

Extracts from an unpublished biography of Peter Ritchie Calder

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Chapter 18 Cloak and Dagger

In the summer of 1941, Ritchie had a phone call at the *Daily Herald* office in Longacre. A man from the Foreign Office asked to see him "...urgently and privately, .on behalf of the Foreign Secretary." As Ritchie worked in a large open plan office, and it was certainly was not private, they went to a nearby Lyons teashop. They found a quiet corner but the waitress was particularly anxious to be helpful.

Between her interruptions, which reduced an unreal situation to farce, Ritchie discovered to his great bewilderment that he was being pressed to take a vitally important and very mysterious job. He could not discover what work he was wanted for except that it was a new job, something to do with propaganda and *not* the Ministry of Information. It was "Most Secret." He was not allowed to discuss the matter with anyone – not even Mabel or Percy Cudlipp, his editor. He had only forty-eight hours to make up his mind.

Ritchie was baffled. His first idea was that the Government were finding his reports in the *Daily Herald* too embarrassing. But there was no need for all this melodrama. Newspapers were censored to prevent the publication of anything that might assist the enemy and the Government had more than enough power to deal with people considered to be causing *real trouble*. Frank Owen, editor of the *Evening Standard* and Percy Cudlipp's brother Hugh, the editor of the *Sunday Pictorial* found this out the following year when they were very unceremoniously conscripted into the army because they had gone 'too far'.

In any case, even if the job was every bit as vital as the Foreign Office man made out, Ritchie believed that the job he was doing was also vital. In a Britain committed more and more to waging total war, ordinary people needed someone like him to act as a watchdog – checking that, whenever possible, their interests were being protected.

Then, he suddenly thought of someone with complete security clearance, whom he could consult. The previous February, he had covered a tour that Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, was making in South Wales. When they were off duty, he had got on well with the Labour leader. Ritchie rang up 11, Downing Street and Attlee agreed to see him.

While Attlee listened carefully, Ritchie explained his problem. As no comment was forthcoming, Ritchie had to ask outright if Attlee thought that he should take the job. Attlee said, "Yes." Then he started to talk about cricket.

Still full of doubt, Ritchie rang up his contact and said he would like to discuss the matter further. The Foreign Office man was irritated. However a letter came (with instructions that it "must be destroyed immediately") which arranged a mysterious rendezvous.

A politely uninformative driver took Ritchie to Woburn Abbey. He was surprised to find there a good many people who 'seemed to have dropped out of circulation lately' and was shown a desk described as his. He always claimed that he had been "kidnapped" because, at that stage, he no longer had any option. He had to take the job. He already 'knew too much'.

All he could do was negotiate for time. Time to finish the book he was working on and to tidy things up a little.

The book, *The Second Industrial Revolution*, was based on a series he had written for the *New Statesman* the previous year. To speed up the work he asked a friend to help him. He was concerned about her because, apart from being a St Pancras Councillor, she was unemployed and he

felt that her talents should be helping the war effort. Whenever it could be arranged she came down to stay at Banstead.

'I was supposed to sit.... and take down Ritchie's *Great Thoughts* while he strode up and down ... and dictated straight on to the typewriter, (but) ... Ritchie was so interested in other people and he had shown such extraordinary spontaneous interest in me, a young unknown at the time ... he couldn't bear to just dictate his own thoughts to me and he'd stop every other sentence and say "Do you agree?"'

'... Well this was a very rash thing to say to Barbara Betts as I was then

' "Well, as a matter of fact, Ritchie ..." I would say ... and then we'd be away ...right away ... into a long argument and it used to go on into the early hours and Mabel would put her head round the door and say: "Ritchie, you have got to let that girl get to bed!"'

"We're just finishing, Mabel, ...we're just finishing ..."

Barbara Castle: *Journey into Hope*, July 14th 1983

The discussion was always so stimulating that the book never did get finished.

Afterwards, Ritchie tried hard to persuade Barbara to join him in his secret work.

'...he thought I'd be good at it ... as a matter of fact, I think I probably would have been ... it involved him getting security clearance for me ... I remember him coming back and saying to me: "Do you know Barbara, I am very disappointed in you... I have just got security clearance for you.... you're supposed to be a rebel!" ...

'But it would have involved burying myself in the country for the duration of the war and that I did not relish ...'

Barbara Castle: *Journey into Hope*, July 14th 1983

A warm friendship endured between the Calders and Barbara and Ted Castle, whom she married shortly afterwards, although they saw little of each other most of the time.

The whole family went up to Scotland for a short holiday with John and Bess Boyd Orr in the peace of the Angus hills. The first night at Newton of Stracathro, there was a spectacularly noisy thunderstorm, which even tried the nerves of the blitz-hardened Calders. Maybe it was a portent. The date was June 22nd, the day the Germans launched Barbarossa and surged into Russia.

The Political Warfare Executive which had recruited Ritchie so abruptly, was one of several top secret organisations whose aims were to undermine German morale and disrupt the German war effort. After Europe was overrun, they also took on the job of bringing comfort to the occupied countries and providing assistance in setting up Resistance movements. These overlapping and competitive organisations had grown up behind screens of secrecy, financed by devious and hidden means, in odd corners of Ministries. They all, no doubt, had impeccable motives and were pursuing the same goals but 'empires' grew rapidly and were jealously guarded. The small number of people who knew of their existence, made repeated efforts to define responsibilities and disentangle the power structure. PWE was, over and over again, 'sorted out'.

For much of the war, it was controlled jointly by Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Brendon Bracken, who was the Cabinet Minister in charge of the Ministry of Information. At all times, Eden and Bracken kept a keen eye on the vital, and possibly conflicting, interests of their own Departments. Both Ministers had a close and special relationship with that unpredictable War Lord, Winston Churchill. Until February 1942 the complications were worse, because, Hugh Dalton, the Minister of Economic Warfare, shared in the control. The fact that this extraordinary body worked – most of the time – shows clearly how much the need to win the war focused peoples' minds. It is perhaps an extreme example of the notorious British habit of muddling through.

The Director of Political Warfare, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, kept, simultaneously, no fewer than three continuous diaries, but, even after working on these to prepare them for publication, Kenneth Young

often had no clear idea of what was actually happening in PWE at this period. He comments in his introduction:

'Here we enter into areas still not officially charted by historians, where the sequence of events is obscure, some of the personalities shadowy and the organisations mentioned difficult to define with any clarity. This is not simply because much was wrapped in tight security, some of which still lingers, but because now, thirty years later, security has been succeeded by forgetfulness. Even the men personally involved when not dead, are naturally vague about exactly who did what, why, and when.'

Kenneth Young, Editor, *The Diaries of Sir Robert Lockhart 1939-1965* (Macmillan, London 1980; page 18)

When the origins, organisation and methods of work of the Political Warfare Executive are taken into account, it is not at all surprising that so many of the senior staff became ill with the strains of getting the work done. As key people disappeared on long spells of sick leave, the tensions and confusions intensified.

For example, Robert Bruce Lockhart was appointed to PWE by the Foreign Office. As a Deputy Under Secretary, he had an easy relationship, formally and informally with Eden. However, during Lockhart's long periods of illness, his deputy, Dallas Brooks took over. Brooks represented the Ministry of Information and he always consulted directly with Brendon Bracken. In the considered opinion of Kenneth Young, Bracken did not understand the niceties of PWE's operational propaganda. Bracken's decisions and/or inaction had a bad effect on the morale of the Department. In January 1944, at a time when everyone was being stretched to the limit with the preparations for D-Day, Lockhart, in hospital in Edinburgh, noted in his Diary:

'I don't know what is really the matter with him (Bracken) but he is driving PWE nearly dotty.'
Young: page 276

PWE was required to keep closely in touch with the Chiefs of Staff. There were always demarkation disputes going on with the other secret organisations such as the Special Operations Executive, which was concerned with physical subversion, sabotage and guerrilla activities and, from time to time, wanted to deal in propaganda. The Royal Air Force had to be persuaded that it was worth while committing men and planes to dropping PWE leaflets on occupied Europe.

Much of the work of PWE was done through the channels of the BBC which never lost its independence and was justifiably proud of its international status ...

'... as an open broadcasting service operating without deception and free from political gerrymandering.'

Asa Briggs: *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume III, The War of Works* (Oxford University Press, London 1970; page 422)

In February 1942, during one of the many reorganisations of the department, Ivone Kirkpatrick was brought in to the PWE team to represent BBC interests. Originally sent by the Foreign Office to be Adviser on Foreign Affairs to the BBC, Kirkpatrick had become in the view of PWE.

