

THE RAINBOW IN THE DARK: ASSESSING A CENTURY OF BRITISH MILITARY INFORMATION OPERATIONS

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The West is again facing multiple threats spearheaded by hostile information activity. ISIL's exploitation of social media has lured new recruits reaching straight into the bedrooms of our teenagers. Seemingly inexplicably, young intelligent minds have been radicalised through a perversion of their faith. A resurgent Russia has reinvented its 'hybrid war' doctrine of the Soviet Cold War-era, believing that it can only be secure when we are weak. Putin's incursions into Ukraine and now Syria have required a vanguard of blatant untruths filtered through its expansive international news agencies *RT* and *Sputnik*. All the while our own performance in Iraq and Afghanistan has been questionable with our strategic communications (stratcom) never becoming as pre-eminent as they were in the World Wars. As will be shown in the following review of British military information operations, a recurrent pattern of under-resourcing, ad-hoc responses, and Whitehall battles of control have been a constant hindrance to effective stratcom, particularly through the Cold War period and despite the best efforts of those involved.

It seems, and one hopes, the UK Ministry of Defence through its 'post-Afghan reset' has recognised and is attempting to address these deficiencies, as it continues to wrestle at almost every level to understand and respond effectively to the emerging character of war in the information age.

In 2012, Stephen Jolly was appointed the UK's new Director of Defence Communications. It was a controversial appointment.¹ An expert on information operations and psyops, Jolly is an unorthodox thinker drawn from an academic background (he is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge); he held a Fellowship in Psychological Warfare at the International Centre for Security Analysis at King's College, London, in the early 2000s; and was a former instructor at the UK Defence Intelligence and Security Centre at Chicksands. His knowledge of the history of British black propaganda operations is evinced by a long list of expert publications. In his seminal Mardin Essay on 'Psychological Warfare and Public

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1 Hugh Muir, 'Master of black propaganda gets top job at MOD', *Guardian*, 13 December 2012, online <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/dec/13/hugh-muir-diary-jolly-mod> (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

Relations' Jolly discusses how Public Relations can learn and utilise concepts from the broader history of political and military information operations but also help it to recognise areas it should never emulate. He concludes:

Whether we like it or not, public relations and psychological warfare are sister disciplines. The remit of the public relations professional most closely conforms to the white and grey propaganda activity of the psywarrior. However, in certain situations, the psywarrior has the capability - sanctioned by law - to extend his range of activity into areas closed to his PR counterpart (black operations).²

During his tenure as Director of Defence Communications, Jolly publicly advocated Full Spectrum Defence Communications, through what has become known as his *Rainbow in the Dark* doctrine.³ This thinking led to a radical overhaul of Defence stratcom capability and governance. Reforms included wholesale digitisation, the introduction of a new Target Audience Analysis (TAA) methodology, a refreshed Defence Advisory Notice system, the formation of a cross-Whitehall National Security Communications Committee and even the birth of 'Twitter troops' in the form of the British Army's 77 Brigade.

As we approach the centenary of British military information operations (IO), it is opportune to take an objective look back at the history, successes and failures of British IO, how an awareness of these might have shaped current *Rainbow in the Dark* thinking and consider how an historical perspective might further influence the future development of stratcom when, now more than ever, a mastery of the art is so critical.

MI7: Britain's first military full spectrum communications operation

From the British perspective, it was not until the creation of the MI7 branch of Military Intelligence exactly one hundred years ago that information operations were first implemented in a truly organised and systematic way. Indeed, it is arguable that MI7 was the first 'full spectrum effects' operation in what we would now call British Defence communications.

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2 Stephen Jolly, 'Psychological Warfare and Public Relations', *Frontline: The Global Public Relations Quarterly*, 22/4: 22-30 (October/November 2000).

3 'Rainbow in the Dark: How UK Defence is moving to 'full spectrum' operations', *DefenceIQ*, <http://www.informationoperationsevenet.com/rainbow-in-the-dark-how-uk-defence-is-moving-to-full-spectrum-operations-mc> (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

The catalyst for MI7 was seeded in the late nineteenth century with the realisation of the enormous influence newspapers had established for themselves and the numerous incidents where the press had published potentially damaging military information at times of national crises. Consequently, Parliament drafted legislation in order to stop the press from printing articles considered harmful to the Armed Forces.

Initially, at least, the press were open to the establishment of a framework of censorship to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information as long as they maintained their rights of criticism. Some disagreement between Government and the media did arise later as legislation was drafted then dropped and then redrafted over the first decade of the twentieth century. Consensus was finally reached in the summer of 1912 following the creation of the ‘Admiralty, War Office and Press Committee’ through which ‘prohibitory notices’ could be communicated to the press to prevent the disclosure of military information of value to the enemy. These were the origins of the Defence Advisory Notice system still in use today.⁴ The War Departments recognised that the Committee was a means of collaboration with the media rather than purely a means of censure, as an official report commented later, they ‘...were not slow to realize the justice of the claims put forward by the Press that newspapers should not be used as a medium for the dissemination of false information, that criticisms of policy should not be stifled, that news should not be restricted except where national interests were at stake, and that in the distribution of news all papers should be treated on an equality’.⁵

The D Notice has often been criticised as a means of Government censorship and non-conducive to a free press but that ignores the underlying voluntary nature of the system. Throughout its 100-year history, the press have generally been supportive, notwithstanding several notable exceptions.⁶ Simon Bucks, vice-chair of the recently remodelled Defence and Security Media Advisory Committee, described it in a *Guardian* op-ed as ‘a very British idea; emphatically not censorship (though critics would argue otherwise) but voluntary, responsible media restraint’.⁷

4 See <http://www.dnotice.org.uk/history/index.htm> for the history of the DA Notice system, (Last accessed 1 September 2015).

5 See file at the National Archives (INA), INF 4/1B – Military Press Control: A History of the work of MI7, 1914-1919, page 4.

6 For example the 1967 revelations by journalist Chapman Pincher of the British Government’s interception of international cables and more recently the *Guardian*’s involvement in the Snowden affair.

7 Simon Bucks, ‘The D-notice is misunderstood but its collaborative spirit works’, *The Guardian*, 2 August 2015.

The birth of MI7

On the outbreak of the First World War, responsibility for press and cable censorship and the issuing of War Office communiqués through the Press Bureau was initially entrusted to a small sub-section of the Directorate of Military Operations designated MO5(h). Its activities expanded quickly, for instance taking charge of policy regarding the sketching and photography of prohibited areas, and was soon upgraded to a new section MO7. At the end of 1915, a reorganisation of the Imperial General Staff resulted in the formation of a new Directorate of Military Intelligence with all press matters being concentrated under the control of MI7. The new MI7 was considered a more ‘comprehensive and important organisation than MO7 had been and advantage was derived from the coordination under one centralised control of all press matters’.⁸

MI7 was divided into several sections. The first section, MI7(a), dealt with the censorship of press articles, books, and cinema films; arranged for the accreditation of, and the issue of permits to, journalists working in the field; controlled official photographers and artists; and, through the Press Bureau, released communiqués on progress of operations. The section also became responsible for giving official permission to officers and other ranks wishing to publish in the press their opinions on military matters.

