INTRODUCTION: PART 1

Daniel Lerner

THE REPRINTING of this book in paperback calls for some reappraisal of the role of psychological warfare during the conclusive phase of World War II in Europe, from the Normandy landings on D-Day (June 6, 1944) to the unconditional surrender of Germany on VE-Day (May 8, 1945). The final campaign conducted by SHAEF/ETO (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force/European Theater of Operations) exhibits some special features in the annals of warfare, just as the management of its symbols under PWD/SHAEF (Psychological Warfare Division /SHAEF) exhibits some special features in the history of psychological warfare. The Sykewar campaign described in this book is first of all notable for how it defined the ancient and recurrent problems of psychological warfare to suit its own needs; from this definition, constructed in terms of high policy and war aims, followed more or less consistently the sequence of decisions regulating psychological operations throughout the campaign. These policy definitions and operational decisions constitute the unique configuration of psychological warfare against Germany from D-Day to VE-Day.

Much that happened before this campaign was crucial, as I indicate at the start by citing Churchill's major speech to Parliament on the highly sensitive subject of war aims. Much that happened after Germany surrendered merits, and has received, intensive study — notably in the Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) and other works cited in the text. Thus, the reader will find connective tissue joining the book to the prehistory and posthistory of psychological warfare against Nazi Germany. But the focus is on what happened *during* this unique campaign of psychological warfare.

It is relevant, in undertaking a reappraisal of the campaign, to illustrate what was special in the PWD/SHAEF/ETO configuration by telling a story about Churchill. He was closer

than Roosevelt to our headquarters in Paris, and he used this proximity to visit us more often. He usually had something to say about what we were doing, as he phrased it, "on the propaganda side." Indeed, on the occasion I am recalling, he stormed into SHAEF headquarters, waving one of our leaflets, with the command: "Kill this!" The leaflet was one of a series addressed to the dockworkers of Hamburg, Bremen, and other North German seaports. The full text of the leaflet is reproduced opposite page 238 of this book (Leaflet W.G. 54, "To the Workers and Port Officials of Hamburg!"). Churchill objected that we didn't need to "plead" with dockworkers to keep their docks in working order for our purposes in Germany; we had enough docks already, and we could open others as we needed them. Had we heeded Churchill, our psychological warfare campaign would have lost the power latent in this relatively minor manifest message. For while Churchill was right on the "reality" of the North Sea ports, he was quite wrong on the "psychology" of this leaflet. Its latent message went far beyond the issue of dockage to tell readers such things as: we are winning and our final victory will come soon; you can do nothing to change this but may make life easier for you and yours, after our victory, by doing as we tell you; thus your own future, under our dispensation, depends on what you do now.

This leaflet, and dozens like it addressed to towns and cities *before* strategic bombing, was primarily designed to reduce resistance and habituate German civilians to obeying allied instructions. It was on this ground that PWD defended the leaflet series against Churchill's airy dismissal and won its case at the highest decision-making level of SHAEF. Whatever the future need for dockage might be, there was a clear and present Allied interest in persuading German civilians to cease resistance and obey our orders.

The devious reasoning illustrated by this incident reminds us that in some respects psychological warfare is only a recent name for an ancient activity. Some of its operational modes are "no newer than the rumors whispered about Hannibal and the methods used by George Washington among the Hessians." * The handling of besieged cities is a case in point. The book traces (pp. 272–281) the siege tactics used in World War II —

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* General Robert A. McClure, Foreword to the original edition of this book.

notably the prolonged siege of Aachen, the ancient *Kaiserstadt* on Germany's westernmost border and the first city to be occupied by Allied troops — from Joshua at the walls of Jericho through the Trojan Horse used in ancient Attica, the psychic ritual of *evocatio* practiced by the Romans (a ritual dating back to the Hittites), and the countersubversive modes advocated by Machiavelli to the "terror-bombing" (for psychic more than physical effect) of the Spanish Civil War dramatized by Archibald MacLeish in *Fall of the City*.

