

DBS SCHOOL OF ARTS

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**KEEP CALM & GO TO THE PICTURES
DID BRITISH CINEMA WIN THE SECOND
WORLD WAR FOR THE ALLIES?
HOW SUBTLE PROPAGANDA MAY HAVE
HELPED THE WAR EFFORT ON THE HOME
FRONT**

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KEEP CALM

AND

GO TO

THE

PICTURES

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Keep Calm & Go To The Pictures

This thesis is entitled 'Did British cinema win the Second World War for the Allies? *How subtle propaganda in movies may have helped the war effort on the home front.'*

The purpose is to see if, by the use of subtle messages and inferred propaganda in feature movies made in Britain during the 1939-1945 conflict and with an English background, British cinema was able to rally support for the cause from its citizens and in so doing, may have brought an early end to the conflict.

Propaganda was a very important weapon in war and the cinema was a very important weapon in propaganda. Britain had shown its adeptness in propaganda during the First World War - something that even Hitler commented on in *Mein Kampf* - and even though its film industry was in its infancy, it was still able with great effect to make use of its burgeoning popularity to further the war effort, particularly with movies such as *For The Empire* (1916), a heavily patriotic and stirring short (approx seven minutes) made on behalf of the Treasury whose aim was to get the population to contribute to the war effort. *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) is an hour long documentary which purported to be actual footage of the fighting which took place in North-East France although doubt has now been cast on some of the scenes in the documentary, with accusations that some of the action had been staged. Whether it was all real or not, it is still an extremely strong piece of propaganda.

By 1939, the movie industry had grown. Technical advances such as sound, colour, better equipment and even general know-how had seen films become the premier form of entertainment for the majority of the British population. When war broke out it was reasonable to assume that the cinema would be a large part, if not the spearhead, of a propaganda campaign.

The great French auteur Francois Truffaut wrote that there was 'a certain incompatibility between the terms 'cinema' and 'Britain" (1983, p. 124) which seems like an unfair comment. To dismiss the British industry in one short sentence - even if it's the opinion of someone as renowned as Truffaut - is to dismiss a large catalogue of some of the finest movies ever made as well as dismissing the talents of many great people in front of and behind the camera. This is particularly true of the time this thesis covers - the first half of the 1940s. During this period, studios and filmmakers such as Ealing Studios, David Lean & Noel Coward and Powell & Pressburger gave the film industry classic films that have stood the test of time including *Went the Day Well?*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *This Happy Breed*.

The thesis will be divided into three chapters. Chapter one will concentrate on the beginning of propaganda up to present day. This will be basically a potted history of propaganda from its earliest beginnings and will not only include the history of the use of war propaganda but general use of propaganda via simple methods such as marketing or advertising ploys.

Chapter two will concentrate on propaganda today and how it's used. It will offer up perspectives from critical theorists as well as my own opinion on the subject.

The main focus of the thesis which will constitute chapter three will be readings of three movies made - and set - during the war:

- ❖ In Which We Serve
- ❖ Millions Like Us
- ❖ Henry V

The readings will involve analysis of key scenes, and contemporaneous as well as more recent opinions of the movies.

1 'Are We The Baddies?'

Man is a rational animal or so Aristotle would have us believe. And yet we are bombarded on a daily basis with companies telling us to buy this washing powder or drink this alcohol because it will whiten your whites/make you more attractive to the opposite sex - and we fall for it. We don't stop to think of the fact that these companies don't care about our clothes or our sex life; all they care about are profit margins. We buy into this view - and we buy the products. If they don't work, we simply stop buying them and buy the next or newest product that promises us the same thing, and on it goes.

It's a form of propaganda, even brainwashing although people might take offence at the fact that they could be susceptible to being so easily controlled. It implies a weakness of character, an inability to know one's own mind. The population would prefer to say because of the age we live in - an age of mass communications and global social media - that it's difficult to avoid the barrage of information that we face every day. It's easy to assume that all this is relatively new. And of course some of it is. The daily intrusion into people's lives, the constant need to inform others of your every move etc only arguably started with the increase in popularity of social networking sites combined with the addition of cameras to phones. Good news for gossipmongers, bad news for the rest of the world. But once man discovered how to communicate verbally, propaganda has theoretically been possible as '[t]hrough speech comes the power to manipulate or persuade people without necessarily resorting to physical force.' (Brown, 1963 p. 9) And when humans achieved the ability to record information this was made even easier. From the quipus used most notably by the ancient Incans to record business transactions among other things, to the earliest know writing in 'the late 4th millennium BC' (Crowley & Heyer, 2007 p.

38), if someone had information that they wanted to pass on, the opportunity to first amend the facts, for whatever purpose, has been there. With the invention of the various forms of mass communication – in particular the printing press but also photography, radio and the moving picture, the opportunities for propaganda knew no bounds.

But what exactly is propaganda? There have been various definitions by scholars. According to Warren Taylor, it is:

a systematic scheme created by one person or a group in an effort to persuade people on insufficient grounds to believe what it wants them to believe or to act to its advantage' (1942, p. 557)

It's a simple, straightforward definition and one that seems valid enough . But on closer inspection, it may be *too* straightforward. The phrase 'on insufficient grounds' isn't necessarily always the case and depends on which side of the argument one finds oneself. The old aphorism 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' (ascribed to many including author Gerald Seymour and U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, but of indeterminate origin) comes into play here. If one believes they're on the side of right, then it's not propaganda but merely explaining why one wants someone to 'believe or act to [one's] advantage.' As Hadley Cantril explains 'it may be good or bad, depending upon the social point of view of the individual judging it.' (1938, p. 217) America's involvement in the Gulf war is a case in point. Noam Chomsky pointed out that people accepted the war against Iraq and Kuwait because they believed the idea that:

illegal occupation and human rights abuses should be met by force. They don't see what it would mean if those principles were applied to U.S. behaviour. (1991, p. 53)

Maybe Cantril's suggestion of propaganda being an:

expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups to predetermined ends. (1938, p. 217)

is a better definition than perhaps Tuttle Ross who believes that 'propaganda is.....mere persuasion.' (2002, p. 16) Although 'persuasion' *is* a much nicer way of looking at it if you're on the receiving end, *and* it doesn't have the same implications. 'Propaganda' is what the 'other side' uses. The English comedians David Mitchell and Robert Webb illustrated it beautifully in a comedy sketch where, both dressed in SS uniforms, the realisation slowly dawns on Mitchell as he's looking at the skull on his uniform cap that perhaps they are in fact the bad guys and may be in the wrong. 'Oh you haven't been listening to Allied propaganda?' he's told. 'Of *course* they're going to say we're the bad guys'.

