> some odd things, and finally the truth began to dawn and then I said, quite bluntly, that you should not say "out here" when you were in an American capital. Generally speaking, I made myself disagreeable through the dinner.[117]

The British Embassy knew that Berle was no friend, and it usually blamed him for any adverse turn of State Department policy. He was the only senior State Department official who still believed that Britain intended to work mischief with its propaganda machine. He did his best to shape policy accordingly.[118]

On August 28, 1940, Berle asked Secretary of State Hull for authority to lay the question of "liquidating" the two foreign libraries before their respective embassies. He assured Hull that the free flow of news from Britain made the BLI redundant; the sacrifice was necessary to clear the way for a seemingly even-handed removal of the dangerous German operation. Hull agreed and sent the Attorney General a copy of Berle's "draft bill to make unlawful the distribution or publication of matter of a political nature by agents of foreign governments in this country." He also commissioned a report on all foreign propaganda activity. A legislative time bomb had begun to tick.[119] But the British had more tangible problems. On September 7, the Nazis began their Blitz on London.

From: Cull, Nicholas John. Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995

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"London Can Take It": British Propaganda and the Blitz, September to December 1940

> A bomb has its limitations; it can only destroy buildings and kill people. It cannot kill the unconquerable courage and spirit of the people of London. London can take it.
>
> Quentin Reynolds, October 1940[1]

start with.

On the afternoon of September 7, 1940, approximately 200 German bombers took off from airfields in Belgium and Northern France. They assumed formation over the English Channel and set course for London. That night, and for the fifty-seven nights that followed, the Luftwaffe pounded the capital without mercy. Many German bombs found their mark. The Surrey Docks erupted into flames, drawing the raiders to London's densely populated East End. Firemen struggled to contain the blaze, but it seemed to them that "the whole bloody world" was on fire. The scale of the attack carried an obvious message. The War Cabinet issued the "invasion imminent" signal and then waited. But the invasion never came, and London held firm. On September 10, London hit back. As the Germans approached, searchlights swept across the darkness, and anti-aircraft batteries began to fire. Londoners heard this noise—their noise—and took heart. But the raids continued unabated, by night and day. It was going to be a long campaign.[2]

* This is a sonic experie

London had long feared the German bombardment, but Churchill had come to attach considerable hopes to the attack. He believed that the bombing of British cities could bring the United States into the war. Roosevelt had said as much to the King in 1939. By mid-August 1940, however, the Prime Minister's anticipation had bubbled over into impatience. Charles de Gaulle caught him cursing the Germans for staying away. Churchill explained that "the bombing of Oxford,

Coventry and Canterbury, will cause such a wave of indignation in the United States that they'll come into the war!"[3]

In the event, Churchill was to be disappointed. Rather than rallying American opinion, the German bombs merely threatened the confidence won during the Battle of Britain. The failure of the Allied assault on Dakar deepened the pessimism of observers such as Ambassador Joseph Kennedy. Moreover, as dollar reserves dwindled, Britain faced the limit of its war purchases. Churchill grew increasingly angry at American attempts to wring further concessions from the British Treasury. He instructed his negotiators to adopt a "stiffer attitude" and refused to send technical data as a "sweetener" for further aid. But Britain's bargaining position was unenviable.[4] The War Cabinet now acknowledged that the war could not be won without full American belligerence.[5]

In reality, the strategic situation was not quite as dire as Britain imagined. In turning against London, Germany had missed its chance to wipe out the RAF fighter command. As a result, the RAF still barred the way to an invasion; and on September 17, Hitler postponed Operation Sealion indefinitely.

The Battle of Britain had been won. Hitler decided to bomb Britain into irrelevance and seek his total victory elsewhere. On September 28, 1940 he gave orders to prepare for war with the Soviet Union.[6] Meanwhile, diplomatic developments offered a fresh basis for hope of American intervention. On September 27, Japan signed the Axis Pact, which included, Churchill noted gleefully, several clauses "aimed plumb at the United States." Now Roosevelt would be forced to clarify his policy in Asia. The pact gave Britain a vested interest in escalating U.S.–Japanese tension. Churchill immediately stopped appeasing Japan, reopened the Burma Road (which had been closed on July 18) on October 18, and renewed aid to Chiang Kai-Shek. He warned FDR that this could provoke a Japanese declaration of war and suggested that the U.S. Navy pay a courtesy call on Singapore. The Americans declined but welcomed the offer of full use of the Singapore naval base in wartime. Thus, at the very moment when Churchill had abandoned his hope that the bombing of London would bring America into the war, he acquired a new scenario for American belligerence. The timing rested with Tokyo; but for the moment, Tokyo preferred to wait. Meanwhile Britain fought on alone and prayed that this spectacle might still stir America.[7]

The Blitz on London shifted the burden of the war onto the civilian population. This created new publicity needs. The Blitz was a human story and required a sympathetic human eye to capture it. Britain's need for its resident American journalists had never been greater. The working relationships between the Americans and British propagandists became a key factor in securing aid and hence in ensuring

Britain's survival. Fortunately, Murrow and his colleagues stood ready to rise to the challenge.

The Overture: Preparing for the Blitz

> They can take what is coming . . . .
>
> Ed Murrow, August 18, 1940[8]

The American coverage of the Blitz did not materialize overnight. Its practices were well tried and its themes were in place long before the bombs began to fall. Neither the themes nor the practices of the Blitz can be separated by national origin. The British and the Americans shared a common pool of ideas that summer, and the interpretations of each influenced the other in a spiral of cooperation and shared metaphors that would culminate in their coverage of the autumn's epic siege.

By the early summer of 1940, the idea of national and social regeneration had become fundamental to some British and most American commentaries on the war. The American correspondents seemed to accept that Britain had cast off its old ways and was now fighting a "People's War."[9] The war news itself supported this. Little holiday steamers had plucked the British Army from French beaches; old men had rallied to form the Home Guard; and all across the country, the ordinary folk of England were moving into the front lines. The common experience of suffering and endurance during the Blitz confirmed this. The associated notion of national regeneration provided a persuasive framework for understanding this experience. It gave a positive shape to events that might otherwise have seemed unbearable. As the second Fire of London raged, it seemed natural for "purgatorial fire" to be the dominant metaphor in both British literature and American reportage. The formula of national death and glorious resurrection promised much for the British cause in America. It side-stepped doubts over the historical unworthiness of Britain. Britain no longer needed to deny its heritage of imperialism, debt defaulting, and appeasement. Now, it could point to the ongoing example of London under fire and cry: "That was then; this is now."

The theme of regeneration had an obvious appeal to the British left, but it also figured in the rhetoric of dyed-in-the-wool Tories like John Wheeler-Bennett. Wheeler-Bennett's extemporaneous speech at the University of Virginia on June 17, 1940, stands as a fine example of this "resurrection" model for presenting the Blitz. He spoke directly to the hope of a new Britain arising from the ruins of the old, and illustrated his point with Milton's vision of England at the height of its Civil War:

> not degenerated or drooping to a final decay, but casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption, to outlive these pangs and wax young again,

> entering into the truth of prosperous virtue, destined to become great and honourable in these later ages. Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks.

Wheeler-Bennett claimed these words for Britain. "I am confident," he declared "that Britain will survive and that this spirit, deepened and purified by the struggle, will outlast the war, be the result defeat or victory!"[10] Three months later Churchill cast the Blitz in similar terms:

> What he [Hitler] has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts, here and all over the world, which will glow long after all traces of the conflagration which he caused have been removed. He has lighted a fire which will burn with a steady consuming flame until the last vestiges of Nazi tyranny have been burnt out of Europe, and until the Old World—and the New—can join hands to rebuild the temples of man's freedom and man's honour, upon foundations which will not soon or easily be overthrown.[11]

The Americans absorbed these themes to varying extents. Writing in the United States, Dorothy Thompson latched onto the vision of the historic, noble England of the past, reborn and facing the trial of the present. By the end of September 1940, she developed her ideas in a three-part essay entitled "The Example of England." Dunkirk, she claimed, had been the moment of death and resurrection, when "one Britain lost the war" and "another Britain was born." The evacuation had been a miracle of Biblical proportions, conducted by civilians "from every village and hamlet on the coast of England," and it heralded a greater rebirth:

> A nation belongs to the people who will die to save it. At Dunkerque was demonstrated that the little men of England would die to save it. Great Britain has not belonged to the people. That beautiful hierarchy of title and wealth and commoners was a political democracy but no social democracy. But Dunkerque is almost an allegory for a strange sort of social revolution.

