

# THE MARKETING OF NATIONAL POLICIES: A STUDY OF WAR PROPAGANDA

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *The problem of using all this country's resources to disseminate effectively the ideas for which the democracies are contending in the present war is one of the day's most formidable marketing problems. Mr. Bernays discusses the problem with new insight in the following paper, which he read before the New York Chapter at one of its fall meetings.*

**D**URING the Great War, the Nations realized the necessity of selling their national aims and policies. They had special marketing problems. The attitudes and actions of their own people, of neutrals and of enemies towards them, depended to a great extent on how effectively they "sold" themselves.

They discovered that arms and armaments are not the only weapons, that ideas are weapons too. They recognized in varying degree the importance of a scientific approach to the marketing of national aims and of national policies.

From an examination of the past we can learn what the marketing policies of our own nation should be today, what we should do and what we should not do to gain acceptance for our country's aims and ideals. I shall review briefly the story of how Germany, England and the United States marketed their national aims and policies during the Great War to the people of their own countries, to the neutrals and to the enemies. I shall indicate that new developments in psychological approaches and technical media have changed national marketing policies since 1917, and I shall discuss activities being carried on in this field today in Germany, England, and the United States.

I hope to prove that a scientific approach to the problem of marketing

national aims and policies should be adopted in the United States. I shall make recommendations on how to meet this problem of selling our democratic ideals, ideals of freedom, equality and orderly justice.

## PROPAGANDA AND THE GREAT WAR

A book published in the late twenties, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, by Harold Lasswell, attempted to isolate the factors of marketing. This analysis was made by a social psychologist looking back over past events. Obviously, things had not been planned this way in advance. He isolated six factors:

- (1) Fasten the war guilt on the enemy.
- (2) Claim unity and victory, in the names of history and deity.
- (3) State war aims. In the last war, the Germans failed to do this successfully. The Allies made successful counter-propaganda out of it. Security, peace, a better social order, international laws, are given as war aims.
- (4) Strengthen the belief of the people that the enemy is responsible for the war, with examples of the enemy's depravity.
- (5) Make the public believe that unfavorable news is really enemy lies. This will prevent disunity and defeatism.
- (6) Follow this with horror stories. The story of the Turk who sits before a tubful of his captives' eyes was first told during the Crusades. Horror stories, says the author, should be made to sound authoritative.

George C. Bruntz's book, *Allied Propaganda and the Collapse of the German*

*Empire in 1918*, may help us in dealing with the question. He deals with the foreign angle, but his classification of psychological techniques is applicable to the domestic situation.

- (1) Propaganda of enlightenment: Get true facts to the people and army of the enemy country, negating the false information they are fed by their own country.
- (2) Propaganda of despair: Attempt to break down the morale of the enemy by showing that death, disaster and defeat face him.
- (3) Propaganda of hope: Present to the enemy civilians and army a picture of a promised land, if they will only lay down their arms. President Wilson gave the Fourteen Points as America's war aims.
- (4) Particularist propaganda: This is aimed at factions in the opposing country and army, seeks to divide them into antagonistic groups—Catholic against Protestant, the people of Alsace-Lorraine against the Prussians in the last war.
- (5) Revolutionary propaganda: This is aimed at breaking down the government of the enemy from within. The propaganda by the Allies in the last war aimed at stirring up the German people against the Hohenzollerns.

All psychological warfare in the Great War, domestic and foreign, recognized the following three main elements, but there was no integrated scientific plan, as there should be today.

- (1) Heighten the morale-unity of your own country.
- (2) Weaken the morale of your enemy.
- (3) Win over the morale of the neutrals.

#### LESSONS FROM THE GREAT WAR

Even though great progress in psychological research and in technology has been made in the spreading of ideas since the Great War, there are lessons to be

learned from the psychological warfare of Germany, England and our own country of that period.

German psychological warfare during the Great War demonstrated what a desultory, segmented handling of the marketing problem results in. The Germans had no total psychological approach. For instance, they paid little attention to morale on the home front.

They recognized the importance of external psychological warfare. They manipulated symbols, used political Machiavellianism, sabotage, terrorism, and censorship. They tried to split off Negroes, German-Americans and other groups from the main body of Americans, blew up our factories and tried to arouse Mexico against us. The Germans used both propaganda and censorship in foreign news control. Efforts to control foreign newspapers through false fronts were a device they used then, as today; they tried to buy the *Evening Mail* in New York, for example. Control of advertising monopolies was tried in some countries. Newspaper policy and public opinion were to be influenced through advertising control.

