Propaganda and the News

or

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SO?

Chapter I

PROPAGANDA

ENGLISH words acquire auras—overlays of emotional meaning. Usually the change comes through generations and centuries. We cannot lay a finger upon the moment or even the century when "villain" ceased to mean just a low-born fellow and came to mean a deliberate rascal. But the word with which I have headed this chapter is probably the unique exception in the English language. The transformation was not an evolution but a mutation. Before 1914, "propaganda" belonged only to literate vocabularies and possessed a reputable, dignified meaning. Over the door of an ancient structure in Rome there stood—and still stands—a legend, "College of the Propaganda." For propaganda, before the World War, meant simply the means which the adherent of a political or religious faith employed to convince the unconverted. Two years later the word had come into the vocabulary of peasants and ditchdiggers and had begun to acquire its miasmic aura. In loose, popular usage it meant the next thing to a damned lie. "It's just propaganda"—paste that label on to any fact or set of facts which your opponent advanced in argument, and you condemned it on the spot. Some of those great government press bureaus so busily engaged in persuading neutrals or keeping their own people friendly to "national aims" had at first called themselves "departments of propaganda." By 1918 they had begun changing the title to "Department of Counter-Propaganda"—a hint that what the other side put forth was

tainted or false and that their own output was the sanitary and corrective truth. When we entered the war, we introduced a variant by calling our bureau of propaganda the Committee on Public Information. Anything to avoid the sinister word!

This odd change in the emotional significance of four simple syllables meant more than a mere curiosity of philology. It was the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual change. As the word had undergone a mutation, so had the thing it represented. War is licensed immorality. The world struggle of 1914–18, which saw an unprecedented advance in the art of large-scale killing, saw an equally rapid advance in that of large-scale lying. Specifically, the old methods of the dishonest partisan gave way to a more effective modern method. Hitherto the special pleader in politics had employed specious arguments or plain canards. The new propagandists, developed in the war, learned how to go back to the very source of public opinion and slant or taint the news. This process was not an invention of the war. Like most modern advances in journalistic technique, it had its source in the United States; and the Foreign Offices of the various European powers were employing it in rudimentary form long before 1914. But the war brought it into general and world-wide use.

The official bureaus of propaganda, hastily scrambled together in 1914, faced unprecedented conditions which gave them opportunity for unprecedented methods. Strict censorships shut out news or argument from enemy sources and prevented any opposition whatever in the domestic press. Beyond that slow sixth sense for truth which characterizes the human animal, there was no correction for lies or half-lies.

The propagandists stood, therefore, in a position to find what methods would best serve to lash their own people into

a fury of "righteous wrath," and to persuade the hesitant neutral peoples. Killing in the common cause becomes morality in time of war; by the same token so does lying, even when it is necessary to lie to one's own people. They tried everything—artistic creation, plain canards, heavy argument, and finally tinkering with the news. This last method proved by far the most effective. When the war passed, this form of propaganda had read itself into the customs of the European peoples—and with bewildering results. Also, it had come back, a full growth, to the country where the seed had germinated.

The inner workings of journalism, and especially of larger journalism, remain something of a mystery to the layman. The newspaper press is objective. Articulate and even clamorous about almost everything else, it has remained inarticulate about itself. Twenty years ago, when our journalism still lingered in an earlier phase, the writer called attention to the fact that in spite of its importance in every modern state, we had few histories of journalism—they partial or superficial—and not a single thorough or scholarly inquiry into its relations to our civilization. That last want is not yet fully satisfied. So before we proceed to the story of wartime propaganda and its successor, postwar propaganda, we must go back, run a long course through the history of journalism, and absorb a few of its principles.

Chapter II

THE DIM BEGINNINGS

MODERN journalism had a dual origin and performs a dual function in society. On the news pages it records the events of the day or gossip about them. In other columns, and especially on those of the editorial page, it comments on the news and attempts openly to influence public opinion. When in the seventeenth century the first permanent and periodical newspapers made their appearance, they welded these two functions. Even in that day, however, systematic collection of news was no novelty; the real novelty consisted in sharing it with the people.

About a century ago we gave the name "reporters" to a newly risen class of young men who, to the horror of the conservative, ranged our cities prying into public transactions and private lives. The name alone was new; the reporter is almost as old as organized society. However, in remote ages he served not the public but one special master, like a monarch. The ruins of Assyria and Babylon have yielded the clay tablets on which satraps kept their kings informed concerning notable military, political or commercial events in distant provinces. Doubtless these officials did not do their own investigating, but relied upon subordinates with a news-sense. Letters from the governors of Egypt or Gaul or Spain figured constantly as source material for the Roman historians. In fact, Roman rule seems to have rested on a basis of sound and rapidly transmitted information. When he broke down the Republic, Julius Caesar, who had among his

lavish gifts a flair for journalism, dimly fore-shadowed the modern newspaper by putting forth the *Acta Diurna*. This seems to have been a condensed bulletin of the day's events, especially the decisions of the Senate. The tribunes or the aediles posted it in the Forum. Another version, expanded and reproduced in script by literate slaves, had a necessarily limited circulation among members of the governing class.

This, however, was the exception which proves the rule—the last newspaper to which the public in general had access for at least fifteen hundred years. In the medieval and early modern period, the governing class, and they alone, maintained the habit of collecting and disseminating news. Religious establishments of the Middle Ages served as news centers for the church and, to a lesser degree, for secular rulers. The original sources of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle were probably gossipy letters exchanged between abbots, priors and bishops. He who writes any history of this era must consult the clerical archives of the Vatican. Except in times of crisis, the main use of diplomats consisted in gathering and transmitting to monarchs accurate "inside" news. The existing letters of the French, Spanish and Venetian ambassadors accredited to the court of England remain invaluable sources of information concerning the reigns of Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth and James I.

The bankers—internationalists almost from the first—made news-letters a main pillar of their business. These dealt not only with finance and current prices of commodities, but with politics and general affairs. Some of the greater houses, like the Medici and the Fuggers, stretched a web of correspondents over all Europe and even into the Near East. The surviving Fugger letters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries show how systemically these banker-reporters gleaned the bits of information serviceable to a man of

finance. Since the bankers were using this news to anticipate competitors, they kept it a profound trade secret. There is evidence that some of them knew, long before 1492, of an island lying beyond the Western Ocean. Such information might have come to them quite naturally; and as naturally failed to reach the generality of Europeans. Imagining a possibility: a sea captain, sailing from some remote port on the Spanish or Irish coast, met a succession of contrary winds and was blown for weeks out of his course. He sighted land at a longitude which showed that he was two thousand miles or so west of the last European outpost. He went ashore, took on food and water; and the winds having shifted, sailed miserably home. In those incurious days, no one outside of his own obscure port paid much attention to his adventure. But a banker's reporter heard some rumors of it, traveled like a modern special correspondent to the source of news, and wrote his story for the information of his employers. When through his obscure years Columbus so stubbornly maintained that lands lay across the Atlantic, he may have based his belief on a leak in bankers' information.

Finally: as soon as parliaments began to function, country gentlemen with seats in the House of Commons or the States-General found it useful, during the recess between sessions, to keep themselves informed on the political, social and general happenings at the capital and the court. So arose a special trade—"news writing." The scriveners who plied it were the forerunners of the modern reporter. Their communications being virtually secret, they worked unhampered by any law of libel. They recorded not only important events, like military movements and intentions or decisions of the crown, but that gossip about the royal family and the great nobles which, passed on by word of mouth, would entertain the employer and his circle. Some

worked for five or six clients; some served as exclusive retainers to one great nobleman. In France and England at least, this custom long survived the competition of the early, rudimentary newspapers. Gentlemen of fashion with proper appreciation of their station in life scorned the ordinary news distributed to the vulgar; just as gentlemen of equivalent station and sentiments bought only manuscript books for a generation after the invention of printing. The masses satisfied their hunger for news with rumors or with an occasional royal proclamation read by a town crier at the crossroads.

This exclusive news, the property of a limited governing class, meant power and wealth—to understand how much power and wealth, one has only to translate the situation into modern terms. If the international banking house of Morgan alone knew that a revolution had broken out in Brazil, that Adolf Hitler had "purged" the Nazi party, that Mussolini was concentrating an army in Eritrea or that President Roosevelt was planning to depreciate the dollar, it would enjoy an immense advantage over the general public. A group of senators in Congress or of lords in Parliament, holding similar exclusive information, would have a powerful weapon for use in practical politics.

Consciously or subconsciously, those reactionaries who were to fight against the popular press during the first two centuries of its development, rested their case on sound principles. One cannot conduct a government or even a large business without constant and reliable information. Restricting such information to a small governing class was one of the most certain methods for strangling that impulse toward democracy which the British aristocracy had hated and dimly feared ever since Wat Tyler's rebellion, the French ever since the Jacquerie. Most of us assume

that the "freedom of the press," for which so many men went to prison, lost their ears or stood in the stocks, involved only the right to express opinion—unaware that the struggle for the right to publish the news was just as bitter and even more hardly won. And events have justified the apprehension of these old conservatives. Freedom of the news and popular government have gone forward hand in hand. Whenever one movement halted or retreated, so did the other. The people cannot govern unless the people know.

That principle is so obvious nowadays that one lays it down almost shamefacedly, feeling that he is uttering platitudes. It was not obvious in those days when the right to inform the populace struggled blindly for a footing. Even now it is not obvious to the backward nations. A few years ago I visited South America with an official expedition. One member of the party talked confidentially with Isidro Ayora, president and dictator of Ecuador. He was a strange and admirable figure, this Ayora. By blood an Inca and by profession a surgeon—the best in his quarter of the continent—he had not sought his political honors. An odd combination of circumstances both tragic and comic had thrust them upon him. When he found himself a dictator, he set himself scientifically to find out what was the matter with his country and to repair the defects. Every sucre of national revenue that could be spared from immediate needs, Ayora was spending on education. He was not putting the money into fine schoolhouses, as a more egotistical ruler would have done. Anything would serve for that purpose—a vacant shop, a thatched hut, a spare outbuilding on a ranch. Similarly, rough plank benches would do for seats. The important thing was to get the children and the adults to sit down under a teacher and learn. When the American touched on this mania of his, Ayora said:

"I am a dictator who does not believe in dictators. My own ideal of government is a representative democracy—like France which I know, or the United States which I have always admired. But how can a democracy function in a country where less than ten per cent of the adults can read a newspaper? How can the people rule a republic unless they know what's happening? Those liberals who have been trying to install popular government in Ecuador have missed that point. If I last"—one regrets to record that he did not last—"in fifteen years I hope to have the majority of this people literate. Then I will say to them, 'My friends, you are now ready for your democracy. Take it!'"

Let us go back five hundred years before Ayora and pick up the thread again. Just in the flowering of the Renaissance, Gutenberg—or Faust—invented printing by movable type. And during the next century, printers in the European countries attempted with varying luck to capitalize a growing hunger for news. The early "newes books," as the English came to call them, were usually single sheets and appeared irregularly as important events arose and as liberal rulers permitted. One, the *Gazzetta* of Venice, was issued periodically for some time, and gave its name to a form of journalism. Another, emanating from Cologne, appeared every six months with a running summary of political events since its last publication. This, titled the *Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus*, was written in that universal language of the educated class, Latin, and had a wide circulation both in England and on the Continent. But one of the oldest known newssheets is perhaps more representative of the type. Printed probably at Nuremberg, and dated 1534, it reports simply and solely the discovery and conquest of Peru—a most important piece of news,

since the major practical problem of Europe was a shortage in gold which Pizarro's adventure helped mightily to correct.

England, whose homeland and colonies were to generate the greater currents of journalism, at first lagged behind the Continent. In 1542 the forces of Henry VIII annihilated a Scottish army at Solway Moss and proceeded to devastate the border country. A London printer, following perhaps the Continental precedent, put forth in 1545 a "newsbook" announcing the success of this campaign and giving some details. He met the fate common to daring pioneers. The crown suppressed his little sheet; the common hangman burned all the copies in stock. History does not record what became of the unhappy printer; but he was lucky if he escaped with his ears. One suspects that the news writers, seeing their secret and immune trade in danger, were the informants who brought the offense to notice of the crown. This trifling police case had the effect of crystallizing a principle inherent in the British law of the period—the exclusive right of the crown to publish news. Violation of this ordinance constituted interference in affairs of state, which was a criminal offense. During the rest of Henry's life and during the stormy reigns of Edward VI and Mary, the printers behaved themselves. Then in 1586, when Elizabeth reigned and events were rising toward the climax of the Spanish Armada, the news peril seems again to have alarmed royalty. Whereupon the powerful, arbitrary Court of Star Chamber, codifying all previous laws, customs and ordinances, restricted printing to London and the two universities, limited the number of printers and put all publishing under a strict censorship. At first the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, or their deputies, served as watchdogs of the public mind. Later the crown

created a Stationers' Register. The official at the head of this bureau read the manuscript or proof of every prospective book, pamphlet and circular and gave it "license to print," edited it or suppressed it. Elizabethan literature proves that he was a trifle careless about obscenity. But he was a hawk for blasphemy, sedition and libel. In 1597 or thereabouts, a rising young actor-playwright named William Shakespeare submitted to him the manuscript of a play entitled *Richard II*, asking for license to print. This included the moving scene of the deposition, which shows the Lords in the act of stripping from Richard his crown and robes. At the moment, Queen Elizabeth had grown unpopular; England was making toward the Essex Rebellion. The censor, it would seem, considered this passage a dangerous hint. He deleted it; and it never appeared in print until Elizabeth had been dead for five years.

As for any publication conveying news, this censor, and others who held power over books under the complicated English system, had only one policy—complete suppression. With an interesting exception. In those days as today, the populace thrilled with not unpleasant horror to crimes and executions. Whenever an especially prominent highwayman or murderer met his end at Tyburn, some London printer or other would issue a "chapbook" telling of the crime and describing the behavior of the felon at the gibbet. The author usually wrote his story as a ballad, in crude verse. This gave both him and the censor a defense. He had based a piece of literature upon a recent real event, just as Shakespeare based *King John* upon remote real events. And since the chapbooks made not the slightest mention of politics, the censor evidently felt that he was within the spirit of his instructions when he winked at them. These ancestors of the modern tabloid sold briskly

for a penny—mostly among that turbulent class, the apprentices of Cheapside.

As said before, the printers of the Continent enjoyed during this period rather more liberty; and in 1615, a daily newspaper established itself at Frankfort. Then in 1631, the period when the weak Louis XIII reigned over France and the strong Cardinal Richelieu ruled it, there appeared another form of journalism—the government organ. Théophraste Renaudot was permitted—indeed, encouraged—to found his Paris *Gazette*. It would seem that the government, perceiving the popular thirst for news, determined to slake it with its own liquor. Between the lines of the admirable prospectus and statement of principles which Renaudot issued to lure subscribers, one reads another motive. Quite evidently rumor had been working invidious effects among the imaginative French, and the authorities proposed to supplant it with such facts as would advance the popularity of the crown. Starting so, with full official sanction, Renaudot created not only a newspaper but a rudimentary press bureau. He had on his staff fifty news writers in various European cities who as a "side line" to their regular occupation, sent him information on events of general interest.

The Paris *Gazette* established a tradition of French journalism: the complete or partial control of news by the party in power. Richelieu, a conservative, must have approved this idea of controlled newspaper, else it would have died at birth. He doubtless failed to see that in giving news of any kind to the populace he was helping the long cause of democracy.

Meantime the news embargo in England had in one respect broken down. During the early reign of James I the Continental newsbooks grew more and more popular across the channel. Also, small sheets called "corantos,"

or "relations," dealing entirely with foreign matters, had intermittently passed scrutiny of the authorities. The printers of London probably represented to the authorities that the money spent on foreign newsbooks should be kept at home. Foreign news, after all, did not come under fair jurisdiction of the King. The authorities seem to have listened to this reasoning; and in 1622 they permitted, though they did not license, a weekly journal published by Thomas Archer and Nicholas Bourne and called *A Current of General Newes or Weekly Newes*. (The custom of a tag-line or trade name for a newspaper was not yet firmly established.) This, and other newssheets which followed it, dealt solely with foreign affairs; England, so far as they were concerned, represented a blank spot on the map of the world. There were a few trifling exceptions. Thomas Archer, being then publisher of an intermittent newsbook dealing with foreign affairs and called *Mercurius Britannicus*, in 1626 dared print a mention of the impending marriage between the Prince of Wales and the Princess Henrietta Maria of France—on the excuse that this wedding, since it would occur in France, was essentially a foreign event. One William Phillips died in prison while awaiting trial for translating a French pamphlet which, presumably, included some reference to English affairs. For a similar offense, the police broke up William Stansby's press and closed his business.

Meantime, Charles I had come to the throne and embarked on that course of provocative reaction which brought on the Puritan Revolution. The Court of Star Chamber suddenly revoked all permissions to print news, whether foreign or domestic. Four years of silence; then in 1638 Butter and Bourne were licensed to publish a newspaper strictly limited to "foreign tidings"—they and they alone. This was a last-

ditch measure; the enemy was already streaming over the top, aiming newssheets, pamphlets and broadsides. The Puritans, soon to become the rebels, were gathering force and courage. Self-expression became with them a mania. Law or no law, amateur Puritan journalists committed their thoughts to paper and experienced Puritan printers published them. Some of this gentry went to prison or the stocks; others managed to defy a government which was fast losing its grip. In 1640 the Long Parliament, with the reform party in the majority, began its fateful session. It abolished the Court of Star Chamber and incidentally the regulations of that court for government of literature and journalism. The dikes had burst; the printing presses rolled forth thousands of pamphlets and broadsides, varying in merit from John Milton's noble prose to those ravings of religious lunatics which are among the major curiosities of English literature.

Two parties could play at that game. The Royalist faction fired its own volley of print paper. The Puritans took over the government, and the shoe went on to the other foot. In 1643 the Long Parliament passed a bill providing that all printing must be censored and licensed; whereupon Milton wrote his "Areopagitica," the classical plea for liberty of expression. Defiantly, he published this without license. The pamphlet made such a furious hit that the Parliamentary faction, while it would not stultify itself by revoking the new law, dared not rigidly enforce it; and the pamphleteers went on with their gang fight. They were a mixed lot—idealists of genius, commercial printers who saw a new field of profit and worked it for all it would yield while the boom lasted, solemn fanatics, rogues, fakers, cranks, unconscious humorists, and dishonest soldiers of

fortune such as the clever, slimy Marchamont Nedham, who sold his pen alternately to King and to Parliament.

Historians of this episode have laid their stress on the pamphlets of opinion and tended to slight the long influence of the newsbooks. The great surge of pamphlets began, indeed, when various press hounds in the Long Parliament had their own speeches published and sold at a penny a copy. Then John Thomas put forth a pamphlet with the descriptive title:

The Heads of Severall Proceedings in the Present Parliament.

Wherein is contained the substance of severall letters sent from Ireland shewing what distress and misery they are in. With divers other passages of moment touching the affaires of these Kingdomes. Mondays. London.

This was a weekly, as the last line in the title shows, and at its third issue Nathaniel Butter, member of a famous printing family, joined the enterprise. Its title settled down to *Diurnal Occurrences*. Samuel Peake, probably the pioneer of all capitol correspondents, furnished most of the copy. Promptly one William Cooke plagiarized this tag-line in his weekly *The Perfect Diurnal*, which kept going for seven years. There were other imitators; at one time during this turbulent period London had fifteen weekly newspapers, whose staple was the debates of Parliament.

We moderns, surfeited with print, find it hard to imagine getting a thrill out of those franked speeches which clutter our mail and wastebaskets, or waiting breathless for the *Congressional Record*. But the literate class among the British was reveling in a new freedom. Hitherto, only the exalted employers of private scriveners and news writers knew how the kingdom was governed. The King's crier

had proclaimed at the market cross any really important law or military victory. Otherwise, silence and mystery. Now the veil was lifted. As the Puritan Revolution swept on to civil war and to the execution of Charles I, the news-hungry populace had many another satisfaction. Penny handbills told of the royal withdrawal from London, the victories at Marston Moor and Naseby, the affairs of Scotland, the King's captivity, trial and death. These early reporters were feeling their way; this art, like all others, had crude beginnings. They infused their news writing with their political point of view; they rambled and "editorialized"; by intent or through lack of training in perceiving truth, they lied outrageously.

When the King established himself at Oxford and fighting began, the conservatives of his retinue were forced into inconsistency. Believing that the populace had no right to know the details of government, they found it necessary, nevertheless, to controvert the flood of republican newsbooks and broadsides spouting from the presses of London. So they put forth the *Aulicus Britannicus*, a weekly of most intemperate tone. This was a war measure, the exact reverse of that modern policy by which, in an age of a comparatively free press, governments suppress news and smother opinion during a national crisis. The *Aulicus* collapsed along with the royal armies; but all through the period of confusion which followed and through Cromwell's protectorate, surreptitious Royalist newsbooks, issued from concealed presses, were bootlegged in the back alleys of London at as much as a shilling a copy. Exactly so during the World War of 1914–1918 the surreptitious *Libre Belgique* plagued the Germans in Belgium.

In time, Parliament rallied from the rebuff of *Areopagitica* and established an official bureau of censorship which,

nominally at least, inspected every line of proof before it went to press. It suppressed various pamphlets of opinion, especially those which leaned toward Catholicism on one side or Anabaptism on the other; and it had certain printers who issued unlicensed tracts imprisoned or flogged. More pertinent to our subject, it kept close watch on the news. Two or three London printers persisted in issuing newsbooks concerning the conduct of Cromwell's troops in Ireland—"atrocity stuff," and probably true in substance. These went to jail. Another, presumably for revenue only, printed and sold a sheet announcing falsely that the King had surrendered and the war was over. He served time in the stocks. Yet for all these arbitrary measures, the press of England, during the periods of the Long Parliament and the Rump Parliament, enjoyed an unprecedented liberty.

When Oliver Cromwell came into full power as Lord Protector, he took a backward step. Parliament ordered the censors to revoke all licenses for newspapers. This proving intolerable to a public with a new appetite, for the rest of his reign he licensed two or three official organs and suppressed the rest.

When the British restored the monarchy, Charles II and the faction about him took the conservative British attitude toward news. Its publication was the King's prerogative. But the English had become accustomed to newspapers; never again would they be contented with rare oral announcements of the town crier. So imitating Cromwell, who had already imitated Richelieu, Charles established a government organ—the *London Gazette*. This, a biweekly, gave a chaste relation of such public acts and events as the crown could afford to let the people know about. The news writers, serving eminent private clients, resumed their occupation. Even so, that element which was crystallizing

into the Tory faction looked back with longing to the good old days of Elizabeth and James, when gentlemen alone knew what was going on in the kingdom.

The experience of the first American newspaper illuminates this point. In 1690, the mother country had just deposed James II and the Massachusetts Bay Colony had risen against his tyrannical deputy Governor Andros, whom they were holding in jail. Benjamin Harris, a Boston printer, seems to have assumed that the new, liberal regime might be complaisant toward the public press. On his own initiative, apparently, he issued *Publick Occurrences*, designed as a monthly newssheet. At the moment the colonists were fighting the French and the Indians; more than two thousand men had just marched from Plymouth and disappeared into the northern wilderness. Boston itself stood in danger of savage invasion. The public was clamorous for news. Harris gave it to them in surprising measure, considering that he had less than three thousand words of space. *Publick Occurrences* is a model of accurate, condensed reporting. Its account of military movements squares roughly with the final, sober judgment of history. It even included police items; although in his single suicide story Harris suppressed the name and address of the leading character. Perhaps it described military movements a trifle too minutely; otherwise no single item, judging by modern standards, should have offended the most captious official. And he printed no editorial column—just news. Nevertheless, the acting governor suppressed *Publick Occurrences*, confiscated and destroyed all numbers remaining in stock and put Harris in jail. The next year, Sir William Phipps, King William's governor, took over with a liberal program for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He reversed most decisions of the Andros regime; but not this one. Phipps, apparently, held

the same attitude toward publishing news as did the rest of the governing class.

Boston had to wait fourteen years more for its first regular newspaper. When the *News Letter* appeared, it was published under government license and strict censorship; and the cautious brevity of its items shows how much the officials hampered the editor. Thirty years later, a governor of Virginia, cataloguing the blessings and advantages of his colony, mentioned that it had no public education and no newssheets—"Thank God."

Yet as though by pressure of public curiosity, the British press, both domestic and colonial, began gradually to work its way out of fetters. In 1693, King William's government abolished the censorship and the law requiring license to print. Within a decade appeared the first British daily newspaper. The British, who always tack toward any objective, made one odd exception to this new liberty. Parliament insisted on keeping its debates a profound secret. Whereupon agents for certain periodicals, notably the *Gentleman's Magazine*, began to pick up fragments of the speeches from the floor and reconstruct them for the press. When the powers suppressed this process by fine and imprisonment, the periodicals published the debates under a thin device of fiction. For a time, the young Samuel Johnson lived by writing "Reports of the Debates in the Senate of Lilliput." . . . When asked if he made his copy impartial, he replied that he did, but "saw that the Whig dogs got none the better of it." . . . By 1772, printers had begun openly to defy the law in this regard. Our old adversary George III ordered these malefactors arrested. The authorities of the City of London refused to execute the order, whereupon the Lord Mayor and one of his aldermen were sent to the Tower as political prisoners. At that time John Wilkes was leading his

agitation for popular rights. The citizens of London passed into a mood verging on rebellion. The King felt it prudent to release the prisoners; and although Parliament did not revise its ruling against public report of its doings, thereafter it gave tacit permission.

Yet as censorships, licensing and general prohibition of news fell into abeyance, the government in power developed other means for killing criticism and suppressing unpalatable facts. Mostly, it used the law of libel; and especially a trimming called "seditious libel." As I shall presently show, the fundamental English law holds that any damaging statement, true or untrue, is libelous; starting from which principle, slowly and painfully the British have laid down exceptions. In the seventeenth century when the newspaper press was born and in the eighteenth when it was learning to walk, the law of seditious libel could be stretched to cover almost any statement of opinion or relation of news unsuited to the tastes and intentions of the exalted minority. Generally speaking, this was a corrupt period politically; and judges expressed the unfair and arbitrary spirit of parties. The long line of pioneer English journalists worked always in fear of prosecution. Daniel Defoe was twice convicted. Once he went to prison, and once to the stocks. Even in the last decade of the eighteenth century, John Walter, founder of the London *Times*, served a term in Newgate prison.

The first considerable break in this system for strangling the British press through arbitrary libel proceedings came from the Colony of New York—a forecast of American influence on world journalism. In 1733, the future metropolis had two weekly newspapers: William Bradford's *Gazette*, a government organ, and John Peter Zenger's *Journal*, which somehow managed to exist as an independent. William Cosby, a retired army officer, served as governor of the

colony. He had been a martinet as a soldier and proved both a tyrant and a fuddy-duddy as a civil administrator. Zenger, expressing the general feeling, ventured to criticize his acts. Cosby had him arrested; and servile judges, by setting ridiculously high bail, kept the unhappy editor in jail for two years. When the Zenger case finally came up on the calendar, the government by various devices made it impossible for any lawyer of the colony to defend him. Thereupon the dissenting faction sent for Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia. His summing up in this case is a legal classic. The judge refused to admit evidence as to the truth or untruth of Zenger's charges and ruled that he, not the jury, had the right to say whether they were libelous in nature. Here he was following English precedent; in proceedings against the press, the jury was usually a mere ornament of the courtroom. Then, again as expected, he declared the matter unquestionably libelous and virtually instructed a verdict of guilty. But this jury broke precedent. It had the courage to weigh the truth, to set its own interpretation on the law and to find Zenger not guilty. The judge thundered, the governor raged until he stood on the verge of apoplexy; but they had to release Zenger. This verdict, reviewed after two centuries, seems as arbitrary as the proceedings of the judge which it defied. Zenger's writings, if untrue, were undoubtedly libelous. And the jury had not heard a word of evidence as to their truth or falsity; it was acting on common knowledge, obtained outside the courtroom. These sturdy Englishmen and hardheaded Dutchmen probably felt justified in fighting fire with fire.

This case served as the precedent to relax somewhat the practices as regarded seditious libel in the mother country. It had even greater effect in the colonies. Upon Zenger's release, the populace welcomed him with processions,

addresses, bonfires and illuminations. Royal governors hesitated thereafter to arrest an opposition editor, no matter how offensive he was making himself. It opened the way for those American journalists, such as Franklin, Freneau and Otis, who did so much in the next generation to work up sentiment for independence.

This brief excursion into the history of journalism, and especially English-language journalism, is necessary in order to explain a tendency which prevailed for a century after news wed editorial and bred the newspaper. The hostility of a governing class toward public exposure of its own acts, together with its instincitive belief that only a gentleman had the right to know what was going on in the world, made news a hazardous form of merchandise and threw the newspaper press out of balance. At least, so we moderns think. Editors habitually laid the emphasis on opinion, expressed in editorial, squib or satire. Although, indeed, a quirk in human nature may have worked even more potently toward this end. All men like power and importance. The early journalist felt that he belonged to the glorious company, stretching from Cicero to Swift, who used literary talents to influence affairs. His importance as he conceived it lay in his power to "mold opinion"; to guide the trend of public affairs through his private wisdom. The news columns, like the advertising columns, were only a means to get the revenue which supported his real career. He took no pride in them; did little to improve them. The nineteenth century was well on its way before news began its expansion and specialization. On the day after couriers from the battlefield of Waterloo reached England, the London *Times* stated the fact of the victory in less than ten lines, added the names of a dozen "noble persons" killed in the action and filled

almost a page with a solemn leader on the importance and implications of the event. When, a few days later, survivors of that action began to arrive in London, it merely published Wellington's official report and a brief "letter from a gentleman" who had witnessed the event from a distance. On the day after the battle of Concord and Lexington, the single newspaper in Boston reported simply that there had been a battle and that the British troops had returned safe. Nothing more, though hundreds of men could have given him the details. Allen French, historian of that battle, remarks that the other colonial newspapers threw no light on the affair. And these instances are typical rather than extreme. The old-time editor seemed almost blind even to the possibility of using the news to gain revenue. No licensor or censor could logically have objected to market quotations on produce and stocks and it is obvious that these would have increased circulation; yet in America systematic market quotations are only a century old. Journalism of opinion developed during the eighteenth century to a high quality which it has never since surpassed. Swift, Defoe, Franklin, "Junius," wrote classics. News journalism fell off in quantity and deteriorated in quality. I have mentioned Harris' *Publick Occurrences*, published in 1690. Not until the 1830's—probably—did any other English-language newspaper ever print so much news, so well expressed, in a single issue.

Another influence restrained the American editor from entering that gate of opportunity which our legislators were to open for him. In the first decade of the nineteenth century there rose the party system. The hatreds, animosities and rivalries thereby engendered seem to have driven American editors a little insane. Never before was type offended with such vicious epithets as they applied to rival politicians or to each other. This state of mind threw the editorial still

further to the fore. The editor's own opinions, letters from Pro Bono Publico which amounted to the same thing, the speech of Daniel Webster or John C. Calhoun, the journal of Congress or the state legislature—these filled his scanty space. On the day after a transatlantic packet arrived, he might fill half to two-thirds of a column with foreign news clipped and condensed from the European newspapers. Now and then, by the agency of the same shears, he presented a half-column of "domestic intelligence." In the 1820's, Boston was our third city in size and already our most important intellectual center. In vain one searches the files of the *Mercury* and *Centinel*, leading newspapers, for any significant mention of their own town. Both give a brief list of arrivals and departures at the city docks. Otherwise almost never do they devote more than a quarter of a column to "local occurrences." And these are of a most unnewsy sort—like advance announcements of concerts. Some issues print not a single line of local news. Yet in that decade Boston grew from 42,000 to 63,000, with the rush and bubble of life which such growth implies.

Doubtless still another influence fettered the news sense. Our aristocracy of the early Republic long retained English manners and the upper-class English outlook on life. They satisfied the human thirst for gossip over the teacups or the social glass; but they considered public exposure of a gentleman's actions—and still more, a lady's—as a wrong not to be tolerated. In delightful, archaic Charleston, the esteemed *News and Courier* respected that attitude even to this generation.

But the newspapers did publish "public occurrences," meaning mostly the debates and decisions of Congress or the state legislatures; a long inheritance from the news outburst of the Puritan revolution a hundred and fifty years

before. And in this connection, one American editor deserves passing mention as a partial exception to the prevailing blindness. Hezekiah Niles of the Baltimore *Evening Post* watched his exchanges. From them he clipped and condensed the important doings of the national and state governments, presenting a fair and moderate synopsis of all political news, even rudimentary news of social movements, in a special weekly issue. He stood alone in that age of violent party journalism; but even he did not let his news sense carry him much beyond politics.

It seems necessary here to sketch the intellectual history of British journalism in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. That was an era of low public morals in the mother country; and the newspapers wallowed in the very depths of the murky puddle. Almost every sin ever charged against journalism manifested itself in the British press. Political factions frankly bought newspaper influence and opinions, either with cold cash or other valuable consideration; the "press manager," who was also a press briber, stood an indispensable cog in the party organization. In the scanty advertising of the period, theatrical notices stood most important. The theatrical manager expected, in return for this favor, the most flattering reviews. Let the dramatic critic cast so much as one aspersion on the performance of Mr. Kendal or Mrs. Siddons, and out went the advertisement. Further, then as in the days of Shakespeare—and even now—the players of London were the King's Men. The party in power had its hand upon them; and the "press manager" sometimes forced a stubborn newspaper into line by threatening to make the theaters withdraw their notices.

Most of the London newspapers practiced shameless and almost open blackmail. The strict British laws of libel were

not then so sharply defined in certain particulars as they are today. The law was more concerned with suppressing "seditious libel" and infringements on the prerogatives of the courts or crown than with light aspersions on personal morals or follies. Moreover, it would seem as though the Briton had not yet developed his hair-trigger tendency to sue for libel. So a newspaper needing the money would compose and put into type a skit or story hinting at scandal or satirizing some personal peculiarity, send the proof to the rich victim by a slimy if courageous emissary, and collect a "suppression fee." Similarly, an "insertion fee" would get almost anything, within legal bounds, into a London newspaper. The trade of journalism took on a miasmic aura which it did not live down for half a century after its reform.

The evangelist worthy of credit for effecting that reform was not, in the first impulse, a man but an institution. As England slid into the industrial era, commerce began to discover that advertising brought results and revenue. Steadily, the advertising matter in the British newspapers increased in volume and, by the law of supply and demand, in price per column-inch. Presently, it became possible to publish an honest British newspaper and make it pay.

By a benevolent coincidence, the first London newspaper to perceive and to meet the changed situation was also the leading British journal of that time—and of this. John Walter the First, who owned and conducted the *Times*, was essentially a printer, not a journalist. He had founded his newspaper for the purpose of exploiting a newly invented method for setting type. The invention proved impracticable; but the newspaper went on to become a moneymaker. The elder Walter was probably a trifle more virtuous than his contemporaries; but not much. He endured his term of imprison-

ment at Newgate for a paragraph, party-inspired, which described the chagrin of the royal dukes when George III recovered from one of his periodic insanities, so dashing their hopes of a regency. He certainly took political subsidies; almost certainly collected suppression fees. But, printer and not editor though he was, he had a few glimmering presentiments of the possibilities in journalism. He was, for example, the first British publisher to employ a regular foreign correspondent. His son, John Walter II, taking hold in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, in his persistent, tacking British way transformed the *Times* and with it all British journalism. He and his great editor, Thomas Barnes, wormed his newspaper out of party control and made it dependent for its revenue solely on sales and advertising. . . . Today, critics of journalism both American and British call "control by the advertiser" the main indictment against the press. But in those building years, the advertiser seemed the knight in shining armor who came to rescue the princess from the dragon of corruption. If our own journalism of the early nineteenth century never sank so low as that of Britain, probably the same influence stands responsible. Scattered as we were along a frontier with slow, imperfect communications, we discovered very early the uses of advertising.

John Walter II and Thomas Barnes did more than establish this tradition of journalistic independence. They rescued criticism from control by theatrical managers, founded that editorial-page policy which was to make a leader in the *Times* comparable with an address from the throne, drew such literary figures as Southey, Coleridge and Hazlitt into the scheme of "feature" journalism, and finally established the custom of a responsible editor. Barnes, who took that post in 1817, introduced another policy less noticed at the time but probably more powerful in its effect on the future of the

craft. In an important but limited way, he turned the *Times* into a real newspaper, not solely a daily periodical of comment and opinion. Under him, the display of news increased at the expense of editorial and criticism. He established a full staff of foreign correspondents and set the *Times* on the way to becoming the world's great authority on current events of the heavy and obviously important kind. The range of this news policy was at first distinctly limited, however. The *Times* devoted itself almost solely to the actions and intentions of governments, wars and rumors of wars, diplomatic tangles. A great disaster might be recorded, tersely and solemnly, in its columns; otherwise there was little or no "human" news. More importantly, perhaps, it failed to record the industrial revolution, going ahead full speed at the time, except when the change manifested itself in politics. Even in the early 1830's, the heyday of Barnes' success as an original editor and a pioneer, news was only a feeder for an editorial policy. By that time, almost all the other British newspapers were following the trail which Barnes had blazed. Thanks to him and more thanks to the advertiser, the British press became independent of venal party control, abandoned blackmail, and looked to its own countinghouses for its revenues.

Chapter III

THE FREE PRESS

WHEN, after the Zenger verdict, the colonial newspapers began to hack at the chains which hampered journalism in the mother country, they drifted as a body toward the "patriot" faction. Most of them helped in bringing on the Revolution. Our Founding Fathers realized the importance of the Zenger affair and understood its consequences. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that Benjamin Franklin sat in the Convention, the original Constitution included no reference to journalism. The valiant little newspapers of the day noted the omission. However, the constitution passed to ratification only after a tacit agreement that its omissions should be supplied by those amendments of Jefferson which we term the "Bill of Rights." And the first of these provided that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of the press." In a general way, the state constitutions followed this precedent. For the first time in any important country the newspaper stood unhampered by "license to print," official censorship and laws which through one device or another made it a legal offense to criticize public officials or to print unwelcome news concerning their actions.

However, this larger liberty was scarcely less important in determining the future course of American journalism than a few minor circumstances; most notably our laws and customs as regards libel and contempt of court. To make the reader understand the full measure of this freedom, it will

be necessary to describe the legal web which in parent Britain confines the press even to this day.

The British libel law proceeds on the fundamental theory that publication of derogatory matter is in itself a crime or a wrong, and "the greater the truth, the greater the libel." Then by a series of complex statutes and decisions it makes exceptions to the rule; most important among them, the one partially exempting truthful news concerning administrative acts of a public official. In theory most of our state libel laws do not much differ from the original British statutes on which they were drawn; in practice they differ from it widely. Minor decisions in special cases, together with the attitude of our people, have greatly abated the danger of libel suits for the American editor. There is the matter of "mitigation of damages," for example. Commonly the defendant, especially if his be a ruthless newspaper, sets forth in his pleadings to prove that the plaintiff is a person of such character that he cannot be libeled. The American citizen, before he sues for libel, must prepare to have the skeletons dragged out of his family closet. In England the defendant adopts these tactics at his peril; such matter, in case of an unfavorable verdict, may cause the court to increase the damages. Further, there is the intangible attitude of our courts and juries. Perhaps in expression of that governing clause in our Constitution, American courts tend to favor the defendant; British, the plaintiff. Some twenty-five years ago, in the suit of *Collier's Weekly* vs. *Post*—a case where, for once, the periodical stood as plaintiff—the jury awarded a verdict of $50,000. Legal experts, after searching the records, pronounced this the heaviest damage ever awarded for libel in the United States (up to that time, of course). British verdicts for 10,000 pounds are commonplace; often they run as high as 50,000 pounds. Further, the

American, who perhaps takes his newspaper more lightly than does the Briton, has always tended to laugh off attacks in the press—except in the old South or the old West, where he attended to that matter with his sidearm. Few leaders of American life have arisen without encountering many a good, actionable libel; yet few of them have ever sued.

The stiff-necked Briton, an ardent believer in personal rights, sues at the drop of a hat. Most readers have noticed on the flyleaves of British novels the notice: "Every character in this book is imaginary." The story back of that line illustrates both the strict application of British law and the readiness of the British to seek legal redress. A novelist, creating a villain, invented for him a peculiar name and gave him a peculiar occupation. By coincidence there lived in an obscure inland town a man of exactly that name and occupation. He promptly entered suit for libel; and although he could not prove that the novelist had ever heard of him, he won a verdict with damages.

The contempt-of-court law is another and even firmer brake on British journalism. Except when some culprit violates a judge's order, contempt of an American court does not run—generally speaking—beyond the doors of the courtroom. It is different in Britain; the power of courts to punish for contempt runs to the remotest bounds of the kingdom. All Americans, reading a British newspaper for the first time, notice a quaint approach to police news. Supposing a case: John Smith, a Bond Street tailor, has stepped out of his shop and with a pistol killed James Jones, a rival in business or love. The street was full; a hundred people witnessed some part of the event; twenty of them knew Jones and Smith. Nevertheless, the London newspapers next morning say simply that "a man" after "engaging in an altercation" shot Jones. Then, at the end, appears the single line: "Later,

John Smith was arrested, charged with the crime." And when Smith comes to trial, the newspapers publish merely literal excerpts of the testimony, each paragraph beginning with "Q" or "A."

The crime has come under jurisdiction of the courts; and, until the court has spoken, none else has the right to publish the fact that John Smith shot James Jones, or to express even by implication an opinion on the case. When in 1935 New Jersey tried Bruno Richard Hauptmann for the murder of the Lindbergh baby, a hundred special writers published their personal observations, even their conviction as to the defendant's guilt. Had New Jersey lain in England, they would all have gone to jail.

In the relations of this British contempt-of-court law to the news there are a thousand subtleties. Early in this century, a certain American reporter got a job on a London newspaper for the experience and remained to become a large figure in British journalism. During his first week on the staff, his editor assigned him to "cover" a newly discovered murder. As soon as he began looking into the facts he realized that this was an extraordinary story. A convict in one of the British prisons had occupied his mind during his term by planning the perfect, undetectable crime. On his release, he started at once to put his creation into practice. He searched the suburbs of London until he found a shopkeeping couple who owned their place of business, had neither relatives nor intimate friends in the vicinity, and wanted to emigrate. He approached them with a most generous offer for their property. They accepted; but he prolonged the negotiations for a time, during which he encouraged them to spread among the neighbors the news of their impending sale and removal. On the night when he was to make payment he got them to sign the papers, lured them into the cellar, murdered them

both, buried their bodies under the floor. Then he stepped into their place in the shop, feeling settled for life. But an accident revealed the two corpses under the floor. He was arrested and confessed.

The detail which made this an event in a million was the long, sinister plotting while the man was in prison. The American sat down and wrote the story in his best style, emphasizing that feature. Half an hour after he turned in his copy, he faced an enraged and appalled employer. "Do you realize," the editor thundered, "that if I printed your little item, you and I would both go to jail for two years?" According to the theory of British criminal law, the court alone has the right to punish a man for crime. When a felon finishes his term in prison, he has paid his debt to society. Printing the fact that he has served a term for crime—unless a court has made note of it—is an extrajudicial punishment and therefore contempt of court. A transplanted American, no matter how expert a news writer in his own country, must pass an apprenticeship of two years or so before he can be trusted to know what he may or may not print in Great Britain.

British journalism did not win even this degree of freedom until the early years of the nineteenth century. At just about the time when the newspapers shook off the last vestiges of censorship and party control, the Empire began its expansion and England started on her way to become the dominant world power. And there arose a tradition which, however commendable in some respects, amounted to another brake on the press. Always the newspapers must play the game of the Foreign Office. Always they must tune the news to the diplomatic necessities of the moment. There is little compulsion about the process—simply an unofficial social sanction.

So much for the relative freedom of the press in America and the mother country. As for the other literate nations of the world, they also force their newspaper press to dance in fetters—although the Scandinavian countries approach our state of liberty. At the time when we ratified Amendment I, the Continental European nations lived mostly under despots who exacted the right to suppress hostile opinion and to censor "dangerous" news. With the growth of liberalism, the Continental press wormed its way out of its cage and attained a nominal freedom. Most countries, however, maintained libel laws nearly as strict as those of Great Britain—although less confusing. And there grew up systems of indirect control unknown to the English-language press. French libel laws are in some respects as liberal as those of the United States. But there, as also in Italy, a newspaper often served as the personal organ for some ambitious politician. Usually he was also its leading writer. With us, a career in journalism has seldom paved the way to political success; in Continenal Europe, it is followed as commonly as that of the law. Trotsky, Tardieu and Mussolini are examples from the current period. Personal organs cannot be expected to adopt a fair and detached attitude; also, during the nineteenth century most Continental countries found expert methods for curbing the press whenever it grew too inquisitive concerning the intimate affairs of the party in power. France, for example, has strict and complicated laws for the commercial conduct of newspapers. Enforce them all, and Parisian daily journalism would be strangled with red tape. Commonly they lie a dead letter on the statute books; but the administration can always revive them to curb a newspaper. Every journalist who knows the Parisian press suspects that this is the reason why the full story of the Stavisky pawnshop scandals remained mere private gossip

for eight years. A good story, yes, the editors were saying to themselves. But if one dug into it too far he might find some powerful politician involved. The risk was not worth the reward. Finally: the growth of the "penny press"—hereafter to be described—established the world-wide tradition that the subscriber shall pay only a small fraction of the newspaper's cost. We and the British meet the deficit by selling advertising. That form of salesmanship is less developed on the European Continent; there the typical newspaper supplies the deficit by subsidies from political factions or large corporations, whose interests it serves with favorable editorials or doctored news.

I have wandered from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. Let us turn back abruptly to the beginnings of the Republic, and start again. The American press, thanks to the letter and spirit of the First Amendment, set forth as untrammeled as any individual or institution may be in civilized society. It was probably the first free press in the world; virtually the only free press. It had escaped that period of dishonesty which marked British journalism during the reign of George III. It was destined to maintain that primacy of freedom. The commodities in which it dealt—news and the full expression of opinion on the part of private citizens—were comparative novelties. However, journalism had not yet found itself. Even those solemn old-time American editors who extolled the press as the Palladium of our Liberties and the Lighthouse of Freedom, had only a dim apprehension of the power lying under their hands and only a faint idea of how they might use it. They were to learn through a century of trial and error; during which the United States became the world laboratory for experiment with journalism.

Chapter IV

BENNETT DISCOVERS NEWS

DURING the first quarter-century of our national life, American editors were mostly boss printers, who had seen revenue in the process of adding a newspaper to the regular business of running off billheads, posters, state statutes, dodgers and occasional books. Their newspapers were literally "sheets"—one big piece of paper, printed on both sides and folded to form four pages. For print paper was expensive, and working the old Franklin or Washington press by hand a slow process. Circulations were small. Even in the big cities, a thousand copies a day yielded enough revenue to make the business distinctly worth while; many publishers struggled along on a weekly circulation of three hundred. Although they had a liberal advertising revenue from the first, the "publick announcements" were mostly one- to four-inch paragraphs, broadcasting sale of slaves, real estate, groceries, and "dry goods," or the arrival and departure of stages and ships. As regards this last item, sometimes when the merchant received by packet from London or Paris an especially tempting consignment of silks, merinos, wines, hats or gloves, he would buy an impressive advertisement occupying six or eight inches. But these advertisements, together with the "publick notices" assigned to the editor whose party stood in power, were not enough to support his business. He must depend also upon revenue from the subscribers. His price to them was from six to ten cents a copy. Regular subscribers received the paper by

carrier or post; transients, generally speaking, must needs call at the printing office. Considering the difference in the value of money and the scantiness of early American incomes, it is fair to assume that in modern terms a newspaper cost at least twenty-five cents a copy. Only the reasonably affluent, like merchants, bankers, professional men and shipowners, could afford it. The "mechanics" of the towns—still in process of winning the franchise—and the farmers seldom saw a newspaper except when they visited the taverns.

I have mentioned the inertia of these old newspapers as regards news. Yet toward the end of that decade, American publishers seemed to feel an amorphic demand from a curious people and to make a few moves toward meeting it. In this same Boston, for example, the *Mercury* began publishing price quotations on fish and other commodities at the wharves or public markets. Boston was then essentially a shipping town; half of her adult males had at one time or another sailed before the mast. The reefs and gales of that broken northern coast made seafaring almost as dangerous as war. The local newspapers began to depart from anonymity by printing death lists of the incessant wrecks on Cape Cod shoals. Presently, the *Palladium* had a real reporter at work on the wharves—one Harry Blake. A printer by trade, he used to return to the office with his notes and himself set up his stories in type, finding expression as he went along. Blake communicated not only the anxiously awaited news of shipwrecks, but commercial gossip useful to exporters and brief tales of adventure on the high seas. In other metropolitan centers like New York, Philadelphia and New Orleans, young subeditors began ranging the town on horseback to look unsystematically for items which would interest the public; and by the thirties of the

nineteenth century, popular usage had borrowed a word from British journalism, altered its meaning, and dubbed these bizarre persons—"reporters."

Meantime, the original thirteen colonies had trebled their population and grown still more rapidly in wealth and literacy. Newspaper circulations increased even faster than population. And mechanical facilities were improving. Using the old hand press, a fast pressman with a stout apprentice pulling on a lever could at best turn out only a few hundred impressions an hour. Now, a German invented a "flat-bed" press worked by foot power. The British harnessed this to steam; the London *Times* was able sensationally to announce that its best press had printed 1,100 copies, on both sides, in an hour. (A modern newspaper press will print 300,000 copies an hour.) Wood-pulp paper was still far in the future. But international companies began scouring Europe and America for the prime raw material of contemporary paper, linen rags; and improved methods of manufacture reduced prices in spite of the growing demand.

Then in the thirties of the nineteenth century came an upheaval of American life, both political and social, comparable only to the one in which we now live. A movement embodied and symbolized in Andrew Jackson swept out of political power the old American oligarchy. The awakened populace was searching blindly for new things. The Jackson administration saw the beginnings of an unorganized abolition movement, of labor unions, of "female emancipation." In New York—which the Erie Canal had already made our metropolis—a horde of "mechanics," taking a new interest in public affairs, found that the six-cent price shut them out from education by newspaper. A young printer named Benjamin H. Day put into operation a

daring idea. He believed that he could publish a small newspaper at one cent, and make it pay. And so in 1833 he started the New York *Sun*. The foundation of this enterprise, really, was a circulation scheme borrowed from England. He dispensed with carriers and employed newsboys—probably the first ever seen in America. These paid him two-thirds of a cent a copy and kept the other third for their profits. Day expected to lose money on his sales; he was calculating on an unprecedented circulation which would justify him in raising advertising rates. After a preliminary struggle during which—to the external regret of his descendants—Day sold out to Moses Beach, the *Sun* achieved success and permanence. Within a year or two it was forced to install steam power to run its presses. It did little at first to advance the intellectual and social importance of American journalism, but it made news its main objective and reason for being. With its eye on the kind of subscriber whom it hoped to attract, it placed reporters in the police stations and the courts. Also, it did its part to establish that tradition of humorous writing which so strongly marked American journalism of the nineteenth century. Notably it won its first sensational increase in circulation by an out-and-out practical joke on the community—Richard Locke's "great moon hoax." This story, written in a style which was a clever burlesque of the current scientific jargon, related that an astronomer at the Cape of Good Hope had perfected a telescope so powerful that he could see the lunar inhabitants and discern their customs—which the story proceeded to describe. New York first opened its eyes with wonder, then ground its teeth with chagrin, finally exploded with laughter at the joke on itself.