Thompson's interpretation of the Blitz hinged on this concept of social revolution; everywhere, she reported signs of the People's War.[12] A visit to Britain in the summer of 1941 more than confirmed the interpretation she had formed in New York: "What I saw," she wrote, "was so beautiful, so noble that I shall never doubt again. I have come back reborn, because I have seen a reborn nation."[13] At the other end of the scale, Murrow was more circumspect. He told his listeners in August 1940 that "Britain is still ruled by a class." But he believed nonetheless that the people of Britain would hold together. Observation suggested as much.[14]

Well before the Blitz, the American correspondents had decided that Britain would be able to stand up to the bombs. In the spring of 1939, *March of Time* had found signs reading "Bomb proof" amid the begonias of suburban London. Now their faith in popular bravado could

be measured against actual reactions to German bomb damage. Murrow watched public response to the first attacks and predicted that the British could "take what is coming to them." He promised America that "the defense of Britain will be something of which men will speak with awe and admiration so long as the English language survives."[15]

As Murrow whetted American appetites with CBS coverage of the defense of Britain, he was working with the BBC to ease restrictions on his broadcasts. There were now few conflicts. The regulations had softened; and as Britain's need deepened, the Americans seemed increasingly tolerant of the remaining regulations. As Eric Sevareid put it, the secret to good press relations in London was simple: "Most American correspondents were prejudiced; we wanted Hitler to lose."[16] By September 1940, most of them explicitly wanted Britain to triumph. With the conjunction of British need and American sympathy, it was only a matter of time before the Americans were allowed access to bomb sites and freedom to broadcast live commentaries on the Blitz. But Whitehall being Whitehall, the new heights of Anglo-American cooperation were reached via a tortuous trail of memoranda.

By the late summer of 1940, Murrow's British allies were on the offensive. Roger Eckersley (now the BBC's chief censor) declared that the cultivation of American broadcasters represented "the finest form of propaganda of which we can avail ourselves."[17] Angered by inflexible regulations, Eckersley asked that the Americans be given access to the wrecks of downed German planes and the scenes of air-raid damage. He stressed the unique potential of radio for "impinging on American consciousness what air raids really mean." After Eckersley made a direct appeal to the Home Secretary, Whitehall agreed to allow the broadcasters access to all bomb damage other than that of military significance.[18] The Foreign Office obtained similar privileges for the staff of the American Embassy. All British officials now accepted that, whatever the scale of the damage, it was better not to leave matters to the American imagination.[19]

At the very moment when Britain opened its civilian war damage to American scrutiny, the radio networks acquired the manpower for detailed coverage of British affairs. With the influx of correspondents formerly attached to the Allied armies in France, the networks suddenly had a surfeit of battle-hardened broadcasters on their hands. CBS celebrated this concentration of talent by posting its crack commentators—including Vincent Sheean, Larry Lesueur, and Eric Sevareid—at strategic points around the British coast and broadcasting a "round Britain hook-up" on the evening of July 21, 1940. The BBC reported that the program convincingly countered German claims and scored an "outstanding success with the American public."[20]

As the summer wore on, Ministry of Information officials did their best to help the Americans in any way they could. Sometimes this help was personal; Janet Murrow spent much of the summer of 1940 living

in the country as a guest of Mrs. Frank Darvall.[21] But all sides knew what was really needed. The Americans still longed for spontaneous running commentaries on raids, but rather than challenging the British ruling against such coverage, they turned to a softer target: their own codes of practice. In August 1940, NBC and CBS declared an interest in broadcasting from recordings. The MoI and BBC immediately arranged for them to record dogfights over Dover. On the first attempt, the Germans stayed away, leaving Murrow, Bate, and Mann standing atop Shakespeare Cliffs with nothing to talk about. When the Germans actually did turn up, the results were hardly spectacular. An engineer forgot to turn up the volume on the recording equipment, and the playback sounded like nothing more than a succession of inoffensive pops.[22]

The BBC scored the first success for itself. The Home and North American Services carried a blow-by-blow account of an air battle over the Channel, delivered by Charles Gardner with all the gusto of a sportscaster doing play-by-play: "Someone's hit a German and he's coming down in a long streak, coming down completely out of control, a long streak of smoke . . . . He's going flat into the sea . . . there he goes! SMA-A-A-ASH!"[23]

CBS soon matched this. Inspired by the success of its "round-Britain hook-up," the network planned a sound montage of London for the night of August 24, with British, Canadian, and American broadcasters speaking live from locations across the capital. The result, "London After Dark," was a triumph. As Murrow opened, live from Trafalgar Square, the air-raid siren sounded. Radios across the United States hummed with an unscripted eloquence to which the censors could not object. Murrow simply held out his microphone and caught the banging doors and hurrying footsteps of a city moving for shelter "like ghosts shod with steel shoes." The censor turned a deaf ear as Murrow ad-libbed around his planned talk. It was the sound of war, live, and as Eric Sevareid recalled, it "chilled the spine of America."[24]

The success of "London After Dark" fueled pressure for a final reform of procedure in London. On August 28, 1940, Darvall reported that the Americans were "anxious" for permission to "broadcast an eye-witness account of an air raid in progress, done, say, from the roof of Broadcasting House." He assured the BBC that the broadcasters could be relied on to respect security and "taste." Darvall and Eckersley agreed to request special uncensored broadcasting privileges for one representative of each chain. Whitehall wavered, but only to the extent of allowing Murrow to record a series of practice commentaries. After six nights spent cutting disks on the roof of Broadcasting House, Murrow convinced Whitehall that he could be trusted. On September 19, 1940, Walter Monckton, director general of the MoI finally granted permission for an unscripted broadcast.[25] With the themes and broadcasting procedures ready, the news from Britain would now have the greatest possible impact. The British could only

hope that, when Murrow took to the roof, the Germans would oblige with an attack.

"This Is London": The Co-projection of the Blitz on Britain

> I am a neutral reporter. I have watched the people of London live and die . . . . I can assure you there is no panic, no fear, no despair in London town.
>
> Quentin Reynolds, October 1940[26]

On the night of September 21, 1940, Ed Murrow stepped out onto the roof of Broadcasting House and prepared to deliver a live commentary on an air raid. German bombers droned overhead. Anti-aircraft fire leaped skyward from batteries nearby. The circuit snapped into life, but as Murrow began to speak the raiders rumbled out of earshot. The effect was no less dramatic:

> I'm standing on a rooftop looking out over London. At the moment everything is quiet. For reasons of national as well as personal security, I'm unable to tell you the exact location from which I'm speaking. Off to my left, far away in the distance, I can see just that faint red angry snap of anti-aircraft bursts against the steel-blue sky . . . . The lights are swinging over in this general direction now. You'll hear two explosions. There they are! That was the explosion, not overhead, not the guns themselves. I should think in a few minutes there may be a bit of shrapnel around here . . . .

The next morning the American press proclaimed: "Murrow ducks bombs in London." The American people sat up and listened.[27] The weeks of broadcasting that followed would bring some tension between the MoI and the Americans; but for the most part, the depiction of the Blitz became a truly cooperative effort. This was the co-projection of Britain at war.

The Blitz brought fresh irritants in ministry procedure. No one liked the MoI's practice of identifying bomb sites only as "a well loved church" or "a Georgian terrace." But the American correspondents soon accepted this institutional vagueness. They knew that Britain would tell the worst when necessary.[28] The British soon learned how to manipulate specific instances of bomb damage. The bombing of Buckingham Palace on September 13, 1940, enabled the MoI to call in the capital from the royal visit to North America. Churchill ordered maximum publicity. The MoI News Division arranged for journalists to inspect the damage and promote the theme of the "King with his People in the front line together." Stirred by the blind democracy of the bombs, American indignation flared on the King's behalf.[29] On a larger scale, Churchill also demanded extensive publicity for the devastating raid on Coventry on November 15, 1940. He later informed the War

Cabinet that "the effect had been considerable . . . in the United States."[30]

Meanwhile, Murrow and the BBC had reached a final accord over broadcasting procedure. Murrow conceded that he would always be required to speak under the censor's cut-out button.[31] He now knew the limits of British lenience, and the relationship between the government and the Americans was free to develop within these limits. Eckersley and Darvall busied themselves arranging trips to visit Bow Street Police Court, to accompany a night river patrol, and to witness the arrival of a convoy in Liverpool. Murrow asked them to send a CBS correspondent to Iceland as "a couple of talks from the one area successfully invaded by Britain would have a salubrious effect on our audience." The MoI arranged a passage for Lesueur.[32] But the days of taking Americans to the war had passed. Now the war came to them.

