

**The Blitz and The Bomber Offensive: A Case Study in British Home
Propaganda, 1939-45**

Stephanie Jane Fisher

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The thesis is a case study of British home front propaganda in the period 1939-45, with particular reference to film propaganda; newsreels, official films, and feature films. It examines propaganda about German bombing raids against Britain during the Blitz and about RAF bombing raids against Germany in the Bomber Offensive.

Chapter One sets out the aims and objectives of the thesis and gives some details about the primary sources used.

Chapter Two deals briefly with pre-war planning for a propaganda Ministry and the basic structure of the wartime Ministry of Information (MOI). It also discusses in detail the way in which the MOI planned to shape propaganda about the Blitz in the period before the Blitz began.

Chapter Three gives a detailed examination of propaganda about the Blitz during the period when it was taking place, and the way in which the RAF's raids against Germany were dealt with in this early phase of the war. The main emphasis is on film propaganda but some comparative data is given covering press and radio presentations.

Chapter Four examines the period May 1941 to May 1942 and looks at the way in which propaganda policies for presenting the Blitz and Bomber Offensive were restructured to take account of changing circumstances: the need for increased aircraft production to support Britain's war effort; and the Alliance with the Soviet Union and America.

Chapter Five deals with propaganda output about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive for the period covered by Chapter Four.

Chapter Six discusses the development of Britain's bombing policy against Germany during the period 1940 to 1945. This chapter sets the context for a detailed study of propaganda about the latter stages of the Bomber Offensive.

Chapter Seven gives a detailed account of the way in which area bombing was presented in film propaganda during 1943. It gives some comparative examples of press and radio propaganda treatment of area bombing. It also discusses the ways in which propaganda about the Blitz continued to play an important role.

Chapter Eight discusses in detail the way in which propaganda about the Bomber Offensive was structured during the period 1943 to 1945 as the RAF bombing campaign developed from area to saturation bombing. It deals with the issues which had to be confronted in creating propaganda images of the Bomber Offensive and the way in which propaganda was shaped to take account of those issues.

Chapter Nine discusses in detail Sir Arthur Harris's disputes with the Air Ministry about both propaganda presentations of the Bomber Offensive and the Air Staff's bombing policy.

Chapter Ten presents the conclusions of the thesis.

The Blitz and the Bomber Offensive: A Case Study in British Home Propaganda, 1939-45

Stephanie Jane Fisher: Candidate for PhD, University of Edinburgh 1993

Declaration of Academic Integrity

The work contained in this thesis has been researched and written up entirely by myself.

Date. 27.10.93.

A small portion of the this thesis which deals with the Blitz was submitted for a CNAA undergraduate degree but it has been revised and rewritten for the purposes of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis is a case study of British home front propaganda. It examines propaganda related to the Blitz and Bomber Offensive in the period 1939 to 1945. It will describe the methods of the Ministry of Information (MOI), with particular reference to its use of film propaganda; analyse the content of film propaganda in relation to the Blitz and Bomber Offensive; and examine the way in which propaganda images of bombing were constructed. The aim of the thesis is to assess the nature of British propaganda, the aims and objectives of the Ministry of Information (MOI) in its presentation of images of bombing, and how the construction of these images affected public perception of both the Blitz and Bomber Offensive.

It is the intention of this thesis to add to an existing body of work in the area of history, film and propaganda. This body of work has been developed in recent years by historians who are interested in the impact of the mass media in modern society, with particular reference to film. Several historians are now working specifically in this field and their work has ranged across a variety of areas: the political uses of film; its cultural impact; its social effect; and its use for propaganda purposes.

The work of these historians has shown that after the First World War the mass media played an increasingly significant political role, linked to the changing nature of politics. The extension of the franchise after the First World War meant that political parties increasingly relied on influencing the opinions of a new, mass, working-class electorate and the mass media provided a powerful means of influencing public opinion.¹

For example, Hollins study of the Conservative Party's use of film has shown the way in which, from the 1920s, the Conservative Party used film for political purposes, regarding it as a potent means of influencing new, working-class voters.² On the political left, however, film remained the province of committed groups - workers' film societies and the Documentary Movement - rather than the Labour Party. These groups regarded film as a means of educating the working-class about their role in democracy, and the work of these film-makers was based on a realist ethic associated with a socialism. The Documentary Movement in particular has since achieved a good deal of critical acclaim from film theorists but in the inter-war period its audiences were small because of the production, exhibition and distribution constraints placed on left-wing film groups and, therefore, the extent to which these films were able to influence public opinion was limited.³ During the Second World War, however, this group assumed a central role in the MOI's Film Division. In part this thesis will be concerned with assessing the contribution of this group to British propaganda, particularly about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive.

The largest cinema audiences during the inter-war period were those of the commercial film industry. The industry provided both news and entertainment in the form of newsreels and feature films to an increasingly large audience. By 1934 some 43% of the population (18.5 million people) attended the cinema every week and by 1939 this figure had risen to over 50% (20-23 million people) attending the cinema every week. This audience was drawn largely from the industrial working-class in the age range 18-35, with a growing middle-class audience in the new suburban cinemas.⁴ This apparently meant that the commercial film industry had great potential for influencing public opinion.

Nicholas Pronay's studies of the development and political uses of the newsreels during the 1920s and 1930s have demonstrated the significant role they played in creating a consensual view of politics and society, and how this was assisted by the organisational structure of the industry. The ownership of the newsreel companies was centralised within a complex structure of American dominated multi-national companies and by 1933 five companies, subsidiaries of British or American feature production companies, controlled the UK newsreel business (and continued to do so into the post-war years). The five companies were, Gaumont-British News (GBN), British Movietone News (BMN), Pathé Gazette (PG), Universal News (UN) and British Paramount News (BPN). These companies made newsreels in Britain for the home market but were part of a world-wide distribution and exhibition system.⁵ Because of this structure the newsreels outstripped any other news medium in penetration of a world market, giving them enormous potential for influencing public opinion.

...there came into being a...common view of the world shared by the lower class townspeople.. The impact and significance of world coverage combined with world distribution can hardly be exaggerated...⁶

As Pronay shows, newsreels played a key role in presenting to British audiences a consensual view of society based on the "...belief in the good intentions of their rulers...".⁷ This was a function which reflected the close relationship between newsreel editors and the government. Newsreels were not, like other types of film, subject to censorship by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) but they avoided this by operating a self-censorship system based on tight editorial control. Their editorial policy was uniformly conservative, partly because of the supposed power of film and also because of the personal inclinations of the editors. During the 1930s the Conservative Party and National Government developed close links with both GBN and BMN⁸ which were invaluable for the government in presenting the potentially divisive

political and social issues of 1930s in terms of the 'national interest', which was by definition that of the government of the day. In this way the media, particularly newsreels, played an important role in maintaining the political and social stability of Britain during a period of intense economic and social pressure.

Jeffrey Richards has argued that the other branch of the commercial film industry, feature film, fulfilled a similar function. In respect of feature films, censorship played an important part in this process and all feature films shown in Britain were subject to BBFC censorship. The declared aim of the censors was to protect public morality and in order to achieve this the BBFC developed over the years a comprehensive set of 'rules' and 'exceptions' governing disallowed themes, which encompassed both political and moral issues. American features were also popular with British audiences but these too were subject to a rigid censorship system - the Hays Code. The net result of British, and American, censorship of feature films was that during the 1930s, the cinema offered its audience a world in which social and political problems were personalised and easily resolved within the established social order.

Richards' study of the cinema during the 1930s used Gramsci's theoretical concept of hegemony to explain the way in which the film industry contributed to maintaining political and social stability during a period of economic and social unrest. The concept of hegemony suggests that the media play a crucial role in propagating a dominant ideology - values, attitudes, norms - and winning the assent of subordinate classes to this ideology,⁹ thereby maintaining political and social consensus.

...mass culture can be used to generate ideological consensus, promote it where it does not exist and confirm it where it does...¹⁰

This, it seems to me, is a crucial concept in explaining and understanding the

role of the media. In part, therefore, this thesis seeks to apply this concept to propaganda, with a view to demonstrating what it can contribute to an understanding of how the media affected public perceptions about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive.

Film propaganda during the Second World War has provided a distinctive area of study within the general field of history and film studies, as demonstrated by the work of Tony Aldgate, Jeffrey Richards, and Philip Taylor. But, as yet, there has been no detailed account of propaganda about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive during Second World War. It is the aim of this thesis to add to an existing body of work about Second World War film propaganda by providing such an account.

An important aspect of this study will be to analyse the role of the Ministry of Information (MOI) which was responsible for wartime propaganda. However, this Ministry was not created in a vacuum. It inherited and had to work with existing perceptions about the power and legitimacy of propaganda. The experience of the First World War had led many to believe that propaganda was a potent force for influencing the course of events. For example, British propaganda was credited with persuading America to join the war and causing German home front morale to collapse, the 'stab in the back' which defeated Germany. But, this supposed power carried with it a negative legacy which is revealed in the persistence of the pejorative terms associated with propaganda. It was believed that propaganda was a questionable activity because its power rested on brainwashing the public into accepting lies and distortion as truth, and the discrediting of First World War atrocity stories seemed to prove the point.

The persistence of questioning about the legitimacy of propaganda is revealed in

continuing contemporary debates about how it can be defined and recognised, and what purpose it serves.¹¹ These debates show that, according to historical and political viewpoint, distinctions between propaganda, publicity, information, education and entertainment are often finely balanced. But how did the MOI and those working within it see their role? It was the proud boast of the MOI during the Second World War that its propaganda was derived from facts and truth. In part, therefore, this case study seeks to assess the validity of this claim by examining the methods of presentation of images of bombing and the extent to which the MOI imposed controls over the media. This will be an important aspect in determining the nature of the MOI as a propaganda agency and the purpose of British propaganda about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive.

Traditionally, historical studies of the Second World War have treated the Blitz and Bomber Offensive as separate topics. The Blitz has been written about extensively in the context of its social and political effects on the home front, whilst the Bomber Offensive has been studied in depth by military historians. Why then study these two topics side by side? There is one obvious connection between these two apparently separate topics and that is bombing as a method of warfare. By the 1930s popular and government perceptions of the likely effects of bombing had assumed apocalyptic proportions, as Harrison reminds us:

...Air-power was born with a kind of huge attachment, a Siamese twin, so that the facts of the matter were intimately blended with an almost separate, quite identifiable other form called Fear-Fantasy...¹²

This "Fear-Fantasy" was nurtured by military theories of aviation based on strategic bombing. The foremost proponent of such theories was the Italian theorist General Douhet who claimed that bombing, directed against civilian centres of population, could force the surrender of any government

because no effective defence could be mounted against the bomber. This theory found political expression in Baldwin's famous maxim, 'the bomber will always get through'.

The potential of bombing as a weapon of war was one which aroused great controversy and fear in the inter-war period. Governments' fear of bombing as a method of war arose from its expected consequences. If it was directed against civilians, not only would it cause enormous home front casualties but, worse still, it would cause panic and hysteria on the part of those that survived. Politicians and government officials had little faith in the ability of the people to stand up to bombing. In Britain it was believed that, lacking the discipline of their social superiors or the armed forces, the people were bound to panic, a belief which found expression in terms of a collapse of civilian morale.¹³

Controversy about bombing was part and parcel of its expected consequences, "...the very idea of bombing seemed to portend barbarism..."¹⁴ and any government which chose this as a method of war might lay itself open to charges of ignoring the international principles governing the conventions of war. Fascist use of bombing in Abyssinia and Spain seemed to prove the validity of this argument. Nevertheless, during the Second World War Britain did engage in a mutual bombing campaign with Germany. This meant that the British government was faced with the prospect of maintaining civilian morale in the face of enemy bombing, whilst at the same time laying itself open to charges of breaking the conventions of war. How would the MOI deal with these twin aspects of bombing at one and the same time? Part of the aim of this thesis is to examine how, given the inter-war context of perceptions of this method of war, the British government chose to explain both its own bombing campaign against Germany, and Germany's bombing campaign against Britain. This will be assessed by examining differences and similarities in British

propaganda images about bombing on the home front as compared to bombing against Germany.

Just as historical studies have treated these events separately, in popular perception too the Blitz and Bomber Offensive are separated. The Blitz has assumed a mythological role in British popular culture and national identity and it became a powerful icon in popular culture and politics but the Bomber Offensive occupies a rather different place in Britain's history and national consciousness. It remains a murky episode, a source of controversy and potential national disgrace. The Bomber Offensive has no proud place in the popular mythology of the Second World War. Instead, "...the bombers' part in the war was one that many politicians and civilians would prefer to forget...".¹⁵ One aim of this thesis is to investigate whether British propaganda about the Blitz and Bomber Offensive, given that they were based on the same method of warfare, treated these events separately or whether propaganda about one informed the other.

The Blitz has been the subject of historical studies covering every aspect of the experience. Recently Angus Calder has written that the 'Myth of the Blitz' may be regarded as "...a 'fact' from the past...".¹⁶ By this he means that, no matter how many times the story has been told, no matter what evidence has been unearthed to debunk the myth, in popular memory it is still regarded as the supreme triumph of the British national character over Nazi Germany. At the heart of the myth of the Blitz is the notion that the British people, as represented by the ordinary 'man and woman in the street', fulfilled their destiny by 'taking' German bombing, which stopped Hitler in his tracks and paved the way for ultimate victory.¹⁷ It is not the intention of this thesis to disprove the myth or to retell the story of the Blitz as it affected the lives of those involved, although it will take account of these factors. The aim of this thesis will be to examine

how, why and to what end propaganda about the Blitz was created, and assess what, if anything, propaganda may have contributed to the 'Myth of the Blitz'.

The focus of historiography about the Bomber Offensive has been directed towards two main themes: was it strategically effective and was it morally justifiable? Again, although the thesis takes account of studies based on these themes it is not concerned with reprising these arguments. The focus of this thesis is to examine the policies which guided propaganda presentations of the Bomber Offensive and analyse its structure and content. The thesis seeks to explain how and why specific images were created, how these related to the reality of British bombing policy in its changing phases throughout the war, and whether the propaganda of the Bomber Offensive bears any relation to the issues raised during the subsequent controversy.

While film will be used as the main primary source for propaganda output it is recognised that other media also played an important propaganda role and, therefore, the study also makes use of selected examples of press and radio coverage. But propaganda output cannot be studied in isolation from government policy or the context in which it was produced. Therefore, the records of the MOI, Cabinet and Air Ministry form an essential part of this study and, since the aim of propaganda was to act upon or influence public opinion, the records of the Mass Observation archive have also been consulted.

CHAPTER TWO

Propaganda Planning For the Blitz

Planning for a wartime propaganda Ministry had begun in 1935, with the formation of a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Its task was to prepare guidelines for the establishment and functions of the proposed Ministry. The work of this committee, however, did not go smoothly. Planners, drawn from a variety of departments, worked only part-time. Obtaining information on the propaganda methods of the First World War proved difficult. Chamberlain and Samuel Hoare, the Minister responsible, proceeded reluctantly. There was rivalry and conflict with Departments who had hitherto been responsible for their own publicity, with their own channels of communication with the media. These problems combined to create an inauspicious start for the wartime Ministry of Information. ¹

The MOI was set up, in the manner of other Ministries, as a complex bureaucratic system. Between 1939 and mid-1941 the MOI underwent several reorganisations, indicating the failures of the planning stage. ² In essence, however, the basis of the Ministry's structure was that of divisional groupings. Each division was headed by a Controller, responsible for different aspects of the Ministry's work. All were answerable to the Deputy Director General who, through the Director General, was responsible to the Minister and his Parliamentary Secretary. The number of Divisions indicate the broad range of the MOI's brief. These were: News; Censorship and Photographs; Home, which controlled Regional MOI staff, Home Intelligence and Home Publicity; Overseas Affairs, divided into areas of specialisation³; Production, consisting of publications, campaign literature and the Reference section; the Film Division; Broadcasting Division; Commercial Relations; Religious Division; and

Administration.

The MOI was responsible for formulating propaganda policy and for guiding the dissemination of news and information through its various divisions to the media. It did this using covert and overt methods. It originated propaganda themes, through which events were to be interpreted. It organised specific publicity campaigns, on its own behalf and for other Departments. It filtered information provided by Service and other Ministries through the censorship system. Information could then be presented to the public in a way which harmonised with policy, overall themes and specific campaigns.

A central purpose of the MOI was the maintenance of civilian morale. In this context its job was defined as:

...To watch and record changes in habit and opinion at home with a view to maintaining the integrity and spirit of the people; to guide habit and opinion in directions favourable to the policy and aims of the government by the issue of information, instruction and advice, both direct and indirect...⁴

Civilian morale, however, was ill-defined and, as many observers have noted, the gap between people and government so great that little was really known about the opinions and habits of the people.⁵ But if the MOI was to fulfil its morale function it had to find the means for gaining access to public opinion. The MOI did not develop a formal definition of morale to which it consistently worked. The state of civilian morale tended to be judged in an ad-hoc way on a blend of attitudes and behaviour. Mass Observation (MO), set up in 1937, provided the Ministry with a ready-made organisation for evaluating civilian morale. Mass Observation's expertise was seen to lie in its knowledge of working-class life and culture. As Angus Calder notes,

personnel of Mass Observation were drawn from a group of socially concerned public-school and Oxbridge-educated writers and artists. They and their compatriots travelled north to study and observe the lives and habits of the northern working-class.⁶ For the MOI, Mass Observation brought invaluable insights into the habits and opinions of a class from which its policy makers were remote. The work of Mass Observation was supplemented by the MOI's own Home Intelligence Division (HI). Other organisations, like the British Institute of Public Opinion, were also occasionally called upon. Armed with information from these sources the MOI could set about guiding habit and opinion in the required directions, using direct and indirect (or overt and covert) methods.

The MOI had extensive powers to control all news channels. But it relied upon a 'voluntary' principle which depended heavily upon the goodwill of editors, rather than the enforcement of negative sanctions. Control of information was the key to the MOI's system. For the Press, although editorial comment was not censored, news was tightly controlled. News was issued via the MOI. The Press was required to submit to the Censor any articles that might infringe an ever growing number of 'D'notices. Guidelines for the treatment of news were given. Official communiques were released.

From the earliest stages of MOI planning, film was believed to be the most important and powerful medium for realising its objectives. The importance attached to film was based on the belief that "...the film cannot be effectively contradicted...".⁷ Newsreels were regarded by the MOI as a particularly important medium of publicity.⁸ Here too voluntary cooperation was regarded as essential.

...Voluntary good behaviour is notoriously very much more valuable than enforced good behaviour. It would be a thousand pities

to lose the greater by seeking to impose
the less...⁹

The newsreels, of course, were well practised in working in cooperation with the government but the war did impose new conditions. Newsreels were subject to a similar system of guidelines and censorship as that applied to the Press. However, because the film image was regarded as more powerful, they were more tightly controlled than the Press. Unlike the Press, completed newsreels had to be submitted for post-production censorship.

The 'voluntary' system was accepted by the media and government as advantageous. Each newspaper and newsreel was able to maintain its individuality, and press freedom appeared to be relatively undisturbed. Co-operation avoided the possibility of seizure or banning of completed products and loss of profit. It avoided the spectacle of heavy-handed government interference with press freedom, while allowing opportunities to influence the content and treatment of news stories.

The MOI was also interested in other types of film. Films produced with MOI backing ranged from short information films to feature length documentaries. The difficulties of arriving at a precise definition of what constitutes an 'official film' are summarised by Nicholas Pronay in *British Official Films of the Second World War*.¹⁰ Three categories are defined. Those produced by the GPO, later Crown, Film Unit and the armed services. Those commissioned from private film companies by the MOI. Those acquired for distribution through the MOI, perhaps in recut or edited versions. All were subject to censorship regulations and were expected to conform to MOI guidelines.

Commercial feature film was, perhaps, the most valuable form of propaganda. British feature films, as they always had been, were subject to censorship. In

addition, under wartime conditions, new forms of control were introduced. The government had control of film stock and other resources. The MOI also offered financial support to producers, on the proviso they submitted scenarios and scripts for advice.¹¹ The benefits to the MOI of such a system were frankly admitted.

...We shall be reaching ready-made world-wide audiences with films produced by the trade for commercial purposes...and will, therefore not be suspected of being propaganda films at all...¹²

But this was a two-way transaction, the advantages were appreciated by both sides. Producers could minimise the risks and costs involved in production delays or bans. The government could exercise covert influence on the content and treatment of feature films. In this way, films appearing under MOI auspices appeared to be independent productions made in accordance with the conditions and practices of peacetime. In reality, however, it would be very difficult to make a film without the sanction of the MOI. It controlled resources, facilities, the availability of actors and technical crew serving in the armed forces, offered finance and, ultimately, had the power to ban any film which it deemed unsuitable.

The 'voluntary' principle was deemed by both the media and government as the most acceptable form of control. But behind this system lay powerful sanctions which could be imposed if the need arose. The government had complete control over all raw materials and personnel required by both the press and film industries. The Emergency Powers Act gave government the power to suppress any item, issue, or company that infringed the provisions of the 'voluntary' system.

The relationship between the MOI and BBC was rather more anomalous, in that

it was never clearly defined. In this sense the BBC retained a semi-independent status, subject to close liaison with the MOI. As Balfour describes it:

...The Government, through the MOI, had complete power but chose not to exercise it...The corollary was that the key people in the BBC...knew what the Government's aims were, sympathised with them in principle and could therefore be trusted...¹³

This is a description which could equally well be applied to the press and film industries. The system of control was accepted by the media through a combination of practical considerations and patriotic duty.

This theoretical description of an apparently cosy relationship between the MOI and media does, however, belie the disputes and difficulties involved in operating a propaganda organisation on such a scale as that which existed during the Second World War. The structure of the MOI and its apparently comprehensive brief in all areas of propaganda did not resolve the central problem encountered by the planners of the Ministry. They had failed to establish the extent of MOI powers in relation to other Departments. As will be seen, attempts by the MOI at establishing itself as a central authority were not successful. In practice the MOI's authority was limited. It relied upon Service and other Ministries for the provision of information for public dissemination. It was also subject to Cabinet decisions in relation to any areas judged to be 'sensitive' or 'political'.

Propaganda from the MOI had to be tailored towards a variety of objectives, requiring different approaches depending on the goal. The MOI was required to produce propaganda for a number of purposes: to bolster morale on the Home Front; to counter enemy propaganda; to influence neutrals, the Empire and Allies.

Influencing American public opinion was high on the list of MOI priorities but American suspicion of propaganda, engendered by First World War experiences, posed a potential barrier. Propagandising in America had to be carefully handled. By August 1939, the government had established a system which relied on cultivating American opinion makers. ¹⁴

In September 1939, John Grierson contacted Sir Stephen Tallents, advising him of the potential for film propaganda in the USA and urging him to entrust arranging this to him. This unofficial approach alarmed the MOI, they could not allow free-lance action in this field. It was suggested that Grierson should "...receive a very sharp instruction...to refrain from further indiscretion...". ¹⁵ This was not because the MOI had no plans for cultivating contacts in the American film industry. On the contrary, the MOI could not afford to have its own plans upset by emissaries such as Grierson. The MOI was equally convinced that the American film industry could do much to further Britain's cause. The Film Division's general plan of operation, drawn up in September 1939, was in line with the government's policy for dealing with propaganda in America by:

...influencing certain prominent American producers and film stars of known pro-British sympathies to produce films from scripts written or approved by us. Films thus made would automatically secure world-wide distribution through existing American organisations, and as American and not as British films...¹⁶

The MOI Films Division was certainly able to gain access to the leading lights of the American film industry via pro-British contacts. In October 1940, Commander Jarrett of the MOI was sent to America to investigate possible avenues for production and distribution of films useful to Britain's cause. A

dinner was arranged by Alexander Korda, at which the head of every major film company was represented, along with the British Consul in Los Angeles and two Vice-Presidents of American banks. ¹⁷ As Angus Calder demonstrates in his recent work on the Blitz, the American Press Corps in Britain, both journalists and broadcasters, were similarly courted and provided with facilities. ¹⁸

The focal point of all MOI propaganda was the promotion of an image of Britain, which relied heavily on the cultural values of the MOI's policy makers. The building blocks of this image were given in a paper outlining the principles underlying British war-time propaganda, prepared by Lord MacMillan in January 1940. The themes it put forward came under the headings of "What Britain is Fighting For...What Britain Stands For...How Britain Fights". ¹⁹ The paper defined the principles Britain was fighting for as the Christian ethic, the rule of law, the scientific spirit and the values of Western civilisation. Although these concepts were vague, they were recognised, and shared, by the 'Establishment'. As MacMillan noted, these were principles which had been reiterated by the Prime Minister and members of HM Government. Churchill, of course, played a significant role in giving dramatic voice to just such concepts. His speeches and broadcasts were invaluable for propaganda both at home and abroad. In his 'Finest Hour' speech on June 18 1940 he echoed the themes outlined by MacMillan, when he set out what was at stake in the Battle of Britain as:

...the survival of Christian civilisation...
our own British life, and the long continuity
of our institutions and our Empire...²⁰

Whilst these were concepts recognised and shared by the 'Establishment', the MOI had to ensure a broader appeal. Its propaganda had *to be:*

...capable of rousing the whole nation and inspiring them with devotion to the national cause...²¹

In emphasising these themes the MOI sought to underline the threat posed by Nazi Germany to British traditions, values and institutions. The concept of a unified nation, with shared values and traditions, was central to the propagandist image of Britain, but the MOI recognised potential threats to national unity.

One perceived threat to national unity was regional loyalty. For example, in the MOI's preparation of Air Raid leaflets for national distribution, a disparity of provision between the North and South of England was noticed. It was decided that this information should be deleted so as not to cause resentment in the North about supposed favouritism for London and the South.²²

Concern about national unity was stimulated by another perceived threat - "class feeling". This had been identified in June 1940 as an expected cause of disintegration of morale in a Home Morale Emergency Committee report prepared for the MOI's Policy Committee and forwarded to the Minister. Regional Information Officers had reported increasing "class resentment", and the Committee judged:

...It is probable that if air bombardment begins this feeling will become more acute...²³

However, this was an area in which MOI action was constrained since the problem was seen to be one of "government policy". This being the case, the Committee accepted that it could only offer minor suggestions for dealing with this. To alleviate the problem, the Committee suggested it would be helpful to make efforts to represent the working class in broadcasting media and so reduce the dominance of upper middle class accents.²⁴ It was also suggested that more use should be made of "...left-wing speakers to counteract the propaganda of our

enemies regarding imperialism and capitalism...".²⁵ Nicolson's marginal note agreeing the point suggested Mr Bevin as being particularly good for this purpose.

The threat to Britain and her institutions was posed not only by the overt enemy, Nazi Germany. The Government appeared equally fearful of the threat posed by internal political dissent. This was not a new theme in British political life but in the circumstances of total war it was sharply focussed. 'Class resentment', especially if exacerbated by bombing could lead to a breakdown of morale and an ungovernable population. This belief was expressed in MacMillan's paper by the idea that war was the harbinger of revolution.

...we...must face the difficulty that a major social change is evidently in progress of which both Nazi and Communist revolutions are morbid symptoms...²⁶

It was against twin threats, external and internal, that Britain's institutions were to be defended and preserved. Therefore, a key propaganda theme was the unified nation, bound together by traditions and values which over-rode regional and class differences. For propaganda to be effective these themes needed to be expressed in concrete public forms. As we have seen, the media had played a key role in producing images of a generalised, national culture upon which the propagandists could build.

A key symbol in defining the nation - what Britain stood for - was the Royal Family. As David Cannadine has demonstrated, the contemporary view of the Royal Family was a comparatively recent 'invention of tradition'.²⁷ However, by the mid-thirties it had become a central feature of a particular image of the nation, both at home and abroad. It was a symbol which rolled together a number of, sometimes contradictory, characteristics. In its ceremonial it

symbolised the history, grandeur and power of the nation but at the same time it stood for a domestic, family image of the nation. Like Parliament, the monarchy represented a free and fair Constitution - the rule of law - but the monarchy stood above party politics. The monarchy, of course, like Britain herself had a role beyond the nation, the King was head of Britain's Empire.

The Royal Family was a powerful symbol of history, tradition, stability, consensus. The overarching concept through which these various functions were expressed was that of the family. The King was represented as the father-figure of the nation and Empire.²⁸ It seems too that the family image was one which struck a deep chord across all sections of society,²⁹ and evidence from Mass Observation indicates that once the war began the popularity of the Royal Family increased.³⁰

By the time of the war, other representations of Britain had also become common currency. Angus Calder outlines the inter-war development of two distinct, though overlapping, cultural traditions - 'Georgians' and the 'Auden generation'.³¹ The 'Georgian' tradition had focussed on the landscape of 'Deep England', and the 'Auden generation' romanticised the landscape of the industrial north. But both expressed a common obsession with the English landscape and countryside as embodying the essence of the nation. Despite the overwhelmingly urban and suburban life style of the nation, it was in the countryside that the finest qualities of the British 'way of life' were seen to reside.³²

The landscape mystically embodied the essence of the nation. In the people it was expressed in terms of shared values and beliefs, or national characteristics. These shared values could be said to be publicly personified in the character of the King. A strong image had been successfully established by George V and

the mantle was assumed by George VI following the abdication. The personal qualities George VI thus embodied were described by Harold Nicolson as:

...those domestic and public virtues which the British regarded as specifically their own...faith, duty, honesty, courage, common sense, tolerance, decency and truth...³³

As Angus Calder shows, it was just such qualities which were ascribed to the people of the nation via the landscape they inhabited. Whether it be 'Deep England' or the romantic, windswept north the finest qualities of the nation were found in their purest form in the countryside, and from there transmitted to the people. Moderation, tolerance, the Christian ethic were inherent in the landscape and therefore assumed as typical national characteristics.³⁴

In the inter-war years the GPO Film Unit had been instrumental in integrating a view of the industrial north into a construct of national identity.³⁵ During the war, the GPO Film Unit became the hub of MOI film production. The Unit had built upon the work of the Documentary Movement, a group whose political persuasions and artistic standards had kept them out of mainstream cinema. Initially, the MOI had not included the Unit in its propaganda plans but pressure from the documentarists and influential supporters within the artistic community led to a change of heart. Following Reith's reorganisation of the MOI Films Division in April 1940 the documentarists found a place in the service of wartime propaganda. As Nicholas Pronay describes it, the need to conciliate Labour and influential members of the artistic community had been recognised.³⁶ In doing so the MOI was enabled to include in its propaganda broadcast images of working-class life and culture, as recommended to its Policy Committee.

Existing cultural images of Britain, clearly gave propagandists a rich source of

material upon which to draw in demonstrating what Britain stood for. But another issue had been raised in MacMillan's paper of January 1940, and that was the question of what Britain was fighting for. It appears that the MOI were not entirely convinced that defence of the past would be quite enough to inspire the necessary commitment from the people. As MacMillan put it:

...propaganda should emphasis clearly...
what we are seeking to preserve and
create...³⁷

The idea that Britain was fighting for something beyond its past, was seen as an essential propaganda weapon. It would serve the double purpose of countering social ideals offered by the new forces of Nazism and Communism, and it would serve to boost civilian morale on the homefront. However, the political sensitivity surrounding this proposal was such that propaganda along these lines could only be pursued with Cabinet approval. It was well-known among MOI policy makers that Churchill was opposed to making any statement of war aims, other than the promise of eventual victory.

The June 1940 report of the Home Morale Emergency Committee picked up MacMillan's theme - what Britain was fighting for. The Committee attempted to persuade the Minister to broach the subject with the Cabinet but in a way which was intended to smooth the political difficulties involved.

...It should not prove beyond the ingenuity
of man to draft some statement...such as
would affirm our moral attitude without
committing us to any precise programme. Such
principles should contain a promise of internal
reconstruction...³⁸

The MOI justified its desire to talk about internal reconstruction by the claim that it was fundamental to its task of sustaining civilian morale. It was obviously felt to be an issue of such importance for effective propaganda that the

MOI was prepared to challenge the expected opposition of the War Cabinet. It was hoped that political objections could be defused by the promise that reconstruction propaganda would be used only as a moral banner, involving no practical consequences. To sugar the pill it was suggested that this would be very useful in obtaining American support for Britain. Nicolson's marginal notes on the report rejected the proposal but evidently pressure from MOI policy makers continued.

In July 1940 the Minister, Duff Cooper, prepared a paper to go before Cabinet. He claimed that without some agreement on this question, he feared civilian morale might reach breaking point. He hoped to gain approval for the paper by conforming to the suggestion of a vague approach. "...It is not proposed to go into detail...", he wrote.³⁹ He indicated too that propaganda along these lines could be used to counter enemy propaganda. Perhaps he intended as well to hint that it would help in challenging America's negative perceptions of Britain's social system.

...our credentials are better than those
of any other nation, for nowhere else has
there been during the last fifty years so
much social reform and so much progress...⁴⁰

But he was imprudent enough to mention some very specific areas of interest: "...unemployment, education, housing and the abolition of privilege...".⁴¹ This indicates that in some quarters, despite the promises, rather more detailed proposals were being formulated. But couched in Duff Cooper's terms, the image conjured up was one of worthy Victorian benevolence and gradual reform rather than social revolution. Clearly, however, in any discussion of internal reconstruction it was a short step from images of national unity to those of the social, political and regional divisions which had scarred the inter-war years. The key to Duff Cooper's proposals was to align the promise of reconstruction

with an image of British tradition and stability. This could easily be supported within the context of the values of Western civilisation and the Christian ethic.

The MOI awaited the Cabinet's decision on the question of reconstruction propaganda, but it also had to be active in producing propaganda designed to boost civilian morale. At this time anticipation of how the public might react to bombing was an important consideration. Although the Home Morale Emergency Committee had been set up to consider public morale in the light of recent German victories, they turned several times to the theme of air warfare and the homefront. In addition to "class feeling" they had identified four other factors as likely to lead to disintegration of morale. These were, fear, suspicion, confusion and defeatism. These were the outcomes of bombing against civilians that had long been expected.

A number of suggestions were made as to how these four "...menaces to public calm....." might be overcome. To counter fear, the public should be given clear instructions about their duties and responsibilities in the event of bombing. It was judged that what was required were "...words of command...". It was seen to be essential to create confidence in government and its agencies. The MOI should intensify and repeat instructions about what the public should do in air raids. This would establish confidence in ARP organisation and foster "...implicit obedience to the Wardens...". In preparation for the experience of bombing, it was suggested that talks should be given by people who had had direct experience of it. But the Committee had clear views as to what people should be told.

...it is important that the public should be taught that the moral effect of air raids is greater than the physical...⁴²

The MOI clearly believed that it had to be impressed upon the public that panic

was the most dangerous response to bombing, and to suggest that physical destruction was less important. It saw its function as the prevention of panic and hysteria. In order to achieve this it was prepared to flatly contradict the vivid visual evidence of physical destruction that the public had already witnessed through media coverage of the Spanish Civil War.

One way of countering fear was to ensure that each citizen had a clearly defined function in the event of bombing but it was judged that some groups could not be included in these plans. The Committee identified two groups who it was felt would be particularly susceptible to fear. One group was lonely women. It was suggested that in the interests of this group neighbourliness should be encouraged as a national duty, and efforts should be made to organise a sense of community in each street. The second group identified were the "incompetent". These were the people who would "...sow the seeds of panic...".⁴³ The Committee felt that they should be kept out of Warden service and it would be unwise to devise artificial means of service for this group. They should be left to look after their own houses.

Confusion could only be avoided by the efficient dissemination of news and information. If major channels of communication broke down, the MOI had made arrangements through its Regional Information Officers to ensure:

...dissemination of correct news by reliable
people in the streets and villages...⁴⁴

The emphasis here on the right sort of information and on reliable communicators indicates concern to maintain government control and public confidence in its authority. This theme was further developed in the suggestion that steps should be taken to reassure the public about the government's use of the Emergency Powers Act.

It was believed that suspicion might arise from lack of confidence in the quality and content of news and information given to the public. It was argued that all possible means should be used to foster confidence in official pronouncements, and the BBC and MPs could play a key role in this. The Committee were particularly concerned that confidence in the RAF should be maintained. It was feared that this could be undermined by stories expected to spread when the BEF returned from France. They had been attacked by German bombers, "...without apparent interference from our own fighters..."⁴⁵ but news bulletins had concentrated on the exploits of the RAF in defending the BEF. It was feared that if such stories were spread by the BEF, the public would lose faith in the ability of the RAF to defend the homefront against German bombers. Countering defeatism was believed to be dependent on maintaining public faith in the strength and efficiency of the RAF.

The Anger Campaign of June 1940 shows the way in which the MOI planned to demonstrate these ideas in concrete form, and how it planned to engender specific public reactions to the enemy. Those planning the campaign had decided that the British people were "...the most stolid and unvengeful people in the world..."⁴⁶ In other words they were stupidly impassive. The campaign would, therefore, be designed to appeal to the people's primitive instincts.

The methods employed would be both covert and overt.

...It should open through channels which are apparently entirely unofficial and non-inspired. These range from the treatment of news stories... to the most subtle methods of securing the desired public attitude of mind...As soon as the public is unconsciously stimulated...the more obvious propaganda methods can be effectively used...⁴⁷

One of the subtle methods referred to was to find an epithet to describe Germans which would be taken up spontaneously. It should be neither too frightening, nor

too good-natured. Examples from the First World War, such as "the Hun", "the Boche", "the Mad Dog of Europe" were cited as carrying the required "edge". It was recommended that until such time as a suitable expression was found, Nazi was to be the preferred word. Good-humoured names such as "Fritz" and "Jerry" were to be positively avoided.

This recommendation was part of the broader theme of the campaign, which was to cast Germany in the role of "eternal bully of the world". Within this overall theme particular sources of anger could be emphasised. Germany was threatening the world by its violation of Christian and civilised ideals. Its cruelty and treachery in war. They were a perverted race who had promoted war as a creed. The campaign should concentrate on the threat that all this posed to the individual and the nation. It was suggested that films could be used to provide concrete demonstrations of these themes. The films suggested were *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Nurse Cavell*, *Professor Mamlock* and *Pastor Hall*⁴⁸. However, there was a possible downside which must be avoided. It would be essential to avoid creating undue fear of the enemy and to counter the growing legend of Hitler's infallibility. Therefore, Britain's "...slumbering pride of race..." should be awakened. Again, film revivals were suggested. But in this context films which represented Britain's heroic achievements against Germany in the past - *For Ever England*, *Mons* and *Cavalcade*.⁴⁹

It was also to be pointed out that the bully is always a coward at heart. This vulnerability was to be underlined by constant reference to German fear of Allied airmen. Visual images accompanying news stories should be presented in such a way that any evidence of German strength would be complemented by an equal show of strength by Britain.

...ie...if we show a picture of a bombed village we should show alongside it pictures of a smashed German bomber...⁵⁰

The discussions of the Home Morale Emergency Committee and the plans for an Anger Campaign indicate that concern about the effect of bombing on the homefront was in the forefront of the planners' minds. Panic was clearly expected. In order to offset this, propaganda would focus on maintaining public confidence in the government, ARP measures, the RAF and the news. It was also planned to rouse the civilian fighting spirit by engendering hatred and anger against Germany. This would be done by contrasting German values, attitude and history to that of Britain. The media would play an important part in this by presenting specific images of Germany and Britain, and its treatment of news stories.

However, news treatment of the air war had to be developed within the security constraints of the Air Ministry and Ministry of Home Security, and censorship regulations but military minds were not necessarily attuned to propaganda. Initially, blanket security was imposed. This meant the MOI were not able to keep the public informed. The Air Ministry withheld information from the MOI so that there was little that could be published. This led to disputes between the MOI and Air Ministry. It also caused disquiet within the MOI because, under these conditions, the MOI ~~was~~ denied the essential means of propaganda - control of information. Negotiations to establish control of information began long before the Blitz.

In October 1939 the MOI argued that existing censorship regulations were so severe that the public would be allowed no information about bombing against Britain. Effectively, the restrictions imposed would ensure that the only news to reach the public would be official communiques. The list of restricted topics

for reporting was comprehensive. There was to be no indication of areas where bombs had fallen. No mention of casualties, their numbers, descriptions of their injuries, or photos of injured people. Only publication of official lists was to be allowed. There would be no mention of attacks against military targets of any type. No details on the sort of damage, or extent of damage caused by bombs and no indication of the number of bombs dropped. Methods for dealing with air raids were to be treated as secret.⁵¹ On the basis that this situation would lead to uncontrollable rumours which would have a detrimental effect on civilian morale, the MOI sought:

...to obtain the sanction of the War
Cabinet...for a constructive policy..⁵²

By November 1939, following meetings with the Air Ministry, Ministry of Home Security and MI5, agreement was reached on a new policy more suited to the MOI's needs. The restrictions were relaxed by persuading the Air Ministry and Ministry of Home Security to waive military objections to publishing certain details. It would now be possible to mention the area in which raid damage had occurred. The names of any large towns damaged could be given. An approximate estimate of casualties could be given, subject to official confirmation. The number of enemy losses could be published. The number of British losses could be published only if it would not be of value to the enemy. Two topics remained banned, any mention of military targets and photos of injured persons.

Other rights were also granted. The press were to be allowed to supplement official bulletins with human interest stories at their own discretion. The MOI won the right to full disclosure of information on damage to buildings of historic but non-military importance.

It was agreed that in instances where British losses were heavy, this should be

understated with the euphemistic formula of 'somewhat serious losses'. In the event of serious losses, it was agreed that:

...the guiding principle...should be to give first place to the good news side of the story, stressing any instance of the gallantry of our fighters and the calmness of the public...⁵³

From the evidence presented above it can be seen that important policy points for the presentation of the Blitz were decided upon long before it began. Particular attention would be paid to buildings of historic importance. Serious losses would be underplayed. Human interest stories would be incorporated at the discretion of the press. The presentation of public reaction would follow the 'good news' principle. Calmness was the watchword, even though this was the opposite of what was expected. The RAF would be presented in heroic terms. This would not be difficult in relation to their role of defending Britain against Germany. This image soon found a focus in the South coast raids and the Battle of Britain.

In relation to its offensive role propaganda about RAF bombing operations might be more difficult to handle. There had never been any doubt in the mind of the government that the bombing of Germany would be a "...fundamental and decisive..." element of the war⁵⁴. But pre-war public controversy about bombing was such that they were not prepared to:

...incur the moral odium of being the first to initiate a strategic air offensive...⁵⁵

Strictly speaking, bombing was not covered by the war conventions of International Law. On the outbreak of war President Roosevelt appealed to each of the belligerents to publicly affirm that under no circumstances would they bomb civil populations. The British government replied that their policy had already been settled. It was to precision bomb only military targets, on the

understanding that this rule would be observed by their opponents. In this way a convention was established that bombing of civilians could be justified only as a retaliatory measure. British propaganda treated German bombing in Europe as evidence of barbarism. By contrast Britain's policy proved its status as a civilised nation. The heroism of the RAF was, therefore, untainted.

In the period between the outbreak of war and August 1940 the MOI developed its policies for presenting images of bombing, both at home and abroad. It did this in the face of inter-Departmental rivalry, Cabinet guidance and public ridicule. In its formative stage, the MOI was painfully aware of its own poor image. It was attacked by the Press, who blamed the Ministry for the paucity of news. The public suspected the MOI of suppressing information. Meanwhile, the Air Ministry remained stubbornly obstructive. At a time when the MOI was developing propaganda capable of containing the expected consequences of bombing, it was under attack from all sides. Despite these difficulties clear policy guidelines did emerge through the creation of general themes, use of censorship regulations, initiation of specific campaigns and information on public morale.

Propaganda about homefront bombing was to be centred on buildings of national importance, the calmness of British civilians, stories of human interest as well as official bulletins, and the heroism of the RAF. The people had to be persuaded they could survive bombing. In this context information about ARP was crucial. The people also had to believe that it would be worthwhile to endure bombing. Therefore, the sensitive subject of internal reconstruction found a place on the MOI's agenda. The focal point of all MOI propaganda lay in the creation of an image of Britain - its long history, its traditions, values and culture. Promotion of national unity was central to this image. But these policies had to be translated into active propaganda. The problem of taking the

abstract themes originating in the MOI and turning them into usable material was the task of the media. For, as MacMillan knew:

...It is the question of treatment and showmanship that is of cardinal importance... the ideas suggested...are valueless as propaganda unless they are presented and advocated by experts who know how to make the heart beat faster...⁵⁶

It was in this way that the media would play its invaluable role. It would provide the imagery to give concrete and public form to the ideas of the MOI. When the Blitz began these ideas and the skills of the media would be put to the test.

CHAPTER THREE

The Blitz and Propaganda, September 1940 to May 1941

The immediate test of the MOI's planned propaganda policies was provided by the news media: press, radio and newsreels. It was they who were to give the propagandists' view of the Blitz its public face.

The surviving records of newsreel companies make it possible to give a detailed analysis of air war coverage on a month by month basis. The Slade Film History Register gives listings of all stories for all five companies during the war. For this study, newsreel coverage of the air war has been both qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. Newsreel coverage has been supplemented by qualitative analysis of a selection of press and radio coverage, along with a study of surviving MOI sponsored and commercial films.

The method used for the analysis of newsreel coverage was to examine the newsreel issue sheets for the period, listing all stories that relate to the air war. The stories were categorised according to type, using policy guidelines as the criteria. The changes in type and density of coverage have been charted on a month by month basis, along with the total coverage for each year. The analysis is given in graph form in the appendices.