However, the importance of the early *Sun* in the long view of history is merely that of a forerunner for James

Gordon Bennett the elder, who in 1835 risked $500 to start the New York *Herald*, another one-cent newspaper. He had earned this money as a reporter on such newspapers as could afford that luxury; and a superreporter he remained to the end of his days. Only in his later years did he become interested in changing the trend of public affairs. At first dimly, then more clearly as he gathered confidence, he perceived that journalism had left to private gossip a hundred interesting aspects of life. Knowing the interest of the uncultivated populace in crime, he improved on the *Sun's* system for "covering" police news. Wall Street quotations were still the exclusive property of the brokers. Bennett began printing the list of stock prices; going further, he developed an expert who daily wrote comments on the financial trend. Formal religion held a far more important place in American life then than today; and New York was already a "convention city." Bennett reported, with such fullness as space allowed, the proceedings of the religious conventions.

The time came, in the early years of the *Herald*, when the six-penny press together with the rising *Sun* declared war against him. On the surface, they belabored him with intemperate language; under the surface, they tried to frighten advertisers into withdrawing their accounts. And it is revealing to note that the open attacks centered not on his publication of scandalous matter nor on that undubitable bad taste which marked his newspaper, but on his Wall Street column and his publication of church news. The financial oligarchy, it seems, retained the Tory idea that news was the special property of a privileged class; the hierarchies seem to have held that public report of their proceedings smacked of sacrilege; and both elements displayed the deeply rooted human suspicion of new ideas.

Bennett emerged a victor; within two decades, he was making half a million dollars a year, net profit, from this single newspaper. Much of it he poured back into his business of collecting news. There were no telegraph lines in that day, of course, and only a few railroads. "Advices" from Europe and the Atlantic seaboard usually arrived by ship. He established a line of swift news cutters which cruised off New York harbor, put alongside incoming vessels, picked up the envelope from Bennett's correspondent in London or Paris, Savannah or Charleston, raced with it to port. Relays of mounted couriers, faster than the stages, brought the latest advices from Washington—not only the bare facts of proceedings in Congress, but human gossip from the lobbies, personal sketches, forecasts of legislation.

Bennett invented the interview. For what reason we of the twentieth century find it hard to understand, this novelty also raised a storm of denunciation. Every month, indeed, Bennett discovered another aspect of human life about which his public was naturally curious or found another method for presenting news.

His rivals first abhorred, then envied, then embraced. The only way to meet his competition was to imitate his methods. Within ten years, one or two cents had become the standard price for an American newspaper, and news as a function of journalism occupied the center of the picture. The six-cent journals either reduced their prices and revised their methods or—like the New York *Journal of Commerce*—became class organs. A few took another tack; notably the New York *Evening Post* under direction of that reformed poet, William Cullen Bryant. Realizing that the newspaper must be improved to meet competition, they practiced intellectual and literary journalism for a limited clientele. They ignored or treated very sketchily that police news—

murders, burglaries, riots, scandals and hangings—which was the staple circulation builder for the "penny press." Outside of their excellent editorial columns, they specialized on criticism—book, dramatic or artistic—and on semi-literary contributions. Eventually, the conditions of newspaper publication made daily journalism of this type generally impossible, even though the Boston *Transcript* manages still to survive. However, this semiliterary tradition eventually flowed, in somewhat diluted form, into the main current of American journalism.

Bennett it was who smote the rock and evoked that current. It is hardly too much to say that he discovered news. True, that strange intellectual commodity existed before his time. But so had men produced moving figures on a film before Edison, run a boat by steam before Fulton, crossed the Atlantic before Columbus. The credit for an invention or a discovery belongs to the man who conceives it in such form as to give it common use. Bennett influenced the trend of his times in both the United States and Europe. Editors of the more prosperous newspapers in that era had correspondents at foreign capitals who sent them by post brief accounts of such events as they considered interesting. For news from points where they had no correspondents they depended upon the foreign newspapers—when at last these arrived. Consequently, they searched their exchanges narrowly. So Bennett's methods made almost as great a sensation in England as in America. True, the London *Times* had stretched over the civilized world a system of correspondents who dealt with "public occurrences"; but it still ignored the millions of private occurrences which this wild American editor had drawn within the scope of news. As has so often happened with American innovations in newspaper technique, the British passed from denunciation

to conservative imitation. The European continent, in its own way, fell into line. The scope of news broadened to include all human activities; the demand grew with what it fed upon.

The Continental journals continued to "editorialize" their news stories. The British, on the other hand, drew a strict line between the two functions of a newspaper. Once they accepted the modern method of journalism, they used it with better taste and sense of proportion than their American contemporaries.

When Bennett had conducted the stormy *Herald* for fifteen years, two American inventions gave journalism the tools to complete what he had begun—Morse's telegraph and Hoe's rotary press. The first made the transmission of news almost instantaneous. The second brought such speed and facility of production as within another quarter century would put a newspaper on nearly every metropolitan breakfast table. Finally: almost as soon as the telegraph came into general use, a German working with the British newspapers—not, this time, an American—put the capstone onto the structure. In the fifties, and while the European telegraph lines were still bridging gaps with carrier pigeons, Paul Julius Reuter founded the first news bureau. This organization—as daring an innovation as any of Bennett's and almost as reluctantly accepted—gathered news from far and near, edited it into proportionate form, and sold it for simultaneous publication to newspapers everywhere. The instruments were perfected; a new force was loose in civilization.

Horace Greeley, advancing all liberal causes in his New York *Tribune;* E. L. Godkin, with his profound political editorials in the New York *Nation* and *Evening Post;* Francis P. Blair, working up enthusiasm for Andrew Jackson with

his rudimentary propaganda among country newspapers and his semiofficial Washington *Globe;* Joseph Medill, struggling mightily for the Union with his Chicago *Tribune*—historians who deign to notice the newspaper as a social force have made these our most famous characters in old-time journalism. They were Olympians; it is possible to give them ungrudging admiration. But few have perceived the full importance of James Gordon Bennett. He was a curious figure. In his attitude toward the public interest, he appeared unmoral rather than immoral. He kept faith with no party, respected no privacy. What seemed opinion in his newspaper was often only an expression of the most shallow contemporary prejudices. He slavered the nascent woman's movement of the forties with every slimy adjective in the dictionary. He cried to high heaven against the antislavery faction. His consistent publication of "scandal stuff" and his blindness to good taste rendered him a rich pariah—he was even horsewhipped publicly. He seemed content with that status.

It is impossible to make an Olympian figure of Bennett, or even much to admire him. But he did follow one major canon of journalistic morals—the right of the reporter to find out and of the public to know. To the end of his days, the greatest satisfaction of his life lay in feeling that tomorrow morning he was going to make fifty thousand breakfast tables whistle with astonishment. The type is not uncommon in journalism; he, however, was its greatest exemplar. And no American of his period more powerfully influenced the long course of history.

My chief authorities for the preceding chapters are Frederick Hudson's and J. M. Lee's histories of journalism, J. B. Williams' *English Journalism to the Foundation of the Gazette*, the anonymous history of the London *Times* entitled *The Thunderer in the Making* and innumerable old files.

Chapter V

WHAT IS NEWS?

NOW we have news and its systematic collection established as a world force. This is perhaps the place to introduce an odd-lot chapter concerning that singular commodity. When the city editor says that one member of his staff has a "nose for news" and another has not, what, really, does he mean? When the rest of us use that word in a journalistic sense, what do we mean? Definition is not easy; any more than it is easy to define poetry or to set rules for what is sound and beautiful in painting. We may, however, begin with one partial definition which perhaps covers two-thirds of the news—including both the important and the trivial:

News is any event which varies from the reader's picture of the normal and accustomed world.

Not the real normal and accustomed world, notice; but the reader's picture of it; even though in nine cases out of ten the picture squares with reality. A reader may have a false picture; and an item or a series of items in a trusted newspaper may bring him back with a jerk to a sense of truth. All of us, in childhood, received a big piece of news when our mothers or our primary teachers told us that our earth is a sphere rushing through space instead of the rumpled, fixed plane which it appears to the eye. The average reader of the news pictures Los Angeles or San Francisco as a town much like his own, where people attend to their various jobs during the day and at night go to parties or to

a show. When San Francisco in 1906 and Los Angeles in 1933 were shaken by earthquakes, the primary element in the reader's interest was the great deviation from his picture of the normal life in these communities. The least educated among us knew that Spain was a monarchy. The better informed had a definite picture of a colorful and picturesque court. When Spain suddenly rose, expelled the King and declared a republic, the event shattered our picture of Spain. And so on down the line, from these events of world importance to trifling occurrences like the burglary in the next block or the item in the country newspaper informing his neighbors that Sam Brown has broken his leg.

This process of the human mind helps to account for the fascinated interest with which all men regard news of crime. With trifling lapses, most people are moral. They stick to their jobs, obey the police and the clergy, refrain from stealing and violence. Tacitly they assume that the other people do the same. Murder and robbery break the picture.

Seldom if ever is news static. It means movement, action. And the definition given above squares with that theory of the *élan vital*, which Bergson put forward in his *Creative Evolution*. Life, whether animal or vegetable, brute or human, must move and change. It may advance or retreat, although in the long run the trend is upward. It cannot stagnate, else it would not be life. The modern hunger for news seems attuned to the purpose of creation.

Yet anyone who cares to analyze this morning's front pages will perceive items of news which do not fit into the definition given above. What of the world series in baseball? During a generation, the winning teams of the National and American Leagues have played for the championship every autumn. What of the national political conventions? They occur at set and stated intervals; have been so occurring

for a century. What of presidential elections? We have been choosing a president every four years since we established the Republic. None of these events is unexpected to the reader; none in itself mars his image of the stable world about him. And hence we come to a secondary definition:

News is a report on the conflict of opposing forces.

That is also a fairly good definition for drama as manifest in the theater, the cinema or written fiction. Every baseball game, every match at boxing or tennis, every horse race is a little drama. Opposing forces face each other in reality, just as, when a skillful dramatist lays out a plot, they face each other in imagination. Expressing it in another way, the reader's picture of the world is put at hazard. The interested spectator watches breathless to see how it is all coming out. And so with politics, whether the struggle be between Roosevelt and Smith for the Democratic nomination, between Roosevelt and Hoover for the office of president, or between Cassidy and Robinson for chairmanship of the town council.

Yet the casual reader, skimming through his newspaper with these two principles in view, reaches the society page, a section fascinating to most women and some men but involving little change and no drama. Weddings, engagements, receptions, dances, gatherings at the country club, the annual removal of this or that social leader from her town house at New York or San Francisco to her country place at East Hampton or Burlingame—such are its staples. The weddings and engagements are a variation from the accepted pattern of the world, although not a broad one, since after all most normal young men and women marry at some time during their twenties. The rest is—routine. The Van Bibbers have been holding that reception every winter for three generations. Ever since her marriage, Mrs. Feather-

stone Grundy has taken flight to her country place in the same week of May or June.

The interest here is the same as that of those primitive news centers the hot-stove club at the country store and the sewing circle. It consists in a lively curiosity concerning the unimportant doings, surroundings and character, of people whom we know, like, admire or envy. The hard-working shopgirl or housewife who devours the society pages does not know the Van Bibbers or the Grundys except perhaps in imagination; but she does admire or envy them. Mrs. Van Bibber or Miss Grundy occupies exactly that position in life which she herself would like to attain. Even when she remarks that Miss Grundy, from her photographs, looks more like a cook than a "society leader," she is merely expressing an envy based upon admiration.

Change, drama, gossip—the three pillars of the news. Let us apply these principles to the most universally followed American news story of the past ten years. I need tell no newspaperman, and perhaps few laymen, that I refer to the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby. This horrible episode involved first of all a great and abrupt change in our picture of the world. The cherished, guarded child of rich and eminent parents, surrounded with every care, is suddenly stolen for ransom from his father's home. The break from the regular routine of life seemed all the wider because kidnapping was not yet established as a characteristic American crime and because the seizure of so young a child was almost unprecedented.

Next, it was unusually dramatic, involving as it did the clash of wills and characters, together with the clash of atmospheres. Inside the house, affection, peace and security; outside, a human rattlesnake waiting to strike. The moment the crime was discovered, there entered another dramatic

conflict; the struggle to get the child back alive and unharmed. Drama again when after a month of this, someone found his dead body in a thicket. Now the clash of wills and personalities changed to the battle of wits between the criminal evading justice and the police trying to catch him. Then at last the arrest and the trial—a clash of wits and wills between prosecution and defense with the world sitting breathless on the spectators' benches. Finally, and here most importantly, comes the "gossip" interest. Colonel Lindbergh was the pet and hero of two continents; Mrs. Lindbergh the daughter of an ambassador and senator, a member of the Eastern aristocracy, a poet, a coadventurer with her daring husband. The most insignificant actions of their lives were news; and now they were involved in an affair which would have made a front-page story had it happened to a most insignificant family.

Yet its fulfillment of these three principles does not entirely account for the breathless interest of this nation in the Lindbergh case. Every sapient and skillful managing editor or publisher knows that quite apart from the abstract importance of the news, certain special factors tend greatly to intensify the reader's interest. Chief among these is emotion. Raise emotion in him and you have him. Often, a story quite trivial in itself attains preferred position on the front page because it has the power to rouse pity, tenderness, morbid horror, indignation or laughter. It is almost unnecessary to recall the state in which the American people lived during the month after the Lindbergh affair "broke" in the newspapers. First came horror; then pity and sympathy. Every family looked at its own baby, put itself in the place of the Lindberghs and shuddered. Next, indignation. Women who had never committed a violent act in their lives found vent for their feelings in telling

what they would like to do to the kidnapper; men talked of it with their hands twitching and their faces working. Finally, fear. Every family with money in the bank shuddered at the thought that their own child might be next. The Lindbergh case fulfilled in supreme degree the three fundamental conditions which transform mere events into news; besides which it had in unprecedented degree the power to raise emotion.

Several other factors intensify the interest of a news story for the individual reader. The chief of these is the proximity of the affair or its characters to his own place of residence, his personal concerns or his acquaintance. First, geographical proximity—a holdup just round the corner thrills him much more than a holdup in a remote part of his town, even though he knows none of the persons involved. Every journalist understands that principle instinctively. A murder among humble, obscure people, and having no extraordinary features, occurs in a small city of Iowa. The local newspaper displays it on the front page. By the time the story reaches Des Moines, it may or may not make the front page, according to the richness or poverty of general news that day. From Des Moines the Associated Press or United Press correspondent sends it in condensed form to Chicago. If it gets printed at all in the Chicago newspapers, that is because they have their eye on circulation in Iowa; and it shrinks to two paragraphs. There it stops; the news-wise men who work in the Chicago offices of the press bureaus "kill" it—the story never reaches New York, Denver, San Francisco or New Orleans.

Axiomatically, personal acquaintance with the characters in a news story greatly quickens its interest for the reader. If you read today that a man whom you know well has died or inherited a fortune or sued for divorce, you

find that the most interesting item in the paper. Less obvious is the interest evoked by vicarious, secondhand acquaintance. The smallest episodes in the life of our president or his wife—an escape from an automobile collision, an unexpected shopping trip, an airplane ride, how many fish he caught yesterday, what materials she is choosing for her autumn wardrobe—become front-page news. This is because everyone feels that he knows the President. Campaign biographies and ballyhoos, party press agents, in late years the radio and the news reel, have attended to that. The same stands true of the Prince of Wales, who owes the inception of his extraordinary popularity on both sides of the water not only to his engaging Peter Pan personality, but to the fact that in the period when other thrones were falling the royal family employed an astute press agent to make them better known to the public. And this rule, I need hardly add, applies to news about those motion-picture stars whose faces, voices and manners our youngsters know fully as well as those of their own brothers and sisters.

Egoism enters into the calculation, of course. A paragraph announcing a decision of the Supreme Court or a municipal regulation affecting his business, even the mere line on the financial page telling him that some stock he owns had risen or fallen sensationally, seems to the merchant a more vital item than the four-column on the first and second pages recording a European revolution or a major marine disaster. Once, "business news" interested only businessmen. Today, housewives, teachers, professional men, workingmen, are reading it avidly because these hard years have proved to them that the general course of business means the difference between employment and unemployment, poverty and comfort. Women are specialists in the affections: news involving love affairs, divorces, sex scandals and domestic

relations in general has always carried a special appeal for them. Forty years ago, the American editor had a formula to express the varying news appetite of the sexes: "Power and money for the men; love for the women." That no longer holds exactly true. The franchise, the courses in current events at women's clubs and the spread of higher education have given American women an interest in power. Indeed, it is probable that during the past ten years our women have read the news from Europe more closely and avidly than our men. But love still fascinates the woman who runs a shop, heads a department in a bank or serves on the country committee of her party, as much as it fascinated her mother, the homebound housewife.

Any literary worker who blends these principles in his mind will perceive that the factors which determine interesting news do not greatly differ from those which make successful popular fiction—with the difference, of course, that news is true and proceeds with the wasteful irregularity of nature, while fiction is imagined and arranged in artistic form. The creative artist so arranges his matter as to put his climax in the third act; a drama of news usually has the climax in Act I, Scene I. However, one stock device of fiction is lacking. The reporter, unlike the creative novelist, cannot honestly look into the minds of his characters nor plumb their hidden emotions. In a necessarily imperfect way the newspaper editor tries to compensate for that lack by the personal interview. But both reporter and novelist use one device which is always a touchstone to the reader's attention. All minds, and the undisciplined mind especially, tend to fix upon a single actor in any human drama and to group the mental picture about him as a center. Nine-tenths of the great plays and novels from *Hamlet* to *Babbitt* have a central character, or at most two

central characters—hero and heroine. Every novelist knows that such a work as John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, which takes a large, spreading British family through three generations and makes at least a dozen characters almost equally important, stands a triumph of technique over human limitations. In reading the news, the average mind writes its own novel as it goes along; and always with a central character, be he hero or villain. This was one of the first lessons which editors learned about the news.

Let us take a few examples. Lindbergh flew to Paris alone. The daring which this performance involved was one cause for the furor which it created; but the main cause, perhaps, was this very loneliness. No mechanic or passenger came in to share the glory, confuse the mind and blur the picture. The public could adore Lindbergh with the exclusiveness of a lover. In the summer of 1934, the courts of Massachusetts acted in the case of the "Millen gang," bandits and multiplex murderers. One of the Millens had married the pretty, runaway daughter of a clergyman. The men stood accused of murder and were sentenced to the electric chair. The woman was indicted as accessory and could suffer at most only a few years of imprisonment. Boston newspapers, with a sure instinct for public taste, made her at once the leading figure of the case; her trial attracted more space than did that of her husband and his accomplices. The Millen affair, as Massachusetts will remember it, was not the story of three more bad boys who went the route, but of Norma Millen. In the World War the American people never reached that degree of hate against Germany which our government desired, until they dramatized German iniquity in the person of the Kaiser. And it is a rule of modern statesmanship that a rising cause makes real headway among the populace only when it becomes

crystallized in a personality—a Hitler, a Bryan, a Huey Long or a Lenin.

These are the main simples which compose that strange brew, modern news. The reporter who knows instantly whether this or that happening in the police court constitutes news, the editor who makes circulation by the choice and arrangement of his news, have swallowed and digested them whether instinctively or consciously. And we shall presently see how the modern propagandist bends them to his uses.

Chapter VI

THE AGE OF EXPERIMENT

AS THE nineteenth century passed into its second half, the presses turned faster and faster. The growth of literacy, the spread of democracy, created a demand; the refinement of news-gathering methods, the improvement of mechanical facilities, furnished the supply. When Hoe first learned how to print from a roller and on both sides at once, his press could still negotiate only single sheets. These were usually folded by hand, making a four-page newspaper; for "special editions," folders might insert a two-page half-sheet. Editors could enlarge their space only by expanding these sheets; the city newspapers of the fifties and sixties were veritable blankets, having twice the page area of a modern newspaper. Then Hoe and his competitors discovered how to fold a newspaper by machinery, and later how to "feed" a press from a continuous roll. The newspapers need no longer limit the number of their pages.

Contemporaneously, applied science was tearing down another barrier to bulk and speed of newspaper production. By the time we came out of the Civil War, the supply of rags suitable as raw material for print paper was not keeping up with the demand. Then someone found that esparto, or Spanish grass, could be made into cheap paper, and wide areas of waste land along the Mediterranean experienced a brief boom. Finally, toward the end of the seventies, chemists discovered how to make impermanent print paper

out of common wood. By the nineties, Mergenthaler's linotype machine had not only reduced the cost of type-setting, but had greatly increased its speed. The half-tone process for reproducing photographs, perfected at about that time, opened another channel between the minds of editor and reader.

Modern applied science yoked to demand was drawing the newspaper along to the sixty-four-page daily edition of the New York *Times*, the Los Angeles *Times* or the Chicago *Daily News*. And improved business method was working toward the same end. When Benjamin Day founded the "penny press" in America, he depended upon the advertiser to pay the freight. When the one-cent or two-cent newspaper grew universal, when editorial expenses, interest on investment and overhead costs began to rise, the newspapers met this increased expense by stimulating advertising. Presently, the dry-goods stores of our big cities had grown into department stores; and their six-inch notices had expanded into whole pages. Keen intelligences, both commercial and artistic, raised this form of salesmanship to a science and an art; until at last our universities recognized it with courses in which psychology allied itself to economics. The disparity between what the reader pays for his newspaper and what it costs to produce grew apace. By the turn of the century, the average city newspaper took in five or six dollars for advertising to one for sales and subscription. With us and the British, the advertiser paid the difference; just as on the European continent political or financial cliques usually paid most of it.

This brief summary of newspaper history on its commercial side has a point only as it shows how American journalism, in satisfying a furious demand for a new commodity, found room and space to experiment. The experiments led eventu-

ally to the present arrangement of American newspapers—news on the front page and the succeeding pages and editorials inside or on the back page. This was the fruit of experience with public taste and patronage. The mere statement that a steamboat has blown up with the loss of a hundred lives, that a leading citizen has been murdered or that Congress has passed an important piece of legislation, carries its own interest; the opinions of an editor, no matter how ably expressed, cannot so fiercely and instantly clutch the average reader's attention. Perceiving the law that all news drama begins at the climax, American journalism established the rule which still prevails for "straight" news—tell your story in the first sentence, expand it a bit in the first paragraph, then go back like a novelist to the beginning of the affair and relate it all in detail.

First by way of attracting attention and then as a convenience to a busy people, editors worked out the American headline, which endeavored to tell the gist of the affair in two or three strips of big type and to sketch its minor features in pyramids of medium-sized type. As the metropolitan newspaper grew toward fifty pages to the edition, the headline became a necessity of journalism. Even if they had discovered news, the sheets of the 1830's, owing to limitations of space, could have chosen from the day's events only such as would interest almost everyone. The modern editor may sauce his dish with stories which professedly interest only segments in his circle of subscribers. To read daily every word in the New York *Times* would be a career in itself. Probably no one does. Perhaps a majority skim most of the front page. Then the reader runs over the headlines of the inside pages, picking out the items which touch on his special interests. A big gang murder in a distant city—well, though he may deplore the prominence which the

American newspaper grants to crime, he reads it. New government regulations for the conduct of textile manufacture. He knows no one in that business; hazily he absorbs the headlines and passes on to the next top head. This relates to the plight of drought-stricken farmers in the West. He is in the provision business; he reads every word. Someone or other attacks the Einstein theory. Well, he never could understand that Einstein stuff; he does not go beyond the headlines. A prominent lawyer is dead. He notes from the accompanying photograph that this was a fine-looking fellow, and passes on. He skims over the headlines revealing that there is a row in the local Methodist church. That is not his denomination, and he knows no person mentioned. An item from Russia catches his eye. This one he reads through; for he has been attending a course of lectures on the Communist menace. In the same spirit he scans the sports pages. Already somewhere along the line he has turned to the financial section to find what stocks did yesterday. Having so brushed over the news, he may perhaps find time to dip into the editorial and feature pages, and his newspaper reading is done for the day. The headline has served its purpose. It has enabled him to select from the offerings of the newspaper the fare he really wants; and it has given him a hazy idea of events beyond his own circle of immediate interest.

When the American newspapers took to the headline plan, Europe as usual regarded the innovation with contempt. For fifty years, Englishmen criticizing America paid special attention to the "glaring, sensational headlines" of our newspapers. Nevertheless, most of the popular European newspapers were to pay them in the end the tribute of imitation. But the conservative Englishman had some reason behind his contention. The big headline has not only an

intellectual, but a commercial use. It serves as the editor's advertisement of his wares. The advertiser tends always to overpraise his own product. These glaring headlines habitually announced relatively trivial matter with the air of proclaiming events that shook the world. So they tended to throw the reader's education-by-news out of balance.

For more than half a century after Bennett discovered news, our newspapers played with the new commodity as a child with a new toy; and like the child, learned by play. Even after the Spanish War drew us into the circle of nations, we were a provincial people. Foreign affairs stirred us but little—except when they broke into the universally fascinating melodrama of war. The average citizen was interested primarily in his own growing community and secondarily in the center of government at Washington. Competition between newspapers expressed itself chiefly in the struggle for local news. The "beat" or "scoop" or "exclusive story" became with editors almost a fetish. Every reporter's hand was supposed to be against every other reporter's—and in such lively cities as San Francisco during the eighties and nineties, journalism almost realized that ideal . . . "night police beat" is today routine work. But when I was "on night police" for the San Francisco *Chronicle*, at the turn of the century, it was understood that the reporter who did not beat his rivals on a story now and then, or the one who got beaten too often, would lose his job. But we reporters, perhaps with better judgment than our city editors, adopted a peace policy. We divided up the work of getting the news and pooled the results. About once a week one of us, by common consent, beat the others. In order to prevent the arrangement from seeming too rhythmic, we played freeze-out now and then to determine who should get beaten that night.

What with the quickening of communications, the growth of interest in foreign affairs and the dawning realization that exclusive news was of relatively small value in winning circulation, the beat or scoop fell back into its proper niche in the plan of journalism—a matter of personal pride and satisfaction to the staff and occasionally, when it dealt with important matters, a real source of prestige. This mania had its romantic aspect; it is the raw material for most of the classic short stories about newspaper men, like Jesse Lynch Williams' *The Stolen Story* and Richard Harding Davis' *Gallagher*. More to our purpose, it established a practice and tradition of sharp news methods which still marks American journalism. . . . Most of the men who, like the present writer, went to Europe in 1914 and 1915 to report the early stages of the World War, spent more time under military arrest than within sound of the guns. The reputation of the American as a "news hound" was our undoing. The European censors felt safe from us only when they had us in jail.

All this time American journalists were learning how to write a news story. Presently we find editors making the distinction between "break-in men" who shrank from nothing to get at news and artists who could attract attention by the skill with which they wrote it. The ideal reporter was of course a combination of the two types.

Most of the pioneers had graduated, like Franklin and Greeley, from the printer's case. Their professional education had consisted in reading the copy that they set up. Some of them wrote vigorously but roughly; copyreaders, in those days, existed mainly to straighten out their grammar. Subconscious fear made the whole trade distrust the highly educated man. He was supposed to lack the common touch. Horace Greeley declared with a characteristic burst of pro-

fanity that he wouldn't have a college man for janitor. These news artisans, when they lacked essential talent, fell back on a curious journalese which has almost disappeared from our newspapers—a collection of stock phrases as definitely classified as the type in the boxes of their printer's cases. Always at those barbarous public executions which afforded so many columns to the newspapers of the times, the drop fell with a "dull, sickening thud." A big fire was "an unparalleled holocaust." A set event "took place." Any young woman above the grade of corner grocer's daughter was a "prominent society girl." And through some obscure quirk of human psychology, they reveled in the passive voice.

However, there was always a sprinkling of highly educated men in the editorial rooms; though, speaking generally, these were in early days of such caliber as to justify that English cynic who called journalism "the profession of failures." Then, during the eighties of the last century, the university man began his invasion. For this movement Charles A. Dana, with his ever-remembered New York morning *Sun*, deserves credit as a pioneer. At the time when the holder of an arts degree usually concealed it from the city editor like a prison record, Dana was watching the universities for young men with literary talent and ambition, was encouraging them to come to him as cubs and to undergo the *Sun* training in brilliant but simple journalistic writing. In his time and in that of his immediate successor, William M. Laffan, this was the best written newspaper in the world. The two *Suns*, morning and evening, graduated such ornaments of American letters as Richard Harding Davis, Jesse Lynch Williams, Samuel Hopkins Adams, A. E. Thomas, David Graham Phillips and Irvin S. Cobb; gave to wider journalism such men as Julian Ralph, "Jersey" Chamber-

lin, Frank Ward O'Malley, Franklin P. Adams and Edwin C. Hill, and left in the trade such ornaments as Frank M. O'Brien, Mrs. William Brown Meloney and Harold Anderson, the latter the author of that classic editorial "Lindbergh Flies Alone." In the later formative period it was the "newspaperman's newspaper." The whole profession read it, took the cue from it. In the same period Chicago had a golden age of journalism. The writing thereof was nearer the soil than that of the *Sun* and for that reason all the more vigorous. This school was to graduate George Ade, Finley Peter Dunne and—much later—Ring Lardner. These influences, and the rise of schools of journalism in our universities, gradually lifted American journalistic writing from the slough of the stock phrase.

In the long run, the *Sun* helped others; itself it could not save. Carr Van Anda, one of its ornaments, was lured away by Adolph Ochs, who had bought the fading New York *Times* and started to rebuild it. As though in revolt against too much cleverness, Van Anda set himself to make a newspaper concerned primarily with the news. He fulfilled that ideal to such a degree that the *Times* under his hand became the greatest sheer news organ in the world; and on the day when the old morning *Sun* died, it stood the most valuable journalistic property in the United States.

Chapter VII

"FEATURE STUFF"

NEWS and editorial are the main currents which feed the stream of American journalism. There is a third, however—what editors call "feature stuff." Less important than the others from a social point of view, it has had important reactions on the news itself. The weekly or monthly periodical review—the magazine—was born at about the same time as the newspaper. In America it made rather a late start; but by the 1840's this semijournalism was beginning to find itself. We had general magazines publishing fiction, essays, descriptive articles and tabloid treatises on scholarly subjects, like *Harper's*, *Century* and the *Atlantic;* serious reviews dealing at leisure with the trend of the times, like Margaret Fuller's *Dial;* special pleaders, like William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator;* purely "female" magazines, like *Godey's Lady's Book*. Newspapers both here and abroad looked with envy upon their circulation pull and, as improved mechanical processes gave more space, in their own hurried way imitated them. In France and on the European Continent in general the newspapers, in contrast with the magazines, began to serve as the first outlet for novelists. The *feuilleton*, fiction run in small type at the bottom of every page, gave the French public its acquaintance with Dumas, Daudet, de Maupassant and Anatole France. For various reasons, both American and British newspapers have generally left the best of our English popular fiction to the weekly or monthly magazines. But very early they borrowed

from the women's magazines the idea of illustrating and describing the latest fashions. This feature, of course, was also news; further, it helped to draw advertising. Almost as early, they began to publish essays or treatises on political or social trends by citizens prominent in literature or affairs. They sent out their best-writing reporters, in odd times, to describe interesting or piquant features of city life. Artemus Ward, Bill Nye and—in his early career—Mark Twain carried on the old humorous tradition of the American press. After an apprenticeship at newspaper writing in Leadville, Denver and Kansas City, Eugene Field settled down on the Chicago *Tribune* to create the first fully developed newspaper "column." As mechanical facilities improved, American publishers began to mass these features in the Sunday edition—a process made not only possible but commercially desirable by the growth of department-store advertising. Presently, it seemed best to isolate them into a separate section—and the "Sunday supplement" was born.

Toward the end of the eighties the ebullient S. S. McClure burst into New York, shooting an idea a minute. At once he saw opportunity in feature matter. Any city newspaper, he said to himself, should be eager to buy a short story by one of the current celebrities in fiction—such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Octave Thanet or Louise Chandler Moulton—for twenty dollars. If he himself could buy one of these stories for the current price of two hundred dollars and sell it to twenty newspapers at twenty dollars apiece for simultaneous publication, he would make a gross profit of one hundred per cent. Full of this simple idea, he got two manuscripts on credit from a popular fictionist of the time, traveled from city to city on railroad passes and proved its soundness. Within two years his McClure Syndicate was making money and achieving the honor of imitation. The process of syndica-

tion was not exactly new; but McClure deserves the credit for bringing it into general use. For various reasons, fiction did not in the end prove so profitable to these enterprises as other features—women's pages, advice to the lovelorn, "child stuff," cartoons, moral essays by prominent citizens, light, topical verse, humor, eventually sporting comment, motion-picture gossip and criticism, medical advice and comic strips.

Today a complex web of syndicate features covers the country. Managing editors depend upon them as circulation builders as much as upon local and general news; and one who travels by train, buying a newspaper at every main stop, has sometimes the feeling that he has been reading different editions of the same newspaper.

The syndicated feature has had its social and political importance. By causing us to think alike in small things and sometimes in great things, it has tended to draw us toward national unity and uniformity. If it has promoted superficial thinking, it has also served in many directions the purposes of civilization. For example, let me cite the "Daily Health Talks," those medical essays by sound physicians that are so popular with newspapers nowadays. They are doing more than a thousand columns of editorial to squeeze out quacks, to crimp the patent-medicine business, to teach practical hygiene, to encourage preventive medicine, to lessen hypochondria. It is fair to assume that they have a widely favorable influence on the health rate. Both the fashion columns and the household decoration columns have tended immeasurably to raise American taste in material things—and so on.

Here, however, we are mainly concerned with the newspaper as a political and social force. And the syndicate, together with its supercilious elder sister the monthly or

weekly magazine, eventually mended one serious flaw in the ways of the American newspapers with news. Small events, like murders, may be a one-day story; large, important events run their course over weeks and months. One day may bring the major climax; but all along there are minor climaxes bearing upon the wider situation. Moreover, the hidden forces which came to light when the story "broke" may have been operating over years and decades. The reader who skimmed day by day the stories of the events leading up to the Civil War, or of the Crédit Mobilier scandals in Grant's administration, missed often the connective passages or overlooked the significance of small details; he did not know what it was all about. Further, the size of the country seemed to make national journalism, in the form of the newspaper, an impossibility—even though the Associated Press and its predecessors were syndicating the "spot news." As long ago as the eighties of the last century a London morning newspaper could reach all the cities of England before the news grew very stale; and similarly the Parisian journals could cover most of France. But here we were dealing with unconquerable distances. The Chicago newspapers could attain only a radius of two or three hundred miles in the Middle West; a New York newspaper was outdated before it reached Boston or Baltimore. To meet the need for a wider journalism there had arisen an array of illustrated weekly journals dealing with the country as a whole. The best among these was *Harper's Weekly*, which called itself in its subheads "A Journal of Civilization"; the most popular, and probably the shallowest, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*.

Then in the changeful eighties and nineties appeared the first of the popular ten-cent magazines. John Brisbane Walker with his *Cosmopolitan*, founded in 1889, was the

pioneer. He had a definite commercial idea akin to Benjamin Day's when he started the New York *Sun* half a century before. Give a magazine cheap in price but not in content; and work up a circulation so great that high advertising revenue would pay the costs. Walker succeeded; and S. S. McClure, following, formed a partnership with the able, judgmatic John S. Phillips and poured the profits of his syndicate into his new, ten-cent *McClure's*.

Walker had no special interest in public affairs; he merely tried to produce an entertaining magazine of high quality. McClure, original always, began by revising our standards of popular fiction. He had in Viola Roseboro' a manuscript reader with a mind as original as his own. From the unconsidered and unsolicited manuscripts which—literally—filled a barrel in McClure's, she plucked Booth Tarkington, Myra Kelly, Harvey O'Higgins, O. Henry, Josephine Daskam Bacon—a school of American fictionists who for the first time wrote realistically of the national life. Going on, McClure drew magazine journalism into politics. His first venture was Ida M. Tarbell's "History of Standard Oil." In this historic exposé of old corporation methods, Miss Tarbell perhaps told little that was news. Editors from Oil City to Los Angeles had published the scattered details, although Miss Tarbell dug for years to find the hidden links of information which completed the logical chain of her work. But no one before her had put the story together, rendered it significant. It made a profound sensation—and the "muck-raking era" had begun. McClure sent out Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker, superreporters both, to study such subjects as the widespread municipal corruption of the times. They exposed not only city gangs, political bosses and rich practitioners of bribery; they exposed also our lack of a national journalism.

Take for an affording study Steffens' "Shame of the Cities." This series dealt with the political machines which then exacted tribute from so many of our metropolitan centers—Tammany Hall in New York, the Cox organization in Cincinnati, the Southern Pacific "push" in San Francisco, the Penrose gang in Philadelphia. Although in some of these cities the newspapers, for fear of their advertisers, had trodden cautiously whenever they approached the machine, in all of them one or two courageous journalists had dared to tell the truth. Cox was not news to Cincinnati nor Tammany Hall to New York; but they did constitute news to the rest of the country. Moreover, Steffens and Baker dug down to some of the fundamentals. Citizens disgusted with the loose, corrupt methods of professional ward politicians had been shouting for a "businessman's government." *McClure's* proved that influential business usually stood behind the boss, who served its ends as well as his own. This last was not only opinion, it was higher news, and of a kind to interest every politically-minded reader. Perhaps that explained certain mysteries in the government of his own town!

Ten-cent magazines, whose standard tool was the muckrake, sprang up like sprouts after a May shower. Some muckraked for revenue only; a few wrote their titles into our history. P. F. Collier was the largest publisher of subscription books in the world. As an annex to his business, he had long conducted *Collier's Weekly*, a cheap five-cent affair. His son, the brilliant and doomed Robert J. Collier, came out of Harvard and took hold of this publication. Installing Norman Hapgood as editor, gathering loosely around him such ex-newspaper reporters with national instincts as Richard Harding Davis, Finley Peter Dunne, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Samuel Moffatt, Mark Sulli-

van, Richard Lloyd Jones, Arthur Gleason, Frederick Palmer, Arthur Ruhl, Wallace Irwin and the writer, he created a magazine which was also a glorified newspaper. During the second administration of the first Roosevelt, an article in *Collier's* often carried more effective weight than all the editorials in half the newspapers of the land. Mark Sullivan helped to break the hold of the Old Guard in Congress. Samuel Hopkins Adams, following up some pioneer work by Sullivan, started the decline of that "great American fraud," the patent medicine racket. Finally, when *Collier's* charged Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger with irregularities in the disposal of our public lands, it hurried the Taft adminstration toward its downfall.

J. O'Hara Cosgrave came on from the funeral of his *Wave* in San Francisco to edit *Everybody's*, a house organ of the Wanamaker stores. Presently, Erman J. Ridgway bought that organ and made it a general magazine. Cosgrave, retained as editor, persuaded Thomas W. Lawson, Boston speculator and café philosopher, to expose the stock exchange and big business in general. In a few months this series, entitled "Frenzied Finance," raised the circulation of *Everybody's* from 300,000 to 900,000. Lawson's style was a mixture of thunderbolts and jazz, and he editorialized every paragraph; nevertheless, these articles were essentially news and news on a national scale. Meantime, the *Saturday Evening Post*, under its genius-editor, George Horace Lorimer, had begun its steady rise. It muckraked a little during this era; but on the whole not much. It did, however, follow in its fact-articles a policy of national journalism consisting largely in putting together and making significant matter which had appeared by driblets in the daily newspapers.

Even before the World War, muckraking began to lose its force. *McClure's* died of a complication of diseases.

Collier's, no longer owned by the Collier family, went on to another success in a different character. *Everybody's* faded back into the ruck as a wood-pulp fiction magazine. The *Saturday Evening Post* alone maintained its character and prosperity. It went on to become a national institution, as typical as baseball.

For by this time advertisers were objecting to muckraking; and the magazines, like the newspaper before them, were finding that in America the wish of the advertiser is the main brake on the freedom of the press. Also, smaller and cheaper magazines on the fringe of the movement were reducing it to absurdity; and the public was growing tired.

Finally—and here, really, is the significant point—the newspapers, again taking their cue from the magazines, were meeting this competition by creating their own wider news-journalism on a national scale. Constantly they used their writers and the more famous writers of the syndicates to put the news of a running story together, render it meaningful. The World War, which began just after the muckraking era ended, was in itself almost enough to render this process inevitable; for most Americans had lived in blissful ignorance of foreign affairs, and each of the dramatic moves in the military or diplomatic game proceeded from situations which we did not understand until some reporter expounded them.

Let me give one striking example—just one—of the manner in which this process works. When President Harding died, insiders at Washington were aware that something was wrong with the management of the Veterans Bureau. A few months afterward Congress took action; a Senate committee held a hearing which practically put Colonel Charles R. Forbes, late director of the bureau, on trial. This proceeding lasted for months. Day after day the press bureaus and the Washington correspondents sent the details

of the hearings. It is probable that the average reader, following this story in his newspaper, found himself merely bewildered. Even if he did not lose the main threads by failing to read the story for a day or so, his memory failed to carry over small details which were the introduction to later testimony of great importance. When the committee adjourned, the general public, and to a great extent the official public, had a vague feeling that the boys in the Veterans Bureau had been doing well by themselves—nothing more. Months passed; it looked as though the affair might have ended with the life of the committee. At that time Loring Pickering was conducting the North American Newspaper Alliance, which furnished "feature stuff" co-operatively to ninety Associated Press newspapers. Seeing a virtually untold story in this Veterans Bureau mess, he employed a magazine reporter to write it comprehensively and consecutively. This man brought to light no unpublished facts. After a few interviews by way of getting the atmosphere, he buckled down to four large volumes of committee reports, already in print. From them and them alone he wrote a running story of the scandal in the Veterans Bureau. And for the first time the public understood the situation, felt the proper righteous indignation; and Forbes went to trial.

But even in 1923 when the Veterans Bureau scandal "broke," such neglect of the larger and longer news was growing exceptional. In their Sunday editions, if nowhere else, our newspapers now print three- and four-column stories, usually syndicated, wherein expert reporters with the larger view bind together these scattering stories of important political events which have been appearing throughout the week, and by telling them with a sense of proportion give them significance. Such writers—to name only a few—

include Edgar Mowrer, Anne O'Hare McCormick, Frederick T. Birchall and Walter Duranty in foreign affairs, Charles Merz, Robert L. Duffus, Frank R. Kent, Arthur Krock and Gilbert Seldes in domestic affairs. At present, Walter Lippmann is defending, albeit at times somewhat critically, the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt; and Mark Sullivan and Frank Kent are criticizing it. Syndicates carry their daily articles to every corner of the country. Being partisans, they infuse their copy with their own points of view. Nevertheless, their stock in trade is analysis and synthesis of the daily news. This is the capstone of our news structure; it is also our own successful device for bridging with a national journalism of comment the enormous distances of these United States.

Chapter VIII

THE NEWS FINDS ITSELF

AGAIN I have run ahead of my story; such, I warn the reader, is the method of this book. Back now to that progressive, complacent, innocent period, the eighties and nineties of the nineteenth century. American journalism was firmly established in its proud position as the Third Estate and the Tribune of the People. Roughly, the craft of gathering and presenting news had found itself and the daily newspaper had settled down to a form and a formula. On the front page the editor printed the most important news; on inside pages, lesser items. The editorial page was to him the climax of the sheet. There he "molded public opinion," satisfied the universal human desire for power. The news columns related the happenings of the past twenty-four hours; the editorial page told the reader what he should think about these events. Though the sharp news-competition prevailing in those days was a means of selling his newspaper and a matter of professional pride, the power of the press, he still felt, resided in the editorial page.

As for the news, the most reputable American editors had borrowed from the best British editors a rough but definite code. Important events must be treated impartially, and so far as humanly possible from the impersonal point of view. In the days when journalism was feeling its way, political organs had printed the campaign speeches of their own party leaders, slighted or overlooked those of the opposition and infused all news writing with a partisan slant. That sort of

thing, the ethical editor of the later nineteenth century felt, was unfair and inexpert tactics. If the reader did not know what the opposition was saying, how could one refute on the editorial page their meretricious arguments?

True, he had to make concessions as regards local and "human interest" news. Reporting for a daily newspaper is a rough art; and an artist must work from a point of view. Analyze the next moving news story which catches your attention in your own newspaper and notice how the reporter seems to stand behind it, saying to himself and to you, "Isn't this funny?" "Isn't this horrible?" or "Isn't this pathetic?" Treating human news humanly was an admissible exception, the best of the old-time editors seemed to feel, so long as you confined this technique to small affairs. It was not right in matters of grave public importance like the doings of the City Council, the policy of the President or the deliberations of Congress.

Unfortunately for the good taste of the times, but fortunately perhaps for the ultimate development of journalism, around the fringes of the trade bubbled a horde of newspapers —crude, militant, sometimes crooked—which knew no ethics when it came to a fight. Especially was this true of the wild and merry West. In the forefront of our advance to tame the continent marched the pioneer editor. When in '49 the Argonauts sailed to the new California gold diggings, battered type and decrepit hand presses went forward with the first consignments of freight; when in 1879 the discovery of silver at Leadville poured fifty thousand adventurers across hitherto untrodden passes to the higher Rockies, C. C. Davis, with the machinery of his trade weighing down a train of pack burros, marched in the van. Such editors did not confine their fighting to the editorial page. They smote their enemies with news stories which in every line carried

vitriolic editorial opinion. In early-day San Francisco, when Casey the hooligan politician shot James King of William, editor of the *Bulletin*, and generated the historic second vigilance committee, the cause was a red-hot exposé. C. C. Davis determined that the time had come for his camp to grow up and abandon the wild ways of its joyous adolescence. He adopted the slogan, "The gamblers must go!" and beside illuminating the subject with blazing adjectives, set his reporter to writing just what happened in the gambling hells. And as Davis remarked in the presence of his office boy—he who writes these lines—it was the news stuff that carried the pizen.

All of our newly sprung cities had their periods of corruption when the forces of vice, under protection of politics, threatened to overrun them. In the typical instance the moral forces of the community drew together and enlisted the services of a local publisher. Again and again, when the fight grew hot, the embattled editor sent a reporter to City Hall, uncovered the true ownership of lands used for immoral purposes and printed the lists. Often they included members of the local aristocracy and church wardens. Such news, as a veteran remarked, "wrote its own editorial."

Nor was this method unknown to those more conservative newspapers of the large, settled cities which felt that they were setting the pace for American journalism. Bennett had used it. During the Civil War, correspondents at the front broke Northern generals with news stories. Late in 1861, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, flanked by reporters, dropped into the headquarters of General W. T. Sherman. The artist among Union generals was in that state of irritation which goes with a creative mood. In plain, emphatic words, he dwelt on the importance of a Western campaign and declared that the War Department must multiply its

forces in that region by ten. Time proved him absolutely right. "He's crazy," carelessly remarked Cameron to the reporters. That, piled upon the hostile attitude of Sherman toward the press, was enough. Newspapers all over the North carried the story that an insane general had command in Kentucky. For months Sherman lived and worked under a cloud.

Because the memory of an artist lives while that of an artisan perishes, most moderns remember Thomas Nast, the cartoonist, as the man who in the seventies broke Tweed's Tammany ring. In reality, the heaviest blows in that war were neither Nast's cartoons nor any other man's editorials; they were a series of news stories, the most effective of them taken from the city's account books, which the New York *Times* had the courage to print. These stories "wrote their own editorial."

Publishers in general came to understand this principle; but they still clung to their illusions. Big news, dramatic news, might on occasion produce a sudden and startling effect; but it was the man behind the editorial who did the real work. Day by day, year by year, his intelligent arguments won his readers to Republicanism or Democracy, free silver or sound money, protection or free trade. News was a valuable auxiliary in a big fight, nothing more.

But in the last two or three decades of the century editors began to perceive that there must be a flaw somewhere in this system. There was Horace Greeley of the New York *Tribune*, for example. As a forceful, honest advocate of causes, his name stood supreme. He is a tradition even to this day. Yet, reviewing his career, one perceived that he never won a major battle and lost most of his campaigns. Other instances were even more perturbingly instructive. For example, Carter Harrison the elder ran for mayor of

Chicago with every newspaper in town thundering against him—and won triumphantly. Publishers began to wonder, cynically but sincerely, whether the "power of the press" was not after all an illusion or a myth, whether the sole mission of a newspaper was not mere entertainment, general instruction and profit.

All this time, however, loose, trial-and-error experiment in the great American laboratory was discovering that the press had a real and vital power. It did not reside in the editorial page. It did not even consist wholly in the occasional dramatic exposé of a private citizen, a politician or a corporation. The long, steady education which the editor was giving his readers through his selection of local and world news, through the point of view he instilled into the authors of his local news stories, through the kind of news he chose to "play up" on his front page or to "play down" under a single head inside, through his very headlines—in this lay the real power of the press over a modern world.

The scientific and skeptical spirit of the nineteenth century had ushered out the editorial as the chief molder of public opinion. In the days of its power and glory, the citizen adopted a political or social theory and selected or rejected his facts according to their harmony with that theory. . . . William Jennings Bryan was a rudiment of that school of thought. . . . The citizen was a Federalist or a Whig or a Republican or a Democrat. The party was right on its major tenets; it must therefore be right on its minor tenets. The leading editorial of his favorite Republican or Democratic newspaper revealed to him what he ought to think about the lesser mysteries of politics. By the same process, the editor converted the young voter, hesitant between the parties; and by sheer argument won over the occasional independent voter.

But now the scientific spirit of the age was beginning to affect even the intellectual dregs of the population. The independent voter held the balance of power. Men took pride in thinking for themselves. They read the news and made up their own minds as to what they thought of it—or felt that they did. Also, the habit of news reading had become virtually universal. Indeed, it formed the mental bread and meat of intellectuals and nonintellectuals, aristocracy and populace. In the period of my own school education, solemn *Hart's Rhetoric* warned the student against anything but the most moderate newspaper reading, and inferred that it was better to read no newspapers at all. They weakened the style, said Hart, rendered the mind shallow. Today, the university professor who ignores the news passes as a recluse and a fossil. On the other end of the intellectual scale, the laborers going to their work in the New York subway are all reading the *Times* or a tabloid.

As regards politics and social trends, the newspaper has become our greatest educator—if you are willing to interpret the word "education" in its broadest sense and to include the bad with the good. Those among us who lack higher education—the majority, of course—have formed our ideas on the contemporary world almost solely from our steady, lifelong reading in the news. Even those who pride themselves on their general reading usually absorb fewer words from books and periodicals in the course of a year than from the daily newspapers.

Modern life, with its magnificent scopes and distances, its subtle, remote first causes, takes its revenge by binding the individual to a narrow sphere of observation. Almost everything he knows about politics, statesmanship, finance, science or any other larger activity, he knows from authority. His main authority is the newspaper. That, almost alone,

has painted his picture of this world—what Walter Lippmann has called his "stereotype." And its chief pigment is the news.

