misery of the inert, disease-ridden, underfed, illiterate people about us.²⁰

Both made deliberate attempts to experience the degradation of the lowest orders of society. If Orwell went slumming, Anand went to Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati to live with untouchables, declassing himself and working, for a time, as a sweeper. It was there that he befriended Uka, the sweeper boy, who provided a model for Bakha.²¹ Motivated by the zeal of the reformist, both took to writing and each had published his first novel, about the lower depths of society, before he was thirty years of age. Both looked to some form of socialism as the satisfactory way of creating a just and fairer society. Both published articles in journals like *New Writing*, *The New Statesman*, *Listener*, and *Tribune*. The Spanish Civil War stirred both, and each went to Spain to fight. Whereas Anand joined the International Brigade, Orwell joined the P.O.U.M. There seems to have been no contact between them either in Spain or immediately after, in England. In 1938, Anand proceeded to India and toured the entire country campaigning for the Republican cause in Spain. When he returned, he found himself 'in intimate solidarity' with Orwell.²² He recalled how they were engaged in a verbal battle about the Spanish War.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53

²¹ The character of Bakha was modelled on one of Anand's childhood friends, and Uka the sweeper in Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram. Anand had vowed to clean toilets once a week throughout the period that he stayed at Gandhi's Ashram. He later commented that the warmth he as an author exhibited for Bakha emerged from his own warmth towards Gandhi's person.

²² Interview with Anand. New Delhi, March 1990.

I remember that in the 30's, on my return from Spain, a whole year was occupied in verbal quarrels with George Orwell: whether the Republicans would have won if the Anarchists had not been recalcitrant. As he was with the Anarchists, and I with the Republicans, the debate remained inconclusive. Though we still remained friends. And it was fun.²³

Anand also recalled that he shared with Orwell and Eileen what he was writing at that time. This is confirmed by Orwell in his war-time diary by recording conversations between Anand and Eileen.²⁴ In his Regents Park home, Anand often shared long discussions on art and literature with Orwell, Inez Holden and Stevie Smith - either as a group or individually. In her unpublished diary, Inez has interesting references to Anand. In November 1941 she wrote:

It is surprising to find a foreigner also coloured belonging to a dominated race so free, well at ease and without any kind of neurosis as Mulk, he is very good company, affectionate and witty - Orwell is anxious to get him to broadcast...Six months ago Mulk says he would not have been able to do so because so many of his friends were imprisoned by the British that the arm-chair broadcast from the Indian poet would have done a lot of harm, now it is better he himself fully supports the Anglo-Soviet war and the only thing that prevents him broadcasting is lack of time as he has to finish a novel and to give several lectures a week for the LCC in the East End. He said he would put Orwell in touch with the right kind of Indians for his broadcasts. Mulk is going to ask us all to dinner with him and cook.²⁵

The verbal war between H.G. Wells and Orwell has been well documented.²⁶ Irritated by Orwell's criticism in the essay, 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', Wells wrote him a terse letter. Following this, there was another confrontation between the two. It is generally believed that this took place at Inez's flat, but Anand has another story to tell:

I remember a frightful scene which Orwell had with H.G. Wells when the old man invited himself to dinner with Eileen Orwell to complain to her about the behaviour of Eric Blair. When Orwell and I turned up at about 7.30 in the evening from the B.B.C., old H.G. threw a copy of *Horizon* (or *Tribune*) I don't remember which, across the table towards Orwell and said : 'Burn it!' Orwell knew it was his review of one of Wells's

²³ Saros Cowasjee, *So Many Freedoms : A Study of the Major Fiction of Mulk Raj Anand*, (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 28. Anand also communicated the same to me during our conversation in New Delhi, February 1991.

²⁴ See Orwell's War-time Diary, *CEJL*, II, p. 475.

²⁵ Inez Holden's unpublished diary quoted in Francis Spalding's *Stevie Smith : A Critical Biography*, (London 1988), p. 158 Inez's reference to Anand cooking a meal is revealing. Anand was known to be a good cook and mastered this art during the thirties by entertaining friends in his small bedsitter in Hendon, London. See his *Curries and other Indian Dishes*.

²⁶ See Bernard Crick, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-30

latest books - quite complimentary but with some odd remarks about Wells having given up thinking while writing. Orwell, politely gave the cutting back to H.G., whereupon the old man said in his squeaky voice : "I tell you, you hate me. You want me to die! But I won't oblige." I tried to pacify the old man by saying : 'I will cook you a curry.' But he wasn't having any. He got up and walked out without dinner.

I told Orwell that I have a sneaking sentimental regard for old age because I am an Indian. He confessed to sharing this sentiment...

I found that Orwell had imbibed something of the Orient while Cyril Connolly and [Stephen] Spender retained the middle class arrogance.²⁷

Both Orwell and Anand admired Henry Miller. In Orwell's opinion, he was 'something out of the common.'²⁸ *Tropic of Cancer* was a remarkable book because it dared 'to expose the imbecilities of the inner mind.' It made the reader experience a 'peculiar relief that comes not so much from understanding as from *being understood*. 'He knows all about me,' you feel; 'he wrote this specially for me', observed Orwell. The novel uncovered the life of expatriates in Paris: of 'people drinking, talking, meditating and fornicating, not about people working, marrying and bringing up children'.²⁹ This was precisely the life Orwell had led in Paris and Anand was living in London.³⁰ Anand, perhaps, also experienced a semi-conscious identification with Miller's world and found *Tropic of Cancer* 'one great novel in which the man and his word are merged together in an extraordinary harmony, in which a personality has shorn itself of all the superficial trappings of its own, and the European psyche, and revealed life in its great terror and beauty.' He thought that

it [*Tropic of Cancer*] takes in, quantitatively as well as qualitatively, the whole of life in its effect on an egocentric man, and synthesises his experiences so that life is almost as it can be within the covers of a book. All the horror, the degradation, the filth and

²⁷ Saros Cowasjee, *Author to Critic : The letters of Mulk Raj Anand*, (Calcutta, 1973), pp. 82-3. Anand's recollection of this quarrel taking place at Orwell's house is at odds with other evidence. All other surviving testimonies of the confrontation, those by Inez Holden, William Empson and Orwell himself, of which Anand is probably unaware, indicate that it took place at Wells' house. Whether Anand was told about this incident, or he witnessed it himself at Wells' house and failed to remember the correct location, or whether he was referring to another similar encounter, it is very difficult to know. Indeed, it appears that Anand's remarkable memory sometimes seems to confuse things. For instance, in his interview with me, he said that he had met Orwell in Madrid. This could not have been true as Orwell never visited Madrid.

²⁸ George Orwell, 'Letter to Jack Common', *CEJL*, I, p. 262

²⁹ George Orwell, 'Inside the Whale', *CEJL*, I, pp. 543-4

³⁰ Anand disclosed similar feelings about his stay in London: 'I had occasion to hear Dr. Radhakrishnan...I hugged the Vedanta theory. But I also wished to live on the plane of hedonism, the here and the now, in the concrete world. And the contradictions tore my soul reading philosophy in the British Museum by day and waltzing with whores in Soho during the nights. See 'I Believe' *Illustrated Weekly of India* 26 October 1969. p. 26. This article with some changes was printed in Kushwant Singh's *I Believe*, (New Delhi, no date).

hypocrisy of Europe before the war, are there; all the neuroses and madness; and everyone is stripped bare including the "I" - relieved only by Miller's pitiless pity, the real core of his humanism.³¹

Anand had met Miller on his way to Spain in 1937 and, again while returning from India in the summer of 1939. He had taken a copy of the banned novel to India, a gesture which appealed to the American author immensely. In a letter to Saros Cowasjee, Miller spoke about Anand's ebullience: 'I remember Mulk Raj Anand vividly. He was an exciting person to know and a great stimulation to every one...I shall never forget the marvellous "missionary" job he did in taking my then unknown *Tropic of Cancer* to India and making people there read it.'³²

It is a strange coincidence that Anand was contacted by Malcolm Darling, a friend since his Amritsar days, to broadcast for the B.B.C.'s Eastern Service. Anand politely refused because it was unacceptable to him to take up any pro-war assignment in Britain when hundreds of Indians, including Gandhi and Nehru, were being made captives by the Imperial Government. It is worthwhile to quote his reply at length because it reflects his honesty, integrity and decency - qualities that Orwell was well known to share.

8, St. George's Mews,
Regent Park Road, N.W.1
22 March 1941

Dear Sir Malcolm,

Your kind letter of the 8th has followed me about from London to Devon to Surrey and, finally, back to London, where I have ended up for the duration after all my peregrinations. Hence the delay in answering it. Now, I don't know how to explain my position in the face of your generous suggestion, without complicating matters and seeming ungrateful.

Briefly, as you know, since the breakdown of negotiations between the Viceroy and Gandhiji, the position of Indians in this war has become very invidious. Particularly is this so with regard to the Indians resident in England at the moment. Because, even those who have the most distant affiliations with the Congress, are bound to feel a certain sense of national humiliation if, with full awareness of the internment of hundreds of their compatriots and the savage sentence on Pandit Nehru, they do anything to help the war effort. My own connections with the Congress are rather more intimate. And the one question that has been taxing my mind all these months is how to reconcile that affiliation with my belief that fascism would destroy all I stand for. I am afraid the British Government has done nothing which may help to solve the dilemma which faces some of us: it has declared neither its war aims nor its peace aims

³¹ Anand, 'The Novel And Henry Miller', *Tribune*, 21 January 1944, p. 18

³² Henry Miller in a letter to Saros Cowasjee, *Author to Critic : The letters of Mulk Raj Anand to Saros Cowasjee*, (Calcutta, 1973), Appendix B.

- and India seems to be its one blind spot. This enforces on us a kind of vague neutrality, the strain of which can be very harrowing for the more timid individual, who is torn between conflicting loyalties... I don't want to bore you with these personal and ideological difficulties, but I hope, from what I have said, that you will see how difficult it is for me to associate myself with the work of the Indian broadcasting section in any way. I want to assure you that nothing I have said above detracts from my personal respect for you and your writing, and I hope that you will understand and forgive me for my disability to take your offer.

With our kindest wishes for you and April,

Yours sincerely,
Mulk Raj Anand.³³

Apparently, Anand seems to have played little part in Orwell's getting the job. However, when Orwell accepted the B.B.C. offer, he invited his friend to broadcast as a freelance. His first letter to Anand, on 22 December 1941, referring to 'our conversation on the subject of broadcasting', requests him to participate in a series of talks 'which I think would just suit you.'³⁴ Now that Russia had joined the Allies, Anand's position was not as precarious as it had been earlier and he was willing to reconsider his stance. He responded favourably and wrote two talks on H.G. Wells and Bernard Shaw for the series 'These Names Will Live'. He next broadcast a series of talks titled 'New Weapons of War' in which he discussed phrases such as 'Fifth Column', 'Lebensraum', 'Pluto-Democracy', 'New Order', and 'Propaganda' that had passed into current usage without always being well understood. This was followed by a further series of nine talks called 'Meet My Friend' in which he interviewed people from different walks of life. Orwell was much impressed by Anand's performance and requested him to institute another series called 'A Day in My Life' which aimed at highlighting the contribution of ordinary people to the war effort.

Apart from planning and broadcasting a whole series of talks mentioned above, Anand frequently participated in other series and discussions. In the one called 'Open Letters', he addressed an 'Open Letter to a Chinese Guerrilla', later printed in *Talking to India*. The most important achievement of their association was the production of a poetry magazine called 'Voice', in which they brought together people of diverse minds and attitudes, to discuss a wide range of literary subjects and recite poetry over the air. 'Voice' was immensely successful because there was less scope for publishing poetry during the war, and the experiment of reciting poems over the air proved to be an attraction. Thus 'Voice' became an outlet, and a meeting place, for imperialist as well as radical writers. One of Anand's letters to Orwell, suggesting some ideas for 'Voice',

³³ Anand to Malcolm Darling, 22 March 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁴ Orwell's letter to Anand, 22 December, 1941. B.B.C. Archives.

is indicative of the scope of the programme and their mutual appreciation of each other's literary sensibilities.

Thinking over the very spontaneous suggestion you made for the next number of *Voice*, I felt it would be an ideal number if we considered translations ranging from Sir William Jones rendering of Kalidasa's classical play *Shakuntala* to Ryder's translation of the same; Max Muller, Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of Buddhist texts and poetry; Barnett's text of the *Gita* as against Mrs. Besant's and Shree Purohit Swamiji and W.B. Yeats; Beveridge's translations of the memoirs of the Emperor Babur; Tagore's rendering of a hundred sayings from Kabir; translations from the Punjabi poetry of the contemporary Sikh poet Vir Singh by Puran Singh; translations from Iqbal by Professor Reynald Nicolson...perhaps some renderings in Hindi by Harindra Nath Chattopadhyaya, some peasant poetry translated by Ahmed Ali. These are all tentative suggestions and may be helpful as background.³⁵

Between December 1941 and November 1943, they worked hand-in-glove, planning and broadcasting several talks. At one point they contemplated writing a book on India. In a letter of 7 October 1942, Orwell asked Anand to meet him urgently -

Gollancz has expressed interest in your idea for a book about India...[it] would be quite easy by the method we were projecting of doing it. He wants you, or failing you, me to go and see him today week, October 14th, at 11a.m. at his office. Do you think you could see me between now and then so that we can draw up a synopsis for the book.³⁶

They discussed the structure of the book, on 12 November, as is evident from Anand's subsequent letter, but why the proposal did not materialise is not known.