'... more BBC than the BBC'
Briggs: page 442

There is no obvious answer to why a curious organisation like the Political Warfare Executive was so determined to recruit Ritchie – particularly as he had so often been treated with suspicion by Special Branch. He contrasted himself with the people he found at Woburn Abbey

'I was not an expert on any country or region as each of them was. Nor an expert linguist. My knowledge of Europe was pretty extensive but of the tip and run variety of a journalist who is not a foreign correspondent, resident or diplomatic. I could claim to be a thoroughly experienced reporter, a competent broadcaster (in my own language) ...'

Autobiography

One explanation that he thought might fit was that the Foreign Office which had never done any planning:

'... but relied on treaty and expediency and used treaty as expediency, was caught up in the prevailing mood of Whitehall about scientific methodology and needed a scientist. But they did not have the courage to hire a real one and settled for a science writer instead.'

Calder: Sussex, 1977

When Ritchie joined the Political Warfare Executive, Robert Bruce Lockhart was just taking up overall charge.

'I doubt if anyone knew exactly what I was supposed to do and my doubts (about taking the job) proved to be substantially correct.'

Lockhart: *Comes The Reckoning* (Putmans, London 1947; page 118)

Lockhart had a brilliant mind but applied it very erratically. Kenneth Young considered that in his work.

'...he was reliable and had unquestionable integrity ...'

'... most of those who knew him enjoyed his customary lightheartedness ...'

Young: page 36

On the other hand, the picture of Lockhart which emerges from his diaries, is that of a very guilt-ridden but self-indulgent man. A heavy drinker, his life was also bedevilled by complicated relations with many women. He was hopelessly irresponsible when it came to money matters and made no obvious attempt to live within his income, which was quite large for the time. When Beaverbrook who was a close friend, made him large present of money, Lockhart accepted it without any embarrassment and with great relief.

Although according to Mabel, they were poles apart, Ritchie developed an affection for Bruce Lockhart. The fact that they were both Scots was a particular bond between them. As Mabel said:

'Peter (Ritchie) was a puritan and Bruce was quite the opposite. But he had great charm and Peter was kind of fond of him in an odd way ...'

In 1947, when everything to do with PWE was supposed to be still a top secret, Bruce Lockhart managed to publish a book about some of his wartime experiences. One of the things that he discusses in *Comes The Reckoning* was the qualifications for the work in PWE:

'... I do not think that any one profession provided any initial advantage of training. A propagandist is born and not made. The journalists were undoubtedly the best exponents of propaganda. They wrote the best leaflets. They had the best understanding of the value of the spoken and the written word, and in a department which always had to work at top speed, they alone had the requisite sense of urgency. Being used to ephemeral work, they were not so good on policy and sometimes felt frustrated by the hampering necessity of consistency.'

Lockhart: page 156

Ritchie had ruled his life by deadlines since he first decided to be a journalist at the age of 12½. In relation to short term commitments, his timing was always very professional. Such a deadline had priority over every aspect of ordinary everyday living – food, sleep holidays, family and deadlines for book production – he always had a struggle to get a book finished.

Whatever might be true of other journalists, Lockhart did not find Ritchie lacking in the ability to think through in detail the wider and long term issues. With a wealth of distinguished talent at his disposal – men who were, or would become, heads of Oxbridge Colleges, Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors, Professors and Law Lords – it was Ritchie whom he appointed as Director of Plans and Operations in August 1942. It was about the time of this appointment that Lockhart, recorded in his diary that Bracken was wanting to send Calder to America for the Ministry of Information, and said:

'Ritchie is my best man; one of the best brains in the whole organisation and certainly the most honest and finest character in the whole show.'

Young: page 186-187

Kenneth Young himself, in his introduction gives his opinion, based on the mass of diary entries, published and unpublished that:

'Ritchie Calder was a pearl without price.'

Young: page 21

In *Comes the Reckoning* Robert Bruce Lockhart paid rather fulsome tribute to Ritchie and his deputy Harry Lucas – referring to them by *noms de guerre*

'... (they) won my special respect, gratitude and affection by their tireless devotion to duty and the selflessness of their determination to create harmony out of what threatened to be permanent dissonance.

'They were not only our chief planners but in a very practical sense our effective peacemakers in internal troubles, and apart from their invaluable contribution to our work, they more than anyone else, provided the oil which made a clumsy and complicated piece of machinery work.

'They were a remarkable pair, devoted to each other and by a curious combination of contrasts each providing the complement to the other.'

Ritchie seemed embarrassed by this passage and even more by the description of himself that followed:

'... an idealist, a convinced Socialist and a dreamer whose lively and fertile imagination occasionally needed an anchor to keep on the stony ground of official reality.'

Lockhart: page 191-192

A non-socialist always uses the word socialist disparagingly, at its kindest, it implies an unrealistic simpleton. Ritchie's fervently held Socialist beliefs were rooted firmly in experience and commonsense. His theories tended to crystalise around the vivid images seared into his memory by, for example, his work in the slums of Dundee and Glasgow. In an article which he wrote for UNICEF many years later he was to say:

'My affliction is that I can put names and faces to statistics. In the past thirty years, I have travelled the world mainly for the UN and its specialised agencies ...'

'I have seen dead babies taken from their mother's empty breasts, I have seen the walking skeletons of marasmus, the swollen bellies of hunger oedema ...'

'These are not statistics one can wipe off the blackboard. They are indelible pictures in the album of human misery ...'

Calder: UNICEF 1967

In July 1941, Ritchie had accepted what seemed to be inevitable and exchanged very cordial letters with Percy Cudlipp.

'You made it both difficult and easy for me; difficult because you made my job at the *Herald* so important and worth-while; easy because, when you knew my decision was inevitable, you did nothing but help me. You could not have done more.'

'I shall have to rely a good deal on my own judgement in my new job, and I know that my judgement is not infallible! I once misjudged you in that, I hope, forgotten or forgiven episode of Francis's going. I hope that you did me the justice then of believing that my mistrust of the change was a genuine concern for the future of the *Herald*. In your handling of the paper you have proved that my concern was unnecessary and have given me, for the past fortnight, the

mental agony of deciding whether I could do more effective work for the things I believe in through the *Herald* or through the job that was offered me. I certainly have no doubts about the *Herald*.

'...My Gaolers suggest that everything possible should be done to prevent any undue curiosity being aroused ... For general consumption it should be enough to say I have been given leave of absence to take an important government job.'

Calder: letter, July 16th 1941

In his reply, Percy Cudlipp, expressing deep regret at Ritchie's departure, added:

'I have been proud to publish the work you have given me over the past fifteen months ... If they do not give you the scope that the task demands, hurry home.'

Newspaper World and *World's Press News* noted Ritchie had disappeared from Fleet Street. His new masters urged him to be seen in his usual haunts. He was given the time to make himself conspicuous at the British Association Conference on Science and World Order in September and to write and broadcast about it.

Ritchie kept up his regular visits to H G Wells and was amazed when HG impishly deduced that his arrivals were not unconnected with the large official looking car which passed his window so regularly. The cars that shuttled too and fro from Woburn Abbey had to be checked through watch points at regular times. Ritchie pointed out to the powers that be that other less friendly eyes could easily make the same kind of deduction particularly when so few cars were about because of the petrol shortage. One wonders slightly how much it was Wells' intelligence and how much it was intelligence supplied by his mistress, Baroness Budberg, who was also a past mistress of Robert Bruce Lockhart and still met him regularly. The Baroness, a colourful personality sometimes described as a Soviet agent, would not necessarily feel a need to be over discreet with Wells who had himself worked on propaganda in the 1914-18 war.

One of Ritchie's first important assignments in PWE was to consider the consequences of the famous V-campaign.

'The V-Campaign had started almost by accident. A member of the Belgian section of the BBC heard that in a Flemish speaking area, people were chalking 'V', for 'Freedom', on walls. It was purely local. In his next radio bulletin, M de Lavelaye suggested that the French-speaking areas could use 'V' for 'Victoire'. Then the same suggestion was made in broadcasts to France. Soon, the V sign was going up all over occupied Europe, with a paralysing effect on German propaganda whose extravagant countermeasures only fed the campaign.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lectures 1965

Churchill made the finger sign famous as he went to hearten the people of blitzed London. Beethoven's fifth symphony was used as the call sign and:

'... broadcasting under name of 'Colonel Britton', Douglas Ritchie mustered the V-Army ...

'It was an incredible success and it unquestionably raised the morale of people everywhere in occupied Europe. The individual and the small resistance group felt that they were no longer alone, that they were a part of the V-Army ...

'It shook the arrogance of the Nazis and reduced to ridicule their efforts of establishing the New Order.'