Now all along the line, the process of putting together a daily newspaper is selective. Beginning with local news: let the reader, if he live in a large city like New York or Chicago, go some morning to the police court in his district. The justice will hear from twenty to fifty cases, most of them filled with "human interest," colored with life, fitting the definition of news. That evening, or next morning, let the reader run over his newspaper to see how the reporter, whom he saw in court, has handled these events. He is likely to find no record whatever; although one or two cases with humorous or dramatic features a little out of the ordinary may come in for brief mention. The reporter on the police-court beat has exercised the faculty of selection. All day long the city editor is weighing news tips or "routine stuff" from the City News bureau, deciding which story is worth following up and which, from his point of view, is not worth while. When the copy begins to come in, the copyreaders—who traditionally "butcher the choicest things we write"—are cutting down one story and putting it under a "single" head, letting another go its full length and decorating it with a "splash" head. As for the out-of-town news from Associated Press, United Press or International News, it has been undergoing this process of selection from the very point of its origin through jerky operations at the various world centers for news, clear on to the desk of the telegraph editor who exercises a final power of selection. The press bureaus send him, usually, from two to three times as much matter as he can possibly print. He preserves those stories which he considers most important or most likely to interest his clientele, and "boils down" the rest or throws them onto the floor.

Then at last come the operations of the night editor or the make-up man. It is for him or the managing editor to determine the position of the news in the paper; and, especially, to say what shall go onto the all-important front page. By the laws of human vision and human psychology, the two columns to the right of the front page are "preferred position." When the newspaper puts a story in this spot, it is saying to the reader: "Here is one most important event of this day." If you live in a city which has both a conservative, old-line newspaper and a member of either Hearst or Scripps-Howard string, compare the items which they choose for that honor. If you live within circulation range of Boston, study the same difference in the news given preferred position by the *Herald*, the *Post* and the *Globe*. The *Herald* has by its character drawn into its circle of subscribers that intellectual element so numerous about Boston; it is their morning organ. The remarkably successful *Post* is sensational, though restrainedly so, and, what with a number of news artists like Bill Cunningham, most entertaining. The valuable *Globe* is peculiar. Professedly it emphasizes local affairs and small, harmless personal items. Its critics call it a glorified country newspaper. There breaks on some days a story of universal interest, like Hitler's "blood purge," the assassination of Dollfuss, the Supreme Court decision killing the N.R.A., the Hauptmann verdict, a textile strike or the assassination of Huey P. Long. These all the three newspapers put in the preferred position. But on ordinary days they seldom agree. In the *Herald*, first-page right-hand column will report some new move of the Nazi government, for example; in the *Post*, some outburst of Massachusetts politics; in the *Globe*, some local accident—"Two Killed at Malden." And so on with the other contents of the front page. Often a front-page top-head story in the *Herald* will figure as a single paragraph

on an inside page of the *Post*, and vice versa. As for the tabloids, the difference between their display news and that of the more conservative newspapers is as wide as the world. Years ago, when this bizarre form of journalism was new, *Life* published a burlesque tabloid number. The front page was an insane mélange of love nests, crime and sports; and in a remote corner of an inside page figured this simple, three-line item—quoted from memory:

BIG BLAZE

Rome, April 1. The city of Rome burned to the ground today. Pope Pius XI is among the missing.

And this was scarcely an exaggeration.

Finally, the headline has an editorial value which the reading public fails generally to appreciate. It is necessarily brief; at its best, it is epigrammatic. Limitation of space and the necessities arising from an artificial arrangement of words have caused headline writers to adopt or invent a curious, clipped vocabulary and to trifle with the rules of grammar and the usages of diction. But it does express the opinion of the newspaper on the matter underneath; it tells the reader—often unconsciously to both parties—what is the important and salient feature and what attitude of mind he should hold toward it. Again: when the next important presidential message appears, compare the headlines in your Scripps-Howard newspaper with those in its more conservative rival—say, the New York *World-Telegram* with the New York *Sun*, the Cleveland *Press* with the Cleveland *News*, the Toledo *News-Bee* with the Toledo *Blade*. The chances are nine in ten that the Scripps-Howard newspaper has selected for emphasis in its headlines some paragraph dealing with the rights of labor or the situation as regards unemployment, and that its rival has preferred a paragraph

dealing with finance. More than twenty years ago I sat at luncheon with a group of American publishers, talking shop. Conversation turned to the decline of the editorial as a social and political force. "My front page is my editorial," said one of the company. "The headlines are mine," said another.

The publisher is exercising the same power when he selects his features from the haystack of copy which the syndicates heap upon him in these days. They vary from the comic strips, frankly the pabulum of childish and immature minds, through household hints, fashion notes and advice on the care of children, to those words-of-one-syllable medical treatises which have done so much in recent years to curb quackery, important current history like General Pershing's memoirs, and interpretation of world affairs by superreporters.

So on to the editorial page, which used to be the heart of the newspaper. One may easily underestimate its influence in these days. It still has a power to draw circulation and sway opinion, or it would not continue to exist. Indeed, of late it seems to be recovering some of its lost ground. In 1923, when Frank Cobb, editor in chief of Pulitzer's New York *World*, laid down his pen and died, journalists all over the country remarked that he was the last of the great "editorial" editors. This was not entirely true. William Allen White, with his Emporia *Gazette*, is still with us. However, his range of influence in his small-town newspaper is narrow; he produces his national effects through the magazines, the syndicates, and of late, the radio. It is not perhaps that the editorial has slipped backward, but rather that the influence of news has gone forward. Even allowing for the evaporation of the issues with which they dealt, the modern journalist, reading the massive old editorials of Godkin, Greeley, Medill or Arthur McEwen, experiences a sense of disappointment.

The work of the anonymous essayists in such newspapers as the Chicago *Tribune*, the Boston *Herald*, the Kansas City *Star*, the New York *Herald Tribune* and a score of others seems more forceful and at the same time more suave, in better taste, more thoroughly informed, wider in point of view. But the explorer of dusty files notices one conspicuous difference between the editorial page of 1860 or 1890 and that of the 1930's. There is far less opinion in these days, and far more interpretation. Usually, though not always, the leader tells the reader what he ought to think concerning some issue of the day. For the rest, the stock in trade is the kind of editorial which takes some large, complex situation with a long background—like the Nazi assault on Austria, the operations of the National Recovery Act, the rise and fall of the Ku-Klux Klan—and tells succinctly how it came about and what is its political or social significance. Rightly understood, this is only the higher news.

"Our daily visitor to your home," sentimentally wrote an old-time editor concerning his own newspaper. The modern newspaper is more than that. It is a daily teacher in the home. For all of us—I repeat—it is still the chief agent in forming our picture of the outer world. True, of late years the cinema news feature and the radio have appeared to supplement it. But so far they are only auxiliaries. The newspaper can educate upward or downward. There is an old Park Row legend about Lincoln Steffens which he does not mention in his autobiography. It may not be a fact, therefore; but even so, it is a truth. The story goes that when he was city editor of the old and meritorious New York *Commercial Advertiser*, he believed strongly in the mission of the press to educate. In the course of an argument, he bet that he could take some uncommon intellectual interest and in a year make it a circulation builder. Let his adversary select that interest.

"All right—art!" came the reply. Steffens established a daily art department which on Saturdays he expanded into a page. He sent good reporters, with the faculty of creating interest, to the studios, the galleries and the exhibitions. When a year later he suspended this department abruptly in order to judge of its effect, the circulation fell as predicted and mail and telephone brought him a flood of complaints.

The expansion of the sports columns into pages and whole sections during the past quarter century may be upward or downward education; I do not presume to say. But it has been largely a matter of conscious effort. Editors have taken sports from the hands of mere mechanics and given them over to men who can write. They have created "paper fans" by the million. The more sensational of the tabloids, and certain pretentious newspapers with the same point of view, have overemphasized crime and thrown about it too often an aura of romance—with deplorable effects on the morbid. Here is a plain example of education downward.

All along the route we have had merely commercial journals, silly tabloids, organs harnessed to some ambition or special interest, even frankly wicked newspapers. Yet in this century education-by-newspaper has tended upward rather than downward. The average American newspaper of 1934 has a wider and more tolerant outlook than that of 1890 or 1900. Always excepting some of the tabloids, it is in better taste. Increasingly it works to create a public interest in things of the intelligence like economics, science, scholarly literature and the arts. When in past time a reporter touched on these aspects of life and society, the details, as he recorded them, were often of such nature as to make experts grind their teeth. And as regards the spirit of the thing, he usually snatched at one sensational item and "played it up" out of all proportion. Experts have fewer and fewer quarrels with

reports on their specialties. "Newspaperese," the mosaic of stock phrases with which so many old-time journalists produced their crude effects, has receded to the country journals. Our newspapers are better technically; and probably as a whole they perform better the supreme function of daily journalism in a modern democratic state—informing the reader on current affairs in order that he may make up his mind how to comport himself in a modern world, and above all how to govern himself.

Not that the average reader really makes up his own mind. The formation of public opinion is a complex and subtle process. The news is the raw material; and most important. It has given the reader his general intellectual slant on the tasks and problems of the day. Sometimes, indeed, a news item bites into one of his pet prejudices, touching off an explosion of the lower nerve centers, which causes him suddenly to realize that he hates Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, prohibition, the American Federation of Labor or the Communists. This, however, is relatively rare. Someone must crystallize opinion in the average reader. Manifestly, the public expressions of our political leaders aim at this end. These are the officers in the army of public opinion. Of late the radio, which brings their voices and personalities into the home of almost every voter, has proved a most powerful tool in their hands. Yet I personally believe that those who have the deepest influence on crystallizing public opinion in this country—as possibly in all countries—are not exalted and famous national figures but people whom I might term the noncommissioned officers. They occupy relatively humble positions—respected leaders of the local lodge, Rotary Club, church society or women's club, the kind of articulate workman who expounds and argues over his shovel or his lathe, clergymen of humble parishes, thinking

schoolteachers, cracker-box philosophers, even the oracles of bars and cafés. These people have as a class a spark of originality and, above all, mental initiative. It is they who digest what they read in the newspapers and transform it into active opinion. Each has his little squad of friends, listeners and admirers. Themselves incapable of making up their minds or at best unaccustomed to the process, these absorb opinions from John or Mary—the leaders. But even John and Mary have not really made up their own minds. A favorite newspaper has long been edging them on toward decisions by the character of its news, by the attitude of the reporters who write it, by the very position which it gives this or that item.

Chapter IX

ENTER THE "YELLOWS"

BEFORE we finish with the influences which molded the American newspaper into its final form, we must tie up a few loose ends. I have omitted, so far, the permanent influence of "yellow journalism." That new form burst out toward the end of the nineteenth century. Two men stood mainly responsible for it; Joseph Pulitzer who began with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* and William Randolph Hearst who conducted his own apprenticeship as experimental owner of the San Francisco *Examiner*. By the nineties, they had invaded New York—Pulitzer as owner of the *World;* Hearst, of the *Journal*. Both, in course of time, were to modify their original formulas and creep much nearer to the conventional form. Indeed, toward the end of Pulitzer's life and for more than a decade afterward, the *World* stood in the place of Dana's older New York *Sun*—which Frank A. Munsey had bought and blighted—as the "newspaperman's newspaper." Then it died of malnutrition, leaving no successor. Hearst, sixteen years younger than Pulitzer, was to go forward until he stretched a string of twenty-five or thirty newspapers from coast to coast and, what with his syndicated features and his news bureaus, gave the cast to scores of others. And while Hearst journalism has a peculiar flavor almost indescribable, his newspapers do not now materially vary from the current American pattern. In some respects he has toned down his methods; in some, the others have imitated him.

We have grown so accustomed to certain tricks and methods which spread from the "yellows" into the main

current of American journalism that we find it hard to comprehend the sensation they created during the nineties. Superficially they performed unheard-of antics with type. In the sixties and seventies no editor, however sensational, thought of breaking a head across two columns. The surrender of General Lee, the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and James A. Garfield, the contested election of Rutherford B. Hayes—all these appeared under single-column heads even though the pyramids of type sometimes trailed three quarters of the way down the first column. Along in the eighties a few editors did stretch a head on an especially important story across two columns. This, however, was a daring innovation, generally disliked. But the yellows! In no time at all they had broken through every column rule in the newspaper, and established the seven-column streamer. "They aren't headlines—they're posters!" remarked "Boss" Clarke, genius of the New York *Sun*. And they broke up their front pages, eventually all their pages, with "box freaks." Hysterics in type reached the climax on the day when Congress declared war with Spain, and the New York *Journal* filled its front page with the one word "War!"

The rise of the yellows came contemporaneously with great improvements in mechanical technique. For the first time it became practical to print at high speed in colors. . . . In view of what happened later, it is interesting to note that the first newspaper color page, appearing in the New York *World*, pictured High Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. . . . The yellow newspapers began splashing their front pages with words or lines in red. Going on, they put forth the colored Sunday supplement and the full-page colored comic. The *Journal* had found in Arthur Brisbane an editorial writer who talked the language of common folk. It

dressed out his editorials with a typographical device which became a stock theme for burlesque. Intensifying Queen Victoria's device of putting emphatic words into italics, it put them into capital letters—"What are you going to do ABOUT IT, Mr. President?" Also the drawings of staff artists or photographs reproduced by the newly perfected half-tone process occupied in the yellows an amount of space of which newspapers never dreamed before.

These were the outward and visible signs. The spiritual part was sensation, using the word in both its popular and its scientific sense. Samuel Chamberlain was Hearst's news expert and, as the string grew, his doctor for feeble circulations. Talking in his later years about the days when Hearst was learning his peculiar trade on the San Francisco *Examiner*, Chamberlain said:

"I used to go home from the office in the wee, sma' hours, on the Hyde Street cable car. At my corner, a starter stood all night on post. Often, he got his morning *Examiner* just as I descended. Sometimes as he looked at the front page by the light of the lantern, he whistled and said, 'Gee whiz!' Then I knew that we'd hit it. I've kept my eye on that car starter ever since. The ideal of this paper is to raise that 'gee whiz!' emotion every day."

They played upon all the emotions—anger, fear, pity, greed and, so far as the conventionalities of Victorian times permitted, lust. But especially they played on wonder—that fundamental "gee whiz!" emotion. Now in sober truth, events human enough and important enough to take the reader out of himself with rage, pity, desire or wonder do not happen every day. But the editor of a yellow newspaper had constantly to give his public strong meat. He could do that only by exaggerating his story, or some detail in it, out of all sane proportion. A pathetic figure of a woman, her dress

revealing her poverty, would be found, a suicide, in a public park. In the yellow journal she became a "society girl" and the whole case a "mystery." When the populace had been perversely virtuous for the day and the yellow journal was forced to drag in Washington, some insignificant act of Congress became, in the hands of its rewrite men and headwriters, pregnant with explosive consequences. And along with this went ruthless methods in getting the news.

From the first the yellows tended to erase the line between news and editorial. Reaching toward circulations which presently swelled beyond belief, they were energetic fighters in causes with popular appeal. And their special writers did not limit themselves to recording the news impersonally and letting the facts produce their own effect. They wrote the attitude of the newspaper into every line; they were capable of immoderate praise and of equally immoderate abuse. That abuse, as a contemporary critic of our journalism pointed out, merely proved that they had the common touch. To the ditchdigger, he observed, everything is black and white—no grays. His boss, his congressman and his president is either a so-and-so or the best fellow in the world. Here, the yellows were talking the language of their clientele.

The yellow Sunday supplement, which has pale descendants even to this day, seemed to the conservative more than a little insane. Its unit was not the column, but the page. A column of type wandered about the spaces in a lurid full-page illustration. Much invention and much experiment went into the process of determining the sort of matter potent to put the "gee whiz!" emotion into every story. One surprising discovery: the public liked science or psuedo science! So in tabloid doses, the yellows gave them primitive man, gave them archaeology, gave them medical discovery—always jazzed up to the emotional point. These features varied

widely in their soundness. The syndicated Hearst Sunday supplement specializes on archaeology and paleontology even to this day; and the matter, popularly phrased though it be, has little in it that a scientific man can justly criticize. Perhaps the long background and abysm of time carries its own wonder. As for medicine and other branches of science, the record is more bizarre. Some bacteriologist isolated the germ which causes certain forms of baldness. As it figured presently in illustrations for the yellow Sunday supplements, it resembled a germ only as an elephant resembles an angleworm. It was a highly organized insect, with sinister, staring eyes, a cruel beak, and long, snaky, hairy tentacles. Into New York blew an odd specimen from Hawaii with a mad theory. To all and sundry who would listen he declared that another ice age was coming. It would descend from the arctic with the speed of a through express train. It would shave life from the lowlands of the United States. The mountains alone would be habitable. Within a fortnight he and his theory occupied a double-truck in a yellow Sunday supplement; the illustration depicted the Rule of Chaos when the ice pack collided with the towers of New York.

Sex, of course, offered unlimited opportunity for raising the "gee whiz!" emotion. Here, the editor of the yellow supplement found his art muted and yet simplified by the Victorian prudery of the times. In those days women shrouded their forms. Legs were "limbs" and men's trousers were "unmentionables." Municipal ordinances commanded that all bathers, male and female, must be clothed from knee to throat, and a Y.M.C.A. secretary at San Francisco refused to let the male members wear gymnasium trousers which terminated above the ankle. The yellow supplements, however, managed to display the unclothed feminine figure and still escape persecution from Anthony Comstock, by

infusing every sex story with a moral purpose. The perils of young girls who hired out as artists' models served for years as a recurrent theme. The brief text expressed a proper and salutary horror of sin; the page layout portrayed the unclothed model, alluringly posed before the lustful artist. The Vice of Montmartre and the White-slave Traffic served the same purpose. However, the chief stock in trade of the yellow Sunday supplement was—and is—the "life story." This consisted in fictionizing, crudely, the careers of persons who had broken into the big news, especially when those persons had the allure of wealth, title, social position or gilded vice.

When these pioneers wedded color printing with humor they founded an American institution. Indeed, R. F. Outcault's "Yellow Kid," the first full-page colored comic, gave the nickname to yellow journalism. This new form was a furious success as a circulation builder; its offspring, the uncolored comic strip, is still the backlog of circulation for many and many a newspaper. Dirks' early "Katzenjammer Kids," Swinnerton's "Noah's Ark" with the naughty lynx, Opper's "Maud the Mule" and "Happy Hooligan"—one laughed at them in spite of his better nature. Were they really funnier than the comic strips of today, or is it just that one has grown older?

These riotous features were by no means the whole content of yellow journalism. Appealing to the populace, it did serve popular causes. And in their building days the Hearst newspapers presented the strange anomaly of vaudeville varied with intellectual flight such as popular journalism had never dared before. Statesmen, scientific men, eminent authors wrote on their specialties in words of one syllable. The yellows did their bit in bringing the complexities of modern art and economics to comprehension of the masses.

This tendency, overflowing the yellows, entered the main current of American journalism. And it was not their only bequest to the craft. I have mentioned the display headlines, the "streamers." Those were to become standard practice in all but the most conservative of our newspapers. Also, the yellow journals stripped from American daily journalism its shell of anonymity. The typical newspaper of the eighties and nineties, the more conservative even in the early twentieth century, printed no "by-lines." The paper was the thing, not its individual contributor. The morning and evening New York *Sun* of Dana and his successor Laffan was perhaps the best-written newspaper that ever juggled with the English language. Its news stories made even the academic world glow with admiration. But only through Broadway gossip did one know that Dicky Davis, Irvin Cobb, Sam Adams, Lindsay Denison, Julian Ralph, Frank O'Malley, Frank O'Brien or Ed Hill wrote this or that little, high-speed masterpiece. The yellows, and especially Hearst, began developing individual stars and publishing their names at the head of their stories—the by-line. They raided the surrounding offices for writers of talent like Julian Ralph. This, of course, was good showmanship. The motion picture never established itself commercially while Mary Pickford was known solely as "the girl with the curl"; only when Adolph Zukor began to build up stars did it become a bonanza. As competition for stars increased, so did salaries. Newspaper work began to pay as well as the other learned professions. (Alas, that day is over!) This also had its wider effect. It drew into the American newspaper more intelligent and better-equipped young men and so generated a current running contrary to the shallow sensationalism with which the yellows began. Moreover, this star system altered the methods of direct editorial persuasion. As other newspapers

followed the policy, as the syndicates pushed it along, the craft developed writers who *in propria persona* delivered themselves of opinions to a country-wide following; for example, Dr. Frank Crane of the early postwar years, Heywood Broun, H. L. Mencken, Harry Elmer Barnes and Will Rogers of more recent times.

Another tendency born of yellow journalism was to become most important. The yellow journals boasted that when it came to a fight they did not find the news; they made the news. That piece of technique was not altogether original with them. James Gorden Bennett II, for example, had in 1869 sent Henry M. Stanley to find David Livingstone, the missionary-explorer lost in the wilds of Africa. This, of course, was "made" news. But Pulitzer, Hearst and their imitators carried the process to unprecedented heights. Old Hearst employees, indeed, say that his first success came from a story of this kind. He was experimenting and learning his trade with the San Francisco *Examiner*. The woman writer of impressions, later known as the "sob sister," was peeping coyly over the horizon. In Winifred Black, who wrote then under the pen name "Annie Laurie," he discovered the pearl of the species. At the time when she was coming into her own, Hearst learned that the local children's hospital had no ward for incurables. He opened a "campaign," with Mrs. Black as general. Her sure instinct for news values had already taught her that the public focuses interest rather on an individual than on humanity in the mass. So she found a hopeless little cripple, son of a poor workingwoman, and made him locally immortal as "Little Jim." Said Sam Chamberlain afterward:

"We were watching our circulation, of course. Whenever Annie Laurie wrote a good story about Little Jim, it jumped by hundreds. Our scouts reported that the stenographers

coming to work in the cable cars were all wetting the *Examiner* with their tears." Those were the days when Americans reveled in common, generous emotions. There followed Little Jim charity bazaars, Little Jim balls and picnics, all for benefit of the Children's Ward. When it was built and dedicated, the *Call* and *Chronicle*, Hearst's rivals, were forced to admit that the *Examiner* had pulled hopelessly ahead in the race for circulation.

In the later years of yellow journalism, political experts remarked that these newspapers had singularly little influence in proportion to their circulation. Hearst himself, in one of his pessimistic moods, doubted whether journalism led public opinion or merely reflected it. But when their weapons were bright and new they had undoubted influence. The spasmodic attacks of Hearst on the Southern Pacific machine in California led up to the progressive Johnson administration and the slaughter of the "octopus." Both Hearst and Pulitzer played major parts in the political dramas of the muckraking era; and they helped mightily to whip up the furor which made the Spanish War inevitable.

Hearst tactics in that last-mentioned campaign afford an illuminating instance of manufactured news. Evangelina Cisneros was a young Cuban woman, a patriot and pretty. The Spaniards captured her, confined her in the Morro fortress. Hearst sent Karl Decker, his star reporter-adventurer, to rescue her from prison and bring her to the United States—which he did, exclusively for the New York *Journal*. Here were beauty, mystery, patriotism, melodrama, suspense, sympathy—the perfect human-interest story. This seems now a shallow foundation on which to build an adventure that changed our national destinies, but unquestionably the Cisneros affair had great effect in raising the war spirit. When the New York *Times* backed an expedition to the

Arctic, when the Denver *Post* organized an automobile race up Pike's Peak, when the Chicago newspapers agreed to start agitation for an exposition in 1933, when two tabloid newspapers conspired with a publicity-seeking district attorney to revive a murder case as long dead as the victim, when today a militant editor, preparing to attack some fault or flaw in the commonwealth, persuades an exalted or popular figure to open the ball with a stirring and apparently spontaneous speech—all these maneuvers are by way of making the news, not simply recording the news. And they are a journalistic inheritance from the "yellows." This method was to become one of the main tools in the kit of the expert propagandist.

Until about the beginning of this century, the chief profits of daily journalism lay in the morning field. Then the commercial strength began passing to the evening newspaper; where, probably, it rests at present, notwithstanding such enormously valuable morning newspapers as the New York *Times*, the New York *News*, the Los Angeles *Times*, the Chicago *Tribune*, the Chicago *Daily News*. The advertiser, with his close scrutiny of returns, stood mainly responsible. The morning paper comes to the breakfast table. The husband—so the reasoning goes—monopolizes it and very likely carries it away to read on the way to work. On the other hand, at least one edition of the evening newspaper comes to the average house in the afternoon—just when the housewife, who does perhaps seventy per cent of the family purchasing, has her hours of leisure. And department-store advertising, the backbone of newspaper revenue, is not only advertising to her; it is also news.

The shift toward the evening field brought several remote technical consequences. At the beginning of the twentieth

century the Associated Press stood as our only considerable news bureau. Since a newspaper must publish national and foreign events as well as domestic ones, it became indispensable. Its founders had made it co-operative and had arranged a system of franchises. All members had the "power of protest." No one could get a new franchise except by consent both of the directors and of his rival or rivals in the same city. These conditions were seldom fulfilled. But E. W. Scripps was already in the field, building up a string of little, cheap, evening newspapers. A professional farmer all his days, Scripps wore a beard, tucked his trousers into cowhide boots, lived patriarchally on a ranch, and believed that the Wall Street Money Trust was strangling the Common People. Having the foresight that goes with journalistic genius, he predicted the trend toward evening newspapers; and his were all of this class. His methods were as original as his personality. When he marked a town for one of his newspapers, he established an office in a basement on an out-of-the-way street and installed an editor and a business manager from one of his older properties. He paid them small salaries but gave them part of the stock in the new enterprise. So they had it in their power to raise their own salaries. Especially, he admonished them not to march into town behind a brass band, as Hearst did in those days, but to enter in gumshoes. So long as possible, they were to conceal their very existence from all but the subscribers and advertisers. They took the popular side of almost any public controversy; they were long the special organs of the labor-union element.

Getting the Associated Press franchise for the fledgling Scripps newspapers was past praying for. Therefore, Scripps organized a press bureau of his own, whose operations consisted mainly in exchange of news between his own proper-

ties. At about the turn of the century, an organization known as the Publishers' Press was working on the proverbial shoestring to serve publishers denied an "A.P." franchise. In 1907, Scripps bought out this company, combined it with his own bureau and founded the United Press. Under the brilliant, shortlived John Vandercook and the dynamic young Roy W. Howard, it rose to major importance in the evening field. When Scripps died, Howard took over the management of the Scripps-Howard newspapers and made them second only to the Hearst combination for circulation and commercial value.

From the first the United Press sold its news budget to fledgling evening newspapers in towns which Scripps had not yet invaded. Eventually it entered the morning field and became a full competitor of the Associated Press. Finally, Hearst established his own press bureaus, morning and evening, and sold their services to outsiders not in direct competition with his newspapers.

In the days when it proceeded virtually without competition, the Associated Press served newspapers of every political belief. It held, therefore, the ideal of colorless impersonality. Its news must be written, so far as was humanly possible, from the viewpoint of the angels. True, now and then a thrilling, human story slipped through the spaces in this system, such as the unhappy John P. Dunning's account of the naval battle at Santiago and some of Martin Egan's stories from the Boxer rebellion. But in general the Associated Press, while probably the most reliable and untrammeled news bureau in the world, put no color whatever into its product. The United Press, however, was from the first what the French call "*tendancieux*"—"tending toward a tendency." Quietly it emphasized, as did the Scripps newspapers which it served, the struggle for popular

rights. As for Hearst, no formula has ever bound *him*. In order to keep up with the times the Associated Press found it necessary to relax its old rules and to widen its conception of news treatment.

The rise of the evening newspaper had at first a retrogressive effect on the literary side of journalism. Most news "breaks" in the daytime or the early evening. The first edition of the old-fashioned morning newspaper went to press at about midnight. This gave the reporters and special writers a little breathing space to perfect and polish their stories. Morning journalism was more finished, therefore wiser and more influential—that was an axiom. If certain evening newspapers like the Boston *Transcript* and the New York *Evening Post* managed to maintain an intellectual cast, they did so by treating the spot news rather sketchily and putting their emphasis on articles which were as good tomorrow as today. But the average evening newspaper exists mostly to satisfy and to whet the public appetite for the immediate news. No reporter can write at leisure for their four or five "latest editions." In fact, when it comes to local news no reporter can write for them at first hand. A "legman" collects the facts, calls up the office by telephone. A "rewrite man" hears his tale, takes hurried notes and makes his typewriter sing as he rushes forth his copy. Yet in the end this speed influence had an unexpected effect. Readers who had snatched the jerky details of a story from this or that edition of their evening newspaper found themselves bewildered. More and more the evening newspapers began to assign their best writers to the task of putting together "specials" which reviewed the story from inception to climax—another example of what I have called the higher reporting. Especially was this true of important public events. Taking for an example the troubled summer of 1934,

reporters for evening newspapers ranged the country to inform us on the devastation of the drought in the Western states, the career of Dillinger the bandit, the workings of the National Recovery Act, the status of bootlegging under repeal, the Federal campaign against crime, the condition of the banks. Yet the fact remains that the morning newspapers, taken as a group, are still more finished than their evening contemporaries.

Finally we come to one fact in the relations of press to public which it would be cowardice to dodge. I have described the unparalleled freedom granted by law and custom to the American press. Tacitly the founders of our commonwealths gave freedom in return for the very valuable consideration expressed in the old Fourth-of-July orations by the rubber-stamp phrase, "tribune of our liberties." The Roman Republic appreciated that making all men equal under the law was not enough to insure practical equality. In a nation where wealth gives the accolade to aristocracy, the upper class was bound to be expert and efficient, the lower class inept. The ideal republic needed some watchdog to prevent invasion of popular rights. Rome provided the tribunes, with their extraordinary powers of investigation, exposure and veto. We left that function to our untrammeled press.

But absolute freedom is not possible in the human scheme; and from the moment when the "penny press" established the principle of making its profits from its advertisers rather than from its subscribers, certain American newspapers began to hold out their arms for fetters. In the days of the muckrakers, the militant magazines cited instances where an accident in a department store, or a scandal in the family of its proprietor, went entirely unnoticed by the local press. For the department store is the backbone of advertising revenue;

and the newspaper which published such a story might pay automatically a heavy fine.

However, these instances were unimportant in the whole scheme of things—mere outcroppings of a larger situation below the surface. As journalism passed from Bohemianism to respectability, newspapers became less and less the rough artistic expression of a personality or a group of personalities, more and more an important business. When Greeley and Bennett, Raymond and Medill flourished, no newspaper except perhaps the New York *Herald* rated as a million-dollar concern. In 1859, for example, the New York *Sun* was sold for $100,000. By the turn of the century most newspapers in any reasonably large city were worth at least a million dollars. One cannot let sentiment affect the interests of so much money as that; and the supremacy in a newspaper organization began to pass from the editor to the business manager. On his way up, the typical publisher, like any other businessman, had given and taken favors. Especially, he had borrowed money. Very likely the leading local bank still held his notes. Securities are the backlog of any business; often local pressure had compelled the publisher to invest in local industries. A hundred other influences tended to make his personal interests identical with those of the small, select financial aristocracy in his city; most subtle and potent of all, perhaps, the social influence. It was extremely awkward for Mrs. Publisher to find herself playing bridge at the country club with the wife of Mr. Banker, whose financial operations the newspaper had exposed that morning. . . . The magazines of the muckraking period uncovered instances where a corrupt gang in control of a city had gone their way unhampered by so much as a vitriolic paragraph in any local newspaper. For powerful financial interests were playing the game of the political boss, and the newspaper publishers

would not or dared not attack their own crowd. On the other hand, hundreds of publishers during that period risked ostracism, bankruptcy, even life, to fight the good fight—like Fremont Older in San Francisco, Richard Lloyd Jones in Tulsa, Julian Harris in western Georgia.

Watchdogs of our public morals, from the early muckrakers to Upton Sinclair in *The Brass Check*, have constantly ventilated this taint in our press and ignored a strong countertendency. Even when the publisher of the newspaper is distinctly a business man, eager only to make his enterprise pay, he finds it bad policy to trifle with truth and to suppress fact. His subscription list is the foundation for his sales of advertising. The bigger and more select the subscription list, the higher the price for space. Moreover, there enters into the calculation another and more subtle value. By the association of ideas, the reader who believes the matter in the news columns is in a mood to believe the advertising columns. Unit for unit of circulation, the reliable newspaper gives better "advertising returns" than the one whose motives and honesty the reader suspects. Now, in our American scheme one cannot entirely suppress any live news story; especially if it smacks of scandal. We are a news-conscious people. The story leaks out. The gossips of the country club, the woman's club, the barroom, the labor union, spread it—with frills. And always the gossip carries this final embellishment. "They got to the *Bugle*—and stopped it!" By so much, the newspaper has impaired its credit with its subscribers; by so much, it has cut into its potential revenues.

As American journalism traveled along its destined road, all sorts of men and all sorts of newspapers marched with the procession. Among others, there were grateful recipients of favors from corporations under fire. In the first decade of this century a mere accident revealed that two or three big

New York insurance companies were playing ducks and drakes with the money of their policyholders. The investigation which followed brought to the fore young Charles Evans Hughes, now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In the course of his battle for the rights of the investor he published the fact that certain city newspapers had printed, at a dollar a line, tainted news stories written by publicity agents for the embattled companies. After we entered the World War, a Congressional investigation proved that a few American newspapers had taken German money in return for their editorial influence. The Federal investigation of the "power trust" in 1928 showed that many small-town and country newspapers had sold influence or suppression exactly as they sold advertising. And others have lived for a time on the subsidies of corporations.

Such things are happening yet; but less commonly than in old years. For experience has proved that the publisher who adopts such methods for making easy money is starting his newspaper on the road to ruin. In the 1920's the enormous costs of publishing caused a shrinkage of units the country over; newspapers no longer able to keep the pace sold out to more successful rivals—making journalism for the first time, in this country at least, an overcrowded profession. The newspapers which took money from the Germans all disappeared during this period. So also, those so unfavorably mentioned in the insurance investigation are, with rare exceptions, only memories. I know a journal of national reputation which some five or six years ago changed its policy overnight in return for a bribe. A year or two ago it went virtually into bankruptcy and was sold for little more than the value of its plant and its franchise. Old-time newspapermen, discussing this point, usually rake up the story of the *Alta California*. From the hurly-burly of mining-camp

journalism in San Francisco, it emerged a strong, stable and valuable morning newspaper. It was to San Francisco of the sixties and seventies what the *Times* is to present-day New York. Then arose the quarrel between the citizens of California and the "Southern Pacific push." The *Alta California* first took the side of the railroad and then the money of the railroad. In its later years it was holding out its hat for any corporation money whatever. The sapient of San Francisco knew all this. And eventually the *Alta California* so dwindled in influence that it was of no use even to the corporations. It died of slow anemia.

Two influences work against the permanent prosperity of a newspaper which consistently sells its editorial columns or publishes paid advertising disguised as news. The first—already noted—is this loss of confidence on the part of the public. The other, less obvious probably to a reader who has never worked for a newspaper, is the effect on the staff. From a social viewpoint, a newspaper is a curious organism. Economics defines a professional man as one who gives personal service. Journalists do not fit that definition; writers and editors are helping to manufacture a commodity. But they do fit the broader and more human definition of the term. Journalism has become a learned profession in almost the same sense as law and medicine. Yet, instead of working individually like the typical physician or lawyer, journalists are lumped off into groups numbering from five to five hundred, each group accepting intellectual domination not usually from one of their own kind but—in the majority of cases—from a businessman with the business outlook. It is he, the publisher, who has the power to determine whether his newspaper shall be Republican or Democratic, shall condone or attack the gang in control of City Hall. However, the wider tolerance of the American press in recent years

and the slackening in personal conviction have given individuals on the staff much more freedom to express their point of view. . . . The New York *Herald Tribune*, Republican on its editorial page, has been letting Walter Lippman ventilate Democratic sentiments on a news page. A low wail which reverberates through the *Herald Tribune* skyscraper on winter nights is not disordered steampipes. It is the ghost of the opinionated Horace Greeley, who founded the *Tribune*, expressing itself. . . . Further, a great many purely commercial publishers have enough sense of enlightened self-interest to give the staff its head in most matters relating to opinion. Newspapermen have grown accustomed to such mild fetters as these; they retain their cynically joyous interest in the news and the world, nevertheless. But when a newspaper's influence is being bought and sold through the cashier's window, when a sudden, mysterious order may change the whole policy overnight, when the editors keep in their desks lists of persons and companies which must never be mentioned favorably and others which must always be treated with kind consideration—the staff loses interest. Slaves, they work like slaves. And the life goes out of the newspaper.

Let us try to look at the matter with a sense of proportion. Successful newspapers, like successful men, seldom rise without greasing the way with a sin or two. We learned at Sunday school that all men are sinners; in which tendency that very human institution, the newspaper, does not differ from individuals. The critics of our "capitalistic press," like Sinclair and Oswald Garrison Villard, have massed the isolated instances of suppression, crookedness or brutality and drawn from them a sensational indictment. That is a biased method of attack—in itself a piece of expert journalistic technique. The general truth seems to be that the American newspaper,

as it settled into permanent form, has justified, though imperfectly, the wisdom of our Founding Fathers. They gave it extraordinary freedom in order that it might inform democracy. And if publishing all the news which democracy needs to know be the criterion, it has met the test. True, it has discovered means of influencing public opinion more powerful than the old-fashioned editorial—"handling" the news; in extreme cases, juggling the news. It is true also that owing to the high investment necessary for modern publishing the average American newspaper leans by instinct to the side of capital.

I have mentioned the danger to the individual newspaper in a consistent policy of news suppression. Beyond that, the general freedom of expression in these United States makes permanent silence regarding any vital bit of news virtually impossible. If it be local, and the local newspapers conspire to suppress it, "foreign" newspapers eventually take notice. Politicians expose it from the platform or over the radio. Statesmen looking for an issue ventilate it in hearings before legislative and Congressional committees. Liberal or radical magazines begin to mention it. Writers of books and pamphlets take up the cry.

At the turn of the century a mild epidemic of bubonic plague appeared in San Francisco. Following an American instinct against "knocking the home town," the local newspapers and the local board of health held their peace. But, as I can testify personally, the news began to pass by word of mouth. Then out-of-town newspapers heard of the epidemic and printed the story. The Federal health authorities quarantined the port—and everyone knew. In the case of the Scottsboro negroes, now stock in trade with the radical element, the local press seems to have suppressed all news favorable to the defendants. But the radicals, seeing an issue,

spread the story so widely that the press outside of Alabama had to recognize the case, whether it wished or no, as live news. And the citizen of Alabama, whatever his attitude toward the trial, may at least know the side of the defendants.

No, news gets printed in America; and in such manner as to forward the ultimate ends of democracy. Let us take testimony from abroad. J. B. Priestley, British author, is not conspicuously prejudiced in favor of America and Americans. Recently he has been surveying the whole state of England. Charily and vaguely he attacks the administration of the dole and the Unemployment Act. He finds political favoritism, inefficiency. He feels that the press might correct these evils if it could only print the truth. But no British newspaper would dare such a thing, honest though British journalism be. The libel laws prevent. And he finds himself wishing that Great Britain might adopt the American law of libel—"if only for a few days."

Chapter X

THE PRESS AGENT

SO FAR this book has confined itself to sketching those internal influences which have determined the relation of American news journalism to public opinion; the external ones have appeared only incidentally. The time has come to introduce a new character who enters the drama as a light, amusing comedian and ends, in the opinion of some critics and spectators, as a heavy villain. I refer to the personage at first designated as the press agent and successively —responsive to his growing importance—as the publicity man, the public relations counsel and the propagandist.

"The public," say editors, "is divided into two classes—those who are trying to keep out of print and those who are trying to break into print." As soon as the newspaper began its advance, commerce and politics discovered the enormous values which lie in free advertising; and the immodest element soon outnumbered the modest.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century appeared the press agent, an expert in crashing the editorial gate. He emerged, appropriately, from the show business. When the road company was the standard amusement for the "provinces," he traveled ahead of the actors, his pockets stuffed with passes, his mouth with humor, repartee and anecdote. Arrived in town, he mingled with his old friends, the newspapermen, spilling stories calculated to dress up the news columns and to spread the word that the show was coming. He was a harmless, picturesque and privileged liar.

Everyone understood that, just as everyone understands that a novelist lies, and forgives him for the sake of art. A few newspapers were offish and skeptical toward the press agent, and had to be fooled, along with the public, before they printed his creations. A few others, like the old New York *Sun*, "queered" the story by attributing it to the press agent—but printed it, nevertheless. However, the majority weighed not the truth of his stories but their interest and plausibility. After all, they had to do with that unreal world, the theater. And the average subscriber liked to read about those glamorous, exciting beings whom he had seen, or expected to see, across the footlights.

When sheer invention palled upon the newspapers, these imaginative artists began to make the news—in language then technical, but now current slang, they "planted" it. A favorite device, in the primitive days of this process, was to have the leading lady's jewels stolen at every stand. A stage mind reader and second-sight artist used to drive a four-in-hand coach through noon traffic with a sack pulled over his head. How could any city editor, hard-boiled though he might be, ignore such an event? Now and then the press agent added a flourish to his art by duping even the newspapers: as in the case of Wallace the Man-eating Lion. He was, in cool fact, a patriarch of most gentle and engaging character, the pet of the circus which owned him; but he expressed all his emotions, no matter how kindly, with a convincing roar. When the show invaded New York, the press agent planted Wallace in a remote shed, announced that he had escaped and notified the police. There followed a siege, with a fringe of war correspondents reporting every move for the latest edition. Finally a heroic lion-tamer entered the shed, subdued Wallace, and persuaded him to enter his cage. These simple devices grew into the marvelous,

complex inventions of the late Harry Reichenbach, king of the theatrical press agents. When the motion picture rose to the status of a major American business, every company employed a publicity corps; today cinema magazines of national circulation live by virtue of their creations. And ahead of all important sporting events marches a corps of press agents stirring up ballyhoo which the public only half believes, but which it reads with avidity.

This was mere fluff on the surface of national journalism, part of the showmanship that has always gone with the amusement business. But early in the game political factions, corporations and special interests, borrowing a leaf from the showman's notebook, began to employ ex-newspapermen to get them free advertising or to keep the public in a complaisant state of mind concerning their products or their larger operations. The ideal publicity agent furnishes the music for brass bands; but he himself walks in darkness and works in silence. So it is impossible to trace in detail the history of this curious trade. At first, indeed, the corporation press agents could hardly be distinguished from the lobbyists who swarmed round the state legislatures. Then, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, newspaper editors began to perceive that banks, important corporations and associations for improving the condition of the world were employing publicity men. They observed also that by a kind of mutation the species had given birth to a new variety —the professional whom Edward L. Bernays afterward called the Public Relations Counselor. According to general belief, it was the insurance companies that first employed him. The revelations of the Hughes Commission had given that business a black eye; further, it had revealed the fact that too many insurance executives were following the motto "The public be damned." This new official sat with the

directors and advised them regarding the popular effect of their actions or their policies.

Ivy Lee first let the public perceive the growing importance of the publicity agent. The revelation came almost accidentally when, summoned before the Commission of Industrial Relations of 1914, he was questioned concerning his part in the bitter and gory struggle between the Colorado Coal and Iron Company and its striking miners. In perfect good humor—often, indeed, with suppressed laughter—he identified the scheme of strategy, titled "ideals," which he had submitted to the company and on which it had based its hidden struggle for public support.

This craft grew steadily in number and importance. In the booming twenties of this century an accurate census might have shown that the working newspapermen of the United States scarcely outnumbered the publicity agents, counselors on public relations and press agents. "Vice-presidents in charge of public relations" began to sprinkle the directorates of banks, manufacturing concerns and public utility corporations. Not only did all firms which exploit artists employ press agents; so did individual artists like leading actors, motion-picture stars, concert singers and best-selling novelists. Whenever a set of Americans formed a national society to protect the interests of a craft or trade or to reform the world it secured a press agent even before it furnished offices. No convention could hope to succeed without the publicity man who went ahead to prepare the way and remained to put himself at service of the reporters. Churches employed them; and hotels, office buildings, fund-soliciting charities, universities, brokerage houses, art dealers, music publishers, departments of our state, national and municipal governments, social climbers, night clubs, restaurants, baseball teams, champion pugilists, manufac-

turers of widely used commodities—the roster is almost as long as the list of human activities.

In the majority of cases the American press agent has no great social significance. Many of the less eminent among them serve merely as a convenience, saving the reporters leg-work. The National Association of Carpet Tack Manufacturers is meeting in Cincinnati or New Orleans or San Francisco. The newspapers and the public in general wish unanimously to make their stay pleasant. However, the reporters assigned to the story know little about the problems, the aspirations and the Who's Who of tacks. The press agent furnishes all that; which helps greatly to insure the success of the party and the accuracy of press reports. An aspiring young artist is giving his first exhibition in a New York gallery. Probably the newspapers will send to this minor show a routine reporter, not a trained critic. The press agent informs him of what he should admire and has photographs ready to hand. A medical congress is meeting. Most of the reporters will know little about scientific medicine. The publicity agent interprets the proceedings, pointing out what revelations or discoveries have news value, striving especially to prevent sensational interpretations such as calling an experimental treatment a "cure." Often the congress has some benevolent public end in view—for example, early operation in cancer. The publicity man hammers this idea into the heads of the reporters. And so on through a long list of organizations and conventions which have unselfish objects and are doing the real work of the world. What with the complexity of modern life and the impossibility of any man being an expert in more than two or three of its activities, the publicity agent of this sort has become a benevolent necessity to modern journalism—even though he has crimped art by causing reporters to depend on "hand-

outs" rather than on their own eyes and ears. Publicity work has wormed itself into the structure of American journalism. It gives the individual newspaper a hundred free channels into the current news.

It is different with those important publicity agents who represent corporations, manufactured articles, parties and factions. While some of the most important among them work mainly to keep their principals from acts tending to antagonize the public, the real creative artists struggle constantly either to insert and insinuate favorable news or to suppress unfavorable news. At this point the layman is likely to put his finger on a seeming contradiction. If our press as a whole be free, untrammeled and unbribable, how does the publicity agent manage to get his stuff printed? Ah, that's an art; and like any other art, rather difficult to convey in words.

The old-time theatrical press agent bridged this gap mostly through his gift of personality. Glenmore ("Stuffy") Davis, "Tody" Hamilton, Channing Pollock—how eagerly did newspapermen await their appearance in town ahead of the show! Tody's ingenious and unblinking mendacities, Stuffy's Tenderloin wit, Channing's humorous outpourings of romance—metaphorically, the city staff rubbed their hands in expectation. To print all but the most absurd inventions of this charming trio seemed a poor recompense for so much innocent enjoyment. And personality of the sort to please newspapermen still counts strongly in the lower ranks of the profession. The greater artists, however, ignore the rank and file and pick off the officers. They themselves, or officials of the corporations they represent, lay for publishers and drop into their ears significant words to the wise.

Before newspaper publishers learned that yielding too much to advertising influence is by way of watering the

milk, threat of withdrawal or promise of business was the most useful tool. In the period when Standard Oil stood as personal devil to the reformers, the small-city and county press of two or three Middle Western states began a scattering attack. Since the corporation was looking at the moment for "relief" legislation, this hostility alarmed the management. They employed a publicity agent. He found that Standard Oil could manufacture an axle grease as a by-product. At his suggestion, his employers incorporated an axle-grease company whose charter showed no visible connection with Standard Oil, began manufacture and appropriated $100,000 for advertising. The publicity agent placed the advertisements. They, like the charter, did not mention Standard Oil. But they went only to newspapers which had refrained from attacking the company. Discreetly the publicity agent let it be suspected that this axle grease was a Standard Oil product. A few newspapers changed their tone. A week or so later they got the advertising. Gradually he choked with axle grease most of the hostile voices in the rural and small-town press. Incidentally—and to his pleasant surprise—this advertising campaign made the axle-grease company a paying enterprise. Fortune favors the just.

Even in times of more enlightened self-interest, approach to newspapers by the advertising route is by no means unknown. Also, here and there one finds a newspaper which can be bribed, directly or indirectly. The ruthless publicity agent with a ruthless company behind him sometimes employs this method of emergency.

But his best device is the same as that of the old-fashioned press agent—"making the news." Nothing sensational, like the escape of Wallace the Man-eating Lion, of course. The sort of news which will influence reasonable people. A public utility is under attack. The publicity agent has dug up an

array of facts which, if sufficiently circulated, will tend to confound the reformers. An important person, not in his company but willing to do it a favor, has an opportunity to make a speech on some well-reported occasion. The publicity agent writes it for him, bringing out the point in such phraseology as will tickle the ears of the reporters. The newspapers cannot ignore this speech—to do so would indict them for suppressing news.

One may say with truth that the thousands of national trade associations or organizations with special social purpose which occupy desk space in Washington, New York or Chicago exist mainly for the uses of publicity agents. A nation-wide organization gives the cause importance and dignity. Its conventions, banquets and luncheons make news, especially if the speakers be prominent persons. Its influential members in the smaller cities probably have acquaintance among publishers and editors. They can serve the publicity agent virtually as assistants to get his well-written copy into the newspapers. If the secretary of the order be a man of some prominence and a good speaker, the publicity man may arrange to route him through a circuit of Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions clubs, where he hands out copies of his speech to the reporters. These methods are almost routine with the expert publicity agent. Causes with every moral color use them; from sincere efforts to mold the commonwealth nearer the heart's desire to crooked assaults on the public pocketbook.

Edward L. Bernays, in his clever book *Propaganda*, has described and defended this process as regards purely commercial uses. And he gives examples of press-agentry which rise above routine and achieve real art. The velvet manufacturers found that their material was fast going out of fashion. How could they stimulate demand? Paris sets the

styles; and behind Paris stands Lyons, where workmen with traditions centuries old make the finest silk fabrics in the world. Someone saw the Lyons manufacturers, persuaded them to put out tentatively a few velvets with new colors and weaves. Under persuasive auspices these were shown to the famous Parisian coutouriers, who created several all-velvet costumes or inserted the fabric as a detail into others. When they introduced them at the regular showings, the promotors of velvet saw that these details were noted by the fashion reporters. It was news—to the world of vanities, big news. Across the Atlantic flashed the line "Velvet has come back!" The rest was easy.

Bernays cites also the case of Jackson Heights, a Long Island real-estate promotion of boom days. Its sponsors were looking for rich customers; and their publicity agent broke constantly into the news columns with stories which pointed its desirability for the socially ambitious. The Jitney Players, young pioneers of the Little Theater movement, had not yet invaded New York. He so managed things that they made their first metropolitan appearance at Jackson Heights, with a long list of sponsors from the social register. The theatrical reporters, the dramatic critics and the society editors took extensive notice of this event; and every story implied preforce that Jackson Heights was exclusive, socially desirable. Later the management, at suggestion of the publicity expert, offered substantial prizes for the best-decorated apartment and gave the competition prestige by enlisting eminent artists as judges. The result was hundreds of columns of free advertising by story or picture, all conveying the same moral to the fastidious homeseeker.

Let us take an example from politics. At the end of 1916 the sapient and informed knew that the United States stood on the verge of war with Germany. The movement toward

woman suffrage was gathering force. By a historical coincidence, the years preceding the Civil War had witnessed the same accession of strength for the cause of woman. When hostilities began, the Northern politicians promised Susan B. Anthony that if she and her lieutenants would drop suffrage agitation and put all their energies into supporting the war, Congress would grant the ballot when it was over. Miss Anthony trusted them and was betrayed. As we approached the World War, this precedent weighed heavily on the minds of the suffragists—especially Alice Paul who led the National Woman's party. This was the smaller but more enterprising and radical of the two feminine factions then fighting for the ballot. Toward the beginning of our first war year, Miss Paul was looking for some device to keep the subject permanently before President Wilson's attention. Inez Haynes Irwin, one of her supporters, suggested that she picket him. Alice Paul planted pickets, striker-fashion, before the White House. The picturesqueness of the performance—then unique—its very shock to sensitively patriotic instincts, made it a front-page story. Miss Paul, with her acute sense for public psychology, did not miss this point. She kept up the picketing with new frills to give it variety. The stupid functionaries who began throwing the pickets into jail played into her hands—they made news. And all during the war equal suffrage, in contrast with every other movement for permanent advancement of mankind, figured constantly on the front page.

