

TOP SECRET

**THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN POLITICAL WARFARE
THROUGHOUT THE WAR,
1938 - 1945**

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I. INTRODUCTION.

Political Warfare is the systematic process of influencing the will and so directing the actions of peoples in enemy and enemy occupied territories, according to the needs of higher strategy. It is not a new factor in warfare, but its importance has been greatly magnified by the character of modern 'total' war and by technological devices which have created new instruments for political attack so that it has become the Fourth Fighting Arm. Its exploitation in modern form originated in Germany where, between the two wars, the Nazis evolved a science and strategy for political warfare based on Hitler's own statement: "The place of the artillery barrage as a preparation for an infantry attack will in future be taken by revolutionary propaganda. Its task is to break down the enemy psychologically before the Armies begin to function at all."¹ Their success is undoubted.

The democracies did not have this advantage of preparation (such preliminary measures as were taken being obviously inadequate), which made their task all the more difficult when war broke out, and it was perhaps fortunate for our political warfare agencies that their necessarily experimental stage occurred during the first two years of war when anything we did, however well, would have made no difference to a seemingly triumphant enemy. It would though, have been possible to have minimised the pessimism in occupied Europe resulting from defeat and our failure to do this when it was most needed is surely one of the worst results of the lack of any proper pre-war planning.

The prime cause of all our early organisational difficulties was the overlap caused by too many departments trying to do the same thing. Although this had become obvious early in 1939, nothing very effective was done as a remedy until the fall of France forced the British Government to take some action. The result was the formation of S.O.E. to carry out subversion and political warfare. This did not, however, make matters very much better and political warfare was eventually removed from S.O.E.'s charter in September 1941 and the Political Warfare Executive came into being. This more or less killed the overlap, but the new problem of triple Ministerial control of the Executive arose, and though this was cut soon afterwards to dual control by the resignation of Mr. Dalton, the compromise was not enough and this split responsibility between the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Information remained a fundamental problem throughout P.W.E.'s existence. Similar overlap problems in the Middle East and the Far East were eventually, overcome in the case of the former in November 1941 and in the Far East in June 1944.

Political Warfare was further hampered by the relations of P.W.E. and its forerunners with Whitehall, caused in the early days by lack of interest by the Service Departments, who were slow to realise its possibilities, and by the tendency of P.W.E. to try to make foreign policy by propaganda instead of just supporting it, which was of course very unpopular with the Foreign Office. The solution of this problem was unnecessarily prolonged by the administrative

birth-pangs of P.W.E., made more difficult by Mr. Churchill's disinclination to look upon propaganda as anything more than of secondary importance and by the Executive's location out of London. If it had been established in London in the first place, its possibilities might have been more quickly recognised, its efficiency increased and many delays and wrangles avoided: as it was the move to Bush House did not take place until the end of 1942, partly because of accommodation difficulties but also because of the stubborn resistance of some members of P.W.E. to any attempt to move them to London.² Nevertheless the first instance of successful liaison with the Service Departments occurred as early as the summer of 1940 when the Admiralty and Air Ministry enthusiastically supported S.O.1's inauguration of 'black' or secret broadcasting, supplying intelligence material and thus laying the foundations of 'black' propaganda for operational purposes the use of which reached its climax during 'OVERLORD'.

It was in the summer of 1940 too that the importance of political warfare to higher strategy penetrated to the Chiefs of Staff. Hitherto, although some attempts had been made to co-ordinate propaganda with military operations, nothing very much had been accomplished and the Chiefs of Staff themselves had thought very little about it. After the fall of France, the Chiefs of Staff listed subversion and political warfare as the third of their strategic aims, but beyond issuing a directive to S.O.E. and establishing, none too successfully, a 'working' liaison between it and the Chiefs of Staff organisation as a whole, they never did very much more than continually emphasise the importance of subversion as "at least as important as the operations of normal armed forces". They seemed in fact quite content to leave the working out of a policy to S.O.E. with the result that nothing was done, subversion never developed into a major offensive weapon of war and, after 'TORCH', subsided into a diversionary role. In this secondary role, however, political warfare continued to figure in the Chiefs of Staffs' strategic plans and was increasingly used as a preparation for and adjunct to military operations, reaching its peak in the Italian campaigns of 1943 and the Normandy landings a year later.

The handling of political warfare was further handicapped by our at times unfortunate relations with the Americans. Here our first difficulty was over the exact status of the numerous organisations involved, and P.W.E., as responsible to the Foreign Office, soon found itself dealing with American departments whose policy might at any moment be repudiated by the State Department. This was settled by President Roosevelt (who throughout the war showed far more interest in political warfare than Mr. Churchill) by an arrangement whereby O.S.S. became responsible for covert and O.W.I. for overt propaganda. P.W.E. dealt with both accordingly and in London and America its relations with O.W.I. in particular became very good as long as Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, the Director General of P.W.E., was at his post;³ in Sir Robert's absence during the 'OVERLORD' preparations, the attitude of the Minister of Information to O.W.I. caused irremediable harm, at the great loss to P.W.E. of the facilities of the Leaflet Squadron of the United States Air Force. In the various theatres of war too the position was not altogether satisfactory, the

differences in Allied policy after 'TORCH' and again after 'HUSKY' making things very difficult. Before 'TORCH' joint political warfare planning between O.W.I. and P.W.E. had threatened permanent dissonance largely due to the fact that both organisations were working on new ground and were therefore uncertain of themselves, and even though afterwards the State Department's policy over Admiral Darlan drew us closer to O.W.I. who were more in sympathy with British policy, relations in the Middle East remained delicate. Ultimately political differences led to the establishment of a joint Psychological Warfare Branch in Algiers which lasted in various forms until the end of the war, and this arrangement helped to some extent, though the tendency of U.S. military authorities to interfere in questions of policy did not help to relieve the strain. Later, in spite of attempts to settle these difficulties at the Quebec Conference, in August 1943, the state of affairs in the Middle East deteriorated badly again when General Eisenhower left for Western Europe and was only saved by O.W.I. tact. In the Far East there were also conflicting American and British policies to deal with, but in spite of Lieut. General Stilwell's desire for O.W.I. and O.S.S. to remain as separate from the British organisations as possible, close and friendly collaboration was established and there was no single instance of a serious divergence of opinion.

Probably the worst hindrance to the actual handling of political warfare was the allied policy of unconditional surrender adopted at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. Opinions are divided as to just how much difference this made: it was defended by Mr. Eden in the House of Commons in July 1944 and again by Mr. Crossman M.P., formerly of P.W.E., in a much more recent debate in July of this year [1949] on our present policy to Germany: ⁴ but Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart is firmly of the opinion that it was a very considerable obstacle. Certainly it afforded golden opportunities to Dr. Goebbels, which P.W.E. in its overt propaganda could only counter by rather tepid explanations that unconditional surrender did not mean extermination and that the Doctor's picture was false: only by 'black' methods could P.W.E. throw out hope of less harsh terms.

The principal defects in P.W.E.'s methods included the lack of technical research into propaganda media and the shortage of trained agents to supply information on enemy intentions, report on the needs of the resistance groups and clandestine press, organise monitoring of broadcasts, etc. ⁵ But probably the most serious was the fact that, except in special cases such as informing the French of our reasons for 'TORCH', leaflet dissemination was only incidental to air operations planned for other purposes. Thus the contents had for the most part to be timeless and general in character losing thereby much of the effect they could have had if addressed to and dropped on specific sections of the civil population and armed forces. On the rare occasions when special leaflets were used, poor liaison with the Royal Air Force resulted in such disasters as propaganda aimed at Bavarian Catholics being dropped in the Ruhr: and, partly owing to the pilots' not unnatural desire to get rid of them as soon as possible and partly due to old-fashioned methods of dissemination, immense quantities were dropped in desolate country and even, on occasions, into the

North Sea.⁶ It was not until P.W.E. had seen what the U.S. Air Force achieved by detailing a special squadron of heavy bombers for leaflet work and by using special leaflet bombs that they managed to persuade the Air Ministry, not, it is true, to lay on special leaflet raids, but at least to order a supply of leaflet bombs and to improve its organisation at bomber stations.

The results of political warfare are difficult to assess because such evidence as there is tends more to quote the numbers of those who read our leaflets and heard our broadcasts than the effects these had on them. Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, although perhaps not with an entirely unprejudiced mind in view of his close connection with P.W.E. throughout its existence, claims that by holding closely to the truth our propaganda in Europe did more to sustain British influence than any other single factor, for 5 years bringing to the occupied countries their only news of the outside world, keeping alive the hope of victory and ultimately becoming the backbone of the resistance movement.⁷ In this he is borne out by various French political and resistance leaders and by Major-General Sir Ian Jacob, who, in a recent address to the Royal United Service Institution, referred to the British Broadcasting Corporation's doubt of the effect they were having until the invasions of Italy and Normandy from which it emerged that very wide audiences had learned to trust what our broadcasts said, probably mainly because of B.B.C. objectivity and impartiality in the early part of the war.⁸ In Italy a good deal of useful work was done, those expressing their satisfaction including Mr. MacMillan, then Resident Minister in Algiers, who gave political warfare pride of place in the conclusion of the Armistice with the Badoglio Government, and General Eisenhower who said: "In the Tunisian campaign, later in Pantelleria and in Sicily, and now in the invasion of Italy, political warfare has unquestionably made its contribution as an integral part of the fighting forces and I look forward to continued valuable work by this branch."⁹ A former Political Warfare Executive officer who served with the political warfare unit attached to the 15th Army in Italy claims that this satisfaction went on to the end of military operations in Italy: "I know from my own contacts.... that the military authorities, both British and American, looked upon us as being the Fourth Fighting Arm."¹⁰ The opposite view comes from Sir Cyril Radcliffe, again probably not entirely unprejudiced through his work with the Ministry of Information during the war, who says of P.W.B. teams with the fighting forces: "I have no doubt that they were an unavoidable form of organisation to suit the period that they were designed to fill, but I never freed myself of a doubt whether they did not greatly over-organise and over-staff the elaborate activities into which they projected themselves."¹¹

But these were fruitful areas compared with Germany and the satellite countries. In the case of the latter there is practically no evidence of anything very worth while being achieved except from Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart who claims that much good work was nullified when the various areas passed into the Russian orbit:¹² all other evidence goes to show the utter unreality of our plans, partly, it is true, accentuated by the vacillations of government policy, and a complaint of the inadequacy of our propaganda to Yugoslavia was made by Marshal Tito's *Aide-de-Campe* in May 1944.

In Germany itself and among the German forces in the West results were more than usually difficult to analyse. The Allied military authorities maintained that German morale was unaffected and it is undeniable that the Armies fought on desperately to the end in spite of evidence that German military commanders were alarmed at the impression our propaganda was making or might make. Among the German public themselves there were certainly very large audiences for both overt and secret broadcasts as well as widespread circulation of our leaflets in spite of very heavy penalties. But of their effect very little is known. The probability is that the realisation of the certainty of defeat was forced on the German people by events rather than by Allied political warfare: however let the last word be with Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart: "I am satisfied that our secret propaganda had a very considerable effect in sapping and undermining the efficiency of the Nazi war machine.... When the Germans surrendered, the collapse was devastating in its completeness, and, in spite of the permanent handicap of unconditional surrender, it would be difficult to deny to British leaflets and to British radio some share in the demoralisation of the German people."¹³

In the Far East results were again very difficult to assess but there is evidence of a significant rise in the proportion of those Japanese who surrendered to those killed following our special 'surrender' campaign: in the first 3 months of 1944 before this campaign had begun the figure was 0.6%, in June/July 1945 12.5%. Apart from this our major success was with the Indian National Army which proved a most receptive target, the vast majority of its members surrendering when they found themselves in a position to do so and a particularly good result occurring in Burma in the autumn of 1944 when 3 out of 4 who surrendered said this was the result of British leaflets. Less spectacular but no less useful was our anti-Japanese propaganda in Burma which removed the last doubts from the minds of the already wavering population.

The subsequent chapters in this note give a picture of the major developments in political warfare throughout the war. They have been arranged more or less chronologically for the convenience of historians who may want to read only those relating to their specific volumes. The exception is political warfare in the Far East, in any case only a small part of the story, which is dealt with in a separate chapter at the end to avoid too much geographical switching in the main narrative. As much as possible this note is limited to political warfare operations carried out in direct relation to Allied strategy and military needs, but for a better understanding of these operations, brief particulars of the various organisations involved and their more day-to-day methods and activities have been included.

II. PRE-WAR ARRANGEMENTS

British propaganda abroad had its beginnings in the Munich crisis when Sir Campbell Stuart, at the request of 'C', began to study the problem. At the same time 'C' had made Major Grand, head of his 'D' Organisation, responsible for the dissemination through all channels outside this country of material to enemy and neutral countries: Major Grand proposed to do this through broadcasts, the neutral press, whispering campaigns, etc. The Foreign Office and Air Ministry too showed interest, though mainly for printed propaganda to be distributed by aircraft.¹⁴ On 25th September 1938, the Air Ministry wrote a most secret note on the subject saying: "There is little doubt that the dropping of propaganda in thickly populated areas would be of great value. Used in conjunction with wireless it may have a most marked effect... The Air Staff regard propaganda as a weapon.... In view of the well-known and widespread opposition in certain quarters in Germany to the present regime, and of the vital importance of securing neutral and especially American opinion on our side, it might well pay us to put up with some small delay before we take effective counter actions, even if the enemy's taking such action first would undoubtedly justify reprisals of some kind."¹⁵ Rough estimates were made for the distribution of ten million leaflets per trip by 12 Whitley bombers and the texts were drafted, but a few days later the Air Ministry modified its views by refusing to use aircraft for leaflet dissemination unless so ordered by the Government. Plans for a balloon unit, to operate from Nancy, were put in train instead.¹⁶

Our policy at this stage and for a long time afterwards was based on the assumption that propaganda should be addressed over the heads of the Nazis to the 'good Germans' who were believed to be willing to listen to reason and be capable of stopping a war if Hitler started one.¹⁷

After Munich steps were taken to improve the position and in December 1938 a Sub-Committee of the C.I.D. under Sir Campbell Stuart was set up, as an offshoot of the already existing one preparing for the establishment of the Ministry of Information, to report on the possible methods of conducting propaganda in foreign countries in the event of war and on the machinery required for the purpose.¹⁸ During the same month the Cabinet on two occasions discussed propaganda to Germany and neutral countries but only on the basis of Foreign Office plans for publicising the British point of view in peace-time by overt means: no reference to war-time or covert propaganda was made.¹⁹ As a result of this Cabinet discussion a nucleus staff of planners was set up in the Foreign Office, and Press Attaches were sent to one or two European capitals but in general overseas publicity was still only embryonic at the outbreak of war.²⁰

The situation soon got out of hand because of the number of different organisations involved and the resultant overlapping. The three most important were:

(a) the 'D' Organisation, still under Major Grand, which claimed the control of all propaganda disseminated through agents outside Britain and the operation of its own broadcasts from abroad,

(b) the Division for Enemy and Enemy-occupied countries of the Ministry of Information concerned with the collection and distribution of news and information and the conduct of propaganda and counter-propaganda necessary to meet enemy action and

(c) the Enemy Publicity Section at Electra House under Sir Campbell Stuart and responsible to the Foreign Office, with functions very closely parallel to both the other two.

