

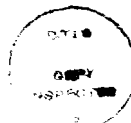
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During World War II, Frank Capra, a well known Hollywood motion picture director, made a series of seven films for the Army to tell the soldiers "Why We Fight". These were soldiers who had grown up between the two World Wars. They were the offspring of the Depression and the bitter debates between isolationism and interventionism. The country was involved in a war that had to be fought, and had to be won. Yet, tremendous resources were expended to tell them why they had to fight. Research for this study began with a review of each of these films. This study includes a brief review of propaganda and its use within the United States and by Nazi Germany. The importance, and the impact of, public opinion and morale will be reviewed. The study will also include a review of the role of Hollywood prior to and during World War II. Having reviewed several of the major events leading up to the making of the film series, each of the films will be discussed. The soldier of yesterday, like the soldier of today, had a right to know "Why We Fight."

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER



FILM AND MOTIVATION
THE "WHY WE FIGHT" SERIES

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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INTRODUCTION

The devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ended the hopes of even the most vocal isolationists for keeping the United States out of the World War. In early February, 1942, Major Frank Capra visited General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. Capra, a well known and highly successful Hollywood motion picture director, was given a mission by General Marshall "to make a series of documented, factual information films - the first in our history - that will explain to our boys in the Army why we are fighting, and the principles for which we are fighting."¹

The purpose of this paper is to review the use of film by the United States for indoctrination and orientation during World War II. Specifically, the focus is on Frank Capra's "Why We Fight" series. The seven films that were produced in the series are "generally regarded as the films that contributed most to American understanding of the issues of World War II. They were a required part of every soldier's training and were released to war workers and ultimately to the general public as well."²

To gain an understanding of the issues and to better understand the use of film in the "Why We Fight" series, it is necessary to examine several key events that occurred prior to Capra's meeting with General Marshall. It is also necessary to review several of the factors that affected Capra's ability to successfully complete his mission. This paper will briefly review the use of propaganda in a democracy and the concept of

propaganda in Nazi Germany.

Capra was involved in a battle for the minds of the masses. He attempted to convey the message of why we were fighting to a generation that had been bitterly pulled between isolationists and interventionists, a generation that was just beginning to emerge from a dreaded depression, and a generation that had seen great prosperity following victory in the "war to end all wars." This paper will review the battle for public opinion, efforts to improve the morale of our soldiers and our people, and will provide an overview of the role and contributions of Hollywood and the motion picture as the country transitioned from peace to war.

PROPAGANDA

F. M. Cornford, in 1922, described propaganda as "that branch of the art of lying which consists in very nearly deceiving your friends without quite deceiving your enemies."³ Research for this paper has revealed that the use of propaganda has existed for centuries and that there are many, diverse definitions of the term. Cornford's definition, written shortly after the end of World War I, may have been heavily influenced by the events of that war. Twenty years later, still reflecting a sinister perception, Charles F. Hoban observed that propaganda "connotes deceit, distortion, and lying by some group for the purpose of influencing the mass of the public toward some preconceived, evil end."⁴ After the second World War, Thomas

Bailey defined propaganda as the "dissemination of presumed information, frequently with a bias or false twist, for the deliberate purpose of influencing public attitudes and hence action."⁵

In a more objective analysis of the word, Paul Linebarger described propaganda as "organized persuasion by non-violent means"⁶ which "consists of the planned use of any form of public or mass-produced communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given group for a specific public purpose, whether military, economic, or political."⁷ In his book Propaganda Comes of Age, Michael Choukas of the Propaganda Analysis Institute stated that "propaganda is the expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends."⁸ Regardless of the specifics of the definition, it appears that propaganda "attempts to influence attitudes of large numbers of people on controversial issues of relevance to a group."⁹

Quincy Wright, in A Study of War, provided a simple, but pragmatic description of the use of propaganda. He wrote that the "objects of war propaganda are the unification of our side, the disunion of the enemy, and the good will of the neutrals."¹⁰ Thus, propaganda is not necessarily a package of lies used for deceitful purposes. It is "an instrument which may use truth or falsehood as its material, which may be directed toward worthy or unworthy ends."¹¹

In 1948, Wallace Carroll, in his book Persuade or Perish, recognized the importance of conveying to the public important facts and information concerning the world situation. He provided the following definitions:

Information - the free communication of facts, favorable or unfavorable, with no undue effort to sway the judgment of the audience.

Propaganda - the communication of selected facts with the aim of leaving a definite impression and possibly inducing action.

Psychological Warfare - the use of words and ideas to break the enemy's will to resist.¹²

As Thomas Palmer explained in his 1971 thesis concerning indoctrination activities and the "Why We Fight" series, "propaganda by any other name is just as sweet."¹³ Although the definitions and descriptions may vary, the end product and its utility to the originator are most important.

PROPAGANDA & TRUTH

Wallace Carroll's definition of propaganda is based upon the "communication of selected facts." However, a fact is necessarily truthful. All propaganda does not deal in honesty and truth. Arthur Ponsonby was convinced, in 1928, that "when war is declared, Truth is the first casualty."¹⁴ Thomas Bailey, in his book The Man in the Street, believed that "all nations pervert the truth in the interests of patriotism."¹⁵ He further explained that "the patriotic propagandist invariably glosses over our shortcomings and magnifies our achievements; he tells

only bad about the enemy and good about ourselves."¹⁶

"Propagandists do not decide to tell the truth because they personally are honest, any more than they decide to tell lies because they are dishonest. Given a particular audience to be reached with a particular policy, the basis for decision is an estimate of what will work."¹⁷ Again, it becomes the desired end state which assumes paramount importance. The packaging and presentation of material must be focused on the expected, and desired, result. As Paul Linebarger explained, "Propaganda is presentation for a purpose; it is the purpose that makes it propaganda, and not the truthfulness of it."¹⁸

Without question, the use and truthfulness of propaganda came under much scrutiny during both world wars. During World War II, "The rulers of Britain argued that if we could build up the reputation for providing truthful news that, in the long run, would be the best propaganda."¹⁹ At the same time in the United States, Archibald MacLeish understood "that a democracy had to be careful about the manipulation of opinion ... democratic propaganda had to be based on the strategy of truth."²⁰ MacLeish, a poet, Pulitzer Prize winner, and the Librarian of Congress, felt that "The real aim was to persuade the American public, by the straightforward presentation of the facts of the war, that the outcome of the struggle was of the utmost importance to everyone at home."²¹ The beliefs and the contributions of Archibald MacLeish will be discussed in more detail later in this paper. His understanding of the manner in which propaganda was to be used in a democracy will become

evident as Frank Capra began to work on the "Why We Fight" series.

PROPAGANDA - USE AND EFFECTS

It appears, at this point, that propaganda is a combination of promotion and persuasion. A thought or idea is promoted by various persuasive means and techniques for the purpose of convincing a group of people of a preconceived notion and, in some cases, causing them to act or react in a desired manner. As he discussed this persuasive promotion, Michael Choukas explained that "It is pursued on the assumption that there is in man an innate propensity to act rationally; an inclination to respond to situations in accordance with the facts that confront him."²² He further defined persuasive promotion as "the attempt to direct the mind and behavior of the individual toward predetermined channels by means other than the use of physical force."²³

Michael Choukas also brought to the surface an aspect of propaganda that has been frequently implied but seldom discussed in detail. "No idea, no truth, no whole system of thought, no philosophy, no matter how zealously and how intensively they may be advanced by their believers, have any propaganda value or significance so long as they are not attached to organized interests seeking power, prestige, or wealth in competition with others."²⁴ The desire to gain an advantageous position in some form of competition, or conflict, sets the stage for the

propagandist.

The effects of propaganda can be extremely difficult to measure. As Paul Linebarger explained, "Success, though incalculable, can be overwhelming; and failure, though undetectable, can be mortal."²⁵ Kingsley Martin, British author of Propaganda's Harvest, cautioned, in 1941, that "Propaganda can be considered technically as a weapon of war. But its affects are permanent. If you undermine the enemy and encourage your own civilian population by false and conflicting promises, you are laying the foundations of a peace made on the basis of lies and you run grave risks of seeing your work shattered by the reaction which follows their exposure."²⁶ Could he have had in mind the promised period of peace following World War I or was he simply trying to encourage the democracies to adhere to the strategy of truth? "To the propagandists' dismay, the second major war of the century demonstrated not only the limits of their expectations but also the infinitely more complex nature of the entire war effort."²⁷

PROPAGANDA IN A DEMOCRACY

"Americans have usually regarded propaganda, with its connotations of tainted information, with suspicion ... Yet since total war requires mass mobilization, democratic governments find propaganda machines indispensable in maintaining civilian and military morale."²⁸ The process of attempting to build and to maintain morale will be discussed later in this paper. At this

point, it is important to simply understand potential uses and common perceptions of propaganda within a democracy.

In Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion: World War II, Anthony Rhodes was extremely critical of the use of propaganda in a democracy. Rhodes summarized his position by explaining that Americans "regard propaganda as an alien, un-American, method of persuading people to subscribe to doctrines in which they have no interest."²⁹

Michael Choukas might agree with Rhodes, in part, but he appeared to be a bit more pragmatic and flexible in the use of propaganda. As he described what he believed to be the "essence of democracy", Choukas felt that the individual possesses the "capacity to reason and an inclination to do good in preference to evil ... the individual is, by nature, a rational, moral being."³⁰ Choukas implied that propaganda does not belong in a democracy, unless it becomes necessary for the preservation of the state.³¹

In general, propaganda and psychological warfare are terms that appear to many to be in conflict with traditional American beliefs and values. The secrecy involved in propaganda and psychological warfare has invoked fear in the Congress and there is no centralized method of control over the private mass communication systems. Information programs have, when required, been acceptable, but propaganda organizations have come under great scrutiny. "Psychological warfare became proper, in conventional American terms, only when there was a war to be

won."³²

As explained by Wilson Dizard, "It was not until World War I that the United States established an official propaganda service." President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information in 1917. With George Creel as its Chairman, the organization became known as the Creel Committee. It was established for the purpose of "whipping up domestic support for the war and also for conducting international propaganda operations to match the German effort in this field."³³ As he wrote about the early participants in the American propaganda campaign, Allan Winkler, in The Politics of Propaganda, explained that "Through propaganda, they wanted to communicate what they considered the basic American values of freedom and democracy to friends and foes alike in all corners of the earth ... they concentrated on presenting [to the American public] the facts about the war, with the confident expectation that the public, when properly informed, would fully endorse their view."³⁴

By the end of World War II, the American people and the American government had experienced many growing pains with the use of propaganda, some positive and some not so positive. However, "In the end American propaganda reflected American policy, and indeed America itself."³⁵

GERMAN PROPAGANDA - WORLD WAR II

The Reichstag building in Berlin was set on fire on 28 February 1933. Chancellor Adolf Hitler, with the approval of

President Paul von Hindenburg, immediately placed "restrictions on personal liberty, including freedom of the press."³⁶ Two weeks later, on 13 March 1933, Hitler established the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda under Dr. Josef Goebbels. Goebbels, by decree of Adolf Hitler, "was responsible for all factors influencing the mental life of the nation."³⁷ According to Goebbels, "Propaganda has only one object: to conquer the masses. Every means that furthers this aim is good; every means that hinders it is bad."³⁸

Kingsley Martin, after studying Hitler's masterful use of propaganda in Mein Kampf, observed that "Lies, as long as they are believed, are often more effective than truth."³⁹ As far as Dr. Goebbels was concerned, propaganda had "nothing at all to do with truth."⁴⁰

As the Nazi movement gained momentum, the Germans developed world-wide pre-belligerent propaganda to a fine art. "They tried to rouse Catholics against Communists, Communists against democrats, Gentiles against Jews, whites against negroes, the poor against the rich, the rich against the poor, British against Americans, Americans against British - anyone against anyone, as long as it delayed action against Germany and weakened the potential enemy."⁴¹

Dr. Goebbels recognized that, during the thirties, the United States did not represent a unified threat to Germany. The thrust of his efforts on this front was a "more subtle method of directing and financing the innumerable organizations whose

object was to increase isolationist sentiment by urging that Americans should not again fight for British Imperialism, that they could safely remain within their own frontiers when the British were defeated, which would inevitably happen; that the war would ruin America and that it would be futile as well as wicked to intervene."⁴² As discussed earlier, it is difficult to accurately measure the effectiveness of any propaganda. We may never know just how much the isolationists were influenced by the work of Dr. Goebbels. As will be examined later in this paper, Goebbels apparently enjoyed some degree of success against his targeted American audience.

