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Review Article
Censorship: A Dialectical Process for Social Change and National Expression

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For as long as peasants have laughed at the satire of traveling players, concerned groups at every level in society have struggled for access to and control of public opinion. Elites typically act to ban material they consider a threat to their power, but they also regulate public expression in an effort to protect society or improve its mores. Regulation can be universal, as in wartime, when strict censorship serves to boost patriotism while restricting enemy access to vital information. More often, it is parochial. On one side of the Atlantic, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) insists that actors playing police officers wear seatbelts. On the other, where a seatbelt interferes with an officer's sidearm, it is against US public safety regulations for actors to shout 'Fire!' Citizens generally complain when the state infringes on their free speech rights, but they are also quick to clamor for controls on the public depiction of behavior they deem offensive, whether to their sense of decency, sexual orientation, political ideology, or group identity. It is important to note that official censorship not only confronts the gamut of the intensely personal, from love to pride to spiritual belief, but also operates within isolating national boundaries,

so its study has the potential to provide unique, and even quantifiable, insights into national characteristics, as well as public opinion. Defining censorship, therefore, in terms of an imposition of power from above that undermines liberal democracy — as prevailing scholarship does — is as simplistic as it is unhelpful.[1]

If censorship, rather, is a dialectical process located in a specific socio-historical setting, then it emerges as both a necessary and a beneficial institution. Perhaps citizens, in calling for controls, have promoted rather than inhibited societal change; élites, in responding to those calls, have used censorship wisely, in furtherance of their society's best interests; and contentious debates over censorship — and the coin's flipside, propaganda — have been a healthy component of political democracy. This review of six of the latest works, most of which consider propaganda–censorship dynamics in wartime transatlantic contexts, hopes for a newly positive interpretation, or, at minimum, a consensus that the construction of public opinion and its modern partner, national identity, through the propaganda–censorship interface, is a useful collaborative venture involving all levels of a given society.

Mass media came of age with the late nineteenth century's wire services and sensationalist journalism, but it matured during the last desperate years of the Great Depression, especially in America, where underemployed workers craved cheap distractions. Henry R. Luce rolled out his glossy news magazine *Life* (1936), Walt Disney produced a feature-length animated Technicolor movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), and upon hearing Orson Welles's radio dramatization of H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1938) thousands of Americans concluded that the Martians really had landed. Dyed-in-the-wool art critics might have fretted over esthetic leveling, just as conservative élites feared the revolutionary potential of gullible mass publics, yet the 1930s witnessed the media's celebration of a vibrant, optimistic working-class culture. At the same time, social science suggested ways to monitor and control the opinions of these *New Masses*, as radical editor Max Eastman aptly named his weekly (1936). Pollster George H. Gallup founded research institutes in America (1935) and Britain (1936), and *Public Opinion Quarterly* appeared (1937); by 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt's Justice Department was applying quantitative content analysis to win convictions against freelance journalists for writing propagandistic articles that ran counter to the government's line.[2]

Yet it is not clear that film, nor other forms of mass media for that matter, has actually lived up to its promise of propagandizing the masses. In 1999, a

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1   For precision, I reserve quote marks exclusively for quoted material, never to denote irony, and I set material that the original source had quoted inside an extra set of quote marks; I use America interchangeably with the United States. My thanks to Peter Weiler and Rob Niebuhr for their valuable input.

2   Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London 1997) gives an excellent account of the media's celebration. Expert testimony provided by Princeton University's Harwood L. Childs, *United States v. Kelly*, May 1943; and see Harold D. Lasswell, 'Propaganda Detection and the Courts', in Harold D. Lasswell, Nathan Leites et al. (eds), *Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics* (Cambridge, MA 1949).

century after the Lumière brothers' cinematographic invention, Nicholas Reeves published a long overdue book, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* His research came down on the side of myth, as in the case of Leni Riefenstahl's acclaimed masterpiece *Triumph of the Will* that, contrary to expectations, did little for Adolf Hitler's domestic popularity ratings, which declined rapidly after its release. Perhaps, then, the power of a given film to propagandize lies not so much in its impact on target audiences but rather in the ensuing debates among publics and officials over control of its content.[3]