In addition there were War Office and Admiralty Propaganda Sections and the B.B.C. European Service, the latter a separate organisation with its own hierarchy and for the most part its own policy though nominally responsible for propaganda purposes to the Ministry of Information and Electra House.²¹ In April 1939 therefore the Strategical Appreciation Committee of the C.I.D. appointed a Ministerial Committee (consisting of the Foreign and Home Secretaries and the Defence Minister) to be the controlling body for all propaganda and its co-ordination. At the same time the Strategical Appreciation Committee authorised that all arrangements for leaflet raids (the only form of propaganda whose planning had reached the stage of a policy decision) should be completed in peace-time on the understanding that the order to carry them out should, when the time came, rest with the Prime Minister.²²

On 28th April 1939 the Ministerial Committee agreed on the necessity for co-operation with the French with whom some preliminary discussions had already taken place. Accordingly Sir Campbell Stuart went over to Paris with the twofold object of co-ordinating policy and ensuring that French broadcasting stations did not assist the navigation of enemy aircraft. The French had not progressed even as far as we had in their propaganda preparations but an Anglo-French Propaganda Council (to remain shadow till war came) was set up in the orbit of the current military staff talks and by the time war broke out collaboration in broadcasts had been arranged and the French had agreed to modify their broadcasting plans so as to eliminate the danger of aiding the enemy: they had also agreed, in certain circumstances, to use their aircraft and balloons for leaflet raids.²³

Concurrent with these talks with the French were plans for the Middle East where the need to counter powerful German and Italian propaganda was urgent. A central office was set up at the Foreign Office with branches in the various countries, to answer anti-British propaganda but not to carry out subversive propaganda specifically directed at Germany, Italy or their colonies.²⁴

Preparations in general continued throughout the summer and on 25th August 1939 the C.O.S. gave 'mobilisation' orders to Electra House.²⁵ Although plans for other forms of political warfare, such as broadcasting, had been drawn up, at this stage the only operational propaganda visualised seems to have been leaflet raids which formed part of a C.O.S. paper put up to the Prime Minister on 1st September on air action in the event of war. In this the C.O.S. attached importance to these raids which could be put into operation at once all the necessary machinery being ready.²⁶ No Cabinet decision was taken on this before the outbreak of war.

III. OUTBREAK OF WAR TO THE REORGANISATION OF JULY/AUGUST 1940.

On 3rd September 1939, at its first meeting, the War Cabinet decided to drop leaflets that night on Hamburg, Bremen and the Ruhr.²⁷ Thereafter similar raids were carried out over different parts of Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The themes of the leaflets were Germany's responsibility for the war, Anglo-French accord and strength, Germany's imminent economic collapse, etc. and therefore appear to have been of negative value only, if that.²⁸ Almost immediately a bombardment of world-wide averse criticism started on the inefficacy and inadequacy of this campaign, but the War Cabinet, against the advice of the Foreign Office who however could draw no certain conclusion on its effects from the evidence available, abided by its decision and the raids went on, incidental to operational requirements, as occasion offered, which was not nearly often enough to meet the demands of Electra House.²⁹ Soon, reports from various sources showed that the leaflets were having more effect than had been anticipated if such evidence as their dislike by the Gestapo and the German Ministry of Propaganda and the use by the latter of similar leaflets for its own purposes can be accounted. Concrete evidence that large numbers of Germans were reading them in spite of heavy penalties was certainly forthcoming, but very little seems to have been obtained on German reactions to their contents.³⁰

Meanwhile other propaganda methods continued, chief amongst them broadcasts to Germany (where again there was evidence of their unpopularity with the German authorities and of widespread listening in spite of penalties) and there was little change of policy in January 1940 when a new Minister of Information, Sir John Reith was appointed in succession to Lord MacMillan.³¹ Although a Service Consultative Committee, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Information, Electra House and the Service Ministries, had been set up early in the war to co-ordinate propaganda with strategy, the greater part of its time was taken up with comparatively trivial details and the minutes of its meetings show practically no mention of military plans.³² On 1st March 1940 Electra House made what was apparently the first serious attempt to consider propaganda in this aspect and discussed the question with the Joint Planners a month later. Beyond spasmodic consultations between the Joint Planners and Joint Intelligence Committee, however, nothing much seems to have been accomplished,³³ the Chiefs of Staff themselves appear to have thought very little about the possibility at this stage merely saying in their paper on *Certain Aspects of the Present Situation*, of which the War Cabinet took note on 27th March, that propaganda against Germany and in neutral countries, particularly in the Middle East and Balkans, should be continued and intensified since there were "some grounds" for showing it had had useful results hitherto.³⁴

Taken on the whole, our efforts at propaganda during the first period of the war were very unrealistic though they became much less so when the danger of a German invasion of Britain became imminent. An indication of the ostrich-like attitude of those concerned up till then is that the first item on the agenda

for an M.O.I./Electra House meeting on as late a date as 17th May 1940 was "That we should keep on attacking Nazidom with a view of (sic) goading Hitler to fury. He should be irritated and driven to doing something desperate."³⁵

After Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister and Mr. Duff Cooper Minister of Information, Electra House retained its separate identity but was responsible to the Ministry of Information instead of the Foreign Office as hitherto, and charged with propaganda to Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the German Army.³⁶ Our propaganda emphasis, however, now shifted temporarily to the Home Front and a nation-wide campaign to educate the public as to what was expected of them, and to raise their morale generally was instigated and continued until the threat of invasion passed altogether. Although throughout the summer there was plenty of criticism of the Government and the need was felt for more instructions and less advice, public morale on the whole improved very much and by the time the invasion scares were at their height people were confident.³⁷

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff had considered British Strategy in the light of the French defeat and had decided to base our future action on

- (a) economic pressure,
- (b) bombing,
- (c) subversion and propaganda.

They emphasised the latter as of the highest importance and asked for a special organisation for the purpose to be created at once.³⁸ The need for a special organisation had been further recognised by the difficulties that had arisen between the Ministry of Information and Electra House but the Government was too overwhelmed with more important matters to make more than a patchwork attempt to remedy them or to meet the Chiefs of Staff request. On 2nd July therefore the War Cabinet agreed to the creation of a Special Operations Executive to co-ordinate all the various organisations dealing with sabotage, propaganda and subversion in general. Thus 'D' Organisation and a War Office Section, M.I.(R), became section S.O.2 of S.O.E. to carry out sabotage, and Electra House became S.O.1 to preach subversion to enemy and enemy-occupied territories. The M.O.I. remained responsible for propaganda to the rest of the world. Mr. Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare, became Chairman of S.O.E. with Sir Robert Vansittart as principal advisor on foreign policy and Mr. Gladwyn Jebb as chief executive officer; Mr. Rex Leeper became head of S.O.1: Sir Campbell Stuart resigned.³⁹

IV. S.O.1 TO THE FORMATION OF THE POLITICAL WARFARE EXECUTIVE.

It soon became clear that the re-organisation was not going to work. Friction between S.O.1. and S.O.2. continued and in fact increased, the overlap went on and the new minister did nothing to settle the trouble, although he did reach some sort of an agreement later proved impracticable with the Ministry of Information on a dividing line for S.O.1./M.O.I. on the basis of covert propaganda being the responsibility of S.O.1. and overt that of the Ministry of Information, both being left free to establish their own sections for all foreign countries. Attempts to raise the question again were made at the end of the year when changes in the B.B.C. organisation were under examination by a special War Cabinet Committee, but the resulting enquiry merely confirmed the status quo.⁴⁰

S.O.E. liaison with the Chiefs of Staff was however, at any rate temporarily, more successful. Mr. Dalton in his note of 15th August 1940 on subversion and propaganda emphasised immediate planning within the framework of a general strategical plan on the only way for these activities to be effective to the fullest possible extent when the time came for offensive operations.⁴¹ On 21st August he saw the Chiefs of Staff who agreed to keep him informed of major strategy as it affected subversive action and to appoint service liaison officers with S.O.E. for the same purpose.⁴² On two other occasions in the next three weeks the Chiefs of Staff gave further consideration to propaganda, emphasising the part it could play in future strategy if intelligently directed on a consistent policy, the essential basis for which was military success which should be immediately and truthfully exploited. They also decided that normally the J.I.C. should deal direct with the Ministry of Information and S.O.E., only referring to the Chiefs of Staff if matters of high policy were involved.⁴³ Some time later, on 25th November 1940, the Chiefs of Staff wrote for the guidance of S.O.E. a memorandum on *Subversive Activities in Relation to Strategy*,⁴⁴ which was in fact a more detailed exposition of the general strategical principles first outlined in May 1940, but with more stress on the need for offensive action in the military rather than the economic sphere. The basis was to weaken the enemy (with Italy as the first objective) by economic and political methods which as time went on would be supplemented by army operations, increased air attacks, etc. A large-scale assault on Europe would be made as soon as, but not before, enemy economy and morale had been severely weakened. It was the task of S.O.E. to contribute to this in addition to action elsewhere necessitated by actual or anticipated enemy attacks (e.g. preparing the ground for possible Allied action in the Azores, Madeira, etc.)

Meanwhile a joint document⁴⁵ was prepared by the J.I.C., Joint Planners and the propaganda departments mentioning the satisfactory establishment of a close link between these organisations but urging a general Cabinet directive on propaganda policy. The document outlined our political warfare aims as

(a) to destroy the moral force of the enemy's cause and to sustain, and ultimately enforce, our own cause and

(b) in co-operation with other arms, to prepare the way for and exploit the effects of our military and economic offensive.

To carry out these aims, the regular weekly meetings between the propaganda departments and the Joint Planners would have to continue as the best means of ensuring co-ordination with strategy, and the release of 'hot' news by the services, even on occasions at the expense of security, was essential. So was the co-operation of the B.B.C. Propaganda themes would include preparations for ultimate revolt by the occupied countries though no attempt at premature revolt would be made, and, although reprisals formed no part of our policy, our growing ability to meet terror with terror would be stressed and the hope of a fair deal to our enemies would be given. Attention was drawn to the need for a statement on our war aims to appeal both to the British and overseas public and to counter Germany's 'New Order'. Such a statement would be a great help to our propaganda as would positive evidence of social and economic reconstruction in the United Kingdom as an indication of our achievements in this field. The Chiefs of Staff passed this paper to the War Cabinet as an M.O.I./S.O.E. document with Chiefs of Staff approval for its contents in so far as these related to military strategy.⁴⁶ The War Cabinet gave its blessing on 20th November, although it did not want too much emphasis on those parts of the programme dealing with our social and economic reconstruction or with a fair deal to our enemies. As for a statement of our war aims, the War Cabinet had inaugurated a Ministerial Committee to look into this as far back as August but nothing concrete had yet emerged.⁴⁷

By April 1941 weaknesses in the execution of this policy were evident. The Director of Plans, in drawing Chiefs of Staff attention to this, gave as the principal reasons:

(a) although the general directive approved by the War Cabinet provided a background, it was not supported by continuous more detailed directives for specific areas,

(b) at the present comparatively low level of liaison, it was difficult to keep the propaganda departments aware of future strategy without giving away military secrets,

(c) there was general ignorance on the part of those responsible for strategic planning of the potentialities of psychological warfare and,

(d) there was a tendency in the propaganda departments not to inform the Chiefs of Staff organisation of the lines they were taking.

Complaints were also received from the Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance who attributed the cause of the trouble to the absence of a single

authority to give rapid decisions on policy viewed as a whole. Solely from the point of view of the relationship between strategy and propaganda, the Chiefs of Staff organisation would have liked the re-establishment of all propaganda bodies in a single organisation under one Minister who would *ipso facto* be a member of the Defence Committee and who would be in close touch with the Chiefs of Staff and Service Ministers. If this were impossible for political reasons, the best compromise would have been a liaison officer between the Defence and Propaganda Ministers who would attend Defence Committee meetings and assist the Propaganda Ministers to base their plans on military strategy.⁴⁸ The Chiefs of Staff agreed to raise the matter with the appropriate people, but it did not reach the Prime Minister until June 1941 in a *General Review of Future Strategy*⁴⁹ It was then taken into consideration by those examining the reorganisation of our propaganda departments from every point of view the result of which is dealt with below (page 18). In this general review the Chiefs of Staff spoke much more strongly than hitherto of the potentialities of political warfare: "In total war, propaganda is as much a military weapon as any of the three services. If properly attuned to future strategic prospects as well as to actual military events, propaganda and publicity can give great help to military operations and be a powerful factor in the stiffening of home morale. Conversely, if insufficiently attuned, publicity of any kind may be very damaging." They no longer regarded Italy as our first objective, though no alternative was given, and looking further ahead, they stressed the importance of the psychological weapons in our final liberation campaigns as "at least as important as the operations of our normal armed forces", and emphasised the need for representatives of the propaganda departments on all levels and at all stages of our preparations.

Although generally confining themselves to questions of policy, the Chiefs of Staff did from time to time interest themselves in political warfare in specific areas. Thus early in September 1940 they authorised through the Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance a campaign in Syria to prepare the way for a revolt against Vichy when the time was ripe, and again on 11th November 1940 they asked S.O.E. to take all possible propaganda action in Madagascar to sway the island against Vichy and to ensure that it was not used by the enemy.⁵⁰ A month later they gave more detailed directions for propaganda to Italy so as to take advantage of the great drop in Italian morale following our Libyan victories. Propaganda was to be directed at Germany and the Fascist Administration, not at the Italian people and armed forces, failures were to be blamed on the corruption and duplicity of the Fascist Government and the Foreign Office was asked to define our war aims against Italy as it would otherwise be difficult to ensure that propaganda was best directed to assist our military efforts.⁵¹ This last however, remained undecided for some time.