As their morale recovered, the V-groups became more and more daring and took greater and greater risks. They invited violent reprisals.

'It was so successful that I had the invidious job of having to suppress it. It was premature.'

At least three years hard struggle lay ahead before liberating allied armies would be able to reach them, but the V army believed that it was going to happen any day. It was not even possible to tell them that it was not possible.

'So we had to play down the V-campaign and use the morale it had generated to build up the organised and secret resistance movements which were to play such a valiant and effective part in the ultimate liberation of Europe. The full results of the 'V' Campaign could not be harvested till four years later.'

Article 7, Political Warfare 19457

When the Americans entered the war in December 1941, there was great enthusiasm for the idea of working together as closely as possible on Political Warfare. In March 1942, Ritchie and David Bowes Lyon set off to Washington to prepare the way for a Political Warfare Mission there, which Bowes Lyon was later to head. They were stranded for three weeks Lisbon

'... that bazaar-and-mart of wartime intelligence ... My hotel room was bugged as we would say today, it was pretty clumsy. The microphone was concealed in a flower-pot with wires connecting it to a listening post. I just ensured that the eavesdropper would get the information that I wanted him to have ... and very misleading it was too.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

Senior officials who went abroad during the war were responsible not only for their own secret documents but also acted as messengers. In the bag manacled to Ritchie's wrist was a proposal from Lord Keynes on the need for an international currency.

Ritchie found it interesting to exchange views with Henry Luce, the owner of *Time* and *Life*, who was also stranded, and enjoyed hobnobbing with his friend Sam Herbert who was serving at the British Embassy at the time. However it came as a great relief when, at last, a plane took them via Brazil to the United States. Their business in Washington did not go altogether smoothly, but Ritchie spent an evening at the White House, attended the broadcast of one of Roosevelt's 'Fireside Chats' and was able to present the letter of introduction which Wells had written to his friend President Roosevelt.

'...just ... "Talk to Ritchie Calder", he will tell you about the Sankey Declaration of the Rights of Man, upon which he did the most valuable organising work. I can think of no one so well equipped to represent the renascent Britain that is breaking its way through the shell of unprogressive habits that has grown about us.'

Chapter 19 Plans

In a sense, Ritchie had been in training for his new responsibilities all through the thirties. He had worked on many planning committees – Spanish Medical Aid, the Cremation Society, the Union for Democratic Control, the Labour Party committee on a National Health Service, the social implications of science, ARP etc, culminating in the Rights of Man Debate. It was no accident that his third publication in the spring of 1941 was a slim volume entitled *Start Planning Britain Now* (Kegan Paul London 1941).

As Director of Plans and Campaigns, Ritchie was answerable to the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff, he ranked as an Assistant Under Secretary of State and Brigadier. His position was unique because he had to be kept informed of all military operations. He had to have access to necessary sources of naval, military, air, economic and political intelligence and to top level Cabinet and Combined Chiefs of Staff papers.

It is not surprising that everything to do with the Political Warfare Executive was in the grip of the tightest security, everyone employed in it had to be screened by MI5.

'I had a great deal to do with obtaining, screening using and for purposes of subversion, manipulating intelligence.

'I was also a hostage of secrecy because I was in a Top Secret position totally bound by the Official Secrets Act, so much so that my identity and my function was a secret.

'...I would propose to employ someone I had known for years, whose loyalty I would be prepared to certify and whose abilities I wanted to use. I would receive a chit from the Security Officer saying curtly. "This person must not be employed by this department." I was not allowed to ask why, nor to see the person's dossier ...'

Technology and Human Rights: Assembly for Human Rights, March 22nd-27th 1968

But Ritchie did at least succeed 'by devious means', in reading his own Special branch file.

The restructuring of PWE, in August 1942, produced a more satisfactory working relationship with the European services of the BBC:

'Although the establishment of an important new post in August 1942, that of Director of Plans and Campaigns, taken over by Ritchie Calder, led to a marked improvement in the co-ordination of propaganda, overseas political warfare was never quite divorced from domestic political warfare.'

Briggs: page 419

Ritchie was responsible for oversight of the BBC European Services

'... "black radio" (the so-called "Freedom Stations") leaflets, whispering campaigns, psychological warfare operations in the military theatres etc. I had dealings with the Governments-in-Exile, with De Gaulle, with the Russians I was chairman of the joint Anglo-American Committee which aligned the 'directives' to the armies in the European Theatre ...

'... I was in touch, directly and indirectly with most of the key figures in the war, and certainly with most of the great events.'

Calder: Note on a proposed book on Political Warfare, 1956

It is tantalising to think of that book on Political Warfare which Ritchie never wrote!

His first task after his appointment was to produce an analysis of *The Meaning, Methods and Techniques of Political Warfare*. The intention was to persuade the Army, Navy and Air Force that Political Warfare was the *Fourth Fighting Arm*. That document was endorsed by the Defence Committee of the War Cabinet, by the Foreign Office and by the Chiefs of Staff.

In this paper, Ritchie stated, very clearly, the principle

'In this war, policy shall make propaganda. Propaganda shall not make policy.'

The importance of this lay in the fact that during the 1914-19 war, the propaganda services, then controlled by Northcliffe and Beaverbrook

'... had been run quite irresponsibly and had exploited propaganda without ever honouring the pledges or strictly observing the truth.'

Calder: Edinburgh University Lectures, 1965

Many Americans felt that British propaganda had trapped the United States into entering the war in 1917. There was to be no repetition of that.

Ritchie insisted that 'Propaganda' and what the Americans called 'Psychological Warfare' were only the tools of Political Warfare.

'In the document which defined the strategy of Political Warfare, it was made clear that we were not cynically exploiting situations in order to get temporary advantages – that there was a long-term objective. It was pointed out that the Second World War had not begun with the Shooting War, it had begun before the war as a War of Ideas and would continue as a War of Ideas after the Shooting War.'

'In other words, everything we were to do or say was to take into account the long-term consequences.'

ASLIB Proceedings, Vol 10 No 7, 1958

As Director of Plans, Ritchie was responsible for:

'basic planning': determining the policies and operations in the various regions:

'contingency planning': working out the variations of impending military situations, the possible political implications and the tactics and materials to deal with the "Period of Maximum Confusion"

'military planning': in which every operational plan from a commando raid to "Overlord", carried a political warfare "annexe" which not only explained what political warfare would do in support of the operation but appraised the consequences of the military actions themselves. We had to assess the morale and moral effects.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

For example, Ritchie was very much opposed to the Dieppe Raid, (19/2/42) which took place before this kind of evaluation became a routine

'...in the circumstances of the time, it might have triggered off the still unorganised elements of the French Resistance with disastrous effects to them. What I did not foresee was the effect of putting the Canadian forces into Dieppe. There were heavy Canadian losses, many of them French-speaking Canadians, with the result that we were accused in Canada and in the United States of having sacrificed the Canadians in order to save the British forces.'

Calder: University Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Perhaps it was not coincidence that, three days before the raid, Lockhart records in his diary that he had seen...

'...Ritchie Calder who wants to resign. He will stay his hand till end of week.'
Young: page 141

Thinking everything 'through' became the normal procedure in the Political Warfare Executive after Ritchie took over. He believed that foreign affairs had never been dealt with in such a way before.

His experience at the Foreign Office left him convinced that a lack of scientific method of a logical attitude was responsible for a great many diplomatic problems.

'It is true that in any international situation there are many variables: leaders do not behave with the predictability of moving particles and statesmen are very erratic stars in their unpredictable courses. But I think on examination of the facts of any situation, you can reduce these variables to a limited number of political planning "contingencies".'
ASLIB Proceedings, Vol 10 No 7, 1958

One of the most complex political problems on which Ritchie worked during the war had been reduced to ...

'... six contingencies, for each of which we could plan in advance. This was called "Planning for the Moment of Maximum Confusion". We would have "in the bag" six plans, and everything to go with them – leaflets, broadcasts, etc, - one of which would meet the situation.'

The Tyranny of the Expert, Philosophical Journal, Vol 2 no 1, 1965

Kenneth Young comments that, at first, the output of PWE and its predecessors was haphazard; only later was there co-ordination and real planning: but campaigns, however carefully working out, had to be altered to meet swiftly changing events. He then gives a picture of Ritchie at work, planning ...