When one thinks of the negative connotations surrounding the word 'propaganda' people may consider it an over-exaggeration to equate it with marketing and advertising. Erwin W. Fellows posits whether they would come under the 'propaganda' umbrella by pointing out the 'possible recent tendency to view advertising as a form of entertainment as well as a source of information or persuasion' (1959, p. 186) and Philip Taylor agrees by pointing out that advertising is a two way street where the viewer or potential purchaser probably benefits as much as the advertiser does and that the word 'propaganda' should be substituted for the more apt word 'publicity'. (2003, p. 6) '[W]hat distinguishes propaganda from all other processes of persuasion' he continues 'is the question of intent.' (2003, p. 7) The sinister world that that phrase 'question of intent' conjures up is miles away from the

(relatively) benign business of trying to persuade consumers to buy the latest hi-def TVs.

Propaganda may seem like a 20th century invention but the first known mention of the word is generally accepted to be in 1622 when Pope Gregory XV founded the Sacra Congregatio Christiano Nomini Propaganda or the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) which aimed to bring the message of Christianity to those not yet aware of it. It is interesting to note that (according to the official Vatican website) Pope John Paul II 'in order to better define its tasks' changed the name to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, perhaps because he was aware of the negative connotations of the word 'propaganda'. As well he might. According to Jowett & O'Donnell in *Propaganda Through the Ages*, this move by Pope Gregory set the standard for current propaganda techniques because:

it stressed the control of opinions and, through them, the actions of people in the mass. It also provided a.....description of the practice of public opinion control. At first, the word propaganda was applied to any organization that set out to propagate a doctrine; then.....the doctrine itself; and finally.....the techniques employed to change opinions and spread the doctrine.' (2005, p. 73).

A rose by any other name.....

So initially, the word 'propaganda' was only used in a religious context. Sometime in the early 18th century the word was introduced into the English language and, gradually by the early 20th century, became to mean what we understand it to be today - 'any fact, opinion, or idea that one does not like.' (Taylor, 1942, p. 556) Like the SS officers in the comedy sketch, it's propaganda if we don't agree with it.

But the original idea of propaganda goes back further than its usage by the Catholic Church - even if there wasn't a word for it at the time - and it was generally associated (as it is today) with warfare and the mind games played by leaders.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the king of Macedonia, was considered one of the greatest military minds ever. It is said that during one battle, when he was aware that defeat was inevitable, he had his men make large breastplates and helmets before retreating. The approaching army, on seeing this outsized armour, believed they had come close to fighting giants and chose not to follow Alexander. It's a crude form of propaganda but it's propaganda nonetheless - making someone believe something that you want them to, whether it's true or not, and getting them to do your bidding. Julius Caesar used coins to spread the message to his people of his greatness and supreme power and 'to boast of victories or to show the emperors in various guises such as warlord, god, or protector of the empire.' (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2005, p. 54) These coins 'were an important medium of Roman propaganda, a valuable means of spreading visual images of Rome's triumphs all over the Empire.' (Taylor, 2003, p. 45) Other societies such as the Assyrians, as described by Philip Taylor, composed stories and poems to describe great battle victories by even greater leaders. A lot of these stories, recited to an audience, were devised long after the actual events described so their veracity is doubtful. Much the same can be said of the Gospels although many people would be loath to label them propaganda. Yet, these too, were stories composed long after the events narrated took place and were designed to report great deeds done.

As years went on and technological advances were made, forms of propaganda changed. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century saw greater ease of communication and contributed in no small part to the Reformation. People had

access to more information (and mis-information). It was no longer necessary to stand on a box in public to make one's point and hope people would stop to listen, although this was (and is) still done. But speeches which before were heard by only a small crowd could now be transcribed, passed on to and eventually influence a much larger audience than before and for the illiterate among them illustrations could be used. The first obviously effective use of this new form of reporting was when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the doors of the Wittenberg church. Taylor quotes Professor A.G. Dickens' figure of over 300,000 copies of Luther's work published and agrees that 'it is difficult to overstate the significance of the printing press as a medium of Reformation propaganda.' (2003, p. 97) This could be seen as the forerunner to the use of pamphlet distribution and leaflet drop as forms of propaganda in the two World Wars.

Not long after Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August 1914, the British government discovered that Germany had a specific department for propaganda and so set up its own agency. In early September 1914, the War Propaganda Bureau was set up by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George and headed by the M.P. Charles Masterson. Propaganda took the form of pamphlets, photos from the front, newsreels, paintings and posters. Several of the country's best known writers (including Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells and Thomas Hardy) were tasked with writing the pamphlets and leaflets which promoted Britain's involvement with the war, as well as stories about alleged German atrocities, while artists such as Paul Nash were commissioned along with official war photographers to provide visual documentation. The relatively new medium of moving pictures was also used to great effect, particularly with movies such as *For The Empire* and *The Battle of the Somme* but also with British Pathé newsreel footage from the front line.

On the 8th August, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) had been introduced. This act, with its main aim being the control of information, gave the Government wide sweeping censorship powers over all aspects of British lives and made sure the British public knew only what the Government wanted it to know. Initially a paragraph long, it was added to continuously throughout the duration of the war. It lost no time in exerting its authority.

On 30th August 1914, a mere four weeks after war had been declared, the London Times wrote about the Battle of Mons, the first major engagement with the German Army, that had taken place the previous week. The initial account by Arthur Moore was deemed by the Government to be counterproductive to the morale of the country:

Our losses are very great. I have seen the broken bits of many regiments. Let me repeat that there is no failure in discipline, no panic.....The men are battered with marching, and ought to be weak with hunger, but they are steady and cheerful, and wherever they arrive make straight for the proper authority, report themselves, and seek news of their regiment.

The article was refused publication until the Government censor had rewritten the final paragraph:

We have to face the fact that the British Expeditionary Force..... has suffered terrible losses and required immediate and immense reinforcement. The British Expeditionary Force has won indeed imperishable glory, but it needs men, men, and yet more men.

Obviously, the British government felt that its people were not ready to hear of great losses despite the rather upbeat tone of the rest of the paragraph. It was less concerned with the public's feelings when it came to its poster campaign. Britain's regular army was very small and as there was no conscription, volunteers were

needed. Posters like the famous one of Kitchener, perhaps the most renowned soldier in the British Army at that time, with the caption 'Your country needs You' were used along with recruitment drives to encourage men to enlist. Other posters were more hard-hitting such as the one of the little girl sitting on her dad's lap with the caption 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?' as her father sits looking pensively into the distance.



Germany's propaganda followed a similar line with the use of leaflet drop, posters, films and atrocity stories. But as Philip Taylor pointed out, Germany's propaganda machine was inadequate compared to Britain's as it focussed mainly 'on war news rather than morale'. (2003, p. 191)



God Punish England

A little over twenty years later, after the 'war to end all wars' the world was again in conflict and propaganda was considered as important a weapon as bombs, bullets or tanks. It's there in Chamberlain's speech which was broadcast to the British nation in September 1939 as he relates the news of impending war:

It is the evil things that we shall be fighting against - brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution - and against them I am certain that the right will prevail.