Whereas MI7(a) was more concerned with the control of information, the second section, MI7(b), was mostly concerned with publication. After a time, for organisational purposes, MI7(b) was split into six subdivisions dealing with a variety of press and propaganda matters including the authorship and distribution of articles for the domestic, colonial and foreign press; the creation of an archive documenting the British war effort; the production of daily summaries of the home press; and organising weekly press conferences or ‘press lectures’.

The first subdivision, MI7(b)(1), dealt with ‘General Press Propaganda’ and focused on the writing of press articles from the military perspective.⁹ In August 1916, a general request was made for army officers with literary experience to offer their writing services. This request, and a second one made in May 1917, resulted in almost one thousand respondents. Eventually, five hundred volunteers were selected to write propaganda articles for the international press. As well as the volunteers, the subdivision employed up to 20 full-time officers which included such notable

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8 Ibid, page 10.

9 Throughout this narrative the terms contemporary to that era will be used to describe influence and information activities.

literary greats as author of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and Assistant Editor of *Punch* magazine, A A Milne; Irish poet and journalist, Patrick McGill; author of fantasy novels such as *The Gods of Pegāna*, Lord Dunsany; and Cecil Street, who would later author the Dr Priestley series of books using the pen name John Rhode. By the end of the war, around 7500 articles had been produced. Other work included both weekly and monthly summaries of military operations provided to the Ministry of Information, a daily account of the 1918 offensives which were taken by up to 50 domestic newspapers, and a morale-boosting weekly letter to soldiers issued to British troops with a second version for Belgian forces. And it was not just the written word; numerous artists were employed to create illustrations. These included Frank Reynolds, the Art Editor for *Punch* and contributor to the *Illustrated London News*, amongst other publications, and Bruce Bairnsfather, the cartoonist and creator of the popular ‘Old Bill’ character.

The fourth subdivision, MI7(b)(4), can lay claim to fathering British Psychological Operations. The subdivision was formed in June 1916 with the appointment of the renowned zoologist Captain Peter Chalmers Mitchell as its head. His initial task was to create a Propaganda Library, to catalogue and critique all enemy war publications that came into British possession through the interceptions of the Postal Censorship branch of Military Intelligence (MI9). Two to three thousand books and pamphlets would eventually make up the library. In August 1917, Chalmers Mitchell’s detailed report on the Propaganda Library was printed and distributed. In the introduction, the report is described as ‘... the most condensed and comprehensive summary of German War-Literature that has been compiled. It is an analysis of enemy propaganda, and material for the preparation of counter-propaganda rather than actual propaganda in itself’.¹⁰ It outlined German interpretation of themes like ‘The Causes of War’, ‘Imperialism’, ‘Prophecies of the War’, ‘War Aims’, and ‘Socialism’.

The main role of MI7(b)(4) was the preparation and dissemination of aerial propaganda. Germany was the first nation to drop propaganda from aeroplanes in the war when their airmen leafleted Paris on 30 August 1914.¹¹ Britain returned the compliment in October with the dissemination of an aerial propaganda leaflet containing a few home truths. This leaflet, titled ‘News for German Soldiers’, attempted to quash the rumour that Britain was treating captured German soldiers in an ‘unmanly fashion’. It reassured German troops that prisoners of war were, in fact, well treated. The leaflet also tried to counter rumours about the war situation.

10 TNA, CAB 17/196 – ‘Report on the Propaganda Library’, 1917. The brief introduction to the report was written by Brigadier-General George K Cockerill, Director of Special Intelligence.

11 R G Auckland, ‘The First Leaflet Dropped in World War I’, *Falling Leaf*, No. 49, 1970.

The news of the German defeat at Montmirail was given, as well as pointing out that the German army had never captured Paris.¹² The leaflet was a one-off effort organised by General Swinton and printed by the *Daily Mail* local office in Paris.¹³ This new form of warfare was not taken up again by the War Office until MI7(b) (4) was conceived.

Over the two years of its existence, the subdivision would produce nearly 26 million copies of propaganda leaflets and postcards.¹⁴ Of note was a series of facsimiles Prisoner of War letters sent by captured soldiers to their relatives back home in Germany. Letters were selected for reproduction that praised the conditions in the British POW camps, their good treatment, and others that contained anti-war and defeatist sentiments. It is interesting to note that the prejudices of a target audience can adversely affect the credibility of accurate and truthful information. Although the original letters were genuine and written by real Prisoners of War, German soldiers who had seen the reproductions often claimed that they found them to be unbelievable and exaggerated.¹⁵ In 1918, the highlighting of United States' entry into the war and the number of American troops making their way to Europe proved to be an important theme for air-dropped leaflets. By June of that year, over a million American soldiers will have arrived in France.

Developing means to measure the effect of psychological operations has always been notoriously difficult. One useful metric is how the enemy reacts to, and tries to counter, propaganda directed at them. And certainly the German authorities were very paranoid about MI7 leaflet activities. German soldiers were financially rewarded for handing in leaflets to their officers, up to 10 marks for a leaflet, or severely punished for reading or distributing them. Soldiers were also warned that leaflets were deliberately infected with disease and should not be picked up. Machine guns, bombing civilians, and mustard gas may have been considered acceptable forms of warfare but for the German High Command the dropping of pieces of paper on their soldiers was not sporting, indeed was considered a war crime. Several captured British airmen were actually court-martialled for treason by the German authorities on the charge of dropping 'inflammatory literature'. They were each sentenced to ten years hard labour for their crime.¹⁶

Accordingly the use of airplanes for dropping leaflets was abandoned. Alternative means of disseminating leaflets were experimented with which included release

12 TNA, AIR 1/823/204/5/52 contains an example of the original leaflet and a typed English translation.

13 TNA, AIR 1/723/68/4 – Interview with Major General Swinton, May 10, 1920.

14 TNA, INF 4/1B – Military Press Control: A History of the work of MI7, 1914-1919, page 23.

15 TNA, WO 32/5143 – British Balloon Propaganda (Second Report August 16th – Sept. 10th [1918]).

16 TNA, AIR 1/67 – Distribution of Propaganda by Air, 1914-1918 by Captain Morris.

from high-attitude box kites or by being fired in modified artillery shells and mortars. Specially designed paper balloons were found to be a satisfactory replacement as they could be manufactured in large enough numbers, were relatively cheap to make, and could carry an adequately large load.¹⁷ From now onwards leaflets had 'by balloon' printed on them in both English and German in an effort to protect airmen from future prosecution by the enemy.

MI7(b)(4)'s propaganda activity was not just focused towards enemy troops but also towards the maintenance of the morale of French and Belgian civilians caught under enemy occupation. This was principally achieved through a weekly leaflet-newspaper in French, instituted by Chalmers Mitchell, titled 'Le Courier de l'Air' or 'Air Mail'. The first issue was dated 6 April 1917 and would eventually reach 78 editions. Typically 5,000 copies were dropped over occupied territory each week. The front page news was drawn from MI7(b)(1)'s 'Weekly Resume of Military Operations'. In the closing two months of the war, aerial leaflet production was taken over by the recently-created civilian organisation known as Crewe House, under press baron and proprietor of *The Times* and *Daily Mail* newspapers Lord Northcliffe.

The two remaining sections of MI7 will only be covered briefly here. MI7(c) was initially the translation section until June 1917 when it adopted responsibility for visits to the front in France. A visitors' château was acquired at Tramecourt and financed between the War Office, Admiralty and Foreign Office. Renowned journalists were invited to spend time at the château and to visit the front in order to give them a favourable impression of the British war effort. In late 1917, a second, slightly larger château at Radingham was used principally for invited American correspondents. MI7(d) was responsible for the reading of foreign press and issuing a daily review containing military, political and economic intelligence gleaned from enemy and neutral newspapers. Weekly supplements were soon produced to analyse changes of opinion and to gauge enemy intentions.