Newsreel coverage of the Blitz is recorded in Appendix 1. Classification of categories, using policy guidelines as a standard is based on the following criteria. Raids - stories based on damage caused by bombing raids against the homefront. Royalty & VIPs - stories which concern the visits of Royalty and VIPs related to bombing. For example, the sites of raids, inspections of defensive units, hospitals, relief centres or RAF stations. Practical Measures -

A variety of stories and government trailers. These were integrated with the newsreels and deal with Civil Defence and ARP, on both government and individual basis. Civilian role and response - a variety of stories based on positive reactions to the Blitz. Role of RAF - stories which concentrate on RAF successes, gallantry and expertise. Human interest - love stories, children or animals, with the Blitz as a background. Production - related only to air war. American contribution - related only to air war. Dominions and Allies - as related to air war. New Technology - in relation to air war.

In the planning stages, the MOI's focus of attention had been on undercutting any hint of the expected panic and convincing the public that they could and should endure the expected horrors of bombing. The MOI had decided the guiding principle of Blitz coverage would be to give the 'good news' side of the story - the power of the RAF and the calmness of the public. The planned presentation of public reaction to bombing was in direct opposition to that which was expected. Nevertheless, news coverage was to be designed to fulfil the propaganda needs of the MOI.

The beginning of the Blitz has been historically defined as 7 September 1940. The graph at Appendix 1 shows the gradual build-up of air war stories from June 1940. During the period September/October 1940 the general categories outlined became synthesised into the overall image of 'Britain Can Take It'. This was variously described by the newsreels as: *Carry on London*, *London Is Proving Unbeatable*, *The Spirit of the People*.¹ For the moment London alone received the full force of German bombing and monopolised news coverage. London's response represented that of the nation as a whole.

The graph shows that during September 1940 the greatest density of coverage of civilian response is recorded and coverage of a type that accorded with MOI guidelines. It included interviews with 'typical' Londoners, broadcasting the voice of ordinary people through the media. During this month too the highest density of coverage of raid stories appears. Again stories which accorded with MOI guidelines, concentrating on buildings of national importance. The buildings of the metropolis would also be recognised by American audiences, for example St. Pauls. A direct hit on Buckingham Palace was heavily publicised. This was proof positive that the whole nation was affected. The appearance of stories on the role of the Royal Family (and other national leaders) as soon as the Blitz proper began indicates that such icons of national unity became an immediately significant propaganda tool. Other bombing targets specifically highlighted in newsreel reports were hospitals and schools which, of course, served to underline the barbarism of German bombing.

Censorship regulations also played their part in shaping the picture of the effects of bombing, and film was especially carefully controlled from a censorship viewpoint, although regulations were adjusted over time according to the needs of the moment. During September 1940 the measure of what was or was not appropriate for pictures of the effects of bombing raids hinged on creating the 'right' balance between shots of damaged and undamaged buildings. So, for example, the order was that panning shots "must not linger over the damaged buildings".² Restrictions were also placed on photographing of casualties and/or bodies, no descriptions of the types of injury caused by blast or fire damage were allowed and only official casualty lists were published.

The Press also played its part in creating an image of the Blitz and this harmonised closely with that presented in the newsreels in its general pattern of coverage, giving space to items in all the categories listed above. For example,

the front page of the Daily Express on September 19 1940 was dominated by stories about the Blitz. The headlining story focused upon night-time raid damage in the West End of London. It was reported that there had been no casualties, and details were given about how the RAF had beaten off daylight raids. The focus upon civilian reaction was provided with a story about the exploits of a 16 year old roof spotter who had stayed at his post throughout the raid. The boy's father was quoted, "...He's a good lad. We don't scare easily as a family...", an action and attitude which served as the epitome of the MOI's good news philosophy and an example to other citizens.

Other stories on the same front page were reports of RAF attacks on German invasion bases. A report of a message sent by an American reporter, H R Knickerbocker, to New York. It praised the reaction of the British population to the bombing, paying particular attention to the absence of fear and the equality of sacrifice:

...Now the West as well as the East End, London's rich as well as London's poor are getting it and the rich are proving that they can take it as well as the heroic working class of Limehouse and the Mile End Road...³

Blitz-related stories also featured in other parts of the paper. The Opinion column was entirely devoted to Blitz themes, emphasising the need for each individual to contribute to their own protection, for everybody to behave with discipline and courage, and the need to stay at work during air raids. There was also a three column article by "Sir Ian Fraser, the blind MP" about his experience of bombing, how different bombs could be recognised by the noise they made and the elevating effect of a 'near miss'.

There was also a report on the use of tube stations as shelters, with the request that people should stop doing this. The practice of sheltering in the

Underground stations was one which was initially officially discouraged. Government had feared encouraging a 'deep-shelter mentality'. It was believed that once allowed underground people might refuse to come up for work. Or worse, that "...such concentrations of proletarians could be breeding grounds for mass hysteria, even subversion...".⁴ Government shelter plans, organised via local authorities, lay in provision of Anderson Shelters for home use, but not everybody had one, or a garden to put it in. Because of this working-class housing areas tended to be less well provided for. As Harrison describes, people sought the shelter of underground stations for many reasons.

...not least the utter inadequacy of protection in the then 'slum' areas...⁵

As well as Anderson Shelters, the government built surface brick shelters intended for temporary use by people caught out in the open during raids. These were notoriously unsafe.⁶ Campaigns to demand shelter facilities, directed by the Communist Party, were also mounted. The government feared that Communist agitation about poor shelter provision in the working-class areas of London might provide fertile ground for political subversion. One incident of this campaign for improved shelter facilities was a demonstration at the Savoy in London's West End. This became the subject of Cabinet investigations. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting record the recommendation that:

...strong action should, if necessary, be taken to prevent demonstrations by bodies of people purporting to seek better shelter accommodation...⁷

The tone of this recommendation and the clear belief that such demonstrations were prompted by ulterior political motives serve to underline the still widely held perception amongst many in the Government that an intensive bombing campaign could trigger some form of 'revolutionary' action from the working

classes. On the question of shelter, however, the ordinary people of London would not be deterred and the Government, presented with the *fait accompli* of direct action, had little choice but to accept the use of Tube stations as shelters.

Daily Mirror coverage for the same day, September 19, carried the same request about the Tube stations and a feature on a taxi driver rescued from the rubble of a West London garage. Alongside this was a report under the headline "Bombing by Night Can Be Solved". This quoted extensively from a speech by Sir Archibald Sinclair in which he contrasted German and British bombing policies. He spoke about Britain's attacks upon military targets and compared these to Germany's attacks on Britain, which, he said, amounted to "...the blowing to pieces of a number of humble London homes...". This was the language used to underpin the RAF image of heroism and gallantry in relation to its offensive role.

The British government's bombing policy against Germany was officially described by a standard format for the reporting of these raids which read as follows:

...German bombing of England is largely a hit or miss affair; our bombers are trained to hit definite targets every time...Every one of our bombing attacks has its part in the 'master plan'...every attack of ours has its special reason...⁸

In this way RAF bombing was established as precise, efficient and, by implication, morally superior to that of the Luftwaffe. 'Precision' bombing was indeed the policy of the Government at this time but it remained a fact that the technology for so-called precision bombing was wholly inadequate. It was privately admitted by the Chiefs of Staff Committee that whilst much propaganda play could be made with 'indiscriminate' German bombing, "...we may

occasionally, by mistake, do the same..."⁹. Nevertheless, any news reports about RAF bombing operations had to be couched in the language of official communiques and propaganda policy.

BBC news broadcasts also reached a large audience and these broadcasts too were based upon official communiques. But by September 1940 the officially approved euphemisms for reporting air operations were being viewed with dissatisfaction by senior BBC staff. Meetings with the Air Ministry staff responsible for the issue of communiques were sought.¹⁰ The BBC also produced a variety of other types of programming such as Talks, features and light entertainment. It was decided that the large audiences for news bulletins could be usefully exploited by introducing a series of News Talks which would focus upon a topical issue from the news of the day. These too would have to be "...passed by the right section of the MOI...".¹¹

During this period it was most likely that such talks would be focused on some aspect of the air war. The air war also formed the basis of other types of story which mirrored those produced by the newsreels and press. For example, *London After Dark* a feature on London during the blackout and Blitz. *London Carries On*, a BBC contribution to the civilian response theme, and *Air Raids - Wedding Day Experiences, Ann and Trev*, a topical 'human interest' story.

Radio broadcasting was, of course, a medium in which Churchill excelled and in the first few days of the Blitz he added his voice to the praise for the people of London in a BBC broadcast to the homefront audience on September 11 1940:

...I express my admiration for the exemplary manner in which all the Air Raid Precautions services of London are being discharged...All the world that is still free marvels at the composure and fortitude with which the citizens of London are facing and surmounting

the great ordeal to which they are subjected...It is a message of good cheer...that we send...from this capital city...¹²

Churchill's broadcast messages, both at home and abroad, represented the voice of the nation. They were in themselves valuable for propaganda purposes. Obviously, the MOI did not dictate the content of Churchill's speeches but the messages of the MOI and of Churchill himself often coincided. The 'good news' theme which Churchill broadcast had been central to MOI policy from the planning stages. It was message which was seen to be essential not only for the Home Front audience but also for the world audience, particularly America.

Blitz coverage through the news media was buttressed by the distribution of official MOI film through its Film Division. The use of this type of short film was to become the mainstay of MOI distribution. It was a format highly praised by Oliver Bell of the British Film Institute (BFI) for its effectiveness and flexibility as a propaganda vehicle:

...for it can be turned out at all prices to suit all tastes. It can be made in a week, or can, for a highly finished product take as much as a year...¹³

This statement stands admirably as a comment upon the range of artistic, technical and propagandist qualities of the surviving MOI films. A study of MOI films centred upon the Blitz theme, reveals some very similar characteristic imagery to that of the news media.

The reality of the first raids on the East End of London, which marked the beginning of the Blitz on 7 September 1940, fractured the confident image of the planning stages. The inadequacy of government provision, organised through local authorities, for both shelter and dealing with the aftermath of bombing

became apparent.

One official response to this was the 1940 MOI film *Neighbours Under Fire*. This film incorporated the inadequacies of ARP and after raid provision in a manner which shifted responsibility away from government. The devastating effects of the bombs and fires were undercut by focusing upon the notion of improvisation. The film therefore concentrated on the role of volunteers. It also made much of the calmness of public reaction - a theme central to MOI policy.

The very title of the film recalls the early policy decision that neighbourliness should be presented as a national duty. However, the narrator's attempts to impose the notion of national unity and equality of sacrifice are continually undercut by the mismatch of pictures and dialogue. For example, the voice-over tells us that '...in the days of peace all of them, volunteers and homeless alike, were neighbours...' but the visual images simply do not fit this claim. The volunteers are clearly identifiable by dress and accent as middle class. The victims of the raid present a stark contrast; poorly clothed, following rather than issuing orders, deferential to the volunteers who are '...helping them with official regulations...'. The stilted exchange of conversation between two working-class women is clearly rehearsed. The middle-class volunteers are articulate and more at ease in front of the cameras. The closing scenes of the film consist of the vicar shepherding his flock into a shelter for a jolly sing-song, followed by a prayer. The final shot is of the people sleeping peacefully in the shelter.

Despite the gap between the film's "witting and unwitting testimony", it establishes many elements of the MOI's general policies. The opening scene

presents a picture of sporadic damage. We see no casualties or bodies. There are some damaged houses and people going about their business - a child with a cat, women sorting their possessions, small groups talking. The prominent role assigned to the vicar emphasises the values of a country founded on Christian principles. The focus on women, children and homes as victims of the raid confirms the enemy as heartless and indiscriminate. A cat, of course, has nine lives and its inclusion here (as in other films) serves as a reminder that people too can be equally resilient. Whilst the film had acknowledged an area of inadequacy in government provision it is made clear that any problems were swiftly overcome by the work of the volunteers. Indeed, the title sequence acknowledges that their work had helped the Ministries of Home Security and Health to restructure government provision. The working-class population of the Docks were not, on this occasion, allowed to voice their opinions. Instead they were presented as the recipients of government approved support, who had survived their experience in good spirits. The last shots of people peacefully sleeping in the shelters pointed the way to a more secure future and showed that through the good offices of the volunteers, the type of person whom the MOI regarded as 'reliable', calm and order had prevailed.

This film was, however, a response to the need to produce some explanation with which to underplay the anxiety and criticism that greeted the first raids on the East End of London. It was not, for the MOI, an ideal image of the Blitz or of British society despite its skill in incorporating official MOI policies.

Images of the Blitz were not produced for home consumption alone. Perhaps the best remembered MOI film about the Blitz is *London Can Take It*. This film was made for the very particular purpose of influencing the as yet neutral, but vitally important material and political support of America. American public opinion had to be convinced that Britain would not collapse under aerial

bombardment if support was to be forthcoming. For the homefront audience the film was retitled *Britain Can Take It*. This film has been presented as a seminal interpretation of the British experience of the Blitz, long after the end of the war. This viewpoint has been enhanced by the way in which cuts from this film have been used over and over again in post-war television documentaries about the Second World War.¹⁴ For example, it introduced in a 1984 Channel 4 series on wartime film with these words:

...Unless you were alive in London in 1940 you can have no possible idea of what the Blitz was like. *Here is a film which will tell you...*¹⁵

The film was made by the MOI. It was made by Humphrey Jennings and Harry Watt, both members of the Documentary Movement which was founded on 'realist' principles. This, perhaps, partly explains the film's subsequent reputation as a realistic interpretation of the Blitz experience. The commentary was provided by Quentin Reynolds. He was a respected, internationally syndicated American journalist. His involvement with the film indicates the importance the MOI attached to creating the right image for America.

Since America was at this stage a neutral country and particularly touchy about the influence of British propaganda, the distribution of this film was very carefully handled so as to eliminate any suspicion of British propaganda at work. Harry Watt remembers that for its American audience the film had no credits for the MOI or its British directors:

...It didn't have anything but *London Can Take It*, Quentin Reynolds. We shipped him on a bomber and flew him to America lecturing. And everybody thought that he'd made the film himself...¹⁶

The London of this film is very different to that of *Neighbours Under Fire*. This is the idealised London of the MOI. Here we see the Blitz centred on the

historic city, not the working-class areas of the Docks and East End. Key architectural features are used to establish an image of British civilisation, culture and tradition: the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, Nelson's Column, St Pauls, the Thames, the West End. The inhabitants of this city are not distinguished by class or environment, they are presented as a nation unified by history and by the experience of the Blitz.

The film sets the scene with preparations for 'our nightly visitors', follows the events of the night and then the aftermath of the next day. Each section articulates MOI policy and perception in presenting a particular image of the Blitz and of Britain.

The preparation sequence emphasises the defensive measures and the role of ordinary citizens in their own defence. The shots of people going into shelters are all focused on the young, the old and women with children. This is followed by shots of an AA gun barrel being lifted to the sky, searchlights being positioned, fireman and ARP wardens - the icons of protection.¹⁷ As the raid begins and the guns flash, the camera intercuts with shelter scenes, panning across the faces of people peacefully sleeping, underscoring the effectiveness of the ARP measures.

In the aftermath sequence from a panoramic view of the city the camera moves in close to a badly damaged house. As the camera pulls back we see that the rest of a long row of houses is still standing. People are walking down the street, a woman collects the milk from her doorstep, casually pushing aside fallen tiles. A cat, symbol of resilience, is lifted from the rubble. A man gazing at two damaged houses, puffs on his pipe and saunters off to the words 'London faces the new day...with calmness and confidence...'.¹⁸

The supposed targets of the Luftwaffe are carefully announced by the narrator '...churches, hospitals, workers' flats...'. The unity of the people is underlined with a juxtaposition of shots, first the Queen inspecting damage, second a group of workers, then a group of men and women, all of whom are claimed to be: '...fused together not by fear but by a surging spirit of courage the like of which the world has never known...'. The film closes with the RAF's response to these attacks with pictures of bombers being loaded and planes in the air to the commentary '....Every night the RAF bombers fly deep into the heart of Germany bombing munitions works, aeroplane factories, canals...'. The claimed precision and efficiency of RAF bombing in hitting only valid military targets again emphasising the "wickedness" of Nazi bombing.

These examples of propaganda output and their similarities in general pattern show that coverage of this early phase of the Blitz, through both the news media and the MOI Film Division, conformed closely to the policies developed during the planning period. The subjects of Blitz propaganda were: buildings of national but non-military importance or workers homes; the heroism of the RAF in defending the nation, and its precision bombing of strictly military targets abroad; the calmness of the civilian population; the effectiveness of ARP measures. These were lightened with a judicious sprinkling of upbeat 'human interest' stories.

The effects of propaganda and censorship combined to produce an image of the effects of bombing as one of sporadic damage with limited casualties. A sturdy, cheerful population - chirpy Cockneys and royalty alike - were undeterred from going about their daily business. They were protected by an efficient ARP system and the heroic RAF. The 'Britain Can Take It' approach was now

established and firmly embedded within it was an image of the ordinary 'man-in-the-street' as capable and self-reliant, playing an active and positive role in the nation's war effort.

Such images, continually repeated throughout the contemporary news media, endorsed by national leaders, and recycled during the post-war years are the ones that have found an abiding place in the popular mythology of the Second World War.

At the time, however, it was not long before news coverage of the Blitz began to undergo striking changes for Home Front audiences. The changes began in October 1940 with newsreel coverage showing an abrupt increase in the coverage of practical measures combined with a high coverage of RAF stories and a sharp reduction in the number of stories covering German bombing raids (see Appendix 1 and 1a). For the newsreels the month of October represents the greatest sustained effort during the whole of 1940 to maintain public faith in the strength and efficiency of ARP measures and the RAF.

These changes are a reflection of the continued intensity of the Blitz and the consequent concern of the MOI to maintain morale, in the face of rising public anxiety. In a speech to the House of Commons on 8 October 1940, Churchill responded to public criticism by promising improvements in ARP measures. The Minister of Home Security, Sir John Anderson, who had come under public attack for his handling of Civil Defence was replaced by Herbert Morrison. In the same speech Churchill also addressed the issue of reprisals. He claimed that in his visits to Blitzed areas he had noted that:

...On every side, there is the cry, 'We can take it',
but with it, there is also the cry, 'Give it 'em back...'¹⁸

He went on to reject the notion that the question of reprisals was in any way a moral issue but made the point that the policy of attacking military targets was the most effective use of bomber resources, "...at this present stage...", thereby leaving the door open for a shift in British bombing policy at a later stage if required. It was hoped that this vague promise of reprisals to come could be used in propaganda terms as a boost to flagging morale. The day before Churchill's speech to the House the matter had been raised in a War Cabinet discussion of a Draft Appreciation of Propaganda Policy drawn up by the Chiefs of Staff (COS), the Ministry of Information (MOI) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE). It was decided that the British public should be made aware that a time would come when Britain would retaliate in kind against Germany.

...Without committing ourselves in any way to a policy of reprisals we should stress our growing ability to meet terror with terror and mete out retribution to our enemies at our own selected time...¹⁹

The whole question of reprisals was in fact a sensitive political issue and therefore deemed to be one of "high policy". Whilst the War Cabinet anticipated the day when bombing operations specifically directed against German civilians could begin, it was also seen to be vitally important to maintain the high moral stance that had been established by contrasting RAF operations to German 'brutality' as evinced by the "wickedness of air attacks".¹⁹ The meeting declared that:

...it should be a particular aim of our propaganda... to preserve the moral force of our own cause...²⁰

Public announcement of any change in Britain's bombing policy might do great damage to the position of moral rectitude to which Britain laid claim. It had, of course, always been recognised and accepted that civilians would be incidental casualties of so-called precision bombing. The philosophy of 'strategic' or 'area' bombing which was now under consideration was, however, one of

deliberate destruction of German cities and their civilian inhabitants. It appears that the tactics of strategic, or area, bombing which would be inaugurated under the catch-all phrase of the Bomber Offensive were the cause of some misgivings from the outset. But misgivings about what the public perception of such a strategy would be rather than the morality of the method itself.

In November 1940 the Blitz moved to the provinces, and in London became less severe. In these smaller towns the effect of bombing was far more disruptive and destructive. The propagandist imagery derived from the first phase on London was now proving to be patently inadequate and so propaganda treatment underwent subtle shifts of emphasis. The MOI remained anxious to maintain public confidence at a national level and indeed to conceal many responses to the provincial raids.²¹

Again the newsreel record provides telling evidence of the direction of shifting propaganda policies. Stories on the RAF and Practical Measures were reduced, undercutting the over-optimistic picture of the efficacy of defensive measures hitherto promoted. Coverage of the raids was reduced compared to that for London and, more importantly, this coverage was not uniform, or of the same type applied to London. The concentration of raid stories was upon Coventry. For the first time the extent of suffering and destruction was acknowledged with the cameras showing large areas of devastation and even scenes of mass burials. Such coverage, however, invariably returned to the familiar pattern of human activity and bustling streets although there were now few 'man-in-the-street' interviews. In provincial areas other than Coventry the continuing Blitz was covered in the context of morale boosting tours by Royalty and VIPs. The images were of a civilian population relying upon the sympathy and support of national leaders in coping with the traumas of bombing, rather than a cheerful,

self-reliant population laughing off the bombs.

The national press followed a similar pattern, the Daily Mirror for example, in a centre page spread on November 18 made full use of photographs showing the destruction of Coventry, describing the inhabitants of Coventry as "...silent, sad people...". The Mirror, however, managed to find a measure of good news, the continuation of business in shops and the spirit of John Shelton, curator of a Benedictine museum, who had managed to save its treasures.

The provincial press, of course, featured raids in their areas much more centrally but they were also much more hamstrung by guidelines, censorship and paper shortages than their colleagues of the national press. The provincial press took up this imbalance of treatment with the MOI. As always, the answer of the Chief Press Censor fell back upon the need to prevent important information reaching the enemy and the issue was handled in terms of the 'national interest'. At a meeting with representatives of the West Country press in December 1940 the official response to complaints from the provincial press was outlined by representatives of the MOI:

...There is nothing good or bad that we would be afraid to tell the people of this country, or to tell the world: but there are a lot of things... we should think it very silly to tell the enemy... What is the enemy attacking?...He is aiming at destroying the whole life of the civilian: at creating conditions under which civilian morale and resolution must break down....We cannot tell the story in the news of how these things are faced and overcome...²²

This was hardly a satisfactory answer for the local press because the story was being told, to some extent, in the national press and through the much more strictly controlled newsreels. However, the reporting on events in Coventry meant that national attention was focused here which may well have been

preferable to a plethora of national feature stories on similar devastation in many areas of the country. Coventry had become the national symbol of the Blitz on the provinces, held up as the ultimate exemplar of the wickedness and barbarity of German bombing. However, the about-turn in policy concerning the response of civilians to provincial bombing raids did not go unnoticed by them.

...many other towns proved they could also take it...
(and) were aggrieved at the inequality of the publicity
they received...²³

Once the initial shocks of provincial raids had passed there was invariably considerable resentment that their part in the heroic resistance had been underplayed by comparison with that of London. In the case of the provincial Blitz, the MOI's concern about the effect of regionalism upon national unity seems to have been forgotten.

Meanwhile, officials from London toured Coventry inspecting the damage with a view to exploiting the lessons learned there in order that the RAF might be able to improve upon the best efforts of the Luftwaffe.

...Coventry was a classic instance of how the Germans missed an opportunity...a raid scattered over the surrounding towns with reminders to the country district, would have started fresh eddies and surges...and driven the Coventry people...farther afield so that it would have been impossible to reclaim them even for the factories which were in a position to resume...Can this be applied to the Ruhr?...²⁴

For the moment, however, these were paper proposals awaiting preparation on both the operational and propaganda fronts.

Media coverage of the air war during 1940 appears to mirror MOI policies closely, reflecting not the actual conditions but rather the methods of distortion. Detailed analysis of the newsreels shows that the plans for an 'ideal' image

reached fruition in September with the Blitz on London. Almost immediately this 'ideal' image was the subject of revision.

In October 1940 the emphasis moved towards bolstering public confidence in ARP measures and the RAF. And, in November, to concealing the widespread effects of German bombing across the provinces. From a national perspective, Coventry represented the provincial Blitz.

Meanwhile, the question of propaganda was under discussion by the War Cabinet's Joint Planning Staff. The effect of the Blitz on homefront morale was evidently causing some concern. It was argued that the function of British propaganda would be to help break down enemy morale, and the object of German propaganda would be to produce the same effect in Britain. Brigadier Brooks of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) suggested that:

...The time has come after five months of intensive warfare, during which the British public...have been subjected, especially in London, to daily and nightly air raids, to formulate a programme of social and economic reconstruction which should begin during the war if it is to have its proper effect as a contribution to winning the war...²⁵

He believed that this would have a number of beneficial effects. It would boost home front morale, inspire resistance in enemy-occupied territory, encourage resistance in Germany and Italy, and encourage American support.

This view was endorsed in the memo submitted to the War Cabinet for approval. It was a joint memo from the Minister of Information and Minister of Economic Warfare, prepared in close consultation with the Chiefs of Staff. The Cabinet did not reject these proposals out of hand but they would not endorse such a positive policy as had been suggested. The Cabinet view was that "...too much emphasis should not be put on the point..."²⁶. These



were proposals that might lead to political dissent on the homefront. If openly discussed, these ideas might turn attention to the divisions of the thirties and break the unity required for war. Nevertheless, under the pressure of the Blitz, the Cabinet had given grudging permission for unspecific propaganda about reconstruction to be allowed.

The MOI remained concerned about the effect of the Blitz on homefront morale. On 5 December a confidential report was prepared by a small Duty Room sub-committee. The Duty Room Conference met regularly to discuss news interpretations. It consisted of representatives from the Services, Foreign Office, home Ministries, and chief officers of the MOI. The sub-committee had been set up to consider the current state of morale and to "...examine the present decline in public confidence...".²⁷ Some of the MOI's most senior staff were appointed to the sub-committee; Lord Davidson, Cyril Radcliffe, Sir Kenneth Clark, Harold Nicolson and Mary Adams, who was seconded from the BBC to direct the MOI's Home Intelligence Unit.

The Duty Room sub-committee identified the causes of decline in public confidence under a variety of headings. Several were directly related to the Blitz (eg shelter, blackout, general anxiety). Others were the growing realisation that the war would be a long one, and lack of faith in the presentation of news. Added to this was worries about "...the Labour position...", and "...Communist propaganda...working on all these...".²⁸

The Duty Room sub-committee's report contained several recommendations to combat these problems. Among these was the suggestion that the public needed a "distraction" from the rigours of the Blitz. The proposed measure to help combat war-weariness turned, once again, to the importance of the promise of

reconstruction as an essential propaganda strategy, recommending:

...Much play to be made with social services, education and housing. The impression created that our New World would be successful and progressive. Some concrete legislation...would be useful if this line of propaganda were to carry conviction...²⁹

The MOI were aware of War Cabinet objections to reconstruction propaganda but, spurred on by anxiety about maintaining civilian morale under aerial bombardment, dissenters were prepared to challenge these views. The report was sent to the Planning Committee for approval. Meanwhile, on 8 December there was a British victory in Libya and bad weather brought a respite from Luftwaffe bombing. This, apparently, raised homefront morale sufficiently for it to be decided that the proposals contained in the report could be dropped. On 20 December the Director-General reassured the Minister that it had been decided that:

... in view of the changed war news, it was no longer necessary to make plans to combat depression... Action upon them was deferred...³⁰

As can be seen from the above discussions, late November/ early December represented a low point for the MOI and the public in dealing with the Blitz. This was reflected in the newsreels. They refrained from making direct reports about raids, and overall coverage about the air war was cut back almost to the level of June 1940, before the Blitz began. Although bad weather had meant less bombing, December was not totally without incident. Raids were made against Merseyside, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Portsmouth and Leicester as well as London. The raids on Southampton, which took place in November were the only ones covered in the newsreels during December. Two newsreels ran the story, but only in the context of a visit from the King.

In late December London, once again, took centre stage. On 29 December a large scale fire raid fell upon the city. The story was widely covered by the press. (It would not appear in the newsreels until 1941). This raid produced the most famous Blitz photograph of the war - St Paul's Cathedral silhouetted against a haze of smoke and bright flames. Its survival was presented as a Divine national triumph. The Daily Mail described the picture as:

...one that all Britain will cherish - for it symbolises the steadiness of London's stand against the enemy: the firmness of Right against Wrong...³¹

The accompanying report, however, was severely critical of the civilian arm of Civil Defence. It was claimed it had failed to meet the challenge by not properly observing fire-watching regulations. In January 1941, firewatching duty was made compulsory.

By the end of 1940 the MOI began to lose faith in its policies for presenting images of bombing. The MOI was concerned at the effect that the harsh realities of the experience of war were having upon the civilian population, and at the perceived failures of its own propaganda. By December the MOI had fallen back on the negative policy of drastically cutting and heavily censoring reports on bombing raids in the provinces.³² MOI attempts to pressure the Cabinet into using the reconstruction theme in a concrete way tied to specific promises were rejected.

The MOI needed to look elsewhere for themes to fulfil this positive role. Other, less politically sensitive, suggestions contained in the Duty Room sub-committee report of early December could be acted upon. For example, an emphasis on Britain's "...ultimate resources...the training of pilots in the Dominions and American production..."³³. It was also suggested that the

Prime Minister might be persuaded to make a confident New Year broadcast, but without damaging his reputation for realistic judgments. It was argued that Labour leaders should give frequent talks about "...labour's total effort..."; their prestige should be maintained. The public should be given explanations about defeating night bombers. And lastly that the presentation of news should be reconsidered.

This last item was linked to the MOI beginning to assess the effectiveness of its propaganda in dealing with the Blitz and its consequences. In November 1940, the Civil Defence Executive had urged the Ministry of Information to carry out a campaign to improve home morale, "...by systematically conveying to the public a picture of civilian war action...at its best...".³⁴ In December 1940 the MOI asked the Executive's Committee of Directors of Public Relations to expand its proposal in concrete terms. The Committee submitted its report to the MOI in January 1941.

In the report concern was expressed at the restrictions MOI imagery of bombing was beginning to impose, and indeed at the evident gap between this and the reality of Blitz conditions. The Committee commented:

...the press naturally presents an almost uniformly cheerful picture...But there are weaknesses which the country cannot afford...³⁵

Particular complaints were levelled by the Committee against workers: busmen who would not drive during alerts; men and women who stayed in shelters instead of fighting fire bombs; factory workers who were said to be spending too much time in shelters. It was suggested that this problem was compounded by the propagandist image of the Blitz because:

...a very large number of people do not expect from themselves much beyond an ability to 'take it'...³⁶

Initial expectations of mass panic and hysteria as a consequence of large scale aerial bombardment had not in fact materialised but this fact had not it seems had any significant effect upon official perceptions of the character and qualities of the public, particularly the working classes. The faults found with workers were said to be widespread and attributed to:

...lack of imagination, or of courage, inertia, selfishness, ignorance...³⁷

The Committee argued that what was needed was a "...stronger corporate feeling and corporate effort..."³⁸, and that a new emphasis should be put on the theme of developing a team spirit, and that a specific campaign entitled "Forty Million Fighters" might be suitable for the purpose. Whilst the Committee were convinced of the value of such a campaign they were careful to point out that they had recognised its basic deficiency:

...It might be objected...it does not set out overtly to counter Communism...³⁹

It is clear that government anxieties about the effects of the Blitz were no longer focused on the prevention of panic but rather its disruptive effects on production. For this effect to be overcome it was believed that British workers had to be encouraged to adopt new attitudes and work practices, regardless of the continuing Blitz, and this could not be achieved without the co-operation and support of Labour and Trade Union leaders. To this end the importance of Labour leadership was to be maintained. MOI fears about the spread of Communism among British workers, especially given the supposed opportunities for its development under intensive bombing, remained high on the political agenda and raising the profile and prestige of Labour leadership could do much

to avert a more 'dangerous' political drift.

The MOI Anger Campaign initiated in June 1940 was also the subject of reassessment, during discussions at a Policy Committee meeting in January 1941. As discussed above, the Anger campaign resurrected the First World War imagery of Germany in terms such as the 'unspeakable Hun', and presented Germany as a nation who had made war its creed. This aspect of the campaign, most widely used in leafletting, came in for particular criticism, despite the Committee's agreement with its underlying argument. It was felt that the failure to distinguish between Nazis and 'ordinary' Germans had been disastrous as propaganda designed to engender anger. People had been led to the conclusion that eighty million German people would either have to be exterminated, or kept in continual subjection in order to quell their incorrigible capacity for war⁴⁰ and, therefore, the logic of the campaign had induced a feeling of hopelessness that was particularly damaging to morale. In this context proposals to underline the eventual promise of retaliation with a Bomber Offensive could serve a useful purpose in overcoming this problem.

The spirit of vengeance which the Anger Campaign had been designed to inculcate appears to have been inappropriate to the conditions of the Blitz. The victims of bombing rarely expressed any desire for revenge. Mass Observation reports confirmed that the Blitz had failed to produce the hoped for response from those directly affected by it:

...One was repeatedly impressed by the paucity, sometimes the total absence, of such reactions among most Blitz victims...⁴¹

Nevertheless, as we shall see, propaganda about the Blitz was used as a

justification for 'reprisals' in vigorous media campaigns centred on RAF bombing operations against Germany. This, of course, was a means by which the moral rectitude of British bombing operations against Germany could be maintained. However, the true extent of public desire for such actions is very difficult to judge. Certainly the idea of bombing Germany was far more popular amongst sections of the British population who had not themselves suffered bombing but what was meant by the term 'reprisals' was not clear-cut in the public mind. For many members of the public 'reprisals' was understood as a catch-all phrase for any form of retaliation although for the Government the term was specific in its designation as retaliation in the form of RAF bombing.⁴²

As the Blitz continued from January into the Spring of 1941 the newsreel companies' continued their coverage (see Appendix 2 and 2a). The overall space given to the Blitz was reduced from that of the period September to November 1940, whether because of MOI doubts about its policies or simply because it was no longer considered automatically 'newsworthy' is difficult to assess. However, coverage was increased from its all-time low of December 1940 when MOI confidence in its policies had been at its lowest ebb. During this final phase of the Blitz a small number of new categories of stories also began to appear, arising from the policy discussions that had taken place in late 1940/early 1941. These were stories concerned with the contribution of Dominions and Allies, the American contribution and production. The introduction of these new elements did not displace those categories already established, although the proportions of space given to them were altered.

Coverage of raids was reduced in early 1941, during which period it was in the provinces that the Blitz had hit the hardest. Of the 22 raid stories in the period January to May 1941 nineteen concentrated on London and several of these

were devoted to the fire raids. Coverage for Royalty & VIPs was increased. This can be partly explained by the fact that it was in this way that the newsreel incorporated the provincial Blitz, in terms judged to be more appropriate than those applied to London in the first phase. These stories were presented as morale boosters, or expressing a shared sense of tragedy, as in *Royal Sympathy for Bombed Sheffield*, *The King and Queen Visit Plymouth*, *Clydeside Cheers Their Majesties*.⁴³ The category of Civilian Role & Response was no longer so heavily featured. The policy decision that the 'Britain Can Take It' theme, with its image of a cheerful population laughing off the bombs, was no longer appropriate is clearly reflected, with only two of a total of nineteen stories now taking this line. The high profile of the RAF appears somewhat muted but stories in the new categories geared towards new elements of the air war in fact mean that coverage in this category is slightly higher than that for the 1940 Blitz period. The new categories all concentrated on means of strengthening the RAF, whether through American and Empire aid or domestic production, with, for example, stories such as: *Second Eagle Squadron*, *More and More Empire Pilots Are Coming* and *Well Done, Aircraft Factory Workers*.⁴⁴

In 1941, as in 1940, the newsreel companies co-operated in following the policy guidelines emanating from the MOI, which were redefined in the light of new requirements of the civilian population, and to take into account the circumstances of the provincial Blitz.

The end of the Blitz has been historically defined as 10 May 1941 but this date did not in fact mark the end of German bombing of Britain. At the time it was anticipated that the Blitz might be resumed at any moment. This anxiety is evident in the continuation of a proportion of coverage on practical measures and civilian response, consisting of government trailers and Civil Defence activities. This was supplemented by RAF stories with new slants on production

and technology as aids to their offensive capacity, for example: *Making Beautiful Bombs, Night Fighters Establish New Records, First Stratosphere Raid By Flying Fortresses* and *Britain's Mounting Air Offensive*.⁴⁵ As the scale of German raids declined steeply after May, the slow build up to a strategic bomber offensive began and the war developed on other fronts, the previous high profile of air war stories from the newsreels was, at least temporarily, displaced.

In early 1941 the BBC too was reassessing its reporting of the air war in news broadcasts and talks. Problems were traced to a variety of factors: Air and Home Security Ministry restrictions; the quality of scripts and speakers provided by the Air Ministry's publicity/propaganda sections; growing public familiarity with air stories to the point where they were coming to be regarded as monotonous and repetitive; and concern about the accuracy of reporting on Bomber operations against Germany.⁴⁶ In a private memo the BBC's Home Controller, A P Ryan, reported on a meeting he had attended in January 1941 concerning some of these matters. The importance attached to getting the propaganda messages right is revealed in the composition of those attending this meeting:

...There was an impressive assembly of senior and not-so-senior Air Force Officers (including Chief of Bomber Command and our own Vice Chairman) and representatives of the Foreign Office (Makin and Dick Crossman) and the Ministry of Economic Warfare (Oliver Roskill and Bowes Lyon)...there had evidently been some sort of row behind the scenes to provoke this meeting...⁴⁷

The subject of the row arose from the sometimes conflicting aims of domestic propaganda and propaganda abroad, in which the Foreign Office and Ministry of Economic Warfare had an interest. Ryan reported that the Air Ministry was being criticised for allowing the BBC to broadcast stories which exaggerated the

effects of bombing raids. The Chief of Bomber Command apparently had some sympathy with this viewpoint because he anticipated that this would cause further difficulty when more intensive raiding against Germany began, which he hoped would be soon. Ryan reported that the meeting ended inconclusively but that its main result was likely to be to "...take some colour out of the Air Ministry follow up stories...".⁴⁸ The BBC, however, regarded this as no bad thing since it was dissatisfied with the efforts of Air Ministry script writers.

Following this meeting Ryan made a study of the BBC's air news and at the end of April 1941 produced a brief internal report for discussion. In the report he concluded that overall RAF news had been better handled than either naval or military news largely because of the greater efficiency of the Air Ministry in handling the flow of information. He defended the vivid and cheerful approach as legitimate propaganda "...cheering up the spirits of the civilian troops, and all that..."⁴⁹ but conceded that future policy needed reconsideration. Since civilians, both at home and abroad, now had considerable experience of air raids he suggested that it would now be "...better news value to pipe down..."⁵⁰ He recommended that on a daily basis RAF news should be treated in a factual, rather than vividly descriptive manner, unless dealing with cases of exceptional or unusual interest. A statement of policy which seems to tie in with the tailing off of air war coverage evident in the newsreels during this period.

The MOI continued to seek more effective methods of communication with the Home Front and on 4 April 1941 Francis Williams, Chief Press Censor who sat on a variety of MOI committees, wrote to Sir Kenneth Clark with some recommendations as to how this might be achieved. Francis Williams began working for the MOI early in 1941. Initially, he had served on its morale committee. When Sir Walter Monckton became Director-General of the MOI,

Williams became Chief Press Censor. In July 1941, when Monckton was succeeded by Cyril Radcliffe, Williams became Controller of Press and Censorship. Williams was ex-editor of the Daily Herald, the Labour Party newspaper. His connections with the press and Labour and understanding of 'ordinary' people were, of course, invaluable for the MOI. Williams was one of a significant group of propagandists drawn, broadly speaking, from the left of politics. Others in this group included, among many others, film-makers from the Documentary Movement and J B Priestley.

Williams' propaganda suggestions reflect his political background. They also coincided with the government's concern to create and maintain national unity. His memo outlining suggestions for improving propaganda centred around the means through which the civilian population could be persuaded to accept the reality of the central concept of national unity. The RAF had played an important propaganda role but Williams was clearly anxious about its public image. He argued that it should be made clear that:

...our pilots are not a picked elite, aloof from the general mass, but young men from... public school, secondary schools, factories and so on...who are demonstrating in their success the flexibility of mind and initiative... engendered by British democracy...⁵¹

Similarly, in relation to "Production and Labour" he saw the same need to emphasise the theme of national unity. He therefore argued that the new status of the Trade Unions should be used as a propaganda point as a useful means of countering unofficial strikes. As Williams realised these points of emphasis implied a somewhat different relationship between "Government and People" than that already established. He argued that:

...in addition to stressing the authority of the government, we should keep in the forefront of our propaganda the fact of the identity of interests between people and government so as to avoid the "they" and "we" feeling...⁵²

These suggestions were related to the need for increased production and, therefore, a more central role for Labour and Trade Unions. This was in line with the Duty Room's recommendation that the status of Labour and its leaders should be maintained. There was also an implication that the RAF would be strengthened by recruiting from a wider social base, drawn from people who might traditionally have joined other military services. The perceived need for propaganda along these lines, and Williams' characteristically working-class description of the relationship between government and people, underlines continuing anxiety about the threat of class division. Williams, as well as his more politically conservative colleagues, was anxious to enhance national unity.

The need for a new focus on material resources and productive capacity was vital for the continuation of Britain's total war effort and this was an area in which influencing American public opinion was crucially important. Particularly because, at this time, Roosevelt was trying to get the Lend-Lease Bill through Congress. In February 1941 Churchill made a world broadcast aimed in this direction:

...The Royal Air Force grows and is already certainly master of the daylight air...if our first victory was the repulse of the invader, our second was the frustration of his acts of terror...against our people at home...Libya is the third considerable event upon which we may dwell with some satisfaction...We shall not fail or falter...Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools, and we will finish the job...⁵³

The tone of this speech sounded exactly that note of cautious optimism which the MOI's Duty Room report had hoped for in the gloomy days of early December 1940, and highlights the value of the air war as a propaganda weapon. In March 1941 the Lend-Lease Bill was signed.

In the same month the decision to commit RAF Bomber Command to a strategic bomber offensive was taken. This committed the Government to an enormous input of technology, productive capacity and manpower to build up a bomber force capable of bringing the plan to fruition. In April 1941, RAF operations controllers received new instructions, which were noted in a Foreign Office memo on operational propaganda.

...the Air Ministry, while not wishing to make any public statement on the subject, is prepared to be much less scrupulous about declaring its intention to bomb only "military targets" in Germany...I infer that the order has been given to pilots that they need not be too careful in future...⁵⁴

For the moment the public were to remain unaware of this change in policy on RAF bomber operations and it would be up to the propagandists to ensure this.

A month after the Lend-Lease Bill had been signed an MOI Policy Committee, meeting to discuss the subject of publicity in America, voiced its view that the 1940 Blitz imagery was now becoming counter-productive. The meeting asked that it should be brought to the attention of the Minister that "...the 'Britain Can Take It' theme has been overplayed...".⁵⁵ It had become detrimental to Britain's cause. If American support was to be won, in particular the mobilisation of American industry, all now depended on convincing the American audience that British workers were making sincere efforts on their own behalf.

By mid-1941 MOI policy-makers had been impressed by the need for revisions in its propaganda, particularly in relation to its policy on the presentation of bombing and national unity. The new focus was to be upon the importance of over-riding the successfully established 'London Can Take It' imagery and impressing upon the civilian population the importance of their role as producers of war materiel.

Many of the new themes discussed above were brought together in an MOI/Crown Film Unit production of 1941, *Heart of Britain*, directed by Jennings but the Blitz remains a central motif. The film opens by setting the scene of industrial Britain. The camera cuts to pictures of the cathedral spires and towers of Durham, Liverpool and Coventry, symbols of culture and Christianity which had suffered damage in the provincial Blitz. The scene changes again to focus on a poster advertising a concert by the Halle Orchestra, with the commentary: 'in Manchester today they still respect the genius of Germany, the genius of the Germany that was'.⁵⁶ The orchestra plays - Beethoven's Fifth symphony - and as it does so the camera begins a sequence featuring the Blitz on Coventry ending with the familiar scenes of a return to bustling streets, to the commentary 'these people are slow to anger...they and their mates, their wives and children have been subjected to the most savage ordeal ever inflicted upon human beings'. Clearly, the MOI still wished people to be angry, but this anger was to be channelled in a positive direction which is underscored by the commentary: 'these people have the power to hit back', to the accompanying images of aircraft production. The closing montage of the film consists of bombs being loaded and a plane taking off with the narrator telling the audience that this would be '...the answer to the German challenge..'.

In short, *Heart of Britain* neatly encapsulates the policy documents discussed

above, using a blend of old and new ideas. First ARP measures are shown but with a careful explanation of the role of roof-spotters, linking the section to the idea of carrying on with work until the last possible moment. Secondly it incorporates the sense of devastation and tragedy associated with the Blitz on the provinces for which Coventry stands as the symbol. Here, as in past films,⁵⁷ industry is located within an essentially pastoral scene, with an emphasis on skill, craft and tradition⁵⁸. Whilst a focus on production is clearly the purpose of the film, the overwhelming imagery within its structure is centred on the Blitz. The images are used to arouse anger as a motivating force encouraging workers to make greater efforts, with the promise of reprisals in kind against Germany. The implication was that the degree of suffering involved would be on a par with that of Coventry - the ultimate in German brutality.