The Ministry of Information which closed down after the first World War, reopened a day after the broadcast and soon got quickly to work with movies, pamphlets, leaflets etc. Within eight weeks, the MoI-assisted *The Lion Has Wings* had hit cinemas - a docu-drama about the R.A.F. with top 'names' such as Ralph Richardson and Merle Oberon which became 'one of the three top British box office successes of 1939' (Aldgate & Jeffries, 2007, p. 324) but was also guilty of 'resort[ing] to blatant jingoism' (Aldgate & Jeffries, 2007, p. 23). As the war continued, propaganda efforts, particularly with regard to cinema, became more refined and subtle as can be seen in movies such as *In Which We Serve*, *The Bells Go Down* and *Millions Like Us*.

The German equivalent of the MoI was the Nazi Propaganda Ministry led by the master of propaganda Joseph Goebbels. The Ministry had control of and censorship over all German media and had been in operation since 1933. Radio, newsreels and mass rallies were all used to great effect to sway the German people. William Joyce, among others, sent radio broadcasts to the Allies from Germany on a regular basis informing them of alleged Allied defeats and great German victories. *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* (The German Weekly Review) was a series of newsreels shown in German cinemas. But arguably Germany's finest propaganda hour was the speech given by Goebbels after the disastrous defeat at Stalingrad. Speaking to an audience

in Berlin, Goebbels acknowledges the heavy losses recently suffered but continues by saying:

the German people are defending their holiest possessions: their families, women and children, the beautiful and untouched countryside, their cities and villages, their two thousand year old culture, everything indeed that makes life worth living.

Der Ewige Jude (1940 The Eternal Jew) is an anti-Semitic faux documentary about Jews which claims that the 'civilised' Jews that the German nation sees are worlds removed from actuality, and attempts to shed some light on their 'real' characters. It's an extremely disturbing piece of propaganda.



Heimkehr (1941 The Homecoming) was personally commissioned by Goebbels and this time it's the Poles who are the target. It was a movie about the Volksdeutsche - a phrase supposedly coined by Hitler. It described Germans but not only those born in the country. According to Doris L Bergen it 'also carried overtones of blood and race not captured in the English translation 'ethnic Germans'.' (1994, p. 569).

Heimkehr allegedly showed how the Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans) were mistreated and subjected to extreme acts of violence in other lands, including Poland

and was given as an excuse for Germany's invasion of Poland. The movie ends with the German characters making their way back to the safety of the 'homeland.'

Propaganda isn't only about what is said or written, it's also about what is *not* said, *not* written down. The famous Ems telegram of 1870 which precipitated the Franco-Prussian war is a perfect example. Some judicious editing of the telegram sent from Kaiser Wilhelm to the then Prime Minister Bismarck gave the impression that Wilhelm and the French ambassador had exchanged insults regarding the successor to the Spanish throne, which wasn't true but Bismarck wanted Prussia to go to war with France and took matters into his own hands. He left out some phrases in the original communication and published his own version. France, believing that their ambassador had been offended, declared war.

On a less dangerous note, simple abridgements of theatrical and cinema reviews are well known. A less than glowing review of a production can change from 'I don't think this will ever be considered a classic' to the more box-office friendly and succinct 'a classic'. Most of the time this is merely shrugged off or ignored by the reviewer.

Could this be considered a form of propaganda? Or an opportunistic moment seized by a very savvy publicity team? People are 'persuaded' that respected journalists rate a movie highly when sometimes nothing could be further from the truth. There are certainly the 'insufficient grounds' that Taylor spoke of, seeing as the true opinion of the critic is so far removed from the one shown, and abridged reviews such as these are 'deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups' i.e. the cinema-going public. But is any real harm done? When all it means is that people waste two hours of their life in a darkened room eating

overpriced snacks, could it be called propaganda even though it seemed to fulfil certain criteria?

The Institute for Propaganda Analysis, an American organisation created in 1937 set out the rules of what it believed to be 'the seven common propaganda devices'

1. Name calling
2. Glittering generalities
3. Transfer
4. Testimonial
5. Plain folks
6. Card stacking
7. Bandwagon

Most of them such as name calling, testimonial, plain folks and bandwagon are self-explanatory. The others such as glittering generalities (using words which imply good virtues) or transfer (referring to a person or institution we admire in order to gain acceptance) most people would be aware of even if only subconsciously, although they mightn't have a specific name for it.

Oliver Thomson (1999) divides propaganda into seven major categories – political, religious, economic, moral, social, diplomatic and military.

Most people would agree though that these days propaganda is acknowledged to be mainly another weapon of war and that any other category is more of a subheading. Religious, economic and diplomatic propaganda are all tricks used in warfare. Military leaders, going back to the times of Alexander the Great, right through history, from the Crusades to the Franco-Prussian Wars, both World wars, all the way up to the Serbian conflict in the nineties, have all made use of propaganda to further their causes.

Thomson also suggested that 'we are all.....propagandists' (p. 11) which may strike some as rather extreme. Everyone uses persuasion of some sort every day just as everyone is guilty of telling little white lies throughout the day, be it to enhance people's opinion of us or to make another person feel better. It's a little bit of harmless manipulation, or what is euphemistically called an 'economy of truth' as Edmund Burke put it in 1796. The phrase was revived in 1986 by the then British Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong who, under cross-examination, spoke about being 'economical with the truth'. To the rest of the world, this is politician-speak for lying so again it would seem that what one calls it - be it propaganda, lying, persuasion or publicity seeking - depends on the situation in which it is used, although it ultimately points towards the same thing.

2 Wagging the dog

There used to be a more innocent time when people believed what they were told by perceived authority figures. The more cynical would suggest that people were just more gullible. Whatever the reason, that's why propaganda has always been considered the best weapon when it comes to fighting a war. It can be used to persuade a nation's citizens to take part, to continue the fighting even when faced with possible defeat and - when defeat is inevitable - can be used as an excuse to make the populace think that their rulers are stopping the fighting for 'the good of the people' without those in charge losing face. Wild stories that have come out over the years with regard to warring factions have been taken as gospel by the civilian population because - as they see it - why would their government lie? Equally the various strands of media - print, TV, film - were usually considered to be reliable with their reporting. As the lyrics from the Lionel Bart song go: 'it must be true, for I read it in the papers. Didn't you?' Yes, Freddie Starr *actually* ate a hamster.

As a result, during times of war, stories used to emerge of atrocities committed by the enemy. The term 'atrocious story' is used to describe these sometimes real, sometimes imaginary stories which are used to persuade the public of the need to continue fighting. It was coined in the late seventies by American sociologists David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe Jr. but there is evidence of such stories going back to the Crusades as is gruesomely detailed in this extract from a speech by Pope Urban II describing how the Saracens tortured Christians, first by circumcision after which they poured the resulting blood on the altars and into the baptismal fonts. Then:

they.....tear out most of their vital organs and tie them to a stake, drag them around and flog them before killing them as they lie prone on the ground with all their entrails out. (Taylor, 2003, p. 73)

Various 'atrocities stories' from the different wars fought during the 20th century and beyond - from World War I to Vietnam to Iraq - have been told by both sides involved in order to further their cause. The German *Kadaververwertungsanstalten* story from World War II claimed falsely that the Germans were boiling up the corpses of Jewish prisoners to make soap. During the Gulf War, the U.S. needed to justify their involvement and a story was released to show the inhumanity of the enemy by telling of 'Iraqi soldiers pulling new-born Kuwaiti children from their incubators so they could steal the equipment.' (Banyard, 1999, p. 45). This was given credence by the fact that someone had 'actually' seen it happen:

A young woman gave evidence to the American Congress that she had witnessed this first hand. It was later discovered....that the young woman was the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the USA and she had been coached in her evidence. (Banyard, 1999, p. 46)

Even more recently, in 2003 the search for the alleged weapons of mass destruction was given as a valid reason for the invasion of Iraq and the eventual execution of Saddam Hussein although Tony Blair, who was the British Prime Minister at the time, later admitted in a 2009 BBC TV interview that he would have invaded Iraq even if there was no evidence of the WMDs.