During the early years of the climb to power by the Nazis, Dr. Goebbels made extensive use of black (covert) propaganda within the United States by using "renegade Americans" to "persuade the American people that Germany had neither the strength nor the intention to hurt anyone."⁴³ After 1 September 1939, and the invasion of Poland, although renegade Americans continued to be used, the lack of strength or intention approach was used less frequently. Dr. Goebbels and his renegade Americans aimed Nazi radio broadcasts at the United States audience every day from 6:00 p.m. to 1:15 a.m. during the period 1 April 1933 until 9:29 p.m. on 24 April 1945.⁴⁴

Paul Linebarger summarized the three basic propaganda accomplishments achieved by the Germans prior to and during World War II as follows"

1. Made large sections of world opinion believe that the world's future was a choice between Communism and Facism.

2. Made each victim seem the last.
3. Used outright fright.⁴⁵

Recognizing that the motion picture represented a potentially powerful propaganda tool, Hitler instructed Leni Riefenstahl to make such a film. Riefenstahl, a highly successful German filmmaker, subsequently produced "the classic, powerhouse propaganda film"⁴⁶ - Triumph of the Will. "The subject of the film is the 1934 Nazi Party Congress. Staged annually at Nuremberg, the congress was a series of speeches by Nazi leaders, reviews of their uniformed followers, and mass rallies involving thousands of people."⁴⁷ The film was "used to create the impression of Nazi strength and discipline."⁴⁸ Triumph of the Will is "actually the filming of a propaganda subject by a non-Nazi, a woman whose appointment by Hitler to make the film was resented by the professional propagandists in the Nazi hierarchy. The result is a fascinating expression of one individual's impression of the Hitler movement. The complete dominance of one man's personality over an entire nation is forcefully conveyed to the viewer's awareness."⁴⁹ To the modern viewer the film is obviously bold, blatant propaganda. However, the German viewer of the 1930's remembered well the national humiliation following defeat in World War I and was in the midst of a terrible depression. He had no potatoes, pride, prestige, or power. Hitler promised all of these, and more. Those things which are bold and blatant today, may not have been so obvious to the vulnerable of yesterday.

PROPAGANDA VERSUS EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

"In a dictatorship, the masses must be deceived; in a democracy, they must be educated."⁵⁰ However, "the line between a campaign of propaganda and a campaign of education is admittedly a fine and wavering one."⁵¹ As Elmer Davis described his work with the Office of War Information during World War II, "propaganda is a word in bad odor in this country, but there is no public hostility to the idea of education as such, and we regard this part of our job as education."⁵²

Many different authors have attempted to define the distinction between what constitutes propaganda and what constitutes a program of education or information. Two of these authors, E. D. Martin and James Warburg, have provided explanations that are particularly useful. According to Martin, "Education aims at independence of judgment. Propaganda offers ready-made opinions for the unthinking herd. Education and propaganda are directly opposed both in aim and methods."⁵³ In explaining the purpose for both, Warburg stated that "The purpose of spreading information is to promote the functioning of man's reason. The purpose of propaganda is to mobilize certain of man's emotions in such a way that they will dominate the reason - not necessarily with evil design."⁵⁴

The freedoms available to the people of an open, democratic society provide the mechanisms for programs of information and education. Such programs are essential because "in modern American times our greatest national resource is an intelligent

people."⁵⁵ As he discussed the importance of information programs to the American people, Elmer Davis explained that "the better they understand what this war [World War II] is about, the harder they will work and fight to win it."⁵⁶ This was the idea that Frank Capra would eventually build into his "Why We Fight" series.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

WORLD WAR I

Writing about propaganda, Michael Choukas explained that "It was during the first World War that the word was further extended to cover all efforts and methods to mislead, to tear down as well as build up group morale, to influence and in every manner to direct and control the thoughts and acts of people."⁵⁷

On 6 April 1917, the United States declared war against Germany. A week later, 13 April 1917, the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy sent a letter to President Wilson recommending the creation of a Committee on Public Information. The purpose of the organization, as they explained, would be to "assume the publication of all the vital facts of national defense."⁵⁸ President Wilson directed that such a committee be formed under the chairmanship of George Creel, a journalist. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the committee became known as the Creel Committee.

As Kingsley Martin explained, "in 1914 the ordinary civilian

knew little of the war and could only be persuaded to enlist if he was sure that something completely devilish was loose in the world."⁵⁹ The war "raised issues that had to be fought out in the hearts and minds of people as well as on the actual firing line."⁶⁰ The Creel Committee "sought first to unite American public opinion behind the war."⁶¹ The Committee "sponsored books, lectures and through its Division of Films, motion pictures to arouse the public against Germany."⁶²

In his Complete Report submitted to the President on 1 June 1919, George Creel summarized the operations of the Committee on Public Information. He stated that his "primary purpose was to drive home the absolute justice of America's cause, the absolute selflessness of America's aims ... we sought the verdict of mankind by truth telling ... we did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with lies and corruptions. Our work was educational and informative only, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that only fair presentation of its facts was needed."⁶³

To assist in carrying the message to the American public, the Committee on Public Information used over 75,000 volunteer speakers, operating in 5,200 communities throughout the United States. They made a total of 755,190 speeches in support of the war effort.⁶⁴ Known as the Four Minute Men, they represented a "specialized publicity service giving four-minute talks by local volunteers, introduced by a standard introduction slide furnished by the Government, in the intermission at motion picture theaters in accordance with a single standard plan throughout the country"

on a "subject of national importance."⁶⁵

Creel's efforts were appreciated by the Secretary of War, Newton Baker. Speaking about the Committee on Public Information and George Creel at a dinner in Creel's honor on 29 November 1918, the Secretary said that "it was of the greatest importance that America, in this war, should be represented not merely as a strong man fully armed, but as a strong man fully armed and believing in the cause for which he is fighting ... we were fighting for ideas, and ideals, and somebody who realized that, and knew it, had to say it and keep on saying it until it was believed."⁶⁶ Creel "was convinced that he was involved in a fight for the mind of mankind" and he, and his Committee, apparently did a superb job of persuasion with the American public.⁶⁷

Although the work of George Creel and his Committee was apparently essential to the war effort and contributed significantly to national unity, he may have "oversold his product."⁶⁸ "Propaganda became a scapegoat in the postwar period of disillusion."⁶⁹

With the signing of the armistice, the Committee on Public Information was directed to cease all domestic activity. Creel felt that his work was not finished. He was concerned that the details of the armistice and post-war plans had not been sufficiently explained to the American people. "There can be no question that the Paris proceedings have never been placed before the people of the United States with any degree of clearness or

in such a manner as to put public opinion in possession of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."70

The Creel Committee was dissolved on 30 June 1919.71

PUBLIC OPINION

In a democracy, public opinion is an essential element in any major endeavor. It is something that is hard to manipulate, "awkward to describe, allusive to define, difficult to measure, and impossible to see, even though it may be felt."72

The authors of our Declaration of Independence recognized they "were taking a bold and dangerous step, they needed and wanted public opinion on their side. They believed that if they presented the facts to a candid world regarding the situation in which the American colonies found themselves and what they proposed to do about it, thinking people would consider these facts and reach a conclusion favorable to the American cause."73

Abraham Lincoln, in 1858, also understood the importance and the value of public opinion when he remarked that "With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed."74

George Creel fully understood the importance of public opinion. He firmly believed the war to be a "fight for the minds of men, for the conquest of their convictions" and that the "battle-line ran through every home in every country."75 He vigorously fought the battle for public opinion "to make our own people and all other peoples understand the causes that compelled America to take arms in defense of its liberties and free

institutions."⁷⁶ After the war, Creel wrote "Back of the firing line, back of the armies and navies, back of the great supply depots, another struggle waged with the same intensity and with almost equal significance attaching to its victories and defeats. It was the fight for the minds of men ... our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts."⁷⁷

Another great American who understood the significance of public opinion in times of peril was Edward Munson. Published in 1921, his book, The Management of Men, is filled with many pearls of wisdom and tremendous observations, most of which are just as appropriate today as they were in 1921. Munson observed that "The education of civilians for morale ends in war is of great importance. Publicity machinery must be organized for civil purposes to combat the depression that follows the reverses, difficulties and disappointments which may come. Such an organization is also necessary to fight with truth the lies, slander, calumny, doubt, suspicion and other causes of dissension which the enemy will sow with a view to weakening the common purpose."⁷⁸ Perhaps providing an early definition of what we today refer to as the national will, Munson explained that "Behind every army stands a nation. As the two, united, represent the sum total of potential force, so too, they form a single mental unit, each component of which is dependent on the courage, good will and endurance of the other."⁷⁹

"Long before anyone ever thought of a U.S. Information Service the problem has been how to influence the way people feel about the facts and the way they intend to act upon them."⁸⁰ Although the United States had declared a position of neutrality and there was still a strong isolationist sentiment throughout the country, President Franklin Roosevelt clearly recognized the importance of trying to influence public opinion. In a letter from the President to Colonel House in October 1937, he wrote "I verily believe that as time goes on we can slowly but surely make people realize that war will be a greater danger to us if we close all doors and windows than if we go out in the street and use our influence to curb the riot."⁸¹

By the time President Roosevelt had written his letter to Colonel House, the Japanese had conquered Manchuria and invaded China, the Italians had invaded Ethiopia, Hitler was firmly in power in Germany, and the Spanish Civil War was a year old. Yet American public opinion was, for the most part, still focused inward. Americans were still disillusioned with the results of the "war to end all wars" and suffering from the depression.

