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BUILDING UNITY THROUGH STATE NARRATIVES:
THE EVOLVING BRITISH MEDIA DISCOURSE
DURING WORLD WAR II, 1939-1941

by

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ABSTRACT

The British media discourse evolved during the first two years of World War II, as state narratives and censorship began taking a more prominent role. I trace this shift through an examination of newspapers from three British regions during this period, including London, the Southwest, and the North. My research demonstrates that at the start of the war, the press featured early unity in support of the British war effort, with some regional variation. As the war progressed, old political and geographical divergences came to the forefront in coverage of events such as Prime Minister Chamberlain's resignation. The government became increasingly concerned about the grim portrayals of the Dunkirk Evacuation in the press, as Britain's wartime situation deteriorated. I argue that as censorship and propaganda increased, newspapers fell into line, adhering to state narratives and uniting behind a circumscribed version of the events that molded a heroic presentation of Dunkirk. Censorship from the government came in various forms, often utilizing softer methods such as the control of information flow and warning publications, which complied in order to appear patriotic and avoid further suppression. My analysis of these papers indicates that this censorship and unity of the press continued during coverage of the Blitz, as the media discourse became more cohesive and supportive of the government's goals.

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INTRODUCTION

For British civilians, the First World War “had come all at once, in a frightening rush” in 1914.¹ In sharp contrast, a British woman recalled that World War II arrived in a much more ominous manner, as if accompanied by the “slow ticking of a clock” during the summer months of 1939.² Initially, many British politicians and members of the general public expressed a desire to avoid another European conflict, wishing to avert the deaths of another generation of young British soldiers. Nevertheless, Britain and France eventually declared war on Germany once again in response to the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939.³ The earliest phase of the war, referred to as the “Phoney War” or “Bore War,” contained very little direct conflict between British and German forces.⁴ This inactivity ended with the German invasion of France and the Low Countries, and Britain subsequently evacuated the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) from the French port of Dunkirk during Summer 1940.⁵ After the Dunkirk Evacuation, the British Home Front faced its most difficult test during “the Blitz,” as German bombers targeted British civilian centers from Autumn 1940 until Summer 1941.⁶

British newspapers covered all of these events during the first two years of the war, displaying a significant amount of unity even during the earliest phase of the conflict before

¹ John Kelly, *Never Surrender: Winston Churchill and Britain's Decision to Fight Nazi Germany in the Fateful Summer of 1940* (New York: Scribner, 2015), 29.

² Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 29.

³ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 4-7, 20-30; A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (1965; Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 442-453; Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (New York: Random House, 1969), 32-34.

⁴ Taylor, *English History*, 454; Calder, *The People's War*, 57-63; Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 41.

⁵ Taylor, *English History*, 485-487.

⁶ Taylor, *English History*, 501-504.

government censorship increased. Utilizing discourse analysis, my research examines several British newspapers from three specific regions in order to analyze the evolution of British media discourse during the early wartime era. The British press began the war with a mostly supportive and unified stance regarding the government and the war effort, but old regional and political biases resurfaced as the nation experienced turbulent events such as Chamberlain's political fall. During the Dunkirk Evacuation, journalists described the grim outlook of the British military position and the government grew concerned about subsequent loss of morale on the Home Front. Consequently, the Ministry of Information began to implement more extensive propaganda and censorship, and papers transitioned into a more state narrative-driven support of the war, which continued during the Blitz.⁷

Newspapers offer a unique perspective on how the media presented these wartime events to the public, as well as the influence of the government on this presentation. Papers also provide a window into the anxieties of British citizens on the Home Front, as certain topics and events aimed to reassure or address these concerns. I argue that the British media discourse at the start of World War II, rather than being divided and fractured, exemplified a largely unified stance on the war effort and early events in the conflict. As regional and political divergences grew, the government ramped up control of the press during the Dunkirk Evacuation, and papers responded by utilizing state narratives and returning to this unified discourse on wartime events. My research focuses on papers from London, the Southwest, and the North, which provides a comprehensive cross-section of both regional and political attitudes in British newspaper

⁷ David Welch, *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War II* (London: The British Library, 2016), 12-17; Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 160-164. See also Aaron L. Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II," *Journalism History* 22 (Winter 1997): 146-155; K. Fred Gillum, "Censorship During World War II," *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Ipswich: Salem Press, 2015). Full text of both articles is available on the EBSCO Discovery Service Database, without page numbers.

publication. In the Southwest of England, I have examined papers from Bristol and Gloucester, while I have utilized publications from Manchester and Liverpool in Northern England. I have also focused on several newspapers from London, the capital city and the center of the British government and war effort.⁸

This research primarily concentrates on the British Home Front, as newspapers during the war directed their efforts toward Home Front readership. There is an extensive historiography of scholarly works focusing on the British Home Front during World War II. These works are divided into two distinct waves of scholarship, progressing from early histories which emphasized the unity of the Home Front, into more recent studies which viewed the Home Front in a much more critical manner.⁹

The first wave of Home Front scholarship began immediately after the war's conclusion in 1945 and continued until the late 1970s. This wave included many wartime British historians who experienced the events of World War II firsthand, regarding them in a positive, almost mythological view. These scholars viewed Dunkirk, the Blitz, and other turbulent events of the war as a “coming of age for Britain,” when the mutual suffering of the British people brought greater unity and social cohesion.¹⁰ Richard Titmuss's *Problems of Social Policy: History of the Second World War* was one of the first comprehensive British histories of the conflict and its effect on the Home Front.¹¹ Published in 1950, Titmuss's monograph is representative of this first wave, emphasizing the unity and perseverance of British society during the war, and downplaying any negative aspects of the Home Front. A.J.P. Taylor continued this trend in 1965

⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World War II”; Gillum, “Censorship During World War II.”

⁹ Jose Harris, “War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War,” *Contemporary European History* 1, no. 1 (Mar. 1992), 17-20.

¹⁰ Craig Stewart-Hunter, “‘Britain Can Take It’: Rethinking British Morale in 1940,” *Student Pulse* 3, no. 3 (2011), accessed April 4, 2016. <<http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/406/britain-can-take-it-rethinking-british-morale-in-1940>>.

¹¹ Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy: History of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1950).

with his study, *English History, 1914-1945*.¹² Taylor focused on the heroism of the British people during such difficult times as the Blitz, arguing that these harrowing experiences actually increased British morale and united individuals across all social classes.¹³ Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, several other scholarly histories of the Home Front continued to develop these positive and inspirational themes.¹⁴

Beginning in the late 1970s, this reverent attitude toward the British wartime experience began to change. Tom Harrisson published one of the first major revisionist studies of the Home Front in 1976, *Living Through the Blitz*, in which he examined the fearful reactions of ordinary people and the numerous shortcomings of the British government during the heavy German bombing of the nation.¹⁵ This study marked the beginning of the second wave of Home Front scholarship, which continued from the late 1970s into the present. Mostly born after World War II, these scholars put forth more critical views of the Home Front during the wartime years. In addition, second wave historians utilized increased access to government reports and archives, which provided additional perspectives on the Home Front.¹⁶

Angus Calder provided a concise articulation of the second wave's revisionist arguments in his 1991 study, *The Myth of the Blitz*.¹⁷ Calder argued that the popular narrative of first wave histories glossed over many British problems of the wartime years, including civil unrest and objections to the war.¹⁸ Several other scholarly histories of the Home Front continued these

¹² Taylor, *English History*.

¹³ Taylor, *English History*, 501-504.

¹⁴ See Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939-45* (New York: Random House, 1969); Henry Pelling, *Britain and the Second World War* (1970; 2nd ed., London: Collins, 1972); Norman Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life during the Second World War* (1971; Reprint, London: Random House UK, 2002).

¹⁵ Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (1976; Reprint, London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

¹⁶ Stewart-Hunter, "'Britain Can Take It': Rethinking British Morale in 1940"; Harris, "War and Social History," 17-20.

¹⁷ Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991; 2nd ed., London: Pimlico, 1992).

¹⁸ Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, 1-5, 92, 103, 107-110.

revisionist arguments during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century.¹⁹ More recently, Susan Grayzel examined the connection between German bombing raids on Britain during the First and Second World Wars in her 2012 monograph, *At Home and Under Fire*.²⁰ Several studies in the second wave also focused on British propaganda and censorship targeted at the Home Front.²¹

My research contributes to this second wave of Home Front scholarship by focusing particularly on newspapers from five cities within three distinct English regions, including London, the Southwest, and the North. Examining publications from these three regions allows for a more insightful comparison between different regional media during the war. Many histories from the first wave described the British Home Front as mostly supportive of the declaration of war, while acknowledging that this unity increased after the Dunkirk Evacuation.²² In contrast, second wave studies of the Home Front emphasized many of the problems faced by the British people at home, particularly early in the war. These more recent studies noted that British society during the war featured class conflicts, a lack of popular support for the war, and fears of German bombing and invasion.²³

While my research builds upon these second wave histories, it also adds a new element to

¹⁹ See Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (London: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Peter Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz* (London: Yale University Press, 2007).

²⁰ Susan R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²¹ See Welch, *Persuading the People*; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*; Edward Stourton, *Auntie's War: The BBC During the Second World War* (London: Doubleday, 2017); James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

²² For example, A.J.P. Taylor asserted in his first wave history that the evacuation of children from the major cities increased class awareness and support for the government's wartime policies. Taylor also asserted that the declaration of war in 1939 was supported throughout the country, that rationing was generally popular among the British populace, and the Home Front "remained unruffled" even when the B.E.F. faced annihilation in the days leading up to the Dunkirk Evacuation. Other first wave histories contained similarly optimistic portrayals of Home Front unity during the early period of the war. Taylor, *English History*, 455-457, 463-464, 488.

²³ For example, Sonya O. Rose emphasized the strong class resentment even early in the war, which was exacerbated by food rationing as well as the domestic evacuation of children from the cities, which underscored the dire poverty faced by many British people and the lack of concern displayed by upper classes for the rest of society. Rose, *Which People's War?*, 34-35, 57. Calder also acknowledged this lack of unity and the presence of class problems while discussing the pervasive issues faced by the British Home Front. Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, 120-139.

these histories by emphasizing the large degree of unity on the Home Front, even early in the war. But this unity was found within British newspaper reports, not among the people themselves. According to my research, British papers from 1939-1941 displayed many commonalities, as newspapers from disparate regions and political leanings utilized the same language and themes to discuss certain topics, and expressed many similar views on these events as well.²⁴ However, as the war progressed, regional and political divergences also came to the forefront, including a focus on different aspects of the war and differing portrayals of politically-infused issues, before unity returned to the press after the Dunkirk Evacuation.

Any examination of British newspapers during the war must acknowledge the significant influence of propaganda and censorship on wartime publications. The British government engaged in varying levels of press censorship during World War II. At the start of the war in 1939, the government established a new Ministry of Information, with an emphasis on encouraging British morale on the Home Front.²⁵ A former Deputy General of the BBC, Sir John Reith, became the first Minister of Information and directed the Ministry in enacting these goals. Reith's Ministry of Information initially instituted a system of "voluntary censorship," under which journalists followed a set of rather vague guidelines and essentially censored themselves. Under this system, journalists had to receive all sensitive information regarding the war from government channels, as the Ministry restricted the flow of information to the media. Journalists then wrote their articles, and a specific editor at each paper passed on any articles which they felt violated the censorship guidelines. Newspaper stories which made it through this system could go to print, unless the British military disagreed with the ruling and got involved. Articles in violation of the censorship guidelines received a defense advisory notice. This voluntary

²⁴ This was at least partly due to British propaganda, censorship, and state narratives of the war, which I will further detail in the rest of this introduction.

²⁵ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-15.

ensorship system proved to be problematic, as journalists became contemptuous of the press censors, and the government censors themselves became too concerned with specific details and failed to implement an overarching strategy for guiding press articles about the war. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain attempted to address the situation by creating a new Press and Censorship Bureau which was separate from the Ministry of Information, but this only caused further inter-departmental strife as well as other problems.²⁶

As Winston Churchill replaced Chamberlain in April 1940 and formed a new government, he replaced Reith with Duff Cooper. The Press and Censorship Bureau also dissolved, with the Ministry of Information again assuming all duties for censorship and propaganda on the Home Front. This new Minister of Information focused more on gathering data from the Home Front in order to see what strategies improved the people's morale. Cooper also recognized that news censorship should be integrated with propaganda distribution. Once the Ministry switched to this strategy, its control of British press became more successful, controlling the narrative of wartime news reports on the Home Front.²⁷

The Ministry's censorship was so effective that many in the general public did not even realize the system was in place, and Britain gained a reputation for its "honest, free, and truthful media" during the wartime years. State propaganda largely focused on justification of the war, anti-German sentiment, keeping the population healthy, rationing, generally increasing public morale, and encouraging the British people to contribute and support the conflict, and these state narratives began to appear in newspapers as well. As Britain's situation in the war worsened,

²⁶ Henry Irving and Judith Townend, "Censorship and National Security: Information Control in the Second World War and Present Day," *History & Policy*, February 10, 2016, accessed November 2, 2019, <<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/censorship-and-national-security-information-control>>; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-15; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 159-161; Gillum, "Censorship During World War II."

²⁷ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-15; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-161; Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II."

Cooper's Ministry of Information increased its focus on Home Front morale, extending the use of both censorship and propaganda.²⁸

As the Dunkirk Evacuation progressed in May-June 1940, Cooper's Ministry of Information became concerned that the near-destruction of Britain's army on the Continent could lead to negative morale on the Home Front. Churchill's government enacted "broad regulations on the press" in order to give the Ministry of Information, and the government as a whole, greater control over journalistic coverage of the war effort. Defense Regulations 2C and 2D enabled the British government to suppress any press material which could encourage resistance to the war effort. At Minister Cooper's urging, the government also replaced the previous advisory notices for journalistic content violating the censorship rules. Instead of these advisory notices, the Ministry began implementing "legally-binding orders issued by a Censorship Board" in June 1940, giving the Ministry's censorship powers more weight and leading to widespread opposition among British journalists.²⁹

The government mostly utilized its increased control of the media to suppress Fascist and Communist-leaning publications such as the *Daily Worker* and *The Week*, which I am not focusing on in this research, but the threat of censorship and suppression remained present for all newspapers. The Ministry of Information repeatedly warned several newspapers for printing negative material about the British government and military, including the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Pictorial*, and *The Times*. During the Blitz, the Ministry further increased its propaganda efforts, fearing that public morale could fall to dangerously low levels. Throughout these first several years of the war, the British government crafted a narrative for the general public through

²⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-15, 17, 22-41, 43, 48; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-161; Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II."

²⁹ Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II"; Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security."

both forceful and voluntary measures, censoring material and distributing propaganda while also encouraging the press to cooperate and support the war effort. This state narrative emphasized the unity of the British Home Front in support of the war, while minimizing potentially divisive issues such as class conflict.³⁰

In addition to the propaganda and censorship, some further context is needed regarding the British political system and the particular newspapers from my research. At the start of the war in 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain and the right-wing Conservative Party held power in the British government. Despite Chamberlain's failed attempts to appease Hitler in the months prior to the war, the Conservative Party did not lose much support after the declaration of war in September 1939. Conservatives held the majority in Parliament, with the left-wing Labour Party as the next-largest political party. Labour “accepted an electoral truce” upon the commencement of the war, but refused to join the government as long as Chamberlain was its leader.³¹ The right-leaning Liberals remained the third-largest party, favored by some business interests in Britain but lacking the widespread support of Conservatives and Labour.³² Chamberlain eventually fell from political favor following the disastrous Norway campaign and the B.E.F's near-destruction prior to the Dunkirk Evacuation, and another Conservative politician, Winston Churchill, replaced him. Conservatives remained in power, although Churchill integrated Labour and

³⁰ Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World War II”; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 22-41, 48-57, 71, 81-83; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 2-4, 14, 29-31. For example, Rose notes that British newspapers in early 1940 called for people to unify and overcome their class differences; the Ministry of Information grew particularly concerned about the media's portrayal of class differences, and sought to minimize or downplay these class conflicts through propaganda. Rose, *Which People's War?*, 31-36.

³¹ Robert Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System, 1885-1940* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 200; Andrew Thorpe, *Parties at War: Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

³² Liberals were once the main opposition party to Conservatives, but they were largely politically replaced by Labour in that role during the mid-1920s. Labour gained more political power due to the expansion of male suffrage and the increased significance of class consciousness, which led more voters to the left-wing Labour Party. Justin Fisher, *British Political Parties* (London: Prentice Hall, 1996), 10.

Liberal politicians into his cabinet to increase popular support for the war.³³

In order to explore the commonalities and divergences in British media more effectively, I have chosen several newspapers each from London, the Southwest, and the North, with multiple representative papers from each of the three major political leanings in wartime Britain. Beginning with the London papers, the *Daily Herald*, originally founded as a socialist newspaper, eventually came under the control of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress.³⁴ The left-leaning tabloid *Daily Mirror* remained “a favorite with the working classes and rank and file troops” in the British military.³⁵ In contrast, the *Illustrated London News* and *The Sphere* both held Conservative leanings, published weekly with more of a focus on world events.³⁶

My research focused on three papers in the Southwest, from the cities of Gloucester and Bristol. The *Gloucester Citizen*, a tabloid founded by a local businessman, received criticism for not being sufficiently patriotic.³⁷ Circulated throughout Gloucester and the surrounding region, the *Western Daily Press* was founded by a Liberal M.P. and expressed Liberal leanings in its reporting.³⁸ Also in the Southwest, local subscribers in the Bristol area created the *Bristol*

³³ Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System, 200-201*; Fisher, *British Political Parties*, 10.

³⁴ The *Daily Herald* was published from 1912-1964, when the newspaper was turned into *The Sun*. “Daily Herald,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/daily-herald>>.

³⁵ The *Daily Mirror* was considered “irreverent and brash.” Government censors warned the paper several times throughout the war. Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World War II.”

³⁶ The *Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842 as the “world’s first illustrated newspaper,” focused more on topics such as world news, political issues, science and the arts, with more comprehensive stories than daily papers. *The Sphere* was founded in 1900 by a former editor of the *Illustrated London News*. “Illustrated London News,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/illustrated-london-news>>; “The Sphere,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/the-sphere>>.

³⁷ Samuel Bland, a Gloucester area businessman and politician, founded the *Gloucester Citizen* in 1876. The paper was criticized by Conservative press for not being patriotic enough, and eventually it became a tabloid newspaper. As the *Citizen* was pro-business and right-leaning but was also criticized by Conservatives, it was presumably Liberal-leaning politically. “Gloucester Citizen,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/gloucester-citizen>>.

³⁸ The *Western Daily Press* was founded in 1858 by journalists Peter Stewart McIver, a Liberal M.P., and Walter Reid, the paper’s first editor and strong advocate for freedom of the press. “Western Daily Press,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018,

Evening Post, which held financial ties with a Conservative and pro-Nazi publisher.³⁹

In the Northern region, I examined four newspapers from Liverpool and Manchester. Despite the area being fairly split between Conservative and Liberal supporters, many of these papers displayed Liberal political leanings.⁴⁰ The *Liverpool Daily Post*, described as “staunchly Liberal,” was founded by a local Chief Constable with anti-tax views.⁴¹ The *Liverpool Echo*, founded in the 1870s, expressed similar Liberal-leaning views.⁴² In contrast, the *Liverpool Evening Express* supported “Conservative interests in the city.”⁴³ A wealthy businessman and failed Liberal politician founded the *Manchester Evening News*, which experienced success as it promoted a Liberal-leaning viewpoint.⁴⁴

Overall, these eleven newspapers represented a significant cross-section of views from

<<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/western-daily-press>>.

³⁹ The *Bristol Evening Post* formed when many other Bristol papers shut down and interested subscribers in the area came together to start a new paper. The publication was also financially affiliated with Lord Rothenmere, a Conservative publisher with some controversial pro-Nazi sympathies. “The Bristol Evening Post PLC,” National Archives, accessed June 16, 2018, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120120052351/http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/rep_pub/reports/1990/fulltext/274c3.pdf>; Richard Norton-Taylor, “Months Before War, Rothenmere Said Hitler's Work Was Superhuman,” *The Guardian*, March 31, 2005, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/apr/01/pressandpublishing.secondworldwar>>.

⁴⁰ Specifically, Liverpool was fairly Conservative-leaning, while Manchester featured more support for Liberal politics. “Liverpool Evening Express,” Guttled Arcades of the Past Blog, accessed June 15, 2018, <<http://guttledarcades.blogspot.com/2012/08/liverpool-evening-express.html>>; “Manchester Evening News,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/manchester-evening-news>>.

⁴¹ The *Liverpool Daily Post* was founded in 1855 by James Whitty, a local Chief Constable who had campaigned against the taxation of newspapers. “1855 and the *Liverpool Daily Post* Begins Publication,” *Liverpool Echo*, accessed June 16, 2018, <<https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/1855-liverpool-daily-post-begins-3369216>>.

⁴² “Liverpool Echo,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 16, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/liverpool-echo>>; “1855 and the *Liverpool Daily Post* Begins Publication,” *Liverpool Echo*, accessed June 16, 2018, <<https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/1855-liverpool-daily-post-begins-3369216>>.

⁴³ The *Liverpool Evening Express* was the “first evening newspaper” in Liverpool. Founded in 1870, the paper eventually ceased publication after a merger with the *Liverpool Echo* in the 1950s. “Liverpool Evening Express,” Guttled Arcades of the Past Blog, accessed June 15, 2018, <<http://guttledarcades.blogspot.com/2012/08/liverpool-evening-express.html>>.

⁴⁴ The *Manchester Evening News* was founded in 1868 by Mitchell Henry, an upper-class businessman who eventually ran unsuccessfully for Parliament as a Liberal candidate. The Liberal-leaning paper became “the biggest selling provincial evening newspaper in Britain.” “Manchester Evening News,” British Newspaper Archive, Publication Information, accessed June 15, 2018, <<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/manchester-evening-news>>.

the wartime British press. This group included four newspapers from London, three papers from the Southwest, and four papers from the North, with each region featuring fairly equal representation. This aided my analysis of both the commonalities between papers and the regional divergences expressed in each paper's wartime articles. This group of papers also included a diverse range of political views, featuring two left-wing papers, four Conservative papers, and five Liberal papers. I attempted to find greater balance in the political leanings of papers in my research group, but I discovered that Liberal-leaning newspapers appeared to be much more common than other political leanings. Local businessmen, who were more inclined to support the economically right-wing Liberal Party, founded many of these papers, which may explain this imbalance. In addition, left-wing papers were much more difficult to find, perhaps due to the lack of support among business owners for left-wing causes. Nevertheless, examining 2-5 papers from each political leaning facilitated a useful comparison of political views among the British wartime press.