Noam Chomsky, here referring specifically to the American public, explains how the U.S. government uses these stories to try to persuade America that they need to go to war:

Usually the population is pacifist....[and] sees no reason to get involved in foreign adventures, killing, and torture. So you *have* to whip them up. And to whip them up you have to frighten them. (1991, p.30)

The use of these stories is known as 'black propaganda' - the type that vilifies the enemy and points out their faults, failures and behaviour towards (generally) civilians - in order to, as Chomsky put it, whip up the public but the problem with these stories is that any questions with regard to their veracity can have a knock-on effect. The Bryce Report of 1915 which detailed alleged brutalities by the Germans against the Belgians was later disproved and as a result made it more difficult for people to accept stories that were coming out of Germany twenty five years later concerning the Nazi treatment of Jews and the existence of concentration camps.

There is also 'white propaganda' that praises and glorifies the actions and victories of one's own side. The famous story of the 'Angels of Mons' during the first World War where ghostly archers were seen on the Belgian battlefield firing arrows at the German army thus forcing them to retreat was taken as a sign that God was on the side of the Allies.

It may seem strange in the 21st century to think that the British people might have believed the story of supernatural help on the front line but as Oliver Thomson points out:

[T]here are three broad types of propaganda – the purely rational, the quasi-rational/half emotional and the purely emotional – which, as it were, provide a complete spectrum between fact and fiction.' (1999, p. 47)

The Mons incident was obviously aiming for the purely emotional and it's doubtful whether it would garner any publicity if the same tale were told today. But the world has become a more circumspect and less innocent place since 1914. When the 'Angels' story came out first, Britain had just entered into a brutal conflict - and was already losing. This was the type of story that the British government believed its citizens needed to hear to buoy them up.

Nowadays people are more suspicious and there is a scepticism, maybe even an unhealthy cynicism towards media outlets and government-sanctioned edicts, especially since the late twentieth/early twenty first century saw the rise of the 'spin doctor' - a public relations person who would present an event or a personality in a particular way to try to persuade the populace of its worth or otherwise (depending on the remit). The public is now less likely to believe that the government has its (the public's) welfare at heart. The surge in conspiracy theorists has grown exponentially with the increase in global social network and mass communication, or so it seems. Maybe there were always large numbers of conspiracy theorists but they never had such a substantial platform from which to air their views. Everything from the moon landings to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales to the 9/11 attacks has been dissected, looked at and put back together again and a new theory proposed - Diana was killed by MI6 (or was it MI5? Or both?), the U.S. government ordered the strikes on the Twin Towers; and as for Apollo 11, well it never got further than the Mojave desert.

When the government *does* try to warn the public, sometimes things go disastrously wrong as in the case of the Y2K bug which was touted as possibly causing chaos at the turn of the Millennium. The Y2K bug was what Thomson would probably call a 'purely rational' attempt to inform the public of a potential worldwide breakdown in communications - Nick Davies in his book *Flat Earth News* referred to it as 'a stunning example of a failure in truth-telling by the global media' (2008, p. 12) He continued 'Whatever the truth was about the possible threat to computers that night, the world's journalists clearly had gone a long way beyond it'. (2008, p. 12) There *was* the possibility that some systems might not have been able to handle the new date (01/01/00) but Davies discovered on further investigation that the chances of

the predicted global cyber meltdown as the clock ticked towards the new millennium were extremely slight. Peter de Jager, the computer specialist who originally highlighted the potential problem, admitted in an interview with Davies that when his initial concerns were ignored, he "cranked up the anxiety", dealing with the real doubt about the seriousness of the problem by assuming the worst'. (2008, p. 24) It was assumed by governments, ergo the populace, that the world was about to end, with rioting in the streets, transport systems crashing and a total breakdown in world order. All that happened in the end was that a lot of clever merchandisers made a profit from various survival guides which explained how to still be alive on January 2nd, 2000. The furore over the Millennium Bug was a genuine effort to warn the public of a likely global worry but it seemed that the media and governments mishandled it and it merely turned into a non-event and another topic of online conversation for the conspiracy theorists to chat about on the 'net.

To the casual user, the internet may seem like a place where cranks and crackpots disseminate their latest opinion on governmental matters, and it is true to say that these people seem to have found their natural home on the web. But it's not just a place for harmless eccentrics. For every one that suggests there are aliens living among us there are others who flood cyberspace with their insidious beliefs. Evgeny Morozov, in his book *The Net Delusion: How not to liberate the world* explains how the internet is a breeding space for propagandists and even genuine, historical facts:

can now be easily compiled and twisted to suit one's own interpretation of history. Fringe literature dealing with revisionist or outright racist interpretations of history used to be hard to find.....no more: Even the most obscure nationalistic texts, which previously could only be found in select public libraries, have been.....widely disseminated online. (2011, p. 250)

When the Wikileaks website was launched in 2007, it would have been understandable if it had been perceived as just another home for outlandish speculation and propagandist dogma. But the fact that its founder Julian Assange is now in residence in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, having claimed diplomatic asylum from several countries wishing to prosecute him for spilling their secrets says something about the credibility of the site. Within a short few years, both Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning would also be wanted by the US government for similar leaks. Manning is now in prison, Snowden in exile in Russia. Had they been one of the many who spout their offbeat views on various forums, it's debatable whether their opinions would have been regarded.

One of the stories that Wikileaks published (in 2011) was on the activities in Guantanamo Bay military prison and its treatment of prisoners. Two years later, Professor John Hickman wrote *Selling Guantanamo: Exploding the Propaganda Surrounding America's Most Notorious Military Prison* in which he detailed the injustices meted out to the prisoners kept there. In an online interview, he explained the book's title and how Americans were sold a lie with regard to the prison:

the American people were purposefully deceived about the Bush administration's Guantanamo decision. The public relations fraud succeeded because popular anxiety was deliberately heightened rather than calmed by the administration for many months after September 11, 2001.

He continued by explaining that one of the reasons for the existence of Guantanamo was:

that it provided a virtual prisoner parade, evidence of a quick victory in Afghanistan so that the American public could be talked into going to war against Iraq.

The 'prisoner parade' referred to was the public showing to the media of orange boilersuit-clad prisoners in order to appease the American population. It was, as Hickman said, a purely public relations stunt to show the public that those responsible for the 9/11 attacks had been caught and duly punished.