Immediately following the end of the war, MI7 was shut down and responsibility for propaganda activities within the War Office taken over by the MI1(b) branch. Throughout the interwar period rather too much credit was attributed to leaflet propaganda for the rapid German collapse. General Ludendorff wrote in his autobiography, 'We boggled at the enemy propaganda as a rabbit stares transfixed at a snake... The Army was literally drenched with enemy propaganda leaflets... we could not prevent them from poisoning the heart of our soldiers'.¹⁸ Later,

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17 TNA, WO 32/5143 – Various reports on methods of leaflet dissemination.

18 Meine Kriegserinnerungen, 1914–1918; Ludendorff, Erich; (Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1919).

recalling the enemy leaflets dropped over German trenches, one lowly corporal named Adolf Hitler, would contest, ‘...This persistent propaganda began to have a real influence on our soldiers... [It] began to achieve undoubted success from 1916 onwards’.¹⁹ On the British side, Sir Campbell Stuart, the wartime Deputy Director of Crewe House, helped to cement the reputation of Lord Northcliffe’s propaganda organisation in his book *Secrets of Crewe House*. This high-profile study quickly relegated MI7, an arguably more significant operation, to the footnotes of Great War history.

An abridged version of Stuart’s account had previously been printed in *The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War* and the *Times* newspaper had itself rather erroneously claimed that good propaganda probably shortened the war by a year and saved a million lives.²⁰ The Nazis were quick to appropriate this omnipotent reputation of Allied propaganda to further its own *Dolchstoßlegende* ‘stab in the back’ rhetoric and to blame Germany’s defeat on enemy tricks.

The Revival of MI7

Following the Munich Crisis in September 1938, the British Government was no longer under any illusion that war was again imminent. For some time, preparations had been underway to re-establish a Ministry of Information. Now Sir Campbell Stuart, who had since been the Managing Director of *the Times* newspaper and the longstanding chairman of the Imperial Communications Advisory Committee, was approached to organise propaganda to enemy countries in event of war. Already the previously politically-neutral word ‘propaganda’ was acquiring negative connotations and seen as the exclusive tool of manipulation and malevolent dictators. Its use very slowly started to fall out of favour and to be excluded from the military lexicon. Reflecting this change of terminology Campbell Stuart’s organisation was officially titled, although rarely called, the ‘Department of Publicity in Enemy Countries’. Campbell Stuart worked from Electra House, the headquarters of communications company Cable and Wireless on London’s Victoria Embankment and, consequently, his department was more commonly referred to as either ‘Electra House’ or ‘Department EH’.

Electra House very much continued where Crewe House had left off. The humble leaflet was still seen as a principle means of influencing the enemy but now joined

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19 Mein Kampf; Hitler, Adolf, translated by Murphy, James; (Hurst and Blackett, 1939), pp.153-154.

20 Secrets of Crewe House: The Story of a Famous Campaign; Stuart, Sir Campbell; (Hodder and Stoughton, 1920); *The Times History and Encyclopaedia of the War: British Propaganda in Enemy Countries*; Unsigned; (The Times Publishing Company, 1919); *The Times* (London, England), Friday, October 31, 1919; p.13; Issue 42245.

by radio broadcasting. The department actively collaborated with the British Broadcasting Corporation in the preparation of radio broadcasts to Germany and occupied territories.

Campbell Stuart considered it essential that Allied propaganda obeyed three principles, firstly that it must be related to a defined policy of war aims; secondly that it must be ‘rigorously truthful’ and thirdly that it must never contradict itself. These guiding principles were adhered to in overt propaganda throughout the war and beyond.²¹ But as far as covert operations were concerned these principles could and were ignored. Tension did arise over the possibility of unacknowledged and exaggerated activities potentially compromising the well-established reputation of open propaganda. For example, the BBC, initially at least, was against the development of the *Soldatensender Calais* radio station (see below). Its Allied origin would soon be apparent and the BBC was concerned that any mistruths or misleading reporting on *Calais* might have a knock on effect on the BBC’s own credibility.²² These fears proved to be unfounded.

As a civilian agency under the direction of the Foreign Office, Electra House needed to liaise and secure the cooperation of the three fighting services. Through the Admiralty, in early 1939 Campbell Stuart arranged the secondment of a Royal Marines officer, Lieutenant Colonel RAD Brooks, to head Electra House’s military wing. Over time, Brooks would become the lynchpin between the civilian propaganda agencies and the Chiefs of Staff and was considered to command the confidence of all three Services. Through weekly meetings with General Ismay, he kept very close links with the Directors of Plans thereby keeping Electra House, and its successors, abreast of forthcoming military operations.²³

In another respect, the early working relationship with the Admiralty was not as good. Campbell Stuart had tried to secure assistance for the dissemination of propaganda in the central Mediterranean. The Admiralty considered possible means for distributing leaflets from Royal Navy ships and submarines. Such methods as using radio-sonde balloons, launching them with rockets, firing inside star shells from 4-inch guns, or floating leaflets in bottles were all considered but quickly rejected as being impractical. All the Admiralty could offer was in certain circumstances to drop leaflets from Fleet Air Arm aircraft over Sardinia and Western Libya but insisted that there was little hope of aircraft being available for the more imperative targets of Italy and Sicily. The proposition of radio broadcasting from

21 TNA, PREM 1/374 – Memorandum by Sir Campbell Stuart, 19 March 1939.

22 TNA, FO 898/45 – Memorandum on *Soldatensender Calais*, 19 November 1943.

23 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Proposed appointment of Lt Colonel RAD Brooks, RM, to work under Sir Campbell Stuart, on propaganda.

ships was also rejected due to the fear a vessel's position could be given away.²⁴

The assistance of the Royal Air Force was particularly needed as the principal provider of the means of distributing leaflets either by Bomber Command aircraft or through the especially established 'M' Balloon Unit. The Air Ministry's 'Plans 5' section maintained contact with Electra House and had the power of veto on the dissemination of leaflets. A veto could be applied either for operational reasons or if the RAF felt the content of a particular leaflet was excessively subversive thereby potentially giving the enemy cause to bring legal proceedings against captured aircrew. The Plans 5 section was later absorbed into the wider Air Ministry Public Relations department but crucially remained directly responsible to the General Branch of the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff. Its work then expanded so greatly that the section was upgraded to the Deputy Directorate of Counter Propaganda on 1 December 1942.²⁵

The War Office on the outbreak of war had re-established MI7 but on a less grand scale. It acted as liaison between the War Office and Electra House and the Ministry of Information as well as providing material for use in propaganda. A year later MI7 was reorganised into the War Office's Deputy Directorate of Information and Propaganda, under the Director of Public Relations.²⁶

The Emergence of the Political Warfare Executive

Following the change of the British Government with Churchill as the new Prime Minister and the fall of France imminent, the Chiefs of Staff considered their future strategy. Means suggested to continue the fight included the application of economic pressure on Germany, air attack on economic objectives and on German morale, and the creation of widespread revolt in the conquered territories. The Chiefs of Staff ordered plans to be urgently put into effect to create a special organisation to conduct subversive action in occupied countries.²⁷ Two months later, the Special Operations Executive was created to commence subversion and propaganda in enemy and enemy occupied territory. Electra House, along with elements of Section D of SIS and the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department, was subsumed into the SO1 section of SOE. While Campbell Stuart was considered to have 'good qualities', he appears to have been generally unpopular in both military and certain political circles. His continued presence in the new

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24 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Propaganda in enemy countries in time of war.