Although I only examined papers from London, the North, and the Southwest, my conclusions about the regional and political variation between publications from these areas is also applicable to other regions' newspapers in Britain. My case study of these three specific regions presents trends in the media discourse which may be applicable in a broader context for British newspapers during the early war period. Across the nation, many newspapers during the first two months of the war exhibited both divergences and similarities in their own particular regional viewpoints, regarding which topics each regional paper focused on as well as disagreement on certain topics based on geography or political alignment. If I continued my research beyond my current analysis, examining papers from additional British regions would allow for further comparison between different areas of the nation during this period, considering

more regional viewpoints on these issues.

My research focused on these eleven newspapers from three British regions during 1939-1941, when the Home Front experienced many problematic events. I analyzed these papers in three different time periods, covering the early months after the declaration of war; Chamberlain's political fall and the Dunkirk Evacuation; and the Blitz. Chapter 1 covers papers from September 1939 – January 1940, focusing primarily on the British declaration of war and the domestic evacuation of children from the cities to the countryside. This chapter features mostly unified perspectives in the media's description and coverage of both the war declaration and the domestic evacuation, with some regional divergences regarding which aspects of defense preparation each region focused on. Chapter 2 examines publications from February-August 1940, with particular emphasis on Chamberlain's political failures and replacement by Churchill as well as the near-disastrous Dunkirk Evacuation. Papers from this period exhibited significant political differences in the coverage of Chamberlain's failures, but the coverage unified during Dunkirk and the rescue of the B.E.F. from the Continent. Finally, Chapter 3 covers September 1940 – May 1941, when German bombers ravaged British cities during the Blitz. This chapter reveals the similar viewpoints in the media's coverage of German bombings, as government control increased and papers began to follow state narratives of the war more closely. Some regional and political differences remained, with varying focus given to particular bombing attacks, and dissimilar portrayals of class issues. Nevertheless, this unity of the wartime British press carried forward from Dunkirk into the coverage of the Blitz.

CHAPTER ONE: EARLY UNITY IN WARTIME PRESS (SEPTEMBER 1939 – JANUARY 1940)

This chapter examines newspaper coverage of two key events during the first five months of World War II: the declaration of war & initial preparations for the conflict and the domestic evacuation of children from major cities to the countryside. Coverage of these events set the stage for British newspapers' participation in the national media discourse during World War II, reflecting the main state narrative of the war as well as revealing the underlying anxieties of the British Home Front during the early war period.

First, I will discuss newspapers immediately following the declaration of war on Germany in early September 1939. This section is divided into several parts based on each of the main themes in these articles, including the war declaration itself, the nation's defensive preparations, government-imposed restrictions on the Home Front, and the encouragement of anti-German sentiment. Articles on each of these early war themes mostly displayed a unified point of view, supporting state narratives of the war and extolling British virtues. Despite this early unity, some regional divergences also surfaced in these early articles, as papers from London, the Southwest, and the North focused more particularly on certain issues. London publications highlighted the defensive preparations against German attacks, while regional papers in the Southwest and North shifted their attention toward restrictions imposed on the Home Front, such as rationing and blackouts. Anti-German rhetoric also featured more prominently in Southwestern and Northern papers.

In the next section, I will examine coverage of the domestic evacuation of children from major British cities to the countryside. Articles on the domestic evacuation also featured unified views supporting the British government's position regarding the operation. Newspapers in all three of these regions minimized problems with the domestic evacuation and attempted to focus on optimistic portrayals of it. These newspaper reports also revealed the deep anxieties of the Home Front regarding the displacement of so many young people within the nation. Articles from London included more concern regarding the separation of children from their parents, many of whom were in London and other major cities, while articles from other regions placed more prominence on the integration of evacuated children into their new countryside homes. When newspapers discussed problematic issues, they often blamed the evacuated children rather than criticizing the government or the host families in receiving areas.

Overall, British media coverage of the war declaration & preparations and the domestic evacuation featured a large amount of unity from journalists in these three regions. Newspapers usually supported the government's viewpoint and remained optimistic about the coming war, with some regional differences on their topics of focus. This unity of the press during the first five months of the war emerged at least in part due to the state narratives of the war, as well as journalists' desire to support the war effort, appear patriotic and avoid future censorship.

Declaration of War

The Allied declaration of war on September 3, 1939 garnered a largely positive reaction from British newspapers and the general public.⁴⁵ The government established the Ministry of

⁴⁵ Taylor notes that the declaration of war came as a surprise to the British people in many ways, but that they "accepted the decision of the parliament and government without complaint... Argument was almost stilled once the war had started, and, if doubts existed, they were kept in the shadows." Taylor, *English History*, 453-454. Calder also asserts that the declaration of war "brought relief to many," after the anxiety and uncertainty of the days leading up to September 3. Calder, *The People's War*, 33.

Information within several days of the war declaration, with Sir John Reith at its head. During this early period of the war, the Ministry mostly utilized a system of “voluntary censorship,” before later transitioning to greater control of the press under Duff Cooper’s leadership in Summer 1940. One notable exception to this relatively lax censorship policy came on September 11, 1939, just a few days after the declaration of war. The Ministry initially approved several newspaper articles which reported on the arrival of the B.E.F. in France, but military officials grew concerned about the strategic information revealed in these articles, and they “forced the Ministry of Information to apply retrospective censorship” to these issues. Police officers seized newspapers at offices around the nation in order to prevent these articles from going into circulation. Eventually, the military, Ministry and media reached a compromise and these papers resumed normal distribution, with the Ministry of Information resuming its system of voluntary censorship and minimal involvement in the press for the next several months.⁴⁶

The media’s initial positivity regarding the war did not come entirely from state-encouraged narratives and censorship, although a fear of being censored certainly played a role in the media’s coverage. British journalists also sought to inspire the people of the Home Front and appear patriotic, contributing to the war effort and encouraging the British people while remaining in good standing with the government.⁴⁷ British newspapers presented a largely unified opinion on the war declaration & preparations, with some regional differences regarding the amount of prominence given to certain issues. Newspaper articles focused on four primary themes: the declaration of war, the initial defensive preparations, government restrictions, and

⁴⁶ Irving and Townend, “Censorship and National Security.”

⁴⁷ Initially, the Ministry of Information “decided not to take over the media or suppress editorial freedom” at the start of the war, but instead resolved to “allow debate and interpretation,” while controlling “the flow of information to the media.” This system of soft censorship and “voluntary censorship” encouraged the press to provide positive material regarding the war effort, without providing as much direct censorship as would be in place later in the war. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14.

anti-German sentiment.

As we might expect, newspapers from London, the Southwest, and the North all featured extensive coverage of the Allied declaration of war. Newspapers utilized several similar themes in reports on this topic, including moral justifications for the war, Britain's stoic determination and resolve, and calls for social unity and popular support from the Home Front. As Angus Calder has noted in his history of the Home Front during the war, public morale was a central component of Britain's success in World War II.⁴⁸ Newspapers felt motivated to contribute to the war effort and remain in line with the government in anticipation of future censorship. Both the press and government viewed Home Front morale as critical for the war effort.⁴⁹

The moral justification of Britain's involvement in the war became an important issue for public morale from the start. According to A.J.P. Taylor, only “the British and French could boast that they alone joined the crusade for freedom of their own free will.”⁵⁰ Taylor further noted the nobility of Britain's cause in the war, as this idea of a crusade against the fascist enemies became entrenched in British ideas of the war later in the conflict.⁵¹ British newspapers extensively focused on this moral justification, as some articles placed the blame for the war entirely on Germany, portraying the Nazi state as a morally indefensible nation fighting against the righteous British people.⁵² Other reports focused more on Britain's failed attempts at diplomacy, noting the

⁴⁸ Calder, *The People's War*, 18.

⁴⁹ Robert Mackay discusses the official anxieties regarding public morale, noting that Chamberlain's government was concerned about “[a]pathy and fatalism” and recognized that general popular support of the war “would be needed for the successful pursuit of victory.” Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 42. Welch also notes that soft censorship and control of information to the press was already beginning during this period, so newspapers were aware of the government's intentions regarding the press and public morale even if there was not extensive direct censorship at this time. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 13-14.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *English History*, 453

⁵¹ Taylor, *English History*, 453.

⁵² The *Daily Mirror* described Germany as an isolated aggressor nation fighting against a strong and morally justified British state. “Britain Sends Her Ultimatum,” *Daily Mirror*, September 2, 1939. Many of the cited newspaper articles do not include a listed author, or simply use “Our Foreign Correspondent” or a similar identifier. I have included the author's name when I am able to identify them; otherwise, I have listed the article

necessity of military force to finish the struggle.⁵³ These articles contained extremely patriotic and inspirational language, with grandiose claims of a united Britain struggling to free all of Europe from Nazi tyranny.⁵⁴ This nationalistic language exemplified the underlying need for the press and government to improve Home Front morale and popular support for the war.

Newspapers also emphasized British stoicism and resolve to persevere in the war. British social historian Arthur Marwick discussed the central idea of this theme in his history of the Home Front, noting that from the very start of the war, civilians on the Home Front displayed “that much-vaunted British calm,” acting “quite orderly” even during the trying times of the war.⁵⁵ Newspapers grasped this theme of stoic British citizens who would remain calm during the war, linking it with historical ideas of British perseverance.

Some of these articles focused particularly on the stoic attitude, preparedness, and calm demeanor of British citizens, emphasizing that these traits would contribute to Britain's success in the war.⁵⁶ Other articles emphasized aspects of the British state as a whole, with assertions that Britain's resolve would allow the nation to prevail against Germany.⁵⁷ Some reports also paired this with a particularly optimistic outlook on the war, inspiring readers on the Home Front with a

title, publication and date.

⁵³ “Britain at War From 11 A.M.,” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 3, 1939, asserted that Britain's “Conscience is Clear” because Hitler could now only be “Stopped by Force,” not diplomacy. See also “Britain At War,” *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1939; “Task Will Be Done Again – Britain's Just Cause,” *Liverpool Echo*, September 2, 1939, for further moral justifications for the British war against the aggressor state Germany.

⁵⁴ “At War,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939.

⁵⁵ Arthur Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 23.

⁵⁶ The *Daily Mirror* focused on the King's plea for the British people to remain steadfast and ready to contribute to the war effort. “The King to His People,” *Daily Mirror*, September 4, 1939. The *Bristol Evening Post* and *The Sphere* emphasized the stoicism and “preparedness” of British citizens in the struggle against Germany. “How Big Crowds in Whitehall Received News – Tension Gives Way to Cheers,” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 3, 1939; “A War Newsletter,” *The Sphere*, September 9, 1939. The *Liverpool Daily Post* and *Liverpool Evening Express* also emphasized that British people would remain calm and carry on with their business despite the looming hostilities. “In True Colours – London Calmly Carries On,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 2, 1939; “The First Day of War – Merseyside Took it Calmly,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 4, 1939; “At War,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939.

⁵⁷ The *Daily Herald* emphasized the British nation's resolve to win the conflict in an early article on the war declaration. “War Declared By Britain and France,” *Daily Herald*, September 4, 1939.

positive view of the war effort.⁵⁸ Newspapers placed importance on the presence of British allies in the struggle as well. Several articles emphasized that Britain was supported in the war by France and the rest of the British Empire.⁵⁹ This emphasis on the support of allies attempted to assuage anxieties on the Home Front about the difficulties presented by the war.⁶⁰

Many papers also focused on social unity and popular support for the war. According to British historian Sonya O. Rose, this became the most important component of the Home Front during the first several months of the war. Rose asserted that media discourse in Britain “centrally featured the idea that the members of the national community were self-sacrificing citizens.”⁶¹ Angus Calder also noted the significance of these calls for social unity and sacrifice on the Home Front, as the government encouraged British people to contribute to this “people's war.”⁶² One of the British government's main goals in the Home Front was to promote this idea that British citizens themselves were “soldiers in the front line,” directly aiding the war effort with their participation and sacrifice.⁶³

British newspapers helped propagate this idea of a people's war, with some articles emphasizing broad support and popular excitement for the war, in an effort to encourage further

⁵⁸ This optimism regarding the war was particularly expressed by the *Illustrated London News*, in an article by British historian Arthur Bryant on Britain's ability to persevere in the war. Arthur Bryant, “Our Notebook,” *Illustrated London News*, September 2, 1939. See also “How Big Crowds in Whitehall Received News – Tension Gives Way to Cheers,” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 3, 1939.

⁵⁹ The *Daily Herald* and *Western Daily Press* emphasized Britain's allies in France and the British Empire. “War Declared By Britain and France,” *Daily Herald*, September 4, 1939; “Britain At War,” *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1939. The *Gloucester Citizen* noted the “warm sympathy” for Britain in the United States and expressed some hope that the U.S. may provide aid to Britain. “America Hopes to Stay Neutral,” *Gloucester Citizen*, September 4, 1939. See also “In Tribute to France” and “Canada Will Be at Side of Britain,” *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1939.

⁶⁰ Historians such as A.J.P. Taylor have emphasized the importance of British Allies to the initial outlook on Britain entering the war, noting that Britain and France were the only countries to initially declare war on Germany. Taylor, *English History*, 453. The British government was aware of the importance of allies in the conflict as well, and the Ministry of Information eventually utilized extensive propaganda highlighting the Dominions of the British Empire and their importance to the war effort. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 160-167.

⁶¹ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14.

⁶² Calder, *The People's War*, 18.

⁶³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 83.

contribution.⁶⁴ These claims of popular support from the moment of the war declaration were not necessarily accurate in a broad context, but instead described crowds and popular sentiments in the immediate public reaction to the declaration. During the early months of the war, the British government still worried about public support for the war effort.⁶⁵ Other articles more explicitly called for contribution to this people's war, often asserting that the British people should ignore class differences and combine their efforts to bring greater social unity to the Home Front.⁶⁶ While newspaper articles asserted the need for unity, pervasive class problems still remained, and continued to be an issue for the duration of the conflict.⁶⁷ In this sense, these articles were more reflective of the British government and media's desire for social unity and the minimization of class differences, as class conflicts remained one of the most concerning potential sources of negative morale on the Home Front.⁶⁸ In addition, many of the newspapers calling for social unity and the disregarding of class differences were Conservative-leaning, which cast a negative light on these inspirational articles. Conservatives tended to be more supportive of the upper-class and nobility, while the working class leaned more toward the Labour Party. Consequently, Conservatives calling for social unity appeared as rich elites calling for workers to forget their grievances and get in line.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ "How Big Crowds in Whitehall Received News – Tension Gives Way to Cheers," *Bristol Evening Post*, September 3, 1939.

⁶⁵ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 40-42.

⁶⁶ An article in *The Sphere* asserted that British society should unify behind the new "people's war" and move beyond class differences to support Britain in the war. "A War Newsletter." *The Sphere*, September 9, 1939. The *Manchester Evening News* also called for social unity and overcoming such differences in order to increase public morale during the war. "Carrying On." *Manchester Evening News*, September 4, 1939.

⁶⁷ Rose focused on this issue of class conflict during the war extensively in her monograph *Which People's War?*, in which she asserted that despite "the powerful fantasy of national cross-class unity," the war was also marked by "persistent expressions of class antagonism." Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

⁶⁸ Even before the war, the British government recognized that class antagonism could be a major cause of social strife and lack of contribution to the war effort on the Home Front. The Ministry of Information considered "the commitment of the whole community to the war effort" to be one of its three major areas of focus during the war, in order to overcome these potential problems. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 48.

⁶⁹ The *Bristol Evening Post* and *The Sphere* were both Conservative-leaning politically, while the *Manchester Evening News* was Liberal. For more information on the social demographics and leanings of the three major

Articles on the war declaration utilized themes such as moral justification, British stoicism, and calls for social unity and contribution. These themes highlighted the remarkable amount of unity present among British newspapers during this period, due in part to the British government's control of the flow of information, as well as the willingness of those papers to appear patriotic, supportive, and in good standing with the government. In addition, this unity of British newspaper coverage on the war declaration revealed the anxieties and concerns of British citizens on the Home Front, which these articles attempted to address.

Defensive Preparations

As the nation prepared for war, the looming threat of German bombing presented a major concern for British cities. Propaganda historian David Welch noted that this issue “was a priority for the government” from the very start of hostilities, particularly regarding “the devastating impact air raids could have on civilian morale.”⁷⁰ Due to this potential threat to Home Front morale, the government focused on defensive preparations such as creating several committees, defense groups, and emergency services while calling for civilian volunteers.⁷¹

The British media also focused on air raid defenses and military mobilization.⁷² British citizens grew very concerned about the prospect of German air raids on London and other major cities. English novelist Margery Allingham wrote that she “expected London to be razed in a

British political parties during the war, see Fisher, *British Political Parties*, 10; Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System*, 200-201; Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 1-8.

⁷⁰ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66.

⁷¹ The British government created the Committee of Imperial Defence, calling for volunteers for air raid defense, as well as instituting blackouts at night to protect cities against bombers. The government also created the Local Defense Volunteers in anticipation of a possible German invasion, as well as the Auxiliary Ambulance Service and Auxiliary Fire Service in order to provide emergency services after bombings. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66-68.

⁷² British media had incentive to follow the government's lead and appear patriotic and supportive of the war during the early months of World War II, even though there was not as much direct censorship and state direction of the media during this time. As the war continued, state narratives focusing on air defense and the heroism of emergency workers became a major focus of propaganda and censorship, particularly during the Blitz. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-15, 66-71.

week,” and such excessive views of the possibility of German bombings were shared by some citizens on the Home Front.⁷³ Olivia Cockett, a British woman who lived in London for the war's duration, wrote in her diary that people in the capital city were very fearful of air raids at the start of the war, and this fear was amplified by several false air raid alarms.⁷⁴ This deep concern regarding German air raids also drew on British citizens' experiences during World War I, as British historian Susan Grayzel noted in her study of air raid culture in Britain during both world wars. According to Grayzel, German air raids during World War I destroyed the separation between the home front and war front, forcing civilians to realize that they were part of the war and could be attacked at any moment.⁷⁵

Newspapers reflected both the government's concern regarding air raids as well as the anxiety among people on the Home Front. Some articles focused on the general threat of air raids, beginning with the false air raid alarm on London immediately after the declaration of war.⁷⁶ Reports on this false alarm emphasized that Londoners kept calm and that there was no panic about the potential air raid, attempting to assuage readers' anxiety about the possibility of further raids.⁷⁷ Coverage also focused on defensive preparations against future raids, the implementation of air raid procedures & safety guidelines, and a general focus on British military strength and buildup. Regional divergences emerged in these articles, as London papers

⁷³ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 41, 39-42.

⁷⁴ Cockett kept a diary detailing her experiences in London during the war. She noted that at the beginning of the war, “we were all very afraid of air raids. Had three warnings in three days.” Presumably these were false air raid warnings. Cockett noted that this high level of concern over air raids at the war's onset eventually subsided after there were no air raids for several months. She wrote that London residents eventually began to shift their concerns toward other issues, until the Blitz later in the war. Olivia Cockett, *Love & War in London: A Woman's Diary in 1939-1942*, ed. Robert W. Malcolmson (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), xi-7, 38.

⁷⁵ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, 2-3.

⁷⁶ Arthur Marwick described this false air raid on London in his examination of the Home Front. He noted that the air raid alarms began “[w]ithin minutes of the declaration of war,” and Londoners headed for the air raid shelters. It was a false alarm, and several more false air raid alarms were sounded over the following weeks. This led to a general concern regarding the possibility of German air attacks on London. Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23.

⁷⁷ “Enemy Planes Off England – Did Not Penetrate Defences,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 6, 1939 discussed the presence of enemy aircraft near the East Coast and subsequent air raid alarms in London, noting that London citizens kept calm and the aircraft did not get past British anti-air defenses.

focused more on anti-air defense preparations, while Northern and Southwestern papers concentrated on air raid procedures and the general military buildup.

Articles from London papers highlighted the threat of air raids and the construction of sufficient anti-air defenses for the protection of the capital city. Even during World War I, London had been the focus of German bombing attacks, and many predicted that this would be the case in the Second World War as well.⁷⁸ In response to these anxieties on the Home Front, London newspapers extolled Britain's defensive preparations for the war.⁷⁹ These articles focused on London's defenses against German bombers specifically, examining anti-aircraft guns, projectors, and operators.⁸⁰

In contrast to these London papers, articles in the Southwest and North placed more emphasis on air raid procedures and guidelines for citizens' safety. According to Susan Grayzel, the British government attempted to make air raid awareness and precautions a “part of everyday life” for the Home Front.⁸¹ Southwestern and Northern papers followed the government's lead in this area and published several articles after the war declaration emphasizing the importance of regional air raid precautions. Articles from Southwestern publications made citizens aware of air raid procedures, especially for children, as well as post-raid cleanup and recovery guidelines.⁸² Northern reports displayed similar concerns regarding these procedures.⁸³ The higher emphasis

⁷⁸ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, 27-31; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 41-43.

⁷⁹ Articles in the *Daily Herald* focused on Britain's defensive measures in preparation for the war, proclaiming that the nation had improved its land & air defenses. “Britain Prepares: Fleet is Mobilised,” *Daily Herald*, September 1, 1939; “Premier Says 'We Are Ready' – All Men Up to 41 Liable to Serve,” *Daily Herald*, September 2, 1939.

⁸⁰ “On Guard in Britain.” *Illustrated London News*, September 2, 1939; “The Diversity of Technical Skill Required for A.A. Defence”; “Tracking the Invader in the Skies By A.A. Gun and Searchlight,” *Illustrated London News*, September 2, 1939.

⁸¹ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, 16.

⁸² Southwestern articles on air raid procedures included “Safety of Bristolians in Air Raids – Be Advised – Rehearse With Your Respirator,” *Western Daily Press*, September 2, 1939; “Protection of Schoolchildren – Bristol Air Raid Precautions,” *Western Daily Press*, September 5, 1939. Other articles discussed concerns regarding the cleanup and recovery after potential air raids, including “Damage to Bristol Houses from Air Raids.” *Western Daily Press*, September 5, 1939.

⁸³ “Liverpool's A.R.P. Wardens,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 2, 1939.

on air raid guidelines instead of anti-air defenses in these two regions indicates that Northern and Southwestern papers felt less concerned with reassuring readers' fears of bombing attacks, and more focused on preparing for how those attacks would affect the region.

Coverage also focused more generally on the British military strength and buildup in anticipation of the conflict with Germany. The Ministry of Information utilized the might of Britain's military in propaganda, deciding months before the war that this would be one of their major areas of focus on the Home Front.⁸⁴ Consequently, this emphasis on military strength featured prominently in articles from all regions. They emphasized that the British military was fully mobilizing its forces and was ready to face Germany in the war.⁸⁵ Some articles also noted the expansion of military service among older age groups, as well as early British military operations.⁸⁶ This focus on British defensive preparations and military strength reveals the unity present in British media discourse during the first five months of the war, as papers followed the government's lead and attempted to assuage readers' anxieties about the topic.