These are not culpable instances of the larger press-agency. The maneuvers of the velvet men, the exploitation of Jackson Heights, we may put down without criticism among the ruses which our sharp modern competition makes inevitable. None can doubt the purity of motive which impelled Alice Paul to stage her picturesque demonstration,

and few today would deny the justice of her demands. However, the publicity agents for special and selfish causes inimical to the general interest and disturbing to the commonwealth use just as much ingenuity and invention plus at least a fair measure of corruption. These people do not boast of their deeds when the work is done, as did the agents for velvets and for Jackson Heights. Security, in their odd trade, depends upon permanent silence. Only occasionally does some unforeseen accident, like a Congressional investigation, for a moment lift the veil.

We shall study this gentry a little more closely when we come to the period of unlimited political propaganda which followed the World War. It is enough here to know that even before 1914 the United States of America, which had taken the lead in journalistic technique, had also evolved most expert methods for using journalism to further selfish causes.

Chapter XI

GERMANY GOES TO SCHOOL

INSIDIOUS national or factional propaganda, usually consisting of plain lies or of plausibly embellished truth, is probably as old as government; here and there in the worn patchwork which we call history we catch a glimpse of the process at work. Julius Caesar records that preliminary to a military advance he "caused propaganda to be spread among the tribes." The nineteenth century saw the rise of the national and colonial systems. The producers of Western Europe, fighting for markets, stood arrayed in regiments with Foreign and Colonial offices as their picket lines and the national armaments as their fortresses. For one weapon in this war they used propaganda—irregularly, somewhat inexpertly and with no sure grasp of its principles. At some periods during the contest for Chinese markets the British, the Germans or the French flooded various districts with pamphlets proving their own benevolent intentions and betraying the insidious plots of rivals. The decade before the World War witnessed shocking accusations concerning the conduct of the white men who managed for King Leopold II the Belgian Congo. An inquiry showed that—as commonly happens in such cases—there was a great deal of smoke and some fire. Many still suspect that Germany or Great Britain or both started the agitation for diplomatic purposes of their own. It is certain that Germany spread it, especially in the United States.

In one important respect, however, the greater European powers were groping toward the future technique of propa-

ganda. Only three nations, over there, had enough newspapers to support a national news bureau covering the whole world: France with the Havas Agency, Great Britain with Reuters, Germany with Wolff. Other nations must rely on one of these three for world news—since our Associated Press and United Press, while maintaining an imperfect system of correspondents to gather foreign news, did not as yet sell their copy directly to consumers outside our borders. In the early years of this century the three European bureaus held a cutthroat competition for territory. This process proving commercially unprofitable, they came together and divided the world between them. Wolff got the German colonies plus the Scandinavian countries, Havas the French colonies plus South America, Reuters the British colonies plus the Orient. Also, they made a complex division of the Balkans and Latin Europe. In entering upon this arrangement, the news bureaus were concerned mainly with commercial profits. But the Foreign Offices had their hands on it. Already the Reich was subsidizing Wolff; and Havas had with the French government an entente amounting to a subsidy. Reuters had never taken financial support from the government; but then as now, following the old British tradition, it held intimate relations with the Foreign Office and as a matter of patriotism played the game of the Empire.

The diplomats, of course, wanted foreign outlets for their native press bureaus as a means of advancing commercial and political influence. What they failed to see was that a French or German or British press service, if left alone, would automatically carry the national point of view. Every skilled newspaper worker knows that there is no such thing as purely objective reporting. To have interest, any story must be written from a point of view. The reporter, and equally the editor who kills, cuts or passes his report, may be an angel

of intellectual honesty. But he is also a Frenchman, a German, a Briton or an American and cannot escape the national habit of thought. Over a term of years, the honest intellectual attitude behind such news is bound powerfully to influence the reader.

However, the French, and still more the Germans, went further than this. A little awkwardly—for the trade of propaganda was still in its infancy—they slanted the news by playing up this favorable feature or playing down that unfavorable one. Their attitude toward American news illustrates a subtlety of this method. While they kept correspondents in Washington and New York, they also bought as "feeders" the American news reports of the Associated Press or United Press. Now, the honest press bureau catering to a foreign country must send all kinds of news for all kinds of tastes—murders and scandals and disturbances along with politics, inventions and national progress. Wolff and Havas and even Reuters emphasized the serious and dignified news from Europe and especially from their own countries. All such news from America they suppressed or cut to the bone. Then they dressed out and sensationalized their reports with American gang murders, divorces in high society, lynchings. An American traveling in far lands looked in vain for important information from the United States, but he could keep himself fairly well informed on the larger police news.

Germany, up to her neck in this variety of international intrigue, was in other respects beginning to grasp the principles of modern propaganda and to make "psychological preparation" for that general war of whose imminence the official class stood cynically aware. All the Europeans were girding themselves for the struggle with greater or less efficiency; but, as the military events of 1914 proved,

Germany most thoroughly of all. Her soldiers were probably as blind as the rest of their clan to the psychology of peoples in war. But the German Foreign Office had perceived the possibility of systematic propaganda at home and abroad. Imperial Germany believed in specialists—possibly believed in them too much. A government overstocked with specialists does not see the woods for the trees. Notoriously, the great experts on publicity lived and worked in the United States. Wherefore the Foreign Office placed young men destined for auxiliary diplomatic careers in our chains of newspapers and in some of our larger advertising agencies, that they might learn American methods and report upon them. The Foreign Office applied these methods only imperfectly at first; but it was learning. It showed conspicuously an appreciation of two American devices—slanting the news and making the news.

Further, it seems to have given much meticulous Germanic study to special national psychologies. The reports of experts on the best methods for guiding the opinions of such diverse mentalities as the Spanish, the Persian or the American lay in pigeonholes ready for use, whether in advancing German commerce during a state of peace or spreading respect for German *Kultur* during a war. Still further, the German diplomats looked within and asked themselves what features of the national life afforded the best material for exploitation. Two must have appealed even to the slowest imagination: German scholarship, much in fashion the world over, and German municipal government, then probably the most efficient in the world. Under tutelage of the Foreign Office, the universities began a system of exchange professors. Each of these men served, often unconsciously to himself, as an advance agent for German *Kultur* and German goods. In their academic vacations,

noted scholars made the circuit of South American universities, creating goodwill and markets. Similarly, the Foreign Office, by those same gentle blandishments at which the American publicity agent is so adept, managed to create universal interest in the German way of managing cities. The advance agents of German commercial interests served as cogs in this system; notably the foreign offices of the steamship companies. The Hamburg-American Line at New York—as every student of the war knows—in 1914 passed gracefully and without hitch into an agency for war propaganda.

To tell the whole story of German commercial and nationalist propaganda before the war would be impossible and also fruitless; it was only an imperfect apprenticeship for a new trade. Its course in our own country illustrates its character, intentions and tangible results. I have mentioned the close liaison with the universities. Before the Kaiser's advance agents finished, they had implanted the idea that the best finish to a higher education, especially in science, was a postgraduate course at a German university or technical school. Our experts on municipal government, welcomed with banquets, visited Germany and in our current magazines reported favorably but honestly the excellence of German plans for housing and sanitation.

"Form an organization" is a slogan with the American publicity agent. The German-Americans, who inherited the instinct for organization with their blood and sharpened it against their environment, had already congealed into gymnastic societies, singing societies, social clubs. It was necessary only to transform these groups into agencies of propaganda. Eminent citizens from the homeland made the circuit among them, delivering speeches whose burden was the general excellence of German civilization and the service

of these Germans to their adopted land. Mostly they spilled only facts. In the aspects of national life which they emphasized, German civilization was unquestionably superior; and the Teutonic element among us had always stood conspicuous for intelligence, industry and good citizenship. On the irreconcilable differences between German civilization and ours, especially in the matter of democracy and the attitude toward war, they held their peace. The proceedings and meetings which marked these visits got themselves printed—which, of course, was the main object.

"Making the news"—German prewar propaganda was beginning to understand that principle also. For one example: on the maiden voyage of the *Vaterland*, in the very summer when the war broke, went committees and commissions representative of all eminence in German life. Receptions, meetings, banquets, all prearranged, drew newspaper space by thousands of columns.

It would be superfluous to repeat that these methods were imitated from those of the American publicity man. And a trifling episode in which I was a minor actor showed that all through the war the Germans still kept their eyes fixed on their American teachers. In 1918 I had charge of our American foreign propaganda. One morning I found on my desk a communication from the War Trade Board. A firm in Finland had just ordered about a hundred new American books. Since Finland often served as a back door for contraband into Germany, would I look over this list and see if it seemed genuine? I did; and a subtle impression of fraud struck me. The fiction, poetry and travel seemed oddly selected; beside works of genuine merit stood obscure books by authors whose fame could not possibly have reached Finland. On a sudden inspiration, I crossed general literature from the list, and its meaning became plain. The rest—about twenty in all—

were the latest American treatises on advertising and publicity. The German Foreign Office was bringing its education up to date!

When the war broke, the Foreign Office had the machinery ready; although circumstances prevented for a time its full and intelligent use. Under the peculiar arrangements of the old imperial government, both espionage in any foreign lands and distribution of propaganda lay under immediate control of the diplomatic and consular representatives. Especially the main offices of their consular service served these two purposes. Fully instructed as to their tactical aims, well supplied with money, the consuls and consuls general were at work as soon as the German army crossed the Belgian border; and in the first autumn of the war they achieved a few important results.

History, it seems to me, has never given the German propagandist due credit for his part in bringing Turkey to the side of the Central Powers. Turks of the governing class venerated Paris only a little less than they did Mecca; most of them were in the beginning Francophile. However, the Turkish press was corruptible; and the Germans were willing to pay the price. When bribery did not work, they had other devices just as useful. The editor of one important newspaper was incorruptibly Francophile. Enver Pasha, prime minister, had served as an attaché at Berlin, favored Germany and was secretly helping out. The Germans persuaded him to arrest the editor on one of those charges so easy to trump up in old Turkey. His Germanophile substitute reversed his policy. In the early stages of the war the editor of another Francophile newspaper refused all offers to turn his coat for money. Suddenly he was called to the colors and ordered to a dangerous sector of the front—Enver Pasha again. Being a married man with children and

in an exempt class, he liked this very little. His paper became pro-German and prowar; and his mobilization was canceled. Before they finished, the German propagandists of the consulates had silenced every newspaper that opposed entering the war with Germany and were filling the press with matter calculated, on the basis of long study, to influence the Turkish mind. At the outbreak of war the British had seized two incompleted warships which they were building for Turkey in the Clyde shipyards. Historians have cited this act as one of the causes impelling Turkey to declare war. They miss, it seems to me, the main point—the manner in which the press, virtually controlled by the German propagandist, used this relatively trifling episode to stir up hatred against the Allies.

In all neutral lands, and especially in those whose attitude might affect the outcome of the war, the German diplomatic and consular agents began laying the foundations of a propaganda which was, when their planting bore fruit, the cleverest in the war—the only one which had at first any grasp of fundamental principles. True, it was to make its mistakes. Too often it put forth ravings of war-mad German professors whose immoderation damaged the cause they were trying to help. However, the most harmful of such effusions were not officially inspired; they were the work of uncontrolled amateurs. German propagandists, discussing their art with me after the war, have told me that such friends were always an embarrassment.

London was cable center for the world; and the British navy held the seas. When the British cut some of the oceanic cables and took control of the rest, they laid a great handicap on the German Foreign Office. The army had taken charge in Germany and held almost absolute power. At once it increased the handicap by deciding that German newspapers

might not be exported, thus largely shutting off the German point of view from adjacent neutral countries.

At the very first the Germans started to renew their communication with the outside world by erecting a wireless station at Nauen near Berlin. That mode of communication was still imperfect and this particular station very weak. But technical men worked constantly to increase its range and reliability. At first, however, strictly diplomatic and commercial messages filled its time schedule; the propagandists could not use it. Then, in the first winter of the war, the Foreign Office succeeded in persuading the all-powerful army that Germany, in view of the situation, needed intensive and scientific propaganda abroad. The army assigned Major Deutschmoser to this job. It looked to the Foreign Office like a ridiculous choice, since the major had never traveled outside of Germany in his life. He proved an agreeable disappointment. First he gathered up a force of experts on journalism; then he wangled from the government the use of the old Colonial Office, which he converted into a veritable Press Palace for the comfort and entertainment of visiting correspondents from neutral lands. More usefully, he completed and rounded out the Foreign Office's information on popular national psychology and journalistic habits in all the nations which Germany might wish to influence. Then the technicians succeeded in increasing the range of the Nauen wireless station until it could reach Mexico on the west and Persia on the east. They made it reliable too; it could work every minute in the twenty-four hours. This done, the German army prepared to install propaganda on an intensive scale. As a first step, they replaced Deutschmoser with Colonel Nicolai. This turned out to be another fortunate choice. In the field of propaganda Nicolai was the individual genius of the war. In the same field the Nauen wireless

"news" service, set afoot by the end of 1915, seems to me, looking back, the one best individual job.

This was a full daily report, three or four columns long, on the events of the war. The Nauen waves, as I have said, reached from Germany to Persia and Mexico. In these or other countries within its range German agents picked up the messages and relayed them by local stations to the most remote corners of the world. The Nauen service "covered" the war in its military, diplomatic, naval and social aspects exactly as did the daily news budgets of our Associated Press or United Press. It was not, on the surface, especially prejudiced. After the first experimental period, it never raised its suave voice nor asserted that Germany was in the right. It purported to record events on the Allied fronts as well as on the German fronts. But constantly it slanted the news, after the fashion of the expert American editor. Allied victories were noted but minimized. German victories received full emphasis. Speeches and statements of Allied leaders were reported briefly, and often in subtly garbled form. The remarks of German statesmen were reported with full effect. The damage in Zeppelin raids on London and the military justification therefor were gently emphasized. And, in substance, any reader who took his whole story of the war from the Nauen wireless report would in six months form a picture of Germany as the persecuted and admirable party to the war. It may be superfluous to add that no one in the Allied countries, except the Foreign Office and the military censors, ever saw the Nauen report!

The promoters of the Nauen wireless did not content themselves with throwing this matter into the air. Eventually they saw to it that it got printed in the neutral countries. At the foot of every receiving station sat a propagandist who translated the service from German into

the vernacular and offered it to local editors—free. There, indirect but effective bribery came into the process. News service costs money—when an editor works on the edge of the civilized world, much money. The press cable rate between Europe and most South American countries was in those days at least a British shilling a word. The Nauen service, so complete and well written that he could offer it without apology, seemed to many and many a provincial editor like a gift from the gods. It achieved extensive publication in all the Americas south of the Rio Grande, in Spain, in the Scandinavian countries and—before they came into the war—the Balkan nations. Even in the United States the pro-German element found it useful. . . . I cannot forbear going ahead of my story to introduce a trifling but strange anecdote. When I was filling that same war post, an officer from the cipher department of Military Intelligence brought in the Nauen wireless report for the day, just as our army operators had plucked it from the air, and called my attention to a fact I had already noticed: it was broken at intervals by a five-group cipher expressed in numbers.

"That's been happening for months," he said. "It's the hardest cipher we've encountered—some entirely new principle. The only way we can crack it is to find a word likely to recur in it. Have you any suggestions?"

My assistant, Robert Rudd Whiting, was sitting across the desk.

"Well," he suggested, "this is propaganda stuff, isn't it? Try the German words for 'propaganda' and 'propagandist'; if those fail, try 'report,' 'news' and 'rumor.'" Two days later the officer returned to announce that they had cracked the Nauen cipher. The first deciphered message began:

"To propagandists in Northern Africa: spread the following rumors among the tribes—"

When after the Battle of the Marne the western lines locked along the Aisne and the "fresh and joyous war" settled down to stale and dismal mass murder, someone in the German government persuaded its army to consider—for once—diplomatic needs. By October, 1914, the military command had atoned for its ban on the export of newspapers by admitting German and neutral correspondents to the front, even as far as the firing trenches. A courteous but watchful escort and an expert censor saw that they observed or transmitted nothing which would furnish vital information to the enemy. Otherwise they wrote what they witnessed. And here, perhaps half-unwittingly, the Germans laid hold on another principle of good propaganda. We tend to like what we know. The art of "building up" a political figure lies largely in acquainting the public with his habits, his eccentricities and his personal tastes—witness the success of this method with the variant figures of Calvin Coolidge, Huey Long, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Sometimes, indeed, this method becomes effective even in the case of characters whom the public has every reason to hate. John Dillinger was a murderous, vulgarly dissolute, doublecrossing little rat. No one was trying to "build him up," of course. But in the period when the whole Middle West was hunting Dillinger, constantly the newspapers fed us stories about his childhood, his escapades, his squalid amours and his family relations. And even the readers who most deplored his deeds began shamefully to admit a secret liking for him.

The German army, viewed close at hand, was much like any other army—a colossal aggregation of amiable boys, making the best of a bad personal mess, living recklessly

and, when they could put fear into the back of their heads, humorously. Report life at this front accurately, humanly and understandingly, and the reporter made friends for Germany even though he said no word for the German cause. In the case of the United States, as in that of other neutral nations, some of the foreign correspondents who saw the German firing line in 1914 and 1915 represented pro-German newspapers and infused their copy with the German point of view. The majority, at least among the Americans, wrote for newspapers which were either neutral or pro-Ally, and had themselves no love for the German cause. But it all amounted to the same thing. Probably this early decision to admit correspondents under strict tutelage was the most effective action of the German propagandists in the early days of the war.

Technically speaking, the tactics of the Allies, during this same period, were decidedly inexpert. Both the French and British General Staffs entered the war with a tradition that the correspondent at the front was almost as dangerous as the enemy across No Man's Land. This attitude grew out of bitter experience. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the army of Napoleon III had put virtually no check on the operations of neutral correspondents. They reported details which the experts of the German intelligence Department, working in Rome, put together to make valuable facts. So, the French learned afterward, the Germans anticipated almost every move of Napoleon's army. In the Boer War, 1899–1902, the British admitted correspondents, under censorship, rather freely. This control was neither strict enough nor expert enough, however. Again, a Boer or pro-Boer element in Europe—mostly in Berlin—gleaned details which meant nothing until collated with other details; when they might mean a fatal much. The results went by grape-

vine telegraph to the Boer army; and these slips, the British army believed afterward, did much to give the hostile generals an insight into British plans and to prolong the dismal struggle in South Africa.

The governments and armies of belligerent Europe, even the German, still thought in terms of old-fashioned war. It was a kind of important sporting event, fought between champions; while the nations as spectators sat in the grandstand cheering them on. None had yet fully perceived that modern war, then and thereafter, must be a contest between nations wherein every citizen stood a belligerent and, by the same token, fair game for killing. With this ancient idea of war in the back of their minds and fear of the enemy Intelligence Department in the front, the British and French General Staffs made this what Max Eastman called "a private war." At once the French clapped a rigid censorship on their press. All along, and especially in the early days, the Parisian newspapers appeared with gaunt white spaces from which, at the last moment, the censor had removed some story which might furnish a slender military clue or held implied criticism of the government. At first the British accomplished the same end more gently; the tradition of co-operation with the Foreign Office still held with decent, ethical British journalism. Then they crystallized practice into law. There were no blank spaces in the British newspapers; but the effect was much the same.

British, French and Belgian War Offices united on another policy. There were to be no correspondents, foreign or domestic, at this war. They did perceive dimly the principle that a population sending forth its sons into utter darkness was likely to grow restive. Hence the "communiqué"—a brief, restrained and yet biased account, amounting often to not more than six lines, of the day's military operations.

An officer at headquarters prepared it; before it passed on to the public, almost the whole General Staff had taken turns at cutting out ideas and turns of expression. It was, of course, tainted and slanted, softening the blow of defeats, emphasizing victories, sometimes lying deliberately in order to deceive the enemy. And emerging as it did in driblets, it gave no real idea of how the war was going or what the shooting was all about. By 1915, the British, responsive to a growing demand for real news, introduced a faint improvement. They established an official "eye witness," whose account of military movements and atmospheres excelled the daily communiqué only in length. It was not his fault; he was working under an apprehensive censor who daily cut his copy to collops.

The native journalists had to accept all this; strict acts for the defense of the realm or the republic made violation of these military regulations the next thing to espionage. Our American correspondents, trying to report the war, did not come under this system. Here and there they found some unguarded point in the cordon stretched against the press, slipped through it—and usually encountered at the end a military policeman. The survivors of the hopeful little company which sailed in August, 1914, to report the European War—"of course, it can't possibly last six months; there isn't enough money in the world"—still rank their efficiency by the number of their military arrests. I boast seven of them: two by the Germans during their advance through Belgium, two by the British, two by the French and one by the neutral Dutch!

If at this point I grow autobiographical, it is because I figured in one episode which illustrates fully the absurdities of the situation. The action known as the First Battle of Ypres began about October 30, 1914, and ended about

November 15th. It was a desperate drive of the German army, with superior forces and munitions, against the British. Its object was to turn the left flank of the Allies and take the Channel ports. In November, between military arrests, I caught a glimpse of confused fighting, from which I could make neither head nor tail, in this quarter; then in December I sailed, temporarily, for home. On returning to London in February, 1915, I learned from high staff officers that this action was part of a general engagement fought with great valor by the outnumbered and undergunned British army; and that it had shut off the Germans from the Channel ports. As a matter of fact, it was the greatest battle, for numbers engaged and losses in action, that British history had known up to that time. It happened so near to England that residents of the East Coast heard the guns. Yet the British public, fed on brief, jerky, hazy communiqués, knew virtually nothing about it. From certain men who had fought it, watched it or directed it, I got the story, wrote it for a syndicate of American newspapers and sent a copy home by courier. A day or so later, I met Lord Northcliffe, publisher, among other newspapers, of the *Times* and *Daily Mail*. He was looking for some implement to break the stupidly exacting censorship. When I told him of this story, he offered to publish it—after himself editing it according to the rules of the military censor—provided I was willing to take a chance. I consented; and I cannot to this day say whether or not I regret my decision. For while the story made a sensation, it brought down such a storm on my head that in the end I escaped from France to Spain almost as a fugitive, and sailed home via Portugal. I had to work for three months on the British and French embassies at Washington before I won the privilege of returning to the war without danger of arrest as a spy!

Chapter XII

THE ALLIES MUDDLE ALONG

MEANTIME, the British and the French held one high trump in the game of propaganda by news; a card which they did not know at first how to play. London had long been cable center of the world, and by the same token, news center. When the British navy clamped down its hold on the seas, the Allies cut most of the cables between Germany and the outside world. This rendered the Nauen wireless station, mentioned previously, a necessity for Germany. However, neutral correspondents in Berlin could still cable via Holland and London. At first the British interfered very little with press matter sent by this route—perhaps for fear of offending neutral governments such as ours. The censors, being military and naval officers, seem to have suppressed only such information as tended obviously to discredit or hamper the Allied armies and navies; and by the time the Allies began to grasp the principles of this game and strictly to censor news arriving via Holland, the Germans had their wireless system working. However, the situation had one obvious advantage for the Allies—sheer quantity. Having their own wireless stations as well as cables, they could send overseas five words to Germany's one.

From the first the French and the British put out formal propaganda of an old-fashioned sort, for dissemination at home and abroad. The domestic newspapers, regarding encouragement of war hatred as both a means for doing

their bit and a circulation builder, grabbed at this matter eagerly; and the censorship choked all voices of dissent. Nevertheless, the European journalists, and especially those of the smaller kind, felt a delicious sense of freedom. In one respect the irritating, confining laws of libel stood repealed; they could without fear of consequence write anything they pleased about the collective or individual enemy—so long as that anything was hostile in spirit. As for propaganda into neutral countries, it made an uncertain and jerky start. In the early, archaic stage of the war, some of it proceeded from private individuals or unofficial societies, and some from the Foreign Offices. With a few exceptions, both the French and the British employed the "editorial" method—direct argument.

By habit of mind, the Foreign Offices tuned their songs to the diplomatic string. The British seized at once upon Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality. Here, accidentally they laid fumbling hands on one main device of good modern propaganda—the half-truth. Great Britain entered the war because Germany invaded Belgium; agreed. But the prime, compelling motive behind the act was a fear that Germany would gain and hold the Channel coast and so "point a pistol at the heart of England." Defending the sanctity of treaties stood as a distinctly minor motive. However, the Foreign Office and the controlled newspapers suppressed any hints of selfish national ends, and painted Britain as the heroic champion of small nations. This pose may have served to advance the cause with some of the neutrals; but probably it deceived few informed Britons. The next device was more useful and successful. Raking up rather stale news, they rang all the changes on German misbehavior during the invasion of Belgium and Northern France during August, 1914. And here again they employed the plausible half-truth.

This is no place to discuss at length the question of war atrocities; but perhaps an outline of the truth about the Belgian invasion may be necessary as a background. The German army entered the war in a state of discipline which amazed all who witnessed the march through Belgium. "Beside them," remarked Gerald Morgan, fresh from France, "the French were a gypsy train." Two million men jerked suddenly out of civilian life included quite naturally a small proportion of incipient sadists and rapists. Yet the proportion of individual atrocities was as low as anyone had the right to expect from an army marching through a hostile foreign country. The real German atrocities proceeded from the General Staff; and they were committed, loosely speaking, under orders.

The German plan of strategy included an initial battle which should capture or isolate Paris, followed, after the French reformed either in their eastern territories or at the traditional barrier of the Loire, by a second and final battle. As the Kaiser's army advanced its line of communications was bound to become embarrassingly attenuated. The more actively hostile the inhabitants along the way, the greater the number of soldiers necessary to guard that line. If the Belgians and Northern French waged guerilla warfare, the imperial army might have to fritter away its army of attack at the front. It was important, then, to render the inhabitants good dogs. The Great General Staff had long decided that "initial severity" would yield the best results. Simply kill a certain number of the inhabitants as an example to the rest. How could the army do that and put the best face on the matter before the world? The Great General Staff fell back upon the "law of reprisals."

Until the Franco-Prussian War, the military clan of all nations assumed that any citizen, whether in uniform or in

civvies, had the right to defend his home. In that war, however, the Prussian army found itself much embarrassed by Frenchmen who, after the rout of their armies, secured guns and sniped at the invaders. Arbitrarily, the Prussians passed their own rule of warfare to deal with these irregulars or *francs-tireurs*. Any civilian not regularly enlisted and uniformed who was caught shooting at the Germans, or even possessing a rifle, must die before a firing squad. The world incorporated that principle into the canons of "civilized warfare." We, for example, applied it during our occupation of Veracruz in 1914. The German General Staff took this rule and extended it. If, during the Belgian occupation, anyone sniped at the Germans from a house, everyone in that house capable of bearing arms was arbitrarily to die. This applied to all ages over fourteen years and to both sexes. Then the invading army was to burn the house. For this purpose, every German division carried as equipment incendiary pastilles and patent kindling. If sniping proceeded from more than one house along a street, the army was to burn that street. If it spread to the rest of a town, they were to burn the whole town. The General Staff raked up from barbaric warfare the custom of taking hostages—always prominent people—and holding each responsible for the behavior of his own community. In case it did not behave, the hostages were to die against a wall. Such were the orders of the invading German army as related to me at the time—I being then a prisoner in their hands—not only by privates in the ranks, but by regimental and staff officers.

Further—it has always seemed to me—the Great General Staff saw to the "psychological preparation" of its forces. The *franc-tireur* of the Franco-Prussian War had become a fireside tale in Germany. The army entered Belgium in a state of nerves regarding snipers and civilian assassins. Judging

by their conversation, they feared the shot in the night more than the bolts of the enemy. Not one soldier, but a score, told me with bated breath that in the Franco-Prussian War thirty thousand German soldiers had been stabbed in the back while in the embraces of French prostitutes. Always the same number—thirty thousand. When a rumor continues as definite as that, it is not wholly irresponsible. Someone is planting it.

Such were the orders and such was the state of mind when the Germans entered Belgium. How sternly and completely any given company or regiment obeyed its orders depended upon the sort of man in charge. When an isolated shot came from behind closed shutters, the commanding officer, if he happened to be a reasonably decent fellow, "punished" only the apparent culprit. If he was a blood-and-iron regular, or one of those younger officers trained in the Prussian military schools to conscious brutality, he applied the rules to the limit. Similarly, if the humane officer encountered some trouble in an occupied town, he spared the hostages. The blood-and-iron man lined them up and shot them—the burgomaster, the parish priest, perhaps a senator or so. Sometimes he exceeded even his orders—as in the ghastly affairs at Dinant and Malines. The genesis of the famous Louvain affair, of whose later stages I was an eyewitness, remains shrouded in mystery. The stories which both Belgians and Germans told at the time did not hold water. But certainly the part of this tragic business which I saw went methodically—incendiary squads lighting house after house, firing squads conducting military executions against walls. Regarding the atrocities in Northern France, I can speak with less authority. Probably in some spots the inherent hatred of France caused the commanding officer to exceed the Belgian frightfulness—as notably at Gerbé-

viller. Even in France, however, the atrocities, while sometimes spontaneous massacres, seem to have been more often the fruit of those same orders regarding civilian snipers.

The Allied propagandists, deliberately or in the warped mood inspired by war, took these episodes and twisted them out of proportion. The average German soldier, an orderly individual caught in the trap of war, became in British journalese a Hun, in French, a sadist. Even when the Allies began to embody their charges in diplomatic blue books and white books, they presented tainted, slanted documents wherein a foundation of truth supported a heavy superstructure of conjecture and false inference. James Bryce gave his name to the British White Book; and now that he is dead, we know how reluctantly.

However, in this stage of Allied propaganda the most effective story was not an exaggeration nor a perversion of the truth, but a plain, damned lie. During the first fortnight of the war, a hysterical American woman fresh from Belgium came into the ballroom of the Hotel Savoy, where Herbert Hoover was assembling the American tourist-refugees, and spilled a sensational tale. At a railroad station, she said, she had seen fifty Belgian Boy Scouts with both hands cut off at the wrists. The Germans had done this so that the boys might never fight against the Fatherland when they grew up. Perhaps she was elaborating on a story which she had picked up in her travels and embellished with a war-mad imagination; perhaps this was its first appearance. At any rate, the report that Germans were cutting off children's hands in Belgium ran like mercury through the Allied countries. The propagandists took it up, embellished it, flung it to every corner of the world. It made the illogical and unexpected hit of an *Abie's Irish Rose*. To express doubt of it in pro-Ally

circles—as I found during my home visits— was to face an accusation of pro-Germanism. In vain the Germans and the neutrals who kept their balance pointed out that a child so mutilated would bleed to death. In vain travelers from Belgium reported that the Belgians themselves never heard of such a thing until the story leaked in from outside. Its success and its usefulness in engendering hate persisted until the very end of the war. Even after the Armistice, the Poincaré administration in France incorporated it in those schoolbooks by which they were teaching "consecrated hatred" to the rising generation. I need scarcely add my belief that the story was untrue. One was always hearing of instances—but second hand and third hand. Investigated, they crumbled. Once, for example, an enraged Briton expressing himself at the Savoy Bar threatened to beat me up for doubting that three Belgian refugee children, living next to his sister in St. John's Wood, had not a hand between them. I got this address, went out to see, and discovered three Belgian children, indeed, but with six remarkably sturdy hands. Lord Northcliffe, who believed the rumor at first, had a standing offer of two hundred pounds for an authentic photograph to prove it. No one ever claimed the prize. By 1915, as I can testify personally, he had ceased to believe. So had every other responsible journalist. Yet to the end of the war this story was circulated by men who lied and who knew they lied.

Handicapped by their real record in Belgium, the Germans had no luck with their denials of the "hands" story. Rather feebly, they tried to counter with a canard of their own. From the irresponsible rumors flying through Europe, they picked up a story to the effect that the Belgians, upon the declaration of war, cut off the breasts of all the German women living in Brussels. Somehow—possibly because the

Allies had the jump—this tale proved relatively ineffective and was soon withdrawn from circulation. So, for the same reason, was a horror tale about Allied nurses poking out the eyes of wounded prisoners. The next canard of the Germans rested upon data which could be made to look like evidence; and it did better. During the South African War, the Boers charged, whether falsely or truly, that the British were using "dumdum" bullets. These had a soft nose which, spreading on contact, inflicted nasty wounds. The name was derived from the Dum-Dum ammunition factory in British India. Now in the World War, this concern manufactured all kinds of small war material. Having discovered in a captured British position a few empty boxes marked "Dum-Dum," the Germans photographed them and put forth the old Boer charges. This also failed to make much impression upon neutral psychology. The average citizen probably reasoned that in a war where explosive shells were daily tearing thousands of men to mincemeat an illegal bullet made little difference. The Allies had all the best of the controversy over atrocities. They owed this minor victory not to their expertness, but to the fact that their lies and exaggerations rested on truths.

All through the war, indeed, the curious inability of German military commanders to read alien psychologies, plus the touch of brutality in their methods, handicapped their own propagandists and played into the hands of the Allies. Edith Cavell, as all the world knows, died for helping Belgian and British soldiers to escape from Belgium to their own lines. In this conspiracy there were six principals, all arrested and held for trial. Four of them were prominent people of title. The military authorities, talking the matter over coolly, decided that one or two of the accused must die as a warning to Belgium. Shooting the noble personages, they

felt, might stir up too much resentment. But a mere professional nurse and an obscure architect's apprentice—none would bother much about them! I need not dwell on the stupidity of this decision; the statue of the little nurse who met her end like a soldier and a Christian stands in Trafalgar Square, a monument not only to her heroism but to their blindness and snobbery. When on a technicality they shot Captain Fryatt, who had valiantly tried to ram a submarine about to sink his unarmed merchant ship, they handed the Allied propagandists another useful human-interest story.

The air raids on London and Paris and the submarine campaign worked to the same end. Military convenience may have justified them; I shall not go into that. But they were automatically useful to opposition propaganda. In the matter of air raids, indeed, bad luck dogged the Germans. The bombs seldom hit anything of military use, and were forever blowing up peaceable families, old peoples' homes, orphan asylums. Making the best of a bad job, the German official communiqués in reporting an air raid on the British metropolis used to refer to "the fortified city of London," which meant the Tower of London, a formidable fortress in the twelfth century and a museum in this. It could now be reduced by one field gun. As for the submarine campaign, the German propaganda constantly stated that the British blockade, designed to starve out civilian Germany, was just exactly as barbarous. There was considerable truth in this contention. But the British blockade remained an abstraction, while the submarine campaign was concrete. So far, Germany was not suffering very much for lack of food. To grasp the final implications of the blockade required foresight and trained imagination. The submarine campaign, on the other hand, was constantly raising invidious pictures—sailors blown up without a chance to fight back, whole crews

struggling until they sank in the icy waters, bodies of women and of babies washed ashore. I need not here recall the effect of the *Lusitania* affair on the American imagination. And ten human beings see with the eye to one who sees with the mind.

Here I might appropriately mention another German maneuver which failed of its objective. The Second Peace Conference at The Hague had in drawing up the "code of civilized warfare" inserted a clause forbidding the use of poison gas. This attracted little attention at the time, since these substances had never served as a weapon for modern armies. In the middle of April, 1915, a brief passage in the daily German communiqué announced vaguely that the British had attacked a sector of their line with poison gas, "contrary to the rules of civilized warfare," and had thereby gained a little ground. Of course, the British operators plucked that paragraph out of the air and transmitted it to headquarters. It puzzled them. That was the period when, Kitchener blighted the War Office, when the artillery was actually withdrawing guns from the front for lack of ammunition. In such circumstances, the British army had found neither time nor energy to experiment with new and untried munitions. What did the Germans mean? "Just another Hun lie," decided General Headquarters unimaginatively, and forgot the matter. On April 22nd they understood. That day the Germans loosed before Ypres a cloud of chlorine gas which broke a troublesome hole in the British line, killed eight thousand Frenchmen, Englishmen and Canadians, wrecked thousands of others for life. Only then did the slow military imagination grasp the meaning of that passage in the German military communiqué. It was by way of setting up a false moral justification. Yet although this ruse probably helped to keep the German public complaisant,

it had small effect upon the neutral world. The details of the mythical British attack, as they emerged from the German propaganda mill, were remarkably hazy. And perhaps the sixth sense for truth was at work. The Allies, while raving over the German violation of civilized warfare, went ahead full speed preparing gases of their own; and in a few months the question of moral justification became academic.

If I mention the accidental successes of Allied propaganda during the early stages of the war, it is only by way of drawing a proportionate picture. In sum total, the British propaganda reminded the finished American reporter of an amateur newspaper. Here and there a contributor just happened to hit the target. H. G. Wells' novel, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, presumably not written as propaganda at all, was tremendously useful in the United States. Part of its effect rose from its moderation. Wells called no names, hurled no insults; he even dared introduce as a character a gentle and likable German caught in the web of war. Going to the other extreme, the first propaganda pamphlet sent from London to Spain embraced the statement that the German atrocities in Belgium "exceeded the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition." The blunder in tact was not the only mark of the tyro in this singular production. Harsh words about atrocities, while effective with the English-speaking peoples, made no appeal to the Spaniard, who is a trifle callous concerning pain in himself or others. The Germans understood that; understood also the odd sporting sense of the Spanish populace, as notoriously exemplified in the bullfight. They thrilled not to a contest—"let the best man win"—but to masterful certainty. And so the Germans were wisely dinning into the ears of the Spanish the one refrain, "We are winning—we are winning."

As for the French, they played up the atrocity stories and for the most part let it go at that. Officials and populace alike seemed at first to have developed a curious sort of national pride. France was upholding the aegis of civilization. He who could not see that—let him perish in his blindness! Early in 1915 they did establish an institution called *La Maison de la Presse* which dealt with foreign journalists in search of general information. But their front, like the British, remained officially a dark mystery to correspondents both foreign and domestic.

The nation, however, was fortunate in one circumstance. American scientific students, wishing to finish off their education abroad, usually went in those days to the excellent German technical schools; but the artists of the Americas and of the Latin and Scandinavian countries trooped by instinct to France. To know a people is usually to like them; especially if the knowledge be illuminated with memories of such an engaging city as Paris. And the artists were much more articulate than the scientific men. Even in the first autumn of the war, such American writers as Gelett Burgess, Mildred Aldrich, Herbert Adams Gibbons, Helen Gibbons and Edith Wharton were sending home articles and books aglow with affection and sympathy. This stood in refreshing contrast to the "atrocity stuff." It was the propaganda of love as contrasted with the propaganda of hate; and the former, although slower in effect, is yet powerful. The image of "our friend France" which the American artistic element built up in the American mind operated even more powerfully than historic ties to draw thousands of young Americans into the Foreign Legion, the Lafayette Escadrille, the ambulances and the hospitals. And all of these adventurers, through their letters, through their constant appearance in the news, gave further impetus to a warm and romantic friendship for France.

Chapter XIII

THE ALLIES LEARN THE LESSON

THE archaic stage of the World War lasted about a year. Germany led the way into the more intensive modern stage. Very early she began to perceive, though somewhat dimly, that warfare was no longer a fight between professional champions with peoples standing as mere spectators. Every resource, human and material, must be thrown into the scale.

Northcliffe's "munitions exposé" early in 1915 caused this truth to dawn upon the slow British intelligence; the more nimble-minded French had begun to appreciate it even earlier. And if governments intended virtually to mobilize all citizens, they must work to maintain civilian morale. They could not accomplish this while the front remained a mysterious hell where the sons of the nation died in a silent fog. Moreover, soldiers on leave were spreading invidious truths concerning conditions and operations at the front; and these contrasted widely with the official communiqués and the inspired articles in a controlled press.

The press itself was growing restive. The administrations in power assumed—humanly and naturally—that their interests were identical with those of the nation; and the censors ruled that criticism constituted treason. I have mentioned the munitions exposé in England. Lord Northcliffe, most powerful journalist of his time, had begun to realize that Kitchener, head of the War Office and popular idol, was living in the last chapter. Kitchener did not under-

stand that the success of national armies in such a war as this rested on the organization of national factories to make munitions. So far the Germans had been holding their line with machinery; the British, with human lives. In the spring of 1915 the British opened operations with an attack at Neuve-Chapelle. It made only the faintest dent in the German line and it hung thousands of British corpses on to the barbed wire. Northcliffe had managed to get Colonel C. A. Repington, his military critic, to the front. Returning, Repington wrote for the *Daily Mail* a restrained six-hundred-word story revealing the failure and laying it to shortage of munitions—in especial, of high-explosive shells. This contribution never went to the censor; and in spirit and letter it violated all the rules. Northcliffe might have done better to leave his story undecorated, and let it sink into the British intelligence. But, being temperamental, he rammed home the point with an editorial of his own wherein he attacked not only Kitchener's conduct of this war, but his record in past wars. The government had been "building up" Kitchener as a device to stimulate recruiting; he had become the popular hero. All Britain blazed with indignation. . . . That afternoon I went down to see Northcliffe in his City offices. On the way I passed several groups of enraged citizens. The proceeding in all cases was about the same. An orator, having harangued the crowd, would put the climax to his remarks by lighting a copy of the *Daily Mail* and waving it in air while the populace cheered. I found Northcliffe guarded by Scotland Yard men and very low in mind. "How has this row affected the circulation?" I asked him. "Going up," replied Northcliffe. "I suppose they're buying it to burn!"

Yet the cat was out of the bag; and few isolated newspaper stories in history ever had such important results. It forced Prime Minister Asquith to form a coalition government,

began the eclipse of Kitchener, set Britain on the way to a modern conception of warfare.

In France, Clemenceau, exercising his special privilege as ex-premier and leader of a party, was daring to print tempered criticism of the government in his personal organ *L'Homme Libre*. When finally the Socialists in power suppressed this journal, he changed its title to *L'Homme Enchainé* and went on playing the same tune, though on a muted string. Plainly, it was becoming good policy to let the press blow off a little steam by writing its own firsthand accounts of the war.

Beyond this, foreign relations, especially those with the neutrals, were growing complex. The British blockade was imposing arbitrary rules concerning exports of American goods to Germany or to adjacent countries. Similar rules embarrassed Holland and the Scandinavian countries. This was leading to irritation; only a state of public opinion overwhelmingly favorable to the Allies could prevent eventual trouble. And German propaganda, in spite of all its handicaps, was making some headway in the United States. The militant Irish element was stirring up hatred of England. Certain episodes which occurred before the war had driven Hearst, with this chain of newspapers, virtually into the opposition camp. Several Middle Western newspapers, notably the powerful Chicago *Tribune*, leaned toward the German side. Latin America stood as yet remote from the struggle. But German propaganda, an investment for the postwar era when Germany should resume her foreign trade, was making notable headway in that territory. So also, an intensive campaign in Spain had produced a state of public opinion where extensive bribery, by which Germany secured vitally useful bases for her submarines, went unpunished and almost uncriticized.

The first moves toward a new Allied attitude came from the British and occurred toward the end of 1915. Really, this was one fruit of Northcliffe's coup. The eclipse of Kitchener advanced the personal influence of David Lloyd George. He is one of those statesmen who, like our two Roosevelts, possesses the journalistic instinct; and he had chafed at the limitations of the censorship. Arthur Balfour entered the coalition Cabinet. In his months of forced inactivity during the early days of the war he had spoken with his cool and deadly sarcasm on the stupidity of British relations with the American press. "We stand to lose America if this keeps up," he said once in my presence. "And if we can hold America, we can afford to forget all other neutrals." The new British attitude dated from the rise of these two men in the cabinet. At last the British began admitting correspondents to their front. In a chateau near western headquarters they installed half a dozen British representatives—expert reporters of such rank as Perceval Phillips, George Ward Price, Beach Thomas and Philip Gibbs—together with "Bobby" Small and William Philip Sims from our Associated Press and United Press. A corps of officers supervised their movements, scrutinized their copy. According to the rules imposed and accepted, these censors not only deleted the faintest trace of information useful to the enemy, but saw that all matter proceeding from the front had the correct "spirit." . . . When the war was over, Sir Philip Gibbs relieved his mind by writing *Now It Can Be Told*. . . . A still larger corps of officers served the sporadic visitors to the front. These tourists included, at first, only important authors, correspondents for foreign newspapers and magazine contributors with useful names. But the whole world was avid for a glimpse of the fighting; and presently the new policy had

perforce to include important and useful personages holding no connection with journalism. These people, however, served journalistic uses. Though they wrote nothing for publication, they would one and all be interviewed on their return. Carefully chaperoned by officers chosen for their charm, they, like the casual correspondents, took four- or five-day tours of the front. The route, of course, was carefully prearranged. The officers in charge gave them a sense of danger with as little real danger as possible; and they were shown only what the General Staff considered it advisable for them to see.

At about the same time the French altered their policy in the same manner. Here the chief protagonist of modern propaganda was André Tardieu, himself a directing journalist. The Italians, entering the war in 1915, at first followed the policy of a silence broken only by bald communiqués. Then they began to admit a few domestic correspondents. Their relations with foreign reporters had an unfortunate beginning. An enterprising American woman, an amateur of journalism, arrived in Rome bent on going to the Italian front. Her charm and persuasiveness accomplished the task which had baffled the masculine correspondents. She won a personally escorted tour of the Isonzo and Carso sectors. However, she did not turn out her important copy until she had left Italy. The sight of the front had raised all the feminist in her. "It is horrible; for God's sake, let us women stop it!" she wrote in effect. If censors hated one thing more than another, it was pacifism; nor did feminism touch any responsive chord in the Italian bosom. These articles raised a temporary Latin fury against foreign correspondents; and none such saw the Italian army in action until the spring of 1916. When the Italians finally opened the front they behaved more intelligently, I have always felt, than the British

and the French. They scrutinized their man carefully and, having satisfied themselves of his honest, friendly intentions, gave him a long stay with much freedom of movement. The censors were literary men, skilled in languages, who regarded their task as an art. I spent many a pleasant half hour with a certain Sienese officer, himself a poet in his odd moments, discussing how best to suppress a hint that the army was short of cigarettes or that a six-inch battery was on its way to a certain pinnacle, while preserving the unity and interest of the paragraph.

This sudden opening of the front to correspondents willing to write the news from only one angle stood as the main visible symptom of a great change. The Allied nations, a year behind the Germans, had awakened to the uses and necessities of a modern technique in propaganda. With the same hysterical war speed in which they organized shell-making a few months before, they were now organizing to manufacture this ammunition for assailing the mind. They created government departments to direct the process; by the end of 1917, Italy had added a minister of propaganda to the Cabinet. They dropped the amateurs of voluntary societies, the tyros of the Foreign Offices; put expert journalists or advertising experts into control. They mobilized their national news bureaus. In a dozen fields, agents of the French and British propaganda skirmished with German agents of the Nauen wireless. Great Britain drew into her army of journalistic warfare most of her distinguished literary figures from H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and Rudyard Kipling down; young journalists were relieved from front-line duty and assigned to offices in foreign capitals or to journeyings in strange lands. France, more moderately, followed suit. Even the Russians were by now admitting foreign correspondents to their lines.

Taught by Germany, which had in turn learned the trade from the United States, the Allied propagandists applied all the tricks, ruses and devices of the expert publicity agent. In the conditions, the news was slanted almost automatically. If a writer turned out a proportionate story of conditions at the Allied fronts, the censors deleted all passages implying the exercise of critical instinct; glory alone remained. The propaganda departments planted and manufactured news. Such eminent figures as could be spared from the immediate business of war went traveling to America or Spain or the Scandinavian countries, there to be interviewed or to deliver lectures which got into the newspapers. "Inside stories," made sometimes out of whole cloth, were permitted to leak out across the tongues of popular and gossipy personages. Wounded veterans with the gift of speech appeared on the lecture circuits which in those days stood equivalent to the modern radio. Thousands of Americans must remember Tom Skeyhill, the Australian soldier, temporarily blinded at Gallipoli, or Lieutenant Paul Périgord who was disabled at Verdun. Skeyhill had his audiences cheering for five minutes at a time, and after Périgord had finished, women used to struggle for the privilege of kissing his sword hilt.

When the war began, the silent cinema was just getting its start as a major public amusement. Before the end of 1916, Hollywood, as yet untouched by war, was paying million-dollar salaries. The propagandist seized on this new means of persuasion. Already the Allies had operators at the front, recording the fighting for information of the General Staff and for history. The propagandists took these films, edited out the tragic and horrible, titled them with appropriate ballyhoo, sent them forth over the world.

The Germans, having at last intelligent opposition, sped up their own propaganda factory. And from the beginning of

1916 until the Armistice there raged two parallel wars. In the first, fought with shot, shell and poison gases, men died; in the second, fought with pen, ink, paper and ideas, men lied.

This war of propaganda had its own strategies, its major and minor tactics, its ruses, even its dramas; as, for example, the episode of the women of Lille. Stating the probable truth about this affair before I describe its trimmings and decorations: in the summer of 1916 the German military faction wrested from the more moderate civilian faction the administration of Belgium and of the occupied area in Northern France. Three adjoining industrial towns, Lille, Roubaix and Turcoing, lie in this territory. The war had closed the factories; the operatives had for two years festered in idleness. Our own Commission for Relief in Belgium was feeding the population. The Germans had control of the farms in the surrounding region. By a special arrangement, the commission was to receive a part of that year's crop, the Germans reserving the rest for their army of occupation. The wheat stood ripe; but there was a shortage of labor. Abruptly, the German Kommandatur decreed that every able-bodied woman between certain ages should be on her doorstep at eight o'clock the following morning dressed in working clothes. On the hour, squads of German soldiers, without apology or explanation, marched them away to the country and set them to gathering the harvest. This was a violation of a minor clause in the code of warfare, and the heavy-handed Kommandatur showed a minimum of tact and understanding; which is the worst that one may justly say against the proceeding.

In a day or so the news leaked across the border. With one voice, the Parisian press announced that the Germans had taken away these wives and daughters of Lille to serve as harlots and mistresses. For a week this story, dressed out

with dynamic adjectives, held preferred position on the front page of every Parisian newspaper. The British press took it up although more soberly, since London journalism still preserved its Victorian delicacies.

Then one afternoon—being at the French front—I picked up the morning newspaper eager to find what latest change Parisian journalism had rung on the Lille story. It had disappeared. There was no reference to Lille whatever. The London newspapers arrived next day. They, too, had shut up completely and permanently. Never again were the women of Lille mentioned in the Allied press. When I returned to Paris, I tried to satisfy my curiosity about this sudden silence. My friends among the French journalists simply shrugged their shoulders or answered with meaning glances which implied that the subject was taboo. But a few months later the Commission for Relief in Belgium gave me the full solution. At about the time when the Kommandatur took away the women of Lille, the Germans served on the headquarters of the Commission at London a terse and chilling notice. This American philanthropy must get out of Belgium and Northern France; which means, on the face of it, that a population of eight or nine million souls must abandon itself to starvation. Herbert Hoover, chairman and mainspring of the commission, hurried across the mine-dotted North Sea to German Great Headquarters at Spa, and faced the general who assumed the responsibility for the order. He found the German adamant. Some special arrangement might be made regarding the inhabitants of Northern France; but as for the Belgians, they were now Germans by conquest and must suffer, along with the other Germans, the rigors of the British blockade. Those who agreed to do war work or to swear allegiance would be fed. As for the rest . . .

Hoover, of course, argued his case; and this led the general to express his opinion of the Allies in general and their newspapers in particular. Two things stuck in his craw: first, the misrepresentations concerning the women of Lille, which he considered an aspersion on German military honor; second, the furor over the execution of Edith Cavell, for which he took personal responsibility. "The woman was a secret agent of the Allies," he said in effect. "We shot her, just as the French have shot our female spies. And look at the libels they published about me!"