During the repressive Cold War era, scholarly works — few of which were by historians — viewed censorship monolithically, as the imposition of power: state institutions, or self-censoring bodies such as Hollywood's Production Code Administration (PCA), acted on mass media to excise subversive and especially blasphemous or sexually explicit content. Law scholar Paul O'Higgins's *Censorship in Britain* (1972) described a web of 'legal rules and practices' that served only to 'inhibit and restrict the freedom of opinion and communication'. Political scientist Michael Adams's *Censorship: the Irish Experience* (1968) ignored issues such as wartime neutrality to dwell instead on the regulatory control of pornography; Adams hardly inspired the field by finding that there was 'really no "conclusion" to this study'. But across the Atlantic, Murray Schumach's popular survey, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor* (1964), did conclude that religious or ethnic-minority pressure groups played a decisive role in film censorship. Yet Schumach nonetheless described a unidirectional process, whereby organizations, however much they disliked the concept of censorship in a democratic society, were 'incapable of resisting the temptation to apply pressure on movie-makers' to cut offensive scenes.[4]

Reaction to the social containment of the early Cold War period gave way to the permissive era, a relaxation of state censorship, and the utopian politics of the anti-war and feminist movements. Excited postmodernists were soon applying Foucauldian theory to film studies. Promising to reveal how cinema 'was not so much subjected to, as created' by regulation, Annette Kuhn's *Cinema, Censorship, and Sexuality* (1988) analyzed censorship as 'an activity embedded within an ensemble of power relations'. Kuhn set about deconstructing its operation 'through attention to particular events and instances', yet the 'extensive array of discourses, practices, and powers' that emerged from her research had a structure as predictably hegemonic as it was monolithic. A structure more satisfying for its heterogeneity emerged from Francis G. Couvares's edited collection, *Movie Censorship and American Culture* (1996). Essayist Charles Lyons showed how an eclectic array of groups — from Chinese-Americans against *Year of the Dragon* to gays and lesbians against *Basic Instinct* — lobbied for censorship throughout the permissive era;

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3   Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?* (London 1999), 109–10.
4   Paul O'Higgins, *Censorship in Britain* (London 1972), 162; Michael Adams, *Censorship: the Irish Experience* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1968), 198; Murray Schumach, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor: The Story of Movie and Television Censorship* (New York 1964), 103.

while their protests neither affected film content nor convinced legislators of the need for tighter controls, they did achieve a measure of self-empowerment, serving to politicize and demarcate group interests within American society. Similarly, as an essay by Couvares demonstrated, Catholic leaders during the 1930s–50s embraced non-governmental censorship because they sought not only to dilute the power of Protestant élites, but also to promote Catholic values as a more virtuous form of Americanism.[5]

Turning to the latest scholarship, I begin with Steve Nicholson's *The Censorship of British Drama*, a comprehensive and brilliantly researched resource, if one that sticks to the point at the expense of broader connections. Nicholson has spent several years working with fifty thousand files at the British Library, each a theatrical license submission to the Lord Chamberlain's office (LCO), to which, for the second volume of his trilogy, covering 1933–52 and reviewed here, he has added materials newly available in the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle. Immediately apparent is the thoroughness with which Lords Chamberlain and their Readers of Plays tackled their work, and the sheer volume of changes as well as outright bans that they forced on producers. Even in the 1950s, as Nicholson notes with some surprise, 'the potential of theatre to influence society was still fundamental' to the LCO's rationale. Lord Clarendon's secretary, while admitting that '"pansy" and other effeminate characterizations' were 'prevalent elsewhere' in British society, nonetheless suspected that such portrayals on stage correlated with a rise in homosexual offenses, were definitely 'harmful', and should therefore 'always [be] forbidden'. Although Nicholson intends his work primarily for theater historians, his sources provide valuable insights for those in other fields.[6]

Of particular interest to historians of foreign affairs are the lengths to which the LCO's Lord Cromer went to eliminate any critical representations of nazis and fascists during the 1930s, for fear of offending German and Italian consular officials. Cognizant of nazi brutality, Cromer did not want to discourage criticism in books and 'even published plays', yet when it came to 'plays acted on the English stage', certification by him as a royal officeholder meant not merely a sanction by the monarch but, in effect, an official endorsement. Given that Edward VII was an avid theatre-goer, and George V followed his father's principles on censorship, especially the depiction of European royalty, Cromer must have been only too aware of this responsibility. Nicholson's sources make clear that both the British Foreign Office and the German Embassy attached great significance to theatre censorship. Researchers in foreign archives will now be able to pick up the story, gauging the extent to which

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5   Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship, and Sexuality, 1909–1925* (London 1988), 10, 9; Francis G. Couvares (ed.), *Movie Censorship and American Culture* (Washington, DC 1996).

