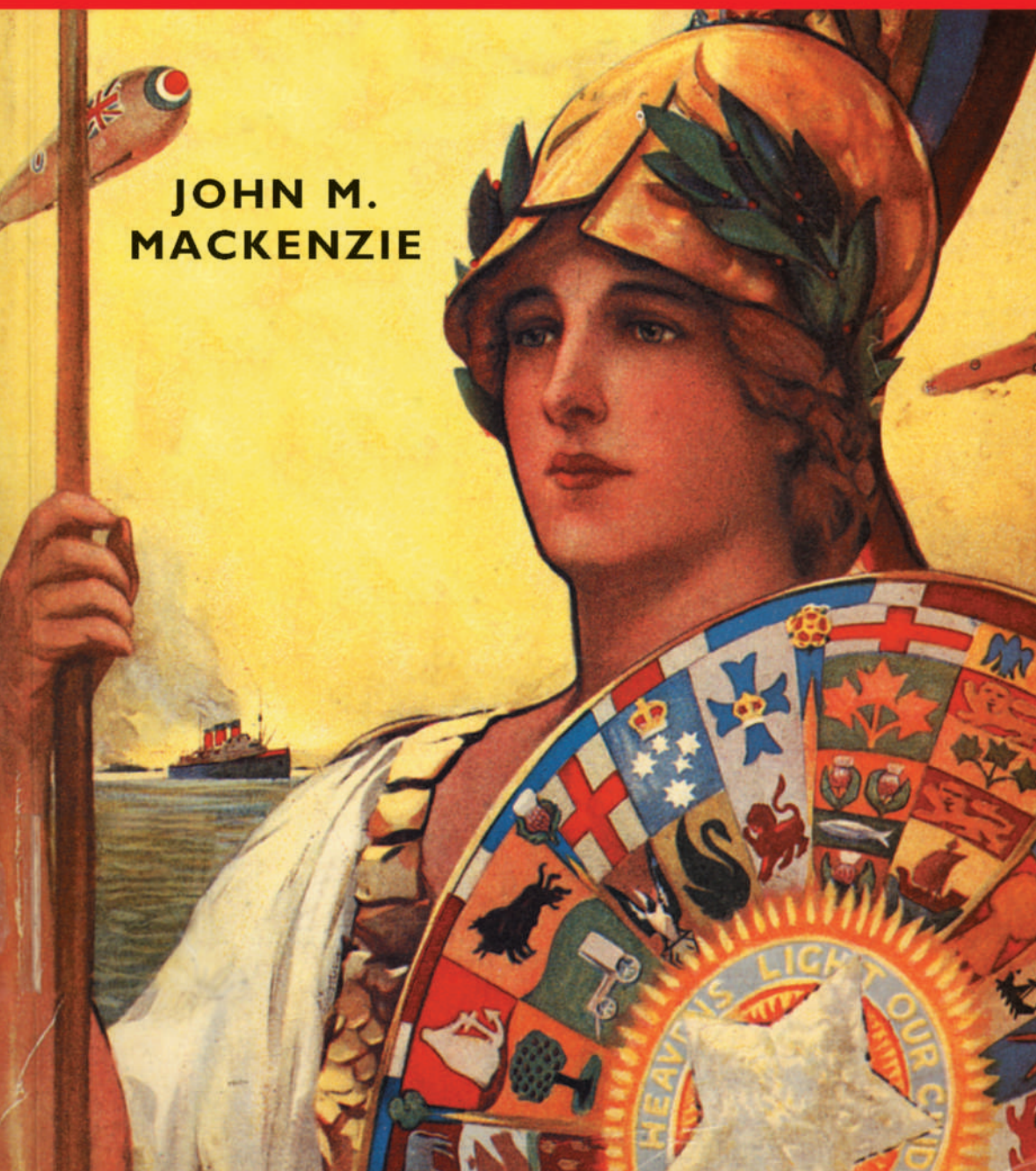
PROPAGANDA AND EMPIRE

THE MANIPULATION OF BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION, 1880–1960

JOHN M. MACKENZIE



PROPAGANDA AND EMPIRE

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AND ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

BOTH OF WHOM WERE BORN IN THE YEAR OF
THE PEACE OF VEREENIGING, WHEN
IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA WAS AT ITS HEIGHT

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J.M.M.

Defenders of the Empire

INTRODUCTION

The British, it has often been said, were indifferent to imperialism. Apart from a brief, aberrant (and indeed disputed) burst of jingoism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they concentrated on more hard-headed domestic affairs. By the 1920s all residual imperial sentiment had been destroyed by the First World War. Imperialism as a sophisticated concept had been, and remained, the preserve of an elite, and a fractured elite at that. The public's lack of ideological commitment was matched by almost complete ignorance of the territories of Empire, the principles of its government, or the economic dimensions of the imperial connection. It was this combination of indifference and ignorance which ensured that the Empire was never a significant electoral issue and that decolonisation was accomplished without any of the national trauma experienced by France.[1] Indeed, by the time decolonisation had been achieved, Empire was already forgotten, surviving in the national consciousness as little more than a source of nostalgic philately.

Imperialism failed to make an impact, the argument continues, because of the diffuse nature of the British imperial experience, and because the Empire was never given a powerful constitutional or cultural expression. The Empire was at least four separate entities. It was the territories of settlement, which by the era of 'popular imperialism' were beginning to emerge as semi-independent political units. It was India, its central economic significance masked by the romantic aura Disraeli created round it in the 1870s on the eve of the 'new imperialism'. It was a string of islands and staging posts, a combination of seventeenth-century sugar colonies and the spoils of wars with European rivals, China and other non-European cultures. And finally, Empire was the 'dependent' territories acquired largely in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Empire's diverse character ensured that imperialism meant different things to different people at different times. Such attempts as there were to develop a grander design were bedevilled by this problem of definition. And so was any effort at national comprehension.