Here Hoover perceived a rift in his adversary's armor, and thrust into it this shaft:

"Can't you see, general, that if you follow this policy, hundreds of thousands of Belgians will prefer to starve? What they said about you in the Cavell affair will be praise compared to what they'll say about you in this case!" Although the general kept up the appearance of a stern military front, the American felt that the thrust had struck home. "Come back again tomorrow," said the general. Next day, the Germans were willing to negotiate. And they reached an agreement. The Commission for Relief in Belgium might remain, provided Mr. Hoover would persuade the Allies to stop that story about the women of Lille. Hoover sped to Paris via Switzerland, saw the proper French authorities; and the story, as aforesaid, never again appeared in print. Perhaps that was from the first the motive behind the order against the commission.

Another episode—this later in the war—illustrates how propaganda entangled itself with diplomacy. The condition of public opinion in the Scandinavian countries began to trouble the Allies. There was even a possibility that Sweden might declare for Germany. At the beginning the Swedish aristocracy had favored the Germans, while the populace

leaned toward the Allies. Two factors were working to swing the whole national attitude in favor of Germany: commercial penetration, and the Wolff news agency in Berlin. When before the war Wolff divided world territory with Reuters (British) and Havas (French), Scandinavia had fallen, quite logically, to the German agency. A local bureau, nominally Swedish but under German control, took these reports, combined them with the daily reports from Reuters and Havas, sent them forth to the ultimate consumer. As one would logically suspect, the war had no sooner opened than this report became decidedly pro-German. The editors did not show that clever and subtle moderation which marked the service from the Nauen wireless station. Generally speaking, they incorporated from Allied sources only such items as tended to injure the Allied cause. The Battle of the Marne had been over for a year before they so much as mentioned it! This process, together with pressure from the governing classes, created in Sweden such an atmosphere that most of the newspapers had become pro-German editorially. It proved less effective in Norway, suffering from the submarine campaign, and in Denmark, still resentful over the seizure of Schleswig-Holstein. But even in those countries it had some influence.

When we entered the war, Admiral W. S. Sims brought an American naval mission to London. On his staff served Lieutenant Commander E. B. Robinette, a young banker of Philadelphia who had worked with our Commission for Relief in Belgium and knew something of European politics. The Allied navies were especially concerned with this Swedish situation, since it threatened their shipping and their communications in the Baltic. And Sims had Robinette attached to our legation at Stockholm in order to see what could be done "by way of creating better feeling."

With the clear vision of an outsider to journalism, Robinette perceived that the local press bureau was the heart of his problem; and he proceeded, American fashion, to instant action. First he persuaded a group of Scandinavian shipping men, pro-Ally through both personal interest and conviction, to raise a fund of a million kronen. With this money they organized and chartered a press bureau known as the "Svenska" and bought the controlling interest in a Stockholm newspaper. Then he returned to London, saw the directors of Reuters and Havas, asked them arbitrarily to break their agreement with Wolff as a war measure and to supply their services exclusively to the Svenska bureau. Here came a hitch. Reuters and Havas had two objections. First, an agreement was an agreement, war or no war. Second, peace would come some day; and when it did, the rupture of the old arrangement might cause a chaotic situation in international news transmission. But Robinette persisted. Already he had enlisted the support of Lord Northcliffe, the most powerful figure in world journalism. The two men pulled it off. Having drawn our own news bureaus into the arrangement, Robinette returned to Sweden and started the Svenska Bureau to work. At first it had only one client. But full publication of news from the Allied armies, for the first time in the war, created sensation and circulation. Also, the Wolff-controlled agency had to abandon even the pretense of giving spot news from Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States. The laws of competition forced all the Scandinavian newspapers, except a few in which the Germans held a controlling interest, to take the Svenska service. The shoe was on the other foot; and thereafter public opinion in Sweden moved steadily toward the side of the Allies.

Chapter XIV

ENEMY TERRITORY

AT FIRST organized war propaganda had only two main objectives: to stiffen the backs of the domestic population and to win over the neutral nations. The first objective became supremely important in 1917 when France, after the failure in the Champagne, and Italy, after the Caporetto affair, passed through periods of dangerously low morale. As the small European nations grew more and more impatient of the fetters imposed by sea and land blockades and as American intervention became a distinct possibility, both sides intensified their foreign propaganda. And at about this time the Allies turned their serious attention to the branch of the art which they had hitherto neglected—propaganda into enemy countries.

From the very beginning a few daring and original souls on the Allied side had been attempting the job of persuading or frightening the enemy by means of literature, but with scant official encouragement. In this, again, the Germans were the pioneers. Their first advance on the western front traveled behind a screen of rather awkward propaganda, dropped from airplanes. Its object was to create distrust of Great Britain in the French mind—to "drive a wedge" between the Allies. They applied the same tactics if not the same policy on the eastern front. One of the curiosities of war propaganda is a leaflet dropped from German airplanes during the first advance into Poland. Printed in Yiddish, it calls on "my Jewish brethern" to strike down the Russian

oppressor and rush into the friendly arms of Germany. And it is signed by Erich von Ludendorff! Yet for all its transparent insincerity, such propaganda among the Jews and other persecuted elements of Imperialist Russia bore fruit. It is one way of accounting for those sudden collapses which marked Russian military operations in the World War.

When they settled down in Northern France, they began to besiege the inhabitants with pamphlets and broadsides; they even issued a regular newspaper, the *Gazette des Ardennes*. After the war its French editor, who strove to implant German ideas and the defeatist spirit, died "at the post" as a traitor. These publications had two objects. First, a doubting spirit among the native inhabitants tended to prevent threats to the lines of communication in occupied territory. Second, inhabitants of these territories were constantly being repatriated through Switzerland. Some of them, doubtless, would carry with them seeds of Germanic thought. This was a rather futile and fruitless proceeding. Their Irish propaganda had better success. All over the world, and notably in the United States, militant republicans among the Southern Irish element were spreading German doctrine and information. New Yorkers may remember that in our period of hesitation leaders of this faction conducted a continuous out-of-door forum before the *World* building—the one theme being Albion's perfidy. Going further, they carried the message into Ireland itself; spread especially the false expectation, which they themselves probably held, that Germany would come forth and support with arms an Irish uprising. Sir Roger Casement's abortive and tragic landing proved the frailty of this hope. Nevertheless, German propaganda had its part in precipitating the crisis of Easter Week, 1916. The money and effort were wisely spent, since the dangerous Irish situation diverted British man power and energy from

the main job at the front. Moreover, it virtually put an end to recruiting in Southern Ireland.

The German attempt to align the Mohammedan world behind Turkey, and so force Great Britain to fight for Egypt and India or else abandon them, proves how squarely the Kaiser's diplomats had grasped the principle of weakening the enemy by means of propaganda. This is an obscure and undocumented episode of the World War. The pamphlets and broadsides in half a dozen Oriental languages have disappeared and the rumors which industrious agents spread among Arabs, Afghans and Sudanese have left no records. But we know that the German agents played upon two themes: the alliance of Moslem Turkey with the Central Powers and British oppression of Mahommedan elements in Egypt and India. Perhaps the multitude of cliques and sects in the Moslem world made this scheme impossible. Perhaps, on the other hand, a German who understood the Near East as well as Colonel Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, British agents, might have succeeded in lighting a Holy War. Germans are not very successful in dealing with people of wholly alien ideas. But it did fail.

Then, when the bloody struggle at Verdun proved fruitless, Germany, in the words of General Joseph E. Kuhn, "found that she had a wildcat by the tail and looked for some way to let go." A negotiated peace, with the status quo or a little better, became temporarily the diplomatic object. They played on the pacifist sentiment in all neutral countries. On their own initiative, the Socialists called a world conference at Stockholm. This seemed to be an opportunity; since Socialists, before the war, were notoriously pacifist. Germany did her best to encourage and to foster this assemblage. The Allies had taken heart, temporarily, from the check at Verdun. Even to whisper of a negotiated peace

constituted treason; no hint of the German yearning was allowed to leak to the public. Perceiving the uses of this conference to the Central Powers, France, Great Britain and Italy refused passports to their own Socialists. Control of cable facilities at the London plexus did the rest; real news of this affair, it became plain, would be confined to the Scandinavian countries and to the Nauen service. In these circumstances the Socialist Conference fizzled and adjourned without definite action.

I cannot forbear to digress at this point and tell a trivial yet illuminating story which I acquired from a reliable friend in the British Intelligence. Let me say that the dialogue in the first scene of this comedy is his imaginative reconstruction of the episode; that of the second scene, a matter of record. The curtain rises on the Turkish minister of foreign affairs sitting in his office with his brows knotted. Enter his secretary.

"What is a Socialist?" inquired the minister.

"I do not know," responded the secretary. "Why do you ask, effendi?"

"These troublesome people at Berlin," replied the minister, "say that there will be a Socialist conference in Stockholm. They want three Turkish delegates at once. Therefore, find me some Socialists!"

The next day the secretary reported:

"No one knows what a Socialist is, effendi. But one thing is certain. There are none in Turkey."

"Nevertheless, we must have some Socialists," snapped the minister. "Find three men and tell them to go to Stockholm and be Socialists."

The secretary hesitated before he objected:

"Do you realize, effendi, that being a Socialist may be contrary to the Koran?"

"That is true," admitted the minister. He thought a minute. "Therefore, send for Ruton Bey." (I have disguised this name.) "He is a Jew, and an unbeliever may believe anything. Tell Ruton Bey he is to find two other Jewish unbelievers and that they are to go at once to Stockholm and be Socialists!"

The second scene begins with the Conference assembling at Stockholm. Karl Hjalmar Branting, the sturdy leader of the Swedish Socialists, occupied the chair. He looked down from his seat to behold in the audience three conspicuous fezzes.

"Who are these?" he asked his secretary.

"The Turkish delegates."

"I did not know," said Branting, beaming satisfaction, "that our movement had reached Turkey. Bring them here!"

After expressing his delight, he began to question Ruton Bey through an interpreter.

"How many members has the Turkish party?" he asked.

Ruton Bey hastily muttered some gratifying figure.

"Splendid!" said Branting. "To what wing of the party do most of your members belong? Do you adhere to the Second International? Are you revolutionary or political?"

Faced with these direct questions, Ruton Bey collapsed all at once.

"I do not know," he said.

"You don't know!" exploded Branting. "And you call yourself a Socialist!"

At that moment one of the Germans, perceiving the situation, edged in, created a diversion and dragged the Turkish delegates away. The Germans kept them out of sight until the conference collapsed. The Foreign Office at Berlin long cherished a dim hope of renewing it at some more favorable time. And the last that British Intelligence knew

of Ruton Bey and his assistants, they were living in Berlin while a set of professors taught them how to be Socialists.

The other outstanding maneuver of this campaign against the mind of the enemy had better result. With the diplomatic feature of that "defeatist" campaign which Germany waged in France during 1916 and 1917 we are not here concerned. It was to bring Bolo Pasha to his death before a firing squad. But Almereyda and his *Bonnet Rouge*, a newspaper concerned with implanting pacifist sentiment, comes into the category of propaganda. Whether he was idealist or traitor, Almereyda drew much of his inspiration, and probably his funds, from Germany. As all the world knows, when this plot crashed Almereyda died violently in prison either by murder or by suicide. More effective than open journalism, however, was a campaign of "whispering propaganda," spread by German agents—usually citizens of neutral countries. By word of mouth, they started unpleasant but plausible rumors belittling the success of French arms and the integrity of the French government. Just as often, perhaps, they told unpleasant truths which the censor had suppressed. After the tragically unsuccessful Champagne attack in April, 1917, a wave of low morale swept France. During the early summer execution squads suppressed several incipient mutinies in the army. "The Blue Devils and the Colonials will still attack," said a general to me confidentially. "The rest will hold the line—and nothing more." Paris passed into a sullen mood. There were strikes, where soldiers in uniform marched with the pickets. Once or twice the sweepings of the Faubourg St.-Antoine, where traditionally revolutions start, paraded the boulevards spitting at the bourgeoisie enjoying tea or apéritifs in the cafés. The mood did not break until the Fourth of July, when Pershing marched the Sixteenth Infantry to Lafayette's tomb. ("Lafayette, we are here!")

This was in itself a bit of exalted ballyhoo—making the news. And it accomplished its purpose. France, with its delightful native pessimism, had never really believed that the United States, for all its professions of love, was coming to the rescue. But this one hastily assembled regiment stood as visible proof. That night—and for the first time in two years—the Parisians sang and sweethearted on the streets.

The wave of low morale paralyzed French military initiative for more than three months. Now, it is impossible to analyze mental and spiritual values quantitatively; and as none will ever know the exact details of the German defeatist campaign, so none will ever evaluate the extent of its influence on the French mind during this low period. But at the very least the whispering squad helped mightily.

One may write much more definitely concerning the Austro-German assault on the Italian mind. This was perhaps the most clean-cut triumph of the Teutonic propagandists. When in 1917 the Italians took the Bainsizza Plateau, their artillery observation posts looked down on the Austrian plains. One more push like that, and Germany's shaky ally might collapse. The Germans determined to send assistance; and they began with a barrage of propaganda. Herein they enjoyed one unusual advantage. Italy had entered the war with the object of rescuing her irredenta from Austria. Against this old enemy she felt the proper warlike rage. Neither the populace nor the governing class held any special aversion to Germany. German residents in Italy had generally gone about their business uninterned and almost unhampered. Systematically, the propagandists of the Great General Staff began an assault, direct and indirect, upon the morale of the Italian army. Agents circulating in the zone at the rear of the front spread two sets of ideas. Dealing with

the Catholic faction, they exaggerated the Pope's approaches for peace into a desire to end the war on any terms. Among the Socialists they whispered that the comrades across No Man's Land had grown weary of the struggle. If, at the next attack, the Italian Socialists would throw down their rifles and hold out their hands, the Austrian comrades would receive them with open arms. After the disaster, Italian officers told me of another subtle little trick. In the week before the attack, floods of anonymous or forged letters and postcards came to individual soldiers in the line or in reserve. These, falsely, told of some personal disaster. The infidelity of a wife stood for a stock theme. Only one who knows war can appreciate what such a process might do to any army—especially when the victims have the passionate and imaginative Italian temperament. I cannot vouch personally for this story; but it seems likely.

The Italian front, running mostly across difficult hills and mountains, had an undue proportion of "quiet" sectors; which made easier the transmission of printed matter across the lines. This sang the same two songs as the whispering propaganda. For the companies and regiments recruited from strong Catholic centers it warped and twisted the statements of the Pope virtually into a command for immediate peace. To the bodies wherein the Socialists had a majority it offered the olive branch. Finally, just before the attack, the Austro-German propagandists played a trick which, as I shall show later, they borrowed from the Allies. In the Italian trenches appeared a "faked" edition of the Milan *Corriere della Serra*, then the London *Times* of Italy. It reproduced with great exactness the typography and advertisements of the original. The reading matter, however, announced the collapse of the war on the western front, and the imminence of peace.

All this was the easier in that the Italians, who so well ordered their news services at the front, had almost utterly neglected domestic propaganda—the ballyhoo and artificial excitement necessary to whip up a population to the sacrifices of modern war. No "drives," no "pep meetings," no "days." Bar flags, decorations, potato bread, the uniforms on the streets and a kind of film over the pageantry of the Vatican, and Rome seemed to be going her accustomed way. Again stepping out of time sequence for a moment: when, after the ensuing disaster, Italy appointed a minister of propaganda, he held a small conference of experienced foreign journalists to consider the question of restoring Italian morale. An American woman in the party remarked that the war drives of France and England served not only to raise funds but to keep up public courage and interest. Italy had neglected all that. "You know—pretty, well-dressed girls selling medals on the street!" she added. I looked around the table and noted that the expression had faded from every Italian face. There was an awkward pause; then the minister of propaganda found his voice:

"Italy," he said icily, "can find other ways of saving herself than exposing her ladies on the streets!"

To give my personal testimony: a fortnight before the climax of this affair I returned to the Italian front after an absence of a year. A great change, I noted at once, had come over the spirit of the army. Officers and men were peevish and irritable. As I know now, certain staff officers understood what was going on and had warned General Cadorna, the expert strategist and poor psychologist who commanded the Italian army. He was a strange, aloof, aristocratic man. To him, common soldiers were as blocks of wood. What did their thought matter? They would do as they were told! He brushed aside the information.

When on October 24, 1917, the German-Austrian forces struck at Caporetto, they made crack German divisions the spearhead of the attack and used for the first time in a major engagement the von Hutier infiltration tactics which they had rehearsed on the Russian front. The Italians had never before met the expert Germans in battle; and those very tactics broke the British front at Easter in 1918. In such circumstances the Italians would probably have sustained a defeat. But these factors do not account for the temporary collapse of an Italian army—some 250,000 prisoners, a corresponding number of guns and nearly a hundred miles of territory lost within a week. The factor which produced that extra effect was clever propaganda on one side, lack of counterpropaganda on the other.

No one can estimate with any exactness the influence of Germany in producing that major disaster to the Allied cause, the collapse and withdrawal of Russia. For as soon as the Communists seized power, this question became itself the vortex for a violent, cloudy storm of propaganda. When in March, 1917, the Czar fell and Kerensky took power, the Allies hurried both diplomats and propagandists to Petrograd with the sole object of stiffening the Russian spine. The Germans had no open diplomatic representation, of course. But they enjoyed one great advantage—proximity. And the Russian front, during that period of hesitation, was a sieve. In this crisis, printed propaganda served no purpose, since the vast majority of Russian soldiers could not read. But a hundred Germans spoke that difficult language, Russian, to one Briton or Frenchman. Agents penetrated the Russian lines, joined in that furious carnival of talk which marked the Kerensky regime. And everywhere they spread the gospel of peace. History has established the fact that the Germans transported Lenin, Trotsky and

their suite from Switzerland to Russia in a sealed train; on this fact, certain special pleaders have piled up data to prove that the Germans plotted, inspired and guided the Communist revolution of November, 1917. This view does too much credit to German military and diplomatic imagination, too little to the genius of Lenin. Probably the Germans were following a policy of opportunism. Any internal disturbance in Russia would tend to that disintegration of the Russian army which was their immediate object. The Bolsheviki had probably pledged themselves to a separate peace. No one could expect good faith from them—but perhaps!

With Lenin in the saddle, both Allies and Germans reinforced their own armies of propaganda. Entering this game for the first time, our government had dispatched Edgar Sisson and a corps of adventurous young journalists to the scene of action. The Allied efforts were as dams of hay against a tide. The opponent, now, was not the German propaganda but that of the Communists themselves—the beginning of the false, distorted picture of Western European civilization which they have drawn in the Russian mind. Without protest from the people, the Soviet government signed up at Brest-Litovsk. And the American and Allied propagandists were lucky to escape from Russia with their lives.

These are the major triumphs of Germany in her war to weaken the enemy spirit. Like her military victories, they make an impressive collection. But—again following the military analogy—the late and decisive victory belonged to the Allies.

Chapter XV

THE LAST PUSH

DURING the archaic stage of the war, the Allies virtually neglected all opportunities to influence the mind of the enemy. What with foiling the German spy system and perfecting their own, the Army Intelligence Departments had their hands full. While it has nothing to do with my topic, let me say that—contrary to the general impression—the espionage and counterespionage of the Allies, when they really got their machine to working, proved better than that of the Germans. This stands especially true of the British, who always know how to cloak their cleverest effects with an appearance of stupidity. But being soldiers with an old-fashioned training, generally the military authorities ignored the possibilities in an assault on the enemy mind. On part of the French, there were a few mild exceptions. In the initial campaign of 1914 their army overran a good part of Alsace. When the threat on the Marne forced them to withdraw, they left behind for the benefit of the advancing Germans copies of pamphlets stating the Allied attitude and informing the humble German private that his cause was hopeless. Whoever wrote this document used imperfect, unidiomatic German; it bore on its face the proof of alien origin. Early in 1915 they smuggled across the front copies of another pamphlet with the same faults.

However, these fiascos led to more important things. Jean-Jacques Waltz, that Parisian cartoonist who signed

himself "Hansi" and who in his collaborative book, *A Travers les Lignes Ennemies*, preferred to hide his identity under that name, served as interpreter with the French forces. An Alsatian by birth, he spoke and wrote German as a mother tongue. The feebleness of these attempts impelled him to form a plan of his own. In 1915, E. Tonnelat, another interpreter-officer, joined forces with him; and they persuaded the authorities to let them put their ideas into effect. Hansi's first production was a little masterpiece of faking—a long letter from a mythical German sergeant captured and interned in a French prison camp. Subtly it conveyed news which censorship had concealed from the Germans; insidiously it suggested desertion. Then came the publication in Switzerland of *J'accuse*—a German's protest against the Kaiser's government, and a blessing to all Allied propagandists. Tonnelat had the *Imprimerie Nationale* issue a full, miniature edition weighing not more than an ounce, and he and Hansi circulated it by tens of thousands in enemy territory.

By 1916, these two Frenchmen had formed their larger scheme of strategy. The Social Democrats, who but for the Prussian system of plural voting would have held a majority in Germany, were inherently no friends of the Kaiser and his system. Though they had endorsed the war, though most of them were fighting as valiantly as the royalists in defense of Germany, there were often rebels like Liebknecht. Here, perhaps, was a rift in the German armor. Presently the two Frenchmen found in an internment camp a German of eccentric character, literary skill and passionate republican sentiments. They added him to their forces and henceforth aimed at revolution in Germany as a main objective. Beginning with pamphlets and tabloid books, they went on to such elaborate hoaxes as imitation editions

of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*—a ruse which the Germans and Austrians imitated during the Caporetto affair. And finally they issued what amounted to a small weekly newspaper whose stock in trade consisted in furnishing the Germans with the news which their censor was suppressing—such as the naval losses in the Battle of Jutland, the frightful slaughter in the Battle of Verdun, and even speeches by opposition deputies in the Reichstag.

Producing the literature was easy; circulating it constituted a problem which the assailants of enemy morale never fully solved. Shortly after their first invasion the Germans had distributed leaflets and pamphlets within the enemy lines by dropping them from airplanes or by attaching them to small paper balloons which, as they sank, touched off a mechanical device and let the cargo of leaflets flutter down the wind. The French and afterward the British improved this mechanism so that it would feed out the pamphlets not in one wad but in bunches. Hansi and Tonnelat even shot leaflets from big guns.

However, these methods did not extend the range of propaganda much beyond the front lines; and the French were most concerned with reaching the civilian population. The Hansi-Tonnelat organization found means, imperfect though they were, for achieving this end. As Germany began to go short on provisions, a class of illicit food traders sprang up on all her neutral borders. The Germans, of course, welcomed them. Allied missions, on the other hand, worked to hamper their operations by watching the borders and complaining to the local authorities. Hansi and Tonnelat made a bargain with some of these bootleggers. The French watchdogs would shut their eyes to the process provided each trader carried across the line a specified number of letters to be posted somewhere in Germany. Of course,

these missives contained propaganda—news of the war from the Allied viewpoint or subtle hints and open argument in favor of revolution. They were addressed to select mailing lists of German civilians known before the war to hold heterodox opinions.

These Frenchmen deserve the credit due to pioneers. But where they sowed the British reaped. Until late in 1917, His Majesty's Government had virtually neglected propaganda into enemy countries. In this the British showed their wide political wisdom. Propaganda designed to break down enemy morale works imperfectly or not at all when he is winning; and for the first three years of the war the balance of success had inclined toward Germany. By the middle of 1918, the United States would begin to exert its full military force and the British blockade would be bringing Germany to the verge of slow starvation. No one in authority really expected the war to end as soon as it did; but generals and statesmen alike felt that 1918 would prove the decisive year. When the Germans sustained their first serious defeat—the time would be ripe. The British prepared to open a drive of propaganda into enemy territory on a large scale.

They had a small but firm nucleus on which to build. Since the early days of the war, S. A. Guest, with reluctant and scanty official backing, had been conducting an experimental show of his own. He had devised some method better than that of trafficking with food traders for getting literature into the hands of the civilian population behind the lines. Neither he nor any other director of British propaganda has ever revealed what it was—perhaps because it may come in handy in case of another war.

At the beginning of 1918, Lord Northcliffe swung energetically into action. All through the war he had maintained a kind of espionage service of his own, its object not so

much to gather military information as to plumb the mind of civilian Germany. Prime Minister Lloyd George appointed him Director of Propaganda into Enemy Countries and put ample funds at his disposal. Sir Campbell Stuart, whose book *Secrets of Crewe House* tells the story of this episode, became assistant director and administrator. H. G. Wells joined the organization and remained with it long enough to create, in a masterly report, a scheme of strategy. When he dropped his active connection, Hamilton Fyfe, a leading British journalist of long international experience, took his place as director of the German section.

Where the French had sniped with small arms, the British now fired salvos of big guns. It seemed at first a futile proceeding; for at Easter of 1918 the Germans loosed a series of drives which threatened to break the western front. They themselves threw out before their advances a rather weak screen of propaganda having the old objective of cutting the tie between Great Britain and her allies. In view of the startling success which Austro-German propaganda attained in Italy during the previous autumn, it seems odd that it worked so slackly at this supreme moment. The old German Great Staff has kept most of its secrets even to this day. Perhaps the blood-and-iron party, which had no faith in anything except force unlimited, had gained the ascendancy. Perhaps the military authorities calculated with some wisdom that it would be for them a futile proceeding. They might influence soldiers; but the only civilians whom they could get at, even imperfectly, were the French. The Channel and the Atlantic, together with the Allied navies and censorships, guarded Great Britain and the United States against any considerable importation of propaganda.

All through this discouraging period, the Northcliffe and Hansi organizations kept up their efforts. Airplanes

dropped pamphlets and leaflets by editions of tens of thousands. The process encountered much opposition from the purely military element in the British army. Individual aviators saw little sense in risking their lives just to act as bill distributors and slacked the job whenever they could. Generals tended to back them up; especially when the Germans ordered that all captured Allied aviators proved guilty of distributing propaganda should be shot as spies. Nevertheless, the operation went on with increasing pace. Ingenious officers managed to enlarge the range and efficiency of paper balloons. When the Armistice came, the American Intelligence Department was experimenting with ten-foot balloons of a new type. On a favorable wind these could travel from the front line to the region of Berlin. The car had a simple but ingenious clockwork mechanism which could be set to feed out a single pamphlet or leaflet every five or ten seconds. When the last leaflet had fluttered away, the apparatus would catch fire and burn up. This experiment, however, did not come to the point of practical application.

When our troops began to arrive in numbers, we took a hand, but usually in a subsidiary capacity—mainly as feeders of material and information to the French and British systems. Our Intelligence Department at the front, our Committee on Public Information at home, realized that we could not in years find such channels into Germany as Guest, Hansi and Tonnelat had dug. We did, however, add a few tactical frills of our own. When in the early autumn of 1918 it became plain that the food crisis in Germany was cutting down the army ration, General Pershing, on advice of our Intelligence Department, ordered officially that our German prisoners should receive exactly the same ration as American soldiers. Intelligence thereupon devised a leaflet in German giving Pershing's order in full

and adding an exact statement of the standard American ration. This they broadcast by airplane over the German lines. It was frankly an inducement to desert; further, the contrast between the luxury of the Americans and their own privation emphasized the decline of German power. We had at Clermont-en-Argonne a large compound where German prisoners of war were assembled directly after their capture. I have seen them, on entering the gate, hand out copies of this leaflet as a meal ticket. Nor were they disappointed.

The British propaganda, like the French, constantly conveyed such news favorable to the Allied cause as the censor had kept out of the German newspapers—the dwindling effect of the submarine campaign, the tightening of the blockade, the success of the crucial Franco-American counteroffensive in July and the British advance in August, the arrival of American troops, our war preparations. Into the atmosphere so created they injected strong hints that the Kaiser and his clique had deceived the German people and forfeited the right to rule. And Germany, this propaganda suggested, might obtain easier terms if she abandoned the war at its present stage. Here the propagandists used as a convincing argument President Wilson's Fourteen Points of 1917, his Four Points of 1918. Marginal comment pointed out that Wilson's attitude opened the way to a just peace. The new organization possessed means for determining the effect of its campaign on the German mind. It found that these speeches were bringing especially good results and began to specialize on them. Wilson held a low opinion of journalism in general, but he did have some sense of large journalistic strategy. No admirer of him and his policies believes that his sole object in these two expressions was the breaking down of the enemy's will to war. But at least

that constituted part of the motive. And insiders at both Washington and London had many a laugh over the spectacle of Northcliffe forcing Wilson's doctrine on Germany; for these two men notoriously disliked and distrusted each other on sight.

And Wilson, at the very end, applied the clincher—"With what government are we dealing? The one which has hitherto prosecuted the war?"

The course of events ran as though the Departments of Propaganda had planned it. With the weakening of German military resistance, German morale began its collapse. There followed the almost panicky appeal for a suspension of hostilities on the basis of the Fourteen Points, the mutiny in the German fleet, the flight of the Kaiser, the Armistice, the Republic.

The broad plan of the Northcliffe organization included intensive work on Austria-Hungary. Wickham Steed took charge of this department. He had served for years as correspondent for the London *Times* at Vienna and had attained to a high if unofficial status in British diplomacy. Especially, he was an expert on the racial problems of that patchwork empire. He inherited a better machinery for his work than even the German section. Underneath the repressive measures of an autocratic empire at war, racial aspirations had begun to smolder. Bohemian nationalists, Jugoslavs and Rumanians split off from their mother races had taken heart. Notoriously, whole regiments of the Austro-Hungarian army were fighting with a kind of second-rate patriotism—their real allegiance was to their races. Leaders, working secretly at home and openly abroad, were fanning the smoldering coals into flame. Conspicuously, a group of able Bohemians were laying the foundations for the Czechoslovakian Republic. Masaryk and Beneš,

who eventually served that state as perpetual president and irremovable premier, hopped from capital to capital trying to persuade rulers and Foreign Offices that the way to victory lay through Austria-Hungary. Under them worked a small but most efficient organization of Bohemians residing abroad; its key man, perhaps, Captain Emanuel Voska, as clever and useful a secret agent as the war upheaved in any country.

These Bohemians and other national factions found the Austro-Hungarian border less strongly guarded than the German against bombardment by paper and ink. On all fronts soldiers and even officers wearing Franz Josef's uniform unwillingly, opened holes for the carriers of forbidden literature. Nor need the propagandists rely entirely upon the printed word. Those secret political societies which were such a factor in Balkan life could be depended upon to circulate any piece of news, with reasonable accuracy, by word of mouth. We Americans had lent the imaginative Harry Reichenbach to this campaign. He introduced some bizarre methods of his own, like causing glaciers to blaze by night with pro-Ally slogans projected from magic lanterns.

It was necessary only to intensify and co-ordinate these efforts, to put behind them the ample funds and first-class brains which Northcliffe had at his command. Steed opened his campaign with a performance imitated from the technique of the American publicity man. He "made the news." A Congress of Oppressed Nationalities met at Rome, ventilated its sentiments, passed resolutions. The speeches, of course, generated splendid copy for pamphlets and leaflets. Following which, the Northcliffe organization widened the channels to civilian Austro-Hungary. After the collapse of Russian resistance, the Austrian army stood massed against the Italians. The front of the Piave became, therefore, the appointed spot for distribution of propaganda

designed to break down Austrian military morale. Here the Northcliffe organization encountered some resistance from their own side of the line. With an eye on eventual control of the Dalmatian coast, Italy proved somewhat cold toward renaissance of Jugoslavic patriotism. Diplomacy removed that obstacle—just how, the public has never been informed. In other ways also, the diplomatic game played in with the propaganda game on this front. The Allies persuaded the Wilson administration virtually to incorporate into our proposed peace terms the freedom of the nationalities governed by the Hapsburgs. The Italians and the other forces announced that they would liberate all deserters of the subject nationalities. These facts were incorporated into pamphlets in eight or ten languages, distributed by millions from airplanes. . . . Introducing a novelty into the business of transmitting literature, the Italians sent over some of their pamphlets by rockets. . . . Also, the Allied propagandists made extensive use of the current news. Here they scarcely needed to slant, taint or exaggerate. The tide was running strongly to the Allied side—for the first time in nearly four years. They dwelt with especial force on the extent and importance of American support.

The Allies opened the intensive eastern campaign of propaganda in April, 1918. Two months later, events proved that it was taking effect. In June the Italians attacked on the Piave and inflicted a sharp defeat. During this action Czechoslovaks and Jugoslavs surrendered by whole companies without firing a shot. Reserve regiments mutinied. Czechoslovaks blew up ammunition dumps. The forces of propaganda, encouraged, sped up their processes and waged mental war to the hilt. When finally at Vittorio Veneto the Italians annihilated the Austrian army, they cut through whole divisions as through cheese.

Certain war propagandists, enamored of this new military weapon, and certain apologists for Germanic defeat, have tried to create the myth that "propaganda won the war." This is like the slogan "America won the war." America did not—alone. And propaganda did not—alone. Indeed, had the belligerents carried on as the United and Confederate States did in the Civil War, with journalists on both sides expressing spontaneous opinion and constantly printing information valuable to the enemy, the ultimate result would probably have been much the same. But it is possible, indeed probable, that the final drive against enemy mentality did shorten the war.

After the Armistice, General Erich von Ludendorff raged through Germany announcing that the ever-victorious army had the Allies checked and would have won the war but for the republican movement which "stabbed us in the back." The sober and undeniable truth is that by October, 1918, the German army was as definitely on the way to military defeat as was the Southern Confederacy in October, 1864. It might have fallen back on its strong inner lines and prolonged the struggle until the strangling British blockade transformed malnutrition into starvation; and then staggered, like Lee's army, toward ultimate surrender. However, it was not yet actually beaten by force of arms. The Allied military authorities, as I can testify from personal knowledge, expected a sharp campaign in the spring and early summer of 1919 and the finish of the Germans—if everything went well—about June. Except for those who kept sympathetic touch with the drive of propaganda, none was more surprised than they when the morale of the Central Powers cracked in October! This result—shortening the war by six or seven months—the Allied propagandists may claim as their own triumph, and with considerable reason.

Chapter XVI

AMERICA BREAKS A PRECEDENT

OUR own war propaganda deserves perhaps less attention than that of the Europeans; since the "drive," the process of working up the populace by ballyhoo and artificial stimulation, was long a familiar method of procedure in these United States and has been described in previous chapters. However, it was to leave one permanent imprint on American political life—the tradition of the press agent for government departments or even for a whole administration.

When in April, 1917, President and Congress injected us into the World War, a considerable element in the United States still failed to understand what it was all about. While they would follow the flag, it might be assumed that they would show a perfunctory interest. Further, there was a doubt which time proved unwarranted as to the attitude of our German-American and Austrian-American citizens. Time was the essence of the contract. If we were to save the Allied cause, we must act quickly or not at all. Also, the question of concealing military information presented a special problem. The Europeans had solved this by the simple process of regimentation—by shutting down on press and platform a censorship which in most countries forbade even criticism of the government's conduct of the war. Should we pass a law equally strict? All through the war President Wilson inclined toward voluntary effort, rather than regimentation, to stimulate effort among the civilian population. In this case, when ardent militarists introduced

into Congress a censorship bill giving power over news and printed opinion, the administration refused to support it. The army and navy, however, were granted a censorship over cable news having to do with military movements. And later such laws as the Espionage and Draft Acts permitted the government to put down the screws on newspapers deliberately exposing military secrets or obstructing the war. Just as in Europe, the authorities in enforcing these acts often shut their eyes to slips or deliberate violations on the part of powerful newspapers with orthodox political opinions and exerted their powers over the unorthodox. For example, the post-office authorities suppressed Victor Berger's Socialistic Milwaukee *Leader*.

For the rest, Wilson put the journalistic direction of our war into the hands of the Committee on Public Information. This was to perform three functions, two expressed and one unexpressed. First, it was to act as a liaison between the government departments and the newspapers, handing out in acceptable form such information as the departments felt it wise for the public to know. Second, it was to cooperate with the press in enforcing a voluntary censorship. Third—and this was the function unexpressed in its articles of foundation—it was to help lash us up to war heat.

Here and there Wilson had bad luck in the men whom he appointed experimentally as the executives of his war departments. In this committee he rang the bell at the first shot. George Creel, its director, was not only one of our most eminent magazine journalists, but had experience both with newspaper work and with reform politics. In the early days of our war, no man except Colonel E. M. House stood on more familiar relations with Wilson than George Creel. His wit helped in that. Even in the most dismal days of the German drive Creel could always make

the President laugh. Ernest Poole, Arthur Bullard and Edgar Sisson, who formed his first staff, were respectively a leading novelist with journalistic training, an authority on international affairs and an experienced editor. Harvey O'Higgins and Wallace Irwin, who entered the committee soon afterward, were literary men who understood practical journalism. And in the course of the next eighteen months most eminent American authors not in uniform contributed the free copy which the Committee on Public Information handed out to the newspapers. Stories of our war preparations, our war aims, the virtues of our new allies and the hatefulness of our enemy came for the asking to every newspaper in the land.

Passing on from the written word to the spoken, the C.P.I. organized those four-minute speakers whom so many "drives" have imitated since. The silent American film had just risen to its world eminence. The committee borrowed Charles S. Hart from the army; he supervised the production and distribution of *Pershing's Crusaders*, a film dealing in the idealistic spirit with our rapid progress toward full armament. The half-assimilated aliens, whose possible attitude had given the government some concern, patronized two thousand newspapers in twenty foreign languages. Josephine Roche assumed the job of loading these with the proper reading matter. Going further, she organized the foreign-born, by groups, to support the war.

Enthusiasm rolled up like a snowball—if anything, too much enthusiasm. Amateur propaganda, of the kind which had often embarrassed the European governments, appeared among us in a malignant form. Orators and writers spread the stale story about the Germans cutting off children's hands in Belgium until doubt became treason. In spots all over the country, boards of education and even legisla-

tures forbade the teaching of German in the schools. By contrast, the French, who had the best of reasons to hate Germany, resisted all such attempts. "The war will be over some day," they said, "and we do not propose to let it hamper the education of our children." For another contrast: in Germany, Liebknecht, the Socialist, publicly opposed the war and complicated his offense, in the eyes of the government, by holding unpopular opinions. Arrested, he was sentenced to two years in a fortress. A group of I.W.W.'s in Chicago found themselves in the same predicament. And they got twenty years each in a Federal penitentiary.

The temporary departments created to direct the war saw the uses of publicity and applied it. Part of our task in the war was to feed the Allies—in the year after a bad harvest—by economizing with our own food supply. We had the choice of two courses—bread cards and regimentation or voluntary rationing. Herbert Hoover, appointed food administrator, chose the more democratic course and Wilson ratified his decision. He could not accomplish this without raising the crusading spirit in Americans, and especially in our women. Experts in advertising and publicity took hold of the problem. They invented the slogan "Food will win the war" and the verb "to Hooverize." With press releases, motion pictures, lectures, rallies, they worked up the spirit of corporate self-sacrifice while at the same time educating our women in the art of conserving staple provisions. The Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A. and the Knights of Columbus, needing funds, advanced behind a skirmish line of expert publicity; as did the agencies assigned the task of selling Liberty Bonds. Never was there such an orgy of idealism and ballyhoo.

In foreign propaganda the Committee on Public Information made a somewhat slower start. Indeed, we hesitated

at first to enter that field. But the logic of events swept us on. The propaganda of the Central Powers had in the first two years of the war aimed mainly to "drive a wedge" between the Allies. When we entered, the German propagandists saw a new opening. "The home front" was growing war weary. Civilian morale in France and Italy had cracked somewhat during 1917; and however domestic propagandists had tried to belittle this event, the withdrawal of Russia as a belligerent had produced a chilling effect in Western Europe. Our entrance served as a counterfoil. Manifestly, it became good policy for the Germans to belittle both our zeal for war and our potentialities. Shortsighted amateur propagandists had helped to prepare the ground among the Allies. No American who was not abroad in 1915 and 1916 can conceive of the contempt in which many elements among the Allied nations held our courage and our military competence. Frantic patriots, striving to lash their people up to fighting frenzy, had before our declaration of war held us up as a contrast and an awful example. President Wilson's forbearance had passed for cowardice and our detached view for dishonorable indifference. When in November, 1916, he won from Hughes on the slogan "He kept us out of war," these feelings rose to a climax. I was at the Canadian front in Flanders when news of the result arrived. And although the polite Canadian officers veiled their true feelings, I could see that they regarded this choice as a major calamity. Neutral countries such as Spain and the Scandinavian group held the same opinion. So, as a matter of fact, did the Germans; else the Kaiser's government would never have made its historic mistake of listening to Admiral von Tirpitz on the topic of unlimited submarine warfare. At home, in the neutral countries, wherever in fact they had a hearing, the German propagandists, after

we entered the war, used this background to spread false news, half-truths and isolated facts to prove that we could not fight if we would and would not if we could.

Sometimes, indeed, they had only to tell the truths hidden by their own censorships from the Allies. Passing through Spain in April, 1917, I found in a Madrid newspaper notoriously under German domination an account of the Allied tonnage sunk by submarines during the preceding week. An accompanying map of the European coast bore a rash of dots—each a site where a merchant vessel had gone down. Plainly, if the submarine campaign kept up at this rate we should never get our army overseas and the Allies would starve. But I set this down optimistically as German mendacity. Only later did I learn that it was the literal truth. This was the period before we organized the convoy system with the power of our navy behind it, and before the British perfected that "mechanical fish" which smelled out submarines. At the moment, the situation on the seas seemed desperate. When later we began to control the submarine, the Germans grew hazy about total tonnage, or falsified it, and fell back on isolated instances like the sinking of a troopship. But the inference was always plain—no American military forces, no American supplies, could reach Europe in numbers or quantities sufficient to help the Allies.

From this the German propagandist went on to create positive hate of the United States. One trivial episode of this Spanish campaign I record mainly for its humors. Rural Spain rated rather low in literacy. It supported, nevertheless, a multitude of small weekly newspapers. These journals, having a hard struggle for existence, were eagerly corruptible. They had influence entirely out of proportion to their circulations. For, by an old custom, literates sat in the cafés of evenings and read the local newspaper aloud to

the illiterate peasants, drovers and carters. One day the same lurid, imaginative story decorated the front pages of nearly all these newspapers. A daughter of President Wilson—it ran—had a few years before visited Spain as a tourist. In the bull ring at Burgos, she had met a handsome matador, fallen in love with him, and married him without the formality of notifying her family. In course of time there arrived a beautiful baby boy. Her father discovered what she had done and ordered her, on penalty of being disinherited, to abandon her husband and child and return to Washington. She obeyed. Afterward the matador was killed in the bull ring. He left the child a charge on his destitute parents. They had repeatedly written to President Wilson asking him to support his grandchild; but the hardhearted man had always refused!

This flight of pure imagination was the product of hard, close, Germanic reasoning. First, you could never get these illiterates interested in an abstraction like the rights and wrongs of the great war. They would grow excited only over a personality. And inquiry proved that the single American of whom they all knew was President Wilson. Second, a bullfighter was always a hero to this class of Spaniard. They took seriously even his political opinions. Finally, the Spanish, like all Latins, are extremely sensitive to a wrong against a child. Having the formula, the rest was easy!

But this is a digression. We had no sooner joined the war than German propaganda began to raise the prospect of trouble at our own doors. As the exposé of von Papen and Boy-Ed showed, even before we became belligerents the Central Powers were stirring up Mexico against us. There they had a promising field. No two adjacent nations in modern history ever knew each other so little as the United States and Mexico of the prewar period. The affluent

Mexican on pleasure bent went not to New York or San Francisco but to Paris or Madrid; and no American seemed ever to cross the Rio Grande except on business. Along the frontier smoldered race hatreds lit by the Mexican War, kept alive by a hundred minor disorders, fanned to flame on the Mexican side by our Veracruz expedition of 1914 and the border patrol of 1916. The Nauen wireless reports, widely diffused in Mexico, had sketched on the Mexican mind a favorable picture of Germany and the German cause. Against this background the clever agents of the German Foreign Office, well supplied with funds, erected a dummy United States—greedy, soft, cowardly, and above all defenseless. "One Mexican," they said in effect and by inference, "can thrash ten gringos." The object, of course, was to raise a diversion on our southern border—either a war or a situation in which many divisions of our new army, needed in France, must guard the Rio Grande.

President Wilson, with his love of truth and his dislike of journalism as it is practiced, had made no provision for propaganda beyond our borders. But here was a dangerous situation, and he consented to take defensive measures. Creel sent Robert H. Murray, a good newspaperman trained on the New York *World*, to Mexico. With small funds—and none for bribery—Murray joined forces with Henry P. Fletcher our able ambassador and made a superb fight. Then, as I have recorded already, German propaganda in Russia began taking a dangerously anti-American slant, and Creel dispatched a team of counterpropagandists to Petrograd. By the beginning of 1918, this constant reiteration of our military impotence and weakness was becoming a real danger to the Allied cause; and Wilson approved at last of a complete foreign section in the Committee on Public Information.

Already Creel had started to clear the channels to the mind of the world. Before the war, American journalism had stood in splendid isolation. Our press bureaus held no direct connection with any foreign newspaper. The Associated Press and United Press simply sold their American news to Wolff, Havas and Reuters. Wolff and Havas were partly supported by the German and French governments; Reuters received from the British government special privileges and encouragement. When war came in 1914, Havas and Reuters became frankly agents of Allied propaganda, while the free-gratis-for-nothing Nauen wireless replaced the strangled Wolff Bureau as an agent for German propaganda. And even after we entered the war, neither Havas nor Reuters showed any zeal to emphasize the good news from the United States—our steady and rapid progress toward making ourselves a major military force.

In only one quarter of the world had Americans made a start toward direct dissemination of our domestic news. The energetic Roy W. Howard, then engaged in building up the United Press, conceived in 1916 the idea of putting what he called "honest-to-God objective reporting" on world events into South America; the agency to be none other than his own bureau. Of course, there is no such thing as purely objective reporting. The writer of anything with literary merit above that of a stock-market report must work from a point of view which subtly infuses all his copy. But there is such a thing as an intellectually honest attempt at objective reporting; which is what Howard really meant. He stood there on solid ground. Our press bureaus took no subsidies and owed to our government nothing more than ordinary obedience to the laws. Further, the young United Press was by now covering the whole world, including the war-area, with its own correspondents. Howard traveled

from the European front to South America, made an impermanent connection with *La Nación* in Buenos Aires and started up experimentally. Intrigue, both foreign and domestic, wrecked that first attempt. Howard gathered up the wreckage and began again. By the beginning of 1918 he had carried the enterprise beyond the experimental stage.

As a first step, Creel set about establishing direct wire-connections with every country whose mind we wished to influence. Therein he had able assistance from Walter S. Rogers, a specialist on news transmission. Slashing red tape, cutting often through national intrigues, fighting for a place on cables choked with military and diplomatic messages, Rogers secured the main lines. Going further, he leased or erected wireless stations, in emulation of the Nauen service, at strategic points. Over these lines of communication the American propaganda, when it really got going, sent a full war report. Maximilian Foster telegraphed a daily "communiqué" from our front; editors in Washington grouped about this the most glowing of the domestic war-news. And any publisher in the neutral world might have it, as he had the Nauen service, merely for the asking. Digressing for the moment: this service nearly wrecked Howard's enterprise in South America. Local editors could get the Nauen service and the American service, giving both sides of the war news, for nothing; and at the moment no one cared about any foreign news unrelated to the war. Why pay for Havas, United Press or any other commercial service, with such free copy in sight? But Howard's service to South America survived the blow.

Behind this telegraph service of the C.P.I., and branching out to many other fields, stood before the summer of 1918 a fully organized Foreign Section. Arthur Woods assumed in February the job of directing it. But the aviation service

pulled him away before he could make more than a start. At about this time my private affairs drew me temporarily back to Washington. Reasoning that my three and a half years as a reporter at the European war must have given me some insight into propaganda, the committee persuaded me to organize this work at the conventional dollar-a-year. I spent four or five months putting at least the nucleus of an American foreign propaganda into thirty countries; and then went back to the front for a rest.

Many a time since have I laughed at the curiosity of our moral position. War is glorified immorality. An act that would ordinarily constitute murder is its chief instrument; but such killing becomes heroic so long as the victim is the uniformed enemy. And if war sweetens murder, why should it not sanctify lesser immoralities? It does—of course. Lying was always a legitimate weapon of war. Such knights without fear and without reproach as Roland, Louis the Saint, George Washington and Robert E. Lee in the course of their campaigns practiced deceits which would read them out of decent society in times of peace. No reason, then, why we should not lie for the common cause like counselors on public relations. But, on the other hand, for three years the propagandists of the other powers had been lying, steadily if inconsistently. Some of this work was so awkward as to defeat its own ends. Now—I repeat—the chief use of American foreign propaganda in those curious times was to discourage the Germans and to hearten the Allies. To do this, we need only spread the news that contrary to report we were preparing to pour into the struggle a fresh army as large and potent as any with which the flagging belligerents had begun the war. No need of lying—except for lies of suppression in spots. It was the sober truth. And truth is more easily maintained than untruth.

The next most important excuse for an American propaganda into foreign countries was the need for disseminating in both Allied and enemy countries Wilson's utterances and views. The Germans were printing his speeches, it is true; but before the censor handed them out to the newspapers he cut them artistically to create the impression that Wilson also wanted to annihilate Germany. And the Allies, with their eyes on settlements after the war, were far from avid to broadcast among their own people his vision of a new Europe. Wilson, of course, meant what he said; and here also the Foreign Section, Committee on Public Information was accidentally standing on the rock of the truth. Or, at least, one side of the truth.

Still further: the President, in establishing the committee and financing it out of his secret fund, had imposed the condition that not a dollar of this money should go to bribe or to subsidize any newspaper or individual. Again, by the sheer accident of war, morals wed convenience. Our incorruptibility helped create the impression of a crusading nation. In the course of this job we confirmed what every experienced journalist knows—that purchased journalism is always faint-hearted journalism. In Spain, for example, the Germans were spending about $1,000,000 a month, mostly for the insertion of glorified "reading notices." Frank L. Marion and Irene Wright, who directed propaganda for us in that quarter, both had the art of getting on with Spaniards. In many parts of that interesting kingdom, editors who printed German copy for money printed American copy for friendship and for its news value. So we were virtuous—in Wilson's case because he was truly so; in the case of the rest of us, I suppose, because virtue paid.

The routine operations of the Foreign Section have no significance here. It did not make a real start until the late

spring of 1918, and the war ended in November. Consequently, much of the work never came to fruition. But a few original maneuvers deserve record. Early in the game, someone suggested that we held one high card lacking in the hands of the European Allies—our large population of aliens or foreign-born citizens. Josephine Roche's department had organized them to support the war, had worked them up to fever heat. Why not use their influence over their nationals at home? The first experiment in this direction proved a huge success. As I discovered personally on the Carso front, the Italian army was thickly dotted with soldiers who had come home for military service from Ohio or Illinois or California, leaving families behind. Monthly, these dependents received the soldier's modest pay at the Italian consulates. We arranged to have the consuls hand out with each pay envelope a circular printed in Italian and beginning: "Write to your relatives and friends in Italy telling them that America is on her way with overwhelming force. Tell them" etc. Probably most of the recipients thought that continuance of their pay depended on writing the suggested letters; and we, I confess, did nothing to correct this impression. Few of them had any skill at paraphrasing. The majority just copied off our brief statement of American progress in getting ready for war, and let it go at that. And American mails into Italy swelled to such a point that the Italian postal censors groaned and complained.