The exigencies of his job had restrained Orwell from criticising the British Government's India policy openly but he discovered an alternative, more effective way, for mobilising public opinion in favour of India. By showing exceptional interest in Indian writing in English and promoting it, he was taking positive action in harmonising relations between the British and Indians. No one benefited more from his patronage than Anand. During late thirties and early forties, Anand published a trilogy of novels - *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), which deal with the life of an Indian peasant, Lal Singh. Anand confessed that Orwell had helped him with the revision of *Across the Black Waters*, one of his best novels. Even the title of *Sword and the Sickle* was given by Orwell. Anand had originally called it "All men are Brothers" (The 1936 publication of *Coolie* lists "All Men are Brothers" as Anand's forthcoming novel) but Anand instantaneously

³⁵ Anand's to Orwell, B.B.C. Written Archives.

³⁶ Orwell's letter to Anand, 7 October 1942, and Anand's reply on 11 October, 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

agreed to accept Orwell's suggestion that Blake's

The sword that sung on the barren heath,
The sickle in the fruitful field
The sword he sung a song of death
But could not make the sickle yield.³⁷

contained a more apt title. In a letter of 23 March he recorded, 'I have asked Cape to send you a copy of *The Sword and the Sickle* before publication, care of *Horizon*. Thanks for the title even if you don't like the book. But I think you might like it.'³⁸ Anand was perhaps suspicious that Orwell would not approve of the novel's Marxist slant.

The Sword and the Sickle received caustic notice in the *Times Literary Supplement* predominantly on the grounds of being an anti-imperialist and anti-British novel. 'What is really disagreeable, however is the spirit of the novel; it tends to create bad blood between Indians and British.'³⁹ Orwell promptly came to its defence in his letter to the Editor. He clarified Anand's position and defended him by pointing out that the novel hardly contained any European characters. With an air of defiance he raised a counter question - 'if Mr. Anand makes it plain that he is anti-imperialist and thinks India ought to be independent, is he not saying something which almost any English intellectual would echo as a matter of course?'⁴⁰ Later, reviewing it for *Horizon*, he noted the book's comparative lack of bitterness. Surprisingly, he ignored its communist bias and concentrated on the political implications of Indian writing in English-

As a general rule, Indians are reliably anti-Fascist in proportion as they are westernised. That is why at the beginning of this review I described the English language as a weapon of war. It is a funnel for ideas deadly to the Fascist view of life. Mr. Anand does not like us very much and some of his colleagues hate us bitterly; but so long as they voice their hatred in English they are in a species of alliance with us, and an ultimate and decent settlement with the Indians whom we have wronged but also helped to awaken remains possible.⁴¹

What is particularly striking about Orwell is his role as mediator, of a cultural sympathiser between Britain and India. He took pains to identify, and highlight,

³⁷ William Blake, XXXV Notebook Poems and fragments,(c.) 1789-93. in *The Complete Poems* (ed.) Alicia Ostriker, (Penguin Books, 1981) p. 152

³⁸ Anand to Orwell, 23 March, 1942. B.B.C. Archives.

³⁹ See 'Letters to the Editor', *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 May 1942, p. 259.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 259

⁴¹ Orwell, 'Review of *The Sword and the Sickle*' *CEJL*, II, p. 253-4

points of common interest between the two countries at a time when political differences were tearing them apart. He wanted to bring them together in a way that would help them to understand each other's position better. Personally, he had linked the independence of India with the victory of the Allied Forces, a view not different from Anand's. The defeat of the Axis powers was as imperative as the liberation of India. He could not understand why the two countries had failed to accept a resolution that was politically favourable and also morally tenable. Orwell discussed this view in a book-review titled 'Letter to an Indian', published in *Tribune* in March 1943. Not surprisingly, it was addressed to 'Dear Mulk' and was written in response to Mulk's letters to Tom Brown published as *Letters on India* (1942).⁴²

A topical book, *Letters on India* had contained an impressive argument for India's independence. Its epistolary form had enabled Anand to go back in time and space to explain historically the phased annexation of India and comment on the crippling effect of the Empire. The text comprises eighteen sets of letters, the first one beginning with the topical question 'Why did the Cripps Mission fail?'⁴³ with the second letter demanding a leap backwards into India's history - 'Has English rule helped or hindered the growth of India as a nation?'⁴⁴ Anand plays with the book's form and injects life into what would have been a dull documentation of events and incidents. When, in his third letter, Brown asks about 'the history of British Imperialism in India, as it could be told by the subject peoples of the Empire' and 'the more fundamental facts about Indian life',⁴⁵ Anand narrates the miserable life of "Uncle" Chajju from his village and his family. In response to the seventh question 'What about our comrades of the working-class movement in India', he tells the tale of Tinkori, the peasant who becomes a coolie but never escapes 'the vicious circle of debt slavery'.⁴⁶ The eighth chapter is a vision of free India exploiting her economic potential and developing planned industry under socialism. The ninth and tenth chapters are devoted respectively to 'the damning indictments' of the Whitley Report on the

⁴² The title of Anand's book echoes Karl Marx's *Letters on India*, published serially in 1853 in *New York Herald Tribune*, and read by Anand in the early twenties. Anand later commented that 'a whole new world was opened to me' by Marx's book. See *Apology for Heroism*, p. 67. 'Like 'Documentary', the use of 'Letter' as a literary form was quite popular in the thirties. Essentially a form of personal communication, it was addressed to a wider audience and often contained messages that varied from the personal viewpoint of the writer to more general political, social or economic propaganda. See also Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (London, 1976)

⁴³ Anand, *Letters on India*, (London, 1942) p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-71

conditions of industrial workers and the history of the Indian trade union movement. His answer to Brown's eleventh question - '*Who is in charge? Who controls the Government?*' results in a treatise on 'high-finance' stating elaborately the British handling of finance and tax collections. Chapter twelve entitled 'Sweetheart, we need each other' is a fascinating insight into the lives of Indian princes, who, despite their imbecility, vices and crimes, were retained as powerful monarchs and faithful servants of the Empire. The last four chapters are very important - they cite the details of the origins of the Indian National Congress as the party created by Hume to 'counteract the growing unrest' and traces its transformation into 'a vast and highly organised anti-imperialist movement'.⁴⁷ He elucidates its role as the flag-bearer of India's freedom movement during the first four decades of the twentieth century. In the concluding chapter Anand comes full circle when he explains the aftermath of the Cripps Mission. He ends, 'For us in India, as for you in Europe, the issue is one of life in a democratic future or death under fascism.'

See to it then that India is liberated for the struggle against fascism. Urge the recognition of its right to complete national independence and for the formation at Delhi of a National Government responsible for the government of India and for the defence of the country in full co-operation with the British government and the United Nations. See to it that everything is done to achieve this simple, basic programme.

Only thus can victory be assured!⁴⁸

Letters on India infuriated many of Anand's intellectual friends. It was publicly defended by Orwell alone.⁴⁹ In his review, he not only answered Anand, but explained why it had not won the complete support of avowed socialists and friends of India like Leonard Woolf. Woolf had voiced his differences with Anand in his 'Foreword' to the book.⁵⁰ Orwell begins by accepting Mulk's view that 'for a hundred and fifty years we have been exploiting you and for at least thirty years holding back your development.' Conceding that the battle against Hitler and Amery were the same, he builds his case over and above this argument. He tabulates his review under three heads - 'Nationalism', 'Differential standard of living' and 'Sentimentalism of the Left' -

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159

⁴⁹ Though Herbert Read praised the book in a letter to Anand dated 12 June 1942. 'I have now read the whole of the MS and I like it very much indeed. I think you have conveyed simply and realistically the problems which confront us in India.' Quoted in Saros Cowasjee, *So Many Freedoms*, p. 30

⁵⁰ *Letters on India* was published by George Routledge and Sons in two editions. The one for the members for of the Labour Book Service, had included Leonard Woolf's 'Foreword' but the other, for the general readers, did not. See also letters of Woolf and Anand in *Tribune*, 2 & 9 April 1942

following the scheme of Anand's book. Under the first head, he argues that hatred of the British should not result in extremes of nationalistic fervour and colour hatred amongst the Indians to an extent that they should become oblivious to the dire consequences of a supposed Axis victory. He refers to an Indian friend in Delhi (Ahmed Ali) who writes that 'the Indian masses are wholeheartedly for Germany against Russia' and 'describes the news boys shouting in Urdu, "Germany smashes Russia at the first battle."' The point Orwell wants to make is that the battle for democracy and against fascism was one and the same and it should not be hampered by colour prejudice. Under the second subheading, he reinstates his firm belief that the empire had benefited only the ruling class in Britain, and that India's independence would bring as much relief to the underpaid British workers as it would to the downtrodden Indian peasants. He wants the Indians to understand that there existed an unjust caste struggle in Britain and not all British were exploiters, and therefore supporters, of the Raj. In the last and longest subheading, he defuses the controversy created by Woolf's disagreement. He reasons that the book's fervent nationalism had appeared to many intellectuals as 'a force actually hostile to Britain.' Orwell probes into the tendency of the British Left to favour causes which had often ended in some form of fascism. He recalls how British opinion had supported Japan against Russia and China, the Boers and Sinn Feiners against Britain, and the Germans against the Poles and French. He refers to Subhas Bose's defection to Germany and points 'how pained and surprised the Left was' by his actions. He writes, 'You see, Mr. Woolf was annoyed by your book because he had expected you to be anti-British in his way, whereas your way involved a condemnation of Mr. Woolf himself.' He concludes:

one must work to make people realise that long-term and short-term interests don't necessarily coincide. The Englishman must see that his domination in India is indefensible : the Indian must see that to side with the Fascists for the sake of revenge against Britain would do him no good. It is largely a question of letting each know that the other's viewpoint exists. That brings me back to what I have often said before, that the best bridge between Europe and Asia, better than trade of battleships or aeroplanes, is the English language and I hope you will continue to write in it even if it sometimes leads you to be called a 'babu' at one end and a renegade at the other.⁵¹

The friendship of Orwell and Anand prospered in spite of their divergent opinion of the Soviet Union. Orwell rejected everything that the Communist Party stood for, more so, after his Spanish experience, but Anand's Russian sympathies did not wane even after the Russo-German Pact of 1939. Stalin had betrayed Britain, not India. Anand claims that, at one point, he had been successful in impressing upon Orwell that if

⁵¹ Orwell, 'Letter to an Indian', *Tribune*, 19 March 1943. p. 15

Russia had not contained Hitler, Hitler would have been on the doorstep of India and Asia.⁵² There is no doubt that Orwell and Anand had considerable differences, but both seemed to have developed a mutual, reciprocal, understanding of each other's position during the war. Their friendship was not restrained by their differences, on the contrary, it grew because of what they had in common - their obsession with the plight of the suppressed and oppressed, their commitment to socialism, their anti-imperialism, their anti-fascism, and at one time, their joint concern about India's liberation. What would have happened to their friendship under the impact of the cold war of the 1950's, it is difficult to imagine. They might well have drifted apart, but one cannot be sure.

Orwell resigned from the B.B.C. in November 1943 and joined *Tribune*. Anand contributed to the journal and often met him at his office. The prospect of India's independence beckoned Anand home in the autumn of 1945. Orwell, too, migrated to Jura in the spring of 1946. They never met each other again.

⁵² Interview with Anand. New Delhi, February 1991

Conclusion

The job of a B.B.C. Talks Producer, as has been seen, was important war work. Characteristically, Orwell underplayed the importance of this assignment and was apologetic about the worth of the British broadcasting effort to India. While he served at the B.B.C., he never revealed in public his feelings of regret or exasperation. Whatever frustration he recorded in his wartime diaries, and later in his letters, was strictly private. As in Burma, he lived with the paradox of executing a job he had come to detest. Yet, he ensured that his country's wartime institutions commanded his patriotic respect. It was only after he left the B.B.C., and only when the allies had started to win the war, that he was able to express his reservations against the B.B.C. in print. Orwell's act of drawing a deliberate (or unconscious! we don't know) curtain over his broadcasting days was effective. Over four decades passed before it became possible to retrieve his undetected scripts; and another decade has passed before it has been possible to establish the relative importance of his broadcasting work.