Such is, perhaps, conventional historical wisdom. The purpose of this book is not to assault the essentials of this view. In some respects, indeed, they are unassailable. But that is not to suggest that imperialism was thereby an insignificant element in British domestic

social history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The idea that Empire was unimportant to the public has arisen from an excessive concentration on the effects of Britain on the Empire. Imperial history and the imperial idea have been examined almost entirely in a centrifugal manner, as the radiation of influences from Britain into its wider hinterland. Imperialism on the domestic scene has been discussed largely as the debate of an elite, while 'popular imperialism' has been approached by those more interested in elements of popular culture than in imperialism itself. This study seeks to explore the centripetal effects of Empire, in creating for the British a world view which was central to their perceptions of themselves. Even if they knew little and cared less about imperial philosophies or colonial territories, nonetheless imperial status set them apart, and united a set of national ideas which coalesced in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. As Field has put it, imperialism should be studied as an essential part of British social history.[2]

It is possible to identify an ideological cluster which formed out of the intellectual, national, and world-wide conditions of the later Victorian era, and which came to infuse and be propagated by every organ of British life in the period! It was made up of a renewed militarism, a devotion to royalty, an identification and worship of national heroes, together with a contemporary cult of personality, and racial ideas associated with Social Darwinism. Together these constituted a new type of patriotism, which derived a special significance from Britain's unique imperial mission. That the mission was unique in scale was apparent to all. That it was also unique in its moral content was one of the principal propagandist points of the age. Empire had the power to regenerate not only the 'backward' world, but also the British themselves, to raise them from the gloom and apprehension of the later nineteenth century, and by creating a national purpose with a high moral content lead to class conciliation.

It has often been said that propaganda does not come easily to the British, that official propaganda was contemplated only in the conditions of the First and Second World Wars, and then only reluctantly, and principally for the consumption of foreigners, allies and neutrals.[3] Home government propaganda was virtually unknown. As the following pages will demonstrate, this was not true in the case of imperialism. Indeed, imperial propaganda was the one area of official propagandist activity which seemed to be generally acceptable, for reasons which will be discussed. But the government effort was never very considerable, largely because it was unnecessary. A large number of imperial propagandist agencies were founded in the later nineteenth

century, and their ideas and influence extended deeply into the educational system, the armed forces, uniformed youth movements, the Churches and missionary societies, and forms of public entertainment like the music hall and exhibitions. Many of the most important companies of the day issued imperial propaganda through advertising and other marketing techniques. Sources of popular entertainment like the music hall and later the cinema embraced the new imperial nationalism, while juvenile literature and publishers' lists generally found the imperial adventure tradition socially and politically acceptable, as well as immensely popular. In other words, a wide variety of non-governmental agencies discovered that imperial patriotism was also profitable.

There can be no doubt that much of this activity was overtly propagandist. Propaganda can be defined as the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another, with the specific intention of influencing the recipients' attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced.[4] Although it may be veiled, seeking to influence thoughts, beliefs and actions by suggestion, it must be conscious and deliberate. The study of censorship will always be an important part of the consideration of propaganda, for, as Philip Taylor has put it:, 'censorship and propaganda are Siamese twins, inseparable and inextricable'.[5] Much 'conscious and deliberate' propaganda was conveyed through all the agencies cited above by means of the various media examined in the chapters that follow. Many of them wished to propagate a view of the world which was essential to their own successful operation, and most of them made knowing and intentional efforts to control individual thought. Particular attention will be paid to theatrical and cinema censorship, which go far to illustrate official attempts to influence popular culture.

One of the central concerns of this book must be an examination of the extent to which all this constituted self-generating ethos reinforcement, a constant repetition of the central ideas and concerns of the age, and how far it represented conscious manipulation on the part of those who controlled the powerful religious, commercial, military, and official agencies. To what extent was an essentially middle-class ethos transferred to the other social classes through the potent media of printing, photography, spectacle, and pageant? The rapidly expanding paper, printing, photographic, display, and advertising industries (surveyed in chapter 1) were well placed to serve the ideological convergence of the day by creating for the Establishment what were in effect the first embryonic mass media.

Reverence for the monarchy developed only from the late 1870s, and when it did it was closely bound up with the monarch's imperial

role. Republican associations proliferated in the early '70s during the period of the Queen's seclusion in her widowhood at Windsor.[6] Between 1861, the year of Albert's death, and 1876 she made few public appearances and refused to participate in national ceremonies. When she re-emerged to open Parliament in 1876, it was to announce a change in her royal style and titles. She was to be proclaimed Empress of India, and thereby legitimate her imperial status in the relationship between the Crown and the princely rulers of the subcontinent.[7] The Indian rulers were now to be integrated into British aristocratic principles, provided with armorial devices, a variety of symbols of status, and a strict order of precedence, a process which was begun in the Prince of Wales's visit to India in 1875-76. As the Queen transformed herself in the public mind from petulant widow to imperial matriarch, it was her world-wide role which at one and the same time provided her with excitements and concerns in her old age and a new significance to the ceremonial surrounding her. That she was a Tory imperialist herself is beyond doubt (even if tempered by many of the philanthropic and humanitarian concerns of the age), and the public was more than dimly aware of where her preferences lay.[8]