Harry Reichenbach, pearl of imaginative press agents, visited the department one day and dropped the seed of a splendid idea for making news. Since we had the foreign-born so well organized behind us, why not promote a Loyalty Day wherein they might demonstrate their enthusiasm? We adopted the plan and worked it out. The head man of all our

thirty-three foreign-born groups, charmed with the idea, at our suggestion petitioned President Wilson to set aside the Fourth of July for that purpose. Wilson, the fire having been built under him, fell into line and issued the appropriate proclamation. We wrote the copy in our office; he merely added a few "may I nots." But he himself put the capstone on the structure. New York, Chicago and Washington were struggling for the honor of his presence on that Independence Day. He would decline all these invitations. Instead, he would go down to Mount Vernon on the presidential yacht *Mayflower*, accompanied by the thirty-three eminent foreign-born citizens and their wives. There, standing before the tomb of Washington, he would make his Fourth of July speech. It turned out a thrilling occasion—John McCormack singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," the people grouped over the green hills of Mount Vernon like Hebrew shepherds listening to their prophet, Wilson himself giving utterance to one of his most famous speeches.

However, we who promoted this piece of "made" news had our eyes not so much on the main performance as on innumerable side shows. In nearly every large city except Chicago—where certain members of the Thompson administration were unfriendly—the organizations of foreign-born citizens marched in huge parades with banners, streamers, national emblems, national costumes. The parade in New York lasted from nine o'clock in the morning until twilight; and none who saw it will ever forget the company of Spanish-American girls tripping along in mantillas and brocaded shawls. From our point of view, these people were parading for the correspondents of foreign newspapers and especially for the motion-picture camera. So we were able to show in Sweden, Spain, Holland and the Argentine—everywhere—news films of their own nationals in a state of active enthusi-

asm over America's war; best of all perhaps, we recorded tens of thousands of German-Americans marching under the flag of '48, carrying on their banners the service stars of their sons. These films could not go into Germany, of course; but when they were shown in adjoining countries the news leaked freely across the border.

However, this piece of decorative work had slight results compared with an ingenious scheme for giving world-wide currency to *Pershing's Crusaders* and its two sequels. The war had closed the European studios. And at the same time we, first of all the world, had learned how to tell a story on celluloid. Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford were by 1917 as well known in Singapore, Buenos Aires and Paris as in New York and Chicago. The whole human race seemed to be clamoring for American films. In order to conserve our shipping for military purposes, Congress had decreed that nothing could be exported from the United States without a license from the War Trade Board. Creel and Hart, after many diplomacies, arranged that American films might be licensed freely and universally on two conditions. First, every consignment of films must include twenty per cent of these American propaganda pictures. Second, in selling programs to an exhibitor, the American company must bind him to take and to exhibit our official films in the same proportion. By midsummer of 1918, South America, Scandinavia and the Iberian peninsula, as well as the Allied nations, were marveling over our fresh and stalwart massed divisions, our great migrations of airplanes, our accumulations of heavy artillery. This measure had even its uses in spreading terror among the enemy. Henry Suydam represented the committee in Holland, and Mrs. Norman de R. Whitehouse in Switzerland; two countries much frequented by Germans during the war. These resourceful and energetic agents saw to it that

nearly every cinema house in their territories showed *Pershing's Crusaders;* and of course word of mouth carried the news into Germany.

While on the subject of the cinema, I feel impelled to record a magnificent picture beat that failed. From one of the Scandinavian countries a secret agent for an American department wrote to say that he could get us a certain German naval film picturing the atrocities of submarine warfare, realistically and horribly. The price was so modest, the description so blood-curdling, the possibility for working up horror among the neutrals so obvious that we accepted the offer at once and waited breathless for the special courier who was bringing this film from Europe. On the night of its arrival we set up a screen in the basement of our offices and, with a marine guard outside, ran it off. It was a superb piece of photography, but—

Every German in it was a handsome young hero. The crew joked and laughed, happy in its work. Before they torpedoed a ship, or sunk it with gunfire, they took off the crew. There were views of the smiling captives, being regaled abroad the submarine with coffee and brandy, and of their cozy quarters in this comfortable undersea home. And finally the weary but enthusiastic heroes appeared landing at the home port, to the acclaim of a grateful Fatherland. What we had bought was four reels of German propaganda film, posed and composed expressly to prove that submarine warfare on merchant ships was most effective and also tenderly humane. When it was finished, the voice of Creel crackled out of the silence:

"Nail up the damn' thing," he said; "nail it up tight, and sink it in the archives of the Navy Department!" And there, I suppose, it is yet!

Another piece of manufactured news had probably a profound effect in setting Mexico right. Murray conceived the

idea of gathering up a group of representative Mexican journalists and bringing them to the United States as guests. So might they see with their own eyes. Our diplomatic representatives had some trouble in arranging this party, since every man who accepted the invitation found himself denounced in the pro-German or anti-American newspapers as a "traitor editor." But our agents succeeded in rounding up twenty-five representative publishers and star reporters. They appeared in Washington—a group of pleasant young men whose finished manners put us all on our best behavior. President Wilson received them and made them a speech on our own responsibility toward the Monroe Doctrine which deserves more attention than history has accorded it. Then they piled into a train of automobiles to make their formal call on the secretary of state. I was riding in the last car with Lieutenant Riley of the navy, who served as their escort and interpreter. Suddenly the procession stopped. All the Mexicans were piling out into the road and gazing toward heaven in a state of tense emotion. I joined them. Their conversation was bubbling too fast for my own *cantina* Spanish. So,

"What's the excitement?" I asked Riley.

"They're talking about those planes up there," he replied, "those two little training planes that always guard the White House."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because there are two of them."

"And what's strange about that?"

Riley listened a moment.

"They have always understood," he reported, "that the United States had only one airplane!"

Within a week we showed them three hundred airplanes, all stunting and maneuvering in the air at once. We showed them trained troops by the hundreds of thousands, parks of

field artillery, heavy artillery and tanks, finally the Ford factories at work on war material. When they crossed the border homeward bound, one of the escorting officers asked a member of the party how the trip impressed him.

"Personally," he said, "I was more than impressed. I was terrified!" And they went home to spread the truth that America was not a pushover.

The Committee on Public Information died with the signature of the treaties. It is notable as our sole acknowledged venture in larger government propaganda, and our single experiment of any kind of foreign propaganda. We never renewed that experiment; which is well for our souls. In times of peace, the European nations and Japan maintain their foreign propaganda mostly as an advance agent for their commerce. However, one or two fortuitous circumstances, entirely disassociated from official encouragement and control, wrought for us somewhat the same result. Until 1928 or thereabout, the film spoke the universal language. Not really, perhaps; rather an American language. While the film remained silent, we had no competition worthy of the name. It went everywhere, carrying pictures of American shoes on the feet of attractive girls, of American plumbing in charming homes, of American automobiles gliding through luxurious gardens. Unsubsidized and unencouraged, it served as a most persuasive advance agent for our exports. Its commercial value, however, was counterbalanced by an adverse political tendency. "Sin is news and news is sin," said Mr. Dooley. So is drama mostly sin. Constantly the film played up the gilded vice in American life, the divorces, the acts of violence. Just at the end of the silent era I visited South America. I found that the more conservative families were forbidding their young people to witness American films—"they set such a bad example." Taken as a whole, they mis-

represented American life to our discredit. Any other government would probably have put a visible or invisible censorship upon them.

Then the spoken film arrived, coincidentally with a wave of nationalism, and broke up the world film business into tight, exclusive language-compartments. The Europeans started to create their own motion-picture industries. Governments subsidized and encouraged them, openly or covertly censored them, with a view to advertising their own wares while glorifying their cultures. Nevertheless, we still manufacture the most popular film in the world; and it still serves us, though less potently than of old, as an advance agent.

Finally, the Associated Press and the United Press have profited by their position as the only news agencies capable of covering the world and at the same time free from propaganda. Conspicuously, Latin America, which once looked almost exclusively to the European bureaus for its foreign news, after the war swung over strongly to the American dispensers of "honest-to-God objective reporting." South America takes far more news from the United Press and the Associated Press than from any other world-wide news-bureau. In this process the bad goes forth with the good; the collapse of Insull's empire and the chase after Dillinger, with social progress and triumphs in art or science. Which, since all this rests on a foundation of truth, is over a long course of years the enlightened policy.*

However, the Committee on Public Information added one tradition to our domestic journalism. Until the war, reporters at Washington dealt more or less directly with bureaus and departments. Except for a few creators of

* The Europeans have, as I write, begun a new effort to crowd our bureaus out of the foreign field. I will discuss that situation in a later chapter.

tepid and harmless flimsy, the American scheme of government knew not the press agent. The Creel bureau had demonstrated the uses of a new political tool; and politicians did not fail to take notice. The number of publicity agents for Federal departments grew constantly during fifteen years until in this, the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the director, adviser or producer of publicity seems indispensable to even the smallest alphabetical bureau.

Chapter XVII

THE DISEASE BECOMES CHRONIC

IN 1905, after a great war which determined the future of the Orient, the delegates of Russia and Japan met at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The next peace conference of real importance to history assembled at Versailles, a suburb of Paris, in 1919. The author was in the press gallery at both events. Portsmouth, like Versailles, witnessed a backstairs convention of reporters and star journalists from every civilized nation. Once every two or three days, the delegates met in the Portsmouth Navy Yard behind locked doors and a marine guard. When the session was finished, an imperturable Japanese attaché or a genial young Russian handed out a statement announcing that the delegates had agreed, partially agreed or failed to agree on Article Four, Fourteen or Sixteen. Since no one knew the content of the document on which they were working, this meant less than nothing and passed as a diplomatic joke. A few of the more eminent figures like Dr. Dillon of the London *Times* were supposed to have the deep confidence of Count Witte, who presided over the Russian delegation. If this was true, it did not show in their copy. The reporters played round the Hotel Wentworth, promoted that merry and ingenious journalistic hoax the Order of St. Vitus of Crete, listened to Irvin S. Cobb's flights of witty narrative, and wrote either "atmosphere" stories or pure conjecture. Most importantly, no one on either the Russian or the Japanese side tried in the least to influence public opinion. There was

a light fringe of secret agents, true. Some were fakers; some represented commercial interests. Only one had much contact with the press; and this led to the single real beat of the conference. A steamship company was holding a fleet of transports to bring home the Russian prisoners in case of peace. Keeping these ships inactive cost money—much money. The company was naturally avid to know whether the war was going on; in which case, it could release them to commercial uses. And an agent for the owners, chosen because he knew Count Witte, wandered inconspicuously about the corridors of the Wentworth unnoted by all except Camillo Cianfarra, an Italian journalist working in New York and representing at the moment *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires. Cianfarra had the foresight to scrape up acquaintance with this man. Two days before the end of the conference, and at a moment when the reporters had generally concluded that it was going to adjourn without action, the steamship agent "leaked" to his friend. Witte, as a personal favor, had passed him a tip. The delegations had reached a private agreement. At the next meeting they were going to make it official. He even gave a rough sketch of the terms. Cianfarra lost no time in cabling the story. *La Prensa* had a world beat, but no one knew it; the representatives of the American and European press bureaus in South America did not grasp the idea that a newspaper in that remote corner of the world might be the sole recipient of an international story.

Otherwise, the announcement came as a bolt from the blue. After an adjournment of two days, the delegates met again at the Navy Yard. The press had long ago given up trying to rush that gate. Someone had by now persuaded the diplomats to telephone their unfruitful messages to newspaper headquarters at the Hotel Wentworth; and Miller of the Publishers' Press was delegated to take them

on behalf of all the news associations. That morning the reporters loafed about the lobbies and piazzas, bored and unexpectant. Suddenly Miller was called to the telephone. The rest of us gathered languidly about him, expecting the usual smoke screen or at best—from a reporter's point of view—announcement that the conference had collapsed. "Yes, Mr. Sato," we heard Miller say "Yes, go ahead!" A brief pause; then Miller started as though he had taken an electric shock, and actually dropped the receiver. He turned to us with his face the picture of overwhelming surprise, and "Peace!" he gasped. A fifth of a second of paralyzed immobility; and then twenty men broke for the wire.

How simple and primitive the Portsmouth Peace Conference seemed to those journalistic survivors who attended the Conference of Versailles! What an age of innocence! The larger nations had transformed their departments of war propaganda into departments of peace propaganda. Before the delegates ran a line of skirmishers—agents of superpublicity, eminent directing journalists who showered flattering attentions on the representatives of the foreign press, humbler figures with engaging personalities. These expounders of national aims took the reporters ostentatiously into their confidence in both daily conferences and private meetings; and they put forth a deluge of mimeographed matter. Wilson and his delegation were forced to follow. They organized an American section, for which Ray Stannard Baker served as director, to make sweet the official relations with the press; and the Committee on Public Information sent over George Creel and Edgar Sisson, with a corps of assistants, to enlighten Europe regarding Wilson's aims. Not only the great nations had their publicity agents, but factions in those nations like the Italian expansionists and

the French left-bank-of-the-Rhine party. Also, the oppressed people of the Balkans and the Russian border invaded Paris not only with diplomats but with whole corps of publicity agents. Some of these factions, with a view to creating a state of public opinion which would force the diplomats to recognize their claims, set up shops in Washington and London.

This contrast between the atmosphere of Portsmouth in 1905 and that of Versailles in 1918–19 stood as the outward and visible sign of a changed relation between the press and established government. The war had brought to attention a new method in politics and diplomacy. Governments had proved that the press could be gagged and the news slanted, biased or juggled to produce almost any temporary effect they wished; and that in time of war at least, peoples would endure the process. Here was a weapon of statesmanship too useful to abandon in time of peace. Further, during the intensive battle of propaganda which marked the last two years of the war tens of thousands of young men and women had learned at least the rudiments of the new art. When the Armistice threw them out of employment, they must needs look round for new occupation. Many hired themselves to governments and factions; others, by stimulating scares of various kinds among the rich and important, created jobs.

It is doubtful if the propagandists of the new nations, or the special pleaders for factions, accomplished much during this period. Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Orlando each knew exactly what he wanted; and they fought it out among themselves. Moreover, the people of the dominant, victorious countries were thinking again in strictly nationalistic terms—the French of security and their "hegemony over Europe," the Italians of the irredenta, the British of the Empire.

The propaganda designed to lead public opinion into accepting the dangerous and uneconomic terms of the Versailles treaty had more practical uses. Already the European propagandists had learned the useful principle that the first step in any campaign of commercial persuasion is the same thing as the first step in a diplomatic maneuver—to create an atmosphere. They worked, therefore, to maintain that white heat of hatred which they had created during the war. They loaded the press of the Allied Continental countries with "now-it-can-be-told" instances of German fury. That clause in the peace terms agreeing to deliver German "war criminals" to punishment by the Allies had probably no other object. . . . The late Allies did not get round to submitting the specific list to Germany until the winter of 1920–21. When it arrived, it comprised not only the names of men who undoubtedly committed atrocities, but those of national heroes like von Hindenberg. Describing the great Field Marshal as Public Enemy Number One turned this document, eventually, into a joke. Which was perhaps the subtle intention from the first. The list of war criminals had served its purpose.

One operation in this campaign gave a rude shock to the class of American reporters who arrived, all ignorant of Europe and its ways, to report our stage of the war or the peace. Now that the war was over, a lively curiosity about Germany ran through America and the Allied countries; for the least informed reader of the daily press knew that she had been living under strict censorship. The Allies, holding the borders, decreed that correspondents accompanying the armies of occupation must not advance beyond the military lines and prohibited other journalists from entering Germany. Some of the Americans, it is true, represented newspapers which served German-American

districts and had enlisted with the Allies only for the term of the war. But the main reason for this intellectual fence round Germany was the condition of the civilian population. The British blockade had reduced it to a state of malnutrition which in spots approached starvation. The Allies maintained the blockade for months after the Armistice and with a single object: so to weaken German morale that her envoys, when finally admitted to the councils of Versailles, could sign on the dotted line without provoking an upheaval at home. Not until March, 1919, was Herbert Hoover, for all his power and persuasiveness, able to break a hole in the blockade and to begin the dispatch of necessary foodstuffs like fats into Germany. Frank and honest reporting on conditions in Germany would tend to create invidious sympathy for the civilian population. The Allies persuaded or forced Wilson into agreement with this policy. When the untamed American journalists at the Peace Conference attempted to remove these bars, they expected help and sympathy from their European confreres, since obviously such a move seemed to the interest of every newspaper in the world. No one who saw the press gallery at the Conference can forget the indignant surprise of the Americans when they found most Continental European journalists, from editors down to cub reporters, in thorough agreement with the politicians on screening Germany from the light. And this episode served as a measure of the control which governments held, and proposed to keep on holding, over the sources of public information.

One strange episode in this successful attempt to create an atmosphere was not noted or recorded, so far as I know, at the time. Wilson was coming to serve as his own peace commissioner; and he at the moment epitomized the hopes of all liberals. His Fourteen Points, his Four Points, his

declaration for the League of Nations, seemed to war-weary peoples the Great Solution, the panacea, the fulfillment of the "war to end war." French communes were naming streets after him; Italian peasants, quaintly confusing their politics with their religion, were burning candles before his picture. The Allied commissioners proposed to start with his Fourteen Points and, by trading, modify them according to their wishes. But Wilson's popularity might endanger their aims. He was due to arrive on a Saturday. Paris could not deny him one of its renowned public welcomes. But the edge might be taken off from the enthusiasm. Therefore, on three Saturdays before the vital date, Paris received with pomp and parade successively the King and Queen of the Belgians, the King of Italy, and the King of England! Here was a case not of making the news but of unmaking it. The maneuver failed of its purpose; at least partially. The French populace welcomed Wilson as enthusiastically as though they had never before seen a foreign ruler. That honeymoon was soon over!

Factions as well as governments maneuvered to catch the favorable attention of journalists and especially of American reporters. The guns were hardly cold before the French army invited a collection of American journalists to make a tour of all the army fronts in occupied Germany. One by one, these guests perceived the object of the party. The French military faction, as contrasted with a wiser civilian faction, wanted to annex Germany clear to the Rhine. They were trying to create the proper atmosphere preparatory to a direct assault on public opinion. They made the mistake, however, of keying their propaganda on the past of France in this region, oblivious of the fact that the historical argument makes little impression upon the American mind. As a dramatic critic in the party remarked, the

show was beautifully staged, superbly cast and utterly unconvincing.

Similarly, in one of the periods when the Conference stood temporarily adjourned the Italians gathered up a distinguished company of American publicists and took them on a most pleasant excursion along the old front in Northern Italy. The object of the party was plain even before the guests left Paris—propaganda for the Italian claim on the northern Adriatic littoral.

During this period a war of wits broke out in another direction. No statesman of Europe could so much as guess whether Russian Communism—then known and dreaded as Bolshevism—would spread westward. Even before the Peace of Versailles there were ominous signs. Bela Kun, the adventurer, had brought off a short-lived revolution in Hungary. In Germany, the Socialist government had suppressed a Spartacist revolution in a wholesale execution by machine gun. New, militant, romantic, brutal, Bolshevism had at the moment no other international idea than a world-wide upheaval of the proletariat; in its first enthusiasm it knew not nationalism. Moreover, Communist foreign propaganda, so often in later days a myth of the counter-propagandists, was in those days a reality. From Russia and its neighboring states, agents were circulating among the Socialist parties of Europe which were already dividing into constitutionalist and revolutionary factions. The revolutionaries passed along the arguments and the literature. The former allies had backed such reactionary military adventures as those of Kolchak, Denikine and Yudenich, and had proved to themselves—whatever they told the public—that it would be some time, at best, before Bolshevism collapsed. Without much prompting or stimulation from without, the "bourgeois" press of Western Europe and

even of the United States opened a campaign which differed little in its tactics from the propaganda of the war years. Bourgeois correspondents, prohibited during that period from entering Russia, hung about the borders to transmit as truth the rumors and inventions of royalist refugees. Also, half-truth served its immemorial purpose. Stories about the sufferings and adventures of intellectuals and aristocrats who had escaped alive into the bourgeois world filled the newspapers. These tales were mainly true in substance; but they stood uncorrected by any news favorable to the Soviet government.

And at least one episode of that period made us observers wonder whether the intellectual dishonesty which characterized journalism in the war were a permanence; whether even the British press had lost its old-time integrity. Following the abortive Kopp "Putsch" at Berlin early in 1920, the industrial district of the Ruhr arose in what amounted to a Communist rebellion. At least, Communists led it; although it seemed to this eyewitness that the average Ruhr miner took out his old army rifle and went gunning for government troops by way of satisfying his grudge against armies in general. This was almost the first out-and-out Communist outbreak in Western Europe, and it attracted correspondents by dozens. As among ourselves we talked it over, we remarked the gingerly moderation of both sides. Germans, pitted against Germans, had not yet warmed up to a frantic fighting-pitch. Especially, none of us had heard of any atrocities. But this was war, although on a small scale; and along the Dutch border or on the Rhine there broke out the customary rumors—women outraged, babies massacred, eyes gouged out—and always by the Communists. Local correspondents picked them up, transmitted them; under what amounted to scareheads for Europe, they reached print

in both London and Paris. At the Ruhr "front" worked a very competent British journalist, just out of the army; he represented a London newspaper which the whole trade regarded as a pillar of integrity. He wired across the Channel a wise, proportionate story of the actions and atmospheres in the insurgent camp. The newspaper took this copy, worked into it a set of those border rumors and printed the whole mess under his signature. When the newspaper carrying the story reached Essen, he promptly and properly wired his resignation.

But Europe settled down, temporarily at least. It passed, without obvious and immediate disaster, the crucial year of 1923. Bolshevism in Russia began to crystallize into Communism; and everywhere in the Western nations, the principle lost ground. War psychology dwindled. The press of Great Britain and France wriggled out of its fetters, regained most of its freedom. Now, seventeen years after the Peace of Versailles, the only free and relatively honest press in any important nation belongs to those two great European peoples and to the United States. Their rank in order of freedom is the United States first, France second, and Great Britain third. In intellectual honesty—I should say—Great Britain leads, with the United States second and France third. The relative rank in common honesty is about the same; though on a percentage basis France, owing to the custom of support by "interests," would rank rather low. Nevertheless, France still has her honest voices; and it is no coincidence that these three nations form the dike against the tide of medieval political thought which has submerged Italy and Germany.

Yet the character and methods of even the French and British press had changed subtly but definitely; and the change, on the whole, was for the worse. It had added to its

intellectual equipment certain tricks of technique learned in the war. It had fully discovered the use of news, properly "handled," as a means of persuasion. Of this let me give only one example. Poincaré had taken charge in France; by his ruthless determination he was to pull his nation through a great crisis. It served his purpose to keep a strong hand on Germany; and to accomplish that he must maintain hatred and suspicion in his people. At the moment, a disarmament commission from the League of Nations was combing Germany for concealed war equipment. Certain irreconcilables of the old regime had, on the collapse of the German army, hidden away stocks of machine guns, stands of rifles, even cannon. The commission nosed round, finding these arms and commandeering them. No proof was ever discovered that the Social-Democratic government at Berlin had any part in this process. And the total cache was rather insignificant at best. Experts of the League of Nations estimated that all the arms discovered or known to be concealed would have equipped only three divisions, and them imperfectly. (By contrast, when the German army collapsed it had more than 160 divisions on the western front.) Yet every time that a dozen machine guns, three field guns or a hundred rifles turned up in a German attic or cellar, the news streamed across the front pages of the Poincaré organs in Paris; and ultranationalistic newspapers of London fell into line. This was simply a case of telling facts out of proportion. And the peasants of the northern border lived again under their old, oft-justified fear of invasion.

The simple era when journalist or reporter made his own "connections" with statesmen or bureaus had passed forever. If governments did not in fact maintain bureaus of propaganda on the war plan, they did so in spirit. Pleasant per-

sonalities guided or steered the press galleries, informed them on the aims of the nation or the administration; in countries where party or government organs existed, plotted campaigns. For anyone willing to undertake the immense labor involved, a study of the attitude of Belgian journalism toward the United States, during the decade after the Armistice, might afford much instruction. During the war, the Belgian *Société d'Alimentation et de Secours* conducted the distribution of food stocks in Belgium—and did, admittedly, a superb job. However, this was after all only an agency subordinate to the American Commission for Relief in Belgium which found the nine hundred million dollars necessary for the operation and kept it alive against the assaults of nationalist elements among the British and Germans. When the war ended, the Belgians understood all this and expressed their gratitude; in the Brussels of 1919, an American uniform was a passport to almost anything. Then gradually reference to American aid began to disappear from the Belgian press. When it referred to the relief of Belgium, the *Société d'Alimentation* was always the hero. The great of Belgium, and especially King Albert, remembered; the populace was induced to forget. By accident or design, this prepared the atmosphere for that agitation, government-inspired in most countries, against payment of the war debts to America. And the Belgian press did its part in creating the picture of "Uncle Shylock."

With the right and wrong of this issue of the war debts we have here no concern. The points germane to the present inquiry are, first, the appearance of concerted action at the direction of the governments in power or under their persuasion; and second, the deliberate violation of truth by the process of publishing only one side of the news. The average citizen of France and Belgium, and to a lesser extent of

Great Britain, never knew that the United States, in its arrangements after the Armistice, had virtually canceled most of the debts incurred for the war itself; that the bulk of the remaining obligations paid for the rehabilitation of the Allied nations. The same process was applied to news from the United States. An occasional favorable speech by a dissenting American statesman or financier reached print in Europe almost in full; a reasoned argument against cancellation by any great American figure, even the President, if printed at all appeared usually as a small item in an obscure position. It is only fair to add that news from Europe about the war debts, as it appeared in certain of our own ultranationalistic newspapers, was sometimes exactly as one-sided.

Germany had no sooner achieved the right of free communication with the outside world than the government reopened that palace furnished during the war for comfort and convenience of the foreign and domestic press; the object, of course, being to supply matter favorable to her present national aims and to establish contact with her apologists. Poland set up what amounted to an official press bureau. In the brief era before the Fascist uprising, Italy kept intact part of the organization for propaganda which had served her in the war. Finally, the League of Nations recognized the new relation of politics to the news by incorporating into its structure a press section; an American, Arthur Sweetser, appropriately served as its director.

The publicity agent or counselor on public relations—the super-press agent—began to intrude into European affairs. He worked on American lines, modified to fit the environment. On what this recorder would regard as the Lord's side appeared innumerable societies opposed to war as a human institution. These varied in policy from the out-and-out

nonresisters, who bound themselves to face prison and a firing squad rather than participate in war, to such realistic associations as the League of Nations Union. Some of these—like their American models—existed merely to support with money and influence the activities of a secretary who was really a publicity agent and who worked to load the newspapers with arguments for peace and news pointing toward international conciliation. Opposed to them stood a group of militaristic, nationalistic and big-navy societies employing somewhat the same methods. These, however, had formidable reinforcement from another element virtually new to Europe—the secret publicity agents for the armament manufacturers. No contemporary historian stands in a position to write with accuracy and authority on the plots, counterplots and intrigues of these gentry. As with the international spy system, secrecy is the essence of the proceeding.

The nationalistic societies and publicity agents had always two immediate advantages over the peace societies. First, the pacifists of all shades shrank from rough or dishonest methods. Usually even the idealists among the element which was militarist by conviction had no such scruples. To them, the national interest sweetened all sins; hence, from time immemorial Christian statesmen have killed in war and lied in peace. Further, the press agents of the militarists had always better financial backing than the voluntary contributions of the pacifists. Peace is to almost everyone's remote interest but to no one's immediate financial interest. Preparation for war stands to benefit professional soldiers by promotion, and manufacturers of munitions or producers of raw material by dividends. Funds were available to subsidize venal journalists, to buy controlling interests in newspapers and, through agents disguised

as anything but what they were, to create the proper atmosphere in the press galleries at disarmament conferences. Newspaper influence once established, technical handling of the news was far easier than lying. In France, suppress or cut down all news indicating a friendly disposition on the part of Germany, and play up the news tending to prove a hostile disposition. In Germany, merely reverse the process. Get into the Berlin newspaper any chauvinistic howl of a French deputy; into the Parisian newspapers any vengeful growl of a German deputy. Since news is sin, this process is only by way of speeding up a natural tendency of journalism. In this country, relatively few newspapers are anti-Japanese in policy; yet an anti-American declaration of a prominent Japanese goes on to the front page while an olive branch from across the Pacific gets scanty attention. Then, having stuffed the heads of his readers with suspicion against the national enemy, the munitions propagandist inserts as a clincher the antique sophistry "thorough preparedness is the best insurance against war"; and nothing remains but to collect the dividends.

I have paid special attention to the munitions propagandists partly because their game is so easy and so understandable, and partly because investigations, both here and abroad, have brought some of their operations to light. Other high-powered publicity men were working at games more subtle, complex and obscure—agents for steel trusts and cartels, for oil interests, and especially for nascent political factions.

And these last revived one game which was not American by origin, but European. The object of the propagandist, of course, is to bias minds in favor of some selfish interest or some political theory. In the case of adults he does his work by direct argument or by the painless process of doctor-

ing the news. But why not begin with the children? Why not implant as part of their intellectual equipment a bias for one or another form of society or a slant toward one or another faction? The churches had done that for centuries; and, even before 1914, the process was not unknown to statesmanship. Allied war propagandists never tired of quoting a primary geography formerly used in part at least of the German schools, which began:

Q: What is Germany?
A: Germany is your Fatherland, entirely surrounded by enemies, etc.

Quartered in the château of a French nobleman during the war, I found in the library the textbooks of his children, as used at a private school for Bourbon aristocrats. The histories proved so fascinating that I read them to the last word. Every chapter—especially when the topic was the French Revolution—preached a sermon on the danger of mob rule. And the mild, moronic Louis XVI, who has no admirers among unbiased historians, figured as a great monarch, a martyr and a saint.

Indeed, all teaching of history in the schools of the world had before the war tended toward excess of nationalism—the glory of one's own race and breed. We Americans stand in that respect as much condemned as the Europeans. Most of my own generation began its study of history and politics with the United States as center of the known world, and from that branched out—perhaps—to the wider scheme of humanity. The half-expressed tendency of this miseducation was toward an excessive and narrow patriotism. In our own case, as probably in most old cases, no one stands willfully responsible for this except a few politicians who used the national banner as a screen for their deeper intentions. It was mostly the fruit of intellectual laziness on the part of

school authorities and school historians. My own education in American history began more than a hundred years after the taking of Yorktown; yet along with the merits and glories of our colonial ancestors I absorbed the idea, a hold-over from the Revolution, that the British were pretty poor stuff. Indeed, I had reached the university before I dared entertain the thought that one could be a good American without distrusting that people from which we inherited our language, our best literature, most of our institutions—and in my own case, my blood. School instruction in most European countries proceeded on much the same lines; and the policy sprang from equally hazy motives. H. G. Wells wrote his *Outline of History* as a protest against this method; his theory being that the child should learn first the story of the human race and only afterward the annals of his subspecies or of his political division. And it is so taught nowadays in our small minority of progressive schools.

Now, by frank intention, factions and whole nations began propaganda directed at schoolchildren. Soviet Russia furnishes the most flagrant example. When the Bolsheviki took charge, the illiteracy of the Empire was traditional. In periods of special repression, the czarist government had even exiled intellectuals guilty of teaching the proletariat to read and write. The Russian people proved hungry for education. Persecuted intellectuals, stripped of their property and driven into the farming districts, worked with the peasants by day and at night taught school; in the course of a year or so, many village communities found means to set them up in day schools. This process was for a time the hope of exiled Russian liberals. "The Communists hold power just now because of the intellectual darkness among the Russian people," they said. "Wait until a literate

generation grows up!" But the clever group which ruled at Moscow dashed that hope. As soon as it began to organize the country, it installed a system of popular education based on the Marxian theory, the class struggle, national conceit and a disbelief in all bourgeois institutions. Every branch of instruction beyond the three "R's" was hammered into this mold; and Russian popular education is not so much a training for life as a preparation for propaganda.

The second German Republic—peace and honor to its ashes—compromised itself out of existence; and notably in the matter of education. In districts where the educational authorities represented the old regime, the rigmarole taught the children in the guise of history had no more relation to reality than the "Marxian history" of the Soviet schools. By now, the propagandists of German nationalism had created a set of stock misstatements, with the requisite sugar coating of truth, to transform national pride to that most dangerous of corporate emotions, national conceit. The Allies had attacked Germany because they were jealous of her progress and power. America had joined them because the bankers had loaned money to the Allies and would lose it if Germany won. The great German army stood at the end on the verge of victory. But domestic treason, whipped by Allied propaganda, had stabbed these heroes in the back. Germany stood "ringed with enemies"—here the statement had in it considerably more truth than in the period before the war. The exploded Nordic theory was taught with the multiplication table. And so on—the mess of perverted ideas which the Nazis were to consecrate as a new national religion.

As for those nations endowed by the treaties of Versailles and Sèvres with new minorities, the story of "patriotic" education in the common schools approaches the fantastic.

Rumania, for example, had taken over large groups of Hungarians. And little children of pure Hungarian ancestry recited in Rumanian from a textbook with a passage which began:

Q: What were the Huns?
A: The Huns were a barbarous and heathen people, etc.

Even those nations which have maintained democracy and its corollary, liberty of expression, had lapses with respect to education. I have spoken of Poincaré's hard-bitten policy toward Germany and the means employed through the partially controlled nationalist press to keep hatred bright. His administration did not overlook the possibilities in education. A primary reader, inserted into half of the French public schools during this period, fairly ate fire. It repeated the old stock story about the amputation of children's hands in Belgium. It revived a folktale of a little Alsatian boy who pointed a toy gun at the advancing Germans and died immediately before a firing squad. It introduced a dialogue between a mother and son concerning the damage to Rheims Cathedral, wherein the Germans figured as murderous vandals. This stuff had no appeal to the average, hard-minded French schoolmaster, however; and when the conciliatory Edouard Herriot came into power, it passed to the scrap heap.

Here and there, and in a rudimentary way, this process of fundamental propaganda appeared among us. During the days of the Insull Empire, the public utility companies, noting the "power trust" agitation in the West, instituted an ambitious campaign of induced publicity; the burden of the song being the dangers of Socialism and its twin, public ownership. As a Senate investigation showed, the agents of the companies did much crooked work, which

included inducements of money and advertising to the country and small-town press. And in a few especially dangerous districts they loaded the public schools with textbooks expressing their ideas. In Chicago, Big Bill Thompson, demagogue, was covering a deal of municipal corruption and inefficiency with a screen of blatant patriotism. Having in his electorate large German and Irish elements, he specialized on hatred of England—"soak King George in the snout." And he succeeded for a time in suppressing school histories which gave a proportionate view of the American Revolution, supplanting them with those that breathed the old, unreasoned hate. That, too, has passed.

It is only fair to add that European pacifists of all shades were also working on the juvenile mind. Here, we must go back and recall a definition of terms. "Propaganda," in the prewar sense, meant simply the means by which one spread his opinions. In the modern sense it means a traffic in half-lies for selfish or dishonest ends. Pacifist propaganda in postwar years seldom fitted the new definition. It served no one's immediate selfish ends, and usually it kept reasonably close to facts. Generally speaking, the intellectuals of the whole world had passed from their early mood of militant patriotism to one of profound disillusion. This was perhaps the first great war of history to bring forth no "heroic" literature in praise of war. *Under Fire* in France, *Journey's End* and *The Spanish Farm* in England, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* in Germany, *What Price Glory* and *Paths of Glory* in the United States—these, and all other recent literature of war which approaches permanent rank, express in greater or smaller degree abhorrence of the institution. More pertinent to the topic: pacifist ideas had taken strong hold

on what an American nationalist has called in contempt "the teacher and preacher class." In the nations which retained some liberty of thought, expression and education, teachers worked subtly or openly to inculcate a set of ideas most horrifying to professional patriotism. Yet as the children grew older, much of their newspaper education in current affairs failed to harmonize with this background of formal education. And from this conflict of ideas, perhaps, sprang much of the tragic confusion of thought which has marked the second decade after the Great War.

Chapter XVIII

THE NEW ARISTOCRACY

NO MAN now alive could write accurately, proportionately and in detail the history of postwar propaganda on the European continent. The task would require knowledge of half a dozen languages and intimate acquaintance with the press in a dozen countries. That, however, would be the mere mechanics of the job. Inspiring propaganda is one of the most secret processes known to politics and diplomacy. Real history of any period is not easily written until the chief actors in the events are dead, and hidden records have come to light. The scholar who sits down at last to tell the story of a historical episode finally and definitely has usually available to his hand the imperfect but sound work of men who lived contemporaneously with the event. But even in the year 2000, the historian of manners and social movements will still find the full story of journalism in this era an impossibly difficult task. The newspaper, articulate and even clamorous about everything else, has always been most secretive about itself. For one thing he will find few documents. The gentlemen who from inside or from outside of newspaper offices rig and juggle the press do not usually exchange contracts or record their operations in letters. He will lack above all the guidance of wise and philosophical minds which worked contemporaneously with the event. Until very recently, authors and scholars alike have displayed toward journalism an understandable but none the less irritating snobbery. The "little sister of literature," someone has called it; and this phrase betrays the

superficiality of the thought behind it. Both employ words as tools; but their purposes and objects are usually quite dissimilar. Nevertheless, even now one can treat the subject along broad lines and, while admitting honest ignorance of the major and minor tactics which wrought certain effects, record with approximation to final truth some of the larger strategies.

It is today the fashion to laugh at Woodrow Wilson's catch phrase, "Make the world safe for democracy"; since the outcome of the World War has rendered the world particularly unsafe for democracy. Yet it conveyed a general fact. Always excepting Russia—the exception to all rules—the Entente Allies roughly represented the right of peoples to govern their own destinies and to choose their rulers; while the Central Powers without exception represented the divine right of kings, nobles or other privileged classes. All through the war the common people of the neutral countries usually favored Britain and France, while the nobility and gentry were hot partisans of Germany. In 1915 I discussed this question with an intelligent Spanish nobleman who, for all his love of Paris and the French spirit, believed that the Central Powers had the spiritual right on their side. "Germany," he said, "has brought the aristocratic idea up to date. Our class had become stupid with privilege. The nineteenth century loosed all kinds of new forces, both material and intellectual. We did not know how to use and direct them. We left that to the canaille. And everywhere we lost ground, while this stupid, hell-inspired democracy gained. But Germany under the Hohenzollerns has shown how the rule of an aristocracy may be brought up to date. Therefore, I am supporting Germany."

Prescience failed him in one thing. The element which was to seize and expand the Hohenzollern ideal was not

the old, hereditary nobility of Europe, but a new shirt-sleeved aristocracy. If the Nazi or Fascist conception of society survives, if the Russian dictatorship goes on to its logical end, leadership will probably follow the reactionary pattern and become hereditary. And families of the new nobility will trace their derivation from paperhangers, blacksmiths, small journalists and schoolmasters—often from ancestors whose original service to the great cause consisted in giving a Socialist a dose of castor oil or in beating up a Jew. Bards and minstrels, themselves primitive propagandists, have thrown an aura of romance about the founders of the older aristocracies. If we knew the hard facts, we might find that their origins were little nobler.

By instinct rather than by reason, the Tory demagogues who founded the new aristocracies perceived the truth that no class can govern without full and accurate information. Deprive the populace of real news—and you disarm it. Clear into the nineteenth century the extreme Tory classes of Britain and the Continent maintained that the invention of printing was the greatest calamity which had ever befallen mankind and desired wistfully to keep education from the common herd. Alone, the Russian aristocracy stood in a position to enforce this ideal. Elsewhere in the world it was too late. Things had got to such a pretty pass that machine tenders and peasants, the backbone of production in a modern state, must be able to read, write and cipher else national efficiency could not be maintained. Moreover, the buttress of the new aristocracy was an organized mob of blind followers—the blackshirts in Italy, the storm troops in Germany, the Communist party in Russia. These numbered millions, and it served the purposes of the masters to have them educated or miseducated. That hand of the clock could not be turned back.

The war had provided a ready-made solution. Governments had proved that in the stress of a national crisis the thoughts of a people could be regimented as effectively as their persons and their property. You needed only a strict and arbitrary censorship to create a void, a flood of expert propaganda to fill it, and such an appeal to the lower nerve centers that emotion would blanket reason.

The first revolution leading to group dictatorships among the European peoples was the Bolshevik coup in the autumn of 1917. That happened primarily because in the chaotic state of Russia, Lenin, Trotsky and their immediate followers formed the sole group which knew exactly where it was going. They used as auxiliary, however, propaganda by word of mouth, the only medium of any use with an illiterate populace. German agents, as I have written before, helped circulate it; and its very essence was false information concerning the conditions, intentions and military prospects of those Allied powers with which Russia under Kerensky stood allied. Russia was now embarked on another war—this time for the world dictatorship of the proletariat. Maintaining an internal censorship and dispensing propaganda by printed or spoken word was only a natural extension of a process now grown habitual to war.

Going further, the Communists during the Red Terror suppressed all newspapers which had shown the faintest sign of independence, and made publishing a state function. When things settled down and they began to form their permanent policy, Lenin, Stalin and the rest of the inner group permitted a certain amount of "tactical" criticism. No newspaper might express the slightest doubt that Marxian Communism was eternally right and the perfect organization for society both within Russia and without. But it might cavil and carp, though with strong reservations,

at the manner in which Russia was carrying on the Marxian program. The masters kept a strong hand on editorial policies, constantly dictating the attitude toward this or that domestic or foreign event. The Russian proletariat is new to the art of reading; and it has apparently that exaggerated reverence for the printed word which caused the reading classes of Western Europe to prove at first such easy targets for partisan literature. Further, the Russian, it would seem, is naturally a doctrinaire, and prefers reasoning from a basis of airy philosophy to deduction from a basis of facts. . . . The much-esteemed Alexis Aladin occupied during the World War a position possible only to a subject of the old Russian regime. Because he had once tried to introduce education among the common people, he was an exile from Russia; yet he served as war correspondent on the Western front for the *Novoe Vremia* of Petrograd. When he came home from the trenches he liked to fill himself with tea and spin out philosophies to all who would listen. One night he spent an hour laying out the perfect economic system and the perfect government. "Sounds well," I said, when he had run down. "But, Alexis, will it work?" "You empiricist!" boomed Aladin in his deep Russian voice. "You Western child! Always asking if a philosophy will work!" This dialogue embalms for me one aspect of the Russian—and perhaps of the American!

Yet the propagandist of the Russian government, having complete and perfect control of the press, did not ignore the news; in fact he specialized on it. As soon as Communist institutions reached a state resembling permanent form, the newspapers made arrangements with bureaus of the United States and Western Europe for foreign cable news and placed their own correspondents in the important capitals. However, the process of editing this news for

publication became at once highly selective. The editor, himself an ardent Communist and with the shadow of the knout falling always across his desk, chose from the foreign news reports only the matter which tended to give aid and comfort to the Communistic idea and to whip up national conceit. Further, he rewrote most items, editorializing them to the same end. He had no need to rewrite the copy of his foreign correspondents. They understood the formula. Strikes, incidents which proved oppression of labor, the successes of national Communist parties, intrigues of "bourgeois" governments—these were his stock in trade. All neutral observers of the modern Russians note with aversion or with humor their false, distorted picture of the "bourgeois" world. That is a triumph of propaganda—almost its classic example. The propagandist who works on the Western European nations is dealing with complex psychologies. The middle class and the aristocracy has been literate for an age, and the populace for at least a century. He must tear down native opinions and prejudices before he can begin to build up his own set of opinions and prejudices. But old Russia had virtually no middle class, the aristocracy disappeared in the fires of revolution, and the Communists found in the illiterate populace a *tabula rasa*. One would guess that Communism is more firmly fixed in the Russian mind than Fascism in the Italian or National Socialism in the German. For after all, Italians and Germans have been at home with ideas for centuries, and probably a gagged minority among them continues to think on old lines.

So much for incoming propaganda. When the Red Terror lifted, when the central group abandoned—at least for the time being—Trotsky's idea that Russian Communism could succeed only on terms of a world revolution, Moscow began to admit foreign correspondents. It imposed, however, an

intermittent open censorship on outgoing matter and a steady hidden censorship. Any correspondent for an "out-of-town" newspaper, whether he work in Washington or Moscow, Rome or Paris, finds himself hampered by a factor inherent in the business of collecting news. When it comes to important social and political matter, he must depend for his information mainly upon officials of the party in power. His acquaintances in the Foreign Office or the Ministry of Finance or whatever bureau give him not only his routine news but his occasional beat; and from their conversation he acquires that background of knowledge necessary to sound journalism. He knows that a story offensive to the government in power, no matter how true, may close these doors in his face. Many a foreign correspondent has faded out of the picture because he once took a chance on a sensational story and encountered an intangible but effective boycott.

The boycott, in the case of the Russians, was not even quiet and secret. Resident correspondents were made to understand that the Soviet bureaus would not stand for much news which involved criticism. And in the early days of the present policy the governments rammed the lesson home by expelling several "bourgeois" correspondents who had offended them. Later, they relaxed that policy a trifle. The Moscow correspondent has one advantage over his fellow in Rome or Berlin—he may sit with the censor and argue his case. Walter Duranty owes much of his success as a correspondent in modern Moscow to his knack of keeping friendly with the government while at the same time slipping unpleasant truths on to the wire.

Time was to render this policy rather futile. When at last Russia began to open her doors, authors who were at least not unfriendly to the experiment—like Lincoln Steffens and

H. G. Wells—had opportunities to see and to write. When she adopted a policy of encouraging tourists, writers and lecturers arrived in droves. Most of them worked under chaperonage as strict as that of front-line correspondents in the war. A guide-interpreter took them in hand and showed them only what they were supposed to see. But a few good reporters like Fannie Hurst, Maurice Hindus, Jay Darling and I. A. R. Wiley managed by one device or other to acquire, and to write, facts and candid impressions.

It is likely that the average unprejudiced American or Briton has nowadays a fairly accurate impression of Russia—a country which is neither the heaven of the *Daily Worker* nor quite the hell of the D.A.R. All of which illustrates the fact that propaganda, no matter how well watched and tended, finds it difficult to produce a permanent impression so long as the press is free to publish the other side. It can achieve its perfect triumphs only in such conditions as the Soviet government has imposed on the Russians themselves—a press controlled to the last n-quad.

In this matter of the controlled press, the Italian story runs contemporaneously with the Russian and does not much differ from it in essentials. A barrage of government propaganda preceded the march on Rome and the Fascist coup. This was not directed toward that unexpected end, however, but toward stirring up excessive nationalism to bolster Italian territorial claims in the postwar settlements. Mussolini and his faction took advantage of the atmosphere so created. Once in power, they themselves began a kind of *ex post facto* propaganda to prove that Fascism was necessary in order to save Italy from the Reds. No outsider to Italy can say whether or no the nation was tottering on the edge of Communism when the Fascists struck, because from that moment forth the new government controlled all sources

of information. But this specter served its uses both in fortifying Fascist rule at home and in giving it prestige with the affluent classes abroad. Here Mussolini, who has started so many things in a backward direction, invented a device which has since served the uses of militant reactionaries in every land.

The ablest of the dictators, Mussolini has never carried control of the press to such extreme lengths as the Communist group in Moscow did before him. He has carried it far enough, however, for all his practical uses. After the final liquidation of the Italian parliament, opposition both written and spoken ceased to exist. The newspaper which even hinted that Fascism was not the divinely appointed state of man would automatically suppress itself. Mussolini's press bureau has the power to appoint and remove all editors. When he got his system into perfect working order, all publishers in Italy began to receive daily a confidential government circular directing not ony the editorial attitude but the handling of news. This relatively small decision of Il Duce must be emphasized on the front page. That scandal in the government must not be mentioned at all, or else shrunk to a paragraph on an inside page. This speech of a French statesman must go on to the floor—not a word of it! That interview with a traveling American banker concerning the benefits of Fascism must receive full emphasis—except for one slightly critical passage. And so on. As regards all really important matters, the dictator of Italy edits by trained deputies every newspaper in the land.

The outgoing censorship is not on the surface quite so thorough as that of Russia; but in the hands of the subtle Italian the invisible censorship is even more severe. The Roman correspondent for a foreign newspaper understands perfectly that the landscape is dotted with sacred cows which

he injures at his peril. And now and then, by way of enforcing discipline, Il Duce "cracks down" on a correspondent or so. During the week in which I write this, he has forbidden the circulation of the New York *Times* in Italy because it printed an editorial criticizing Fascism, and deported the correspondent of the Chicago *Tribune* for a dispatch stating —with probable truth—that large elements of the population did not like the prospect of war with Ethiopia. Yet Mussolini gives the press its head in artistic and cultural matters; and the Italian newspapers manage generally to remain mildly interesting.

Nazi Germany, as everyone knows, showed the racial tendency for going to intellectual extremes by raising the Fascist state to the totalitarian state. The story of the postwar press in Germany is still obscure. These, however, are its broad lines:

As in most of continental Europe, German advertising lingered in a rather primitive state and the typical newspaper made up the difference between sales income and cost of production by some form of open or secret subsidy. In general, the moneyed classes were not sympathetic with the Republic. The financial and industrial barons looked back with longing to the good old days of the Empire, when Germany had her own colonies for customers and was through open channels absorbing most of the world trade in her specialties. The steel and chemical manufacturers, especially, missed the returns from munitions. The large and influential old military class resented violently the disarmament clauses in the Treaty of Versailles. The monarchists, of course, hoped and prayed for restoration of the Hohenzollerns, or some other German dynasty, to the throne of Wilhelm. So far as the press was concerned, the reactionary movement really began when Thyssen and other

industrial leaders began buying or subsidizing newspapers by strings. Though Republican Germany maintained many fine, liberal newspapers like the ancient *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the vast majority of the press came eventually under control of the reactionary class.

In matters vital to the future of Germany, these organs followed roughly identical policies. They selected the news and editorialized the news with a view to creating in the populace a mania of persecution from without. By the same methods they created the illusion that the Republic stood an accomplice with the powers which were strangling Germany. When the world depression arrived, they set up the fiction that Germany was the deepest sufferer of all. By a tragic accident of the times, the National Socialist revolution, whose excuse was the injustices of the Versailles treaty, gathered force just as the Republican regime, working through the League of Nations, was in process of repairing those injustices. But the controlled press interpreted every move toward the repair of German fortunes through conciliation, not through arms or threat of arms, as a weakness or betrayal on the part of their government.