Although this thesis brings to light new material about Orwell's life and work, it suggests a few leads that need to be further investigated. The thesis does not undertake, primarily for reasons of space, an examination of some of the issues that have a bearing on its subject. Firstly, the influence of the B.B.C. upon Orwell's vision of the relationship of art and propaganda. Orwell had become aware of the interdependence between art and propaganda at a very early stage in his apprenticeship as a writer. One of the predominant themes in his work, long before he had joined the B.B.C., had been to delineate the 'writer's point of view', his 'mental world', his 'vision', his 'message' in the context of his age. In almost all his major essays, including those on individual writers like Swift, Dickens, Kipling, Yeats, as well as in his critique of early twentieth-century writers in 'Inside the Whale', and even in 'Boys Weeklies', one of his central preoccupations is his subject's message. This is equally true of his numerous book reviews. As an avid collector and critic of contemporary pamphlets, he delighted in tearing to pieces their political faiths, politics and policies. Involving himself vehemently in contemporary controversies, he himself frequently engaged in propaganda activities. However, as an independent writer, he had been able to successfully demarcate, and negotiate, the boundaries of his propaganda effort. Therefore, despite engaging in acts of propaganda, he had yet not committed himself to any particular propaganda organisation.

The situation altered irretrievably once he joined the Indian Service. He had now become

part of the B.B.C., a national establishment, and had accepted, in principle and in practice, the deviousness and compromises that political propaganda brought in its wake. His post-B.B.C. work reveals a new consciousness of the role of art as a vehicle for propaganda and the use of propaganda as art. Take any piece of journalism or writing that Orwell produced after joining the B.B.C. 'the one thing that strikes you', as he would have written, is the conscious and willing admission of the role of propaganda in his own work. In the essay 'Why I Write', written in 1945, and in hindsight, he accepted unequivocally his own role of a propagandist. Although he quite rightly dated the dawning of this consciousness in him since 1936, one wonders if his exploitation of the novel as a medium for anti-totalitarian propaganda was so ripe and mature in the thirties as it came to be in the forties. It can only be debated if the craftsmanship with which he was able to intertwine art and propaganda in the forties had any connection with the formal apprenticeship he received at the B.B.C at handling sensitive propaganda matters.

Between 1936 and 1949, he published five major books along with his other work. Indeed, the treatment he gave to his last two novels - *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* - as compared with the earlier books - *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *Coming Up for Air* - is undoubtedly different. Although the success of his post-B.B.C. novels cannot be attributed to his broadcasting experience alone, it needs to be asserted that somewhere along the road from Spain to Jura, Orwell's experience of the wartime B.B.C. was an important influence. The growth in his understanding of the relationship between art and propaganda resides, and is documented, in the numerous essays, reviews, broadcasts and articles he wrote after 1936, through the war period, and beyond. Lynette Hunter in her revealing study *George Orwell: In Search of a Voice* has expounded Orwell's stance on art and propaganda during the thirties and forties. Time and time again she brings in the relevance of Orwell's broadcasting experience. She writes, 'he [Orwell] is not unaware of the dangers in totalitarianism, but he is unsure of the suitable solution. The problem resides in his hankering after an absolute. Not until he works for the B.B.C. propaganda service during 1942 does he consciously sort out the contradictions.'¹ Again she observes, 'Orwell is firmly against capitalism and its imperialist basis, but much of his writing from 1943, when he had left the B.B.C., leaves it aside as manifestly limited. Instead, Orwell concentrates on the solutions being offered by the Left.'² She further points out: 'And it is at this point, in the post-B.B.C. period of 1943-44, that Orwell begins to recognise the extreme dangers of totalitarian politics, because totalitarian 'realism' is

¹ Lynette Hunter, *George Orwell, In Search of a Voice*, (Milton Keynes; 1984), p. 116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 118

complete, its propaganda more thorough and technologically advanced.³ Unfortunately, Hunter wrote her book before the discovery of Orwell's wartime scripts. At that time she was unaware of the full extent of his wartime job. Now, in the light of the new information, a fresh analysis of Orwell's stance on the relationship between art, propaganda and politics needs to be undertaken.

Connected with this is Orwell's stance on the interrelated themes of patriotism, nationalism and transferred nationalism which underlie all his writings. Orwell often took time to recognise his own response to people and situations; his own opinions also fluctuated enormously, but the one thing he never wavered from was his patriotic love for his country - especially for England. In the thirties he attacked fellow intellectuals for transferring their patriotic allegiance to other countries of Europe, in the forties he attacked Lionel Fielden for practising transferred nationalism by lending uncritical support to India. This thesis has very briefly taken into account Orwell's patriotism. What is still underexplored is the manner in which his patriotism affected his stance on his two non-literary jobs and his moral convictions. As far as his jobs - the one imperial and the other propagandist - are concerned, the affirming force that kept him going was his patriotic sentiment, particularly so in the latter. In both jobs he experienced the most intense conflict between his patriotism and some other moral dilemma which eventually led to his resignation. In both cases, his patriotism was superseded by his moral beliefs. While in Burma he was not aware of his patriotism, or if he was, he did not confess this but he knew all along that he was serving in the Imperial Police and thereby serving His Majesty's Government. At the B.B.C., however, Orwell had become acutely aware of the stakes involved. Yet, in both cases, and throughout his life, his love for England weathered all challenges and subsisted unblemished however many, and great, the contradictions in his life.

And again, as with his police job, he had come to view his broadcasting job with mixed feelings, he could also recognise the differences between them. If Orwell thought of the B.B.C. job as useless, especially from the writer's point of view, he also recognised that this very job had enabled him to contribute to the war effort. It had given him the satisfaction of being useful at a time of national crisis. His sense of achievement, in the long run, it appears, had far outweighed his feelings of worthlessness. The intervening phase, comprising a few months during which he was given to self-pity and self-reproach was short-lived, and his respect for the B.B.C. as an organisation was soon restored, quite

³ *Ibid.*, p. 118-9

in contrast to his Burma experience where feelings of guilt dominated his actions for nearly a decade. His sense of guilt forever haunted him and he could never really bring himself to vindicate imperialism.

Then, there is Orwell's relationship with Burma. Historically, Burma was part of the Indian Empire when Orwell went there in 1922. But by 1937, Burma had become a separate geographical unit. Although the British continued to use similar administrative practices in both countries, the term 'India', after 1937, had ceased to encompass Burma. The situation became more complicated when the war imposed new urgency on the geographical situation of Burma, in a way that India never experienced. During the war, national and international transmissions expanded in India; whereas in Burma, they were violently disrupted. The Burmese Broadcasting Service was perhaps the foremost of services to be devastated by Japan's 'scorched earth' policy. Soon after occupying Burma the Japanese systematically uprooted British transmitters and supplanted them with their own. They attacked as many broadcasting stations as they could and ruined, or rendered useless, nearly all British equipment. Even the supposition that broadcasts from London were heard in Burma is a matter of conjecture, quite in contrast with India, where listening-in proceeded unharmed.

Back in Britain, the issue of India's independence was dominating political headlines. It had appeared as if, with the Japanese occupation, Burma had lost her international voice. For Orwell, however, the separation of Burma from India, or her capture by Japan, made no difference. He continued to remain interested in Burmese affairs despite the fact that information on Burma was scarce. He quite rightly divorced the Burmese situation from the Indian context, and the resulting approach needs to be explored and appreciated.

Orwell's attitude to Burma underwent cyclical changes, although not so acute and pronounced as in the case of India. In the twenties and thirties, Burma had appeared to him as an extension of India, an embodiment of the very Empire itself. In nearly all his criticism of the Empire, especially those written in the early and mid-thirties - 'A Hanging', 'Shooting an Elephant', and 'Trials in Burma' - are based upon his Burmese experiences, but treat the theme of imperialism in the larger Eastern context. 'A Hanging' records the hanging of an Indian - a Hindu - at the hands of another Indian, the fat Dravidian Jailor Francis, but the event occurs in a Burma jail. In 'Shooting an Elephant' Orwell employs the word 'East' to augment the scope of his argument.

'I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman *in the East*.' (CEJL, I, p. 266)

'That is invariably the case in *the East*; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes.' (CEJL, I, p. 267)

'And it was at this moment...I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion *in the East*.' (CEJL, I, p. 269)

'And my whole life, every white man's life *in the East*, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.' [all my italics] (CEJL, I, p. 278)

Again, Orwell's review of *Trials in Burma* deals with the story of a British magistrate in Rangoon. The magistrate's plight, as seen by Orwell, is true of all white officers in the East. 'The truth is that every British magistrate in India is in a false position when he has to try a case in which European and native interests clash.'⁴ That Orwell treats the Burma of pre-1937, even in retrospect, as a part of the Indian Empire is evident from one of his 'As I Please' columns. Narrating his experience of the 'Indian sun' in Burma, he writes: 'When I was in Burma I was assured that the *Indian sun*, even at its coolest, had a peculiar deadliness'. 'But why', he questioned, 'should the *British in India* (my italics) have built upon this superstition about sunstroke?'⁵

A decade after leaving the Indian Imperial Police, Orwell effectively disentangled Burma, politically and geographically, from India. This differentiation, as it came in 1938, was significant. In a letter to John Sceaux, written from Marrakech, he compared the poverty of French Morocco with that of Burma and India. He reflected 'The poverty [in Morocco] is something frightful...I don't know how it would compare with the poorer parts in India, but Burma would seem like a paradise compared to it, so far as standard of living goes.'⁶ From now onwards, Orwell treated the problems of Burma as distinct from those of India. Moreover, the image of India captured the foreground of his own political concerns. He seemed to bring in India more and more when reflecting upon aspects of imperialism, although sometimes he also continued to group Burma with India. Indeed, in 1942, when Burma returned to his mind as an important point of focus, it came only as a defeated land - a country surrendered by the British to the Japanese.

The sudden glare that Burma came to receive in 1942, after the Japanese invasion, also regenerated Orwell's old memories, and fuelled fresh speculation about the country's status. His first comment came as a footnote to an article in the *Tribune* entitled 'Whitehall's Road to Mandalay', in which Robert Duval, the writer, had outlined the pitfalls of British Burma policy before and after the Japanese invasion. The strategy suggested by Duval was to offer Burma complete independence i.e. a status greater, or at

⁴ Orwell, 'Review of *Trials in Burma*', CEJL, I, p. 341.

⁵ Orwell, 'As I Please', 20 October 1944, CEJL, III, p. 300 & 301.

⁶ Orwell, 'Letter to John Sceaux', CEJL, I, p. 398.

least equal, to what had been offered by the Japanese, if Britain had wanted to repossess Burma. Orwell, quite bluntly, professed his disagreement with Duval's viewpoint, because he thought that Burma was neither capable of defending itself, nor fit to be independent. (This was a typical Orwellian contradiction; earlier, he had extended the same argument to India, but had not denied her her independence on account of her weak military status. Instead, he had wanted the British to defend India until she was self-reliant.) Orwell's opinion proved to be quite unpopular as after a fortnight two letters appeared in the *Tribune*, one by a 'Burmese Observer', and the other by E.A. Richards, vigorously denouncing the view put forward by Orwell. Richards saw in Orwell 'a new cheap brand of imperialism'. Not surprisingly, Orwell retaliated, asserting that what he said about Burma was true, and quite supported by other socialists.⁷

Strangely enough, Orwell's views on Burmese independence did not complement his anti-imperialism, and stood in direct contrast to his stance on India. In his reply to Richards, he objected that the giving of unrealistic promises, bound to fail, was a wrong thing to do on the grounds that even in propaganda 'it does not pay to tell lies.'⁸ Instead, he thought that Burma's future resided in the larger 'Asiatic federation of which China and India would be the leaders.' He believed that his solution 'may be less attractive than independence' [which Duval, Richard's and others were pressing for] but it had 'the advantage of being realistic.'

Eighteen months later, in the autumn of 1944, Orwell surprised some readers when in an interview with a columnist of *New Vision*, he anticipated that direct rule of the British could return to Burma. The journalist, whose identity was contained in the initials G.B.P.E., reported:

The present war situation indicates that before long a full-scale assault will be launched against the Japanese in Burma. What will follow the expulsion of the Japanese troops. Inevitably there will be considerable chaos and robber bands will, for a time, seek to pillage the country. The inexperienced and often corrupt Burmese politicians will be unable to cope with the situation - if, indeed, they are given a chance - and the military administration, in Mr. Orwell's view, may well pave the way for a return to direct rule. This would be accompanied by an announcement that constitutional government would be restored when the situation was under control. Probably the promise will be made that Dominion status will be granted after a lapse of years. Unless a very definite and fairly short time limit is set, we may assume that 'direct rule' will continue indefinitely under the plea that Burma is not yet fit for self government.⁹

⁷ See *Tribune*, 16 April 1943, p. 13

⁸ See correspondence titled 'Burma' in *Tribune*, 23 April 1943, p. 13

⁹ 'Direct rule may return to Burma', *New Vision*, no 19, Autumn 1944, p. 8

It is not clear whether, in the above quotation, Orwell was stating his own views or was expressing borrowed opinion, (because some months later, in an 'As I Please', he confessed that the possibility of direct rule i.e. 'military dictatorship' coming to Burma was a rumour) or whether he was made to sound so because his views were mixed with that of the reporter's. More straightforwardly, Orwell could also have meant that the British were going to recapture Burma. What is certain, however, is that Orwell got deeply interested in Burma's wartime status and her uncertain future. It is significant that until about 1942, there was a near black-out of information about Burma in Britain. The official media seemed to have had little information to share, and no newspaper correspondent with a background knowledge of Burma was known to have been present during the campaign.