As her power declined, her ceremonial role grew.[9] In the 1880s she opened the Exhibition of Shipping, Commerce, and Industry at Liverpool, the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London, and laid the foundation stone for the Imperial Institute. All were enacted with considerable pageantry, replete with imperial trappings, poetry by Tennyson and music by the composers of the contemporary renaissance of English music. If there were still some rumblings of anti-monarchical feeling in the Jubilee celebrations of 1887, they had largely disappeared by 1897. *Lloyd's Weekly* (with a million sales) was critical of the 1887 jubilee, but had become unswervingly loyal by 1897. By the latter date there was much press comment on the role of the monarchy in uniting the classes, and on the beneficial propagandist effects of the jubilees on schoolchildren. A local study of the 1897 jubilee in Cambridge has revealed that if there were class disputes about the actual organisation of the jubilee there were none on the principle of the jubilee itself.[10] Both the 1887 and 1897 celebrations brought to London colonial Premiers and Indian princes, together with troops and retainers as exotic in their race, colour, and creed as they were colourful in their uniforms. From then until the accession and coronation of Elizabeth II all great royal occasions would be imperial, drawing to the capital apparently loyal denizens from the furthest corners of the Empire.[11] Edward VII, George V and George VI whole-heartedly accepted their imperial role, and shared, in suitably modified form,

Victoria's politics. Even if Edward VIII did not share his father's or his brother's personal morality or acceptance of the ceremonial role, he nonetheless contributed to the imperial image of the monarchy through his extensive Empire tours. Coronations, funerals, weddings, and jubilees all followed and elaborated the late Victorian precedents, and the wave of programmes, ephemera, publications, films, and later broadcasts which accompanied each of them all invested the monarchy with a global imperial mystique. Until the 1870s royalty was seen to contain little in the way of opportunities for commercial exploitation. From that date, advertising, bric-a-brac, and packaging all exploited royalty and imperialism, taking symbols of colonial adventures into every home. For imperialism made spectacular theatre, with the monarchy its gorgeously opulent centerpiece (though Victoria herself often resisted display).

The growing popularity of the armed forces antedated the enhanced reputation of the monarchy by several decades. Military subjects had long been popular in spectacular theatrical presentations and in melodrama.[12] But it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the army and its personnel rose in the public's esteem. Regiments became a source of local and civic pride, a vital part of national and local ceremonial and pageantry, particularly after the great expansion in the number of army bands took place. The new respect for the army was a product of the fear of militarist European nationalisms and the recurrent invasion scares of the nineteenth century and the years before the First World War. Military sentiments and rhetoric spread into civilian life. The cult of the Christian military hero developed out of the Indian Mutiny and reached its apotheosis in General Gordon.[13] Through army chaplaincies and missions the Churches began to take a more active part in army life, and in return the Churches took on a more militant and militarist tone which infused the missionary evangelicalism and revivalism of the period. The language of war entered into hymns, tracts, and sermons. The paramilitary organisation and ranking of William Booth's Christian mission, the Salvation Army, founded in 1878, were specifically designed to exploit the popular militarism of the contemporary Russo-Turkish war. It was followed by the Church Army and uniformed youth organisations which began to drill and to process in church. As a result, many of the Churches were swept up into 'the tidal wave of race patriotism' of the late 1890s and Edwardian years.[14]

It was a short step to the dissemination of militarism in the schools. The public schools became wholehearted exponents of the new militarism, closely intertwining it with patriotic and imperialist

endeavour.[15] The games field came to be seen as a preparation for war, and some schools specifically devoted themselves to the education of the officer corps.[16] State schools were now urged to take the public schools as their model, and the successful aping of militarist ideology and training became the leading imitative norm. Cadet corps proliferated in both types of school from the 1880s. Drilling was adopted as a crucial source of discipline in working-class State schools. Military activities became an important source of recreation for the working classes, through the highly successful Volunteer forces, rifle clubs, ceremonial and drill units in factories, and brigades of shoeblacks and other youthful street arabs and industrial apprentices. In all these ways a very large proportion of the population came to have some connection with military and paramilitary organisations.[17] Popular recruitment was enhanced and the scene was set for the dramatic waves of volunteering for the armed services in the Boer War and in 1914.

Not surprisingly, this popular military activity was matched by an appropriate ideology. War came to be seen as a 'theatrical event of sombre magnificence', while theories of the inevitability of warfare emerged from the social application of Darwinism.[18] Warfare was endemic to civilisation, it was argued, both in the competition of rising States and in the conflict between them and their decaying counterparts. In naval building, the manufacture of armaments, and the soaking up of excess labour, it was crucial to the modern industrial economy. It was, moreover, a source of personal and national moral regeneration. There have been efforts to absolve the working class from jingoist militarism, but they do not convince. Richard Price's attempt to demonstrate a low working-class involvement in the Boer War[19] has been effectively countered by Michael Blanch.[20] In any case, by the end of the century, the working men's clubs from which Price derives so much of his evidence had adopted the patriotic music hall as their principal attraction, and rifle clubs and service associations had become an important part of their range of 'interest groups'.[21]

Juvenile literature of all sorts exploited this interest in warfare and militarism and wedded it to an overseas adventure tradition which became the leading popular literary genre of the period. The locus of hero-worship moved from Europe to the Empire; colonial exploits were enthusiastically followed by the public; war became a remote adventure in which heroism was enhanced by both distance and exotic locales. Modern armament technology ensured that the risks to European troops were relatively slight. The popular press exploited this spectatorial fascination with colonial warfare, and its power was such that not only the jingoist *Daily Mail* but also labour papers like

Reynold's News were swept up into it. In 1898 the *Labour Leader* complained that the working class were more interested in celebrating Omdurman than in supporting the Welsh coal strike.[22]

It was perhaps, principally through warfare that the racial ideas of the day were diffused to the public at large. Concepts of race were closely related in popular literature to the imperative of conflict between cultures, and the evidence of superiority it provided. Colonial heroes became the prime exemplars of a master people, and this enhanced their position in the military cult of personality. Their fame enabled them to exert great influence in leading service and conscription associations and youth organisations, in travelling extensively on speaking visits to schools or in public lectures in civic halls, as well as participating in ceremonial throughout the country.