They had sketched in the background. Another was to seize the canvas and splash upon it the main figures. Adolf Hitler, perhaps the most successful demagogue in history, is a man of the people. He perceived with his instincts certain values which the upper-class riggers of the German press could not encompass with their intellects. He knew that propaganda cannot lead to violent, radical action until the propagandist transmutes mere opinion into emotion. The two corporate emotions upon which demagogues have played from time immemorial are pride and hate. Pride—the average man yearns for distinction and superiority. Looking at himself impartially, he cannot

honestly say that he possesses either of these glittering attributes. The next best thing is the feeling that he belongs to a superior class. That was the main hold of our Ku-Klux Klan. An individual who had failed in every relation of life could still feel a glow of superiority when told that he was a white, Protestant, Gentile, native-born American, and therefore an inheritor of the earth. From the tangle of bizarre theories which has always fringed sound German philosophical and scientific thought, Hitler picked the Nordic myth. That appeal engendered pride. The Empire and the reactionary opposition of republican times had always played upon the human hatred of foreigners. While Hitler twanged that string, he vented most of his hatred upon the Jews. This also was no invention of his own. In the course of medieval Jew-baiting, many a prince and grand duke, by way of diverting attention from some unpopular move of his own, stirred up a raid on the Ghetto. The Dreyfus case arose from the same motive. And in the abortive Kopp *putsch* of 1920, as I can personally testify, reactionary gangsters were ranging Berlin to beat up Jews. He had, however, a subsidiary emotion to play upon—envy. The German Jew, unpersecuted under the Empire and the Republic, had proved marvelously successful—especially in the arts and the sciences. Further, an infusion of Galician Jews, drawn to Germany by the attitude expressed in von Ludendorff's famous circular of 1915, "To my Jewish brethren," were proving keen competitors in the lower ranks of trade. . . . It is one of history's minor ironies that von Ludendorff had by now revealed himself as a violent Jew-baiter. . . . By the newspapers which came under control of his party, by circulars, by his speeches, Hitler spread from border to border every scandal or case of moral delinquency involving a Jew. From among the curiosities of literature he unearthed

The Protocols of Zion, as discredited and shaky a piece of faking as the modern world has known, and made it seem gospel. Before he finished he had most of middle-class Germany grinding its teeth at mention of the word "Jew."

Borrowing from Mussolini, he played on the Communist menace; so raising another emotion—fear. Here he had probably rather more reason behind his contention than had the Italian dictator. As Naziism rose and as the Republic showed itself incapable of meeting the peril, more and more voters of the working class abandoned hope of success by moderate methods and aligned themselves with the Communist party.

Having worked up the middle classes to a state of emotionalism which they mistook for reason, Hitler stole the show from those reactionaries whose propaganda set the stage for him. And, being three-quarters in agreement with him, they let him steal it.

The accolade of the propagandist, the official recognition of his importance in modern life, came with Hitler's organization of his dictatorship. From his Cabinet, two men stand out so that with Hitler they form almost a triumvirate. One is Herman Goering, minister of national defense, but the other is that strange neurasthenic Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, minister of enlightenment and propaganda. The fundamental ideal of the "totalitarian state," as expressed by Hitler even to boredom, is the submergence of the individual in the mass. The state becomes a thing with a soul. The individual citizen must give his all, for its advancement and glory and honor, without regard to his individual interests or that of any other citizen. Especially—according to Goebbels at least—in matters affecting the state all citizens must think alike. And the fanatics of the National Socialist party have so stretched the meaning of the phrase

"matters affecting the state" as almost to cover the full range of human thought and feeling. Certain scientific theories, notably those of Einstein, must go by the board because they are Jewish. The same rule holds for music. The new Nazi culture prohibits jazz and the intellectual music founded upon jazz as non-Nordic, and therefore immoral.

Literature must be Germanic, which means National-Socialistic. During the first month of its rule, the new regime directly or indirectly banished almost all German authors with any international reputation whatever. The history of the German center of the International P.E.N. Clubs illustrates the thoroughness with which Hitler "purged German thought." This had been a strong organization, almost equivalent to a national academy. Men like Thomas Mann, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, and Ernst Toller, the Eugene O'Neill of Germany, had served it as officers and leading spirits. In the first week of the revolution, the Nazis announced the "harmonization" of their P.E.N. Club. For president they installed a dramatist whose sole claim to eminence was a sensational melodrama glorifying a martyr of Nationalist Germany, for secretary, the author of a yellow tract reviling the Jews, and for international representative a lawyer who was writing a life of Hitler. Having done which, they caused the club to pass a resolution debarring "all Communists and persons holding similar opinions"—meaning all who did not embrace National-Socialist doctrines. Finally, taking advantage of its membership in an international society, they set for the German P.E.N. the task of "reconciling" the rest of the world with the new doctrine of government. This earnest endeavor failed when the P.E.N. Clubs of the world, in congress assembled at Ragusa under the presidency of H. G. Wells,

called the German chapter to account and put it in such a position that it could save its face only by breaking all its international ties.

From the first, Goebbels imitated Mussolini's plan for controlling and unifying the press. Eventually he cast out all "non-Nordic" publishers or editorial workers. By violence or device, he suppressed some four hundred newspapers friendly to Communism or to the Republic. He organized official guilds of newspaper publishers, reporters and editors. None may work in the editorial department of a German newspaper unless he be a member of such a guild; and the government has the absolute right to expel members. Goebbels is at present a trifle less strict about criticism on the part of foreign correspondents than is Mussolini's Bureau of Propaganda. Nevertheless, sacred cows dot the landscape. And by deporting Edgar Mowrer and Dorothy Thompson of our ilk and Noel Panter of the London *Daily Telegraph* for telling the undoctored truth as they saw it, he notified the correspondents of foreign newspapers that they must not go too far. Nevertheless, Frederick T. Birchall somehow managed, as did Duranty in Moscow, to slip through a restrained ration of critical copy. He earned his Pulitzer prize.

Having so prepared his raw material, Goebbels proceeded to direct the thoughts, attitudes and opinions of the German press. His censors, unlike those of Mussolini, appear to admit exceptions. Just as certain Jewish bankers useful to the regime continue to conduct their business with tacit immunity, so for reasons not apparent on the surface a few newspapers like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* are not forced to join the chorus of praise. They may not criticize, they may not print "dangerous" news, but they may at least keep silence. Nor have Goebbels' instructions the same monoto-

nous regularity as those of the Italian directors of propaganda. The German control of the press is therefore less strict in detail. On the other hand, following the declared policy of making National Socialism the very fiber of the citizen's soul, it is broader in scope. Science, art, matters of general cultivation all lie within its province.

Goebbels often anticipates the news with his warnings and instructions. On the morning of Hitler's "blood purge," he notified the newspapers that they were to ignore startling domestic events set to occur that day; which they did, of course. News from abroad undergoes a process of Nazification all along the assembling line. The official correspondent who gathers it gives it a slant in his writing; the editor who prepares it for distribution in Germany selects those items which best fortify the Nazi theory; the local editor inserts it with one eye on the program as revealed by Herr Goebbels.

The consequence of this whole process is—unsupportable dullness. Harping on one string has grown monotonous. Further, any body of artists or artistic craftsmen, set to write or paint or compose on a single theme and in a single mood, cannot maintain interest. Newspaper and periodical circulation in Germany fell by thirty per cent during the first year of the Nazi regime. It is still falling, even though Goebbels reiterates that what he wants from the German press over and above obedience is "interest, interest, interest!" The far-off end to which he must work is a chain of government bulletins aimed at inspiration, not enlightenment, and having no relation either to fact or to the search for truth. So has the new aristocracy swung round the circle to that period before Gutenberg when the small, tight, governing class had the sole opportunity and held the sole right to know what is really going on in the world.

Chapter XIX

EXPORT PROPAGANDA

THE European powers had before the World War employed propaganda of a crude, archaic variety to advance their political and commercial interests. Peace having failed to bring about that transformation in human nature and custom which idealists so wishfully expected, it was only natural that they should continue the process and should improve their methods by the technique learned in the war. In modern practice the propagandist is usually camouflaged. Since the war, most European governments have allotted the function of "national advertising" to the Foreign Office. A lump appropriation for this department covers all its expenses; and the prying investigator can never determine how much of the money has gone for propaganda. Sometimes an accident shows Foreign Offices resorting to out-and-out bribery of journals or journalists. We know now that in the decade following the war one Parisian newspaper sold its influence to Bulgarian diplomacy and that the German Republic purchased journalistic influence in the Balkans. More often, doubtless, the expert official propagandist employs methods less obviously immoral or, indeed, not immoral at all. O. W. Riegel, with a background as American correspondent in European capitals, has published recently his own frank impressions of the hidden struggle for export markets in ideas.* Yet if we could weigh and

* *Mobilizing for Chaos*, Yale University Press, 1934.

measure intellectual values, we might find that some of this matter has long effects running contrary to the purposes of its creators. In great part it amounts to love propaganda rather than hate propaganda. To the citizen of the Argentine, Scandinavia or the United States it presents France or Germany, Britain or Spain, with the best foot forward. When neutral countries receive a blend of all these propagandas, the net result may be the prettyfied truth, but at any rate the process tends toward international conciliation rather than narrow nationalism. The result is far different when the foreign propagandist uses tactics amounting to interference with domestic politics. Moscow gives its moral and intellectual support, even at times some material support of money, to the Communist party in the United States. The initial object was to stir up a Bolshevik Revolution in America as an important step toward world revolution. That hope growing dim as the years went on, the diplomats of Russia continued their support as a means of maintaining a body of American sympathizers. Since Hitler took over, Germany has followed much the same policy. Some at least of the "sympathetic" societies which the Nazis are promoting in both the United States and Great Britain are working to promote the totalitarian idea in domestic politics; the object, of course, being to create a body of public opinion generally friendly to German aims.

As for us, with the single exception of two years during the World War and the Armistice we have never spent an official dollar on propaganda among foreign nations. Nevertheless, we have found ourselves embroiled in this war. Elsewhere I have mentioned the service of the American motion picture during the days of the silent film as advance agent for American manufactured goods. Even before the advent of the spoken cinema, European nations were prepar-

ing to build up by subsidy their own film industries and were raising walls against the free circulation of the American product. These motions toward the hip, being preliminary to an attack upon a valuable American export, drew our State Department and our diplomats into the struggle. Then the cinema found speech, so tending to divide the business into language compartments; but already import quotas in the film-producing nations and ruthless methods in the rest of the world were diminishing the export business of American producers.

We had no sooner lost this battle than the war blazed up on another front. Without encouragement on the part of our government, the American press bureaus began about 1917 to sell their product in the foreign field. After the Peace of Versailles, European administrations and factions resumed the old business of employing their press bureaus for diplomatic ends. This process worked to the immediate advantage of the American bureaus. Our representatives of export journalism were selling a relatively pure product in competition with adulterated goods. Theirs was the only news flowing between nation and nation to maintain unhampered that search for facts, and for the truth behind facts, which is the governing ethical canon of journalism. If this be letting the eagle scream—well, let him!

Historical accident and that wide-reaching First Amendment had united to effect this result. The Associated Press, oldest of our existing bureaus, started up without aid or comfort of our government and on the co-operative plan. Both these factors are important. Reuters, pioneer European bureau, was a private enterprise, the creation of the man whose name it still bears. Other individuals looking for profit, or else governments, set up the rest of them. Had Henry Watterson, Horace Greeley, Fremont Older or any

other among our honest and vigorous journalists formed the Associated Press, it would have taken on something of the founder's mental slant. Had our government backed, subsidized or especially encouraged the enterprise, it would have been born a moral cripple. But from the first it owed nothing to any administration except ordinary allegiance and small favors in return for news. And being owned by hundreds of newspapers varying in politics from Socialist to Tory, it had to avoid any slant of any kind. It need not even strive to please the local advertiser. Getting the news, pure and unadulterated, became a mania with the Associated Press. Melville E. Stone, its manager in the last generation, and Kent Cooper who succeeded him, both held toward the search for fact an attitude approaching religious mysticism. When the United Press came along, the tradition was so firmly entrenched that E. W. Scripps and Roy Howard could not have broken it had they wished—as they did not. However, truth is stalked only from a point of view; behind the selection of news from events, behind all writing of news, stands the opinion of the editor or writer as to what is interesting or uninteresting, of good report or of bad repute. Scripps and Howard, having come up through working-class journalism, had a different point of view from that of the men who managed and operated the Associated Press. But it was an honest one. And the difference between the two bureaus became wide enough to create a healthy competition. When Hearst founded his bureaus, the terms were a little different. These, serving fundamentally his string of newspapers, were bound to reflect in some measure his pronounced opinions and drastic policies; also, Hearst journalism, written and edited as it is on a unique American formula, is in small favor abroad. The Hearst bureaus have done relatively little in the way of export journalism.

Time was when our bureaus, while maintaining correspondents in the foreign capitals, did not pretend fully to cover the world but used the European services as partial feeders. Even before the World War they had corrected that; their European, Oriental and even African news came from their own correspondents, mostly American. Foreign editors all over the world began to perceive that this was untainted news and reached out for it. By the current decade, we beheld the anomaly of European journals buying American-gathered news in preference to that of their national bureaus. This movement had its greatest success in South America where it seemed for a time that we would sweep the European bureaus from the field—this in spite of the fact that the Latin American is more interested in Europe than in the United States. For the North American bureau was giving him European news fairly, with the clear viewpoint of an outsider like himself. The sapient editor realized, too, that even North American news came to him, through these channels, untainted. Necessarily, this process amounts to long-range propaganda, even though such was never its intention. It is getting the world acquainted with the American point of view and with the United States itself; it is serving as a diplomatic advance agent for American products.

The European press bureaus, all in greater or less degree special apologists for the governments which own, control or influence them, could not let such an arrangement stand forever. When the world depression sharpened economic nationalism, they opened war on the American bureaus. Diplomatic pressure, intrigue, price cutting—they used all these tools. Among them, the last is the most important. The bureau which under the Nazis has succeeded Wolff, and Stefani, that official Italian bureau which has begun to reach into the foreign field, are virtually identical with the

German and Italian governments. The complex arrangement between Havas and whatever administration holds power in France may not be a subsidy in letter, but it is in spirit and often in practical effect. Just now Havas is selling its service to South America at a price below cost. We cannot meet such prices and still return a profit. The newspapers which compose the Associated Press and the management of the United Press will never consent to sell export news at a permanent loss. The only way to overcome such competition, if it comes to the pinch, is—government subsidy. Anyone who understands the American press and its relation to our civilization will regard that dim possibility with sheer horror.

Chapter XX

THE FIFTH ESTATE

ENTER now a character who seems at moments to dominate the drama. Radio, wireless telephony, the spoken word disseminated to millions, has altered perhaps fundamentally the relations between governments and peoples, between those who rig the news and those who consume the news. A scientific toy in the early 1920's, by the latter part of that decade it had come into such common use as to threaten in spots the supremacy of print over the mind of modern man.

I have described in preceding chapters the machinery by which the newspaper influences public opinion and the gradual change in the *modus operandi*. Let me here summarize. When printed matter was a novelty to the populace, when, owing to lack of mechanical facilities, restrictive laws and weak imagination on the part of journalists, news remained scanty and unreliable, the average citizen took his political opinions from an Olympian editorial writer. Then, in the liberal nineteenth century, came the development of news and its command of mechanical facilities. Gradually the citizen developed the habit of making up his mind not on the basis of what the leader writer told him to believe, but upon impressions gained from the news. The modern editor, keeping pace, made news his molder of public opinion—sometimes by writing into it his editorial views, sometimes by dramatic exposés, but most commonly—and most effectively—by reflecting on the reader's mind his own picture of the modern

environment. This last is in the long run the most effective method of free journalism. Nevertheless,—since most of humanity is unoriginal,—something else is needed to crystallize public opinion into positive thought and into action. The reagent may be a newspaper editorial or an article by a favored feature writer. Indeed, there are signs that in this age, when public issues have grown complex beyond possibility of resolution by the average mind, the editorial is recovering some of its old authority. It may be a speech of a respected political leader which itself, in nine cases out of ten, filters to the common citizen through the news columns. It may be a lecturer before the lodge, the labor union, the Rotary Club or the women's club. Commonly it is a trusted and original friend belonging to the element which I have called noncommissioned officers in the army of public opinion. And herein lies the political function of the modern radio. It stands the greatest crystallizer of public opinion that the modern world has known since news attained its full importance; and for reasons which go deeply into the psychology of human evolution.

Our race has possessed the power of speech, primitive though it was in the beginning, during a period measured by hundreds of thousands of years. The written word is probably no more than five thousand years old. Even at that, this art reached the masses only during recent centuries. In our own colonial taverns hung signs requesting that guests in process of learning to read use the back-files of the newspaper, not the current issue. The common folk of Russia and Turkey have begun their experience with letters only during the past two decades. Further, conveyance of ideas by reading involves intervening machinery—dead matter. But the living vocal chords speak to the living ear. All these ages, that faculty of hearing has been gathering about itself an

emotional aura. The male voice is even a sex fetish with women. The thought behind a written sentence may convey emotion; the manner of writing it or printing it cannot. Whereas a skilled actor, or even an unskilled layman under stress, may put such emotion into one common, disjointed word as to chill or heat the blood of the hearer.

Of course, politicians and all other suppliants for popular favor have understood this principle all along. Though the candidate for office had the newspaper press to bring his thoughts into every home of his constituency, he tried to address personally as many voters as possible. Every president before Coolidge felt it necessary during his term of office to "swing round the circle" occasionally, speaking twice or three times each day. With a constituency as vast as that of our presidents and with the limitations of the human voice, he could reach only a small fraction of the voters. Even at that, the process proved worth the trouble. But radio made it possible for a president or a candidate to address first an audience potentially as large as the population of several states and, when the "nation-wide hookup" appeared, as large as the country itself. This new medium could not, of course, transmit the whole range of a personality. Gesture and facial expression were subtracted from the orator's bag of tricks. But as radio emerged from the wheezy stage it could convey with approximate perfection that governing element in the quality which our fathers called "personal magnetism"—the voice. And it proved tremendously effective, so that politics grasped it as a new tool. President Coolidge was a pioneer in making effective use of it; and many analysts of politics believe that his somewhat inexplicable personal popularity rose from the fact that he was the first president who had spoken face to face, as it were, with virtually every citizen of these United States.

The radio, in its state when Coolidge used it, was kind to him in another respect. Even yet it does not in practice catch all those overtones and undertones which make high "C" on a cornet a very different sound from the same note on a violin. Coolidge had a delicious, old-fashioned Yankee twang which in private conversation gave point to his flashes of dry wit. In dealing with the country as a whole, however, a pronounced local accent is usually a liability. But the radio filtered most of the Yankee peculiarities from his accent and left the quality of a well-bred, cosmopolitan American. Hoover, too, was fortunate. His speech has no special dialectic peculiarity, but his voice lacks carrying power. Over the radio, which can intensify a whisper to a roar, the country could hear him perfectly. Al Smith's luck went to the other extreme. Broadcasting seemed only to intensify his native Bowery accent; and the mild dislike of New York prevailing in the rest of the country served partly to nullify the wit, force and close reasoning of his campaign speeches. Again on the other hand, this medium intensifies, if anything, the rich, warm tones in Franklin D. Roosevelt's voice. Nowadays, caucuses and central committees, weighing a potential candidate for any larger political office, ask always, "Has he a good radio personality?"

The old-time political orator depended for his effects on mob psychology. A hundred or a thousand men packed tightly in the same room catch the contagion of enthusiasm, and bursts of applause, which such masters as William Jennings Bryan well knew how to evoke, have the same effect as the reiterations of the tom-tom upon savages. When radio broadcasting was new, most commentators remarked that such devices were now a dead letter; and they looked forward to an era of less buncombe and more reason in political speaking. But the experiments of local demagogues on small

fly-by-night stations had shown the way to new arts of persuasion. It is a different kind of technique from that of the platform orator—somewhat akin to the pleasing conversation of the peddler dispensing brushes or the agent selling washing machines. And when at its most vicious, it is exactly as meretricious as the rolling periods of the old spellbinder. Within five years after broadcasting began its full development, Huey Long and Father Coughlin, both of whom understood the new technique, were broadcasting effective fairytales to millions of wishful thinkers.

So much for the part of the radio in crystallizing the news into active political and social thought. The relation of radio to news itself is at present somewhat amorphic. When the great American stations began broadcasting news flashes at stated intervals and sending forth minute-by-minute accounts of interesting events like a presidential inauguration or a football game, a few journalists grew pessimistic regarding the future of their business. The American public is "headline-minded," they said. Once establish the radio-listening habit among them, and they would be content with condensation of the important news virtually to a single line —"Supreme Court Kills N.R.A.," "Roosevelt Proposes Higher Taxes on Big Fortunes"—and would satisfy the remainder of their news hunger by listening to the play-by-play account of a baseball game. This apprehension rested on a false basis. All of us are partially headline readers and none is wholly a headline reader. Who consumes a big metropolitan newspaper from cover to cover? The most avid news addict skims the headlines in order to select the stories which really interest him and to omit the rest; while the shallowest and most superficial reader finds something, be it only the story of a love nest in a tabloid, worthy of full perusal. And the radio is time-bound. It offers its news budget

at twelve o'clock or six or seven. If the citizen be otherwise occupied at the moment, he misses the news entirely; whereas the newspaper awaits his leisure. . . . Colonel Laurie Bunten, unforgettable Scottish-American of San Francisco, refused to read the local newspaper and devoured the Edinburgh *Scotsman*. "'Tis true I get the news three weeks late," he used to say, "but I get it r-right!" . . . On the other hand, the radio, dealing as an eyewitness of a set news event like a football game in the Pasadena Rose Bowl, has its own particular advantages. It conveys incidents and episodes instantaneously, and it makes full use of personality. In dealing with the average mind, the most vivid literary style is an impotent tool beside the rich, thrilling voice and the assumed excitements of such an announcer as Graham McNamee.

Yet whenever they have contemplated a policy of news transmission in full competition with printed journalism, the owners of our American radio chains have paused before one purely commercial consideration. The Associated Press is strictly co-operative. The newspapers in that chain share the expenses. More importantly, they contribute their own local news to the general pool. In this last respect the privately owned United Press and Hearst news bureaus are exactly as co-operative as their older rival. Two thousand daily newspapers in the United States and Canada lend their news organizations to the uses of the big bureaus—this in addition to a special force in every large city of the civilized world. Without this body of experts, in small centers as well as great, no bureau can pretend to cover the world. For while the greater part of the greater news has its source in the capitals or metropolitan centers, important stories have an irritating way of breaking out in the country or in small centers. The most generally interesting bit of police news,

during the month in which I write this, was the Weyerhaeuser kidnapping case. It had "ends" in Tacoma, Ogden, Salt Lake City and Butte, all relatively small cities. In every case, the flash came not from the specialists of the press bureaus but from local newspapers performing their function as members of these bureaus. To stretch across the world a news organization capable of competition with printed journalism would entail costs comparable only to those of a government. Nor can the radio station cull its items, a little tardily, from the newspapers. The courts have ruled that news is a commodity and may not be stolen. Even our shaky and archaic American copyright laws give it some protection.

Wherefore the radio has compromised with its elder rival. By special agreement it may broadcast a limited number of "flashes" furnished by the newspapers. It may give eyewitness narratives of certain set events, and its specialists, like Lowell Thomas and Edwin C. Hill, may comment on big stories which the newspapers have already published. Perhaps this is the final niche of radio in the structure of the news; perhaps it is merely a temporary truce. Here prophecy becomes an especially slippery business.

But if the radio ever cancels this agreement and comes into full competition with the newspaper, it may transform the relation between journalism and the public. The limitations of this medium will tend to blur that picture of the contemporary world which is in this era the chief service and the chief power of the news dispenser. All the more so because the radio, through the magic inherent in the human voice, has means of appealing to the lower nerve centers and of creating emotions which the hearer mistakes for thoughts. Further, as things go at present, most American news programs derive their support not from advertisers in general, as with the newspaper, but from a solitary advertiser. He, and

not the large company whose "time" he has purchased, has the power to choose or suppress, and to dictate expression. Advertising men are given to exaggeration; under their direction, the news tends to emerge somewhat warped. Some of them, indeed, are already inserting a "slant." One large patron of a news period will not permit the name of President Roosevelt to be mentioned on his program; this is a sinister forecast of what might happen should advertisers exert their full power over radio news. Many former newspapermen who have entered this new business believe that the larger companies should never let out the news privileges; that such matter should form part of the sustaining programs.

This in the United States where the radio is legally free, and subject to no restraining influence other than the self-interest of its owners and its advertisers. However, in no other country of importance is it even relatively free. This revolutionary invention, this Fifth Estate, seems to have come to being in a tragically wrong time—the period when a wave of exaggerated nationalism was sweeping the world and the propagandist had learned his business. In its raw and sputtering infancy, pacifists, liberals and internationally-minded folk in general acclaimed it as the great reconciler. At last, man might speak to man not only across the waste spaces of physical geography but also across those of political geography. Diversity of tongues seemed to be the one dam in the stream of perfect understanding; and the idealists set out to remedy that by the promotion of artificial languages such as Ido and Esperanto. But the European nationalists recognized this possibility on their own part; and, having control of governments, acted at once to avert the peril. To accomplish their end they juggled with two factors which vexed radio in its early days—distributing wave lengths and creating a box office.

Wave lengths first. Long ago all civilized nations recognized in some degree or other the necessity for regulating public utilities such as railroads, electric light companies, the telephone, the telegraph. Here was a new public utility which in its very nature demanded strict regulation. For, as the number of stations grew, constantly they overlapped. "Interference," the inharmonious clamor of rival voices or musical instruments, threatened chaos on the ether. It was as though unregulated railroads were running across each other's tracks, causing an endless succession of collisions. Governments took over the function of assigning wave bands; a power which if exerted arbitrarily meant life or death to any given radio station.

Next, the question of the box office. After the first period of amazed curiosity when amateur scientists spent happy hours picking up distant stations, broadcasting became an amusement enterprise like theatrical management. It was transmitting music almost perfectly before the world fully perceived its uses for transmitting thought. In the early days, "talent" like divas of grand opera and popular orchestras were glad to volunteer their services for the advertising value in the process, and manufacturers of receiving apparatus supported stations in order to create a demand for their goods. That era was bound to pass. Popular artists, impresarios and announcers began to demand high prices for their services. But how could the radio, which was giving so much, exact anything in return? It was manifestly impossible to set a ticket taker before the dial of every domestic receiver. The European nations generally applied a solution which, simple and candid on the surface, often concealed a deal of political guile. They taxed all radio sets; the proceeds of the tax going to pay the growing expenses for programs. Since the government had the money, it appeared

only right and natural that the government should spend it. Therefore, a commission or bureau, or some corresponding agency of the party in power, selected and arranged the programs. So from its very birth gentlemen who knew exactly what they wanted made this new medium for transmitting thought a slave to their purposes.

The degree of their tyranny has varied with the atmosphere of the nations which they control. Russia stands at one extreme. The Soviet government owns the stations, as it owns everything of any social value. Professedly, the grand dukes of the new Russian order are trying to "remake the mentality" of their people. Even in face of a craze for education, the Russian is still ear-minded. The government has installed receiving sets with loud-speakers in all recreation halls and centers of public assembly. Nightly, crowds of young Russians listen breathless to expositions of Marxian doctrine, news trimmed and warped to fit the Communist scheme, directions, orders, inspirational talks. Western Europeans who understand Russian testify that these programs, what with their monotony, their constant harping on one theme, seem to them deadly uninteresting. But the humble Russian listens night after night, enthralled. Well, we have a parallel in our own intellectual history. Just so did the English Puritans, in the day when a free press was a novelty, scramble for printed reports of speeches in Parliament. Just so did our colonial ancestors, an intellectual people starving for ideas, give earnest attention to four-hour sermons.

True to form, the Russians no sooner possessed this new medium for transmitting thought than they began to use it for export propaganda. In that day, "proletarian manners" were the fashion in Russia, and the hope of an immediate social revolution in all lands had not yet died. The Communist both at home and abroad affected the "you-go-to-

hell" attitude. Mouthpieces of the Soviets broadcast speeches in the Western European languages, exhorting peoples to strike off their chains and deliberately insulting the bourgeois governments. First the German stations and then those of other European nations arranged deliberately to interfere on the Russian wave lengths; and so began a war in the ether which has raged intermittently along half a dozen fronts—government-controlled stations striving to kill the spoken propaganda of their rivals while slipping through their own. However, as more and more nations recognized the Soviet Republic and as the hope of a universal, immediate revolution faded, the foreign propagandists of the Russian radio changed their tune. Except when they found it expedient to brawl with the Nazis, they dwelt upon the successes and triumphs of the Communist experiment, upon its aims and aspirations, even upon its humors and picturesque features.

The Nazi government, ruling a land almost adjacent to Russia, had based much of its moral justification upon the danger of Communism. So even this mild sort of special pleading must not reach German ears. And it found a better way than interference to shut out dangerous propaganda. It is now distributing among the German people weak little long-wave radio sets incapable of "picking up" the foreign stations, including Moscow, but completely satisfactory for receiving messages from those local stations which relay from Berlin a carefully edited news service, inspirational and "educative" speeches by Herr Goebbels' troupe, and the public addresses of Hitler himself. When Hitler speaks, all the German earth keeps silence before him. Schools and factories declare a recess, while scholars and operatives mass before the loud-speakers. One who fails deliberately to listen stands suspected of treason. So has *Der Führer* built about

his realm a wall against all invidious thought both foreign and domestic; and he fills the void with his own doctrine. Such a state is the heaven of the propagandist.

Externally, the German short-wave stations and the more powerful of the long-wave stations broadcast in several languages pleasant accounts of the progress of German civilization under the Nazis; the whole dish being superbly sauced by that good music which is a German specialty.

Mussolini holds full control over that committee of artists and publicists which dictates radio programs from the Italian stations. He employs this medium for the same ends as does Hitler and uses much the same technique. After he launched his African war, smooth, persuasive voices, speaking perfectly the language of the country in which they would be heard, crammed the long waves with Italian propaganda.

France had at first an approximation to our plan for private support of radio. Small local stations drew their revenue from advertising. Then, as a "measure of national defense," the government began setting up powerful stations of its own. Here, too, the listener pays through a tax on his receiver. Following the spirit of a people which remains free, the programs from these stations do not carry an undue amount of matter in praise of the government temporarily in power; on the other hand, matter sharply critical of the government gets little or no hearing. However, French broadcasting is heavily engaged in the business of foreign propaganda, especially since short-wave reception began to bridge the oceans. Speeches or lectures calculated to create friendship for France and complaisance with French policies go forth to Continental Europe and to the Americas, often in the vernacular of the countries at which they are aimed. The cables carry to the French possessions of Southern Asia a news service for broadcasting in the Orient. It is edited

according to the familiar formulas of propaganda. As Spain settled down from the ferments of her revolution, the Republic set up its own station whose main use, so far as it concerns this inquiry, is "cultural propaganda" leading indirectly to the expansion of Spanish commerce, especially among the daughter-lands across the Atlantic.

British broadcasting comes nearer freedom than does that of the European continent. As usual, the British have compromised—in this case between those who demand free speech whether it passes through air or through ether, and those who regard with suspicion this new tool of civilization. Again as usual, their compromise leans toward freedom's side. The British Broadcasting Corporation is a private company, strictly regulated even to its profits. It may not advertise anything. Every receiving set is licensed and taxed; and the government turns the receipts over to the company. In return, it keeps its hand on the output. The post-master general, in whose province this matter lies, appoints the five governors of the company and they select that director who is virtually the editor of its programs. The government exacts a certain amount of time for speeches and reports from the various departments. It does not, however, shut the door to the opposition. In election-time, members of Parliament representing all parties have their turn at the microphones. The fact remains that the constant flow of reports from the departments amounts to gentle propaganda in favor of things as they are. And for all their native British integrity, the governors, being human, cannot help seeing, like Dr. Johnson, that "the Whig dogs get none the better of it." Also, the British system virtually shuts the ether to new ideas. The germination of political and social thought is a process as wasteful as Nature herself. For one Abraham Lincoln we have had twenty Huey Longs. And if we do not

give hearing to the Longs, whose bizarre creations will wither in the sunlight of free discussion, we shall miss the Lincolns.

Much of this European maneuvering with the radio bears direct relation to "national defense." The place of the Fifth Estate in war affords matter for interesting and bizarre speculation. No other medium could compare with it for stirring up hatred and berserk patriotism at home. It makes the pep meetings, the rallies, the posters and the four-minute speakers of the World War seem as obsolete as a muzzle-loading musket. Let alone, it would solve the problem, never solved in the World War, of a universal channel for propaganda into enemy countries. It might serve powerfully to stir up those primitive peoples whom the Germans tried so steadily to rouse in 1917. Indeed, the Italians have that idea already. During the troubled diplomatic negotiations over Ethiopia, the British felt it necessary to protest against Italian broadcasting among North African tribes. Speakers were slandering England—and in the language of the country. The Italians took the rebuke to heart, and extended their radio propaganda into Egypt.

The speed of radio as compared with that of printed matter even suggests a new dimension of intellectual warfare. When in 1934 Austrian and German Nazis raided Vienna, murdered Chancellor Dollfuss and attempted to seize the government, they sent a picked squad to capture the central radio station. They failed in this, but their object was plain. They intended to flash the false news that they held full possession of Austria and that resistance had become useless. These political bandits were reaching toward the grim future. At certain stages of a general war, a false report put forth dramatically and artistically might so influence the civilian mind as to tip the balance between victory and defeat.

Against this mode of warfare there are two defenses, already put to service in the bickerings of European propaganda. One is Hitler's plan of receiving sets so weak that they can pick up only a near-by station. This plan does not, however, guard the territory along the borders. Even now the French station at Strasbourg can reach hundreds of Hitler's toy receiving sets in Southern Germany. Word of mouth, so much more potent in war than in peace, would do the rest. Also, an enemy could probably communicate with these receivers from invading airplanes. The other protective device is interference. That game could be played with offensive tactics as well as defensive. Germany, for example, might not only blot out the foreign propaganda of France, but might so improve the technique of the process as to confuse the domestic propaganda as well; and France, of course, might follow suit. Then would come literal war on the ether, until some technician managed by fraud and device to slip over a coherent message. All this is possible. It is also possible that the military authorities, realizing the uncertainties and dangers of radio, may in case of another general war suppress all private receiving sets whatsoever.

The American way with radio stands unique in the world. History has repeated itself. The knight who in the early nineteenth century rode forth to rescue the nascent newspaper from the dragons of blackmail and the ogres of party management has shaken off the sloth engendered by his life as husband of the fairy princess, caparisoned himself and ridden forth again. In plain language, American radio owes most of its freedom and some of its failings to the fact that it supports itself by advertising.

With us as with the Europeans, the two problems of regimenting the air and of providing a box office came to a

head almost simultaneously. Wireless, of course, meant at first simply wireless telegraphy, not transmission of the human voice. In 1912, Congress recognized the problem of interference and passed laws providing that anyone in the business of transmitting signals across national or state boundaries must obtain a license from the secretary of commerce. When just after the World War the telephone wed the ether and amateur or experimental stations began to jostle each other, the secretary assumed the right to assign wave lengths. A court decision withdrew that right; chaos on the air impended. Herbert Hoover, who held the office then, called successive conferences of all the radio interests. By now they had learned that advertisers would pay for time on the air, and no one favored the European plan for creating a box office. But radio had to be regulated; and together they worked out a comprehensive Federal plan. So Congress, with a little unnecessary tinkering, passed that law of 1927 which is the Constitution of American radio. In distinction from European practice and in harmony with the First Amendment, this act proclaimed the principle of freedom of speech over the ether. It went even a little further by providing that when a station gave a hearing to one candidate in a political campaign it must offer equal facilities to his opponents. Further, it prohibited government censorship over radio programs. It did, however, establish the principle that radio stations must be lincensed by Federal authority. That authority was first the Radio Commission and later the Communications Commission—both appointed by the President. These governors of the air had the right to issue licenses and assign wave bands to the recipients; and also to revoke them for cause. Congress specified the grounds on which the commission might act—the use of profane, indecent or obscene language over the air

and the broadcasting of matter contrary to "public interest, convenience, or necessity." These last provisions stand in faint conflict with the clause forbidding government censorship. The meaning of "public interest, convenience, or necessity" might be interpreted to embrace any opinion harmful to the purposes of the party in power.

Louis J. Caldwell, legal authority on radio, has pointed out another flaw.* The war for freedom of speech and of the press had its focus in the battle to bring such cases not before government functionaries like commissioners and censors, but before unhampered juries. The Zenger verdict, which so vitally affected our national history, was only one stage of that battle.

Not that the commissioners have exerted their power unfairly; the danger remains passive. And still it is interesting to note that the political mind has run true to form. Remember that Stationer's Register seems to have passed all the smut in Shakespeare but blue-penciled the deposition scene in Richard II. Four or five times, American commissions have refused to renew the licenses of radio stations on the grounds of "public interest, convenience or necessity." Each time, the offense was embodied in a set of political speeches. Let us admit that the commissioners acted fairly. In one case at least, the offending station permitted a speaker constantly to employ language whose violence transcended all limits of intellectual decency. The fact remains that they have never exerted their powers to curb suggestive sketches. All censorships became in the end political censorships. Nevertheless, this partial control has sat very lightly upon American radio; and criticism would be mere faultfinding were it not that the wrong set of commissioners might stretch

* "Freedom of Speech and Radio Broadcasting," *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, January, 1935. To that number of the *Annals* I am indebted for some of the facts in this chapter.

the phrase "public interest, convenience, or necessity" to cover a deal of crooked manipulation for partisan ends.

That is not the whole story, however. The mild, imperfect censorship of the commission has its main effect in a subtler way. The large radio interests boast that they, unlike the newspapers, do not strike editorial attitudes. Their programs exist mostly for amusement. As regards public affairs, they act solely as an agency of transmission. Their position resembles that of a big commercial printing establishment in New York which does the mechanical work for a dozen different magazines of diverse opinions. It gives the publisher sound typography, good paper and clean presswork; there its responsibility ends. Yet the very existence of the licensing power makes radio corporations, and especially the larger ones, chary of refusing favors to a party in power. After all, the commission might hold over them the threat of instant death. For example, when the New Deal was really new, when its publicity men were trying to work up a crusading spirit for the N.R.A., the radio companies virtually put their facilities at disposal of the administration.

These possibilities for subtle control under a licensing system gave the main justification to the attitude of the newspaper publishers when their own N.R.A. code was in process of formation. Government license—they granted—was necessary in the peculiar case of the radio. It was not necessary for the press, and it constituted a dangerous precedent. When after long negotiations they yielded this point, they insisted that the principle of license be balanced by a clause reaffirming our classical declaration for freedom of the press—the First Amendment. Why the administration resisted this inclusion for months, why when it was finally affirmed President Roosevelt let the code lie unsigned on his desk for a fortnight, no one who will talk seems exactly to know. Perhaps he realized that the publishers were not

fighting solely for the public good. The codes, as proposed, would have hit them at several points of their pocketbooks.

European critics of American radio harp monotonously on one string. Under government control, they say, radio operates to raise the cultural level. The official directors of programs, being themselves men of cultivation, try always to give their public something a little better than it wants. On our side of the water the advertiser, who is the true patron of this art, is interested only in attracting the greatest number of listeners. And usually he makes a mistake common among caterers to popular taste by giving his public something a little worse than it really wants. He ignores, above all, the opportunity to educate listeners to higher standards of taste. Hence the night, when the largest invisible audience sits at the receiver, clamors with cheap music and flimsy, "folksy" drama, while fine music finely rendered must take the slack hours of the afternoon. Here the European critic fails to think the matter out to its end. Radio, like any new medium for transmitting thought enwrapped in art, must find itself by trial and error. The story is usually that of progress from cheap and sleazy stuff toward higher art which may break out into genius. Mountebanks and tumblers trading crude dialogue at country fairs, or prelates exhibiting primitive mimes to ram home lessons of morality and religion, founded the English drama. Wild young rapscallions from the universities carried it along until they stumbled upon artistic form. There followed Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson. With every stage of this advance the audiences kept step. The cinema is just now running a similar course. Except as a transmitter of music, the radio can never develop, can never find itself, under such rules and policies as generally prevail in Europe. Being free, we are experimenting—not consciously of course, but effectively nevertheless.

Chapter XXI

RUSES NEW AND OLD

IN THE United States as in Europe, peace demobilized whole regiments of war propagandists. Naturally they looked for new jobs at this attractive trade; and they found a brisk demand. The mental maneuvers of the war had taught both business and politics the uses of indirect advertising. Individuals and companies formerly innocent of trying to influence the press now joined the movement. New issues arising from the war had generated new societies to revise the world—or to keep it just as it was—and in these, as of old, the publicity department was driving wheel of the machine. While it still seemed possible that the United States would either join the League of Nations or some other Parliament of Man, new nations like Poland maintained active offices of propaganda in Washington or New York. This period witnessed also the rapid growth of a phenomenon which the slang of sociology calls the "pressure group"—societies formed to bring about special legislation. These strive with one hand to influence congressmen or senators through lobbies, letters and telegrams, and with the other to distribute and plant propaganda. This, of course, was not a new factor in American affairs; but the five years following the war saw its expansion into a universal method.

The publicity agent was adjusting himself to new conditions, and much of his output during this period was stupid and mechanical. A visitor to a city editor of New York found the office boy carrying away three full wastebaskets.

"Mimeographed publicity stuff, every sheet of it," said the editor, "and all from this morning's mail. We don't even attempt to read it." After a year or so, the incompetent and unoriginal among the publicity agents began to drop out and the flood of mimeographed copy subsided.

The artists refined their methods. Commercial propaganda—really, glorified advertising—took a leaf from the notebook of the political propagandist and began to create wide backgrounds. During this period, first the medical profession and then the laity learned of vitamins. The California orange growers opened a highly successful campaign to make the public conscious of those particular vitamins contained in oranges and orange juice. Health hints, medical lectures faithfully reported, even the praise of vitamins in general without any reference to oranges—all helped. Before they finished, they established the glass of orange juice as the eye opener of the American people. So without doubt they served the cause of public health and also their own cause. When, just after the war, skirts rose to a height that shocked the conservative, the stocking became conspicuous. Until then, silk stockings had stood the symbol of affluence; politicians called the rich the "silk-stocking element." Now, every factory girl scrimped and saved to buy a pair of these gauds. Rayon arrived as a substitute for its more luxurious sister. And the struggles of stocking manufacturers to keep short skirts in fashion form a chapter in our commercial history. J. R. Hamilton, advertising expert of Chicago, was working for Wanamaker's in Philadelphia when a customer planted in his mind a seed which grew into the idea of Mother's Day. He "sold" it to the local florists. By another year, it had become an American institution. The manufacturers of small luxuries for men followed with Father's Day.

The counselor on public relations extended his operations until he advised and guided not only single firms but whole industries. Will H. Hays represents the elite of this class. For more than a decade he has mediated between the motion-picture producers and the public. Through the Age of Smut he worked with more than partial success to "hold down Hollywood" while at the same time averting a general legal censorship. Hays stands at the moral height of his curious trade. In the depths wallow some of the men who during the boom of 1923–29 corrupted the country press on behalf of public utilities and certain agents of stockjobbery who in the same mad period helped to spread that fatal illusion "the new economic plane."

Many counselors on public relations had one foot in commerce and the other in politics—even international politics. The most eminent figure in this class was the late Ivy Lee. It seems a pity that he died silently, leaving behind, so far as anyone knows, no real record of his activities. The candid reminiscences of Ivy Lee would be as useful to a future historian as Pepys' Diary—and perhaps as interesting to the student of human souls. He began his larger career as counselor for certain Rockefeller interests. He was careful, nevertheless, not to identify himself with the Rockefellers or any other group, so leaving himself free to serve all clients. He had a hand in an agitation for recognition of Russia as a means of increasing our export market. Indeed, he may have directed this campaign. So, too, when an element among the bankers decided that cancellation of European war debts would benefit American finance, they used Lee's talent for sweetening unpopular causes. And in the last year of his life he was advising the new German government on ways and means for making

Nazi principles and methods less hateful to the average American citizen.

Simon-pure political propaganda—limitations of space will confine me to those recent instances which illuminate new methods.

One would overstate his case if he said that propaganda alone brought about national prohibition and then killed its own creation. Behind its birth and its death worked complex and subtle social forces. But half-truths, slanted news, deliberate creation of a false picture, pressure on the channels of publicity, all sped up the prohibition movement and rushed it on to its extreme in the Eighteenth Amendment. Similar methods, even more cleverly employed, carried along the movement for repeal so fast that it caught most politicians flat-footed.

The women's temperance organizations of the nineteenth century were our earliest pressure groups. Even when the average woman shuddered at the thought of voting, they were carrying into legislatures the humble petitions of a dear, disenfranchised class. In the seventies and eighties, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union gathered up the scattered groups into a national organization. These ladies understood from the first the uses of made news. They would pick a small town for a "cleanup" and proceed to hold before its doors all-day prayer meetings wherein they craved mercy for the souls of the rum-seller and his drunkards. The proceeding was so picturesque and so full of action that New York, Philadelphia and Chicago newspapers sent special correspondents to follow the militant ladies and report their doings. So from the very beginning the W.C.T.U. attained to front pages all over the country.

When the able Frances Willard took charge, she established a policy of instilling hatred for beverage alcohol into

the souls of the younger generation. Hence the temperance rallies of the Sunday schools with the children singing "Cold water, cold water, oh that is my song" and "Tremble, Demon Alcohol, we shall grow up some day!" Further, her followers used all the rising political influence of woman to force "temperance education" into the curricula of the public schools. Eventually, the textbooks on personal hygiene in nearly every state included chapters describing the effects of strong drink. In some cases this literature was merely yellow science; in some, it read like the peroration of a temperance orator. But Frances Willard fulfilled her mission. When she died, she left behind a rising generation whose typical member either repudiated alcohol or took it with a bad conscience.

Then the Anti-Saloon League appeared to transform distrust, dislike and hatred into positive action. It applied a new method in politics which has shown the way to innumerable other pressure groups—the balance of power. It neither nominated a ticket nor permitted any of its members to run for office. Beginning with the small units and going on to the larger, it interviewed candidates and endorsed that one whose pledges most nearly fitted the ideals of the Anti-Saloon League. Before it finished, many a politician who drank a quart of straight whisky a day was making speeches in favor of prohibition. The very name of the society was a piece of clever propaganda. It did not imply legal prohibition of beverage alcohol, although such was the intention from the beginning. The saloon, the system of retail distribution, was the weak point in our old liquor business. Men who drew back from prohibition would join or support an organization aiming to destroy a social nuisance. And as the struggle grew more intense, the Anti-Saloon League, with its sister, the W.C.T.U., employed publicity agents to affect the newspapers.

The brewers and distillers supported all this time a counterpropaganda. In spite of large supporting funds, they lost most of their battles through failure of the men who employed the publicists to grasp the strategies of such a campaign. Notably—and most stupidly—they took on two opponents at once when they opposed the movement for woman suffrage, which was in this period rolling up like a snowball.

The sentiment for repeal of prohibition arose with the suddenness and violence of a cloudburst. In 1928, Smith's declaration for repeal probably constituted his chief political liability. This, more than the religious issue, was the reason why Hoover broke the solid South. Yet four years later an out-and-out declaration for repeal in the Democratic platform, contrasted with a muted declaration in the Republican, served Roosevelt as an asset. For, just as the tide began to turn, the opponents of prohibition organized, began their own pressure and launched their own propaganda. The astute Jouett Shouse took general direction of this agitation in its later stages. The publicity men assigned to this job perceived one plausible and useful half-truth. In the boom period, when materialism ruled and all classes were a little drunken with greed, crime had followed the tendency of the times. Criminals had organized, had begun to play for higher and higher stakes. Crime grew insolent and violent to an unprecedented degree. In most cities, the murderous activities of the underworld centered about the distribution of illicit alcohol. The eminent traders in sudden death were also "beer barons." It is impossible to say, however, whether the greed of boom days might not have engendered similar sores on the body politic, prohibition or no prohibition. Certainly, the commercial rackets of Chicago, which during one year cost the city more than a

hundred million dollars, had little direct connection with bootleggers. But at best or worst, prohibition gave steady employment to hosts of young city toughs who employed murder as a means of competition. Also, the organized gangs of bank robbers which stamped a gory mark on the social history of this period drew most of their personnel from the pretorian guards of illicit alcohol.

The organized enemies of prohibition tuned their propaganda on this note. The Eighteenth Amendment was the father of crime. Our scandalous murder rate, the growing corruption of our police, all went back to that source. They used other devices such as presenting partial statistics going to prove—probably contrary to the truth—that drinking had increased under prohibition, and rather bizarre estimates to show that the revenue from legalized alcohol would lighten taxation, balance the budget and restore prosperity. But the crime theme dominated the symphony. The newspapers needed small encouragement to publish stories of bootleg murders; such matter has been the common denominator for readers ever since the days of the chapbooks. Where encouragement was needed, the wet publicity agents applied it. Events worked with them. Just as the movement for repeal began to gather force, Hollywood discovered almost by accident the "pulling power" in films of underworld life. The characters in these dramas were mostly bootleggers, and the plots usually centered round tangles in the illicit alcohol business. Guardians of our public morals protested against setting such shocking examples before our young. The directors of the agitation for repeal drew their own moral to these immoral tales and drove it home through every channel of publicity: prohibition caused all these things to be.

Then, when the inevitable reaction had begun in the public mind, came that Lindbergh case which stirred our

people as no other event of the decade. No one knew at the time whether this was the work of a gang or of some free-lance criminal. But the public in general, its eyes and ears full of gangster stories, interpreted it as part of a general background. And wet propaganda had already pointed to prohibition as the generator of these villainies. The Lindbergh episode was the spark that ignited the powder. But propagandists laid the train.

The propaganda of the Ku-Klux Klan is worth mention, now that the Invisible Empire has passed, for its successful use of the isolated instance. Some of the men who founded it were honest fanatics of provincial patriotism; more, probably, were good businessmen, interested in profits from the sale of regalia, or politicians trying to break in. This last element realized that the spread of the Klan was distinctly limited so long as it worked merely to "keep the negro in his place" and to regulate small-town morals. Its charters restricted membership to "white, native-born, Protestant, Gentile Americans." From the first, hatred had proved its best selling point—that hatred which in small minds is the best touchstone for patriotism. For a time the management considered emphasizing the word "Gentile," and starting, in advance of Hitler, a wave of anti-Semitism. But the Jew is typically a dweller in cities, while the Klan made its best appeal in the rural districts or the small towns. Here, "Protestant" would have the stronger pull. This policy decided, the rough but astute propagandists of the Klan turned all their guns against the Roman Catholic Church. The Know-Nothing party of the early nineteenth century founded its agitation on *The Confessions of Maria Monk*, a book which in collections of odd and mendacious literature occupies a place beside *The Protocols of Zion*. These new propagandists used the news—slanted, touched

up, or dispensed without sense of proportion. Owing to the reverence with which Roman Catholics regard their priesthood, American newspapers had tended to suppress or to minimize stories of those moral lapses happening occasionally among the clergy of this church—as among that of all churches. In the early days of Christian Science, the newspapers were critical of instances where the sick died under treatment of a healer. The new sect thereupon organized a committee to stimulate floods of protesting letters. This policy, continued year after year, stopped all criticism. So far as appears on any record, the Roman Catholics had never proceeded in such systematic fashion. Pressure was not necessary. Simply, editors and—especially—business managers hesitated to offend a large element of the community, with the risk of losing circulation and advertising. So the Ku-Klux Klan raked up every suppressed or muted story of the kind, old or new, often adding imaginative decorations, and put it forth in pamphlet, lecture and periodical. When the supply ran short, it hammered upon the civic offenses of Catholic laymen in trouble with the police. Axiomatically, the sins, follies and weaknesses of almost any individual, if recorded without mention of his virtues, wisdoms and strengths, could make him appear a creature unfit for membership in the human race. The Klan propagandist applied this principle to an organization. The average Klansman, being a trifle narrow between the ears, had a dull sense of proportion; to him, this matter appeared as well-rounded truth. It was the main stimulant for that bizarre movement which blossomed so rapidly and withered so suddenly.