By 1939, the Nazis had invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland. The world realized that Neville Chamberlain had been duped by Hitler in Munich. Great Britain and France had declared war on Germany. The English had conscription and were aware of the atrocities being committed under Nazi aggression. They knew why they were fighting.⁸²

Henry Wriston, in June 1940, was asked to respond to an opinion survey of college students which alleged that American

college students "seem to hold to a belief that no ideal is worth fighting for." Wriston wrote that he could "find no evidence to support any such generalization," however, he explained that they had not heard much about the American ideal. All they had heard concerned the "shortcomings of democracy" and the ideals of "physical, material, economic determinism."⁸³ Quoting from the American Youth Commission, Wriston further argued that "The very survival of the nation depends upon the prompt establishment of conditions under which the youth of the land may have confidence in American institutions and in the American form of government."⁸⁴ Wriston's implication was that such conditions did not exist in 1940.

With the fall of France in 1940, not only had the French suffered military defeat, as a nation, they appeared to have lost the will to fight. In the United States, "concern mounted that stronger efforts needed to be made to awaken faith in democratic values and awareness of their vulnerability."⁸⁵

In the spring of 1941, President Roosevelt authorized Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, to initiate a treasury campaign "to use bonds to sell the war."⁸⁶ Morgenthau believed the bond campaign would be the "spearhead for getting people interested in the war" ... by giving everyone a "chance to have a financial stake in American democracy - an opportunity to contribute toward the defense of that democracy."⁸⁷ The bond campaign was a venture designed to build public opinion behind the war effort.

As important as it may be to be able to build or shape public opinion, it becomes equally important to be able to assess the existing attitudes and beliefs that create the public opinion. "By the summer of 1941 a Gallup Poll showed 85 percent of the people believing we would be drawn into the European war; another poll shortly before Pearl Harbor had two-thirds of the respondents predicting war with Japan shortly. The isolationist-Roosevelt-hating coalition in Congress, which bitterly fought FDR's defense measures, was out of touch with the preponderant weight of public opinion."⁸⁸

On 9 December 1941, President Roosevelt reached out to public opinion with his Fireside Chat to the American people:

The true goal we seek is far above and beyond the ugly field of battle. When we resort to force, as we now must, we are determined that this force shall be directed toward ultimate good as well as against immediate evils. The Americans are not destroyers -- we are builders.

We are now in the midst of a war, not for conquest, not for vengeance, but for a world in which this Nation, and all that this Nation represents, will be safe for our children ...

And in the difficult hours of this day -- through dark days that may be yet to come -- we will know that the vast majority of the members of the human race are on our side. Many of them are fighting with us. All of them are praying for us. For in representing our cause, we represent theirs as well -- our hope and their hope for liberty under God.⁸⁹

As Archibald MacLeish explained, "The principal battleground of this war is not the South Pacific. It is not the Middle East. It is not England, or Norway, or the Russian Steppes. It is American opinion."⁹⁰ MacLeish also warned, in an address

delivered at the Inaugural dinner of Freedom House, 19 March 1942, that "If American opinion is determined that this war shall be won, it will be won. But if American opinion is not determined, if the American people are not committed entirely and irrevocably to a complete and final victory, this war can be lost."⁹¹

Quincy Wright, in a Study of War, was fully aware of the importance of public opinion when he wrote that "Our unity is promoted by identifying the enemy as the source of all grievances of our people, by repeating and displaying symbols which represent the ideals which we share, by associating the enemy with hostility to those ideals, and by insisting on our own nobility and certainty of victory and on the enemies diabolism and certainty of defeat."⁹² His thoughts were certainly not foreign to George Creel in World War I, Archibald MacLeish in the early years of World War II, or to Frank Capra in his "Why We Fight" series.

In Living Ideas in America, Henry Commager conducted an analysis of the qualities of the American people when confronted by war. He wrote that "Americans must be convinced that the war they are fighting is just, that the cause they champion is good, and that they are not the aggressors."⁹³ Hollywood and the motion picture played a significant role in demonstrating to the public the justness of the war. One of the strongest statements of justification of the cause was provided in the pro-British film Mrs. Miniver (MGM, 1942). The final scene of the picture takes place in the rubble of a church. In this scene, the

audience hears the following: "Why in all conscience should these be the ones to suffer? Children, old people, a young girl at the height of her loveliness ... Because this is not a war of soldiers in uniform, it is a war of the people - of all the people - and it must be fought not only on the battlefield but in the heart of every man, woman and child who loves freedom."⁹⁴ Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, remarked "God bless the men and women who made this film; its effect in these trying days will be miraculous."⁹⁵ From Hollywood's position, it didn't hurt that Mrs. Miniver was the leading box office grosser of 1942.⁹⁶

In the early months of the war, although public opinion supported the war effort, there were varied opinions about the nature of the war. President Roosevelt sought suggestions for a name for the war - exactly what should the war be called. The variance in public opinion was clearly demonstrated in the suggestions provided by an April 1942 survey by Dr. Gallup:⁹⁷

War of World Freedom	26%
War of Freedom	14%
War of Liberty	13%
Anti-Dictator War	11%
War for Humanity	9%
Survival War	7%
The People's War	6%
Anti-Nazi War	5%
Total War	5%
War of Liberation	4%

ISOLATIONISTS VERSUS INTERVENTIONISTS

"The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with

them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop."⁹⁸ These words, spoken by George Washington on 17 September 1796, during his Farewell Address, represent early isolationist sentiments within the United States.

Thomas Jefferson, in a 6 December 1813 letter to Baron von Humboldt, stated that "The European nations constitute a separate division of the globe; their localities make them part of a distinct system; they have a set of interests of their own in which it is our business never to engage ourselves."⁹⁹ Further stating his case for isolationism in 1815, Jefferson wrote "The less we have to do with the amities or enmities of Europe, the better."¹⁰⁰

For most of the 19th century, isolationists had little to fear. The United States was protected by her two oceans and we were busy building a country with its supporting infrastructure. The 20th century was a different story. After flexing our muscles in the Philippines at the turn of the century, many felt it was time to enter the international arena; to pursue our Manifest Destiny. We entered World War I as a world power.

In 1916, President Wilson explained to the American people that "We are participants, whether we would or not, in the life of the world. The interests of all nations are our own also. We are partners with the rest. What affects mankind is inevitably our affair as well as the affair of Europe and of Asia."¹⁰¹

However, as Thomas Bailey summarized the results of our experience in World War I, "We got a treaty which we would not ratify, a League which we would not join, debts which we could not collect, and dictators more menacing than the Kaiser."¹⁰² "They fought a great war from 1917 to 1918 to make the world safe for democracy, and when it was over the world was less safe for democracy than it had been at any time in the past half century of so."¹⁰³ Bailey believed that President Wilson "tried to go too far and too fast, without first of all undertaking to educate the American people to their new responsibilities."¹⁰⁴

Senator Gerald P. Nye (North Dakota) was critical of American involvement in World War I. He suggested that our entry was driven solely by economic factors. As rationale for his claims, he cited the huge profits acquired by American munitions makers during the war.¹⁰⁵

Walter Millis' Road to War: America, 1914-1917 "left the indelible impression that American entry into the World War had been a tragic mistake."¹⁰⁶ The American public was repeatedly being told that we had made a big mistake.

The end of the war brought a decade of prosperity and an uneasy peace to the people of the United States. The prosperity was shattered by the dawn of the depression in 1929. "People who believed that a new era of affluence had arrived were ill-equipped to weather the harsh realities of the depression."¹⁰⁷

"Most Americans in the 1930's were neither isolationists nor interventionists. Rather than adhering to any dogmatic views of foreign policy, they simply ignored the world."¹⁰⁸ Fortune

magazine, in 1937, concluded: "The United States is definitely not international-minded. It regards foreigners as people whose business is their own, and to hell with them anyway."¹⁰⁹ After all, they still had their two oceans and many internal problems that needed resolution. As Thomas Bailey wrote in 1948, regarding the American view of foreign affairs during the 1930's, "American indifference and preoccupation are due largely to the absence of any feeling of imminent peril."¹¹⁰

Congress appeared to be representative of American sentiment at the time. Having already passed the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1936, a "joint resolution forbidding arms shipments to both Spanish loyalists and rebels passed Congress in 1937 by a count of 80 to 0 in the Senate and 408 to 1 in the House. The thunderous vote went even beyond the Gallup polls in revealing that we were not pro-Loyalist or pro-Franco but pro-stay out of war."¹¹¹ The February 1937 Gallup poll had shown American people were 22% pro-Loyalist, 12% pro-Franco, 26% neutral, and 40% without opinion.¹¹²

Fully aware of world events and the growing dangers in Europe and the Far East, President Roosevelt told the American people, on 5 October 1937, that "The peace, the freedom, and the security of 90 percent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining 10 percent, who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law." He called for collective action against and a "quarantine of the patients." He concluded his Quarantine Speech with "America hates war, America

hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace."¹¹³ However, President Roosevelt's words were troublesome to many who still believed that the affairs of the rest of the world were not our concern.

Elmer Davis, future head of the Office of War Information, understood Hitler, however, in 1938, he declared that the United States should remain aloof, because "twenty years ago we went on a crusade which would have made sense if we had got what we wanted; but we failed to find the Holy Grail, and the experience ought to have cured us of our inclination to go graining."¹¹⁴ Although he appeared to change his mind with Hitler's aggression in the summer of 1940, he did not support military involvement until December 1941.¹¹⁵

To the concern of the isolationist, the United States was slowly becoming involved in the world situation. The Neutrality Act of 1939 provided that "for the first time since the outbreak of the war, American citizens could sell arms, ammunition, and implements of war to the European belligerents provided that title was transferred before the munitions left the United States and that they were carried away in foreign ships."¹¹⁶ With the cash-and-carry policy now in effect, "Americans still clung to the illusion that the United States could protect its security by measures short of war."¹¹⁷

During the autumn of 1939, the President called a special session of Congress. During the session, the five major platforms and views held by the isolationists were identified:

1. "Our help is not needed" - Herbert Hoover

2. "It's all over. We couldn't help the Allies even if we wanted to, so let's accept a Hitler victory" - Charles Lindbergh
3. "War means abandoning democracy" - Herbert Hoover
4. "We are secure behind our oceans" - America First Committee
5. "This is just another imperialist war of power politics and does not concern us" - Senator Borah ¹¹⁸

In face of the deteriorating world situation, "the people hid their heads beneath the sand and again attempted neutrality and non-intervention in the wholesale deprivations that were taking place in the rest of the world."¹¹⁹ As the British novelist, H. G. Wells, commented, "Every time Europe looks across the Atlantic to see the American eagle, it observes only the rear end of an ostrich."¹²⁰ Great Britain was already involved in a fight for her survival.