Early in the New Year complaints were received from the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, on the bad state of our propaganda in Greece which was apparently largely due to lack of interest on the part of the local Ministry of Information representative. The Chiefs of Staff passed this on to the Ministry of Information who agreed to improve the position, which they did so much to

their own satisfaction that in the House of Commons, after our military campaign in Greece, their Parliamentary Secretary claimed that it was their presentation of our case which caused both Greece and Yugoslavia to come in on our side.⁵² At the end of February 1941 the Chiefs of Staff turned down as unsuitable Ministry of Information proposals for propaganda to the French in North Africa though agreeing that the aim of getting them back into the war on our side as soon as possible was right. These particular proposals included exhortations to the armed forces urging them to fight, which it was thought might be regarded as interference and thus have the opposite effect.⁵³ The question was then examined by the Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance and the Joint Planners (taking suggestions by General de Gaulle into consideration) and their recommendations approved by the Chiefs of Staff on 29th March. Our immediate aims in French North Africa were visualised as the limitation of German infiltration and the prevention of German control of the French Fleet and, as force of arms was then quite impossible and economic pressure would have only limited results, political warfare was inevitably our chief weapon. An energetic campaign was therefore to be directed not against Vichy but against Germany in general and her designs in North Africa in particular. To carry this out it would not be possible in present circumstances to use aircraft, as the Committee on Foreign (Allied) Resistance had wanted, but every opportunity provided by our economic assistance to North Africa should be exploited, e.g. the introduction of observers and the inclusion of propaganda matter in all supplies.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, acting on the instructions of the Prime Minister, S.O.1. had successfully reached agreement with the Allied Governments in London whereby British propaganda should be conducted in consultation with the Government concerned and vice versa within the framework of the general policy already laid down.⁵⁵

S.O.1. was also developing and expanding its propaganda techniques, notably in the field of secret or 'black' broadcasts, which had begun in May 1940. Immediately after the formation of S.O.1. plans were drawn up to exploit this weapon with which it was hoped to compensate to some extent for the disappointment of the early leaflet raids.⁵⁶ The aim of 'black' broadcasting, in the words of Mr. Leeper of the Political Warfare Executive, was "to strike at the roots of totalitarianism with individualistic sentiments, the appeal of which is reinforced by the very nature of man... it seeks to poison the souls of individual Germans by guiding their attention, under the pose of right-mindedness, to the pleasures and benefits of avarice, crime, greed, the lusts of the flesh and all the rest. It seeks to ferment envy, suspicion, hatred and so on by indirect comment... It is hoped more and more it will be issuing actual instructions in the service of S.O.2."⁵⁷ In the initial stages this only applied to a small proportion of S.O.1 broadcasts, (most of which dealt with political idealism, 'good Germans', etc.) but, under the revolutionary control of Sefton Delmer, it proved to have immense appeal to Germany and was recognised by our Service Departments as providing exactly the cover they wanted to put out rumours to the German forces. First of all the Admiralty, followed by the Air Ministry with

enthusiasm and confidence, put the resources of their intelligence units at Delmer's disposal and although the War Office was less co-operative, the foundations were laid for the use of 'black' propaganda for operational purposes which ultimately reached its peak in a complete and intimate collaboration with S.H.A.E.F.⁵⁸ In November 1940 'black' broadcasts to France and Italy were started, but, in the case of the latter, remained spasmodic and amateurish due to the uncertainty of our objectives.⁵⁹ Those to France were much more regular and better planned. In overt propaganda, it had been laid down that there were to be no personal attacks on Marshal Petain so as to avoid underlining Anglo/American differences and to ensure no embarrassment in the unlikely event of his transferring himself to North Africa as a leader of resistance, but on 'black', which purported to operate inside France, there was no such ban. At first 'black' broadcasts were addressed to specific groups such as right-wing *petit bourgeois* and industrial workers in the North, but later they became more operational, advocating passive resistance in various forms and minor sabotage. In particular one station concentrated on numerous and unofficial denunciations and there is evidence of phenomenal success in this sphere. In the summer of 1941 'black' broadcasting was extended to Yugoslavia, and for a short time, Czechoslovakia.⁶⁰

Meanwhile the state of our propaganda in the Middle East had gone from bad to worse. By the end of 1940 there were no less than six separate propaganda organisations, including the Ministry of Information and S.O.E., at work in the area and the rivalries and overlaps were inevitably appalling, not the least in the case of S.O.1 and 2.⁶¹ On 6th January 1941 the Ministerial Committee on Military Policy in the Middle East had before them a memorandum written by the Commander-in-Chief Middle East in October 1940, urging a propaganda offensive on the widest possible basis for which the existing machinery, which had hitherto carried out mainly defensive propaganda, was entirely inadequate. The military side of the present organisation was fairly satisfactory as there was centralised control but on the civil side (which was the executive for most open propaganda) there was no control nearer than London. The Commander-in-Chief therefore suggested the urgent establishment in the Middle East of a senior representative of the Ministry of Information to co-ordinate all aspects of propaganda.⁶² Certain objections were raised by the Ministerial Committee and the question remained unsettled for months in spite of the increasing restiveness of the Chiefs of Staff, Commander-in-Chief and others. Eventually it was decided that control should be centred in one individual under the aegis of the new Minister of State for the Middle East, with the various organisations concerned owing allegiance both to the new director and their own authority whether civil or military.⁶³ The next trouble was the choice of a suitable person for the post. This in its turn went on for a long time and it was not until 5th November 1941 (nearly thirteen months after the re-organisation had first been raised as urgent) that Sir Walter Monckton was finally appointed.⁶⁴ The Minister of State had, however, set up his propaganda department in the meantime and was able to tell Parliament on 2nd October 1941 that it was working satisfactory.⁶⁵

Notwithstanding, our propaganda in the Middle East throughout these discussions did have some effect. A despatch of 30th January 1941 from the Commander-in-Chief says: "General impression our propaganda increasingly successful. Despite orders High Command for destruction of leaflets, some officers apparently took steps to ensure each of their men had copies. One officer prisoner volunteered opinion intensification similar propaganda in Italy would have important effect." There was also the evidence of a captured Italian colonel: "Your leaflets fell on Bardia. They have a very demoralising effect on the troops because they read them and come to the officers for explanation. We have no convincing arguments against the truth".⁶⁶ Again, on the Abyssinian campaign in June 1941, a Middle East Intelligence summary says: "Senior officers among Italian prisoners have blamed our propaganda for the wholesale desertions of native troops who are seldom reliable now".⁶⁷ On the other hand, in spite of the specific request of the Chiefs of Staff in September 1940 (see page 15 above) by June 1941 little or nothing had been done in Syria.⁶⁸

During May and June 1941 the long standing enmity between the Ministry of Information and S.O.E. reached such a pitch that the War Cabinet was forced to find a solution. The right course undoubtedly would have been to put all propaganda to enemy and enemy-occupied countries under one head, but instead S.O.1 was detached from S.O.E. becoming a new department called the Political Warfare Executive under a Triumvirate of the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Information (now Mr. Brendan Bracken) and the Minister of Economic Warfare with an Executive Committee under Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart to run the department with the guidance and approval of the Ministers. In the case of disagreement the final word would rest with Mr. Churchill as Minister of Defence who announced the new arrangement in the House of Commons on 11th September 1941⁶⁹

V. UP TO OPERATION 'TORCH'

The Political Warfare Executive did not by any means start in a blaze of glory. The most serious mistake in the new arrangement, and one that was not put right for some months, was the omission on the Executive Committee of Mr. Ivone Kirkpatrick, Controller of the B.B.C. European Service, which hampered the relationship between the two departments. Other difficulties, particularly administrative, cropped up which Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart asserts could more easily have been overcome if the Prime Minister had been interested in political warfare. As it was he regarded it as at best of secondary importance.⁷⁰ The storm burst early in 1942 and on 17th February there was a long debate in the House of Commons during which Political Warfare Executive came in for a good deal of criticism though on the whole it was admitted that things were better than under the old system.⁷¹ Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart comments that the criticism was by no means unjustified. The Executive Committee worked fairly well, but the Ministerial Committee was out of gear due to the bad relations between Mr. Dalton and Mr. Bracken and, although Sir Robert himself tried to insist on accuracy as the basis of our propaganda, a lot of his staff did not recognise this fundamental truth, partly, he claims, owing to their keenness, partly to the encouragement to exaggerate given by the Service Departments and partly to the influence of Dr. Goebbels' unscrupulous and apparently successful methods.⁷² At any rate, soon after the Parliamentary Debate, Mr. Dalton resigned and Political Warfare Executive became responsible to two ministers instead of three, Mr. Eden as Foreign Secretary for policy and Mr. Bracken for administration. The new Minister for Economic Warfare, Lord Selborne, agreed to stand down on condition a close liaison between Political Warfare Executive and S.O.E. was maintained. The Executive Committee was abolished, Sir Robert becoming instead Director-General of Political Warfare Executive with a Propaganda Policy Committee to assist him. This rearrangement which was to last throughout the war and which, though not ideal, was better than before, took effect from 20th March 1942, but it was not until the end of the year that accommodation difficulties were sorted out sufficiently to admit of the establishment under one roof of Political Warfare Executive and the B.B.C. European Service thus at last achieving a proper policy control for European broadcasts.⁷³

In the meantime subversion and propaganda remained on paper a major element in our strategy. Nevertheless the Chiefs of Staff, though constantly emphasising its importance, were content to leave the working out of a subversive policy - meaningless unless integrated with military policy - to S.O.E. which was largely outside their control. S.O.E. never did any such thing with the result that subversion never developed into the major offensive weapon envisaged by the Chiefs of Staff and after 'TORCH' no attempts were made to evolve a method of warfare in which it occupied more than a subsidiary and diversionary note.⁷⁴ Within this limit, however, political warfare continued to figure in the Chiefs of Staff's strategic plans and as time went on was used much more in conjunction with military operations.

In the autumn of 1941 the Chiefs of Staff arranged for the establishment of an organisation in the United Kingdom for the preparation of plans for strategic deception on the lines of one already in existence in the Middle East, Political Warfare Executive's part being to assist deception by the usual propaganda methods which would include the increased dissemination of rumours to mislead the enemy, a form of political warfare which had been used continually for the last year but which hitherto had suffered from the lack of strategic direction.⁷⁵

In March 1942 the Chiefs of Staff approved a Political Warfare Executive request to supplement its already existing 'Go-slow' campaign to decrease factory output in occupied Europe by a new campaign of undetectable sabotage - a method made opportune by the recent raid on the *Renault* works in Paris.⁷⁶ A special campaign was therefore started in France and the Low Countries and at the end of May Political Warfare Executive put up to the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff a request to continue it by issuing instructions, active and passive, on open broadcasts as a corollary to Operations 'SLEDGEHAMMER' and 'ROUND-UP' then under consideration. The Chiefs of Staff, at a meeting with Bruce Lockhart and other members of Political Warfare Executive, discussed the whole question of resistance and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff gave what was felt to be a much-needed directive on what was wanted from the military point of view:

- (a) the formation and support of organisations in occupied countries who would take charge when Germany collapsed,
- (b) sabotage by these organisations in connection with military operations and
- (c) continuous sabotage of a 'go-slow' nature by all possible means of passive resistance.

For the first two Political Warfare Executive could of course only act in co-operation with S.O.E.; the third was its own direct concern.⁷⁷ At the same time the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office also approved a campaign to induce the French population to leave coastal areas with the dual object of relieving the Royal Air Force of restraint and, in an attempt to relieve the Russians, making Germany believe an invasion was near. This worked two ways however and French expectations of an invasion in August 1942 led to a modification in tactics.⁷⁸ As for the 'go-slow' sabotage operations it was not until the autumn of 1942 that a campaign directed against transport began. This continued for a year as the main piece of operational propaganda in open broadcasts, giving instructions that were general in character and not linked to military requirements.⁷⁹

Political Warfare Executive's work as an adjunct to military operations was increasing at this stage and among those in which propaganda played its part, though somewhat ingloriously, were the St. Nazaire and Dieppe raids. The

former was a political warfare defeat due to no warnings of its nature having been issued to the French who thought it an invasion, while the latter achieved only a temporary success, everything ultimately being wrecked by the American press.⁸⁰ But the biggest and most important operation in which Political Warfare Executive had a hand before 'TORCH' was 'IRONCLAD' (the invasion of Madagascar) which was the first major operation in the planning of which Political Warfare Executive was consulted.⁸¹ The original plan ('BONUS') involved only the capture of Diego Suarez and included the participation of Free French and South African troops. Political Warfare Executive when first told of the plan in December 1941, took exception to the use of these troops, in the former case because of the likelihood of Vichy accusing us of involving Frenchmen in fratricidal strife and in the latter because of South Africa's attitude to the colour question, native Madagascans counting themselves and enjoying the status of Frenchmen. These views were accepted in spite of wounding the susceptibilities of General de Gaulle and the Free French but the plan was cancelled on 13th January 1942. It was revived and expanded into operation 'IRONCLAD' (providing for the subsequent capture of the whole island). Some weeks later and although no post assault plans were made, Political Warfare Executive had ready the necessary leaflets, the officer in charge had prepared a plan to capture any printing press at the earliest possible moment and directives for the use of the press and for broadcasts from existing stations in Mauritius were drawn up. After the operation had begun leaflets explaining it were dropped over Metropolitan France to forestall and defeat Vichy counter-propaganda and as a result, a violent Anti-British outburst by Admiral Darlan fell flat and opinion even in Vichy circles tended to be resigned. After a pause of two months during which Political Warfare Executive continued to act through broadcasts, newspapers, etc., the operation started again as operation 'STREAMLINE JANE' on 11th September and some weeks later Political Warfare Executive (and ultimately the Free French Administration left to control the island) took over the Information and Propaganda Office at Tananarive. The whole operation was regarded by Political Warfare Executive as "surprisingly satisfactory" and this was borne out by the G.O.C. and by the Mauritius Government who testified to the effect our broadcasts had on security, the island's *modus vivendi* and our relations with the French in general. Mr. David Garnett, writing the history of Political Warfare Executive comments: "The Madagascar episode shows the high military value of political warfare when dealing with an indeterminate situation where neither the opposing garrison or the population had yet decided on its actions, and mental attitude. Political Warfare Executive propaganda from England both via leaflets and B.B.C. broadcasts showed how dangerous political results can be averted by getting the facts presented in the right light without any delay at all. Had the leaflet dissemination taken place a week or two weeks later they would have had little result. The harm done or the good achieved depends on the right presentation of the facts as the news breaks".⁸²

In the meantime, to carry out its everyday duties, Political Warfare Executive compiled a series of plans for political warfare to Germany, Italy, France, the Balkans and elsewhere based on the following four principles:

- (a) To extend and strain Germany's military and administrative machine by an assault on the morale of German occupation troops, which was thought more profitable than a wider attack on German morale in general
- (b) To lower still further Italian morale to the point where Germany might be forced to occupy the country in the teeth of Italian resistance either active or passive
- (c) To relieve pressure on the U.S.S.R. by trying to get Finland out of the war and
- (d) To cause the maximum resistance and disturbance of communications in the Balkans to make a German attack on Turkey less tempting.⁸³

An examination of these principles showed Italy as the most profitable target and she therefore became Political Warfare Executive's first objective with the guidance of morale and, if possible, action in occupied countries as its second.⁸⁴ Subsidiary aims included attempts to bring French North Africa into the war on our side for which the occupation of Libya up to the Tunisian frontier was a pre-requisite as was an undertaking by General de Gaulle to collaborate with General Weygand if our attempt was successful.⁸⁵ In the light of changing circumstances, both the German and Italian plans had to be adapted, the failure of the German offensive in the East and our Libyan victories making the myth of German invincibility no longer relevant. In February 1942 therefore our aims *vis-à-vis* Germany became:

- (a) To increase confusion and divisions among her governing classes and to stimulate defeatism among the masses, and
- (b) To press home attacks on the morale of the German navy and seaboard population.⁸⁶

Our Italian objective was "so to affect the morale of the Italian people and armed forces as to reduce to a minimum the assistance which Italy could render to her ally Germany".⁸⁷ In general the media for political warfare to Germany, apart from propaganda still dropped as an adjunct to air operations, remained 'white' or open broadcasting to spread defeatist ideas and 'black' to induce defeatist action and corrupt discipline.⁸⁸ Evidence continually came in that these broadcasts reached their intended hearers despite penalties, jamming, etc. On one occasion early in 1942 Dr. Goebbels writing in *Das Reich* said: "One might assume that British news was completely discredited in neutral eyes. On the contrary Swedish and Swiss papers gleefully present their lies day after day and only give our factual reports the same space when they cannot possibly be condensed any more. Even among us there are still people who will not learn. Two death sentences and a number of sentences of forced labour, passed quite

recently, prove this".⁸⁹ Again, a Zurich newspaper said: "British propaganda has now developed into a definite form which, by all appearances, is very effective. Lately, we have learnt from German sources that the English bombers drop, side by side with bombs, small newspapers which are so well folded that they are no larger than cigarettes... These newspapers from aeroplanes are astounding, abundant and manifold. They fall to earth in a steady flow and light small, secret and hidden fires in the hearts, which spread slowly as the miniature newspapers pass from hand to hand".⁹⁰ In Italy, however, which should surely have been a much more fertile field for political warfare, we were hampered by the contempt in which the Italians were held by our Commanders and Press and by the lack of policy on the general line to be taken on such things as the House of Savoy, anti-fascist prisoners of war, etc.⁹¹

Political warfare to the Balkans was extended to overt broadcasts in August 1941 with the object of uniting all the states against Germany and Italy and in so doing to lay the foundation of a closer co-operation between them after the war. Like most of our efforts in Eastern Europe, this proved unrealistic, but not entirely through the fault of P.W.E. who could not foresee the vacillations of the higher authorities in regard to foreign policy and military plans.⁹² There is little evidence of any results except from Yugoslavia early in 1942 when Radio Belgrade said: "London still does not leave us alone... Whilst all nations have turned away from London's criminal appeals, the Serbs in the woods are the only fools in Europe who still obey London."⁹³

Propaganda to the occupied countries in the west was of course far more effective than to Germany or her satellites, but there were handicaps, notably in dealing with the refugee governments. As leaflet raids were for a long time on a very small scale, media were mainly the B.B.C. and 'black' broadcasts which supplied most of the material for the various clandestine newspapers, themselves very important weapons. Though hampered to some extent by the lack of agents to organise monitoring and report the needs of the resistance movements, results were achieved, particularly in France after the volte-face of the Communists following Germany's invasion of Russia.⁹⁴

During this period, despite attempts by P.W.E., there was no contact whatsoever with the Russians,⁹⁵ but, although the U.S.A. was not then in the war, a branch of Col. Donovan's organisation O.S.S. was set up in London in the autumn of 1941 and proved a considerable help in the supply of intelligence. After Pearl Harbour O.S.S. took over the dissemination of all American news as the intermediary between the U.S. Armed Forces and the general public but our relations with them (as with all the then numerous American propaganda sections) were hindered by our misgivings as to their exact status. Their credentials often appeared vague and conflicting and in particular when dealing with Col. Donovan, then responsible only to the President, P.W.E., as responsible to the Foreign Office was in the awkward position of having an opposite number whose policy might well be repudiated by the State Department.⁹⁶ The need to get things straightened out was recognised as was the necessity of co-ordinating British and American

propaganda in accordance with Allied strategy and P.W.E. representatives were sent to Washington in March 1942 to examine the best ways of co-operation. As a result a P.W.E. Mission to the U.S.A. was set up in July 1942 with H.Q. in Washington, a Far Eastern Station in San Francisco and a European one in New York. S.O.E., hitherto responsible for our propaganda in the U.S.A., ceased to have any such charter, certain of its staff being transferred to P.W.E.⁹⁷ In the meantime, President Roosevelt, always more interested in political warfare than Mr. Churchill, had reorganised his propaganda set-up, transferring Col. Donovan's section, less his Foreign Information Service, to the U.S. C.O.S. and establishing a new Office of War Information which included the F.I.S. The P.W.E. mission therefore worked on its 'black' side with O.S.S., on its 'white' with O.W.I.⁹⁸

The P.W.E. arrangement in the U.S.A. brought to a head the already simmering P.W.E./S.O.E. battle on representation abroad from which P.W.E. eventually emerged victorious. By an agreement of 2nd September 1942 S.O.E. recognised P.W.E.'s right to establish independent missions abroad and provision was made for the closest co-operation between the two organisations in the M.E., West Africa and any other place to which it might later be agreed to apply the same principle.⁹⁹ Meanwhile Sir Walter Monckton had returned from the M.E., but under the new agreement it was not thought necessary to replace him.¹⁰⁰ Instead Mr. Paul Vellacott went out to Cairo early in October 1942 as head of the P.W.E. Mission and as sole British representative for political warfare policy and the collection of propaganda intelligence.¹⁰¹

VI. OPERATION 'TORCH' AND AFTER

By the time planning for 'TORCH' began, the comparative ineffectiveness of the blockade and subversion as offensive weapons had been recognised by the C.O.S. and the final execution of the operation owed surprisingly little either to these two or to bombing.¹⁰² This did not mean, however, that subversion, or particularly political (or as the Americans called it, psychological) warfare was altogether neglected. In August 1942 it was decided by both Allies to establish on General Eisenhower's staff a Political Section under a high-level British representative, in the person of Mr. W. H. B. Mack, to co-ordinate in accordance with military policy the various political and quasi-military organisations such as S.O.E., S.I.S., P.W.E., and their American equivalents.¹⁰³ Political warfare planning for 'TORCH' had in the meantime been started by P.W.E. who was instructed to collaborate with O.W.I., who had established a special European Division for the purpose, in a 'handmaid' capacity for what was a predominantly American operation. The beginning of this joint planning was inauspicious and almost chaotic with a threat of permanent dissonance largely due to the fact that both organisations were covering new ground.¹⁰⁴ P.W.E.'s 'handmaid' role meant in effect that, although able to exert some influence over U.S. policy, no joint planning for political contingencies ever took place, the British department mainly being limited to lending experience and resources. Thus P.W.E. was responsible for the printing of all proclamations, leaflets, handbooks for the troops, etc., but had little or no say in their contents and had considerable misgivings as to their quality.¹⁰⁵

By the 17th September, final plans for enemy and enemy-occupied countries, for unoccupied France and French North Africa were under preparation as were plans for dealing with the French Navy and Merchant Marine in the case of opposition. Propaganda in the Iberian Peninsular, Spanish Morocco and Tangier was the responsibility of the M.O.I. who, in accordance with the C.O.S. wish to keep the number of people in the know as low as possible, agreed to be brought into the picture only 30 days before the operation actually began.¹⁰⁶

By the end of October everything was as ready as could be. A propaganda team had gone to join the fighting forces, proclamations and leaflets had been printed, broadcasts arranged and the final version of the General Directive drawn up. The main points in the latter were:

- (a) the operation was to be presented as an American one with the full support and co-operation of the British Government, but with no reference to British forces until mention of them was made in official communiqués or by a special directive;
- (b) emphasis to be made that neither Ally had any territorial claims on North Africa and that our troops would leave as soon as their military tasks were performed;

(c) the purpose of the operation, which was not to be presented as a second front, was to frustrate the planned German invasion of French North Africa, the destruction of Rommel's forces being the first stage of our liberation of Europe for which the opening of the Mediterranean and the liquidation of the Middle East situation were essential preliminaries;

(d) in the event of a clash with the French fleet, the blame was to be laid on Hitler and Vichy France, (an inconceivable instruction had proper inter-Allied planning for all contingencies been carried out and one which of course added to our later difficulties with the Americans);

(e) every precaution was to be taken to damp down premature action in occupied countries who should not think it a signal for revolts, though the current line of indirect encouragement to undetectable sabotage would be continued and

(f) the idea that the operation might be a feint to cover an imminent landing on the Western seaboard should be fostered even at the risk of people in occupied countries, as well as the Germans, believing it.¹⁰⁷

A similar directive, suitably revised for the Far East, was also drawn up.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile the Political Section of General Eisenhower's staff ceased to exist. Instead political warfare was dealt with by the Civil Affairs Section as a Propaganda Sub-Section under O.W.I. direction with the assistance of P.W.E. Mr. Mack stayed on as 'British Civil Liaison Officer'.¹⁰⁹ Of the other last minute changes, the two most important were a compromise over not presenting the operation as a Second Front and the decision to use *Aspidistra*, a medium-wave transmitter of great power originally intended for broadcasts on the wavelengths of enemy or enemy-controlled transmitters. The former was brought about by President Roosevelt's wish to refer to 'TORCH' as a Second Front in his first statement and P.W.E. compromised by amending the general directive to the effect that "the operation should not be represented as a Second Front unless mentioned as such in official statements."¹¹⁰ The *Aspidistra* plan had been drawn up by an *ad hoc* Committee of P.W.E., the B.B.C., General Eisenhower's H.Q. and the Wireless Telegraphy Board, with the object of broadcasting the President's, the Prime Minister's and Eisenhower's messages and the first communiqué to the largest audience possible in North Africa and France and thereafter to announce subsequent policy to the same areas. On 2nd November the C.O.S. agreed that during the first 48 hours of 'TORCH' it was worth risking any interference that *Aspidistra* might cause to Service W/T sets or to navigating aircraft. Afterwards, it could be used for short periods unless the A.O. C.-in-C. Fighter Command wanted to suspend it for operational reasons.¹¹¹

The actual execution of the plans went well but not quite perfectly. The deception scheme in which P.W.E. had played its part had been a success in leading the Germans up and down the western seabords of Europe and Africa

and causing them to concentrate U-boats at Dakar, though it must be admitted that P.W.E.'s mission to West Africa in this connection did not get organised in time.¹¹² A very large number of leaflets, giving such things as President Roosevelt's and General Eisenhower's messages to the French people and to her forces in North Africa and the *Avis* issued in the name of the Governments of the U.S.A. and Great Britain, were dropped over France, all targets being well covered except Toulon which was of first importance as the base of the French Fleet. The total dropped throughout the 4 days the raids lasted was over 22 million out of a possible total of 25 million provided by P.W.E. Much smaller quantities were dropped over North Africa where the total was no more than nearly 2 million by the R.A.F. and Fleet Air Arm, though the Americans are believed to have dropped another 2 million which were at their disposal in Gibraltar.¹¹³ Broadcasts on the whole went well after some initial tardiness on the part of the Americans and confusion caused by their changes in the order of the official announcements, but the day following the Operation was made difficult by trouble with General Giraud whose broadcast eventually had to be made by an impersonator.¹¹⁴ *Aspidistra* proved more useful overtly as an addition to the B.B.C. European Service than secretly when its effect was doubtful.¹¹⁵ Taken on the whole, however, the higher authorities seem to have thought the political warfare aspect of 'TORCH' to have been a success and P.W.E. received tributes from the Foreign Secretary, at the Prime Minister's request, and from General Bedell-Smith.¹¹⁶ P.W.E.'s own opinion was that it was successful locally but that, through 'TORCH', political warfare in Europe had received a setback.¹¹⁷

What does not seem to have been very effective was the part political warfare agents played in the actual landings. No arrangements had been made to contact the French, the leader of one Political Warfare Unit by mere chance volunteering to the O.C. of the 6th Commando with whom he was travelling the suggestion that this should be done as soon as possible. After they had landed, a French Colonel came to see the 6th Commando, again by chance, and gave news of the countermanding by the local French C.O.S. of orders not to resist. When the Americans attacked, a member of the unit claims to have helped reduce resistance by shouting through a megaphone and to have smoothed matters down as a negotiation after the cease-fire. Elsewhere on the front little seems to have been done except for more shouting through megaphones. A few days later the United States Colonel Hazeltine arrived to take control of political warfare, our representatives working under him still in their 'Handmaid' capacity.¹¹⁸

Immediately after the Operation inter-Allied differences over Admiral Darlan made things very difficult. P.W.E. feared that the American policy of ramming the Admiral down French throats might well result in an accentuation of the already existing social divisions in the resistance movements with a strengthening of the Communist factions in them,¹¹⁹ but in fact it did more for General de Gaulle (to whom in theory the Americans were opposed) than any rabid propaganda on his behalf. The more the opposition of the State Department grew, the more did the de Gaullist movement in North Africa gain

power.¹²⁰ This did not, however, prevent the Americans, after de Gaulle had accused them of making use of traitors, telling P.W.E. that the General had no following in North Africa, that Marshal Petain was the God of French officers and that Admiral Darlan had to be used.¹²¹ Nevertheless we did not identify ourselves with this policy so could profit from United States mistakes with the result that our prestige began to rise. O.W.I., too, were more in sympathy with us than the State Department over this and felt the need for a joint policy.¹²² The outcome was that North Africa became an Allied, and not exclusively American, propaganda base, P.W.E. and M.O.I. co-operating on equal terms with O.W.I. and part of O.S.S. in a newly formed Psychological Warfare Branch.¹²³ Relations with the Americans, however, even after Darlan's assassination remained delicate as they were inclined to think we were jealous of their success in obtaining French co-operation and, for our part, we had very low opinion of the abilities of Colonel Hazeltine. In the end matters were improved early in 1943 when Mr. Robert Sherwood, head of the Psychological Warfare Department of O.W.I. visited North Africa. He had seen the successful fruits of P.W.E./O.W.I. collaboration in New York and had recognised the importance of joint action everywhere. Accordingly he planned a reorganisation of P.W.B. to ensure greater O.W.I. authority and agreed that front-line propaganda should be under British control thus eliminating Colonel Hazeltine from this aspect at any rate. Things were further improved by the fact that the Germans had made so much use of the obvious Anglo/United States divergence of policy, that both Allies were forced to counter by each stressing the achievements of the other.¹²⁴

Meanwhile fighting was going on in Tunisia. In P.W.E.'s opinion if preparations had been made on a sufficient scale and if political warfare had not been relegated to a subsidiary role Tunis would have fallen shortly after Algiers. As it was the campaign offered a field for political warfare which was never exploited, only one piece of uncoordinated front-line propaganda in fact being carried out and this on the initiative of a British Intelligence Officer by arrangement with 'I' Branch at 1st Army H.Q. As he had no directive, he settled his own policy, composed and had printed his own leaflets and provided his own intelligence largely through the interrogation of P.O.W.'s. He found dissemination of leaflets by air unsatisfactory, due to the likelihood of their scattering a long way from targets, but patrols and individual line-crossers were better though results were difficult to assess. By far his best method, however, was leaflet bombs (even though the shells themselves were imperfect) because they could be put down accurately on an actual enemy position. The immediate results of his endeavours were that after dropping 10,000 leaflets on an Austrian regiment, 7 deserters crossed the lines in 5 days. By the end of April 1943, 85% of the enemy P.O.W.'s had read our leaflets and 15% carried copies. In spite of this, the officer's ideas in general met with active opposition in P.W.E., propaganda methods remained unchanged and the leaflet bomb undeveloped.¹²⁵

With Operation 'TORCH' successfully over, the C.O.S. at the end of December 1942 discussed and approved a new overall strategic plan in which methods to

bring about an Italian collapse included political warfare on lines already approved by the War Cabinet. These, briefly, were to make no appeals or promises, merely warning Italy of what was in store and laying the blame on Mussolini and the Fascist Government. Further the internal and international dissension's in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary were to be exploited by P.W.E. with the aim of removing their national forces from the Russian Front and occupied territories, and political warfare against Germany was to be intensified. There was no mention of Japan.¹²⁶

At the Casablanca Conference on 14th January 1943, decisions were taken which had serious repercussions on political warfare. The policy of unconditional surrender then decided upon ruled out once and for all the use of any 'hope' clause in our propaganda to the Axis and nullified any benefits that may have accrued from the Atlantic Charter. Further, the de Gaulle/Giraud *démarche* was so lukewarm as to make propaganda to France difficult.¹²⁷ In the light of this, P.W.E. drew up a paper entitled *Military Tasks for P.W.E. in 1943* which, with a few amendments, was approved by the Foreign Secretary and the Chiefs of Staff. In its final form the document envisaged our strategic aims as:

- (a) intensified pressure in the Mediterranean on the southern flank of the Axis thus diverting German pressure from the Eastern Front,
- (b) the creation of such a situation that Turkey would be enlisted as an active ally,
- (c) a bomber offensive against Germany,
- (d) the assembly of an assault force as a preparation for invasion, and
- (e) in the general offensive against Germany, to keep U-boats as a first charge.