Orwell was in a slightly more advantageous position. At the Indian Service he received secret reports, issued by the Monitoring Service, about the Japanese action in Burma - news which he incorporated regularly in his weekly war reviews. However, Orwell found this information not very satisfying at all times. For instance, after the fall of Burma, certain issues kept troubling him about which he had little information, and he could not resist drafting a questionnaire about the internal situation in Burma. He sent it, presumably to the Monitoring Service, for adequate details. The memo reflects not only the depth of his curiosity, but also the range of his understanding of Burmese affairs.

B.B.C. Internal Circulating Memo
Information regarding Burma Campaign

16.5.42

The questions which I think could usefully be asked of the Burma government are:

- i. What number of Burmese troops voluntarily evacuated themselves along with British troops etc. leaving India, and what proportion of these were officials.
- ii. Attitude of Burmese officials when breakdown appeared imminent. Whether there was a marked difference in loyalty between Burmese and Indian officials. To what extent Burmese officials are known to be carrying on under the Japanese occupation.
- iii. Behaviour under fire of the Burma regiments and military police. Whether any actual Burmese (not Kachins etc.) were fighting for the British.
- iv. What difference appeared between political attitude of the Burmese proper and the Karens, Shans, Chins, Kachins.
- v. What number of the Eurasian community, especially in Rangoon, Moulmein, Mandalay evacuated with the British and how many stayed behind under the Japanese occupation. Whether any who remained behind are known to have changed their allegiance.
- vi. Behaviour of the Burmese population under bombing raids. Whether these produced resentment against the Japanese, admiration for Japanese air superiority, or mere panic.
- vii. The native Christians, especially Karens. Whether interpenetrated to any extent by nationalist movement.
- viii. Number of short wave sets known to have been Burmese, Indian and Eurasian before the invasion.
- ix. Detailed information about the Burmese nationalist and left-wing political parties.

The main points are:

- a. Numbers and local and social composition of the Thakin party.
- b. Extent to which Buddhist priests predominate.
- c. What affiliations exist between the Burmese nationalist parties and the Congress and other Indian parties.
- d. Burmese Communists, if any, and what affiliations.
- e. Extent of Burmese trade union movement and whether it has affiliations with trade unions in India or Europe.
- x. Estimated number of Burmese actually fighting on side of Japanese. Whether people of good standing or mainly dacoits etc. Whether they are reported to have fought courageously.
- xi. Extent of Japanese infiltration before the invasion. Whether many Japanese are known to speak local languages, especially Burmese, and to what extent they are likely to be dependent on Burmans for monitoring and interpretation generally.

Eric Blair.¹⁰

Such exchange of internal information at the B.B.C. was supplemented by the sudden spate in publication of books on Burma. Between 1943 and 1946, Orwell read and reviewed over a dozen books on Burma which included *Red Moon Rising* by George Roger, *A Million Died* by Alfred Wagg, *Burma Surgeon* by Gordon S. Seagrave, a series of *Burma Pamphlets* published by Longmans, *Burma* by Ma Mya Sein, *Wings over Burma* by Kenneth Hemingway, *Wingate's Raiders* by Charles J. Rolo and *The Story of Burma* by F. Tennyson Jesse. These interesting eye-witness accounts or individual viewpoints, coming as they did after a period of extended censorship, shaped Orwell's vision of a country and its peoples whom he had known well.

Orwell's views on Burma, as expressed in 'Direct rule may return to Burma', and later in his reviews, but most particularly in his 'As I Please' of 16 February 1947, are far removed from his solution for India. On the face of things Orwell's willingness to foresee the return of British rule in Burma, and his agreement with the policy of holding on to it for some time was just the opposite of asking for the immediate abolition of the Empire in India. However, as in the case of India, he saw himself as a friend of Burma. He wanted the Labour Party, if not the British Government, to treat the Burmese sympathetically once their recapture of Burma from the Japanese was complete.

For a year or two after the Japanese have gone, Burma will be in a receptive mood and more pro-British than it has been for a dozen years past. Then is the moment to make a generous gesture. I don't know whether Dominion status is the best possible solution. But if the politically conscious section of the Burmese ask for Dominion status, it would be monstrous to let the Tories refuse it in a hopeless effort to bring back the past. And there must be a date attached to it, a not too distant date. Whether these people remain inside

¹⁰ George Orwell, 'Information Regarding the Burma Campaign', 16 May 1942. B.B.C. Archives

the British Commonwealth or outside it, what matters in the long run is that we should have their friendship - and we *can* have it if we do not play them false at the moment of crisis. When the moment comes for Burma's future to be settled, thinking Burmese will not turn their eyes towards Churchill. They will be looking at *us*, the Labour movement, to see whether our talk about democracy, self-determination, racial equality and what-not has any truth in it. I do not know whether it will be in our power to force a decent settlement upon the Government; but I do know that we shall harm ourselves irreparably if we do not make at least as much row about it as we did in the case of Greece.¹¹

A year later, in a letter to Tennyson Jesse, Orwell disclosed that his knowledge of Burma was 'out of date', but still 'quite good of its kind'. He wondered why Ms. Jesse had been soft on the British for their economic exploitation of Burma and also their social misconduct while they were the rulers of Burma. He explained:

No one would infer from your book that the British had done anything worse than be a little stupid and sometimes follow mistaken policies. Nothing about the economic milching of the country via such concerns as the Burma Oil Company, nor about the disgusting social behaviour of the British till very recently...My grandmother lived forty years in Burma and at the end could not speak a word of Burmese - typical of the ordinary Englishwoman's attitude.¹²

Indeed, the development of Orwell's views on Burma, as manifest in the book reviews he published in the *New Statesman* and *Observer*, and some of his 'As I Please' columns alongside his war commentaries, and some other material still unretrieved from the B.B.C. archives, requires further in-depth analysis.

I now turn to Orwell's friendship with Mulk Raj Anand. Chapter IV, 'Unusual Friends', prepares a framework within which the extraordinary exchange of ideas between these two gifted and humble men can be viewed. However, there are many areas that need further exploration. Orwell's *Burmese Days* needs to be compared with Anand's *Two Leaves and a Bud*, a novel set in the Assam tea gardens against the backdrop of British colonialism. Both Orwell and Anand were propagandists, and made conscious and deliberate use of art to convey their respective messages. Both were fond of journeys and the idea of physical exploration. Anand still is. In his most recent letter to me, he has shared views about his journey to the caves of Ajanta and Ellora. Orwell's opinion of Gandhi, briefly discussed in Chapter V, needs to be juxtaposed with Anand's life-long, but not unqualified, admiration for Gandhi. Most notable are the three exhaustive lectures on Gandhi that Anand gave at the College of Amritsar. Anand, like Orwell, was impelled to respond to Kipling. Whereas Orwell's estimation of Kipling bordered on strong

¹¹ 'As I Please', *Tribune*, 16 February 1945, p. 10

¹² 'Letter to F. Tennyson Jesse', 14 March 1946, *CEJL*, IV, p. 142. See also *CEJL*, IV, p. 141

admiration, Anand's response was more cautious and reserved.

Julian Symons once said of Orwell that he viewed people in the light of whether or not they supported the cause of democratic socialism. Saros Cowasjee made a similar observation about Anand. He noted that Anand's reception of people depended upon how far they were sympathetic to the cause of Indian independence. The friendship of Orwell and Anand indicates the commitment of the two writers to each other's convictions despite Anand's professed inclination towards the Soviet Union and Orwell's hatred for her. Although the brief description of their early backgrounds, provided in the previous chapter, explains to a considerable extent their shared attitudes to life and literature, it does not adequately answer how and why Orwell and Anand arrived at their respective political faiths. Their arrival on the road to Socialism and anti-imperialism was more a matter of accident than of inherited conviction or systematic thinking. How they travelled on this road, and what their strengths and weaknesses were, still needs to be examined. As mentioned earlier, both published extensively in contemporary journals and their work needs to be collected and compared in order to reach an all-encompassing conclusion.

Finally, there is the question of ascertaining how far Orwell's B.B.C. scripts were his own and whether some other texts, besides the ones this thesis, or West's anthologies, have discovered, exist. I have based this thesis on my personal research at the B.B.C. Written Archives. However, I am aware that I have only skimmed the surface. Almost certainly, more relevant material will be coming to light, and readers of Orwell will have to await the publication of the remaining volumes of *The Complete Works of George Orwell* for an authoritative source for Orwell's work. The publication of these, by Hartcourt Brace in America and Secker and Warburg in the U.K., is awaited anytime now.

THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Broadcasting House, London, W. 1

TELEPHONE: WELBECK 4468 TELEGRAMS: BROADCASTS, LONDON

Reference: AS/PO

18th August, 1941

E. A. Blair, Esq.,
Empire Department.

Dear Sir,

We have pleasure in offering you an engagement as a Talks Assistant in the Empire Department on the following terms and conditions:-

1. You will perform the duties of an assistant in the Empire Service of the Overseas Division and you will also perform such other duties of any kind (including the provision of written and spoken contributions to the broadcast programmes) as may reasonably be required by the Corporation.....
2. The Corporation shall be entitled without your further consent or concurrence (a) to record by any means any performance of any kind which you may, at any time during this engagement at the request of the Corporation give in any of the Corporation's programmes (whether broadcast or not) and (b) to reproduce or authorise others to reproduce by any means a record of any such performance at any time whether during the subsistence or after the determination of this Agreement.
3. You agree to devote the whole of your time and attention to the service of the Corporation and to attend for duty at such hours of the day or night as shall be from time to time indicated to you at such place or places in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as shall from time to time be decided by the Corporation. The Corporation shall at its discretion either pay your reasonable travelling expenses from London or arrange at the expense of the Corporation for your transport from London to such place or places. You further agree not to undertake work for any other person or firm whatsoever during the continuance of this engagement without the previous written consent of the Corporation.
4. You undertake at all times to exercise your talent to the best of your skill and ability in the interests of the Corporation and to observe all instructions given to you and to conform to all rules and regulations of the Corporation for the time being in force. A copy of the Staff Regulations now in force is enclosed herewith.
5. You will not, without the previous written consent of the Corporation, publicly write or speak about the Corporation or its affairs during the continuance of this engagement. Furthermore you will not either during or after the determination of this engagement disclose to any person in any circumstances whatsoever any information, processes or secret matters relative to the business or affairs of the Corporation, which may have come to your knowledge during the period of this engagement.

-1-

Please initial here.....

6. The complete copyright in any work written by you in the course of your employment under this Agreement shall vest in the Corporation.

7. Your remuneration shall be at the rate of £640. 0. 0d (Six hundred and forty pounds)..... per annum, payable monthly in arrears.

8. This engagement shall in the first instance be for a trial period of three months from the 18th August, 1941 but the Corporation reserves the right to terminate it at any time during that period by one month's notice in writing, and (subject as hereinafter mentioned) if not so determined this engagement will continue thereafter (subject to satisfactory service) until determined by two month's notice in writing on either side. Provided that the Corporation may determine the engagement at any time forthwith by notice in writing (a) if your references prove unsatisfactory, or (b) if during or within fourteen days after the expiration of the trial period or any extension thereof, the Corporation shall not be satisfied with your work or conduct.

9. This engagement does not qualify you for membership of the Corporation's permanent staff or of the Staff Pension Scheme.

10. In the event of (a) the further performance of the engagement at any time being prevented by force majeure or any other cause outside your control or the control of the Corporation, (b) any breach or non-observance on your part of any of the conditions herein contained, the Corporation may forthwith terminate the engagement without giving rise to any claim on your part for damages, compensation or otherwise beyond a claim to remuneration at the appropriate rate down to the date of termination and without prejudice to any claims outstanding on the part of the Corporation.

We shall be glad if you will kindly confirm your acceptance of this engagement by signing the declaration at the foot hereof, initialling page one and returning the letter complete to us, keeping the duplicate which is enclosed for your information.

Yours faithfully,

Maurice P. Hill

To: *for Acting* Overseas Establishment Officer,
Overseas Establishment Officer,
British Broadcasting Corporation,
Broadcasting House, London, W.1.

Dear Sir,

I accept the engagement offered above upon the terms and conditions stated.

Yours faithfully,

Date.....

