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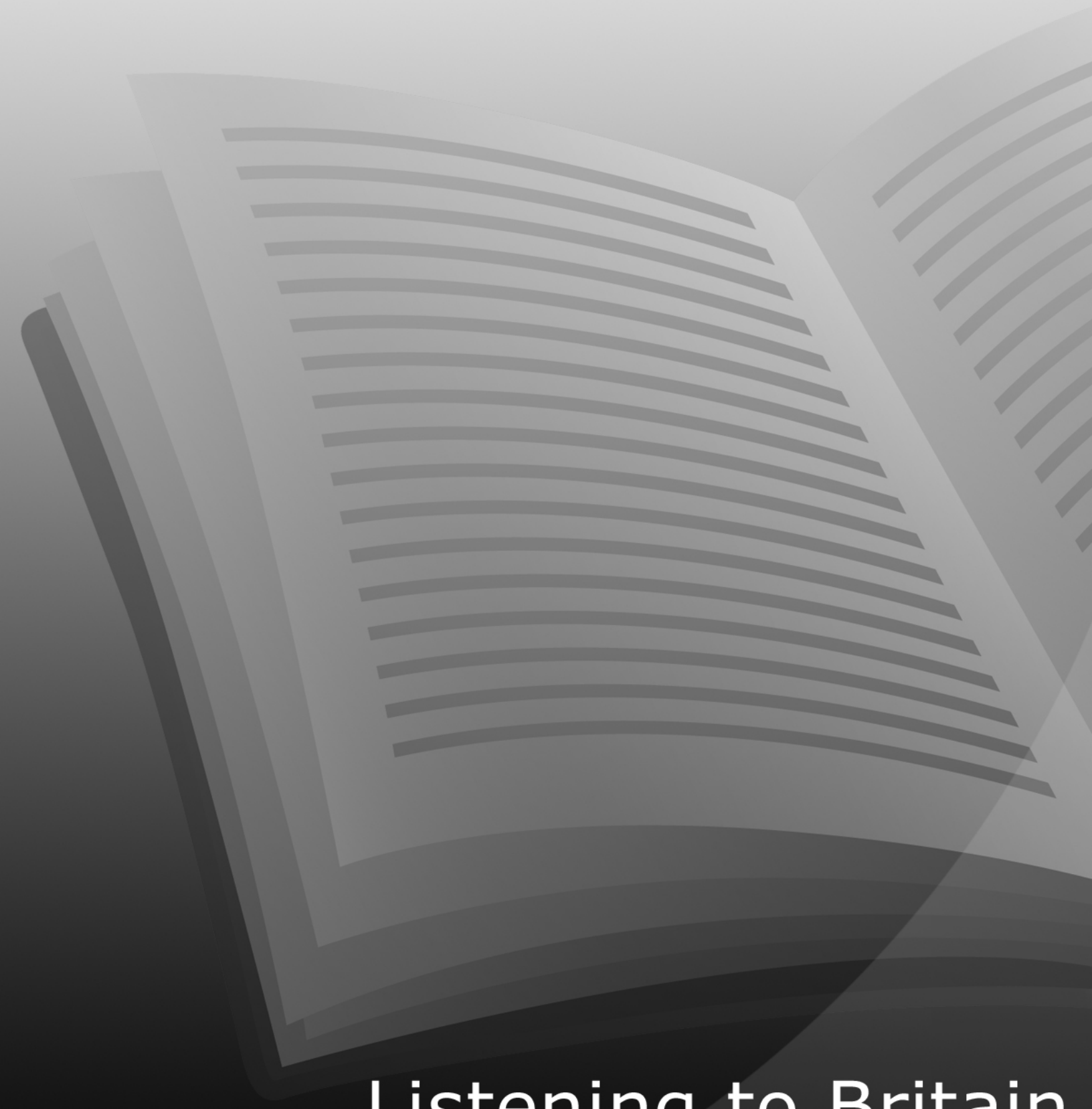

Listening to Britain

Paul Addison and Jeremy A Crang

Contents

Cover
About the Book
By the Same Editors
Map
Dedication
Title Page
Introduction

Saturday 18 May to Saturday 25 May 1940
Monday 27 May to Saturday 1 June 1940
Monday 3 June to Saturday 8 June 1940
Monday 10 June to Saturday 15 June 1940
Monday 17 June to Saturday 22 June 1940
Monday 24 June to Saturday 29 June 1940
Monday 1 July to Saturday 6 July 1940
Monday 8 July to Saturday 13 July 1940
Monday 15 July to Saturday 20 July 1940
Monday 22 July to Saturday 27 July 1940
Monday 29 July to Saturday 3 August 1940
Monday 5 August to Saturday 10 August 1940
Monday 12 August to Saturday 17 August 1940
Monday 19 August to Saturday 24 August 1940
Monday 26 August to Saturday 31 August 1940
Monday 2 September to Saturday 7 September 1940
Monday 9 September to Saturday 14 September 1940
Monday 16 September to Saturday 21 September 1940
Monday 23 September to Friday 27 September 1940