Government Restrictions

At the start of the war, the British government recognized that food, gasoline, and other critical supplies could become an issue for Britain during the war, and consequently implemented a rationing system. The government began issuing rationing books immediately in September 1939. Gasoline was rationed from the start, while foods such as butter, sugar, and

⁸⁴ The Ministry of Information decided in May 1939 that its three major areas of focus would include British military strength, the justification of Britain's involvement in the war, and obtaining the support of the entire British community. As previously noted, the Ministry did not put significant censorship or propaganda into place this early in the war, but newspapers were still encouraged to support the government's propaganda goals in order to stay in good standing, and in anticipation of possible future censorship. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-15, 48.

⁸⁵ "Mr. Chamberlain Says 'We Are Ready,'" *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 2, 1939; "Britain Prepares: Fleet is Mobilised," *Daily Herald*, September 1, 1939

⁸⁶ "Premier Says 'We Are Ready' – All Men Up to 41 Liable to Serve," *Daily Herald*, September 2, 1939; "R.A.F. Success in Raid on Nazi Fleet." *Bristol Evening Post*, September 6, 1939.

meat began rationing in January 1940. Even printing paper fell under the rationing system, leading to difficulties for book publishers.⁸⁷ In addition, the government imposed other restrictions on the British people as well, including blackouts during the nighttime, designed to prevent German bombers from easily targeting British cities and towns.⁸⁸ Many British citizens grew concerned about these restrictions, and papers discussed both rationing and blackouts extensively in articles during the first several months of the war. These restrictions also became a central focus for the Ministry of Information, as the government recognized that these measures could be unpopular.⁸⁹ Coverage of rationing and blackouts largely featured a unified viewpoint, with some specific regional concerns.

Rationing became one of the most potentially problematic issues on the Home Front during the first five months of the war.⁹⁰ Not only did it cause citizens to worry about dwindling supplies and rising prices, but rationing also led to class problems, as it was much more arduous for the lower classes than the rich elites in Britain. According to Sonya O. Rose, food supplies and rationing were “a focal point of 'class feeling'” during the war, causing resentment of both the government and the upper class.⁹¹ But the government recognized this issue and utilized propaganda, soft censorship, and the encouragement of the press in order to make rationing more popular. This eventually worked, and the British people accepted the system of rationing within a few months of its implementation.⁹² Despite this eventual acceptance, people still worried about

⁸⁷ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 50-54. Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory: Book Publishing in England, 1939-1945* (London: The British Library, 2008), 63-95.

⁸⁸ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 51.

⁸⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 43; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 34-36.

⁹⁰ In Olivia Cockett's diary, the London woman wrote that residents of the capital city complained about the rationing system. Cockett, *Love & War in London*, 38.

⁹¹ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 35.

⁹² Taylor noted that rationing was surprisingly popular with the British people, and it enabled the more efficient distribution of food to the general public. Taylor, *English History*, 463-464. Welch also extolled the government's implementation and use of propaganda regarding the system, noting that getting the public to accept rationing was “one of the greatest achievements of wartime Britain.” Welch, *Persuading the People*, 43.

rationing, and papers in the North and Southwest attempted to assuage those readers' anxieties.

Southwestern and Northern reports examined how rationing could impact local residents. In response to fears of food shortage and rationing, some of this coverage told readers that sufficient reserves existed for their particular region, as well as noting the government's measures to prevent hoarding and price gouging.⁹³ Other articles explained the rationing system to readers so that they could understand it and eventually become comfortable with the system.⁹⁴ Many of these articles focused primarily on the rationing of food products and petrol.⁹⁵ These reports conformed to the expectations of the Ministry of Information, minimizing concerns over the rationing system and educating the Home Front about it.⁹⁶

The issue of blackouts received more backlash, particularly in regional areas which did not expect to be as heavily bombed as London. Blackouts caused many problems for civilians during the early months of the war. The amount of travel declined, roads became more dangerous, and towns cancelled local celebrations.⁹⁷ The lack of bombing during the first several months of the war led to further frustration for British citizens, making the restriction seem needless and imposing. Due to this lack of German bombing, the government eventually relaxed the blackout rules until bombing began in earnest during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.⁹⁸

Blackouts also proved inconvenient for residents of London and other major cities. Olivia

⁹³ "Food for the West Area – Plenty and Priced to Be Held,"; "Food Supply & Safety Provisions – Commissioners Take Charge in the West," *Western Daily Press*, September 2, 1939.

⁹⁴ Several *Western Daily Press* articles explained the rationing system to readers. One article in October 1939 noted that food rationing specifically would be implemented soon for margarine, sugar, and some types of meat. It also assured readers that there were significant reserves of tea on hand, so there would be no concern over a tea shortage during the war. Another issue in November 1939 explained how ration books work and where citizens in the Southwest region could sign up for them. "Food Rationing Expected at End of Month," *Western Daily Press*, October 6, 1939; "Rationing – Note," *Western Daily Press*, November 30, 1939.

⁹⁵ "Petrol Supplies & Prices – Rationing From Sept. 16," *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 4, 1949.

⁹⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-15, 43; Taylor, *English History*, 463-464.

⁹⁷ Mackay described many of these Home Front problems regarding the imposition of blackouts, noting the difficulties involved with the government imposition. Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 51. Taylor noted that blackouts were one of the defensive measures taken by the British government early in the war. Taylor, *English History*, 454.

⁹⁸ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 50-52; Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz*, 50; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 40-43.

Cockett noted in her diary that Londoners often complained about blackouts imposed by the government. She described her experience of “[b]lackout windows, living in gloom, not sleeping... that ever dreadful feeling that so much worse may be to come.”⁹⁹ In the North, a Birmingham woman complained in her diary that blackout impositions began in early September 1939, lamenting that many Birmingham residents did not understand the blackout rules and that they made certain events such as thunderstorms more frightening.¹⁰⁰

Similar to rationing reports, newspapers discussed blackouts in an educational and positive manner, conforming with government expectations. Some papers provided instructions for civilian residents and motorists, advising them on how to prepare for blackouts and what types of activities to avoid.¹⁰¹ In addition to instruction, articles also included retrospective summaries for how previous blackout trials went, and encouraged local citizens to do better.¹⁰² These articles avoided harsh criticism of the blackout system, and generally attempted to be helpful and informative. The presence and tone of these articles also indicated that blackouts caused concern on the Home Front, and that the government and press utilized these reports in an attempt to address those concerns.

Coverage of these government restrictions highlighted the importance of those issues to the Home Front, and the need for newspapers to address these anxieties. British citizens' concerns mostly focused on food consumption and the disparate impacts of these government measures on different classes.¹⁰³ Some regional differences persisted in articles on this subject,

⁹⁹ Cockett, *Love & War in London*, 38, 14.

¹⁰⁰ The anonymous author of this diary was a single woman from Birmingham who recorded her thoughts on Home Front experiences for Mass Observation studies. Dorothy Sheridan, ed., *Wartime Women: A Mass Observation Anthology, 1937-45* (1990; 2nd ed., London: Phoenix, 2000).

¹⁰¹ For example, see “Bristol's 'Black-Out' – Instructions to Citizens & Motorists,” *Western Daily Press*, September 2, 1939.

¹⁰² “Glo'ster's Black-Out Better – But Perfection Not Reached,” *Gloucester Citizen*, September 4, 1939; “Black-Out Must Be Improved,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 4, 1939.

¹⁰³ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 31-36.

but most of the coverage expressed largely the same views. The British government invested in ensuring the smooth operation of blackouts and rationing, and these government restrictions only increased as the war continued.

Anti-German Sentiment

British newspapers encouraged anti-German sentiment on the Home Front through articles focusing on the German sinking of the British ship *Athenia* in early Sept. 1939, the internment of ethnic Germans in Britain, and generally negative portrayals of Germany. Northern and Southwestern papers concentrated more on anti-German sentiment than other areas, perhaps due to increased xenophobia and lack of exposure to foreigners as compared with the capital city.¹⁰⁴ The British government officially encouraged these anti-German views, and the Ministry of Information focused on justifying the war by blaming Germany for it.¹⁰⁵ This anti-German propaganda and state narrative increased as the war dragged on, and the government eventually shifted to more outright demonization of the entire German population.¹⁰⁶

The sinking of the British ship *Athenia* by a German U-Boat on September 3, 1939 received especially prominent press coverage. Many reports utilized this event to encourage anti-German sentiment, often making comparisons to the German sinking of the *Lusitania* in World War I, which helped lead to the United States' entry into that war.¹⁰⁷ Newspapers utilized similar reporting strategies from articles on the *Lusitania* sinking, asserting that the Germans violated

¹⁰⁴ Southwestern and Northern papers generally expressed more xenophobic and anti-German views than London papers, which tended to make more generalized comparisons to World War I or blaming Germany for starting the war. In the North specifically, the *Athenia* sinking was more of an issue for local citizens because the *Athenia* made port at Liverpool before being sunk by German U-Boats. See "British Liner Torpedoed By German Submarine," *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939.

¹⁰⁵ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89.

¹⁰⁷ See Willi Jasper, *Lusitania: The Cultural History of a Catastrophe*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 92-94; Diana Preston, *Lusitania: An Epic Tragedy* (New York: Walker & Co., 2002), 308-310.

international rules of warfare with the *Athenia* attack and publishing the recollections of *Athenia* survivors in an effort to encourage anti-German sentiment.¹⁰⁸ Northern coverage emphasized that the *Athenia* had stopped at port in Liverpool before it was destroyed, making the sinking more personal for local readers.¹⁰⁹

Papers also encouraged anti-German sentiment in their coverage of the review and internment of all German and Austrian aliens residing in Britain, often portraying these people as hostile security risks who were justifiably targeted.¹¹⁰ A.J.P. Taylor asserted that this internment occurred almost immediately after the declaration of war, and most of the interned Germans were Jews and political refugees who had fled Germany to escape Nazi persecution.¹¹¹ Reports on this internment supported the government's actions, asserting that the internment protected the British people from hostile German aliens.¹¹²

Newspapers sought to draw on negative ideas about Germany forged in World War I propaganda. They reminded readers that Germany bore the “sole responsibility” for starting the

¹⁰⁸ After the *Lusitania* sinking during World War I, British papers such as the *Daily Chronicle* ran detailed, explicit reports of the sinking, including pictures of the deceased and “shocking conversations with the survivors.” British editorials also argued that Germany was waging “a new and unprincipled form of warfare” by its U-Boat actions, insisting that Britain and her allies must band together against this “renegade” nation. Jasper, *Lusitania: The Cultural History of a Catastrophe*, 93; Preston, *Lusitania: An Epic Tragedy*, 308-309. For articles on the *Athenia* sinking, see “Torpedo Sinks British Liner,” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 4, 1939; “U-Boat Shelled the *Athenia*,” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 5, 1939.

¹⁰⁹ “Loss of the *Athenia* – Torpedoed Without Warning,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 5, 1939; “British Liner Torpedoed By German Submarine,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939; “Hundreds of Americans on Torpedo Liner,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 4, 1939; “Survivors Tell of Their Ordeal,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 5, 1939.

¹¹⁰ At the start of the war, the British government classified all 70,000 Germans and Austrians in the country as enemy aliens, forcing them to appear before internment tribunals. This included all of the Jewish refugees who had fled from Germany to Britain. Out of these 70,000, about 569 of them were interned in camps, while another 6,700 were given a special classification and had their rights restricted, and the rest could retain their freedom. Another 8,000 were interned the following year. For more details, see Roger Kershaw, “Collar the Lot!: Britain's Policy of Internment During the Second World War,” The National Archives, July 2, 2015, accessed October 19, 2018, <<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/blog/collar-lot-britains-policy-internment-second-world-war/>>

¹¹¹ Taylor, *English History*, 492.

¹¹² “Review of All Germans and Austrians in Britain,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 5, 1939; “A Review of All Aliens,” *Liverpool Echo*, September 4, 1939; “Review of Austrians and Germans in Great Britain,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939.

current war, just as the Versailles Treaty placed the blame for World War I on Germany.¹¹³ This conformed to the government's Home Front goals, as the Ministry of Information justified the war by placing the blame on Nazi Germany.¹¹⁴ Papers also compared the situation in 1939 to World War I more generally. After the British declaration of war, the *Daily Mirror* noted that the 1914 declaration was marked by “summer sunshine... through open windows,” while in 1939, “the windows were darkened against air raids. This time were was no singing.”¹¹⁵ Portrayals such as these did not directly depict Germans in a negative or xenophobic manner, or even at all – but the mere comparison of the situation to World War I, when an entire generation of young British men were killed in another conflict with Germany, led readers to recall their previous anti-German sentiments with renewed fervor.

Newspapers early in the war generally presented Germans as enemies who should be feared and resented. The British government supported and encouraged these portrayals, increasing anti-German state narratives as the war progressed. This anti-German sentiment attempted to improve Home Front morale and increase support for the war effort.¹¹⁶

Overall, these first five months of the war featured a largely unified media discourse focusing on the declaration itself, defensive preparations, government restrictions, and anti-German sentiment. Some regions placed more prominence on different issues, but newspapers in all regions utilized these themes to discuss the early war events.¹¹⁷ These articles also revealed

¹¹³ “Germany Wanton Aggressor,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 2, 1939. See also previously cited articles on Britain's moral justification in the war against the German aggressor, including “Britain Sends Her Ultimatum.” *Daily Mirror*, September 2, 1939; “Britain at War From 11 A.M.” *Bristol Evening Post*, September 3, 1939; “Britain At War.” *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1939.

¹¹⁴ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 22-23.

¹¹⁵ “One Man Has Brought the World to War.” *Daily Mirror*, September 2, 1939.

¹¹⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 22-23.

¹¹⁷ Most significantly, London papers displayed more concern regarding the expected German bombing of the capital city and defensive preparations to prevent this. This fear proved to be correct, as London was bombed by the Germans to a much greater extent than any other British city during the war. The worst phase of bombing came at the start of the Blitz, when the *Luftwaffe* bombed London for 75 out of 76 consecutive nights, beginning

the concerns and anxieties of the British people living in each region, and many of the articles attempted to assuage these concerns. The government focused on Home Front morale during this period, with soft censorship and encouragement for papers to conform to their expectations on these issues. Newspapers mostly followed these expectations, presenting issues in a favorable manner for the government.¹¹⁸

The Domestic Evacuation

In addition to the war declaration and preparations, newspapers reported on the domestic evacuation of British children in early September 1939. The British government initially divided the nation into evacuation areas, receiving areas, and unaffected neutral areas, each representing roughly a third of the population. Evacuation areas included London and other major cities, while receiving areas mostly contained less populated areas of Britain. The remainder of the country comprised neutral areas, which did not send or receive evacuees during the population transfer. At the government's direction, millions of British people, mostly children and other vulnerable segments of the population, traveled from London and other cities in evacuation areas to the rural receiving areas.¹¹⁹ When German bombing did not begin as soon as anticipated, many of these evacuated children ended up returning to the cities by early 1940.¹²⁰

British historian Robert Mackay described the domestic evacuation as “a potent source of

on September 7, 1940. Robert Mackay, *The Test of War: Inside Britain, 1939-1945* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 122.

¹¹⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-15.

¹¹⁹ About 1.5 million people evacuated from September 1-3, 1939. Examining the situation more broadly, during June-September 1939, between 3.5 and 3.75 million British people evacuated from the major cities to receiving areas. The evacuation areas and neutral areas each contained 13-14 million people, while the receiving areas contained 18 million people. Evacuation areas included London and other major urban areas which the government expected to be bombed, but did not necessarily include all the heavy bombing targets from the war. Some towns like Bristol, Plymouth and Swansea were heavily bombed and were not initially designated as evacuation areas, since the government did not expect them to be targeted so heavily. Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46; Calder, *The People's War*, 37; Mackay, *The Test of War*, 46.

¹²⁰ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 50.

resentment... at odds with the official campaign to promote social solidarity” and unite the public in support of the war.¹²¹ Due to this potential threat to the Home Front’s morale, the British government committed itself to the success of the operation, encouraging newspapers to portray it in a positive manner by utilizing soft censorship and the control of press information. Newspapers went along with the government's goals regarding the evacuation out of a desire to appear patriotic and supportive as well as fear of censorship.¹²²

Coverage of the domestic evacuation mostly portrayed it as a successful operation with positive experiences for the evacuees, minimizing or ignoring some of its difficulties. When papers discussed problems with the evacuation, they often blamed the evacuated children rather than the government or the receiving host families. Many evacuees wrote in letters and diaries that they had unpleasant experiences during the evacuation, but they did not receive prominent media attention.¹²³ Articles on the domestic evacuation generally focused on three themes, including the operational aspects of the population transfer, the evacuated children’s separation from their parents & assimilation into new areas, and criticism of the children for any failures associated with the evacuation.

Reports on the evacuation’s operational features generally followed the government’s narrative, which presented it as a highly organized “triumph of calm and order,” utilizing “an elaborate system of banners, armlets and labels” to direct evacuees to their trains and buses for transport to their respective receiving areas.¹²⁴ Many reports emphasized the unprecedented nature of the operation, with the *Daily Herald* describing it as “[o]ne of the greatest mass

¹²¹ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 49. For a useful articulation of some of the problems with the evacuation, see Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46-47; Calder, *The People's War*, 38-40.

¹²² Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 38-41, 43; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 57-62; Calder, *The People's War*, 37-39.

¹²³ Calder, *The People's War*, 47; Sheridan, ed., *Wartime Women*, 64; Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23, 26, 27.

¹²⁴ Calder, *The People's War*, 38.

movements in history.”¹²⁵ Publications also extolled the evacuation's speed, progression, and well-planned nature, attempting to inspire readers' support.¹²⁶ The overwhelming praise in many of these articles indicated that newspapers tried to at least provide the appearance of an organized government operation.¹²⁷

Some articles ran counter to these uniformly positive portrayals, particularly in receiving areas, as paper noted that supply problems could still be an issue for the evacuation, particularly housing shortages due to the influx of new arrivals in the countryside.¹²⁸ This lack of living space became a recurring problem in receiving areas, leading to overcrowding and difficult situations for both the evacuees and host families.¹²⁹ One article in the *Western Daily Press* told residents in this receiving area that ample supplies and air raid protections existed for the children, attempting to reassure both local residents and the parents of evacuees that supply shortages would not be an issue.¹³⁰ Papers in evacuation areas addressed these supply issues as well, with the *Daily Herald* noting that each evacuee should bring food rations, gas mask and a spare change of clothes on their journey.¹³¹

In addition to evacuation's organization, reports also focused on the evacuated children's departure from parents and their integration into rural areas. Many residents in evacuation areas worried about their separation from the evacuated children, particularly Londoners, as more

¹²⁵ “London Children on the Way,” *Daily Herald*, September 1, 1939; “Children Go,” *Daily Herald*, September 4, 1939; “Second Day of Evacuation”; “Evacuation 'Like Clockwork,’” *Gloucester Citizen*, September 3, 1939.

¹²⁶ “London Children on the Way,” *Daily Herald*, September 1, 1939; “Children Go,” *Daily Herald*, September 4, 1939; “Children Leaving,” *The Sphere*, September 9, 1939; “Second Day of Evacuation,” “Evacuation 'Like Clockwork,’” *Gloucester Citizen*, September 3, 1939; “Evacuation Scenes on Merseyside,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 2, 1939; “Second Day of Evacuation,” *Liverpool Echo*, September 2, 1939.

¹²⁷ Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23

¹²⁸ A *Gloucester Citizen* article noted requests for more homes to be made available for the evacuees in the area, due to the imminent arrival of more children above the current capacity. “Evacuation 'Like Clockwork,’” *Gloucester Citizen*, September 3, 1939.

¹²⁹ Calder, *The People's War*, 40-41.

¹³⁰ “Protection of Schoolchildren – Bristol and Air Raid Precautions.” *Western Daily Press*, September 5, 1939; Calder, *The People's War*, 38-41.

¹³¹ “London Children On the Way,” *Daily Herald*, September 1, 1939.

children evacuated from the capital city than any other British urban areas. Olivia Cockett discussed this issue in her wartime diary, noting that the operation caused “major upheavals” in London residents' lives and that mothers of evacuated children acted very stoic during the evacuation.¹³² Coverage in evacuation areas such as London, Manchester, and Liverpool addressed these concerns. London papers mostly focused on the parents' separation from their children, emphasizing the parents' heroic sacrifice as well as their relief for the children's safety.¹³³ Papers in Liverpool and Manchester also noted these farewells, but focused more on the evacuees' assimilation into the evacuated areas in the countryside. These articles often described the evacuated children as happy in their new surroundings, attempting to reassure parents in these major cities that their sons and daughters were safe.¹³⁴ Coverage generally portrayed the evacuation as “a rather exciting adventure,” including many “obviously set-up pictures showing the children as happy, and the organization as impeccable.”¹³⁵

In reception areas such as Gloucester, and neutral areas such as Bristol, papers placed more emphasis on the caring for newly arrived evacuated children from the city.¹³⁶ Reports in these areas featured appeals for the people in reception areas to welcome the evacuees and take

¹³² Cockett, *Love & War in London*, 11; Calder, *The People's War*, 37.

¹³³ “We'll See the Children Are Happy.” *Daily Mirror*, September 1, 1939; “The Eleventh Hour – 58th Minute,” *The Sphere*, September 9, 1939.

¹³⁴ The *Liverpool Daily Post* discussed the “cheering send-off” the evacuees received from their parents, the enjoyment which the children experienced in their new surroundings, and included pictures of the children laughing and dancing in “a romp in a Cheshire harvest field near to their new home.” “Evacuation Scenes on Merseyside,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 2, 1939; “Evacuation Went On,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 4, 1939; “From City Streets to This,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 4, 1939. The *Liverpool Echo* reported that letters were “pouring in from the children” about how happy they were in their countryside homes. “Children Are All Right – Happy Letters Home,” *Liverpool Echo*, September 5, 1939. The *Manchester Evening News* asserted that evacuated children were enjoying their studies at their new school, and that they enjoyed being away from the busy city life. “Having the Time of Their Lives: Don't Worry Mothers,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 6, 1939.

¹³⁵ Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23.