STAFF TRAINING DEPARTMENTTIME TABLEWeek beginning Monday, 18th August, 1941

Time	Session	Instructor	Place
<u>MONDAY, 18th AUGUST</u>			
9.30	Report to Mr. Gough		Common Room
9.45	Preliminary Meeting.	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
10.15- 11.30	The Chain of Technical Processes between the broadcaster and the listener	Mr. R.T.B. Wynn (Senior Superintendent Engineer)	Lecture Room
11.45- 1.00	The Administration of the B.C.	Mr. G.C. Beadle (Controller - Administration)	Lecture Room
2.30- 4.00	The Main Kinds of Programmes	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
4.30- 6.00	Practical Acoustics & Microphones	Mr. Gough	Lecture Room
<u>TUESDAY, 19th AUGUST</u>			
9.45	Meeting to discuss Programme Exercises	D.S.T.	Studio 3, <i>Delaware</i> Maida Vale
10.15- 12.45	Demonstration of Studio Equipment	Mr. Gough	Studio 3, <i>left hand</i> Maida Vale <i>side.</i>
2.30- 3.30	The B.C. in Wartime	Director- General	Lecture Room <i>No. 6</i> <i>lms</i>
4.00- 6.00	Feature Programmes	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
<u>WEDNESDAY, 20th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	The Planning of Home & Forces Programmes		Lecture Room
11.45- 1.00	Analysis of Empire Service lecture script, Freedom Ferry, No. 15, 'Missions to Seamen' by Robert Barr	Mr. Folton	Common Room
2.30- 4.30	Attend rehearsal and live transmission in the Eastern Service of Freedom Ferry, No. 15 Producer: Francis Dillon		Monseigneur, Marble Arch
5.00- 6.00	Discussion on above programme with Producer and Mr. Folton		Monseigneur

Time	Session	Instructor	Place
<u>THURSDAY, 21st AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	Radio Transmission & the BBC's Networks	Mr. L. Hayes (Head of Overseas Engineering Information Dept.)	Lecture Room
11.30- 1.00	Speech for the microphone	Mr. Gough	Lecture Room
2.15- 3.30	Recording Systems used by the BBC	Mr. M. J. L. Pulling (Superintendent Engineer (Recording))	Maida Vale
3.30- 4.00	Demonstration of Recording Equipment	Mr. M. J. L. Pulling	Maida Vale
4.30- 6.00	Description of programme uses of film and tape, and demonstration of programme applications of disc recording system	Mr. Gough, and representative from Recorded Programmes Department	Studio 3, Maida Vale

FRIDAY, 22nd AUGUST

10.00- 11.15	Overseas Programme Planning	Mr. C. Lawson- Recco (Supervisor of Overseas Planning)	Lecture Room
11.30- 1.00	Talks Exercises by students	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
2.30- 4.00	Talks Exercises by students, followed by analysis and discussion	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
4.30- 5.45	Listener Research	Mr. R. J. Silvey (Listener Research Director)	Lecture Room

SATURDAY, 23rd AUGUST

a.m. Available for office work

STAFF TRAINING DEPARTMENTTIME TABLEWeek beginning Monday, 25th August, 1941

Time	Session	Instructor	Place
<u>MONDAY, 25th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	Programme Routine	Mr. S.G. Williams (Assistant Director of Overseas Programme Administration (Supply))	Lecture Room
11.45- 1.00	Outside Broadcasts	Mr. N. Standing (Director of Outside Broadcasts)	Lecture Room
2.30- 4.00	Magazine Programmes	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
4.15	Tea Party, to meet senior members of the staff		Common Room
<u>TUESDAY, 26th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 1.00	Read through of script for afternoon's production.	D.S.T.	Monseigneur, Marble Arch
2.15- 5.15	Rehearsal and performance on closed circuit recording of fifteen- minute feature, produced by D.S.T., with students taking part as cast, Programme Engineers, Junior Programme Engineers, etc. (Recording: 4.45 - 5.15 p.m.)		Monseigneur, Marble Arch
<u>WEDNESDAY, 27th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	Play-over and discussion on feature recorded on previous afternoon	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
11.45- 1.00	European Intelligence Services	Mr. J.S.A. Salt (Director of European Service)	Lecture Room
2.15- 3.30	News Talks Production	Mr. Donald Boyd (Assistant Senior News Editor (Home Division))	Lecture Room
3.45- 6.30	Exercises in making running commentaries and use of recording van	Mr. Gough	Moot in Common Room
7.15- 8.30	Play-over of running commentaries	Mr. Gough	Lecture Room

Time	Session	Instructor	Place
<u>THURSDAY, 28th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	News Broadcasting		Lecture Room
11.45- 1.00	Radio News Pool	Mr.H.P.K.Poolcy (Empire News Talks Editor)	Lecture Room
2.30- 3.45	Broadcasting to a Dominion	Mr.Gronfell Williams (Deputy Director of Empire Service & African Service Director)	Lecture Room
4.15- 5.30	Analysis of a feature script	D.S.T.	Lecture Room
6.30- 8.30	Play over of running commentaries recorded on previous day	Mr.Gough	Lecture Room
<u>FRIDAY, 29th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 11.15	Presentation and Continuity	Mr.L.Stokos (Overseas Presentation Manager)	Lecture Room
11.30- 1.00	The Use of Music in Productions	Mr. Gough	Lecture Room
2.30- 3.45	The Organisation and Problems of the Overseas Division	Sir Stephen Tallonts (Controller - (Overseas))	Lecture Room
4.15	Mooting to discuss course, with Director of Staff Training and Senior Instructors		Lecture Room
<u>SATURDAY, 30th AUGUST</u>			
10.00- 1.00	Available for individual sessions with Director of Staff Training and Senior Instructors		Room 46, The Residence

EASTERN SERVICES COMMITTEETuesday, October 22nd

2.30 p.m.

Room 101, 75 Portland Place.

A G E N D A

1. The Hindustani Service
 - (a) Advance Programmes
 - (b) Listener-Reaction
 - (c) Comments and Suggestions
2. The English Service
 - A. For Indian Listeners
 - (a) Advance Programmes
 - (b) Listener-Reaction
 - (c) Comments and Suggestions
 - B. For the "Exile Audience"
 - (a) Advance Programmes
 - (b) Listener-Reaction
 - (c) Comments and Suggestions
3. Newsletters

(a) Tamil	(b) Malay
(c) Thai	(d) Cantonese and Kuoju
(e) Bengali	(f) Burmese
4. Constitution of Selection Committee for "Hindustani" etc.
5. Any other business.

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
 DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION
 AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
 NEW DELHI

*Communications
 Section
 22/10/54*

THROUGH INDIAN EYES
RECORDS

HOW WE SPEAK TO INDIA
RECORDS

Date	Day of week	Program	Notes
26th Nov	Green	The History of Mr. Folly No. 4. by H.G. Wells. Written & produced by Lance Stevens. Religious Service	HOW IT WORKS No. 5 by D.G. Saverker. A talk on the Home Guard.
27th Nov	Red		
28th Nov	G. & R.	My Life in the Theatre No. 5. Henry Ainley, produced by John Murrell	THE DEBATE CONTINUES No. 5 by Sir Hari Singh Gour.
29th Nov	G. & R.	MASTERPIECES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE No. 2. Piers Plowman. Herbert Read will introduce Prof. Nevill Coghill	FROM FIG LEAVES TO FABRIC. talk on the manufacture of cloth.
30th Nov	G. & R.	WOMEN GENERALLY SPEAKING. No. 49 L.A.G. Strong will talk about Guy Fawkes. LOOKING AFTER THE HOUSE. No. 11 By Mrs. B. Foster	WITH THE WORKERS. No. 5. Dr. Mukerjee on the ship- building industry
1st Dec	G. & R.	Lend me your ears - a study in soap Oratory from Mark Antony to Adolf Hitler. Produced by John Murrell	THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE No. 3 (fortnightly) by Miss F. Petherick.
2nd Dec	G. & R.	MELODY AND HARMONY. No. 5. Scott and Goddard and Dr. B. Mukerjee on European and Indian music	THE MAN IN THE STREET No. 5.
3rd Dec	G. & R.	ANY SUBSTITUTIONS. Recorded from Forces 2.11.41	THE LEADERS (?)

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A NOTE ON NOMENCLATURE OF SERVICES

Various terms, including the Overseas Services, Empire Service, Eastern Service, Eastern Transmission, Indian Service and Hindustani Service have been used in the thesis when referring to personnel responsible for radio broadcasts to India and the programme schedule itself. In fact, these terms were simultaneously used during the entire war period and appear somewhat confusing even today. This is so because the Indian Service, like many other services, was regrouped and reorganised several times during the course of the War. Changes within the B.B.C. wartime staff and services were so rapid, radical and unceasing that one transmission fell into several categories at a given time as far as its particular nomenclature and technical classification was concerned. A brief summary of the history of the Empire Service will clarify the point.

Just six days after the Empire Service of the B.B.C. had started transmitting on 19 December 1932 the King, George V, broadcast to the Country and the Empire on Christmas Day. The manner in which it started purported to give the impression that the Service was going to be one of goodwill, reaching out to English-speaking listeners throughout the Empire, a majority of them of British origin, living in the Dominions and Colonies. The B.B.C. divided its transmissions to the Empire in numerical order. India received the second transmission, from 2.30 to 4.30 pm., out of the total five (later six). However, it was soon realised that cross-listening on the short-wave was inevitable and listeners in one part of the world could tune in to transmissions originally intended for those in other areas. From this phenomenon, the B.B.C. came to distinguish its audience as 'Primary' and 'Secondary', the former denoting those listeners for whom the Service was particularly designed, the latter indicating those who were able to gain access to broadcasts not originally meant for them.

With the outbreak of war, it was realised that the B.B.C. would have to broaden the base of its Empire Services and to include listeners outside of the Empire. Even transmissions within the Empire had to be made more specific, especially in view of the various primary and secondary audiences. Therefore, in the summer of 1940, it reorganised its Empire Service. For the first time it reconsidered the use of the term 'Empire' and substituted for it the more general 'Overseas'. It retained the Empire Service, though, but only as a sub-group of the larger Overseas Services. Even the B.B.C.'s weekly bulletin for the Empire, previously called *London Calling: B.B.C. Empire Broadcasting*, from July 1940, became *London Calling: The Overseas Journal of the B.B.C.* In addition, it abandoned the earlier numerical designation of transmissions and gave a geographical name to each

of the Empire Services distributed over four broadcasting zones of the world. They came to be known as the (i) Pacific; (ii) Eastern; (iii) African; (iv) North American Service. The primary listeners of the Eastern Transmission were in India, Burma, Malaysia and the Far East. Similarly, the Indian audience was also able to receive the Pacific Service during summer as a secondary audience.

According to the B.B.C. Year Book 1943, the B.B.C. effected a further reorganisation of its Services to the world. In January 1943, it combined the Overseas and European Services and sub-divided this one massive transmission into four Services. These were:-

(i) The Empire Service, consisting of programmes in English for over 28 hours a day, covering the greater part of the world, and parallel transmissions broadcast for 3.5 hours a day in Empire and Eastern languages.

(ii) The Near East Service, broadcast for 4 hours a day in Arabic, Persian and Turkish.

(iii) The Latin American Service, broadcast for 4.75 hours a day in the special forms of Spanish and Portuguese spoken in South America.

(iv) The European Service, consisting of two parallel groups of transmissions, one broadcast over 21.5 hours a day in central and Western European languages and the other for over 9.5 hours a day in Spanish and Portuguese, and in Scandinavian and Balkan languages.

The Empire Service in English retained its earlier four sub-divisions, Pacific, Eastern, African, North American, and added a fifth - 'Service for the British Forces Overseas' - in its transmissions.

INDIA

Amongst the various terms used for India, the use of the first three - the Overseas Services, the Empire Services and the Eastern Services - is quite clear. The Indian Service, like the Chinese and the Japanese Services, was a sub-section of the larger Eastern Service. This sub-division was vital for the smooth running of the Eastern Service covering great geographical distances and containing many countries, sometimes politically hostile to one another. The term 'Hindustani' was very much a political expression, and was quite often used to describe the Indian Service. It was, nonetheless, a loose term and had several connotations. It covered broadcasts for Hindustani people from the B.B.C, and broadcasts by Hindustani people from the B.B.C. in English, in Hindustani, and in other regional languages of India. This partly explains the B.B.C. policy of only allowing Indians to read scripts as far as was possible.

Now, a note about Malaya and the Far East. The occupation by the Japanese of Burma and Malaya in 1942, and the consequent loss of several local transmitters due to Japan's 'scorched earth' policy, imposed a new burden on the Eastern Service. As a result, each week it included in its Eastern transmission two newsletters one in Burmese, the other in Malay. Orwell seems to have been connected with these four newsletters. Besides, the B.B.C. also undertook an interesting experiment in broadcasting in the morning a service specifically addressed to Malaya, but also including broadcasts in Kuoyii, Cantonese, Hindustani, Hokkien, and simple English. The purpose was to spread as widely as possible the Allies conviction of the ultimate defeat of the Japanese and the triumph of the United Nations. These broadcasts may also have needed Orwell's help, and perhaps Orwell did get involved; but apart from scattered secondary evidence no record of his contribution exists, and it is not always possible to draw definitive conclusions from such information.