The assembling of this ideological cluster of monarchism, militarism, and Social Darwinism led to a dramatic shift in the class and intellectual context of the 'language of patriotism'. Whereas in the early nineteenth century patriotic rhetoric had been seized by political radicals, it was progressively reclaimed by government in the succeeding decades, particularly in time of war. Hugh Cunningham sees the 1870s as the vital decade in the wedding of patriotism to the new nationalist, imperialist, and royalist ideology, in the new romantic treatment of the Indian Empire, and the famous outburst of jingoism of 1878.[23] Patriotism became the 'key component of the ideological apparatus of the imperialist state'. It also became a vital counterweight to class consciousness, 'a half-accepted false consciousness' for the working classes. A very considerable debate has indeed raged around the class dimensions of the late nineteenth-century fervour. The attempt to acquit the working class of contamination can be discounted, but the accusation that the lower middle class and the aristocracy of labour were the prime mediators of the popular imperial ideology between the upper classes and the rest of society is more difficult to dispose of.[24]

The diversion of working-class consciousness into patriotic imperialism and 'social chauvinism' was of course postulated by Lenin. He attributed the 'temporary decay in the working-class movement' to 'the tendency of imperialism to split the workers'.[25] The natural leadership of the labour movement was 'bribed' by the economic benefits of imperialism, and in consequence trade union and other labour organisations in Britain permitted socialist internationalism to be subverted by a dominant imperial nationalism. Hobsbawm eleborated this thesis and found in it the source of the developing social stability of the mid-nineteenth century.[26] In this period the semi-skilled lost ground to the skilled, and the aristocracy of labour, which

constituted 15% of the working class by 1890, were assimilated to the conservatism and respectability of the middle-classes, apparently confirming the process of bourgeoisification of the proletariat which Engels had identified and which Orwell noted anew in the 1930s.[27] In Birmingham the dominance of skilled trades ensured that past radicalism was forgotten, and the city largely followed Chamberlain into Conservative imperialism. Queen Victoria expressed a gratified surprise at the unexpected adulation she received there in 1887.[28] An onlooker at the 1887 jubilee celebrations was reported to have said that years of socialist activity had been destroyed on that day.[29] The labour aristocracy thesis has been carried forward into the 1920s, and has been used to explain the failure of the General Strike and the increasing 'respectability' (including imperial respectability) of the Labour Party in that decade[30] Non-Marxists have suggested that the aristocracy of labour was a much more heterogeneous group than the Marxists would allow, prepared to pursue their own independent economic and social ends by whatever means lay open to them.[31]

This debate has intersected with the discussion between the revisionist optimists and the traditional radical pessimists on leisure, a discussion which has centred on the problem of whether popular culture was the 'locus of struggle or of control',[32] whether class consciousness was diverted into 'controlled decorum', 'obedient recreation',[33] whether leisure was class-conciliatory or created means of class expression.[34] Opportunities for recreation were widened by shorter hours of work and an increased surplus income available for leisure pursuits. Together these stimulated a mass leisure market, which was soon taken over by capitalist operations like the music hall.[35] Some recent studies have revived the hegemonic theory of Gramsci, that power lay with those who 'controlled the means of mental production', whether in education or in mass entertainment like the music hall or later the cinema.[36] The question resolves then into the extent to which the diffusion of the core patriotic ideology was supply- or demand-orientated.

It has, moreover, become customary to stress the stability and conservatism of British society in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Brian Harrison, writing of the 1880s, has suggested that the forces for stability in that decade were able to counterbalance the forces for social disruption.[37] Martin Wiener has surveyed the mental and cultural 'gentrification' of the industrial bourgeoisie, such that the aristocracy succeeded in 'educating its successors to its world-view'.[38] And by the 1880s and '90s part of that world view was the greater social acceptability of occupations in the army and the Empire than in the

demeaning world of business. In the same period, as Noel Annan has put it, the 'propaganda of the intelligentsia' became 'the accepted gospel of the country'.[39] Each of these debates will necessarily be touched upon in this book.

Yet despite these controversies there has been little attempt at a synthesis of studies of education, juvenile literature, the theatre, youth organisations, and propagandist movements, which have a significant bearing upon these problems of leisure, ideology, and social discipline. Moreover, there has been little attempt to take the debate beyond the First World War. The war has acted as a convenient climax to most studies, and the inter-war years have not been blessed with the close examination the earlier period has enjoyed. Many historians have merely argued from silence. Those dealing with some aspect of popular imperialism or militarism have usually concentrated on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, when such manifestations are most apparent. They have invariably seized upon the all too convenient means of winding up with the bald suggestion that after the First World War imperialism was discredited and lost much of its popular edge. Historians who have dominated the inter-war period, themselves often intellectually influenced by the ideas of the 1920s and '30s, have discounted imperialism as having any significance for the public at large. Indeed, the public are alleged to have viewed Empire with the greatest indifference. By the 1930s emigrants were returning, disillusioned, with unhappy tales of an Empire failing to live up to its propagandist promise.[40]

Some have seen the Boer War as cracking the imperial spirit.[41] More conventionally, the Great War has been regarded as the critical turning point. The war, it is alleged, was followed by a period of pacifism, and militarism and imperialism were so intertwined in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods that revulsion from the one led to rejection of the other. After 1918 imperial propaganda had lost its power. Imperial studies fell on hard times.[42] The membership of the Royal Colonial Institute, which had burgeoned, went into steep decline.[43] The Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924-25 was treated with contempt by the intelligentsia and as a mere funfair by the populace.[44] The most successful of the youth movements adapted to the new creed of internationalism in order to protect and develop their membership.[45] Moreover, one of the most important vehicles of the popular imperialism of the nineteenth century, the music hall, was rapidly becoming moribund,[46] and the people turned from a jingoistic topicality to a romantic escapism.