But there's a very fine line between P.R. and propaganda and they're arguably interchangeable. No-one was more aware of this than Edward Bernays. Known as the father of public relations, Bernays was a nephew of Sigmund Freud and was possibly the first P.R. man to make use of psychology in his promotions. His biographer explained 'Hired to sell a product or service, he instead sold whole new ways of behaving' (Tye, 1998, p. 52). In the late twenties, Bernays was able to convince the women of America that smoking was good for them by suggesting that it kept them thin. One of the ways he did this was by asking the opinions of so-called experts such as professional photographers who all agreed that yes, thin women were better-looking than fat ones. He even encouraged hotels to add cigarettes to their dessert menu to persuade women to smoke after a meal rather than eat something fattening. In his 1928 book *Propaganda* he wrote:

the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society.....We are governed, our minds molded (sic), our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. (1928, p. 37)

The public relations business is all about making the client look good. It's about suggestion and making us believe that whatever they're doing, it's for our own good, whatever product they're selling, we need to buy it, whatever we're being told, it's the truth.

But 'seeing is believing' cannot be taken as true anymore. It's very easy these days to mock up 'official' documents or newsreel footage. The 1997 black comedy, *Wag the Dog* showed how simple it is. The story concerns a potential U.S. governmental sex scandal which is averted by the machinations of a spin doctor who invents a fake war with Albania. With the use of actors, scenery and backdrops, he manages to convince the public and various media outlets of its alleged authenticity.

The Blair Witch Project (1999) which spearheaded the re-emergence of the 'found footage' movie is a prime example of how easy it is to fool the public. The film is about three young people who supposedly went missing while making a documentary about the Blair Witch. All that was found was the camera they were using along with some rather scary footage and this is what was released to cinemas. It was all fake but the makers of the film went to great lengths to make it seem authentic to cinema-goers. They set up a website detailing the (made-up) legend of the Blair Witch, they went on message boards and talked about it, they even put a fake entry on the IMDb website before the movie opened where the three 'documentary makers' were listed as 'missing, presumed dead'. This generated huge interest in the movie before it even opened, and guaranteed huge box-office returns on a relatively small budget.

Nick Davies wrote that:

[J]ournalism without checking is like a human body without an immune system. If the primary purpose of journalism is to tell the truth, then it follows that the primary function of journalists is to check and to reject whatever is not true. (2008, p. 51)

Noam Chomsky & Edward Herman in their book *Manufacturing Consent* (the title was taken from Walter Lippman who in his 1921 book *Public Opinion* formulated the

idea of 'the manufacture of consent' which was the belief that the public in general couldn't democratically handle the common interest and it was up to a small group of people to deal with it instead - not unlike the 'men we have never heard of ' that Bernays later wrote about) looked at the performance of the media in the U.S. to determine if they were 'independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth' (1994, p. xi) or if they actually could 'decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about' (1994, p. xi).

In the book they discuss the media reportage of the Vietnam War and point to the 'widely held' view that the coverage was actually detrimental to the U.S. and 'that the media 'lost the war' by exposing the general population to its horrors' (1994, p. 169) citing as an example two shameful episodes in the war. The first was the coverage of the Tet Offensive campaign where the North Vietnamese launched a surprise (and almost) victorious attack on the American army. The second was the My Lai massacre of innocent Vietnamese civilians. But both these stories were revealed by Americans - My Lai by a G.I. Had it come from the 'other side' it would have been termed black propaganda.

It's pure hypothesis though as to whether the outcome of the Vietnam War would have been any different had the media coverage been less when one takes into account that the two incidents that Chomsky and Herman write of took place in the late sixties and it was the mid-seventies before the fighting ended. Equally, the Angels of Mons story came out in the early stages of a war that had still another four years to run its course.

It's puzzling for the public at large to know what's true and what isn't - especially with the ease of access of communications that is at our fingertips. Equally, it's a balancing act for governments and media outlets alike with regard to knowing exactly

what information to give the public, especially in times of war. If they tell it like it is, it can cause panic and despair among civilians. If they sugar-coat the truth, they're bound to be accused of lying for underhand reasons or behaving like a nanny state. It's no surprise really that feature films were used in the propaganda war. The audience would be aware that they were watching make-believe but the intended message would subliminally (or not as the case may be) filter through to them. During the Second World War, this method also gave British cinema some of the best wartime movies ever made.

3 Keep Calm

An article on the website of the U.K. newspaper *The Independent* from 2009 (the seventieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War II) pointed out the difference between English and German propaganda movies:

If the British propaganda film-makers of the period had to stretch their creative powers to the maximum, then that is surely only an illustration of the differences between making propaganda in a democracy and making it under a dictatorship.....between being deftly persuasive and lazily indoctrinating.

British feature film makers did ably stretch their creativity with regard to propaganda movies but it took a while before they got into their stride of persuasion rather than indoctrination.

The first full-length propaganda feature film of the second World War hit cinemas less than eight weeks after the war started. *The Lion Has Wings* produced by the renowned Alexander Korda was unabashed in its message. It was more a docu-drama than an actual feature film and was made to promote the R.A.F. With stars such as Ralph Richardson and Merle Oberon among other familiar faces, it consisted of newsreel footage and scripted scenes edited together. From the stirring opening music which is followed by a sonorous narration declaring 'This is Britain where we believe in freedom' to the shot inserted from *Fire Over England* (1937) with Dame Flora Robson as Elizabeth I delivering her famous rallying speech to her soldiers at Tilbury ('I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman.....'), it was clear from the off what the tone of the movie was to be - not surprising when one considers that it was 'made under official supervision' according to *The Times* in London. (1939, p. 3)

Contemporaneous reviews were fairly unanimous. Frank S. Nugent in the *New York Times* pointed out that despite its heavy propaganda message it 'happens also to

be a tremendously interesting and exciting motion picture'. Another reviewer called it 'a fascinating film as well as first-rate propaganda'. (The Times London, 1940, p. 5) However, one of the audience members questioned at a test screening and quoted in the Mass-Observation report (a weekly paper by the Ministry of Information) said 'I think it un-British to shove propaganda down your throat like that. They should regard us as more intelligent than that.'

Looking at it now, several decades later, there's no denying its jingoistic nature and heavy-handed message but despite that, it was a remarkable achievement by the film's makers to complete a full-length movie in such a short space of time, and it achieved what it set out to do - use the medium of cinema as an important propaganda tool. And cinema was a *very* important propaganda tool - 'a primary medium of mass communication and, in addition, a weapon in the arsenal for the battle for hearts and mind'. (Fox, 2007, p. 28). This is hardly surprising as in 1939, in a country of 48 million people, 20 million went to the 4,800 cinemas in the U.K. on a weekly basis. Within five years this had risen to an audience of 30 million. A.J.P. Taylor called it 'the essential social habit of the age' (1965, p. 313). It was obvious that at some stage the Government would make use of the film industry to help the war effort in some way. At the start of the war however, all entertainment venues were closed by Government order, the rationale behind this move being the fear of mass casualties from air raids. But the weeks went by and the presumed air raids and bombings failed to materialise and so by early November cinemas were reopened.

