

backed up Adorno's thesis of "enforced retardation," and serve as a brainwashers' handbook.

In studies on the serialized radio dramas, commonly known as "soap operas" (so named, because many were sponsored by soap manufacturers), Herta Hertzog found that their popularity could not be attributed to any socio-economic characteristics of listeners, but rather to the serialized format itself, which induced habituated listening. The brainwashing power of serialization was recognized by movie and television programmers; to this day, the afternoon "soaps" remain among the most addictive of television fare, with 70% of all American women over 18 watching at least two of these shows each day.

Another Radio Research Project study investigated the effects of the 1938 Orson Welles radio dramatization of H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, about an invasion from Mars. Some 25% of the listeners to the show, which was formatted as if it were a news broadcast, believed that an invasion was under way, creating a national panic—this, despite repeated and clear statements that the show was fictional. Radio Project researchers found that most people didn't believe that Martians had invaded, but rather that a German invasion was under way. This, the researchers reported, was because the show had followed the "news bulletin" format that had earlier accompanied accounts of the war crisis around the Munich conference. Listeners reacted to the format, not the content of the broadcast.

The project's researchers had proven that radio had already so conditioned the minds of its listeners, making them so fragmented and unthinking, that repetition of format was the key to popularity.⁹

Television: the one-eyed babysitter

Television was beginning to make its entrance as the next mass media technology at the time the Radio Research Project's findings were published in 1939. First experimented with on a large scale in Nazi Germany during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, TV made its splashy public appearance at the 1939 New York World's Fair, where it attracted large crowds. Adorno and others immediately recognized its potential as a mass-brainwashing tool. In 1944, he wrote, "Television aims at the synthesis of radio and film . . . but its consequences are enormous and promise to intensify the impoverishment of aesthetic matter, so drastically that by tomorrow, the thinly veiled identity of all industrial culture products can come triumphantly out in the open, derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the fusion of all arts in one work."

9. It is important to note that there is nothing inherently evil with radio, television, or any form of technology. What makes them dangerous is the control of their use and content by the Club of Isles networks for evil purposes, to create habituated, and even fixated listeners and viewers, whose critical capacities are thus seriously impaired.

As was obvious from even the earliest clinical studies of television (some of which were conducted in the late 1940s and early 1950s by Tavistock operatives), viewers, over a relatively short period of time, entered into a trance-like state of semi-awareness, characterized by a fixed stare. The longer one watched, the more pronounced the stare. In such a condition of twilight-like semi-awareness, they were susceptible to messages both contained in the programs themselves, and

Tavistock's language project: the origin of 'Newspeak'

At the start of World War II, Tavistock operatives, including Brig. Gen. John Rawlings Rees in the Psychological Warfare Directorate, were busy at work on a secret language project. The target of that project was not the "enemy," but the English language itself, and the English-speaking people.

The Tavistock crowd had picked up on the work of British linguist C.K. Ogden, who had created a simplified version of the English language using some 850 basic words (650 nouns and 200 verbs), with rigid rules for their use. Called "Basic English," or "Basic" for short, the product was ridiculed by most English-speaking intellectuals; Ogden's proposal to translate Classic literature, such as Marlowe and Shakespeare, into Basic, was rightfully attacked as an effort to trivialize the greatest expressions of English-language culture.

But in the bowels of the psywar directorate, the concepts behind Basic were key to large-scale control of dangerous "thought." A simplified English language limits the degrees of freedom of expression, and inhibits the transmission of meaning through metaphor.¹ It is then easy to create a "reality" that can be massaged through the mass media, such as radio. A reduced language is a straitjacket for the human mind.

The British Ministry of Information, which controlled all broadcasting and news dissemination, decided to experiment with the effectiveness of Basic. The British Broadcasting Corp. was asked to produce some newscasts in Basic, which were broadcast in a number of foreign sections of the BBC, including the Indian Section, which included among its operatives 1984 author George Orwell and his close friend Guy Burgess, who later was to be

1. For a more detailed discussion of language and metaphor, see Lyndon LaRouche, "On the Subject of Metaphor," *Fidelio*, Fall 1992.

through transference, in the advertising. They were being brainwashed.¹⁰

Television moved from being a neighborhood oddity, to

10. For a more comprehensive discussion of television, its programming, and its brainwashing of the American population, see the 16-part series "Turn Off Your Television," by this author in the *New Federalist*, 1990-93. It is available in reprint from *EIR*.

involved in Britain's biggest postwar Soviet spy scandal.² The results were carefully monitored.

