

Even worse is O'Brien's explanation of Jefferson's failure to meet his young daughter, Polly, in London in 1787. Jefferson, then the American Minister in France, sent someone else to bring her to Paris. Our author comes up with a characteristically fatuous explanation for Jefferson's behavior.

Polly was accompanied by a teenage slave girl who was a half-sister of Jefferson's wife. Had Jefferson gone to London, he would have had to meet John Adams, the American Minister, and his wife Abigail. "New Englanders were aware in general that such relations between families of masters and slaves [as that between Jefferson's father-in-law and the slave girl] were not uncommon in the South." But Abigail Adams "detested such arrangements." So it is understandable that Jefferson "did not want to meet Abigail in the presence of his daughter, and of the young slave who was Polly's aunt" (p. 24).

Once again the mind of our mystic is at work. His account of Jefferson's thought is pure conjecture, and he presents not the slightest evidence in its support. How, by the way, was Abigail Adams supposed to know the slave girl's ancestry?

I once asked my great teacher, Walter Starkie, what he thought of O'Brien. He replied: "I found him a rather self-opinionated young man when he was a pupil of mine." After a long career, O'Brien has wound up a self-opinionated old man. Such is progress. ♦

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## Charmed Into Bloodshed

### **SELLING WAR: THE BRITISH PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST AMERICAN "NEUTRALITY" IN WORLD WAR II**

Nicholas John Cull

Oxford University Press, 1995, xv + 276 pgs.

Great Britain learned an important lesson from World War I. American entry into that war in 1917 proved decisive. The American Expeditionary Force helped bring the long military stalemate on the Western Front to an end; and even before America's declaration of war, Britain and her allies would have been in a hopeless position without American loans and sales of arms.

American entry into the war did not come about by accident. Quite the contrary, an extraordinary propaganda campaign by the British moved America from "neutral in thought, word, and deed" to armed intervention. The increasingly tense European diplomatic situation in 1938, culminating in the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the British and French declarations of war on Germany on September 3, led the British government to attempt to repeat its World War I strategy.

America had to be brought into the new war, and propaganda was a vital weapon in this task. This British propaganda campaign is described in

careful detail by Nicholas John Cull; his book, based on extensive archival research and personal interviews, is a major contribution.

The British faced a formidable obstacle in their attempt to draw the United States into the war. During the 1920s, most Americans came to believe that United States entry into the First World War had been a disaster. The historical revisionists, such as Sidney Fay and Harry Elmer Barnes, challenged the official accounts of the war by “court historians.” Of particular relevance here, detailed studies exposed the British propaganda efforts. Cull emphasizes Walter Millis’s 1935 study *Road to War* in this connection. Millis’s “findings sparked a surge of anglophobia and paranoia” (p. 9).

This time, the opponents of war were prepared for the British campaign, making their task all the more difficult. Isolationists, including Senators Nye and Borah and the great aviator Charles Lindbergh, did not hesitate to warn of British wiles.

Here, Cull might have made more use of an important book published in 1937. Cull does mention the work in question. “The American isolationists pressed their attack by once again raising the hue and cry against British propaganda. Senators William E. Borah and Gerald P. Nye seized on a

British study titled *Propaganda in the Next War*, by British public relations expert Sidney Rogerson, as evidence of ‘a basic plan to involve us in the next war’” (p. 29).

Unfortunately, though, Cull does not discuss the book’s contents. It suggested that America might be drawn into a future European war by the “back door” of a conflict in the Far East. Surely this was a detail worth mentioning, at least as important as Lord Halifax’s distaste for hotdogs (p. 134).

Before 1940, British propaganda was according to our author not very effective: the British Library of Information in New York, whose activities Cull covers thoroughly, spent much time in fu-

tile conflicts of jurisdiction with other agencies. Cull attaches much of the blame for this state of affairs on the government of Neville Chamberlain, of whom he is decidedly no admirer. He holds the conventional view of Chamberlain as an appeaser of Hitler, reluctantly dragged into war. As such, he and his officials were halfhearted in their propaganda efforts.

Cull, it seems to me, radically underestimates the aggressiveness of the Chamberlain government. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, was in particular no Milquetoast trembling before the Führer. From October, 1938, he dominated foreign policy decisions and

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he actively pursued a militant anti-German policy.