Abbreviations
Glossary

Acknowledgements
Copyright

About the Book

From May to September 1940, during a period that saw some of the most dramatic events of the war (retreat of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, Battle of Britain, beginning of the Blitz), the Ministry of Information compiled daily reports on the morale of the nation for circulation within Whitehall. These reports make fascinating reading: they tell the story of people's hopes and fears, moods and concerns – from rumours about German spies disguised as nuns to the hardships of rationing – in all regions of the country during Britain's Finest Hour – at a time when the outcome of the war was far from certain.

Drawing on a wide range of informants, from the Mass-Observation social survey organisation to a network of contacts including chief constables, postal censors, doctors, parsons, publicans and trade unionists, the reports pieced together from these sources at great speed were by their very nature impressionistic, but provide us nevertheless with a unique record of contemporary feelings and perceptions at this historic juncture.They also include a wealth of curious and idiosyncratic information about the lighter and the darker aspects of life in Britain at the time, illuminating the prevalence of rumours and gossip about the threat of invasion – as well as the importance of the introduction of tea rationing for daily life.

Edited by two top-rate historians and published here for the first time to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the dramatic events that came to be known as Britain's Finest Hour, the complete and unabridged sequence of the daily

Home Intelligence reports provides unique insight into the continuously unfolding drama of Britain at war.

BY THE SAME EDITORS

The Burning Blue:
A New History of the Battle of Britain

Firestorm:
The Bombing of Dresden, 1945


ORKNEY ISLANDS
SHETLAND ISLANDS
Ministry of Information Regions
Regional offices
Inverness
Aberdeen
SCOTLAND
Dundee
Perth
Glasgow
Edinburgh
Berwick upon Tweed
Dumfries
Carlisle
NORTHERN IRELAND
Belfast
Newcastle upon Tyne
NORTHERN
Middlesbrough
North Sea
NORTH WESTERN
Barrow-in-Furness
York
Leeds
NORTH EASTERN
Hull
Preston
Manchester
Sheffield
Dublin
Liverpool
Lincoln
EIRE
Denbigh
Ruthin
Chester
Derby
NORTH MIDLAND
Nottingham
Shrewsbury
Birmingham
Leicester
Norwich
Lowestoft
Coventry
EASTERN
Cambridge
WALES
MIDLAND
Bedford
Ipswich
Colchester
Oxford
Chelmsford
Gloucester
Swansea
Southend
London
LONDON
Cardiff
Avonmouth
Bristol
Bath
Reading
Croydon
Canterbury
Margate
Weston-super-Mare
SOUTHERN
Dover
Tunbridge Wells
Folkestone
SOUTH WESTERN
Southampton
Brighton
Hastings
Calais
Boulogne
Portsmouth
Exeter
Bournemouth
SOUTH EASTERN
Plymouth
Portland
Penzance
FRANCE
N
0 50 100 miles
0 80 160 km

In memory of Angus Calder
(1942–2008)

LISTENING TO BRITAIN

Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour
May to September 1940

Edited and with Introductions and a Glossary by
PAUL ADDISON *and* JEREMY A. CRANG

THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON

Introduction

The months from May to September 1940 were among the most crucial in British history. During this period, which incorporated the epic events of the evacuation from Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the opening stages of the Blitz, the fate of the nation depended, among other things, upon the readiness of the general public to support the war effort and their confidence that Nazi Germany could be defeated. At this critical point, the Home Intelligence department of the Ministry of Information was tasked with compiling daily reports on the state of popular morale. Covering all regions of the United Kingdom the reports ran from 18 May until 27 September, after which they were replaced by weekly summaries. Published here in their entirety, they provide a unique window into the attitudes and behaviour of the British people during what Churchill described as their ‘finest hour’.