The Germans also distributed deadly dull leaflets or pamphlets and heavy academic books in foreign countries by mail. Distribution of material over enemy lines by airplane was an effective method in Italy and Russia.

After the Great War, the Germans recognized that, from a technical standpoint, their foreign propaganda was poor—too tactless, too open, too obvious, lacking in enthusiasm and “inflammatory catchwords.” It antagonized more than it persuaded, and proved to be a boomerang.

In 1933, one year after Hitler's rise in power, Ewald Banse, Professor of Military Science at Brunswick Technical College, in *Germany Prepares for War*,

pointed to these failures. He complained of glaring mistakes, "a lack of comprehensive thinking; thinking in terms of continents and oceans," "an ignorance of economics and of national psychology plus inadequate preparations for war, both as regards food supply, raw materials, and psychological equipment," "inadequate psychological preparation of the German government." "The stab in the army's back by which our fate was sealed," was due to these, he wrote.

The conflict between military and civilian authority on the home front added to the German difficulty until, finally, their lack of morale brought despair and collapse. The Germans studied their failures in psychological warfare after the Great War and came to recognize the importance of ideas as weapons.

The British experience in building and breaking down morale also points the way for us. The English at no time harnessed the intellectual civilian resources of the country and their knowledge of human relations to master the problem of psychological warfare on a broad integrated basis of marketing their aims and ideals.

British propaganda at home started with unofficial independent committees and groups, with no regard to the basic principles of mass psychology, and also with no integrated approach.

Wellington House, a propaganda bureau for the British Government, was principally concerned with news purveying and publications. In its work out of England, it did make a contribution. It emphasized the group leader approach, personal correspondence with influential people, it arranged for the interchange of visitors, personal tours of leaders to neutral and allied countries, visits of distinguished neutrals and representatives of the Allies to England. It won leaders who influenced large groups.

Even Lord Beaverbrook, who was put in charge of the Ministry of Information in 1918, working with Lord Northcliffe at Crewe House and with the National War Aims Committee, never got started on the total psychological warfare approach we know today.

The British did have an advantage in radio and control of trans-Atlantic cables which enabled them to catch up with the better organized German propaganda in this country. Also, British propaganda dropped from airplanes in enemy countries was a potent weapon, providing a deluge of "English poison raining down from God's clear sky," to quote a German opinion—a means of reaching the public of enemy countries.

After the last war, the Germans credited the British with effective foreign propaganda. "We are bound to admit," said Banse, the German, in 1933, "that the English campaign of lies was one of the most effectual weapons used against us, conducted on thoroughly sound psychological lines. The English propaganda was run entirely by civilians, the German by soldiers. "The latter," adds Mr. Banse, "is the wrong way, because it is not the soldier's but the psychologist's opinion that counts here." We can safely say of the British as of the Germans that they recognized that they had weapons in the use of ideas, but that they never really learned how to use them effectively as an organized instrument of the national interest.

Both Germans and English failed to use public relations activities broadly. They used censorship and propaganda as separate weapons to accomplish specific purposes. At no time, as far as I know, did they apply to psychological warfare the strategy they applied to physical warfare. They achieved unified fronts in military strategy not in psychological strategy.

The British did recognize the potency of group leaders, and of enlisting the aid of civilians such as the publishers, Northcliffe and Beaverbrook. But like the Germans they missed the importance of welding the new weapons together and, in working out a program, neglected to utilize existing knowledge of persuasion and suggestion, from among the civilian population.

#### THE AMERICAN EFFORT

In the United States, psychological activity evolved slowly from the need for it, rather than from advance planned activity undertaken as part of a program of national defense. It did not represent a plan with definite goals, with effective strategy, and timing worked out in advance.

The Committee on Public Information, founded on April 13, 1917, did a splendid job within these limitations. I became associated with it soon after it was established and served with it here and at the Peace Conference. It did not proceed on a definitely formulated plan in its work of "holding fast the inner lines," although it did utilize some of the available knowledge of psychology and sociology. The men in it went ahead with enthusiasm on a widespread front. When anyone of us got a bright idea, it was very likely to be accepted. I remember one day suggesting that all exporters should be asked to put inserts in their letters about America's war aims and ideals, and henceforth they did as a matter of voluntary cooperation.

The Committee distributed millions of pamphlets, spoke through advertising to the entire country, used every available means of communication, and won public opinion to war aims and ideals, in other countries as well as in our own. The organization grew and spread to all parts of the world.