Film makers were then faced with what sort of movies to show in them. Fantasy or real life? Comedies or a reminder of what their loved ones were suffering on a daily basis? Did the public want 'films which offered them an escape from the reality of war or.....see their wartime experiences reflected on the screen'? (Murphy, 1989,

p. 34) The obvious answer was a bit of both. However, there was also another problem to be considered. Up until the war, the portrayal of working-class people had been limited to a particular stereotype. Cinema had consisted mainly of performances from sophisticated stars with well-modulated tones such as the suave Leslie Howard or the glamorous Phyllis Calvert. As Nicholas Reeves explained, the lower classes were rarely shown onscreen, middle-class characters even less so. It was mostly upper-middle-classes:

with the occasional working-class caricature by way of light relief. The only real exception to this was.....George Formby and Gracie Fields. Yet while they were unmistakably working-class, the extravagant worlds they inhabited in their films had almost nothing in common with.....their working-class audiences. (1999, p. 148)

Propaganda is useless unless it's seen by its target audience and this meant *all* classes of society. In fact, as Churchill had called the war the 'People's War', it arguably meant that it was more important for those working in the factories, down the mines and in all service industries that they could recognise and identify with what they saw on-screen. The British population needed to feel that everyone was in this together. Posters that seemed to suggest that it was up to the ordinary working-class people to win the war weren't helping.



A sea change was essential, and inevitable.

Notwithstanding the speed with which *The Lion Has Wings* was shot and distributed, making a movie can be a slow and laborious process and it was sometime in 1941 before 'The extraordinarily narrow class confines of pre-war British cinemas were breached.' (Reeves, 1999, p. 176) The 1941 movie *Love on the Dole* from the Walter Greenwood novel was probably one of the earliest examples. The British Board of Film Censors had blocked previous attempts in the 30s to make it due to its explicit portrayal of poverty and when it finally got made it didn't shirk on the realism. This was probably too much, too soon. The British cinema-going public needed to be eased into a new style of cinema, one that ticked all the boxes - for filmmakers, Government and the viewing public alike.

3.1 'This is the story of a ship'

The 1942 film *In Which We Serve* was one of those movies which seemed to have all the magic ingredients. It was based on a true story, scripted by Noel Coward, co-directed by David Lean, and boasted a stellar cast (what war movie was complete without John Mills or Bernard Miles?). It told the story of the wartime naval experiences of Lord Louis Mountbatten and his ship HMS *Kelly* (renamed the *Torrin* in the film.) Mountbatten was a friend of the playwright and author Noel Coward and suggested the story to him when producers Anthony Havelock-Allan and Filippo del Giudice approached him (Coward) about making a movie although Mountbatten didn't want his association with the film to be known. Coward originally planned to direct the movie himself but this plan was changed when he realised that he didn't have enough movie experience plus he found directing boring, so instead he concentrated on playing the lead role of Captain Kinross, handing directing responsibilities to David Lean, at the time better known as an editor. As Coward had directed a few scenes, he and Lean eventually shared the directing credits.



The opening shot shows the sinking of the *Torrin*. Its crew is left floating in the sea clinging to whatever they can, and as they float there their individual stories are told in flashback. From the cheeky chappie Shorty Blake (played by the ever-reliable John Mills) to Chief Petty Officer Hardy (Bernard Miles) to the Captain himself,

we're shown the lives and families they have left behind. Kay Walsh, Joyce Carey and Celia Johnston play their respective wives. The characters are all from three different strata of society but all are given equal screen time and very little, if anything is made of the difference in their backgrounds. Kinross is shown to be a tough but reasonable captain, respected and loved by his crew. When one of the least experienced crew members (Richard Attenborough in his screen debut) deserts his station during a raid (an incident that actually happened on Mountbatten's ship) he obviously has to be taken to task for shirking his duties but this is done offscreen and the audience implicitly understands that the Captain has been fair in his punishment and that the boy has learned a valuable lesson. Later on as the boy is dying from wounds, Kinross tells him he'll write to the boy's parents to tell them they can be proud of him.

Where this movie excels is in its realism, thanks in no small part to its attention to detail as Kevin Brownlow explained in his biography of Lean: 'Many of the troops were wounded veterans, convalescing.....Also a number of the girls who were playing nurses were authentic VADs' (1996, p. 162) (Voluntary Aid Detachment). Even the German aircraft were the real thing, 'supplied by the RAF from something called the Enemy Flying Circus'. (1996, p. 163)

Another important aspect of the film is its portrayal of the women left at home, particularly the Hardy family. Shorty has married the niece of Hardy's wife Kath so new bride (Walsh), Kath (Carey) and her mother Mrs Lemmon (Dora Gregory) are all living together for the 'duration'. The scenes between the three women show an unspoken heroism, a willingness to continue with daily life as normally as possible despite the daily air raids and bombings. At one point Kath comments on the sound of the bombers approaching 'Oh, there they are again' as if it's more of a nuisance than

a real threat to their lives and also tells her mother that there's no point making a fuss. Thompson and Bordwell remark that 'Such scenes contribute to the film's treatment of the war as a daily presence.....sometimes remote and sometimes suddenly dangerous.' (2010, p. 225) And indeed it is during this air raid that Kath is killed. The scene in the film where Shorty has to break the news to Hardy that his wife has died is a turnabout from all the movies where it's the woman who receives the bad news (the dreaded telegram) and shows that not only is it just as dangerous for those at home but also that the danger they face in their support of the armed forces has not gone unnoticed by Britain. Yes, it *is* the story of a ship therefore the men in the story take priority but the message is clear - the women left behind who keep the country ticking over are just as important.

Reeves called it an 'unmistakeable surrogate for the whole nation at war' (1999, p. 179). Not only did it show both battleground *and* home front, the cross-class story showed that despite class differences, during a time of crisis everyone can pull together - 'a national family' (Reeves, 1999, p. 184) - no matter what their status, all for the greater good.

The dialogue is very realistic considering it was scripted by Coward who was more known for his drawing room comedies of manner but there are occasions when the Coward humour peeps through:

Flags: Very pretty sky, sir. Somebody sent me a calendar rather like that last Christmas.

Kinross: Did it have a squadron of Dorniers in the upper right-hand corner?

Flags: No, sir.

Kinross: That's where art parts company with reality

Kinross' lines are all the more amusing when delivered in Coward's familiar clipped style of speech but other cast members get their share of what would have been

considered risqué dialogue in the 40s as in when Freda tells Shorty that her uncle's a

Petty Officer:

Freda: They call him a funny name.

Shorty: We often call Petty Officers funny names.

Freda: It begins with a 'B'.

Shorty: Generally does!

