



OXFORD JOURNALS  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

## American Association for Public Opinion Research

---

Propaganda in Cold Wars

Author(s): John B. Whitton

Source: *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring, 1951), pp. 142-144

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#) on behalf of the [American Association for Public Opinion Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745760>

Accessed: 13-05-2015 10:19 UTC

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*American Association for Public Opinion Research and Oxford University Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Public Opinion Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

on "Paix; conditions générales des puissances alliées, 1914-20"; and 32 volumes on "Presse étrangère, analyses, 1914-22: violation du droit des gens par les Allemands (déportations, etc.); divers."

The clippings of (1) this press collection, (2) the "Correspondance politique, légations," (3) "Correspondance politique, consulats," (4) "Correspondance politico-commerciale," and (5) "Papiers Lambermont" are a veritable gold mine for the student of public opinion in the period from 1870 to 1900. The "Correspondance politique"

is also valuable for the score of years preceding 1870.

The conditions of the Service des Archives are conducive to profitable research. The serious investigator is welcomed by the entire staff and their service is exceptionally cordial, intelligent, and efficient. Much of the material dated before 1914 is bound, and trained archivists have briefed or summarized many of the documents. The reading room is open from 9:15 to 12:00 and 2:15 to 6:00 Monday through Friday, and from 9:15 to 12:00 on Saturday.

## PROPAGANDA IN COLD WARS

By JOHN B. WHITTON

*Princeton University*

Nations have always resorted to propaganda as a weapon of power, in war and in peace, and for purposes of both domestic and foreign policy. The great innovation of modern times is the frank recognition of propaganda as a regular branch of government alongside economic and military departments. This recognition, for wartime purposes, was a development of the first world war. Its recognition generally for times of peace came in the Twenties, first by Soviet Russia and second by Mussolini and Hitler. The democracies only recently, and then only with great reluctance, have been forced by the exigencies of the cold war to accord similar recognition to their "information" departments.

If the role of propaganda in wartime is now well understood, the same cannot be said of its use in time of peace. Many seem to ignore the fact that cold wars are themselves no innovation, but

a frequent occurrence in the history of nations. When nations were not shooting at each other, but were maintaining normal and superficially friendly relations, they often carried on "warfare by other means." Fearful of each other's aims and policies, they struggled to improve their power positions through persistent searches for bases and allies. Meanwhile they frantically rearmed and attacked each other with words, at first through pamphlets distributed by secret agents and, more recently, via the radio.

The cold-war propaganda employed by nations in the past might be classified as war-mongering, subversive, and socio-revolutionary. The first of these, war-mongering, consists of attempts to manipulate people's definitions of a situation so that war seems advantageous for them. This propaganda may be directed toward either the home population or foreign peoples. Thomas Paine, in 1791 in his *Rights of Man*, wrote, "Each gov-

ernment accuses the other of perfidy, intrigue, and ambition, as a means of heating the imagination of their respective nations, and incensing them to hostilities."

A familiar example of war-mongering is the famous Ems dispatch, that incendiary telegram sent in 1870 by King William of Prussia to Bismarck, which the wily Chancellor garbled and publicized so as to make war inevitable. Its contents were so highly insulting to the French that they immediately declared war, and so provocative to the Germans that the hesitant states promptly united for military action. Similarly, in 1898 an American newspaper publisher sent the artist Frederick Remington to Cuba to make illustrations of the alleged Spanish atrocities against the Cubans. When the artist objected that he could not find anything of the kind, the publisher sent him that much-cited telegram, "You furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war!"

Subversive propaganda consists of attempts to weaken foreign states by stirring up internal dissension, factional disputes, and even civil war. Of such tactics history can offer many examples, but no campaign of subversive propaganda was more virulent than that carried into Bosnia from Serbia prior to 1914. Newspapers were bought and leaflets distributed to preach subversion, revolt, and assassination. This propaganda was undoubtedly one of the proximate causes of the assassination of Grand Duke Ferdinand and the outbreak of the Great War.

More familiar to the present generation are the psychological campaigns undertaken by Hitler, especially through radio broadcasting in lands destined for conquest. Thus was Austria the recipi-

ent of broadcasts which went so far as to suggest the assassination of Dollfuss. Subsequently the Sudeten Germans were aroused to a frenzy against the Czechs, and later France was softened up by the use of intrigues and incendiary messages designed to incite party against party and class against class.

Socio-revolutionary propaganda consists of attempts by leaders of socio-political movements to institute a new world-wide regime. The leaders of such movements, inspired by a sort of evangelical zeal, seem convinced that they have discovered ultimate truth, which it is their duty to spread across the world.

An early instance of this phenomenon was the Cromwellian Revolution, but the first outstanding example is offered by the French Revolution. At this time the Jacobin agents and pamphleteers operated in every direction from Paris. The highest point in the campaign was reached in the famous decree of 1792 which offered the aid of France to any people ready to overthrow its regime and adopt the new order.

The Soviet socio-political revolution has largely been dependent on propaganda. One of the first moves of the regime was to set up a school for propagandists, whose graduates were soon at work in all parts of Europe and eventually in other parts of the world as well. The Russians were the first to make full use of radio for mass indoctrination, but it was only with the invention of short wave broadcasting that programs laden with propaganda could be beamed to all the world.

Though propaganda has long been accepted as an effective weapon by many types of governments, democracies have shown a reluctance to employ it. They

have instead relied upon somewhat more rational campaigns of "information." Although the distinction between *our* "information" and *their* "propaganda" may be a difficult one, there

would seem to be some basis for believing that our scruples concerning truth represent a new departure in cold-war propaganda techniques. Its effectiveness remains to be ascertained.

## IS ECONOMIC FACT THE ANSWER?

By STANLEY L. PAYNE

*Special Surveys*

According to the editors, no *Fortune* magazine story in recent years has stirred up so much controversy as the one in the September 1950 issue entitled, "Is Anybody Listening?" That article questioned the worth of the tremendous amounts of effort, time, and money many companies are spending to acquaint employees and the public with the workings of our economic system. Reactions of *Fortune* readers have ranged from outraged indignation to a feeling that the editors could have stated an even more detailed critical view.

For those of us engaged in the measurement of opinion this presents a problem and a challenge: Who is right—the *Fortune* editors and their adherents, or the businessmen who have invested so much in telling the history of enterprise and the facts of economics? Or is there some compromise or middle ground solution that is more effective?

Why have businessmen come to take the effectiveness of economic fact for granted? Is it their only weapon? Is it their best weapon? How effective is it? Can it be depended upon to work fast enough? Has it become an end in itself?

Researchers must bear much of the responsibility for the acceptance and popularity of the economic fact ap-

proach. The reason for this is that absorption of economic fact is more readily measurable than are more subtle changes in human attitudes, and our reports of successfully getting facts across may be so spectacular that the attention of businessmen has become unduly focused on this one approach. Just as the complacency we induce in an election campaign may affect the results, so our other pronouncements may take on too much authority because we "have the figures."

After a considerable amount of favorable experience with tests about economic fact, we may have tricked even ourselves into assuming that indoctrination in economic fact is the final objective. One may conjecture, however, that although 70% of the workers in a given plant today can parrot back the amount invested in equipment per man where only 20% knew that fact a year ago, the net change in ideology, morale, and productivity may yet be almost negligible.

The role of economic fact may someday be discovered to parallel the experience with wartime fact reported in "The American Soldier" series. Army surveys testing the effectiveness of such devices as "The Battle of Britain" film found that teaching soldiers simple facts