In order to appreciate the particular character and qualities of the reports we need first of all to remind ourselves of the circumstances in which they were written and the sources from which they were compiled. At the outbreak of war in September 1939 the government of Neville Chamberlain set up a Ministry of Information (MOI) housed in the Senate building of the University of London. The outcome of half-hearted preparations in the late 1930s, the new Ministry lacked authority in Whitehall and suffered from a difficult relationship with the press, which accused it of censoring and withholding news, and more generally of bureaucratic muddle. Nor, when it was first established, had the MOI any means of investigating or monitoring public

opinion. It was talking to Britain without listening to Britain: a one-sided conversation.

After much argument within the MOI it was decided to establish a Home Intelligence department and in December 1939 Mary Adams was appointed as director with a brief to establish the necessary machinery.[1] Adams was one of the many temporary civil servants whose recruitment to Whitehall during the war introduced an unorthodox element into the pre-war Establishment. After a degree in botany from the University of Wales she had gone on to postgraduate research at Newnham College, Cambridge, and given a series of radio talks on heredity which fired her with enthusiasm for the cause of educational broadcasting. Joining the BBC as an education officer, she became a producer with the corporation's fledgling TV service in 1936: 'a tiny, vivacious, brainy blonde with bright blue eyes who always dressed very elegantly'.[2] Married to the Conservative MP Vyvyan Adams, a firm opponent of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, she herself was 'a socialist, a romantic communist . . . a fervent atheist and advocate of humanism'.[3]

When the television service closed down at the outbreak of war, Adams found herself without a role. But the BBC's loss was MOI's gain and the Home Intelligence department was largely her creation. 'In those early days of MOI,' she recalled in 1980, 'you could do almost anything if you had determination.'[4] In February 1940 she defined the purposes of Home Intelligence as follows:

> 1. To provide a basis for publicity. A continuous flow of reliable information is required on what the public is thinking and doing in order that publicity measures may be properly planned and their effectiveness tested.
> 2. To provide an assessment of home morale. For this purpose it is necessary to study immediate reactions to

> specific events as well as to create a barometer for the purpose of testing public opinion on questions likely to be continuously important, e.g. pacifism.[5]

Adams looked to outside bodies to supply much of the necessary intelligence. She was an admirer of Mass-Observation (M-O) and commissioned it to undertake studies of morale for her department. Founded in 1937 by the social anthropologist Tom Harrisson, the poet Charles Madge and the documentary film-maker Humphrey Jennings, M-O employed a range of experimental and unorthodox techniques for assessing popular attitudes. Whereas conventional surveys reported the opinions expressed by members of the public to investigators, 'Mass-Observers' eavesdropped on conversations and reported on behaviour as well as opinion. Many of its early reports had focused on working-class life in the Lancashire town of Bolton ('Worktown' in M-O publications), but with the outbreak of war Harrisson, who was now in sole charge of the organisation, turned the spotlight on the problems of the home front. The message of *War Begins at Home*, M-O's account of the phoney-war period published in March 1940, was unequivocal. A gulf of mutual incomprehension separated the politicians and the civil servants in Whitehall from the broad mass of the British public. Neither the press nor the House of Commons could bridge the gulf: Mass-Observation could.

Though historians now place much reliance on its reports, M-O was often criticised at the time on the grounds that its methods were unscientific. To balance and check the intuitive nature of its reports, Adams somewhat reluctantly agreed to the establishment of a more academic and quantitative type of investigation: the Wartime Social Survey.[6] Organised by Arnold Plant, Professor of Commerce at the London School of Economics, and operating under the auspices of the National Institute of Social and Economic

Research, some of its surveys, like its investigation into attitudes towards rationing for the Ministry of Food, were carried out for other Whitehall departments. But it also conducted inquiries into morale for Home Intelligence. Its investigators employed the standard market-research technique of a questionnaire which members of the public were invited to answer in face-to-face interviews. The findings were then reported in statistical form. Contrary, however, to Adams's desire to publicise the Survey, its existence was kept secret.

The initial plan was for Home Intelligence to compile a monthly report on the state of morale, but following the collapse of Norway, Belgium and Holland, and the German invasion of France, there was an immediate demand within the MOI for day-to-day information about the state of public opinion. Adams's department was thus instructed 'to report daily on people's reactions throughout the country, with special reference to morale, rumours, and the reception of ministerial broadcasts and pronouncements'.[7] Meanwhile Churchill had succeeded Chamberlain as Prime Minister and appointed his friend and political ally Duff Cooper as Minister of Information.

In compiling the daily reports Home Intelligence was able to draw on the services of M-O and the Social Survey, but a range of other sources were also employed. The MOI's Regional Information Officers (RIOs) across the country were instructed to report each day by telephone between 12 noon and 2.30 p.m. on morale in their regions. 'Their data,' a brief internal history of the department noted, 'were obtained partly by discussions with their own staff, partly by casual conversations initiated or overheard on the way to work, and partly by a hurried series of visits to public houses, and other places where the public foregathered.'[8] BBC *Listener* research surveys were also utilised as were questionnaires completed by such organisations as W. H.