The C.P.I. had 14 divisions, working together in more or less coordinated fashion. Of course there were divisions of Pictorial Publicity, Cartoons, Syndicate Features, and Foreign Press. Tremendous amounts of material were produced and widely distributed in which a definite attempt was made at adaptation to various publics. Four-minute Men spoke in movie houses and wherever audiences of any kind were assembled. Women's and Junior divisions were developed, and the activity expanded until 75,000 speakers were participating. Four-minute Men, with the Speaking Division, which handled longer talks, were the "spearhead of the assault on indifference and apathy." They reached an estimated total audience of 400,000,000, and did the job radio does today.

The Division of Films and Pictures did effective pioneer work.

The Division of Civic and Educational Cooperation produced and distributed 75,000,000 pieces of literature, bringing about, someone said, a "veritable mobilization of the country's scholarly resources, and making schools, colleges, and various non-educational groups among the strongest of strong points in the inner lines."

The work of the Divisions of Industrial Relations, Labor Publications, and Work with the Foreign Born indicates considerable understanding of approaches, which we can handle in a much more scientific way today. It did the most effective job of all the war agencies with comparable interests, and did it democratically, without threat, intimidation, and with only voluntary censorship.

The United States shot paper bullets over the enemy lines in the World War. Confidential Army reports of the period state: "The Germans have issued an order punishing with death the retention

by their soldiers of any examples of American or Allied propaganda."

But even though I regard the U. S. effort as effective in marketing our war aims and ideals to America and the world on a democratic basis of suggestion and persuasion, in perspective I see it as a pioneer effort with trial and error, with much fumbling, and not as a well planned activity. Candidates for jobs were chosen on the basis of their enthusiasm for the cause, not their training and experience. There never was a chart drawn in advance for the Committee on Public Information that I know of.

#### CHANGES SINCE 1917

How has the situation changed since 1917? Technical means for spreading ideas have been improved, the number of channels for their distribution increased, speed of transmission tremendously accelerated, the costs of disseminating greatly lessened. In 1917, the talking movie, the radio, and the airplane, as we know them today, did not exist.

As a result of these things, leaders recognized the greater potency of the common man in the shaping of political destinies. From the French Revolution in the late 18th century through the 19th century, the power of the common man was growing. At the beginning of the 20th century, belief in his strength grew. After the Great War, self-seeking men capitalized on the fact that the common man had been swayed in the war by propaganda. This powerful common man could be influenced by symbols, by words, pictures and actions. Appeals could be made to his prejudices, his loves and his hates, to his unfulfilled desires. Manipulation of symbols by unscrupulous leaders against a background of post-war psychological and economic uncertainty, led millions to follow new

leaders and ideologies in the 'twenties and 'thirties. The historical truth of the development of the power of the common man, coincidental with the development of the technological methods of spreading ideas, must not be lost sight of in the treatment of these marketing problems.

The rise of Communists, Nazis, and Fascists obviously was accelerated by this manipulation of symbols through the speeded-up technical methods of spreading ideas. A symbol is a short cut to our understanding of goals. Hitler used symbolism. The Hitler salute is political symbolism. Civil servants, national, state, and local, were ordered to raise their arm in the Heil salute, immediately after Hitler gained power; then Dr. Frick, Minister of the Interior, got trade and industry to follow suit. In 1934 an official communique closed with the following sentences: "The spirit of true national community in the national socialist state and the willing identification with it implies that the whole population complies with this regulation."

The symbol of the new Germany, the swastika flag, was stressed. "There must be no house which does not display the sign of Nationalist Socialist Germany," was printed on a handbill signed by the local group of the national socialist party and placed in every mailbox the day of the plebescite on Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. The Fuehrer himself is the most powerful symbol. A book published in 1933 in Germany on *Propaganda and National Might* says: "No passion, no idea can find its final and strongest expression without this great symbol." The National Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda with Dr. Goebbels as its director and with 31 regional agencies made full use of these symbols, and ground them continually into the consciousness of the common man to lure



him closer to Naziism. Russia and Italy used somewhat similar approaches.

Knowledge of the human mind, and of human relations has greatly increased since 1917. Sociologists, psychologists, social psychologists, theoretical and practical experts in public opinion have studied principles and techniques since the War. Public Relations has emerged as a new field. In 1922 there was no course in public relations that I know of in any American university. I gave the first one in 1923 at New York University. A recent study we made shows that 31 universities were offering 68 courses in Public Relations, Public Opinion, and related subjects, and these figures have probably increased since our survey. In fact, Doris E. Fleischman and I coined the expression "counsel on public relations" to define this new field of activity.