¹³⁶ The *Gloucester Citizen* included readers from Gloucester, a reception area. The *Western Daily Press* was based in Bristol, a neutral area, but also included readership from the surrounding Southwestern region which was also a reception area.

care of them.¹³⁷ Some articles also focused on how the evacuated children should behave in their new homes, with requests for them to be courageous and obedient for their new families.¹³⁸

These types of articles tried to reassure local residents of the receiving areas that they would not have to deal with constantly misbehaving children.¹³⁹

While these reports described the evacuees' experiences in leaving their families and attempting to assimilate into receiving areas, they failed to provide an adequate viewpoint from the evacuated children themselves. Evacuees wrote in diaries, letters and memoirs about their difficult experiences in the evacuation, but these views did not often appear in newspapers at the time, as the media generally sided with the government and the host families. In this correspondence, evacuees mostly expressed fear, sadness, and a desire to return home. One evacuated boy wrote to his father that he wanted to return to the city, because he "would rather come home than endure the situation any longer."¹⁴⁰ In a collection of Mass Observation diaries, an older evacuated woman lamented that she was "treated like bits of dirt by the locals," and consequently planned to come home.¹⁴¹ Some evacuated children experienced separation anxiety and felt unsafe, with one boy recalling that he had trouble sleeping after being evacuated.¹⁴² A British cartoonist, Mel Calman, later recalled his experiences as a child during the domestic evacuation, noting his confusion and loss of identity as he was sent off to the countryside.¹⁴³

These letters and memories indicated that, for evacuees, class differences could often

¹³⁷ An appeal from the Archbishop of Canterbury called for the receiving areas to treat the evacuated children as friends and look after their welfare. "Evacuation of Children – Primate's Appeal for Co-Operation." *Gloucester Citizen*, September 4, 1939.

¹³⁸ "Mr. Walter Elliot on Evacuation." *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1939.

¹³⁹ Evacuation areas' papers also noted some of these concerns regarding the evacuated children's assimilation into their new rural homes. The *Liverpool Evening Express* reported on a proposition for a curfew for children in receiving areas. "8 p.m. Curfew for Chester Children?," *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 4, 1939.

¹⁴⁰ Calder, *The People's War*, 47.

¹⁴¹ British citizens filled out these particular diaries for the Ministry of Information's data collection. Sheridan, ed., *Wartime Women*, 64.

¹⁴² Marwick, *The Home Front*, 27.

¹⁴³ Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23, 26.

negate any otherwise positive aspects of the evacuation. Many of these lower-class children hailed from such economically disadvantaged backgrounds that they brought nothing on their trip, arriving “dirty, tearful and exhausted” in the countryside after a long trip with minimal supplies.¹⁴⁴ As these recollections expressed, many of the evacuees felt embarrassed by the situation created by these class differences, and found it difficult to pay for their own supplies. In the most extreme cases, some evacuees even experienced physical or sexual abuse.¹⁴⁵

Several British historians have asserted that these class differences underlay most of the domestic evacuation’s difficulties, as most of the evacuees came from working-class or lower-class families, while their host families in receiving areas often came from the middle or upper-class. This created a situation of strong class conflict, as some evacuees found themselves separated from their siblings, forced to perform unpaid work for their host families, or generally looked down upon.¹⁴⁶ These class differences led to problems between the evacuated children and the host families & other people in receiving areas. These class issues could be seen more indirectly in some articles on the evacuated children’s treatment in receiving areas, as one *Manchester Evening News* story noted that locals gave money to a young evacuee and his friend, raising issues of the children’s lack of monetary support but presenting it in a positive manner.¹⁴⁷

When newspapers discussed these conflicts between evacuees and host families, they often criticized the evacuated children, utilizing this theme to blame the evacuees themselves for the problems. This criticism generally took the viewpoint of host families and other people in the receiving areas. Robert Mackay noted that these “horror stories” described “the intolerable

¹⁴⁴ Calder, *The People's War*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 47.

¹⁴⁶ Evacuated areas tended to be higher population density cities with many lower-income families, and upper-class families in these areas often sent their children away privately, leading to this unbalanced situation during the domestic evacuation. Rose, *Which People's War?*, 57-62; Calder, *The People's War*, 40; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46-47; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 41; Sheridan, ed., *Wartime Women*, 63.

¹⁴⁷ “Plenty of Food Makes Life at Blackpool Fine – One Landlady Gave Kiddies Pennies,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 2, 1939.

experiences of country hosts trying to cope with dirty and foul-mouthed slum children unused to parental control,” which summed up many of the complaints in these articles.¹⁴⁸ These complaints generally centered on the evacuees' poor hygiene, improper behavior, and general failure to assimilate into the receiving areas.¹⁴⁹ Some locals in reception areas grew resentful of having to support the influx of lower-class children. The government paid host families a minimal allowance for housing the children, but many of them felt that it was insufficient for their effort and expenses.¹⁵⁰ Arthur Marwick asserted that “many newspapers published reports critical of the evacuees, totally uncomprehending of the appalling slum conditions which had created their predicament.”¹⁵¹ These articles did not focus on the class differences which led to the conflict between the evacuated children and their host families, instead blaming the children without this needed context. This complied with the Ministry of Information's goals, encouraging a united front to support the war while minimizing potentially divisive class differences.¹⁵²

Overall, coverage of the domestic evacuation mostly followed the government-encouraged narrative, presenting a unified and optimistic view of its operational aspects and the children's experiences. Papers in evacuation areas focused more on reassuring the parents of evacuated children, while reception area reports emphasized the newly arrived evacuees' need to assimilate. Some articles noted problems with the evacuation, but blamed the evacuated children rather than the government or host families in receiving areas. Class differences caused the most discord between evacuated children and their new hosts, but coverage did not highlight these issues, and the evacuees' viewpoints often went unheard by the general public, confined largely to private diaries and letters. Papers mentioned other problematic issues such as the need for

¹⁴⁸ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 49.

¹⁴⁹ Calder, *The People's War*, 42.

¹⁵⁰ Calder, *The People's War*, 38-39; Sheridan, ed., 63.

¹⁵¹ Marwick, *The Home Front*, 27.

¹⁵² Welch, *Persuading the People*, 48; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 31, 34.

additional housing and supplies but did not place as much prominence on these difficulties as compared with their positive portrayals of the evacuation. One of the worst aspects of the evacuation was the lack of bombing raids for the first few months of the war, making these hardships seem pointless. Many evacuees returned to London and other major cities after a few months, only to evacuate again when the Blitz started in September 1940.¹⁵³

British newspaper reports during the first five months of the war largely displayed unity in portrayals of the war declaration & preparations and the domestic evacuation of children from the cities. The British government encouraged newspapers to support their goals of Home Front morale and popular support of the war, through the use of soft censorship, controlling the flow of information to the media, and the early beginnings of the Ministry's propaganda system. Newspapers also went along with the government's goals because appearing patriotic and supportive of the war would lead to less risk of censorship in the future.¹⁵⁴ Throughout these unified portrayals of the declaration of war and domestic evacuation, regional and political differences occasionally surfaced. Different regions of Britain focused more on certain aspects of the war during this early period, and evacuation areas displayed dissimilar concerns regarding the domestic evacuation compared to receiving areas or neutral areas. As the war progressed, the Ministry of Information's censorship increased and its usage of propaganda became more pervasive as well, particularly after the Dunkirk Evacuation.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 2-4, 14; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 157-160.

CHAPTER TWO: INCREASING GOVERNMENT CONTROL AND POLITICAL DIVERGENCE (FEBRUARY – AUGUST 1940)

After the early wartime unity of the British media, in the midst of the Phony War period, old political and regional divisions resurfaced in the press. These divisions primarily concerned the controversy over Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's wartime leadership, as well as Allied setbacks in the war. After the inactivity of the first five months of the war, in April 1940, British forces finally came into direct conflict with the German war machine in Norway, with disastrous results. The British public blamed Chamberlain directly for these military failures, and his political credibility never recovered. All of these events shook the Home Front, as Britons experienced both fear and anxiety about the war, feeling that the government had failed them.¹⁵⁶

German forces captured key locations across Norway in early April 1940, and although Allied troops remained in the region for the next month, they never recovered from this early defeat and eventually abandoned Norway to Nazi control in late May.¹⁵⁷ As Chamberlain continued to lose public and political support after the loss of Norway, he eventually resigned on May 10, 1940, and Winston Churchill became the new Prime Minister.¹⁵⁸ British setbacks continued under the new government, as Germany invaded the Low Countries and France on

¹⁵⁶ Historians such as John Kelly have argued that Chamberlain's government pursued a "vague and ill defined" war policy in the early months of World War II, failing to take any real proactive measures against Germany. A.J.P. Taylor asserted that the British people "blamed the men at the top" for early British military failures in the war, regardless of how much blame Chamberlain actually deserved for these setbacks. Taylor, *English History*, 470-475; Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 85, 96-97, 100-102, 108-128.

¹⁵⁷ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 96-97, 100-102.

¹⁵⁸ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 108-128.

May 10, 1940. German forces surprised the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) in the northwest of France, after breaking through Allied lines in the Ardennes. Cut off from its supply lines, the B.E.F. slowly fell back to the port of Dunkirk. From May 26 to June 5, 1940, Britain scrambled to organize a rescue operation and save some of the thousands of British soldiers from total annihilation on the Continent. The Dunkirk Evacuation resulted in British ships saving almost the entire B.E.F., ferrying over 338,000 British troops back to Britain. British forces ultimately experienced 66,000 casualties during this early fighting in France and the Low Countries, while politicians and the media focused more on the large numbers of successfully evacuated troops.¹⁵⁹

The press closely covered both Chamberlain's political fall from grace and the Dunkirk Evacuation. In this chapter, I will examine press coverage of these crises from February to August 1940 in order to show how political divergences arose in the media discourse, as well as the increase in government censorship and state-endorsed narratives of the war. Coverage of Chamberlain's political failures often fell along political lines, with Conservative papers offering little criticism of the government compared to Liberal and Labour-supported papers. The Dunkirk Evacuation marked the most significant event of the war in terms of media coverage. The national media discourse expressed a remarkable unity of coverage regarding Dunkirk, aided by heightened government propaganda and press interference.

Beginning in April 1940, the Ministry of Information reabsorbed the temporary Press and Censorship Bureau, beginning extensive propaganda campaigns and more stringent censorship. Churchill appointed Duff Cooper as the new Minister of Information, and the strained “voluntary censorship” system of the war's early months transitioned into greater government control over

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, *English History*, 486; Calder, *The People's War*, 106-110; Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, “Dunkirk's Darkest Day: When the Evacuation Came Close to Disaster,” *The Guardian* (July 16, 2017), accessed June 20, 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/16/dunkirk-darkest-day-29-may-1940-evacuation-came-close-to-disaster>>.

the press. The Ministry replaced its previous advisory defense notices to infringing newspaper articles with more legally forceful orders from a Censorship Board, giving more weight to its oversight of journalists. Ministry censors also began targeting political opinions in newspaper articles, not just sensitive military information, as they suppressed the *Daily Worker* and other Communist and Fascist publications in Summer 1940. In addition to these draconian measures, the Ministry of Information continued to utilize soft censorship methods such as the control of information flow to the media and the encouragement of state narratives in newspapers. During the Dunkirk Evacuation, Cooper's Ministry feared that the Home Front would lose confidence in the war effort, implementing more extensive anti-German propaganda and inspirational narratives in an attempt to inspire the British people and prevent the rise of defeatism.¹⁶⁰

Chamberlain's Political Decline

From the war's onset in September 1939 until May 1940, Chamberlain's National Government directed the British war effort, largely controlled by his party, the Conservatives. In addition to the Conservative majority, the National Government also included representatives from the Labour and Liberal political parties.¹⁶¹ Despite the failure of Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler and the lack of any strong direction in British military strategy, Chamberlain's government still maintained a reasonable amount of support at the beginning of 1940, perhaps due to increased patriotic sentiment during the early wartime period.¹⁶² Chamberlain's cabinet appointments of Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, influential Conservative politicians who had previously been critical of him, helped to unify Conservatives,

¹⁶⁰ Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security"; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-15, 91, 123-125.

¹⁶¹ Andrew Thorpe, *Parties at War: Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.

¹⁶² Robert Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System, 1885-1940* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 201.

while the Labour and Liberal parties experienced more division.¹⁶³

British military failures in the Norway operation during April and May 1940 severely weakened Chamberlain's public and political support. By early May, he essentially became “engaged in two wars: one against Germany, the other against his critics in Parliament.”¹⁶⁴ These critics increasingly taunted Chamberlain, with slogans such as “Missed the bus!” being yelled or featured in newspaper headlines. Ultimately, Chamberlain received most of the blame for the British setbacks in Norway, which directly led to his resignation on May 10, 1940 after a further dwindling of political support.¹⁶⁵

During early May 1940, British newspapers frequently reported on the military failures in Norway, as well as Chamberlain's declining political situation. Coverage focused primarily on political disapproval or approval of Chamberlain's wartime leadership, with increasing criticism during Chamberlain's final days in office, from May 1-10.¹⁶⁶ The political leanings of each newspaper greatly influenced the manner in which they discussed Chamberlain and the failures in Norway. Conservative papers did not criticize Chamberlain strongly, instead cautioning their readers against a change in leadership. In contrast, left-wing papers featured more critical commentary on Chamberlain and the Norway situation, while Liberal papers included more mixed views on the Prime Minister. These papers pointed out failures in Chamberlain's leadership, dwindling political support on the Home Front, and poor military decisions in the Norway campaign. Despite these political divergences, the British press largely remained unified

¹⁶³ Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 108.

¹⁶⁵ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 123; Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (London: Routledge, 2006), 416.

¹⁶⁶ Scholars have pointed to several reasons why Churchill rose to the Prime Minister position after Chamberlain's fall. Historian William Manchester asserted in his biography of Churchill that he came “to power because he had seen through Hitler from the very beginning,” and was untainted by Chamberlain's appeasement of Nazi Germany in the years leading up to the war. Churchill also largely escaped the blame for the disastrous Norway campaign, even though he was heavily involved in the campaign as well; Chamberlain took most of the public's wrath as Prime Minister. William Manchester, *The Last Lion: William Spencer Churchill; Alone: 1932-1940* (New York: Delta, 1988), 682; Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (London: Routledge, 2006), 416.

in recognizing the problems facing Britain in the war during early 1940, merely disagreeing on the best solution for these problems.

Left-leaning newspapers strongly disapproved of Chamberlain and his government's direction of the war effort, with increasingly critical remarks from May 1-10, 1940. These left-wing papers also expressed optimism regarding Churchill, Chamberlain's successor. The *Daily Herald's* W.N. Ewer and Maurice Webb asserted that the Norway campaign was a disaster, citing poor leadership and supply problems and noting that the British people were beginning to lose respect for Chamberlain's government.¹⁶⁷ By May 8, 1940, Webb argued that Chamberlain's resignation was inevitable, mocking his last-minute attempts to build support as pointless.¹⁶⁸ Other left-wing articles also focused on Chamberlain's increasingly weakened political position, eventually including more scathing criticism of the Prime Minister and calling for him to resign, as well as praise for Labour politicians who refused to participate in any government with Chamberlain.¹⁶⁹ Left-wing papers viewed Churchill with more optimism and confidence than Chamberlain, despite his Conservative affiliations.¹⁷⁰

Conservative papers differed from left-wing papers, notably lacking any strong criticism of Chamberlain and warning against a change in government. These Conservative publications also contained a mix of opinions regarding the Norwegian campaign, with some papers putting a

¹⁶⁷ W.N. Ewer, "Tanks and Planes Led Nazi Advance," *Daily Herald*, May 1, 1940; Maurice Webb, "Gov't. Prestige Shaken," *Daily Herald*, May 3, 1940. Webb was a political correspondent for the *Daily Herald* and a Labour supporter, while Ewer was a foreign affairs correspondent for the *Daily Herald*.

¹⁶⁸ Webb even described a recent speech by Chamberlain as an "obituary notice." Maurice Webb, "M.P.s of All Parties Denounce Norway Muddle," *Daily Herald*, May 8, 1940; Maurice Webb, "Chamberlain's Resignation Now Certain," *Daily Herald*, May 10, 1940. The *Daily Herald* also featured articles on the discontent among trade union leaders for the government's war direction, the disunity among Conservatives and the newfound energy among Labour and Liberals. "No Playing With Soldiers' Lives': Bevin Gives Cabinet a Blunt Warning," *Daily Herald*, May 2, 1940; "Parliament's Shattering Blow to Chamberlain," *Daily Herald*, May 9, 1940.

¹⁶⁹ "Churchill Gets More Power," "Change the Leadership," *Daily Mirror*, May 7, 1940; "In Name of God, Go, Premier Told," *Daily Mirror*, May 10, 1940; "P.M.'s Last Bid Fails: Labour 'No.,'" *Daily Mirror*, May 10, 1940; "Who Held Back Navy? Admiral Hero Asks," *Daily Mirror*, May 8, 1940; "Peers in Revolt," *Daily Mirror*, May 8, 1940.

¹⁷⁰ Maurice Webb, "Winston Now Has Wider Powers," *Daily Herald*, May 7, 1940; "Churchill Gets More Power," *Daily Mirror*, May 7, 1940.

positive spin on British military failures in Norway, while others criticized the campaign but did not blame Chamberlain for it. British historian Cyril Falls' weekly column in the *Illustrated London News* asserted that Britain could not “make a change for the better in the supreme leadership of the country,” a surprising position when most other journalists and politicians viewed Chamberlain's resignation as likely by this time.¹⁷¹

Other Conservative publications called for patience from the Home Front, urging the British people to remain optimistic with both the government and the direction of the war.¹⁷² Conservative papers continued to defend Chamberlain up until his resignation, remaining doubtful that he would be forced out of government and lamenting the Prime Minister's increasing unpopularity.¹⁷³ A weekly column in *The Sphere* warned that Britain's situation was comparable to the tumultuous Home Front during World War I, when the public was quick to blame government leaders for any military failures, and cautioned that the British press should avoid causing this kind of political disunity in 1940.¹⁷⁴ Conservative papers generally attempted to insulate Chamberlain and the Conservative Party from criticism.

Liberal-leaning publications presented more of a mixed opinion on Chamberlain, falling in between left-wing and Conservative newspapers. These Liberal publications criticized Chamberlain's leadership and the government's handling of the Norwegian campaign, but not as vociferously as left-leaning papers. Regional differences also played more of a role with Liberal

¹⁷¹ Falls also attempted to use the British campaign in Norway as more of a rallying, inspiration subject for his readers, rather than emphasizing its faults. Cyril Falls, “The War With Nazi Germany: The Set-Back in Norway,” *Illustrated London News*, May 11, 1940. Cyril Falls, “The War With Nazi Germany: The Fighting in Norway,” *Illustrated London News*, May 4, 1940.

¹⁷² The *Liverpool Evening Express* also portrayed the Norway campaign as well-planned and effective even as British troops were in retreat, placing partial blame on the Norwegian government for failing to coordinate with Britain, and minimizing the negative aspects of the British military situation. “Premier's Statement on Norway,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 2, 1940; “Gallantry of British Rearguard,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 3, 1940; “A War Newsletter,” *The Sphere*, May 4, 1940; “Critical Debate on Norway – Political Crisis Unlikely,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 4, 1940; “Judgment on Norway,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 6, 1940.

¹⁷³ “A War Newsletter,” *The Sphere*, May 11, 1940; “Premier Tells of Namsos Withdrawal,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 7, 1940; “Premier Likely to Rebuild, Not Resign,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 9, 1940.

¹⁷⁴ “A War Newsletter.” *The Sphere*, May 11, 1940.

papers, as Southwestern Liberal newspapers moderately criticized the Prime Minister, while Northern Liberal publications varied from weak criticism to harsh anti-Chamberlain rhetoric.

Liberal papers in the Southwest initially encouraged the British public to be patient and optimistic about Chamberlain's government and the war effort in Norway.¹⁷⁵ This initial optimism gave way to an increasing amount of criticism and negativity, as Liberal papers in the region expressed stronger disapproval of Chamberlain and the setbacks in Norway. Frequent topics of concern included Chamberlain's passive and timid methods of running the war, as well as the increasing opposition to Chamberlain in world opinion.¹⁷⁶

While Southwestern Liberal papers displayed a moderate but increasing criticism of Chamberlain and his government, Liberal-leaning papers in the North featured more of a divergence. Northern Liberal publications split between positive views of the Prime Minister and more emphatic criticism of his government, perhaps due to a mix of differing political opinions in this region. Some Northern Liberal papers praised Chamberlain's impressive leadership.¹⁷⁷ In contrast, other Northern Liberal papers featured more biting criticism of Chamberlain and his management of the British war effort. Malcolm Gunn, a Liberal editor of the *Manchester Evening News*, asserted in an editorial that Chamberlain had been far too complacent in the war, and that he employed too many Conservative "yes-men" who failed to challenge his ideas due to

¹⁷⁵ "Resolved and Patient," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 1, 1940. "The Truth About Norway." *Western Daily Press*, May 3, 1940; "Cabinet Stand Together on Norway." *Western Daily Press*, May 4, 1940.

¹⁷⁶ "Allies Must Give Blows Back." *Gloucester Citizen*, May 4, 1940; "No Serious Government Setback Expected," "Political Crisis Unlikely – Biggest War Debate on Norway." *Gloucester Citizen*, May 6, 1940; "Withdrawal From Norway Not Comparable With Gallipoli." *Gloucester Citizen*, May 7, 1940; "Labour's Surprise Decision to Force Vote on Norway." *Gloucester Citizen*, May 8, 1940; "What Action Will Premier Take?" *Gloucester Citizen*, May 9, 1940. "The Premier's Strong Position." *Western Daily Press*, May 6, 1940; "Churchill to Put Drive Into War." *Western Daily Press*, May 8, 1940; "Government Majority Falls to 81 – Opposition Calls 'Resign.'" *Western Daily Press*, May 9, 1940; "Opposition Leaders Meet Premier." *Western Daily Press*, May 10, 1940.

¹⁷⁷ The *Liverpool Daily Post* was optimistic about Chamberlain's leadership during the Norway campaign, noting that he gave an honest accounting of the nation's progress and invigorated the nation. As Chamberlain lost support, this optimism eventually transitioned into more ambivalent articles which asserted Chamberlain must make changes in the government. "Mr. Chamberlain's Statement," *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 3, 1940; "Our London Newsletter," *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 10, 1940.

their “sheep-like allegiance” to Chamberlain.¹⁷⁸ These regional divergences in Liberal papers on Chamberlain's declining political situation showed that regional as well as political influences still affected the media discourse during this period.

As the British situation in the war worsened, censorship and propaganda increased as the government became more concerned about Home Front morale. These methods of affecting the British media began rising with the British military failures in Norway, but the Dunkirk Evacuation marked the real turning point when the government began utilizing censorship and propaganda more frequently. During newspaper coverage of Chamberlain's political fall from grace and the Norway campaign, some publications criticized the government and the war effort, but these views stopped short of outright defeatist sentiments. Consequently, the government had not extensively suppressed most newspapers during this period, even the left-wing and Liberal papers which denounced Chamberlain's government and leadership. As the war situation continued to deteriorate for Britain with the Dunkirk Evacuation and the Fall of France, the Ministry of Information shifted its resources “increasingly towards home publicity,” attempting to influence morale on the Home Front and avoid a public loss of confidence in the war effort.¹⁷⁹

While the British media discourse had been united up until this point, newspaper coverage of Chamberlain's political loss of power diverged along political lines. Left-wing papers viewed Chamberlain with strong negativity, noting his poor planning and leadership, while Conservative papers took the opposite view, defending Chamberlain as a strong Conservative politician and warning against any change in government. This political divide left

¹⁷⁸ “In Fleet Street To-Day,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 4, 1940. Further articles in the *Manchester Evening News* noted that the British people were waking up to the problems in the government and war effort, leading to “strong, justified, and widespread criticism” which could lead to Chamberlain's removal from power, and that his resignation seemed likely. “What We Think – On Trial.” *Manchester Evening News*, May 6, 1940; “If Chamberlain Goes – Halifax or Churchill.” *Manchester Evening News*, May 9, 1940.