P.W.E. was to assist this strategy:

- (a) by trying to make it impossible for Italy to continue the war, by exploiting operations to be taken against her, by aggravating her internal disruption, fostering distrust between her and Germany and by waging a war of nerves in the Mediterranean generally,
- (b) by demoralising and pinning down German forces in North West Europe by a similar war of nerves, threats of invasion, etc.,
- (c) by sustaining morale in occupied countries,
- (d) by lowering morale in Germany, trying to separate the German people from their leaders and generally weakening the German war machine by intensive political warfare against every section of its war effort and among foreign workers,

(e) by continuing the campaign in the Balkans aimed at the removal of forces from Russia and

(f) by a special campaign against Germany's transport and oil by encouraging sabotage and interference.¹²⁸

P.W.E. was also increasing the range of its 'black' broadcasts, particularly in the Balkans. In Yugoslavia Slovenian broadcasts began as an addition to the already existing services to Croatia. Propaganda aimed at demoralising Italian troops was spread by Slovenians taking their cue from this new 'black' station. An operational success may have resulted from this when the Italians withdrew from their line regiments 20,000 Slovenes and instead diverted them to labour battalions: propaganda with this in view had been put out by our 'black' station.¹²⁹ Czech 'black' broadcasts were resumed to stimulate passive resistance and industrial sabotage by indirect means and on 2nd November 1942 a Polish station was set up for the first time with the main object of servicing the underground movement.¹³⁰ Early in 1943 a new venture, originally conceived by Sefton Delmer in 1941, was put into execution. This was a 'grey' broadcasting station, *Atlantik* which was at first used on behalf of the Admiralty to undermine the morale and subvert the discipline of U-boat crews. The Admiralty supplied the material, both true and deliberately misleading, which enabled P.W.E. to expand the station into a full-scale programme of news and entertainment ostensibly operating from Germany. The Air Ministry soon followed suit and eventually the aim of the station was extended to include subversion of discipline in all German forces by creating alarm about conditions in Germany, undermining faith in their leaders, etc. *Atlantik* achieved and kept a large audience greatly exceeding that of the B.B.C. German Service and some indication of its success may be the repeated denials the German authorities had to give of news it transmitted.¹³¹

Soon after 'TORCH', P.W.E. raised the question of the continued use of *Aspidistra* for offensive radio work such as broadcasts of counterfeit German news bulletins, but this was turned down by the Foreign Secretary in view of possible German retaliation. Instead the transmitter was used to augment the B.B.C. European Service where it proved very valuable.¹³²

In general our broadcast propaganda at this stage of the war seems to have been fairly effective. In the House of Commons on 8th April, 1943, the M.O.I. gave evidence that news put out by the B.B.C. was known to Western Europe, excluding Germany, in 3 hours. In Germany itself no big news put out by the B.B.C. and subsequently suppressed by Dr. Goebbels, failed to get round within a week. In Italy, the M.O.I. claimed, audiences were larger and the effects remarkable, and in the occupied countries at least 500 secret newspapers were supplied with material by special transmitters designed to penetrate jamming. One of a great many tributes from occupied countries came from the French Socialist Deputé, Andre Philippe, who said: "If we have resistance in France, it

is because of the B.B.C. Its influence has been tremendous, possibly one of the greatest influences in French history.”¹³³

VII. THE INVASIONS OF SICILY AND ITALY

As part of his preparations for the invasion of Sicily (Operation 'HUSKY'), General Eisenhower, early in March 1943, asked for a directive on political warfare for both before and after the assault.¹³⁴ The Foreign Secretary and Mr. Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, had already been in correspondence over this and had drawn up a formula which the Prime Minister agreed should be the basis of Mr. Eden's talks on this subject during his forthcoming visit to Washington.¹³⁵ Although matters were therefore only at a preliminary stage, the Chiefs of Staff replied to General Eisenhower that he should follow the lines of the agreed Anglo-United States Government policy as a preliminary to 'HUSKY' and that he would be informed of our post-operational policy as soon as it had been settled.¹³⁶ To this the Joint Staff Mission in Washington not unnaturally answered that neither they nor the United States Chiefs of Staff knew of any such policy and asked that the question be settled with the State Department.¹³⁷ By 16th April this had been done, everyone involved had agreed and the necessary instructions to General Eisenhower, P.W.E. and O.W.I. were issued.¹³⁸ The policy thus laid down was divided into two parts. The first stage, until just before the assault, was to take a hard line with Italy, giving no promises, emphasising the hopelessness of her position and the strength our attack would have, and encouraging passive resistance to and sabotage of her war effort, though incitement to premature revolt should be avoided: the second phase, timed for just before and immediately after the assault, should take a softer line, holding out hope for Italy's future after the defeat of her Fascist Government and presenting the Allies as liberators not conquerors.¹³⁹

The following month General Eisenhower expressed his disapproval of this timing and urged that, in order to get the fullest effect, the change from hard to a soft line should be made at once so as to give sufficient time to sink into the heads of the Italians.¹⁴⁰ A difference of opinion arose on this in London, the Foreign Secretary holding strongly to our original timing on the grounds that if we changed now the effects would wear off in the interim before the operation and there were no further promises we could give to ginger things up again. On the other hand, the V/Chiefs of Staff (in the absence of the Chiefs of Staff at the Trident Conference in Washington) looked upon it entirely from the short-term effect it would have on 'HUSKY' as opposed to the Foreign Office's longer-term view of the defeat of Italy as a whole and agreed with General Eisenhower.¹⁴¹ The War Cabinet decided to back the Foreign Secretary and informed Mr. Churchill in Washington accordingly. The matter ended with President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister instructing General Eisenhower to adhere to the original policy.¹⁴² In point of fact, no sudden switch ever took place, alteration in tone being so gradual as to be almost imperceptible and overwhelmed in the ever-increasing war of nerves in which all strategic speculation was banned.¹⁴³ If it can be said to have had a beginning, it was in the press statements of the President and Prime Minister, the former's made only a few days after the decision to abide by our original policy, both of which

emphasised the place of Italy in a future Europe, her freedom in certain circumstances to choose her own Government, etc.¹⁴⁴

At the end of June 1943 General Alexander suggested, and General Eisenhower agreed, that 'black' radio should be used just before D-day to spread false rumours that Italy had asked for and been granted an Armistice. The British and United States Chiefs of Staff were in favour of the plan, as was P.W.E., but the Foreign Office was inclined to doubt its value. It was therefore submitted to the Prime Minister who at first concurred but on second thoughts decided against it as making no contribution to the outcome but robbing victory of its fame. President Roosevelt agreed with him and the project was dropped.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile the Foreign Secretary had learned by chance of the President's intention to broadcast to the Italian people at the opening of 'HUSKY'. Both Mr. Eden and the M.O.I. agreed that a joint statement with the Prime Minister would be much more desirable and they upheld P.W.E.'s view that a much more effective time would be when the success of the operation was assured. The President agreed and a suitable text was prepared.¹⁴⁶ The Americans also agreed, at the request of the Foreign Office and the British Chiefs of Staff, to cancel a proclamation to the Italian people by General Eisenhower at the outset of the attack as cutting across that of the President and Prime Minister. The General's proposal for a proclamation to the French explaining 'HUSKY' was allowed to stand.¹⁴⁷

The war of nerves was continuing at full blast throughout these months of preparations though its effect on softening Italian morale was not thought to be great. There was, however, every reason to believe that, with the Allied raids on Crete early in July, political warfare did blind the enemy to our intention of attacking Sicily, thus helping the operation along even if not in the sphere in which its help had primarily been required.¹⁴⁸ The actual landings, however, showed that its effect on morale was much greater than had been expected and P.W.E. claim that the state of mind of the troops, particularly the Sicilians, must largely be attributed to our propaganda of the last three years. Further the pre-'HUSKY' operations against Pantellaria were, or so P.W.E. alleges, considerably helped by our leaflet raids calling on the population to surrender.¹⁴⁹

Immediately after Operation 'HUSKY' began on the night of 9th/10th July 1943, our political warfare arrangements were put in train. P.W.B. teams were landed with each Army and started their distribution of pamphlets, publication of newspapers, etc. in accordance with Army plans, the necessary orders being issued through Staff channels. Statistics showed that 50% of the civilian population read our leaflets but front-line propaganda was made difficult by the rapid retreat of the enemy forces.¹⁵⁰ By 16th July it had been decided that the time was ripe for the issue of the Roosevelt/Churchill statement and this, including as it did an indictment of Signor Mussolini, and supplemented by similar propaganda, undoubtedly helped to secure the vote against him in the Fascist Grand Council before his arrest on 25th July and his succession by Marshal Badoglio.¹⁵¹

There then began one of the worst periods of the war as far as political warfare was concerned because of the difficulty of co-ordinating a policy between London, Washington and A.F.H.Q. The latter looked upon propaganda purely as an adjunct to military operations, was prepared to accept Badoglio or anyone else who would give military support and was inclined to resent criticism from London and Washington who of course had to look at events from a wider point of view. The consequent fluctuations of policy were very complicated and the situation became much like the post 'TORCH' phase all over again. Mr. Churchill and the President backed the House of Savoy and Marshall Badoglio in spite of much criticism both at home and in Italy where the partisans would not look at the King or the Marshal.¹⁵² Nor were our political warfare tasks made easier by the still existing policy of unconditional surrender (to which General Eisenhower and his Staff paid little attention, making promises far beyond any official policy) and by such incidents as the failure of A.M.G.O.T. in Sicily to purge Fascists from administrative posts, the police force, etc. Moreover the always simmering State Department and O.S.S. feeling against O.W.I. had flared up following the line taken by O.W.I. in the field, in the absence of any official instructions, that in establishing the Badoglio Government the Italians were merely putting a new face on Fascism. All this contributed to an American proposal, to which we were of course rigidly opposed, to make Washington the seat of political warfare co-ordination.¹⁵³ In an effort to avoid this and to straighten things out generally, British suggestions for a re-organisation were taken to the Quebec Conference in August, but it was not until some weeks later that anything was settled.¹⁵⁴ (See Chapter VIII)

Meanwhile Badoglio had tentatively started peace negotiations. The President and the Prime Minister remained faithful to unconditional surrender but General Eisenhower was more than ever anxious to give hope to the Italians.¹⁵⁵ In an effort to meet the needs of the situation, a propaganda directive was drawn up by A.F.H.Q. with the main object of fomenting popular impatience so as to prevent a lull and cut short Marshal Badoglio's temporising policy: this was to be followed after a few days by turning on the heat in words and deeds as, for instance, in trying to pin the blame for our continued strategic bombing of Italy on the King and the Marshal, and so bring pressure on the Government to make up its mind. P.W.B. also drew up plan 'CYCLONE', arranging the political warfare tasks to authenticate and exploit the news of the Armistice, when it was made, by such methods as broadcasts by Marshal Badoglio, special leaflets to the German troops, etc. After protracted negotiations agreement was reached on 3rd September, the day Operation 'BAYTOWN' on the toe of Italy started, but, as it was decided not to announce this until just before the Salerno landings, plan 'CYCLONE' was not at once put into operation.¹⁵⁶

The Armistice was duly announced, according to plan, on 8th September, 1943 the day Operation 'AVALANCHE' began at Salerno. As an experiment for the future in view of the still unsettled question of amplified political warfare administration, we had agreed to General Eisenhower's suggestion that responsibility for the co-ordination and dissemination of propaganda during 'AVALANCHE' was to be in the hands of the C.O.S.¹⁵⁷ The latter issued a

directive to drop all mention of the surrender and the armistice terms, to avoid discussion of the character and motives of the King and the Government and to concentrate on military operations and on encouraging the Italians to resist the Germans.¹⁵⁸ These principles, though suitably modified from time to time as the situation deserved, formed the basis of our political warfare to Italy and the Dodecanese throughout this phase of the war.¹⁵⁹

In carrying out this policy, General Eisenhower aimed at creating the impression on the Germans that there would be further landings and at obtaining the maximum possible Italian help in particular in paralysing road and rail communications.¹⁶⁰ Immediately after the Armistice a pre-conceived plan to broadcast to the Italian Navy and Merchant Fleet with the aim of avoiding sabotage or its surrender to the Germans was carried out by the already existing 'black' radio station to Italy which had previously put out propaganda to build up the solidarity of the Italian Navy. P.W.E. have evidence that this station was believed in by Italian Naval Officers and that it played a considerable part in their surrender.¹⁶¹ P.W.B. plans for front-line propaganda were at first hampered by their rather cool reception by the military authorities, but as the campaign progressed they got under way and something was achieved both in Italy and in the current Dodecanese campaign by broadcasts, newspapers, leaflets, etc.¹⁶² After the fall of Naples, in paying tribute to the work of those responsible for political warfare, General Eisenhower praised both the P.W.B. teams as integral parts of the fighting forces and P.W.B. itself for its contribution to the friendly and co-operative attitude of the civilian population.¹⁶³