Before 1939, Thomas Bailey observed that "our people demanded a course of shortsighted neutrality at the expense of national dignity and honored tradition."¹²¹ As a tool of promotion and persuasion, President Roosevelt approved the creation of the Office of Government Reports (OGR) in September 1939. Under the direction of Lowell Mellett, the OGR was to "pass on to the public all available information about government activities."¹²² With its focus on informational propaganda, the OGR "disseminated accurate, neutral information, while withholding adverse news."¹²³ However, throughout its short existence, the OGR "never became the propaganda organization its critics seemed to fear."¹²⁴

In December 1939, Dr. Gallup asked the American public why we had entered the conflict with Germany in 1917. The responses

still reflected great disillusionment with World War I:

- 34% - America was the victim of propaganda and selfish interests.
- 26% - America had a just and unselfish cause.
- 18% - America entered the war for its own safety.
- 8% - Other reasons.
- 14% - No opinion or undecided.¹²⁵

In September 1940, President Roosevelt hesitatingly approved the transfer of 50 World War I vintage warships to Britain, clearly demonstrating that the United States was "aligned with Britain in the struggle against Hitler."¹²⁶ A public opinion poll taken shortly after announcement of the transfer showed that 70 percent of the American people supported the destroyer deal. American opinion had begun to shift. Regarding the President's hesitation with the ship transfer, William Allen White, a Republican newspaper editor from Kansas and head of a non-Partisan Committee for Peace through Revision of the Neutrality Act, warned him in June, "You will not be able to lead the American people unless you can catch up with them."¹²⁷

By 1940, "American family life was just beginning to emerge from the Depression economically, if not psychologically."¹²⁸ Poverty was still widespread and the majority of families operated on tight budgets. The youth of 1940 had been "brought up by their parents to believe that the United States not only made a mistake in going to war before, and that in going to war, we did not achieve any worthy purpose."¹²⁹ Many still felt that "after twenty years of saying that America has no great stake in Europe which ought to lead it to give up any niggling portion of its sovereignty to a feeble League of Nations, after twenty years

when even the ideal of the World Court sponsored by America and fought for by America was sabotaged by America --- after twenty years of telling us to mind our own business --- let the rest of the world go hang."¹³⁰

As Charles Hoban Jr. commented in his 1942 book, Focus On Learning, "To a generation of high school youth raised in the school of propaganda analysis, all appeals to higher principles were simply "propaganda", and the concepts of patriotism, duty, sacrifice, freedom, justice, and charity were dismissed as "glittering generalities" which served only to disguise motives of self-interest and indulgence."¹³¹ Although public opinion and sentiment appeared to be in favor of the victims of aggression, motivating America to fight by their side offered a greater challenge.

The American people "from the days of the Declaration of Independence have valued their liberties above dollars," however, " ... the American citizen presents a puzzling contradiction. He sets great store by security, but he has generally been reluctant to take adequate measures to insure it until his enemy is on the threshold."¹³² "One idea which appears to be the most difficult to get Americans to accept either when war is impending or has just begun is that they must temporarily abandon peaceful ways and take up the sword."¹³³

By August 1940, Japanese aggression was rampant in the Far East and Hitler had seized Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. Great Britain continued to bear the brunt of the Nazi onslaught. During

August, Congress passed the first peacetime conscription act in the history of the United States. The Selective Service Act, however, limited the draftees' time of service to one year and insisted that "men drafted into the Army could not be stationed outside the Western Hemisphere."¹³⁴

Debates continued within the Congress. President Roosevelt, on 6 January 1941, presented to the people his Four Freedoms Speech --- emphasizing the significance of Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Want, Freedom of Expression, and Freedom of Religion.¹³⁵ In his Third Inaugural Address on 20 January 1941, the President assured America that "Democracy is not dying. To us there has come a time, in the midst of swift happenings, to pause for a moment and take stock --- to recall what our place in history has been, and to rediscover what we are and what we may be. If we do not, we risk the real peril of isolation, the real peril of inaction."¹³⁶

Strong isolationist factions continued to warn of direct involvement in the war. Isolationist Senator Hiram W. Johnson (California) declared, in 1941, that "the conflict raging in China and Europe had no conceivable relation to our interests."¹³⁷ Also in 1941, the American hero, Charles A. Lindbergh, speaking at the Lend-Lease Bill hearings in Congress, observed that we were moving "one more step away from democracy and the democratic system ... and one step closer to war."¹³⁸ The congressional debates ended on 11 March 1941, with the passage of the Lend-Lease Act.¹³⁹

In what he may have intended to be a comparison between the activities of Congress and the American people, Thomas Bailey wrote, in 1948, that "the more one knows about the obstacles one is up against, whether in domestic or foreign affairs, the more inclined one is to hesitate, weigh all factors, and then move cautiously, if at all. But that is not the American way."¹⁴⁰

Several studios in Hollywood were beginning to get more active in the affairs of the world. On 3 July 1941, Warner Brothers released Sergeant York, a film of transitional importance to the American public and current events. Jeanine Basinger, in The World War II Combat Film, wrote that "its power lies in its ability to persuade viewers that it is the story of a nonprofessional soldier who is drawn into the fight out of necessity and appropriateness. It is a very important film of this transition period, because it teaches us we must fight. We don't want to, but we have to, just like York."¹⁴¹ The film, through the World War I hero, "lays considerable emphasis on the man's internal struggle between his patriotism and his pacifism" and it "explains that violence is sometimes necessary to preserve our free way of life."¹⁴²

Throughout 1941, the British continued their fight for survival. Francis Williams, the English author, wrote that "This is a war of ideas ... we are fighting not simply for our own survival but for the survival and future of democracy."¹⁴³ As Thomas Bailey explained, these were words that touched the hearts of the American public: "The sympathy of the American people has invariably gone out to democracies whenever they have become

involved in a war with monarchies or dictatorships."¹⁴⁴ To the chagrin of the British, it was one thing to sympathize with a cause, it was yet another to fight for it. In his description of an American, Henry Commager observed that "He was not easily excited to war, but when war came he fought hard ... he was reluctant to take the offensive and loathe to be maneuvered into the position of aggressor ... he fought best when sure his cause was just."¹⁴⁵

Isolationist sentiment continued. In a September 1941 radio broadcast, Charles Lindbergh warned the American people that "The greatest advocates of bringing us into the war are the British, the Jews, and President Roosevelt."¹⁴⁶

"Roosevelt was determined to avoid repeating the apparent mistakes of national policy during World War I. Mindful of the calculated hysteria embedded in the propaganda of fear and hate of Woodrow Wilson's Committee on Public Information ... he was initially opposed to the creation of any federal propaganda service. He changed his mind only with reluctance and only under pressure from advisers, especially Eleanor Roosevelt and Fiorello La Guardia. Their primary aim in 1941 was to provide an adequate flow of information to the American people in order to explain the growing national involvement in war-related programs, especially the build-up of the armed services and procurement for lend-lease. The President consented to a policy intended to give Americans those facts, which would presumably speak for themselves."¹⁴⁷ The President's consent gave birth, by executive

order on 24 October 1941, to the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF), within the Office for Emergency Management.¹⁴⁸

On 26 October 1941, Archibald MacLeish was appointed as the Director of OFF. His task from the President was "to facilitate a widespread and accurate understanding of the status and progress of the national defense effort and of the defense policies and activities of the Government."¹⁴⁹ In practice, MacLeish would soon learn that he had been given much responsibility, but little authority for execution.

MacLeish "brought to his desk a poet's humane sensibilities, a basic faith in sweet reason tempered by a growing alarm about the advance of facism, and a large reputation as an advocate of American involvement in the war against Hitler."¹⁵⁰ However, Harold Lasswell, a major influence within OFF, believed that propaganda had to have "a large element of fake in it ... That only truthful statements should be used seems an impractical maxim."¹⁵¹ MacLeish persisted that a strategy of truth was the best course. He summarized his beliefs on 2 December 1941, in an address delivered at a dinner in honor of Edward R. Murrow, Chief of the European staff of the Columbia Broadcasting System:

... the American people themselves are not afraid to know what they are up against. They were not afraid twenty-five years ago or fifty years before that or ninety years earlier. They were not afraid when you, Murrow, told them the truth about London in the terrible winter of '40-'41. So long as the American people are told and told truly and told candidly what they have to face they will never be afraid. And they will face it.¹⁵²

Prior to 7 December 1941, "the American attitude to the war in Europe was partly interested and partly disinterested but

always cautious and invariably confused."¹⁵³ The Japanese attack ended the debate between isolationists and interventionists. Reflecting the mood of the country, isolationist Senator Wheeler asserted that "The only thing now to do is lick hell out of them."¹⁵⁴

MORALE

"A civilian cannot be changed into a soldier merely by putting him into uniform, providing him with a weapon and instructing him in the rudiments of military discipline ... there must obviously be within him some powerful motive capable of dominating many of the ordinary weaknesses of human nature, of so controlling his will that the victory of the army of which he is a part becomes the supreme object of his desire."¹⁵⁵ Edward Munson went on to explain that the purpose of morale work was to "make troops more effective, creating a discipline which is voluntary and enthusiastic rather than enforced, stimulating and centering the minds and wills of individuals upon desired ends. Its ultimate aim is military success."¹⁵⁶

To improve morale during World War I, General Leonard Wood and Brigadier General Edward Munson "visualized a military establishment in which indoctrination activities would play an important role."¹⁵⁷ Created in 1918, the Morale Branch was to "function through the spread of truth. It has nothing to conceal. Its ideals are those of right, truth, honor, patriotism

and justice."¹⁵⁸

Twenty years later the leaders of the Army were again faced with the task of trying to instill a warrior spirit into the citizens of a peaceloving democracy. In 1940, the United States Army was composed of 267,767 soldiers; the eighteenth largest army in the world.¹⁵⁹ One year later it had expanded to one and a half million.¹⁶⁰

To assist with the mobilization, orientation lectures, under the supervision of the Bureau of Public Relations, General Staff Department, began in 1940.¹⁶¹ "The background of world events which led to war was a fascinating subject to historians and students of world politics, but to soldiers bone-tired from their initial encounters with basic training it proved baffling, bewildering, or just boring. In any event, lectures were too slow, too limited, to meet the demand for mass indoctrination."¹⁶²

Early in 1941, the Secretaries of War and the Navy appointed a Joint Committee on Welfare and Recreation. Frederick Osborne (later commissioned brigadier general) was selected to head the committee. His mission was to "coordinate the leisure-time activities of the recruits."¹⁶³

The morale needs of the Army were the primary subject of discussion at the Conference of Army Public Relations Officers, held in Washington, D.C., 11-14 March 1941. As Secretary of War Henry Stimson explained to the conference attendees, "The army of such a country does not need to be bolstered up by false propaganda. What they want is to be sure of the fair truth; and,

if they feel they are getting that, they will carry through to the end. Therefore, it is vital that both the Army and the people behind it must know the real basic facts free from any false exaggerations either one way or the other."¹⁶⁴ On 14 March 1941, a new Morale Branch was created; it would function "directly under the supervision and control of the Chief of Staff."¹⁶⁵

During the 1940-1941 period, numerous field exercises and maneuvers were conducted in an attempt to improve the training and readiness of the much expanded Army. General Marshall, however, "became conscious that the ranks were densely ignorant of the tactical purpose of the maneuvers in which they themselves were engaged and resultingly critical of their own and higher commanders. To remedy this situation to some degree the Chief of Staff impressed on the army commanders the good that would be served by having company officers inform their men of the maneuver situation in which they were a part, and of the value of maneuvers, even with simulated arms, in training the command itself."¹⁶⁶ He sent his guidance to the Commanding Generals, First through Fourth Armies, in a memorandum on 26 June 1941, explaining that "we will have no trouble with morale if the men themselves understand what they are doing and the reasons why they are doing it."¹⁶⁷

On 18 August 1941, Congress voted on a critical issue involving the Selective Service Act of 1940. The original act had authorized the Army to draft soldiers for twelve months of

active duty service. The twelve month period was about to expire. After a bitter debate, Congress approved an eighteen month extension of the draftees' time of service. The extension was approved by a vote of 203 for, 202 against.¹⁶⁹

Also on 18 August 1941, Life magazine published an article stating that "Army morale was extremely low, most draftees had little awareness of why they were serving or of events abroad that were affecting the country."¹⁶⁹ As a result of this article, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, publisher of the New York Times, sent a team of reporters to several Army installations to investigate conditions. Upon conclusion of his investigation, he found that Life had understated the problem. Sulzberger did not publish the results of his investigation. He sent his findings to President Roosevelt and to General Marshall, with a recommendation that a troop indoctrination program be established.¹⁷⁰

In the fall of 1941, General Marshall again "complained of low morale among draftees, which he traced to apathy in the general public."¹⁷¹ General Marshall asked Frederick Osborne to establish an indoctrination agency.¹⁷² On 9 December 1941, Brigadier General Osborne, Chief of the Morale Branch of the War Department, called Colonel Schlosberg of the Army Pictorial Service to discuss the possible use of orientation films for indoctrination purposes. Colonel Schlosberg "agreed to try to find a qualified person from the motion picture industry to be commissioned in the Signal Corps to direct a series of orientation films."¹⁷³

"Until a purpose has been established, no special reason will be apparent why the war should be fought or the individual incur danger."¹⁷⁴ Edward Munson's advice, provided in 1921, was again alive in the indoctrination program.