It may seem rather tame now but American censors had trouble with the 'bad' language in the movie, specifically the use of 'bloody' and 'bastard' and the U.S. opening was delayed because of it. A report in the New York Times in December 1942 quoted a member of the reviewing committee as saying:

There are a lot of people in this country who do not like vulgarity, particularly on the screen. Morally we are obligated to protect youngsters who attend our pictures.....Do we want to scandalize them?

But generally reviews were extremely favourable. Jeffrey Richards gives snippets of some of the contemporaneous reviews: from the Sunday Times 'the best film about the war yet made in this country or in America'; Sight and Sound 'the best war film made so far'; the Monthly Film Bulletin 'the finest war drama yet produced' (2007, p. 205).

Nowadays, although some may baulk at the stiffness of the upper lip onscreen (no surprise considering there were two future knights, two future lords and a future dame in the cast), there is no doubt of the talent involved on both sides of the camera as it's there for all to see. When looked at purely as a movie, it's one of the best. When looked at as propaganda, it's almost second to none.

3.2 Mobile Women

The Wartime Society Survey of 1943 uncovered the fact that a large proportion of the cinema-going public in Britain was female and so it made perfect sense when Mass-Observation (the weekly Ministry of Information paper) suggested using the medium to target this audience with propaganda messages.

One of the most important messages that the Government needed to send out was that thousands of women were needed in industry to replace the men that were fighting. A request for volunteers didn't have the hoped-for effect so in December 1941, compulsory service was introduced. The National Service (Number 2) Act:

made unmarried women and childless widows aged between 20 and 30 liable for call-up to serve in the forces or factories. (Aldgate & Richards, 2007, p. 300)

Most British movies during the war had focussed on the woman's position specifically in the home but now with women's roles changing drastically it was necessary to show how they too were helping the war effort. One of the few movies to do this was *Millions Like Us* (1943). Co-written and directed by the partnership of Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, *Millions Like Us* was set in an aircraft factory and followed Celia (Patricia Roc) as she leaves home to join all the other women who have been called up to do vital factory work because they are - as the Government termed them - mobile women.

Initially Celia wants to join the A.T.S. (Auxiliary Territorial Services), the female branch of the British Army as she sees it as more 'glamorous' than working at a machine all day long. But as the only vacancies in the A.T.S. are for cooks, and she already cooks and cleans for her widowed father at home, she reluctantly accepts the factory job. Soon she is joined by other women from all walks of life including

Jennifer, an upper-class snob who's never had to work for a living, Gwen, a university graduate and the daughter of an unemployed Welsh miner, and a chirpy Northerner called Annie. At first, the movie is at great pains to show the disparity of the girls' backgrounds - Annie and Jennifer share a room and Annie is agog at Jennifer's nightly beauty routine while Jennifer is equally perplexed when Annie explains why she doesn't take her underclothes off before going to bed - 'they've only got to go on again in the morning'. But this is all gradually put to one side as the girls come together to aid the war effort. As the woman at the Ministry of Labour explains to the girls in an earlier scene, before they're bussed off to the factory leaving their family and their previous life behind them 'You'll be indispensable. Remember that'. It's a very clear message to potential 'mobile women' watching in the cinema.



There are other scenes in the movie obviously intended on setting minds at ease. On arrival at the hostel where the girls will be living, Gwen is pleasantly surprised (and not a little relieved) to discover that their new home is not what she expected - a 'long bare dormitory with 'The Lord will Provide' framed on the wall.....rows and rows of iron bedsteads.... with little enamel pots under them'. Instead they're put into a small but cosy two-bed room which they can decorate to make more homely. There's also the opportunity to meet soldiers during one of the many dances held in the hostel and Celia meets a Scottish gunner Fred (Gordon Jackson) who is as shy as

she is. They eventually marry but the inevitable happens and he is killed in a raid over Germany. Celia, although grieving for her new husband, is helped by the camaraderie of her fellow workmates and the final scene shows them joining in a mass sing-song in the canteen while aeroplanes roar overhead - aeroplanes that the girls helped to build.

This scene is perhaps the strongest message of *Millions Like Us*. It shows how important the community spirit is in times of crisis and how everyone pulling together can really make a difference.

And it's not just Celia who is 'doing her bit'. Her father is in the Home Guard, her brother is fighting in Egypt and her sister Phyllis is in the A.T.S. In a sweetly comical scene (a subtle nod to the other work now being done by women), Phyllis is shown expressing amazement at Celia's love of factory work 'She actually *likes* it!' - all while she herself is covered in grease and under an army jeep trying to fix it. But the directors make their point before the film even begins. The opening credits list the main actors in the cast and, following Eric Portman's name, the caption '- and millions like you - in' appears followed by the film's title. All this is shown over real footage of factory workers heading to and from their daily job and underlines what the movie is trying to say - what they are experiencing is not unique, that it's shared with everyone in the country.

3.3 Cry 'God' for Harry

Aldgate and Richards have said that 'Historical films have regularly been used as vehicles for propaganda' (2007, p. 138) but also make the point that

Given the value of history for its ability to suggest historical parallels, it is perhaps surprising that comparatively little use was made of history for direct propaganda purposes during the Second World war. (2007, p. 138).

This England (1941) directed by David MacDonald was an episodic film, using scenes from English history to show peasants and landowners working side by side to repel the various invaders the country has faced through the ages. *The Young Mr. Pitt* (1942) starred Robert Donat as the 18th century British Prime Minister. But the best use of Britain's historical past as propaganda was undoubtedly *Henry V* in which Laurence Olivier directed, produced and starred. It's an unsurprising choice really. The story of the young English king is an ideal one to remind cinemagoers of, especially in times of war. According to the Shakespearean play, if not actually historically accurate, Henry was a playboy prince with no ambitions to the throne for which he was destined. When the monarchy was thrust upon him following his father's death, he accepted his destiny, acceded to the throne and in time became a great king. The notion of recognising one's patriotic duty when it is needed speaks for itself. The fact that the play had the great victory at Agincourt at its heart couldn't do any harm either: In 1415 the British army defeated the much larger French opponent under terrible conditions (the battlefield was practically a sea of mud). Comparisons with the current situation were obvious.



The role of Henry was one with which Olivier was much associated.

Like many actors in the British military, he was often required to perform for the troops. Young King Henry always appeared. "I don't think we could have won the war without 'Once more unto the breach' somewhere in our soldier's hearts," Olivier wrote. (Nicholls, 1997, p. 89)

As with *In Which We Serve* and *Millions Like Us*, there is a dedication in the opening titles. This time it is 'To the Commandos and Airborne Troops of Great Britain - the spirit of whose ancestors it has been humbly attempted to recapture in some ensuing scenes.' The film starts with a sheet of paper floating through the air which has an announcement of a production of Shakespeare's *Henry V* at the Globe 'This date 1 May 1600'. We see the actors backstage getting into costume and going onstage at the Globe to perform in front of an audience, the scenes gradually change to sets with painted backdrops and the movie eventually opens out onto location for the battle scenes at Agincourt before returning to the Globe for the end scenes.