There are, perhaps, two problems to an over-eager acceptance of this view. The first is that the intelligentsia have too often been allowed to

speak for everyone. The classic expressions of alienation from the imperial ethos by Robert Graves, H. G. Wells, E. M. Forster, and George Orwell, among many others, have been seen as representative of a general spirit in the inter-war years. Yet Orwell himself pointed out that the intelligentsia had become cut of from the common culture of the people and went on to argue for a new alliance between intelligence and patriotism.[47] The second problem is the continuing one of definition. Imperialism is of course open to many different definitions, but in its popular context it has usually been seen as synonymous with jingoism — aggressive, offensive, and xenophobic. But there is no reason why a popular imperialism should be so narrowly defined. Those who deplored jingoism were often the most fervent exponents of a 'moral' imperialism, and it was just such people who controlled the levers of propaganda between the two wars, a time indeed when the professions of marketing, public relations, and propaganda (including censorship) all came of age. At the end of the First World War a greatly extended Empire no longer seemed to be under serious threat. Much of the landscape of a defensive, nationalist popular imperialism had become so familiar as to be barely noticed. A Britain without an Empire seemed almost a contradiction in terms. If it was, quite simply, there, a source of pride, not lightly to be put aside, it was also to gain a new economic significance. The crucial thing now was to exploit it more effectively in a period of increasing world economic difficulty. As in the late nineteenth century, Empire could be portrayed as a means of arresting national decline.

It was in such an atmosphere that popular imperialism seemed to secure dramatic new cultural and institutional expressions. Music hall was replaced by even more powerful media in the cinema and broadcasting. Although the need for official propaganda, directed towards 'selling' Britain in the rest of the world, was slow to gain acceptance in Whitehall, nonetheless much propaganda was directed at the public at home. Imperial exhibitions, school texts, popular juvenile literature, the ephemera issued by commercial companies and mission societies remained little changed from their pre-war guise, and all continued to convey an imperial message. The cinema found the adventure tradition of imperial literature congenial to treatment on celluloid. The British documentary film movement, for all its alleged left-wing commitment, in fact had its origins in an imperial propagandist body, the Empire Marketing Board, and treated Empire as an existing commitment, open to reform perhaps, but offering the British public excitement (imperial air routes and the like) and valuable products (Ceylon tea, etc.). Reithian broadcasting sought to educate the

public to a national consensus which included a royal and imperial ethos as part of an immutable order. In short, an implicit imperialism, partly economic, partly moral, underlay most propagandist and entertainment output in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1940 George Orwell was able to write that he felt a positive surge of patriotism, for 'that long drilling which the middle class go through had done its work'.[48] Orwell went on to consider the extent to which the middle class had also successfully drilled the rest of the population.[49]

This book aims to use popular imperialism as a focus for the examination of the theatre, the cinema, education, juvenile literature, imperial exhibitions, youth movements, and a variety of imperial propaganda bodies between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries in an attempt to underline the strengths and durability of imperial propaganda. Some of the material constitutes a synthesis of work not previously brought together; the rest emerges from research in little-noticed areas of imperial propaganda. These are of widely varying significance, some relatively obscure, others in central, yet ignored, fields like the teaching of imperialism in schools. But each derives its true importance from its position within a strikingly consistent overall picture. At the end an attempt will be made to establish imperialism and its related reverence for royalty and other elements of established authority, its racial ideas, its national complacency and conceit, as a core ideology in British society between the 1880s and the 1950s.

The mid-1980s seems an appropriate time to undertake such a study. A generation of scholars has emerged largely uncontaminated by intellectual influences of the 1920s and '30s which so often misled their predecessors. Moreover, the Falklands war of 1982 aroused many echoes of the earlier period of popular imperialism — the jingoistic press, the wildly enthusiastic reception of returning troops and ships, victory parades, repeated medal distributions, the stealing of the clothes of patriotism by an established government, and the apparent lulling of domestic economic and social discontents. Increased newspaper circulations, higher viewing figures for television, and the major publishing event which the war constituted seemed once more to confirm Hobson's 'spectatorial passion' induced by warfare.[50] Once again the Church seemed to be overwhelmed by the combination of government propaganda and popular enthusiasm. The Bishop to the Armed forces spoke of the campaign as acting upon the nation 'like a purifying fire', an argument for the moral effects of warfare strikingly akin to those of the late nineteenth century, while some historians and politicians began to call for the teaching of a new nationalist and patriotic history in schools.[51]

J. H. Plumb has remarked that 'the old past is dying, its force weakening, and so it should. Indeed, the historian should speed it on its way, for it was compounded of bigotry, of national vanity, of class domination.'[52] Maybe that past lingers on. This book seeks to expose the extraordinary durability of the late nineteenth-century ideological conjunction, the striking congruence of which carried it forward to the mid-twentieth century, and contributed to the national conceit and complacency which have, perhaps, proved such a barrier to Britain's economic progress.

NOTES

1 Henry Pelling, 'British labour and British imperialism', in *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, London, 1979, 82-100. fames Morris has written that few people in Britain found the Empire interesting, and its dissolution was met with indifference. James Morris, The popularisation of imperial history', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1973), 113-18.

2 H. John Field, *Toward a Programme of Imperial Life*, Oxford, 1982, 20.

3 Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda, 1919-1939*, Cambridge, 1981. M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, London, 1982. See also Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, London, 1977, which does emphasise the role of home propaganda.

4 For good definitions of propaganda, see Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, London, 1979, 19-20, and Taylor, *Projection*, 4-5.

5 Taylor, *Projection*, 4.

6 For an excellent discussion of the rolling back of republicanism by pageantry and ritual, see P. S. Baker, 'The Social and Ideological Role of the Monarchy in Late Victorian Britain', unpublished M.A. dissertation, Lancaster, 1978. See also Jeffrey L. Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, London, 1979.

7 Bernard S. Cohn, 'Representing authority in Victorian India', in E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, 165-209.

8 Richard Faber, *The Vision and the Need*, London, 1966, 90. See also Frank Hardie, *The Political Influence of the British Monarchy*, London, 1970, 11-39.