The personal involvement of the American broadcasters in the Blitz became central to their coverage. They sympathized with Londoners under fire because they had become Londoners under fire. In the spring of 1939, MoI planners had fought to ensure that London remained the center of American coverage of the European war. Now the value of the American presence became clear. As weeks of bombing dragged into months, the American journalists came to think like Londoners. They developed the same instincts—dodging into doorways on an impulse, moments before a bomb blast. They learned the same fatalism; Murrow became contemptuous of the dangers and earned a shrapnel dent on his tin helmet to prove it. They took their turn in rooftop fire-watches; on the nights when he wasn't working late at the UP office, Wallace Carroll became adept at dousing incendiary bombs with sand. Like the poor Londoners, they drew deep satisfaction from the roar of British anti-aircraft guns. Like wealthy Londoners they also leaned on more tangible crutches—not least the well-stocked bar at the Savoy. In recognition of this, Douglas Williams moved the MoI's nightly press briefings to the Savoy, which he duly delivered, cocktail in hand, clad in a Noël Coward–style dressing gown. As Drew Middleton recalled, the American press corps agreed with Osbert Lanchaster that it was the crowning mercy of the war that the shortage of liquor did not coincide with the Blitz.[33]

The Americans shared London's burden of loss. When bombs flattened the Devonshire Arms near Broadcasting House, everyone lost friends. CBS lost its offices, and Lesueur was bombed out of his apartment and forced to move in with the Murrows. Then, in early November 1940, Broadcasting House sustained a direct hit. Fred Bate of NBC caught the blast in the middle of Langham Place. A Canadian colleague found him struggling to get into Broadcasting House to deliver his address to America as usual. His ankle tendons were severed, and one ear hung loose. Bate was promptly shipped back to America. The

blast wrecked their studio, but the BBC technicians immediately returned to work amid tangled cables and floodwaters rising from a fractured main. Somehow an engineer nursed the equipment back to life in time for Mildred Boutwood to speak in Bate's place. She did not mention the bomb. She had no desire to act as a spotter for the Luftwaffe.[34]

All of this gave the broadcasters' work an emotional edge. When, in the late autumn of 1940, Eric Sevareid made his final broadcast from London, his voice audibly wavered as he said: "When this is all over, in the days to come, men will speak of this war and they will say: I was a soldier or I was a sailor, or I was a pilot; and others will say with equal pride: I was a citizen of London."[35] Sevareid and his colleagues had earned the same honor.

American sympathy for the British cause brought a measure of self-censorship, most obviously in coverage of government shelter policy. The rich had disproportionate access to shelters. The East End was particularly badly served; and to make matters worse, the government had closed the underground railway stations, fearing that a "deep shelter mentality" might otherwise prevent London from "carrying on." This story was not suppressed by the British government and was well-known to the Americans; indeed, its most famous incident occurred under their very noses. On the evening of September 15, a smartly dressed Englishman walked into the lobby of the Savoy and asked if he might inspect the air-raid shelter on behalf of an American businessman who wished to stay at the Savoy. As the maître d' showed him into the basement, he opened a side door onto the Embankment. In poured some eighty East Enders of all ages and two dogs. The man was Phil Piratin, a Communist counsellor from Stepney who had fought the Black Shirts in his streets and the fascists in Spain; now he was commandeering shelter space for the ordinary people of London. As the sirens sounded, Piratin explained his case. The police could do nothing. The newcomers had a legal right to shelter for the duration of the raid, so they ordered tea (for which they insisted on paying only the East End price) and settled in for the night. At dawn the all-clear sounded; and the protesters left as swiftly as they came, leaving their sheltermates nonplussed.[36]

This incident challenged the assumptions of American coverage of the Blitz. But instead of addressing it, the news agencies reported the usual story. AP led with St. Paul's Cathedral "saved from a ½ ton time bomb," UP reported "Nazis crash into London Streets: Crowds dance and cheer RAF on," and even the *Chicago Tribune* mentioned only the RAF successes.[37] Yet numerous American correspondents saw the affair; many lived at the Savoy and few ventured out at night. The AP correspondent Drew Middleton recalled the incident in his memoirs. Quite simply, this and other incidents did not fit with the

American press corps' understanding of Britain's war experience. Moreover, no one wished to feed ammunition to Britain's enemies. Murrow did deal with the broader shelter issue, but only James Reston of the *New York Times* covered the story in depth. His account was framed by the British government's plan to house the homeless in "empty West End apartments," but he acknowledged the legitimacy of the Communist case. Faced with similar dispatches in the now markedly less deferential British press, the War Cabinet took notice.[38]

On the afternoon of Tuesday, September 17, Piratin and his comrades broke open the Goodge Street underground station and marshaled the crowds to safety. But the War Cabinet had already resolved to open the underground stations. With this move, the embarrassment of the Savoy incident melted into a new wartime image as potent as a Spitfire or as the little ships of Dunkirk: the world-turned-upside-down picture of Londoners living underground. Now that the shelter policy matched America's image, it received particular attention. Although only 4 percent of the city's population sought refuge on the underground, this aspect of life during the Blitz dominated America's picture of British civil defense. The underground became an integral part of the correspondents's own war experience. Lesueur visited his local station so frequently that he came to recognize the individual shelterers by sight—the same families in the same spot, night after night. Six months into the Blitz, he realized that the children camped under the Cadbury's machine had grown visibly since he first saw them in September. Even on a railway platform, life went on.[39]

The British publicity structure maintained a steady flow of propaganda throughout the Blitz. On the BBC North American Service, Priestley provided stirring descriptions of London "carrying on," but he was swift to rebuke the American headlines describing London as "hell on earth." London, he averred, was not a "hell on earth"; he had seen action on the Somme in World War I and knew the difference.[40] Meanwhile, "Radio Newsreel" brought ordinary Londoners to the microphone. In one program, three small East End boys described being buried alive under bomb debris; another program carried an account of a bombing raid over Berlin. But the real strength of British propaganda now lay not in individual programs but in the way in which the campaign merged seemlessly with America's own news activity. Radio coverage of the Blitz was an Anglo-American co-production. The BBC and CBS teamed up to produce a new feature, "London Carries On," and to bring the sounds of Britain at war into American homes. It became impossible to say where CBS or NBC productions began and the BBC or MoI work stopped.[41]

The hidden hand of the MoI was also present in the field of war photography. The MoI's newly strengthened Photographic Section fed the news-hungry magazines of America a steady stream of images of

the Blitz, including Bill Brandt's unforgettable studies of London shelter life.[42] In the summer of 1940, the MoI hired Cecil Beaton—America's favorite British society photographer—to assist in this effort. Beaton became the ministry's most prolific photographer, taking 10,000 pictures during the course of the war. His pictures of cheery pilots, smoldering monuments, and humming factories took America's news magazines by storm. Two pictures proved particularly powerful. The first showed a three-year-old child, Ellen Dunne, who had been wounded by a shrapnel splinter, clutching her teddy bear in a hospital bed. "Her face," Beaton wrote, "so babylike, had suddenly grown old and pale"; she looked at the camera "in a trance of trustful misery." The MoI soon put this simple image to work. On September 23, 1940, it appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, and it soon became a poster for the White Committee. The second photograph, taken in December, was a portrait of the Prime Minister seated in the Cabinet Rooms at 10 Downing Street, glowering into the camera, "like a bull dog guarding its kennel."[43]

The Information Ministry also worked to bring film of the war to American screens. The spirit of cooperation with Americans reached its apogee in the work of the MoI Crown Film Unit, culminating in the most famous British documentary of life during the Blitz, *London Can Take It*, made in October 1940. From conception to distribution, this film was Anglo-American. The MoI Films Division conceived the film specifically to move America. The division wanted British authorship to be unobtrusive and decided that an American should provide the commentary. Sidney Bernstein duly recruited the veteran correspondent Quentin Reynolds of *Collier's Weekly*. The film's directors, Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings, were initially unimpressed by Reynolds. He refused to leave the basement of the Savoy to report on night raids and, moreover, had a booming voice and no microphone experience. The MoI team overcame these problems by bringing their microphone to the Savoy bar, all but sticking it down his throat, and making him whisper the commentary. Reynolds repaid them by delivering an electrifying commentary and thinking up the title. Watt and Jennings then assembled suitable pictures of the Blitz from Movitone newsreels.[44] The result was the first really useful MoI film contribution to the propaganda effort in America.