During the period of the Blitz, from September 1940 to May 1941, MOI propaganda policies for the presentation of aerial warfare were the subject of revision, in response to long-held Government anxieties about its potential effects and the circumstances of the moment. There had been no social breakdown as a result of mass panic, but fear of political subversion remained. Thus the MOI attempted to fend off the perceived dangers of radicalism in domestic politics. One method was to promote images of national unity, such as those inherent in Blitz propaganda. Morale had not broken, but there had been moments when it seemed it might. And so the MOI drew up plans to combat public depression. In this respect its plans to promote social reconstruction at home were hampered by the Cabinet's desire to avoid political controversy.

Instead, less controversial, more military, themes were preferred. The MOI turned to the promise of increased military resources. The 'Britain Can Take

It' theme was exhausted. For the future more than this was required of the people. Production of aircraft and munitions was the current requirement.

The MOI's developing policies appear to have been effectively translated through the media channels; the press, the BBC but especially in the carefully controlled film images of newsreels and MOI distributions. During the period a characteristic picture was developed. Government, via local authorities, had provided strong ARP defences in which civilians played their role. An heroic RAF capable of both defence and offence was contrasted to the cowardly and wicked Luftwaffe. The effects of bombing were seen to be enduring; whether presented, as in the first phase, as sporadic, or, as in the provincial phase, as widespread. Neither type was seen to cause any panic or hysteria. The initial focus upon the good cheer and resourcefulness of the civilian population of London was soon played down to be replaced by sympathy and support of national leaders, in particular the Royal Family. This was followed by attempts to spur civilians on to greater efforts in production.

All of this was located within a particular image of Britain and British society, which reflected the perceptions of a class to which many MOI policy-makers and propaganda producers belonged. Britain was presented as a country whose stability was founded upon pastoral traditions, underpinned by Christian, civilised principles. But as Calder has shown the pastoral images which stood for Britain were those of the English landscape.⁵⁹ Images of Britain and of the Blitz were reinforced by a cumulative effect and it was in this way as much as in any particular report or film alone that the MOI sought to imprint its interpretation of the qualities of British society and how it had reacted to the Blitz in the minds of their target audiences both at home and abroad.

CHAPTER FOUR

Propaganda Policies May 1941 to May 1942: the MOI and Air Ministry

In Spring 1941 government took the decision that a strategic bomber offensive against Germany would be inaugurated. This meant that the MOI would have to integrate conflicting notions about the strategic effectiveness of bombing. The Blitz on Britain had not proved fatal to British civilian morale but still the Air Staff clung to the belief that German morale could be broken by bombing. The MOI would, therefore, have to 'prove' to the British public that the RAF could achieve in Germany what the Luftwaffe had failed to achieve in Britain. Added to this was the controversy centred on the morality of bombing as a method of war.

The prop upon which the efficacy of RAF Bomber Command continued to rest can only be described as the mystique of bombing. Bombing was endowed with peculiarly flexible qualities. So that it was possible for operations undertaken during the Bomber Offensive to be classified by the Political Warfare Executive under two headings; "Morale-making" and "Morale-breaking",¹ according to whether they were directed against enemy occupied territory or Germany itself. In enemy occupied territory it was claimed that bombing would serve to boost morale. But in Germany bombing would break morale. MOI propaganda had insisted that bombing had completely failed to break civilian morale at home, although privately it had been suggested that it was a close run thing. It was nevertheless believed that a Bomber Offensive against Germany would be successful. There appear to be two reasons for this belief. Firstly because:

...A fundamental difference exists between
the reaction of the German civilian population

to bombing as compared with that of the British civilian population...²

The explanation for this perceived difference in civilian reaction to bombing was the claim that, in contrast to Germany, British government was based upon the loyalty of its civilian population.

Secondly, it was believed that lessons learnt from the experiences of the Blitz on Britain could be put to good use in planning Britain's RAF operations against Germany. A successful outcome would be guaranteed by the sheer scale of bombing to be undertaken with the planned offensive.

By mid-1941, therefore, the MOI were faced with a number of new tasks. It was to promote the bomber offensive in such a way as to maintain faith in the RAF's effectiveness and reputation. The War Cabinet's propaganda policy, as drafted in October 1940, had declared that a particular aim should be to preserve the moral force of Britain's cause. If it became widely known that Bomber Command was deliberately bombing civilians, this might damage Britain's moral reputation. The MOI would also have to maintain British civilian preparedness for German bombing and encourage greater efforts of production. In addition, it had been decided that the 'Britain Can Take It' image would have to be abandoned. And this was a theme which had been particularly successful in terms of presenting an image of national unity.

The new tasks faced by the MOI represented a challenge which was exacerbated by a number of other factors. In the spring of 1941 the MOI was in a state of disarray, with senior officials threatening resignation. Relationships between the MOI and the Air Ministry were somewhat strained after months of dispute about the release of information for publication. The war continued to

develop on other fronts and the MOI had to take this into account. Anglo-American relations still needed careful handling, and in June 1941 Britain found a new ally in the erstwhile arch-enemy, the Soviet Union. The MOI was expected to fashion propaganda on military themes. In this context the promise of a large-scale bomber offensive against Germany would be an important focus. But from the end of 1941 through to mid 1942 the whole issue of a bomber offensive was the subject of fierce controversy amongst the Chiefs of Staff, centred on the dispute between Tizard and Cherwell. And doubts about the morality of British bombing operations were beginning to be voiced by a small band of protesters, led by George Bell, Bishop of Chichester.

Turmoil within the MOI stemmed from its long-running battle to establish complete authority over its use of the building blocks of propaganda - the flow of information. In order to achieve this the MOI would have to establish supremacy over those providing the information. The list was a long one: Civil and Service Ministries, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, the Political Warfare Executive, and the Foreign Office. ³

The MOI had been the subject of attack from both the media and the public for its apparent failures in handling news and propaganda, as the Minister's private secretary noted:

...we may expect both in Parliament and the Press continued criticism of the scarcity and presentation of news of recent operations. The ultimate responsibility of the Service Departments is recognised, but blame will attach to this Ministry for its failure to force their hand...⁴

With the threat of resignation from Cyril Radcliffe (Controller of Press and Censorship) and Sir Walter Monckton (Director General), the Minister of Information, Duff Cooper, tried to force the hand of other Ministries by taking

the matter to Cabinet. The state of morale within the MOI had apparently reached an all time low. In a hand written addition to a memo to the Minister, Lord Davidson summed up the position:

...The Ministry of Information is not unlike the Chief Eunuch - it has all the appearance of normality albeit in the eyes of the public a rather swollen, flabby, figure of fun but in fact it has been denied the means of exercising its natural functions. If that is a fair description of the MOI then the BBC is really a kind of Eunuch's club...⁵

Various papers and discussion documents on the role of the MOI were prepared to go before Cabinet. In a personal minute Churchill sought the opinion of Lord Beaverbrook, who favoured the MOI's claim for overriding authority as a central information control system. This advice was rejected by the Cabinet. The results of Cabinet deliberations were presented on 2 July 1941. The Cabinet's view of the functions of the MOI were clearly stated. These were seen as two-fold. Firstly, making news about the war public in a way consistent with "national security". There was no attempt, however, to define what was meant by the term. Secondly, to:

...publicise and interpret Government policy in relation to the war, to help to sustain public morale and to stimulate the war effort, and maintain a steady flow of facts and opinions calculated to further the policy of the Government in the prosecution of the war...⁶

The MOI's claims to power were not granted in the way it proposed. Service and other Ministries retained the right to veto the release of information in the event of any dispute between their security considerations and the propaganda needs of the MOI. The Minister of Information was charged with the duty of preserving "...intimate and cordial relations..."⁷ with the press at all levels. Each of the Service Ministries was to maintain within the MOI an officer who understood the importance of propaganda and was of sufficiently high rank to

pass or reject items on security grounds in a speedy and reasonable manner. In addition the Service Ministers were instructed to designate "...an official of the highest standing..." within their Departments who would be able to adjudicate on "...matters of the highest policy..."⁸. All Departmental Ministers were charged with the duty of keeping the MOI supplied with "...all the news and information at their disposal..."⁹.

As for the BBC, who had maintained a stance of independence, the document stated that the MOI was to take full editorial control on a day-to-day basis of news services and propaganda and that the Minister of Information would be responsible for ensuring the co-operation and goodwill of the Board of Governors.

The conclusions of the Cabinet, which left open that vital loophole of "national security", through which the heads of relevant Ministries could continue to act as final arbiters, were not ideal for the MOI. However, it is hard to see how the Cabinet could have agreed to the sweeping powers that the MOI had originally demanded without incurring the wrath of a host of other Ministers. Nevertheless, the instructions outlining the duties incumbent on all concerned were clearly stated and the Cabinet's belief in the importance of propaganda unequivocal.

This document signalled the fall of yet another Minister of Information and a reshuffle within the MOI. In July 1941 Duff Cooper resigned. He was replaced by Brendan Bracken. Walter Monckton left the Ministry and Cyril Radcliffe succeeded as Director-General. Francis Williams replaced Cyril Radcliffe as Controller of Press and Censorship. Harold Nicolson, Parliamentary Secretary, was moved to a governorship of the BBC and was replaced by Ernest Thurtle.

Duff Cooper later claimed he had resigned because he did not have Cabinet support, and the reason for this lack of support was that Churchill did not believe propaganda could win the war. This is a truism, which given the bitter experiences of Duff Cooper (and his predecessors) is understandable as his explanation of events. But his conclusion does not seem to be borne out, either by Churchill's own mastery of this psychological element of warfare, as demonstrated over and over again in his radio broadcasts, or by the amount of time, effort and energy expended at the highest levels of government in planning and determining what Britain's propaganda policies should be. Further evidence to support this viewpoint can be found in Churchill's choice of Brendan Bracken as the next, and last, Minister of Information.

...Bracken was prepared to use his Ministerial weight, derived in large measure from his personal association with Churchill...¹⁰

Churchill may not have been prepared officially to delegate the powers demanded by the MOI but with the appointment of his close personal confidante as the fourth Minister of Information, on 21 July 1941, the MOI sailed into calmer waters. Bracken's authority as Minister was heavily reinforced by his personal relationship with Churchill. Bracken had freedom of access to Chequers and spent much time with Churchill both there and at Downing Street.¹¹ MOI policy requirements could now be discussed personally with Churchill, putting an end to appeals submitted formally to the War Cabinet. Bracken's relationship with Churchill placed him in a position of superiority to many senior Ministers and government officials.

Simultaneously with the MOI's stand of May 1941, the Air Ministry had begun an examination of its internal propaganda organisation and relationship with the

MOI. This was not solely a consequence of MOI dissatisfaction but the result of a growing awareness from some within the Air Ministry of the important role that propaganda could play in promoting the RAF and its operations. Since the RAF was clearly going to continue to be important for MOI propaganda and the MOI was to continue to be dependent on the Air Ministry for information it was vitally important for both sides to establish friendly relations. Air Marshall Peck ACAS (G) was charged with investigating the matter, reporting to Sir Archibald Sinclair, Minister of State for Air, and representing Sinclair in discussions with the Minister of Information. On 14 May 1941, he submitted his report to Sinclair's office. In a long and detailed report, covering some forty three points, Peck set out the cause of disputes between the MOI and Air Ministry, and the argument for the importance of establishing closer co-operation between them:

...The fundamental defect from which all others spring is the old fashioned attitude within the Services and in Whitehall towards "propaganda" and publicity. Officers generally regard it as unsoldierly and distasteful...many highly placed authorities as well as many officers and officials have not yet realised the vital importance of "propaganda" or as I prefer to call it "presenting the British case" both at home and abroad...They have not yet realised that wars nowadays, perhaps more than ever before, are won and lost on the Home Front. They think that Home Morale, Empire enthusiasm, confidence abroad and prestige among neutrals are all fixed stars in a British heaven. The proud British challenge "we can take it" is to stand for ever without any effort on their part to sustain it. They fail to realise that the morale of our people, our greatest asset...must be cherished and fostered, or some day it will wither..¹²

Although the MOI and media had been more satisfied with the Air Ministry's approach to propaganda/publicity than that of other Ministries both believed that there was still much room for improvement. Peck's report confirmed this

viewpoint, arguing that the situation could only be improved with "...a drive from the top...". The level at which he was conducting and reporting on his inquiries is ample evidence that this view was shared by those at the top. Peck's report was endorsed by the Secretary of State for Air. He too shared the view that a collapse of morale on the Home Front could mean losing the war and that British morale was not immune to such a collapse. Thus he argued that one method of sustaining morale was to keep the public informed of the progress of the war, within the bounds of security considerations, and in particular to publicise the achievements of the RAF through all media channels. In order to achieve this goal he requested that Peck should be given all the help he required, including, if necessary, changing personnel in the Air Ministry's public relations units and taking immediate action to deal with Peck's proposals on film and photography.¹³ By August 1941 Peck was able to report to the Secretary of State on the progress of his reorganisation plans.

On the subject of "Rules of Anonymity", the rule whereby RAF operational personnel were prohibited from being named by the press and gave radio talks and interviews anonymously, he reported that although there had been some relaxation in the application of the rule he felt that still more could be done. This matter, however, was one which would have to be "...thrashed out at the Air Council...".¹⁴

In other areas he had news of more substantial progress. A public relations branch known as PR7 had been formed for the purpose of collecting propaganda material and was said to be "...going strong...".¹⁵ Photographs supplied by the Air Ministry were now of sufficient quality for the MOI to be confident of their publication not only at home but abroad. From the MOI's point of view this was excellent news because:

...if the right incidents are photographed

- right from our point of view - you can get good news out of bad events...the Air Ministry are now producing some absolutely first class news photographs - with corresponding results in the USA...¹⁶

In this way the Air Ministry greatly assisted the MOI's efforts to influence American public opinion. America was still at this stage a neutral country whose press were operating according to conventional journalistic standards, so that the strong and vivid photographs of the war produced by the German propaganda machine had, until this time, been favoured by the American press agencies simply because they were better, that is more dramatic and "newsworthy" photographs.

Peck also reported that his suggestion for the formation of an RAF Film Unit had been approved. The Unit became fully operational in 1942. It too performed an invaluable propaganda role for the MOI and Air Ministries. A later report on the way in which the Unit operated and was integrated with other public relations departments within the Air Ministry reveals the success of Peck's work in reorganising the propaganda functions of the Air Ministry, and the way in which this contributed to the overall controls exercised by the MOI:

...All "marketing" of the Unit's material to the public was done by PR1. [a public relations unit] The most important side of this was "selling" of FPU material to the newsreels...the procedure was...to send up daily to PR1 all material that had been shot that might be suitable for newsreel use. Censorship would be arranged...The various stories would be sifted...in the light of the newsreels' current requirements...and offered to the companies at the most appropriate moment...¹⁷

This report confirms that the Air Ministry shared with the MOI a conviction that newsreels were a prime propaganda medium. With the setting up of this unit the Air Ministry was able to supply film footage direct to newsreel companies, and others, without fear of security breaches. However, the newsreel commentaries for films obtained in this way were subject to a separate censor-

ship procedure operated by the MOI. The first stage in this procedure was the submission of commentaries to the MOI censor by telephone before recording. The second stage was for completed newsreels to be viewed by the MOI censor on Mondays and Thursdays. If at this stage any material was found to be unsuitable, action was taken to ensure that it was not seen by the viewing public. In this way the MOI could ensure that visual image and spoken word were suitably matched.¹⁸ Such a system clearly rested on close co-operation and the development of a harmonious relationship in which all parties knew what was expected of them. It was rare indeed that the MOI censor found it necessary to impose cuts upon completed reels. This co-operation was maintained via a committee system through which representatives of the MOI, the Air Ministry's PR1, and the newsreel companies met weekly to discuss and consolidate policy.¹⁹

For the MOI securing such assistance from the Air Ministry was vital. For as Bracken noted in a memo to Sinclair; "...public interest in the RAF is so great, and of such importance to our propaganda...".²⁰ With this system in place the MOI could be confident of continuing to promote RAF operations in a new spirit of close co-operation.

Revisions in the MOI's propaganda policies were driven not only by domestic needs but also by the external circumstances of the war on a broad front. In June 1941 the appearance of the Soviet Union as a new-found ally caused disquiet within the MOI. This was a propaganda problem which would need very careful handling. Churchill's world broadcast in response to this critical turn in the progress of the war gave the lead for the general line that was to be adopted. Churchill was, of course, a well-known opponent of Communism. He referred to this in his broadcast, saying that he would not retract these

views. But this was, he said, not significant in the context of the fight against 'Nazidom'. Any state that joined the fight against Germany would have the support of Britain because this was a war waged without regard to race, creed or party. Churchill declared that technical and economic support had been offered to Russia. He also commented on Britain's military contribution.

...We shall bomb Germany by day as well as night...casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs...But this is only a beginning. From now forward the main expansion of our Air Force proceeds...In another six months the weight of the help we are receiving from the United States in war materials of all kinds, and especially in heavy bombers, will begin to tell...²¹

This public statement implied that the new alliance was to be wholeheartedly embraced and the "errors" of Soviet history forgiven. Behind the scenes, however, both government and MOI policy-makers worried over the political implications of this new alliance. They were particularly concerned that home front admiration for the Soviet war effort might lead to undue regard for its political system but since the Soviet Union was now an ally the MOI could no longer engage in overt anti-communist propaganda. It would have to find more subtle methods of representing this new relationship to the British people.

In addition, American perceptions of British society were not always those that the British government might have wished. The image of a class-ridden society was hard to shake off and British imperialism was the subject of attack. The importance of the Anglo-American relationship had long concerned the government and MOI propagandists, and much effort had been expended trying to reshape American perceptions of Britain. In August 1941 the Anglo-American relationship took a new turn with the signing of the Atlantic Charter. The eight clauses of the Charter set out a vague, idealistic statement of the basis of Allied co-operation and war aims. This banner was seized by propagandists

on all sides but it was swiftly realised that it bore some strange devices. For example, it was interpreted by many in America as sounding the death knell for Britain's colonial Empire.

From early 1940 the MOI had pressed the government to make a statement on its war aims and allow the MOI to raise the issue of reconstruction in its propaganda. The MOI had justified its interest in reconstruction issues with two claims. That it was vital to talk about these issues if the British public were to be persuaded to endure German bombing, and that such propaganda would improve Britain's image in America. The need for creating a more dynamic image of Britain and the changes that might be expected after the war had long been recognised by the MOI, and if nothing else the sheer physical damage caused by the Blitz was proof enough that the topic of reconstruction could not be avoided indefinitely. The signing of the Atlantic Charter (and the new alliance with the Soviet Union) created additional pressures in this direction.

From the outset MOI interest in the topic of reconstruction and domestic war aims was regarded by the Cabinet with extreme suspicion. In a secret memo of October 1940 the Director-General of the MOI had suggested that in order to overcome political difficulties surrounding reconstruction, discussions should be handled entirely under the auspices of the MOI and that it should produce a series of pamphlets for discussion and circulation "...in those quarters in which opinion is formed...".²² In this way the MOI proposed to act as a forum for discussion whilst at the same time shielding the government from the necessity for action, or from adverse comment on inaction.²³ This proposal was rejected. The government set up a secret committee to oversee all discussion on reconstruction issues, while continuing to use the MOI as an official screen. For the MOI the Atlantic Charter might have been a golden opportunity for

morale-boosting propaganda on a theme which it had long recognised as being crucially important but the opportunity was denied.

Government sensitivity to class issues on the Home Front had been heightened by its new alliances with both America and the Soviet Union. In response, in September 1941, a comprehensive document entitled "Themes for Propaganda" was prepared by Francis Williams. It was intended to iron out the potential difficulties that domestic politics and external relations had created. The MOI's proposed solution to the problems posed by these new circumstances was to create a more dynamic and progressive image of British society than that which had so far emerged. Williams's document outlined how this was to be achieved. He claimed that propaganda should be based on a "...reasoned and moral appeal..."²⁴ the success of which depended upon the British public being treated as "...politically adult...". The key term which was now to be used in describing British society was democracy. Great pains were taken to point out the dangers of this new departure but it appears that no other suitable terms could be found. Williams explained, "...the term 'democracy' has only been chosen after prolonged discussion as the label for the conception..."²⁵ From this point on Williams's apparent radicalism becomes restricted and 'democracy' is carefully defined in an apolitical way, avoiding social, economic or constitutional principles.

...Democracy is not simply a set of abstract political principles, or even a particular form of constitution. It is rather a way of life, a frame of mind...reflected in our family life, our attitude to children, to marriage, to all personal relationships. It shapes our social intercourse in small matters as well as big ones, in the way a Women's Institute is run or a village cricket club...it governs the freedom and ease of discussion in a pub...²⁶

The choice of such institutions as representative of British democracy is telling

since they reflect that rural way of life which had long been used to stand for the essence of British character and qualities. Friendly Societies and Trade Unions are also mentioned but set in this context it is the Tolpuddle Martyrs rather than industrial militancy that is evoked.

It seems that Williams had learned the lessons from the rejection of his earlier apparently radical proposals. The language and concepts of this document are more conservative than those he had produced in April 1941. But there is another explanation. Williams, like other propagandists and 'Establishment' figures, shared the view that the countryside somehow represented the nation. Further his evocation of British democracy is symbolised by the English country village. The cultural traditions of Williams and his ilk were strong and deep-rooted, as Williams himself noted with some surprise in his autobiography.

...I had always thought of myself as an internationalist. I was not aware of any strong sense of patriotism...And then suddenly the war exploded and I found that what I most cared about was England. England in its most tangible form. The soil of England, the fields and hills and lanes of England, the English sky...²⁷

Whilst Williams's politics were of the left, his view of what the nation stood for, of what Britain was fighting for, was little different culturally to that of the political right. In this way, the sharp edge of the new term 'democracy' was blunted by wrapping it in a heavily coded format which accorded well with the already established image of Britain.

Williams went on to link this frame of mind, British democracy, as historically connected to America. America, as part of the Anglo-Saxon community, stood for liberty of the individual, just as Britain did. (The irony that America had

bought this liberty by freeing itself from British dominance was ignored.)

This appeal to 'democratic' principles, historically shared with America, was linked to the context of the times, serving the MOI's current propaganda requirements:

...the qualities of vigour and daring, of initiative and comradeship which the tradition engendered are the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon success in peace and war...They were - and are - qualities particularly called for in a naval power. They are the qualities which air combat calls forth and they account for the success of our fighter pilots against the heaviest odds...²⁸

That the RAF was deemed to be particularly associated with British historical traditions and her particular brand of democracy indicates the special role it played in MOI propaganda. Here too Williams's suggestions fitted well with the already established conservative image of Britain.

Williams also commented on the production theme to be integrated into the 'new' image of Britain. In line with many previous policy discussions Britain's industrial strength was to be emphasised. It was proposed that workers could best be encouraged to play their part by inculcating the idea of "...team spirit..."²⁹, reinforcing ideas developed during the Blitz. Again, however, attention was drawn to the difficulty in such a conception. It had to be ensured that the term should not be used without making clear that the "team spirit" of a free country was very different from that of a totalitarian country.

On the evidence of this document's definition of democracy, a term apparently reluctantly chosen, and the clear distinction that was to be drawn between the "team spirit" of Britain and that of Germany, or the Soviet Union, it seems clear that in reality the government remained unconvinced of the political maturity of

the British people. The juggling act the MOI had to perform in order to satisfy an anxious government was complex. It was to define freedom and democracy as Christian, civilised principles deeply embedded in British tradition and culture. Whilst these traditions symbolised a vital cultural link in Anglo-American relations, any Americanisation of British culture or politics had long been regarded as vulgar and dangerous. It would also be necessary to distinguish the British variety of freedom and democracy from anything which might resemble dangerously communistic ideals.

Government sensitivity to class politics, in particular its anxiety about the impact of the Soviet Union, appeared to be confirmed by events. Public pressure for a Second Front to aid Russia quickly grew, and as AJP Taylor has written:

...Churchill, and with him nearly all those in responsible positions, staked everything on the Anglo-American partnership. Those lower down, particularly, the factory workers, were enthusiastic only for Soviet Russia, once more restored to her idealistic pedestal...³⁰

This enthusiasm for the Soviet Union was something of a double-edged sword for the government. The Communist Party immediately committed itself to full support for the war and with it the communist controlled Shop Stewards' National Council. On the shopfloor the production war was waged more urgently, indeed government now found itself under public attack for allowing inefficiency in industry.³¹ Whilst this new-found shopfloor enthusiasm for the production war was much needed, the impulse from which it sprang was exactly that which government had most feared. The Communist Party increased its membership threefold after the Soviet Union's entry into the war.

Government hopes continued to focus on the Anglo-American relationship. With

the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 America entered the war. One result of this was the proposal for an Anglo-American production programme and following his visit to Washington, Churchill set about reorganising Government management of production.³² The appointment of Beaverbrook as Minister of Production met with strong opposition from Bevin and others who were not prepared to give up authority in their spheres of responsibility, especially to Beaverbrook. In February 1942 Beaverbrook resigned his post and Oliver Lyttleton took his place as Minister of Production. There were other changes too - Cripps was brought into the War Cabinet along with Lyttleton and Attlee was made Deputy Prime Minister. This reshuffle was welcomed by the public who saw it as a response by Churchill to their own and press criticisms of both the organisation of production and Churchill's conduct of the war. Undoubtedly there had been "...gestures to left wing opinion..."³³ but Churchill continued to run the War Cabinet and expected those within it to serve loyally.³⁴

Public enthusiasm for the Soviet Union was evidenced in the persistent and active campaign for a Second Front to aid Russia. Official propaganda made gestures towards appeasing this campaign and undercutting its feared political potency amongst workers with organised events such as "Tanks for Russia" weeks in British factories, public celebration of Red Army day and Mrs Churchill's fund for Russian aid. The campaign was taken up by Beaverbrook from within the War Cabinet until his resignation and then publicly by the Daily Express.³⁵ Churchill, however, continued to resist all such calls for the opening of a second land front. The campaigning drew together a disparate band of supporters with Conservative press barons joining socialists and Communist Party members in the general clamour to launch a Second Front. The 'Britain Alone' phase of the war was over and the glare of publicity was

now falling upon the Soviet Union, a situation which Williams had anticipated when he wrote the paper which introduced the concept of 'democracy' into the language of British propaganda:

..We must avoid the danger that during a period in which the main fighting is on the Russian front men and women will, because of their admiration for Russian bravery, come to think that Communism is the only positive creed capable of meeting Nazism on level terms. We must be careful lest the admiration for the Russian stand becomes translated into an unthinking admiration for Communism...³⁶

The government had defined the MOI's propaganda objectives as concentrating on Britain's contribution to the war effort, rather than domestic political/social issues. The recent political and military developments brought new urgency to this task if the British public and world opinion was to be diverted from its growing admiration for the Soviet Union. In the military field too, however, difficulties arose. Throughout the period mid-1941 to early 1942 a fierce controversy raged behind the scenes over the potential of an effective strategic use of Bomber Command. The major protagonists in this debate were on the one hand, Lord Cherwell and his supporters; Portal, Trenchard, Tedder and Harris, who believed that a bomber offensive would succeed in breaking German power; and, on the other hand, Sir Henry Tizard and his supporters; Professors Hill and Blackett, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound and Sir Alan Brooke. But the pressure for an air offensive was strong:

...the counter-forces that maintained the air offensive came from two main directions - operational analysis and pressure for the Second Front...³⁷

At Cherwell's suggestion the Butt enquiry into the effectiveness of Bomber Command operations was launched. Its findings were not positive, concluding that most bomber crews did not get within five miles of their target area.³⁸

Meanwhile on 31 July the COS committee had reaffirmed its faith in a bomber offensive, and the Air Ministry had put its own statisticians to work. The statistics they produced were derived from an "index of activity" based on Coventry. It was calculated that Bomber Command required 4,000 heavy bombers in order to launch an offensive on a scale sufficient to defeat Germany. Portal forwarded this information to Churchill on 25 September 1941 having wholeheartedly accepted the calculations, and arguing that with such a force Germany could be finished in six months. This battle of statistics rumbled on throughout the early months of 1942 leading eventually to the commissioning of the Singleton Report in April.³⁹

The dispute between Cherwell and Tizard was based solely upon the strategic effectiveness of bombing as a weapon of war. The government had already chosen to abandon any moral or legal considerations with the claim that Germany, having instigated such illegal acts, could justifiably be repaid in kind. The claim that Germany had been the first nation to indulge in deliberate bombing of civilian centres was not in fact true. This is confirmed by the findings of the Spaight Report which noted that Britain had been the first to bomb German mainland targets, and further that Germany would have called a bombing truce if Britain had been prepared to do so.⁴⁰

The moral debate was left to a small band of protesters who, at least until the end of the war, "...cried in the wilderness..".⁴¹ Nevertheless some of these protesters had a high public profile. Perhaps the most famous of these was George Bell, Bishop of Chichester. Another protester was Canon John Collins, an RAF chaplain. Although the government was committed to a strategic bomber offensive, maintaining a high moral stance remained paramount. The propaganda theme of a fight for the principles of a Christian nation might be threatened by protests from such men. In the Spring of 1941

Bell wrote to the Times condemning the development of the bombing war, and appealing for its restriction:

...It is barbarous to make unarmed women and children the deliberate object of attack...Is it not possible for the British government to make a solemn declaration that they for their part will refrain from night bombing (either altogether or of towns with civilian populations) provided that the German government will give the same declaration?.."42

Bell's description of the object of RAF bombing was entirely at variance with that presented to the public, and with the declared bombing policy of the British government. His suggestion that the German government might agree to a bombing truce was also contrary to the way that German bombing of Britain had been presented, which was as the actions of a bloodthirsty warmonger. Bell was dissuaded by Archbishop Lang from putting a motion on the subject to the Canterbury Convocation in May, agreeing instead to substitute one expressing sympathy for the victims of German air raids on Britain. In return, the Archbishop agreed to condemn demands for reprisals. Bell, however did not keep to his promise. He began to discuss the moral issues surrounding night bombing against Germany and was ruled out of order.⁴³ During the subsequent remonstrations over the incident both parties were concerned to avoid public controversy. Bell requested the Press not to report the incident and it obliged.

Within the Chaplaincy division of the RAF moral questions were also causing concern. In 1941 it was proposed that moral leadership courses should be provided:

...It is the considered opinion of the Chaplaincy Services (all denominations...) that there is an urgent need for the development in the RAF of positive nuclei of Christian faith and practice in order to maintain high morale... This view is confirmed by the concern felt by the Air Ministry when confronted by some of the moral problems which now face the RAF which are the result of wartime conditions of service...⁴⁵

During 1940-41 RAF bombing operations had resulted in greater casualties amongst the RAF than German civilians⁴⁶ and heavy losses in RAF bombers.⁴⁷ Hardly surprising then that morale within Bomber Command was low. This was a situation which could only be made worse by moral doubts as to its role. Government resolve to continue the air offensive was not, however, weakened by conflicts over its strategic effectiveness, the scale of losses so far incurred, or moral probity. The conclusion was that a bomber offensive would succeed if Bomber Command could be built up to sufficient strength and if new tactics were adopted.

Although Churchill was not entirely convinced of the claims being made by the proponents of a strategic air offensive he did not oppose the plan. It was in this way that he had pledged Britain's support for the Soviet Union on a military front. It had been promised to the home front as the answer to German bombing against Britain, and it represented a ray of hope in the face of gloomy war news from other fronts.⁴⁸

In the Autumn of 1941 the air offensive was temporarily slackened in order to allow a build-up of front-line strength and reevaluate tactics. Preparations were to be geared towards a new objective, outlined by the Air Ministry in October 1941:

...the whole question of air attack is undergoing further investigation...in preparation for the time when the weight of our offensive is judged to be sufficient to direct the whole effort primarily against morale...⁴⁹

In February 1942 Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris was appointed the new head of Bomber Command. Harris, like Bracken, also had direct access to Churchill, visiting Chequers from his command headquarters at High Wycombe.

Preparations for the Bomber Offensive were complex, involving a number of agencies - the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW), the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), both under the auspices of the Foreign Office, the Air Ministry and the Ministries of Home Security and Production. Co-ordination and information gathering from this number of Ministries inevitably involved disputes and difficult negotiations but over the months of preparation a workable system was hammered out.

The MEW was charged with the task of providing information for target selection, the PWE with exploiting RAF bombing operations for propaganda purposes. The inter-relationship between bombing and political warfare was summed up in a PWE paper:

...in raids on occupied territory, the best psychological effect is achieved by...precision bombing...the opposite seems to be true of Germany. Here the psychological effect has little connection with the military or economic importance of the target: it is determined solely by the destruction and dislocation caused...To render several thousand people homeless...anywhere in Germany is to put further strain on an organisation already so taut, that there is no slack to be taken up...⁵⁰

In planning this new policy pains were taken to ensure that the RAF's reputation for conducting a morally just bombing campaign should not be damaged. The Foreign Secretary reassured the Secretary of State for Air that the RAF's "high reputation" would be maintained by describing all targets as "of special importance for Hitler's Spring offensive".⁵¹

In developing its tactics the Air Ministry also paid special attention to housing. The Air Warfare Analysis and Bombing Committee's discussions covered which types of bombs and fusing devices were most suitable for various types of

housing (multi-storied, ribbon development, single storey, small brick) and the use of incendiary tactics. The incendiary tactic was not discussed under the headings of different types of housing since "the use of incendiaries applied to the target areas as a whole".⁵²

The Research and Experiment Section of the Ministry of Home Security, which had been conducting a survey of the Blitz on Britain, also contributed valuable information about its economic and morale effects. One of the recommendations which arose from this information was that smaller towns (under 150,000 inhabitants) should be accepted as targets because experience in Britain had shown that the psychological effects of a raid on towns of this size was far greater than that in large cities.⁵³

On the Home Front preparations for the Bomber Offensive involved rising production targets for heavy bombers, recruitment drives for all types of Air Force personnel and new propaganda campaigns. From Spring 1941 MOI propaganda took new directions in response to domestic needs and external circumstances. The air war, whether at home or abroad, continued to play an important role and so propaganda about the Bomber Offensive received a high priority from the MOI.

The appointment of Brendan Bracken brought stability and new prestige to the MOI. Air Ministry reorganisation of its propaganda/publicity operations brought more willing co-operation with the MOI. Although the Blitz had not acted as a catalyst of widespread political discontent, the government remained sensitive to the perceived dangers of class politics. This sensitivity was fuelled by new alliances with the Soviet Union and America. The MOI's response was to introduce the concept of "democracy" into its propaganda.

The general context in which the MOI was now operating was to boost flagging morale, partly by continuing to promote RAF operations; to douse public admiration of the Soviet system; to continue attempts to improve Britain's image in American eyes; and to maintain the high reputation of the RAF in respect of its bombing policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Blitz, Bomber Offensive and Propaganda, May 1941 to 1942

The overall aim of the MOI continued to be to boost morale and secure public support for the government's conduct of the war. But events had to be interpreted within the boundaries of developing propaganda policies and the changing circumstances of the war.

One avenue for bolstering public morale was to continue to promote RAF operations. In August 1941, as the Butt enquiry began, the MOI released one of its most popular RAF films of the war, *Target For Tonight*, in commercial distribution both at home and overseas. The film was a documentary feature made by the Crown Film Unit with the full support of the Air Ministry (whose own film unit was not yet operational) and directed by Harry Watt. Research into the making of this film provides evidence which throws some light on the way in which film-makers (and others) subsequently interpreted their role in the propaganda machine - in short an apparent reluctance to acknowledge the guiding hand of the MOI. Harry Watt appears convinced that the origin of the idea for a "hitting back" film was his and his alone.¹ However, as the previous chapter clearly shows, the theme of Britain's military power, especially in relation to bombing, had long been recognised as an important avenue for propaganda in policy discussions amongst the War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff and the MOI. These discussions had also reached the conclusion that it was imperative to maintain the high reputation of the RAF. *Target For Tonight* fits very neatly with policy decisions in both areas. It also picks up on other ideas current in policy discussions of the time about replacing the 'Britain Can Take It' theme with ideas of corporate effort, or team spirit, directed towards military success.

The themes of RAF effectiveness, Britain's military prowess and team work are all embedded in the film's structure and plot, from the planning stages to the bombing of Germany. It shows planned efficiency with a focus upon the careful preparations for bombing operations. It demonstrates teamwork through the command structure, reconnaissance, briefing of pilots, the work of ground crews, technical preparations of aircraft, and a civilian meteorological officer. From the highest command down to the ground crew all played their part in the team and contributed to the carefully laid plan. The essential element for drama, personal identification, was provided by singling out the crew of F for Freddie.

In the briefing room we see the RAF personnel awaiting news of who will be flying that night. They represent a microcosm of the larger community of Britain and her Empire. The camera picks out a Scots navigator, a stereotype often used in film as symbolic of the working class, underlined here by his rank of Sergeant. A cheerful Canadian. A younger middle class officer. An older, upper-class, officer, strongly identified by accent. His stability and dependability was visually represented by the fact that he smoked a pipe. He is selected to captain F for Freddie. He is joined by the Scot, the younger middle-class officer and two young men. This was not a random selection. In an interview conducted by the Imperial War Museum, Watt confirmed that he deliberately chose his characters for their range of accents and origin from different parts of the Empire. He also remarked on how the youth of many of the crews, known as sprog crews, had made a strong impression on him.² In this way the family of Britain and her Empire was fully represented. But the crew was captained by the British upper-class. His relaxed good manners, charm and dependability marked him out as the father figure. This particular crew are of course representative of all the others who work together to ensure

the successful completion of the mission.

The camera accompanies the plane on its mission: a carefully coordinated take off, following the flight path mapped out; the target is sighted, the bombs dropped on it. Back at base the returning planes are anxiously awaited, F for Freddie the last to return. Theirs is the final report confirming the target has been destroyed. Another successful bombing mission destroying a bonafide military target was complete, with no loss of civilian life, RAF personnel, or machinery.

At the time of the making of the film Britain's bombing policy was to attack military targets, although technical and other difficulties meant that the policy could not be effectively carried out. By the time of the film's release the directive enjoining attack on military targets had already been relaxed. When interviewed about the making of the film Harry Watt made much of the fact that, in line with the canons of documentary realism, he adopted a journalistic approach. In this way, he claimed, he captured the atmosphere of a real mission, without melodrama. When pressed by the interviewer, however, he is forced to admit that bomber crews rarely expressed with such certainty, as they did in the film, that they had accurately bombed the target.

...Amongst themselves it was well known... that they'd dumped their bombs and got off target and that kind of thing. But generally when they came in and made their report...they just fluffed over it. Generally they weren't very frank about it. They'd taken a lot of chances, God knows. Some turned back after a bit of ack-ack fire and said they'd got lost or damaged or an engine wasn't running very well ...But the authorities knew very well. The nerve of the people progressively got worse...³

It is not hard to see why the realities of British bombing operations during this

period should have been concealed from the public. The line followed in this film goes back to that image of efficiency, precision and, by definition, morality as outlined in the official communique format of October 1940. From the earliest days the MOI had recognised as paramount the importance of maintaining public faith in the abilities of the RAF, and the morality of its bombing policy. This could hardly be maintained if the scale of RAF losses and its effects upon their morale became widely known. Nor could the moral force of Britain's cause be upheld if it were to be admitted that RAF bombing was just as indiscriminate as that of the Luftwaffe, and that the effects of what were essentially technological problems would soon become magnified with the introduction of 'area bombing' as a deliberate policy.

In propaganda terms, however, the effectiveness of such imagery is best judged by its public reception. The film was a box office success both at home and in America, where Alfred Hitchcock supervised its dubbing in order to ensure that American audiences would not have to struggle with British accents.⁴ The film journal of the Documentary Movement, Documentary News Letter, praised the film as "...magnificent propaganda for the British cause...an effective symbol of resistance...".⁵ The more commercially minded Monthly Film Bulletin was equally fulsome in its praise, "...it dramatises reality and is very successful in conveying atmosphere...".⁶

The theme of realism is an important one here. The documentary/journalistic style gave added verisimilitude to the images it presented, although in fact it was an extremely skillful distortion of reality. The reason for its popularity with audiences is, as always, difficult to judge. Harry Watt does not claim the film as an artistic or technical masterpiece. He believed the film's success was simply a matter of timing in that it represented what the public wanted at that moment. No doubt there is much to be said for this judgment. The MOI's

close watch on public opinion helped to produce propaganda which met public anxieties as well as promoting government policies. That this film represented what the public wanted to believe should not therefore be surprising. It was also what the MOI wanted the public to believe. This was an MOI film and it was the MOI's control over domestic film distribution and influence in an international distribution system that ensured the film its worldwide release.

From May 1941 to 1942 the newsreels continued to co-operate with the MOI in its presentation of images of bombing and the RAF. (See Appendices 2, 2a and 3, 3a). In general terms from Spring 1941 there was a sharp decrease in the amount of coverage of these themes as other news grabbed the headlines. (Behind the scenes the argument over the merits of launching an all out air offensive began.) What coverage there was, however, conformed to the MOI's development of policy. In March three of the five newsreels gave a prime position⁷ to the Air Minister's speech on a forthcoming RAF offensive.⁸ In June 1941 the story of radar, hitherto secret, was released. During the next few months until the end of 1941 space was given to stories about the development and production of new aircraft, RAF recruitment of both pilots and support services, the formation of new RAF squadrons made up of Empire, Dominion and Allied forces, and VIP visits to bomber stations. These stories held out the promise of "hitting back" with powerful forces, and improving the effectiveness of the RAF through the use of sophisticated technology.⁹

The BBC in its news talks series of War Commentaries, using MOI and Air Ministry approved personnel, relied upon Group Captain Helmore to explain the air war to its audiences. On 11 September 1941 he opened his talk with a brief history of the air war so far, using the analogy of a play. The first act being the

Battle of Britain, and the second act the Blitz, then he came to the bomber offensive:

...The third act has yet to be played...it opens, as is perhaps proper, in a third act in which is always concentrated the supreme drama of the play at what may at first seem a slow tempo...¹⁰

Helmore continued by commenting that Britain could best help Russia by bombing Germany, which he noted was being done with a greater weight of bombs than ever before. He continued his talk using the elements of individual personality and drama, which the Air Ministry had sanctioned, at the MOI's request, with the abandonment of the "rule of anonymity". He argued that the essential feature of Britain's success in the air was "...the flying man himself...". The individual he selected in this instance was Douglas Bader, not in fact a bomber pilot, but a fighter pilot. He described his story as one which would claim its place in history alongside that of "...Nelson, his telescope and his blind eye...". Bader's story was indeed to become part of the folklore of the war, though not as Helmore suggested under the title of "the Battle of Bader's Leg...".

In succeeding broadcasts Helmore continued in the same folksy, anecdotal vein to offer thinly disguised official comment on the air war. On 9 October he described the current situation as "...a moment of supreme opportunity..." with Britain at last approaching air parity but he cautioned this did not mean that enemy bombers might not once more return to attack Britain. He emphasised again Britain's air link with the Soviet Union, confiding to his audience that three RAF units had been sent to aid Russian pilots. He went on to discuss the importance of new technological developments but he said:

...I must warn you it may be some time...
before the technical miracles we are attempting

will see us victors in this "Battle of the Stratosphere"...¹¹

In his usual style he ended the broadcast with yet another example of individual courage and heroism, this time by an American fighter pilot shot down before he had the chance to broadcast to the nation.

In his next broadcast Helmore continued first on the Russian theme. He turned then to a new theme, inserting into the broadcast a speech by Goering threatening to renew the weight of German bombing against Britain. He used this to squash the idea of a bombing truce, adding:

...thank goodness our bomber force has already given the Nazis the only answer they can understand - by dropping - during the past three months - ten thousand tons of high explosive on them...¹²

He claimed that Luftwaffe crews were showing signs of deterioration in morale and expertise, presumably so as deflate the German threats which he had included in the broadcast. This broadcast also finished with yet another tale of individual courage and heroism, this time about an airman who sacrificed himself by taking on a German fighter with a training plane.

The theme of individualism was an important one in British propaganda. In his early paper outlining the principles of British propaganda MacMillan had emphasised the importance of concentrating upon "...the sanctity of the individual and the family..."¹³ as a pillar of civilisation. Francis Williams's paper also highlighted this theme as a central principle of 'democracy'. Focusing on the individual was one way in which a contrast between 'democratic' and collectivist forms of society was drawn.

The period from Autumn 1941 to Spring 1942 was one of mixed fortunes for Bomber Command¹⁴ but the promise of a bomber offensive continued to be

heavily emphasised by the media. On 30 May 1942 this promise was publicly fulfilled with the first 1,000 Bomber Raid on Cologne (a second on Essen followed on June 2 and a third on Bremen on June 24). This was an event enthusiastically greeted by the media as a major news story. The BBC reported the story the next day describing the operation as an "...outstanding success...".¹⁵ The *Daily Express* carried it as a front page story on Monday 1 June, also representing it as a success story, giving details of the amount of bombs dropped, the tonnage rate per minute, the scale of the fires, and claiming that the tactic of saturating Cologne's air defences had "...worked perfectly...".