9 David Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the invention of tradition, 1820-1977', in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention*, 101-64.

10 Elizabeth Hammerton and David Cannadine, 'Conflict and consensus on a ceremonial occasion: the Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge in 1897', *Historical Journal*, 24 (1981) 111-46.

11 The public programmes of both the coronations of George VI in 1937 and Elizabeth II in 1953 were firmly imperial, bearing the arms of all the Dominions and colonies on their covers and listing all the colonial troops present.

12 J. S. Bratton, 'Theatre of war: the Crimea on the London stage, 1854-5', in David Bradby *et al.* (eds.), *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama*, Cambridge, 1980.

13 Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *English Historical Review*, LXXXVI (1971), 46-72.

14 Stephen Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', *Historical Journal*, XVIII (1975), 110.

15 Geoffrey Best, 'Militarism and the Victorian public school' in Brian Simon and Ian Bradley (eds.), *The Victorian Public School*, London, 1975, 129-46.

16 Best, 'Militarism', 131-2. See also J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, Cambridge, 1981.
17 Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, London, 1975. M. D. Blanch, 'British society and the war', in Peter Warwick (ed.), *The South African War*, London, 1980.
18 John Gooch, 'Attitudes to war in late Victorian and Edwardian England', in B. Bond and I. Roy (eds.), *War and Society*, London, 1975, 91-3. Anne Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War', *History Workshop*, 2 (1976), 104-23.
19 Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, London, 1972.
20 Blanch, 'British society'.
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22 Blanch, 'British society', 216.
23 Hugh Cunningham, 'The language of patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981), 8-33.
24 R. N. Price, 'Social status and jingoism: the social roots of lower middle class patriotism, 1870-1900', in Geoffrey Crossick, *The Lower Middle Class in Britain*, London, 1977, 89-112.
25 V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, London, 1968, 100.
26 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The aristocracy of labour', in *Labouring Men*, London, 1964, 272-303.
27 Quoted in Lenin, *Imperialism*, 100. Orwell wrote of an enlarged middle class, spreading 'middle-class ideas and habits among the working class'. 'To an increasing extent, the rich and the poor read the same books, and they see the same films and listen to the same radio programmes.' George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, London, 1982, 66-7.
28 Colin Ford and Brian Harrison, *A Hundred Years Ago*, London, 1983, 263.
29 Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, 13.
30 John Foster, 'British imperialism and the labour aristocracy', in Jeffrey Skelly (ed.), *The General Strike, 1926*, London, 1976.
31 Robert Q. Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1850-1914*, London, 1981.
32 Robert D. Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England*, London, 1982, introduction, 13.
33 Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Class expression versus social control? A critique of recent trends in the social history of leisure', *History Workshop*, 4 (1977), 163.
34 Hugh Cunningham., *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, London, 1980, 11. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-85*, London, 1978.
35 Peter Bailey, 'Custom, capital, and culture in the Victorian music hall', in Storch (ed.), *Popular Culture*, 180,205.
36 S. Humphries, '"Hurrah for England": schooling and the working class in Bristol, 1870-1914', *Southern History*, 1 (1979), 172. Lawrence Senelick, 'Politics as entertainment: Victorian music hall songs', *Victorian Studies*, XIX (1975), 149-180.
37 Ford and Harrison, *Hundred years*, 199.
38 Martin S. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980*, Cambridge, 1981.
39 Quoted in Wiener, *English Culture*. 131.
40 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, Oxford, 1965, 300-1.
41 James Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets*, London, 1979, 91. Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', 105-18. Pelling, *Popular Politics*, 100.
42 J. G. Greenlee, 'Imperial studies and the unity of the Empire', *Journal of Imperial and*

Commonwealth History, VII (1979), 332.

43 Trevor Reese, *History of the Royal Commonwealth Society*, London, 1968, 134. However, membership grew to a record figure in 1930, and after some initial decline in the 1930s reached a new peak in 1939.

44 Morris, *Farewell*, 302.

45 Paul Wilkinson, 'English youth movements, 1908-1930', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 4 (1969), 16. J. O. Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, London, 1977, 63.

46 Senelick, 'Politics as entertainment', 180. Senelick suggests that music hall declined because imperial sentiment declined. In fact it was merely superseded by other forms of entertainment, and imperial sentiment migrated into them.

47 George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 63-5

48 George Orwell, 'My country right or left', *Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, London, 1970, 591.

49 For example, George Orwell, 'Boys' weeklies', *Collected Essays*, 505-31.

50 J. A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, London, 1901, 12.

51 *The Guardian*, 21 and 22 June 1983.

52 J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past*, London, 1969, 145.

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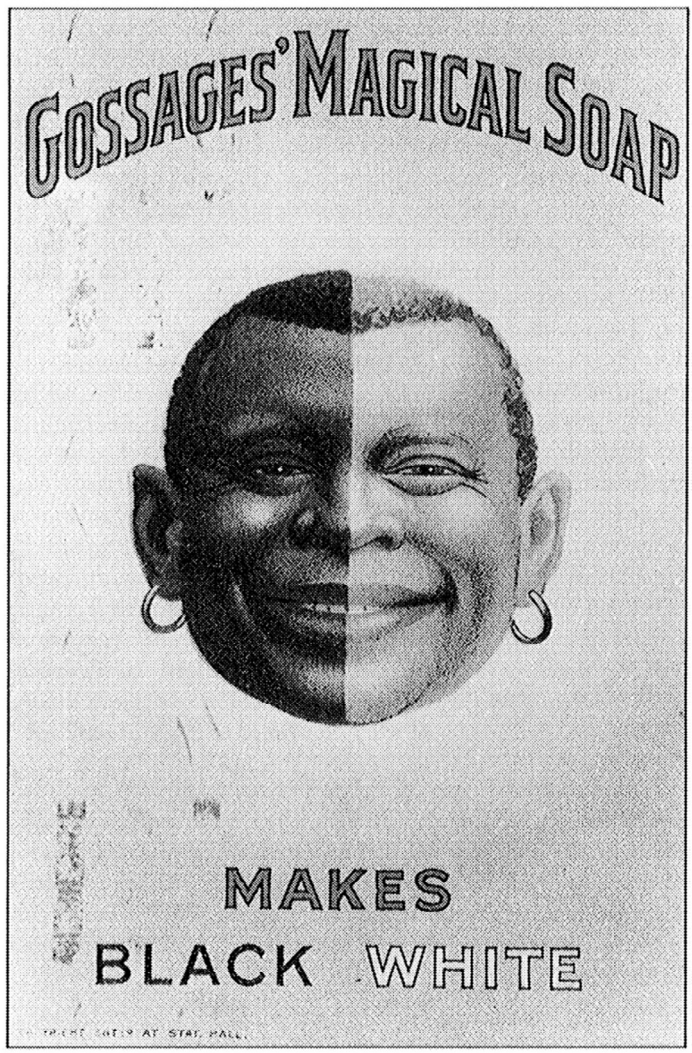
THE VEHICLES OF IMPERIAL PROPAGANDA