25 TNA, AIR 41/9 – Air Historical Branch: Narratives and Monographs: Propaganda and Publicity.

26 TNA, WO 165/95 – War Diary of the Deputy Directorate of Information and Propaganda.

27 TNA, CAB 80/11/58 – War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff Committee Papers, COS(40) 390, British Strategy in a Certain Eventuality, 25 May 1940.

set up was deemed likely to be ‘a constant source of friction and disharmony’. Accordingly his appointment was terminated.²⁸

SOE was directly accountable to the Minister of Economic Warfare, Dr Hugh Dalton. On taking up this new responsibility Dalton penned a memorandum titled ‘The Fourth Arm’ suggesting how subversion and propaganda could assist the fighting services. The opening paragraph read:

The Germans have shown that success in war can, to a large extent, be achieved by “Subversion”, by which I mean not only propaganda but subversive activities in the widest sense. Before a shot is fired, before even war is declared, the ground has been so well prepared that [the] opposing nation, divided, discouraged and even to some extent, disarmed, is unable to offer the desperate and united resistance which alone can prevail against military resources at Germany’s disposal. In other words, Subversion, I suggest, is an essential element in any large scale offensive action...²⁹

Dalton further suggested that in conducting subversion action ‘the selection of the right men is even more important than the creation of the right machine’. The three services appeared to have agreed with this statement, but still had reservations that the proposed leadership of SOE was overly civilian. In the opinion of Commander Ian Fleming, the personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence, the right men should not be ‘political cranks’ but taken from the services if immediate confidence and cooperation was to result. He felt that Dalton’s proposals sounded rather ‘Chatham Housy’ and warned that he ‘must not be allowed to shroud himself with secrecy as an excuse for inertia or incompetence as Campbell Stuart did’.

It soon became obvious, however, that the two branches of SOE, propaganda and subversion, were not working well together and if anything matters had been made worse. Both internal fighting within the organisation regarding division of labour, as far as the production and dissemination of overt and covert propaganda to different audiences was concerned, and external fighting across Government over control of policy resulted in another reorganisation a year later. SO1 was split from SOE to create the Political Warfare Executive in the autumn of 1941. A Ministerial committee consisting of the Foreign Secretary and Ministers of Information and Economic Warfare dealt with major questions regarding propaganda policy. The day-to-day running of PWE was left in the hands of the Executive Committee

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28 TNA, PREM 3/365/6 – Letter from Hugh Dalton to Winston Churchill, 24 July 1940.

29 TNA, AMD 223/477 – Memorandum titled ‘The Fourth Arm’, 19 August 1940.

comprising of Robert Bruce Lockhart as Chairman with Brigadier RAD Brooks and Rex Leeper. Brigadier Brooks retained his link with the Chiefs of Staff through General Ismay and the Directors of Plans in order to provide PWE with guidance on the strategic aspect of the war. Leeper continued his supervision of the more clandestine political warfare activities.

The Director of Naval Intelligence remained sceptical that the new PWE would improve matters in any way with essentially the same staff and same mentality but now under two-committee control. DNI's frustration was plain to see, when he commented '...the difficulty in the past has not been lack of ideas, but ...a certain flabbiness in the prosecution of whatever policy has been put forward. Ideas have been plentiful and these, by means of the existing machinery, have been passed to SO1 and its predecessor, Electra House. Means for converting these ideas into action also exist, but the will to use them has in the past been lacking, due partly to divided responsibility and partly to timidity and lack of realistic thinking. In this respect the Russian methods employed during the last three months have acted as a distinct stimulus, and have in fact been partly responsible for the formation of [PWE]'. The frustration proved to be short-lived as effective and close cooperation between PWE and the Admiralty was quick to ripen with the establishment of a new section of Naval Intelligence, NID17z, devoted to political warfare matters. NID17z was headed by Lieutenant Donald McLachlan, a former *Times* journalist who had worked in Berlin before the war. McLachlan, as Secretary of the Axis Planning Section, had recently provoked a useful debate following the circulation of a strategic appreciation he had prepared on 'German Psychological Warfare'. The appreciation was written from the German point of view and how it might plan a propaganda campaign against Britain in the build up to and during an invasion.

The preparation of a special Naval programme broadcast on the BBC's German service was one of the first profitable collaborations between McLachlan and PWE. A very productive and close partnership also flourished with Sefton Delmer, PWE's director of special operations, with the creation of the clandestine *Atlantik* shortwave radio station. McLachlan was able to provide Delmer with intelligence from the most secret sources in order to frame the broadcasts of *Atlantik* to best attack the morale of U-boat crews and the wider Kriegsmarine. The station appeared to develop a sizeable audience very quickly. Interrogations of 200 German Army prisoners of war taken within the first six months of broadcasting revealed that *Atlantik* was widely listened to in Tunisia and Sicily. One prisoner said that it was the most listened to station in his unit, more so than official German radio stations. The music was generally considered to be the first appeal of the station

with its news segments judged informative and interesting.³⁰ *Atlantik* later evolved into the *Soldatensender Calais* medium wave station that assisted the deception plans for Operation Overlord and built up a large listenership in the closing months of the war in Europe. The *Soldatensender* broadcast separate new bulletins aimed at the Kriegsmarine, Luftwaffe and German Army in between interludes of specially recorded dance music and Jazz. The War Office's disaffection with the new Political Warfare Executive setup would remain for a little while longer, with it expressing concern that the new organisation might be submerged by the 'curious mixture' of Bloomsbury-set and émigrés which made up the 'PWE-BBC circus'.³¹ With the fighting in North Africa, the War Office was taking an interest in the possibilities of frontline propaganda directed towards civilian populations and enemy military personnel immediately prior to and throughout a campaign. It was noted that the Germans had paved the way for many of their successful campaigns through the use of propaganda in this way. Ideas considered were the employment of mobile broadcasting stations, leaflet printing units combined with the provision of aircraft to distribute them, and the possibility of installing aircraft with loudspeaker systems.³² The latter idea does not appear to have been taken forward at this time, although radio broadcasting from aircraft was later trialled by the Air Ministry in cooperation with BBC engineers. The first two ideas were implemented when the 1st Army Field Propaganda Company went into action with the Eighth Army in the Western Desert in June 1942. The Company produced and broadcast its own radio programme under the name 'Radio Marmarica'. The station call sign was the Morse letter 'V' – dot-dot-dot-dash – sounded on a reed. Separate German and Italian programmes were transmitted on a wavelength of 35.33 metres up to five times a day. To help establish a regular audience captured undelivered letters from home to Axis soldiers were read out on air. The Company's printing presses were rarely used for their intended purpose of producing leaflets. Instead they were mostly utilised for printing the *Eighth Army News* newsheet and reproducing General Montgomery's famous personal messages to the troops.³³

Meanwhile, planning for Operation Torch was underway, which included provision for a joint Anglo-American 'Psychological Warfare Branch' to conduct propaganda in the North African theatre. The Psychological Warfare Branch was formed from a mix of staff from the US Office of War Information and Office of Strategic Services and, on the British side, from PWE. Some served in uniform and others as civilians. US Colonel CB Hazeltine was appointed commander with Richard H

30 TNA, ADM 223/477 – Evidence of Listening to German Atlantic Station.

31 TNA, WO 193/447 – Relationship between the Political Warfare Executive and the General Staff.

32 TNA, WO 193/446 – Provision of Propaganda Units for use in the field.

33 TNA, WO 169/6826 – 1st Army Field Propaganda Company war diary.

Crossman, later an eminent Labour Cabinet Minister, being the most senior British official attached. Before his transfer to the Middle East, Crossman was head of the German section of PWE.