¹⁷⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 17, 81-83, 123.

the Liberal-leaning papers mostly in the middle, containing some disapproval of Chamberlain which increased as the Prime Minister's public support dwindled, with some regional differences.

Despite this political split, the British press remained unified. British papers of all political leanings recognized the issues facing Britain, including the disastrous military campaign in Norway, the unrest in government and growing public discontent with these issues. The press mostly agreed on the problems, but they disagreed on the best solutions for them. Many papers generally counseled patience from the Home Front regarding both the war effort and the government.¹⁸⁰ By encouraging patience, British papers elicited support from the Home Front, calling for the British public to unite in support of the war effort and complying with the Ministry of Information's goals for increasing Home Front morale.¹⁸¹

Once it became clear that Chamberlain could not build any kind of coalition to retain power, he resigned on May 10, 1940 in the face of overwhelming political pressure. At that point, the Conservative majority faced the question of who should succeed Chamberlain as the new Prime Minister, with the two main choices being Lord Halifax and Winston Churchill. Critics of Halifax noted his peerage and lack of interest in the position, while Churchill retained broad support across the public and political spectrum.¹⁸² British newspapers from all political leanings expressed support and optimism regarding Churchill. Left-wing and Liberal papers viewed Churchill as a preferable alternative to Chamberlain, without the leadership failures and baggage from appeasement and the failed Norway campaign. For Conservative papers, Churchill

¹⁸⁰ For Conservative and Liberal articles calling for patience with the government and war effort, see "A War Newsletter," *The Sphere*, May 4, 1940; "Judgment on Norway," *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 6, 1940; Cyril Falls, "The War With Nazi Germany: The Set-Back in Norway," *Illustrated London News*, May 11, 1940; "Resolved and Patient," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 1, 1940; "Mr. Chamberlain's Statement," *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 3, 1940. Left-wing papers were more critical and less likely to call for patience, but even left-leaning papers such as the *Daily Herald* still recognized in early May 1940 that Chamberlain had some support and could not be forced out of government quickly. "Govt. Prestige Shaken," *Daily Herald*, May 3, 1940.

¹⁸¹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 48.

¹⁸² Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System*, 201; Calder, *The People's War*, 83-84; Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 2.

at least allowed Conservatives to remain in power, and offered a chance to build further political support as well as unite the nation behind the war effort.¹⁸³

The Dunkirk Evacuation

Soon after Chamberlain's political fall from grace, the Allied war situation worsened again with the German invasion of France and the Low Countries on May 10, 1940. The British Expeditionary Force's retreat and subsequent evacuation from the Continent via the port of Dunkirk, from May 26 to June 4, 1940, captured the imagination of the British Home Front. This led to extensive coverage in newspaper articles, as the British public initially feared the worst with the operation, but eventually experienced relief and optimism at the evacuation's conclusion.¹⁸⁴ Historians of the British Home Front have placed a varying degree of emphasis on Dunkirk's effects on British society. Angus Calder asserted that some British people felt overjoyed at the miraculous rescue of British forces, while also challenging the mythological narratives which the government and media propagated following the Dunkirk Evacuation.¹⁸⁵ Walter Lord argued that Dunkirk energized the Home Front, giving the people hope and inspiring them to contribute to the war effort.¹⁸⁶

Coverage of Dunkirk provided a striking contrast to the reports on Chamberlain's political failures and the Norway campaign. While articles on Chamberlain and Norway diverged along political lines, most of these political differences dissipated during the reporting on Dunkirk. In

¹⁸³ Maurice Webb, "Winston Now Has Wider Powers," *Daily Herald*, May 7, 1940; "Churchill Premier: Labour to Serve in the Cabinet," *Daily Herald*, May 11, 1940; "Churchill Gets More Power," *Daily Mirror*, May 7, 1940; "Our War Premier Churchill," *Daily Mirror*, May 11, 1940; "War Policy Statement Next Week? - New Premier's First Task," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 11, 1940; "Churchill to Put Drive into War," *Western Daily Press*, May 8, 1940; "If Chamberlain Goes - Halifax or Churchill," *Manchester Evening News*, May 9, 1940; "Churchill Prepares for His Great Task," *Manchester Evening News*, May 11, 1940.

¹⁸⁴ Calder notes that many newspaper articles, public speeches, acts of public celebration and other analyses and commemorations have been propagated about the Dunkirk Evacuation. Calder, *The People's War*, 576.

¹⁸⁵ Calder, *The People's War*, 109; Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, 1-5.

¹⁸⁶ Walter Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk: The True Story of Operation Dynamo* (New York: Open Road, 1982), 274.

particular, as the Dunkirk Evacuation progressed, the press featured less criticism of the government and war effort. Conservative papers continued to utilize many of the same strategies and viewpoints, having not been particularly critical of the government or war effort prior to Dunkirk, while left-wing and Liberal papers minimized their previously critical views.

The British media discourse displayed unity regarding the Dunkirk Evacuation, even more so than earlier in the war, due in large part to the increasing censorship and propaganda from the Ministry of Information. According to propaganda historian David Welch, the Ministry became increasingly concerned with Home Front morale as the British military situation continued to worsen from May-June 1940.¹⁸⁷ The Ministry began to intensify its propaganda efforts during this period, encouraging the idea of a “People's War” and emphasizing that the Home Front should not become complacent or lose confidence in the war effort.¹⁸⁸ As the Dunkirk Evacuation continued to progress, the government encouraged heroic narratives of the operation in the media, culminating in a significant shift in the overall presentation of the war in the post-Dunkirk media discourse.¹⁸⁹

Along with this propaganda, the Ministry of Information also began tightening its control over the press through several methods of censorship around the time of the Dunkirk Evacuation. The Ministry began suppressing political opinions such as Communist and Fascist views in newspapers, banning the export of the *Daily Worker* in May 1940 and eventually closing down the paper altogether. The Ministry's advisory notices to infringing newspapers articles were also replaced with more legally forceful Censorship Board orders, against the objections of many British journalists. Minister of Information Duff Cooper, Churchill's appointed successor to Sir John Reith, oversaw all these changes and transitioned the Ministry into a greater focus on

¹⁸⁷ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 17.

¹⁸⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 81-83, 90-91.

¹⁸⁹ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

strengthening the morale of the Home Front. Cooper increased the use of propaganda and employed various data collection methods in order to gain insight into the British people's feelings about the Dunkirk Evacuation and the war effort. These intensifying propaganda and censorship efforts on the Home Front greatly contributed toward the resulting unity of the press regarding the Dunkirk Evacuation and subsequent wartime events, as newspapers began to get in line with the Ministry of Information's goals.¹⁹⁰

This first phase of the Allied setbacks and the Dunkirk Evacuation, from May 20-29, featured grim newspaper articles which largely gave an unflattering view of the deteriorating British military situation on the Continent. As this phase continued, government censorship and propaganda ramped up, and the overall outlook of the government regarding the evacuation improved. By the end of this phase, the government's narrative of a victorious British nation and the heroic Dunkirk Evacuation prevailed in many newspapers, as the previously despondent articles transitioned into more upbeat and glorifying reports on the evacuation.

The "Phony War" period of inactivity ended on May 10, 1940 with the German invasion of France and the Low Countries. By May 14, the Germans broke through Allied lines at the Ardennes, with many tanks and mechanized units sweeping behind British and French supply lines. German forces encircled the main Allied force and pushed it back towards the coastal port of Dunkirk. The Dunkirk Evacuation then proceeded from May 26 – June 4, as the British government scrambled to rescue as many British troops as possible. May 30 marked a turning point as additional small vessels and volunteers began to help with the evacuation, and the government became more optimistic about the operation. British propaganda and interference with the press increased, as the government attempted to assuage the Home Front's anxieties about British setbacks in the war and portray the Dunkirk Evacuation as a moral victory, rather

¹⁹⁰ Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security"; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-17, 81-83, 90-91.

than a crushing loss against the German forces.¹⁹¹

By May 24, the Allied pocket had been reduced to a thin strip of land from Lille to Dunkirk on the coast, as the press presented the daunting situation to readers. Some newspapers asserted that the Allied situation in Belgium and France was grave, noting that the Allies were running out of room to retreat as their forces approached the coast. Journalists emphasized the Allies' precarious position and acknowledged that “deep anxiety must be felt in this country whose sons are probably bearing the brunt of the ordeal.”¹⁹² The following day on May 25, the German forces pushed the Allies further back toward Dunkirk, and British papers continued to focus on the “grave peril” of the British military situation, as this momentous struggle for the Allied forces' survival continued.¹⁹³ In his weekly column for the *Illustrated London News*, Conservative historian Arthur Bryant acknowledged that “the sky is threatening to fall” as the British military faced its most crucial battle in centuries, noting the grim circumstances but attempting to inspire some hope in readers with historical comparisons.¹⁹⁴

These descriptions of the harsh reality facing the British forces continued in newspapers for the next several days, as the Allied forces fell back to Dunkirk, and Britain launched a massive evacuation effort on May 26 to rescue the B.E.F. from annihilation.¹⁹⁵ British forces suffered 66,000 casualties during the retreat to Dunkirk and the evacuation, and while the press did not specifically focus on the rising death toll, newspapers did not hesitate to proclaim the

¹⁹¹ Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk*, 3-7; Taylor, *English History*, 486; Calder, *The People's War*, 106-110; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 17, 81-83, 90-91; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

¹⁹² “The Battle for the Coast,” *Western Daily Press*, May 24, 1940.

¹⁹³ “London Letter,” *Western Daily Press*, May 25, 1940. “A War Newsletter.” *The Sphere*, May 25, 1940.

¹⁹⁴ Bryant asserted that Britain was currently standing “face to face with the most decisive moment in her fate since the sailing of the Spanish Armada.” He nevertheless attempted to inspire some confidence among readers, asserting that the English people's “courage and constancy will be tested as never before: but whatever fails, these will not.” Arthur Bryant, “Our Notebook.” *Illustrated London News*, May 25, 1940.

¹⁹⁵ Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk*, 3-7.

potentially devastating situation facing the B.E.F.¹⁹⁶ Coverage from May 27 noted the massive German offensive bearing down on the Allied troops, asserting that British and French forces were “heroically facing the mad onslaught” of continual German attacks on their position.¹⁹⁷ Articles emphasized the significance of this moment in British military history, focusing readers' attention on the “critical stage” which the Allies were now facing in the struggle against Germany.¹⁹⁸ The press did not directly criticize the British war effort, but the coverage presented an alarming outlook to readers. The Ministry of Information continued to utilize a soft censorship policy, passively controlling the flow of information without extensively utilizing direct censorship. This would change in the coming days, as the appalling outlook of the war began to threaten the stability of the Home Front, and the government became more concerned about the British public losing confidence in the war.¹⁹⁹

As the Dunkirk Evacuation proceeded on May 28-29, newspapers focused on the grave situation facing the Allies, the urgency and desperation of the British troops, and the atrocities which Germans were committing in their offensive. The *Daily Herald* political correspondent W.N. Ewer noted that the British situation was “Graver” than ever on May 28, and that the Allied forces faced a situation “of the utmost gravity.”²⁰⁰ Many articles noted Prime Minister Churchill's

¹⁹⁶ Sebag-Montefiore, “Dunkirk's Darkest Day: When the Evacuation Came Close to Disaster.”

¹⁹⁷ “Flanders Battle Grows in Intensity,” *Gloucester Citizen*, May 27, 1940; “Allies Massacre Germans as Mad Onslaught Goes On,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 27, 1940.

¹⁹⁸ The *Liverpool Echo* noted that “the battle in France is approaching a critical stage,” as the British Empire was facing a challenge to its very existence. “The Challenge to the British Empire,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 27, 1940. The *Liverpool Daily Post* asserted that the “British Army faces the greatest action in its long and glorious history,” comparing the present struggle with British & French battles against Germany in World War I. “The Battle of Flanders – Crammed With Possibility,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 27, 1940. Several articles also pointed out the Allies' stubborn resistance at nearby Calais, where violent fighting was taking place against continual German attacks. See “Allied Successes in Belgium,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 27, 1940; “Fate of Boulogne: Calais Held By Allies,” *Western Daily Press*, May 27, 1940; “Calais is Held: Navy Shells Enemy,” *Daily Mirror*, May 27, 1940.

¹⁹⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 90-91; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

²⁰⁰ Ewer noted that British troops near the coast were now in danger of being cut off, but that they were making the Germans pay for every attack. Another *Daily Herald* article noted the Allied defensive entrenchment before being rescue, as soldiers prepared defenses amidst fields littered with dead bodies. Similar articles in the

speech to the House of Commons, in which he described the “‘extremely grave' position of the British and French armies,” while noting that British troops were still “in good heart and fighting with the utmost discipline.” Churchill further noted that the House should “prepare itself for hard and heavy tidings,” emphasizing the difficult task ahead.²⁰¹

Some articles focused particularly on German forces' perpetration of atrocities on civilians, noting several incidents including German tanks machine-gunning escaping civilians and German planes bombing hospitals. Papers used these atrocities as evidence of the heartless and bloodthirsty nature of the German invaders, increasing anti-German fervor on the Home Front.²⁰² The Ministry of Information explicitly encouraged these anti-German themes among the press, as one of the Ministry's goals included an emphasis on “the brutality of the Nazi regime” in order to encourage the Home Front to further support the war against Germany.²⁰³ Coverage during May 28-29 noted the “grim retreat” of the Allied forces toward the coast, and the British troops “hold[ing] grimly to their” defensive positions, despite facing “every military disadvantage” in this struggle.²⁰⁴ These articles represented the height of negativity and pessimism in the British media discourse during the first year of the war.

Liverpool Daily Post and *Daily Mirror* emphasized the large number of German casualties. W.N. Ewer, “Situation Graver This Morning,” *Daily Herald*, May 28, 1940; A.L. Easterman, “Flanders Fields Piled High With Nazi Dead,” *Daily Herald*, May 28, 1940; “German Losses Total ‘Nazis’ Enormous Losses,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 28, 1940; “Huge Losses, Germans Told,” *Daily Mirror*, May 29, 1940.

²⁰¹ “Mr. Churchill Tells Commons of B.E.F.'s Position,” *Gloucester Citizen*, May 28, 1940; “B.E.F. Fights on 'As Long as Ammunition Lasts,’” *Daily Herald*, May 29, 1940; “Troops in Good Heart and Fighting With Utmost Discipline,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 28, 1940.

²⁰² “German Tanks Crush Refugees,” *Daily Mirror*, May 28, 1940; “Nazi Tanks Mow Down Refugees,” *Western Daily Press*, May 28, 1940; “British Troops Furious at Revolting German Deeds,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 29, 1940; “B.E.F. Still Intact, Withdraws Towards Sea,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 29, 1940; “Gort's Men Fight on Fiercely and Withdraw Towards Coast,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 29, 1940.

²⁰³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89.

²⁰⁴ “Great R.A.F. Attack to Help B.E.F.,” *Daily Mirror*, May 29, 1940; “Gort's Men Fight on Fiercely and Withdraw Towards Coast,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 29, 1940; “Allied Forces Capture Narvik,” *Gloucester Citizen*, May 29, 1940. The *Liverpool Daily Post* also noted that the B.E.F. was in a “critical position,” while the *Western Daily Press* focused on the “increasing gravity” of the Allies' desperate situation. “B.E.F. to Withdraw From Threatened Front”; “B.E.F. Carry On,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 29, 1940; “British Line Holds Firm as Nazis Hammer,” *Western Daily Press*, May 28, 1940.

After May 30, 1940, British propaganda and censorship increased during the second phase of the Dunkirk Evacuation, with state-encouraged narratives of the heroic operation featuring more prominently in British newspapers. Additional civilian vessels and volunteers began aiding the evacuation, contributing to a more extensive evacuation effort and a greater optimism among both the government and press.²⁰⁵ This coincided with growing government interference with the press, as the Ministry of Information began to fear that the British public lost confidence in the war effort. The Ministry needed to both explain this huge setback in the war effort and attempt to use it to energize the British people.²⁰⁶ State narratives of the war shifted towards encouragement of public participation in this “People's War,” inspiring confidence on the Home Front, and coverage after May 30 reflected this new focus.²⁰⁷

British papers from May 30 continued to recognize the desperate odds which the Allied soldiers were facing. Articles noted the struggle which British soldiers would have to endure in order to defend Allied positions and complete the rescue operation.²⁰⁸ Newspapers tempered this with additional heroic and patriotic imagery, however, as media coverage transitioned into a more positive discourse supporting the government's goals of a unified Home Front supporting the war effort.²⁰⁹ Some articles mentioned the Allied losses in the operation, but minimized the

²⁰⁵ Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk*, 157, 162, 174.

²⁰⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 90, 123.

²⁰⁷ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

²⁰⁸ The *Daily Herald* noted that British troops were “grimly, tenaciously and with perfect discipline” battling their way to the coast and defending against the advancing German forces, in a “most desperate” retreat. “B.E.F. Battling Its Way to Coast,” *Daily Herald*, May 30, 1940. The *Daily Mirror* also described this desperate retreat using similar language. “B.E.F. Battle on as Navy Cover Dunkirk,” *Daily Mirror*, May 30, 1940. The *Western Daily Press* described the overwhelming odds facing British troops at Dunkirk, noting the heroism which they continued to display. “Germans Suffer Enormous Losses,” *Western Daily Press*, May 30, 1940. The *Manchester Evening News* asserted that the “grim struggle” for the Allied troops continued as they retreated and entrenched the Dunkirk area. “B.E.F. Main Bases are Intact – Dunkirk is Powerfully Entrenched,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 30, 1940.

²⁰⁹ The *Liverpool Daily Press* praised the “magnificent courage” and discipline displayed by the B.E.F. in their withdrawal to Dunkirk. “British Army's Fighting Withdrawal,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 30, 1940. The *Liverpool Echo* also praised the B.E.F., extolling the British troops' heroism which was “unparalleled in military history.” “Night and Day Struggle in Gallant Retirement,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 30, 1940.

importance of these losses rather than focusing on them, reflecting the increased patriotism and support of the war in coverage during this period.²¹⁰

As more Allied troops continued to be ferried from Dunkirk to Britain, papers shifted toward more inspiring coverage of the event, focusing on the unprecedented success of the evacuation and the gallantry of the Allied troops in contributing to the operation. Articles from May 31 proclaimed the evacuation a “stupendous feat,” carried out efficiently by the British military.²¹¹ June 1 articles echoed these positive sentiments, asserting that operation was continued “swiftly, unceasingly,” and professionally by all personnel involved.²¹² Coverage from May 31-June 1 also emphasized British gallantry and courage in the war effort, rather than focusing on the overwhelming odds and struggles which the nation faced in previous days.²¹³ Conservative papers particularly focused on this British stoicism as a national attribute. In Arthur Bryant's *Illustrated London News* column, he described English people as cool, collected and stoic, capable of carrying on with their lives despite the recent difficulties, while the weekly newsletter in *The Sphere* noted that the British people would face the present danger with their

²¹⁰ For example, the *Daily Herald* described Allied losses in the early fighting against Germany as “relative rather than catastrophic,” minimizing the significant losses which the Allies experienced during this time. “Barges & Tramps Bring More B.E.F. Men Home,” *Daily Herald*, June 1, 1940.

²¹¹ The *Daily Herald* asserted that thousands of British troops were being carried home safely in the operation, while other papers from May 31 emphasized the incredible efficiency and large numbers of troops involved in the evacuation and extolled the Royal Air Force and Navy for aiding its successful performance thus far. “Battle is Now on Flanders Coast,” *Daily Herald*, May 31, 1940; “Navy Fight for B.E.F. - Thousands Home,” *Daily Mirror*, May 31, 1940; “Most of Army May Be Got Away,” *Gloucester Citizen*, May 31, 1940; “Flanders Heroes Reach England in Ever-Increasing Numbers,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 31, 1940; “Thousands of B.E.F. Men Landed in England,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 31, 1940.

²¹² The *Daily Mirror* praised the swift and methodical work of the military personnel involved in the Dunkirk Evacuation, while the *Western Daily Press* emphasized the magnitude of the “stupendous and successful task” which Britain was now accomplishing. Other papers echoed these sentiments and continued to note the large numbers of men returning home. “Outposts Win Vital Hours for B.E.F.,” *Daily Mirror*, June 1, 1940; “German Losses Total 500,000 Since May 10 – Attack on Dunkirk Foiled,” *Western Daily Press*, June 1, 1940; “Tens of Thousands More Return – 100,000 Are Reported Evacuated,” *Manchester Evening News*, June 1, 1940.

²¹³ Newspapers on May 31-June 1, 1940 frequently used descriptors such as courageous, indomitable and gallant to describe the British military. “Outposts Win Vital Hours for B.E.F.,” *Daily Mirror*, June 1, 1940; “Battle-Weary B.E.F. Men Home,” *Western Daily Press*, May 31, 1940; “French Rearguard Men Reaching Dunkirk,” *Gloucester Citizen*, June 1, 1940; “Allied Rearguard Reaching Dunkirk,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, June 1, 1940.

usual determination.²¹⁴ This emphasis on gallantry directly contributed to the Ministry of Information's Home Front goals, as the government sought to propagate the idea of a “People's War” supported by the masses. As the government increased its propaganda efforts and encouraged more state narratives in the press, the Ministry attempted to reinforce this idea of “the unbreakable spirit of the British people.”²¹⁵

By June 3, British ships had almost completed the evacuation, with just a small portion of Allied troops remaining to be transferred to Britain.²¹⁶ Newspaper articles continued with a positive tone, emphasizing the discipline and increased speed of the evacuation.²¹⁷ Many newspapers also proclaimed that most of the British troops were on their way home, reassuring British readers that this terrible chapter in the war effort drew to a close.²¹⁸ As the Dunkirk evacuation ended on June 4, papers published several retrospective articles about the entire operation, furthering the government's narrative of a successful evacuation.²¹⁹ Some of these articles focused on the sheer magnitude and unprecedented scale of the evacuation, while others asserted that the Allies should feel “pride and gratification at the brilliant success” of the operation.²²⁰

²¹⁴ Arthur Bryant, “Our Notebook.” *Illustrated London News*, June 1, 1940; “A War Newsletter.” *The Sphere*, June 1, 1940.

²¹⁵ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 81, 83, 90-91.

²¹⁶ June 2, 1940 was a Sunday, and consequently most papers did not publish an issue on that day.