The late nineteenth-century imperial world view was an integral part of the commercial, industrial, and social revolution which took place in Britain between the 1850s and 1914. During that period the population nearly doubled; incomes exhibited a similar growth at a time when prices remained relatively steady; and British society achieved nearly universal literacy.[1] Dramatic changes occurred in patterns of consumption in the last two decades of the century as new sources of supply were opened up, new tastes created, new means of preservation, packaging, and marketing found.[2] There were also unrivalled opportunities for the leisure and entertainment industry, and a voracious new demand for collectible items, which contributed to the taste for bric-a-brac so characteristic of all but the very poorest of homes. All these changes reflected technical developments which lay at the heart of the 'new imperialism', providing its motive power, its justification, and also the instruments through which its propaganda could be disseminated.

It has been customary to see the age of the mass media as arriving with the cinema, the wireless, and television. But before the era of the electrical and electronic media, printed and visual materials became available at prices so low as to place them in almost every home. It is perhaps difficult for us, jaded by the printed word and the omnipresent electronic image, to comprehend fully the impact of these materials. There seems to have been a craving for visual representations of the world, of events, and of the great and famous, which a large number of agencies and commercial companies sought to satisfy in the period from the 1870s to the First World War. New advertising techniques were central to all this activity, and companies creating arid supplying the new tastes were concerned to sell not just their own product, but also the world system which produced it. The most aggressive and innovative advertisers of the day were companies dependent on the imperial economic nexus, in tea, chocolate, soaps and oils, tobacco, meat extracts, shipping, and later rubber. They set out not only to illustrate a romantic view of imperial origins, a pride in national possession of what Joseph Chamberlain called the imperial 'estates', but also to identify themselves with royal and military events, and to score from the contemporary cult of personality.

In his classic description of Edwardian Salford, *The Classic Slum*, Robert Roberts refers to a 'culture of the streets from which the young

especially profited'.[3] It consisted of 'information of every kind from posters and advertisements', the 'regular scrutiny of newsagents' windows', which were 'festooned' with hundreds of picture postcards, the new marketing gimmick, cigarette cards crying out to be collected, and a wealth of boys' papers which could be read and swapped. Such ephemera (a term belied by the craze for collecting which they engendered) became a prime source of news, information, and patriotic and militarist propagada. During the First World war this material inevitably became devoted almost entirely to patriotic ends, and, as we shall see, its imperial and colonial content became even more pronounced. The period from the late 1890s to 1918 has often been seen as the golden age of picture postcards, cigarette cards, juvenile journals, and the like, but in fact they continued to be used for propagandist ends until after the Second World War. Moreover, it was between the wars that marketing and advertising emerged as a separate profession, and they helped to sustain a new range of popular journals and literature in that period. The provision of ephemera and popular literature of all sorts will be an underlying theme in what follows, for many of the agencies described in subsequent chapters made assiduous use of the public interest in such material and the collecting activities associated with it.

It was of course nineteenth-century developments in printing that created this new mass medium of the printed word and the visual image. During the century, conservatism in printing was gradually broken down; wood gave way to iron, and steam power was applied from 1810.[4] But more important was the gradual widening of the range of printing processes. Specialised areas of printing appeared, stimulated by and in turn stimulating mechanical innovations. By the last quarter of the century; rotary presses, mechanised typesetting, and a range of machines for different types of printing were available. The treadle and light jobbing platens made possible large runs of posters, leaflets, and the like. Some aspects of mechanisation, including machine binding, aided the collapse in the unit cost of book production, a vast expansion in the publishing trade, and the first appearance of cheap popular editions available for every home. All this was made possible by associated developments in the paper industry. Hand-made rag paper was the rule until the middle of the century. The invention of the wood-pulp and other natural processes, together with the rapid development of machine manufacture, greatly reduced the cost of paper, assisted by the removal of all paper duties in 1861. Annual production in Britain expanded from 11,000 tons in 1800 to 100,000 tons in 1860, and to 652,000 tons in 1900.[5] Recent research indicates that the growth

may have been even greater.[6] At the beginning of the century, the printed word had still been the preserve of a small social class, and books were expensive even by today's standards. Printers and binders concentrated on the aesthetics of their trades, and were more interested in short runs of high value than in the wider dissemination of their wares. By the last quarter of the century all that had changed.