London Can Take It opens with a night raid on the capital. In a grave, urgent whisper, Reynolds notes: "These are not Hollywood sound effects. This is the music they play every night in London." The film then shows the scene the next morning, as Londoners pick their way to work through the ruins. The film appropriates all the stock themes of the Blitz: the People's War, the King and Queen, and damaged monuments of the English-speaking world. One shot shows a statue of Richard the Lionheart, his sword raised, defiant, in front of a bomb-damaged House of Commons. Audiences could hardly mistake the film's mes-

sage: the people of London "would rather stand and face death than kneel down and face the kind of existence the conqueror would impose on them."[45]

The distribution of *London Can Take It* provided further evidence of trans-Atlantic cooperation. The British cashed in the long-standing promise of support from Warner Brothers by asking that studio to arrange its release. Warners pledged all profits to the British War Relief fund and rushed 600 prints into national distribution in the first week of November 1940. Eight theaters carried the first run in downtown New York alone. Within a few months, the film had been shown at 12,000 American cinemas and had been seen by an estimated 60 million Americans. The U.S. release print of *London Can Take It* credited only Quentin Reynolds. Jennings, Watt, and the MoI went unmentioned. As Watt later recalled: "all America imagined that this was an unbiased, personal report made by one of their own people." Reynolds was happy to retain the outward credentials of "a neutral reporter."[46]

London Can Take It opened the way for further British films. The MoI immediately commissioned a sequel "to make the American public uncomfortable while they celebrate Christmas"; Watt and Reynolds obliged with *Christmas Under Fire*. The new film supplemented the defiance of the previous picture with a moving display of faith in adversity. With an emphasis on Britain's "Christmas underground," the film challenged the complacent peace of Christmas in neutral America. Reynolds growled that this year Britain prayed for bad weather at Christmas—bad enough to hold off the German bombers—as "a stormy night is an ally of England, a non-belligerent that demands no rules of Cash and Carry." He continued:

> There is no reason for America to feel sorry for England this Christmas. England doesn't feel sorry for herself . . . . Destiny gave her the torch of liberty to hold and she has not dropped it . . . she is thankful that when the test came she had the high courage to meet it, and today England stands unbeaten, unconquered, unafraid.[47]

The final moments of the film appealed shamelessly to the sentimental heart of middle America. As choirboys gathered to "worship the Prince of Peace," there could hardly have been a dry eye in the house.

Thus the Blitz on Britain wore on with Anglo-American cooperation as the order of the day. By Christmas, Murrow's flat had become a second Piccadilly Circus, with a steady stream of British politicians, Whitehall officials, and BBC staff dropping by at all hours. Murrow would sit up into the night, discussing everything from postwar reform to the generals of the American Civil War.[48] The correspondents had thrown their lot in with the British, and they had not been disappointed. But one question remained. Britain had stood firm, and they had reported the story; but what did the American public think, and

The Impact of the Blitz: American Sympathy and Its Limits

> You spoke, you said, in London . . . . But it was not in London really that you spoke. It was in the back kitchens and the front living rooms and the moving automobiles and the hot dog stands and the observation cars of another country that your voice was truly speaking. And what you did was this: You made real and urgent and present to the men and women of those comfortable rooms, those safe enclosures, what the men and women had not known was present there or real. You burned the city of London in our houses and we felt the flames that burnt it. You laid the dead of London at our doors and we knew the dead were our dead—were all men's dead—were mankind's dead and ours.
>
> Archibald MacLeish to Murrow, December 1941[49]

The Americans reporting the Blitz on Britain were quite unable to judge the impact of their efforts. Their only regular indication of the United States' mood came in daily, hurried contact with their New York headquarters over the service line, tempered by a steady stream of isolationist hate mail. Murrow cherished a letter addressed to Mr. Edward R. Moron. The wider public response could only be guessed. In November 1940, Eric Sevareid became the first of the correspondents to return home. He was amazed to find that he and his colleagues had become national heroes. The United States was following the war in Europe day-by-day, hour-by-hour, on the radio and was deeply moved by what it heard.[50]

The nation's old dislike of Hitler had now become an overt sympathy for the British people. The United States admired the "magnificence" of Britain's progress from defiant retreat, to victory in the air, to courage under bombardment. Each successive phase eroded the old images of the British Empire. The figure of Winston Churchill towered over all. Drew Middleton returned home to find a marked change in his family in South Orange, New Jersey. Although never previously anglophile, they now lay under the Prime Minister's spell. Churchill's appearance on the radio plunged his welcome-home dinner into silence. No one spoke until the speech had finished. An old uncle broke the silence: "What a great man." The others echoed: "What a great people."[51]

The opinion polls bore out this change. In November, when Gallup asked "Do you think the United States should keep out of war or do everything possible to help England even at the risk of getting into war ourselves?" American opinion divided evenly on the question. By December, a full 60 percent were willing to risk war. The previous May, a similar majority had favored isolation.[52] The British noticed the change. Lothian reported "an overwhelming sentiment for giving us all immediate assistance short of war." On October 21, Lord Halifax informed the War Cabinet of "an almost miraculous change of opinion in the United States

tively resisting the German air attack." Once pessimistic American journalists now openly expressed the "hope and belief" that the United States would be involved in the war by the autumn of 1941 "at the latest."[53]

Much of the credit for the "miracle" lay with the medium of radio. The Blitz had allowed a powerful medium and a powerful message to converge. This point was eloquently made by Archibald MacLeish. At a dinner in Murrow's honor held on December 2, 1941, he told the broadcaster:

> you destroyed in the minds of many men and women in this country the superstition that what is done beyond three thousand miles of water is not really done at all: the ignorant superstition that violence and lies and murder on another continent are not violence and lies and murder here; the cowardly and brutal superstition that the enslavement of mankind in a country where the sun rises at midnight by our clocks is not enslavement by the time we live by; the black stifling superstition that what we cannot see and hear and touch can have no meaning for us.[54]

But the United States' response also owed much to years of trans-Atlantic cultural interchange. The German bombs did not fall on some unknown corner of the globe but on a city and nation whose landmarks and inhabitants were well-known to all Americans—a familiar place that existed inside the head of any American who had ever read *Oliver Twist* or seen *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. No other country held such sway over the American imagination. Strengthened by its apparent rebirth, Britain appealed directly to American anglophilia. Hitler had given America something to hate; now Britain provided something for America to love.

American popular culture digested the sounds and images of the Blitz and glowed with sympathetic sentiment. Although many U.S. radio stations banned war songs (NBC refused to play certain Gracie Fields records), British patriotic music seemed to be everywhere.[55] In December 1940, Ridsdale reported: "There is such a marked sweep of pro-British feeling running through the States that even strip-tease dancers discard their brassières and what-have-yous to the tune of 'There'll always be an England.' This seems to me not only physically, but psychologically, suggestive and perhaps a tribute to our national virility."[56]

A long poem, "The White Cliffs," by Alice Duer Miller, achieved phenomenal success. It told of an American's love for England—its villages, people, and history—and of her willingness to send her only son to die to preserve it. The poem ended with the lines:

> I am an American bred,
> I have seen much to hate here—much to forgive,
> But in a world where England is finished and dead,
> I do not wish to live.

Published in August 1940, the poem sold 300,000 copies in the United States. Millions more came to know it through broadcast readings and a best-selling musical version performed by Jimmy Dorsey. It became an archetypal work of anglophilia.[57]

Churchill was prepared to accommodate the American fantasy of village England. In October 1940, when *Life* magazine carried a photo feature on the Prime Minister's namesake village in Somerset, he provided a personal message:

> I have enjoyed looking at *Life* magazine's pictures of Churchill in Somerset. Such villages exist throughout the length and breadth of Britain and I commend these pictures to the readers of *Life*, for they may give a better idea of what Britain is fighting for and how she is meeting the challenge [of Germany] than words can say.[58]

Others saw the pitfalls of this view of England. J. B. Priestley scorned "The White Cliffs": "This isn't the England that is fighting the war. The Christmas card caricature of England couldn't fight this war for a couple of days . . . they don't make 16-inch guns or Hurricanes or Spitfires down on the old family place in Devon."[59] In time, British propaganda would try to correct these illusions; but the United States, like one in love, preferred its fantasy.