In the meantime an Allied mission had been established with the Badoglio Government, though the situation was anything but promising owing to the Government's general lack of enthusiasm and the inclusion in it of war criminals. Furthermore, Italy's future role and that of her King, to whom most of the nation was opposed, still presented a difficult political problem to the Allies. The military authorities on the spot were anxious to make the best of the Government, to accept Italy as a co-belligerent and to go easy on the Armistice terms. President Roosevelt, with one eye on his Italo/American voters was prepared to go even further, but the Foreign Office was afraid of the effect Italy's co-belligerency would have on the French, Greeks and Yugoslavs, not to mention the suspicion it would arouse among the Russians. This was taken up with Moscow, in due course her agreement was obtained, and the British Government decided to support Marshal Badoglio if his government were enlarged to include representatives of Italy's 6 democratic parties, the Communists among them, and if the Allies adhered to the full terms of the Armistice only relaxing these as, and when Marshal Badoglio proved his willingness to co-operate. On 12th October a proclamation on Italy's co-belligerency was issued, but the broadening of the Badoglio Government proved no easy matter, some of those who were approached to join making the King's abdication an essential pre-requisite. The War Cabinet, however, decided that the problem was purely an Italian one and future O.W.I./P.W.E. policy took the line that the existing Government was only temporary.¹⁶⁴

VIII. GENERAL POLITICAL WARFARE BETWEEN 'HUSKY' AND 'OVERLORD'

As mentioned above, the question of Anglo/U.S. co-ordination of political warfare, made acute by the difficulties encountered after 'HUSKY', was discussed at the Quadrant Conference at Quebec in August, 1943. The outcome was a decision to adopt P.W.E.'s idea for three Committees of equal membership in London, Washington and New Delhi to make emergency rulings on propaganda for the European, Pacific and S.E. Asia theatres respectively. Political warfare preparations in any area, as an integral part of military operations and in conformity with the Allied basic propaganda policy, were to be submitted by the Commanders concerned to the C.C.S. for approval: the new Committees would only deal with emergency decisions that might arise from the execution of these plans.¹⁶⁵ The London Committee, whose membership included representatives of the F.O., P.W.E., M.O.I., and the C.O.S. on the British side and of the State Department O.W.I. and the U.S. C.O.S. on the American, had its first meeting on 13th October, 1943 and thereafter met fairly regularly for the rest of the year.¹⁶⁶ By then, however, it had become evident that the new organisation was not a great success. The Washington Committee had only met once when it decided nothing, the New Delhi Committee had not even done that and the London Committee had stepped right out of its intended scope and was issuing directives as though authorised to run European propaganda.¹⁶⁷ Attempts to clear things up resulted in agreement with an American suggestion to wind up the New Delhi Committee and in February, 1944 therefore S.E.A.C. interests were taken over by the London Committee, those of China and Indo-China by Washington. These two continued somewhat ineffectively in existence till the end of the war, the London Committee at any rate only meeting very spasmodically: Bruce Lockhart comments that the arrangement justified itself mainly by scotching the original U.S. proposal for Washington control of political warfare.¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile political warfare direction in the Middle East was again in difficulties and Anglo/U.S. relations had deteriorated with General Eisenhower's departure for Western Europe. Attempts to co-ordinate the various agencies at A.F.H.Q. (first at Algiers, later at Caserta), Cairo and Bari came to nothing although through the tact of the Senior O.W.I. official in Algiers, P.W.B. was able to operate harmoniously once more, this time until the end of the war.¹⁶⁹

At this stage our guiding principles for political warfare were:

- (a) The certainty of Allied victory,
- (b) Allied agreement on the strategy to defeat Germany at the earliest possible moment, and
- (c) Avoidance of mention of any specified date for victory, though now on the last lap.¹⁷⁰

P.W.E.'s new problems, apart from preparing for 'OVERLORD' which is dealt with separately in Chapter IX was propaganda to the Balkans within the framework of these principles and co-operation with Russia. In dealing with the former P.W.E. was up against not only the conflicting policies, or more accurately series of improvisations, by the Prime Minister and the C.O.S. who were inclined to support and arm any group or groups prepared to fight with us, but also the ever-present 'unconditional surrender' rule. Early in 1944, however, the Allies, including Russia, agreed that rigid application of this rule would hinder rather than help in dealing with Germany's satellites and that no more mention of it should be made.¹⁷¹ This decision helped, though in individual countries our vacillating policy of support continued: in Greece we were still backing E.L.A.S. and E.L.I.N. and in Yugoslavia both Mikailovic and Tito. It was not until the spring of 1944, however, that the Prime Minister finally decided to support Marshal Tito and started trying to create Yugoslav unity by promising to recognise his Government if it accepted King Peter: in Greece the situation was not so far advanced, but we were already curtailing help to E.L.A.S. and attempting to create a democratic central government midway between Right and Left. This gave P.W.E. at least some lines to go on, but for the most part our arrangements for the Balkans seem to have been particularly poor. Tito's personal A.D.C., on a visit to London in May 1944, complained of the meagreness of our propaganda and there is evidence of fantastically unrealistic plans for Romania and Bulgaria which left out of account any possible Russian influence even when it had become obvious that these two countries would be in the Russian zone of occupation.¹⁷²

Nor were we very much more successful in establishing liaison with the Russians. Overtures were made at the end of 1943 but it was not until June 1944 that Russia sent a delegation to the London Committee, which had been reorganised in anticipation of the Russian agreement and as a result of taking over the duties of the New Delhi Committee, and which now consisted of a European Committee on which Russia was represented and an Asiatic, on which, not being at war with Japan, she was not. The liaison was, however, short-lived. The Russians walked out only 3 months later.¹⁷³

P.W.E.'s general activities at this pre-'OVERLORD' stage were energetic and in some instances successful. The results of the special campaign against transport in Western Europe, initiated at the end of 1942, had achieved during September and October 1943, as many as 1,400 incidents on railways and, over a longer period, 40 major incidents on waterways causing serious interruption to traffic.¹⁷⁴ R.A.F. dissemination of leaflets to Germany had risen from 47 million in 1940 to 253 million in 1943, though after this it tailed off owing to the increasing part played by the U.S. Air Force;¹⁷⁵ similar raids on the Balkans and mid-European countries started from Bari after its capture and, though hampered by lack of aircraft, 982 million leaflets were disseminated during the 9 months of the operation.¹⁷⁶ Evidence of the effect of all these leaflets was sadly lacking, particularly in Bari. On the authorisation of the Prime Minister in August 1943, P.W.E. continued its campaign against the morale of U-boat

crews, though hampered by the need to conform to the recently inaugurated monthly statements on U-boat warfare within which framework comment had to be confined.¹⁷⁷ They should have had more scope, however, in the execution of plan 'COCKADE' drawn up by P.W.E. and S.O.E. on instructions from the C.O.S. to counter not only the disappointment the feint invasion operation 'STARKEY' would have on patriot armies but also enemy propaganda which would presumably present it as a failure to invade. The C.O.S. approved this on 22nd July 1943 asking P.W.E. and S.O.E. in their implementation to guard against the danger of premature action by resistance groups and of precipitating German action against them. French reactions were, however, very bad and when the time came to carry out the operation in September 1943 it was decided to suppress the issue of any warnings: so in fact P.W.E. played no part in offsetting the effects of the operation which in any case was a failure.¹⁷⁸

IX. OPERATION 'OVERLORD'

Political warfare planning for the invasion of Western Europe was at first based on the belief that the liberation of North West France, Belgium and Holland would be a British affair, that of South and East France an American. It was not until late August or early September 1943 that P.W.E. was told the outline of operation 'OVERLORD' but the plan already made needed only slight alteration and it ultimately formed the basis of the joint P.W.E./O.W.I. plan asked for by C.O.S.S.A.C.¹⁷⁹ Drawn up in conjunction with S.O.E., this first P.W.E. plan was based on getting as much active co-operation as possible from the French population and committed S.H.A.E.F. to working with the Resistance Movements as partners in the work of liberation, this last representing a triumph for P.W.E. and S.O.E. who, in the teeth of opposition from D.C.C.A.O., firmly held that this was the only way to prevent appalling difficulties when dealing with the various countries after the war.¹⁸⁰ As preparations progressed the need for integration with O.W.I. became imperative if only because they alone would supply the men and machinery for leaflet raids, but was hindered by the attitude of the Minister of Information who, in the absence through illness of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, had been brought into day-to-day planning more than was strictly necessary and who so failed to understand the importance of O.W.I. to P.W.E.'s schemes that he irretrievably damaged the Department's position with the Americans.¹⁸¹ Further complications arose when General Eisenhower took up his appointment as Supreme Allied Commander, bringing with him from A.F.H.Q. most of P.W.B. whose name was now changed to Psychological Warfare Division. When in Algiers P.W.D. had worked fairly successfully with O.W.I. and P.W.E. but it was obvious that in 'OVERLORD', these last two would play a much larger part than they had in 'TORCH' or 'HUSKY' as they had control of the two radio organisations (the B.B.C. and A.B.S.I.E.) which would inevitably dominate all radio output to Western Europe. When Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart returned from leave he obtained permission to discuss the question with the Americans and at a meeting with General Bedell-Smith, General Eisenhower's C.O.S. and Mr. Sherwood, of O.W.I., arranged full co-operation in planning between all three with P.W.E. and O.W.I. responsible for policy direction when the time came for P.W.D. to move to the Continent. This co-ordination was achieved by regular Tripartite meetings under Sir Robert which, although never entirely repairing the damage done by the M.O.I., worked reasonably well, largely owing to the tact of General McClure who, after a lot of discussion, was appointed military head of P.W.D. with 4 civilian deputies drawn from the M.O.I., O.W.I., O.S.S., and P.W.E.¹⁸²

It was not until 11th April 1944 that the final Allied plan, geared to fit in with our deception policy was approved by the numerous people concerned and ready for implementation. This does not mean that nothing had been done pending final approval. P.W.E., though hampered by lack of agents particularly in France, had in fact taken considerable steps not only to warn the French of our increasing air raids on coastal areas and to explain the necessity for them but also to prepare and mobilise the populations of occupied territories either

for operation 'OVERLORD' or for operation 'RANKIN', a contingency plan in three parts:

- (a) In case Germany weakened so much that we would attack before 'OVERLORD',
- (b) In case she withdrew to a shorter line and
- (c) In case she surrendered unconditionally.

To meet either plan, P.W.E. had sent to Western Europe a steady supply of material to undermine the morale of German troops and educate the civilian population: incitement to guerrilla activities had been a major theme on 'black' broadcasts; a radio and newspaper campaign for strikes had been carried out; and in France, in collaboration with the Conseil de la Resistance, progress had been made in arrangements for the destruction of records useful to the enemy and a directive issued on the treatment of collaborators.¹⁸³ Furthermore, propaganda to Germany had more and more stressed the certainty of her defeat, the strength of the Allies, etc. and, in November 1943 Sefton Delmer had secured the use of *Aspidistra* for his 'grey' station, *Atlantik*, which for 'OVERLORD' was extended with success to a special programme to the Germany army in the West known as *Soldatensender Calais*.¹⁸⁴ Only in the sphere of leaflet raids had things been difficult because, apart from paper shortages, of P.W.E.'s desire to make the best of both worlds by using U.S. Air Force facilities as well as those of the R.A.F.; eventually Bruce Lockhart succeeded in obtaining a joint leaflet policy whereby P.W.E. and O.W.I. were responsible for long-term and P.W.D. for tactical leaflets, the U.S. Air Force handling raids for O.W.I. and the R.A.F. for P.W.E.¹⁸⁵ For the first time in the war P.W.E. now came under close scrutiny of the Prime Minister who was profoundly interested in the problem of French reactions to our bombing, at first being by no means satisfied with the reports on this subject that he received daily from P.W.E.; in the end, largely due to good news from France given by Mr. Louis Marin a former French Minister newly arrived in London, both he and the Foreign Secretary relaxed.¹⁸⁶

On the 11th April, 1944, S.H.A.E.F. issued its directive implementing the joint Anglo-U.S. plan for political warfare in connection with Operation 'OVERLORD'.¹⁸⁷ The basis of this plan¹⁸⁸ was of course "so to affect the will of the German people and of the German Armed Forces as to make them refuse to continue the war." To achieve this our targets were:-

- (a) the people and armed forces of Germany, to make them realise the certainty of their defeat which would be worse the longer it was put off, thus trying to produce pressure for ending the war by rousing mass resentment of their military and political leaders,

(b) Germany's satellites, to make them too realise the certainty of defeat and the advisability of prompt surrender before they were turned into a battleground,

(c) the populations of occupied countries in Western Europe, to further the still incomplete plans for resistance and check premature outbreaks so as to be ready to precipitate a crisis when requested to do so by the military authorities and

(d) neutrals, to develop and maintain goodwill towards the Allied cause. (This last, as far as we were concerned, was an M.O.I. function).

The success of this plan would of course depend very much on the degree of political and military success we obtained before D-day, but much could be done at once in the occupied countries by continuing P.W.E.'s methods of educating the population to hinder the enemy by strikes and so on, while in Germany herself at this stage, propaganda could profitably be directed at foreign workers and the *Todt Organisation*. After D-day distinctions were to be drawn between:

- (a) the liberated zones,
- (b) combat zones,
- (c) unliberated zones, and
- (d) Germany and satellites.

In the first the chief aim was obviously to consolidate the goodwill of the population and to enlist its active support: in the second and third zones instructions would be given for organised mass action, not disorder, though these would have to be graded according to the proximity to the actual fighting: and in the fourth zone, after the impact of 'OVERLORD' on the German home front had been assessed, a general war of nerves would be started and some form of agitation suggested to the *Todt Organisation* and foreign workers. In all four zones, any later plans would necessarily be dependent on events.

At the same time a contingency plan for operation 'RANKIN 'C'' was approved.¹⁸⁹ This proceeded from the 'OVERLORD' plan being mainly a particularisation of some of its aspects, with the emphasis on bringing about the surrender and subsequent reconstruction of Germany and Europe at a minimum expenditure of Allied forces. In its implementation great care would have to be taken to avoid premature action that might lead to civil war or reprisals.