The Psychological Warfare Branch provided the framework for the future organisation of tactical psychological warfare. It invented new means of leaflet dissemination using artillery shells and dedicated leaflet bombs and developed staple leaflet products like Safe Conduct Passes and bomb warnings. It also formed Combat Propaganda Teams, put captured radio transmitters back on air and monitored enemy broadcasts. The branch attempted to measure effects of psychological warfare with a programme of enemy prisoners of war interrogations. As planning for Operation Overlord commenced, a new Psychological Warfare Division was formed under the command of General Robert A McClure. The Psychological Warfare Division was not only fathered by PWB but also supplied it with most of its staff.

For Overlord, the British Army fielded five Amplifier Units, accompanied by the same number of Leaflet Units, to provide forward PsyWar and consolidation support to 21st Army Group.³⁴ In the battle to capture the port of Cherbourg, the 13th Amplifier Unit distinguished itself. Advancing at the front of American troops, in two days the Unit netted around 1,200 enemy prisoners following broadcasts from their loudspeaker truck. One broadcast was made from 500 yards from the walls of the Cherbourg arsenal in daylight. Following a brief negotiation and a show of strength, the commanding General and the entire 600-man garrison of the Arsenal surrendered. The four-man crew of the 13th Amplifier Unit truck were each awarded Bronze Stars by the Commanding General of the 1st US Army in recognition of their efforts.³⁵ The 14th Amplifier Unit was part of the first British troops to enter the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in the early afternoon of 15 April 1945. The Unit remained in the camp for the next two weeks acting as interpreters, using their loudspeaker to restore order in the camp, organising the distribution of food and arresting collaborators hiding amongst the inmates of camp.³⁶ The Amplifier and Leaflet units would also fulfil a civil affairs role, for instance with the production of newspapers in recently liberated areas.

In South East Asia, the arrangements for psychological warfare were even more complex than in Europe due to divergent British and American post-war policy towards European colonial possessions. This eventually resulted in separate British

34
The Amplifier Units were numbered from 10 to 14 and the Leaflet Units from 15 to 19.

35 TNA, WO 171/168 – Report of the action in the 21st Army Group Publicity and Psychological Warfare war diary, 29 June 1944.

36 TNA, WO 171/8142 – 14th Amplifier Unit war diary, April 1945.

Commonwealth and US organisations. On the British side, the five Indian Field Broadcasting Units (IFBUs) established by the Special Operations Executive beginning in 1943 was one of the more noteworthy endeavours in the region.

The IFBU's were tasked 'to carry out frontline propaganda against the enemy, and also behind the enemy lines' with this to be accomplished 'by loudspeaker apparatus, by distribution of leaflets, cartoons and other printed material by hand and by mortar, and by patrols whose ostensible purpose is to sell trade goods to local inhabitants'.³⁷ The trading with local inhabitants behind the lines was found to be an excellent way of securing both intelligence about the Japanese enemy and to foster goodwill amongst the local population.

Assessing British military information operations conducted in the Second World War, Dr Dalton was proved mostly right that selection of the right men proved more important than creating the right machine. The political organisation of psychological warfare was never satisfactory despite the improvement following the establishment of the Political Warfare Executive. It was the later opinion of Richard Crossman that subversive and propaganda activities were the only aspects of war at which Britain achieved real pre-eminence.³⁸ As far as psychological warfare is concerned, this pre-eminence was due to the imagination, acumen and strength of purpose of the likes of himself, Sefton Delmer, Donald McLachlan and their many colleagues. Whitehall battles over control of information activities were a distraction at best.

The decline of British military full spectrum communications (and the Psychological Warfare Executive that never was)

The post-war history of British military information operations is at best chequered. Without the existential threat of war, it proved impossible to replicate the coherence and reach of 'full spectrum communications' operations such as MI7 and PWE.

The transition into the Cold War came rather quickly and it is not surprising that planning for psychological warfare would continue in a similar vein as previously. In the Cold War, the Foreign Office took the lead and, in 1948, created the Information Research Department as a means to counter the worldwide threat of Soviet propaganda. Ralph Murray was appointed the first head of IRD. He was

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37 TNA, HS 1/333 – IFBU war diaries.

38 Richard Crossman, 'Personal view', *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday, May 16, 1973; p.18; Issue 58783.

one of the few senior figures originally from Electra House who had remained working with PWE throughout the war. Other former staff from both PWE and SOE also joined the department. In the event of global war with the Soviet Union, IRD was to provide the nucleus of a new 'Psychological Warfare Executive'.³⁹ One chief weaknesses of the original PWE, as Murray saw it, was the huge burden placed on the Director General, bearing responsibility for policy, strategy and administration. In the proposed new PWE, the structure included two Assistant Director Generals, one responsible for policy, the other for strategy. The latter was to be a Brigadier, or equivalent rank, as the senior Services representative. The new PWE would solely be responsible to the Foreign Office to avoid the complications of the previous triple Ministerial wrangling. It would be based in London with sub organisations envisioned in overseas commands in the Middle East and Far East and a small liaison section in Washington.⁴⁰

Planning in this immediate post-war period was centred on a future global war with little consideration given to Defence needs for a psychological warfare capability in local war or counterinsurgency. Information activity to help pacify the Emergency in Malaya, for instance, was originally entrusted to Government Public Relations. It was well into the 1950s until a small military psychological warfare section was formed as part of the wider civilian information effort.

The US Department of Defense had a monopoly on PsyWar activity throughout the Korean War. As Brigadier-General Robert A McClure, then head of the US Army's Office of Psychological Warfare, put it, this monopoly was 'not by design but by default'.⁴¹ Britain had no provision for tactical psychological warfare and could not provide either a PsyWar unit or technical hardware. The apparent American disappointment at the lack of assistance appears to have prompted the Chiefs of Staff to reconsider the position. The Chiefs acknowledged that limitations on manpower and equipment would prohibit setting up a military PsyWar organisation on the same scale as the Americans but they could not let psychological warfare activities 'go by default'. They further pointed out that 'it is in matters of this kind that we can establish a special relationship with the Americans'.⁴² At their meeting on 21 March 1952, the Chiefs of Staff requested the three Service Ministries to

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39 The terms 'Political Warfare' and 'Psychological Warfare' had been used analogously since 1943. Psychological Warfare, the favoured American term, was officially adopted over Political Warfare by the British Chiefs of Staff in May 1949 with agreement with the Foreign Office. TNA, DEFE 11/275 – COS(49) 74th meeting, 20 May 1949.

40 TNA, DEFE 11/275 – Details the Chiefs of Staff involvement with the planning for a Psychological Warfare Executive in event of war, 1948 to 1953.