Though Cull has no use for Chamberlain, he does celebrate one hero who served this regime: the British Ambassador to Washington, Lord Lothian. He finds that Lothian was an excellent propagandist, especially skilled at cultivating important American politicians. "Lord Lothian was a master of the American scene. Always accessible and disarmingly frank, he charmed the press corps" (p. 57). Of especial importance as a source on Lothian's activities is the contemporary newsletter of the American isolationist Porter Sargent, later published as the book *Getting US Into War*. Cull cites this but ought to have made more use of it.

After the German invasion of Norway in May 1940, Chamberlain's government collapsed; and Winston Churchill was appointed Prime Minister. For Cull, this is of decisive significance for British propaganda. "Churchill's accession to power proved to be a watershed event in Anglo-American relations. His coalition Cabinet brought several key figures of the prewar Anglo-American bloc back into power.... Given Churchill's own commitment to the 'English-speaking peoples,' the reshuffle sounded a death knell for the reticence that had

marked Chamberlain's dealings with the United States" (p. 68).

Cull covers extensively the principal British officials engaged in war propaganda in the United States; and the reader will make the acquaintance of such figures as Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, an independently wealthy scholar attached to the British Library of Information.

But propaganda was by no means confined to official spokesmen. The British government carefully cultivated such journalists as Edward R. Murrow, whose broadcasts during the Blitz became legendary. "Meanwhile, at the Ministry of Economic Warfare, the press officer David Bowes-Lyon charmed the Americans, which was no easy task considering that he had to explain such matters as the blockade. His popularity owed something to his family connections. King George's wife, Queen Elizabeth, was his sister; and favored correspondents were invited to take tea with her at Buckingham Palace" (p. 87).

Cultivation of the journalistic elite of course did not preclude direct appeal to the American masses, and here Hollywood played a decisive role. "In the late autumn of 1940, the Films Division [of the Ministry of Information] dispatched the distinguished British film executive A.W. Jarratt to develop the necessary

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links with the studios" (p. 87). At a dinner with the leading Hollywood producers, Jarratt received pledges of support. The author offers a characteristically detailed account of their efforts to fulfill these pledges.

Cull's book poses a formidable challenge to reviewers. It is a detailed narrative rather than an analytical study, and only a few of the many incidents it discusses can be mentioned here. One incident, though, cannot be omitted, as it brings together several key themes of the book. "On October 27, 1941, during his Navy Day speech, [President Franklin] Roosevelt made an astonishing claim: 'I have in my possession a secret map, made in Germany by Hitler's government, by planners of the new world order. It is a map of South America and part of Central America, as Hitler proposes to organize it'" (p. 170).

In fact, the map was a crude forgery; and although Cull does not establish its origins with certainty, William Stephenson, notorious for his "dirty tricks" as the head of British Security Coordination in New York, bears primary responsibility for its dissemination. "Whatever the exact origin of the map, the most striking feature of the episode was the complicity of the President of the United States in perpetrating the fraud" (p. 172).

American popular sentiment in 1940 strongly opposed entry into the European War; and Roosevelt's pledge, "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars, except in case of attack" helped him win an unprecedented third term. But the combination of the British propaganda machine with an American

President set on undermining neutrality proved too difficult for the isolationists to overcome.

Cull's study, though written from what D.C. Watt has called a "triumphalist" perspective on British propaganda, provides a great deal of information to those who seek to avoid future foreign entanglements. *Selling War* gives ample, if unintended support for the judgment of the great diplomatic historian Charles Callan Tansill: "The main objective of American foreign policy since 1900 has been the preservation of the British Empire" (*Back Door to War* [Chicago University Press, 1952], p. 3).♦

## The Hayekian Cul-de-sac

### HAYEK AND AFTER: HAYEKIAN LIBERALISM AS A RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Jeremy Shearmur  
Routledge, 1996, x + 257 pgs.

**I**n this outstanding book, Jeremy Shearmur approaches the thought of Friedrich Hayek from an original angle. Debates in political theory often bog down because of incompatible assumptions. If you do not find plausible the egalitarian premises of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, you are liable to think the book a failure. Similarly, many reject libertarian arguments because they find unacceptable the initial axiom of self-ownership. Can this impasse be escaped?