The historical lineage of psychological warfare is a fruitful study, for in showing how recurrent problems of psychology under wartime conditions have been solved in the diverse situations of the past, it brings the varieties of human experience to bear on the problems of the present. Yet each situation incorporates enough features of its own to make a special configuration; we take it as an axiom that in some respect every human experience is like all others, like some others, and like no others. If we focus here upon the distinctive aspects of psychological warfare in World War II, it is to provide a historical record of this particular configuration as it dealt with the ancient and recurrent problems of wartime propaganda. More generally conceived, our concern is with the problems of propaganda under conditions of war and crisis, since these appear increasingly to be the chronic state of the world we live in.*

From this perspective, the World War II experience has much to teach us. Subsequent propaganda campaigns carried out under conditions of war and crisis — by the British in Malaya, by the Dutch in Indonesia, by the French in Algeria, by the Americans in Korea and Vietnam — have been executed and interpreted within severe, perhaps excessive, constraints of localism. The localized character of psychological warfare in these situations was determined largely by the high policy directives that have conditioned world politics during the postwar years, that is, the psychological code of the Cold War.

That the Cold War code constrained and localized the execution of psychological warfare operations in embattled areas is fitting and proper, since wartime propaganda must be the controlled instrument of high policy. That is certainly a major

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* In order to document these conditions from a wider variety of perspectives, I edited *Propaganda in War and Crisis* (New York: George W. Stewart, 1951) as a companion volume to the original edition of this book.

lesson to be drawn from the experience of World War II, as described in the first chapter of this book. But the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of such operations after the event need not — indeed, should not — be so constrained and controlled by policy directives. The endless task of postmortems is to prevent premortems. The aim of the study of psychological warfare as a policy science is to interpret past experience so as to improve future performance. Scholarship serves policy not by obeying it — that is the job of operations — but by improving it. The second chapter of this book, and in particular the section dealing with "Problems of Unconditional Surrender," attempts to do just that by subjecting high policy to critical analysis.

It is worth dwelling a moment on the issue of unconditional surrender. The conclusion I reached after three years of postwar study was based on evidence that I, as the Intelligence officer in charge of the PWD weekly digest, evaluated continuously during the war and that, as European representative of the Library of Congress, I reviewed closely after the war. My conclusion ran counter to the prevailing wartime opinion of my Sykewar colleagues, particularly those on the "output" side of PWD/SHAEF, and to the postwar judgment pronounced by no less a person than Allen W. Dulles. Their conclusion was that unconditional surrender made Germany's surrender harder to obtain. That this policy imposed difficulties upon psychological warfare operations was obvious. Propaganda is always easier when we can promise you "something" rather than "nothing." Unconditional surrender, on the contrary, said: "Yield to *us* without regard to any terms *you* may want." But the purpose of high policy in World War II was not to make life easier for propagandists. It was rather to shape psychological warfare to help win the war on terms acceptable to the victors. This, I believe, it did.

The lesson we have not adequately put into practice is the adaptation of critical postmortems to subsequent propaganda operations. Scholarly judgments of past policy and practice are objectively adaptable to new conditions because they have documentary support. Since the closely reasoned and well-supported postmortems on World War II were not adapted in this way, the Cold War code — the major psychological operation that has shaped the world arena over the past two decades — has not been articulated sufficiently in operational terms or evaluated in

policy terms. As a result, we have no solid basis for reaching a judgment of whether, for instance, Khrushchev won a victory at Suez by missile rattling or whether Kennedy won a victory at Cuba by his firm rejection of missile rattling. (The fine analysis of "nuclear blackmail" by Hans Speier has not been followed by adequate empirical studies of particular cases.) Nor can we say, with the confidence that can only be based on sound scholarship and critical evaluation, whether the United States lost or gained, in psychological terms, by its restraint during the Hungarian uprising of 1956, or how Soviet restraint during the successive Congo crises was perceived by the rest of the world.

While psychological warfare as a branch of military action has operated only in localized situations since the end of World War II, not enough study has been given to the interaction of these operations and United States high policy, which made placing limitations on them meaningful, and indeed — in the light of the controversy between President Truman and General MacArthur over Korea — indispensable. The policy of containment adopted by the postwar United States as the world's leading status quo power required that all areas of conflict (especially with the U.S.S.R.) be limited as rapidly and localized as completely as possible. Even the substantial, and understandable, pressure of the United States military on behalf of the tactical doctrine of "hot pursuit" has been subject to the high policy commitment to containment. This policy has shaped both the military and the propaganda postures of the United States, in Korea as well as in Vietnam.