41 Ibid, Brigadier-General Robert A McClure quoted in COS(51)727, 7 December 1951.

42 Ibid, COS(51)727, 7 December 1951 and Confidential Annex to COS(52) 4th meeting, 8 January 1952.

each nominate an officer to be responsible for liaison with the Foreign Office in peacetime regarding the organisation of psychological warfare. This appears to be the origin of what became the 'Interdepartmental Working Party on Psychological Warfare', which steered Defence planning for the next few years.⁴³

In May 1952, two officers were sent to Korea and Japan for two months to examine American PsyWar units in the field. They were certainly impressed at the level of resources the US military provided but, despite acknowledging that the value of psychological warfare operations is always difficult to estimate, felt that only some limited and local success had been achieved. Their conclusion was there was 'no clear proof that the results justified the effort'.⁴⁴ They pointed to organisational issues within the US machinery, which might have reduced effectiveness. There was an absence of proper State Department guidance, tension between the three services and insufficient coordination between the operations and intelligence staffs of individual services. They further suggested that the propaganda was unskilful and certain staff appointments were ill chosen.

While the Chiefs of Staff were considering psychological warfare purely in terms of global war, the Emergency in Malaya was *de facto* highlighting the requirement for a military capability in counterinsurgency. For example, about this time, the Director of Operations in Malaya, General Templar, secured the temporary use of a C47 Dakota loud hailer aircraft being used by the Americans in Korea. At the end of October, trials were undertaken by the War Office Operational Research Section using the Dakota to establish the effectiveness of loudspeaker broadcasting from aircraft. As a result of these trials, the employment of 'Voice Aircraft', using RAF Valettas and Austers, now became a rapid means of communicating with the Communist terrorists holed up in the jungle.⁴⁵ It is clear world events were rapidly overtaking the planning process.

The next major development occurred in the spring of 1956 when responsibility for psychological warfare planning inside the Ministry of Defence was taken over by the Directorate of Forward Plans. The Directorate, headed by John A Drew, was the successor to the London Controlling Section that had been so effective at organising Allied strategic deception in the Second World War. Deception remained the principle function of the DFP but now aimed towards misleading the Soviet Union. In the coming years, the importance attached to strategic

.....
43 Ibid, COS(52) 42nd meeting, 21 March 1952.

44 Ibid, Psychological Warfare in Korea, Appendix to Note on NCDB/19.

45 Emergency in Malaya: The Psychological Dimension; Derry, Archie; (National Defence College, 1982) and TNA, WO 291/1762 – Operations Research Section (Psychological Warfare) Memorandum No. 2, Experiments in the use of Airborn (sic) Loudspeakers: Operation Hailer.

deception would wane with increasing effort devoted to psychological warfare. The Chairman of the Interdepartmental Working Party became a permanent member of the Directorate.⁴⁶ On joining the Directorate, he shared his disaffection at the previous lack of progress and commented that other nations' forces:

...are or are becoming organised to conduct psychological warfare both against troops, and also subversion-wise and counter subversion-wise. The French MOD and forces have recently built up a large PsyWar organisation and the Americans are of course well set up. Oddly, we are amongst the most backward, whereas we have in the past been pioneers in this field. And it will take time for us to catch up. Do we have the time?

The first challenge for DFP came with the Suez Crisis. A challenge, which painfully highlighted the unpreparedness of Britain to conduct psychological warfare and must rank as the low point in the history of its information operations. John Rennie, then head of IRD, began to make the necessary arrangements for the information campaign for Operation Musketeer at the start of August 1956. He proposed the formation of an Information Coordination Executive, (ICE), composed of IRD staff with liaison officers from the three Services. Above ICE, was an advisory committee chaired by Douglas Dodds-Parker, a former officer of the Special Operations Executive. The Advisory Committee first met on 24 August with those in attendance including John Drew from the Directorate of Forward Plans, John Rennie, and Sir Dick White who had recently switched hats from head of MI5 to head of the Secret Intelligence Service. Donald McLachlan, Sir Charles Hambro, the banker and another high-ranking veteran of SOE, and Hugh Carleton-Greene, previous head of the Emergency Information Service in Malaya but now representing the BBC, also attended. This time, however, having the right men available was not going to compensate for a lack of suitable machinery not being in place.⁴⁷

The psychological warfare plan for Operation Musketeer was divided into three phases. The first pre-invasion stage would be conducted exclusively by IRD and consisted of an 'all-out attack on Egyptian morale combined with some action to restrain other Arab States'. Then if an invasion of Egypt were still necessary, the second phase would be conducted mostly by the military with assistance from IRD. An all-out PsyWar effort would be mounted against other Arab States to undermine Egypt in conjunction with 'some action to disrupt any resistance in

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46 TNA, DEFE 28/1 – Directorate of Forward Plans: Terms of Reference, 1950-1966.

47 TNA, FO 1110/880 – ICE set up.

Egypt'. The final phase was the rehabilitation stage.⁴⁸ IRD provided facilities for printing leaflets in Cyprus and transmitters for broadcasting a special *Voice of Britain* radio programme in order to counteract the pernicious anti-Western Cairo radio. The transmitters of Cairo radio would be put of action by bombing on the first night of operations. Two Voice aircraft were promised plus six loudspeaker vehicles provided with pre-recorded messages in Arabic and leaflets to hand out. Brigadier Bernard E Fergusson was appointed Director of Psychological Warfare for Musketeer. 'For this my qualifications were nil', Fergusson later remarked.⁴⁹

Fergusson recalls that from the beginning everything that could go wrong did go wrong. One of his first and crucial problems was the great difficulty experienced trying to recruit Arabic speakers suitable for broadcasting and translation work. The printing presses in Cyprus broke down delaying production of leaflets by several days, (Five different illustrated leaflets had been designed by cartoonist Ronald Searle. The reverse sides were left blank so texts could be printed later as the campaign progressed). The air drop packages designed to release leaflets at lower attitudes using barometric fuses were incorrectly calibrated and required sand ballast to function properly. Then once Musketeer began the RAF experienced great difficulty allocating aircraft for leaflet dropping. The now single voice aircraft, which was expected from Kenya, arrived with a serious case of laryngitis having had its loudhailers removed en route. On the first night of operations, the scheduled bombing raid on the Cairo radio transmitters, which were supposed to be taken out so that *Voice of Britain* could broadcast on the same frequency, was rescheduled. Several days passed before the transmitters were finally knocked out but were then back on air within a few more, albeit at reduced power. *Voice of Britain* had taken over the studios of the Near East Arab Broadcasting station *Sharq al-Adna*. Originally this clandestine station was operated by the Special Operations Executive in Jerusalem during the war.⁵⁰ The transmitters were later relocated to Cyprus and the station continued as a commercial enterprise although still remaining a tool of the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office felt that *Sharq al-Adna* was no longer effective as it used to be and so could be sacrificed for Musketeer. One IRD official put it this way, 'Effectively *Sharq* has been 'blown'. Although the act of requisition will in itself add some substance to the tattered fabric of its cover, any advantage this might have is, in my view, outweighed by the disadvantage of the station's Arabophile line and that attendant complications with the French and Israeli Governments'.⁵¹ In their first meeting, the Advisory

48 TNA, DEFE 28/9 – Psychological Warfare in Support of Operation Musketeer, 23 August 1956.

49 Bernard Fergusson, *The Trumpet in the Hall, 1930-1958*, (Collins, 1970), p.259.

50 Ewan Butler, *Amateur Agent: A story of 'Black' Propaganda during World War II*; (George G Harrop & Co Ltd, 1963).

51 TNA, FCO 1110/947 – Draft memorandum on the future of Sharq, 17 October 1956.

Committee gave a prophetic warning that following the take over of its studios by *Voice of Britain* the Arabic staff, who were pro-Egypt, were likely to resign. That is exactly what happened, but not before unscheduled broadcasts were made by rebellious staff telling the audience not to trust any future broadcasts from the station.

