

How did the
government try to
hide the effect of the
blitz essay sample



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During the blitz, the government's main policy was to sustain high morale. The government did not always want the public to know the full scale of attacks, because they feared talk of defeat amongst the British people. Also if workers were struck by low morale, it was feared the quality of their work would deteriorate. British leaders wanted their people to radiate victory and show the Germans they were not being defeated.

Another aim was to demoralise the Germans. They wanted to prove to Germany that her tactics were not working. If a bombing raid happened on a certain day, the photos would not be published for a few days. By doing this, the government hoped the Germans would not be able to confirm success, and would be unaware which areas were still intact and this would lead their morale to plummet.

In addition Britain wanted to challenge German propaganda. The Germans continuously tried to undermine British morale with Propaganda. Radio Hamburg had a programme on during the blitz by a certain lord Haw-Haw, an American, speaking in an English accent, who read the news. He knew the British wanted direct information on the war, so he was sure they would soak up the information he read on his programme, he therefore tried to dampen British morale by constantly repeating that Germany was winning the war very easily.

The government took many measures to achieve these aims, by controlling the information the public would receive.

The most important measure was the set up of the Ministry of Information in September 1939. Its job was to supply information on the war, and give
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guidance and advice to the media. It used radio, pamphlets, posters, letters and advertisements to pass information on to the whole country, and sustain civilian morale. The ministry was the source of all official and military information. It relied on information from mass observation in order to target its audience in the most appropriate way; this ministry acted as a censor.

In Britain at this time there was freedom in the press. Therefore neither the government nor the newspapers relished the idea of censorship. This was also because Britain was fighting Germany, an authoritarian regime, in the name of democracy, and so the government did not think control of the press would go down well. Therefore, the government tried to keep good relations with the press. Overall, relations were good, if not always smooth. Censorship tended to be indirect, the papers still produced their own articles, but they were kept in line by the ministry of information. Although the ministry held regular guidance meetings, these were often not necessary, as the press went into self-censorship. The editors saw themselves as patriots, and felt they could inspire patriotism in the nation.

However if newspapers stepped out of line, they would be prosecuted. The daily worker fell victim of this, because the communist newspaper expressed its views that the war was a capitalist idea, which did not benefit the working classes, it also said Britain would lose the war.

Another paper that came close to this fate was the Daily Mirror, because of its criticism on the way that Churchill and his government were dealing with things. The Daily Mirror however was a very popular newspaper, so Churchill

feared a press campaign would be his downfall, just as chamberlain had suffered in 1940. From then on the paper toned down.

Newspapers tended to report in an upbeat fashion. If bombing occurred, no precise information was supplied, only positive comments made by citizens. Reports often used to concentrate on a particular family's story, so as to bring hope to other readers. They often twisted the truth to keep morale high. In cases of individual disasters, newspapers were often made to report or show photographs of the incident only a few days later, and some times had to wait even longer. This occurred with the bombing of Balham tube station, where several hundred people drowned because of a severed water pipe.

Censorship of photographs was very common during the blitz. Photographs were not always censored because they showed death and disasters of the worst kind, but also because they portrayed the misery and angst of civilians (photo 1), and depicted the widening gap between the way of life of the working classes in comparison to the middle classes (photo 2).

Photo 1: the crowd looks upon the rescue workers searching for survivors amid the ruins of the bomb damaged Catford Central School for Girls.

Photo 2: shows the comfort of the middle classes at Mrs Staines's restaurant in London in April 1943.

The BBC radio home service was continuous throughout the war, as most people had a wireless set. The BBC was the government's official channel of communication and carried out Ministry of Information Instructions. I theory

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the BBC was independent, but it was financed by the state, therefore the government had final authority over Broadcasting policy and could veto the appearance of any broadcaster. It also controlled the content of political and all news coverage. It passed on ministerial announcements, news from war fronts, and had programs giving advice on safety, health issues, recipes and activities for adults and children. It also had light entertainment, comedy, parodies of war, programs for the troops, and readings by J. B Priestly.

At the time, film was one of the most powerful mediums of communication and was therefore used for propaganda during the war. Wartime propaganda in the form of short films and documentaries accompanied the main feature. These films were produced by the film division of the MOI in liaison with commercial studios, independent producers and news real companies, but the MOI always decided the message and the theme of the film.

Over 1400 documentaries urging the British people for greater wartime effort and containing government instructions were made, but these were truly unpopular, as they were often very crude. Feature films were also produced; the aim was to make good films that contained messages from the government about the war.

Posters with slogans were also used to warn, inform and encourage war effort. Slogans like "Your courage, Your cheerfulness, Your resolution, Will bring us victory" were widely disliked; they were often devised by the ministry of information to try to maintain morale. This was because Londoners felt they were living their lives the best they could, without the

help of these brave patriotic slogans. Forced in front of their eyes by the
MOI.