In December 1941, "the navy was crippled, the army was an expanding swarm of civilians without sufficient equipment, training, or experienced officers; and industry was only partially converted from peacetime production."¹⁷⁵ The nation had been violated, was angry, yet frustrated that we were not ready or able to strike back. "In the spring of 1942, surveys indicated that some seventeen million Americans "in one way or another" opposed the prosecution of the war. That summer, after a series of American defeats in the Pacific, public morale sagged."¹⁷⁶

Archibald MacLeish reflected on the frustration within the country. In an address delivered before the American Library Association on 26 June 1942, he attempted to lift sagging morale and called for rapid military action: "Wars are won by those who mean to win them, not by those who intend to avoid losing them, and victories are gained by those who strike, not by those who parry."¹⁷⁷

"Key personnel with the ability to evaluate the situation realized that the war would be long and costly. The initial fury from the shock of the attack would wear thin, and something more in the form of a commitment to lasting values would be needed if national morale was to be sustained."¹⁷⁸

In a review of early combat films, Jeanine Basinger noted that most of these films demonstrated that "the obvious interpretation is that the war brings a need for us to work together as a group, to set aside individual needs, and to bring our melting pot tradition together to function as a true democracy since, after all, that is what we are fighting for: the Democratic way of life."¹⁷⁹

Richard Lingeman, in Don't You Know There's a War On?, wrote that "As the first six months of the real war progressed and our troops suffered a series of defeats unprecedented in our history, the tough individualist was abandoned; now it was time to depict the American fighting man. Hollywood tried to radiate a grim seriousness from the screen in its combat pictures which would awaken the slumbering American public to its responsibilities while bolstering its morale and puncturing complacency and overconfidence."¹⁸⁰ Hollywood had to find a way to glorify American defeats.

As Bernard Dick observed, "The fall of Bataan was a problem for Hollywood: how could defeat, much less the largest single capitulation in America's history, be ennobled?"¹⁸¹ Hollywood responded with Bataan, a powerful motion picture. Released by MGM in April 1943, Robert Taylor played a sergeant in charge of a small unit fighting the Japanese during the American retreat to the Bataan Peninsula.¹⁸² After all of the members of his unit have been killed, he "delivers his own patriotic funeral oration while machine-gunning a horde of attacking Japanese:

Maybe it don't seem to do much good to fight

here but we figure the men who died here may have done more than anyone to save the world. It don't matter much where a man dies as long as he dies for freedom.¹⁸³

Bataan represented a powerful display of propaganda. "Not only are the Japanese referred to with insulting epithets, but screen time is devoted to discussions about why we are fighting."¹⁸⁴ It was also a call for unity, teamwork, and cooperation. The thirteen soldiers in Robert Taylor's unit were volunteers. They represented a totally diverse mixture - separated geographically, racially, and intellectually.¹⁸⁵ The racial and ethnic integration presented a winning formula that began to emerge from this type of war movie. These films were frequently based on the "typical platoon which inevitably comprised the tough sergeant, the rich kid, the ex-con, a Jew, a Polish-American, an Italian-American, and a Black."¹⁸⁶

Early World War II combat films were also generally supportive of the Army indoctrination themes:

1. Need to work or fight harder.
2. Creating abhorrence of the enemy.
3. Reassure soldiers concerning things of personal concern.¹⁸⁷

By October 1943, troop indoctrination sessions were required for all soldiers.¹⁸⁸ For the remainder of the war, this type of training was referred to as indoctrination or mental training. After the war, and throughout the 1950's, the terminology was changed to orientation and non-military education. The substance remained unchanged. Education became the acceptable term until the mid-1960's. In 1967, informing became the "sole acceptable official function of the Troop Information Program."¹⁸⁹

Although difficult to measure, the efforts of the indoctrination programs during World War II appeared to be quite successful. Paul Linebarger, in Psychological Warfare, agreed with the final product (good American morale), but disputed the manner in which it was obtained: "The American Army did not employ defensive psychological warfare in World War II. Troop indoctrination was extremely spotty. American morale remained good; not because it was made good by professionals who knew their job, but because Providence and the American people had brought up a generation of young men who started out well and - since the situation never approached hopelessness - kept on going with their spirits high."¹⁹⁰

Regardless of its origin, the fact that morale was an essential ingredient of victory, has not been questioned.

USE OF THE MOTION PICTURE

Charles Hoban Jr., in his 1942 book, Focus On Learning, attempted to summarize and interpret the results of a five year study in the use of motion pictures in schools. He concluded that "propaganda is a legitimate role of the motion picture, and that, consciously or unconsciously, many motion pictures are highly propagandistic. The danger of propaganda motion pictures is not simply that they are propagandistic but that they may propagandize undesirable doctrine and may distort the truth regarding these doctrines."¹⁹¹ The motion picture was clearly

recognized as a powerful medium of mass communication.

The same Charles Hoban, in 1946, wrote about the Army use of film in Movies that Teach:

Behind the development in Army films was a broad concept of the dynamics of human behavior, an empirical understanding of the reasons why people behave as they do, and a positive approach to the direction and control of human behavior ... Its films ... dealt not only with what men must know, but also what men must do and why they must do it. In order that its men be brought to a mental state where they were willing to make the sacrifices they were called upon to make and to perform the duties they were called upon to perform. The Army made and used films which showed the nobility of the cause in which they were engaged, the morality of individual conduct under stress of strong emotion, the progress of their fellow men in furthering the cause in other ways and the principles and performances of technical operations that must be learned and performed with speed and efficiency to ensure the triumph of the cause the men were called upon to defend.¹⁹²

As explained by Francis Harmon in an address delivered in Oklahoma City on 9 June 1943, there were many varied types of films used in the "fight for freedom":

1. War information films (includes Frank Capra's series)
2. Newsreels
3. Training films
4. Films for combat areas
5. United Nations films
6. Good Neighbor films
7. Morale films ¹⁹³

"All Army motion pictures during World War II. for whatever purpose, were produced either by the Signal Corps itself or by Hollywood under commercial contract."¹⁹⁴ Throughout the war, soldiers spent over ten million hours of time watching War Department films.¹⁹⁵

In addition to the films produced by the War Department,

Hollywood continued to contribute to the war effort. As Dorothy B. Jones wrote, in 1945, "Traditionally, the motion picture industry has maintained that the primary function of the Hollywood film is to entertain. However, in a world shattered by conflict it has become increasingly evident that only through solidly founded and dynamic understanding among the peoples of the world can we establish and maintain an enduring peace. At the same time it has become clear that the film can play an important part in the creation of One World."¹⁹⁶

The motion picture was an invaluable participant in the fight for freedom. It was used to entertain and to inform, to promote and to reinforce, and to persuade. "The war brought the most sustained and intimate involvement yet seen in America between the government and a medium of mass culture as the Roosevelt administration applied pressure on Hollywood to make feature films that were propaganda vehicles."¹⁹⁷

The motion picture also filled a basic need traditional with the American people --- the need to believe in the justness of the cause for which we were fighting. As noted by William Murphy, in his essay on "World War II Propaganda Films", "No other country felt the need to explain the war in the moral terms evident in American films."¹⁹⁸

HOLLYWOOD MOVIES

During the post World War I era, the motion picture industry

was booming. As it entered the Depression years of the 1930's, Hollywood continued to grow. The price of admission to a movie was still relatively inexpensive and most films provided the viewer with entertainment, as well as an opportunity to escape from his daily worries and troubles. For the most part, Hollywood avoided making political films, because "politics translates into controversy and bad box office."¹⁹⁹

In addition to the domestic audience, Hollywood had a huge foreign market. The industry had been particularly cautious with any subject which might be offensive or controversial, because they were "nervous about their overseas market ... they go to great lengths to avoid offending foreign customers."²⁰⁰ As explained by Brock Garland, in War Movies, during the "late 30s, the film industry shied away from controversial subjects such as the Spanish Civil War, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia and Austria."²⁰¹ During this period, "any war propaganda contained in a Hollywood film had to be incidental to the entertainment."²⁰²

As the decade of the 1930's passed, much of the sentiment in Hollywood, as in the rest of the country, began to shift toward "extolling the virtues of democracy and exposing the horrors and savagery of totalitarian regimes."²⁰³ In spite of the shift by several producers, there remained a considerable isolationist faction. In fact, "of the more than one thousand films produced by Hollywood in the three years between Munich and Pearl Harbor, only fifty were anti-Nazi in theme."²⁰⁴

Warner Brothers made the "first overtly anti-Nazi American

film" in 1939. Confessions of a Nazi Spy was the first Hollywood film to identify the enemy and to mention Adolf Hitler.²⁰⁵ Edward G. Robinson, playing the part of an FBI agent, clearly indicated that Germany was at war with the United States. The final scene of the movie told the viewing public that "America must learn from Europe - we must be prepared to defend our Constitution and Bill of Rights."²⁰⁶ The film marked a significant departure from a "sole reliance on the pleasant and profitable course of entertainment."²⁰⁷ Confessions of a Nazi Spy represented a definite shift toward intervention on the part of Hollywood.

By the summer of 1940, much of the Hollywood foreign market had fallen victim to totalitarian aggression. Then, on 17 August 1940, "Germany banned American films from areas under its control" and Italy followed suit ... "Hollywood took its gloves off."²⁰⁸

The popularity of the films made by Hollywood "during America's last year of peace alarmed isolationists."²⁰⁹ "Despite the caution it [Hollywood] had displayed in selecting its war stories and despite the generous measure of compensating entertainment values it had seen fit to provide, the American film industry found its worst fears realized."²¹⁰ "On 1 August 1941, two isolationist senators, Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota and Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri, introduced a resolution [Senate Resolution 152] calling for a thorough and complete investigation of any propaganda disseminated by motion pictures

and radio or any other activity of the motion picture industry to influence public sentiment in the direction of participation by the United States in the present European war."²¹¹

During the 1941 Senate subcommittee hearings involving Senate Resolution 152, Wendell Willkie, in defense of the film industry, told the Senate, "If you charge that the motion picture industry as a whole and its leading executives as individuals are opposed to the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, if this is the case, there need be no investigation. We abhor everything Hitler represents."²¹²

The investigation continued. Hollywood was feeling anxiety similar to that experienced by George Creel, several years earlier: "... domestic disloyalty, the hostility of neutrals, and the lies of the German propagandists, all combined, were not half so hard to combat as the persistent malignance of a partisan group in the Congress of the United States."²¹³

Investigation of Senate Resolution 152 was terminated by the events of early December 1941.