Both the press and BBC included in their reports Churchill's message of congratulation to the Chief of Bomber Command. Indeed Churchill had played no small part in ensuring that a raid of such a scale was mounted. He had personally authorised the operation and applied pressure to obtain the amount of aircraft and personnel needed, calling upon reserves from Coastal and Training Commands.¹⁶

The newsreels also covered the story and Harris's orders for the attack provided a catchy phrase, which was picked up to headline their stories, "let him have it - right on the chin".¹⁷ GBN under its call sign - "Gaumont British News presents the truth to the free people of the world" - opened the story with a voice-over of Churchill, listing the German targets that had been identified for attack, over shots of bombers taking off. He claimed that citizens could leave the city if they wished. Harris was given the opportunity to expound on the future development of the Bomber Offensive:

...there are a lot of people who say that bombing can never win a war, my answer, its never been tried yet and we shall see...but

the time is not yet...there is a great deal of work to be done first, so let us all get down to it...¹⁸

The 1,000 Bomber Raids of Spring 1942 had been preceded by yet more military disasters for Britain, in particular the fall of Singapore in February 1942 was a devastating blow to national confidence, and in April 1942 the Luftwaffe once more became active in Britain with the Baedeker raids on historic cities. In this context the publicity given to RAF operations seemed to the MOI to be achieving the desired effect. Its monthly morale report to the Cabinet in June 1942 claimed that public optimism had risen in the belief that the war might soon be won. The report attached particular importance to recent RAF raids in increasing national confidence. They represented a symbol of national pride as a direct attack by Britain and could be used to offset admiration for Russia, the contribution of American production and Empire "...fighting qualities...".¹⁹ However, this happy result was short-lived. The next report to Cabinet in July 1942²⁰ revealed that confidence was once again in a state of decline. It was suggested that in fact publicity about the 1,000 Bomber Raids had created over-confidence by contributing to hopes that the war might be brought to a swift end.

...the war is now once more expected to be a long one. The earlier over-confidence was brought to a head much more by the inauguration of our 1,000 Bomber Raids on Germany than by any other single factor...²¹

For the public continuing RAF raids with normal sized forces now appeared unimpressive and more significantly renewed attacks upon Cologne raised question marks as to the real achievements of the 1,000 Bomber raids of Spring 1942. The set piece propaganda moves surrounding the 1,000 Bomber Raid had not, it seems, succeeded in convincing the public of the strategic effectiveness of such operations nor met the claim that bombing was in effect a

A successful all-out offensive rested upon producing enough bombers to carry it out, and propaganda around this theme continued throughout the period.

Bombers in sufficient number were an essential part of the plan and heavy commitment had been made to resourcing their manufacture but the aircraft industry was beset with a host of organisational, managerial and industrial problems, which had so far resulted in continued failure to meet (often unrealistic) production targets.²³ The industry, upon which the government's war plans relied so heavily, was also a centre for the communist-dominated Shop Stewards movement.²⁴

Propaganda campaigns aimed at industrial workers were carried out on two fronts, nationally and within particular industries. The Ministry of Aircraft Production (MAP):

...led...in the field of propaganda to workers..
Between mid-1941 and mid-1942 over a thousand
visits to factories by pilots were arranged,
and two hundred thousand posters and bulletins
were distributed...²⁵

On a national level the MOI coordinated a range of activities. One example of which was the 1942 film *Speed Up On Stirlings*, made by the MOI in conjunction with the Ministry of Aircraft Production. The film concerns a visit to a factory where the managers are looking at ways in which the production process might be speeded up. The emphasis of the film is upon the application of management skills to the production process, and the need for precision and quality in production. The theme is in line with addressing the problems which confronted the industry and offers the solution of managerial efficiency, which was promoted by the MAP's new Minister, Stafford Cripps, who took over the post in Autumn 1942. Meanwhile, an all-out air offensive remained

on hold.

MOI monitoring of public opinion showed continuing public interest in issues surrounding post-war reconstruction of British society. The MOI, caught between the pressures of Home Front morale and Cabinet reluctance to become involved in public debate, had to approach the subject with reticence.²⁶

The first MOI short film to deal with reconstruction was *The Dawn Guard* commissioned during 1940 from Charter Film, produced and directed by John and Roy Boulting. The film was released in 1941. A large proportion of the film consists of compilation footage of existing documentaries and newsreels made during the 1930s. As early as December 1939 the MOI's Reference Section had collated a catalogue of social documentary films for propaganda use. The film makes use of at least three of the MOI's catalogued documentaries which can be positively identified, and possibly more. These are *Citizens of the Future* (1935), *Housing Progress* (1938) and *Today and Tomorrow* (1937)²⁷ The catalogue was the appendix to a five-part report on the ways in which such films might best be used for propaganda purposes:

...All these themes...about social efforts at home...lend themselves for dramatic personal presentation...²⁸

The film runs for seven minutes and consists of a discussion between friends, one old, one young. They are members of the Home Guard and their discussion takes place whilst they are on watch. The images of Britain are pastoral. The film is specific in the problems it mentions, which are those outlined in Duff-Cooper's paper - poverty, housing, unemployment, education. No specific solutions are suggested to these problems other than that Britain will continue to progress with reformist measures along traditional lines, though perhaps with

added enthusiasm and a greater appreciation of British liberties. The most concrete solution offered is to draw attention to the redeeming qualities of rural or quasi-rural life - the value of fresh air, sunshine, parks and trees.

The film incorporates the general lines of policy agreed between the Cabinet and MOI during 1940, including some of the specific recommendations of the Anger Campaign. It is difficult to judge whether this is the result of close control by the MOI, or of the extent to which the cultural values of the film-makers coincided with those of policy-makers. The Boulting brothers saw this film as a personal viewpoint, striking a timely blow for the promise of a better future, and rushed into production before the government could settle into a conservative stance.

...the M of I gave us carte blanche...very ingenuous, very idealistic, deeply felt... that is the film we made...it perhaps went further than the Government wished to go...²⁹

However, despite this claim, it must be remembered that it was the facilities provided by the MOI which ensured that the film could be made at all. And its wide distribution, theatrical and non-theatrical, home and overseas, under the MOI banner stands as a guarantee that it accorded with MOI and Cabinet policy, as it stood at the time the film was produced.

In January 1942 the MOI released *Post 23*, another film dealing with reconstruction. The setting for the film was an ARP wardens' post where three men discuss the whys and wherefores of reconstruction. The three characters represent three distinctive groups: the first, the leader, a middle aged professional male, pipe smoker; the second, young middle-class male; the

third, working-class male. It was the young in particular that Williams had suggested should be encouraged to embrace the concept of 'democracy':

...the failure to realise the true character of 'democracy'...is responsible for most of the discredit into which 'democracy' has fallen... particularly among the younger generation...³⁰

The second character had already been discussing reconstruction with his "...pals at the Club...". He justifies his commitment to reconstruction with the claim that the experiences of war had encouraged him to feel that he "...had a stake in the place...". This argument shifts the emphasis from that presented in the earlier MOI film *The Dawn Guard* away from a forward-looking philosophy of general social change, to a more conservative philosophy of individual benefit.

The leader of the group who is slightly older, his steadiness signified by the pipe he smokes, singled out the topic of housing as the essential area of concern, "...the gaps in the houses will have to be replaced...". To this the working-class character replies. "...I'll second that...", signifying the democratic process in action. He then says that he hopes there will be no more slums and cheerfully declares his willingness to roll up his sleeves and get on with the work. His role was clearly marked, to follow and support the natural good sense and judgment of his social superiors in their plans for the future and to continue to provide the required manual labour.

The MOI's presentation of reconstruction appears to have shifted from a relatively expansive to a restricted position. The focus in this discussion was narrowly confined to housing. The characters were not discussing the issue as equals but within a hierarchical class structure.

The production conditions of these contrasting films on the same theme provide the key to understanding the differences between them. *The Dawn Guard* was produced at a time when government anxieties about the potential effects of the Blitz were at their height. *Post 23* was produced after it had become apparent that the Blitz had not caused social breakdown. *Post 23* was a film entirely for the home audience, whereas *The Dawn Guard* was widely shown overseas, including in the United States. Although public enthusiasm for discussion of the future of Britain after the war remained high, the Cabinet's attitude to public discussion became more cautious once the immediate crisis of the Blitz had passed. However, a key feature of *Post 23* is the use of the Blitz as a metaphor for national unity. The Blitz imagery of working together is harnessed as a central motif as a means of undercutting the potentially divisive political implications of domestic social reconstruction.

Public enthusiasm for reconstruction was not, apparently, dampened by such propaganda. Post-war aims continued to be discussed and social policy reports continued to be published. In August, Uthwatt, in September Scott and in December the Beveridge report. The public response to these reports heightened government anxiety about the public's desire for social change and created additional pressures for the MOI. The preparation of monthly morale reports for the Cabinet show the extent of sensitivity surrounding the MOI's role in creating propaganda around the issues.

...It will not be possible or desirable in the report to avoid matters requiring administrative action. But we should avoid as far as may be positive recommendations for administrative action. These would...involve us in... embarrassments...on a dangerous level...³¹

It was the Beveridge report which caught the public imagination but the official response to its publication disappointed them. The initial high profile burst of

publicity was quickly smothered by Cabinet pressure to keep the lid on such "controversial" proposals³², whatever the potential morale-boosting effect. Public enthusiasm soon turned to cynicism about the Government's attitude, and the MOI's role in cutting media coverage of the report played its part in a widespread belief that the government disapproved of the report and would ensure its rejection.³³ The MOI was concerned about the effects of this incident on public morale. In discussion with the Reconstruction Secretariat, a committee "...whose existence, composition and terms of reference..."³⁴ were secret, an MOI representative defended its argument for continued public debate by claiming that:

...our chief anxiety is to make people realise...
that a great deal of essential research and study
has been seen to be done...the fruits of which will
be seen from time to time...in the form of different
reports...³⁵

The tactic proposed by the MOI was to undercut acclaim for the Beveridge Report by representing it as merely one of a whole series. In this way it was hoped to bolster public expectation of post-war rewards, without committing the government to specific policies but, as the MOI's monthly reports to Cabinet noted, without a greater British share in military operations public attention was likely to remain focused on domestic difficulties and anxiety about post-war conditions rather than the progress of the war.³⁶

An area identified in early 1941 as requiring attention in propaganda was that of the 'Britain Can Take It' image. It had been suggested by the Civil Defence Executive's Committee of Directors of Public Relations in January that this image was counter-productive. The Committee wanted to encourage a different attitude to the Blitz. They had argued that more was required than

simply 'taking it'. It was not enough to sit in shelters during an alert. Factory workers, they said, were spending too much time in shelters and, by implication, not enough time working. Bus drivers were refusing to drive during alerts. People were taking to shelters rather than fighting fire bombs. This type of behaviour needed to change.

An MOI short five-minute film, which exemplifies the way in which propaganda was designed for this purpose was *Shunter Black's Night Off*, released in September 1941. Although we now know that the worst of the Blitz was over by this time, this was not apparent at the time. Nor did the end of the Blitz mean an end to German bombing raids on Britain. The film, based on a true story, is about one man's attitude to the Blitz. It is centred on Joe Black, a marshalling yard worker, who acts heroically when the railway station is raided on his night off. Joe's brave action is to shunt a train, which is on fire and loaded with ammunition, to the water hydrant and single-handedly put out the fire. But, as the narrator notes, "...Harry in the signal box stays put, he always has to...a little thing like a Blitz doesn't hold up a marshalling yard for long...". Between them Joe and Harry have exhibited model Blitz behaviour of the new form. The fire has been put out because Joe has been vigilant in firewatching and brave in response to the fire itself. Meanwhile, Harry stays in the signal box and carries on with his job.

As a documentary the film was reviewed in the Documentary Newsletter where, despite criticism of its technical expertise, it was acknowledged to be "...in essence an interesting and exciting film...".³⁷ The tone of the commentary to the film is chatty and working-class. The behaviour of Joe Black and Harry is held up as an example to all workers, underlining the need for individual heroism and initiative and emphasising its importance in ensuring that work carries on despite bombing raids.

Images of the Blitz also appeared in other films, including more lavish feature productions. In 1942 MGM released *Mrs Miniver*. This was, of course, an American commercial production and as such would have been regarded by the MOI as an ideal propaganda vehicle. Evidence of exactly how the MOI operated its system of 'influence' within American studios remains scant. The MOI had long planned to secure a position of 'influence' over such products and, on occasion, it appears to have been successful in achieving this.³⁸ Once America began fighting the American Office of War Information (OWI) and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) received funds for the purpose of analysing all feature films released in the commercial cinema. The OWI analysed the character functions of *Mrs Miniver* in class-based terms as "...war changes English class structure..."³⁹. This was a message which the MOI were particularly keen should be received by American audiences but it is not clear whether the MOI had any 'influence' over this film. However, within the structure of the film it is the Blitz which is represented as the motive force for changing Britain's class structure.

The film was an international, Oscar-winning, box-office success. Its stars were Walter Pidgeon and Greer Garson, as the title character. The opening sequence of the film is set immediately before the war and in it the audience are introduced to each of the characters, who do indeed represent a full range of classes. The location of the film is an English village community in which the position of each character is firmly established within a rigid class hierarchy.

The first signification of the war is an air raid siren. This is the signal for Lady Beldon matriarch of the village to inform the village grocer, now also the community's ARP warden, "...we don't take orders we give them...". By the

end of the film, however, she has accepted his authority. She also accepts the marriage of her grand-daughter to the son of the professional middle-class Minivers'. The most striking illustration of her gracefully accepted loss of power is the award of the Annual Flower Show trophy to the working-class station master for his rose. By tradition and birthright this accolade had been the preserve of the lady of the manor.

The Miniver household play a very full role in their contribution to the war effort. Part of this is Mrs Miniver's capture of a German parachutist. In this scene the captured Nazi informs her that thousands more like him will come to bomb the cities of England "...like Barcelona and Rotterdam...". Shortly afterwards the Miniver house is indeed bombed. Mr and Mrs Miniver take refuge in their Anderson shelter. This scene bears little relation to shelter scenes produced directly by the MOI for the home audience. The bombing raid is shown as a frightening, nerve-wracking experience. The falling bombs make loud noises and the shelter shakes as they land. Mr and Mrs Miniver are obviously frightened and their young daughter cries. The production values of Hollywood required this element of fear in order to create a more emotionally affecting scene, which would give credence to the horrific effect of bombing and thereby engender sympathy and admiration within the audience. This sympathetic appeal is further called upon in a later scene in which Lady Beldon's grand-daughter is killed by enemy machine gun fire in another raid on the village.

The final scene of the film is set in the village church. Lady Beldon stands alone in the family pew, a poignantly evoked signification of the loss she has suffered. As the vicar reads a sermon on the courage, sacrifice and unity of his community in the "People's War", her son-in-law crosses the aisle to join her in the family pew. This is the final exemplification that the air war waged against

Britain had broken down class barriers.

My analysis of the film does very little justice to its emotional effectiveness but as Oliver Bell's BFI lecture had pointed out to MOI propagandists back in 1939, the appeal of a feature film:

...is almost entirely to the emotions...The sort of thing that does down well anywhere is a film based on the theme of love...self-sacrifice ...or love in adversity...⁴⁰

Mrs Miniver contained all these elements in abundance. The Blitz served as an ideal vehicle, for the film's plot and for its clear message that the war, especially bombing, had fundamentally changed Britain's class-based society. Whether or not the MOI had a hand in influencing this film, its message was certainly one they would have approved.

By contrast *Demi-Paradise* used the Blitz motif to present a very different message about class and British society. The film was produced for the home audience by a British company, Two Cities Films. The place of this company within the commercial system is something of a mystery. It was set up in the early days of the war by an expatriate Italian, Filippo del Giudice.⁴¹ It has been suggested that it was funded by the MOI and used as a as a front company for propaganda work.⁴² As we have seen, the MOI certainly intended to provide funds to commercial film companies for work which it approved. And Two Cities was responsible for two of the war's most famous films, which also carried clear, distinctively British, propaganda messages - *In Which We Serve* and *Henry V*. To all intents and purposes Two Cities was an ordinary commercial operation, using stars and directors with established reputations. But its best remembered films are those which played an important part in Britain's film propaganda, although it is difficult to judge the extent of MOI involvement

with the company.

Demi-Paradise was directed by Anthony Asquith and starred Laurence Olivier and Penelope Dudley-Ward (who was Churchill's god-daughter). Olivier's appearance in the film confirms the MOI's approval of it. At this time he was serving in the Fleet Air Arm and his release would have had to be requested by the MOI. The film is used as a vehicle for commenting on the Anglo-Soviet relationship and in this context the Blitz is used as an emblem which demonstrates the superiority of the British class system over Communism.

The film is set in Barchester, the setting for Trollope's cathedral novels. Barchester is a strange, though peculiarly English, conglomeration. It houses a small market town where everybody appears to know each other, an ancient cathedral, a shipyard, a large working-class area, and a country manor. Barchester, therefore represents all classes and sections of the nation, or family of Britain. Olivier plays Ivan, a visiting Russian and Dudley-Ward plays Ann Ranelow, daughter of the shipyard owner. The notion of Anglo-Soviet friendship is implied in the purpose of Ivan's pre-war trip to England. He has come to the British shipyard which is to manufacture a propeller for an *ice-breaking* ship named *Friendship*. Ivan's *revolutionary* propeller is, however, unworkable until modified by the experienced British engineer who owns the shipyard. From the outset the superiority of British culture, in its broadest sense, is implicit and this is further underlined by the film's depiction of Soviet society. Ivan is presented as a comic foreigner whose beliefs, attitudes, and, perhaps most significant of all, sense of humour, are alien to the British way of life. There is also a sinister undertone running through the first section of the film. Ivan reports regularly to the Trade Delegation, a body linked in the public mind, through the Zinoviev letter and the Arcos Raid, with the NKVD. At the end of the first section of the film Ivan returns to Russia with all his

"stereotypical" prejudices about British society confirmed.

The second section of the film concerns Ivan's return to England after the outbreak of war. He finds that life in Barchester is very much the same as before. The only visible difference is the planes in the skies overhead and the sound of air raid sirens. The pivotal point of the film comes when the shipyard is raided. Contrary to usual practice, on this occasion the plot of the film demanded that German bombing was associated with a military target. From here on Ivan's prejudices are swept away, his admiration for and understanding of British society demonstrated.

The main comment on British attitudes to bombing, however, is reserved for the domestic setting of the Ranelow household. The presentation of the air raid as compared to that in *Mrs Miniver* demonstrates the way in which images of the Blitz could be shaped according to purpose. In *Demi-Paradise* the raid is an event which causes little consternation in the Ranelow household. The opportunity is taken to introduce some humour, the idea that an air raid was an occasion for jollity and laughter had not been abandoned. Two humorous incidents are linked to the air raid. Firstly, the worry that the air raid might upset the song of the nightingale, which at that moment is being recorded by BBC engineers. Secondly, the Jeeves-like butler's concern to ensure that the engineers are offered shelter in a place appropriate to their social station (the cupboard under the stairs) should the occasion arise.

After the air raid the shipyard employees work at double speed to get the propeller finished and ship launched on time. Ivan's speech at the launch of the ship confirms what has been amply demonstrated. His misconceptions about Britain have been replaced with the knowledge that the British are "...a great

people...". It is through observing the British in Blitz conditions that Ivan comes to this revelation. The resolution of the film proves beyond doubt, with Ivan's affirmation, that the British class system is superior in every way to that of Communism.

The close similarity between *Mrs Miniver* and *Demi-Paradise* in their location and range of class representative characters was no accident. These aspects of film had been singled out in an MOI report of December 1939 as being particularly significant:

...Clearly the background presented in ordinary commercial film is important... the complex nature of British social life... due emphasis on the importance of the individual as well as on the importance of the community...⁴³

These are features which both films incorporate but each uses the Blitz as symbol for delivering a very different message. In *Demi-Paradise*, a film for the home audience, we see that Britain's class-based social system has stood the test imposed by bombing. Life carries on much the same as before. As presented in an Americanised format the Blitz was used as a symbol of the breakdown of class barriers in Britain.

These films turned back to Britain's hour of glory - the Blitz - at a time when the main focus of war news had moved away from Britain's role and towards the Soviet Union's. This new focus caused difficulty for the MOI on both the domestic and international fronts. At home, it was feared that certain sections of British society might translate enthusiasm for Russian bravery into blanket admiration for the Communist system. Internationally, American political and material support was still crucial for the British war effort but it remained

necessary to demonstrate the continuing importance of Britain's contribution. One way of dealing with this was to remind British and American audiences of Britain's role so far in the war against Nazism.

The theme of Britain's contribution to the war through the Battle of Britain and the Blitz was, paradoxically, most successfully presented in an American film. When America entered the war Frank Capra was seconded to make a series of 'orientation' films for the American Army. One of these series was entitled *Why We Fight* and the fourth film of this series was about Britain's role in the war. The film gave fulsome praise to both the RAF and British civilians for their heroic resistance to the Luftwaffe. Since the film footage was edited together from a number of existing propaganda and feature films and newsreels, the British public were already familiar with many of its images. The source materials naturally confirmed the mythic images of the Blitz and of Britain itself, although in a form readily accessible to American audiences. The skills and techniques of Hollywood methods gave it additional gloss. As Angus Calder points out, no other film about this period of the war, during which Britain heroically 'stood alone' against the Nazi invader, reached such a large audience.⁴⁴ The film was given general release in Britain in Autumn 1942. Churchill provided a preface for the film and was instrumental in ensuring its general release.⁴⁵

...Britons were happy to accept it...It gave due praise from a powerful ally - an ally which had brought to the war industrial and military might far exceeding that of their own country, but which could never match the moral authority represented by the image of St Paul's dome above the ruins...⁴⁶

Although the Blitz was no longer 'hot news' its dramatic potential provided an ideal vehicle for continued propaganda use through other media channels, from MOI shorts, to American documentaries and feature films. Although the

images themselves were familiar ones, the messages attached to them were moulded for different purposes, as the examples quoted above show.

The symbol of the Blitz was a theme which was reprised in many formats and styles. In the 1942 short film *Arms From Scrap*, made by the MOI in conjunction with the Ministry of Supply, the familiar phoenix metaphor of rebirth was applied to a more mundane topic than social change. The film, with a commentary by Leslie Mitchell, was shown by Movietone. It opened with scenes of the December 1940 fire raids on London and the acknowledgement that similar damage had been suffered in other cities when "...the Luftwaffe did its worst...". Care was taken to point out that damage was also caused to historic and government buildings, with special reference to the House of Commons. This was followed by shots of clearance of damaged areas, "...gaping wounds of towns, cities, villages have been cleansed...". The next scene was of the processing of scrap metal, collected during the clearance. The audience was assured that this would be used to make weapons - ships, planes, guns, tanks - for the continuing war, "...from the homes of Britain and areas laid bare are being forged weapons for our offensive...". It has, of course, since been confirmed that much of the scrap collected was in fact totally useless for the purpose of manufacturing weapons, but the propaganda value of this activity was believed to be valuable.

In the changing circumstances of this phase of the air war the MOI set about harnessing familiar images of the RAF, of bombing, and of Britain to new policy objectives. Throughout 1941 and 1942 the MOI, assisted by the output of commercial companies, remoulded images of the Blitz period in a number of different ways. These images were used to call upon ideas of national unity embedded in the defunct 'Britain Can Take It' theme through the creation of a new "team spirit". The Blitz was cited as justification for the promised bomber

offensive. In response to the perceived challenge presented by new political configurations, both at home and abroad, the Blitz was symbolised as a catalyst of both social change, and as proof that traditional social structures had helped Britain to survive its ordeal. The overarching concept within which these themes were presented was the new one of 'democracy'. The Blitz also came to be seen as a synonym for Britain's 'unique' contribution to the war against Germany, matching, even surpassing, American economic power and Russian military might.

From the outset of the war the Cabinet's view of the function of propaganda was tied to military success and the conduct of the war effort but in this period Britain met with a series of military setbacks. The MOI attempted to assuage the blows to morale by holding out the promise of a strategic air offensive aided by new technology and greater efforts of production. Moral doubts about this method of warfare had no place in the propaganda picture, which continued to present all RAF operations as conducted according to the highest moral standards, albeit within the limitations of the war plan set in motion by the Luftwaffe.

CHAPTER SIX

The Bomber Offensive: Bombing Policy 1943-45

In studying the Bomber Offensive, the period 1943-45 needs to be considered as a whole. In order to understand propaganda about the bomber offensive it is necessary to outline developments in bombing policy. Connections between changing policy, propaganda output, Harris's role and his relationship with the Air Ministry are complex. The latter stages of the Bomber Offensive were carried out in a context of dispute between Harris and the Air Ministry about the role assigned to the RAF, and the way this was publicised. These disputes are central to the historical debate about the RAF's strategic effectiveness, the morality of the way in which it was deployed, and Harris's part in bombing policy. Each of three areas - policy, propaganda output, and Harris's role - will be dealt with in the following chapters.

This chapter will examine bombing policy for the period 1943-45, during which time it was subject to a number of revisions. The outline presented here will chart the major policy developments, as outlined in the official history of the air war by Webster and Frankland. It will serve to set the context in which propaganda was formulated, and a backdrop against which to set the role of Harris and Bomber Command, both of which will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

1943 was the year in which the long-planned and publicised strategic Bomber Offensive began. The tactics and technology developed by the RAF during the testing years of 1941 and 1942 came to fruition. Harris was confident that, at last, the potential of air power as a 'war-winner' would be demonstrated.¹

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 the Allies announced the policy of unconditional surrender and their commitment to an air policy founded on a strategic bombing offensive against Germany was sealed. From this point the bomber offensive was designated a Combined operation and a new directive governing the operations of both British and American Bomber Commands in the UK was drafted.

There were, however, differing opinions about both the use^{of} air power and the grand strategy of the war. The directive which governed the Combined Bomber Offensive rested on an uneasy consensus reflecting the different strategic concepts of air power held by Britain and America. At this point, however, the two strategies were seen as complementary. Bomber Command would concentrate on night area attack, with the aim of achieving maximum destruction and dislocation of German industry. America would concentrate on daylight selective attack against particular industrial targets. Overall, the two halves of the campaign would harmonise in a 'round-the-clock' bombing operation. So, although Casablanca was a joint directive, in these early years the Commands effectively operated separately.²

The promise of the Combined Bomber offensive was viewed by Churchill as a means of assuaging Russian demands for a Second Front, while allowing time to prepare for its opening at a time suited to Britain.³ For the moment Churchill's advocacy of a Mediterranean strategy was accepted but the Americans who favoured a 'Germany first' strategy:

...pushed, if discreetly, for a command and control structure which would ensure that, when Overlord arrived the conduct of such an offensive would either be in American hands or in hands belonging to someone in full agreement with American theories of air power...⁴

The objective of the combined air offensive was defined in broad terms as:

...the progressive destruction of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their armed resistance is fatally weakened...⁵

The opening paragraph of the Casablanca Directive, quoted above, set out the broad scope of the Bomber Offensive. Within this target priorities were identified as: submarines, aircraft, transport, oil, other targets in enemy war industry. Bomber Command concentrated on the area offensive and the USAAF on specific target industries.

American adherence to an air policy of daylight, selective attack during early 1943 proved difficult to operate in European weather conditions. When the bombers were able to launch raids, in particular deep penetration raids into Germany, losses became unsupportable. For the American Air Force the directive arising from the Casablanca Conference and the American theory of air power "...had become a test to which dutiful adherence meant disastrous loss in combat...".⁶ The experience of the Americans gave weight to Harris's claim that precision attacks were too costly, and that the RAF's tactic of area bombing was superior.

In early 1943 a variety of individual targets in Germany, including Hamburg and Berlin, came under heavy attack from the RAF. In early March Harris made his first complaint about targeting to the Air Staff. He was unhappy about diverting from area bombing of Germany for any reason and recent directives had required his Command's participation in selective attacks on enemy-occupied territory, directed against the aircraft and U-Boat industries.

He argued that these were "diversions" which would hinder the Directive requiring a general attack against Germany. When Portal was consulted about Harris's complaints he wrote to the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Ops) that Harris had no reason to complain because for the majority of Bomber Command operations he was given latitude to concentrate on Germany:

...What his Directive really means is that he should obliterate Hamburg, Bremen and Kiel as quickly as possible....⁷

"Diversions" against U-boat targets and aircraft industries would only apply on occasions when the weather was unsuitable for long-range attacks against targets in Germany. The policy of area attacks was to be the main focus of Bomber Command operations. Harris ensured that these were carried out and by the end of March 1943 was rewarded with promotion to the rank of Air Chief Marshal.

During the spring of 1943 the RAF began sustained campaigns against German cities. The first was the "Battle of the Ruhr", during the period March to July. This consisted of 43 separate attacks over 39 nights on targets in the Ruhr Valley - Essen, Dusseldorf, Muster, Duisburg and Cologne, amongst others. These cities were in the industrial heartland of Germany but area bombing had as its main target the residential areas at the centre of the towns. The industrial areas were generally dispersed into the less vulnerable suburbs.⁸ The pilots who flew these missions dubbed the area "The Happy Valley". For them these were difficult and dangerous raids and many did not come back. The German High Command had devoted considerable resources to new air defence measures which were highly effective and Bomber Command suffered high loss rates in both men and machinery. The battle resulted in a total loss rate of 16% of bombers. In human terms this meant approximately 6,000 men killed,

wounded or taken prisoner. ⁹

On 10 June 1943 the Casablanca Directive was revised with the insertion of the Pointblank directive. Pointblank announced direct attack against the German Air Force as an essential 'intermediate' objective for the ultimate achievement of Casablanca's goals.

Divisions between British and American bombing policy remained but were still accommodated within the scope of the Pointblank directive. Industrial dislocation and the morale objective remained as the 'main aim' of Bomber command. The 'intermediate' objective was seen as largely an American concern. It was stated that the Pointblank directive:

...does not attempt to prescribe the...effort of RAF Bomber Command...Fortunately, the industrial areas to be attacked are in most cases identical with the industrial areas which the British Bomber Command has selected for mass destruction anyway...¹⁰

In practice then, 'Bomber' Harris retained a free hand and area attacks by Bomber Command against the towns and cities of Germany continued, although with some interruptions in aid of Pointblank. Harris's independence was tacitly supported by the British Chiefs of Staff whose attitude to a proposed combined command structure, in line ^{with} American thinking, was in any event ambivalent.¹¹

On 30 June, Churchill spoke about the progress of the war and the role of the air offensive.

...Three years ago Hitler boasted that he would 'rub out' - that was the term - the cities of Britain.....But now those who sowed the wind are reaping the whirlwind... These forces will be remorselessly applied

to the guilty nation and its wicked leaders,
...never was there such a case of the
biter bitten...¹²

What was now made explicit by Churchill was the "guilt" of the German nation. The distinction between ordinary Germans and Nazis was no longer drawn. A factor which went hand-in-hand with the new policy of unconditional surrender.

Undaunted by the losses suffered during the "Battle of the Ruhr" and bolstered by reports of its apparent effectiveness, Bomber Command pressed on with the area attack. The next target was Hamburg, attacked between 24 July and August 2, with the aid of the new radar-jamming device, Window. The attack on Hamburg was, by Bomber Command's operational standards, a complete success. The loss rate was low and the destruction level high. The report of the Police President of Hamburg recorded:

...The cause of the enormous extent of the heavy damage and particularly of the high death rate in comparison with former raids is the appearance of firestorms. In consequence of these a situation arose...which must be regarded in every respect as new and unpredictable...¹³

Creating a firestorm was the ultimate aim of the incendiary technique and the major cause of the devastating effect of area bombing. Temperatures could reach 2,000 degrees centigrade, winds gale force 10. The conditions created by firestorms rendered defence impossible. Victims suffocated, were burnt alive, or were overcome by poisonous fumes released by the chemicals contained in incendiary bombs and markers. The scale of the destruction was vast. The total area of Hamburg was 8,383 acres, the area destroyed was 6,200 acres. By December, the Police President reported, the number of deaths had still not been settled. " ...The destruction was so immense that of

many people nothing remains...".¹⁴ Posterity has recorded a conservative estimate of 30,000 killed. One million were made homeless.¹⁵ Harris's codename for the operation against Hamburg, "Gomorra", was well-chosen.

In September and October similar attacks against German cities continued as a prelude to the major prize - Berlin. Berlin was regarded by the PWE as a primary *morale* target, but only if any raid mounted was successful in achieving its objective.¹⁶ Churchill had long pressed for Berlin to be subjected to attack by Bomber Command.¹⁷ The first salvoes in the Battle of Berlin took place in August and September but the main force was carried out between November 1943 and March 1944.

Berlin was a huge target, the third largest city in the world, administrative centre of the German empire, centre for factories and communications, and home to a population of millions. It was also heavily defended by both passive measures and Germany's night fighter force. Consequently, the resources Harris demanded to carry out the attack were prodigious - 40,000 tons of bombs, which would represent twenty to twenty-five full-strength raids.¹⁸

From an operational point of view Berlin was a difficult target to reach. It was a deep penetration target - 600 miles there, 600 miles back - with danger from flak batteries and night fighters en route. Defences over the target area itself were well-prepared and effective but it was planned to combat this with the introduction of new tactics. The Command was split into two forces, crossing the enemy coastline 250 miles apart. The bombing period over the target was shortened. The bomb load per aircraft was increased.

As the battle continued from November through to December 1943, the results

were mixed. Some raids were reasonably successful but a number of problems were encountered. Accurate navigation and bomb aiming, even over such large areas, was still not fully achieved. Accuracy relied heavily upon the expertise of Pathfinder forces, who suffered proportionately heavy loss rates and a depletion of experienced senior crew. Demands on all the bomber crews were high and when asked to fly Berlin raids on consecutive nights, a high rate of early return from Main Force squadrons was noted. The increased bomb load crews were expected to carry had a detrimental effect upon the performance of the aircraft and bombs were sometimes jettisoned before the target area was reached. Losses over the target area were added to by an increasing number of crash landings in England, the result of damage received on the way home, or lost aircraft forced to land wherever they could. The casualty figures for the period revealed an alarming escalation, rising from 2% for the first of the five raids to 8.7% for the fifth.¹⁹ Although the overall loss rate remained within 'acceptable' limits these figures, combined with the success of German defensive forces, caused a marked deterioration of morale among aircrews.²⁰

The Air Ministry's response to morale problems was to categorise men who were in fact suffering from battle fatigue (or what might now be called post-traumatic stress) as lacking in moral fibre, or LMF.

... 'Lack of Moral Fibre' was a label which frightened everyone because, if you stopped flying, you were stripped of rank and posted out as an A.C.2 to some other station... Bomber Command was terrified of too many people going sick and reducing the available force and that other crews might catch the 'don't want to fly bug' ...²¹

During 1943 the bomber offensive assumed the characteristics of a war of attrition, testing aircrews to their limits - and beyond but they still kept flying: the LMF sanction, for which the penalties were severe, was one of the ways by

which this was achieved. But the number of aircrews to which LMF was applied was relatively small. By and large the crews were kept flying through a combination of discipline, training, courage, comradeship and loyalty to their Commander, Harris.

During late 1943 and early 1944 British bombing of German cities reached saturation level. This tactic received endorsement from Churchill, as did the strategic importance of the bomber offensive, in a speech to the House of Commons reviewing the progress of the war in February 1944.

...four raids...prove the *value of saturation* in every aspect of the air war...The whole of this air offensive constitutes the foundation upon which our plans for overseas invasion stand...²²

But this apparently confident statement concealed a number of uncomfortable realities. As the date for the launch of Overlord drew closer, the GAF had not been defeated. Command of the air was now recognised as an essential prerequisite for the success of Overlord. Rather than an essentially American concern²³ it was viewed as the key to the success of the strategic bomber offensive. The strategic demands of Overlord now began to take precedence over Pointblank but the question of establishing an effective command structure for Overlord remained to be settled.

The review of the command structure was a source of friction between Britain and America and, once again, conflicting views on how bomber forces should best be deployed was brought into sharp focus. American Service Chiefs pressed for attack upon selected targets (although this did not necessarily equate with precision bombing). Harris continued to argue for area bombing and the morale objective but his position was weakened by growing doubts by Portal

and others about the strategic effectiveness of this tactic.²⁴ At the same time, however, there was a good deal of resentment amongst British Service Chiefs at America's attempts to establish control over the direction of the combined operation by bringing RAF Bomber Command under a centralised command structure.²⁵

The structure of command for Overlord's strategic air forces evolved from a series of complex negotiations. The interest groups involved were Harris, Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, General Spaatz, Commander of the 8th and 15th USAAF and Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, consisting of both British and American elements. At the Cairo Conference, it was proposed that these three groups be brought together under the control of General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander and Air Chief Marshall Tedder, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. This proposal was strongly resisted by both the Secretary of State for Air and the Chiefs of Staff, who made representations to Churchill that he should not agree to any such proposal. British air forces, it was argued, could be used in support of Overlord but should not be brought under the sole command of Eisenhower because they could not then be called upon to protect British interests. This was a view which gained Churchill's support.

An agreement was finally reached by which control of British air forces remained, nominally at least, in the hands of British Chiefs of Staff. The strategic air plan for Overlord was to be drawn up by Sir Arthur Tedder, in consultation with Sir Arthur Harris and General Spaatz. Coordination of bomber operations resulting from the plan was to be undertaken by Sir Arthur Tedder. Tactics for Overlord, including the use of heavy bombers, were to be drawn up by Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, supervised by Sir Arthur Tedder. Such plans had to be approved by Sir Charles Portal and General Eisenhower.

Following approval, the Combined Chiefs of Staff would be asked to assign to General Eisenhower use of the necessary strategic air forces.²⁶ Complex though this arrangement was it nevertheless represented a step forward in the creation of a coherent command structure for Overlord. It remained, however, to reach agreement on a strategy.

The three principal players, Harris, Spaatz and Leigh-Mallory each had different views about the best strategy for Overlord. Leigh-Mallory favoured two main objectives, the attainment of air superiority and disruption of German communication lines in France and western Germany. This strategy was wholly related to the requirements of Overlord, and designed to integrate air operations with land and sea operations. Both Spaatz and Harris were against such a proposal, although for different reasons. Both favoured use of bombers as an independent, rather than fully integrated, strategic method. Both placed the objectives of Pointblank, strategic air attack against Germany, above those of Overlord, preparation for invasion through France. However, Spaatz pushed for selective attack against key sectors of the German war economy, specifically oil production, whilst Harris wished to pursue general attack against Germany, regarding Spaatz's oil plan as merely another 'panacea'. Harris based his arguments on claims that RAF Bomber Command was not operationally geared up for selective attack, daylight operations, or tactical support of ground troops, and that to divert his force from direct attack on Germany would allow industrial recovery to take place, thereby prejudicing the potential success of invasion forces.²⁷ These were not new claims from Harris but the context had changed significantly from the last time this argument had been played out in 1942. By this time the Air Staff had become increasingly sceptical about Harris's claims suspecting that his operational analysis was coloured by his strategic preferences.²⁸

In March 1944, despite Harris's analysis, Bomber Command was diverted from area to the type of selective attack required in support of Overlord, at the specific request of Portal. The aim was to test Harris's claims about the operational capacity of Bomber Command, which was directed to undertake selective attacks against French marshalling yards. The operations were generally successful, demonstrating that Bomber Command did indeed have the capacity for selective attack if required. However, this did not in itself resolve the question of to what extent operations against Germany (Pointblank) should be dropped in favour of operations in France (Overlord).²⁹ The question was further complicated by Churchill's reaction to the proposals put to him in April for attacks directed against communications in France and Belgium.

...These difficulties arose from the scruples of the Prime Minister about the casualties to French civilians which were likely to be caused by the bombing of the French railway system...³⁰

It is interesting to note that British (and indeed American) Service Chiefs seemed quite able to accept the fact of civilian casualties, even those of Allies, as a natural and justifiable consequence of bombing in any theatre of war. Whilst Churchill, a robust supporter of area bombing against Germany, found this unacceptable.

Churchill would not give his seal of approval to the plan, which involved bombing seventy-four railway targets, even though it had been approved by Eisenhower, Portal and the British Chiefs of Staff. He sanctioned attack against only three of the seventy-four targets and referred the plan to the War Cabinet for decision. The War Cabinet, unable to reach a decision, called for a report from the Joint Intelligence Committee and passed the matter on to the

Defence Committee.³¹ However, with D-Day now so close such delay was unacceptable to Eisenhower who wrote to Churchill arguing that the plan was essential to the success of Overlord and that General de Gaulle could be relied upon to explain to France its necessity. The Defence Committee agreed to authorise a "...limited and 'experimental' application of the plan...",³² with the proviso that targets should be limited to those areas where the risk of civilian casualties could be kept to a minimum.

The directive of 17 April 1944, which followed from this agreement, retained as its overall mission for Strategic Air Forces the progressive destruction of Germany, with the immediate objective of first destroying the GAF. However, the "supreme operation" for 1944 was "reentry on the Continent", to which end all support required from air forces by the Allied Armies was to be provided. Within this overall directive specific missions were allocated. The US had as its primary objective destruction of the GAF, both in the air and on the ground, with enemy rail communications system as a secondary objective. Bomber Command would "continue to be employed in accordance with their main aim of disorganising German industry".³³

This directive appeared to reaffirm previously held assumptions, and practice, in respect of the roles of American and British bomber forces. But there was a key difference between this and other directives, and that was defining the "supreme operation" as reentry to the Continent, which implied that all other air operations were subordinated to this end. Although, as we have seen, the use of Bomber Command within the supreme command would be by request, it was unlikely that such requests would be vetoed by Portal who by this time had become frustrated with Harris's stubborn resistance to any change of strategy. Nevertheless, retention of specifically allocated, 'traditional', missions no doubt served to pacify Harris about the role of Bomber Command, and to dispel fears

about loss of control amongst British Chiefs of Staff.

In line with the new directive and despite its definition of roles, Bomber Command was used increasingly to effect the plans for attack against the French railway system. The Prime Minister continued to voice "vigorous opposition"³⁴ to this plan, in particular Bomber Command's leading role, which he felt would damage Anglo-French relations. Nevertheless, between March and June 1944 an increasing proportion of Bomber Command's work was carried out over France rather than Germany. These 'diversionary' activities did, however, have benefits for Bomber Command, which laid the foundation for the return to the strategic offensive against Germany itself. The occupation of France dealt a heavy blow to the German night fighter force. At the same time, it meant that radar guidance for Bomber Command could be sited in France thereby increasing its effectiveness for operations against Germany.³⁵ By the time Bomber Command returned its attention to Germany once more its destructive power had been increased. As Webster and Frankland describe it:

...the strategic air offensive...presently recovered much more than its former vigour and violence. By far the greatest part of the strategic damage done by Bomber Command to Germany in the whole of the war was achieved in the last year...through the agency of what may conveniently be called the final offensive.³⁶

With Overlord successfully achieved attention turned once more to Pointblank (strategic air offensive against Germany). The 'vigour' of the final offensive was assisted by the Allies having won air superiority by the Autumn of 1944.

Discussions about new arrangements for the command of strategic air forces were held at the Quebec Conference in September 1944. Control of bombing operations in Germany passed from the supreme command of Eisenhower back,

jointly, to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (Air) - Portal and General Arnold. (Although Eisenhower's right to call upon air force support when required was protected). Directives would be issued by their representatives, General Spaatz and Sir Norman Bottomley.³⁷

Three elements contributed to the final offensive: oil, communications, and area bombing. Target selection for the renewal of Pointblank was arrived at as a result of ongoing discussion and operational analyses. Oil had been a selected target in previous directives and had been identified as one of exceptional strategic value, if operational problems could be overcome. During early 1944, as a marginal operation to the main efforts for Overlord, attacks had been mounted against oil targets with considerable success. The new directive of 25 September 1944 (Octagon) designated oil as a first priority in the final offensive. Germany's rail and waterborne communications system was given equal second priority, along with tank production plants and depots, ordnance depots and motor vehicle production plants and depots. The GAF now took position as the third priority. "Important industrial areas" were also included in the directive, although without a priority ranking. Attacks upon the identified priority targets, however, were said to be "subject to the exigencies of weather and tactical feasibility".³⁸

Doubts about the way the September directive was implemented, and about the direction of the strategic offensive itself, were being expressed in a number of quarters by October 1944. Bomber Command's part in the operations was only one aspect of the questions that were raised. The major point at issue was the 'question of concentration'.³⁹ Oil had been identified in the September directive as the first priority but concentration upon this target had been dispersed by the requirement to continue providing support to land forces; a

reluctance to commit strategic forces to the communications target; a number of American schemes focusing on targets other than oil; the process of target selection; and Harris's persistent faith in general area bombing.⁴⁰ Webster & Frankland identify this last factor as the major challenge which faced the Air Staff's intention to concentrate on the oil target. It is clear from this list that Harris was not the only Commander whose prosecution of the September directive diverged from Portal's requirements. Nevertheless, the challenge posed by Harris was one which would be most difficult to reconcile with the concept of concentration of effort. Added to this was the difficulty of reaching a compromise with Harris, who, no matter what the arguments put to him, continued to view the oil plan as yet another panacea.

On 1 November 1944, a new directive was issued by Sir Norman Bottomley and General Spaatz. Oil was again given first priority; communications alone (ie excluding tanks etc) were given second priority, this time with a particular emphasis on the Ruhr. (Hurricane I) The clause dealing with important industrial areas remained, again without priority ranking and again only when weather or operational conditions made attack against priority targets impossible. But a new proviso was added, area attacks would be expected to be directed in such a way that they contributed to the maximum destruction of the priority targets - oil and communications, especially in the Ruhr. This point appears to be an attempt to reach a compromise between the respective views of Harris and Portal but nevertheless the oil plan brought confrontation between them to a head and was the issue over which their relationship finally broke down. Their correspondence over the oil plan followed on from a previous dispute about RAF propaganda which had already strained Harris's relationship with the Air Staff, but this will be discussed in a following chapter.