'Ritchie Calder was a great planner. Instructed to cause as much damage as possible to transport in the German-occupied territories to back up RAF bombing, he proposed five stages beginning with constant references to Germany's transport difficulties in news bulletins. This was followed by a talk by Air Marshall "Bomber" Harris in which he said: "The bombs which the RAF carries are only the big brothers of the grains of sand or carborundum which can find their way into oil-pipes and grease-boxes...." In the third phase there were instructions on the movements of trains across Europe; how the Russians destroyed or immobilised locomotives; and an anonymous pilot explaining why he chose to attack a particular train. At the fourth phase, detailed instruction was given on how transport systems could be strained or broken down completely. The final phase – of direct destruction – was to depend on the RAF and SOE simultaneous action; and was to await Chiefs of Staff decision.'
Young: page 21

The Transport campaign, which got under way in September 1942, efficiently controlled and guided sabotage and confusion on the railways etc of occupied Europe and played a vital part in the defeat of the German armies.

A factor which the Directorate of Plans had to take into account was Hitler.

'...everyone agrees that Hitler was a paranoid. This made his behaviour and the military conduct of the war quite unpredictable by the normal rules which the General Staff would use to 'work out the other fellow's move'. One of the tasks of PWE was, by many devious ways, to deduce Hitler's mental condition and gain an insight into his irrational behaviour. We had an astrologer to advise us as to what Hitler's astrologer might be telling him and, by subversive means, we could even influence his astrologer's predictions.'

There was one critical period, during the autumn of 1943, when the preparations for *Overlord*, the code name for the invasion of Normandy, were already in progress. There was reason to believe that Hitler was in bad physical and mental health. He was due to make his annual speech in the Beer Cellar at Munich, an occasion which he had never missed from the earliest days of the Brown Shirt movement. It would be bad for German morale and also very suggestive to the Hitler watchers if Hitler failed to make his speech.

'If he did make the speech and it was broadcast, we could read a great deal into it as to his state of mind. But of course, a broadcast can be a recording. He might record it in his lucid moments. So on the night of November 9th 1943, we organised one of the biggest eaves-dropping sessions of the war.'

Every kind of expert was assembled – people who had heard every broadcast Hitler had delivered; people who had analysed every word he had written; experts from Economic Warfare and the Foreign Office and from the intelligence departments of every service, Army, Navy and Air Force; the radio experts and of course the psychiatrists.

'Next day there was a pile of reports a foot high. One was especially significant. The radio experts were sure that it had been recorded. Further, that it had been recorded at different times, because, the report said, "the discs are out of balance". On the basis of the 'lucid moments', this could mean that Hitler was in a stop-go phase.'

All kinds of deductions were drawn from this and a lot of it went into the military planning. When Ritchie got to Germany, after the Nazi defeat, the first thing he demanded were those discs.

'There were no discs. The Germans had evolved the magnetic tapes with which we are all now familiar. It was perfectly true that the speech had been recorded, but in the Beer Cellar in the afternoon, taped and broadcast at 8.15pm after Goebbels, as he boasted in this diary, had edited it and cut out the clumsy phrases. In other words he had made the Führer articulate.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

PWE had arrived at the right answer for the wrong reason. All that had been learned or assumed, was that Hitler was becoming progressively more unstable. In the critical days that followed, that only made him militarily even less predictable.

It must be remembered that from the summer of 1940, Germany and Italy were in control of Europe from the Arctic coast of Norway and the Russian front, to the northern shores of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean. Only the Fascist regimes of Spain and Portugal survived as uneasy neutrals along with Switzerland and Sweden.

'When countries were overrun, the old institutions collapsed, political parties disappeared or went underground. Trade unionism collapsed. In the demoralised state of Europe, our job was to help the anti-Nazi and anti-fascist elements to reform themselves into resistance movements.'

There was no strong tradition of underground activities in Europe, except in Czechoslovakia which had had for centuries.

'... dating back to Hussite times, a sort of freemasonry of resistance and it was extremely effective. I used to say that I could get a reply from German occupied Prague quicker than I could get a reply from our Mission in Washington.'

'All this changed tragically after the assassination of Heydrich who was Himmler's right-hand man, on May 31st 1942. The Nazis retaliated with savage mass execution. On June 10th, they killed all the male inhabitants of a village called Lidice, and razed it to the ground. The women were sent to concentration camps and the children disappeared. The Gestapo systematically and ruthlessly set out to eliminate all elements of resistance. They stripped it like an onion, layer by layer, until they destroyed the very core.'

'This explains why, after the war, the Czechs with their centuries old reputation for resistance submitted to the Russians. In any case, after Munich, they had no respect for the forces of the Western World.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

In some countries, the Resistance groups had to be trained in proper security to safeguard themselves.

'I borrowed my old Shadow-acquaintance by then well up in Special Branch. I wanted to know how the IRA active in pre-war Britain, had disappeared down their rabbit holes and how the Communists sealed their cells.'

'We used his advice and the experience of Special branch to good effect. Maybe he and I are in another dossier as the people responsible for encouraging the communist cells of post war Europe.'

In countries like France, they knew more about protecting themselves.

'... the initiative of forming cells would lie with the communists. They knew how to protect their underground activities. I have always said that the communists were the non-commissioned officers of the resistance. When the broad front of the Resistance eventually emerged it was not necessarily, indeed rarely, the communists who were the leaders. This was not generally understood.'

Ritchie saw his job as a very positive one. He tried to encourage hope in occupied Europe with plans for the world that the suffering people deserved after the war. The Declaration of the New Rights of Man, by then, much to HG's annoyance, referred to as the *Wells' Declaration*, was printed on leaflets and dropped all over Europe.

There was so much that could have been built on after war – hope, goodwill, knowhow. In spite of all the promises he had been given and which in good faith he had passed on, he had to watch, helplessly, while almost all of it was hamfistedly squandered in the interests of military and political expediency. This, probably more than any other reason, was why he was too slow in starting to write his autobiography. He preferred not to have to remember it all. In any event there was too much that needed to be done to try to improve the outlook for the future.

Chapter 20 Struggle

One day in the House of Commons, after the war was over, the Leader of the Opposition, Winston Churchill started to try to needle the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin about the way German affairs were being handled. Bevin retorted to Churchill, 'But you stuck me with unconditional surrender.' At which, Churchill jumped up to protest that he had never heard the term 'unconditional surrender' until the Casablanca Conference.

Ritchie knew for a fact that this was not true but he was bound by the official secrets act. Unconditional Surrender had been discussed before Casablanca. It was not something which had been dreamt up at the conference and it was certainly not something which had just tripped off Roosevelt's tongue at the meeting with the Press.

'...*Unconditional Surrender* had been dropped into my lap, or rather on to my desk in the second week in January 1943. This was the week before they got to Casablanca, I knew this but I had to prove it from open sources, from published documents, and not from my own insight or intelligence about it. So I spent three days hunting through every document I could find.'

Calder: University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

In the bibliography of Eisenhower's *Crusade in Europe*, Ritchie found that the *Unconditional Surrender* formula was before the Chiefs of Staff on the 7th January 1943 and the minutes of this meeting were circulated to the Cabinet. At this point, it had reached Ritchie asking for the comments of PWE.

'I and my colleagues, experts on Germany and on political warfare agreed with the purpose behind *Unconditional Surrender*. We too wanted to destroy the myth of Hitler, Mussolini and indeed of the German High Command and of the Japanese High Command. We wanted the war to be won, and won in an emphatic way.'

'However, to say in unqualified terms, that, on no account and in no circumstances would we ever negotiate with anybody in Germany, in Japan or in Italy, even if they got rid of the people we were after, of course made nonsense of all our propaganda, all our political warfare and, incidentally, made complete nonsense of the Atlantic Charter.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

The Atlantic Charter which had been signed by Roosevelt and Churchill before America came into the war, had by then been watered down considerably. PWE was not allowed to promote it or even discuss it.

'Of course we did. We used it when we saw fit, but we were discouraged from holding out the high hopes of the Four Freedoms, or the other suggestions in the Atlantic Charter.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Ritchie was not there to argue when the PWE representations were discussed.

'... but, I assure you we took a very, very strong view on the foolishness – on the tragic foolishness – of specifying in 1943 that there would be unconditional surrender.'

'When it was made public we were in close cahoots with our American colleagues who felt as strongly as we did that it was a denial, a repudiation a defeat of anything we could do in the enemy countries in the way of dividing the people against their rulers and, by our methods, helping to shorten the war.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

Some of the Americans working with PWE, Bob Sherwood, for example, were close personal friends of Roosevelt. They attempted to persuade him to drop the policy.

'What he actually told them was: "But everybody knows that when Grant refused to offer the Confederates any conditions of surrender and Lee had unconditionally surrendered, Grant

gave him back his sword and his horse. Everybody knows that we would be generous in our treatment."