²¹⁷ “Nazis Still Batter Away at Dunkirk,” *Gloucester Citizen*, June 3, 1940; “Still Resisting at Dunkirk,” *Western Daily Press*, June 3, 1940; “Last B.E.F. Battalions Stand Firm Before Enemy's Final Fury – Still Embarking From Shell-Torn Beach,” *Manchester Evening News*, June 3, 1940; “Defenders Remain Calm in Face of Savage Onslaught,” *Liverpool Echo*, June 3, 1940.

²¹⁸ Newspaper articles frequently cited that 4/5 of the B.E.F. was already evacuated from Dunkirk, with the rest of the British troops arriving soon, along with some French soldiers. “Navy Fights to Save the Last Thousands,” *Daily Mirror*, June 3, 1940; “Four-fifths of B.E.F. Saved From Dunkirk,” *Liverpool Daily Press*, June 3, 1940; “Evacuation Nearly Over,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, June 3, 1940.

²¹⁹ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 81, 83, 90-91.

²²⁰ The *Daily Herald* noted that over 1,000 ships were involved in the Dunkirk Evacuation, most of them British, and that Allied losses in the operation were surprisingly small in this “glorious epic” which had now reached its conclusion. “Thousand Ships Saved the B.E.F.,” *Daily Herald*, June 4, 1940; “Last of Our Forces Fight Their Way Out of Dunkirk,” *Daily Herald*, June 5, 1940. The *Daily Mirror* praised the “tenacious defending” of the Allied troops who held back German forces at Dunkirk. “Allied Attacks Beat Back Nazis,” *Daily Mirror*, June 4, 1940. The *Western Daily Press* emphasized that the evacuation was a triumphant success which should inspire

The returning home of British troops from the Continent marked the third phase of the Dunkirk Evacuation. From May 26 to June 4, Allied soldiers continued to arrive at English beaches and ports, mostly along the southern coast. British historians have noted the importance of these arriving troops for the nation's morale. Angus Calder asserted that in these ports, "large sections of the population were swept up into the feverish activity which surrounded the troops' return," with volunteers providing food, supplies, and medical treatment for the new arrivals.²²¹ Dunkirk historian Walter Lord emphasized that the local population treated the returning veterans "like conquering heroes," celebrating their return.²²²

The British government recognized that these returning soldiers could provide a powerful morale boost for the Home Front, utilizing them as evidence of Britain's success in the Dunkirk Evacuation. As operation progressed, the Ministry of Information increased propaganda and censorship in an attempt to encourage continued Home Front support for the war effort and to explain recent setbacks in the war.²²³ In perpetuating the heroic state narrative of Dunkirk, the Ministry encouraged inspiring portrayals of the evacuation and the returning troops, which offered a convenient distraction from the British defeats against Germany and the casualties which the British military suffered thus far. British newspapers followed this patriotic narrative, focusing articles in a unified manner on the returning soldiers, and avoiding the topic of the 66,000 casualties which Britain suffered during the fighting in France and Belgium – those soldiers who never made it back home.²²⁴ In reporting on these returning soldiers, British papers again featured a regional divergence, as newspapers from the Southwestern and Northern regions

"pride and gratification," but also cautioned that Germany would be preparing further attacks against Britain.

"London Letter," *Western Daily Press*, June 4, 1940.

²²¹ Calder, *The People's War*, 109.

²²² Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk*, 270-271.

²²³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 122; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

²²⁴ Sebag-Montefiore, "Dunkirk's Darkest Day."

emphasized the returning troops more than publications from London. Geographical differences likely caused this variation, as the Southwest and North contained more port cities, where local readers may be more interested in such news. Southwestern ports were also particularly close to the receiving areas for returning soldiers from Dunkirk.

Some London papers noted the growing anticipation for B.E.F. troops to come home, as the evacuation fleet grew and “the spirits of the crowds that lined the beaches and cliff-tops” rose along with it.²²⁵ Articles such as these emphasized that morale on the Home Front increased as the evacuation progressed and more soldiers headed home to the ports. Other London papers noted the “battle-worn” and weary appearance of many British troops who arrived in British ports, asserting that their difficult experiences had not diminished their morale.²²⁶ Ewart Brookes, a *Daily Mirror* staff reporter, wrote one of the most rousing articles about these returning troops. Brookes observed the operation firsthand with an evacuation vessel, describing the “grim, silent men” who embarked on their ferries and returned home to the beaches safely, and noting that all of these soldiers “gave one backward glance to the beach... 'We'll be back, Jerry,' they seemed to say.”²²⁷ Articles such as these perpetuated the Ministry of Information's goals in inspiring the Home Front, portraying British soldiers as stoic and courageous men who could not wait to return to battle. This willingness to return to the fight also encouraged British citizens to support the war effort in any way they could, as well as giving them hope that the war against Germany could be won despite the recent setbacks.²²⁸

Southwestern coverage also advanced many of the government's propaganda goals with articles on the returning soldiers. Some of these papers echoed Brookes' article, portraying the

²²⁵ “Barges and Troops Bring More B.E.F. Men Home,” *Daily Herald*, June 1, 1940.

²²⁶ “Navy Fight for B.E.F. - Thousands Home,” *Daily Mirror*, May 31, 1940.

²²⁷ Ewart Brookes, “How Little Ships Rescued the B.E.F.” *Daily Mirror*, June 3, 1940.

²²⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 17, 48, 81, 83, 90-91.

returning troops as full of high morale and eager to return to the fight quickly. One article noted that many of the evacuated soldiers actually wanted to head back to the battle zone as quickly as possible, in order to “have another go at the Germans.”²²⁹ Other Southwestern articles focused more on the returning soldiers' gratefulness for their warm welcome at the ports, as well as for the navy crews which brought them across the Channel.²³⁰ These articles emphasized positive portrayals of the evacuated soldiers, highlighting attributes such as gratitude and a willingness to fight while avoiding difficult topics such as the harrowing experience which the soldiers endured in their retreat, and the large numbers of casualties.

The primary disembarking spots for the returning Dunkirk soldiers did not extend as far as the North, but as Liverpool included one of the largest ports in Britain, papers in the region displayed growing interest in the new arrivals at southern ports. Northern articles emphasized the large numbers of returning troops, and the cheerful welcome which they received from the burgeoning crowds waiting at English ports.²³¹ Some articles compared the conflict to World War I, noting that returning soldiers would be able to compare war stories with their veteran fathers who had fought in Europe during 1914-1918.²³² These articles did not focus on the casualties and dire circumstances faced by Britain in both World War I and World War II, instead using the comparison merely to inspire patriotic fervor among the British Home Front and prevent the general public from losing confidence in the struggle against Germany.²³³

²²⁹ “Nazis Still Batter Away at Dunkirk,” *Gloucester Citizen*, June 3, 1940.

²³⁰ “Battle-Weary B.E.F. Men Home,” *Western Daily Press*, May 31, 1940. Another article further asserted that thousands of Allied soldiers continued to be transported from Dunkirk to the Southern ports, with safe landings and positive morale. “German Losses Total 500,000 Since May 10 – Attack on Dunkirk Failed,” *Western Daily Press*, June 1, 1940.

²³¹ “Flanders Heroes Reach England in Ever-Increasing Numbers,” *Manchester Evening News*, May 31, 1940; “How B.E.F. Men Came Home,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 31, 1940; “Homecoming of B.E.F.,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, June 1, 1940; “Evacuation Nearly Over,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, June 3, 1940.

²³² “North, Welcoming Home Its Hero Sons, Hears the Valiant Message of the B.E.F.,” *Manchester Evening News*, June 1, 1940.

²³³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 90-91.

Overall, the British government encouraged the media to portray the return of the B.E.F. to English ports in a positive and inspiring manner, in order to encourage public support and participation in the war effort. Newspapers went along with the Ministry of Information's goals in order to appear patriotic and supportive of the war, avoiding future censorship and defeatist accusations. Articles utilized heroic and rousing themes to achieve these goals, describing the returning British soldiers as courageous, willing to continue fighting, and grateful for the domestic support. Most significantly, papers did not emphasize the large number of casualties which British forces faced, focusing instead on the evacuated soldiers who made it home. Newspapers featured some regional differences, with Southwestern and Northern papers focusing more on the returning troops, likely due to geographical differences. At the conclusion of the Dunkirk Evacuation, the Ministry of Information completed its shift to a new focus on propaganda, censorship, and the idea of a "People's War."²³⁴

In the Spring of 1940, the British war effort encountered setbacks, as German forces conquered Norway and swept through the Low Countries and France. On the Home Front, political turmoil swept the nation as Prime Minister Chamberlain lost political support and resigned under intense domestic pressure.²³⁵ Afterward, the B.E.F. escaped annihilation at Dunkirk in the massive, unprecedented evacuation effort launched by the British government.²³⁶

During these events, the Ministry of Information moved from its early system of voluntary censorship toward a more encompassing system of extensive propaganda and stronger censorship. While earlier in the war, the Ministry managed the flow of information to

²³⁴ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 17, 48, 81, 83, 90-91.

²³⁵ Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography*, 416.

²³⁶ Kelly, *Never Surrender*, 100-102; Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography*, 416; Calder, *The People's War*, 106-110.

newspapers but did little to directly suppress publications, it transitioned toward a pervasive propaganda campaign aimed at the general public, as well as warning newspapers which did not comply with the Ministry's goals. Under the leadership of Churchill's appointed Minister of Information Duff Cooper, the Ministry replaced its previous advisory notices with more legally forceful orders from a Censorship Board, a change which caused widespread criticism among British journalists. Cooper's Ministry also began to censor political opinions as well as strategically sensitive information, suppressing Communist and Fascist publications. The Ministry of Information primarily focused on preventing the British people from losing confidence in the war effort, attempting to encourage Britons to support the war with a heroic presentation of the Dunkirk Evacuation and minimal emphasis on the casualties which British forces suffered in the operation.²³⁷

Early in this period, old political and regional divergences resurfaced in the previously unified British press, as papers portrayed Chamberlain's fall from grace in different ways according to their political leanings, and some regions focused more on events such as the Dunkirk troops' return home. Despite these differences, the British media after the Dunkirk Evacuation displayed more unity than earlier in the war, advancing similar goals in articles on the war effort. The "Dunkirk spirit" which the media presented during Summer 1940 carried over into subsequent newspaper coverage of the war, as papers continued to focus on British heroism, attempting to instill readers with a belief that Britain would prevail in the war.²³⁸

²³⁷ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48, 81-83, 90-91, 123-124; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security."

²³⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 123-124.

CHAPTER THREE: STATE NARRATIVES AND PROPAGANDA OF THE BLITZ (SEPTEMBER 1940 – MAY 1941)

After Dunkirk, Germany attempted to force Britain into submission through heavy bombing raids. The Luftwaffe initially focused this bombing on military targets, particularly British aircraft installations, in the Battle of Britain from July 10 to October 31, 1940. In September 1940, the Germans shifted this bombing strategy toward the civilian population, in an effort to destroy the British people's will to fight. This turbulent period of the war, known as “the Blitz,” lasted from September 7, 1940 to May 11, 1941.²³⁹

During the Blitz, German bombers continuously raided British cities and towns for over eight months. London suffered these raids most often, but many other cities also experienced major bombing.²⁴⁰ These bombing raids “marked a transition to a war at a more intense level, and one that would be deeply experienced by the home front.”²⁴¹ Scholars have divided the Blitz into three phases. The first phase (Sept. 7, 1940 – Nov. 13, 1940) notably featured the heavy bombing of London, with minimal targeting of regional cities. In the second phase (Nov. 14, 1940 – Jan. 19, 1941), the Luftwaffe shifted its strategy and began to target mostly regional cities around Britain, only raiding London a few times. This continued in the third phase (Jan. 20, 1941

²³⁹ According to A.J.P. Taylor, Germany's main focus in the Blitz was to destroy civilian morale, which was also the British government's “main anxiety” during this period. Taylor, *English History*, 501-502. For additional information on the Blitz, see also Calder, *The People's War*, 163-169; Amy Helen Bell, *London War Ours: Diaries and Memoirs of the London Blitz* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

²⁴⁰ British cities bombed during the Blitz included London, Bristol, Southampton, Birmingham, Plymouth, Liverpool, Manchester, Coventry, Portsmouth, and several others. Calder, *The People's War*, 206-214.

²⁴¹ Peter Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 1.

– May 11, 1941), with regional cities bombed frequently and London suffering a small, but devastating, number of raids.²⁴²

Historians have viewed the Blitz in several different ways. Some scholars, particularly during the first wave of Home Front scholarship from the post-war years until the mid-1970s, asserted that the Blitz was a trying time for the British nation which helped to unify its people, increasing popular support and contribution to the war effort.²⁴³ In contrast, more recent historians have argued that this unifying “myth of the Blitz” was a propagandistic construction, masking underlying problems on the Home Front during that period.²⁴⁴

After Dunkirk, the Ministry of Information attempted to utilize the Dunkirk Evacuation as a rallying cry for the nation, using propaganda and censorship to both explain this massive setback in the war effort and inspire the British people. Duff Cooper continued in his role as the Minister of Information until July 1941, after the end of the Blitz. Under Cooper’s leadership, the Ministry continued to control the flow of information to newspapers, warning papers that printed articles critical of the government or war effort and occasionally suppressing newspapers outright. The Ministry sent legal orders to newspapers which printed articles containing material in violation of the censorship policy. At the same time, the Ministry of Information employed a more targeted propaganda campaign in the Home Front designed to energize the British population and persuade everyone to contribute to the war. While these state narratives initially

²⁴² Bell, *London Was Ours*, 56-57; Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*, 28; Calder, *The People's War*, 168-170, 203. The exact periods of the Blitz phases are approximate, as bombing raids were frequent and there was not a clear delineation between phases. The bombing of Coventry on Nov. 14, 1940 is generally viewed as the shift of Luftwaffe strategy toward heavily bombing smaller regional cities.

²⁴³ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*; Taylor, *English History*. For a more recent example of this view, see Bell, *London War Ours*. Bell asserts that “[t]he Blitz encompassed the historical themes that have come to characterize the Second World War in Britain: civilian fortitude under the bombing, and the emergence of a new national unity.” Bell, 4.

²⁴⁴ For the best articulation of this view, see Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, 1-5. See also other second wave Home Front histories, including Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz*; Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality*; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*; Rose, *Which People's War?*; Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*.

emphasized Dunkirk, this propaganda transitioned into an emphasis on the Battle of Britain and then the Blitz, encouraging British stoicism and perseverance in these difficult experiences. Newspapers utilized these state narratives, continuing to “stress cheerful courage and the determined endurance of civilians under fire” during the Blitz.²⁴⁵

This chapter will analyze British newspapers from London, the Southwest, and the North, through the lens of several major themes that persisted during the Blitz. First, British papers often portrayed the destruction which German bombings caused during the Blitz. Articles emphasized the destruction of property, the infliction of casualties, and other damage caused by the raids. Some newspapers focused more on local bombings, minimizing or ignoring German bombings elsewhere in the country. Second, coverage focused particularly on how the British people responded to these bombings. These articles featured stories of personal bravery, the contributions of emergency personnel, and general British stoicism in order to reassure readers and encourage them to contribute to the war. Third, the presentation of class difference and social struggles varied both regionally and politically, as left-wing, Liberal, and Conservative papers each utilized the topic of class in different ways.

The Destruction of Bombing Raids

British newspaper reports often depicted the destruction caused by German bombing raids, highlighting aspects such as the damage to property and buildings as well as the numerous civilian deaths and injuries.²⁴⁶ While this emphasis on the destruction of bombing raids risked

²⁴⁵ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 89-91, 122-128, 134-140; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29; Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World War II”; Gillum, “Censorship During World War II”; Irving and Townend, “Censorship and National Security.”

²⁴⁶ London experienced many bombing raids, by far the most of any British city during the war. The North also suffered several major bombings, including both Liverpool and Manchester. Southwestern cities varied more during the Blitz, as the Germans completely ignored some Southwestern cities like Gloucester but focused intense raids on others such as Bristol. Bell, *London Was Ours*, 56-57; Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*, 1-6,

causing Home Front morale to drop even further, it also advanced several of the Ministry of Information's Home Front goals. Articles on the destruction aimed to instill anti-German sentiment among the British populace, emphasizing Nazi Germany's penchant for brutality and increasing fear of what Britain would be like if Germany won the war. These articles also encouraged public participation in the war, as British citizens read about the extensive damage to their cities and the needed repairs. The Ministry focused much of its propaganda and state narratives on these two goals during the Blitz, and newspapers aided these objectives through articles on the bombings, both due to a voluntary desire to cooperate and appear patriotic as well as the threat of censorship and suppression for noncompliance.²⁴⁷

In these newspaper reports on the bombings, the amount of coverage given to each bombing raid varied in terms of emphasis, presentation, and prominence within that particular issue. Newspapers often covered bombing raids in their immediate vicinity much more heavily, often ignoring or minimizing details of raids further away.²⁴⁸ Papers likely utilized this strategy due to readers' interest in local events, as well as not wanting to overwhelm British readers with too much bombing news during the Blitz, which could lead to greater morale problems.²⁴⁹ Local bombings required coverage and likely could not be ignored, but bombing raids in other areas of the country could be largely minimized when possible. These regional divergences also led to some resentment between different areas of Britain. Scholars have noted that regional cities often resented the increased media attention given to London bombings, in comparison to the miniscule amount of coverage which smaller bombings received. Residents of many British cities felt that they suffered the worst bombings of the Blitz, regardless of statistics, and coverage

28-30, 180; Calder, *The People's War*, 202-227.

²⁴⁷ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89-91, 102-103, 125-134.

²⁴⁸ In her collection of diaries and memoirs of the Blitz, editor Amy Helen Bell noted that bombing raids could be perceived different by British citizens depending on their location during the raids. Bell, *London Was Ours*, 11.

²⁴⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 71.

of German raids often reflected these diverging viewpoints.²⁵⁰

At the beginning of the Blitz, London experienced a major German raid on September 7, 1940, known thereafter as “Black Saturday.” The Luftwaffe rained bombs on the capital city for over 12 hours, followed by a brief lull and several more hours of heavy bombing. Beginning with this Black Saturday raid, German bombers targeted London for 76 out of the next 77 nights, as residents of the capital city suffered from this seemingly endless succession of bombing raids. Initial estimates of the casualties from the Black Saturday raid indicated at least 400 deaths and over 1,300 injured, and papers highlighted these heavy casualties.²⁵¹ London coverage emphasized the raid's unprecedented scale, the “deliberate and wanton” targeting of British civilians, the heavy numbers of British casualties, and the extensive damage to the capital city's historical buildings.²⁵² This focus on Germany's victimization of the British civilian population became a prominent theme in state narratives of the Blitz, both in newspapers and government propaganda, encouraging anti-German sentiment.²⁵³

Southwestern and Northern papers also reported on the Black Saturday raid, but not as extensively as the London papers. In the Southwest, Bristol papers noted the horrific aspects of the raid, while Gloucester papers largely ignored the topic, with articles instead focusing on the

²⁵⁰ Angus Calder noted that “in most parts of the country, the tendency was to pooh-pooh the stories of what was happening on London. If a town had been attacked, however lightly, the locals wanted to know why London had all the publicity.” He also noted that there was a “jealousy with which the inhabitants of each blitzed city insisted on regarding it as the worst hit of all.” Calder, *The People's War*, 202, 216.

²⁵¹ Angus Calder, *The People's War*, 168-169; Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*, 1-2, 28, 95; Bell, *London Was Ours*, 56.

²⁵² Left-wing papers noted the targeting of the civilian population by the Luftwaffe as well as the attack's massive scale and devastating damage. “London's Docks Raided Again Last Night – Fires Light Bombers to City of 400 Dead,” *Daily Herald*, September 9, 1940; “All London's Fires Out But One,” “Second Night in Battle of London,” *Daily Mirror*, September 9, 1940. Conservative papers noted the “intensive, indiscriminate bombing” of civilians resulting in many casualties, and the damage to historical structures. “One of Goering's 'Military Objectives,’” “Devastated Churches – A Crime For Which Goering Must Answer,” *Illustrated London News*, September 14, 1940; “A War Newsletter,” “The Prime Minister in the Bombed Area,” *The Sphere*, September 14, 1940.

²⁵³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89-91, 101.

need for more wardens and anti-air defenses, in preparation for possible future German raids.²⁵⁴

Gloucester's media generally concentrated more on local issues rather than bombing raids, perhaps due to the city's regional location on the nation's periphery.²⁵⁵ Gloucester did not experience any significant bombing raids during the Blitz, giving its media a fairly unique perspective on such German bombing raids compared to the other cities in my research. Northern papers also emphasized the destruction caused in the Black Saturday raid and encouraged anti-German xenophobia, condemning the "terrorism bombing of the Capital."²⁵⁶ Liverpool papers in particular emphasized the raid's heavy casualties and extensive damage to the London docks, possibly due to readers' anxiety about the Liverpool docks as a potential target for future raids.²⁵⁷

This first German raid and the ensuing newspaper coverage provided a blueprint for how the government and media continued to utilize state narratives to encourage Home Front morale during the Blitz. British historian Peter Stansky asserted that after the first raid of the Blitz, the Home Front experienced a certain "acceptance of the situation as well as a determined mobilization in response."²⁵⁸ As the Blitz continued and German bombing raids occurred more frequently, the Home Front became more accustomed to the experience and the British media discourse continued to feature an emphasis on the bombing raids' destruction, encouraging anti-German sentiment and greater public participation in the war effort.

After September 7, 1940, German bombers continued to target London with continuous bombing raids for the next several months, largely ignoring regional cities for the first phase of

²⁵⁴ "Carry On' London After Big Raids," "Britain's Ordeal," *Western Daily Press*, September 9, 1940. For some examples of Gloucester articles focused more on local issues, see "South-West Farmhouse Damaged," "Gloucester Wants More Wardens," *Gloucester Journal*, September 14, 1940.

²⁵⁵ *Gloucester Citizen* issues are not digitally available on the British Newspaper Archive for 1940, so I am utilizing *Gloucester Journal* articles for this section in order to continue providing an example of media viewpoints from each city. The *Gloucester Journal* has a Liberal-leaning viewpoint and a similar area of focus to the *Gloucester Citizen*, contributing similarly to my research.

²⁵⁶ "Hospitals, Tenements Hit in 10-Hour Raid," *Manchester Evening News*, September 9, 1940.

²⁵⁷ "Many Killed in Worst Air Raid of the War," *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 9, 1940.