Smith and Sons, the London Passenger Transport Board, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the Association of Women House Property Managers and the Brewers' Society. Additional information was supplied by the main political parties. Secret sources were drawn upon too. Postal censors provided analyses of letters, Special Branch reports were made available, and RIOs were in touch with Chief Constables.[9]

At the same time, special arrangements were put in place to cover the London region. According to the internal history:

> It was decided to make contact with a number of people in London, in all strata of society, who would be prepared, in response to a telephone call or a personal visit, to report the feelings of those with whom they came into contact . . . The types of people approached were doctors, dentists, parsons, publicans, small shopkeepers, newsagents, trade union officials, factory welfare officers, shop stewards, Citizens' Advice Bureau secretaries, hospital almoners, businessmen, and local authority officials.[10]

This network was established by the staff of Home Intelligence, who recruited people known personally to them, who in turn suggested other likely individuals, and about twenty phone calls were made each day to these contacts in order to help construct the London region report.[11] This helps to explain why the daily reports for the capital were more substantial than the reports from other regional offices.

The Home Intelligence reports were compiled each day of the week except Sunday. The general overview at the start of each document was written by Adams herself. The rest, presumably, was prepared with the help of her small staff of assistants.[12] The report was produced at 4.45 p.m. and

copies distributed within the MOI and to other Whitehall ministries such as the Ministry of Home Security, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Supply, the War Office and the Air Ministry. The total circulation list in September 1940 came to about 100 copies, of which 25 circulated outside the MOI.[13] A small advisory group was established to provide guidance on interpreting the material. Its membership included Lord Horder, Julian Huxley and Richard Crossman.

In the summer of 1940 the future of Home Intelligence was put in jeopardy when its activities became the subject of a hostile press campaign. A number of people had been prosecuted for spreading 'alarm and despondency' by making 'defeatist' remarks or expressing sympathy with the enemy. The MOI, though not responsible for the prosecutions, had been running a 'Silent Column' campaign urging the public not to pass on rumours. Its attempts to monitor morale could therefore easily be mistaken, or indeed deliberately misrepresented, as part of a government witch-hunt against innocent civilians.

On 25 July the science correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, Ritchie Calder, revealed the existence of the Social Survey and its house-to-house enquiries for the MOI and alleged that the public had often reacted violently against the questioning of their morale. The following day the editor of the *Herald*, Percy Cudlipp, renewed the attack in an article in which he referred to the Social Survey as 'Cooper's Snoopers' and urged that the 'morale and social survey' section of the MOI should be closed down. Several other national newspapers took up the hue and cry. The *Daily Sketch* warned: 'This house-to-house questioning will throw the shadow of the Gestapo over honest and loyal creatures . . . The Ministry must abandon these ill-judged, amateurish inspirations.' The *Observer* commented: 'The idea of sounding opinion by doorstep inquiries can hardly have

been produced by a British mind. Nothing could be more unpopular or more futile.'[14] Similar views were expressed by MPs critical of the government in a debate in the House of Commons on 1 August.

These reactions reveal how jealous journalists and MPs were of their claims to represent public opinion, and how little credence they were prepared to give to what were then comparatively novel techniques of social research. Duff Cooper, however, mounted a strong defence of the Social Survey in the House of Commons and the press campaign soon died down. From the point of view of Adams and Home Intelligence the attack on the Social Survey had one redeeming feature. It served as a lightning conductor diverting the attack away from the eavesdropping activities of her department (and those of M-O) that could well have got it into serious trouble if they had been exposed. 'Though no deliberate efforts at concealment were made,' remarked the internal history, 'Home Intelligence worked, as it were, in the shadow of the Survey, its doings unquestioned and its results confidential.'[15] The 'Cooper's Snoopers' affair, therefore, proved to be a storm in a teacup, and the Social Survey eventually emerged with a clean bill of health from an investigation by the Select Committee on National Expenditure.