'Somehow, I do not think that many people in Germany, Italy, Japan or even Britain, would know what happened at the Appotomax Courthouse at that meeting of Grant and Lee which ended the War between the States of America.

'As one of my American colleagues said, "If we tell them they cannot have their sword, can we promise them their horse? The answer, of course, was "No."'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

After that exchange in the House of Commons between Bevin and Churchill, Ritchie pointed out in the *New Statesman* that the Joint Chiefs of Staff memorandum had been circulated to the Cabinet.

'I must say in fairness to Churchill that when, the subject again came up in the House of Commons, he made a personal statement. He conceded that there had been Combined Chiefs of Staff discussions ... before Casablanca, but he could not recall the term *Unconditional Surrender* being used.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Churchill made the point that it was impossible to negotiate with Hitler, the maniac, who had the supreme power to play his hand to the end. Ritchie insisted that he and his team never considered that negotiation with Hitler would be possible.

'... but our job in political warfare was, for example, to try and divide the German people, and to produce a situation within Germany in which you could have an alternative to Hitler. Of course, people said this was impossible but many of us did not believe it.

'We were not thinking that "the good German" could conceivably tear the regime to pieces with his bare hands. The decent people, in many cases, were in concentration camps. But there were forces in Germany which were not entirely reprehensible which could have gathered as an opposition to Hitler and which, as history showed eventually, tried to do so.

'...two of Germany's top Physicists tried to make private contact with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen, to get advice from the suspicious Dane on what they could do if required to work on an atomic bomb.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

The Bishop of Winchester, Dr Bell, had established contacts with the German Protestant Churches, and secretly met their representatives in Stockholm to try to see how the churches could work for peace against Hitler. Cardinal Faulhaber, the Archbishop of Munich, opposed the Nazis all through the Thirties and throughout the war. He attacked the regime in his sermons and when PWE could get hold of them, these were broadcast to Germany.

'In addition there were many substantial groups of opposition with which we were in contact – not enough to do anything themselves, but capable of merging and emerging at a moment of decision. One of the likeliest categories of opponents was the German Trade Union Movement and it was Patrick Gordon Walker's job to keep in touch with them during the war. One of the most important of the trade union groups was the Transport Workers Union. They were part of an international communications system going up and down the Rhine by boat, across frontiers by road and rail and fraternising with the Resistance in various countries. Among other things, they kept escape routes open.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

After the fall of Mussolini, the problems caused by *Unconditional Surrender* became obvious. Marshall Bagdoglio, who took over, wanted positive safeguards against German retribution if the Italians made a separate peace.

'We dropped leaflets on Italy stating in cold official terms our intransigent attitude and on the back of the leaflet, a somewhat softer explanation of the terms themselves. When, before dropping this leaflet, it was shown to Eden, he was angry.'

"What on earth does this mean?" he demanded, pointing first to the one side and then to the other, "*Unconditional Surrender* here and *honourable capitulation* there."

"Oh," said Bruce Lockhart, "*Honourable Capitulation* is Italian for *Unconditional Surrender*". And we got away with it.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

In later years, Ritchie regularly used Lord Cherwell, the distinguished physicist, whom Churchill brought into the wartime cabinet, to illustrate the grave danger of blindly accepting 'the expert view'.

'(Cherwell) could silence every Cabinet argument with a slide rule! What politician can argue with a slide rule?'

Calder: *The Tyranny of the Expert*, 1963

Cherwell persuaded the Defence Committee to adopt 'area bombing', the policy was that bombs should not be aimed at the war plants but, deliberately, on the homes of the workers.

'This policy has been attributed to Air Marshall Harris: but it was Cherwell's policy.'

Calder: *The Tyranny of the Expert*, 1963

Other experts, Henry Tizard and Patrick Blackett protested that Cherwell had got his sums wrong. When J K Galbraith studied the matter after the war, he proved

'... beyond all argument that Cherwell's estimates had in fact been *ten times too high*.'

Calder: *The Tyranny of the Expert*, 1963

As Ritchie pointed out, in Coventry, a fortnight after that city had been 'coventrated', production by Coventry factories was actually higher than before. The raid on Clydebank increased production not only on the Clyde, but all over Scotland. It made everyone more determined not less.

'... I was one of the people who was over-ruled by Cherwell on the issue of area bombing. His scientific colleagues were worried about his calculations. I did not need to check them, Cherwell's strategy of indiscriminate bombing made nonsense of any principles for which we were supposed to be fighting.'

'In terms of political warfare, it played straight into the hands of Goebbels. It gave "Unconditional Surrender" every lurid meaning that he wanted to give it. It made nonsense of our efforts to divide the German people. It convinced the Germans, all of them, that they were dealing with a ruthless and implacable enemy from whom no quarter could be expected if they surrendered. But then, Cherwell had no use for morale warfare, with or without the "e".'

Calder: *The Tyranny of the Expert*, 1963

Ritchie was convinced that Cherwell's strategy lengthened the war.

'Even in terms of his mathematics, it was wrong. The damage caused to the German war effort was less than the wastage of manpower and resources which Britain put into it. We produced the callous absurdity that, while the heart of Frankfurt was torn out, the I G Farben offices, the biggest single building in Germany was left intact. At the I G Farben works at Horsch, the workers and their families took refuge in the works, knowing that they would not be bombed. Two small bombs fell on the chemical plant. The adjoining housing estate was mangled. This policy of area bombing led inexorably to the holocaust of Dresden which was commensurate to the horrors of Hiroshima.'

Calder: *The Tyranny of the Expert*, 1963

Of course, expert knowledge, used appropriately, can be most valuable. When Ritchie began on the task of 'basic planning' for the Balkans, he knew nothing about the area, but the PWE experts produced for him objective appraisals of what was going on in Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, and Greece.

'As I studied them, it was quite obvious to me that there was only one common denominator and that was what we called the 'Green International' – the agrarian revolutionary movement, this was something which overrode frontiers.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

It was a grass-roots movement which did not involve distinctions like Greek-Macedonia and Yugoslav-Macedonia or the contending claims of Hungary and Rumania for Transylvania. It was a solution to the problem of Balkanisation, the breaking up of units into smaller units. It seemed to Ritchie that in this way a coherent approach could be achieved.

'When I proposed this I encountered a great deal of opposition from the Foreign Office.

'One night at H G Well's house, I was with the Russian Ambassador, Ivan Maisky who was not supposed to know what I was doing – although I am sure he did. I was very worried about my Balkan problem and in a moment of indiscretion which could have got me into serious trouble with Security, I discussed with him the "Green International", Maisky, said, "You are quite right!" The Balkans will go co-operative, they will never go collective."

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Ritchie found his statement by Maisky, who was one of the Soviet Old Guard, very important, recognising as it did, that the peasants in the Balkans – the little Slavs – might co-operate in agricultural changes but they would never agree to the industrialisation of farming as collectives. It also accepted as possible that a revolution could have its roots among peasants instead of among the proletariat of the cities as had happened in the Russian Revolution.

'...this has profound relevance to the subsequent events.'

After the Germans overran Yugoslavia, the situation became very tangled and ugly as resistance movements were organised. On the one hand, there was General Mihalovic, King Peter's War Minister, with the Cetniks: on the other, Moscow-trained Tito with the Partisans.

'This produced schizophrenia in the Foreign Office, Churchill was committed to the monarchies – at one stage he wanted us to restore the Hapsburgs to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

King Peter must be put back on the throne of Yugoslavia. Therefore PWE was expected to back Mihalovic.

'We quickly lost any illusions we had about Mihalovic. We found that in Yugoslavia there was no audience for broadcasts about, or to, the Cetniks. Our agents, dropped in by parachute to establish a mission with him, were treated almost as if they were hostages. He was taking our arms supplies and using them against the Partisans who retaliated. Worse than that, we found that there was direct collaboration between Mihalovic and the Germans. This was fairly easy to demonstrate. We would give him operational instructions and find that, not only did he not carry out the operations, but their intentions were disclosed to the enemy.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Tito on the other hand, was waging a vigorous guerrilla warfare against the Germans. Even Churchill with his monarchist sympathies, could not doubt that. In the end, a mission was sent to Tito's headquarters, headed by Fitzroy Maclean MP and including Randolph Churchill, the Prime Minister's son.

'Always, our Political Warfare in and to Yugoslavia was bedevilled by this split mind. We were never allowed to refer to the Partisans. We had to speak of the "Yugoslav Resistance"

including the Cetniks by inference. To Tito's great and continuing and loud indignation, this meant that the Cetniks were getting the credit for the activities of the Partisans, and Mihalovic was cashing in.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

On May 12th 1944, when PWE was struggling with the final preparation for D-Day, an important meeting took place at Bush House with General Velebit, Tito's Chief of Staff. Ritchie found him very impressive. When Velebit, years later, succeeded Gunnar Myrdal as Secretary General of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Ritchie found that the Yugoslav was still very impressive. Through General Velebit, Tito was offering an opportunity to build a bridge between East and West.