The dramatic news from Britain coincided with a new wave of interventionist films. The most significant of these was Walter Wanger's co-production with Alfred Hitchcock of *Foreign Correspondent*, released in the final week of August. This film rode the crest of public admiration that had been building for Murrow and his colleagues in Europe. The opening titles read:

> To the intrepid ones who went across the seas to be the eyes and ears of America. To those forthright ones who early saw the clouds of war while many of us at home were seeing rainbows. To those clear-headed ones who now stand like recording angels among the dead and the dying. To the Foreign Correspondents this motion picture is dedicated.[60]

Hitchcock had abandoned his original plan to film Vincent Sheean's memoirs. Instead, he launched a fictional journalist Huntley Haverstock (played by Joel McCrea) on a roller-coaster ride through a Europe tumbling into war. Haverstock, a humble New York crime reporter, has a keen sense of morality but is wholly ignorant of European affairs until his paper sends him to cover the "crime" of Europe's return to war. He finds a world of German spies, frantic diplomacy for peace, assassinations, chases, and spy-infested windmills. He faces murder in Westminster Cathedral and a plane crash in the mid-Atlantic. The movie's message was never far below the surface. At the climax of the film, after viewers have shared Haverstock's journey from parochialism to wholehearted commitment to the anti-Nazi cause, Hitchcock confronts them with their government's own position. Haverstock is

rescued at sea by a rigidly neutral U.S. Navy captain who forbids his filing the big story while on board. American neutrality thus becomes Haverstock's problem.

Foreign Correspondent ends in a crescendo of propaganda, as Huntley Haverstock broadcasts to the United States from London:

> Hello America. I've been watching a part of the world being blown to pieces. A part of the world as nice as Vermont, Ohio, Virginia, California, and Illinois lies ripped up and bleeding like a steer in a slaughterhouse. I've seen things that make the history of the savages read like pollyanna legend.

An air-raid siren interrupts. In the background Londoners move calmly towards their shelters. Bombs explode. Lights flicker. Haverstock continues:

> I can't read the rest of this speech because the lights have gone out. So I'll just have to talk off the cuff. All that noise you hear isn't static, it's death coming to London. Yes, they're coming here now. You can hear the bombs falling on the streets and homes. Don't tune me out—hang on—this is a big story—and you're part of it. It's too late now to do anything except stand in the dark and let them come as if the lights are all out everywhere except in America. Keep those lights burning, cover them with guns, build a canopy of battleships and bombing planes around them and, hello, America, hang on to your lights, they're the only lights left in the world.

Music swells under the words; it is "The Star Spangled Banner." The credits then roll over Wanger's American eagle logo.

The completed film impressed even unsympathetic observers. Goebbels called it "a masterpiece of propaganda."[61] Wanger and Hitchcock also avoided some obvious pitfalls. The final plea spoke only of a defense of America's "lights" and not of intervention to rekindle the lights of Europe. The message was thus closer to the interventionism of William Allen White than to that of Wanger's Century Group. *Foreign Correspondent* was perfect for the moment: it anticipated Reynolds's *London Can Take It*, opened during the same week that Murrow made his live broadcast from Trafalgar Square, and reached theaters exactly as the Germans began their Blitz on London. Fact and fiction collided in one persuasive blur.

Walter Wanger also squeezed an anti-Nazi message into *The Long Voyage Home*, directed by John Ford. The film starred John Wayne as a lovable Swedish sailor whose wish to "goo hoom" is tragically confounded by a German torpedo.[62] Other producers proved equally partisan. In Warner Brothers' Elizabethan epic, *The Sea Hawk*, Errol Flynn thwarts turncoats at home, defeats Spaniards on the high seas, and rouses England to build the fleet necessary to frustrate Spain's dream of an empire stretching "to the Urals." Flora Robson as Queen Elizabeth concluded the proceedings by extolling the virtues of rearmament and proclaiming: "Freedom is the deed and title to the soil on

which we exist." "Count on Warners," commented the *New York Times*, "to inject a note of contemporary significance."[63] Then, in September 1940, *March of Time* released *The Ramparts We Watch*, a feature film tracing the World War I experiences of a small New England town. The film undermined the isolationist view of World War I by criticizing the war fever and spy hysteria while still upholding the justice of the Allied cause. German footage of the Nazi bombing of Poland, supplied by Grierson, provided a pointed climax—especially since, at that very moment, the same bombers had appeared in the skies over London.[64]

Twentieth Century Fox offered two anti-Nazi pictures that autumn: *I Married a Nazi* and *Four Sons*, a tale of life in occupied Czechoslovakia, produced by Darryl F. Zanuck. MGM added *Escape*, the story of an American's struggle to free his mother from a concentration camp, and *The Mortal Storm*, which dealt with a German academic's resistance to Hitler's racial doctrines. But none of these pictures matched the impact of the big picture of that autumn: Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. Chaplin's tale of a Jewish barber mistaken for the European dictator "Adenoid Heinkel" transformed Hitler and Mussolini into strutting buffoons. Although the absurdities of fascism had long been apparent to most Americans, the cinema now caught up with public attitudes, and Chaplin scored a runaway box office success. The *New York Times* declared the film "perhaps the most significant motion picture ever produced."[65]

The British made their own contribution to the season, with the stiff-upper-lip heroics of Michael Balcon's *Convoy*, and Carol Reed's spirited sequel to *The Lady Vanishes*, titled *Night Train*. Reed's film starred matinée idol Rex Harrison as a British secret agent at large in Nazi Germany. Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne added comic relief at the expense of Hitler, with exchanges such as: "Did you know that every German couple is given a copy of *Mein Kampf* on their wedding day?" "Goodness . . . I had no idea it was *that* sort of book." Walter Wanger adored the film and tried to poach Reed to direct his next war picture, but Reed remained in Britain, overworked and under contract.[66] Some British films proved too idiosyncratic for America. In October, the *New York Times* struggled gamely to welcome the latest George Formby vehicle as "evidence of the Britishers' incorrigible 'Thumbs Up' attitude in the face of mortal danger," but it found *Let George Do It* "only sporadically funny" and speculated that the cast may have been "half listening for air raid sirens."[67]

Whether British or American in origin, these films provided a fertile cultural environment for the news reports from Britain. Audiences watched such movies with the latest newsreel from London fresh in their minds, and they returned home to hear the same war live on the 9:00 news. No better environment for nurturing aid to Britain could have been imagined, and the public gave accordingly. On September

18, the *New York Herald Tribune* reported that "U.S. Red Cross aid to England" was nearing $5 million, and that Bundles for Britain had designated September 29 as "Britain Sunday." But the U.S. government sent no new aid of its own.

The British blamed Roosevelt's reticence on the impending election, but they also noted the limits of the American public's understanding of the war. The United States clearly grasped only the rawest elements in Britain's experience and seemed unsure what Britain would do next beyond "taking" further punishment from the Nazis. Some portion of the blame lay with the lack of British war aims; but for its part, the American press seemed to have forgotten the broader issues of the war. Lothian saw this as a side effect of the liberal reporting restrictions. The license to cover the Blitz and the experience of being caught up in it had ensured that the Americans were "so obsessed with the bombing of London . . . that they cable about nothing else." He concluded: "It gives a wonderful reputation for courage but tends to put the war out of perspective."[68] John Grierson agreed. He remained bitterly critical of British film propaganda in the United States and told the MoI:

> Sympathy is only a second-class propaganda gambit and doesn't create participation. It doesn't create confidence. *London Can Take It* though . . . had I think the wrong secondary effect. "Boy I was sorry for London last night!" Tear dropped, job over. Ditto, it seems for *Christmas Under Fire*. Someone writes to say it is nothing but *London Can Still Take It* and like a Landseer painting of a noble stag bleeding to death on a Scottish moor, but mutely asking no one to be sorry for it, because it is still "Monarch of the Glen."[69]

The American correspondents confirmed this. Larry Lesueur insisted that the MoI could not use the "Britain can take it" line indefinitely. Britain could take it, but only until it was in a position to strike back at the Germans. Lesueur had seen boxers fight bravely for money, and he had seen them fight bravely just to win, but he'd never seen anyone win just because he could "take it." It therefore came as no surprise when, on January 2, 1941, the MoI informed the BBC as follows:

> At the last meeting of the planning committee it was agreed that the phrase "Britain Can Take It" and the other members of the "Can Take It" family had become ineffectual and therefore undesirable. We should be glad therefore if you would discourage the use of such phrases in broadcasting.[70]

A brilliant propaganda device had outlived its usefulness, and in the meantime the battle had shifted to the United States. On November 5, 1940, FDR won an unprecedented third term in the White House. Now, at last, Britain's best friend enjoyed the political security necessary to extend large-scale aid, and the way was clear for a new era of British

propaganda in America. Neither of these developments proved wholly straightforward.