On 12 December 1944 Harris initiated a correspondence with Portal about targeting policy that continued until 25 January 1945. Harris's letter of 12 December gave details of the Operational Research Section's feasibility study of the oil plan. Harris was scathing about MEW (Ministry of Economic Warfare) intelligence about the location and number of oil plants which were to be destroyed. He made it clear that as far as he was concerned the oil plan was merely another "panacea".⁴¹ Portal responded with a full and detailed reply. He disposed of the feasibility study by the Operational Research Section on the basis that it gave an inaccurate picture because it did not take into account the availability of US Forces. He maintained that it was the overriding task of the Allied bomber force to destroy and keep out of action all synthetic plants in Germany because it was essential for the bomber offensive to achieve its goals. He maintained that the task could be achieved by the Allied forces and urged that every opportunity should be taken to press the attack.

...If...the job can be done this winter,
strategic bombing will go down in history
as a decisive factor in winning this war...⁴²

Enhancing the strategic role of the bomber offensive in the history of the war was a prospect as attractive to Portal as it was to Harris. But by this stage they had apparently parted company on the means by which this would best be achieved. Portal continued by suggesting that if Harris did not put his "heart into the attack on oil", then he would be in danger of minimising the role of Bomber Command in the history of the air war. He suggested too that unless Harris gave full support to the oil plan, his staff would not give sufficient priority to it.

Harris replied to this letter on 28 December. He repeated his lack of faith in MEW intelligence and went on to present his well-rehearsed arguments on the

subject of area attacks. Such attacks, he asserted, would achieve a greater effect than any tactical bombing. The point was proved, he believed, by the fact that area attacks had "fortuitously" also destroyed six synthetic oil plants. Harris was clearly affronted by Portal's implication that he had failed to carry out orders contained in Air Ministry directives:

...when the decision is made I carry it out to the utmost and to the best of my ability. I am sorry that you should doubt this, and surprised indeed if you can point to any precedent in support of your statement...⁴³

Portal's marginal notes on this letter confirm that indeed he did not believe that Harris had failed to carry out directives as required. Portal was seeking to convince Harris of the value of the oil plan. If he could do this he might persuade him to devote more effort and enthusiasm to it. Harris, however, clearly saw the increasing proportion of effort devoted to the oil plan as the thin end of the wedge, which might lead to a complete stop on area bombing. Here too, however, Portal's marginal notes are revealing. Against this paragraph he simply wrote, "has he not got 29 good cities on his list".

Correspondence between Portal and Harris about the oil plan continued in a similar vein in January 1945. On 8 January Portal again wrote to Harris, trying to convince him of the value of the oil plan. A significant thread running throughout this letter was an implication that Harris personally was impeding the prosecution of the oil plan because of his lack of enthusiasm for this type of bombing. This time, however, Portal pushed the imputation too far. On 20 January Harris replied to Portal. He reprised the same arguments about the value of the oil plan. He also took issue with Portal's implications of disloyalty, going so far as to suggest that he should give up his post as Chief of Bomber Command.

Portal was quick to retract his charges of disloyalty. He claimed that Harris had misread his letter. "...We must now agree to differ...", he said. He recognised that he could not convert Harris to the oil plan but accepted his assurances that he would continue to carry out the policy. They would have to wait until the war was over before they would know which of them was right. He closed the letter by saying:

...I sincerely hope that until then you will continue in command of the force which has done so much towards defeating the enemy and has brought such credit and renown to yourself and to the Air Force...⁴⁴

Why area bombing continued, even though British Chiefs of Staff were no longer entirely convinced of its strategic value and Bomber Command had proved its operational capacity for selective attack, is the subject of some debate. Webster and Frankland suggest two factors in the continuation of area bombing: operational arguments in favour of area bombing still carried some weight, and conditions during this last year of war brought forth new strategic arguments in favour of targeting German morale. Nevertheless:

...Neither of these reasons...fully explains the gigantic effort devoted to general area bombing by Bomber Command in the final offensive...⁴⁵

However, the lengthy correspondence between Harris and Portal about the oil plan does indicate that area bombing still had a place in overall strategy. For example, Portal's references to the 29 cities on Harris's list. It should be remembered too that the wording of the directive retained the old formula of including industrial areas, which were to be attacked when weather and other tactical limitations prevented selective attack. Harris's faith in the value of area

bombing had never wavered, as all his communications with the Air Staff show but Portal's accusations that Harris was pursuing his own policy in contradiction to that laid down by the Air Staff were not sustained.

Further, as Webster and Frankland show, the notion of a 'knockout blow' against German morale, codenamed *Thunderclap*, still had wide currency amongst British Chiefs of Staff, although now related to carefully defined and particular circumstances. In a memorandum prepared by the Chiefs of Staff for Churchill in July 1944, it was argued that in circumstances where the German High Command was threatened with collapse, an all-out attack on civilian morale might prove decisive in securing German surrender. If such a plan was to succeed, it would depend entirely on pressing the attack at precisely the right moment. Various targets were suggested. Initially, Berlin was favoured but other great cities were also considered - Hamburg, Cologne, Frankfurt or Munich. A final suggestion was to mount such an attack against a town which was "hitherto relatively undamaged".⁴⁶ This, Webster and Frankland, argue was the origin of the raid on Dresden. The proposal was approved and the Chiefs of Staff were asked to prepare plans for it.⁴⁷

Undoubtedly, Harris continued to favour general area bombing as a strategy and persisted in deploying a substantial proportion of Bomber Command's sorties in this way sometimes, apparently, against the wishes of Portal. That he was able to do this owed much to the wording of directives which continued to insert the get-out clause of weather and tactical feasibility. That the Air Staff still retained its belief in the potential of area bombing to deliver a final blow to German morale is clear from the *Thunderclap* plan. Whilst it can be seen that succeeding directives attempted to tighten control over Harris's part in the strategic offensive, it is also clear that area bombing continued to retain a place in the overall strategy for the Combined Bomber

Offensive. The question was not whether or not area bombing should be used, but how and where it should be directed.

At the Quebec Conference, there had been high hopes that the combined bomber offensive would finish the war by the end of the 1944. In the event, the final stages of the strategic air offensive were played out between January and May 1945. At the beginning of 1945, the apparent failure of the bomber offensive, a German counter-offensive in the Ardennes, the launch of V-weapons, and Germany's development of jet aircraft and a new class of submarine seemed to threaten a swift conclusion to the war in Europe. This combination of factors caused anxiety amongst Allied commanders about the progress of the war.

As Webster and Frankland put it:

...The year 1945 opened with a severe sense of anti-climax in the western camp of the Grand Alliance...nowhere was the feeling of frustration more pronounced than in the minds of those concerned with the direction of the strategic air offensive...⁴⁸

None of the commanders involved in the air offensive was satisfied with the results achieved by the close of 1944. Harris believed that the potential of general area offensive had been hampered by the 'diversion' of the oil plan. Tedder that the communications target had not received sufficient priority. American dissatisfaction was shown in their continued search for a new strategy. Portal believed that the oil plan had been only partially successful because of failure to concentrate sufficiently upon the target. All shared the view that too much effort had been diverted in support of ground forces.⁴⁹

In mid-January 1945 a new directive was issued. The GAF, particularly jet production, once more became an objective of attack, although oil and

communications remained first and second priority. Marginal bombing was to be undertaken against German U-boat development. The target priorities contained in this directive were, however, countermanded as a result of developments on other fronts. Russia launched a major new offensive on the Eastern front, which was expected to have a decisive effect on the length of the war. The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) recommended that the oil plan should be continued as an absolute priority; tank factories were identified as the second priority; bombing of communications should also be considered, in order to prevent German reinforcements reaching the Eastern front. Consideration was also given to launching *Thunderclap* (originally discussed in the summer 1944) in conjunction with the Russian advance, and a separate report on this was made.⁵⁰

JIC's *Thunderclap* report was, in turn, discussed by Bottomley and Harris. They agreed that Spaatz's forces should be brought into the operation, which was planned to be of considerable scale - involving simultaneous attacks on Berlin, Chemnitz, Leipzig and Dresden. Portal, who was preparing to attend the Yalta conference, was also consulted. Meanwhile, Churchill, via the Secretary of State for Air, intervened. He wanted to know what plans had been made for air strikes against Germans retreating from the Russian advance. Sinclair reported to Churchill that the question of area attacks against East German cities was 'under consideration'. Churchill responded by asking what action would be taken against "large cities in East Germany" which he said should be regarded as "especially attractive targets".⁵¹ As a result of these consultations a further directive was issued on 31 January 1945. Oil remained the first priority but second priority was now given to *Thunderclap*, against "cities where heavy attack will cause great confusion in civilian evacuation from the East and hamper movement of reinforcements from other fronts."⁵² The definition of civilian targets as the first objective for *Thunderclap* gives some

indication that civilian morale was still regarded as a prime objective for area attack.

Attacks against all the suggested the target cities were duly carried out by both Bomber Command and the USAAF. The Dresden raid was, by operational standards, hugely successful, the climax of Bomber Command's area offensive but it was also to become the operation which, above all others, sullied the reputation of Harris and Bomber Command. By April 1945 JIC reported that the objectives of the oil plan and communications campaign had been fulfilled. In short, the aim of the strategic air offensive - to undermine the military, economic and industrial system of Germany to the point of collapse - as set out at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, had at last been achieved.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Beginning of the Area Offensive and Propaganda 1943

The Casablanca Conference of January 1943 opened a new phase of operations for Bomber Command. The propagandists would be responsible for presenting these developments in a suitable form for public consumption. As we have seen from the previous chapter, they would be operating under the difficult circumstances of an increasingly complex war situation; inter-service rivalry; problems with Allied relationships; and internal disputes about bombing policy among Air Staff. This and the next chapter will examine propaganda output for the period of the combined bomber offensive, 1943-45, identifying its themes and structures and how these related to the context.

The promise of a large-scale bomber offensive against Germany had been an underlying propaganda theme for some time. Churchill's speeches, Helmore's broadcasts, aircraft production campaigns, the 1,000 Bomber Raid had all played their part in this long-term promise. But although the promise had been made, the nature of the forthcoming campaign and its objectives had been only vaguely alluded to and propaganda would still have to be formulated within the constraints imposed by the MOI and Air Ministry.

Public announcement at Casablanca of the Combined Bomber Offensive appeared in the first 1943 issue of Universal News. In the second week of January all five newsreels presented the story of a Luftwaffe daylight bombing raid which hit a London school. This meant that in the two newsreel issues for that week (Monday and Thursday) there were no less than seven stories featuring this raid. The stories appeared under a variety of headline titles. The heavy coverage of this incident carried a high propaganda value. It reminded the home front of the continuing possibility of bombing attacks by the

Luftwaffe, the prospect of which continued to exercise the government. It assisted the task of presenting Bomber Command in heroic terms of defending Britain against Nazi aggression. It underlined the justification for RAF retaliation against Germany.

One of the tactics developed by Bomber Command during 1942 and brought into play for the offensive of 1943 was the Pathfinder force, used to find and mark targets. Pathfinder was first used in an attack against Berlin on 16 January 1943. This raid was something of a propaganda coup for the BBC which gained permission for a reporter, Richard Dimbleby, to accompany the mission. Dimbleby's eye-witness report, having been passed by the appropriate censors before transmission, was broadcast on the home news bulletins of 18 January.

The broadcast first paid tribute to the pilots who undertook such missions as a matter of routine, and rather in the manner of *Target for Tonight* talks the listeners through the various stages of the raid; the flight out, the approach over the target, flying through the flak attack, dropping the bombs on target, and, as an addition to his original script, a description of the flight home. It is worth quoting at some length Dimbleby's description of area bombing:

...just then another Lancaster dropped a load of incendiaries, and where, a moment before, there had been a dark patch of the city, a dazzling silver pattern spread itself - a rectangle of brilliant lights - hundreds, thousands of them - winking and gleaming and lighting the outlines of the city around them. As though this unloading had been the signal, score after score of fire bombs went down, and all over the dark face of the German capital these great incandescent flower-beds spread themselves...I saw the pin-points merging, and the white glare turning to a dull, ugly red as the fires of bricks and mortar and wood spread from the chemical flares...¹

The style of the report is strikingly different from broadcasts by Air Ministry personnel, such as Group Captain Helmore. Dimbleby, of course, was a professional, versed in the techniques of broadcasting. The language is vivid, conveying a sense of excitement and wonder which, even now, has an immediate impact. The description of what he witnessed gives a detailed, graphic account of the mechanics of area bombing, giving a strong impression of the striking power of the RAF. But nowhere in his report is there any mention of the human cost of the raid, either for Germans or British bomber crews. The impression is of an abstract operation, rather like a glorious firework display.

As journalism, and propaganda, the report works well and its powerful effect was something which the BBC propagandists sought to build on. It was argued that public interest in Bomber Command could be stimulated by presenting its operations in such new and dramatic forms. Permission for this, however, rested with the Air Ministry. Accordingly, in February 1943 the Director General of the BBC wrote directly to Sir Charles Portal requesting his assistance.

...I believe we were at Winchester together a long time ago, but I don't need that excuse for writing to you personally on a matter which I believe is just as important to you as it is to us...it is very important both for the Services and for the morale of the civilian population here, including particularly factory workers, that broadcasting about active operations on land, sea or in the air should be as live and as "near the bone" as it is possible to make them...²

With his letter he enclosed a private and confidential report prepared by senior BBC staff. It was argued that greater support and co-operation from the Air Ministry was called for if broadcasts of RAF operations were to be effective in

maintaining public interest. The need for more "actuality" in broadcasts in order to achieve this was strongly pressed. The term "actuality" was used broadly to refer to a variety of methods; sound recording, outside broadcasting from RAF stations, direct recording of interviews with pilots, and sending observers on operations.³ In addition, it was argued that the BBC should have greater control over scripts for news and talks. The BBC had argued for many months with the Air Ministry about the quality of scripts provided by Air Ministry PR men, which were not allowed to be altered by professional scriptwriters at the BBC.⁴

In presenting its case the BBC used as a lever the more effective American media coverage of air war news. American Air Force chiefs took a more relaxed and open attitude to the media than their British counterparts, resulting in more dramatic and eye-catching news stories. The US Air Force had developed close contact with American media services over a long period and its new role in Europe was heavily publicised by them. It seems also that the US authorities were keen to extend this relationship to embrace the British media services.⁵ The point was pressed in the report:

...the US Army Air Corps has already shown itself willing to grant liberal facilities... While we cannot ignore the availability of such US facilities when they are offered to us,...we are naturally anxious that they should not result in a false emphasis in our broadcasts...⁶

Foot was referred to the Air Ministry's propaganda 'expert', Air Marshall Peck. Between them an agreement was reached, making some concessions to the BBC's requests. However, it was recognised by both parties that translating this effectively at an operational level would be difficult and they arranged to maintain personal contact so as to ensure that any difficulties could be speedily resolved.

The level at which these negotiations were conducted and the concessions granted underline the importance attached to coverage of the RAF in this new phase of its operations. Propaganda structured around the RAF's current role would serve to boost home-front morale, and maintain a high public profile for Britain's role in the Alliance of the 'Big Three'.

During the "Battle of the Ruhr", between March and July 1943, a total of 21 newsreel stories about the bomber offensive were shown. Of these, three featured a specific target, the Renault works in France. The remaining eighteen featured area attacks against Germany. Some of these stories focussed on cities - Cologne, Essen, and Berlin. Others were more general, referring, for example, to 'round-the-clock bombing'. One feature all these stories had in common was an emphasis on the new scale of the offensive.⁷ In addition, during April, four of the newsreels (BMN, BPN, GBN and UN) featured the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the RAF and each of them gave the story the prime slot.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, a high price was paid by Bomber Command in the Ruhr campaign. Increasingly, young and relatively inexperienced crews were expected to undertake ever more dangerous missions and the scale of losses affected both their morale and operational efficiency. Propaganda emphasising RAF successes played its part in concealing this from the public. In a BBC broadcast for the twenty-fifth anniversary, the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, described the contemporary mood of the RAF as one of "...confidence in their growing strength and in the justice of their cause..." and the men themselves as men of "...cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows...".⁸ Max Hastings's assessment of the mood amongst Bomber Command at this time reveals a rather different picture:

...The mood of this new Bomber Command was utterly different from that of 1939... the idea of a squadron as a family, had been replaced by that of a human conveyor belt, a magic lantern show of changing faces...⁹

During the "Battle of the Ruhr" Bomber Command were 'diverted' for a special mission which won them a good deal of publicity and praise. This was the "dam-busting" raid which took place in May 1943 and remains to this day one of the most famous of Bomber Command's wartime operations. Thirty-two of those taking part in the operation received decorations and the leader of the raid, Guy Gibson, became a national hero. Like Quentin Reynolds, he was dispatched to America to begin a lecture tour. It was even proposed that a feature film of the operation should be made but the idea foundered on the Air Ministry's suspicion of what Hollywood might do with the story.¹⁰

In real terms the mission, though spectacular, was not a great success. The damage caused to the Mohne and Eder dams was swiftly repaired. But the episode did bring Bomber Command a much-needed boost:

...the real and lasting effect of the dams raid was psychological, producing an upsurge of public praise and confidence from which the whole of Bomber Command benefited...¹¹

The dams raid represented a rare event for Bomber Command's part in the offensive. It was a "successful" attack on a precision target of the kind which, for Bomber Command, remained the exception rather than the rule.

As the offensive against Germany got under way, the home front audience were also being reminded of their own experience of bombing via the release of two feature films in April 1943, *Fires Were Started* and *Bells Go Down*.

Fires Were Started was the project of Humphrey Jennings, creator of the successful and highly praised films *London Can Take It* and *Heart of Britain*.

In the case of this film, however, the commercial distributors were extremely reluctant to fulfil their distribution agreement with the MOI.

In an internal memo of November 1942 Jack Beddington, Director of MOI Films Division, explained that both the Managing Director of General Film Distributors Ltd (GFD) and Mr Jarratt of the G-B circuit were:

...most reluctant to offer it for booking in its present condition. Both of them criticised the picture severely as entertainment and as propaganda...¹²

The commercial distributors had demanded that the film should be cut. It was too slow and too long, they complained. It was also suggested that a commentary should be added explaining that the film represented the experience of a volunteer Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) crew. It was argued that the apparently amateurish performance of the fireman was bad propaganda. A complaint which reveals the way in which earlier propaganda images of the Blitz were being remoulded. The voluntary effort and improvisation, so highly praised in 1940, was no longer regarded as a suitable image of Britain at war.

Jennings was of the opinion that this reluctance to accept the film for distribution was simply a cover to protect the viability of the commercially produced *Bells Go Down*, and was scornful of the standards of entertainment by which the commercial distributors judged his film. In a letter to his wife he complained:

...All sorts of people - official and otherwise - who apparently had not the courage to speak out before, suddenly discovered that that was what they had thought all along, that the picture was much too long and much too slow...All this arising out of the criticism of one or two people in Wardour Street, who had other irons in the fire anyway and who fight every inch against us trespassing on what they pretend is their field...¹³

The MOI were, however, very keen that the film should be released on the commercial circuit although, apparently, in sympathy with the criticisms made. In the light of the government's anxiety about retaliatory raids by the Luftwaffe it remained essential that faith in protective measures, in particular the fire service, should be upheld. The recommendations of the distributors were accepted.

As requested, the film was cut and the suggested commentary was included in the credit titles,¹⁴ which explained that the film was representative of the experience of the voluntary AFS, and that the lessons learned had played their part in the creation of a national, and by implication more professional, fire brigade in mid-1941. Nevertheless, the MOI still had to apply pressure to ensure the film's commercial release. In early March 1943 Jack Beddington wrote to the Director of GFD:

...If there is any way in which the Ministry can be helpful...we should be pleased to do our best...With regard to your view that a circuit booking would not be possible...I am going to ask you to do your level best...Nevertheless I am not going to have you shot at dawn if you find it impossible...After all, there are plenty of other theatres in the UK...May I hope to have some better news from you about it soon...¹⁵

This reminder of the value of MOI support combined with an appeal to patriotic duty achieved the desired effect. The film was released on the commercial circuit by GFD. MOI assistance and goodwill could not be dispensed with even in the apparently independent commercial system, and the importance the MOI attached to the topic of this film is demonstrated by their insistence that it should receive full commercial distribution.

With the release of both the documentary treatment and the commercial film, cinema audiences were exposed during 1943 to two major films on the theme of the heroism and bravery of firemen during the London Blitz. Both films concentrated on the Dock fires in the East End. Jennings's film followed the

cannons of documentary realism, using real firemen rather than professional actors, and was regarded as an aesthetic delight even by those who were severely critical of much of his work. The Documentary Newsletter proclaimed the film:

...the best of the Crown films...the best handling of people...that we've seen in any British film...¹⁶

Ealing's *Bells Go Down*, by contrast, had a cast of star professional actors - Tommy Trinder, James Mason and Mervyn Johns. Tommy Trinder was, of course, a popular comic actor and the MOI had long regarded comedy as one of the most useful of propaganda vehicles, particularly for the working-class audience. For the film's commercial backers, the stars guaranteed good box-office receipts.

Analysis of the films shows a number of similarities and contrasts. Both followed a similar pattern, focussing on particular qualities - bravery, courage, teamwork, individualism.¹⁷ But each was different in style and film techniques. Jennings' images were lyrical and the techniques those of documentary. The appeal of the Ealing film rested on a mix of comedy and pathos, its techniques were those of commercialism. The stock of characters in each of the films, drawn from a range of working-class stereotypes, was also distinctive. The characters in the Ealing film were drawn largely from the 'chirpy Cockney' mould. This is particularly evident in the character played by the star of the film, Tommy Trinder. He is part of an extended East End family, something of a ne'er do well, but lovable with it. His gradual moulding into the team and ultimate sacrifice of course serve to redeem any lingering doubt about his worth. James Mason, the station chief, is of the 'respectable' working-classes. He is of the old-school, something of a killjoy, but it is his skill and knowledge that

mould the men into a team who prove their worth on the night of the fire. The men of Jennings' film are from good, traditional, honest working-class occupations. The jobs they do define them as sturdy, reliable and sensible.

The opening sequences of both films introduced each of the men of the sub-station. Given the characters of the men of *Fires Were Started*, implicit in their occupations, it is clear that they have joined the service motivated by the desire to serve the community. The men of *Bells Go Down*, drawn from a different working-class stereotype, are motivated to join the AFS not by high ideals but rather to escape some worse evil (with the exception of one who had experienced bombing in Spain). The men of *Fires Were Started* appeared from the beginning as a unified team. In *Bells Go Down*, which takes a longer perspective, we see the men of the Regulars and AFS moulded into a team. *Bells Go Down* enacts the experience of the Blitz as engendering unity amongst a disparate group. In *Fires Were Started* this notion is implicit from the beginning. These were, of course, standard themes of Blitz imagery for the home front audience but there are important differences from the 1940 coverage. The rejection of voluntaryism and improvisation is one. Another is the way in which the main focus has shifted away from civilian reactions to bombing (absence of panic and cheerfulness) towards the recruitment of civilians to government service and how this forges national unity.

The next section of both films concerned the Blitz itself serving to demonstrate the teamwork and bravery of the firemen. In both cases life is sacrificed. The closing scenes of both films, a funeral in one and a christening in the other are important icons of sacrifice and of rebirth, demonstrating the strength and faith of a Christian people.

Both films emphasise teamwork, which is exemplified in the fire-fighting

scenes, as well as individualism. In *Fires Were Started* the members of the team are introduced, each with their different mannerisms and occupations. On the way to the fire each member of the team is shown in a full close-up on the face, always an intimate and revealing camera shot. In *Bells Go Down* the members of the team are individualised by an examination of their personal and family lives. The emphasis on teamwork and individualism evident in both films reflects the MOI policy decisions of 1941, when the concept of "democracy" and the idea of team spirit were introduced.

Documentary Newsletter's enthusiastic review of *Fires Were Started* asked:

...Who would have thought that a film about the Blitz could seem timely and important now?...¹⁸

One answer to this question, although the reviewer did not suggest it, was MOI policy-makers. It was Williams who had pointed out back in 1941:

...If morale is to be kept high, the appeal to reason must be reinforced by a moral appeal which will carry men and women through a period of emotional frustration caused by an inability to embark on any large scale military offensive or give Russia...full military support...¹⁹

In 1943 with a land offensive in support of Russia again postponed and the Bomber Offensive offered in its stead, it was the Blitz to which the MOI turned. Recalling for the home-front audience their days of heroism, and reminding them of the necessity for the Bomber Offensive in a way which retained the moral high ground. The two films appealed to very different audiences but their simultaneous release ensured that an essentially similar message would be received by a wide-ranging target audience.

The press also contributed to the general spread of coverage about the RAF. One method (also extended to the BBC and newsreels) was by allowing the

press the "privilege" ²⁰ of interviewing prominent Air officers. Air Ministry authority for Commanders-in-Chief to be invited to give personal interviews, breaking the previously held anonymity rule, had been given in July 1942 because it was believed important:

...from the point of view of propaganda,
that the names and personalities of our high
officers and commanders should be widely known...²¹

Even so, the system was subject to controls. Commanders were instructed to avoid, as far as possible, any reference to future operations. In circumstances where it was unavoidable to refer to the future the "greatest discretion" was called for. Direct quotes could only be used with the express permission of Commanders, who were cautioned to choose their words with care. Any press article resulting from such interviews had to be made available for "scrutiny and censorship". (Scripts for newsreel and broadcasts were pre-censored).²²

Churchill kept a keen eye on the press, where he often found stories which displeased him. In March 1943 at a Chiefs of Staff meeting where the question of press interviews was under discussion, the PM's suggestion that "special permission" should be obtained for such interviews or press conferences was accepted. However, since this ruling would also affect "off-the-record" conferences, Churchill's permission was sought, and granted, to allow these to continue so that a Commander could "...explain the way in which he wishes the operations to be handled by the press...".²³

Despite the apparent confidence the Air Ministry displayed in its ability to handle the press, it was not enough to satisfy Churchill. For example, in June 1943 both Air Marshall Peck and Air Marshall Leigh Trafford-Mallory had

given interviews which incurred Churchill's displeasure. He wrote to Bracken complaining that the sorts of information given and questions answered were such that they should receive "serious ministerial attention beforehand". He went on to say that the practice needed even tighter control, suggesting that all such interviews should be read by the Minister responsible and Bracken himself. This, of course, had the effect Churchill desired of considerably reducing the volume of interviews by Service Chiefs.²⁴ By the end of 1943 personal interviews by Air Commanders were banned altogether.

Meanwhile, press news reports continued to cover the exploits of RAF Bomber Command in Germany. On July 1 the Daily Express²⁵ reported that Cologne was still burning following a raid on the previous Monday. Vivid descriptions of the raid, provided by "Axis sources", were included in the report. This included, buildings which had been "wafted away by blockbusters" and the dropping of "phosphorous bombs which had unimaginable effects". The caption to an RAF reconnaissance photograph of "saturated" Wuppertal, which formed part of the same report, described the picture as showing "a smashed railway, a blitzed foundry and wreckage of a city industrial belt". Also included in the report was speculation about the amount of damage inflicted on Cologne cathedral, which it was noted "German propaganda has been lavishly and variously describing as damaged, seriously damaged and destroyed". Along with this story were other air war reports: a House of Commons statement by the Under Secretary of State for Air quoting figures for the bomb tonnage dropped on Germany during the offensive; a report on the American contribution, giving figures for the number of German fighters claimed by the American Flying Fortresses; and, on the home front, information about changes in the Fire Guard regulations; a report of a new siren system which would "avoid needless work hold-up"; and a warning from Herbert Morrison that the

Luftwaffe might bomb Britain at any time. This last item was apparently confirmed by a short piece quoting the German News Agency that "full Axis air strength is being held back to be thrown in with greater effect at the decisive moment".

All this information (along with other stories) was crammed onto the front page of the paper. The main report of the raid on Cologne, accompanied by a picture of Wuppertal, presents a confused picture of events. Although there is some realistic description of the method and effects of area bombing most of it is attributed to Axis or unidentified sources. This has the curious double effect of suggesting that the affect of British bombing may (or may not) have been exaggerated by German propaganda. At the same time, the authentic RAF reconnaissance picture provides proof of the effectiveness of Bomber Command but specifically avoiding any mention of the human dimension. Meanwhile, the reports focusing on the possibility of imminent bombing against Britain keeps to the forefront the necessity of Bomber Command's operations.

During August press and newsreel coverage of the air war concentrated on the raids against Hamburg and Berlin. In the issue, 12 August, four of the newsreel companies (Universal, Pathe, Gaumont British and British Paramount) carried the story of Bomber Command's raid on Hamburg. In the issue of 30 August all five companies carried the story of the raid on Berlin. Again the stories were given emphasis by using terms such as 'destruction' and 'devastation', to describe the effect of the bombing. During September and October the attack against Berlin was suspended and newsreel stories about the air offensive declined ²⁶ In two weeks during November when the attack on Berlin was resumed prominent coverage of the air war returned, with a total of eight stories.

The film footage which was an integral part of these stories was supplied by the Air Ministry. Paradoxically, in the case of film footage less can be gleaned about the effect of area attack on the ground than was available through press reports. The picture presented in RAF operational films was very much like that described in Dimbleby's eye-witness account of the raid on Berlin - pinpricks of light, occasional flashes and a distant glow of fires - all creating the general effect of a firework display. Images of the night attack were sometimes followed by high altitude daytime reconnaissance photographs, which were used to point to damaged railways and factories. These, of course, were seen as legitimate military targets. Damage to housing or references to civilians found no place in these reports.

The tone of the commentaries, delivered in the strident style of the time, were unrelentingly jingoistic,²⁷ and reflected the commitment to the policy of unconditional surrender. Complete destruction of Germany was promised and justified:

...Destruction returns with interest to the gangsters HQ...those who remember...will not need to be reminded that Hitler asked for this... that this was inevitable...do you pity these men who murder and torture and defile or do you say this is retribution and there is Berlin getting it...²⁸

These themes were repeated in a 1943 MOI produced short film, the title of which, *The Biter Bit*, was taken from Churchill's June speech about the air offensive. The film summarised the history and development of the air war. It opens with Luftwaffe attacks on Norway, Rotterdam and Warsaw and then moves to the Blitz on Britain. The section on Britain features a long list of names of bombed towns, with pictures of London and Coventry. Much is made of the German invention of the term "Coventrated". From here the film moves on to the reply, with scenes of production of heavy bombers and the

gathering together of Empire, British and American airmen. This is followed by a round up of bombing operations against Germany - the 1,000 Bomber Raid on Cologne, Dusseldorf, Essen, the dams, the Renault works, and Hamburg. The film closes with night shots of bombers taking off and the camera looking down the bomb-aiming sight, to the commentary:

...the German people shall learn once and for all, from their own experience, the quality of the hell they have let loose...²⁹

Here the 'guilt' of the German people, or nation, is even more explicitly stated and this was a key theme of the Churchill speech to which the film's title refers. In the speech Churchill had promised that the bombing force would be "remorselessly applied to the guilty nation *and* its wicked leaders". In marked contrast to the debates in 1941 about the flaws of the Anger Campaign and the desirability of distinguishing between Nazis and Germans as, for example, in Jennings's *Heart of Britain*, Vansittartism had prevailed as a central theme of British propaganda in the new context of the Bomber Offensive.

As can be seen from the examples above, propaganda about the bomber offensive during 1943 was not, apparently, used to hide the scale of destruction being wrought in Germany. On the contrary, newsreels and press reports as well as MOI shorts, seem to revel in the destructive power of RAF Bomber Command, giving graphic descriptions of the techniques and effects of area bombing. A significant thread running through all reports was the reminder that all of this was morally justified because of the Blitz. The examples quoted above are marked by a notable absence of any references to housing damage or attacks against civilians. But since the fulcrum of propaganda had become the guilt of the whole German nation it was a simple matter to avoid such complexities. Vansittartism went hand-in-hand with the policy of

unconditional surrender, announced at the beginning of 1943 at the Casablanca Conference.

CHAPTER EIGHT

From Area Offensive to Saturation Bombing, Propaganda 1943 to 1945

Whilst direct coverage of Bomber Command operations was the most important overall element in propaganda about the bomber offensive, it was not the only one. Behind the public bombast about Bomber Command's achievements during 1943 lay the reality not of a 'knockout blow' but a war of attrition: tactical problems, heavy losses and an increasing strain upon the morale of aircrews.¹ If the offensive was to continue losses had to be replaced and this meant not only men but also machinery.

Harris wrote to the Air Ministry arguing the case for increased production, particularly of Lancasters, "pointing out that the current production...did little more than replace losses."² The problem of production was a constant factor in the continuation of the air offensive, and publicity about Britain's production efforts was regarded as useful not only for the home front but also overseas, particularly in America.³

In September 1943, The Ministry of Production (MoP) was asked by Attlee to provide a report, which had been under preparation for some time, on propaganda activity related to the field of production. For the report the MoP collated information about all types of propaganda on the production theme, released from the beginning of the year. Items included were Ministerial statements; press handouts; booklets; films; special articles; films guidance memorandum; and radio broadcasts. The Information Section of the MOI reported that during 1943 the Publications Division had laid:

...special emphasis...on feature articles
dealing with the many aspects of production and
67 articles on this subject have been issued to

Regional Information officers for distributing to provincial dailies, evenings and weeklies...⁴

The Times had run a 30 week series written by its "Production Expert", and articles had been supplied to eighty works and staff magazines.

In November/December the BBC collaborated with the MoP and MAP on a three programme series, *The Air is Our Concern*.⁵ It was noted that:

...the main object of this series, which was a highly successful one, was to emphasise the importance of aviation to Britain and the tremendous achievements not only of the RAF but also of the scientists, designers, engineers and workers engaged in aircraft production...⁶

As this report notes, the concept of team-spirit remained central. This was often expressed in terms of the idea of Britain as one big family, working together towards the same end. As in the example above, the pilots of the RAF were invariably depicted as the most important members of the family, supported in their endeavours by other family members.

The MOI Films Division had produced nine short films, three of them related to aircraft⁷; "innumerable items in the newsreels"; and were centrally involved in the feature film - *Millions Like Us*.

One of the newsreel items, carried by British Movietone, was *Sky Giant - The Story of the Avro-Lancaster*. In this film too the audience were reminded of the history of the air war, the key points of reference for the achievements of the Bomber Offensive were listed - Augsburg, the 1,000 Bomber raids, Hamburg, Berlin. So too was the familiar litany of German bombing 'atrocities' - Rotterdam, Warsaw, Belgrade, London, Coventry. Scenes of work in progress in the factory were also featured. These scenes are strikingly

different from the 1942 *Speed Up On Stirlings*. In this film there is a real sense of reality of factory production; crowded, dirty and noisy, with a predominantly female workforce. It is noted that the technical specification of the Lancaster lends itself to rapid production but even so, bomber crews could be sure of "first-rate workmanship", so that, together, bomber crews and factory workers could build up "effective instruments for the hammering of Germany". This is followed through with the delivery of a completed Lancaster to an operational station; an RAF briefing and a bombing raid. The film closes with scenes of the factory in full swing, to the final commentary "the finest bomber in the world, built in British factories, by British labour".

The scale of production propaganda during 1943 is indicated by the MoP report and much of this was related to the air war. A key feature of this type of propaganda was the way in which it was moulded to include the justification, purpose and end result of Bomber Command's operations in exactly the same way as was done in straightforward news stories about the Bomber Offensive.

By the end of the year the scale of Bomber Command losses was beginning to loom large as a matter of public concern. Given that just one night's raiding on Berlin could cost 294 aircrew killed and 21 taken prisoner⁸ it is hardly surprising that the public was becoming increasingly concerned.

In respect of the BBC whose news bulletins were appearing regularly on a daily basis, the Air Ministry attempted to address the problem by requesting it to reformulate its news bulletins. In December, the BBC's Assistant Controller of News wrote to the Editor of the Home News Bulletin, with the Air Ministry's suggestion:

Group Captain Rose rang me up yesterday to put a point which had been raised with him by some pretty high authority in the RAF. As we all know the RAF are rather worried because of the public reaction to losses in big raids over Germany...They feel that we should consistently try to avoid the whole theme of "cost" and they therefore ask us not to use phrases such as "the nights work cost us x aircraft". There is no suggestion...that we should hold off quoting the figures of aircraft losses...merely this one type of formula...I think there may be a very valid psychological point behind this and I told Group Captain Rose that the Home Service would do their best to keep off the offending phrase...⁹

The formula of "cost" was a reporting convention first established during the Battle of Britain when a tit-for-tat numbers game became common practice. In the context of the Bomber Offensive it came to be seen as counter-productive and the convention was dropped. A new formula, which simply stated the number of aircraft lost was adopted.

Public anxiety about air losses was also reflected in newsreel stories. Of those appearing in November 1943, one was of a quite unusual type, entitled *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*. Admittedly, it was a short piece within a whole reel and a small percentage of the total coverage for the month but the very fact of its appearance indicates that this was an area of public concern. Furthermore, although the Battle of Berlin continued until December 30 there was no newsreel coverage of this, or any other air engagements for the whole of that month.

Concern about Bomber Command losses was only part of the picture. Such questions naturally raised secondary ones about the effectiveness of the air offensive, and how it would contribute to victory. Some indication of the sensitivity of this issue is given by Churchill's vehement response to a Sunday Pictorial editorial on October 24 1943. Although news information was controlled, editorial comment was not. Churchill took exception to an article

which he described in a letter to Bevin as "particularly venomous, malicious and mischievous". He had asked Bracken to investigate and prepare a dossier on Cecil Harmsworth King.¹⁰

The article was indeed critical of government policy on the conduct of the war. Under the headline "EYE-WASH?", it castigated the government for failing, once again, to open a Second Front and leaving the Russians to fight the German Army unaided. It derided the Italian campaign. And, significantly in this context, claimed that the British public: "...now sees that no amount of bombing will break the German power to resist...".¹¹

All in all, this added up to a round condemnation of government policy. It is hardly surprising perhaps that Churchill reacted so angrily. Postponement, yet again, of a Second Front had caused some strain in Britain's relations with both the Soviet Union and America and memories of the Commons vote of confidence following Second Front campaigning in 1942 had not yet faded. The Combined Bomber Offensive had been heavily publicised both at home and abroad as a major contribution to smashing German power and to claim that it had no hope of succeeding added insult to injury.

Like previously quoted examples of Churchill's exasperation with the press, this incident illustrates the difficulty of keeping the press under close control. In the more tightly controlled world of newsreels and film such comment could not slip through the net.

It was during the same period, the end of 1943, beginning in October, that Harris began his series of complaints about the way in which Bomber Command was represented in the press, which will be dealt with fully in the next chapter. It was a dispute which rumbled on alongside his battle with Portal about targeting

policy and the deployment of Bomber Command, discussed in the previous chapter.

Despite these disputes among the Air Staff, propaganda about the air war resumed at the beginning of 1944 but, as ever, it had to be geared to meet the new challenges of the period as well as the old. Britain's relationships with her allies in the context of the evolving grand strategy of the war were becoming increasingly complex, and home front morale faced new challenges. In early 1944 the strategic offensive entered another phase, preparation for Overlord, for which command of the air had been deemed an essential prerequisite. The 'Little Blitz' of February 1944 and Flying Bomb attacks during the summer of 1944 had shaken home front morale. Attacks such as these were apt to cast doubt in the public mind about the real achievements of the RAF's long war against the Luftwaffe.

The format of newsreel presentations for 1944 was modelled on established patterns, although shaped to reflect contemporary events and prevailing themes of propaganda. During the year 105 stories related to the air war were presented. The categories of story (see Appendix 4 and 4a) are defined as: Civil Defence, Royal/VIP visits, Flying Bombs, Bombing Raids on Britain, Bombing Offensive on Germany (raids against occupied territory have been excluded), New Technology and Miscellaneous. The majority of stories (37) were concentrated on bombing of Germany, featuring specific targets and more general area attacks.¹² The next highest density of coverage (26) was of Civil Defence, reflecting rising concern about the effect of flying bombs. Royal/VIP visits to bombed areas (15 stories) remained a staple form of morale-boosting coverage. But although the categories of coverage were very similar to that of the Blitz period of 1940, the Britain Can Take It genre, featuring chirpy

Cockneys, had long since passed. The main focus of air war coverage was the Bomber Offensive against Germany, with some coverage of Combined Operations in preparation for the long-promised Second Front.

Connections between home front morale, the RAF, the press and grand strategy came to the fore again in April 1944, once more as a result of Churchill's complaints. This time Sinclair was called upon to provide an explanation for press reports which seemed to indicate *increasing* strength in the GAF, thereby implying Bomber Command's long series of campaigns had not succeeded. The story had been covered by many leading papers - the Herald, Mirror, Express, Times, News Chronicle, Mail and Telegraph.

The explanation offered to Churchill indicates the delicate balancing acts the propagandists were expected to perform. It was reported that the story had arisen from "demi-official" requests from the Foreign Office as an attempt to offset Russian claims that RAF air attacks on Germany were only made possible because Russian attacks had drawn off fighters and air defences from Germany. Claims which effectively devalued Britain's contribution to the war effort. The desire to keep Britain's efforts in the forefront of the public mind, particularly where the Soviet Union was concerned, apparently remained a key element of overall propaganda.

Further explanation was offered in relation to more specific objectives on the home front.

...The public have, without doubt, been hoping for early evidence of an obviously reduced GAF following our attacks, and it was also thought desirable, therefore, to explain how the effect of the very heavy destruction done to the factories would naturally take some time to mature...¹³

It was explained that direct reference to the Russian articles had been avoided but to combat the possible effects of such stories, the line had been taken that the enemy had to put all efforts into maintaining front-line strength against the RAF attacks, and would continue to do so for as long as possible. This was why the results of Bomber Command's raids had not yet been fully revealed. The inference was there to be drawn that it was only a matter of time before the effects of those raids were shown. These articles, it was argued, would have the effect of explaining to the public that since it was essential to the enemy to maintain front-line strength "at all costs", this would be the last place at which the effectiveness of Bomber Command would show.

From a slightly different angle, public anxiety about the effectiveness of Bomber Command and its material and moral 'cost' was addressed in a short (35 minute) low-budget British film, *There's A Future In it*, widely distributed by Paramount. The film was adapted from a short story by H E Bates (Flight Lieutenant). The title alone indicates the way in which public anxiety had apparently been aroused by questioning the value of bombing operations against Germany. The Monthly Film Bulletin's review described the film as:

...a fine tribute to the crews...conveying a realistic picture of the feelings and thoughts of bomber crews and of those who wait for their return. At the same time it implies that those who are out of touch with the reality of war have no right to criticise...¹⁴

The film is structured around the romantic relationship between an RAF pilot (Johnny) and an English girl (Kitty). Questions about the effectiveness of the bombing campaign are dealt with in the form of a running argument between the girl and her father. The film cuts between shots of the father grumbling about the apparent failure of bombing against Germany, in particular Berlin, and scenes at the nearby airfield of ground crews anxiously awaiting the return of a

squadron. This time Q for Queenie, carrying the daughter's boyfriend, is the last to return. The scenes at the house allow the girl to refute the complaints of the father. His curmudgeonly moans, delivered from a comfortable armchair, contrast sharply with the scenes of the returning crew. The strain of the mission shows clearly on their faces and the debriefing gives details of the dangers from flak and problems with weather that make their task such a difficult one. This is followed by a pub scene in which an airman is heard eulogising the bravery and skill of Johnny. Here the point is made that this war is "...more than just a crazy row with a mad dictator...". So, what is at stake is the future of civilisation, the triumph of good over evil.

Later, as Johnny walks Kitty home, following the best traditions of British understatement, he minimises his own bravery and confesses to hating the job he has to do. But, he says, he hates the Nazis and what they are doing even more. It is this hatred that drives him on. When he asks Kitty if there is anything wrong with such hatred she replies no, "...it's an honest, downright emotion...sometimes I think we need more of it." This is a key scene of the film. The pilot whom we know to be brave, skillful and respected by other airmen is the one that raises the ethical dilemma of his task. It is, as would be expected, justified by the far worse actions of, not Germans, but Nazis. But still there is a suggestion of something not in keeping with the British character in the feelings and actions he is forced to. The response of Kitty clinches the scene. It is the female character, repository of feminine virtues such as gentleness and compassion, who rejects the ethical questions Johnny raises, in favour of more of the feelings of hatred and anger that so trouble him.

The final scene of the film is Kitty's return to her home to more haranguing from her parents. In a last outburst she tells her parents "...there's a future for us because of him and men like him...", to the sounds of sirens blaring and

planes taking off once more.

The messages of the film are clear, spelt out in the dialogue between Kitty and Johnny and between her and her parents. The bombing will continue because it is essential to the future of Britain, and indeed civilisation itself. The bombing crews are heroes but more than this, they are caring human beings who have thought long and hard about the ethics of what they are called upon to do in defence of a civilised order. Those who criticised the effectiveness, or morality, of RAF bombing were nothing more than armchair pundits, out of touch with the real issues of the war.