In one of his Edinburgh University lectures in 1965, Ritchie mourned the chance that was lost at this time because of Churchill's personal commitment to King Peter.

'Churchill was only prepared to support Tito as a leader if he would accept King Peter, Tito not unnaturally scorned the suggestion ...'

'If, instead of being beset by old fashioned ideas and by our dread of a word, *communism*, we had backed in Yugoslavia and elsewhere the new forces which were emerging from the Resistance Movements, we could have found an alternative to Russian communism. We could have saved the East European countries from being overshadowed by Stalin by a much earlier example from Tito ...'

'This is not hindsight. This is what many of us were arguing in 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 ...'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

Ritchie found the Greek story even more tragic. In August 1936, King George of Greece had allowed General Metaxas to abolish the constitution and set up a Fascist dictatorship. It is more than probable that Greece might have remained neutral during the war if it had not been invaded by Mussolini. In the end, in spite of heroic resistance, the Greeks were overwhelmed when German troops arrived to reinforce the Italians. King George fled.

'It was the unqualified opinion of our political warfare experts that King George had absolutely no following whatever in Greece. It was not a case of "anti-monarchy", it was just "non-monarchy". He had gone and was forgotten. And that was the end of it.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

A very effective Resistance Movement was quickly built up with plenty of help from inside and outside the country. In the beginning, there was much passive non-co-operation but by 1941, guerrilla bands were being actively formed and were encouraged by Britons dropped in by parachute. With many acts of heroism, these guerrillas disrupted German transport and services. The Germans retaliated savagely and the Greeks suffered severely.

'That did not however reduce their patriotic resistance to the Germans. I repeat *patriotic* because the National Liberation Front, EAM and the National Popular Liberation Army, ELAS which formed the political and military movement was a genuine cross section and included patriots of every kind. Of course there were communists in it. But again, I insist, that in the origin of this and other movements, the communists were the non-commissioned officers.'

'We supplied EAM-ELAS liberally with arms and we had substantial missions attached to them.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

In 1942, Churchill went to Cairo, principally to put Montgomery in charge of the Eighth Army in place of Auchinleck. However, while he was there, he dined with the Greek Royal Family.

'He sent back a signal which, among other things, said "I have promised His Majesty King George of the Hellenes, that he shall return to his capital on a white horse."

'When this came over my desk, I made a pencil jotting in the margin, expecting that my superiors would rub it out. I wrote, "The last time this happened it was Europa and it was a bull; and I say it still is!"'

'It was not rubbed out and when it got to exalted levels, I got a rocket.'
University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

Churchill's promise had immediate effect, EAM-ELAS were certainly not prepared to bring back the King so, on higher instruction, a second group, called EDES, the National Republican Greek League, was formed under General Napoleon Zervas. He was not able to mobilise sympathy for the monarchy, but he had a side arrangement with Britain and he was the King's Man.

'Again we had this impossible situation of backing two horses at once. It is true that EAM-ELAS were difficult people to deal with but, of course, they knew what we were up to and that did not help.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1966

After Italy surrendered in September 1943, EAM-ELAS set up a Provisional Government in the mountains and disowned King George and his Government-in-exile. Greek troops in Egypt who mutinied in sympathy, were rigorously suppressed. Then Sir Rex Leeper, the British Ambassador, began talks with EAM and the Government-in-exile to persuade them to form a coalition.

'How anyone expected it to succeed I cannot imagine.'

Ritchie now received instructions from 10 Downing Street that he was to issue a directive saying:

'...that EAM-ELAS were to have no credit whatever, "Even if they destroy two German divisions."

'I refused to issue this directive, because apart from its innate stupidity, it contradicted our master directive which said that "Anyone who fights our enemy is on our side". Churchill had applied this when, in spite of his violent anti-communist attitude, he welcomed Stalin as his ally.'

'I pointed out to my Foreign Office superiors that, if such a directive were to be issued, it would not only be the Greek section of the BBC which would "walk out" but all the other sections from occupied countries as well.'

'I was ordered to issue it, but I restricted to eight key people, and began it "the Prime Minister directs ..." As soon as this was brought to the attention of Churchill, he ordered it to be withdrawn. He was not prepared to accept responsibility for such an outrageous instruction. He had meant it to be an internal subversive activity within the PWE which he could, if necessary, disown.'

University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

Withdrawn or not, this attitude to EAM-ELAS soon had effect, both in propaganda and in supplies of military equipment. Then, an attempt was made to impose the authority of what had been the Government in exile. This finished any pretence of a coalition and led to civil war. In Athens, British troops who had arrived as the Allied Liberation Force when the Germans withdrew, fired on the Greeks causing serious casualties. In the House of Commons, Churchill insisted that it had been a "necessary police action against a band of ruffians".

'Churchill might even have been right in his description of ... the rump of what had been a genuine front of resistance, but which we had succeeded in discrediting to the point that the decent elements had got out and left it to the extreme elements.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

It was clear that the King could not yet return and Archbishop Damaskinos was appointed as Regent.

'I recall a round table at the Foreign Office on the Greek situation at which Sir Orme Sargent, the Deputy Under Secretary, asked plaintively, "Why won't the Greek Left cooperate with Archbishop Damaskinos?"'

'One of my deputies, David Jenkins, who later became a Law Lord, replied drily, "Because they don't like his Beatitude!"'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

There were wider, long term effects of the way in which Britain had handled the Greek situation.

Ritchie went to the Labour Party Conference in May 1945. He was there incognito because he was still in the Foreign Office. The Labour Ministers were heavily attacked for the Coalition Government's actions in Greece – Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, was on the platform but it was Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour who was put up to deal with the critics.

'His was a typically hard hitting speech. He avowed Cabinet responsibility and, on behalf of his fellow ministers, indemnified the "police action".... Fair enough. He then went on to attack the "Rebels" in a fashion which showed that he, and probably the rest of his colleagues, knew nothing about the back-log of our activities in Greece.'

'But what filled me with dismay was his justification for trying to install a regime in Greece on the grounds that Britain must make her post war bases secure in the Middle East --- Greece, Cyprus, Suez. My dismay would have been alarm if I had dreamed at that time that Bevin was to be Foreign Secretary.'

Ritchie respected Bevin's consistency of policy and recognised in him the Trade Union leader who, above all, observed the sanctity of the contract.

'If Bevin made a deal on behalf of his union, he would see it implemented. In the same way, having gone on record, he was later going to stick to it. It conditioned his whole Middle Eastern policy. He kept British troops in Greece until Britain could no longer afford it, but it also determined his attitude to the Palestine question – with the hell-ships and concentration camps for Jews in Cyprus, because the only way he could 'secure' British bases was by appeasing the Arab League and that meant opposing the admission of Jews to Palestine and the emergence of the State of Israel.'

Chapter 21

Stresses

In January 1944, Ritchie was 37½ and halfway through his life. The year that followed was the most stressful he ever went through and twice he nearly died ...

For Mabel and Peter the year began hopefully enough with the birth of their fourth child. Everyone was very pleased with the new baby. They had been continually delighted by his older brother, Angus, who was nearly two. In spite of having a large circle of admirers, and showing signs of being very forward for his age, Angus was a very sweet natured child.

The Calders named their new son, Allan, after Ritchie's brother, who had died the year before of peritonitis. Believing that his job as Manager of Ringway Airport was too essential to the war effort for him to take care of his health, Allan Calder had ignored the symptoms of appendicitis. Penicillin was still only in the experimental stage and he was too overworked to fight the infection.

Margie, Allan's widow, had come to live at Greenways and Betty, now Mrs Adams, had been back with the family for more than two years while her husband was in the army. The two older children at 14 and 12 were working hard at school.

By February 22nd, Pancake Tuesday, Mabel and the new baby were just about settled down at home. Even at the height of the war, it was usual for middle-class mothers to stay about three weeks in a nursing home when they had a baby ... Air raids were by then less common, but that night, the sirens sounded. The family had become hardened to being under the *flight path* along which German bombers throbbed their way to drop their bombs on London. Mabel and Betty were sheltering downstairs in the boarded up hall where the boys were sleeping inside the table-topped *Morrison shelter* but were not really worrying that Margie and I were still upstairs. Then a fleeing bomber jettisoned its load of bombs and one took the corner off the house.