Beyond the Blitz: Building New Propaganda Machinery in the United States

> The whole country has sunk back into a post-election reaction. The feeling for Great Britain is as strong and friendly as ever but public opinion is still inclined to live in complacency derived from the failure of Hitler's attempt at invasion of Britain this autumn, while nothing has happened on the international front to revive American anxiety about its own security.
>
> Lord Lothian, November 1940[71]

On November 6, Churchill wrote to congratulate the President on his victory. He did not mention his need for American aid, but hoped that FDR might reply with a new initiative. To the Prime Minister's surprise, Roosevelt failed to answer this message and remained silent on the question of aid to Britain. On December 2, 1940, Churchill told the War Cabinet that he felt "chilled" by Roosevelt's attitude since the election. He assumed that FDR must be waiting for the post-election atmosphere to disperse. Britain, however, could not wait; the country's dollar reserves were all but exhausted. The British Treasury prepared to liquidate all British assets in the United States, but Britain's survival now depended on war credit. Such a radical revision of neutrality law required the sympathy and confidence of both the American government and the American public. But once again American confidence wavered.

In the second week of November 1940, the British noted a sudden loss of American faith in their shipping reports. Certain sections of the press alleged that the British were concealing the scale of U-boat successes, which offered an obvious index of Britain's chances of survival. Germany lost no time in exploiting this line of attack, and thus the Battle of the Atlantic, like the Battle of Britain before it, became a battle for the American headlines. The Foreign Office prescribed openness, but the Admiralty dragged its feet. The MoI made do with some stirring broadcasts and press conferences and helped *March of Time* produce a film on the British Merchant Navy.[72]

Meanwhile, Ronald Tree sought to address the larger problems of British propaganda. In a letter to Duff Cooper of November 20, 1940, he called for clear propaganda objectives so that the MoI could "educate people" in the United States "to help us along specific lines." He argued that the root of Britain's problem was the President. FDR's "refusal to come out and tell the truth" about the war had left the United

States "utterly uneducated as to the seriousness of our position."[73] Tree knew that only action at the highest level could apply the necessary pressure to Whitehall and the White House alike. Fortunately, Churchill was now thinking along similar lines.

On October 20, Lothian returned to Britain for a much-needed rest. He took the opportunity to urge Churchill to broach the question of American aid with Roosevelt. The Prime Minister agreed and resolved to address the President in the strongest possible terms, outlining the true depth of Britain's need. But Churchill did not want to rush; he preferred to wait for the right moment to send his request to FDR.[74] Lothian had other ideas. On November 23, 1940, he landed at LaGuardia Airport in New York City. Reading from a brief unauthorized statement, Lothian presented assembled reporters with a grim picture: "England will be grateful for any help. England needs planes, munitions, ships and perhaps a little financial help." In response to questions, he hinted at an imminent British financial collapse. The *Chicago Tribune* screeched "Envoy Lothian claims Britain is going broke." In the folk memory of Britain's propagandists Lothian had said "Well boys, Britain's bust. It's your money we want!"[75]

Lothian's candor effectively punctured American complacency. The Foreign Office News Department saw its chance and rushed into the breach, calling for the War Cabinet to set clear propaganda objectives in the United States. Charles Peake put the matter bluntly in a letter to Duff Cooper: "We know very well how delicate is the ground upon which we tread. But so long as we are not told how far we can go, what risks we may take, and above all what the Prime Minister expects and wants, we can only nibble at American propaganda and the time is too urgent for nibbling."[76]

At the Foreign Office, North Whitehead predicted a vigourous American debate over intervention. He underlined that: "On the outcome of this discussion our chances of victory largely depend and the result will be guided by public opinion at the time. It is of the utmost importance that we should do what we can to influence that opinion in our favour." He therefore prepared a cabinet paper on British propaganda in the United States. "Briefly," he wrote, "our objective is to obtain the utmost assistance from the United States as quickly as possible, not excluding direct participation in the war."[77]

Duff Cooper heartily endorsed this assessment and begged Churchill to issue a "directive on which to base our propaganda effort." Churchill seemed sympathetic. He asked only that any new British campaign be delayed until Roosevelt replied to his impending appeal for aid.[78] In cabinet, on December 2, 1940, Churchill underlined the need for a considered approach to American opinion. He argued: "If the picture was painted too darkly, elements in the United States would say that it was useless to help us, for such help would be wasted and thrown away. If too bright a picture was painted, there might be a tendency to withhold

assistance." On the night of December 7, 1940, Churchill sent his request for aid to Roosevelt. The State Department forwarded the note to the President, who was then on a Caribbean fishing trip aboard the USS *Tuscaloosa*.[79] With Churchill open to the notion of full-scale British propaganda in the United States, no barrier remained to prevent an all-out campaign. Activity merely awaited FDR's reply.

Developments elsewhere heightened Britain's need for effective publicity. When Jewish refugees scuttled the SS *Patria* off Haifa rather than be redirected to East Africa, 1,555 survivors found themselves in a British concentration camp. Britain was left in the difficult position of having to explain an unpopular and seemingly repressive policy to American Jews and gentiles alike.[80] Meanwhile the isolationists had found the soft underbelly of the American interventionist movement. They spent the month hammering away at the highly charged issue of American belligerence. Their initiative wrought havoc in the interventionist camp, laying bare the split between the Century Group hawks and William Allen White's "all aid short of war" policy. In late December, in an interview to the Scripps-Howard chain, White denounced the radical line and declared "the Yankees won't come": "America would only play into the hands of Hitler if she should enter the war actively; the shipment of American war supplies to England on American merchant ships and the protection of convoys to England is not permissible in any circumstances."[81] The British had tried to put a brave face on the rivalries between the various aid committees, but this was different. The need for a British propaganda initiative had never been greater. Fortunately, the discussions over the expansion of the British publicity in the United States had produced dramatic structural developments. Yet even at this critical moment, the gremlin of interdepartmental rivalry lurked beneath the surface.

The prolonged policy wrangles of the summer had pointed to the need for more British publicity in the United States. Now Britain created the necessary machinery. Lord Lothian led the way by launching the Inter-Allied Information Committee (IAIC), a body created to fund and direct the American propaganda efforts of the smaller Allied nations. The new committee brought fresh voices onto the American stage. The Czechs and Poles had previously had no money to spend on U.S. publicity, and the German conquests of the spring had silenced the remaining European powers. The IAIC also offset a new danger. Lothian had noted the establishment of a French section within the German Consulate in New York, and he suspected that Britain's erstwhile allies would soon be reading from a German script. In reply, he proposed that Britain direct Free French news and propaganda in the United States through the IAIC. The IAIC promised to be the perfect puppet propaganda machine, not least because the puppets themselves were eager to participate.[82]

This initiative drew a mixed reception in London. Duff Cooper still felt that he should control all such activity, and Halifax was rather appalled by the notion of collaborating with the Free French; but the Foreign Office approved. The leadership of the committee fell to Michael Huxley, formerly the British Embassy press attaché, who now realized that this post would be superceded by the expansion of British publicity.[83] The Inter-Allied Information Committee convened on September 24, 1940, with Huxley at the helm and with a share of the MoI money brought by Childs in its campaign chest. The governments-in-exile of Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, and Norway, as well as observers from Belgium and Luxembourg, all participated; Robert Valeur (formerly of the French Information Bureau in New York) represented the "France Forever" committee. Valeur would later become the organization's director of publications. By the second meeting, the emigré Poles had joined, and the committee was preparing to draw representatives of the remaining Allies into the fold. The committee operated through its own Inter-Allied Information Center located close to the other British propaganda offices on the third floor of 610 Fifth Avenue, Rockefeller Center, New York. It soon surprised even its creators with its ambitiousness and vitality.[84]

Lothian had originally hoped to use the Allied representatives to address their own national minorities within the United States, thus quietly turning the Polish-Americans of Pittsburgh, for example, into a fifth column for the British cause. But Huxley preferred to build a sturdy public news office. The international character of the IAIC's output highlighted a common experience of Nazi tyranny; it also created a natural environment for the member states to address their common concerns for the future and, most importantly, for postwar international cooperation. Thus, on October 30, the Foreign Office noted: "Mr. Huxley has converted the intended activities of this committee from those of underground propaganda to various U.S. national groups into a 'high grade' information bureau and centre for the discussion of future aims for Europe."[85] The Inter-Allied Information Committee had clearly developed a life of its own. Even as it began work, however, Britain prepared a new tier of propaganda operations in the United States.