If anything good came out of the Suez operation, it was the final recognition that urgent improvements were required in planning for psychological warfare in peacetime. The shift in thinking was moving away from planning for global war to focusing on limited war and local actions. The Directorate of Forward Plans had already begun work to improve the situation prior to the Suez interruption. Importantly, it recognised that effective machinery had to be in place in peacetime. A reserve PsyWar unit needed to be formed with the wider training of personnel undertaken and the necessary hardware for psychological warfare procured. The first post-war psychological warfare training course for staff officers had taken place in September at the Joint Concealment Centre. An official manual embodying the principles and practice of psychological warfare was in preparation.⁵² Another positive to come out of Suez was the now permanent availability of printing facilities in Cyprus, which remained under Defence control.

The Chiefs of Staff were also supportive and recognised the need for upgrading defence psychological warfare capabilities, they commented in February 1957:

We have long been concerned about the state of our information and propaganda activities... We consider that information and propaganda form an integral part of our defence effort. Up till now they have proved weak and ineffective weapons and their control has been confined to those not responsible for defence. The reductions to be imposed on our armed forces will inevitably circumscribe the influence they can exert in support of the policy of Her Majesty's Government and efficient information and propaganda services will often be the only means of filling the gap. We can discern nothing in the present organisation of information and propaganda which gives us any hope that the use we can make of our wits will prove equal to our needs.⁵³

On the demise of the Joint Concealment Centre, a new Psychological Warfare Centre was set up at Maresfield Camp, East Sussex in September 1958. Its role was to train officers, to provide advice to the Service Ministries and to prepare

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52 TNA, DEFE 28/148 – The Psychological Warfare Organisation in Peace and War, a note by the Director of Forward Plans, 21 June 1956.

53 TNA, DEFE 28/148 – COS(57)50, 25 February 1957. Propaganda and Information.

PsyWar publications. The Centre maintained an establishment of three officers, seven other ranks and three civilians. In time, it also would provide a psychological warfare cadre unit to be activated at times of crisis.⁵⁴

In early 1959, discussion over terminology was reignited. 'Psychological Warfare' was often considered the 'unbreathed dirty word' in terms of both technique and description. Proposals had been made to water the expression down to either 'Psychological Support' or 'Psychological Operations'. The latter term was favoured by the Americans and had been used the previous year in a British contingency planning paper for possible 'Psychological Operations' in the Lebanon. In consultation with their American opposite numbers, the Directorate of Forward Plans agreed that 'Psychological Operations' would become the new generic term to encompass all forms of psychological activity.⁵⁵

During this period of reorganisation, several local actions requiring PsyWar support had been ongoing, particularly in Kenya, Cyprus, and Muscat and Oman. In Cyprus, the EOKA insurgency to secure 'Enosis' for the Greek-Cypriots had been raging since 1955. EOKA orchestrated a very active propaganda campaign aimed at gaining support from fellow Greek-Cypriots and denigrating British security forces. The propaganda was mostly channelled through a cyclostyled leaflet war, a friendly press and physical intimidation. The information department of the Cypriot Government was predominantly concerned with counteracting the insurgent propaganda at the strategic level. Through the earlier part of the campaign the military provided a single 'Propaganda Officer' to coordinate psychological warfare against EOKA. In 1958, a tactical psychological warfare unit was established on the island. For security purposes, it was titled the 'Information Research Unit' (IRU), but rather than being utilised for its intended purpose of psychological warfare, it was taken over by the Secretariat and used intensively for 'information research' and other administrative work. By the time the IRU was put into action once the DFP Middle East officer had taken command, the insurgency was in its final throws with a political solution bringing it to an end. Useful lessons were learnt. As in Malaya, the voice aircraft provided a very useful and rapid means of broadcasting to the EOKA insurgents ensconced in the mountainous regions. Airdropped leaflets proved less useful as EOKA incited Greek children to collect and destroy them immediately after they fell. In the circumstances on the island, leaflets pushed under doors by security patrols during curfew were a more effective

54 TNA, DEFE 28/16 – Working Party file, 1957-59. Its War Establishment was officially approved from January 1959 at the COS(58) 42nd meeting, recorded in DEFE 28/17.

55 Discussion on change of terminology in several TNA files, including CO 1027/179 and DEFE 28/16.

way of getting them read by civilians.⁵⁶

Throughout the 1960s, more challenges would require psychological operations support from the attempted revolt in Brunei and the Borneo Confrontation in South East Asia to the rebellion in Aden in the Arabian Peninsula. Regrettably, there is not space to examine the PSYOPS response to these small wars here. PSYOPS planning and training through the decade continued in much the same vein.

An official ‘Staff Officers Guide to Psychological Operations’ was published in 1962 by, what was now called, the Psychological Operations Centre. The Guide covered the nature, role and aims of PSYOPS in the strategic, tactical, and consolidation spheres as well as support to internal security measures. Media was discussed in terms of leaflets, loudspeakers either on the ground or using voice aircraft, and radio operations.⁵⁷ The guide opened with the definition of Psychological Operations as:

...the planned use of propaganda and other psychological actions, to support current policy by influencing the opinions, emotions, attitudes and behaviour of enemy, neutral and friendly groups in time of war or emergency.

In October 1964, the Psychological Operations Centre moved to the Joint Warfare Establishment at Old Sarum, near Salisbury in Wiltshire, becoming the Psychological Operations Section. The Section provided two courses, one for senior officers and the other for staff officers. The senior officers course lasted for one week and was intended to acquaint officers of the three Services with the principles of psychological operations and its capabilities as a support weapon for military operations. The two-week staff officers’ course was aimed at officers likely to be involved in the planning or execution of psychological operations.⁵⁸ Permanent psychological operations staff officers were now serving in Aden, Singapore and Malaysia. If other locations required emergency psychological support, an Old Sarum trained staff officer could be deployed on an *ad hoc* basis. If a full team was also needed then previously earmarked men were available to receive additional training at the Joint Warfare Establishment and pre-packaged equipment was available from a reserve.⁵⁹

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56 TNA, DEFE 28/10 – Report on visits by DDFP(ME) to District Security Committees in September 1958.

57 A reproduction of the Staff Officers Guide to Psychological Operations is available online from the author’s website: http://www.psywar.org/pdf_WO_PSYOPS_Guide.pdf

58 TNA, DEFE 28/84 – Joint Warfare Establishment, Old Sarum correspondence.

59 TNA, DEFE 28/1 – Psychological Operations, 10 May 1966.

Following rioting in 1967 a new unit, known as the No. 1 Army Information Team, was deployed to Hong Kong at the request of the Hong Kong Government. Most likely this unit was principally concerned with community relations rather than psychological operations.