One of these issues was to explain to the public the RAF's role in combined operations with the USAAF in preparation for D-Day. One film made for this purpose was *Towards the Offensive*, made by the MOI and Air Ministry, shot by the RAF Film Unit and released in early 1944. The majority of visual images would, by this time, have been very familiar to the audience. There were the usual shots of men running to their planes, of factories turning out planes and bombs, of ground crews preparing the planes for action, day and night shots of bombs dropping on their targets, planes returning from raids over Germany, and debriefing scenes. This was an allied operation, involving the extended family. A fact underlined by including American pilots and a French fighter squadron. A slightly novel addition was the inclusion of shots of parachute training, indicating the co-operation between the Army and Air Force in preparation for land invasion.

This familiar amalgam of images was given cohesion and meaning by the commentary, which explained the new context of Combined Operations, emphasising the destructive force of 'round-the-clock' bombing and promising

that this was the build up to a final offensive. The audience was told "...preparations are being made to break the power of Germany. You will know what these decisions are in due time and so will the enemy...". Vital targets were identified - railways, shipping, industry - and the audience were assured that all this was "...part of a carefully thought out plan..." which, in the fullness of time, would lead to the defeat of Germany. Although this film was apparently presenting a new phase in bomber operations for the long-promised Second Front, in fact the language and promises were little different to those that had been made from the outset of the bombing campaign. The reference to the carefully laid plans harks far back in the propaganda war to the official communique format of October 1940.

In addition to the view of Combined Operations prepared for the public, others were prepared for a more select audience. The film *RAF In Combined Operations* was shown in 1944. It was classified as highly secret and shown only to officially authorised audiences. This included a screening in the House of Commons immediately after D-Day.¹⁵ The film was made by the RAF Film Unit and its distribution handled entirely by the Air Ministry. It was edited together from a variety of existing and new footage. The film was essentially an exposition of how the RAF would be deployed for the D-Day landings - attacking communications and enemy airfields, protecting convoys and providing cover for ground troops. Exactly those uses which Harris disparaged. The film was introduced with a statement from Mountbatten:

...All through our history, the people of this country have shown a special genius for being able to sink their differences in the face of national danger. This family spirit has always been our particular strength; and 'Combined Ops' is simply the expression of this spirit in terms of modern war...¹⁶

The highly secret classification of the film was undoubtedly due to its fairly

detailed description of the plans for D-Day. It is interesting to note how deeply the propagandist images of Britain at war - the family spirit, transcending differences to forge a common purpose - had penetrated, and that this was an imagery felt to be appropriate for such a film.

The period of combined operations in preparation for Overlord, as we have seen from the previous chapter, was one of strained relationships between the USAAF and the RAF and between Harris and the Air Staff. Nevertheless, all involved were keen to get publicity for their part in operations and this involved the press, as well as films. Despite the problems which had been caused by allowing Commanders-in-Chief to grant interviews, it was still felt to be an important propaganda method. Once Overlord had been launched, the ban imposed at the end of 1943 was lifted. Harris played an important role in getting the ban lifted but the Air Ministry was cautious about what he should be allowed to speak about.

On 21 July 1944, Air Marshall Peck wrote to the Air Ministry's Director of Public Relations explaining that he had spent two hours talking to Harris and had drawn the conclusion that he should not be allowed to talk to journalists about Overlord bomber operations. He felt that Harris would not be able to "...conceal his lack of enthusiasm for this kind of bombing...". The suggestion that Harris might be asked to give a separate talk about the operations of his Command shows that there was also concern that he would not give due credit to the USAAF's part in the Combined Operation. It was suggested that Ministerial approval of any such talk by Harris should be accompanied by advice as to the importance of giving due credit to the USAAF. Despite Bomber Command's successful participation in selective attacks in preparation for Overlord, Harris remained adamant in his condemnation of these operations as "panaceas", and resented the USAAF's influence in determining

this bombing policy. The task of explaining Overlord bombing, therefore, fell to Trafford Leigh-Mallory. The interviews were noted with concern by Churchill but since permission had been obtained the matter went no further.¹⁷

Press interviews and conferences involving Air Commanders clearly remained an area of difficulty but the Air Ministry regarded them as:

...a valuable method of presenting the achievements of the RAF to the public and of informing them of Air Staff policy and doctrine...¹⁸

Rather than abandon them, the Air Ministry continued to rely on guidance notes for officers called upon to make public statements. In August 1944 new guidance notes were issued, paying particular attention to "pitfalls to be avoided" in order to avoid further embarrassment for the government. There were to be no statements on future policy. Descriptions of operations should concentrate only on what had been done in the past and what was being done at the time. Any impression that Commanders were not in agreement with the policy of government should be "scrupulously avoided". The notes also seem to indicate that continual trumpeting of RAF successes against the Luftwaffe was wearing thin with the public. Two points were made in this respect. The first explained how such 'misunderstandings' arose. It was claimed that correspondents, who were unfamiliar with Service subjects, could unwittingly misrepresent statements made by Service personnel in "compressed accounts and headlines". Because of this the public had reached the false conclusion that there would be no more German bombing of England. The second point suggested how to avoid such embarrassments in future. It was advised that descriptions of the performance and strength of the GAF should be carefully measured.

...The enemy should not be belittled...phrases such as "the Luftwaffe is finished" may well be correctly interpreted by a Service audience... but the public...cannot understand why we continue

to have occasionally heavy losses or why so much
as one bomb can afterwards fall on British soil...
they are apt to blame the RAF...¹⁹

As the war had progressed the context in which RAF propaganda was formulated had become more complex. Although, the primary aim of maintaining its image on the home front remained constant this was now bound up with emerging questions about the policy being pursued by Bomber Command, the grand strategy of the war, and developments in Britain's relationships with its Allies.

Towards the end of 1944, as the examples quoted above show, the RAF was experiencing some difficulty in maintaining its credibility with the public. Since 1942 great things had been promised of the Bomber Offensive but these promises had been only partially realised, and the RAF, for so long Britain's primary defence against the enemy, was now merely part of a greater whole. With the war's end apparently in sight a new format for presenting the RAF, looking back at its achievements during the war, became more common.

The BBC began preparations for a radio broadcast to be entitled "Tribute to the RAF" during the Autumn of 1944. (The programme was not broadcast until early 1945). It was planned that the tribute would be edited together from a number of previous broadcasts about the work of the RAF, across a range of activities. The draft script, prepared by Commander Helmore, indicates plans for presenting the air war through a series of familiar key images. The first of these was a description of the current scale of the air war to the sound of the roar of a 1,000 bombers. This would be followed by the sound of a Spitfire, comment on the fall of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain - with special mention of Douglas Bader, air raids over London, and the RAF's part in North Africa.

From here the script moves to the build up of power in Bomber Command. This section would describe how Bomber Command repaid Germany's Blitz on Britain, including an explanation of how initial heavy losses for Britain were overcome with improved technology and tactics. This would be followed by a recording of a description of a briefing for and return from a raid on Germany. The purpose of this would be to "...illustrate the bomber crew's stoical and long drawn out heroism..." and "... the difference between our methods and the German's...".²⁰ With the British method, of course, described as precise and scientific.

Other illustrative broadcasts specifically suggested were torpedo attacks, dam busting, the prison break, the sinking of the Tirpitz, preparations for D-Day. None of these incidents were typical of the day-to-day work of Bomber Command for most of the war. Similarly, a press feature in the *Sunday Express* of November 1944 on the death of Group Captain Pickard, the pilot featured in *Target For Tonight*, concentrated on dashing exploits concerned with operations in aid of the French Resistance.

An overview of the RAF's contribution to the war was used in other formats. For example in the BBC's *War Review*, with its famous call sign "London Calling", which was broadcast to both home and overseas audiences. The edition of 31 October/1 November 1944 by Richard Dimbleby took as its subject the war in the air. The emphasis was upon presenting current activities as the final stages of a three year air war, with many references to the historical development of the conflict. The contemporary issues of debate were dealt with at the end of the broadcast. The scale of the operations was noted, as was the fact that this was a combined operation. The possibility that this might be the "decisive" battle was admitted. The question of the state of the GAF was addressed. So too, was the question of RAF losses.

...Bomber Command must pay a price for its initiative, but it is demanding a payment out of all proportion from Germany...The plain fact is that the quicker the big cities and communications...are burned and destroyed, the quicker the allied armies will get deep into the Reich, and the sooner the war will be over...²¹

This then was to be public answer to anxiety about loss rates among bomber crews. The information could not be suppressed, the percentage loss rate was deemed to be acceptable.²² It was acceptable so long as it was costing the enemy more and so long as it was believed to be crucial, perhaps even decisive, in ending the war. It is made clear too that the focus of Bomber Command's campaign remained the destruction of cities, although this was now being tied to communications as a target.

Bomber Command's campaign continued during the first months of 1945. In January and early February the newsreels informed the home front of a New Year "Air Blitz", a major victory over the Luftwaffe, "Night and Day Air Assault on Germany, and the blitzing of Berlin.

On 13 February the first of three raids on Dresden was launched. There was little in the Daily Express's brief mention of this the next morning to indicate that this was anything other than a normal Bomber Command operation, or the controversy which would follow later. All that appeared was a headline stating that an early morning German radio broadcast had reported night raiders over Dresden. The reporter concluded that this was an operation in support of the Red Army's advance. The main body of the report was about the advance, where it was stated that Marshal Koniev was less than 70 miles from Dresden.

A report in the *Times* on 16 February on follow-up raids was similarly routine.

Under the headline "14,000 tons on Germany - Dresden Again - Air Blows Affect Both Fronts" the air correspondent described a series of raids on "railway and other transport targets" by both the RAF and USAAF. It was mentioned in passing that this was the third attack on Dresden, a target selected because it was a German centre close to both fronts. It had still been burning when the main force had attacked Chemnitz. It was on 17 February, Webster *and* Frankland suggest, that the seeds of controversy were sown. On that date a despatch was issued by an Associated Press correspondent at SHAEF, describing the attack on Dresden as a decision made by Allied Air Chiefs to adopt ruthless terror bombing of population centres. This despatch was widely publicised in America but, after a brief release, suppressed in Britain.²³ The apparent embarrassment of this incident was not reflected on the front page of the Daily Express of 17 February. A banner headline proclaimed "West Wall 'Dresdened' By Lancaster Fleet". The name of Dresden had quickly found a place as a shorthand for mass destruction by bombing, like Cologne and Hamburg before it. Indeed, on the same front page the origin of similar symbolic names was gloatingly revealed in a short piece entitled "Berlin Coins A Word". It described reports from Swedish journalists in Berlin where it was being said that the "...whole of Germany has been staggered by the raids on Dresden...". It went on:

All the German reports use superlatives. But as even these superlatives do not seem to be sufficient to give an appropriate picture of the devastation, the Germans have invented a new word...The word is "atomisation", meaning that the whole city was blown to smithereens...²⁴

Whatever may have been said privately, or under the protection of the House of Commons, the British press seemed to show no sign of wishing to suppress or deny the scale of destruction wrought in Dresden. It was not until February 22 that the story appeared in the newsreels but here too the same tone - of

satisfaction - was evident. Three newsreels carried the story. The titles used were "Elimination of Dresden", "Allied Bombers Shatter Dresden" and, finally, picking up on the new German word, with an uncanny foreshadowing of what was still to come - "Dresden Bombed to Atoms".²⁵

Propaganda output about Bomber Command operations between 1943 until Dresden in 1945 appears notably consistent, despite some contextual variations. Unconditional surrender, the rise of Vansittartism, and the area offensive were its main themes. Details about the scale of the offensive, its techniques and effects seem remarkably frank. However, this was invariably offset by the theme of moral justification because it was Germany who had first chosen this method of war (Rotterdam, Warsaw, the Blitz), and heavy emphasis on the heroism of RAF bomber pilots. And as the war dragged on, the 'cost' of the offensive was weighed against these same factors and deemed to be within acceptable limits.

During the period, however, the circumstances in which propaganda was formulated changed considerably. The early promise of a 'knockout blow' soon became a war of attrition. The USAAF took on an increasingly important role in the strategic offensive, which ultimately became a Combined Operation in practice as well as in name. And, finally, relationships between Harris, Britain's leading air commander, and the Air Staff deteriorated markedly.

CHAPTER NINE

'Bomber' Harris and the Air Ministry, 1943-45

It was in 1943 that the strategic air offensive against Germany began, reaching unprecedented proportions by the middle of the year as the battles of the Ruhr, Berlin and Hamburg took place. In June Churchill publicly promised the continuation of the air offensive, with ever increasing force:

...The war industry of Germany has already to some extent been dispersed...When the cities are disposed of we shall follow it there...we may feel sure that we bear the sword of justice, and we resolve to use that sword with the utmost severity to the full and to the end...¹

Churchill's promise was indeed fulfilled. And as Bomber Command's offensive progressed throughout 1943, it continued to receive a steady stream of media coverage through all press channels. But public presentation of the aims and effects of British bombing against Germany contributed to a deepening rift between the Chief of Bomber Command and the Air Staff.

It began in October 1943 with a letter from Harris to the Air Ministry.² Harris set out his complaints about Bomber Command propaganda to the Under Secretary of State for Air. He made a number of points about the way he felt propaganda about the Bomber Offensive was affecting public perception. The points can be broadly categorised as: causing unfavourable comparison with the Soviet Union, with the USAAF and with British and American land forces; having a detrimental effect on the morale of bomber crews; and failing to adequately explain RAF bombing policy to the home front.

On the first point, he argued that the contribution of the Bomber Offensive was being treated as a "sideshow" rather than the "major part" of the war effort in

Europe. This was dangerous because it created the impression that the advance of the Red Army was more important than the bomber offensive. In this way the role of the Soviet Union was favoured, giving it greater status and credibility than Britain. And the consequence of this would be to strengthen the hand of "...those elements in this country who hope to accumulate political capital by minimising our contribution...as contrasted with that of the USSR...".³

The contribution of Bomber Command was, he claimed, minimised in favour of British and American land forces by publicity given to "...minor military operations in Italy...".⁴ Similarly, publicity for the USAF's attacks on precision targets created the impression that Bomber Command was ineffective because it was not doing the same thing.

All of this arose because despite the "considerable space" given to the Combined Bomber Offensive it "...misrepresent[ed] both the aim and achievement..."⁵ of the part played by Bomber Command. Another consequence of this continued "misrepresentation" was that the morale of air crews was adversely affected. If this continued unchecked, it might have very serious implications for the continued prosecution of the offensive:

...it is not to be expected that men will go on risking their lives to effect a purpose which their own government appears to consider at least too disreputable to be mentioned in public...⁶

The only answer to all of this, Harris said was to fully inform the public of the aim of the Bomber Offensive, the role assigned to Bomber Command following the agreed strategy of Britain and America, and the effect of area bombing.

...That aim is the destruction of German cities, the killing of German workers and the destruction of civilised community life throughout Germany...⁷

In order to explain this satisfactorily to the public it would be necessary to specify the targets selected for achieving that aim. Harris listed these as housing, public utilities, transport, and lives which taken together would create a refugee problem, and intensify fear of further bombing causing a breakdown of German morale on both the home and battle fronts.

This was a comprehensive attack on the Air Ministry's propaganda, in the course of which Harris played some strong cards: fear of the possible political effects at home of communist inspired admiration for the Soviet Union; maintenance of Britain's position in the Alliance; and Britain's dependence on the willingness of bomber crews to continue the battle. (Although there were many reasons other than those he cited for deteriorating morale). All these themes had at one time or another been exploited in official propaganda about the role of the RAF and Bomber Command. Further, they had been endorsed by no less a figure than Churchill himself.

Harris's letter produced a stream of internal memoranda within the Air Ministry as consultations about a suitable reply were conducted. The Secretary of State for Air pointed out that he had already, privately, argued these points with Harris. He claimed that the extent of devastation was not being concealed from the public. There was, however, a crucial point of emphasis:

...that the damage to the built-up areas, though inevitable and huge is incidental...if we were to abandon this line...we should provoke the leaders of religious and humanitarian opinion to protest...⁸

Sinclair was in fact already troubled by the protests of such leaders, mentioning specifically the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland but, so far, protest had been confined to a small group and its potential effects upon public opinion contained by Government insistence upon the

"incidental" nature of the destruction of German cities. Sinclair was adamant that there should be no deviation from the official propaganda policy without express authority from him.

The contribution of ACAS (G), Peck, to the correspondence indicates the care which had been taken in briefing the press, and through it the public, about area bombing.

...The conception that an industrial city is in itself a military objective can be inculcated and the public is coming to accept it...I do not think we could prudently press the educative process much harder. This would, I believe, do grave harm to the Allied cause as well as to the RAF, both now and after the war...⁹

Correspondence generated within the Air Ministry and government about Harris's letter reveals the extent of government anxiety about carrying with it public opinion, at home and abroad, in the execution of its bombing policy in both the short- and long-term. It also reveals a good deal of pussyfooting about how the government's policy and the aims of the bomber offensive should be publicly stated. As Peck pointed out, if the Air Council was to commit itself to an official written policy ruling in response to Harris, the question of the aim of the offensive should be clearly stated. As Peck saw it:

...our aim has been the destruction of the war machine and has not been terror bombing. We know that loss of civilian life is entailed...and the public knows it but the public knows also that this has not been our assigned aim....¹⁰

These were the formulations of those responsible for propaganda and public statements. Similarly, however, the Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Bottomley, quoting the directive itself (which called for the progressive destruction of the German military, economic and industrial system and undermining of morale) insisted that this did not mean destroying German cities or civilians "as such"

except insofar as those cities and civilians were located in German war industries.

The Vice Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Douglas Evill, was rather more in sympathy with Harris's claims but clearly more attuned to the political considerations. Whilst he agreed that the Air Staff could not accept Harris's definition of the aim of the bomber offensive, he also said that:

...the difference of opinion between us is a matter of words and not of purpose...but it is in present connection important. The Secretary of State has already clearly expressed his policy in this matter...¹¹

Evill also gave some support to Harris's request that propaganda policy should be rejigged. He felt that Harris was justified in asking that the "tone" of publicity for the bomber offensive should be stepped up, to impress upon the public the "decisive nature" of the offensive and the intense effort it involved. But this would have to be very carefully done, not only for the reasons already discussed, but also to avoid making over-optimistic promises to the public about what the offensive would deliver and when.¹²

From the Air Council's deliberations about the aim of the bomber offensive, no clear statement had emerged which was deemed suitable for public expression. The policy of the government in this matter, expressed via the Secretary of State, could not be ignored. Instead, the propagandists would have to rely on doubletalk, presented in the manner established by Sinclair.

Harris's conception of the aims and effects of area attack were in fact closely in line with the stated policy of the government, as drawn up at Casablanca, and as it had evolved during the course of the war, and these aims had indeed been largely realised by means of the target selection he outlined. However, his

complaints went to the heart of the government (and MOI) dilemma in presenting the Bomber Offensive. His brutal, but realistic, conception of the ethos of area bombing could not be incorporated into official propaganda without destroying the foundation of moral righteousness upon which it was based. The frankness which Harris saw as imperative could not be countenanced by his superiors.

It remained, however, to convince Harris of the necessity for such a presentation of the 'facts'. The final draft of the Air Council's reply to Harris, despatched on 15 December 1943, demonstrates the ascendancy of political considerations in dealing with the public presentation of area bombing on both the strategic and moral questions.

On the strategic questions of Harris's claim that Bomber Command's operations would win the war, and the relative merits of the contributions of Britain as compared to America and the Soviet Union, it was pointed out that discretion was required in comparing the effectiveness of land and air operations:

...the Council are obliged to exercise great discretion...the fact is that the British and US governments have made plans for major land operations...in framing their publicity policy, the Council cannot ignore this basic concept of Allied strategy...Nor can they ignore the vast significance of the Russian land offensive...¹³

Harris's attempts to use as a lever the differences about grand strategy which had been apparent at the Casablanca Conference were areas which were not open for public discussion. The future success of the 'Big Three' Alliance and Operation Overlord rested on maintaining, in public at least, a united front and a coherent operational policy. The complexities of the politics of the Alliance and Britain's, relatively, diminished role in the war effort are evident. His attempt to raise the spectre of admiration for Soviet war achievements

strengthening left inspired politics on the home front was not even mentioned. Whilst this was a factor in propaganda, the means by which it was offset were much more subtle than the path Harris seemed to be suggesting.

A great deal more space was devoted to replying to the moral aspect of the question, in terms of how the aim of the offensive should be described. In essence, the stance adopted by Sinclair formed the basis of the reply. Harris was told that whilst the Council recognised that night attacks involved great destruction of cities "...essential to the enemy's war effort..." and that this meant "...heavy casualties to the civil population...",¹⁴ the Directive under which this was permitted did not directly advocate attack on German civilians "...as such...". It was pointed out that destruction was not being deliberately concealed from the public but it was essential to maintain that this devastation was "...not an end in itself..." but rather an incidental feature of the method of attack. It was suggested to Harris that to do otherwise would in fact damage the reputation of Bomber Command because it could provoke public protest.

It is...desirable to present the Bomber Offensive in such a light as to provoke the minimum of public controversy...Any public protest...could not but hamper the government in the execution of their policy...¹⁵

It appears from the correspondence that at this point the War Cabinet was still in agreement with Harris that the policy of area bombing was an effective one, which should continue. The fundamental difference of opinion rested on how that policy should be presented to the public. Harris was reassured that within the general framework outlined, the Council would continue in its aim of securing "the fullest recognition" for the importance and successes of the work of Bomber Command.

The practicalities of presenting Bomber Command operations to the public in the manner demanded, that is, as morale-boosting events, upholding the image of the RAF and Britain, belonged to the MOI, the propaganda branches of the Air Ministry and the media. During the Air Council's deliberations Peck's Assistant Under Secretary demonstrated how the policy had been realised. He referred to examples of press coverage, which, he argued, refuted Harris's claims. He pointed out that press summaries for 28 October contained eight items on the bomber offensive which included the headlines: "Saw 20 Months of RAF Terror" (*Daily Herald*), "Bombs Sap German Morale" (*Daily Telegraph and Daily Express*) and "Half Food Shops Wrecked" (*Evening Standard*).¹⁶ In fact, he said, propaganda about the achievements of Bomber Command had been so effective that the public had been misled into believing that some cities had been completely destroyed, and wondered why they should continue to be attacked.

Peck was even more specific about how the policy worked in practice.

...I attach a front page "Daily Telegraph" article...The article pays full tribute to the scale of the bomber offensive; explains and justifies the method of area bombing; recounts the results upon the city, and explicitly compares their devastation with that of Coventry...¹⁷

Peck's statement provides the key to understanding the way in which the official propaganda policy worked. The extent of destruction achieved, measured in terms of acreage, was usually an integral feature of press reports. It was believed that such announcements provided a ready measure of success easily understood by the public. However, whilst Harris insisted upon the importance of acreages of housing devastation and the effect that this would have on civilian morale, the official policy was to categorise acreages of devastation in terms of military damage and not to mention the effect upon civilians. In this way, Peck claimed, "...we have avoided difficulty...".¹⁸ The idea that an industrial city

was in itself a military target had been established but only by reference to its capacity for war production. The yardstick used to comment upon the effects of area bombing was comparison with the German attack on Coventry.

Although the War Cabinet's earlier reticence about admitting its bombing policy had been waived in order to meet current political and morale requirements, coverage of the method was still carefully handled. The key to presenting the Bomber Offensive was in fact the Blitz. It stood as the moral justification for the bombing of Germany. Coventry in particular was the symbol for themes of retribution, German guilt and, therefore, the policy of unconditional surrender, which, it was claimed, bombing would help to realise.

The analysis of propaganda output in the preceding chapter bears out the policy line as it was described to Harris. The scale and destructive force of the offensive were significant features of all reports. Industrial cities were consistently presented as legitimate targets on the basis that they were essential to Germany's military capability. Similarly, area bombing was consistently justified on the grounds of Germany's bombing of Britain and, by 1943, as just retribution upon the nation as a whole. There was also, however, a consistent point of emphasis which brought a subtle hue to the general picture. Although the fact of civilian casualties was not denied, it was presented as an unfortunate by-product of a just and necessary policy.

Harris was not prepared to let the matter rest here. On 23 December he again wrote to the Air Council, expressing his dissatisfaction with the ambiguous nature of its response to his first letter, and claiming that his arguments had been misrepresented. He repeated his view that the Bomber Offensive was being underwritten in favour of Allied ground forces. But, he

said, these advances had been made possible by the bomber offensive. Further, that the "reduction to ruins" of German cities, in which context he cited Berlin, Hamburg and Cologne, was far more significant to the "German people" than the Soviet capture of Kharkov and Kiel. The point of all this, he said, was not that the victories of Allied land forces should be ignored but that they should be "fairly estimated" by comparison with the victories of Bomber Command. It was impossible to discern from the Air Council's letter, he said, whether they agreed with this view but "...were unwilling to admit it...",¹⁹ or whether they believed that the bomber offensive would win the war, as opposed to merely creating the conditions of victory.

On the subject of the moral issue, he complained that the Air Council was being deliberately equivocal. Here too, he said, his argument had been misrepresented. He had not suggested that direct attack on civilians was, or should be, the policy of Bomber Command. But the German economic system, which he was required to destroy under the terms of the Directive, consisted of cities which by definition included workers, houses and public utilities. Cities were, "...literally the heart of Germany's 'war potential'. That is why they are being deliberately attacked...".²⁰ The argument the Air Council had put to him was, he said, contradictory. It had been admitted that Bomber Command's objectives were not confined to specific targets. Given that cities were indeed the objective of Bomber Command, houses and workers were not "incidental adjuncts" but legitimate targets. Behind the Air Council's prevarication, therefore, lay fear of "alienating 'religious and humanitarian' opinion".²¹

Following the same arguments he had set out in his first letter, he again claimed that air crew morale was being adversely affected by inept propaganda. It was unfair, he said, for air crews to be sacrificed for something which the Air

Council appeared to be saying was neither necessary or legitimate. His judgment was that the scruples of a "negligible minority" ²² of humanitarian opinion were surely less important than maintaining the morale of air crews.

This time he added further fuel to the fire by suggesting that the government was storing up trouble for the future. Failure to openly admit its policy to the public, via propaganda, would "...inevitably lead to deplorable controversies when the facts are fully and generally known...".²³ An assertion which proved to be correct.

It was not until 2 March 1944 that Harris received a reply to his second letter. Each of the points Harris had raised were tackled. Concerning its strategic contribution there was a grudging admission that the Council too entertained "high hopes" about what might be achieved but they could not let these hopes override the facts of grand strategy. Harris was offered reassurance that, within the demands of equitable treatment for all armed forces and bearing in mind that the government was committed to a land invasion, the Council would continue to:

...secure the fullest recognition of the superb achievements of your Command and to paint the most accurate picture of the results of the Bomber Offensive....²⁴

Equally, the Air Council would not be dissuaded from its view that political expediency must control the way in which the Bomber Offensive was presented to the public. Though they agreed that for practical purposes, the distinction between attacking cities "as such" and incidental damage caused by attacking cities contributing to the war economy made little difference, it remained imperative that, in public at least, this distinction was held. On this point too, however, some ground was grudgingly given. The Air Council now said that the key factor in targeting any city was its relationship to the German war

economy.

...The Council must emphasise however, that this does not mean that the destruction of a German city as such must be your objective. The destruction of a German city which does not contain any military installations or any war production or organisation potential would not fall within the terms of your Directive...²⁵

Given that the Air Council's description of legitimate city targets embraced those that had merely *potential* for war, it would be somewhat difficult to find a German city that did not fulfil the criteria. Harris was, therefore, effectively given *carte blanche* to continue area attacks against German cities.

The Council had acknowledged that Harris's unshakeable faith in the strategic effectiveness of the area offensive was a hope shared by them. They had also given a tacit admission that area attacks, in practice, meant attacks against civilians. The only point on which they stuck was that propaganda could admit neither of these things.

This response to Harris was enclosed with a note apologising for the delay and referring Harris to recent publicity for Bomber Command which, it was suggested, he might regard with greater satisfaction. This included publicity which "reverberated around the world" about the Battle of Berlin, general publicity for the Combined "all-out offensive",²⁶ speeches by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and Air, and the Prime Minister's speech to the House of Commons on 22 February 1944.

Churchill's speech, "Preparation, Effort, Resolve", was a comprehensive review of the war situation as it currently stood. In it he touched upon many themes: the continuing strength of the German Army; the air offensive, particular note was made of the ever-increasing American bomber force; Britain's share in the total war effort; the contribution of the Royal Navy;

Germany's new weapons; and the war against Japan. It is worth quoting at some length his comments on the air offensive, which formed the major part of the speech.

...the results of our bombing have had a noteworthy effect upon Germany's munitions production. In the people they have produced a dull apathy...Anglo-American bombing of Germany has been of assistance to the Soviet Union. I think these statements should be made in justice to the Western Allies...the honour of bombing Berlin has fallen almost entirely to us...The Anglo-American air attack upon Germany must be regarded as our chief offensive effort at the present time... the idea that we should fetter or further restrict the use of this prime instrument... will not be accepted by the Governments of the Allies...This air-power was the weapon which both the marauding states selected as their main tool of conquest...I shall not moralise any further than to say that there is a strange, stern justice in the long swing of events...²⁷

The themes of the speech were not only familiar, they also touched on all the points Harris had raised. It is made clear that the target of the bomber offensive includes morale. That the offensive has aided the Soviet Union. The bomber offensive was main contribution of the Western Allies to the war effort, and its effect had been significant. The special role of Bomber Command was highlighted by reference to its long range attacks against Berlin, heart of the German government. There was no question that the offensive would be curtailed because it was morally justified. He paid special attention too to the cost to Britain of the offensive to date.

Harris may well have found this speech very satisfactory. He found too the Air Council's further statements encouraging. On 7 March he wrote once more to the Air Council, declaring himself to find the second letter evidence of agreement between them.

...I...note that the destruction of any German city which contains any military installation or any war production or organisation potential is agreed to fall within the terms of my Directive. This being the case, it is clear that the elimination of every German city and town included in the 'Bombers Baedeker' issued by the MEW is recognised as the aim of Bomber Command Offensive and it is unnecessary to enter into purely verbal discussions as to what constitutes a town or city "as such". It is equally clear that any civilian who produces more than enough to maintain himself is making a positive contribution to the German war effort and is therefore a proper though not necessarily worthwhile object of attack. Here, too, the question of attacking civilians as such...seems to me merely academic...²⁸

Harris was not to be swayed from his views on the purpose and morality of the Bomber Offensive. Indeed, the second Air Council letter, and Churchill's speech, must have offered considerable encouragement to him. He interpreted the Air Council's letter as a confirmation of his views. Choosing to ignore the fine moral distinctions the Air Council saw as primary in its considerations for propaganda, he suggested that the aim of the offensive might yet be made clear in publicity. He regretted, however, the Air Council's need to tread carefully in comparing his Command's part in operations with that of others.

For the moment correspondence was closed but it soon reopened in another context - reporting of air losses and the way in which this reflected on the achievements of Bomber Command. As we have seen from previous chapters dealing with policy and propaganda output, the issue of Bomber Command loss rates was something of a 'hot potato'. This was especially so by the Spring of 1944 when, as Webster and Frankland note, it "...became apparent that Germany was surviving the onslaught and that the Bomber Command casualties were approaching an unbearable rate...".²⁹ With so much time, effort and resources having been invested in the bomber offensive, accompanied by a

steady flow of propaganda proclaiming its significance and effectiveness this was indeed a sensitive issue. Presenting information about loss rates had to be carefully handled.

On 10 April 1944 Harris wrote a letter of complaint to Portal in which he claimed that inept handling of a press statement at the end of March by the Air Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) had had an adverse effect on the image of Bomber Command. He argued that the way in which losses had been reported had created a false impression of the cost of recent operations to Bomber Command.

...the widest and most ostentatious publicity had been given to the two nights in the month on which our losses were heavy...Nothing, however, had been said about the strikingly low general average achieved...the public, and...our own crews,...gained the impression that...the month as a whole had proved a failure...³⁰

He went on to complain that figures provided by him which would have corrected this false impression had first been delayed by the Air Ministry and then, when issued, had been presented in a garbled fashion so that public misconception was made worse. This was particularly unfair, he said, because overall March had been a very successful month for Bomber Command not only in Germany but also in minelaying operations and "outstandingly accurate work"³¹ in raids on occupied territory.

He took the opportunity too to make complaints in similar vein to his previous correspondence. He said that, despite assurances to the contrary, the contribution of Bomber Command was still being underwritten in favour of other services and countries. This time he went so far as to suggest that this was a deliberate policy of the Air Ministry.

The usual consultation procedures to concert a reply to Harris were begun. Air Marshall Peck's comments suggest that the Air Council's patience with Harris was now beginning to wear thin. On the charge that the Air Ministry was deliberately minimising Bomber Command's role, Peck simply wrote - "no comment". On the question of the effect of the bomber offensive on the Russian campaign, he claimed that a lot of effort had been put into explaining this to the public and he was confident that the point had been made. On the question of the significance of the bomber offensive in the war as a whole he was more forthcoming. He agreed that balanced presentation was an "ideal" to be aimed at but it would be impossible to sustain any claim that the air offensive was more important than the land offensive, "...however much we ourselves may think so...".³² Even so, he said:

...the general opinion in Government Departments and among many of the public would be that the Air Force gets more than its due proportion...³³

With this admission, Peck indicates a very real concern that the public (and unspecified Government Departments) had finally become over-saturated with air war propaganda. Continual trumpeting of the achievements of Bomber Command without any readily identifiable successes was making the task of turning out effective propaganda increasingly difficult.

On 18 May the Air Council's despatched its reply to Harris. It was confined largely to dealing with his specific complaint about reporting loss rates. Evidently, the figures he had supplied to the DPR had been based on a percentage loss rate. This was common practice in operational analysis but not so for public presentation. In public, losses were more usually reported on the formula of actual number of aircraft lost by comparison with the number of aircraft flying specific missions. In the same way, tonnage of bombs dropped

was quoted, and numbers of sorties flown.

Harris was informed that Bomber Command losses had been omitted from the monthly statistical analysis for policy reasons, at the behest of the Air Council and Air Staff. The inclusion of percentage losses was an "innovation" which, in this case, the Air Council rejected. It was noted that if percentage statistics were once included in public statements the practice would be expected to continue as a regular feature of analysis but such calculations were fraught with danger.

This was demonstrated to Harris by using the figures he had supplied. Firstly, it was pointed out that the public associated losses in Bomber Command with attacks against Germany but the figure of 3% supplied by Harris also included operations against enemy-occupied territory. It was argued that to give a percentage loss rate would have led to demands for explanation as to how the figure was arrived at. If this had been the case, the breakdown would have disclosed a loss rate of "...more than 5%..."³⁴ for attacks against Germany, a statistic approaching unacceptable limits. This would have done irreparable damage to the Air Council because:

...the Council would have laid themselves open to a charge of tendentiousness in their presentation of the news, and have placed in jeopardy the worldwide reputation for veracity which is at present attached to Air Ministry statements...³⁵

The formula of quoting specific numbers of aircraft on missions and specific numbers lost tended to produce impressive figures on the weight of attack as against the losses incurred, and the Air Ministry felt this to be the best method of disclosing loss rates. It was, however, pointed out to Harris that the statement made had, in general terms, made clear that the average loss rate for March had been lower than for "many months previously".³⁶ Clearly, the Air

Ministry's reputation for accuracy in its propaganda output was highly prized. And any doubts about accuracy in reporting of loss rates would also, of course, have laid the Air Council open to questioning about statements in other areas of propaganda, including bombing policy.

On the question of Harris's continued complaint that the Air Council underplayed the role of Bomber Command by comparison with other services and battles, no specific answer was given. He was offered the same reassurances as before. The Air Council would continue its attempts to secure favourable publicity for Bomber Command so that they would "...receive the recognition which is unquestionably their due...".³⁷ But this could only be done in the context of the war as a whole.

Despite the Air Council's apparent frustration with Harris, once again some concessions had been made. An average loss rate, showing its decline in comparison to previous months, had been made in the statement. The fact that the work of Bomber Command was still held in high esteem by the Air Council was also made clear. It was not long, however, before Harris raised the subject yet again, this time with the apparent backing of other Air Commanders.

He wrote to Portal on 1 July 1944 following an AEAF (Allied Expeditionary Air Force) meeting at which Sholto-Douglas, Coningham, Leigh Mallory and Roderic Hill were also present. He said that the question of publicity for the RAF in particular, but also for the Air Force in total, about their efforts for the invasion had been raised and all present had agreed that it was totally inadequate. He wrote, he said, because he felt that Portal should be aware of the "full depth of feeling" that had been aroused.³⁸

In illustrating his complaint he referred particularly to the role of Bomber Command, comparing its contribution to that of the Allied Armies by reference to the numbers of men lost in battle. The British Army had lost 2,500 and the US approximately 5,000. The figures quoted for Bomber Command alone were 6,038 killed, wounded or missing. Of these 5,804 were missing, of which only 20% were expected to survive. But, he said, a false emphasis in publicity had led "...the country as a whole and the world at large..." to regard this as "...almost entirely a land war...", whereas in fact it was the Air Forces who were "...bearing the brunt...".³⁹ He felt that this was wholly unfair, not least because his Command alone had suffered two and a half times the numbers killed as the British Army and more than the US Army.

He went on to give details of all the operations in which the various commands of the Air Forces had been involved to make the invasion possible: destroying enemy shore batteries; attacking enemy supply and communication lines; protecting Allied convoys against submarines; attacking the enemy fleet; and last, but not least in Harris's book, the effect of bombing in Germany itself (Pointblank). It would not be possible, he said, to maintain the morale of aircrews unless they received official and public recognition for their contribution.⁴⁰ This, he said, was a view shared by other Air Commanders.

This letter found some sympathy with Portal who, on 11 July, called a meeting of senior staff to discuss how publicity for the RAF could be improved. Such improvement was needed because now that the war had entered another stage and the RAF was competing with the Navy, Army and the Americans for publicity there was:

...a genuine danger that the part which it had played...would be forgotten by Ministers and the public...⁴¹

Discussion centred on reorganising the duties of Air Staff involved in order that more time and effort could be devoted to dealing with publicity material for propaganda, and Evill (VCAS) was given the responsibility of working out how this could best be achieved.

Meanwhile, on 12 July, Portal replied to Harris, with copies to Tedder, Sholto-Douglas and Leigh Mallory. No mention was made of the meeting of 11 July or the plans for improving the performance of the Air Ministry's propaganda divisions. Portal did concede that there was "much" in what Harris said. But, he said, Senior Officers must bear some of the responsibility for any failings of propaganda. Publicity for air operations had undoubtedly suffered as a result of the ban imposed on personal press conferences but this had been necessary to protect the security of Overlord following some "unwise disclosures" to press correspondents. However, now that Overlord had been successfully launched consideration was being given to relaxing the security rules, but with "...suitable safeguards...". He urged Harris to use the "...established machinery..."⁴² of Air Ministry public relations staff as being the best way of obtaining publicity. He suggested that the letter Harris had sent to him might provide the basis of some articles or an address to correspondents but he cautioned Harris to avoid comparing RAF and Army casualty rates.

Clearly, from their actions Portal and the Air Staff felt that Harris's reading of the current propaganda situation as it affected the RAF was accurate. Propaganda output, as discussed in the previous chapter, bears this out. From the summer of 1944 the Air Ministry pushed its propaganda in the direction of a public relations campaign around the theme of the RAF's historic contribution to the war, and its unique role in the success of Overlord. *Towards the Offensive, Tribute to the RAF, The RAF in Combined Operations* all contributed to this move to polish the image of the RAF in relation to other services in a campaign

aimed at the general public, Government Ministers and posterity.

However, the tone of Portal's official reply to Harris indicates that their personal relationship had deteriorated. The extent of this deterioration was to be made fully apparent in further correspondence following the Dresden bombing.

In its planning and execution the Dresden raid had been regarded by the Air Staff as no different from any other area attack, and the USAAF had played a full part in the operation. It had been supported too by Churchill's minute at the end of January specifically requesting attacks against East German cities. It was as a result of this raid that the seeds of controversy were sown, although it took a little time for this to become apparent. Initially, just as the press had treated Dresden in the same way as any other raid so too did the Air Staff and Churchill. John Colville records in his diary that on February 23 Harris was invited as an overnight guest at Chequers. Colville says that Churchill never mentioned the Dresden because it was not regarded as anything special.

...it was not at the time regarded as different from previous "saturation" bombing attacks...it was in accord with the general policy of bombing German towns massively, so as to shatter civilian morale...⁴³

This situation soon changed. Indeed, by the time of this dinner party the despatch associated with fanning the flames of controversy had already been made. It was widely publicised in America and caused great controversy. The American response to this controversy was to deny that they had ever deviated from the official policy of selective bombing. It was also claimed, less than accurately, that anyway the attack had been requested by Russia. In

distancing themselves from the raid on Dresden, the Americans left Bomber Command to shoulder the blame. Although the despatch was suppressed in Britain it did not go unnoticed and was quoted in the House of Commons on 6 March 1945, causing "...serious embarrassment...".⁴⁴

On 28 March 1945 Churchill wrote his infamous minute to the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Chief of Air Staff:

It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed...The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing...⁴⁵

What exactly prompted Churchill to write such an incautious minute is the subject of some speculation but the context in which this took place may provide some explanation. With the war's end at last in sight the politics of Alliance and of the home front were changing. The question of post-war settlement, including occupation of Germany, was the major issue for the Allied nations. Churchill was increasingly suspicious of Russia's intentions, painfully aware of America's new-found power and believed that Britain's occupying force would "...come into control of an utterly ruined land...".⁴⁶ With Britain's wealth and status now so diminished, both the politics and cost of post-war settlement posed complex problems.

By March it was possible to see on the ground the shattering effect of the bomber offensive. Churchill had visited the Rhine between 23 and 26 March. He told Colville that "...what he had seen of the German civilian population had moved and upset him...".⁴⁷ What Churchill had seen during his visit would soon also become visible to the home front once newsreel cameras gained access to occupied Germany. And on the home front too the context was changing.

The public and politicians were increasingly preoccupied with the coming General Election. Churchill's status as a supreme war leader was unquestioned but, as he had pointed out, the bomber offensive represented a serious question mark against the conduct of the war. The responsibility for this had been laid firmly with the RAF and ultimately, therefore, with Churchill. If Churchill was to succeed in post-war politics, both at home and abroad, it would be to his benefit to distance himself from any controversy about the bomber offensive.⁴⁸

Whatever prompted Churchill to write his minute, it caused great consternation among the Air Staff, and for Harris came as a particular blow. Churchill's memo was greeted with anger and dismay by the Air Staff but Harris bore the brunt of the supposed blame. Harris immediately wrote to Bottomley. The charges were, he said:

...an insult both to the bombing policy
of the Air Ministry and to the manner in which
that policy has been executed by Bomber Command...⁴⁹

What was really at issue, he said, was whether this bombing policy had been justified. He, of course, had always believed that it was. He referred Bottomley to the continuing correspondence between himself and the Air Ministry conducted between 25 October 1943 and 7 March 1944 as discussed in this chapter. Here, he said, Bottomley would find that the Air Ministry had officially confirmed that his Directive "...could be carried out only by the elimination of German industrial cities...".⁵⁰ But he went further still. He submitted that since Germany was now so close to collapse, far from giving up area bombing it should be pressed even further so as to "...eliminate the few cities which still remain more or less serviceable...".⁵¹ Strategic bombing could only be given up if it had achieved its task, and he had not been informed that it had.

Meanwhile, Portal had prevailed upon Churchill to withdraw his minute of 28 March and substitute another on 1 April 1945. The second minute eliminated references to "terror bombing", substituting instead "...so called 'area bombing'...".⁵² But still it called for the policy to be reviewed on the grounds that the Allied occupation would be made more difficult and, more cryptically:

...We must see to it that our attacks do not do more harm to ourselves in the long run than they do to the enemy's immediate war effort...⁵³

On 16 April 1945 Harris and Bomber Command were informed that the objectives of the strategic bomber offensive had been achieved, henceforth the objective of Allied bombing was to be to give direct support to the Allied Armies.

The issues raised in the correspondence outlined above between Harris and the Air Ministry set the agenda for the historical debate. On one point at least Harris's predictions were proved correct - both the morality and the strategic value of the bomber offensive became the focus of great controversy. His charges against the Air Council of evasion and hypocrisy in presenting the aims of the bomber offensive were, perhaps, on the evidence above, justified. On the question of publicity for the strategic contribution of the offensive, the charges made are, perhaps, less valid. The Air Council was equally as interested as Harris in securing the RAF's reputation but Harris's forthright assertions about the aims of the bomber offensive could only make this task more difficult. As his correspondence with the Air Ministry progressed, Harris himself became increasingly isolated from the Air Staff and in the aftermath of Dresden he found himself beyond the pale.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

This case study has examined in detail the way in which the MOI constructed propaganda around images of bombing, both at home in the Blitz and abroad in the Bomber Offensive against Germany, from 1940 to 1945. From the evidence presented in the study it seems that the MOI was remarkably successful in ensuring that the images presented were consistent with prevailing policy in its changing phases throughout the war. This suggests that the MOI ran an efficient and sophisticated propaganda organisation which is, perhaps, surprising because as Taylor reminds us "...propaganda has never been an activity with which the British have felt comfortable..."¹. This discomfort is reflected in the fact that many of those involved in the MOI's work show little pride in their achievement. Bracken, Radcliffe, Williams, Duff Cooper, and Harold Nicolson all expressed unease about, or dismissed the importance of, their roles as propagandists.² This, it seems to me, is a product of a continuing belief that propaganda is not a respectable activity, particularly in Britain where it is indelibly associated with totalitarianism. British discomfort with their own success at propaganda is also reflected in the way in which many of the studies which draw on the MOI's work tend to emphasise the idea of amateurism a concept associated with ideas of Englishness such as 'fair play' and gentlemanly conduct. This is reinforced by the MOI's own definition of its work as 'propaganda with facts' in which a cardinal precept is that the MOI, by contrast to totalitarian propaganda, ensured that the British public received full and honest news about the war.³ But notions of amateurism and 'propaganda with facts', passed on by those involved with the MOI, serve to belie the sophistication of the MOI as a propaganda organisation.