The new processes rendered large print runs of popular editions highly profitable. Publishing houses like Nelson grew rapidly after the introduction of the rotary press from the 1850s, and began to cater for a fast-expanding juvenile market, as well as for the new taste in books of illustrations and information.[7] All the literary classics were reissued in cheap editions, at prices as low as 6*d*, 3*d*, or even 1*d*.[8] But even more important than the classics were works which enshrined contemporary hero-worship, the cult of personality which was an inseparable part of imperialism. Stories of travel and exploration, missionary writings and biographies, the endless stream of popular lives of General Gordon and other heroes, books celebrating military and naval exploits, the 'romance' of transport, communications and engineering, the excitements of migration and pioneering life, the quaint and exotic among indigenous peoples of the Empire, all these became Christmas and birthday present staples, and above all prizes for school and Sunday school. To them we can add the vast range of children's novels and stories by G. A. Henty, F. S. Brereton and others, surveyed in chapter 8. In some working-class homes a little library of such books would be composed entirely of prizes for regular attendance at the Band of Hope or Sunday school.[9] Publishers provided both propaganda and bribes, dressed up in dust jackets (invented in this marketing age) and board covers which vividly conveyed the message carried within. Even if books were not read, their owners could scarcely miss the stirring titles and equally exciting cover illustrations which depicted an heroic and expansionist age, in which fellow countrymen generally overwhelmed or converted people of 'lesser' cultures.

Even more influential was the burgeoning popularity of journals for boys and, later, girls. A tremendous expansion in the publication of juvenile literature occurred in the 1870s and 1880s. At first, adult middle-class opinion saw this growth as untrained, rank with murder, crime, and sensation. A considerable controversy raged about the nature and quality of the material, and the provision of satisfactory periodicals for adolescents became part of the search for 'rational recreation', so much a feature of the age. Journals acceptable to adults' conception of appropriate juvenile interests, mainly enshrining adventurous and militaristic patriotism, began to appear from the late 1870s. Dozens of

different titles appeared, many sold for only a penny, and some of them reached enormous sales. They were exceptionally sensitive to developments in national concerns and contemporary events, as is illustrated by the new range of journals which mushroomed in the jingoistically dank conditions of the Boer War.[10]

The growth of 'jobbing' printing led to a great increase in the publication of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, programmes, and other small ephemeral items which could be distributed free as advertising and propaganda or sold for a few pence each. Such material was used by all forms of entertainment, by the exhibitions, the armed forces, and missionary societies. Much of it must indeed have been ephemeral, but some was sufficiently attractive to be collected, and contemporary agencies and advertisers certainly saw these cheap pieces of printed paper as an effective way of purveying their ideas or their wares. Posters could be run off at the rate of 10,000 an hour at extraordinarily low cost from the 1860s, and 'poster art' emerged as a new art form which was to reach a great peak in production and quality in the inter-war years of the twentieth century.[11]

As this 'veritable revolution' in printing was taking place, another, visual, revolution was under way.[12] Whereas printing advances represented dramatic change in an old technology, photography represented an entirely new one. Photography perfectly demonstrated the rapidity of technical and scientific discovery of the period, and at the same time literally captured the world on glass and paper. It has been described as offering a new lining to the human brain;[13] it captivated contemporaries, not just by transmitting and revealing the 'realities' of a newly opened world (like Felice Beato's photographs of Japan in the 1860s), but by offering them the opportunity to illustrate their achievements to their successors.[14] Through photography Europe could provide itself with a visual representation of the remodelling of the world through economic and political control. From the 1850s travelling photographers set out for North Africa, Egypt, India, Burma, and China to create and satisfy both a new taste for exotica and a fascination with the technology, the ships, railways, post offices, troops and arms, which facilitated Western intrusion in far-flung parts of the globe.[15] As Ian Jeffrey has put it, the camera became a coloniser, a preparer of the route to European expansion in the late nineteenth century.[16]

Above all, the camera was a source of entertainment, creating as much pleasure, as Jane Carlyle asserted, as any other development of the century.[17] But it was to take some time for photography to democratise itself. Until the 1890s it remained largely an aristocratic and upper middle-class preserve. The first books of photographs were all

very expensive. By the last quarter of the century, photographers were selling 'shilling' views, and, judging by surviving albums, members of the middle class began to collect the small *cartes de visite* photographs of royalty, famous statesmen, soldiers, and theatrical personalities as part of a developing personality cult, a careful manipulation of publicity by public figures ranging from the royal family (whose photographic popularity was engineered by the Queen herself) to music hall celebrities. Large framed photographs, instead of paintings, appeared on the walls of middle-class homes.

The main photographic craze of the period before the 1890s probably did not penetrate far into the working-class home either. This was the stereoscope, which was invented in time for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and no fewer than one million were sold within three months. It experienced a great growth of popularity from the 1860s, and the leading stereoscope company made 'One in every home' its marketing ambition.[18] The principle of the stereoscope was that two photographic images viewed through lenses in a simple hand-held or table-top device provided a three-dimensional effect. Vast numbers of stereoscope cards in sets were produced, and many of these represented other places, other climes, offering visual imperial propaganda for colonisation and migration. Some remain important photographic sources for the period, but the relative lateness of the popular exposure to photography is reflected in the actual growth rather than decline in wood-block engraving before 1890. Not until the invention of photographic film made possible the appearance of the cheap Eastman Kodak camera from 1888 could the magic circle of practitioners wrestling with complicated equipment and chemicals be extended. But more important than the practice of photography was the printing of the results. Processes for rapid and cheap printing of large runs appeared in the 1890s, and only then could the shilling view become the penny postcard view.

Until that time all but the most expensive books continued to be illustrated by woodcuts, and woodcuts (often themselves copies of photographs) continued to reign supreme in the illustrated journals like the *Illustrated London News*. Although there had been attempts to introduce the photographic half-tone in popular newspapers in the 1880s and 1890s, it was not until 1904 that they began to appear regularly. The photographic journals in existence by 1899 could not be produced cheaply enough to secure a mass circulation. Earlier in the century, Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine* and *Penny Cyclopaedia*, both using woodcuts, had sold as many as 200,000 and 75,000 copies respectively. But they had collapsed when production costs pushed their