

FINAL REPORT

Professional Development Grant

Great Britain and Neutral Nations During World War I

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September 25, 2013

This document is the final report of a research project funded in part by an ATU Professional Development Grant. The research took place in December 2012/January 2013 in London, UK.

A. Title Page (attached at front)

B. Restatement of Project Researched

The historical literature of World War I largely focuses upon the belligerent powers with less attention to the nations who adopted neutrality in 1914. While some of these countries, such as Italy and the United States, eventually declared war upon the Central Powers and joined the Allied war effort, the process by which these populations came to see the Allied Powers as the protagonists in the war is one of the earlier uses of international propaganda during the twentieth century. Opposition to the war in neutral countries created particular challenges for the belligerents' propaganda machines, as demonstrated by the German-American and Irish-American lobbies in the U.S. during the Wilson Administration. British propaganda campaigns in these countries were so subtle and secretive that it was not until the mid-1930s that their efforts became public knowledge. I proposed this research trip in order to gather material on the efforts of British propaganda agencies to influence public opinion in neutral nations during the war, either to remain sympathetic to the Allies or to join their war effort.

C. Review of Research Procedure

While the British government formalized the use of propaganda during World War I, most published works address its domestic uses, and little attention has been focused upon the important foreign policy role of propaganda in affecting the sympathies of neutral nations. The British government drafted famous writers, journalists, and entertainers to write articles, go on speaking tours, and otherwise inform the populations of neutral nations about the threat of the Central Powers and the "truth" about Allied intentions. None of the other Allied nations engaged in international propaganda on such a scale, nor was the propaganda of the Central Powers disseminated with such cool efficiency or secrecy. The major document collections are held in major repositories in the UK, with government archives located at the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives.

D. Summary of Findings, Outcomes, or Experiences Had

During the first week of my stay in London, I undertook research in the War Propaganda Bureau archives held by the Imperial War Museum, including papers of Wellington House, the original propaganda headquarters at the start of the war. While working in the IWM archives, I also reviewed the papers of Sir Stanley von Donop, Master-General of the Ordnance from 1913 to 1916.

During the second week of the trip, I conducted research at the National Archives at Kew. My particular interests among their holdings were propaganda documents of the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office News Department, and I was able to use modern technology to photograph documents and save them to “Dropbox,” so I could retrieve them instantly and in their original appearance.

E. Conclusions

The research trip so generously funded by Tech’s Faculty Research and Professional Development grants has expanded the materials I have collected during my research and increased my knowledge on the subject of British propaganda in World War I. While I hope to continue my research as possible, I am working on a manuscript at the present time.