6   Steve Nicholson, *The Censorship of British Drama, 1900–1968*, vol. I, *1900–32*, vol. II, *1933–52*, vol. III, *1953–68* (Exeter 2003, 2005, forthcoming), II, 380. For a general survey, see also Dominic Shellard and Steve Nicholson, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets . . . A History of British Theatre Censorship* (London 2004), which includes selected Readers' Reports, as well as statistical data.

German and Italian policy-makers correlated censorship practices with any assumptions that British monarchs and their subjects held fascistic sympathies.[7]

In common with all the authors in this review, Nicholson is at his most compelling when he connects public protest to censors' decisions, and at his most frustrating when he does not follow through to an inference. Cromer, for instance, was 'disinclined to discourage' the mid-1930s peace movement, but, for fear of undermining the fighting spirit of British soldiers, nevertheless did, ruling one play to be 'a most pernicious form of pacifist propaganda'. At about the same time, Cromer approved *Family Portrait*, a play about Jesus' home life, only to find himself in the eye of a firestorm of protest from the grassroots Catholic Women's League. While Cromer did not withdraw the license, Nicholson believes that the 'affair was likely to influence future decisions'. There is scope here for further interpretation. Did a concern to promote patriotic and religious values drive Cromer's decisions, a universal concern that a French or American censor would have shared; or did Cromer bend to this particular Catholic women's protest but not the pacifists' because the former lobby was more effective than the latter? Although Nicholson's addiction to block quotations curtails interpretive analysis (many is the page with fewer than a dozen lines of his prose), *Censorship of British Drama* is as much a monumental scholarly accomplishment as it is a priceless collection of primary-source material.[8]

Through a series of thematically organized case studies, Anthony Aldgate and James C. Robertson's compact survey of *Censorship in the Theatre and Cinema* compares the policies of the LCO with those of the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), the industry's voluntary regulatory body. Selecting plays from one country that subsequently became films in another allows the authors to pursue their goal of broadening the 'national, even parochial' purview of censorship studies. One case in seeming contradiction of Nicholson's observations is that of *Professor Mamlock*, a 1934 play by German social critic Friedrich Wolf about the irrationality of nazi antisemitism, which Lord Cromer approved intact, commenting wistfully, 'I suppose the Germans cannot object?' Still, the production then failed to appear as scheduled at the Westminster Theatre, presumably after pressure from the Foreign Office, although it did play to an audience at a Nottingham church hall. When the Soviet Union released a film version in 1938, the BBFC rejected it, only to lift the ban two weeks after the German invasion of Poland. While Aldgate and Robertson do single out the ban by successive Lords Chamberlain of the biblical but insufficiently reverent adaptation *The Green Pastures* — especially after its release as a feature film in 1936 — as a bureaucratically rigid 'blot on the record of stage censorship', the authors argue nonetheless that the BBFC's

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7   Nicholson, *Censorship of British Drama*, op. cit., II, 10, 53 (George V); 148–9, (Foreign Office), esp. 34.

8   Ibid., 127–8 (peace); 145–6 (*Family Portrait*).

censorship of a given film was consistently stricter than the LCO's treatment of the original play. After Parliament abolished stage censorship in 1968, an act that the authors suggest was a nod to the educated intellectualism of theater audiences, the working-class-oriented cinema increasingly became 'the battle-ground' of the permissive era.[9]