The importance to propagandists of a continuing evaluation of such a policy in operation is obvious. However, little guidance can be gleaned from published studies of American propaganda in war and crisis over the past two decades. We lack comprehensive studies of the psychological component underlying American policy toward Eastern Europe, from the Truman Doctrine guaranteeing protection to Greece and Turkey to the display of American restraint, after years of broadcasting by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation (later Radio Liberty), when anti-Soviet activities erupted in Hungary and East Germany a decade later. Also wanting are critical evaluations of American high policy in the Middle East, from the Eisenhower Doctrine guaranteeing Lebanon and Jordan to the more recent reticence of Washington when faced with military

initiatives in the area by the U.S.S.R. and Egypt. Especially lacking are documented and reasoned studies of the inherent psychology of American high policy toward the great "rest of the world" — studies that clarify the Kennedy Doctrine of the *Allianza* in terms of American coexistence with military regimes in Latin America or the coexistence of war to the death in Vietnam with holier-than-thou propriety in neighboring countries of Asia.

I am not bushwacking the American administrations that have been faced with the severe and largely novel problems of the postwar decades. I am rather addressing to those scholars capable of policy science thinking and research a counsel of concern for the interaction of policy and propaganda. Under the rule of containment, psychological operations usually are more important than — indeed are a major alternative to — military operations. A few (all too few) studies are available to illustrate the kinds of scholarship we need. Hans Speier, at a particularly dangerous period, published a set of studies that shaped American policy thinking about Soviet nuclear blackmail as a new psychological technique for intensifying international crises and thereby influencing their resolution. W. P. Davison, in a notable case study of the Berlin airlift, arrayed and evaluated the full set of factors involved in this major psychopolitical operation of the Cold War. Lessons from the great power arena as applied to the vast terrain of the emerging nations — for example, via Soviet doctrine on "the socialist commonwealth" and Maoist teaching on "wars of national liberation" — are sorely needed.

Such scholars as Speier and Davison learned to fit localized and limited situations into the larger global context through their participation in the psychological warfare campaign against Germany described in this book and through studying the campaign extensively for years after it was over. For in its very particularities that campaign remains the most important experience available to us of the conditions under which contemporary psychological warfare is waged. The experience is only as valuable, however, as its recorders and interpreters make it for the generations that follow.

This lesson is still vivid to my generation. Once engaged in World War II, we looked for guidance to prior experience that had been recorded, codified, evaluated. We found little ready at

hand. World War I clearly was an important experience in psychological warfare for its participants, as revealed in thousands of pages of documents and memoirs, but these pages contained little that could serve as guidance for those of us involved in World War II. Instead, our guidance came from a brilliant codification and evaluation of these records published a full ten years later: Harold D. Lasswell's classic study *Propaganda Technique in World War I.**

What has happened to psychological warfare since World War II is summarized in Part 2 of this Introduction by William E. Griffith. During his eight years (1951–1958) as political advisor to Radio Free Europe, Griffith was obliged to relearn and reapply principles and practices that had been learned "the hard way" during World War II. His intimate knowledge of the Sino-Soviet conflict has taught us valuable lessons about the interaction of policy and propaganda in the current world arena. His is the voice of experience; I hope it will be heeded.

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* Reprinted as a companion volume to this book in the M.I.T. Press series Studies in Comparative Politics.

INTRODUCTION: PART 2

William E. Griffith

Rereading Daniel Lerner's standard work on psychological warfare in World War II gave me above all a sense of *déjà vu*. As one who was actively engaged in psychological warfare operations directed toward Eastern Europe in the 1950s, I realized again how long it took us to learn the lessons that he (and R. H. S. Crossman) had set forth in this pioneering work.

Not that one should be surprised by this: as Goethe put it, *Nur der seine Freiheit verdient, der sie täglich erobern muss.* Yet how long it took post–World War II psychological warfare operations to grasp what Professor Lerner states as the obvious: "Credibility is a condition of persuasion." How long it took to understand that one cannot conduct professional psychological warfare operations with "gifted amateurs," but only with trained professionals. How slow many were to accept the qualifications Professor Lerner specified for a trained propagandist. And how often, particularly under the malign influence of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy, were the logical conclusions of the "strategy of truth" not drawn.

For the conduct of psychological warfare against the communist countries in the post–World War II period, then, Professor Lerner's conclusions as to strategy, tactics, and above all personnel remain correct. Indeed, far from being invalidated, they have become even more compelling in the postwar period because of the major differences between the problems of psychological warfare since 1945 as compared with wartime.