This was the great watershed in the Calder family's life. Even now the older members of the family speak of *before the bombing* and *after the bombing* ...

Ritchie was summoned from Bush House where he was on duty. He found his sister-in-law was critically injured in hospital and his home was a smouldering wreck. Almost unbelievably, however, no-one else was hurt although splinters of glass were found in seven-week-old Allan's carrycot and he had to be abruptly weaned, because Mabel was so shaken up. Neighbours, known and unknown were being very kind and helpful, but everything was chaotic.

Their rented home, Greenways, was officially declared a total loss although a very random collection of things did survive, mostly battered or, in the case of books, mildewed. Always, afterwards, Mabel would say that it was the ultimate lesson in the unimportance of material things. In the long run however the financial strain of re-establishing a home had an unsettling effect. From then on Mabel and Ritchie were rarely free of an underlying uneasiness about money.

In the Department pressures on the staff were already very great. Lockhart had been on sick leave in an Edinburgh nursing home since October. Several other key people were on the sick list as well which, as Young points out was very much in line with the predictions that Sir Findlater Stewart had made in a paper on the health of senior civil servants in the fifth year of the war. (Young: page 266)

Dick Crossman was running true to his PWE form.

'Bruce Lockhart had some difficult colleagues on his staff, not least Richard Crossman, later a Labour Minister, whose work was good but his ... habit of taking crucial decisions off his own bat several times came near to getting him sacked.'

Young: page 21

Although seriously ill, Crossman from his sickbed, was causing great deal of trouble with an article he had written for the *New Statesman* criticising policies to which, as a member of the Department staff, he was officially committed. He was also 'intriguing with the Americans' (Young: page 274).

Even before America had come into the war in December 1941, the staff of the Political Warfare Executive had close and fruitful links with their opposite numbers across the Atlantic. Ritchie formed several lifelong friendships with people like James Warburg, Archie MacLeish, poet and Librarian of Congress: Bob Sherwood, playwright and close friend of Franklin Roosevelt and Bill Paley head of the Columbia Broadcasting Company. However it soon became clear that most of PWE's problems were replicated on the other side of the Atlantic.

Considerably more acrimony raged over there, perhaps because the United States did not have the pressure of being under siege which had such a splendid organising effect on the real priorities in Britain. As America began to dominate the war, the influence that PWE was able to exert came to depend more on personal relationships than on any respect for British experience in the field and in detailed planning. Now politicking in Washington was making it necessary to work with people who showed less appreciation of the expertise and carefully calculated plans of PWE.

Since September 1943, Ritchie and his team in the Directorate of Plans and Campaigns had been putting a formidable effort into planning every last detail of the invasion of North West Europe: *Operation Overlord*. It was essential that Ritchie should be able to give his mind to this job, so the PWE Administration solved the problem of rehousing the Calders. They were whisked off to one of the requisitioned houses around the *Country HQ* at Woburn Abbey. Many of these were standing empty at this time because so much of the work had been transferred to Bush House.

Within three days, the family, still in a state of shock, suddenly found itself in a small mansion, Wensden, Aspley Guise, complete with resident housekeeper and parlourmaid. By one of the quirks of fate, Ritchie was to visit the house again, during the seventies when it had become the official residence of the Vice Chancellor of the Open University. In spring 1944, the only reading matter in this house was a copy of *Burkes' Peerage* and the *Red Book*, which was a guide to the social round in London. Ritchie and Mabel could not afford to rent a house of this size and so on May 4th, another move was made to Broom Down, a smaller and more convenient house at Woburn Sands.

This took care of the greatest difficulty but letters survive to show the problems with which Ritchie had to deal on top of a nearly overwhelming work load. There was the furniture: salvage: storage: insurance claims. There was the electricity: the telephone. The local Council irritably tried to refuse to take back the salvaged Morrison shelter without a receipt to prove it had been bought from them. He was corresponding with the recently widowed owner of Greenways. The children needed school work and there were Margie's legal affairs. Margie herself had to be visited in hospital where she was making an amazing but slow recovery. The detail must have seemed endless.

It was characteristic of him that he took the trouble to write to the Metropolitan Police about the unidentified policemen who had come to the help of his family on the night of the bombing. They had put out the fire, taken Margie to hospital and braved the ruins twice for necessities for the baby.

'If they can be identified, please convey to them my most grateful thanks: if they cannot, please accept these thanks as yet another tribute to the Metropolitan Police.'

In April, Harry Lucas, Ritchie's Deputy, who always gave him so much support and whom he held in the greatest affection, had to be carried out of the office. He had collapsed over his desk with tuberculosis and by the following January, he was dead.

Whatever Ritchie's problems, the preparations for *Overlord* ground on, like a juggernaut. In addition, other vital planning matters, which were running in parallel could not be ignored. It was on May 12th, General Velebit, Tito's Chief of Staff came for discussions at Bush House. The outcome of this meeting was, in Ritchie's view, disastrous. He was, however, still far too busy to spend much time dwelling on his frustrations about Yugoslavia.

At last, at 10pm on June 5th 1944, all the Regional Directors were gathered together to be fully informed for the first time and to hear that the invasion was even then in progress. Lockhart recorded that:

'It was quite an amusing and exciting performance because Ritchie Calder, (who has worked like a black) was in a state of emotional fever and gave (á la Brooks whose job it is) a military appreciation complete with map and pointer.'

Young: page 317

The small hours of the morning were spent with Lockhart and Bill Paley debating whether De Gaulle, who was furious at the way he was being treated, would actually agree to broadcast the following day. The next question was, if he would agree to broadcast, would he agree to his script being vetted? In that event who would actually vet it? Eden dragged out of bed at 4am was clear. De Gaulle's speech definitely had to be vetted and vetted by the Foreign Office.

Before Ritchie was able to get some sleep, another problem arose which required a decision. The BBC was reporting German announcements of the Invasion ahead of the official Allied Communiqué being issued. As June 6th continued, there was still the matter of De Gaulle.

There had been a long series of regrettable incidents, umbrage, obstinacy and misunderstandings particularly with the Americans. At 1am on June 6th Churchill is reported as having 'exploded, roared, bellowed' and 'being incoherent with rage' about De Gaulle. (Francois Kersaudy: *Churchill and De Gaulle*, Collins, London 1981; page 347)

Ritchie gave an account of the difficulties which had to be dealt with.

'Even at that late hour and at that great moment of history, De Gaulle was not to be trusted. We in Political Warfare Executive were responsible for putting him on the air. We were instructed that his script must be vetted, censored if need be. And when the General arrived to broadcast there was McLure, an American General, and two other Americans to see that he kept in line in what he said.'

'If anyone of us had any idea that we could alter his script, that idea withered as we met him, killed by the frost of his look. He went into the studio and he delivered a magnificent broadcast, moving to tears those who had suffered from him for years.'

'No one could have tampered with that inspiring message, but there were those in high quarters who were angry. De Gaulle typically had pulled a fast one. He was recognised only as the President of the Provisional French Government. In the broadcast he had deliberately left out the *Provisional*. Like Napoleon Buonaparte, he had crowned himself.'

University of Edinburgh Lectures, 1965

The strains on Ritchie and the rest of PWE did not ease with the landings in Normandy. The Political Warfare implications of the liberation of Europe needed to be kept under constant review. Then on the night of June 12-13th the Germans launched their secret weapon, the flying bomb. London, as usual was the intended target. There was a horrific incident on June 30th when a flying bomb came down alongside Bush House at lunchtime. There were very heavy casualties in a queue outside the Post Office and on two buses passing along Aldwych.

'PWE was lucky, for although considerable damage was done, the bomb fell at 2pm when many people were at luncheon. Some forty members of the staff received treatment for cuts and minor injuries. There were only three serious casualties and, fortunately all recovered. Morale was however, visibly, but not seriously affected, and afterwards when the overhead danger signal sounded, we came away from the glass with which we were surrounded and congregated in the centre of the building. Interference with work, however, was negligible.'

Lockhart: page 313

On the evening of July 11th, Ritchie was expected home at Broom Down. The evening wore on and he never appeared. Then, very late at night, the news came that he was lying unconscious in University College Hospital. The delay was because all his papers were marked top security and there was no way of knowing where he had been going.

The facts were at last pieced together. While crossing Euston Square, Ritchie had collapsed. The first passerby who reached him was a doctor and he recognised the urgency of the case. A passing

weapon carrier was commandeered and at the nearest hospital, University College, by another freak of luck, the doctor on duty was Francis Walshe, a leading brain specialist.

Ritchie had been struck down by a sub-arachnoid haemorrhage. This was almost always fatal and it was many years before Ritchie could find an insurance company prepared to take the risk of ignoring the statistics and allow him to increase his life cover.