The MOI had at its disposal a variety of methods for controlling propaganda output, including censorship; issue of 'D' notices; and, if necessary, the power to ban anything judged to be against the national interest. Such methods rested on powerful negative sanctions but the MOI rarely found it necessary to apply them. Instead, the MOI's work was founded on voluntary cooperation and since the MOI had power over the control of information and raw stock (film and newsprint) it was well placed to run a 'voluntary' system founded on the acceptance of MOI guidance notices and agreements reached in editorial meetings with newspaper barons and newsreel editors. In addition to this, policy decisions were turned into effective propaganda by a group of film-makers, whose working practices were founded on individualism and artistic concepts. How was it that such a group apparently conformed so readily in producing propaganda fitted to MOI policies? The evidence of this case study suggests that the consistency of MOI propaganda about bombing rested on shared cultural concepts of 'Britishness' and the national interest which film-makers had in common with MOI policy makers. It was this, rather than bureaucratic systems, which was the key to the MOI's success in propaganda.

At the end of the war Cyril Radcliffe who worked in the MOI for the whole period of the war and, as he wrote, "...was as much associated with its higher direction as any other single person..."⁴ wrote an unpublished survey of the MOI's work. His conclusion about the MOI's role in relation to morale was that:

...A Ministry of Information...has no wardenship of the "morale" of its fellow citizens...⁵

Although Radcliffe's phrasing is somewhat obscure, it suggests that he believed that the MOI had no effect on civilian morale, or that the MOI was not an appropriate body for dealing with morale problems, or both. This is interesting

because maintenance of morale was to all intents and purposes a defining function of the MOI. But the MOI never developed a clear or consistent definition of what was meant by the term.⁶ Radcliffe's view on the MOI's function of maintaining morale is echoed by Tom Harrisson who was even more directly concerned with this particular aspect of the MOI's work. As Harrisson records, there was a good deal of confusion about defining morale in terms that could be measured and quantified. But if, as Radcliffe and Harrisson suggest, the MOI was not the arbiter of civilian morale, what was its purpose?

The evidence of this case study suggests that the MOI's major function was a political one which revolved around two objectives, broadly defined in terms of the national interest. The first was ensuring the loyalty of the civilian population to the government and it is in this context that the term morale is best understood. The fear that lay behind the creation of the MOI was social breakdown and political disintegration as a result of bombing on the home front (a collapse of civilian morale). Morale was always a euphemism for political stability and, therefore, the function of the MOI was to ensure the political reliability of the civilian population. The second, related, objective was to use propaganda to ensure assent to the way the government prosecuted the war. This view is supported by the evidence presented in this case study, both in the nature of the images of bombing the MOI created and promoted, and in the ways in which these images were used during changing phases of policy. In short, propaganda was designed to indoctrinate its audiences into accepting the British Government's view of bombing both at home in the Blitz and abroad in the Bomber Offensive against Germany.

Whilst the model of organisation and practices which shaped British propaganda were not totalitarian, it would be naive to accept that because of this it had no political role. Given the attitude of British propagandists to their own role, it

should not be surprising that this aspect of their work has been underplayed by them. Radcliffe, for example, is particularly disingenuous in dealing with the political aspect of the MOI's work and organisation as he attempts specifically to avoid analogies with totalitarian practices. Two examples illustrate this point. First, he says:

...A Ministry of Information which is not to be a totalitarian instrument must fit itself into the free publicity system of the country with as little friction or displacement as possible...It must study the publicity methods and organisation of its day...if it is to be acceptable...⁷

This certainly was the organisational model for the MOI but the voluntary system was backed by powerful sanctions for imposing control if necessary. And, the control of information which was vested in government via the MOI placed substantial limitations upon a free press. This was not a totalitarian model of propaganda but neither was it a free publicity system.

Radcliffe claimed that in a democracy the powers of a Ministry of Information can be harmlessly used to achieve practical purposes in specific campaigns. For example, to persuade people to burn less coal. But, on larger, political issues, these powers should not be brought to bear.

...when one passes to the larger issues of politics or sentiment, it would be an altogether disastrous thing if the Government of the day, however broadly representative of political factions, were to have in the Ministry of Information an organ for successfully imposing its views on the free publicity agencies of the country...This is a very real danger, because Governments in time of war much too readily confuse their convenience with the public advantage and newspapers are nothing like as vigilant as they should be...The forms of pressure are many and often insidious...⁸

Radcliffe stops short of saying that the MOI was used to impose Government opinions in the press but his recognition of this danger and the insidious pressures to which he alludes suggests that he clearly saw elements of this process at work. Radcliffe points to the fact that the theatre was left completely free from government control as proof that the MOI was not totalitarian. He says that pressure to include the theatre in propaganda activities was resisted because it was a medium of entertainment. But if the theatre, as an entertainment medium, was left free from government control why should the MOI have concerned itself with that other entertainment medium, film? Radcliffe freely admits that the MOI had considerable influence over film because of its involvement in production and distribution and its responsibility for securing facilities and release of actors.

...Not that the film is any less an entertainment medium than the theatre, but its protean possibilities make it much more as well...⁹

Radcliffe gives no details about these "protean" qualities of film and no explanation as to why the government sought to control it. However, this case study provides ample evidence from which to draw conclusions about this. The MOI believed that film was the most powerful medium of communication and it reached a large home front and international audience. This was a medium which the government could not afford to ignore if it was to have any success in influencing public perceptions through propaganda, whether directed at the home front or American audiences.

From the beginning of the war, as Radcliffe observed, the MOI had considerable influence over all forms of film not only its own productions but also newsreels and feature films and it was evidently satisfied with the role film played in propaganda. The newsreels were described by the MOI as

"exemplary" in their conduct. The MOI's own productions made by directors like Jennings and Watts may now be regarded as works of art in their own right, but their origin was to serve British propaganda. Similarly, many wartime feature films have acquired a status based on artistic standards and although the MOI's method of influence over feature film is more difficult to pin down, the film record itself shows their effectiveness as British propaganda vehicles.

Detailed study of the content of propaganda about bombing in the Blitz has shown that by the end of 1940 two distinctive images had emerged. The first, centred on London, was that of 'Britain Can Take It', which represented British character and spirit and was a source of national pride. The second, centred on Coventry, was that of 'Coventration' which represented national suffering and was a source of national mourning. Similarly, two distinctive images of the Bomber Offensive emerged, although over a longer time period, and these images were significantly linked to those of the Blitz. The first, developed during the period of the Blitz itself, depicted RAF bombing as precisely targeted against strictly military objectives. It served to demonstrate Britain's superior moral standards, even during war. The second phase, developed during the area offensive, introduced the idea of the city as a legitimate military target. In doing this 'Coventration' images played a key role in presenting the area offensive as morally justified, with Britain wielding the sword of justice on behalf of her Allies, particularly the Soviet Union. In establishing this moral standard, images of the Blitz and of the Bomber Offensive contributed powerfully to that of Britain itself - a nation fighting a just war according to moral principles.

The broad political objectives of the MOI and the sophistication of its techniques can be seen in the way images of bombing were constructed, disseminated and used. In all these aspects the media were crucially important but all media

construct images through a selective interpretation of reality which is shaped as much by what is left out of those images as by what they contain. It is notoriously difficult to prove conclusively what effect the media have upon public perceptions but in examining how the media shaped the reality of bombing during the war, conclusions can be drawn about the possible effects upon contemporary perceptions of the Blitz and Bomber Offensive.

What, if anything, might MOI propaganda have contributed to the 'Myth of the Blitz'? The MOI's planning discussions in preparing how it would present the Blitz, which finally emerged as 'Britain Can Take It', correspond uncannily closely with the Blitz as it is understood in mythical terms.

... 'The Blitz' supports a myth of
British or English moral pre-eminence
buttressed by British unity...¹⁰

The mythic version of the Blitz is founded on the view that brave Londoners, chirpy Cockneys and Royalty alike, cheerfully laughed off the bombs, sung in the shelters, carried on as usual, and so saved Britain from Nazi domination, which enabled the free world to fight on to ultimate victory.

For the MOI the concept of 'Britain Can Take It' was a transitory phase of propaganda about the Blitz but it is this particular image that assumed a central place in national consciousness as a unique British contribution to the Second World War which indicates the finest qualities of British national character.

But however closely the myth corresponds to MOI propaganda it is not simply a product of that propaganda. The people of Britain could and did 'take it' not because of propaganda but because of the human capacity to adapt and endure. The expectation of mass panic which had dominated the thinking of the thirties

turned out to be a fantasy. And although innumerable instances of individual panic and hysteria can be cited these remained individual, private experiences as did the sight of mangled bodies and corpses. Such images had no place in the propaganda picture, or the myth. The mythic image of the Blitz drew inspiration from MOI propaganda and was generalised as representative of the national character. The people of Britain, whether bombed or not, whether experiencing bombing in the provinces or the capital, accepted the self-affirming view that was embodied in propaganda, it entered myth and played an important part in confirming it.

In what way then might propaganda about the Bomber Offensive have affected contemporary perceptions about British bombing of Germany? Because, despite the intensive propaganda about RAF heroism and effectiveness which accompanied the Bomber Offensive, controversy, as Harris predicted, ensued. But the evidence of this case study suggests that during the period of the war at least controversy was successfully contained even though propaganda about the Bomber Offensive was surprisingly frank. The media, particularly the press and newsreels, presented the bomber offensive in gloating terms with an apparently significant amount of detail about the tactics and effects. Constant reference was made to the amount of devastation achieved, the tonnage of bombs dropped, and the use of incendiaries. However, there were other important factors. The case study has shown that propaganda about the Blitz in fact had an important role in relation to propaganda about the Bomber Offensive. This is shown most clearly in the way in which 'Coventration' images were used as moral justification for the area offensive. It was presented as the long-awaited and deserved retribution upon the German nation, not only its leaders but the people too.

It is plausible to argue that selective reporting, references to the Blitz, and the limits of imagination combined to place significant limits on public understanding of what was being implemented and achieved. Propaganda was carefully tailored in order to 'educate' the public into accepting that an industrial city was a legitimate target, and this seems to have been successfully achieved. Reporting consistently gave details of military rather than civilian damage and the pictures which accompanied the reports were, of course, taken from the air. Therefore, the public had no way of assessing the real effect of the Bomber Offensive in human terms, except by reference to their own experience of the Blitz. Perhaps the key distinction between propaganda images of bombing in the Bomber Offensive as compared to the Blitz was that the Bomber Offensive was consistently presented in abstract, technological terms whilst the Blitz was always shown in human, individualistic terms. For the British, Coventry represented the ultimate experience of bombing but what was happening in Germany was something quite different.

The theme of retribution was a strong one in propaganda about the Bomber Offensive, from Harry Watt's "hitting back" film, *Target For Tonight*, to news reports of Dresden but did this reflect the real feelings of British civilians? In January 1944, a year after the onslaught of the area offensive against Germany began, Mass Observation drew up a report entitled *Vengeance* which dealt with the question of public feeling about reprisals.¹¹ The report suggested that popular feeling about British bombing raids on Germany could only be understood in the context of feelings about experience of the Blitz on Britain. In its visits to Blitzed towns immediately after raids, Mass Observation had found very little desire for vengeance in kind against Germany. Nevertheless, the report showed that by 1944 60% of their sample gave unqualified support for the Bomber Offensive; 20% viewed the raids as necessary but showed some qualms about the effect on civilians; 10% disapproved; 10% could not give an

opinion. Even so, there was little evidence of a vengeful attitude. Generally, the Bomber Offensive raids were regarded as an "unpleasant necessity". The report suggests that the rationale for people's acceptance of the bomber offensive was the belief that it would end the war, or more commonly, that it would play a significant part in shortening the war. This rationale was later worked out in the strategic balance sheets of the military histories of the campaign.

The report also indicated that a large number of people were happy to accept the propaganda version of events for reasons of self-interest:

...An interesting reflection of the depth of guilt felt about bombing people is afforded by the extent to which men and women still manage to believe that we are bombing military targets...¹²

In this case too it is clear that because self-interest and propaganda coincided there was little difficulty in persuading the public to accept, even to believe in, the propaganda version of the bomber offensive. Churchill's attempts to dissociate himself from the area bombing policy and subsequent denial of honours to Bomber Command seem to reflect a similar, public, desire for disassociation from a policy which had been carried out in their name. Any guilt could be attached to a most convenient scapegoat, Bomber Harris. It was around Harris that the one element of public myth about the Bomber Offensive coalesced, with the idea that he could be held personally responsible for the actions of Bomber Command, leaving the government, Air Staff and public with clean hands.

It cannot be denied that Arthur Harris was an ardent and persistent champion of area bombing, even after the Air Staff began to lose faith in it but the responsibility for the policy was a collective one. Churchill, right up to Dresden,

played a key part in promoting Bomber Command and the strategy of area offensive. Initially, the Air Staff had as much faith in the policy as Harris but even after they began to doubt the strategic effectiveness of the policy they acquiesced in the continuation of the area offensive. The Air Ministry had played a key role in propaganda about the RAF, particularly in respect of presenting the Bomber Offensive. In large measure the Air Ministry viewed propaganda as a means of promoting the reputation of the RAF and establishing its position as a key, independent fighting service, so the Air Staff too had a vested interest in disowning a policy which would bring discredit to the RAF.

The desire of government, Air Staff and public to distance themselves from the Bomber Offensive was expressed in the dishonouring of Arthur Harris at the end of the war when the government denied campaign medals to Bomber Command. This dishonouring of Harris, Walzer argues, was a means of expunging collective guilt and re-establishing a moral standard.¹³ This is a convincing argument particularly when one considers the nature of British propaganda about both bombing and Britain's role in the war which rested so heavily on a theme of moral pre-eminence.

In the case of the Bomber Offensive, what was left out of propaganda is perhaps most significant in revealing how public perception about its effect was constrained, self-deception supported, and why government and people collectively rejected the image of Britain that was suggested when reports of the true effects of the Bomber Offensive reached the public from occupied Germany.

The devastating effect of area bombing lay in the firestorms created by incendiary bombs. This created conditions in which winds could reach gale

force ten and fires a temperature of 2,000 degrees centigrade. The effect was a calculated outcome of the technique and it reached its apogee at Dresden. In such conditions there was little possibility of defence. The way in which the British media distorted reality by selective representation is best illustrated by the accounts of those who experienced the effects of the area offensive, and survived to tell the tale. This is an eye-witness description of the aftermath of an "unimportant operation" over Darmstadt on 11 and 12 September 1944:

...It was even more unreal than the previous night. Not a bird, not a green tree, no people, nothing but corpses...One was afraid of losing one's reason. People from the rescue services were collapsing with nervous hysteria...All preparations counted for nothing...¹⁴

This was the apocalyptic vision of bombing that had been so fearfully anticipated during the thirties but in the event it was the RAF's area offensive against Germany, not the Nazi Blitz on Britain, that brought the vision to a ghastly reality. However, as this case study has shown, MOI propaganda was able to present bombing in terms which obscured the effect of the Bomber Offensive, while mythologising the effect of the Blitz. In this way it played a key role in establishing and consolidating a cultural hegemony which fostered public acceptance of Britain's moral pre-eminence at the same time as its government was prosecuting a bombing campaign which pre-war pundits had characterised as heralding the end of civilised standards.

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4. Pronay N 'British Newsreels in the 1930s
1. Audience and Producers' *The Historian and Film*, 1971, p412-414
5. The details of this system are discussed in:
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1. Audiences and Producers'. Ibid.
Pronay N in P Smith (ed) *The Historian and Film*, (Cambridge University Press, 1976) pp112-113
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6. Pronay N in P Smith (ed), Ibid, pp102-103
7. Pronay N 'British Newsreels in the 1930s
2. Their Policies and Impact' *The Historian and Film*, 1972, p63
8. Hollins T J Ibid, pp366-9
9. Richards J For a discussion of the five basic ways the media act to serve this function see:
The Age of the Dream Palace (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)
10. Richards J Ibid, p5
11. A number of texts deal with this debate, among them:
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Smith B L,
Laswell H D,
and Casey R D *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion* (Princeton University Press, 1946)

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- Balfour M *Propaganda In War 1939-1945* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) pp427-430
- Taylor R *Film Propaganda - Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (Croom Helm, 1979)
12. Harrison T *Living Through The Blitz* (Penguin, 1990) p19
13. Harrison T *Ibid*, p24
14. Frankland N *The Bombing Offensive Against Germany: Outlines and Perspectives* (Faber & Faber, 1965) p33
15. Hastings M *Bomber Command* (Pan, 1981) p347
16. Calder A *The Myth of the Blitz* (Jonathan Cape, 1991) pxiv
17. Calder A *Ibid*, pp1-2

Chapter Two

1. The difficulties in setting up the MOI are fully discussed in:
- MacLaine I *Ministry of Morale* (George Allen & Unwin 1979), Chapter one
- Balfour M *Propaganda in War 1939-45* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), Chapter three
2. *Ibid*
3. Overseas propaganda to enemy and enemy occupied territory was not the direct responsibility of the MOI. This was handled by the PWE which had close links with the Foreign Office, and on which the MOI was represented. This rather complex arrangement is fully discussed by Balfour pp88-103, and is an example of the way in which some Ministries were reluctant to relinquish responsibility to the MOI.
4. FO898/5 MOI Coordination Committee. Memo defining the purpose of the MOI, 21 November 1940
5. Harrison T *Ibid*, p32
6. Calder A *The Myth of the Blitz*, p191
7. CAB 102 374 International Propaganda and Broadcasting Enquiry, 21 June 1939, p3
8. INF1/300 International Propaganda and Broadcasting Enquiry, 10th meeting, 8 June 1939

9. INF1/195 Memo to Sir Kenneth Clark from Sir Edward Villers, 19 January 1940. This correspondence resulted from complaints in the letters section of *The Times* about BPN's treatment of the departure of Hore-Belisha from government and the Unity Mitford case.
10. Pronay N *British Official Films in the Second World War* (Clio Press, 1979) pp40-48
11. INF1/194 Memo, MOI Films Division - General Plan of Operations, 25 September 1939, p1
12. INF1/194 Ibid, p1
13. Balfour M Ibid, p85
14. Calder A *The Myth of the Blitz*, p211
15. INF1/628 Letter to Sir Joseph Ball (Director of MOI Film Division) from Mr Forbes (MOI Film Division), September 1939
16. INF1/194 Ibid, p2. Alexander Korda played an important role in this respect as discussed by Shindler in *Hollywood Goes To War: Films and American Society 1939-52*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979)
17. INF1/600 Report from Commander A W Jarratt to the Director General of the MOI, 24 October 1940
18. Calder A *Myth of the Blitz*, chapter ten
19. INF1/848 The Principles Underlying British War-time Propaganda, a paper prepared by Lord MacMillan, January 1940
20. Eade C *Winston Churchill, War Speeches*, Vol I p206 (Cassell, 1945)
21. INF1/848 Ibid
22. INF1/339 Memo from Fife-Clark (Health) to Leslie (Ministry of Home Security) 21 November 1940 about a leaflet entitled "After the Raid"
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24. INF1/254 Ibid. This is also discussed in the diaries of the Parliamentary Secretary, *Harold Nicolson - Diaries and Letters 1939-45* (Collins, 1967) pp99-101
25. INF1/254 Ibid
26. INF1/848 Ibid

27. Cannadine D see essay in Hobsbawm and Ranger (ed) *The
Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University
Press, 1984)
28. Cannadine D Ibid, p140 and 152
29. Cannadine D Ibid, p142 and 152
30. MO22 Mass Observation report, 28 January 1940
31. Calder A *The Myth of the Blitz*, chapter nine
32. Calder A Ibid, p184
33. Cannadine D Ibid
34. Calder A Ibid, p187
35. Calder A Ibid, p190-191
36. Pronay N *British Official Films in the Second World War*,
pp23-35
37. INF1/848 Ibid
38. INF1/254 Ibid
39. CAB 66 10 Propaganda For the Future, paper from Duff
Cooper to the War Cabinet, 20 July 1940, p2
40. CAB 66 10 Ibid
41. CAB 66 10 Ibid
42. INF1/254 Ibid
43. INF1/254 Ibid
44. INF1/254 Ibid
45. INF1/254 Ibid
46. INF1/849 Anger Campaign document, p8
47. INF1/849 Anger Campaign document, p1
48. *Confessions of A Nazi Spy*, Warner Bros. 1939, dir. Anatole Litvak
Nurse Cavell, Imperator/RKO, 1939, dir. Herbert Wilcox
Professor Mamlock, Lenfilm, 1938, dirs. Adolf Minkin and Herbert
Rappaport
Pastor Hall, Charter Films, 1940, dir. Roy Boulting
49. *For Ever England*, Gaumont, 1935, dir. Walter Forde
Mons, British Instructional, 1925, dir. G Barkus
Cavalcade, Fox, 1932, dir. Frank Lloyd
50. INF1/849 Anger Campaign document p5

51. INF1/844 Memo by Minister of Information, 8 December 1939.
52. INF1/844 Ibid
53. INF1/844 Memo from Deputy Director News Division to Sir Walter Monckton, Chief Press Censor, 3 November 1939
54. Webster & Frankland *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-45*, Vol I, p130
55. Webster & Frankland Ibid
56. INF1/848 The Principles Underlying British War-time Propaganda, paper by Lord MacMillan, p4

Chapter Three

1. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets

BPN 999	25 September 1940
GBN 704	3 October 1940
PG40/87	28 October 1940
2. Pronay & Spring *Propaganda, Politics and Film* (MacMillan, 1982) p193
3. *Daily Express*, 19 September 1940
4. Harrison T Ibid, p37
5. Harrison T Ibid, p112
6. Harrison T Ibid, p 38
7. CAB 250 (40) 2
8. INF1/251 9 October 1940
9. CAB 84 20 Director of Naval Intelligence, 8 October 1940
10. R/28/10/2 Memo from BBC Controller (Home) to Senior News Editor, 12 September 1940
11. R28/10/2 Ibid
12. Eade C Ibid, p256. Churchill broadcast, 'The Crux of the Whole War'
13. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, proceedings of the twelfth ordinary meeting, 21 February 1940, p471

14. Calder A *The Myth of the Blitz*, p229. Supply of film material about the Blitz was in fact quite limited and was often recycled in different forms. For example, newsreels might use shots from MOI films and newsreels themselves supplied 'stock' and other shots to the press or other film companies.
15. Halliwell, L Channel 4 series on wartime propaganda film, 1984
16. 5367-11 Imperial War Museum sound archive. Interview with Harry Watt
17. Harrison T Ibid, p101. The public were reassured by the sound of the nightly barrage of AA guns, even though it was not a particularly effective method of defence.
18. Eade C Ibid, p268. Churchill speech to the House of Commons, 'This Ruthless and Indiscriminate Attack', 8 October 1940
19. CAB 84 20 Conclusions from Chiefs of Staff Committee appreciation of propaganda policy, 7 October 1940
20. CAB 84 20 War Cabinet Joint Planning Staff. 7 October 1940
21. Harrison T Ibid. Several examples of local officials 'deserting their posts' during the provincial Blitz are cited. Even when this did not happen civic leadership was often inadequate and this was far more noticeable in provincial towns than in London
22. INF1/351 Note of a meeting between the MOI and representatives of the provincial press, December 1940
23. This reaction is noted in both:
 Lewis P *A People's War*, p108 and
 Harrison T Ibid, 149
24. FO 898/313 Air Raid Morale. Minute by R Calder, 29 September 1941
25. CAB 84 20 Propaganda Policy, draft document from the War Cabinet Joint Planning Staff, 7 October 1940
26. CAB 65 10 Cabinet Conclusions
27. HO 262 12 Memo from R H Parker to Duty Room, 4 December 1940
29. HO 262 12 Report of Duty Room sub-committee, 5 December 1940, p1

29. HO 262 12 Ibid
30. HO 262 12 Memo from Director-General to Minister, 20 December 1940.
31. *Daily Mail*, 31 December 1940. Reproduced in *Images of War* (Marshall Cavendish in association with the Imperial War Museum, 1990)
32. Harrison T Ibid, p149
33. HO 262 12 Duty Room Report, p1, 5 December 1940
34. INF1/849 Memo from the Directors of Public Relations of the Civil Defence Executive Sub-committee, 13 January 1941
35. INF1/849 Ibid, p1
36. INF1/849 op.cit
37. INF1/849 Ibid, p2
38. INF1/849 Ibid
39. INF1/849 Ibid, p3
40. INF1/849 Policy Committee Minutes, 23 January 1941
41. Harrison T Ibid, p134
42. Harrison T Ibid, pp314-316. Indeed, Harrison notes that many Blitz survivors expressed a form of "affectionate respect for the Luftwaffe crews, 'only doing their jobs', etc"
43. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets
 BMN 12/606 13 January 1941
 GBN 754 27 March 1941
 BMN 12/614 10 March 1941
44. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets
 PG 41/79 4 December 1941
 BMN 12/611 17 February 1941
 BMN 12/618 7 April 1941
45. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets
 PG 41/100 13 December 1941
 GBN 767 12 May 1941
 PG 41/61 31 July 1941
 BMN 13/645A 16 October 1941

46. This issue is discussed in a number of BBC letters and memoranda from early 1941, in the following file references:
- Air Min I, R28/10/2, R34856/1
47. R34/856/1 Memo from BBC Controller (Home) to Assistant Controller (Home), 25 January 1941
48. R34/856/1 Ibid
49. R28/10/2 Report on Air News by A P Ryan, 29 April 1941
50. R28/10/2 Ibid
51. INF1/252 Memo from Francis Williams to Sir Kenneth Clark, 4 April 1941
52. INF1/252 Memo to Sir Kenneth Clark, Director Films Division from Francis Williams, Chief Press Censor, 4 April 1941
53. Eade C Ibid, p352, Churchill world broadcast, 'Give Us The Tools And We Will Finish The Job'
54. FO898/311 Memo from Valentine Williams to Mr Leeper, 9 April 1941
55. INF1/849 Policy Committee Minutes, 3 April 1941
56. The question of whether propaganda should be structured so as to distinguish between Nazis and 'ordinary' Germans was a complex one in propaganda terms. By this time the Anger Campaign which sought to treat all Germans as war mongers had been tried and failed. This comment is, perhaps, a reflection of that perceived failure. However, with the policy of unconditional surrender and the scaling up of the Bomber Offensive which accompanied it, propaganda reverted to the notion that all Germans were 'guilty'.
57. *Britain At Bay* (MOI/GPO, 1940) is one such example.
58. The reality of work in aircraft production was, however, very different as the MOI well knew. This is shown, for example in an MOI memo from the Committee of Directors of Public Relations (INF1/849) which commented in January 1941 that: "...many civilians' jobs today are like the jobs of workers in a certain aircraft...factory, making nondescript parts...".
59. Calder A *Myth of the Blitz*, chapter nine, 'Deep England'

Chapter Four

1. FO898/313 Minute by R Calder, 1941.
2. FO898/311 Report from the Department of Subversive Propaganda, 24 September 1940

3. INF1/857 The issue of control over news and information was addressed in a memorandum on propaganda policy by Walter Monckton and Cyril Radcliffe
4. INF1/857 Memo from Lord Hood to the Minister and Director-General, 5 May 1941
5. INF1/857 Handwritten note from Lord Davidson to the Minister, 28 June 1941
6. CAB 66 17 Cabinet paper on Information and Propaganda, 2 July 1941
7. CAB 66 17 Ibid
8. CAB 66 17 Ibid
9. CAB 66 17 Ibid
10. Lysaght C E *Brendan Bracken* (Allen Lane, 1979) p194
11. The close relationship between Bracken and Churchill is well documented in a number of texts, including:

Lysaght Maclaine I Colville J	Ibid Ibid, pp240-242 <i>The Fringes of Power, Downing Street Diaries</i> Vol II, 1941-April 1955
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12. AIR2/5325 Report by Air Marshall Peck, ACAS (G) to Sir Archibald Sinclair, Minister of State for Air, May 1941
13. AIR2/5325 Memo from Secretary of State For Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair to Under Secretary, Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS), Air Marshall Peck (ACAS G) and Director of Public Relations, 25 May 1941
14. AIR2/5325 Report by Air Marshall Peck to Sir Archibald Sinclair, August 1941
15. AIR2/5325 op cit
16. AIR2/5325 Letter from Cyril Radcliffe (MOI) to Air Marshall Peck, 22 July 1941
17. AIR41/9 Air Ministry Directorate of Public Relations monograph on the development, organisation and achievements of publicity on behalf of the RAF from April 1918, until the conclusion of the Second World War, August 1945
18. INF1/178 Directors Orders No S 13 Censorship of Films, quoted in a report on 19 November 1941
19. AIR41/9 Ibid

20. AIR2/5325 Letter from Brendan Bracken, Director-General of MOI to Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, 7 September 1941
21. Eade C Ibid, p452-3, Churchill world broadcast, 'The Fourth Climacteric', 22 June 1941
22. INF1/251 Peace Aims, secret memo by Director-General of the MOI, 8 October 1940
23. INF/251 Ibid
24. INF1/232 Themes for Propaganda by Francis Williams, September 1941
25. INF1/323 Ibid, p1
26. INF1/323 Ibid, p5
27. Williams F *Nothing So Strange: An Autobiography* (Cassell, 1970) p157
28. INF1/323 Ibid, p5
29. One way in which this message was packaged as propaganda with a particularly working-class emphasis was in an MOI short film, *The Team* released in 1941. The film was based on football. The Arsenal manager, George Allison, comes across a group of boys playing football and transforms them from a disorganised rabble into a team 'pulling together'. Shots from an Arsenal match are used to demonstrate the principles of teamwork. The film ends with shots of Britain's team, the civilian army of civil defence workers, aircraft workers, firemen, and shipyard workers whom we assume will go about their business with a similar show of team spirit. The Documentary Newsletter of September 1941 approved of the film, commenting "...it is a good solid film, associated with the people, not preaching, not priggish...".
30. Taylor A J P *English History 1914-45* (Pelican, 1970) p659
31. Calder A *The People's War* (Granada, 1971) p303
32. Bullock A *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin* (Heinemann, 1967) p149
33. Taylor A J P Ibid, p661
34. Bullock A Ibid, p154
- Taylor A J P Ibid, p661
35. Calder A *The People's War*, pp343-8
36. INF1/323 Ibid
37. Beaumont R 'The Bomber Offensive as a Second Front' *Journal of Contemporary History* (SAGE 1987) Vol 22, p8
38. Verrier A *The Bomber Offensive* (Batsford, 1968) p135

39. Mr Justice Singleton reported to Churchill on 20 May 1942. The report is published in Webster & Frankland, Vol IV, Appendix 17.
40. Taylor A J P Ibid pp648-649
41. Hastings M *Bomber Command* (Pan, 1981) p209
42. Jasper R C D *George Bell Bishop of Chichester* (Oxford University Press, 1967) p262
43. Jasper R C D Ibid, pp262-4
44. Jasper R C D Ibid, p263
45. Correspondence between Air Ministry and RAF Chaplaincy service, April 1941. (Information provided by Rev Chris Ledgard, Heriot, Scotland, 1990)
46. Taylor A J P Ibid, p631
47. Hastings M Ibid, p147
48. This was not a good time for Britain in terms of war news, British troops had been evacuated from Crete, Rommel had achieved a string of successes against British troops in North Africa, the Russian army was in retreat, and in May 1941 Churchill faced his first no confidence vote in the House of Commons.
49. AIR41/5 Air Ministry letter no S.46368/II/DCAS, quoted in *International Law of the Air 1939-45*, Confidential supplement to *Air Power and War Rights* by J M Spaight
50. FO898/311 Political Warfare Executive paper PW(E) (42) 22, 14 April 1942
51. FO898/311 Letter from Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary) to Sir Archibald Sinclair (Secretary of State for Air, 15 April 1942
52. AIR2/8655 Decision 1113: 25th meeting of the Bombing Committee held at the Air Ministry 5 February 1941
53. FO989/311 It was believed that the experience this section of the Ministry of Home Security had gained during the Blitz could be invaluable for planning RAF raids during the bomber offensive. This is discussed in FO898/131 on a minute by R Calder on 22 August 1942.

Chapter Five

1. 5367-11 Interview with Harry Watt, Ibid
2. 5367-11 Ibid
3. 5367-11 Ibid
4. 5367-11 Ibid
5. *Documentary News Letter*, August 1941
6. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol 8 no 92, August 1941
7. The stories were placed either at the beginning of the reel, or had more footage than other stories in the reel.
8. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets

PG41/18	3 March 1941 ran the story under the headline 'Air Minister's Inspiring Speech'
BMN12/613	3 March 1941 ran the story as 'Air Secretary on RAF Offensive'
BPN/1044	3 March 1941 ran the story under the title 'Minister Says RAF Will Out-blitz the Nazis'
9. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets

Examples of such coverage include:

GBN/811	13 October 1941 'New Hurricanes in Action'
GBN/812	16 October 1941 'Stirlings Load Up For Germany'
GBN/829	15 December 1941 'Lease-Lend Warplanes Still Coming'
UN/1096	15 January 1941 'Fighter Squadron Presented by the Burmese'
UN/1110	6 March 1941 'More Dominion Airmen Arrive in Britain'
UN/1113	17 March 1941 'Free French Airmen in Training'
UN/1136	5 June 1941 'New Night Fighter - The Havoc'
BMN13/655A	25 December 1941 'Flying Wing (Aircraft of the Future)'
10. BBC News Talks series, *War Commentaries*, by Group Captain Helmore, Home News Bulletin, 11 September 1941
11. Ibid, Home News Bulletin, 9 October 1941
12. Ibid, Home News Bulletin, 16 October 1941
13. INF1/848 Ibid
14. Bomber Command had achieved some successes, for example the raid against Lubeck, its loss rates were still high and it was still developing tactics such as the Pathfinder Force, bomb aiming and radar jamming devices.

15. Ibid, Home News Bulletin, 31 May 1942, 6.00pm
16. AIR8/864 Personal Minute from the PM to the Chief of Air Staff (M194/2), 19 May 1942
17. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets
 PG42/46 8 June 1942 'On The Chin - Quentin Reynolds'
 GBN/879 8 June 1942 'Bomber Command 1000 RAF Lets Hitler Have It Right On the Chin'
18. Ibid
 GBN/879 8 June 1942
19. INF1/284 Morale report from the MOI to the Cabinet 10 June 1942
20. Again, war news from other fronts was affected the public mood. At this time news had just been received of the fall of Tobruk
21. INF1/284 Morale report from the MOI to the Cabinet 17 July 1942
22. Longmate N *The Bombers: The RAF Offensive Against Germany 1939-45* (Hutchinson, 1983) chapter sixteen
23. Calder A *The People's War*, chapter seven
24. Calder A Ibid, p523
25. Calder A Ibid, p522
26. Pelling H *Britain and the Second World War* (Fontana, 1970) pp168-173
27. *Citizens of the Future*, Strand/Gaumont British Instructional, 1935
Housing Progress, produced by Matthew Nathan, 1938
Today and Tomorrow, produced by Paul Rotha, 1937
28. INF1/338 Memo from Mr Maling to Mr R Stevens, 19 December 1939
29. 4627-06 Imperial War Museum sound archive. Interview with Roy Boulting.
30. INF1/323 Ibid
31. INF1/284 Memo from Mr Parker to Mr Gates, 25 April, 1942
32. Calder A *The People's War*, p613

33. INF1/683 Minute from Sir Quintin Hill to Sir Alfred Hurst, 31 May 1943
34. INF1/683 Letter to Mr Heald, MOI from Reconstruction Secretariat, 19 November 1942
35. INF1/683 Memo to Mr Royd from Mr Heald
36. INF1/284 Morale report to the War Cabinet, 9 October 1942
37. *Documentary News Letter*, September 1941
38. Shindler C *Hollywood Goes To War* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) cites evidence of script changes apparently due to MOI influence
39. Information provided by Nigel Mace
40. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Ibid, p477
41. Halliwell L (ed) *Filmgoer's Companion* (Eighth Edition, Paladin, 1985) p1023
42. Hurd G (ed) *National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television* (BFI, 1984)
43. INF1/338 MOI report compiled by the Reference Section on existing films about social issues.
44. Calder A *Myth Of The Blitz*, p247
45. Calder A loc cit
46. Calder A Ibid, p250

Chapter Six

1. Verrier R *The Bomber Offensive* (Batsford, 1968) p162
2. Webster C & Frankland N *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-1945* (HMSO, 1961), Vol III, p305
3. Verrier R Ibid, p156
4. Verrier R Ibid, p159
5. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol IV, p153
6. Verrier R Ibid, p171
7. AIR2/8694 Memo from Sir Charles Portal (CAS) to ACAS (Ops), 11 July 1943

8. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp122-3
9. Verrier R Ibid, P168
10. Allen H R quoted in *The Legacy of Lord Trenchard* (Cassell, 1972) p140
11. Verrier R Ibid, p161
12. Eade C Ibid, speech 'Before The Autumn Leaves Fall', 30 June 1941, p480
13. Allen H R Ibid, p126
14. Allen H R Ibid, p130
15. Verrier R Ibid, p169
16. FO898/183 Memo from Richard Crossman to Major General Brooks, 29 January 1943
17. Middlebrook M *The Berlin Raids: RAF Bomber Command Winter 1943-44* (Penguin, 1990) pp7-8
18. Middlebrook M Ibid, p8
19. Middlebrook M Ibid, *passim* pp98-219
20. Middlebrook M Ibid, p218
21. Middlebrook M Ibid, p316
22. Eade C Ibid. Speech to the House of Commons, 22 February 1944, 'Preparation, Effort, Resolve', pp77-78
23. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol II, p59
24. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p16
Verrier R Ibid, p258
25. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp16-18
26. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III p19
27. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp22-29
28. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p27
29. Webster C & Ibid, Vol III, pp27-28

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30. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p34
 31. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p34
 32. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p35
 33. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp35-37
 34. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p37
 35. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp39-41
 36. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p40
 37. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp42-64
 38. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p63
 39. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, Chapter XII (3)
 40. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp65-67
 41. AIR8/1020 Letter from Sir Arthur Harris, Chief of Bomber Command, to Sir Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), 12 December 1944
 42. AIR8/1020 Letter from CAS to Harris, 22 December 1944
 43. AIR8/1020 Letter from Harris to CAS, 28 December, 1944
 44. AIR8/1020 Letter from CAS to Harris, 20 January 1945
 45. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p45
 46. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p55
 47. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp52-55
 48. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p95

49. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p95
50. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, pp96-100
51. Quoted in Webster & Frankland, Vol III, p103
52. Quoted in Webster & Frankland, Vol III, p104

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3. R34/856/2 Report on RAF Broadcasts P.6/43 by the Controller, Overseas Division
4. R34/856/2 op cit
5. Beaumont R 'The Bomber Offensive As A Second Front', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 22, 1987, p13
6. R34/856/2 op cit
7. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets
Examples of such stories are:
BPN/1254 8 March 1943 'Berlin Got A Cologne'
PG/43/22 18 March 1943 'Essen Blitzed' (...whole target area a mass of flames...)
BMN14/718 8 March 1943 'Round The Clock Raids'
8. BBC Home News Bulletin, 28 March 1943 broadcast by Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, reprinted in *The Listener*, 1 April 1943
9. Hastings M Ibid, p16
10. AIR2/5546 This file contains correspondence conducted between October and December 1943 about the proposal to make a film about the dams raid. It was planned that Howard Hawks would direct the film. The idea for the film was a result of Guy Gibson's tour of America after the dams raid.
11. Longmate N Ibid,
12. INF1/212 MOI memo from Jack Beddington, 27 November 1942

13. Jennings M (ed) *Humphrey Jennings: Film-maker, Painter, Poet* (BFI 1982), p35
14. INF1/212 Ibid. The full, seventy-five minute, version of the film is now available.
15. INF1/212 Letter from Mr Beddington to the Director of General Film Distributors Ltd (GFD), March 1943
16. Aldgate A & Richards J quoted in *Britain Can Take It*, p242
17. Aldgate A & Richards J Ibid, p240
18. Aldgate A & Richards J Ibid, quoted on p242
19. INF1/323 Ibid, p3
20. AIR8/759 CS 15015/S.6 Interviews and Broadcasts by Commanders in Chief, 26 November 1942
21. AIR8/759 Ibid
22. AIR8/759 Ibid
23. AIR8/759 Chiefs of Staff 77th meeting, 26 March 1943
24. PREM4/66/5A Memo from the Prime Minister to Brendan Bracken, 26 June 1943
25. *The Daily Express*, 1 July 1943
26. Middlebrook M Ibid, pp93-97
27. Imperial War Museum (NWV719) Essen. This newsreel for example, contains the commentary: '...Essen may be the heart of the largest gun defended city in Europe but they can't stop the RAF...'