²⁵⁸ Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*, 1.

the Blitz. London experienced a particularly heavy bombing raid on October 14-15, 1940, prompting newspaper coverage which utilized similar narratives to the Black Saturday coverage.²⁵⁹ London papers again emphasized the raid's destruction both in terms of material damage and civilian casualties, describing it as the city's "worst terror raid of the war" and noting the extensive damage to London particularly St. Paul's Cathedral.²⁶⁰ This emphasis on the damage to historical monuments such as St. Paul's further encouraged the state narrative of the German bombing raids' destruction, inspiring anti-German sentiment among the British populace. In the Southwest, Bristol papers depicted the October 7 raid as a "thunderous barrage" on an unprecedented scale, while Gloucester papers again focused on local issues rather than the raid.²⁶¹ Northern papers also mentioned London's damage from the October raid, but did not focus extensively on this bombing.²⁶² Regional papers during the Blitz often minimized or ignored bombing raids which took place in other areas of the nation, focusing primarily on bombing raids in their local area which held more personal significance to readers.

In the second phase of the Blitz, the German strategy changed as the Luftwaffe mostly targeted bombing raids on regional cities, including ports, industrial centers, and population centers. Scholars have asserted that this shift began with the heavy German raid on Coventry on November 14-15, 1940, which began a series of comparable regional raids on other British cities, termed the "Coventration" of these cities. Although the strategy changed, one of Germany's main

²⁵⁹ Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*, 28; Bell, *London Was Ours*, 56; Stephen Bungay, *The Most Dangerous Enemy: A History of the Battle of Britain* (London: Aurum Press, 2000), 112-113.

²⁶⁰ "London's Worst Terror Raid," *Daily Herald*, October 15, 1940; "Bomb Trail Clean-Up," *Daily Mirror*, October 15, 1940; "The High Altar," picture and caption, *Illustrated London News*, October 19, 1940; "A War Newsletter," *The Sphere*, October 19, 1940.

²⁶¹ "Nazi Night – Bomber's Flame Dive – Mass Raid on London," *Western Daily Press*, October 16, 1940; "The War Day By Day," "Glo'ster War Weapons Week Drive," "Women Help Far Effort – Glo'shire W.I.'s Part," *Gloucester Journal*, October 19, 1940.

²⁶² "250 Over London By Night," *Manchester Evening News*, October 16, 1940; "Many Fire Bombs on London," *Liverpool Daily Post*, October 16, 1940; "Heavy Night Raid Over London," *Liverpool Evening Express*, October 16, 1940; "Heavy Raid on London," *Liverpool Echo*, October 16, 1940.

goals in the Blitz remained the destruction of British Home Front morale, in order to encourage Britain to sue for peace. Targeting additional cities beyond London expanded the scope of German bombing raids and further threatened Home Front morale.²⁶³ Germans still bombed London during the second phase, but the capital city only suffered a few major raids.²⁶⁴ Papers emphasized the destruction caused by German bombing in coverage of several bombing raids during the second phase, particularly the heavy bombing of Bristol on November 24, 1940 and the Manchester Blitz from December 22-24, 1940.²⁶⁵

Bristol experienced its “Coventration” in late November 1940, as a far more intense and targeted Luftwaffe raid than usual rocked the city. Residents of the city later recalled “[f]ire and bombs everywhere” during a hellish experience which was unprecedented for Bristol at that point.²⁶⁶ Newspapers in the Southwest reported extensively on the heavy damage and destruction caused by the Bristol raid, as the raid's geographical proximity gave the incident a greater, more personal impact for Southwestern citizens. Bristol papers called it the city's “heaviest air raid of the war,” emphasizing the unexpected nature of the attack and the government's fears of heavy civilian casualties.²⁶⁷ Papers in London and the North did not focus heavily on the damage caused in the Bristol raid, either ignoring the raid entirely or minimizing its impact.²⁶⁸ The recent raid on Coventry received more attention in these regions, with some articles emphasizing the

²⁶³ Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 722-724; Taylor, *English History*, 502-503; Calder, *The People's War*, 202-203.

²⁶⁴ Bell, *London Was Ours*, 56.

²⁶⁵ Calder, *The People's War*, 206; Helen Carter, “Manchester's Devastating Christmas Blitz,” *BBC News*, December 22, 2015, accessed February 2, 2019, <www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-35094565>.

²⁶⁶ Calder, *The People's War*, 206. Calder utilized a Bristol woman's diary about the raid to provide examples of its effect on the citizens of Bristol.

²⁶⁷ “Big Night Raid on West Town,” *Western Daily Press*, November 25, 1940; “How West Town Carried On – Heroes & Heroines of Raid,” *Western Daily Press*, November 26, 1940. Despite the close geographical proximity, Gloucester papers still did not feature extensive coverage of the November 24 Bristol raid, opting to forego any focus on bombing raids and instead concentrate on local news.

²⁶⁸ Several papers in London and the North noted the Bristol raid, but did not focus on its details and minimized the damage experienced by the residents of Bristol. “Blitz Raids on 4 English Towns,” *Daily Herald*, November 27, 1940; “Town Sang in Six-Hour Blitz,” *Daily Mirror*, November 26, 1940; “Only One Brief Attack,” *Manchester Evening News*, November 26, 1940; “Bristol, Say Nazis,” *Liverpool Echo*, November 25, 1940.

grieving townspeople of Coventry while others debated the morality of the heavy bombing of population centers in modern wars.²⁶⁹

These reports complied with the Ministry of Information's Home Front goals, portraying the Germans as brutal aggressors with no qualms about committing atrocities or destroying cities.²⁷⁰ Newspapers further developed this theme of destruction in articles on the December 22-24, 1940 raid on Manchester. The Northern industrial city experienced its worst raid of the Blitz, suffering thousands of casualties during several days of intense bombing over the holiday season.²⁷¹ Coverage of the Manchester raid's damage and casualties most prominently appeared in local Northern newspapers. Articles from Manchester and Liverpool focused on the raid's loss of life and damage to the city. Some reports discussed the unexpected intensity and brutality of the raid, which shocked residents of the city.²⁷²

After four months of German bombings, the British government became particularly concerned about Home Front morale by this point in the Blitz. Under Minister Cooper's leadership, the Ministry of Information continued to utilize propaganda and censorship to inspire anti-German sentiment and increase support for the war effort among the British populace, encouraging the press to follow these state narratives. By the end of 1940, the Ministry began emphasizing German brutality even more extensively in these state narratives, with less concern for truthfulness and more focus on simply inspiring hatred of Nazi Germany and the German people. This "Anger Campaign" against Germany also influenced newspapers, which continued to endorse anti-German rhetoric with a focus on the brutal destruction left behind by German

²⁶⁹ "Aftermath of the Indiscriminate Bombing of Coventry," November 30, 1940; "A War Newsletter," *The Sphere*, November 30, 1940.

²⁷⁰ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89-91.

²⁷¹ Graham Phythian, *Blitz Britain: Manchester and Sandleford* (Stroud: The History Press, 2015), 12-13.

²⁷² "Manchester Blitz: Many Buildings Fired," *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940; "Manchester's Chin is Still Up," *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940; "Heavy Night Attack – Explosions & Fires – Manchester Gets Blitz," *Liverpool Evening Express*, December 24, 1940.

raids during the Blitz.²⁷³

In the third phase of the Blitz, from mid-January to May 11, 1941, the Luftwaffe continued its strategy of mostly bombing regional cities around Britain, along with several lengthy and destructive raids on London.²⁷⁴ As the Blitz approached its endpoint, two particularly devastating raids occurred during the first two weeks of May 1941, in Liverpool and London. From May 1-7, Liverpool and the Merseyside area endured heavy bombing for a week straight, with large numbers of casualties and building damage.²⁷⁵ Unlike many previous raids, the May Blitz on Liverpool received significant newspaper coverage from all regions, due in part to its unexpected brutality and length, as well as the British government's increased anti-German state narratives and propaganda from the Anger Campaign.²⁷⁶

London papers grimly noted the heavily damaged buildings and high casualties of the Liverpool raid on May 1-7, emphasizing the week-long bombing's destruction and loss of life.²⁷⁷ Southwestern papers focused more on the German bombers' use of the particularly destructive high explosive and incendiary bombs in the raid, a choice by the German bombers which caused even greater damage and casualties.²⁷⁸ Liverpool papers placed heavy emphasis on the destruction caused to the city and the surrounding Merseyside area. Articles focused on the

²⁷³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89-91, 17, 48.

²⁷⁴ Some notable bombings during this phase included a Good Friday raid on Bristol in mid-April 1941, a massive raid on London from April 16-19, 1941, and a final major bombing of Bristol on April 25, 1941.

²⁷⁵ The May Blitz which Liverpool and the Merseyside area suffered was one of the longest and most damaging raids to hit any British city besides London during the Blitz. Public anger and negative morale grew in the Liverpool & Merseyside area during mid-May 1941, as the region struggled to recover from the May Blitz. At one point, the government even restricted letters and communications in the area for some time. Calder, *The People's War*, 213-214.

²⁷⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 89-91.

²⁷⁷ "Many Die in Mersey's Big Raid," *Daily Herald*, May 5, 1941; "Liverpool's Worst Blitz," *Daily Mirror*, May 5, 1941.

²⁷⁸ The *Western Daily Press* highlighted the issue of high explosive and incendiary bombs in the raid. The *Gloucester Citizen* noted that many German planes were shot down in the raid on Liverpool, but did not focus as much on the raid as other papers, as Gloucester papers tended to concentrate more on local issues. "Night Fighters Bay 14," *Western Daily Press*, May 5, 1941; "Nine Night Raiders Down," *Western Daily Press*, May 7, 1941; "Seven Raiders Down Last Night," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 5, 1941; "9 More Night Raiders Destroyed," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 7, 1941.

damaging of many buildings and infrastructure, and noted that the government “feared that the death-toll will be heavy” from the week-long bombing ordeal.²⁷⁹ Other Liverpool reports noted that the German bombers destroyed many shops, hospitals, hotels, schools, places of worship, and other cultural and historical buildings in the region.²⁸⁰ This explicit emphasis on the Germans' destruction of one of Britain's industrial and naval centers, as well as the brutal suffering inflicted on its people, furthered the British government's goals of attempting to inspire anti-German sentiment and encourage popular support of the war effort.

The Blitz concluded with one final, devastating raid on London. Scholars have called May 10, 1940 the “last and worst night of the London blitz.”²⁸¹ This intense raid on the capital city caused over 1,400 deaths and over 1,700 serious injuries, along with the destruction or disruption of infrastructure throughout the metropolis. Massive fires raged throughout London, blocking out the sun on the day after the raid. Some British people feared that London would not survive more of these intense barrages, but the May 10 raid proved to be the last major raid on London, as the Luftwaffe shifted its focus east for the invasion of the Soviet Union in June.²⁸²

Newspaper coverage of the May 10, 1940 raid marked the culmination of the state narratives and strategies which the media and government used throughout the Blitz to emphasize the destruction inflicted on British citizens and cities. Newspapers throughout the nation expressed outrage and despair over this terrible raid on the capital, with London

²⁷⁹ “L'Pool Raider Down,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 2, 1941; “Part of Nazi 'Plane Found – After Raid on Merseyside,” “Heavy Merseyside Raid – Gallant Defence Work,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 3, 1941; “Seven More Night Raiders Brought Down,” “How Citizens Faced German Air Attack,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 5, 1941.

²⁸⁰ “Severe Night Raid on Merseyside,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 3, 1941; “Mass Night Raid on Merseyside,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 5, 1941.

²⁸¹ Calder, *The People's War*, 214.

²⁸² Germany ultimately abandoned its bombing of Britain for several reasons. Scholars such as Angus Calder have asserted that the intense German bombing was simply unable to achieve its goals of destroying British morale. German bombers caused extensive damage to cities and infrastructure, but the Luftwaffe was unable to destroy Britain's will to fight. Calder, *The People's War*, 214, 219-220.

publications in particular mourning the extensive casualties and damage to the city.²⁸³ London coverage described the May 10 bombing as “the most wanton raid of the war,” noting the extensive fires raging across London, which numbered over 2,000 at the height of the capital's burning.²⁸⁴ Papers in the Southwest and North also noted this destruction, emphasizing the high number of casualties, fire, and damage to buildings, as well as extolling London's anti-air defenses which shot down several Nazi bombers in the raid.²⁸⁵

The press generally aided the Ministry of Information's state narrative of anti-German sentiment throughout the Blitz, with reports on the extensive damage and casualties inflicted on Britain by German raids. These articles attempted to both instill resentment among British readers towards Germans and to inspire the Home Front to support the war effort. Newspapers generally focused particularly on raids in their local region, while occasionally minimizing or ignoring raids in other areas. The Ministry of Information used official propaganda to aid these goals, promoting the Anger Campaign and other anti-German state literature. The Ministry also encouraged newspapers to support these Home Front goals through soft censorship, controlling the flow of information, suppressing publications critical of the war effort, and generally inspiring papers to remain supportive of the war and the official state narratives. In utilizing these methods, the Ministry continued to exercise much greater control over the British press

²⁸³ Some London papers focused especially on the extensive damage to government and historical buildings, especially the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, seen as symbols of the British nation. See “Revenge Raiders Blitz House & Commons,” “The War This Morning,” *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1941; “Abbey, Houses of Parliament Were Hit,” “M.P.s' Hall is a Ruin,” *Daily Mirror*, May 12, 1941; “Westminster Abbey Bombed,” “Time Marches On: Big Ben Still Chimes Above the Ruined Chamber,” “Aryan Culture': Westminster Abbey, Hall and School Bombed,” “The Prime Minister Inspecting the Ruined House of Commons,” *Illustrated London News*, May 17, 1941; “The Great Raid of May 10-11: The Destruction Wrought in Westminster,” *The Sphere*, May 17, 1941.

²⁸⁴ “Revenge Raiders Blitz House & Commons,” *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1941. Angus Calder noted that the May 10 raid caused over 2,200 fires in London. Calder, *The People's War*, 214.

²⁸⁵ “Heavy Toll of London Night Raiders – 33 Nazi Bombers Destroyed,” *Western Daily Press*, May 12, 1941; “8 More Added to May Bay of Raiders – Nazis Lose 132 in 11 Nights,” “London's Fire-Watch Failure,” *Gloucester Citizen*, May 12, 1941; “Undaunted London – At Work Again in the Debris,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 12, 1941; “33 Raiders Down in a Night,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 12, 1941.

compared to earlier in the war. Minister of Information Duff Cooper oversaw this increased media control during the Blitz, gathering statistics and data on Home Front morale in order to improve the Ministry's propaganda and censorship efforts.²⁸⁶

The Public Response to Bombing Raids

While the destruction of cities and the civilian population remained a prominent theme in state narratives of the Blitz, the Ministry of Information also focused on the public response to bombing raids. Concerned about public morale during German raids, the Ministry concentrated much of its efforts on reassuring the Home Front. The government heavily focused on themes of resilience and perseverance, using slogans such as "We can take it!" to inspire British citizens to endure the relentless bombing attacks.²⁸⁷ Encouraged by the government, the press also focused on this state narrative of public response to bombing raids, expressing this theme in several ways. Papers emphasized the brave response of emergency personnel after raids, reassuring readers that these emergency workers would help them. Personal acts of bravery and heroism also became a focus of newspapers during the Blitz, highlighting ordinary citizens' contribution to surviving the bombing attacks. Coverage also weaved general themes of British stoicism into articles on the bombings, using inspirational language and appealing to national pride.

At the start of the Blitz, the British government created several defense and emergency organizations in anticipation of German bombing raids. These groups included the Committee of Imperial Defence, the Local Defence Volunteers, the Auxiliary Ambulance Service, and the Auxiliary Fire Service. The general public initially viewed the Ambulance and Fire Services as "service-dodgers," but these emergency workers eventually became admired as national heroes

²⁸⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-17, 48, 71-72, 81, 89-91; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II"; Gillum, "Censorship During World War II."

²⁸⁷ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 125-129; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66-68, 71-72.

during the Blitz.²⁸⁸ State propaganda focused on the bravery and selflessness of these emergency service personnel, extolling their virtues in films such as *London Can Take It!* and *Fires Were Started*.²⁸⁹ These emergency organizations mostly recruited civilian volunteers, so this focus on emergency workers in state propaganda and the press instilled regular British citizens with feelings of direct participation in the war effort.²⁹⁰

Newspapers followed this state narrative of emergency workers' heroism and contribution, helping to perpetuate it through numerous articles on emergency personnel response to bombing raids during the Blitz. The Ministry of Information's control over information flow also worked to emphasize the presence of emergency personnel. Pictures of British cities in the aftermath of German bombings had to pass through an approval process before being released to the public in newspapers. Many of the photographs approved for print contained police officers and other emergency personnel standing near the wreckage and ruined buildings left by the bombings, as the Ministry sought to reassure the Home Front that these emergency workers would take care of them.²⁹¹ In the first phase of the Blitz, newspapers emphasized the importance of emergency personnel in several articles on the Black Saturday raid and the October 14-15, 1940 raid on London. These articles proclaimed that emergency workers aided injured civilians, cleared away wreckage and began repairing damaged buildings and infrastructure in the wake of the German raids.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66-71; Calder, *The People's War*, 207-209.

²⁸⁹ *London Can Take It!* released in 1940, while *Fires Were Started* released in 1943, after the Blitz was already over. Emergency personnel remained a focus of official propaganda for much of the war's duration. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 71; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 125-129; Chapman, *The British at War*, 161-178.

²⁹⁰ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 71.

²⁹¹ "Censorship and Propaganda in WW2," My Learning," accessed November 2, 2019, <<https://www.mylearning.org/stories/censorship-and-propaganda-in-ww2/483?>>; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66-71; Calder, *The People's War*, 207-209.

²⁹² "All London's Fires Out But One," "Second Night in Battle of London," *Daily Mirror*, September 9, 1940; "Bomb Trail Clean-Up," *Daily Mirror*, October 15, 1940; "Many Fire Bombs on London," *Liverpool Daily Post*, October 16, 1940.

This focus on emergency workers increased as the Blitz continued. In the second phase, papers from London and Manchester emphasized the vital importance of emergency workers' contribution in the wake of the December 22-24, 1940 bombing of Manchester. Several articles focused on the Auxiliary Fire Service workers in particular, noting that the firemen “worked heroically hour after hour” to get the numerous fires under control after the German raid.²⁹³ Other articles focused more on emergency workers who aided the homeless and injured civilians, and the volunteers who began helping with the necessary repairs.²⁹⁴ These articles encouraged the people of the Home Front to look up to emergency workers, assuaging their anxieties about the German bombings and reassuring citizens that someone would take care of them during these turbulent events.

As the Blitz entered its final phase and German bombings increased in severity, newspapers and state propaganda continued to emphasize the contributions of emergency workers. In the wake of the horrific week-long May Blitz on Liverpool and the Merseyside area from May 1-7, 1941, several newspaper articles included heroic portrayals of firemen and other emergency personnel, noting their vital importance in the area's recovery from the German bombing.²⁹⁵ The final raid on London, on May 10, 1941, featured the courageous work of many firemen and rescue workers, cleaning up and repairing the unprecedented amount of damage left behind by the German bombers. This contribution led to several positive portrayals of these workers in the press. Papers especially focused on London's firemen, as they attempted to

²⁹³ “Manchester Blitz: Many Buildings Fired,” *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940; “Buildings Without Spotters in Blitzed City,” *Daily Herald*, December 24, 1940.

²⁹⁴ “Manchester Gets Its First Big Bombing,” *Daily Mirror*, December 24, 1940; “Manchester's Chin is Still Up,” *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940; “Get on the Roof,” *Manchester Evening News*, December 24, 1940; “Saturday Night Raid – Heroic Work By the Defence Services,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, December 23, 1940.

²⁹⁵ “Many Die in Mersey's Big Raid,” *Daily Herald*, May 5, 1941; “Liverpool's Worst Blitz,” *Daily Mirror*, May 5, 1941; “Heavy Merseyside Raid – Gallant Defence Work,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 3, 1941; “How Citizens Faced German Air Attack,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 5, 1941.

extinguish the multitude of fires which ravaged the city, including over 2,000 fires at the height of the raid's impact. London reports even asserted that the struggle between the heroic firefighters and the blaze impacted Londoners more than the struggle between the city's air defenses and German bombers.²⁹⁶ These heroic descriptions of emergency workers often recurred in British newspaper coverage during the Blitz, as papers helped to propagate the state narrative of emergency workers' "courage and sacrifice" in aiding the British people.²⁹⁷

Personalized stories of bravery, courage, and survival became another important facet of British reporting on the Blitz, including both workers and regular civilians. This aided the British government's goals of encouraging widespread support and participation in the war effort, turning the conflict into a "People's War."²⁹⁸ For example, papers noted that during the Manchester bombing of December 22-24, 1940, twenty people became trapped in a collapsed shelter. Some wardens arrived to help, and they ultimately broke down a nearby wall to reach the trapped civilians, saving them. During the same raid, an article also described a Manchester nurse who stayed in the local hospital throughout the duration of the bombing raid, in order to care for a six-year old deaf & dumb patient who could not be moved.²⁹⁹ After the May 1-7 raid on Liverpool, several local papers also printed more personalized articles about how Liverpool residents managed to survive the raid, including stories of people narrowly escaping bombs,

²⁹⁶ For example, see "These Heroes Fought the Battle of London," *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1941; "Abbey, Houses of Parliament Were Hit," *Daily Mirror*, May 12, 1941; "Revenge Raiders Blitz House & Commons," *Daily Herald*, May 12, 1941; "Undaunted London – At Work Again in the Debris," *Liverpool Echo*, May 12, 1941. Angus Calder noted that over 2,200 fires ravaged London during the May 10 raid. Calder, *The People's War*, 214. Some newspaper articles asserted that fires caused most of the damage to London in this attack, noting that additional fire-watch personnel were needed. "London's Fire-Watch Failure," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 12, 1941.

²⁹⁷ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 71.

²⁹⁸ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 81-83; Calder, *The People's War*, 17-18.

²⁹⁹ The *Manchester Evening News* detailed both incidents, focusing particularly on acts of heroism and bravery during the German raid on Manchester. "Manchester Blitz: Many Buildings Fired," *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940.

hiding under wreckage and scrambling for crowded air raid shelters.³⁰⁰ Many of these personalized stories appeared in the press during this period, describing regular citizens and workers who managed to survive the bombs or help others during the raids. Through these stories, papers sought to encourage readers to contribute to the war effort, attempting to inspire them to believe that regular people could endure these turbulent situations, as well as advancing the Ministry of Information's goals and further propagating state narratives of the Blitz.³⁰¹

While these articles on emergency personnel and personalized stories aided the British government's efforts at improving Home Front morale, the propaganda campaign from the start of the war included a significant emphasis on British stoicism and heroism. This aspect of state propaganda appealed to traits of the British national character, encouraging citizens of the Home Front to believe in their own strength and perseverance.³⁰² Newspapers emphasized this British stoicism in many articles on German bombings, subtly hinting at it in some reports, while overtly appealing for national strength in other articles.