As the Blitz on London began, the Ministry of Information was still debating Stephen Childs's scheme for a British propaganda bureau in New York. Duff Cooper presided and Wheeler-Bennett flew in from New York to represent Lothian in the process. Under Lothian's hand, the plan had developed into a two-pronged attack. He had appointed Childs to head an expanded British Embassy press office to handle the embassy's dealings with the MoI in London and with Washington columnists. Now, he sought to launch the long-awaited British publicity office in New York. Lothian held all the cards. He had hijacked Duff Cooper's emissary and used his funds to set up the Inter-Allied machinery. He commanded the loyalty of Wheeler-Bennett and the expansionist faction in the BLI. With the budget of the British Embassy and its press office at his disposal, he did not need any further funding from London. He could take his next step alone. Duff Cooper could only sit back and watch Lothian play his hand.[86]

Lothian planned to use the New York press office as the nerve center of British publicity in the United States. It would cultivate American press and radio commentators, issue "hot news" and features, refute enemy propaganda, and even build links with religious organizations and organized labor. Lothian took care that even the title of the new organization fit these objectives. He avoided the word *relations*, which he said reminded Americans of their own government's rash of "public relations" departments, and he could of course not use the obscene word *propaganda*. In triumph, he hit on the word *service*, writing: "the word 'Service' produces a benevolent reaction in America. We do not wish to be accused of making overt plans to 'influence' the press; although of course it is quite understood that the organisation will specialise in 'relations' rather than acting as a spot news agency."[87] Thus the title British Press Service was born.

In deference to the imminent U.S. elections, work began cautiously. Lothian promised that the BPS would avoid secret service–style whispering campaigns (the practice whereby British agents "mingled in bars and thoroughfares" and introduced subversive rumors into the population at large). The BPS scheme included plans for regional diversification, but not, as yet, for separate regional branches. It would also be responsible for surveying the American press. This was hardly surprising, since Lothian used the old BLI Survey Section as the core of the BPS. He recruited the survey staff wholesale, and assigned Aubrey Morgan and John Wheeler-Bennett to assist in administering the new office. Lothian appointed Alan Dudley, the BLI's survey chief, as acting director. Dudley lacked the charisma of Morgan or Wheeler-Bennett, but his unassuming character served Lothian's present purpose well. Like Morgan and Wheeler-Bennett, Dudley was well known in the New York press world, and the array of familiar faces disguised the degree to which this office represented a new departure in British policy. British propaganda had, at last, broken free from the suffocating rigidity of Angus Fletcher and the BLI. This, Wheeler-Bennett wrote, was "the first step toward creating a 'popular' institution for the conduct of British public relations; an organisation which aimed to serve the curious many rather than the enquiring few, and which was based upon the principle of creating an ever growing demand for its services."[88]

The BPS found office space on the forty-fourth floor of the RCA building, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, close to the British Library of Information. The offices of NBC were in the same complex; CBS and a slew of New York newspapers lay within easy reach. The budget was sub-

stantial—Lothian requested $14,000 per month for the New York office alone—but other facilities were sparse. The reference section initially consisted of little more than several willing hands, a well-thumbed British *Who's Who*, and a ragged selection of books from Wheeler-Bennett's own shelves. During the early days, Sir William Wiseman, a ghostly presence from the previous war, drifted in and out to offer his advice. He held no formal appointment, however, and soon slipped into the background.[89]

The office scrambled to hire the necessary staff. Some officers recruited their friends. The stranded British student Frank Thistlethwaite brought in his sympathetic American college friend John Lawler. Lawler had worked on the *Des Moines Register* and brought an intimate knowledge of American journalism and the American Midwest. He gained ample reward for his service, meeting his British wife on the staff; in later years he would joke that he married her in lieu of a knighthood. For the clerical posts, the BPS followed usual diplomatic practice and hired staff at the local employment exchange. The telephone operator, New York native "Mitch" Mitchell, joined without knowing the nature of the office's business; his only clues were the initials BPS over the door. He used only the number when answering the telephone. His colleagues seemed equally vague. The office wit, Alan Judson, steadfastly maintained that he had first entered believing that this was the British Pornographic Society. Despite the reticence of their employers when the BPS and British Embassy press office opened for business in mid-October 1940, the new recruits found no shortage of work.[90]

From the first, the British Press Service sought to provide a steady stream of reference material within the deadlines required by working journalists. They offered a rapid and accurate reference service for editors, correspondents, and radio commentators situated as far west as Chicago. The BPS prepared information bulletins based on MoI "Hot News" material, and it arranged transport to the British Isles for Americans seeking to cover the war. No less important, the office served as the main point of contact between the British government and the American interventionist movement. Morgan and Wheeler-Bennett maintained close relations with their opposite numbers in the Century Group (soon to become the Fight For Freedom committee). Through their offices, the interventionists received a steady supply of BPS news releases. The Century Group leaders, Ulric Bell and Peter Cusick, were in touch with Morgan or Wheeler-Bennett by telephone at least once a week and, when events dictated, enjoyed personal confidential briefings on the latest material from London. This did not require much effort. Fight For Freedom operated from the twenty-second floor of the same building.[91]

The BPS did not shy away from such sensitive issues as the food blockade of occupied Europe. The first BPS bulletins, issued to the

American press and the interventionists in early November 1940, included an authoritative response to Herbert Hoover's campaign on this subject, digests of statistics, and a speech by the Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton. Thereafter, the BPS allowed the Century Group to push the British line on the blockade, and turned its attention to the task of convincing the United States that Britain could "take" the Nazi Blitz.[92]

Even though Lothian had established the BPS in consultation with Angus Fletcher of the BLI and Duff Cooper, neither of these men was entirely happy with the new office. Fletcher did not appreciate being outflanked by the ambassador and refused to help the new office. This threw the entire burden of press relations onto Wheeler-Bennett and his colleagues. They found themselves working sixteen to eighteen hours a day, and their phenomenal success merely made matters worse. Their work load grew with their reputation. Morgan and Wheeler-Bennett did not forget Fletcher's attitude. As their influence grew, it became clear that Fletcher's days at the BLI were numbered. In January 1941, he received a knighthood for his long service in New York. In August 1941, he was dismissed.[93]

Fletcher represented the ancien régime, but Lothian soon learned that revolutionaries could be no less troublesome. Duff Cooper and his new American Division director Douglas Williams still hoped to have an active voice in the application of propaganda policy in the United States. Since the MoI had financed the BPS, the IAIC, and the British Embassy Press Office, their interest was not wholly unreasonable. The problem lay in the question of who should have ultimate authority. Duff Cooper still wanted to run policy from London and, if necessary, impose his view on the "local representatives." North Whitehead noted that George III had made the same mistake. Even before Lothian had set up the BPS, Duff Cooper moved to bring the entire operation under his own control. He saw his chance in the vacant post of permanent director of the New York office. In late September 1940, Williams wired the British Embassy to say that he had dispatched "certain journalists" to New York to "direct press contacts." Lothian was not reassured to learn that this envoy should have been identified in the singular.[94]