Henry V was a very important entry into the canon of propaganda movies. It wasn't chosen purely to remind people that Britain had previously fought and won wars

against seemingly insurmountable odds, and could do so again. It was also chosen for the stirringly patriotic and inspiring speeches that Shakespeare put into the mouth of the young king. The St Crispian's day speech where Henry tells his men (his band of brothers) that they will be forever remembered for their bravery in battle:

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; And gentlemen in England
now-a-bed Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

or the speech as they attack Harfleur

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.....
.....Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!

were enough to galvanise cinema audiences hearing this in 1944. The war had been raging for five long years at this stage and though there was less than a year to peace - the movie opened in November 1944 - people were naturally tired. Rationing, air raids, bombing, deaths were all now unavoidable parts of daily life. It would have been understandable had public opinion pressed for an end to the fighting. *Henry V* encouraged people to push on 'once more.....for.....England, and Saint George'. There are other lines in the play which would hit the mark with contemporaneous audiences and make it seem as if Shakespeare was writing as much about the current conflict as the one 500 years previously. 'Now all the youth of England are on fire,' proclaims Leslie Banks' Chorus; some of the current wounded youths of England, indeed, were among the extras'. (Barr, 1986, p. 158), which gave an added frisson to the battle

scenes by acknowledging the sacrifices that were being made by these men as well as the consequences of these sacrifices. There is also the wooing of the French princess Katherine which would have been a timely reminder of the long connection between Britain and France as well as an indication that Britain isn't just fighting the war for itself. Added to this, there is the scene between the Scottish, Welsh and Irish captains to remind viewers that *Britain* - as opposed to just England - was at war.

Some of the play's text was altered to suit the situation. Henry's negative traits were played down and the positive aspects of the French were highlighted as well as omitting 'suggestions of internal dissent' (Fox, 2007, p. 239).

A film of a Shakespearean play might have been a gamble at the box office but it paid off handsomely with reviews such as this one from the trade newspaper *Kinematograph Weekly* 'Superbly acted.....artistically and vigorously directed . Outstanding.....a film every Briton must see.' Basil Wright, the film historian called it a 'beautiful and well-nigh faultless film' (Chapman, 2000, p, 204) The public flocked to it in droves thus ensuring it ticked the boxes on both counts. Not only was it well-received as a film in its own right but as a well-made piece of propaganda also.

4 A spoonful of sugar

Propaganda is a useful tool at any time but more so in wartime when getting the right message across is vital to the war effort. The medium used to convey this message has to be something that can be accessed easily (and willingly) by large groups of people.

With such a large percentage of the U.K. population visiting picture houses on a weekly basis, the answer was obvious. Not only was cinema the main source of entertainment for the British people, providing a diversion from the constant hardships faced by its population both at home and at the front but it also was able to portray onscreen what people were facing everyday and show that the playing field was now level - everyone was in it together dealing with the same problems. All these movies, showing people coming together regardless of their background or education, were extremely important to the war effort. As Robert Murphy explained 'The common danger, the shared intensity of experience, seemed for a moment to fuse Britain into a harmoniously classless society' (1989, p. 27). It was, as Churchill had said, 'The People's War' and gave everyone hope that unlike 1918, this time things would be different once the war was over. It also gave a message to the rest of the world - Britain was not going to be pushed around.

Documentary films were also doing their bit for the propaganda machine. Grierson, Jennings et al were well respected film makers whose work still stands up today as fine examples of the genre. There was also British Pathé newsreels as well as the public service films. But the public wanted entertainment too and the bitterness of the propaganda pill was sweetened by seeing their favourite stars facing the same problems - albeit in a fictionalised setting - that they themselves were facing. It was also an acknowledgement of their daily struggle and the fact that the people at home -

and the work they were doing - were just as important in the fight as were the people fighting on the battlefields of Europe and elsewhere, as shown for example in *The Bells Go Down* (an Ealing Studios drama about the Auxiliary Fire Service).

It's easy to forget that the 1940s were more innocent times and most young girls of a certain background were expected to work in offices (if they were to work at all) before eventually finding the right man and settling down to cosy domesticity. The war changed all that. The vast majority of eligible men were either fighting, wounded or dead. Women had to become more independent and the thoughts of factory work with people outside their classes would have been a frightening thought to most females. With a dry documentary one was forced to sit through facts, figures and a possibly dull voiceover narrative whereas with *Millions Like Us* or *The Gentle Sex* women could see what life could (potentially) be like were they to work in a factory or join the ATS (respectively) and perhaps lessen the fear. One woman, having watched a documentary on the ATS wrote how the 'accents.....are all very ladylike, some of them indeed almost unbearable' (Chapman, p. 207) before expressing her fear that the uniform might not look good on her.

Other movies such as *Went The Day Well?* which imagined a German invasion thwarted by the inhabitants of a small village or *In Which We Serve* which showed the women continuing on as normally as possible without their men (and doing an excellent job of it too) were an inspiration to the populace. If Thora Hird could fight off a German interloper and Celia Johnson could cope on her own, then so could the women of Britain.

It wasn't just the women though. The aforementioned *In Which We Serve* showed the depth of loyalty a sailor has for his fellow crewmen and ship. *The Way Ahead* did similar for the army where a disparate bunch of civilians is turned into a battalion of

soldiers ready to lay down their lives for someone they'd literally only met two months before. Then too, there were the reminders of Britain's historical ability as a fighting nation with *Henry V*.

When one looks at the filmic output during the war years, it's hard to take Satyajit Ray seriously when he commented 'I do not think the British are temperamentally equipped to make the best use of the movie camera' (Barr, 1986, p. 1). Britain has been responsible for some of the best movies ever made and not just during the war. All these movies, showing people coming together regardless of their background or education, were extremely important to the war effort.

Although this thesis concentrated on Britain and British war cinema, the list of countries that has used cinema as propaganda runs from Australia to the U.S. and is far too comprehensive to cover here. The relationship between cinema and propaganda is almost as old as cinema itself. Possibly the earliest known is the collection of shorts made by the American film studio Vitagraph in 1898 - when cinema was still in its infancy - about the Spanish-American war. During the early years of the 20th century, the Soviet authorities made use of the cinema in both peacetime and times of war to disseminate their beliefs to the people, particularly after the revolution in 1917, with the help of such luminaries as Kuleshov (who made *On the Red Front* in 1920) and Pudovkin (*Mother* 1926). Japan looked to stories from its ancient past to inspire its people and made animated movies 'starring' the hero of one of its most famous fairytales '*Momotaro*'.

The Australian company Cinesounds closed down its feature film productions so that it could make documentaries such as *Soldiers Without Uniform* (1942) to highlight the work done by those not directly involved in the fighting, or *Give Us This Day* (1943) which pointed out the necessity of food rationing.

From the pioneering works of the aforementioned John Grierson for the National Film Board of Canada to the less subtle, gung-ho American efforts such as *We've Never Been Licked* (1943), the worldwide cinema industry - when called upon - helped its respective country when most needed. For good or bad, it got the message out there that its government was right and that what was being asked of its people was also right.

The British movie industry did its duty as much as any other nation, and helped its people to fight the Second World War just as much as those who enlisted.

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