The press began to utilize state propaganda slogans such as “We can take it!” and “Carry on.”³⁰³ After the Black Saturday raid, London papers noted that East Londoners continued “carrying on” with high spirits despite the extensive damage to the city.³⁰⁴ Further reports on this raid emphasized the unbroken morale of London residents, asserting that business continued as usual.³⁰⁵ These themes of British perseverance continued after the October 14-15, 1940 raid on London, with articles asserting that British people would stoically endure any struggle against

³⁰⁰ “How Citizens Faced German Air Attack,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, May 5, 1941; “Crowded Shelter Drama in Big Mersey Raid,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 3, 1941.

³⁰¹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66-72, 81-83.

³⁰² Welch, *Persuading the People*, 48, 71, 81-83.

³⁰³ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 71-72.

³⁰⁴ “London's Docks Raided Again Last Night – Fires Light Bombers to City of 400 Dead,” *Daily Herald*, September 9, 1940; “All London's Fires Out But One,” *Daily Mirror*, September 9, 1940.

³⁰⁵ “Hospitals, Tenements Hit in 10-Hour Raid,” *Manchester Evening News*, September 9, 1940; “British Courage in Raids,” *Liverpool Evening Express*, September 9, 1940.

Germany, and that Germany's efforts would not force the nation to capitulate.³⁰⁶

After the November 24, 1940 raid on Bristol, British papers proclaimed that Bristol residents were coming together and carrying on despite their hardships. Articles asserted that citizens of Bristol felt that “[i]f Coventry and London can take it, we can.”³⁰⁷ The December 22-24, 1940 raid on Manchester provoked appeals to British stoicism from papers, with assertions that Manchester residents continued to work with a “grim determination,” making necessary repairs and keeping their “chin up to-day.”³⁰⁸ These articles on Bristol and Manchester residents presented each city's morale as a type of competition, with each city's residents competing against each other to see who could retain the highest morale and continue with their daily lives despite the bombings. The British government desired precisely this response from the Home Front, as the Ministry of Information became increasingly concerned during the Blitz about the dangers to the public morale.³⁰⁹ The press continued to emphasize these ideals through the final raid of the Blitz, the May 10, 1941 bombing of London. Articles after that final raid portrayed Londoners as stoic, resilient, and eager to get back to work and carry on with their lives.³¹⁰

These portrayals of British people did not necessarily reflect the reality of Home Front citizens during the Blitz, but rather the main goals of the British government in the war effort – the encouragement of morale among the general public, and a refusal to capitulate in the face of seemingly endless bombing raids. Propaganda and state-encouraged narratives among newspapers assisted these goals, as articles focused on emergency workers, personalized stories of courage, and general ideals of British stoicism. These articles attempted to boost morale

³⁰⁶ “The High Altar,” picture and caption, *Illustrated London News*, October 19, 1940; “A War Newsletter,” *The Sphere*, October 19, 1940.

³⁰⁷ “How West Town Carried On – Heroes & Heroines of Raid,” *Western Daily Press*, November 26, 1940; “Bristol, Say Nazis,” *Liverpool Echo*, November 25, 1940.

³⁰⁸ “Manchester's Chin is Still Up,” *Manchester Evening News*, December 23, 1940.

³⁰⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 66.

³¹⁰ “Undaunted London – At Work Again in the Debris,” *Liverpool Echo*, May 12, 1941.

among the British people until the threat of the Blitz subsided after May 1941.³¹¹

Class Conflict During the Blitz

As the British government implemented propaganda, censorship and state narratives in order to improve the morale of the general public, the issue of class relations presented a particularly concerning aspect of Home Front society. While the Ministry of Information promoted ideals of a unified Home Front which supported the war effort, class differences and social antagonism continued to cause divisions among the general populace.³¹² The press expressed these class divisions in articles throughout the Blitz, as political divergences affected each paper's methods of discussing these class issues. Left-wing papers portrayed class divergences more frequently, sympathizing with working-class British people and the increasing problem of homelessness caused by German raids. Conservative papers attempted to promote state narratives of moving beyond class divisions and unifying the Home Front, while Liberal papers examined these issues from a more balanced perspective.

In Britain, a person's class and status significantly affected their experience of German bombings during the Blitz. Recent historians have noted that working-class Britons suffered the most from these German raids.³¹³ In London, working-class areas such as the East End and the docklands were among the hardest-hit neighborhoods during the Blitz. These areas contained lower quality buildings, more easily destroyed and difficult to repair, while the shelters in these neighborhoods experienced more over-crowding and contained less provisions than shelters in

³¹¹ Angus Calder asserted that German bombings could not have broken the British "will to fight" the war, as British citizens adapted particularly well to the situation and retained a general feeling that they could withstand the punishment of German raids. David Welch noted that British propaganda and press played a particularly important role in morale on the Home Front, with the government's goals of encouraging the British people to come together in support of the war effort. Calder, *The People's War*, 219-220. Welch, *Persuading the People*, 48, 66-72, 81-83.

³¹² Rose, *Which People's War?*, 29.

³¹³ Calder, *The People's War*, 164-165, 178-180, 188-189; Bell, *London Was Ours*, 61-69.

more upscale London areas.³¹⁴ These problems also led to increased homelessness during the Blitz, which disproportionately affected working-class and lower class people.³¹⁵ In contrast, rich British people could more easily escape the bombings by moving to the countryside, or distracting themselves with luxuries such as dining out at expensive restaurants.³¹⁶ These class differences all combined to create powerful social conflicts during this period, with various portrayals of these class issues appearing in coverage of the Blitz.

Left-leaning newspapers attempted to raise awareness of class issues through articles on German bombings and the ensuing aftermath of these raids. After the initial bombing of London, one left-wing paper noted that most of the German bombs “fell among the congested streets of dockland, on the homes of the poor.”³¹⁷ Leftist papers praised the strong working-class spirit among the people of the East End and docklands, emphasizing that even the destitute residents of the area retained high morale, insisting that they would make it through the turbulent experiences.³¹⁸ Left-wing papers also noted the greater impact of the German bombings on poor British children. These papers asserted that, in the aftermath of Bristol's heavy bombing in November 1940, many children in the city would not be getting presents for Christmas that year, as some shops were damaged and others had raised prices.³¹⁹ Leftist coverage also continued to focus on the issue of homelessness, detailing the problems which these Blitz bombings caused for working-class Britons in particular, as many of them lost their homes.³²⁰

³¹⁴ Bell, *London Was Ours*, 61-67; Calder, *The People's War*, 164-165, 188.

³¹⁵ According to Calder, the British government was not well-prepared this homeless problem during the Blitz. Poor citizens in British cities sometimes had difficulties in obtaining food, water, and cooking supplies. The government used “rest centre” facilities to provide some aid for them. Calder, *The People's War*, 188-190.

³¹⁶ Calder, *The People's War*, 40, 47, 178-179; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 41-57.

³¹⁷ “London's Dock: Raided Again Last Night,” *Daily Herald*, September 9, 1940.

³¹⁸ Ritchie Calder, “Joked as They Left Their Shattered Homes,” *Daily Herald*, September 9, 1941; “All London's Fires Out But One,” *Daily Mirror*, September 9, 1940.

³¹⁹ “Children of Blitzed Bristol Will Get Few Toys,” *Daily Herald*, December 24, 1940.

³²⁰ “Manchester Gets Its First Big Bombing,” *Daily Mirror*, December 24, 1940; “Many Die in Mersey's Big Raid,” *Daily Herald*, May 5, 1941.

In contrast to left-wing papers, Conservative newspapers did not regularly address class issues in coverage of the Blitz. In some cases, Conservative publications even attempted to minimize the importance of class problems, instead over-emphasizing the unity and togetherness of British people in the wake of the Luftwaffe bombings. Conservative articles described the Black Saturday bombing of London as indiscriminate, arguing that the raid affected London's unfortunate civilians as a whole.³²¹ Further articles called for national unity, minimizing the damage to working-class Britons' property: "Our whole sympathy in this tragedy centres on the human victims, the innocent victims. Property means nothing at all. Lost possessions do not count. The nation is proud to share every loss."³²² Yet it seems convenient for a Conservative paper targeted at wealthy readers to proclaim lost property and possessions as inconsequential. The people suffering that damage included many working-class Londoners who could not afford to replace their homes or possessions, or even buy Christmas presents.³²³

Conservative calls for unity continued as the Blitz proceeded, and these papers mostly avoided any focus on the homeless problem when discussing further German raids.³²⁴ After the Luftwaffe's May 10, 1941 raid on London at the conclusion of the Blitz, Conservative papers asserted that Germany now threatened "the English-speaking world in general" with its brutality and despotism.³²⁵ Conservative appeals to patriotic unity reached their crescendo with this article, as Conservatives now sought to present the war as a struggle between the English-

³²¹ "One of Goering's 'Military Objectives,'" *Illustrated London News*, September 14, 1940; "Heavy Night Raid Over London," *Liverpool Evening Express*, October 16, 1940.

³²² "A War Newsletter," *The Sphere*, September 14, 1940.

³²³ As discussed previously, these problems were largely experienced by working-class people of Britain, as detailed in left wing papers. See "Children of Blitzed Bristol Will Get Few Toys," *Daily Herald*, December 24, 1940; "Manchester Gets Its First Big Bombing," *Daily Mirror*, December 24, 1940; "Many Die in Mersey's Big Raid," *Daily Herald*, May 5, 1941.

³²⁴ *The Sphere* asserted that English people have "accepted" the mass bombing of Coventry, ignoring the issue of homelessness and property damage for lower classes after the bombing. "A War Newsletter," November 30, 1940. See also "Mr. Winston Churchill at Bristol University," *The Sphere*, April 19, 1941. That article featured calls for unity and promise of revenge on Germany for the Bristol raid.

³²⁵ "Westminster Abbey Bombed," *Illustrated London News*, May 17, 1941.

speaking world and its historical foundations against the barbarism of the fascist Axis powers, failing to address any class differences in this portrayal.

As with many political issues, the perspective of Liberal-leaning papers fell in between left-wing and Conservative papers on the issue of class struggle. Liberal papers acknowledged that the Blitz disproportionately affected the poor and working class residents of British cities, but failed to focus on this problem or advocate any concrete solutions for it.³²⁶ Some Liberal-leaning papers noted the growing problem of homelessness as the Blitz continued, but remained optimistic about this problem rather than focusing on the plight of the homeless as in left-wing articles.³²⁷ Generally, articles from Liberal papers indicated that those publications preferred to remain largely neutral regarding the issue of class struggle during the war, noting some of the problems facing poor and working-class Britons but declining to advocate solutions for them.

Class struggles posed a challenge to the British government and media's attempts at influencing Home Front morale during the Blitz. These class problems threatened to undermine the prevailing state narratives of the Blitz, which asserted that British society should unify behind the war effort. This danger to Home Front unity caused the Ministry of Information great concern regarding any “expressions of 'class feeling'” during the Blitz, leading to propaganda

³²⁶ The *Western Daily Press* noted that “most of the bombs fell among the poor – in congested working-class districts.” “‘Carry On’ London After Big Raids,” *Western Daily Press*, September 9, 1940. The *Liverpool Daily Post* also noted that the London docks were hit hardest in the September 7 bombing, which contained many working-class Londoners. “Many Killed in Worst Air Raid of the War,” *Liverpool Daily Post*, September 9, 1940. The *Western Daily Press* asserted that kids in badly bombed areas of Bristol were having a tough time at Christmas, and would receive some holiday presents from the government and charities. “Christmas Parties for Bristol Children – Treats in Worst Bombed Areas,” *Western Daily Press*, December 23, 1940. After the April 11, 1941 Bristol bombing, the *Western Daily Press* asserted that working-class districts received the brunt of the German raid. “Premier Tours Badly Bombed Areas,” *Western Daily Press*, April 14, 1941.

³²⁷ The *Gloucester Journal* attempted to help readers who had recently become homeless, featuring a message directing readers to a nearby rest center or police station. “What Do I Do... If My Home is Made Uninhabitable By a Bomb?,” *Gloucester Journal*, October 19, 1940. The *Liverpool Echo* noted that some Manchester citizens became homeless after the Manchester Blitz, but the article asserted that the people were generally still “smiling and cheerful,” and remaining brave and optimistic about their situation. “Lancashire Raid – Much Damage in One Town,” *Liverpool Echo*, December 24, 1940.

and state material which emphasized British unity over any class sentiment.³²⁸ In this instance, the largely unified British press did not entirely advance the government's goals, as both left-wing and Liberal papers included portrayals of class struggle and sympathy for the poor and working-class residents of British cities. These newspaper articles showed that despite the large amount of unity in the post-Dunkirk British press, old political biases also caused divergences among the media discourse during the Blitz. These class struggles continued after the war, as British people expected to be rewarded for their sacrifices and contribution to the war effort, desiring a restructured British society with more support for poor and working-class residents. These people “wanted to believe that after the war Britain would be a better place... a country worth fighting for,” and their expectations did not fully materialize after the war.³²⁹

During the Blitz, British newspapers generally focused on several state narratives in reports on German bombings. Publications highlighted the destruction which German raids caused, examining both the extensive civilian casualties as well as the damage to buildings and infrastructure. This focus on destruction helped advance the Ministry of Information's goals for on the Home Front, leading the British people to resent the Germans who attacked their cities and killed their compatriots. Papers also reported on the civilian response to bombings, noting examples of emergency personnel's contributions, personal stories of courage, and British resilience. These articles further advanced the government's goals, by inspiring the people of the Home Front to contribute to the war effort. Such themes aimed to keep up the Home Front morale more generally, attempting to manage the fears of British citizens about German raids.³³⁰

³²⁸ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 34.

³²⁹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 214; Calder, *The People's War*, 17-18; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29, 31-34.

³³⁰ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-17, 48, 66-72, 81-83, 89-91; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Calder, *The People's War*, 18, 219-220; Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World

Political differences remained among the British media, as newspapers portrayed class differences and social struggle in different ways. These class problems affected British morale on the Home Front, threatening the government's goals of Home Front unity and support for the war. While most British newspapers displayed a unified viewpoint and advanced many state narratives during the Blitz, this differing portrayal of class issues encompassed one instance where papers politically differed. Despite this variation, the British media discourse generally continued to advance state narratives and comply with the Ministry of Information's goals. The Ministry directed this media discourse through its increased control over the press under Minister Cooper's leadership.³³¹

War II"; Gillum, "Censorship During World War II."

³³¹ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-17, 48, 66-72, 81-83, 89-91, 214; Calder, *The People's War*, 17-18; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29, 31-34; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164.

CONCLUSION

The British government heavily focused on the importance of Home Front morale during World War II, viewing the “connection between propaganda and censorship” as one of the keys to retaining high morale among the general public.³³² The Ministry of Information advanced these goals through the propagation of state narratives, censoring or warning publications, and encouraging the media to follow these narratives. British newspapers utilized many of the Ministry's narratives in articles during the first two years of the war, which my research primarily focuses on. Coverage throughout this period displayed a significant amount of unity and willingness to advance the British government's goals, both due to increasing censorship as the war advanced as well as a desire to appear patriotic and supportive of the war effort. Despite this unity, old political and regional divergences reemerged, as newspapers disagreed about which topics to most prominently focus on, and how to portray issues such as Chamberlain's political fall from grace or the class struggles during the Blitz. Nevertheless, these differences did not fracture the British media discourse during the war, as newspapers remained largely unified in the presentation of wartime events, even early in the war.³³³

At the start of the war in September 1939, the British government established the Ministry of Information with the goal of managing morale on the Home Front, with Minister of Information Sir John Reith at its head. The Ministry initially encountered many problems under

³³² Welch, *Persuading the People*, 13.

³³³ Calder, *The People's War*, 17-18; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48, 66-72, 81-83, 90-91; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29, 31-34; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Goldman, “Press Freedom in Britain During World War II”; Gillum, “Censorship During World War II.”

Reith's leadership, as it employed a system of voluntary censorship and controlling the flow of information, without a strong overall plan of managing Home Front publications or propaganda. The Ministry's advisory noticed to newspapers in violation of the censorship guidelines also lacked strong legal authority during this early period. Despite this lack of early censorship, newspapers during the first five months of the conflict mostly displayed unity in their presentation of wartime events, with some regional variation. Patriotic sentiment and support for the war effort featured prominently in these early articles on the declaration of war. Papers differed according to region regarding the nation's preparations for war, as certain areas' publications focused more on defensive preparations, rationing, blackouts, or anti-German sentiment. These regional divergences revealed the different concerns of each British region, as well as Home Front anxieties about the war. Articles on the domestic evacuation of children also featured a unified message advancing the government's goals of a positive and optimistic portrayal of the operation, while focusing more on either the separation from parents or the assimilating children depending on the region of the paper's publication. These articles minimized many problems with the operation or blamed the evacuated children for them, and generally attempted to assuage the anxieties of British citizens regarding the population transfer.³³⁴

As the Phoney War period came to an end in May 1940, the Ministry of Information increased its usage of propaganda and censorship in order to further improve morale on the Home Front, largely as a response to the challenges posed by the Dunkirk Evacuation. The Ministry encouraged state narratives of a People's War, supported by a united British Home Front, and suppressed or warned publications which were critical of the war effort. Prime Minister Chamberlain's leadership failures and subsequent political fall from grace received

³³⁴ Mackay, *The Test of War*, 122; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 2-4, 14; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 46; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 157-160; Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security."

extensive coverage in British newspapers, with political divergences between left-wing, Liberal, and Conservative papers on how to portray these failures. Despite this political divergence, British papers remained unified and supportive of the war effort. From the Dunkirk Evacuation onward, the Ministry of Information utilized more extensive censorship and propaganda, reacting to the threat of Home Front collapse in the wake of massive setbacks in the British war effort. Prime Minister Churchill appointed Duff Cooper as the new Minister of Information, and the Ministry under his leadership began to exercise greater control over the British press. The previous advisory notices became legally enforced orders, and the Ministry began to suppress political opinions such as Communist or Fascist leanings in addition to strategically sensitive information. The press followed the government's narrative of a successful Dunkirk Evacuation, utilizing inspiring portrayals of the British troops returning home in order to encourage morale on the Home Front and ignoring the tens of thousands of casualties which British forces suffered in the operation. By June 1940, the British media discourse fully united to support the war effort, as the Ministry of Information's efforts at encouraging Home Front morale improved.³³⁵

Germany began heavily bombing British cities during the Blitz, as the British government grew more concerned about the potential for negative morale on the Home Front. Under Minister Cooper's direction, the Ministry of Information continued to utilize its increased control over the press, and newspapers fell into line with the Ministry's goals. The Ministry consistently advanced several state narratives of the Blitz in order to combat negative morale, emphasizing unity, xenophobia, and stoicism. Newspapers propagated these narratives in articles on Blitz bombings, focusing on the destruction of British cities and the response of civilians to the bombings. The focus on destruction and casualties encouraged anti-German sentiment on the

³³⁵ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48, 81-83, 90-91, 123-124; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security."

Home Front, inspiring British citizens to unite in their resentment of Germany. In addition, newspapers' focus on civilian response emphasized the role of emergency workers and regular citizens, while generally advancing the government's narrative of uniting the Home Front. British papers still displayed some political divergences during the Blitz, however, as left-wing, Liberal, and Conservative papers featured different portrayals of class struggles and their importance to the Home Front during this period.³³⁶

This unity of the media discourse directly flowed from the Ministry of Information's propaganda and censorship efforts on the Home Front. As the war progressed, the Ministry increasingly utilized state-sponsored propaganda, information control, warning of newspapers, and occasionally outright suppression of publications in order to advance its goals of increasing Home Front morale. As British historian Angus Calder asserted in *The People's War*, the morale of the Home Front remained one of the key components to British success in the war.³³⁷

The historiography of the British Home Front generally progressed from first wave histories (from 1945 to the mid-1970s) which focused mostly on the unity of the Home Front and minimized negative aspects of wartime society, towards second wave histories (from the mid-1970s to present) which viewed the wartime years more critically, emphasizing problems on the Home Front such as civil unrest and objections to the war.³³⁸ Many of these second wave historians have largely viewed the early months of the war critically, noting the lack of unity on

³³⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, 14-17, 48, 66-72, 81-83, 89-91, 214; Calder, *The People's War*, 17-18, 219-220; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29, 31-34; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II"; Gillum, "Censorship During World War II"; Irving and Townend, "Censorship and National Security."

³³⁷ Calder, *The People's War*, 18; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48, 66-72, 81-83, 89-91; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, 160-164; Goldman, "Press Freedom in Britain During World War II"; Gillum, "Censorship During World War II."

³³⁸ First wave histories included Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy: History of the Second World War*; Taylor, *English History*; Calder, *The People's War*; Pelling, *Britain and the Second World War*; Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life during the Second World War*. Some examples of second wave histories included Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz*; Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*; Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality*; Rose, *Which People's War?*; Stansky, *The First Day of the Blitz*; Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*; Welch, *Persuading the People*; Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*.

the Home Front and pervasive social problems among British society and asserting that Britain only later became unified in support of the war, after events such as the Dunkirk Evacuation.³³⁹

My research adds a new element to these second wave histories, as my examination of British newspapers from 1939-1941 indicates that this unity existed on the British Home Front from the beginning of the war. This unified media discourse increased as the Ministry of Information furthered its propaganda and censorship after the Dunkirk Evacuation, but it already existed from the declaration of war onwards. In addition, the regional and political differences among the newspapers in my research indicate that this unity persisted in British media discourse despite many differing viewpoints on wartime issues.

The specific focus of my research on these three British regions, including papers from all three major political leanings in Britain, also allowed for a greater comparison between the similarities and differences between these regional and political viewpoints. This comparison highlights the different circumstances which newspapers, as well as British citizens, found themselves from 1939-1941, which affected the viewpoints expressed in these publications. Although each of these newspapers featured some regional and political variation, each paper contributed to the Ministry of Information's goals on the Home Front. During these first two years of the war, the British government primarily concentrated on the management of Home Front morale, and newspapers played a critical role in achieving that goal.³⁴⁰

This examination also presents numerous possibilities for additional research. If I continued researching the British media discourse during World War II, I would analyze additional newspaper archives to obtain different political and regional viewpoints on these

³³⁹ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 1-15, 29-31; Mackay, *The Test of War*, 7, 32; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 40-41; Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz*, 17-50.

³⁴⁰ Calder, *The People's War*, 18; Welch, *Persuading the People*, 12-17, 48, 66, 90-91; Rose, *Which People's War?*, 14, 29.

events, possibly visiting the local newspaper archives at their places of publication in England. Letters to the editor as well as the notes, diaries and private accounts of British journalists working at these papers would also allow for further exploration of this topic. In addition to these supplemental sources, I would also examine the press in other regions in Britain, comparing newspapers in these regions and analyzing their coverage of key events for similarities and divergences. This could help expand my analysis of the British media discourse during World War II and lead to further insights on the regional and political variation between publications in different areas of the nation.

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