Inherent to the contested process of censorship is its power for publicity, an unintended consequence readily exploitable by activists, as one case study shows so well. After limited modifications to suit the LCO, an erotically macabre stage adaptation of *The Devils*, Aldous Huxley's novel of seven-teenth-century exorcism, ran at the Aldwych Theatre for nine months in 1961 with only a single public complaint. When an X-rated and substantially expur-gated film version by Ken Russell was screened 10 years later, at the height of Mary Whitehouse's anti-pornography crusade, there was an ironic twist. To protect impressionable minds from corruptible filth, logic surely demanded that Whitehouse press for an immediate ban. Yet she seized on it to promote her forthcoming Nationwide Festival of Light mass protest rally, and let *The Devils* play in cinemas to attract public attention. Christian activists like Whitehouse ultimately lost the battle for stricter film censorship, though after governmental relaxation of controls in 1981 led to a craze for imported horror videos, public debate about the regulation of pornography in rental stores renewed, as it has again recently over internet content. In a second edition, Aldgate and Robertson might add a chapter to compare public responses in Ronald Reagan's America and Margaret Thatcher's Britain to increasingly explicit films.[10]

Although Lester D. Friedman's captivating and coherent edited collection, *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, has little to say about censorship, it does provide compelling insights into national identity. Commenting on the 'Renaissance' in film during Thatcher's confrontational premiership, contributor Thomas Elsaesser notes how Thatcherism 'implicitly and explicitly' challenged what it meant to be British, a self-questioning that extended to the promotion of Britishness by production teams. In part to acknowledge that so many of his contributors are Americans who are writing from an outsider's perspective, Friedman boils the matter down to trans-atlantic perceptions of societal stratification. Americans value egalitarian society, so their cinematic hero has long been 'the rugged loner who fights for personal rights and freedoms', whereas British cinema dwells on the 'irrecon-cilable binary opposites' of capitalism versus socialism or management versus workers, reflecting its patrons' preoccupation with class. A retrospective of

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9   Anthony Aldgate and James C. Robertson, *Censorship in the Theatre and Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 3, 51 (*Green Pastures*); 161 ('battleground'); 183.

10   Ibid., 172–9. In 1965, Whitehouse founded the influential National Viewers' and Listeners' Association to lobby against sexualized behavior, violence, and blasphemous or obscene language on television; in September 1971, she teamed up with Peter and Janet Hill, Malcolm Muggeridge, Lord Longford, and other Anglican church activists to stage mass rallies throughout England to protest what they saw as the moral breakdown of society.

Ken Loach's documentary-style films by contributor James F. English indicates the pitfalls of this obsession. Troubled by the Thatcherite turn, Loach increasingly sought to situate domestic issues in global interplays of power, only to lose the '"documentable" reality' of his plotlines, which became 'machinations of a shadowy world-conspiracy whose agents are never quite in view'. Loach's *Hidden Agenda* transitions from a government-backed assassination in Chile to one in Northern Ireland, before building subliminally to link MI5/MI6 and the CIA with Conservative MPs and ultimately fascism, yet English notes that it does so at the expense of Belfast's 'unique' problems.[11]

An essay by Paul Giles suggests that the remarkable success of movies produced by Independent Television's Channel 4 often depended on the juxtaposition of the 'foreign, strange or sinister with the safe haven of the drably domestic'. Giles cites *Another Time, Another Place*, in which Italian prisoners, billeted in a remote Scottish village during the second world war, appear as black-clothed devils who play on the repressed sexual fantasies of the crofters' wives. Advertising might have provided the bulk of Channel 4's revenue, but — as detractors have been quick to stress — its Controller Jeremy Isaacs and his successors surely appreciated that their relationship with government was symbiotic. While Giles praises the unconstrained esthetics of movies such as *Saigon: Year of the Cat*, or *An Englishman Abroad*, he also worries about the valorizing nostalgia of *A Room with a View*; ultimately, he identifies a 'conservative pattern' behind the films, 'with "order" re-established after the mild allure of the forbidden'. But who did the re-establishing; who drove the conservatism? Given the millions of television viewers who popularized these films, as well as the creative freedom enjoyed by the films' self-censoring directors, it is tempting to conclude that sentimentalism, and perhaps a yearning for the glory of empire lost, is deeply ingrained in the British character.[12]

Across the Irish Sea, where the yearning was to throw off the yoke of British imperialism, the discourse of empire was no less central to the national psyche. Kevin Rockett's magisterial *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography*, draws on recently released office records of the Official Film Censor to provide a comprehensive, thematically structured guide, referencing some 1600 films. In recounting this 'sorry tale' of the censors' 50-year grip on popular entertainment, Rockett considers that the state's 'paternalistic treatment of its subjects was little different to that of the colonizer'. From the outset, then, Rockett's interpretation appears to fit the old top-down, monolithic paradigm: 'Censorship is necessarily a blunt instrument,' he writes, an 'attempt at total repression' by state officials. Yet, as