The war between the Communist propagandists on one hand and the professional patriots on the other has its comic features. On its serious side it illustrates several principles;

among others, the odd way in which extreme opponents sometimes find themselves singing the same song. In the two or three years following the war, the wisest could not even guess at the future of Communism in the United States and Western Europe. It was new; and it had brought off the most drastic internal revolution since the 1790's. It might capture the strong Socialist faction in every civilized country and set the workers of the world on fire. The French policy of the *Cordon Sanitaire* about the Russian border, the American and British appeals to patriotism and reason, had behind them a sense of necessity. Then, as the Soviet government settled down to the long pull, the movement lost ground on all its edges. Except in limited districts of China, the Communists have never gained an inch of territory which did not belong to old Imperialist Russia. Nevertheless, Moscow encouraged the agitation in other lands; though with smaller hope and enthusiasm in later years. So far as the United States is concerned, the "flood of Russian money" supporting Communist agitation is most probably a myth. According to my information—and it comes from very good sources—the lords of the new Russia have tended to reverse the process. Occasionally they have made a contribution to a special purpose, as when they subsidized a sick daily newspaper, which died nevertheless. If we knew the secrets of Soviet finance, we should probably find that the greatest single appropriation for work in the United States went to support the campaign of propaganda for recognition of Russia. And this had ends more mercenary than "freeing the workers" of America. The Russian government has, on the other hand, helped to direct the agitation in the United States; has even claimed the right to dictate appointment and removal of officers in the American Communist party.

Communist agitation on our side of the water has failed, to put the matter badly and bluntly. The depression was its opportunity; yet in the national election of 1932, when the party made its strongest "drive on the political front," it polled only 200,000 votes—about one-half of one per cent of the electorate. Numerically it remains distinctly a minor faction. But, like any political party, it exaggerates its own spread and importance in order to stimulate the fainthearted. And in this instance, so do its most active opponents. Every night some orator quotes to an audience of affrighted patriots the exaggerations of the Communists; every night some Red spellbinder repeats from a soapbox the multiplications of his militant enemies.

Less than moderately successful in rounding up votes, the Communists have proved themselves the best publicity men ever known to American politics. And they have used, virtually, only one device. They make the news. Here, again, their opponents have helped mightily by surrounding the operations of Communists with an aura of fear and melodramatic mystery. A common laborer who murders his neighbor attracts less space and attention from the newspapers than a common laborer who finds himself marked for deportation as a Communist. Two factions fighting it out at a Sunday picnic, with the police taking a battering from both sides—unless it ends in a killing, this recurrent event is good for six inches on an inside page of the local newspaper. A Communist riot of no greater magnitude and violence may achieve the honor of front-page notice all over the country. Barred by circumstances from ordinary channels of publicity, the Communists have specialized on action. Every strike, no matter by whom called, has a fringe of Communist agitators. If they manage to make themselves conspicuous, the employers assert that this is a "Red

strike"—splendid advertising. Whenever a poor man runs dramatically afoul of the law, be his case good or bad, one of the multiple Communist-inspired societies considers it. If the prosecution can be warped to appear an assault on the workers, with picket lines, small riots and other devices for attracting attention they join the fray.

Specifically they have made millions of capital out of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, the Mooney case, the prosecution of the Scottsboro negroes. Communist support usually injures any cause. But the party managers are indifferent to the fate of individuals. If the defendant loses, then the event only goes to prove that the worker cannot expect justice from the "bosses." If he wins, they can point to the party as the one potent champion of labor. Meantime, win or lose, they have been crowding the front pages.

Constantly they have staged riots to keep the publicity moving. These have varied from small and rather comic brushes, as when the Young Pioneers demonstrate against their schoolteachers, to dazzling generators of publicity like a stage-managed riot in Union Square, New York, a few years ago.

This affair deserves special mention. The Party declared its intention of moving as a body on the mayor to present a petition for redress of some forgotten grievance. When they applied for permission to parade from Union Square to City Hall, the police refused. They would have refused a similar application from the most conservative society, since a procession in the narrow, crowded streets of the wholesale district would have tied up business for hours. Concealing their intention, the Communists ordered a rally in Union Square. The police, scenting trouble, turned out a strong guard. Grover Whalen, police commissioner, himself took charge. When the meeting had begun, a committee approached him with a last demand—the Communists

never do anything so mild as request—for a permit to parade. Whalen, of course, refused. Whereupon Robert Minor, who was speaking from the platform at the time, appeared at least to give marching orders. The procession fell in and started. The police could do nothing but try to break it up. Some of them lost their tempers and used fists or nightsticks roughly. On the other hand, Communist women, burning for the crown of martyrdom, threw themselves under the hoofs of the horses—which, being among the nobler element present at this party, stepped daintily over them. The result: some broken heads, a few really serious injuries, minor trials in the police courts and a front-page story in every newspaper of the land.

In the summer of 1934 a series of small strikes disturbed the cotton and rayon factories of the Blackstone Valley in Rhode Island. This is one of the most densely populated regions of the United States; and it lives entirely by weaving. The depression struck it early; for six years, boys and girls had been finishing school and then simply festering in idleness. Brushes between pickets and police grew into a series of riots wherein youth worked off its energies and expressed its resentment against the world. Of course, the Communists had sent up a few organizers, as they always do. One or two of these had harangued a crowd a little before trouble started. A commander of militia, hearing of this, jumped to a hasty conclusion and informed Governor Theodore F. Green that the Communist Revolution had broken out in Rhode Island. The governor spread this revelation over the world; and again the Communist party, at a minimum of trouble and expense, made display headlines. . . . Later, the police conducted a roundup of Communists in Rhode Island. They bagged none in the Blackstone Valley and less than twenty in Providence.

Propaganda, in the invidious modern sense of the word, stands almost synonymous with insincerity. To advance a cause in which he may or may not believe with all his heart, the propagandist puts forth data which he knows to be false or—more usually—incomplete. Anti-Communist propaganda in the United States has given a new quaver to this note. Much of it may be described as propaganda for the by-product. The originator is not vitally concerned with the Red peril; but by stretching definitions a little, he manages to include in "the network" that set of opinions which he is trying to refute. Harry Daugherty, attorney general in the Harding administration, conducted his office—well, in a political spirit at least. After Coolidge succeeded to the presidency, Daugherty resigned under fire. However, he managed for a time to wrap himself in the American flag and dare any traitor to strike at him through its sacred folds. He transformed the valuable Division of Investigation, since notable as the model police force of the United States, into an organization for showing up the Communists. By stretching the facts a little, he managed to include in the Red Plot innumerable citizens of merely liberal opinions; a task much lightened by the somewhat imaginative Lusk Report for the New York State Legislature.

Meantime, another element with an ax to grind had found a special device to make anti-Communist propaganda useful. Though the country had in 1920 repudiated the letter of Wilson's policy for securing universal and permanent peace, its spirit still held the imagination of the country. The League of Women Voters, formed to educate the newly enfranchised sex, turned itself for a time into a pressure group and was mainly responsible for bringing about President Harding's successful conference on Naval Disarmament. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

stood even more radically for peace. Men's organizations, like the Rotary Clubs, endorsed the principle.

The militarists, together with those who sincerely believed the fallacy that heavy armanent is insurance against war and those who held a stake in the game of the munition makers, were temporarily on the run. They grouped themselves into societies, some with purely patriotic impulses, a few the creation of individuals who scented revenue—"patrioteers." The Intelligence Department of the army had during the war paid some attention to "subversive activities," especially those of the I.W.W., and had collected data on suspected citizens. The men who did this work were mainly amateur soldiers, filled with that hatred for dissenters which is part of the war spirit; and they interpreted the subversive spirit a trifle loosely. From these official records and from those of Harry M. Daugherty in the Department of Justice, publicity agents for certain patriotic societies compiled "blacklists" of "dangerous citizens." These seem at first to have circulated only privately and for the most part among the Officers' Reserve. Brigadier General Amos A. Fries, head of the gas warfare service, belonged to a militaristic faction of the army. An employee in his office put forth a curious document entitled "The Spider-Web Chart" which set a milestone for anti-Communist propaganda. A series of squares enclosed the names and "records" of certain eminent and suspected citizens, mostly women. Lines, making a web, joined the boxes; and all the lines met at the top in—Moscow.

The ladies honored by this singular document were officers or outstanding members of societies for the promotion of international good feeling and permanent peace, not Communists nor—for the most part—adherents of any theory resembling Communism. A famous woman citizen

whose name stood near the head of one column, was a Democrat; Mrs. Maud Wood Park, almost equally condemned for treason, a Republican. But the brief text took that hurdle gracefully. All American pacifists of any degree were auxiliaries of the Communist plot. Their function was to soften us up so that the Red Revolution would find us easy picking. Propagandists for militarism or armament or national defense seized upon this by-product of anti-Communist propaganda. Even today, political orators trying to stir up chauvinistic patriotism lump off pacifists—meaning both nonresisters and workers for international good feeling—with Communists and anarchists. Presently, the blacklists came out from their concealment in wallets and began to find print. Usually they led off with such eminent and useful citizens as Jane Addams, John Dewey, Carrie Chapman Catt, Sinclair Lewis, James T. Shotwell and Stephen P. Duggan, and went on to persons of lesser importance. Professional secretaries of manufacturers' associations, fighting for the open shop, saw the uses of the by-product and joined in. The authors of the lists hunted constantly for new names. Y.W.C.A. secretaries and schoolteachers who promoted peace meetings were almost sure to make the blacklists; often this honor cost them their jobs. In those days the speaking radio had not reached its importance, and the lyceum lecture was in its heyday. Scarcely an American town of more than five or six thousand souls but had its winter "course." A local manager arranged the program; but he had usually behind him a committee of sponsors whose tastes and wishes he consulted. During the period when we were lashing ourselves up to the disarmanent conference, lectures in favor of peace had come into demand. By 1925, most lecturers on this topic found themselves blacklisted as accessories to the Communist

plot. The societies which dispensed the lists had members all over the country. They, as a patriotic service, made it their business to pass the information on to the sponsors of local lecture courses. Two times out of three, a hint was enough. The proportion of peace lectures on lyceum programs steadily declined.

This campaign blazed sometimes into action—and into comedy. A woman novelist of New York, who at the time voted the Republican ticket, went to a city of the Middle West to address a banquet on a literary topic. Some years before, she had taken the unpopular side in a labor controversy; that sufficed for the dispensers of blacklists. When her name was announced, affrighted patriots informed the ladies in charge of the affair that their speaker was a dangerous Red and unquestionably had no other object than to rouse her Communist cohorts—perhaps even start the revolution then and there. The committee stood by its guns and refused to alter the program. On the night of the performance, volunteer saviors of the commonwealth and city detectives lurked in the lobby, crouching to rush in and arrest the speaker at her first treasonable utterance. The ladies in charge, fearful of precipitating a case of nerves, had kept her in ignorance of the situation. For an hour she aired her ideas concerning the process of creating fiction; and she could not understand—then—why there was so much cheering and laughter when she sat down.

When a libel suit brought these odd documents to sudden public attention, the newspapers called them the "D. A. R. Blacklists." In that, they did a partial injustice. The lists originated elsewhere; but the Daughters of the American Revolution, whose officers of the period had swallowed the "Pacifist-Communist" theory hook, line and sinker, helped out by encouraging their circulation. This suit appealed to

the comic sense, rather than the civic sense, of the public and the newspapers. When finally an assemblage of prominent citizens held in New York a banquet to celebrate their elevation to this eminence, a gust of laughter sent the blacklists fluttering to the trash heap. Yet this artificial link between Communism and the desire for peace does service yet. It is one reason why the American public has accepted so complacently and casually both the gradual withdrawal of our government from attempts to promote peace through disarmament, and our own increase in armaments. It is one reason why Father Coughlin, by a single speech over the radio, was able to keep us from joining the World Court. He crystallized sentiment, yes; but the sentiment was already in the minds of those who reason faintly and feel vividly.

Chapter XXII

THE PERSONAL NOTE

SHORTLY after the World War, a group of American book publishers, meeting informally, discussed the probable trend of public taste in the immediate future. History of the trade had taught them that the reading public is never less interested in any war than during the decade after it ends. The Napoleonic Wars, the Franco-Prussian War, our own Civil War—the same intellectual rhythm marked them all. While they raged, no one wanted to read about anything else. With the peace came an emphatic slump of interest, followed ten or twenty years later by a strong revival. What class of current literature would supplant the hastily concocted volumes of correspondence from the front, the soldier letters, the biased fiction and the appeals to hate, whose remnants now cluttered their stockrooms? After long debate they decided that a public sated with horror, realism and dismal international politics would go to the other extreme and demand old-fashioned romance.

Never did a forecast by intelligent men go so wide of the mark. Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, written in drastic criticism of American folkways, was already in manuscript. It set the new fashion; or rather, it brought to the surface the impatience of a younger generation in revolt against its inheritance. As so often happens, the adolescent rebels who took their cue from Lewis paid more attention to the skin of their enemy than to his heart. The attack on Victorian niceties of conduct and Victorian inhibitions of

speech seemed to run away with the show. In its decadence this movement brought the era of smut to fiction, the screen and especially the stage.

All of which has only indirect bearing on the present inquiry. But at about the same time appeared another tendency more pertinent to our topic and less easy to trace to its origins. The reading public, and especially that of journalism, developed a voracious appetite for personalities. The cheaper magazines began it with personal confessions, true or faked. Their success in building circulation attracted attention. Some of the pretentious magazines began to imitate in a more finished way. This also attracted circulation; and a craze began. Here and there celebrities revealed their intimate lives to a degree which would have seemed scandalous in a period of better taste—*How I Fought the Opium Habit, What I Owe to My Divorced Husband's First Wife, Why I Couldn't Stand Matrimony*. The wisest, ripest and best-considered treatment of a public question by a professional writer counted for little with most editors of magazines and newspaper syndicates beside the opinions of some leader in finance or politics—even though he might express himself on a topic far afield from his specialty. Naturally, most of these headliners wrote dully if at all. Therefore, the trade of "ghost writing"—putting into readable English what the prominent citizen said or might well have said—enjoyed an unprecedented importance. Commercial and political propagandists found this mania useful to their ends. There arose what the craft of writing called the "double-check man." He accepted a retainer to advertise a prominent citizen, usually by way of advancing a cause or a business, wrote a readable article or interview, and sold it to a magazine. This practice having come strongly to the attention of the craft, the Authors' Guild of the

Authors' League adopted a code which declared double-checking unethical.

The mania for personalities took just as strong hold upon that which is called literature because it appears between book covers—and sometimes is literature. Biography and memoirs began to push fiction from the pinnacles of the best-selling class. The biographies of this period vary in merit from sound, original and scholarly work by such men as Gamaliel Bradford, John Corbin, Burton J. Hendrick and Douglas Southall Freeman to sleazy books thrown together in three months for the trade. The new spirit of criticism infused most of them. The best took figures which the mealy-mouthed reverence of Victorian times had built into effigies, and rendered them human beings; this served the cause of truth. The worst often amounted to libels on dead men.

The newspapers, with their nervous touch on public taste, fell early into line. Personal stories, the more intimate the better, stood at a greater premium than ever before. The tabloids, shoddy and silly little sisters of dignified journalism, arose at about this time; and revealing underwear to the public became their stock in trade.

The craze for personalities still afflicted journalism when 1928 brought the quadrennial upheaval of a presidential election. Not for a century had two major parties less real difference of opinion. The boom was at its peak. A few Cassandras, with an uncommonly small audience, warned us dolefully that bloated prosperity is the prelude to a depression; but none even among them foresaw the universal debacle just ahead. The great majority danced after the illusion "a new economic plane." No more than the Republicans did the rank and file of Democrats wish much to disturb conditions which had produced this halcyon period.

Their platform of 1928 gives the impression of the search for a live, appealing issue. One plank must be noted as an exception—the demand for repeal of prohibition. That, however, was the personal issue of the nominee. In view of his known opinions and his public expressions, Alfred E. Smith could have contested the presidency on no other terms. And so the ensuing campaign became a struggle between two exceptionally fine and able personalities—Herbert Hoover, who had relieved Belgium in the early World War, provisioned the Allies after we entered, administered the postwar relief of all Europe and raised the Department of Commerce to major importance; against Alfred E. Smith, whose common sense, high intentions and talent for driving legislation had made him the model governor of an American state. The prohibition issue had force, it is true; but the time for repeal was not yet ripe.

Since the issue was personal rather than political and since politics is a ruthless business, both sides at times hit below the belt. Systematically, Republican county leaders and other small fry of politics traded upon Smith's humble, sturdy origins to whisper among the voters—and especially the women—that the Smith family would make a poor showing in the White House. It mattered not that they had made a good showing in the Executive Mansion at Albany! More openly, they emphasized his old connection with Tammany Hall and that aversion to the metropolis and its ways which colors thought in some parts of the interior. And one need hardly recall how Smith's religion, reviving for a time the dying spirit of the Ku-Klux Klan, heated up the small-minded in several Protestant sects. Twice, Hoover protested sincerely against the injection of religious bigotry into the campaign. These expressions had little effect on such county chairmen as dictated tactics for dis-

tricts with a large Protestant majority. Nor did they, indeed, restrain some of the larger leaders. Even if the candidate had called down the curse of the party upon those who used these arguments, the process would have gone on just the same. For until Smith took the defensive and brought this issue strongly to public attention, it was mostly a whispering campaign; the whispering could not be suppressed. These tactics involved no new technique of propaganda. The general arguments and the mendacious stories were revamped from the literature of the Know-Nothing party or gathered up from the scrap heap of the Ku-Klux Klan. But a political ruse is not necessarily ineffective because it happens to be old. Opposing a strong candidate, demanding a change of political management in an era of unprecedented prosperity, urging repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment at a period when the majority still believed in prohibition—Smith was not on the cards. But the religious argument may have swung the balance in two or three doubtful states.

The Democrats had sent agents abroad to investigate Hoover's record in business. Mid-campaign, they turned up a fact which promised to have its uses. Once Hoover's name had appeared on a voting list in the Kensington district, London, where he held a lease on a residence. The discoverers probably understood perfectly the difference between the British way with the franchise and our own way. There, the right to vote rested on income or tenure of property. Before an election, the authorities prepared and published lists which included every resident, whether British or foreign by nationality, who owned or leased real estate in the district. But only the British among them might vote. Since with us a man's enrollment as a voter implies citizenship, this old Kensington list might be used as seeming proof that our Republican candidate for president had become

secretly nationalized as a Briton. The Democrats were preparing to announce their discovery with the appropriate noise when the Republicans got wind of the matter. In a mild open letter of inquiry they brought the charge to the attention of the public and answered it with a strong letter stating the facts. The Democrats fired their bomb just the same; but it proved a dud. However, it did inspire whisperers who passed along the rumor that Hoover was really a British subject. And the Democratic National Committee made some capital of a fugitive report that Hoover had oppressed native labor in Burma and a warped version of a suit over a Chinese coal mine.

So much for detraction in this campaign of personalities. But the emphasis lay on the other extreme. Orators and biographers, radio speakers and pamphleteers, touched lightly upon the rock-ribbed principles of the party, whichever it happened to be, but bore down heavily on the transcendent abilities of the candidate. Both parties raised expectations beyond human possibility of fulfillment; each somewhat oversold its man. And Hoover won by a landslide which broke even the Solid South.

O. Henry has written that the straw ballot shows which way the hot air blows. That may have been true in his time; but the straw ballots of the *Literary Digest* and the Hearst newspapers, covering on scientific principles typical cross sections of the country, have developed an accuracy most invidious to politicians on the losing side. Weeks before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, 1932, these unofficial canvasses had Hoover leading in nearly every state. More convincing to the politicians were pessimistic reports from those county chairmen who form the backbone of any party organization in the United States. A fortnight before the election, Democratic National Head-

quarters knew that Smith, bar some colossal mistake by his opponents, could not win. On the Saturday night before election, the workers in the Democratic vineyard packed their kits, privately congratulated their Republican friends, and went home.

All but John J. Raskob. A multimillionaire grown great in the boom, until this election he had voted Republican by instinct. His personal admiration for Smith, his indignation over unjustified attacks on his own faith and his aversion to prohibition, drew him into the Democratic camp. He underwrote part of the campaign expenses and directed at headquarters with the shrewd advice of a businessman. But he was an amateur to politics, and he failed to read the signs. Until the radio began to chatter off news of a substantial Republican lead in regions which had hitherto gone Democratic ever since Democracy was, Raskob had lived in a rosy dream. Awakened, he sat down and applied the ordinary common sense of a shrewd businessman to this new game.

Let us not assume to read Mr. Raskob's thoughts. What he had perceived and what he had deduced could not have differed widely from the perceptions and deductions of any other man who had directed business operations on a large scale. When a party nominated a candidate, it scrambled together an organization for propaganda and rushed blindly ahead. Merit had little to do with the selection of personnel; that was mostly a matter of influence and "taking care of the boys." Now and then a party stumbled on to a first-rate talent like Edward Anthony who contributed to Republican publicity in 1928; but that was just happy accident. And the organization, even at that, had scarcely shaken itself together before the election scattered it to the winds.

What were they trying to do? Influence popular psychology. The larger publicity agents and counselors on public relations spent months and even years creating a background, an atmosphere, before they came to the point. But in the interval between elections, the losing political party maintained only a skeleton organization which usually wasted its first year in struggling to pay the deficit. Then with one access of animation at the time of the Congressional elections, it jogged along at a desultory pace until the next presidential year. It employed a press agent; but his endeavors consisted mainly in writing conventional, routine matter and distributing it in mimeographed copies to the newspapers—which usually dropped it on to the floor. We were living in the 1920's, and political party methods, so far as the all-important business of publicity was concerned, lingered in the 1890's.

Whereupon Mr. Raskob, having analyzed the situation in these terms or something resembling them, characteristically translated thought into action. He and another wealthy man who in 1928 supported Smith underwrote the finances of a Democratic National Committee on a new and more intensive plan. It was to start operations full blast from the very inauguration of President Hoover. In election season and out, it was to pursue one object—discrediting the administration with the people. This accomplished, Raskob expected to see Smith renominated in 1932—and, this time, elected. Of course, the last part of his program failed. Raskob set the scenes, but another man stole the show.

The chairmanship fell to Jouett Shouse, a most expert politician with a flair for journalism. But the all-important point was the publicity agent; for him, these promoters were willing to pay a salary befitting high talent. He must

be a man of original mind who could temper creation with experience of journalism and politics. Rejecting all suggestions to employ one of the regular counselors on public relations, they reached into the trade itself and drew out Charles Michelson, then serving as Washington correspondent for the New York *World*. It was a shrewd choice. Michelson belongs to a Californian family dowered with brains. His brother Albert was a winner of the Nobel Prize in physics, his sister Miriam a best-selling novelist. In his early years he himself had published fiction of merit; but he preferred the more active life of journalism. He wrote gracefully, forcefully and with penetration. Unlike most "writing journalists," he had demonstrated ability as an executive and administrator. He was popular personally. He understood the viewpoint of the Washington correspondents. Finally, he was by conviction a Democrat.

During the campaign of 1928, Michelson had written for the *World* a frank criticism of tactics on both sides. Democrats and Republicans alike, he said, were overpraising their candidates—creating in public imagination a pair of impossible supermen. Following this idea, either he or Shouse adopted a scheme of strategy from which, whatever the tactics, the committee never deviated. This being the age of personalities, let the Democrats pay small attention to the principles of the Republican party or even to its actions. Concentrate all the fire on Hoover himself. Make every slip of the administration Hoover's personal mistake. Label with the same tag every policy which brought the slightest sign of opposition. Render the man's actions unpopular; then the man himself. And, finally, roll up unpopularity to that point where emotion blankets reason.

The regular press releases of the new Democratic committee began to flutter forth a month or so after Hoover

took office. Then and for a long time thereafter, these fugitive documents were on the whole rather less violent than the general run of partisan literature. But they criticized Hoover, not his party. Hoover's first Congress passed a tariff bill. Let us not go into the bill itself; that belongs to forgotten history. History first forgot the names of its Congressional sponsors. Every criticism in the literature of the Democratic National Committee called it "The Hoover Tariff." Six months more, and the stock market had crashed. Those same releases laid the disaster to "The Hoover Tariff"—that and that alone. All through the blind year of 1930, when both the administration and John J. Raskob saw a new prosperity just round the corner, this literature continued to jab straight lefts into the face of the President. He was keeping the Senate in session "during the heat of the dog days," in order to win votes by making them pass the Naval Treaty. His appointments to the Tariff Commission, it hinted, showed that he was getting ready to load it with men who knew exactly what they wanted. While secretary of commerce, he had favored those speculative interests which, together with the Hoover Tariff, brought on the "Hoover Panic." When the Republicans began calling this line of attack the "smear Hoover" campaign, Michelson himself emerged from that anonymity held proper for a publicity agent and faced the microphone with a masterpiece of ingenious invective. "We haven't smeared Hoover," he said in effect, "the man was already smeared," and he proceeded to quote extracts from speeches and statements of the Republican Old Guard in the period when they were fighting against Hoover's nomination. After this, the releases lightened the pressure on Hoover for a few weeks, as though to give the public breathing space; then resumed full blast.

The committee, with Michelson shrewdly mixing the colors, was brushing in a background. And all the time it was working more quietly in another direction. Anything said on the floor of Congress or before a Congressional Committee is "privileged"; which means that it cannot be interpreted as slander. So also, when such utterances reach print in the *Congressional Record*, or when newspapers quote them from the *Record*, they still stand immune. Every editor understands that. He prints without apprehension a vitriolic personal attack by a congressman speaking in a regular session, whereas he would fight shy of a similar statement by a private citizen addressing the Rotary Club. Propagandists had already discovered the uses in this process. Putting forth a wild, vague charge, a hint or a suggestion at a Congressional hearing had become a standard ruse. Also, every session of Congress knows its waste spaces when serious legislation is tied in a knot and members talk for the *Record*. Systematically, the publicity department of the Democratic National Committee used these two peculiarities of the law and the lawmakers. The staff, going to work early, scanned the news for items which might prove valuable in attacking the President and thought out "slants." By noon, when the session opened, the latest idea with data useful for expanding it lay on the desk of Representative This or Senator That—always a Democrat and a good speaker. In the first dull period, the orator would rise and get his assignment into the *Record*. Democratic newspapers published it, of course, but when it was interesting enough, so did Republican and independent newspapers. They had to do it, or stand accused of suppressing news.

By 1931, the Democratic National Committee was swimming with a tide. The depression gripped the world, with the United States squeezed at the very center. And as

modern democracies have a way of doing in crises, we embraced the past. The republican form of government is very young. Most of us are less than five generations away from the rule of kings; behind, even into the darkness of human origins, stretch the generations who in corporate distress looked not to themselves but to their Liege. As dying men call for their mothers, so when the commonwealth is sick the citizens of a republic appeal not to their lesser rulers nor to the masters of economic forces but to this one lonely figure—the King of their own creation. From a ruler whom they have given limited tools they demand unlimited performance. They expect him to sweep a tide back with a broom, to stretch forth his hand and quell a tempest. When he does not accomplish such miracles because no man can, when he sets himself to the plain task of keeping the ship intact and riding out the storm, impatience and illogical disappointment may easily be intensified to hatred. And in that mood democracies, properly encouraged, revert again, this time to an unaccountable impulse which ruled us in the savage era—the urge to kill that which we worship.* Which fitted exactly into the consistent strategy of the Democratic Committee. "Hoover brought it on"—they dropped that burden and set forth to convince the public that prosperity might immediately be restored but for the "bewildered" Hoover, who "did nothing."

The atmosphere which Democratic propaganda was creating spread presently to those front apartments in the White House offices where the correspondents keep watch over events. And here, a special circumstance helped the Democratic propaganda. George Creel, who once through no fault of his own found himself temporarily out of favor with the reporters, wrote afterward: "Long training had

* See J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*.

developed [in them] the conviction that nothing in the world was worth so much as a story." Once I asked a veteran police reporter whether, in his opinion, the new district attorney was a good man. "Good!" he exclaimed. "He is the best ever. We get more stories out of that office in a day than we used to get in a week!" News is the road to the newsman's heart. The era of personalities was just passing its climax; stories and "specials" about the private, intimate lives of the great were still in demand. In this respect President Hoover held to ideals of taste which had gone temporarily out of fashion. "What I do in the conduct of my office is the public's business, of course," he said privately. "But what I eat for breakfast shouldn't interest anyone." And the White House under Hoover resisted a thousand open or subtle attempts to turn the searchlight on to its domestic quarters. Here was a cause of dissatisfaction, and someone—I do not profess to say who—kept stirring it up.

The hostile element among the reporters played their game subtly. It consisted in giving a slightly invidious slant to everything that Hoover said or did. All skilled reporters understand the process. Let me cite only one instance, so trivial as to be unworthy of mention were it not typical of a hundred others which mounted up to an important effect. One day, several newspapers revealed in a one-head story that a curtain in the President's private apartment had been patched. This meant little to the public or, probably, to the overworked President; but a great deal to the presidential entourage. No reporter—no one, indeed, but White House employees and most intimate friends—ever entered those rooms. Therefore, someone on the White House staff was "leaking." Next time, the leak might involve such a matter as the premature revelation of most delicate

negotiations—a story which might wreck a treaty or give a foothold to stock speculators. Investigation revealed a secret-service operative who had grown overfamiliar with a group of reporters and was handing them tips. His superiors removed him at once from the atmosphere of the White House. The reporters who had written the original story wrote this one also and at greater length. But most of them omitted the motive for the removal and made it appear that President Hoover had inspired all this simply and solely because he was sensitive about the patched curtain! As the atmosphere spread and grew thicker, many of the smaller fry among American journalists seemed to feel it a duty never to write the name of Hoover without adding a sneer; just as the fingerlings of London journalism long appended a contemptuous little dig to every mention of America and Americans. No good reason in either case—simply a fashion, blindly followed.

Chapter XXIII

GUTTER JOURNALISM

THE Democratic National Committee and its department of publicity were not responsible for the next and strangest episode in the detraction of Hoover, even though certain elements of the party made some use of it. The craze for "personality stuff" had reached its height—and its depth—in scandalous accusations against famous contemporaries. First came *The President's Daughter*, which did no good to the posthumous fame of President Harding. It sold by the hundreds of thousands and paid its semi-amateur publisher handsomely. Noting this, the slippery Gaston B. Means turned his imagination loose and wrote *The Strange Death of President Harding*. Sheer melodrama from beginning to end, this book more than hinted—falsely, of course—that Mrs. Harding poisoned her husband. Means had wriggled his way through the political and financial scandals of the Harding administration; he had just enough inside knowledge to make his story, which was half a purported personal confession, circumstantial and plausible. In fact, plausibility was the forte of Gaston B. Means. When the Lindbergh kidnapping case became the topic of the hour, he persuaded Mrs. E. B. McLean, owner of the Washington *Post*, that he knew where the baby was and could recover him, as an exclusive story for her newspaper, at a price of $100,000 or so. He got some of the money, ran afoul of the police, and was returned to his old environment—the penitentiary. But *The Strange Death* circulated

widely, and a few romantic persons believe it yet. What could one not do with a book of scandal concerning a president who was living and governing—especially in view of the invidious aura which partisanship had cast about him? It seemed good for a million copies at least!

Several such books, directed at President Hoover, did appear. One or two had their genesis in hot conviction; but most of them, it would appear, derived their inspiration from this pecuniary consideration. The episode is unparalleled in the history of journalism. In no other land and at no other time have a set of writers so unrestrainedly—and some of them so falsely—belabored any king, prince, premier or president and walked away immune. Some of the authors and publishers must have made shrewd calculations on this factor of immunity. Nothing in our legal system restrains the President or any other citizen from bringing suit for libel. But if the President sues—what then? In the ordinary course of such an action, he must appear in court as the prosecuting witness. If he fails to do that, the defense has the right to subpoena him. And we might witness the spectacle of a President of the United States being cross-examined by such an attorney as some of these potential defendants would employ. Besides, this was the climax of the depression. The pilot of our ship of state was at the wheel sixteen hours a day, holding her bow into the wind. Extravagant statement, false inference, ingenious mendacity, had for once a free hand.

This is no place for a refutation of these astounding books. Most of them made much capital of the "Chinese mining case," a legal dogfight from which Mr. Hoover's adversaries have been stretching inferences for twenty years. On that matter Arthur Train, eminent as both author and lawyer, has after full investigation spoken the final word—and that

word favorable to Hoover. And Herbert Corey, in *The Truth about Hoover*, has given detailed answer to others of their charges and insinuations. The point which interests the earnest inquirer into propaganda and propagandists, and justifies their mention here, is an ingenious method employed by the author of one among them. It consists in artistic juggling with the time element. Hoover's active life as a directing engineer had its climax during that boom in shares which swept London, mining center of the world, a few years before the World War. On its fringe worked quack promoters and large racketeers; men like Whitaker Wright who, convicted of wholesale fraud, committed suicide in the prisoner's dock. Mining companies dishonestly founded, or ruined by speculative methods, were constantly going on to the rocks. Yet often, despite their methods of promotion, they held title to valuable deposits of ore.

Hoover belonged to the higher command of engineering. Such men do little or no work in the field. From their executive offices they co-ordinate the activities of companies, just as a general, who leads no charges himself, co-ordinates the operations of an army. During this crisis, he constantly took charge of companies which had collapsed through dishonest, speculative or inefficient policies and, under new ownership, were attempting to resume operations on a sound and honest basis. Here, his reputation for personal integrity, universal in his craft, served as his chief asset. Sometimes he found that the property could not be made to pay dividends and recommended its dissolution. Sometimes he carried it through to permanent profits and large dividends. In the former case, the outstanding genius among the authors of these books set the enterprise down on an impressive-seeming list of "Hoover failures." In the latter case, he used a more original device. He reviewed all the sins and

shortcomings of the original company, letting the tale lose nothing in the telling, and proved by documents that Hoover was one of the directors. He omitted only the fact that Hoover had nothing whatever to do with the property in question until the old, unsound or unethical management had gone to the scrap heap. By the same process, an ignorant audience might be persuaded to believe that the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt which came into office in 1933 was responsible for the Teapot Dome scandals in 1922. And quite naturally the American public was densely ignorant regarding conditions and atmospheres in the realm of international mining during the decade before the World War. Further trading on this ignorance, the author in question could enrich his indictment with the record of transactions by companies with which Hoover never had the slightest connection, could warp a three weeks' visit to South Africa into a story that Hoover stood responsible for the introduction of Chinese contract labor into that field, could finally seem to bolster an absurd charge that the Commission for Relief in Belgium was only a plot for feeding Germany during the World War.

All this is perhaps a digression. Except for that ingenious method of one author, they are notable mainly as curiosities. And they are an issue apart from the official smearing of Hoover. The organization which Michelson served so ably was not responsible for them. When they appeared, the public lived in a neurasthenic state akin to its affliction in time of war. Men were not seeing straight. In spite of their absurdity, a few Democratic orators drew upon them for material in campaign speeches; and a few antiadministration newspapers gave them favorable review. Also the Democratic National Committee—against Michelson's advice, it is said—issued the South-African-Chinese-labor story as a

regular release. Yet these books had probably small effect upon the campaign of 1932.

Returning to the main theme: the permanent importance of the work of Michelson and his superiors lies not in the fact that they, as publicity agents for the opposition, helped to defeat a candidate for president. It lies rather in the contribution of a new method to American politics. The publicity agent, the counselor on public relations, had learned his trade and wrought his subtle effects in private business or as the servant of minor factions. Politics, the most ruthless and unsportsmanlike business of all, had somehow failed to study and to apply these systematic and intensive methods. Especially had it failed clearly to perceive the uses in two stock devices of the expert publicity man—constructing a background upon which to project dramatic action and warping or creating news in such manner that even hostile newspapers must needs become parties to the enterprise. Political propaganda had been languishing in the hands of amateurs or mechanics. The publicity bureau of the Democratic National Committee brought it up to the times and gave it a professional cast.

Chapter XXIV

IN THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY

TO SAY that clever propaganda alone defeated the Republicans in 1932 would be to stretch the facts. In the peculiar circumstances, defeat was almost inevitable. Nothing but a dramatic rise in production and employment during the summer and autumn could have saved their cause. But the policy of sustained propaganda with brains behind it did turn defeat into a rout. The Democratic leaders, preparing to distribute the fruits of victory, understood this perfectly.

Even before the conventions, that ardent partisan, Claude Bowers, declared that Charles Michelson had done more to serve the party than any other journalist since Francis P. Blair, who brigaded the rural newspapers for Andrew Jackson a hundred years before.* "Press" helped raise them to this dizzy height; "press" would help to keep them there. The new president would fit beautifully into this policy. He was a Roosevelt, and in that strain runs a talent for publicity. "Teddy," said a White House correspondent of his time, "is instinctively the best newspaperman of us all." Franklin D. Roosevelt's appointments forecast his own tactics. His three secretaries—Colonel Louis McHenry Howe, Marvin McIntyre and Stephen Early—were newspapermen first and politicians second. Until his health failed, Howe passed

* Three years after Roosevelt's election, a statement of that Democratic bureau of publicity which Michelson was then directing gave the credit for the "Smear Hoover" campaign to Messeurs Raskob and Shouse, who had meantime entered the opposition. Michelson, of course, worked under their orders.

like an editor upon most of the President's measures, actions and statements—always with a view to their effect on the newspapers and magazines. Charles Michelson, creating ideas in the background, accepted the immediate task of engendering publicity for the National Recovery Act.

Some of the White House reporters, as stated before, had resented Hoover's ethics regarding "personality stuff." Roosevelt changed all that. He and his large, energetic, enterprising family threw most of their doors open to the world. Special writers invaded the second floor of the White House, in previous administrations sacred to the President's private life, to gather personal anecdotes, to describe furnishings and domestic routine. Mrs. Roosevelt allowed herself to be interviewed freely on topics of current interest, wrote for the magazines, organized her own weekly conference with the woman reporters. The President's kinsfolk published their impressions of the new environment. This squared with one formula which every propagandist understands: we like what we know. During several administrations, the President had met with the reporters once or twice a week. These sessions gave the press its opportunity to ask embarrassing questions; most of Roosevelt's predecessors had dreaded them. But he, like a good general, took the initiative into his own hands. He managed to dramatize the semiweekly conference, so that it became news in itself. News! The White House spouted news. The stories, wrapped and addressed, hung like presents from a Christmas tree on every bush.

Politicians with the larger point of view realized from the first that the radio had put a most effective tool at the service of the President. "The White House," said one of them, "is the most powerful pulpit in the country; and now it can have the country for its congregation." On the theory that

custom might dull the public appetite, both Coolidge and Hoover had employed this new agency rather sparingly. Roosevelt's "radio voice" is one of his assets; the warmth and ease of its tones reflect his engaging personality. And he faced the microphone, on an average, twice a month. "These are my reports to my employers," he said in effect. Mrs. Roosevelt, herself a good speaker, used the radio even more frequently. That, taken with the flow of personalities from the White House, gave an impression of engaging candor.

In this period appeared the first, faint symptoms of an indirect censorship over the Fifth Estate. The courts had just decided that when the Communications Commission refused or canceled a license after due hearing, the case could not be appealed on a basis of fact. The secretary of that body selected the political programs for Washington; and another member, speaking probably without authority from his fellows or his superiors, let it be known that he proposed to tolerate no speeches hostile to the administration. In this he showed rather more logic than appeared on the surface. He believed, as did most ardent supporters of Roosevelt, that we were living through a public emergency equal in importance to any war. Had the speaking radio existed in 1917, would the government have tolerated pro-German or pacifist speeches? The same reasoning gave moral support to those who tried to license the newspapers under their Code, and balked at reaffirmation of the First Amendment. This attitude did not escape the attention of a business which professedly exists to transmit thought not to create it, does not itself attempt to mold public opinion, and depends upon government license for its very life. So far as politics was concerned, for more than a year the radio belonged to the triumphant Democrats. Nor did

the Republicans, licking their wounds in the wilderness and waiting for the end of the long presidential honeymoon, make much audible objection.

Michelson himself, assigned to the task of rendering the National Industrial Recovery Act popular, shifted from the propaganda of hate to the propaganda of love. He adopted a simple policy; this also founded on the parallel between the depression and a war. Taking the cue from George Creel and those European directors of publicity who worked up whole populations to fighting pitch, the publicity department for the N.R.A. organized parades, sent out traveling speakers, crowded the wave bands and tried to spread about the Blue Eagle some such aura of mystical devotion as surrounds the flag. This was an end impossible of full attainment; Michelson was probably enough of a practical psychologist to realize that. War is not an abstraction; war is concrete. And nine out of ten think with the eye of the mind—concretely. Until actual hunger pinches his vitals, the average man cannot work up the last degree of emotional abandon over an economic issue. Nor could Michelson wield the best weapon of the war propagandist—hate. However, to accomplish his end he need not raise the thermometer quite to the fever mark. Ably assisted by General Hugh Johnson, who has himself a flair for publicity, Michelson kept up quite enough enthusiasm for all practical purposes.

These tactics, however, have less meaning for the American commonwealth than a quiet policy which attracted scarcely any attention until the new administration had held office for more than a year. Only then did the newspapers in general realize what their Washington correspondents might have told them long before. Carrying our way with the press to a logical conclusion, this administration had

incorporated the publicity agent into the scheme of American government. True, no director of propaganda sat in the Cabinet as in Germany or Italy. Nor did any functionary have the power of suppression. Quiet and subtle persuasion, with the propagandist sitting modestly in the background—that was ever the American method. But every point of contact between the inquiring reporter and the administrative branch of our government was padded with an expert press agent, director of publicity or counselor on public relations. The American plan again—take care of the news, and opinion will take care of itself.

This mutation had behind it, however, a long and slow evolution. Ever since the Committee on Public Information showed how Washington might regiment public opinion, more and more government bureaus had been employing publicity men. Congress had even noted the tendency and decreed that such appointments must have its special approval. Most of them were necessary to the modern plan of government. Take, for example, the Bureau of Standards, Department of Commerce. It experiments constantly with the commodities by which we live. The results of these experiments serve no public use so long as they lie filed in the archives. The bureau needs some intelligent journalist to put its findings into readable shape and to see that they reach the people. The same holds true of the Bureau of Fisheries in that department, those bureaus of the Interior Department concerned with mines, health or child welfare, and almost every activity in the Department of Agriculture. Further, somewhere along its route from the laboratory to the printed page research needs interpretation lest the casual reporter, either through ignorance of the subject or desire to make a sensation, so distort scientific conclusions as to make publication worse than useless. The enlightened editor,

as I have said before, looks favorably upon this kind of publicity work. It lengthens his arm and makes for accuracy.

Other units of the Federal government, by way of saving time and effort, set aside some employee whose business it was to arrange all contacts with the newspapers and generally to keep the press in an amiable mood. The army, the navy and the Coast Guard assigned officers to this task. Usually such press officers issued mimeographed bulletins concerning the performances and policies of the department—in newspaper slang, "handouts." The official publicity agent tended to give his superiors the best of the story; that was only human. Sometimes, indeed, the superior expected it. As the time for hearings on the Appropriations Bill approached, he generally issued releases or made personal statements amounting to propaganda for the department. And often he advised his chief, like a counselor on public relations, on ways and means for keeping himself popular with the press. The period after the World War witnessed a slow but steady increase in the number of these publicity agents serving the Federal government. President Hoover gave the movement tacit recognition by making George Akerson, a newspaperman, his personal secretary and installing the late French Strother to serve as liaison officer with the magazines. And still the tendency had not grown to such a point as to justify much criticism.

Then came the New Deal, with its creation of a hundred bureaus and divisions of bureaus designated in popular language by letters of the alphabet. The bills establishing them usually wove the publicity agent into the fabric. When the law overlooked this essential, the new organization cut a little red tape and set up a publicity department just the same. Old, established bureaus and divisions, which had never before felt the necessity for a link with the press,

followed the fashion. Six months after the new administration went to work, the reporter at Washington obtained no news from the bureaus until it had filtered through the mind of an expert.

And the men who wielded this new weapon of government were real experts. Which makes pertinent a dissertation on that happy family, the newspaper correspondents at Washington. To the journalist with a special interest in politics, a job at Washington is Valhalla. In normal times the salary is liberal. He finds himself playing the big game, instead of the smaller games at the State Capitol and City Hall. If his tastes and talents run in that direction, he may make himself a place in the formal but alluring social life of a world capital. He has constant and delightful association with kindred minds. Above all, perhaps, he enjoys much more independence of expression than a reporter under the eye of a city editor. The days of extreme party journalism being definitely over, his newspaper usually expects him neither to overpraise the administration nor to embarrass it. Very largely, his attitude toward a public man or a public measure is a matter of his own professional conscience. With the Gridiron Club as a nucleus, the Washington correspondents have tended to congeal into a solemn and great fraternity which divides the world into Washington correspondents and other people. In this they have a shade of reason. For ability and personality, they come near to forming an elite among American reporters.

The depression hit them hard. Many metropolitan newspapers decided that they could get along without the trimming of a special Washington bureau. Others shrank their staffs and reduced salaries again and again. Once a Washington correspondent, always a Washington correspondent at heart. The displaced usually remained at the Capital, picking

up odd jobs, living on their savings and waiting for the storm to abate. Those who retained their positions cut personal expenses and worried on somehow, even though posts which in boom times paid as high as eight thousand dollars a year now returned only three thousand.

Ordinary, run-of-the-mine politicians, seeing several hundred good jobs lying round loose, would have scrambled to install party hacks who could command votes or influence. But the men who selected the publicity agents for the Federal bureaus understood the higher politics. Almost invariably they reached out into the corps of Washington correspondents, employed and unemployed. The jobs so bestowed were agreeable and the salaries, while not exactly bloated, substantially better than current rates in private employment. This policy had a by-product—its benevolent effect upon the whole corps of Washington correspondents. Being clannish, they could not fail to regard the new administration as a friend in need, even a fairy godmother.

Almost without exception, these journalists who took the king's shilling were skilled newspaper writers with the trick of creating interest. Above all, they knew a story when they saw it. Therein lies the chief distinction between the amateur in publicity and the professional. . . . During the Battle of the Argonne the generals commanding the front-line divisions usually appointed an officer of Intelligence to pass out news, properly censored, to the war correspondents. One day Grantland Rice, Damon Runyon, Frank Taylor and I visited a division operating on the edge of the forest. "Nothing special to report today," said the press officer, who was not, in civilian life, a newspaperman. "A little scattered fighting that doesn't mean much. Oh yes—here's a story for you. The enemy sent over quite a bunch of three-twenty-caliber shells last night. Only three of them exploded.

The German munitions factories must be going to the bad." And the day before, on that same sector, Sergeant Alvin C. York had performed the greatest singlehanded exploit of our war!

Even the handouts and the mimeographed matter from the departments, once fodder for the wastebasket, became works of art. By printing almost any of these stories exactly as written, an editor could improve the tone of his columns. As for quantity, on almost any day the volume of handouts from units of the New Deal at Washington would fill the largest of metropolitan newspapers.

This routine process does not half exhaust the usefulness of the new publicity agent to his department or to the administration behind it. Permanent Washington correspondents and reporters for the local newspapers visit him constantly; transients in search of special stories begin with him by instinct. He is the mouthpiece of the force. If the visitor wants special statistics or obscure facts, he or his assistants assemble them. He keeps his eyes open for stories and robs his own copy to hand them out in conversation. He arranges interviews with his chief. And the peculiar circumstances of this era make him a virtual necessity to the press. No newspaper staff at Washington, not even that of a country-wide press bureau, is large enough to cover first-hand that whole web of agencies with alphabetical designations. By the summer of 1935, indeed, the official dispensers of Federal publicity, major and minor, exceeded in number the newspaper correspondents privately employed at Washington.

Quite naturally, the press agent of a department gives his output a slant in favor of his superiors and of the administration. Accomplishments and benevolent intentions receive full reports. Hitches, breakdowns, delays, dissensions, office

politics—if these stories come out at all, they leak out. Seldom, if ever, do the official publicity agents lie or fake. They are too well grounded in the ethics and technique of their trade. But necessarily they give only one side of the news and hold up a barrier against any prying dissenters trying to reach the other side. And that, as any expert counselor on public relations could tell you, is quite enough.

The end of this new and advanced technique for creating public opinion? Alas for the contemporary chronicler, he must write "finis" in the midst of events, with forces still at balance. He is like a war correspondent of 1863 obliged to abandon the front and gallop to the wire on the second day at Gettysburg. This much seems certain: from 1929 to 1935 the Democrats profited so handsomely by sustained publicity with modern methods that the Republicans would be stupid politicians if they did not imitate the model. Probably they will imitate it. Thereafter the party in power, whether Republican or Democratic, will maintain its corps of press agents in the executive department of the government, will continue to pad every point of contact between the administration and the press. It may even cast a rosy aura over the legislative department. For while Congress may never find it possible to make use of a publicity bureau or of a counselor on public relations, the President, whose management by a skilled press agent is distinctly possible, serves in our peculiar scheme of government as a premier—the chief creator and driver of legislation. The opposition will find it necessary to start full speed from the mark, as did the Democrats in 1929, with an extensive and expensive publicity department. Experts will think out its scheme of strategy; other experts will execute the tactics of getting the proper ideas into the minds of the public and putting the proper

slant into the news. The proceeding will be expensive; and our taxes must pay for the Federal machine of publicity. But it will leave the relative forces about where they were before. Omitting, of course, one leading character in the drama—that poor, battered old virtue Truth, in her renowned act of being crushed to earth and rising again. Most of our political news will come to us, the readers, with the taint of intellectual dishonesty.

Does Truth, as a matter of fact, always rise again? Isn't she sometimes counted out? I have written, probably even to boredom, of that sixth sense for truth in the human mind: the instinct by which most of us, given time, perceive that John or Mary is a liar. Have I let wishful thinking deceive me? Will it always operate in the long run? Certainly truth—or perhaps I should say fact—is woven of very tough fiber. Also, so long as we have free press and free speech, the corrective for any one-sided presentation of the news, while it may work slowly, seems to work almost automatically. To take a very modern instance: when the amalgamated publicity departments of the Federal administration had been spreading their gentle influence for nearly two years, there arose a phenomenon new to American journalism—syndicated columns giving the "inside" of the news from Washington. Some of them may be inspired by the opposition, but most of them proceeded in the beginning from the insight of a free-lance journalist who felt that he perceived a public demand. The popularity of these features shows that such demand exists. And what is this, in essence, but an uneasy sense that the inside of affairs at Washington may differ somewhat from the outside?

However, the question whether Truth rises again usually generates very little anxiety in the bosom of the insincere propagandist. He can do his work while she is down. He is

striving for a quick effect—to ruin a disarmament conference on behalf of a munitions maker, to win an election on behalf of a party, to pass a bill on behalf of a corporation, to stir up a revolution on behalf of a faction. The sense of truth works in the period of sober second thought. All he needs is to generate an intoxicated first thought and to maintain the mood in his public until his end is accomplished. That is dangerous enough, of course. It remains to be seen whether in free conditions propaganda, conceived and executed as propaganda, will work over the long pull. The United States, owing to those same free conditions, has been the laboratory for experiment in larger journalism. We are pouring a new compound into the crucibles. It may be twenty years before we can announce the result.

Only one thing seems relatively certain. Democracy being dependent on the free circulation of news, we shall only make matters worse if we try repressive measures, no matter how good the intention behind the act. That First Amendment to the Constitution is still the Palladium of our Liberties. . . . Or, do we wish to maintain our liberties? This chronicler admits that he does. That is why he has written this book.

Bibliography

•

THE
BOOK OF
EXPERIENCE

Index

INDEX

INDEX

Y

Z