For students of history the daily morale reports are a fascinating but problematical source. The quality of the evidence is uneven and has to be sifted carefully in order to separate the wheat from the chaff. Some of the statements about the attitudes and opinions of particular localities, for example, are supported by little hard evidence (31 May: 'Horsham continues "smug"' is a memorable case in point). On the other hand the reports contain many references to specific events, perceptions and behaviour, as well as quantitative information, of great interest. And although they are, by their very nature, invariably impressionistic, the

reports represent a genuine attempt to synthesise the best available sources. They illustrate many of the more mundane details and problems of daily life on the home front, as well as the public's hopes and fears about the progress of war, while also demonstrating a sensitivity to issues of class, gender and national identity. Furthermore, although a single day's report when read in isolation can only offer a glimpse of the unfolding drama, the cumulative effect of the reports when read as a whole is to provide a continuously evolving narrative and a coherent version of events.

Interpretations of the material are of course bound to differ and in the final analysis readers must form their own judgements. In our own view the reports offer a number of valuable insights. We need firstly to recognise that the British people, like the compilers of the daily reports, did not know what was going to happen next and were reacting to events without any of the historical perspective that we now have. They thus give the reader some idea of what it must have been like to live through a period of cataclysmic developments. The reports convey a sense of the diversity of British society and the existence of dissenting minorities. But they also testify to certain dominant themes, such as the stubborn belief, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, in ultimate victory; the more or less constant popular pressure for a more effective prosecution of the war effort at home and abroad; a powerful consciousness of national identity which sometimes showed itself in intolerance of conscientious objectors and suspicion of refugees from the continent; and the growing importance for the civilian population of the war in the air. The home front was indeed becoming a battle front and the reports show that the public increasingly thought of themselves as part of the front line. As Angus Calder wrote in a classic work published in 1969, the Second World War was turning into a 'people's war'.[16]

And as Churchill prophesied in a speech to the House of Commons in May 1901: 'The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings.'[17]

A word or two of explanation is needed on the subject of the editing of the documents. Our aim has been to publish an unabridged set of the daily reports, of which there appear to be two virtually complete sets in existence. One is in the National Archives at Kew in INF 1/264, the other among the papers of Mary Adams at the University of Sussex.[18] The text published here is based primarily on the set in the National Archives, but this contains minor omissions which have been filled by documents from the Mary Adams papers. The original text, which seems to have been dictated, contains typos and errors in spelling or punctuation which we have corrected, and inconsistencies of presentation which we have replaced with a more uniform house style. We also decided to highlight the distinction between the introductory summary at the start of each report, and the more detailed summaries from the regions, by putting the introduction in italics. We have sometimes omitted headings where they were repetitive or superfluous. In all other respects the text of the original documents has been reproduced in complete and original form.

For the convenience of readers we have grouped the reports into weekly sections and written for each week an introduction outlining the historical context and background to the main topics discussed in the reports. In addition, where appropriate, individuals and terms referred to in the text are identified in the glossary at the back of the book, and a list of abbreviations is attached.

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Notes

[1] Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War Two* (1979), pp. 49–51.

[2] Angus Calder, *Gods, Mongrels and Demons* (2003), p. 11.

[3] Sally Adams, 'Mary Grace Agnes Adams' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (1990), online.

[4] University of Sussex, Special Collections, Mary Adams papers, box 7, Mary Adams, interview with Angus Calder, 15 February 1980.

[5] The National Archives, Kew, papers of the Ministry of Information, INF 1/47, 'Note on the Functions of Home Intelligence', by Mary Adams, 9 February 1940.

[6] McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, p. 53.

[7] TNA, INF 1/290, 'The Work of the Home Intelligence Division 1939–1944', p. 3.

[8] Ibid.

[9] TNA, INF 1/47, 'Home Intelligence Machinery', 16 July 1940.

[10] TNA, INF 1/290, 'The Work of the Home Intelligence Division 1939–1944', p. 3.

[11] Ibid., p. 4.

[12] TNA, INF 1/47, 'Home Intelligence: Organisation and Staffing', by Mary Adams, 17 July 1940.

[13] TNA, INF 1/101, 'Home Intelligence', by Mary Adams, 13 August 1940; University of Sussex, Mary Adams papers, box 1, 'Circulation of "Daily Observations by Home Intelligence"', 28 September 1940.

[14] Mass-Observation online, M-O file report no. 325, 'Report on the "Cooper's Snoopers" Press Campaign, 5 August 1940', pp. 1–2, 5.

[15] TNA, INF 1/290, 'The Work of Home Intelligence Division 1939–44', p. 2.

[16] Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945* (1969).

[17] Quoted in Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front 1900–1955* (1992), p. 19.

[18] It should be noted that the National Archives' copy of the Home Intelligence reports was made available on microfilm in 1979 by Harvester Press.