Since 1917, we know much more about the working of the human mind. We know that acceptance of ideas comes through feeling, reason, custom, authority, persuasion and factual evidence. Industries and governments call upon advisers on public opinion. We use measurement techniques to determine how far private interest conforms to public desires. A baker now only bakes the bread he knows his public will buy. On the other hand, organized persuasion often changes attitudes of the public and leads it to new actions.

#### THE ENGINEERING APPROACH

All these factors—and the experience of the Great War—led to the engineering approach to the problem—the engineering of consent in a democracy. What do I mean by this? I mean that problems of public relations are handled as an engineer plans the building of a bridge, or as a tactician works out a military campaign. What are our goals? What are we selling? What are our aims? What is the

time factor? Have we the men and materials we need?

When we know what our goal is, we make a study of public opinion to appraise our problem. What are the limits of tolerance of the public? What symbols—words, pictures and actions—are effective in changing public attitudes and actions. What are the channels of communication through which to reach the public with these symbols. What is the group formation of the public we are reaching. How much in men, money and materials is required?

After we have learned all these things, we can work out strategy, planning, and timing, in an engineering approach to our objectives. Segmented attack may be of some little value, but integration and unified attack are fundamental.

Every approach must be used to affect every kind of attitude as part of a broad integrated program, giving the proper relationship to each element, just as in military affairs the able army is the one that balances its weapons effectively to meet its goals.

This approach to public relations can be used for social ends, or can be abused for unsocial ones. It can be carried out on a democratic basis of suggestion and persuasion or on an undemocratic basis of suppression, threat, intimidation, and brutality. This *engineering approach* to public opinion should be applied in a *democratic way* to U. S. wartime pursuits as it is to peacetime pursuits.

As early as 1927, after he had made his authoritative study, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, Lasswell wrote that propaganda had become a profession. "The modern world," he wrote, "is busy developing a corps of men who do nothing but study the ways and means of changing minds or binding minds to their convictions. Propaganda is developing its practitioners, its professors,

its teachers and its theories. It is to be expected that governments will rely increasingly upon the professional propagandists for advice and aid."

How are England, Germany, and our own country using the instruments and knowledge available for total psychological warfare?

England certainly has not learned much from the experience of the last war or taken account of the changes and developments of the intervening years. The handling of public relations in England during the first part of the war was astonishingly inept. Criticism of censorship and other activities brought about changes in management. Even today there is much left undone both in domestic and foreign activity.

Britain's morale is maintained despite her public relations techniques. As an example, here is a recent United Press report: "The Daily Mirror today attacked Colonel Walter Elliott, Director of Public Relations at the War Office, as a 'fool who should keep his folly to himself. Speaking at Manchester yesterday he had the impertinence to accuse the British people of lacking guts,' the Mirror said. 'Elliott obviously knows nothing about the average man or woman. He should go around to some of the blitzed towns immediately after a raid. He must not go about the country insulting them and he should not be allowed to direct anything, least of all public relations.'" Bad British public relations have adversely affected the domestic and foreign situation despite Churchill's and Bevin's changes for the better.

While Britain has not profited from her experiences in the last war, Germany has. Since then, Germany has been working on psychological rearmament—adding Nazi *schrecklichkeit*, of course. Her scientists have studied and written about national psychology, psychological

warfare, psychological espionage, the psychology of military life.

Ewald Banse's recommendations made in 1933, were translated into action by the Nazis. They even went further, not only rectifying their mistakes, but building up a monster system of forcing morale by dictatorship.

The Nazis with totalitarian brutality centralized all the machinery of idea formation into a Ministry for National Enlightenment and Propaganda. To persuasion and suggestion they added brutality, threat, intimidation and censorship. All negative viewpoints were eliminated by one or more devices to bring about an enforced "national unity."

"Besides supervision of the press, broadcasting, films, music, art and the theatre, the Ministry includes general information on home policy; the organization of national holidays and festivals; tourist and economic propaganda; the organization of art exhibitions, films and sports in foreign countries. All State and Party meetings, conferences and receptions also come within its sphere. The Ministry is both the stage manager and the loud speaker of the Nazi regime. Under it the press is subject to the most stringent regulations and close organization ever achieved in any country. Journalists must be registered, and the Press Association is a statutory body under the Minister of Propaganda. Newspaper proprietorship and shareholdings are rigorously controlled, and no joint stock company, cooperative society of public or learned body of any kind may publish a newspaper."

Here we have the totalitarian apotheosis of morale building carried on in total psychological warfare—offensive and defensive. Only the Nazis practiced this advance building of morale at home—false and demagogic though it was. And abroad they carried on similarly, apply-

ing the knowledge they had acquired in what we call the strategy of terror.