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11 Lester D. Friedman (ed.), *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* (2nd edn, London 2006), 7–8; Thomas Elsaesser, 'Images for Sale: The 'New' British Cinema,' in ibid., 45, 46; James F. English, 'Local Focus, Global Frame: Ken Loach and the Cinema of Dispossession' in ibid., 269, 270.
12 Paul Giles, 'History with Holes: Channel 4 Television Films of the 1980s', in *Fires Were Started*, op. cit., 62, 61, 63.

becomes increasingly clear by the book's end, citizen lobbyists imbued with a mix of anti-British fervor and Catholic religiosity were participants in a complex interactive process.[13]

To a liberal of today, Irish censors' dogged determination to impose Catholic morality does seem to be a sorry tale. Censor James Montgomery, who banned 1905 films during his 1923–40 term, was as 'inflexible in his decisions as he was witty and sharp' in his reports. Into the 1960s, Rockett notes, critics such as the *Irish Times*' Fergus Linehan could still condemn 'archaic censorship laws' that sanctioned horror films for children while banning for adult viewership a 'tasteful treatment' of Dublin's own Oscar Wilde simply because it referenced the playwright's homosexuality. When conceding that discussions of 'personal morality or the human body were as forbidden on the cinema screen as they were repressed elsewhere in Irish society', Rockett retains his habitual passive voice, which is a shame, for it is crucial here to identify the repressors. Montgomery, it transpires, was not operating in a vacuum, but taking his cue from citizen organizations, such as the national Irish Vigilance Association (IVA), which in turn represented the conservative opinions of scores of local grassroots committees, from Temperance Pioneers to chapters of the Catholic Young Men's Association. Prudishness, then, was perhaps not an empire-wide hangover from the Victorian era, as Rockett at one point suggests, but a particularly Irish trait that elicited national pride. If the latter, then what drove the consensus to police morality through strict censorship? Maybe it was not the top-down power of the Catholic hierarchy, but rather a bottom-up societal response conditioned by the structural peculiarities of the Irish land tenure system, which for decades had penalized large families and rewarded celibacy.[14]

Montgomery might have 'lost no time' in September 1939 'to impose his will on the film trade' through wartime emergency regulations, yet instead of persistently blaming officialdom, Rockett might place more weight on all the evidence that he presents for citizen action, especially in the fascinating closing chapter on Irish politics. When representatives of four movie companies met with a group of concerned republicans in May 1937, it seems likely that precedent guided their decision not to show films about George VI's coronation. Throughout the mid-1920s, armed Sinn Féiners disrupted the screening of British prestige movies such as *Ypres* and *Zeebrugge*, and, in actions that continued into the mid-1930s when demonstrators tore down the Dublin Savoy's screen during a newsreel featuring the Duke of Kent's marriage, Irish Republican Army (IRA) deputations threatened managers who showed pro-British films. Similarly, Rockett implies that 'ministerial intervention' was alone responsible for the 19 cuts ordered by censor Richard Hayes in Ernest

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13 Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography* (Dublin 2004), 17, 13.

14 Ibid.: 'Witty', 75; 'archaic', 170; 'personal', 78; IVA, 63, 44; Montgomery's Victorian 'reticence', 78. For a discussion of Ireland's 'distinctive' demographics, celibacy, and land tenure in the post-Famine period, see Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (Harlow), 133–7.

Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943), which praised Loyalist dynamiters in the Spanish Civil War, yet, given the overwhelming popular support in Éire for General Francisco Franco's Nationalists, it is surprising that Hayes allowed the film at all.[15]

In just 130 narrative pages, Robert Cole takes but a thin slice of Rockett's scope to analyze in depth *Propaganda, Censorship and Irish Neutrality in the Second World War*. Using a satisfying range of archival and newspaper sources, Cole examines the 'vital propaganda–censorship' interface that did so much to inform the foreign relations of neutral Éire and the warring powers. During the second world war, neutrality became a core value of Irish nationalism. Cole notes that Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Éamon de Valera promoted it both for the safety of the Irish and as an expression of their independence. 'Neutrality is the policy of the whole people,' de Valera assured an audience in 1944. Indeed, only 1 per cent of Irish people favored joining Britain, and many would have agreed with the sentiments of one farmer who wanted to see England 'not bate, but nearly bate'. There was a three-cornered 'war of words over Irish neutrality': British propagandists did everything they could to swing opinion to the Allied cause; German propagandists worked to keep Ireland neutral, primarily by fomenting distrust of British motives; while the Irish government diligently censored references to the opposing sides from the mass media.[16]

At the war's outset, Britain's official channel, the Ministry of Information (MOI), was largely ineffectual. British press attaché John Betjeman contrasted the BBC's 'dull and unamusing' broadcasts with those from Germany by turncoat Lord Haw-Haw, which Irish listeners thought 'a wonderful joke'. Complicating the Irish censors' efforts in the early days was a small but vocal pro-British domestic lobby, especially the *Irish Times*. Worried that 'in comparison with Germany's efforts, British propaganda has been almost crude', *Times* editors did their best to fill the void. Indeed, when Betjeman realized that the crude jabs at de Valera's neutrality policy in London newspapers that circulated in Dublin were playing into Germany's hands, he asked the MOI to notify editors through the D-Notice (Defence Notice) Committee to tone down their anti-Irish rhetoric. But after January 1941, when Betjeman arrived in Dublin and impressed his hosts by learning Gaelic, the MOI expanded its efforts, to which Irish censors responded by tightening their control. Cole considers that by mid-1941, Irish cinema was virtually propaganda free, to the extent that newsreels contained no battle scenes. Irish officials went to inordinate lengths to project impartiality; maintaining protocol to the end, de Valera and External Relations Secretary Joseph Walshe called on German Ambassador Eduard Hemple to pay their respects after Hitler's suicide, to the disgust of reporters on both sides of the Atlantic. Because strict censorship curtailed

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15   Ibid.: 'Lost', 338; coronation, 324; *Ypres*, 319; marriage, 320; Hayes, 349.
16   Robert Cole, *Propaganda, Censorship and Irish Neutrality in the Second World War* (Edinburgh 2006), 'vital', x; 'neutrality', 165; 1 percent and farmer, 66.

the impact of Allied propaganda, and because de Valera skillfully presented neutrality to reinforce existing opinion, the Irish ultimately won the war of words. Still, Cole points out that 'the Allies did not lose, for Eire did more for the Allies than for the Axis.'[17]

Cole's inclusion of the Irish-American press, in which anti-British propaganda was the mainstay of its reportage, is an especially stimulating feature of this excellent book. There is scope here for further study, probing the degree to which Irish-American lobbyists, inspired by Éire neutrality ideology, actually hindered Franklin D. Roosevelt's efforts to overcome the broader currents of US isolationism. Irish-Americans, Cole stresses, were influential in deciding American attitudes toward the war, yet he also notes that during the heated Congressional debates over the US Neutrality Act in October–November 1939, de Valera secretly backed proposals to lift the arms embargo to Britain.[18]

All the works under review could do more to address a fundamental issue: the level of public support for — and hence complicity in — strict censorship regimes, which to the outsider might appear to be egregious examples of state oppression, but that were actually playing a central role in the initial construction and later maintenance of national core values (or vital interests), whether the rubric of consensus was Catholic morality, wartime neutrality, or Cold War anticommunism. In his investigation of this latter topic, John Jenks goes the furthest of the works under review. *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* argues that British journalists did not self-censor their reportage from fear of governmental reprisals, but rather because they 'accepted the hegemonic common sense' about the danger of Soviet Communism; they 'probably never even considered challenging' what seems to have been a fully co-operative endeavor.[19]

Patriotism, imperialism, and structural trends in journalism inform Jenks's compelling application of Gramscian theory to the Cold War's early years. Conditioned to an 'almost reflexive deference to government-defined security concerns' by their second world war experience, patriotic British journalists accepted 'without a murmur' the continuance of the wartime D-Notice Committee and Official Secrets Act. Press coverage of Britain's A-bomb program was so minimal that atomic officials actually complained that excessive secrecy was interfering with recruitment. Because the 'legacy of empire' had

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17   Ibid.: Haw-Haw, 52–3; *Times*, 32; D-Notices, 20; expansion, 69; propaganda free, 74; suicide, 171; reinforcement, 2; 'lose', 177.