WHO LISTENED-IN TO GEORGE ORWELL

With the discovery of Orwell's B.B.C. scripts, much critical attention has come to be focused upon one important aspect, an aspect that had caused considerable anxiety to B.B.C. officials, including Orwell, during the war period, and continues to perplex scholars of the subject even to this day. It is the question, 'Who listened in to programmes beamed by the Indian Service and to what extent?'

Orwell himself became convinced that the broadcasting effort of the Indian Service was not worthwhile because not many Indians were listening in. As early as in June 1942, he had observed that 'even when one manages to get something fairly good on the air one is weighed down by the knowledge that hardly anybody is listening.'¹ He strongly reiterated this view a number of times. In July he wrote, 'Much of the stuff that goes out from the B.B.C. is just into the stratosphere, not listened to by anybody, and *known* to those responsible for it to be not listened to by anybody.'²

The reports of Laurence Brander only confirmed his doubts and cast gloom, for a time, over the efforts of the entire Indian Service staff. Orwell's colleagues, however, soon regained their confidence, the more so when the War began favouring the Allies in late 1943, but Orwell did not much change his opinion. Even in his resignation letter he highlighted the problem of 'wasting my own time and the public money on doing work that produces no result.' In fact he never ever changed the view that his audience was a small minority. In 1946-47, he had let his London flat to Mrs. Miranda Wood who had lived in Java during the War with her former German husband. Mrs. Wood had also typed Orwell's manuscript of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. When Orwell asked her if she had heard the B.B.C. Overseas broadcasts, she replied that 'she had done no radio listening in the Japanese occupation at all' - because it had been far too dangerous. 'Orwell', she remarked, 'said he had thought as much.'³

A secondary reason why Orwell held a negative view of his audience could have been purely psychological. Unable to establish direct communication with one's listeners, and therefore unaware of their reaction, he called them 'shadowy figures'. Orwell's dilemma, shared by most novice broadcasters, was thus expressed by J. B. Priestley:

¹ Orwell, 'War-time Diary', *CEJL*, II, p. 489.

² *Ibid.*, p. 494

³ Mrs. Miranda Wood's typescript, pp. 5-6. Orwell Archive.

as I sat before the microphone and waited for the little red light to appear on the opposite wall, that at last when the red light did appear I always found it hard to believe that anybody could be listening anywhere. It seemed as if I must be merely talking aloud to myself. I tried not to make it sound like that, did my best, as usual, to feel as if I were addressing a few interested friends; but I never sounded convincing to myself.⁴

The search for a credible answer to this unsolved problem 'of the enormous effort put into winning the hearts and minds of those in the East, and in sustaining the morale of those supporting the Allies,'⁵ motivated Peter Davison to write about the contents of a manuscript diary kept by a British civilian, Albert Gentry, in 1943. During the war, Gentry was interned in Bangkok by the Thai Government following the Thai-Japanese Alliance treaty of January 1941. His diary, now in Davison's collection of books and manuscripts belonging to the Second World War, records amongst other things, the progress of war through news which Gentry had received from various sources, including the B.B.C. Davison thinks that the value of the diary lies in the fact that it establishes 'what news was heard in an occupied country in the Far East in 1943.'⁶

In another article, Davison quotes from Gentry's diaries to show that 'Orwell *was* heard in occupied territory, by privileged prisoners and, perhaps more importantly, by neutral consular officials when he read the News Commentary in English broadcast to Malaya on 18 June 1943.'⁷ This, indeed, is interesting information about the reception of some of Orwell's programmes in the Far East. As far as India is concerned, although Davison has found evidence to support the view that some broadcasts were heard, he still believes that 'the chances of listening-in being widespread were improbable.' To prove his point, he states:

Radio licences may not be a wholly accurate measure of the number of wirelasses available in a country, but whereas there was estimated to be one radio per 2.3 people in the U.S.A. in 1940, one radio for 5.25 people in the United Kingdom in 1939, there was only one radio per 3,875 people in India where B.B.C. broadcasts were split between English, Hindustani, Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, Bengali, and Sinhalese services.⁸

Davison's argument falls in line with the findings of Brander which had provided the basis for much negative opinion at the Indian Service. Brander had estimated that there

⁴ J.B. Priestley in *London Calling*, No. 109, November 9-15, 1941. pp. 3-4

⁵ Peter Davison, 'Bangkok Days: Orwell and the Prisoner's Diary', in *Manuscripts*, Vol. XLI, No. 4, 1989, p. 304

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 305

⁷ Peter Davison, 'George Orwell: Dates and Origins', *Library*, June 1991, Vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 146-7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

were only 121,000 radio sets in a country of nearly three hundred million people. A better figure of 155,908 was quoted by Ahmed Ali, the Listener's Research Officer in New Delhi. (These figures were published in the annual report of the All India Radio.) Statistically, the argument may appear convincing, but this is far from the case. There are other sources of information which prove, beyond doubt, that the Indian broadcasts from London were listened to, in the right places and by the right people. Patterns of listening-in in India were much more varied, and widespread, than was believed. The incongruity in listening patterns was reflected in one of Brander's reports.

One of the clearest informations I got from my contacts with Indian listeners last year was that when they tuned in to the B.B.C., they did so to hear Englishmen and not Indians speak English. It was interesting, therefore, to hear the view expressed by the Bombay journalist Tata that in his part of the country [Maharashtra] Indian listeners were more enthusiastic about some of our Indian broadcasters than about any other B.B.C. programme.⁹

However, before we look into the sources that confirm substantial listening-in to B.B.C. programmes during wartime, a brief look at the political background of India will help in understanding the motives and patterns of listening-in.

At the outbreak of War, India was governed in two different ways. On the one hand, the British ruled directly over eleven states, without the aid of any local ruler, and called them the British Provinces. On the other, in as many as 562 states, they had formed alliances with native rulers and called them the Princely States. By any standards, India was a vast sub-continent and it was impossible for London, even for Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore or Madras, where major broadcasting stations were set up after 1935, to influence the teeming masses. Moreover, hostility to British rule was ever fluctuating. It varied from place to place, and from time to time. In most provinces of British India, like the Punjab, Bengal, United Provinces and areas which are now known as the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, nationalistic fervour was unparalleled, and opposition to British rule was fierce. In sharp contrast were many Princely states, such as Rajputana (now Rajasthan), where rejection of the British rule was passive and lacked direct action.

The B.B.C. knew well, when it started the Indian Service, that it should neither aim at influencing the masses (the job was left to the All India Radio) nor was such a massive effort required. It wanted to concentrate propaganda in well-marked areas and within

⁹ 'Preferences of the English Speaking Indian Audience', from Brander to E.S.D., E.S.O., I.P.O., and Mr. Blair. 22 September 1943. B.B.C. Archives.

distinct sections of Indian population (as is evident from M.O.I. reports). It recognised the need to target propaganda to people living in towns and cities who spoke or understood English, had jobs or businesses, and were politically more aware than fellow countrymen living in villages and other remote areas. Similarly, broadcasts in Hindustani and other regional languages, as opposed to those in English, served to create an atmosphere of goodwill, and were designed to appeal to the relatively enlightened but not so well versed in English. The people targeted *were* the people who owned radio sets, or had relatives and friends who possessed them, and more importantly, had the political voice and the ability to align with, or reject, the British war effort.

The arguments of Brander and Davison, therefore, about the unequal ratio between numbers of radio licences and listening persons in India, becomes only a secondary criterion, more so, when one considers that community listening (or watching) in India was, and has always been, popular. Even the B.B.C. was aware of this fact. In a report about Indian broadcasting, London admitted that 'in India radio listening is a family affair (the family, with its various dependants and servants, may run to a group of fifty or more).'¹⁰

Brander's second observation related to the gross disregard of B.B.C. broadcasts in favour of German propaganda. Although he had discovered that nearly all radio sets possessed by Indians were good short-wave sets and much short-wave listening was being done, Britain was not winning the radio war that raged every night because it was intensely competing with Axis radio¹¹. Here again, some background information is essential.

When the war broke out in Europe, political opinion in India was sharply divided. There was unanimous resentment of the fact that India had been declared at war with Germany without her consent, and the issue of her own independence was treated with the slightest of considerations. Although the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru was well-established, many Indians were beginning to feel impatient with their approach. They felt that the time had come when Indians ought not to put up with decades of suppression in their own home. They saw, in the war, a great opportunity to further their own cause. For a time the people of Bengal, and those with leftist inclinations throughout India, favoured the extremist approach of Subhas Bose, whose differences with Gandhi and Nehru had already become public. Hence as war progressed, deep divisions developed, on the one hand between the British and Indians, on the other, among the Indian nationalists themselves. By and large all thinking Indians, especially Congressmen, saw in the rise of

¹⁰ See *London Calling*, No. 176, 21 February 1943. p. 2.

¹¹ Reports of Laurence Brander, B.B.C. Archives

Germany and Japan the rise of Fascism and a greater danger than the one presented by British Imperialism. They, nevertheless, greatly resented the British presence in India.

When the ban on the Leftist parties of India was lifted, as a consequence of the Soviet Union's joining the Allies in 1941, opposition to British rule, hitherto divided, was suddenly united. It was at this critical time that hostility to Imperial rule rose to an unprecedented high. Almost overnight, Churchill decided to dispatch Stafford Cripps to try and solve the Indian stalemate. Following the failure of the mission, Gandhi announced, in August 1942, the strict and severe 'Quit India Movement'. Unfortunately, Brander travelled to India within days after the Cripps mission, and his visit could not have been more ill-timed. What Brander saw and recorded there was perhaps the worst phase ever for the British during the War.

The opinion of about fifty people was taken in January-March 1990, and February-March 1991, to assess trends of radio-listening in India during the War. These included civil servants, army officers, intellectuals and other middle class citizens who were in their twenties or early thirties during the war period. All interviewees confirmed some common observations:

- * that radio was the fastest means of obtaining news, and its attraction was irresistible.
- * that as the War progressed, more and more people took to radio-listening. As well as becoming a status symbol, radio-listening became also highly contagious.
- * that until about late 1943 and early 1944, Indians listened in to the B.B.C. but with scepticism and reservation. The B.B.C. News, however, was popular because of its speed and accuracy. It was generally believed to be the most credible of all sources.

WHY DID INDIANS LISTEN-IN TO THE B.B.C.?

It has emerged that the interests of the Princes and the ruling class were quite identical with those of the British, and they listened in to the B.B.C. with pride and pleasure. 'One Prince had 86 wireless sets in one room, and an unpleasant habit of turning them all on at once: when asked, on one occasion to get the B.B.C. news, he transmitted the order to his tame mechanic who failed to do so and was immediately sacked.¹² Others, like western educated intellectuals, genuinely believed in the veracity of the B.B.C.

¹² Lionel Fielden, *Beggar My Neighbour*, (London, 1943), p. 51.

and listened in to 'Lord Haw-Haw' with disdain and contempt. T.M. Pande, sub-editor of the *Sunday Standard Bombay*, dismissed in the *New Statesman* broadcasts from Germany as 'a cheap propaganda stunt'. He observed, 'I still remember how people in a metropolis like Bombay and a small town like Dehra Dun eagerly wait to hear the announcer begin his bulletin with that simple yet very attractive 'London salutes India'.¹³ Raja J.K. Atal, who entered the Indian Civil Services in 1936, and served as District magistrate in the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh), holds a similar opinion:

I don't think anyone with any degree of intelligence would have believed the absolute rubbish that the Germans were saying. I used to meet quite a lot of politicians. My grandfather, Tej Bahadur Sapru, was the leader of the Liberal Party and the man who led the First Round Table Conference. By and large, very few Indians felt that if Hitler won, India would be better off.¹⁴

It is significant that the Government of India had passed the 'Defence of India Rules', thereby banning the listening-in of all enemy broadcasts, particularly those from Germany, Japan and Italy. But curiosity about the progress of War, combined with hostility to British rule, made surreptitious listening-in even more popular. Prof. R.P. Bhatnagar, former Head of the Department of English, University of Rajasthan, shared his memories of war-time listening.

The entire locality would gather at a particular place, usually in an affluent person's house, who had a radio set. With every announcement of some kind of a victory of the Germans, and corresponding defeat of the British, people used to feel almost hysterical. That was the kind of atmosphere to begin with.¹⁵

Some Indians tuned in to as many radio stations, as was possible, through sheer indulgence. Like the intimidating broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw from Germany, the charming voice of the 'Tokyo rose', with her American accent, was captivating enough. Whatever the reasons, perpetual radio listening was the most favourite wartime pursuit. Most Indians were keen to listen-in to multiple radio stations so that they could compare and contrast the various versions of war. As Chief Justice Berry of Rajasthan, a practising advocate in Ajmer during the war, observed:

¹³ T. M. Pande, 'Indian Broadcasting', *The New Statesman*, 9 August 1941. p. 137

¹⁴ Raja J.K. Atal: Educated at Oxford, he joined the Indian Civil Service. He became the private secretary of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the first Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister of Free India. Subsequently, Atal joined the Foreign Service and served as Indian Ambassador in many countries. He has also been elected Chairman of the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

¹⁵ Prof. R.P. Bhatnagar in a recorded interview. February 1990.