SATURDAY 18 MAY TO SATURDAY 25 MAY 1940

The first of the daily Home Intelligence reports reflected the shock and confusion caused by a fast-moving sequence of military disasters. On 9 April Hitler's forces had invaded and occupied Denmark and Norway. The political crisis precipitated by the defeat of the British expeditionary force to Norway had compelled Neville Chamberlain to step down as Prime Minister on 10 May. His successor, at the head of a new all-party Coalition government, was Winston Churchill. At dawn on 10 May Hitler's armies launched an invasion of Belgium and Holland, accompanied by a drive through the Ardennes into northern France. Within a few days the Allied armies were in retreat. On 15 May the Dutch High Command capitulated. By 18 May the German armies were advancing rapidly towards the Channel coast and threatening to encircle the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), along with the French First Army and the Belgian Army.

On 19 May the French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, made a last-ditch attempt to revive his country's military fortunes by replacing General Gamelin with General Weygand as commander-in-chief. That evening Churchill, in his first broadcast as Prime Minister, sought to bring home to the British public the gravity of the situation while still holding out hope of a successful Allied counter offensive. On 15 May, and again on 22 May, he flew to Paris to give encouragement and support to the French, but no counterattack materialised, and by 25 May the commander of the BEF, Lord Gort, had concluded that he could only save his army by conducting a fighting retreat to the coast, and

creating around the port of Dunkirk a bridgehead from which the troops could be evacuated across the Channel.

These are the facts as we know them now, but everyone at the time was enveloped to some extent in the fog of war. Reports were sketchy, but it was obvious that the news was bad, and in the absence of hard information rumour and speculation flourished. It was rumoured, for example, that Italy had entered the war, though this did not happen until 10 June, and that the two Princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, had been sent to Canada. As Home Intelligence commented, the rumours were mainly home-grown but often attributed, by those who passed them on, to 'Lord Haw-Haw', the nickname for the Nazi propagandist William Joyce who broadcast regularly from Hamburg. Press reports alleged that in Belgium and Holland German parachutists had disguised themselves as peasants or clergymen and been assisted by a 'Fifth Column' of enemy sympathisers among the local population. Home Intelligence noted many rumours of parachutists landing in Britain disguised (for reasons best known to the enemy) as nuns. Rumour also pointed the finger of suspicion at enemy aliens, most of whom were of course refugees from Nazi persecution, and there were signs of growing intolerance towards conscientious objectors. MOI officials clearly felt that the public were in need of more leadership and guidance than they were getting, and looked above all to the BBC and the radio as the most effective means of information and propaganda on the home front.

Home Intelligence reports were often impressionistic and never more so than at this early stage, but the straws in the wind they detected suggested a general toughening of popular opinion, a frustrated activism among those who wanted to see the war prosecuted with greater vigour, and a warm welcome for positive measures. On 14 May Anthony Eden, the newly appointed Secretary of State for War, broadcast an appeal for men between the ages of

seventeen and sixty-five to join a new part-time militia, the Local Defence Volunteers, intended to serve as a second line of defence in support of the army. (They were to be renamed ‘The Home Guard’ in July). 250,000 men put down their names within the first twenty-four hours. At the new Ministry of Aircraft Production Lord Beaverbrook injected a spirit of urgency into the drive to accelerate the output of warplanes. There was an enthusiastic response from garage hands when he appealed to them to apply for work in the aircraft factories, but his call for 24-hour working over the next two weekends proved more controversial.

On 22 May Parliament passed the Emergency Powers Act, which gave the government sweeping powers over labour (of which in the event only limited use was made) as well as property. That same day the War Cabinet decided to arrest Sir Oswald Mosley and other leading fascists under a new emergency regulation, 18B (1A), which gave the government the right to detain without trial anyone suspected of endangering public safety, public order, the prosecution of the war or the defence of the realm.

Although it was reported by Home Intelligence that there was as yet ‘no fundamental realisation that the fight is for life’, from the outset there was a strong belief in eventual victory: ‘Still the phrase is heard on all sides “We shall win the last battle.”’

SATURDAY 18 MAY 1940

Civilian Morale

This report has been put together hurriedly from a series of reports sent in by our observers over the last few months. In particular, the material collected since 10 May is analysed and an attempt is made to show the implication for morale of present events.

For the sake of speed conclusions are given first:

Conclusions

On 18 May people are by no means prepared for the shock which awaits them. Many will undoubtedly manage to make themselves feel that bad news is not *really* bad, but many fewer people will be able to do this than in previous months, and the propaganda of events is inescapable.