The appointment of a "certain journalist" to the New York position reflected Duff Cooper's bid to professionalize the MoI, as well as his disdain for the men who had borne the burden of British publicity to that point. Morgan and Wheeler-Bennett were stung to discover that he considered them no more than "monied amateurs." Yet Duff Cooper's candidate for the job, René MacColl, was undoubtedly well-chosen. He was a veteran of the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the RAF press relations unit in France. Armed with letters of introduction, MacColl prepared to take passage to the United States. On the morning of October 4, 1940, the front page of the *New York Herald Tribune* an-

nounced MacColl's appointment as "Chief British Press Relations Officer in the United States." Once again Lothian shuddered at the tactlessness of the MoI and prepared a volley of angry telegrams. His anger increased when, that same morning, he received a telegram uncoded and en clair from Douglas Williams, requesting that the ambassador approach William Allen White in order to establish a telephone link between his committee and the Information Ministry. Lothian wired back: "It would be most disastrous to the William Allen White Committee were it ever to be established that it was communicating and collaborating with any branch of His Majesty's Government." Ominously, Lothian pledged to take "certain measures to avoid further possible damage" to British publicity. Lothian asked that the MoI postpone MacColl's arrival until after the U.S. election and that he accept duties under Dudley's direction. Unfortunately, this did not fit the instructions MacColl had in hand on November 19, 1940, when he finally landed on American soil.[95]

René MacColl arrived in New York believing himself empowered to take charge of the BPS. He promptly discovered that the staff of the BPS did not acknowledge Duff Cooper's authority to have appointed him. MacColl was thus an innocent victim of his minister's "Byzantine Intrigue" to gain control of propaganda in America.[96] Lothian saw MacColl as a threat to the BPS. On November 30, he gruffly informed the MoI:

> I now feel very strongly that press and publicity questions are at this juncture so important that it would be unwise to do anything to disturb the smooth working of the BPS and its satisfactory development. It would not . . . be part of wisdom to confide its direction to a new arrival, however brilliant his journalistic gifts, who had not in my view had the administrative experience to enable him to take full charge of this organisation.[97]

MacColl endured a fortnight of frustration during which his colleagues withheld telegraphic traffic addressed to him as "director of the BPS." The mutiny did not last long. Duff Cooper conceded defeat and accepted MacColl's appointment as assistant director of the BPS with responsibility for the supply of hot news to American press and broadcast networks. MacColl immediately set about the task of building a dizzying array of connections with the New York press world. Despite being a Ministry of Information appointee, he displayed all the qualities of the old hands in New York. His commitment to the BPS, his humor, and his healthy disregard for Foreign Office procedure soon won him the hearts of his New York officemates. He outraged the career diplomats at the British Embassy in Washington by introducing such snappy expressions as "Hot Cat!" into his file minutes. British relations with the New York press prospered as they never had before.[98]

By mid-December 1940, the BPS was stable and poised to challenge Roosevelt's intransigence. Then came the news. On December 12, Alistair Cooke, special correspondent of the London *Times*, called at the British Embassy to interview Lord Lothian. The butler responded to the visitor with solemn composure: "I'm terribly sorry, Sir, that will be quite impossible. The Ambassador died early this morning."[99] Lothian's death was a severe blow. His illness—a kidney infection—had been sudden, and its gravity known only to a few. Lothian's Christian Science beliefs had complicated matters. The ambassador's personal staff—his secretary, his driver, and his deputy, Neville Butler—were also Christian Scientists and had reinforced his resolve to refuse conventional medical attention. Lothian's head of Chancery, Derek Hoyer-Millar, together with John Wheeler-Bennett and the senior diplomatic staff, tried to approach him to argue the case for a doctor, but they found their way blocked. Lothian's co-religionists insisted that he was responding to Christian Science treatment.[100] Yet even from his sickbed, Lothian had led the British attack.

On December 11, Neville Butler read an address prepared by Lothian to the American Farm Bureau Federation in Baltimore. It was Lothian's first full-length speech in five months. Lothian declared that the war had become a revolutionary struggle between Hitler's totalitarian world and democracy. He had no doubt that British democracy would emerge from the war even stronger than before; but with his final words, he placed the burden of the future firmly on the American people:

> We are, I believe, doing all we can. Since May there is no challenge we have evaded, no challenge we have refused. If you back us you won't be backing a quitter. The issue now depends largely on what you decide to do. Nobody can share the responsibility with you. It is the great strength of democracy that it brings responsibility down squarely on every citizen and every nation. And before the judgement seat of God each must answer for his own actions.[101]

The post-mortem recorded Lothian's death the next day as being due to uremic poisoning. ~~Lord~~ Halifax preferred to note "another victim for Christian Science."[102]

Washington mourned ~~Lord~~ Lothian's passing. The State Department arranged for his temporary interment, attended by an honor guard, in Arlington National Cemetery. Lothian's remains were placed beneath the mast of the battleship *Maine*, whose mysterious sinking in Havana Harbor in 1898 had pitched the United States headlong into the Spanish-American war. Given Lothian's desire to accomplish much the same feat, it was a fitting spot.[103] But the ceremony provided scant compensation for the loss. This single blow shattered the cornerstone of British propaganda in the United States. Never had the office held

such importance. Now, the future of Anglo-American diplomacy hung in the balance.

The vacancy on Massachusetts Avenue triggered an immediate flurry of speculation as to a suitable successor. Raymond Gram Swing advised Churchill, "Urgently remember that liberals won the election here so Ambassador must be Liberal." He added "No old school tie also must not be appeasement."[104] But the Prime Minister's choice flew directly in the face this advice. Churchill selected an arch-Tory, an old Etonian, and a peer with an unrivaled reputation as an appeaser: the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax. Halifax reeled at the suggestion. He had known enough of American to appoint Lothian, and he understood that, as a former viceroy of India, he was not a suitable successor. Halifax was the six-foot-six-inch, living, breathing personification of every negative stereotype that Americans nurtured with regard to Britain—the very antithesis of the dynamic new nation of Spitfires and the Dunkirk spirit. But Churchill insisted that the appointment of the Foreign Secretary could not fail to impress the Americans, and he called on Halifax to accept "This high and perilous charge . . . on which our whole future depends."[105]

Churchill stood to gain much from Halifax's departure from London. At the death of Chamberlain in October 1940, Halifax had inherited the mantle of Munich and thus had become a political liability. Besides, since Halifax had already appeased Gandhi, Mussolini, and Hitler, it seemed logical to trust him to appease America. Few in Whitehall missed the deeper reasons for Churchill's choice. The appointment enabled Churchill to consolidate his hold on the War Cabinet, moving Anthony Eden back into the Foreign Office and assuming the War Office himself.[106] Halifax fought valiantly to change Churchill's mind, but to no avail. When the offer was sweetened by an arrangement whereby he retained a seat in the War Cabinet, he accepted the job.

The news of the appointment fell heavily on American journalists and British propagandists alike. Murrow confessed himself appalled. René MacColl simply recorded in his diary: "22 December 1940 . . . Halifax is Ambassador. Christ."[107] Despite his own misgivings, Halifax determined to make the best of his new circumstances. Sadly for Britain, his initial performance in the post suggested that his best would be inadequate.

As the year 1940 drew to a close, the future of British propaganda in the United States appeared especially uncertain. While Halifax packed his bags, Duff Cooper took advantage of the Embassy interregnum and lunged to snatch control of British propaganda in the United States. Sir David Scott, head of the Foreign Office American Department, regarded his attempt to capitalize on the death of Lothian as "unworthy of a third-rate sensational newspaper editor . . . indecent and disgusting" and blocked his move.[108] But Churchill had no interest in such matters.

He fixed his gaze on the absence of American aid and waited. Then, suddenly, Roosevelt broke his silence. In a press conference on December 16, he announced that he planned to "get rid of the silly, foolish old dollar sign" from the question of aid to Britain. Roosevelt put the case in terms of homely common sense: "Suppose my neighbor's home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose . . . ." Churchill remained unimpressed. On December 21, 1940, he reminded Halifax that: "We have not had anything from the Americans that we have not paid for and what we have had has not played an essential part in our resistance."[109] Meanwhile the Blitz raged on.

The night of December 29 brought unprecedented destruction to central London. As incendiary bombs rained down on the city, firemen fought back to the best of their ability. It was not they who failed London, but its river. Their hose-ends soon flopped, flaccid and useless, in shallow pools on the empty bed of the Thames. That night produced one of the most enduring propaganda images of the war: the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, alone, surrounded by a sea of fire. St. Paul's survived, but the Guildhall and eight Wren churches perished. Sir Alexander Cadogan recorded the cabinet's response in his diary: "decided to advertise attack on City . . . . This may help us enormously in America at a most critical moment."[110] Yet December 29 also brought new hope for the future; for while London burned, Roosevelt delivered his most outspoken public statement since June. In a fireside chat, FDR declared that the interests of the Allies and of the United States were now one and the same. America would become, he pledged, "the great arsenal of democracy." At last, large-scale American aid was on the way.