I was myself keenly watching the progress of war. My own impression is that it [B.B.C.] did maintain a certain amount of objectivity. All India Radio was absolutely partisan and there was a perceptible contrast between the A[ll] I[ndia] R[adio] and the B.B.C : the one adhered to truth to the extent it could, the other departed whenever necessary.¹⁶

Nonetheless, Justice Berry noted that 'it was not on account of our love for Hitler, but our dislike of the British rule that we listened in to Radio Berlin.' Raja Atal supported Berry's view and thought that many Indians, like himself, might have favoured Hitler to annoy the British. 'But in our heart of hearts' he went on, 'we never considered coming under fascist rule'. He put faith in the war ideology of the Allies. As the Deputy Commissioner at Sagar, he took Commando training so that he could volunteer himself for the army when the Japanese threat came.

In addition, over two million Indian soldiers were fighting for the British in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Far East, and many eager relatives wanted to listen in to various radio stations for messages from them or any news of them. Col. R.M. Kasliwal, a physician in the Imperial Army (now in his late eighties), had defected to Subhas Bose's 'Indian National Army' made of POW's in the Far East, and had become one of his close associates. He was thought to have been dead during the period of Japan's victories, but when he made a broadcast in his own voice from Radio Tokyo, along with Subhas Bose's, his family was relieved to know that he was still alive and safe.¹⁷

As evidence suggests, radio listening was inevitably more widespread than Orwell and other officials came to believe. G.B.K. Hooja, who has written an informative book on the history of Indian broadcasting, recollected

When I joined the organisation [All India Radio] in 1946, we were already tuned in to the B.B.C. In fact, the tuning had started as early as in 1940, when Indian programmes were started in English on the short-wave. They used to be relayed on Indian stations and later on from Sri Lanka on the medium-wave. People used to listen-in to the B.B.C. They wanted to find out what was happening. A[ll] I[ndia] R[adio] could not give them much information. Even our print media was not up-to-date. In any case we had to depend upon borrowed information. The news from the B.B.C. was considered to be authentic except that the nationalist opinion was terribly anti-B.B.C. at that time. We also listened-in to radio Berlin but that was more out of nationalistic

¹⁶ Chief Justice Berry started an eminent career as an advocate in Rajasthan and became the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court in 1960. He retired in 1975 and has headed many Commissions. Interview with Justice Berry, February 1990.

¹⁷ Col. R.M. Kasliwal in an interview. Jaipur 1990.

chauvinism.¹⁸

Hooja added that 'people were not interested in the ideology for which the war was being fought but for the news and development of the war. 'It was, really speaking, the news commentaries and the background material which we most listened to', he pointed out.

Evidence has also emerged that both the literary as well as political broadcasts from the Indian Service were being listened to. R.K. Kaul, former Professor and Head of the Department of English at the University of Rajasthan, distinctly remembers his enthusiasm for literary and cultural programmes.

The kind of programme, to which I was particularly attentive, was of a non political nature, specially that which had to do with literature, philosophy, culture and so on. I recall that the programmes we used to tune in to were those which came immediately after the evening news bulletin which had an appeal for the intellectual or cultural elite of India - programmes like 'The Brains Trust' - in which men whose reputation had reached this country, men like Bertrand Russell and C.E.M. Joad, used to participate. It was a delight to listen to them.¹⁹

'The Brains Trust' was broadcast every Sunday as 'Any Questions'. Its title was changed in April 1942, when the schedule of Indian Service and the time of its transmission was reorganised.

Another important testimony was given by Major General Jorawarsingh who was commissioned in the Imperial Army in 1940. He had heard the Indian broadcasts in the Middle East.

'We used to listen in to the B.B.C. although we were overseas. We had the 19 American high-frequency radio sets. We were anxious to know what was happening in the East on the Japanese side because that was causing us great unrest. The B.B.C. used to give clear cut factual information. We heard the sinking of 'the Repulse' for instance, that very evening when it happened in the afternoon. That frankness impressed me very much as a young officer.'²⁰

LONDON CALLING AND PATTERNS OF LISTENING-IN

A more important source confirming the popularity of the B.B.C. is contained in letters

¹⁸ G.B.K. Hooja in a recorded interview. Jaipur 1991

¹⁹ Prof. R.K. Kaul, recorded interview, Jaipur 1991.

²⁰ Major General Jorawar Singh was the youngest Lt. Col. and Brigadier in the Indian Army. He is now retired and lives in Jaipur. Interview with Col. Jorawar Singh, February 1990).

published in *London Calling: the Overseas Journal of the B.B.C.* In fact, the first letter arrived within days of the institution of the Service. It said:

I do not think the B.B.C. altogether realises how serious minded the great bulk of the people are out here, who listen to the Overseas broadcasts. As far as I know, the general feeling is: give us good, illuminating talks and good music, and our radio will become an increasing delight to us.²¹

By August, *London Calling* had already received the early opinions of Indian listeners about broadcasts that had begun in May. A letter from Bombay read:

I beg to inform you that my family and myself tender our best appreciation for the announcer of the Hindustani broadcasts. His voice is very clear, and at times he hypnotises the listeners by his superb style, which no other Hindustani programme broadcast from different countries has equalled. I congratulate the B.B.C. for having selected such a capable man for broadcasting in Hindustani.²²

However, the response of audience was generally sparse between 1940 and 1943 except for a short phase in the latter half of 1941. There are two reasons for this. By and large, Indians were not known to be avid letter-writers. Then the particular situation of India did not much inspire them to write in. The case with the intelligentsia was different. The few letters that were printed must not only have weathered British censorship, but also, would have come from those who would have been undeterred by immediate happenings in India, or would have had individual reasons to write in.

Letters from British listeners, however, kept pouring in at intervals. In July 1941, a listener wrote to thank the B.B.C. and compensated much for the absence of communication in the past few months.

May we thank you all for the pleasure and amusement and confidence you have brought us through this last dark year. One evening I was walking in the dusk on a lonely road in the hills and I saw, grouped about an open door of a tiny shop, some Indians who, having no radio of their own, gather there to listen. I realised as I went by that the King's speech was being rebroadcast from Delhi, and I heard ringing out over these lonely hills his words that came to me then like a real promise, 'There will always be an England'. I had heard the speech earlier, but this came almost like a miracle, and I'll never forget it.²³

This anecdote, in all its simplicity, is a telling one. It confirms that community

²¹ *London Calling*, 7 July 1940, No. 38, p. 2

²² *Ibid.*, 1 September 1940, No. 46, p. 4

²³ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1941, No. 90, p. 15

listening was common even in remote areas; and that, even during the most politically volatile years, people listened in to the B.B.C. and to the 'King'. In September 1941, a lady from Monghyr (Bihar) wrote to thank the B.B.C. 'for the many hours of pleasure my husband and I have had listening in to your programmes.'²⁴ At the height of war in May 1941, a letter from Bombay said, 'Dr. Goebbels has sunk the entire British Navy - and yet I receive my *London Calling* regularly. What about that, Herr Doktor?'²⁵

Letters from India were immensely interesting and carried some of the most unexpected of information. Some were sentimental and complimentary, while some others were factual and critical. In November, V.N. Manmed wrote about his exhilaration after hearing his daughter and son-in-law's voice on the air. 'Thank you for the privilege...What seemed so wonderful was that lately, due to monsoon conditions, the reception has been a bit crackly, but last night there wasn't a crackle nor buzz, and the voices came through wonderfully.'²⁶ A letter from B.H.M. from Punjab carried comments about the quality of the broadcasters' voices:

I have noticed that modulated tenor voices carry best, Norman Claridge's particularly so - and George Formby! Of the deeper voices Voigt and Wickham Steed came through very clearly. As regards Howard Marshall, the voice is clear but sounds like the rumble in an elephant's stomach when it has eaten an acre of someone else's sugar cane.²⁷

In April 1942, an unhappy Englishman grumbled about the incapacity of the B.B.C. in maintaining consistency of accent in its radio dramas. He commented:

Why is it that the B.B.C is so fond always of having the heroine with either a very Scottish or very Irish accent? Very often they're difficult enough to understand when you meet them! But on the wireless it's doubly so - just an ordinary English play with all English actors would be so much plainer and simple.²⁸

Nevertheless, as war progressed, Indians became more confident about the veracity of the B.B.C. This was reflected in the few letters printed by *London Calling*. A complimentary letter from K.R.S.C. Bombay working for the Royal Indian navy, said:

An outstanding aspect of your broadcasting is that whenever there is any local action in which we are involved, such as an air-raid on the port we are in or any attack on a convoy we are in, the first authentic and complete story we get of the action is from the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1942, No. 100, p. 5

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 May 1941, No. 86, p. 6

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 November 1941, No. 110, p. 10

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 December 1941, No. 113, p. 2

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 April 1942, No. 131, p. 14

B.B.C. many thousand miles away. For instance, you remember the destroyer attack on the convoy in the Red Sea on the night of November 17 last year? We were in that convoy, and...I was actually on the bridge at that time and saw the whole action...And it was correct in every detail as far as our convoy was concerned. After such events we all listen in to Germany to see whether we are still alive. We are supposed to have been sunk at least three times by now, and suffered vast devastation and fire twice. At first we were just amused, but now we are beginning to feel quite offended at being sunk so often by Goebbels, as actually they have not even scratched our paint so far, thanks to the Royal Navy and our own - the gallant little Royal Indian Navy.²⁹

It is interesting that by the middle of 1942, letters from India became increasingly critical of B.B.C. talks which Orwell had devised in late 1941. A listener, D.H.B from Karachi, communicated feelings of his fellow officers in a letter titled 'No Radio Lectures, Please!'

I have spoken to many of the officers here and they all seem to be of the same mind - that as they have to listen to numerous lectures during the day and have to give lectures themselves, when they come in at night they like to have a little relaxation by listening to some good music.³⁰

Similar views were expressed by another letter, this time by an Indian., R.O., who sent 'Four Points from India'.

- 1) Give us English announcers always.
- 2) Don't put us to bed at 8.30 pm. [i.e. 5 pm. GMT]
- 3) Give us more music
- 4) Not so many talks. The News, War Commentary and one other talk is ample. Fill up the time with gramophone records of semi-classical type.³¹

A businessman from Bombay expressed similar views:

You have to bear in mind that all business houses here have lost at least half their staff, and the rest are working like slaves. Each man is trying to do two men's work, and we're pretty tired in the evening - this isn't an easy climate - and we don't want to listen to talks all night. I must give you credit for your presentation of the news; it is well done, interesting, and gives a definite feeling of authenticity, a very pleasant contrast to the Axis bulletins. One thing we're all disappointed about is the discontinuance of the 13-metre band for India. The 49-metre band comes through very well, but it's a very crowded band.³²

These opinions substantiate, with a fair degree of certainty, the argument of Brander that the B.B.C. ought to curtail the transmission of talks and substitute it with music.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1942, No. 122, p. 6

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 April 1942, No. 130, p. 8

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12 April 1942, No. 131, p. 14

³² *Ibid.*, 19 April 1942, No. 132, p. 17

Indeed, there is evidence that music was a great favourite from the very start and many listeners wrote in to appreciate or criticise the particular selection of music, as these letters reveal:

Still too much Chamber Music and pianoforte recital. While not asking that the loudspeaker should blare out jazz continuously for the whole of each transmission, what we want is more light, cheery music. Remember that we are undergoing temperatures of 115 degree F. in the shade, and it is in the evening only that we can sit outside and try to get cool, and at these times we want bright music.³³

Why do your announcers always consider it necessary to select a 'highbrow' record to fill in an interval?³⁴

[There is] too much dramatic music sandwiched in between the speaking parts, and it spoils the continuity of your plays.³⁵

One of the striking things is that there are virtually no letters from India after May 1942 until the end of March 1943, and none at all from Malaya during this period, except one in January 1942 which refers to a 'reproduction talk given by a seaman' on the wireless 'direct from London at 7.30 p.m.' Malaya time.³⁶ However, this uneasy silence from the subcontinent was broken by a letter from C.R.P. from United Provinces about the 'Brains' Trust'. It supports the claim made earlier that literary programmes were also being listened to.

I am a regular listener to the B.B.C.'s Brains Trust programme every Sunday afternoon...I am sure, in common with myself, all listeners picture your staff in accordance with the characteristics expressed in their voices. It is interesting to compare one's impressions with pictures of broadcasters which appear from time to time in *London Calling*.³⁷

Far and few in between, during this period and continuing in late 1943, are letters from the British audience; about a 'Scot's Grouse' of not 'having more of Scotland for the thousands of Scots out here who listen regularly'; about an Indian father whose son was serving in the Imperial Army in Iraq, and both father and son hearing the same broadcast at the same time (though in different parts of the world) describing the 'first day's march of the son's battalion'; about a father referring to his daughter's broadcast and a husband hearing his wife's voice over 'Calling India'; and about 'boredom with technical talks over the B.B.C.'.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1 September 1940, No. 46, p. 2

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 November 1940, No. 60, p. 16

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1942, No. 134, p. 17

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 January 1942, No. 119, p. 14

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 March 1943, No. 181, p. 16

From these numerous letters, one can presume that a far greater number would have arrived from India, some no doubt hostile. The proportion of letters received from Indian listeners was evidently high: for example, out of the eleven letters published in *London Calling* in No 131 (April 12-18, 1942), five are from India.