It is suggested that the *shock* of the news can be offset by doing several things. There will be immediate necessity to ease the burden on each *individual* mind, to relieve *personal* fear, and to steady the bewilderment which by its nature leads to feelings of inferiority and futility.

(1) It is imperative that people should not be rallied by the stock trick of recent years, ‘the reassuring picture.’

(2) At the same time it is bad to give people flat facts and to allow the exploitation of personal fears and negative imaginative terrors.

(3) Fear needs to be expressive not repressive.

(4) Thus, while private individual fears are bad, socialised fears can be made positive and turned to account.

(5) Where personal fears exist an attempt should be made to liberate them. The fear of parachutists was strongly felt

and privately held, particularly among women. Eden's broadcast offering an active solution (even though a partial one) was something aggressive and all our reports show that the broadcast did much to allay personal fears by transference to corporate action.

(6) People should be made to share their fears: to fraternise: be neighbourly. Street unities should be thought out. Social workers should make personal visits. ARP wardens should call personally. Those who play civic roles should be urged to show themselves. The Queen might tour the streets. It is important to stimulate a feeling of being a united nation (at the level of the street as well as at the level of the Cabinet).

(7) Civilian leaders should be chosen and quickly built up. Some would be national figures, e.g. the Duchess of Kent, Gracie Fields, (for women specially).

(8) Interpreters should be chosen and be constantly at work. It is necessary for the news and for events to be interpreted and explained. Retreat and disillusionment engender bewilderment without the help of interpreted facts. Facts, even bad ones, are some protection against bewilderment and suspicion. Interpreters like Vernon Bartlett should be *constantly* broadcasting, explaining each fresh phase and answering the many questions which remain unanswered hour by hour.

(9) Even at the eleventh hour people are seeking and needing a *positive purpose*, something aggressive, dynamic, beyond themselves, worth dying for, not just survival or 'blood, sweat and tears.'

A Summary of Public Opinion on the Present Crisis

During the course of this afternoon a brief survey of public opinion was made in London and in the Regions (with the exception of Newcastle where the telephone was out of order).

The opinions expressed from the Regions were, of course, those of single individuals, and may therefore be biased in certain respects. But the consensus of opinions gathered both outside and inside London shows marked unanimity upon the major points.

The facts which most clearly emerge are that people are rather more depressed than frightened by the trend of events and that there seems to be confidence in the ultimate victory of the Allies. Nevertheless the gravity of the situation is generally realised.

There is a strong and widely expressed desire for definite instructions to be issued by the Government about what people could or should do to help the country and themselves at the present time. The feeling is that they would like to be disciplined, and would be glad to be given some precise duty or occupation to carry out.

The following is a brief summary of regional opinion:

LEEDS Morale is on the whole fairly good, chiefly because everyone is working full-time. The new phase of the war and the realisation of facts hitherto unfaced has stiffened resistance.

No rumours are reported.

The campaign of open-air meetings put into effect by the Ministry is having a good response, and there have been no interruptions.

CAMBRIDGE This morning there was optimism over the news, but there was some tension in Clacton and Ipswich over the re-evacuation order. There was also apprehension in Cambridge about troop movements, which were said to be for the purpose of combating a parachute raid. In the Chelmsford area there were rumours of parachute troops having landed, and from the same place it was said that there had been bombing at Harwich. Similar rumours and apprehensions were reported from the King's Lynn area.

People would like more explanation on the radio about the military situation. 'Onlooker' is considered too 'fatherly'.

NOTTINGHAM People are more depressed than frightened, though fear seems to be growing. The opinion is generally expressed that it would be a good thing on this account if the Prime Minister were to broadcast in a day or two.

No rumours are reported from this Region.

WALES Although there seems to be a good deal of depression, people seem to be less frightened than angry. The way in which the news is announced by the BBC is considered to account for some unnecessary alarm, and it is suggested that a reassuring personality such as Mr Duff Cooper or Mr Eden should give a short talk every evening *during*, but not after the news.

A rumour which is given general currency is that there is a large Fifth Column nucleus of German tourists in Eire.

BIRMINGHAM People are more bewildered and worried than they were yesterday, and would welcome instructions about what to do or how to act, providing these were of a *definite* nature. The point is made that Government speakers on the wireless would have a greater response if their appeals were directed to backing up the Services rather than the Government, which is much less of a reality to most people than the Navy, the Army or the Air Force.

MANCHESTER The public is not so much frightened as depressed. Today for the first time the news seems to be bringing home to a good many people the real gravity of the situation. The majority in this area ignored the Government's appeal to treat Whitsun Bank Holiday as an ordinary day.