The main, overshadowing difference between the post-1945 period and World Wars I and II has been, quite simply, that with the exception of Korea and Vietnam, fighting has not been going on. World War I and World War II were above all *world wars*. It was clear that they had to, and would, come to an end. Therefore, psychological warfare was directed toward victory — and indeed, as Professor Lerner states, on the Allied side in

World War II as in World War I, toward total victory and un-conditional surrender. In both cases, war for the Allies was not a continuation of politics by other means, but (it was hoped) a one-time spasm, in which the overwhelming objective was simply to win. What came after would take care of itself. (I believe that this was an oversimplified war aim, but nevertheless it was the aim for which the Western allies fought.)

The Cold War, like death and taxes, is always with us. This was perhaps the greatest qualitative change for the West in the post-1945 period: that the postwar world was one of neither peace nor war. For pre-1945 America this state of things was initially unbelievable, and indeed it took quite a long time for most Americans to accept it. The concept of cold war, however, was nothing new to the Soviets or to other communists (or, for that matter, fascists): it was for Lenin and Stalin the *normal* state of relations between capitalist and socialist states, as it had been for Philip II or John Knox in the religious wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Moreover, even that apostle of détente Nikita Khrushchev defined peaceful coex-istence as "the intensification of the class struggle by all means other than interstate war."

Yet behind this aspect of the Cold War was another, which Winston Churchill first saw: the existence of atomic weapons created not only the nightmare but also the security of the post-war world. Had they not existed, it is difficult to imagine that the United States and the Soviet Union would have avoided a major conflict in the past two decades. Because they existed, boundaries have been frozen, and war, nuclear or otherwise, has become much less likely. Psychological warfare, therefore, has evolved as the main substitute for military conflict.

This was only slowly realized after 1945. The adjustment of U.S. and Soviet policy, and even more of psychological war-fare policy, limped behind realities. The 1956 Hungarian Rev-olution marked a great caesura in propaganda from the West. Thereafter it was clear even for the psychological warriors that only gradual, in-system change, in East or West, was tolerable, given the overhanging mushroom cloud.

This realization was all the easier for Western psychological warriors to accept because, in addition to the nuclear deterrent, they had one other great advantage as compared to World War I or World War II: nationalism, with the exception of the Great

Russians, was on their side, while German, Italian, and Japanese nationalism had been against them. Ours is an age of nationalism, and as Professor Lerner points out, psychological warfare can intensify but not create realities. Moreover, as the fifties and sixties advanced and the economic recovery of Western Europe proceeded, one of Lerner's concluding prophecies came true: the West exercised an increasing economic attraction on the East, which Western psychological warfare needed merely to project in order to be effective.

These, then, were in general the advantages of Western psychological warfare in the post-1945 period. What were its main problems? Not so much different as more complex than those of Allied psychological warfare in World War II. Wartime Nazi Germany was a very difficult target for psychological warfare *inter alia* because of the intelligence and analysis problems that it posed. Postwar Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were, in my opinion, even more difficult targets in this respect. The range of available expertise on this region in the United States was, until recently, quite limited. The wartime reservoir of trained psychological warfare personnel was largely dissipated through demobilization, and the Cold War has never, even during Korea and Vietnam, mobilized talents on a comparable scale. Neither the urge to offer support, nor the prestige, nor other tangible rewards created anything like the equivalent of the wartime U.S. psychological cadres. Moreover, the problem of linguistic, area, and analytical skills for the Soviet Union and the East European countries, to say nothing of Korea, China, and Vietnam, presented far greater difficulties than was the case during World War II. Finally, communist ideological discourse presented problems in the decipherment and analysis of esoteric communications which were met only with the development of a new conceptual and methodological framework.

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of American psychological warfare operations in the postwar period was what Professor Lerner points to as its necessary prerequisite: an informational and analytical base. Only in the middle and late 1960s did such American psychological warfare operations as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty finally acquire fully competent American personnel with linguistic and political training. A resource not available during World War II was especially helpful in this regard: regular personal contact between travelers from the tar-

get countries and personnel involved in psychological warfare operations — perhaps the major single key to a realistic view of the audience and the political situation with which propagandists must deal.

That the Cold War has not become hot is not the only thing that distinguishes it from World War II. The second and by now increasingly important difference is the rise of pluralism within the communist world. It is clear that after 1948 Yugoslavia could not at one and the same time be given U.S. economic and then military aid and yet be the target of anticommunist U.S. psychological warfare. Not surprisingly, therefore, the originally planned Radio Free Europe Yugoslav desk never became operational. U.S. broadcasting to Rumania since the mid-1960s has also naturally become more equivocal: less anticommunist ideologically, more concerned with gradualist liberalization and with strengthening anti-Soviet sentiment in the population — in short, implicitly sharing certain aims with Bucharest's propaganda.