A few days before D-day, all loose ends had been cleared up. A directive to the Press had been issued urging correct and sober presentation of events as they occurred with no speculation as to the future, with the aim of keeping the

enemy guessing whether the landings were the real thing or only a foretaste of the future¹⁹⁰ President Roosevelt had agreed, on the advice of the War Cabinet which had the backing of General Smuts and Mr. Curtin, not to go ahead with his plan to broadcast to the German people after D-day as the moment was inopportune.¹⁹¹ The only heads of states to do so would be those of occupied countries to warn against premature rising and these governments would also issue statements promising good treatment to their nationals serving under compulsion in the German forces if they surrendered at the first opportunity.¹⁹²

The pre-D-day part of the Allied plan for political warfare was by now in full swing. *Soldatensender Calais* was building up a large audience and an airborne newspaper *Nachrichten für die Truppe* had been dropped nightly by the U.S. Air Force to the German forces in Northern France since 25th April. This newspaper, which marked the culmination of one of P.W.E.'s most ambitious projects, worked on the same principle and with much the same material as *Soldatensender Calais*, thus providing a news service of harmless items mixed with those with a subversive twist: there was no propaganda by direct appeal either in the newspaper or from the radio station.¹⁹³ Leaflet raids were on a vast scale of which the most remarkable occurred two days before D-day when Divisional Commanders asked P.W.E. for leaflets inducing the German forces to surrender: as this had been anticipated by P.W.E., the Tactical Air Force was supplied at once and apparently to good effect.¹⁹⁴

On D-day itself the second stage of the Allied plan began. Two special programmes were broadcast, one for Europe and one for the U.S.A. and Great Britain, announcing the start of 'OVERLORD' and giving General Eisenhower's proclamation, the special messages from Allied Ministers, etc. a new series of broadcasts, *The Voice of S.H.A.E.F.*, was introduced to provide the S.A.C. with a channel for direct instructions to the civilian population on the Western seaboard: the 'grey' stations, *Atlantik* and *Calais*, redoubled their efforts.¹⁹⁵ Leaflets to the tune of about 34 million were dropped during the immediate invasion period: issues of *Nachrichten für die Truppe* varied from 250,000 to 750,000 a night. In addition forged documents and subversive pamphlets were distributed by agents and balloons.¹⁹⁶ A special transport campaign was launched by radio and leaflet calling upon French and Belgian railway workers to dislocate and paralyse enemy lines of communication in the area feeding the Atlantic wall between Antwerp and Nantes.¹⁹⁷ As the invasion progressed, these various media were extended through the fighting zones of France into the Low Countries and Germany, issues of *Nachrichten* reaching a monthly total of 6 ½ million and leaflets in the first 6 weeks of the invasion, totalling 227 million.¹⁹⁸

On the whole the results of all this seem to have been fairly satisfactory though as ever the available evidence seems more concerned with the numbers of recipients of our propaganda than with the effects it produced. In Parliament tributes were paid to the extraordinary transformation of the M.O.I. and P.W.E. even though their task was much easier now we were winning.¹⁹⁹ This praise may have been too high in the heat of the moment but there is evidence from a captured document that some months before D-day the German authorities

were apprehensive. This document, dated 4th February 1944,²⁰⁰ is a directive issued by the G.O.C., of an Infantry Division on the Western Front on measures to deal with British propaganda. "The enemy is trying, with unheard of hatred, with ever-changing tricks and ruses, with lies and falsehoods and with everything however mean, to undermine the morale of the German people and to force a decision on the 'battlefield of the War of Nerves', just as he did in the first world war. In the West, the effect of the enemy agitation have been intensified from month to month. I need only mention the increasing number of seditious leaflets in German and the dangerous propaganda broadcast by the provocative enemy station *Soldatensender Calais*. It has become decisive for the outcome of the war that we provide officers, non-commissioned officers and men with convincing counter-arguments well ahead of time and that we promptly parry any propaganda attack by the enemy. There are still occasional cases where unit commanders have not yet been convinced of the importance of this task. We must bear in mind that during the first world war enemy propaganda succeeded in wearing down the morale and fighting spirit of the German people to such an extent as to contribute materially to the economic and military breakdown. We must always be aware of this precedent as a warning example. Political instruction cannot and must not be neglected any more than the cleaning of a rifle or gun. The Führer demands that all commanders down to Company C.O.'s, etc. will do their utmost to utilise fully every opportunity to maintain also the fighting spirit of the troops."

In spite of this there is evidence from German prisoners of war that *Calais* was widely listened to and appreciated for the accuracy, detail and interest of its information and that rumours were widely spread based on this information to the confusion of the neutral press. Captured documents too show that the Gestapo was so impressed by the accuracy of *Calais* reports that they were investigated individually, while Fritsche of the German Propaganda Ministry when under interrogation told Sefton Delmer that the most disturbing feature of these reports had been that they proved the presence of a British agent at Hitler's H.Q.: in fact several arrests had been made but the right man was never found.²⁰¹ P.W.E. statistics picked at random in Prussia, show that 51% of the population listened to Allied radio stations while of prisoners of war interrogated in Normandy, 77% admitted to reading our leaflets and 40% had them in their possession when captured. The most dangerous seems to have been a handbook on malingering which necessitated a document from the German High Command expressing concern at the spread of this vice. Leaflets urging desertion were found on German troops in Norway as well as in France and forged ration cards are known to have caused trouble to the German Food Ministry.²⁰² The other side of the picture, however, was given in the House of Commons on 18th July by an M.P. who quoted from an officer serving in Normandy that prisoners taken were convinced they would be shot, some even preferring suicide to capture.²⁰³

The populations of occupied countries were of course more fertile ground and available evidence, which includes the opinion of a French political leader, shows that both broadcasts and leaflets had a good reception and provided the

backbone of the resistance groups. P.W.E. claims that even from S.O.E. records it is obvious that much of the credit for the useful resistance in Belgium belongs to them.²⁰⁴

Such reactions from satellite countries as reached us indicate that, in keeping with our usual efforts in the Balkans and Central Europe, we were not very effective.²⁰⁵

X. P.W.E.'S POST 'OVERLORD' ACTIVITIES

The liberation of France and Belgium marked the peak of P.W.E.'s career. Thereafter although its activities did not diminish for some time, the character of its work changed: officially it was still responsible for the policy guidance of P.W.D. in France but with propaganda becoming more and more closely linked to military operations, P.W.D. inevitably acquired further independence and authority and P.W.E. became increasingly a rear echelon to supply personnel and material for forward units.²⁰⁶ The department was, however, able to assist in the military operations of the autumn and winter of 1944 in various ways and to bring about some improvements in its methods. Of these the biggest was the result of discussion on 2nd August by the Chiefs of Staff of a summary of P.W.E.'s activities during 'OVERLORD' drawn up to put them more into the political warfare picture with which they had been out of touch for some time. This included a complaint against the R.A.F.'s old fashioned methods of leaflet dissemination and when in the following month the R.A.F. agreed to the use of the Monroe leaflet bomb and to the introduction of new methods of handling at bomber stations, P.W.E. were much happier.²⁰⁷

The operations in which P.W.E. assisted included an S.O.E. project, known as 'BRADOCK', to drop small delayed-action incendiaries over Germany in the hope that they would be used by foreign workers and anti-Nazis. This had first been mooted as far back as October 1943 but was postponed until such time as the control of the security forces in Germany showed signs of becoming less effective.²⁰⁸ General Eisenhower decided that time had come in August 1944 and asked for the use of *Aspidistra* for 'black' propaganda in conjunction with the operation. This request was turned down after much discussion, largely because of the Minister of Information's desire to keep the transmitter for some tremendous occasion, thereby incurring the wrath of the Chiefs of Staff who somewhat tartly expressed the hope that this would not result in our having failed to use it altogether before Germany collapsed. The difference was settled a month later when the Foreign Secretary and the Ministry of Information agreed that it should be used for future military operations, but this was too late for 'BRADOCK' and General Eisenhower had to be content with the facilities afforded him by the *Voice of S.H.A.E.F.*²⁰⁹ The operation was not considered by the Chiefs of Staff to be very successful and when raised again by the Prime Minister in March 1945, they turned it down partly because of this and partly because of the danger of the bomb being picked up by *Werewolves* on dropping near P.O.W. camps, thus risking reprisals. The Prime Minister bowed to their views.²¹⁰

Although the landings in the south of France in August 1944 (operation 'ANVIL') were the concern of A.F.H.Q., S.H.A.E.F. was responsible for servicing the Free French units involved and P.W.E. therefore had a share in the formulation of political warfare policy in which prominence was given to the Free French forces and restraint was urged on the civil population. French propaganda was co-ordinated with our own and the result was the restoration of French self-respect by a sense of active contribution to the defeat of the

enemy.²¹¹ This co-operation with the French was extended in October 1944 when General Eisenhower, as a result of negotiations in Algiers when it was decided to intensify French propaganda and to co-ordinate it with that of the Allied forces, agreed to the appointment of French officers to P.W.D. to participate in political warfare to Germany.²¹²

At the end of the year, P.W.E. was given two very unpopular new commitments: the re-education of German prisoners of war and political warfare against Japan.²¹³ The former is outside the scope of this paper, the latter is dealt with in Chapter XII below.

XI. THE FINAL PHASE OF THE WAR WITH GERMANY

Towards the end of 1944 it became obvious that whatever our political warfare had achieved in the occupied countries, morale in Germany was showing no signs of breaking probably because of the overall iron discipline of the *Wehrmacht* and the Nazi Party and of Dr. Goebbels' successful propaganda that unconditional surrender meant elimination as a nation. A new plan was therefore virally needed to break Germany's will to resist by deception, propaganda and in any other way possible.²¹⁴ The Prime Minister and the British Chiefs of Staff turned down President Roosevelt's suggestion of a high-level appeal and instead a special committee under Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart and comprising representatives of all interested British departments and of P.W.D., was set up to investigate the problem.²¹⁵ The plan resulting from this investigation had been approved by everyone concerned by the end of January 1945 though a month later, at the request of the American Chiefs of Staff, it was modified to avoid the risk that any propaganda which could be attributed to official Allied sources should hold out hope of anything other than unconditional surrender: such hopes should be put out only by 'black' methods.²¹⁶ The plan²¹⁷ had as its background what was believed to be the reason for Germany's continued struggle: that the Nazi leaders, with everything to lose and nothing to gain by surrender and in the hopes of building an underground movement in Germany and of increasing war weariness and dissension among the Allies, had managed to convince the German people that there was no alternative to fight, a line in which they were helped by our unconditional surrender terms and by the troubles in those countries already liberated. Our aims were therefore

(a) to destroy the unity of purpose of the Nazi leaders and thus the effectiveness of their control,

(b) to show them and the German people that unconditional surrender was not a synonym for extermination.

These were to be carried out through overt P.W.E. channels by pointing out the false picture German propaganda gave of life after surrender, by publishing facts on the way of life in liberated countries, etc., through an unofficial Foreign Office approach to the Vatican asking for the help of organised religion in re-educating Germany, and, it was hoped, through the settlement of future policy for Austria by the European Advisory Council so that we could set about creating an S.O.E. organisation there. In addition, covert P.W.E. propaganda would be directed at giving the impression that there was a British-controlled opposition in Germany, that another attempt on Hitler's life was contemplated, that atrocities on the families of German soldiers at the front would be classed as war crimes, etc. An attempt to enlist the support of German generals in our hands came to nothing as not unnaturally they refused to jeopardise their families by allowing their names to be quoted.²¹⁸

Arising out of this basic plan, and of the Ministerial Agreement of September 1944, to use *Aspidistra* for military operations, a project to break German resistance at a decisive moment in an Allied break-through was discussed by the Chiefs of Staff on 8th January 1945. This project, known as 'MATCHBOX', was in essence the same as one submitted by S.H.A.E.F.

- (a) to suggest through a forged announcement that Germany had asked for an Armistice
- (b) to paralyse, with S.O.E. help, the German Command in the West, and
- (c) to embroil General Rundstadt and his staff with Himmler so as to force the latter to remove them.

These objectives would be carried out by 'black' broadcasts and by deception on the highest level.²¹⁹ The Foreign Office, Ministry of Information and Political Warfare Executive disliked the scheme, nor were the Chiefs of Staff themselves very much attracted to it. It was not however until two months later that the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, too, expressed their dislike and the plan was abandoned, though, at the suggestion of the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, General Eisenhower was asked to consider submitting a specific plan based on *Aspidistra* technique for use when Germany's collapse seemed imminent.²²⁰

Other operations carried out within the framework of the basic plan were 'PERIWIG' and 'HUGUENOT'. The former was the implementation of that part of the plan aimed at giving the impression that a British-controlled opposition was in existence in Germany. To this end, stores and agents were despatched and code messages were sent over the radio in the hope that the energies of the German police would be wastefully diverted to trying to liquidate the 'network' through arrests which might affect German morale. This unscrupulous plan operated for only about a month before the S.H.A.E.F. ban of 13th March on air supply operations over Germany brought it to an end. It is only fair to say that 'PERIWIG' was mainly a Sefton Delmer affair of which P.W.E. as a whole never thought very highly.²²¹ Operation 'HUGUENOT' aimed at desertions from the German Air Force: black channels were used and some desertions did occur.²²²

On the whole the basic plan seems to have been pretty ineffective and it is perhaps small wonder that the Chiefs of Staff early in March 1945 laid down a new political warfare policy for Germany East of the Rhine, with the aim of embarrassing the German High Command by the maximum movement of German civilians and traffic, though the 'stop work but stay put' policy to foreign workers remained unchanged. To avoid too abrupt a contradiction between the old and new policy, overt propaganda only gradually led up to the issue of specific instructions to the population for total evacuation to avoid inevitable destruction and then only in specified areas which included the Ruhr.²²³

To make this new policy more effective, S.H.A.E.F. wanted to use *Aspidistra* in an intruder role during Operation 'PLUNDER' (the crossing of the Rhine). The idea, with which P.W.E. agreed, was for *Aspidistra* to intrude when a German station went off the air because of bombing, taking over the station at once and including in its programme the issue of false instructions, etc. The British Chiefs of Staff were against this as they thought it could be effective at the most only two or three times and that it would easily be countered by the Germans by such means as not cutting off the station involved or by cutting off all stations: they were accordingly loath to take *Aspidistra* away from the R.A.F. who for the last 15 months had used it with success to spoil the enemy's use of broadcasting stations to guide night fighters, thus cutting down our bomber losses considerably.²²⁴ The American Chiefs of Staff felt the same way, so a compromise was reached whereby S.H.A.E.F. had the limited use of *Aspidistra* for small-scale operations, designed to cause confusion and strain the German Administration in the rear by giving false orders to civilians, which would not hinder the R.A.F. who continued to have priority.²²⁵ For the first few days of its use for 'PLUNDER', there was little reaction but on 28th March the Germans had to warn listeners of *Aspidistra* and the following day evidence was received that, through its activities, the Germans had been forced to confine instructions to the civilian population to their long-wave transmitters which *Aspidistra* could not touch, thus very considerably disrupting their carefully prepared channels for A.R.P. and civilian instructions - a not unsuccessful ending to what was the last important piece of political warfare against Germany.²²⁶

In the Mediterranean theatre too things were moving to a climax. Political warfare in Italy seems to have been quite successful in the last stages of the war a voluntary poll of German P.O.W.'s showing 68% listened to our broadcasts. Leaflets calling on the enemy forces to desert resulted in hundreds doing so from an Italian Fascist formation in the Lucia area while on another occasion a single broadcast brought in 47 deserters. Marshal Graziani, after his capture, was induced to broadcast to his Ligurian Army ordering surrender and within a few hours both Germans and Italians in this Army started to do so. Secret missions were sent to Italian partisans, equipped with leaflets for distribution behind the lines, and these were seen or heard of by 80-90% of the German soldiers in the areas concerned, a large percentage going so far as to carry safe conducts or passes 'in case'. Nor was the serious problem of civilian refugees forgotten: suitable instructions to the populations of areas about to be conquered were issued and steps taken to try to prevent alarm and despondency by contradicting Fascist-inspired rumours which swept the country.²²⁷ By March 1945 the time had come for a considerable change to meet the post-war needs of the people of Central Europe and the Balkans. General Alexander therefore drew up a plan whereby joint Anglo/U.S. propaganda would cease in liberated areas, each ally setting up its own organisation to collect information only: in areas where fighting continued, the current joint organisations would go on till military operations were over.²²⁸ For Italy he proposed a similar division into liberated and non-liberated zones, but in both cases the responsibility was P.W.B.'s though in the liberated part of Italy control of the information services was more and more passing into the hands of the

