

thoroughgoing, old-time Marxist. Productive forces are the basis of all societies and the only worthwhile endeavours are political struggles. The new social history, therefore is only important when it illuminates the peoples' mass struggles against their oppressors. For archivists, the questions are: what does Chesneaux's straitjacket do to their profession and, more generally, how does it effect their role in the writing of history?

Perhaps some understanding of Chesneaux's ideology can be gained from his academic background. He is Professor of Far Eastern History at the Sorbonne and is the author of several books on Chinese and Vietnamese history. Indeed in *Pasts and Futures* (originally published in French as *Du passé faisons table rase?*) he takes great delight in attacking nameless American sinologists for their "establishment" interpretation of Chinese history. He exhibits great disdain for those who would write history from the records of the ruling classes because they will invariably distort the nature of past class struggles. Written from these sources, history becomes a hymn of praise to the mandarins.

In arguing against history for its own sake, Chesneaux maintains that the past only has meaning in relation to the future. He believes that the only true history is that of the struggles of the exploited masses against their oppressors. Apparently even those proletarians and peasants who have not been enlightened to the point of class consciousness are not worthy of his own or our scrutiny. Thus, the only history worth studying is that which can be put to use today to promote the class struggle. And if the records for such an exercise in propaganda do not exist, they should be "reinvented"!

Reading between the lines, one can see that Chesneaux does have a place for the archivist. The author's perfect archivist would approximate Winston Smith, the hero of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*. This humble fellow would spend his time in the Ministry of Truth shredding "bourgeois" documents. Chesneaux is in fact an anti-humanist because he has no respect for the past, mankind's past. His interest is not really centred in the actual peasant revolts of the Middle Ages or the brutality of the Industrial Revolution but merely in using these "historical facts" as weapons of propaganda against the enemies of the people.

M Stephen Salmon
Public Archives of Canada

Propaganda in War 1939-1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany. MICHAEL BALFOUR. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979. xvii, 520 p. ISBN 07100 0193 2 \$52.50

Propaganda is nasty. At least that is the argument of most English-speaking scholars writing about twentieth century official propaganda. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, Harold Lasswell and Walter Lippman expressed their horror of Great War exhortation by condemning propaganda and all its works as the deliberate distortion of opinion. During the Second War, necessity forced a less jaundiced view of this attitude. But very few politicians, intellectuals or public servants in democratic countries felt comfortable as colleagues of Dr. Goebbels. This includes Michael Balfour himself during his work for the British Ministry of Information and the Political Warfare Executive. I suspect that Balfour, like Mackenzie King, would have preferred that allied propaganda "ooze out by osmosis, untouched by human hands." After 1945, most students again tended to revert to the Lasswell viewpoint — but with a difference. Some writers began to apply 'value free' methods, to study propaganda from a social scientific viewpoint that cloaked their moral judgements behind surveys that purported objectively to gauge its effectiveness. But even those with mechanistic definitions (e.g. the manipulation of the means of communication to form or to alter attitudes and actions) have felt it necessary to point out that democratic values hamper official propaganda efforts.

Unlike most writers, who use their view of propaganda as the argument and organizing principle for their books, Michael Balfour attempts to let the 'facts' speak for themselves. Consequently, he writes without an argument. Throughout seven-eighths of this book, the reader is left to puzzle out the author's viewpoint. The first section discusses in some detail the organization of British propaganda operations during the Great War, the German pre-1939 establishment of Dr. Goebbels and consequent war-time operations as well as the mobilization of the British Government to run a Ministry of Information and concomitant 'black' operations. The aim of providing a comparative view of German and British official propaganda in World War II is admirable but because Balfour never spells out his argument or draws direct parallels, he leaves the reader in the dark. Both British and German agencies, for example, experienced constant challenges and opposition from more senior government departments, but these comparisons are never directly made. When Balfour does make generalizations about attitudes that affected the propaganda organizations, he ignores earlier secondary works. In Britain, he notes that "under Blitz conditions, classes were thrown together and faced by common problems so that class distinctions declined" (p. 77). This is the accepted wisdom perhaps, but does not reflect Angus Calder's *The People's War*, a book that is a more definitive study of popular attitudes than Balfour's.

The second section, "The Progress of Propaganda," suffers again from Balfour's failure to establish a thesis or to spell out his first principles. This series of one to six page chapters provides short vignettes that illustrate the German and/or British propaganda treatment of specific wartime events, military and domestic. Because the author has provided no general framework, these are unrelated to the first section and the "one-damn-thing-after-another" approach gets tedious. No amount of compression, furthermore, can treat the complex question of rationing, economic stabilization and the left-ward shift in British opinion in five pages without references to existing sources such as Paul Addison's *The Road to 1945*. Implicitly, Balfour appears to suffer from a "Mightier Yet" bias (pp. 252-53) that justifies British actions such as the official silence on the Russian massacre of Poles at Katyn (p. 333). The attempt to cover all this territory makes the book into an incomplete history of the Second War rather than a history of propaganda. Again the author fails to compare. Both British and Germans, for example, were forced to devise strategies to justify their propaganda flip-flop on the subject of the USSR and Italy.

Too little and too late, in his final section, Balfour sets down his ideas on propaganda in general. Balfour's long-delayed definition of propaganda is a rambling 'liberal' confession directly related to inter-war ideas. Propaganda induces "people to leap to conclusions without adequate examination of the evidence" and is distinct from the scientific method" (p. 421). This seems to be all very much off the top of Balfour's head since he acknowledges no debts to previous works. Its lack of sophistication is only equalled by its irrelevance to the rest of the book.

Balfour's analysis is most interesting when he gets down to comparing the techniques of British and German propaganda and assessing their effectiveness (pp. 426-436). He argues that presenting the facts as news exercised a greater effect on public opinion than hortatory campaigns. Also, he shows that propaganda is most effective when it is accompanied by action, that exaggeration destroys its effectiveness and that the government can control sections of public opinion by co-opting their arguments. Again, however, these conclusions would have made the book more comprehensible had they appeared somewhere in the introduction.

William R. Young
Ottawa