#### WHERE WE STAND TODAY

Where do we stand in relation to our own morale—what lessons can we learn? Certainly we must recognize the potency of ideas, ably handled, as weapons of offense and defense. We have been geared for peacetime activities; we function by adjustment arrived at through democratic processes. We accommodate conflicting viewpoints in evolutionary progress. We want no dictatorial authority to abuse power and the people. We must recognize in dealing with our own morale, that we have recently passed through years of depression. This has left its mark on millions suffering from economic and psychological insecurity. We all have a great yearning for security and for realization of the ideals of democracy. Equality, freedom, orderly justice, opportunity, and security have not been completely achieved. We have also been exposed to divisive propaganda from within and without. We have the best way of life and government yet devised. Our democracy has ideals of freedom, equality, opportunity. But they have not been effectively presented in symbols to all the people.

Our people have already provided billions of dollars for physical armies and armaments. Through their elected representatives they have voted for the first peacetime selective service army in the life of the nation. If we are to be fully prepared for whatever may come, we shall have to convince the people that psychological ramparts in this country must be as strong as our physical ramparts. Such belief must be founded on greater economic and psychological security for the individual, on a strengthening of democracy and the democratic faith. Such belief, based on an under-

standing of our aims, will express itself in a will to victory and to sacrifice.

To achieve it effectively is our goal. There is urgency and need—and we have the country with us. Now we can plan. All of us can help build this morale through effective marketing policies. Here are concurrent programs of action with the objective of building morale through a balanced public relations effort.

#### ELEMENTS OF A UNIFIED ATTACK

All of us can play a part in this program; but leadership by our government is essential for the effective carrying out of the program. Only a unified attack on the whole problem can lead to the best result. First, harness the soundest intellectual resources of the country for a psychological general staff to be called upon for advice by government; second, construct a program to strengthen faith in democracy; and third, build a program to strengthen democracy itself.

Every government and private organization, carrying on any activity that impinges on morale, can fit into such a broad program.

First, the Government needs a psychological general staff to advise on all major questions of morale—in industry, civilian life, army and navy. This staff would provide the soundest available knowledge for building morale and for psychological warfare—and by having on tap the ablest technicians, would speed up the entire morale building processes. Such a moral commission in its field of psychological defenses would take its place on a parity with the general staff in physical defenses.

Much good work is now being done in this field by public relations divisions of many government departments—Army, Navy, and the others—but as far as I have been able to find out, *there is no*



*master plan* worked out by technicians drawn from the fields of the social sciences, sociology, psychology, ethnology, adult education, economics, the Army, Navy, public opinion, communications, public relations and market research. There are available in this country today many individuals in these fields whose experience, aptitudes and skills fit them admirably for such advisory activity.

Technicians already advise government on many subjects. There should be a master plan of psychological approaches, just as there is a master plan for physical defense. A psychological general staff should advise on methods and procedures to meet the national goals that have been set up by government. It should not make policy but it should advise on how to put policy into practice efficiently and democratically. Many governmental and private bureaus are carrying on activities to build morale. But is it not obvious that all these morale activities might better receive a broad orientation from a group of experts working closely with those who carry out national policy? This will give the broad, important, over-all psychological situation the same kind of attention the general staff gives to planning to achieve military objectives. It is important that this organization should not be a propaganda bureau, not a publicity bureau. It is to be a planning, strategy and advisory body. It should have no authority except the authority that is inherent in good advice.

Second, a program to strengthen faith in democracy. We can get people to understand democracy better by getting

them to see the true alternatives between it and Naziism and Fascism. Everyone can speak up for democracy, can tell those he comes in contact with by word of mouth and in other ways what its goals and realities are. Such activity, undertaken in a broad way as a national program of public education, under the leadership of government or private individuals, must be one step in creating a dynamic will for democracy instead of a passive acceptance of it. Millions of Americans are willing to be eager proponents for democracy.

Third, a program to strengthen democracy. By strengthening democracy I mean making democracy work better, making its ideals come true—working individually or as groups to help bring about the ideals of liberty, equality and orderly justice, which (we might as well face it) do not exist for all at present. That means using our influence to increase security, opportunities, education. Our aims and ideals must be set. A happy healthy person has a strong morale. We can help to make Americans happy by strengthening democracy. Government is doing this already, but government in a democracy depends on the people. The people—and the leaders of the people—must work to strengthen democracy.

Experts, including marketing men, have laid a sound basis for a scientific approach to the problem of psychological warfare in the crisis we face today. The Nazis have translated this knowledge into action for their own evil ends. America should not, cannot wait. She must apply today what she already knows towards meeting the problems she faces.