Those involved quickly discovered that, with some modification, the language was ideal to present a censored, edited version of the news. Since it lent itself to simple, declarative statements, it gave those statements the character of *fact*, even though the information being reported was heavily censored or even self-admitted propaganda.

British 'empires of the mind'

Following the presentation of a special report on these findings in 1943, the Basic project was placed on "highest priority" in the War Cabinet, at the insistence of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The project, now-declassified papers reveal, was to be expanded to include work in the United States. While not revealing the secret research on the psychological implications of Basic, Churchill became its cheerleader, promoting the new language as the basis for a renewed bond between Britain and its former colony, America. On Sept. 6, 1943, in a speech at Harvard University, Churchill called for "a new Boston Tea Party," to overturn the English language and replace it with Basic. Telling his audience of Anglophiles that they were at the "headstream" of a mighty cultural sea change that would have a "health-giving effect," he declared that the power to control language "offer[s] far better prizes than taking away people's provinces or lands or grinding them down in exploitation. The empires of the future are the empires of the mind."

But the public side of the project met resistance from the British and American public, who, while not neces-

2. Some historians have claimed that Orwell's "Newspeak," in his *1984*, is a simple parody of Basic. To the contrary: Orwell was one of the most avid supporters of the Basic concept of reduced language. What appealed to him most was its simplicity and its apparent ability to abolish "jargon." He also thought that anything without real meaning, when reduced to its Basic translation, would be easily seen to be absurd. A utopian, Orwell, in his letters, expressed concern over the power of the Ministry of Information (Miniform, as it was known) to control and manage the news. It was that aspect of the process, not Basic's degrading of the English language, that he parodied in *1984* with his "Newspeak," controlled by Minitrue, the Ministry of Truth.

mass penetration of especially urban areas, during approximately 1947-52. As Lyndon LaRouche has observed, this coincided with a critical period in the nation's psychological life. The dreams of millions of World War II veterans and their high hopes of building a better world, crashed to earth in the morally corrupt leadership of the Truman administration and ensuing economic depression. These veterans retreated into family life, their jobs, their homes, their living

sarily grasping the full implications of Basic, nonetheless resented being told how to speak. And there was no support forthcoming from the U.S. President, Franklin Roosevelt, who considered Basic "silly."

However, reports from the Ministry of Information to the special War Cabinet committee said that the language was unwieldy. Rather than overturn the English language, the reports argued, it were easier to simplify the latter's usage by example of the mass media news broadcasts. Radio newscasts, which had been made up of long descriptive commentaries before the war, took on the shorter formats that are featured today. The long sentences, often with literary overtones, gave way to shorter, more direct sentences and simple vocabulary.

Television news has adopted this linguistic style: simple direct sentences, with a very, very limited vocabulary. Television newscasts, never too informative and erudite, have become less so in recent years, as they were forcibly dumbed down. When Roone Arledge, the former head of ABC sports, took over its poorly rated news division in the mid-1970s, he demanded that news broadcasts be simplified and made easier to understand.

In a 1979 article in *Washingtonian* magazine, media expert and political scientist John David Barber supported Arledge's approach to the news, arguing that its language "passes right over the head of the great lower half of the American electorate." He compiled a list of 31 words that he thought should be excised from a CBS news broadcast; included was the term "political conspiracy." Wrote Barber, "There is no way that [that] vocabulary can catch and hold the average high school graduate." Most news directors agree with that assessment: Vocabulary analysis of newscasts reveals that, other than specialized terms, names of places, and proper names, far less than Basic's 850-word vocabulary is employed.³ Recent studies have shown that the vocabulary of the average American, while not quite at the Basic level of 850 words (excluding proper nouns and specialized terms), is plunging toward that level.

—L. Wolfe

3. The vocabulary of non-news television is even more degraded and limited.