18   Ibid.: influential, 27; embargo, 26; and see 41, n. 37.

19   For a discussion of the ideological importance of national core values, see Melvyn P. Leffler, 'National Security', in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge 2004), esp. 126. John Jenks, *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* (Edinburgh 2006); Jenks's and Cole's books are companion volumes in Edinburgh University Press's International Communications series. On behalf of students confused enough as it is by the difference between British and American grammatical systems, I would like to make a plea for tighter editorial quality control: both these books, evidently composed in US format and then converted before printing, suffer from so many inconsistencies that, at times, whether punctuation belongs inside or outside quotation marks appears to be a random decision.

endowed London with global contacts, communications, and a pool of jour-
nalistic talent, the government's covert Information Research Department
(IRD) could feed propaganda to the press confident of worldwide publicity.
Journalists assigned by editors to cover particular institutions or policy-makers
tended over time to identify with the opinions of their sources; they could
hardly afford, moreover, to antagonize those sources without imperiling the
flow of news upon which they depended.[20]

Using a range of Public Record Office materials, backed up with policy-
makers' papers as well as interviews, Jenks documents three IRD campaigns:
to denigrate the Soviet-sponsored Peace Partisans; to propagandize Soviet
defectors; and to expose gulag labor. Ensuring the effectiveness of these
campaigns were the IRD's nimble tactics and fact-based approach, to which
Moscow's habitual distortions only lent credibility. With the press slurring the
Partisans as a '"so-called" peace movement', and the Archbishop of Canter-
bury, 'fortified with IRD material on the Soviet treatment of religion', con-
demning anyone associated with them, peace became a 'wicked word', as
Daily Express cartoonist Giles put it. Exposure of the gulags through publica-
tion of the USSR's Corrective Labor Codex, which the IRD backed up with
copious evidence from British diplomatic missions, met with mixed results.
Extensive coverage by the *Daily Telegraph* and the BBC's home and foreign
services prompted IRD officials to comment that 'they did us proud'. But the
Times was dismissive; undeterred, the IRD persuaded sympathetic MPs to
write letters to the editor, which, upon publication, the IRD kept in circulation
through other channels. Jenks shows how, once the respected French socialist
David Rousset seized on the Codex to mount his own drive to discredit Soviet
communism, the IRD could rely on the behind-the-scenes tactic of positive
reinforcement.[21]

Jenks makes a solid case for the propaganda-funneling self-censoring
alliance between the IRD and the press. Yet, in common with the other works
reviewed here, there is little in his study to link mass-media content with public
opinion. Reminiscing back to my father and his circle of Nottinghamshire
friends, avid *Telegraph* readers and staunch anticommunists all, I might infer
that the news censorship regime of the early Cold War years enjoyed wide-
spread support as well as effectiveness. But anecdote will not suffice — or, at
least, a single anecdote. Each of the authors in this review could strengthen
his argument by doing more to consider the consumers of the media under

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20   Jenks intends 'hegemonic' in the sense of socially constructed power relations, or discourses,
of the type described by the Italian Marxist political theorist Antonio Gramsci. Jenks, *British
Propaganda*, op. cit.: patriotism, 4, 23, 31; bomb, 53; empire, 150; structural developments, 4–5.
An instructive transatlantic comparison would be Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The
Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001):
Sweeney commends Byron Price's administration of voluntary censorship, which worked so well
'not only because [journalists], like other Americans, supported the prosecution of the war, but
also because they feared the alternatives if civilian censorship failed,' 218.
21   Jenks, *British Propaganda*, op. cit.: 'So-called', 118; Canterbury, 119; Codex, 138–9.

analysis. They could then tease out censorship's interactive dialectical nature, and draw broader conclusions about social change and national expression. Connecting media content to public opinion is of course notoriously problematic; my father spent a half-hour at breakfast on the news and editorials, but most riders on my trolley to school turned straight to the sports section or the want ads. Still, as Nicholas Reeves's dismissal of *Triumph of the Will*'s propagandistic power implies, difficulty should not preclude necessity.

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