Imperial War Museum (NWV743-01) Berlin. For example, '...sure as the nights grow longer Berlin comes face to face with the appalling reality of the war she started...'
28. Commentary to GBN1007, August 1943
29. *The Biter Bit* (MOI, 1943)

Chapter Eight

1. Middlebrook M Ibid, pp313-319
2. Middlebrook M Ibid, p175

3. INF1/978 Memo from Mr Sendall to Mr Carter, discussing preparations for a meeting between Attlee and the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) about the role of the Industrial Publicity Council in releasing information about British production
4. INF1/978 Memo to the Deputy Director General of the Memo from the Information Section 6 October 1943
5. INF1/978 Report by the Minister of Production on publicity for British war production during 1943
6. INF1/978 op cit
7. INF1/978 The films were listed in a memo from Jack Beddington (Films Division) to the Director-General of the MOI, 28 September 1943. Those related to aircraft production were:

'What Britain Can Do In A Quarter of an Hour (Britain Beats the Clock)' 'Workers Weekend' 'Splinters for Hitler' (item in "Worker and Warfront 7")
8. Middlebrook M Ibid, p176
9. R28/10/3 Memo from BBC Assistant Controller News to the Editor of Home News Bulletins on the subject of aircraft losses, 22 December 1943
10. PREM4/66/4 Memo from Churchill to Bevin (No 577), October 1943
11. PREM4/66/4 *Sunday Pictorial*, 24 October 1943
12. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets. Some examples of this type of coverage are:

BPN/1348 31 January 1944 'Day and Night Raids Strike Harder Still'
BPN/1354 21 February 1944 'How the RAF "obliterate" - saturation raid on Mannheim'
UN/1427 20 March 1944 'Berlin the target'
BMN15/780 15 May 1944 'Our Night Bomber Force Was Out'
13. AIR8/759 Report to Churchill from the Air Ministry 14 April 1944
14. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1944
15. AIR41/9 Ibid
16. *The RAF In Combined Operations* (RAF Film Unit, 1944)
17. AIR8/760 Minute from Churchill to the Air Ministry, 6 August 1944

18. AIR8/759 Notes for the guidance of RAF officers giving public addresses, broadcasts or interview to the press, August 1944
19. AIR 8/759 Ibid
20. R19/1336 Outline of broadcast
21. Dimpleby R BBC broadcast for *War Review*, 31 October 1944
22. A percentage loss rate for aircraft of "less than 2.5%" was quoted.
23. Webster C & Frankland N Ibid, Vol III, p113
24. *The Daily Express*, 17 February, 1945
25. Slade Film History Register - Newsreel Issue Sheets

BMN16/820A	22 February 1945
BPN/1459	22 February 1945
PG45/16	22 February 1945

Chapter Nine

1. Eade C Ibid, Churchill's speech on receiving the freedom of the City of London, 'Before the Autumn Leaves Fall, 30 June 1943, p481
2. AIR2/7852 Letter from Harris to the Air Ministry, 25 October 1943
3. AIR2/7852 Ibid
4. AIR2/7852 Ibid
5. AIR2/7852 Ibid
6. AIR2/7852 Ibid
7. AIR2/7852 Ibid
8. AIR2/7852 Secretary of State to CAS, ACAS(G), DCAS and DPR 26 October 1943
9. AIR2/7852 Memo from Air Marshall Peck ACAS(G) to DCAS, 3 November 1943
10. AIR2/7852 Ibid
11. AIR2/7852 Vice CAS to ACAS(G), 12 November 1943
12. AIR2/7852 Ibid

13. AIR2/7852 Letter from the Air Council to Harris,
15 December 1943
14. AIR2/7852 Ibid
15. AIR2/7852 Ibid
16. AIR2/7852 Memo AUS (G) to ACAS (G), 29 October 1943
17. AIR2/7852 Memo from Air Marshall Peck ACAS (G) to
DCAS, 3 November 1943
18. AIR2/7852 Ibid
19. AIR2/7852 Letter from Harris to the Air council,
23 December 1943
20. AIR2/7852 Ibid
21. AIR2/7852 Ibid
22. AIR2/7852 Ibid
23. AIR2/7852 Ibid
24. AIR2/7852 Letter from the Air Council to Harris,
2 March 1944
25. AIR2/7852 Ibid
26. AIR2/7852 Air Ministry letter CS.21079 from A W Street
to Harris
27. Eade C Ibid, Churchill speech to the House of Commons,
'Preparation, Effort, Resolve' 22 February 1944
28. AIR2/7852 Letter from Harris to the Air Council,
7 March 1944
29. Webster C & Ibid, Vol III, p293
Frankland N
30. AIR2/7852 Letter from Harris to Sir Charles Portal,
10 April 1944
31. AIR2/7852 Ibid
32. AIR2/7852 Minute by ACAS (G), 1 May 1944
33. AIR2/7852 Ibid
34. AIR2/7852 Letter from the Air Council to Harris,
18 May 1944
35. AIR2/7852 Ibid
36. AIR2/7852 Ibid

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| 37. | AIR2/7852 | Ibid |
| 38. | AIR8/761 | Letter from Harris to Sir Charles Portal,
1 July 1944 |
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| 40. | AIR8/761 | Ibid |
| 41. | AIR8/761 | Minutes of a meeting to discuss Air Force
publicity, 11 July 1944. The majority of senior
ranking officers were present at the meeting,
including CAS, VCAS, DCAS, ACAS (G). |
| 42. | AIR8/761 | Letter from Portal to Harris, 12 July 1944 |
| 43. | Colville J | Ibid, pp202-3 |
| 44. | Webster C &
Frankland N | Ibid, Vol III, p113 |
| 45. | Quoted in Hastings M, Ibid, pp343-4 | |
| 46. | Colville J | Ibid, p204 |
| 47. | Colville J | Ibid, p221 |
| 48. | Hastings M | Ibid, p344. Hastings' opinion is that this memo
can only be seen as an attempt by Churchill to
distance himself personally from any controversy. |
| 49. | AIR20/3218 | Letter to Sir Norman Bottomley from Harris,
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| 50. | AIR20/3218 | Ibid |
| 51. | AIR20/3218 | Ibid |
| 52. | Quoted in Hastings M, Ibid, p344 | |
| 53. | Ibid | |

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| 2. | MacLaine I | Ibid, pp276-280 |
| 3. | MacLaine I | Ibid, p11 |
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Director-General of the MOI |
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11. M-OA FR2000 Mass Observation File Report, *Vengeance*,
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12. M-OA FR2000 Ibid
13. Walzer M *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With
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14. Hastings M Ibid, p387

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HO262 12, 262 15, 262 16

INF1/18, 178, 194, 195, 199, 205, 208, 210, 212, 217, 234, 250, 251, 252, 254, 283, 284, 300, 315, 318, 320, 323, 338, 339, 568, 598, 600, 625, 626, 628, 629, 679, 680, 683, 698, 844, 848, 849, 851, 857, 860, 862, 978, 979

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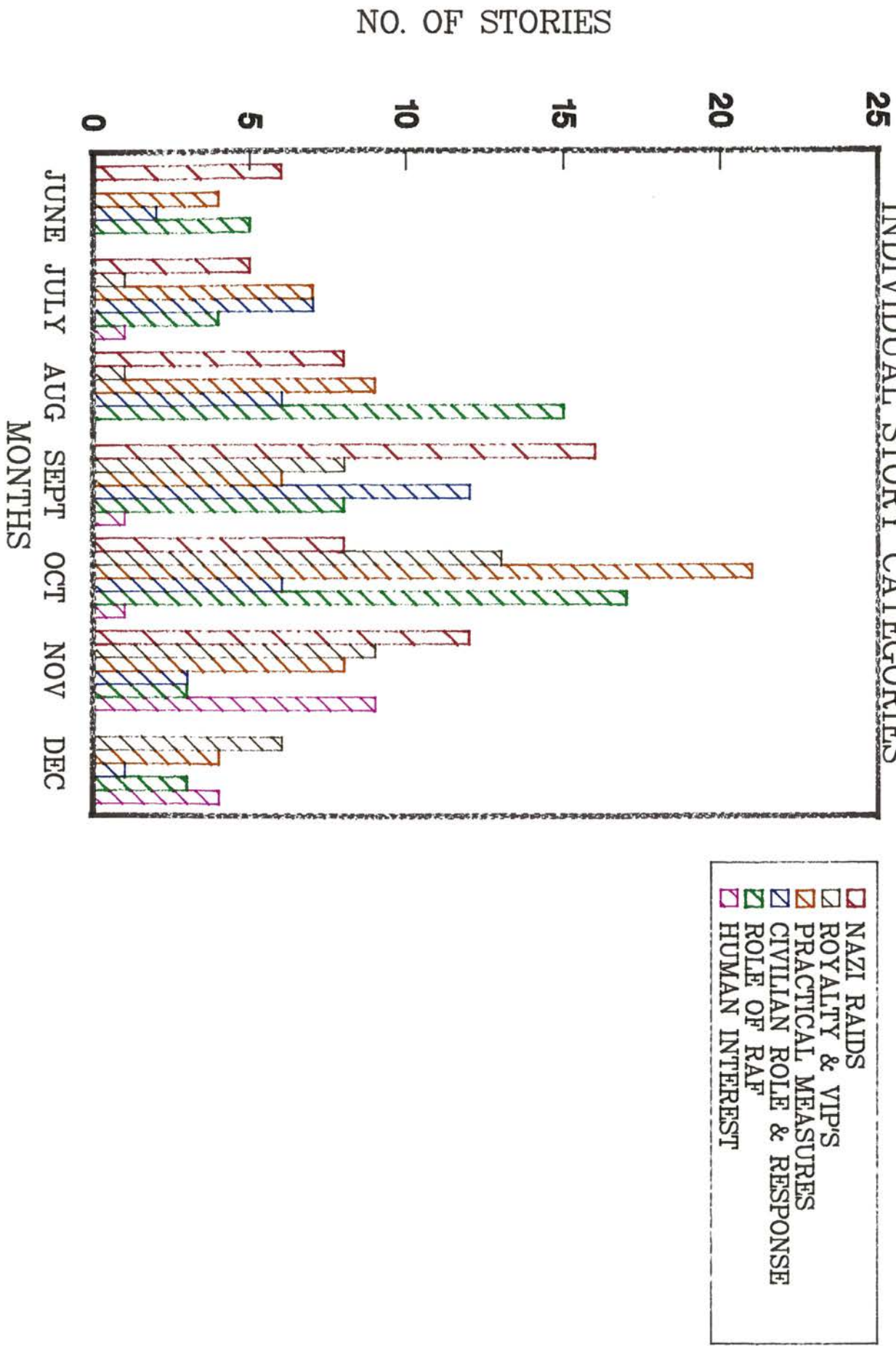
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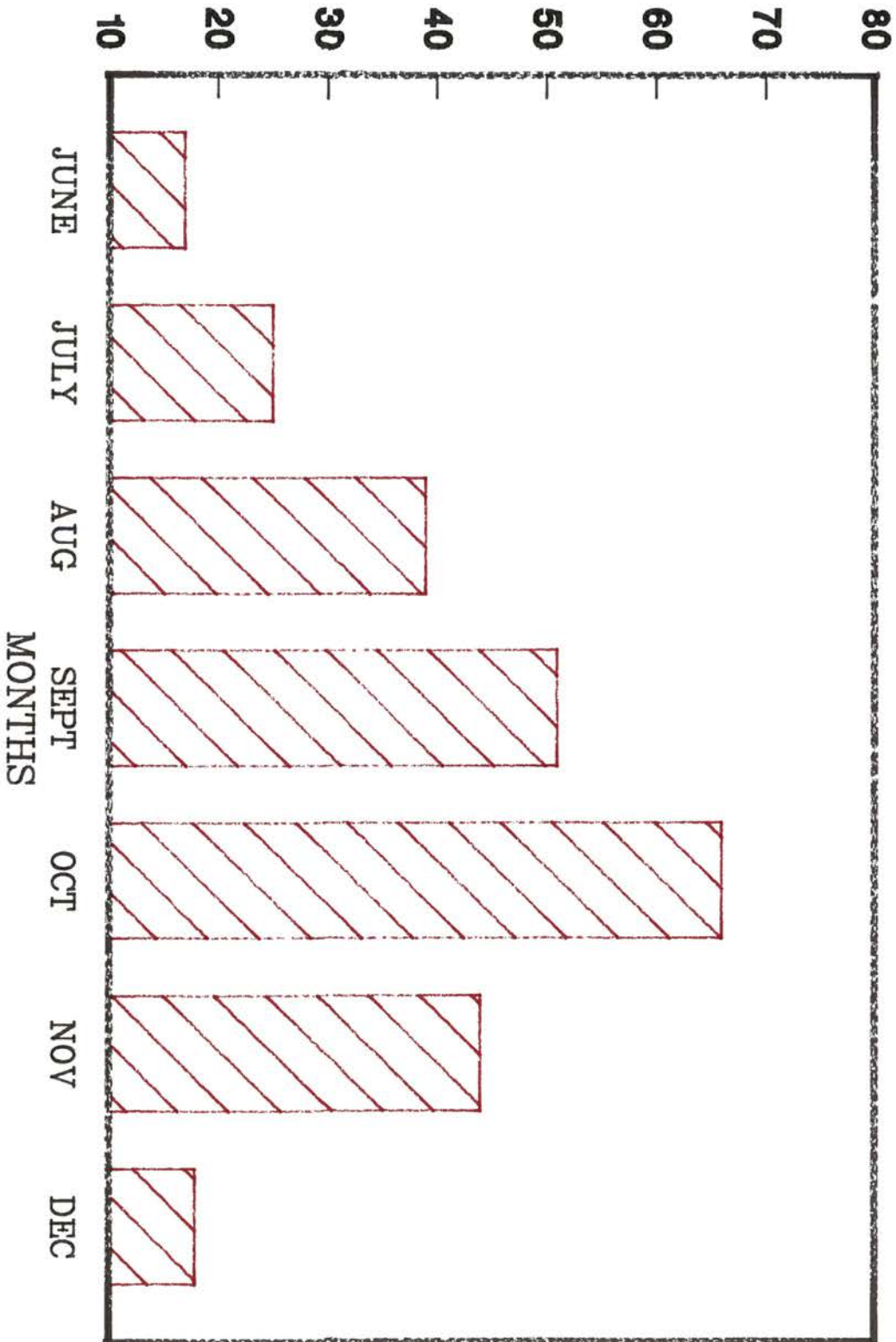
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INDIVIDUAL STORY CATEGORIES



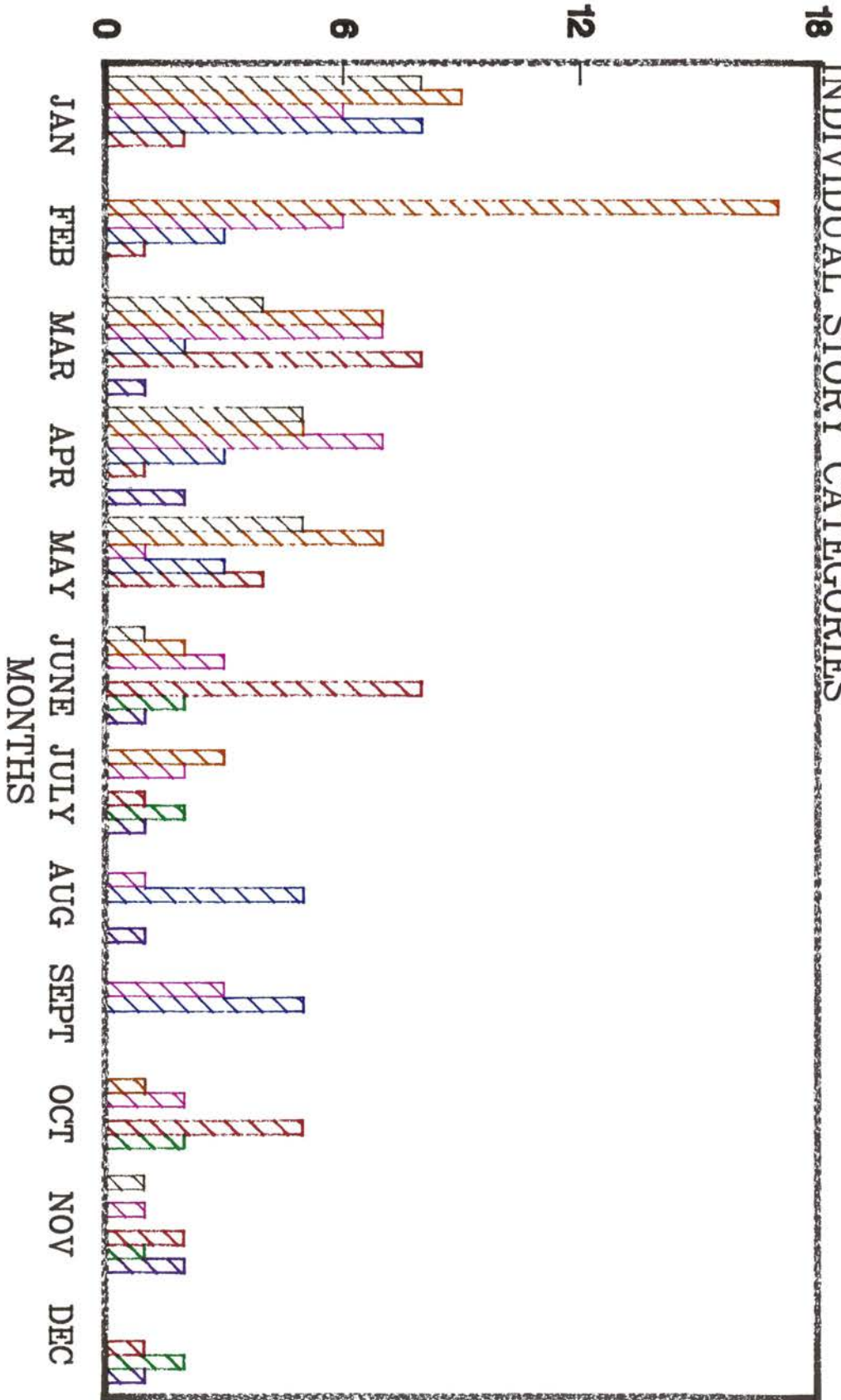
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APPENDIX 1a
NEWSREEL COVERAGE - 1940
TOTAL STORIES PER MONTH



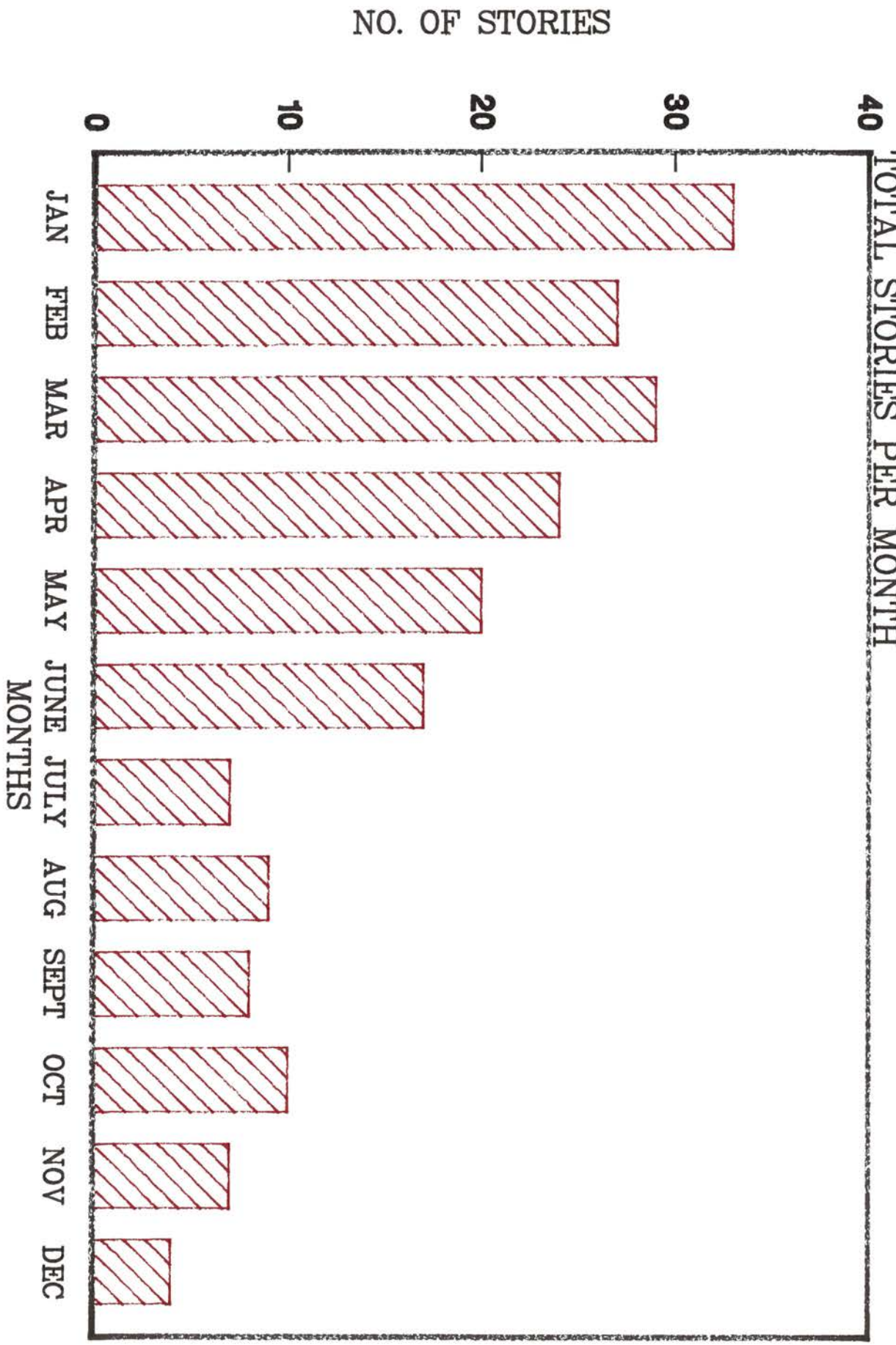
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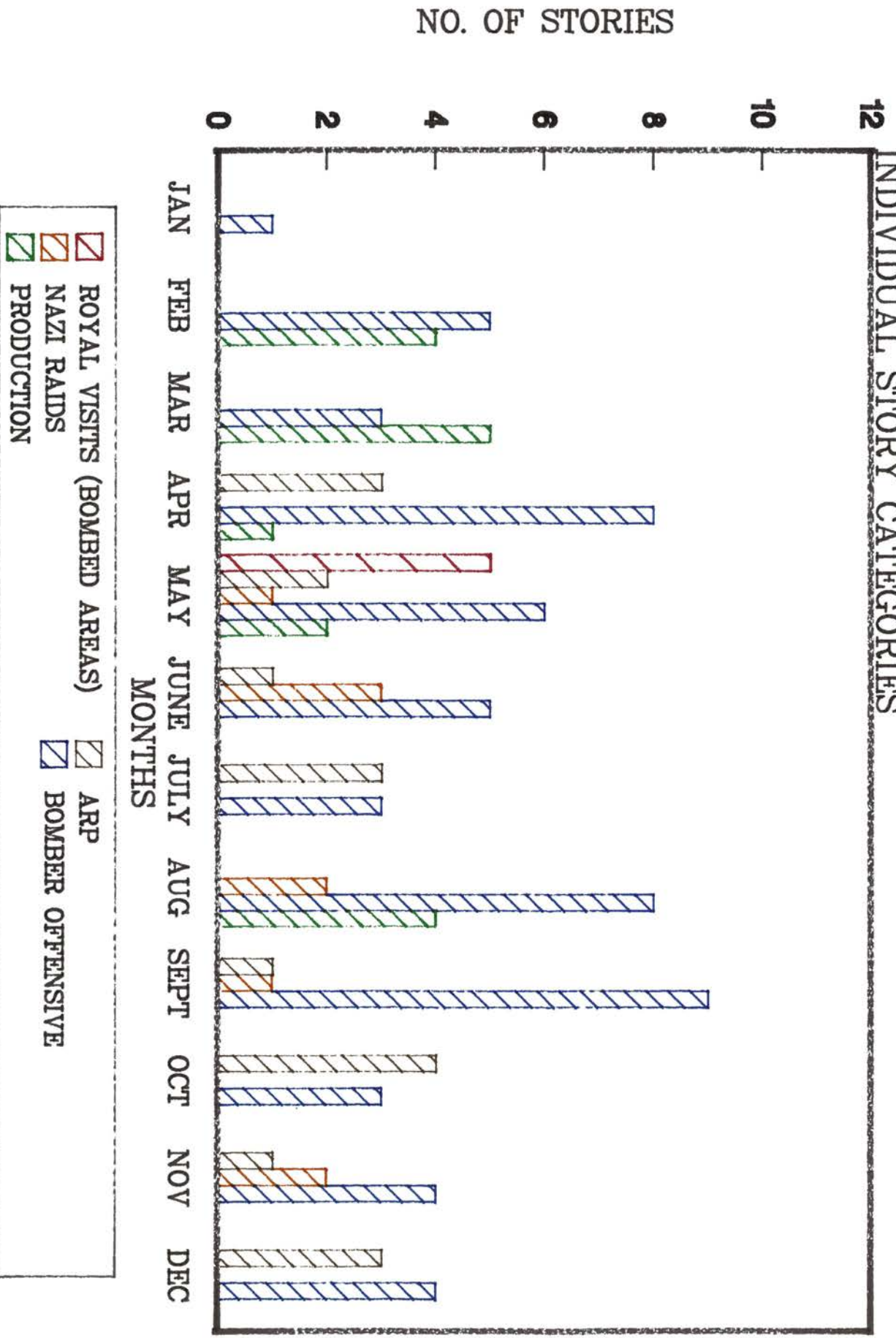


- ▨ RAIDS
- ▨ PRACTICAL MEASURES
- ▨ ROLE OF THE RAF
- ▨ PRODUCTION
- ▨ ROYALTY & VIP'S
- ▨ CIVILIAN ROLE & RESPONSE
- ▨ NEW TECHNOLOGY

APPENDIX 2a
NEWSREEL COVERAGE - 1941
TOTAL STORIES PER MONTH

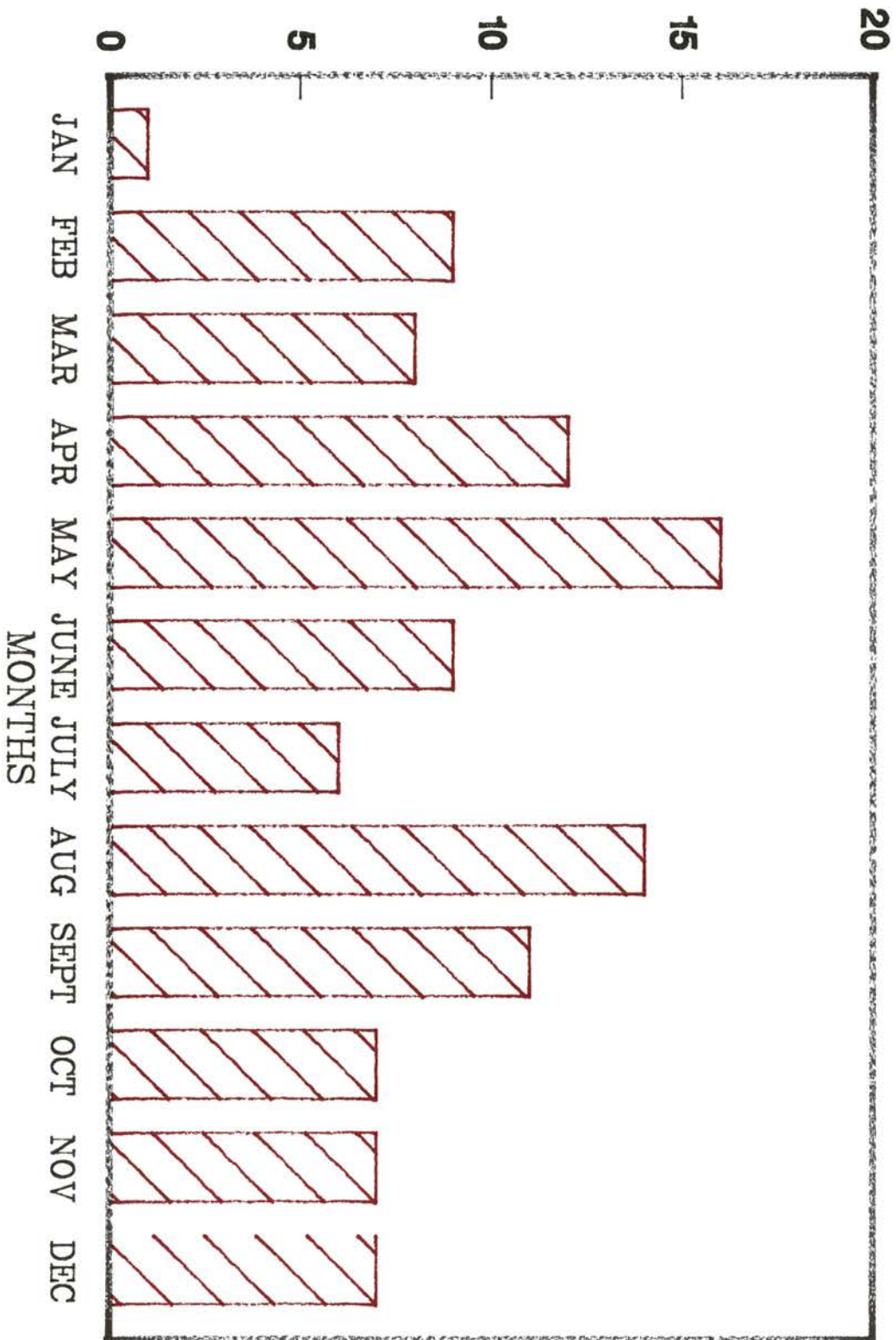


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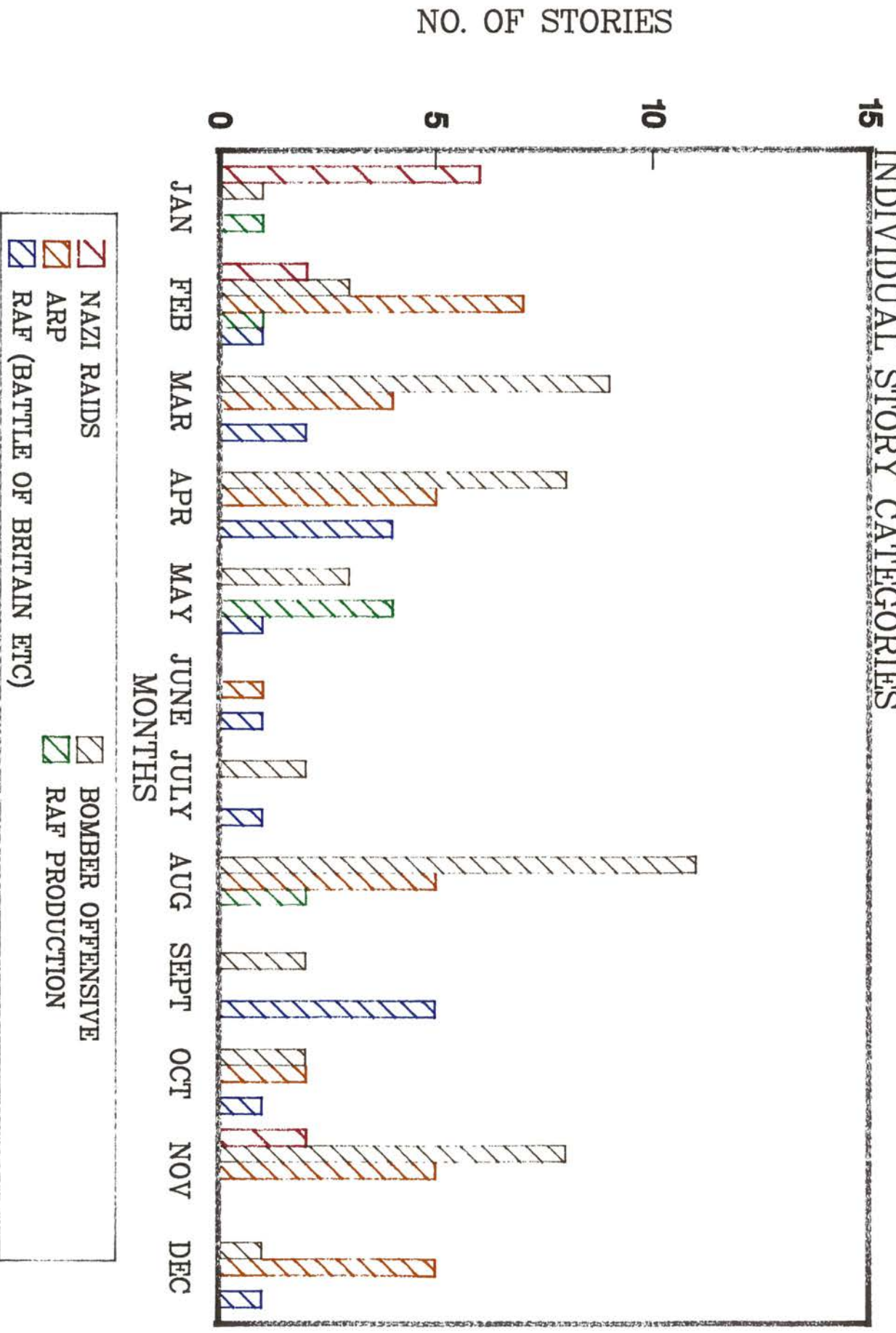
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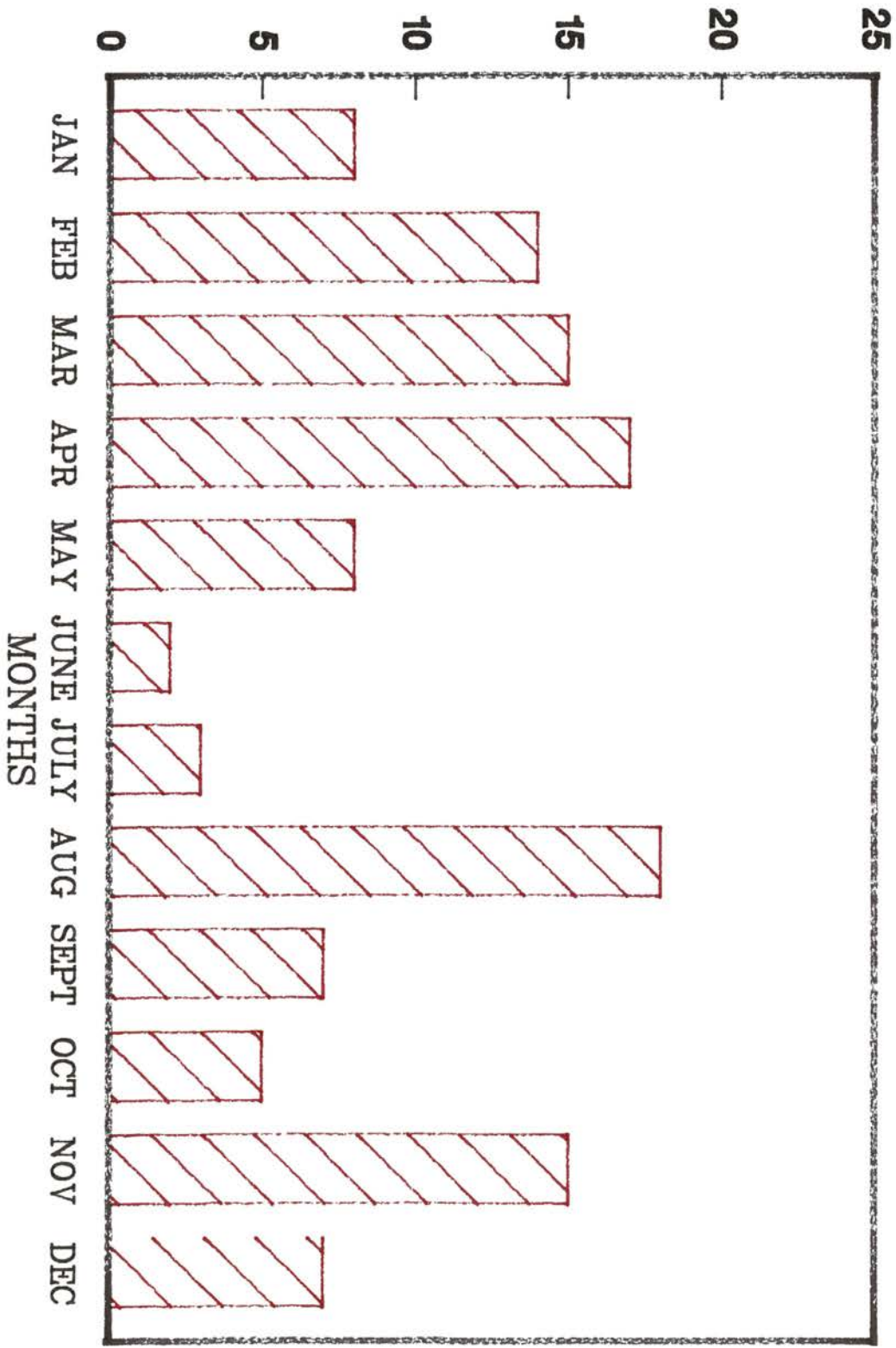
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INDIVIDUAL STORY CATEGORIES



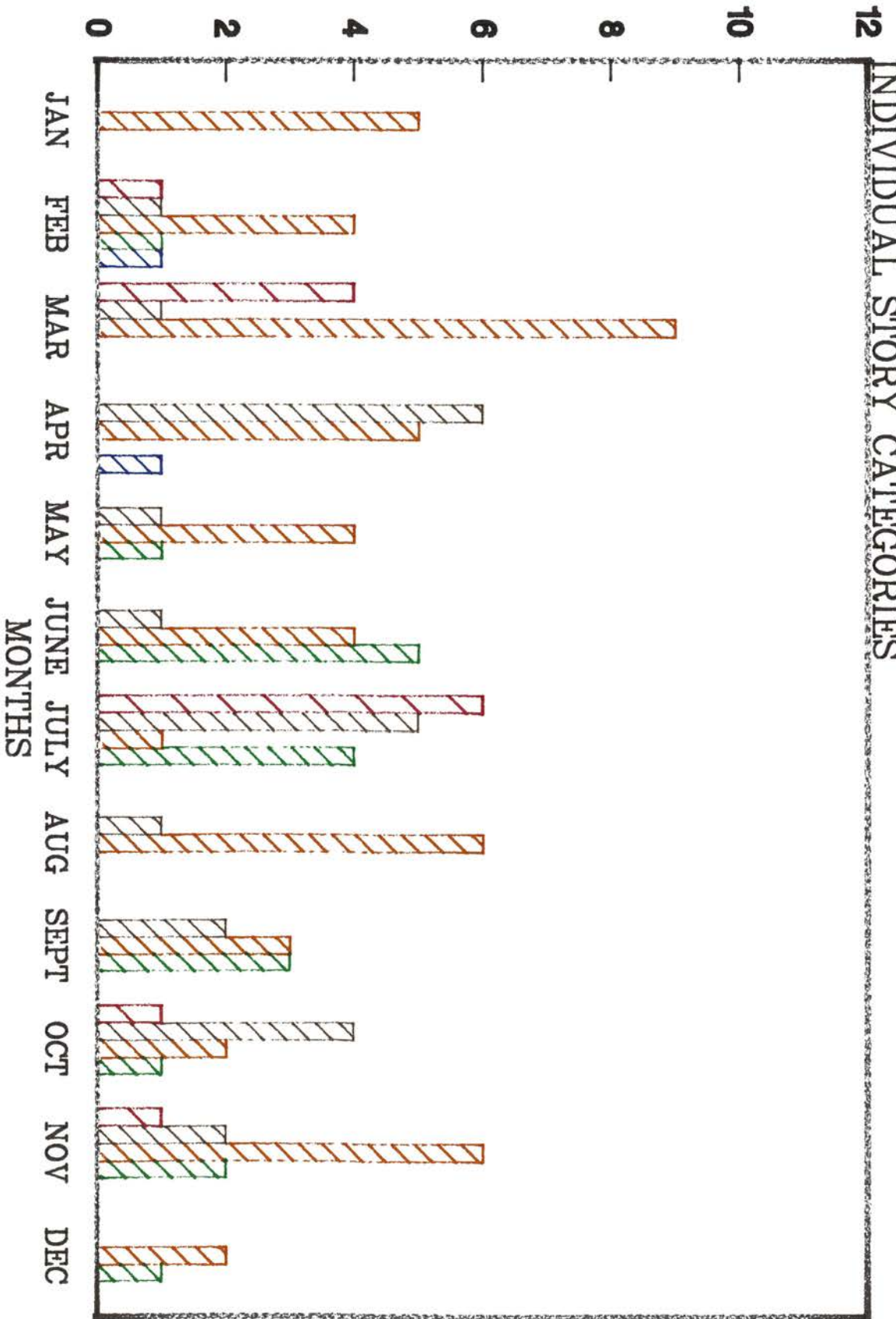
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TOTAL STORIES PER MONTH



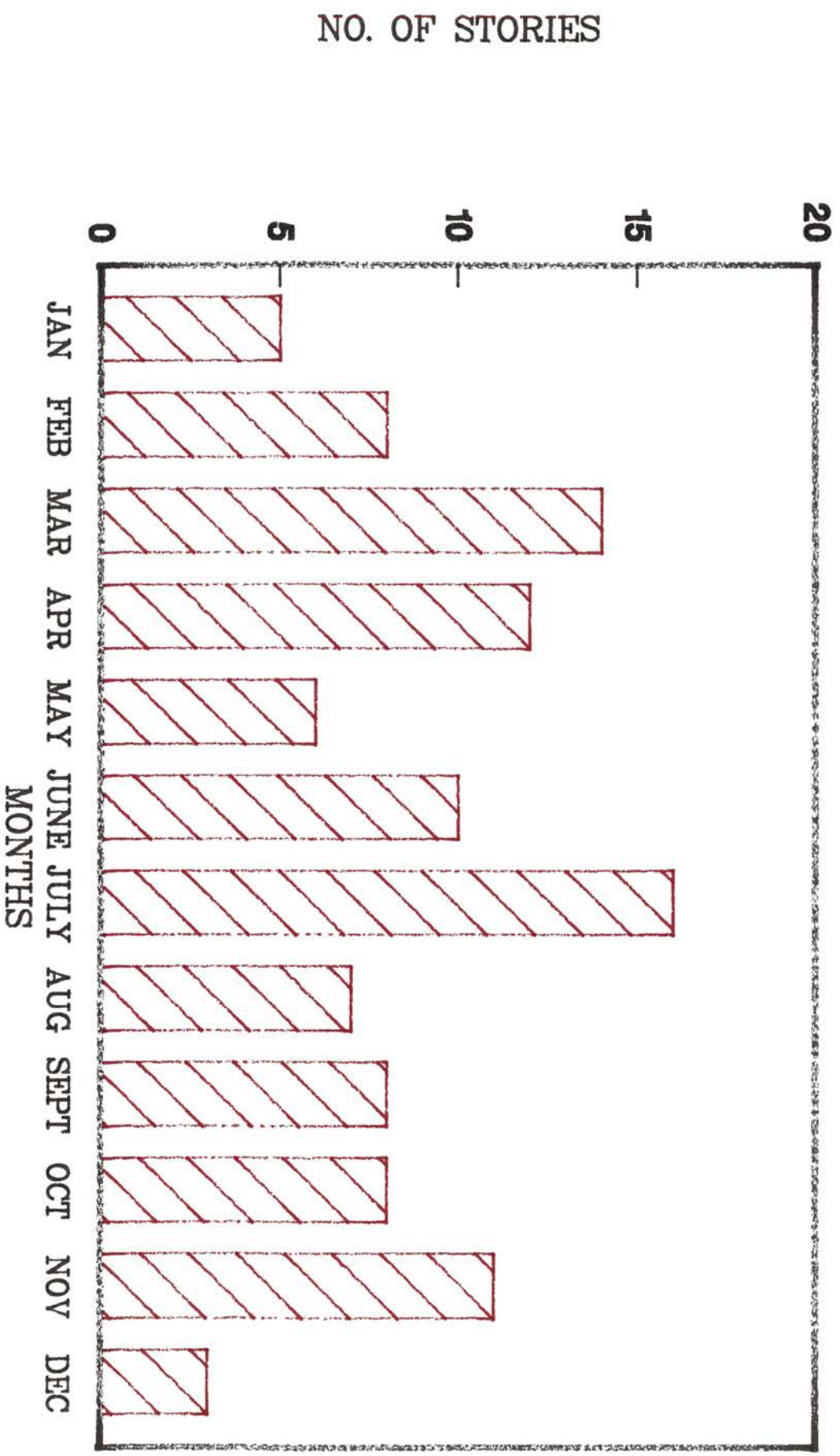
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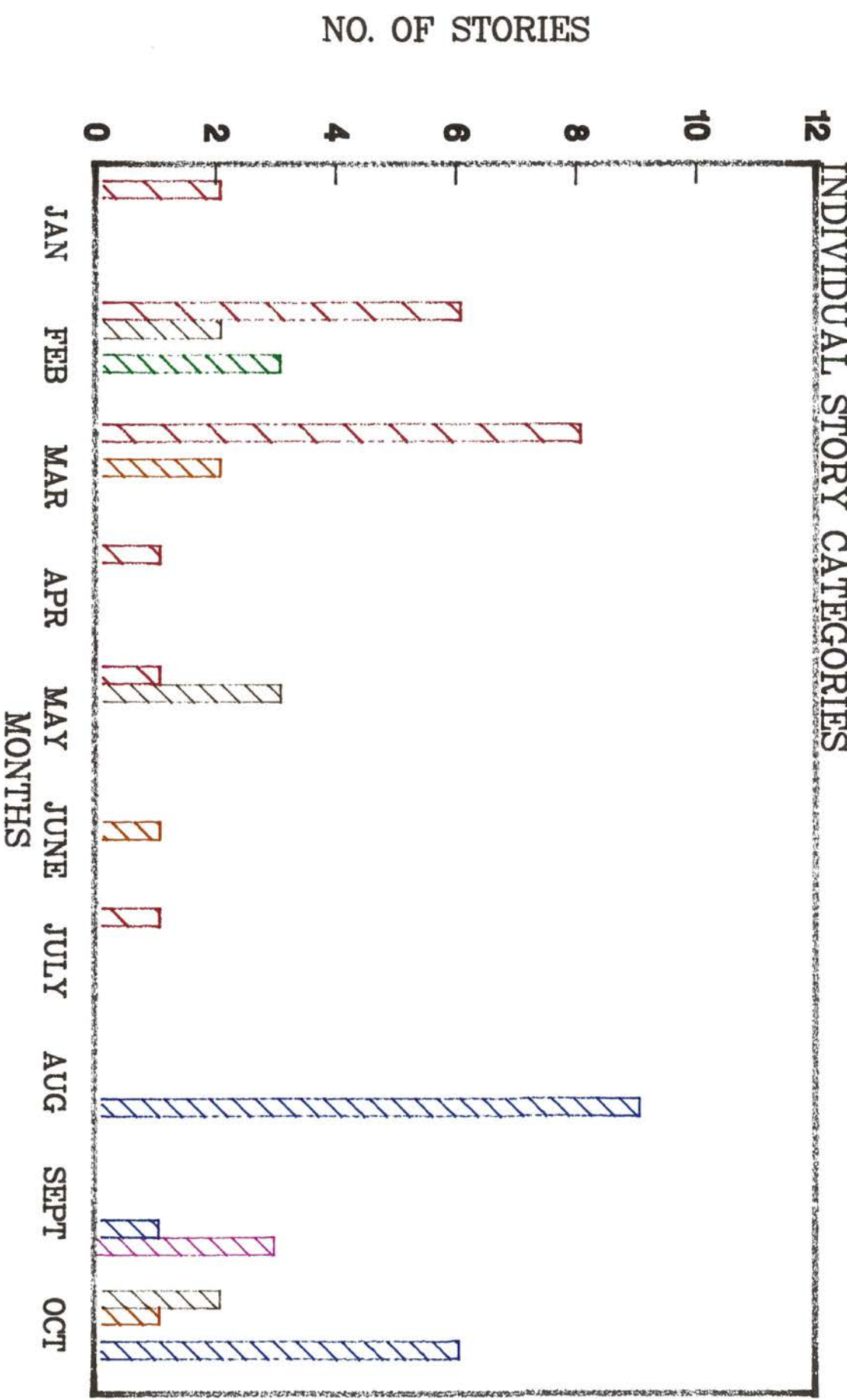


- ROYAL VISITS
- NAZI RAIDS
- ARP
- NEW TECHNOLOGY
- BOMBER OFFENSIVE

APPENDIX 5a
NEWSREEL COVERAGE - 1944
TOTAL STORIES PER MONTH



APPENDIX 6 NEWSREEL COVERAGE — 1945 INDIVIDUAL STORY CATEGORIES



- BOMBER OFFENSIVE**
- ARP**
- NAZI RAIDS**
- ATOM BOMB**
- NEW TECHNOLOGY**
- BATTLE OF BRITAIN**

APPENDIX 6a
NEWSREEL COVERAGE - 1945
TOTAL STORIES PER MONTH