On 17 December 1941, President Roosevelt appointed Lowell Mellett as Coordinator of Government Films.²¹⁴ Mellett believed that "freedom of the screen is as important as freedom of press or of speech."²¹⁵ He immediately formed the War Activities Committee (WAC) with leading executives from the motion picture industry: "its purpose was to channel government suggestions for film projects to the studios without having to take direct control of them."²¹⁶

Through the WAC, the government provided six basic patterns

for pictures related to the war. Guidance was provided in each of the following areas:

1. Issues of the war itself
2. Nature of the enemy
3. United Nations and its peoples
4. Pressing need for increased production
5. The home front
6. The fighting forces ²¹⁷

With the country now at war, Mellett spoke to the producers of Hollywood concerning their pre-war efforts and his hopes for future cooperation between the government and the film industry: "Whether it was foresight, intuition or instinct, you saw what was happening in the world. You couldn't have done more in your efforts to educate people. The government, of course, was pleased but we were unable to advertise what you were doing. Some misguided people in the Senate advertised the job you did, however ... Now nobody is concerned if the government frankly engages in such cooperation. Now we can help you in your work."²¹⁸

The government apparently did recognize the contributions of the industry to the war effort. "The Selective Service System ruled that motion pictures were an essential industry", exempting its employees from the draft. However, the Screen Actors Guild was wary of such favored status. "In any case, by October 1942, 2,700 men and women from the motion picture industry, or 12 percent of the total number employed at the start of the year, had entered the armed forces."²¹⁹

In recognition of the importance of Hollywood, President Roosevelt stated that "The American motion picture is one of our

most effective mediums in informing and entertaining our citizens."²²⁰ However, their contributions were not without criticism. "The movies, Archibald MacLeish concluded, were "escapist and delusive", a contributing factor to the failure of Americans to understand either the origins or the objectives of the war."²²¹

As Thomas Bohn compared the films of World War II with the films of World War I, he felt that in the later films "There was much, if not more, emphasis on information and persuasion. However, the form of persuasion was seemingly more objective, relying more on acceptance of facts objectively presented than the frank emotional appeals so common to World War I films."²²² Presentation of current and accurate facts about the world situation would cause the viewer to reach a rational conclusion.

One of the difficulties faced by the government and by Hollywood was the alliance of the United States with the Soviet Union. How was the American public to react to an alliance with a strange foreign power that had, in 1939, signed a nonaggression pact with Hitler? The task was given to Warner Brothers.

"According to Jack Warner, he received a telephone call from his old friend, the President of the United States, who asked him to make a film from the book Mission to Moscow, written by the former American Ambassador to Russia, Joseph E. Davies. 'We have to keep Stalin fighting,' explained Roosevelt, 'and this picture of yours can make a case for him with the American people'."²²³

Released in 1943, Mission to Moscow attempted to look at the

world from a Russian point of view. It represented a sincere plea for greater understanding and closer cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Government.²²⁴ It also attempted to fill an informational void by feeding a "genuine hunger on the part of millions of Americans to know more about their heroic but little understood and still mistrusted allies."²²⁵

Reactions to the film were predictably diverse. As Richard Lingeman observed, "Here was a solid, successful American businessman saying the Reds weren't so evil after all."²²⁶ However, to some it was "the most notorious example of propaganda in the guise of entertainment ever produced by Hollywood."²²⁷

We were involved in a war against totalitarian regimes, and we were fighting with the forces of friendly nations. How we portrayed our allies to the American public was important to public opinion and support for the war effort and to the maintenance of national will and morale. "To focus too much attention on the chinks in our allies' armor is just what our enemies might wish. Perhaps it is realistic, but it is also going to be confusing to American audiences."²²⁸

The focus of many of the Hollywood films produced during the war included numerous positive, pro-American themes. These themes included freedom, democracy, patriotism, survival, and self-defense. The country was shown to be prospering through our industrial progress and strength. The war was depicted as a peoples' war, with everybody doing their fair share and sacrificing for the war effort. Problems between labor unions and management were avoided, as were most other social problems.

Most films attempted to avoid offense to any group within the country. Although "the United States' armed forces were integrated on the screen many years before they were integrated on the battlefield", racial issues were also generally avoided.²²⁹ "The genius of Hollywood was its ability to capture not American reality but American aspirations and make them seem real."²³⁰

Concerned with how America would be portrayed to the foreign audience, the Office of Censorship, on 11 December 1942, issued a new code which included tighter restrictions and controls on films.²³¹ Ten years later, the Supreme Court would rule that film came under the protection of the First Amendment, effectively killing the influence of censorship on films.²³²

In recognition of the influence of Hollywood on the prosecution of the war, Josef Stalin commented to Wendell Willkie in 1942, that "If I could control the medium of American motion pictures, I would need nothing else in order to convert the entire world to Communism."²³³

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

In a letter from Archibald MacLeish to President Roosevelt on 16 May 1942, the final paragraph advised the President that "A full knowledge of what we are fighting for, coupled with assurance that we can win our goals, can be a positive measure in winning the war."²³⁴ Four weeks later, the President directed

the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI).

The President selected Elmer Davis to head the organization. By Executive Order 9182, Davis' mission was to "formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government."²³⁵ Elmer Davis viewed the establishment of OWI as "recognition of the right of the American people and of all other peoples opposing the Axis aggressors to be truthfully informed."²³⁶

The functions of the Office of Facts and Figures and the Office of Government Reports were consolidated under OWI, as were the functions of several other organizations. Lowell Mellett retained his responsibilities with the film industry as the Chief of the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP), within OWI.²³⁷

Davis' plan was to adopt a strategy of truth: "... we are going to tell nothing but the truth, and we intend to see that the American people get just as much of it as genuine considerations of military security will permit."²³⁸ However, Hollywood was apprehensive about the new organization. They feared too much governmental regulation of their products. Specifically, they feared censorship.

From the BMP, Lowell Mellett "told producers how to insert important war propaganda into even the most traditional of pictures,"²³⁹ Before they agreed to produce any film, "OWI asked film makers to consider seven questions":

1. Will this picture help win the war?
2. What war information problem does it seek to clarify, dramatize, or interpret?
3. If it is an "escape" picture, will it harm the war effort by creating a false picture of America, her Allies, or the world we live in?
4. Does it merely use the war as the basis for a profitable picture, contributing nothing of real significance to the war effort and possibly lessening the effort of other pictures of more importance?
5. Does it contribute something new to our understanding of the world conflict and the various forces involved, or has the subject already been adequately covered?
6. When the picture reaches its maximum circulation on the screen, will it reflect conditions as they are and fill a need current at that time, or will it be outdated?
7. Does the picture tell the truth or will the young people of today have reason to say they were misled by propaganda?²⁴⁰

The last question was an attempt to avoid some of the adverse experiences of World War I. As James Warburg explained, part of the problem was that "people of the United States had been miseducated about the meaning of propaganda. They had come to believe that propaganda meant merely official falsification and that, as such, it was unworthy of a decent, democratic state, even in war-time."²⁴¹

In addition to these seven questions, OWI "issued a constantly updated manual instructing the studios in how to assist the war effort, sat in on story conferences with Hollywood's top brass, reviewed the screenplays of every major studio (except the recalcitrant Paramount), pressured the movie

makers to change scripts and even scrap pictures when they found objectional material, and sometimes wrote dialogue for key speeches."²⁴²

As Davis explained, "the OWI is a war agency, which owes its existence solely to the war, and was established to serve as one of the instruments by which the war will be won."²⁴³ He firmly believed he was in the information providing business; flatly denying that his organization was responsible for maintaining national morale: "... in my opinion there is no need of such an agency. A document recently issued up on Capital Hill contained the following statement":

There are no privations which our people will not willingly endure, no sacrifices which will not be unflinchingly faced, as long as they are truthfully informed as to the reasons for making such demands on them.²⁴⁴

Through the motion picture, the OWI in Hollywood represented "the most comprehensive and sustained attempt to change the concept of a mass medium in American history."²⁴⁵ The Domestic Branch and the Overseas Operations Branch "sought to influence public opinion both at home and abroad."²⁴⁶ However, in a nation still distrustful of the influence of propaganda, the Domestic Branch of the OWI would eventually suffer the same fate as its predecessor, the Creel Committee.

In May 1943, OWI and the Congress were involved in a bitter struggle over OWI appropriations for 1944. On 18 May 1943, the House authorized no funds for the Domestic Branch. In a 15 July compromise, the House and the Senate agreed on an appropriation of \$2,750,000 for the Domestic Branch, but the Office of

Publications and the BMP were effectively shut down. The BMP appropriation had been slashed from \$1,300,000 to \$50,000.²⁴⁷

"The action of the Congress had returned to the media and to those who bought advertising space the whole field of domestic propaganda, a field they had monopolized in peacetime and the government had entered, when the war began, only partially, temporarily, and superficially."²⁴⁸

In fact, OWI influence in Hollywood did not cease with the demise of the BMP or of the Domestic Branch. The Overseas Operations Branch still controlled influence abroad. Working in close cooperation with the Censorship Board, export licenses were denied to films that were not considered appropriate for the foreign audience. This became an increasingly important hurdle for Hollywood as the war progressed and countries - foreign film markets - were liberated.²⁴⁹ "Where foreign pressure or OWI influence failed to stop an offending item, the Office of Censorship was still waiting to head it off at the gateway by denying an export license."²⁵⁰

"The BMP read 390 screenplays from September 1943 to August 1944 (the last period for which records have been found), and recorded changes to meet their objections in 71 percent of the cases. The agency reviewed 1,652 scripts before Truman abolished it effective 31 August 1945."²⁵¹

The OWI experienced many internal philosophical conflicts over the use of the "club of censorship" and the "philosophy of free communications."²⁵² As Elmer Davis explained, "... a

democracy may see fit to curtail its own liberties in its own long-term interest ... if curtailment should be abused, we have recourse at the ballot box."²⁵³

"Although President Truman cited OWI for an "outstanding contribution to victory" as he abolished the wartime agency ... he and others, both in and out of the agency, now had a clearer idea of the contributions propaganda could make."²⁵⁴

FRANK CAPRA
Major, Signal Corps

"As one rueful American put it ... Europe had been occupied, Russia and China invaded, Britain bombed; only the United States among the great powers was fighting this war on imagination alone."²⁵⁵

Born on 18 May 1897, Frank Capra arrived at Ellis Island from Sicily during the summer of 1903.²⁵⁶ His climb to fame was, in many respects, representative of the American dream. From a poor immigrant family, he worked his way through school, paying for his education and supporting his family. He set high goals for himself and, through hard work, achieved his goals. By the mid-1930's he had become a very successful and highly respected Hollywood motion picture director.