Ritchie's life was always full of surprising twists. The first person he saw when he recovered consciousness was Agatha Christie, who had returned to her original profession as a pharmacist to help the war effort. They had not met since the encounter in the Harrogate Hydro.

There were many anxious and affectionate enquiries about Ritchie. Anthony Eden was asking for news but Brendon Bracken, as seems to have been typical of that very complex man, wrote Mabel a personal letter ...

'I am deeply grieved to hear of your husband's illness. I fear the arduous work he has done for political warfare has taken its toll of him. He has never spared himself and all of his colleagues are full of his praises ... if there is anything I can do to help you please let me know.'

The Foreign Office ruled that Ritchie was to be treated as a very special war casualty and he was given every possible attention. In the early days, the great anxiety was of course whether, if he did survive, there would be permanent disability, but survive he did, and in good order. This was typical. Ritchie had a very tough constitution indeed.

Ritchie had his own very characteristic explanation of what struck him down in July 1944. In a lecture at Edinburgh University, he told the story of the efforts the Political Warfare Executive had made to get a sensible reaction to Velebit's mission. His final comment was that his brain surgeon Francis Walshe had said:

'... that my particular form of haemorrhage should have been the result of a physical blow. I replied I had been battering my head against a brick wall in the Foreign Office and something had to give and it wasn't the brick wall.'
University of Edinburgh Lecture, 1965

John Boyd Orr had written to Mabel saying:

'When he is out of danger, tell him that we are looking forward very much to having him hereif possible you must get someone to look after the children and come north with Peter (Ritchie).'

Letter: July 19th 1944

By the end of August Ritchie was ready to travel up to Scotland to convalesce. He must have started to catch up with his correspondence because on September 15th H G Wells wrote:

'My Dear Calder
I do not think I have ever been so delighted by a letter as I am by yours. (dated 10th but to hand only yesterday). I have been round and about you several times in the last few weeks with the Baroness Budberg calling upon other cases in the hospital and every time we asked for you we were told you were insensible ... Everybody had counted you off as completely done for. And here you are like one come back from the dead.'

By September 21st he was back in London. Of course he did not pay sufficient attention to orders to take things very gently. It was not surprising therefore that he picked up a bug when in December, he made a trip to the Supreme Allied Expeditionary Force Headquarters in Paris. Boils developed into septicaemia and he was back in hospital but by now, mercifully, penicillin was available.

'I had a hollow needle in my leg and penicillin was being dripped into it. I knew the cost of the product. It was a Scotsman's nightmare, I lay there and I counted each drip, "Tenpence ... Tenpence ... Tenpence ... Tenpence ..."

He was well enough to see in 1945. It was the first time that Fiona and Nigel had stayed up for Hogamany but seeing the back of a year like 1944 seemed a good idea. At midnight, Ritchie explained very solemnly that he expected that they would be surprised to learn that he had been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the New Years Honours list. He had never believed in these things but he had been persuaded that, as the work he was doing in the war was so totally secret and some of it, perhaps could never be made public, the only way its usefulness could be made known was to accept some such award.

What he did not say was that, before he was ill the previous summer, he had written to Lockhart asking:

'... that the Minister should not put his name forward for what you mentioned ... a man of my age and grade should be earning his distinctions in other fields and I am fortunate to be able to follow my bents even in wartime.'

Nor did he ever reveal that, according to Mabel, the fact that he would not accept more than a CBE upset the scale of the awards in other parts of PWE.

He exchanged rather sheepish letters with his friends Francis Williams and R J Cruickshank each of whom had also accepted a CBE. Cruickshank responded to Ritchie's letter with:

'My dear sir, what is this about a veiled figure? The people on the other side when I was there, which isn't so long ago, were praising and honouring your name to me, notably Archie MacLeish, Elmer Davis, Bob Sherwood ... They will be as pleased as we are here to see your brilliant work acknowledged.'

In response to the letter from Dallas Brooks, who had moved to the Royal Marines at the beginning of the year, Ritchie grumbled:

'I don't know about getting one's deserts. In my case I feel it is a subtle move to make me respectable.'

It became more obvious every day that the end of the war in Europe was in sight and, every day, arrangements seemed more and more impermanent. The replacement for Dallas Brooks as Deputy Director General did not arrive until the beginning of March and when Lockhart, once more, had to take to his bed in February, an Acting Deputy took over. The new Deputy, in any case, only stayed five months and then went off to become Chief of the Information Services in the British Zone.

The European war accelerated to a crescendo. The Russian army broke through in the east and the war leaders met at Yalta. There was the inferno of Dresden, the last filing of Cherwell's area bombing policy, the full horror of which was not comprehended at the time: the crossing of the Rhine and the deliverance at last from the flying bomb and the V2's which made fatalists of a generation in England. Roosevelt was dead and then the realities of Belsen and Buchenwald were revealed to a stunned world which had refused to believe all the evidence that such things could be possible. On April 25th, at Torgau, the Russians moving west met the Americans moving east, Berlin was taken and the German forces at last surrendered unconditionally ... There was at last victory in Europe.

Ritchie sneaked away to the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool. He was after all still a Civil Servant. On May 21st, Attlee took to Churchill the decision of the Party that it would not continue in the Coalition Government although the war with Japan had not ended. Plans for a General Election got under way. Dick Crossman resigned to fight the Coventry North constituency. Ritchie was wistful. If he had not been taken ill in July he would almost certainly have been chosen prospective candidate for 'the only seat he ever wanted', Dundee.

The doctors had at last cleared him to go back to SHAEF and he set off for Germany with Eleanor Allden, his personal assistant.

In a letter to a German research student in January 1977, Ritchie described his assignment as Special Adviser.

'(I was) expected to personalise the PWE presence with my American opposite number, and good friend, George Backer. I was expected to consolidate all the arrangements – from theory into practice – for the implementation of the final directive on the control of the Press, Film and Radio. If I had considered these measures necessary, my experience now confirmed it. My time was spent dealing with elegant gentlemen, protesting themselves non-Nazis but blandly admitting to having been members of the Party because everyone was and producing their proprietary claims to the presses.'

The problem was that everyone wanted to get home and Editorial boards were hurriedly appointed which included anti-Nazis as well as the non-Nazis. Ritchie was left profoundly unsatisfied.

'... the obvious anti-Nazis had been for many years in concentration camps. Some of them were psychologically crippled. All of them were out of touch with the contemporary world. I knew that they would not survive long on the *Editorial Boards*. Such *liberalisation* was cynical and burking our responsibility to the Germans.'

When the Zones were taken over Ritchie removed to Montgomery's Headquarters but he gathered immediately that he was wasting his time ... Besides he, too, was now itching to get home.

Ritchie had not surprised when a landslide Labour victory was announced. As he told Lockhart:

'I knew the (Tories had lost the) election ... at the beginning of the Potsdam Conference when, at the British parade, the band put down their instruments, without or against orders, in order to cheer Attlee. There was nothing like this cheering for Churchill.'

'Attlee was most embarrassed.'

Young: page 488

When the news of the election results reached Ritchie in Germany, he wrote to Lockhart.

'You can imagine my feelings about the Election. The intoxicating effects of the results have left me with a morning after feeling. When I think that I could have been in for Dundee with a majority of 16,000!'

'In view of the developments, I have an awful sense of frustration here. I am completely out of touch except for the new-bulletins and for forty-eight hour old newspapers. And "out of sight out of mind" applies to leaders of the Labour Party as well as to most people. I don't know precisely what I want to do, nor indeed what I want them to do, at this juncture. And I will not until I get back to sum up the situation. It might be that I should want (since my tour of the German Bads has now restored me to full health to fight one of the four by-elections now pending, but even if I don't seek a Parliamentary candidature, I know that there is a whole lot of work to be done and which it is my duty to offer to do ...'

Letter: July 30th 1945

Ritchie appealed to Lockhart for quick action....

'As the accommodating person whose good nature you have systematically exploited, I don't want to be, or to appear, unreasonable even in the present circumstances, but I am quite convinced that I can do more for the German operation by coming back than by staying here. I certainly want to catch the new Foreign Secretary as soon as possible for reasons which you know and we have discussed when I was rooting for EB as Foreign Secretary.'

'...I have fulfilled the mission which you asked me to undertake – of restoring and establishing good relations with the Americans. The future of these relations is beyond my competence (except in the degree to which I can influence the attitude of my friends in the Government) since now it is a question not of personalities but of policy.'

'... I certainly must be back well before the 15th, when Parliament reassembles and most of the preliminaries, in which I might have some say, will have been completed.

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