Italian Administration.²²⁹ As it was not until 2nd May that these arrangements were approved, there cannot have been many fighting zones left to deal with.²³⁰

After the German surrender changes in organisation took place in Western Europe. P.W.D. broke up with the zonal division of Germany: O.W.I. began winding up, though it did not leave London till September 1944, and P.W.E. cut down as much as possible in view of its new commitments in the Far East and in Germany, where it had been made responsible for the British Information Service as long as a Military Government remained. The end of the Coalition Government meant the transfer of Mr. Bracken to the Admiralty, Mr. Eden reluctantly taking over P.W.E., a late date for the achievement of the long awaited single Ministerial control. The Executive then became part of the Political Intelligence Department and the only part of its charter that any longer concerned political warfare was that relating to the Far East.²³¹

XII. POLITICAL WARFARE IN THE FAR EAST

Political warfare against Japan was raised by the U.S. soon after Pearl Harbour. Hitherto we had not paid a great deal of attention to this, although the Far Eastern Committee had in February 1941 approved a propaganda plan to be carried out by the Far Eastern Bureau of the M.O.I. in Singapore aimed at causing doubt and hesitation in Japan herself as well as countering her propaganda in other Far Eastern countries.²³² The first American plan was a somewhat startling affair which was turned down by all the British concerned as impracticable and contrary to our agreed strategy and was eventually dropped. Briefly it aimed at establishing that a Japanese victory was an inevitable pre-requisite to ultimate Axis success and, by aggressive propaganda, at committing Japan to some objective (such as Singapore, Burma, Australia) thought unlikely to be attained at least within a definite time-limit: after the first Japanese setback towards this, her failure would be exploited as a turning point in the Far Eastern campaign. The propaganda to carry out this plan would be timed for when no major reverses were likely, would be preceded by a created atmosphere of suspense and alarm and followed by optimistic and favourable news and with the initiation of movements designed to indicate a counter-offensive.²³³

In March 1942 the Foreign Secretary set up under his own authority a committee to give guidance on political warfare against Japan in all areas: members of the M.O.I., P.W.E., and S.O.E. were represented on it and it had power to co-opt representatives of the U.S.A. and the Netherlands.²³⁴ This Committee brought out a basic plan aimed at:

- (a) weakening the Japanese war machine
- (b) keeping China in the war
- (c) maintaining Indian morale
- (d) decreasing co-operation and increasing friction between Germany and Japan and
- (e) sowing discord between Japan and the Asiatic populations either in the Japanese Empire or in recently overrun territory.²³⁵

After discussions with the Americans, a joint Anglo/U.S. policy was drawn up on much the same lines (though omitting any mention of India and China and adding the encouragement of resistance in countries either overrun or likely to be) and this became the accepted Allied policy for political warfare in the Far East.²³⁶ Within this overall policy the Political Warfare (Japan) Committee drew up plans for India, Malaya, Burma, Siam and Indo-China, all of which were sent to the Chiefs of Staff for approval before being put into operation.²³⁷

In the autumn of 1942 protracted discussions began, at Lord Wavell's instigation, on the co-ordination of the work of the various agencies conducting political warfare in India. The Far Eastern Bureau, re-organised at New Delhi after the fall of Singapore, was still responsible for all overt propaganda under policy directive from the P.W.(J)C and for the printing of leaflets and newspapers for G.H.Q. (India). With the latter, however, the Bureau had a long-standing dispute which had resulted in the formation of a special section within G.H.Q. to provide a military propaganda service not to be had from the Bureau.²³⁸ A plan to improve things was drawn up by the P.W.(J)C and this included the re-organisation of the Bureau by dividing it into overt and secret sections and giving it the responsibility for broadcasts to enemy and enemy-occupied territories except for front line propaganda, a function of G.H.Q. India. In carrying this out, G.H.Q. (India) had the help of S.O.E.'s Far Eastern Section, which in 1942 had formed a political warfare branch for clandestine propaganda behind the enemy lines and which proved very valuable to G.H.Q. for the provision of the necessary Japanese-speaking personnel and technical equipment.²³⁹ The P.W.(J)C itself was enlarged to include service representatives as well as interested Ministers and its terms of reference were extended to the co-ordination of Far Eastern political warfare with that of the West: the B.B.C. established a Far Eastern Section at the request of the Committee who gave the necessary policy guidance.²⁴⁰ The outstanding decision whether the Far Eastern Bureau should be attached to the Viceroy direct or to some department of the Indian Government was under discussion until August 1943 when the War Cabinet gave statutory powers to the Viceroy in a personal capacity.²⁴¹ American political warfare was in the hands of O.W.I. and O.S.S. with both of whom our relations were better than elsewhere, in spite of conflicting interests.²⁴²

It was not long after this that Anglo-American collaboration difficulties accentuated by the post-HUSKY divergence of policy, came up for discussion at the Quebec Conference, resulting in the formation of the three emergency committees in London, Washington, and New Delhi (See Chapter VIII). There is little to say about the two latter, dealing with the Pacific and South East Asian areas respectively, as they never really got going at all, principally because the Americans, who appear to have had second thoughts after Quebec, only had one meeting of the Washington Committee and never even appointed anybody to sit on the one in New Delhi. In February 1944, therefore, at American instigation, this was abolished and South East Asian interests were taken over by London, those of China and Indo-China by Washington: in both cases somewhat ineffectively.

This was not good enough for the Supreme Allied Commander at S.E.A.C., Admiral Mountbatten, who was always more interested in political warfare than any of the other Allied military leaders. In a telegram from S.E.A.C. in February 1944, he described the impasse in that theatre owing to conflicting British and American interests, and put forward suggestions for a solution which the C.O.S. passed to the Foreign Office to take up with the relevant departments. Pending this, to meet the situation in Burma which was then

offering opportunities for softening enemy morale not to be missed, the Supreme Allied Commander established a section at his H.Q. to work on directives from G.H.Q. (India) and from the P.W.(J)C in London and in close collaboration with S.O.E., leaving O.W.I. and O.S.S. to go their separate way.²⁴³

With the object of solving Admiral Mountbatten's troubles, Lord Halifax, then British Ambassador in Washington, had discussions during March 1944 with General Wedemeyer and as a result they proposed the formation of a Combined Psychological Warfare Division in S.E.A.C. under the S.A.C. to deal with strategic and front-line propaganda as an integral part of military operations and with so-called 'consolidation psychological warfare' to ensure the co-operation of civilian populations in restoring essential services, preserving lines of communication, etc. The new Division's activities would be co-ordinated with the already existing propaganda agencies, (which would not come under S.E.A.C.), through a Combined Liaison Committee to comprise representatives of quasi-military bodies concerned with political warfare.²⁴⁴ These still included G.H.Q. (India) which, although front-line propaganda was no longer its responsibility was to continue its activities in Indian languages which were of course, mainly directed at the Indian National Army. This arrangement was eventually cleared with the interested authorities in Washington, and the Foreign Office, the British C.O.S. and Admiral Mountbatten agreed too though without considering it by any means an ideal solution.²⁴⁵ In practice, local American objections even to this somewhat inconclusive arrangement were so strong that the S.A.C. had to rule that P.W.D. must operate under its combined charter as originally conceived, but that it must not press for U.S. personnel. On the other hand, the S.A.C. decided that the existing close collaboration with S.O.E.'s propaganda section was so valuable that complete integration was advisable and this took effect from August 1944.²⁴⁶

Concurrent with this were the protracted negotiations with the Americans for a new joint plan for political warfare against Japan. These had been started in August 1943 by the P.W.(J)C who drew up a paper on the co-ordination of Anglo-U.S. propaganda to overcome Japanese reluctance to surrender, which was approved by the C.O.S. and sent on to Washington.²⁴⁷ There it remained until February 1944 when the C.O.S. submitted to London an outline plan for general political warfare against Japan which included methods to induce surrender.²⁴⁸ A great deal of talk then began between the two capitals and it was not until May 1944 that a final plan was agreed upon. This outlined as our basic aims:

- (a) the undermining of the military, political, economic, social and psychological foundations of the Japanese war machine,
- (b) the encouragement of resistance by the populations of territories occupied or threatened by Japan,
- (c) the promotion of dissension between Germany and Japan, and

(d) the destruction of the confidence in Japan of neutrals (excluding Russia) and German satellites.

Included in the military section of (a) were instructions to create friction between the Japanese forces and puppet troops, between the Japanese Army and Navy themselves, and within them, between different ranks and loyalties, and also, as directed by the appropriate military authorities, to create real or feigned conditions to force Japan to disperse her troops and to increase the administration and logistic strain on her occupying forces. Furthermore, a special directive was included with the object of lessening the fighting will of Japanese forces and inducing them to surrender by such methods as emphasising the certainty of their defeat and their lack of leadership, by trying to force public discussion of the possibility of surrender, by including in our communiqués all possible references to the taking of P.O.W.'s and their good treatment, though not mentioning numbers unless particularly significant, and by stressing the need Japan would have of men after the war, etc. etc.²⁴⁹

The Psychological Warfare Division at S.E.A.C. was not actually set up until 6th June 1944. But in the meantime and until July 1944 front-line propaganda was carried out by 5 units raised by S.O.E., 2 in Arakan and 3 at Imphal. At Imphal the military situation soon made propaganda patrols impossible and the units had to confine themselves to static Japanese positions: in Arakan, however, patrolling was maintained, although the units were really too small to cope with this and with the civilian population. During this period the target was the battle area and lines of communication in Burma and propaganda was based on London directives and, when it was drawn up, on the joint Allied plan. Leaflet dissemination rose from 250,000 to 1 ½ million a month and a most fruitful target was found in the Indian National Army whose reaction to our 'surrender' campaign was enormous, the vast majority doing so if they could, and in Burma, in the autumn of 1944, 3 out of every 4 who surrendered saying this was as a result of our propaganda. Another success was the impetus given by our anti-Japanese propaganda to the already wavering Burmese civil population.²⁵⁰ After the P.W.D. had started to operate, targets were extended further afield, broadcasts to Sumatra and Malaya, chiefly of news and comments, starting late in 1944 and newspapers early in 1945. In April 1945 a paper for Siam was inaugurated, and in the same month leaflet dissemination reached a new peak of over 20 million. The front-line patrolling units had been reformed and during the operations to clear Burma starting in December 1944 ('ROMULUS' and 'CAPITAL') were in action in the Kabaw Valley, in the crossing of the Chindwin and the battle for Mandalay. After the battle of Meiktila at the end of February, however, the pace of our advance was too quick for these units to have much chance for action.²⁵¹ Political warfare in connection with 'ROMULUS' and 'CAPITAL' was carried out within the framework of a special plan drawn up by P.W.D. so as to exploit the lowered morale of the Japanese forces and to maintain the increased rate of surrender that our earlier activities had achieved, by emphasising their failure to compete with the Allies, the poor showing of the Japanese High Command, our

honourable treatment of P.O.W.'s, etc.: forward agencies were to avoid mentioning the relative importance of 'CAPITAL' and 'ROMULUS', the probable course of future operations or organised resistance or guerrilla activities except under specific direction from the S.A.C.: propaganda to the civil population was to emphasise the bright prospects after liberation in contrast to present miseries, to reassure civilians that collaboration with the puppet regime was not in itself a war crime and, when justified by the tactical situation, special instructions for guerrilla action would be issued.²⁵² This plan was referred to the C.O.S. who, acting on P.W.E. advice, approved it except for the proposed line to the civilians that collaboration was not necessarily a war crime, to which they preferred that no reference should be made until Government policy in this respect had been decided.²⁵³

Just after this approval had been given P.W.E. assumed responsibility for political warfare against Japan taking over the functions of the Far Eastern Bureau, except for unoccupied countries, and the control of the B.B.C. Far Eastern Service. The P.W.(J)C was liquidated and a new P.W.E. Committee set up for the purpose, but the organisation of an F. E. Department within P.W.E. was complicated by lack of experts and problems of man-power in general and it never really got going very much before the end of the war,²⁵⁴ the only examples of its work in Cabinet files being 2 plans for Malaya and Siam drawn up in June 1945 within the framework of the still existing basic policy and superseding the earlier ones of the P.W.(J)C.²⁵⁵

On the spot, however, a certain amount still went on though, with the fall of Rangoon on 3rd May, 1945, only to a decreased extent. An intensive campaign was waged against the Japanese trapped in the Pegu Yoma mountains in Burma during which some of those who read our leaflets came to believe in the good treatment they would get as P.O.W.'s but still feared penalties on their return to Japan. But our main effort was now on Malaya and Siam and, though leaflet dissemination was much smaller than hitherto because of distances and the impossibility of special propaganda raids, the number dropped on Malaya rose from ½ million in May to 3 ¼ million in July. A satisfactory result of all this was the rise in the proportion of those who surrendered to those killed to 12.5% in June/July 1945, as compared with 0.6% in the first 3 months of 1944 before our 'surrender' campaign had got under way.²⁵⁶

When Japan surrendered unconditionally on 14th August, 1945, P.W.D.'s first tasks were to provide a means of communication with the Japanese H.Q. at Saigon, to inform Japanese forces and local populations and guard against premature reprisals and to ensure that Allied P.O.W.'s and internees knew of the surrender and of relief measures being undertaken.²⁵⁷ Thereafter P.W.D. and the Far Eastern Bureau were integrated and propaganda was directed to re-educating the Japanese, a task of great importance in view of their prevailing attitude that they had only suffered a temporary setback.²⁵⁸

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| 181. | Garnett | Vol. 5, pp. 553-554 |
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| 183. | Garnett
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| 184. | Garnett | Vol. 5, pp. 651-655 |
| 185. | Garnett | Vol. 5, pp. 692-699 |

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187. S.I.C. D/France/6/8B serial 33 11/04/44 S.H.A.E.F. /44/28
188. C.O.S.(44) 108(O) 02/02/44
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| 206. | Lockhart | p. 323 |
| 207. | C.O.S.(44) 256th (O) Meeting
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| 217. | S.I.C. D/Germany/8/1 serial 59a | Revise of GEN. 52/1 (Final) |
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220. S.I.C. D/Germany/8/1 serial 47a 13/01/45 Brue Lockhart to C.O.S.
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253. C.O.S.(44) 377th (O) Meeting 22/11/44
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