In the fall of 1938, Capra toured Washington, D.C., in preparation for the making of his film, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. After a visit to the Lincoln Memorial he wrote, "I left the Lincoln Memorial with this growing conviction about our

film: The more uncertain are the people of the world, the more their hard-won freedoms are scattered and lost in the winds of chance, the more they need a ringing statement of America's democratic ideals."²⁵⁷ Mr. Smith Goes to Washington became such a ringing statement.

The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Capra was sworn into the U.S. Army as a major. He wrote, in his autobiography, that he was commissioned into the Signal Corps and assigned to Special Services (Morale Branch) "at the personal request of one General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff."²⁵⁸

Major Capra reported to the Pentagon for duty, as directed, in February 1942. In The Name Above the Title, Capra recalled the details of his initial visit with General Marshall: "He told me we were raising a very large army - around eight million - and that we were going to try to make soldiers out of boys who, for the most part, had never seen a gun. They were being uprooted from civilian life and thrown into Army camps. And the reason why was hazy in their minds." In the words of the Chief of Staff:

Within a short time, we will have a huge citizens' army in which civilians will outnumber professional soldiers by some fifty to one. We may think this is our greatest strength, but the high commands of Germany and Japan are counting heavily on it being our greatest weakness. Our boys will be too soft, they say, too pleasure-loving, too undisciplined to stand up against their highly trained, highly indoctrinated, highly motivated professional armies. They are sure the spirit, the morale of their individual soldier is superior to ours. He has something to fight and die for - victory for the superman; establishing the new age of the superstate. The spoils of such a victory are a heady incentive. Now, how can we

counter their superman incentive? Well, we are certain that if anyone starts shooting at Americans, singly or collectively, Americans will fight back like tigers. Why? Because Americans have a long record of survival when their skins are at stake. What is in question is this: Will young, freewheeling American boys take the iron discipline of wartime training; endure the killing cold of the Arctic, the hallucinating heat of the desert, or the smelly muck of the jungle? Can they shake off the psychological diseases indigenous to all armies - boredom and homesickness? In my judgment the answer is Yes! Young Americans, and young men of all free countries, are used to doing and thinking for themselves. They will prove not only equal, but superior to totalitarian soldiers, if - and this is a large if, indeed - they are given answers as to why they are in uniform, and if the answers they get are worth fighting and dying for.²⁵⁹

The Chief of Staff gave Major Capra his mission. Drawing upon his experience as a successful motion picture director, he was to use film to provide the answers that were worth fighting and dying for. As explained by Henry Commager, "... democratic armies who know what they are fighting for customarily fight better than professional armies who do not care about either issues or countries."²⁶⁰ Edward Munson's wisdom surfaced again, as he wrote, in 1921, "War aims must be clarified for the soldier. He must know for what he is fighting or preparing to fight."²⁶¹

Through the Troop Information Program, the Army had minimal success with the orientation lectures (as discussed earlier in this paper). General Marshall agreed: "I personally found the lectures of officers to the men, as to what they were fighting for and what the enemy had done, so unsatisfactory because of the mediocrity of presentation that I directed the preparation of this series of films ... The responsibility for the films was

purely mine."²⁶²

"WHY WE FIGHT"

To Frank Capra, the purpose of the "Why We Fight" series of films was clear: "... To win this war we must win the battle for men's minds."²⁶³ An unstated purpose may also have been "to goad the public into accepting a relinquishment of isolationism."²⁶⁴

Although he was a veteran in the film industry, Capra was a novice with documentary films. His areas of expertise had been comedy and entertainment, with an occasional political statement. He had to find the best way to use his talents to fulfill General Marshall's task. He finally found his answer ... "Let the enemy prove to our soldiers the enormity of his cause - and the justness of ours."²⁶⁵ He decided to "use the enemy's own films to expose their enslaving ends. Let our boys hear the Nazis and the Japs shout their own claims of master-race crud - and our fighting men will know why they are in uniform."²⁶⁶

"Capra and his writers began writing the scripts for the seven films about March in 1942."²⁶⁷

In a memorandum to Lowell Mellett, 1 May 1942, Capra stated that the "films should create a will to win by":

1. Making clear the enemies' ruthless objectives;
2. Promoting confidence in the ability of our armed forces to win;
3. Showing clearly that we are fighting for the existence of our country and all our freedoms;

4. Showing clearly how we would lose our freedoms if we lost the war; and

5. Making clear we carry the torch of freedom.²⁶⁸

The seven films in the series are shown sequentially below, as they were completed:²⁶⁹

Prelude to War	1942
The Nazis Strike	1943
Divide and Conquer	1943
The Battle of Britain	1943
The Battle of Russia	1943
The Battle of China	1944
War Comes to America	1944

As Capra described the series, "These were the seven "Why We Fight" films that were to revolutionize not only documentary filmmaking throughout the world, but also the horse-and-buggy method of indoctrinating and informing troops with the truth. Primarily made by the Army for the Army, they were used as training films by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The British, Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders used them as training films for their armed forces. Translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese, they were shown to the armed forces of our allies in China, South America, and in various parts of Europe and Asia."²⁷⁰ "In Britain the entire series was shown to the public by order of Churchill himself."²⁷¹

In the U.S. Army, the film series was required viewing for all soldiers prior to going overseas and "the fact of viewing marked in the individual soldier's record."²⁷² General Marshall's opening statement clearly told each soldier why he was watching the film: "This film, the first of a series, has been prepared by the War Department to acquaint members of the Army

with factual information as to the causes, the events leading up to our entry into the war, and the principles for which we are fighting. A knowledge of these facts is an indispensable part of military training and merits the thoughtful consideration of every American soldier."²⁷³

The "Why We Fight" series was made "in spite of the heavy-handed opposition of entrenched colonels."²⁷⁴ Major Frank Capra was a man with a mission, and he would not be stopped by bureaucrats or jurisdictional squabbles.

The "Why We Fight" series "required approval by as many as fifty different government agencies - many with conflicting policy concerns - before being released."²⁷⁵ Prelude to War was completed in October 1942, but its commercial release was "delayed for six months because the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures found the film biased and superficial."²⁷⁶

Much has been written and several studies have been conducted on Capra's "Why We Fight" film series. Charles Ewing, in An Analysis of Frank Capra's War Rhetoric in the "Why We Fight" Films, concluded that the films "create a sense of urgent necessity for war preparation."²⁷⁷ Thomas Bohn, in An Historical and Descriptive Analysis of the "Why We Fight" Series, wrote that Capra had depicted "... the righteous wrath of a just and forebearing people finally forced to defend themselves and pick up the sword from struggling allies."²⁷⁸

In Experiments on Mass Communication, Carl Hovland was more critical of the film series. Published in 1949, Hovland's comments were based on studies and analysis conducted by the

Research Branch of the War Department's Information and Education Division. Hovland wrote that the purpose of the "Why We Fight" films "was not purely instructional in the manner of a training film, but was rather to get across particular interpretations of facts, overcome prejudices, arouse motivations, and in general to modify attitudes rather than merely to convey factual information."²⁷⁹ Hovland acknowledged that the films appeared to have a significant affect on the viewer's knowledge of presented factual material, however, they appeared to have little influence on soldiers' opinions, and had "no effects ... on the men's motivation to serve as soldiers, which was considered the ultimate objective."²⁸⁰

Hovland's comments and studies were based on an indepth analysis of the responses by 2,100 trainees early in 1943. Half of the group saw the films, the other half did not. Surveys were administered within a week of the showing of the films.²⁸¹ Hovland provided several possible explanations for the apparent inability of the films to significantly affect motivation: "previous indoctrination (as civilians), conflicting motivations, ineffectuality of a single 50-minute presentation, lack of specific coverage (of material presented), and need for a sinking-in period."²⁸² Experiments on Mass Communication presents several interesting observations, however, it appears to be convincingly inconclusive.

In an apparent defense of the films, Richard D. MacCann observed that "... if they did not show attitude changes in the

subject of preference for overseas duty, it might be said that more than a handful of movies and more than a few months would be needed to wipe out years of inter-war isolationism. Social science should not ask too much of film-makers."²⁸³

In An Exploratory Study of the Rationale of United States Military Film Propaganda in World War II, Douglas Gallez reviewed Hovland's conflicting motivation hypothesis. Gallez concluded "that the films tend to reinforce motivations which are consistent with the milieu of daily life and with the aspirations of the individual or the social group of which the individual is a part. Thus, we have, as a very moot and open question, the problem as to what extent one can hope, by using information and attempting to work upon the opinions of recruits, to bring about rather sudden changes in their motivation concerned with accepting the role of a soldier, which in itself, is not highly valued in the American culture. There is no warrior cult in the United States."²⁸⁴

Thomas Bohn, in his analysis of the Hovland studies, noted that "These studies and others designed to cite the influence of films on military motivation point up the difficulty of modifying military motivation within the American culture."²⁸⁵ After a detailed and completely thorough analysis of the "Why We Fight" series films, Bohn concluded that "This one series ... was important not only in itself and its personal achievement, but also for what it reflected concerning the Army's attitude toward the morale of the individual soldier."²⁸⁶

Blake Cochran, in a discussion of several documentary films,

wrote that "... the importance of these films is not so much in the actual events pictured as in the interpretation and significance of these events in the light of the principles basic to American institutions."²⁸⁷ Although written in 1940, Cochran's assessment could be applied to Capra's films.

Frank Capra's mission from General Marshall was to use film to tell the soldier of World War II why he was fighting. Did the films of the series accomplish the Chief of Staff's mission?

THE SERIES

PRELUDE TO WAR

General Marshall introduced this powerful film with a clear statement of its purpose. The film vividly showed the war to be a battle between two completely different worlds - one evil and one good, one a slave world and one a free world.

The narrator traced the rise to power of the ruthless regimes within Italy, Germany, and Japan. Using enemy film footage, the film showed how each totalitarian system did away with free speech and assembly, freedom of the press, culture, courts and trial by jury, labor unions, religion, and virtually everything else of value to the free world. Several times in the film, the narrator asked the viewer why we are fighting, after showing moving scenes of aggression in Pearl Harbor, Britain, France, China, etc. Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, one of Hitler's ministers, is quoted in the film: "I am absolutely clear in my

own mind and I think I can speak for the Fuehrer as well, that both the Catholic and Protestant churches must vanish from the life of our people."

Opposing the evil empires was a free world: a world built on the foundations of Moses, Mohammed, Confucius, and Christ. This was a world that had disarmed after World War I, a world that wanted peace, and a world that was unprepared for war.

In the words of Blake Cochran, 1940, the film clearly showed that "The war in Europe today is just one phase of the conflict between two ways of life which are the antithesis of each other. One is built on the concept of the freedom of the individual, the other on repression of the individual; one advocates a society built on reason, the other a society dominated by force."²⁸⁸

The film showed the war to be a conflict of values, ideas, freedoms, and a fight for survival. The Tanaka Memorial is cited as Japan's masterplan for world domination and the narrator scolded the world for ignoring it. The plan, "supposedly presented to the emperor in 1927 by Prime Minister and former War Minister Baron Tanaka was actually discovered and published in China, and is considered by most scholars to be an artful forgery."²⁸⁹ "The reason it was ignored was simple: it probably never existed; although throughout the thirties and during the war, there were those who considered it authentic."²⁹⁰

Prelude to War ended with "We lose it [the war] and we lose everything. Our homes. The jobs we want to go back to. The books we read. The very food we eat. The hopes we have for our kids. The kids themselves. They won't be ours anymore. That's

what's at stake. It's us or them. The chips are down. Two worlds stand against each other. One must die, one must live. One hundred and seventy years of freedom decrees our answer."