These are only two examples of what has been since the mid-1950s the main policy dilemma for American psychological warfare operations toward communist countries. This dilemma may be, admittedly in an oversimplified manner, summed up as the contradiction between liberation and peaceful engagement.* Should the goal of American policy, and therefore of American psychological warfare, be the liberation of Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union, that is, the rapid if not revolutionary overthrow of their communist party-state regimes and their replacement by parliamentary democracies; or should the United States abandon this otherwise desirable objective as beyond the realm of the possible and replace it by the more modest one of "peaceful engagement?" The latter would mean the encouragement of gradualist, in-system changes toward more autonomy from the Soviet hegemonic power (in the case of Eastern Europe and — a more disputed point — the Soviet minority nationalities) and more internal liberalization.

The American rhetoric of liberation was a combination of anticommunist ideology and competition for the U.S. ethnic vote. It was buried in Budapest in 1956. But even before that, some psychological warfare policy makers had been developing

* Zbigniew Brzezinski and William E. Griffith, "Peaceful Engagement in Eastern Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 39 (July 1961): 642–654.

a policy of peaceful engagement, out of their own realization of the impracticability of a policy of liberation. Since then, this policy has been retained and intensified, at least on the propaganda level, but for a series of reasons it has hardly been implemented politically. The policy of peaceful engagement, of trying to exercise influence toward in-system changes, inevitably required that psychological warfare concentrate on elites rather than masses, since the elites, especially in Eastern Europe, were more inclined toward collaboration than the anticommunist masses. It therefore required greater credibility — that is, greater apparent objectivity.

Furthermore, by the end of the 1960s another problem was looming large for U.S. psychological warfare: the state of American society. Whether or not American society is in crisis may be debated, but it seems fairly clear that this is how most of the rest of the world sees it. This problem has been particularly difficult for American psychological warfare operations because of their inhibitions, whether official or unofficial, as a result of Washington's sensitivities on the subject. If Professor Lerner is right, and I believe he is, in declaring that credibility is the precondition of persuasion, then American propagandists would be shortsighted indeed if they attempted to project an optimistic image of America by glossing over the reality. (Of course, this statement must be qualified by pointing out that the difference between what the truth is and what it is seen to be varies with the audience: for example, the images of America that would be credible in France and in South Korea would certainly be different.)

My own inclination is that of Noel Newsome, a major figure in British wartime psychological warfare: "Bad news comes first in the bulletin." If America pulls out of whatever domestic crisis it is now in, a ruthlessly objective U.S. propaganda presentation of it will pay off in the end, just as the BBC's rapid and complete announcement of British defeats did in wartime; and if America does *not* pull out of it, propaganda can in the long run do nothing to conceal this, except at the cost of discrediting itself.

There is one other topic in Professor Lerner's book that stimulated me to postwar comparisons: the propaganda of "the other side." Wartime German propaganda was relatively ineffective once Germany had begun to lose the war. For Western,

as for communist or other anti-Western propaganda, the de-
mands of the postwar situation have been different. Perhaps
the greatest difference has been owing to the emergence of
pluralism within the communist world beginning with the
Soviet-Yugoslav split in 1948 and intensifying as a result of the
Sino-Soviet split in 1959 and thereafter. These developments
have produced intracommunist propaganda of an increasingly
multifarious nature, first Soviet-Yugoslav, then Sino-Soviet, and
by now many other varieties as well, more or less explicit in na-
ture: Soviet-Cuban, Sino-Cuban, Soviet-Czechoslovak until Au-
gust 1968, and so on. A common Marxist-Leninist ideology
delayed the advent of this overt propaganda but made it more
violent once it broke out. Its development has been perhaps the
major indicator available to Western analysts of esoteric com-
munications of the course of relations among communist pow-
ers.* It has also provided Western propaganda media with an
invaluable source of "cross-reporting": the projection to all
communist states of disagreements among some of them, with
the purpose of eroding the credibility of Communist propa-
ganda media.

The challenge to American psychological warfare person-
nel, then, is more complex and long-term than it was in World
War II. Moreover, the present inward-turning mood of Amer-
ica makes U.S. propaganda operations abroad more difficult,
and the acquisition and retention of able personnel much
harder. Yet the Cold War continues. Those who must deal
with it now and in the future can learn much from this book.

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* William E. Griffith, "Esoteric Communications: Explication de texte," *Studies
in Comparative Communism* (January 1970): 47–54.