The public would definitely welcome some sort of instructions about what they are expected to do in the present state of crisis. They would, in fact, like to be *disciplined*.

Rumours in this area are confined to exaggerated apprehensions about refugees arriving in great numbers.

BRISTOL Public morale has been shaken by recent events, particularly in Bristol. In Gloucestershire the news has awakened people; everywhere there is determination to win and a realisation that our backs are against the wall.

There are many evidences of rumours in this Region. At Gloucester aviation works it is rumoured that all men up to thirty-six are to be mobilised at once. At Exeter there has been a large water main burst and rumour has it that sabotage is responsible. Many rumours of air raids occur from time to time; one has it that all areas on the South East coast will be raided to drive people over to the South West where they can be bombed collectively. At Gloucester people are saying we are not making enough aeroplanes as there is not enough material at the two aeroplane factories there to provide full-time work.

People would prefer to know all the news, even if it is bad, and criticise the BBC news bulletins as having too little detail in them. They want German claims denied immediately. Exeter says: 'Bad news should be dressed up'. Plymouth, Exeter, Bristol and other towns are asking when the casualty lists are coming out. They suspect the numbers are so large that the Government dare not divulge them. Questions are also asked about how soon the Local Defence

Volunteer Corps can act and why more enemy aliens are not interned.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS People do not seem to be frightened but are certainly more depressed than yesterday. General Gamelin's message has helped to account for this. Nevertheless confidence is expressed everywhere in an Allied victory. Most people seem to be prepared for the news to be temporarily worse during the coming weeks.

There was a persistent rumour on Thursday last that Italy had entered the war on the side of Germany.

SCOTLAND The public are undoubtedly more depressed than yesterday, but at the same time express confidence. The main sentiment seems to be that though we always lose the first battle, we always win the last one. (This point was stressed also by Mass Observation's survey made in London during the early afternoon). Most people seem to be prepared for worse news to come but expect that this will be only temporary.

Observations made today in London largely confirm the trends of opinion expressed in the Regions. The views of working-class people seemed to be on the whole rather more optimistic than those of other classes. Though there is definite apprehension everywhere, and though the seriousness of the situation seems to be fully appreciated, there is also a feeling of confidence.

SUNDAY 19 MAY AND MONDAY 20 MAY 1940

There has been an increase of optimism since Friday and Saturday. The public is still somewhat depressed but there

are no signs that determination is shaken. Information goes to show that opinion is labile, any straws of good news are seized and the press of Sunday and today has on the whole been less gloomy than on Saturday. The impression is gained that there is as yet no fundamental realisation that the fight is for life, although many people have envisaged the possibilities of invasion. We shall be able to take it as a common expression. Still the phrase is heard on all sides 'We shall win the last battle'.

Reports show that many women are frightened and that there is a general desire for more concrete proposals and indeed orders about what the public should do. There is a good deal of criticism in this connection on two points:

1. The machinery for registering mechanics at aircraft factories and Labour Exchanges was not ready when the applications began to be made.

2. That the Local Defence Volunteer Corps has not become organised beyond the receiving of applications.

There is also criticism from two or three Regions that Government factories are not working at full pressure because material is not available.

Village and country morale continues to be higher than urban morale chiefly because there is less realisation of the dangers.

Broadcasts

1. Mr Duff Cooper. Very well received. Detailed criticisms were made but overwhelmingly people thought the two broadcasts were 'a very good idea', 'first rate', 'shows we're being taken notice of', 'just what we want'. These comments

are in general line with interviews on another subject which show that opinion is anxious for an *interpretation* of news.

2. The Prime Minister. All comments are favourable. ‘A good fighting speech’, ‘makes you feel we’re taken into his confidence’, ‘he’s not hiding things’. There does not seem to be, however, any general realisation that the Prime Minister’s speech had any extremely grave import.

Rumours

The number of rumours has increased considerably since Friday although they are still not as widespread as in September. Several need contradiction, e.g. that Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose have gone to Canada, that parachutists have landed in specified areas, that Italy bombed Paris last night.

There are several scares about Fifth Column agents, particularly in relation to vulnerable points for sabotage. Churchill went to France to cheer Reynaud who is in tears. Italy is already marching through Switzerland. The incendiary bombs dropped near Canterbury were aimed at a secret factory in the woods. Haw-Haw is sending secret messages to the Fifth Column by code words in wireless talks.

Weygand’s Appointment

The appointment is taken on trust and generally welcomed. Nowhere does it seem to be felt that the appointment indicated bad leadership. The only criticism is on account of Weygand’s age.