In October 1942, Prelude to War was shown to President Roosevelt in a premiere showing at the White House. At the conclusion of the film the President had one comment: "Every man, woman, and child in the world must see this film."²⁹¹

However, getting the film released to the public was a difficult proposition. Lowell Mellett felt that movies such as this "might win the war, but it wouldn't help much in making a saner world after the armistice."²⁹² He felt that the film contained "too many notes of hate."²⁹³

Hollywood was also less than enthusiastic about release of the film. They felt that the subject had already been covered in earlier documentaries and that the length of the film was awkward; it was "midway between a short and a feature."²⁹⁴

Richard W. Steele "cites other reasons for the OWI's opposition to commercial release, including the fact that it had produced its own 'prelude', World at War."²⁹⁵

In February 1943, Senator Rufus Holman, Republican from Oregon, was critical of the film, as he commented that "At the conclusion of the picture I was convinced that Mr. Roosevelt intended to seek a fourth term in the presidency."²⁹⁶

Mellett "threatened to tell that the Army was trying to impose a propaganda film on a free society."²⁹⁷ The Army countered with an accusation that Mellett was trying to suppress

the film. Prelude to War was eventually released to the public on 27 May 1943 by 20th Century-Fox. It was classified as a box-office failure, but was "highly acclaimed by a majority of the critics."²⁹⁸

Prelude to War received the Oscar Award for the Best Documentary Film of 1942.²⁹⁹

Without a doubt, the film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why he was fighting.

THE NAZIS STRIKE

After a geographical orientation, the narrator began to explain, in detail, Hitler's rise to power and his plans for world conquest. Having watched Hirohito grab Manchuria and Mussolini rape Ethiopia, it was now time for Hitler to strike. The viewer was introduced to Nazi propaganda, concentration camps, and Mr. Chamberlain's fateful "peace in our time" visit to Munich.

Again, using film provided by the enemy, Hitler's march through Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland (especially Warsaw) was demonstrated as brutal, senseless attacks on peaceloving and defenseless peoples.

As a result of his ruthless atrocities, aggression, and conquest, the narrator explained that the people, not just the government, of Great Britain had declared war on Hitler; "for they finally realized that what was being threatened wasn't just the integrity of Poland, but the integrity of free men everywhere

in the world."

In a moving speech at the end of the film, Winston Churchill told the viewer to "Lift up your hearts, all will come right. Out of the depths of sorrow and of sacrifice will be born again the glory of mankind."

The film clearly told the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

This film showed the audience a war-torn Europe in flames. It described, one by one, the fall of Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and France. Hitler was compared with the American gangsters of the 1920's as he threw away "all regard for the laws of God or man."

Rotterdam was shown under massive bombardment as the narrator explained that over 30,000 men, women, and children were killed within ninety minutes. Nazi savagery was also depicted as the viewer was shown helpless refugees in Belgium being machine-gunned by Nazi warplanes.

At the evacuation of Dunkirk, the audience watched "over 300,000 battle-tested men, grimly determined to go back ... to blast the hated Nazis out of this world ... for free men are like rubber balls - the harder they fall, the higher they bounce."

With the signing of the French Armistice, 16 June 1940, the narrator explained that the French had been enslaved. "Gone is

the Republic of France. Gone is free speech and a free representative government. Gone is liberty, equality, fraternity."

The film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

The young and the old, the men and the women were shown preparing the defense of Britain. As the narrator explained, "in a democracy it is not the government that makes war, it is the people." The viewer was shown the beginning of the battle for Britain, 8 August 1940, and was told of Hitler's plan to take Britain ... then the United States.

The British people were depicted in their air raid shelters defiantly resisting Hitler's bombardment. The air attacks were "German bombs against British guts." As the narrator explained, "the German mind has never understood why free people fight on in spite of overwhelming odds." The British were shown as a "people that couldn't be panicked, couldn't be beaten."

The viewer was told, and shown, that 2,375 German warplanes and their crews killed nearly 40,000 men, women, and children. "Hitler could kill them, but damned if he could lick them ... for the day was coming that they would strike back."

The film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

THE BATTLE OF RUSSIA

The film began with a geographical orientation and explanation of the history of Russia and her people, which included 700 years of fighting.

Again, the young and the old, men, women, and children were shown being mobilized for total war against the Nazi onslaught. As the narrator explained (twice), "generals may win campaigns, but people win wars."

The Russian people are shown in the churches of Moscow praying for victory. The film included many scenes of the Russian people suffering mass murders, hangings, torture, and humiliation at the hands of the Nazis.

The seige of Leningrad was compared to the death and destruction experienced by Warsaw and London. As the narrator explained, "the more the people of Leningrad were shelled, the harder they worked."

As the Nazi invasion of Russia began to stall, the narrator explained that "there are no invincible armies against the determined will of free and united people."

The film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

THE BATTLE OF CHINA

The film began with a geographical orientation and an

explanation of the history, the land, and the people of China. The viewer was told that China was a country that contained one third of the world's population and that it was a country that had never fought a war of conquest. It was the land of Confucius, the man who in 500 B.C. had written "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." It was a land of freedom of expression and freedom of religion. And of the Chinese, "they are now our allies."

Beginning with the 18 September 1931 invasion of Manchuria, the "Japs introduced the world to a new kind of war": deliberate terrorism, deliberate mass murder, and deliberate frightfulness. They "slaughtered thousands from the air." When the "blood-crazed Japs attacked a U.S. ship", they officially apologized and said it was a mistake.

At Nanking, the "Japanese went berserk" in an operation "deliberately planned by the Jap high command to tear the heart out of the Chinese." In an invasion of rape and murder, the narrator explained that 40,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered. But Nanking aroused the Chinese and they developed the will to resist. As they traded space for time, the narrator explained that thirty million Chinese migrated westward from "slavery and death to freedom."

With Chungking as their new hope for freedom, and the Burma Road built by hand as their lifeline for supplies, the Chinese were "the people who wouldn't be beaten."

The film ended with the narrator stating that "we are now on the offensive."

The film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

WAR COMES TO AMERICA

The final film of the series opened with American children saying "I pledge allegiance ...". The narrator explained that we are "fighting for an idea."

The viewer was provided with a short historical synopsis of democracy in America. The narrator recalled the words and deeds of Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Patrick Henry. Portions of the Constitution were repeated. From Lexington and Yorktown to the present, the narrator explained that "America was built from the blood and sweat of all nations."

As he described the American people, the narrator explained that we are a working people and an inventive people; we want the best for the average man, woman, and child; we value education; we like vacations and sports; we love to travel; we love our radios, music, free press, books, and magazines; we like churches of all kinds; we like elections; we make mistakes (like prohibition) and we correct them; we build for the future; we are easy going and sentimental, but passionately dedicated to our freedom and liberties; and we hate war, but ...".

The narrator then reviewed for the audience Manchuria, 1931; Hitler to power, 1933; Mussolini attacking Ethiopia, 1935; American Neutrality Acts; Civil War in Spain, 1936; "Japs turning

Asia into a slaughter house", 1937; and Hitler in Europe, 1938. Each event was depicted as another example of the Axis powers smashing personal freedom, equality of man, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

The film showed the Nazis in Paris with an enslaved people. The viewer is told of growing Nazi and Japanese influence in Brazil, Equador, and Argentina.

As the narrator described the mobilization of America, businessmen and farmers, black and white, are shown entering the armed forces. The Pact of Berlin (27 September 1940) was described as the Axis powers coordinating their efforts "aimed directly at the United States ... organized to smash the very principles which made us the people we are."

The narrator explained that in 1936, 1 out of 20 Americans thought we would be involved in a war. By 1941, 14 out of 20 were willing to risk war if necessary. Then, the "Germans opened unrestricted warfare" and U.S. ships were sunk. Then, Pearl Harbor.

As with each of the other films in the series, the following quote from General Marshall appeared on the screen for the viewer to read: "Victory of the democracies can only be complete with the utter defeat of the war machines of Germany and Japan."

The film ended with scenes of the Stars and Stripes and the Statue of Liberty, and stirring patriotic music in the background.

The film clearly showed the American soldier of World War II why we were fighting.

THE SERIES

The "Why We Fight" series received the 1944 New York Film Critics Award as the Best Documentaries.³⁰⁰

General Marshall presented the Distinguished Service Medal to Colonel Frank Capra on 14 June 1945. Colonel Capra was released from active duty on 15 June 1945.³⁰¹ He had completed his mission.

"... in this Army I, a Hollywood film man, had been freer to say the things that needed saying than I had been in civilian clothes. I had found our Army chiefs to be human beings who care, as well as being generals who have to defend America."³⁰²

CONCLUSION

The United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, sent, in 1990, a survey to World War II veterans throughout the country. Two of the questions in the survey were "If you were shown the film series "Why We Fight", what was your reaction to it?" and "Why did you fight?". Research for this paper included a review of the responses to these two questions in 200 of these surveys. Survey responses were selected at random from different areas of the country, representing soldiers from a wide variety of branches and units. Responses were as follows:

If you were shown the film series "Why We Fight",
what was your reaction to it?

RESPONSE	NUMBER
Did not see/don't remember	151
Very informative/convincing	27
Inspiring	5
Reinforcement	3
Big spread of propaganda	3
It was a just war	2
Patriotic	2
Amazed	1
Brought out seriousness/danger	1
Gained respect of the enemy	1
Pearl Harbor was enough	1
Reality of war was worse	1
Training film	1
Unsophisticated	1

Almost fifty years have passed since these soldiers, as trainees, could have seen the films. Many of them may have already been deployed when the films were released. Of those who saw the films, we will probably never know to what extent the films affected their contribution to the war effort. To those who saw the films and later lost their lives in the war, we can only hope that the films gave them some comfort that they had died for a righteous, just cause.

Why did you fight?

RESPONSE	NUMBER
Protect democracy & free peoples	41
Love of country	40
Duty & Honor	39
Axis aggression/Pearl Harbor	26
Country needed me	12
It was the thing to do	10
To stay alive	8
Professional soldier	6
Jewish	4
Had no choice	4
For unit	3
There was a war on	3
Parents came from Poland	2
Adventure	1
Peer pressure	1

Again, to what extent these 200 reasons for fighting were affected by Frank Capra's films we may never know. However, these responses appear to capture the essence of the "Why We Fight" series.

Films played a significant role in the events leading up to World War II and during the prosecution of the war. In most endeavors, a strategy of truth was pursued. We could not hide forever from the rest of the world or from our responsibilities within the world. The American public had to be addressed,

assessed, and informed. Morale was a vital ingredient. Most importantly, if we were going to ask the youth of our country to fight, and to die, they deserved to know why.

Thanks to the vision, wisdom, and concern of many - Frank Capra, Franklin Roosevelt, George Marshall, Jack Warner, Elmer Davis, Archibald MacLeish, Frederick Osborne, Edward Munson, George Creel, and many others - the American soldier of World War II knew "Why We Fight".

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