It can be concluded, therefore, that programmes of the Indian Service were listened to by Indians, but whether any listener heard Orwell and identified him thus, is difficult to know. With the passing of time, the possibility of finding an Orwell listener becomes a near impossibility. In any case, Orwell was not a famous figure in the early forties, certainly not in India, where his reputation as a successful writer had established only in the late forties. His voice did not compliment the microphone, and would have been unlikely to attract many listeners. The content of his broadcasts was also restrictive. His literary talks did not appeal to the majority who were more interested in entertainment and music. However, his war reviews would have had every reason to be popular, but his own rendering of them, in his thin voice, hardly did them justice.

Orwell's limited popularity as a speaker was reflected in a survey conducted by Brander. The questionnaire was distributed amongst audience in Bengal, Bihar, the Punjab, the Central Provinces, Hyderabad and South India. It was as follows:-

1. The question has arisen whether our listeners prefer to hear Indians or Englishmen speak English on the radio. What are the views of your contacts on this?

a)	Prefer Englishmen	...	...	...	55%
b)	Prefer Indians	...	...	...	13%
c)	Indians or English	...	...	...	16%
d)	No Opinion	...	...	...	16%

2. Which of these personalities are enjoyed?

George Orwell	...	16%	Dr. C.E.M. Joad	...	56%
Shridhar Telker	...	0%	Dr. Gangulce	...	8%
Priestley	...	68%	E.M. Forster	...	52%
Venu Chitale	...	12%	Princess Indira	...	40%
Kingsley Martin	...	16%	Sir Aziz Ul Haque	...	28%
Bokhari	...	32%	Wickham Steed	...	76%
Lady Grigg	...	20%	S. Lall	...	12%

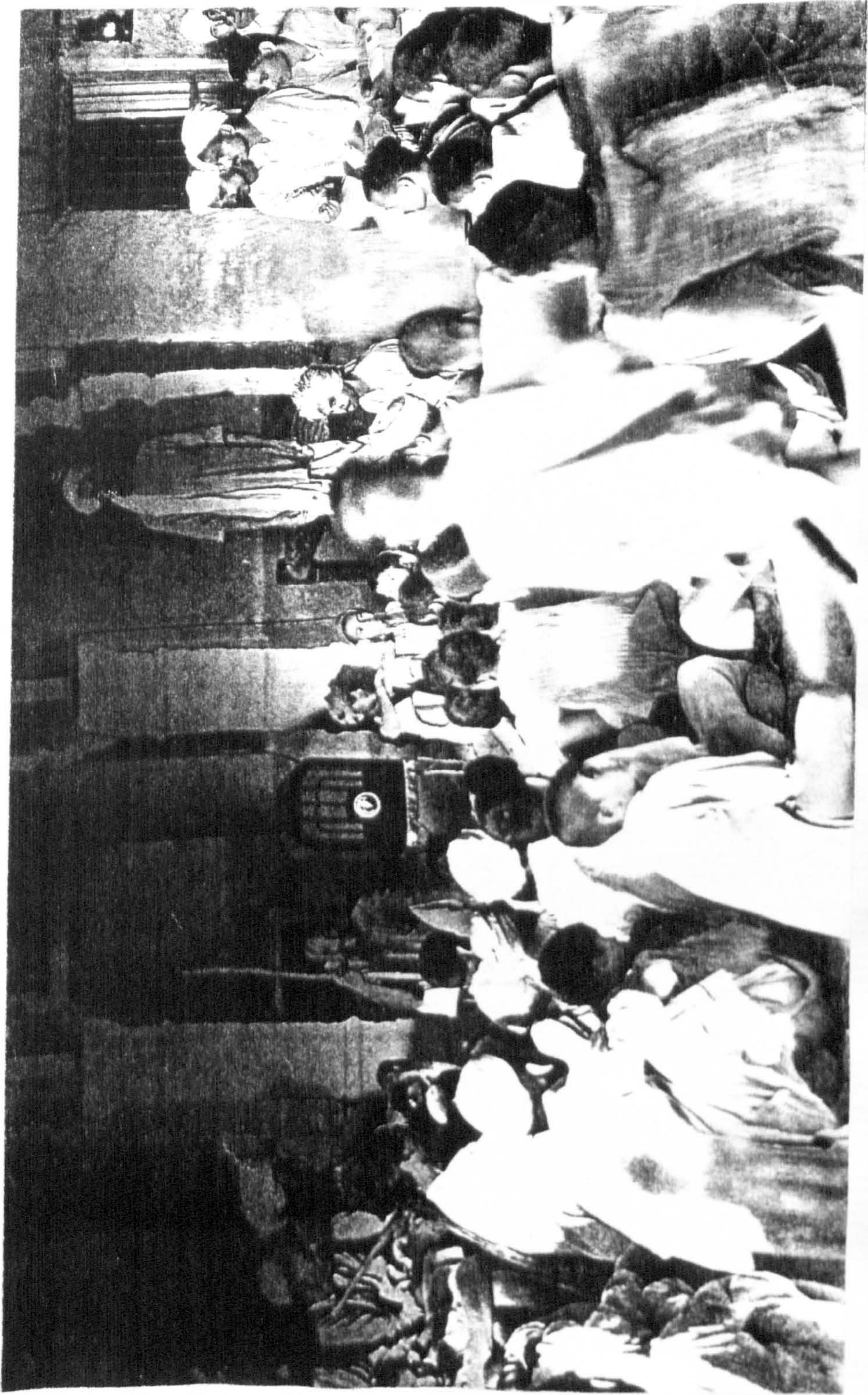
During the time that the questionnaire was circulated, hostility to British rule was extraordinary and many listeners would not have been motivated to fill in questionnaires like the one circulated by Ahmed Ali. Many employees at the Indian Section must have taken these figures at their face value as did Michael Sheldon, who

erroneously thinks that 'Orwell was disheartened to learn that his rating was among the very lowest of all the names on the list'.³⁸ What Sheldon, and presumably many others, did not consider was that Brander in the same report had categorically stated that 'the actual number of questionnaires returned was too few to form a firm conclusion.' He requested the questionnaire to be circulated again, stating that 'the following results may, meantime, be taken as indicative if not conclusive.'³⁹

Certainly, the results of the survey would have been discouraging to Orwell, even though it proved that some people after all did listen to Orwell. His perennial sense of failure continued to haunt him even at the B.B.C. and he thought his broadcasting effort, like his literary work, was one of failure. In both respects, time has proved him wrong.

³⁸ Michael Sheldon, *Orwell: The Authorised Biography*, (London, 1991) p. 379

³⁹ 'Preferences of the English speaking Indian Audience', 22 September 1943, from Laurence Brander to E.S.D., E.S.O., I.P.O, and Mr. Blair. B.B.C. Archives.



Wireless and Community Listening in India. (Source: *Report on the Progress of Broadcasting in India up to 31 March 1939*, (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1940), p. 40)

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 1939 - 1943

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
March 1939	German troops invade Czechoslovakia		After living in Morocco for six months and writing <i>Coming Up for Air</i> , Orwell returns to London	
June			<i>Coming Up for Air</i> published by Victor Gollancz	
August	Nazi Germany and Communist Russia sign a non-aggression pact			
September	Hitler attacks Poland on 1 September; On 3 September Britain and France declare war against Germany. Churchill joins the War Cabinet.	Lord Linlithgow declares India to be at war without the consent of Indians; plans for Indian Federation are postponed indefinitely; the Congress Working Committee passes a resolution and asks Britain to declare its war aims and peace aims with regard to India;	Eileen Blair takes up job in the Censorship Department and moves to Greenwich; Orwell stays at Wallington awaiting suitable war-time employment; takes to reviewing and publishes five short reviews in the first five months of war, leaves the Independent Labour Party	
October		All Indian Congress ministers resign in protest because they receive no answer from the British Government. Their participation in Provincial Governments, an important step towards self-rule, comes to an abrupt end.		
December				Germany starts broadcasting to India

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
January 1940		Subhas Bose detained on charges of sedition		John Reith, founder and first Director General of the B.B.C. leaves the Corporation and takes over as Minister of Information; Frank Ogilvie succeeds him at the B.B.C.; Bokhari arrives in London
March		Muslim League at Lahore proclaims its goal to create a separate State of Pakistan for Muslims		
April				Lionel Fielden returns to Britain from India to take up sub-editorship of the proposed Indian Service
May	Churchill's War Cabinet replaces Chamberlain's Government			
June	Benito Mussolini declares war on the Allies		Orwell joins the Local Defence Volunteers (the Home Guard) as sergeant in C Company of the 5th Battalion, County of London	The B.B.C.'s Indian Service begins; Malcolm Darling arrives from India as Head of the Service
September	The Blitz begins in Britain; 31/2 million homes damaged or destroyed; 30,000 people killed			
October		Gandhi launches individual <i>Satyagraha</i> programme		

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
November	President Roosevelt wins a third term in the White House			
January 1941		Bose escapes on the eve of his trial	Orwell writes first of his fifteen London Letters to <i>Partisan Review</i> , which he continues writing for the next 51/2 years	
February			<i>The Lion and the Unicorn</i> published by Gollancz	
March			<i>The Betrayal of the Left</i> Published by Gollancz which contains two chapters- 'Fascism and Democracy' and 'Patriots and Revolutionaries' by Orwell	
April		Bose reaches Berlin secretly journeying via Afghanistan and Russia		Radio Azad Hind set up by Bose;
June	Hitler attacks Soviet Russia	As a consequence of Bose's broadcasts, the violent wing of India's nationalist movement erupts, several trains derailed, British soldiers attacked, bombs exploded in public buildings, theatres and bazaars.		Rendall interviews Orwell for English talks for India

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
July				Brendan Brecken becomes Minister of M.O.I. and announces tighter centralised control of British news and propaganda services
August	Roosevelt meets Churchill aboard Cruiser <i>Augusta</i> to declare the Atlantic Charter	About 20,000 satyagrahis convicted, 14, 000 in jail		Orwell joins the Indian Service
September	Churchill declares in the House of Commons that the Atlantic Charter does not apply to India, Burma and other parts of the British Empire			Radio Himalaya starts operating from Rome under the supervision of Mohammed Iqbal Schedai
December	Japan attacks Pearl Harbour; U.S.A. declares war on Japan	All <i>satyagrahis</i> and jailed Congressmen released to win popular backing		
January 1942	Kuala Lumpur falls to Japan			
February	Singapore falls to Japan			
March	Java surrenders to the Japanese army; Churchill announces his dispatch of Sir Stafford Cripps to India; Cripps arrives in New Delhi and declares his proposal of an Indian Union with Dominion status to be set up once the war was over.			

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
April		Japan bombs Vizapatam (now Vishakhapatnam)	Eileen Blair takes up job for the Ministry of Food, organising Kitchen front broadcasts	Brander goes to India to assess listening patterns and encounters great hostility; sets up Listener Research Office
May	Japanese take Mandalay and extend control over entire Burma	Gandhi launches 'Quit India Movement', demands British withdrawal or the onset of a new civil disobedience movement		
July				Indian Service moves to 200 Oxford Street with the entire Overseas Services Department
August		Congress Working Committee passes resolution to launch the civil disobedience movement at Poona; the whole Committee is interned, Large scale rioting begins, more than 1,000 dead and 3,000 injured; Time of terror, fear and hatred; 60,000 Congress supporters arrested between now and the end of 1942;		
September			Orwell promoted as Talks Producer	
January 1943	First German surrender to Russia at Stalingrad			

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
February	Hitler orders German army to retreat; intensive fighting between Allied troops and Japanese forces in Burma	Subhas Bose leaves Germany and travels to the Far East in a U-boat from Kiel	Famine in Bengal	
July	Mussolini sacked by the King and arrested			
August		Subhas Bose becomes the Supreme Commander of the <i>Azad Hind Fauj</i> (Free India Army) in the Far East and launches the slogan 'Onward to Delhi'		
September	Allied troops land in Sicily, Italian general Castellano signs secret armistice with Allies to take Italy out of the War; Italy surrenders unconditionally on 8 September			
October		Lord Wavell takes over as Governor General; entrusts the British army to deal with relief distribution in famine areas; rationing introduced in India; British army becomes popular		

TIME	WORLD EVENTS	EVENTS IN INDIA	ORWELL'S LIFE	WORLD OF RADIO
November			Allen and Unwin publish <i>Talking to India</i> ; Orwell leaves the Home Guard on medical grounds; also resigns from the Indian Service and takes up literary editorship of the <i>Tribune</i> .	
December	Tehran Summit brings Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill together			

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