In the summer of 1968, the Directorate of Forward Plans was closed down and its staff integrated into a new PSYOPS section in the Defence Operations Centre. The Section's responsibilities essentially covered those of the former DFP and were defined as:

- a) Military PSYOPS support to all contingency and operational plans;
- b) Policy and technical guidance to PSYOPS staff on Commands overseas;
- c) Policy guidance on PSYOPS training;
- d) Community Relations, allocations of funds; and
- e) Briefing of senior officers and officials.⁶⁰

Currently, little documentation is in the public domain detailing British psychological operations planning and deployments for the remainder of the Cold War period.

What is known of the PSYOPS campaign for the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict very much implies a re-run of the Suez Crisis. Five leaflets, including a Safe Conduct Pass, were prepared and sent with the Task Force but no leaflet bombs were available to disseminate them from fast jets. Despite newspaper coverage, based on a Ministry of Defence press release, saying that leaflets had been dropped over Port Stanley, it proved impossible for the planned leaflet mission to proceed. Known as Project Moonshine, a radio station *Radio Atlantico del Sur* was set up directed to Argentine troops and their families using a BBC transmitter on Ascension Island. From the moment Project Moonshine was suggested by the Ministry of Defence, the FCO, recalling the *Sharq al-Adna* debacle, recorded their disquiet against the plan. Among their objections, they questioned whether the MOD had access to suitable linguists for a professional radio station, whether a suitable frequency could be found without pirating one assigned to another nation in the region and by requisitioning a BBC transmitter how would this impact on the BBC's scheduled World Service broadcasts in Latin America. In one respect the FCO was proved correct, regardless of the excellent early 1980's popular music including Elton John and the Bee Gees, the station was criticised for using announcers speaking Spanish with Anglicised accents.⁶¹ The press also did not report favourably on *Radio Atlantico del Sur* by accusing the MOD of broadcasting

60 TNA, AIR 20/12048 – PSYOP Brief for Colonel Rigby on Joining, February 1974.

61 TNA, FCO 26/2449 – Project Moonshine.

propaganda. *The Times* was particularly scornful in an article under the mocking headline ‘The ultimate weapon. Radio station could be last straw for invaders’.⁶² Press relations more generally were far from ideal throughout the short campaign. Perhaps this poor performance throughout the Falklands Campaign was the result of a decline in support for a psychological operations capability since the closure of the Directorate of Forward Plans.

Post Cold-War

While the Cold War progressed through its death throes with one Soviet state toppling after another, the Middle East took centre stage with the Iraqi invasion of neighbouring Kuwait in late 1990. As a US-led coalition advanced to liberate Kuwait, an extensive psychological operations programme was mounted by the US 4th Psychological Operations Group. Throughout the six-week campaign of Operation Desert Storm, over 29 million leaflets were dropped, at least 66 loudspeaker teams deployed, and the radio station ‘Voice of the Gulf’ broadcasted continually to Iraqi troops from 19th January 1991 using multiple transmitters.⁶³ Forty-four percent of Iraqi troops deserted with an estimated 17,000 defecting to Saudi Arabia and Turkey and 87,000 surrendering to Coalition forces. Very many of those surrendering had leaflets in their possession. Just as happened in the Korean War, psychological operations were almost exclusively conducted by the United States with, it seems, British forces not contributing in any significant way to the tactical information war. Perhaps because of the apparent success of US psychological operations in the Gulf War, the British Chiefs of Staff agreed to the formation a new shadow PSYOPS unit soon afterwards.

A tactical battlefield unit, it was officially designated the 15(UK) Psychological Operations Group (Shadow) with the double-digit prefix ‘15’ being assigned to distinguish it from its American opposite numbers. It resurrected the stag’s head emblem of the Indian Field Broadcasting Units as its insignia. It was quartered initially at Templar Barracks, Ashford before moving in 1997 to Chicksands in Bedfordshire where it became a lodger unit within the then Defence Intelligence & Security School. Stephen Jolly became a PSYOPS instructor at Chicksands

62 Nicholas Timmins, ‘The ultimate weapon. Radio station could be last straw for invaders’, *The Times* (London, England), Saturday, June 05, 1982; p.4; Issue 61252.

63 Leaflets of the Persian Gulf War, published by 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne), 1991, <http://www.psywar.org/psywar/reproductions/LeafletsPersianGulfWar.pdf>. Also see Psywarrior: <http://www.psywarrior.com/gulfwar.html>, this article puts the number of tactical loudspeaker teams deployed at 71. The Gulf War was also the first 24-hour rolling news war, which helped to cement the reputation of CNN in particular. Most of the major international broadcasters carried live reporting from their correspondents in the Iraqi capital Baghdad. Extensive use of military imaging, particularly onboard camera footage of precision guided weapons, marked another innovation for war reporting.

during this period.⁶⁴

Around the same time, at the strategic level, the Directorate of Forward Plans component of the Defence Operations Centre in Whitehall had morphed into a Defence Targeting & Information Operations (DTIO) cell of which today's Military Strategic Effects (MSE) branch is a lineal descendant.

15 (UK) PSYOPS Group's baptism of fire came when it was deployed to Bosnia in January 1996. But, as Major David Hazel, the Group's unofficial historian, acknowledged, the deployment '...highlighted the inadequacies of the shadow or double-hatting concept',⁶⁵ whereby a unit's personnel are designated as 'shadow' (ie deployable on demand from the ranks of other units in which they serve). As a result, the Government agreed to the funding of a permanent and dedicated capability. The Group as a joint organisation constituted service personnel from the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, and Royal Marines. Within a few years, it consisted of 8 regular servicemen, supported by 2 civil servants and 28 reservists. The reservists were particularly important for providing the Group with non-military skills in television production and post-production, desktop publishing, and market analysis. Soon, the perennial debate over finding a more suitable name for 'psychological operations' raised its head again. The new Labour Government, elected in 1997, considered the name 'PSYOPS' to carry unacceptable connotations of 'black propaganda' and underhand methods. Consequently, the Group was renamed '15(UK) Information Support Group' as from 13 March 1999. The unfortunate upshot of this name change was that the Group began receiving phone calls from the wider Defence community requesting IT support to fix their personal computers and a psychological operations capability disappeared from the Army's Order of Battle.⁶⁶ Three years later, the Group's name reverted back to 15 (UK) PSYOPS Group.

During recent years, the Group nested within 1 Military Intelligence Brigade of the Army. Although joint, it came under the command of HQ Land and as a result, was subsumed into the Army's Security Assistance Group in 2014 and into the new 77 Brigade in 2015. In 2016, all personnel are expected to relocate to Hermitage in Berkshire.

64 Stephen Jolly, 'Wearing the Stag's Head Badge: British Combat Propaganda Since 1945', *Falling Leaf*, no. 170, October 2000.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Anonymous source.

The future of the ‘Rainbow in the Dark’ doctrine

One hundred years of British military information operations and post-war institutional history suggest that, without the unifying force of war, the probability is that the full spectrum communications experiment – the *Rainbow in the Dark* – is unlikely to prosper. However, in this era of ‘carnage and connectivity’,⁶⁷ with ISIL rampant and Russian ‘hybrid war’ being waged in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, it might be argued that such a doctrine offers its greatest potency at this very point in history. Conventional responses to the current non-conventional threats are not working. MOD information operations and experimental work in full spectrum effects must be nurtured. The *Rainbow in the Dark* should not be disregarded or relegated to the sidelines else it will be consigned to history as yet another brave but ultimately failed experiment.

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