

PREFACE

This paper was originally prepared, in January 1978, for a seminar at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham. During the summer of 1977, I spent many hours in the Mass-Observation Archive, reading the Day Survey Diaries of 1937 'life histories' of the 1939 Observers in connection with a wider project on the London lower middle class between the wars. It was clear that an adequate discussion of the diaries and life histories was impossible without some understanding of Mass-Observation as a whole and I therefore attempted to write a narrative history of the organisation and to set it in the context of the 1930's and 1940's. The following paper is the result. There are some serious lacunae in the account, most notably in Part I, where a discussion of the state of academic sociology and anthropology in the 1930's and a fuller analysis of the interests of the founders of M-O in surrealism and psychology would be helpful. I would welcome any criticisms and suggestions readers may have to offer on these and other points arising from the paper.

The writing of this paper would have been quite impossible without the unfailing help and kindness of Dorothy Wainwright, Secretary of the Mass-Observation Archive. To her I owe especial thanks. I am also grateful to the Trustees of the Mass-Observation Archive, with whose permission this paper is published. Should readers wish to know more about the Archive, they should contact Dorothy Wainwright at the Mass-Observation Archive, Arts Block D, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex.

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1936 an article appeared in the *New Statesman* by Geoffrey Pike, a Cambridge school master, commenting on the power of what he called a "myth" in national politics.ⁱ The Abdication Crisis prompted Pike to write again to the *New Statesman* suggesting that there was a need for an anthropological study of British society. In his December letter he wrote:

"Anthropologists and Psychologists all over the world are studying the reactions of primitive tribes to sexual situations. There has been concentrated within the last ten days the reactions of the people of the British Empire to a sexual situation. Here, in a relatively limited form, is come the material for that anthropological study of our own situation of which we stand in such desperate need."ⁱⁱ

The Abdication Crisis is the immediate cause of the founding of M-O, illustrates three of Mass-Observation's fundamental concerns. Firstly, a fascination with what they called myth and superstition in national life, especially in relation to public fears and fantasies about the coming of war and relation to Royalty. Secondly a deep distrust of the press, and criticism of the inability of the press to fulfil its supposed function, that is, to bridge the gap between rulers and ruled, to tell the public of the moves and thoughts of its elected leaders and to tell the leaders of the opinions of the electorate. During the Abdication Crisis the press had imposed self-censorship, pages had been torn out of foreign magazines before they reached the public, the Prime Minister, Baldwin, was publicly silent until the eve of abdication: the public wanted the facts and got nothing but rumour. Conversely, Baldwin and his Government were worried about public reaction to the crisis. The war in Spain had broken out earlier that year and the government was loath to encourage the formation of a faction of the King's Friends.ⁱⁱⁱ The government needed, therefore, to be able to gauge public opinion, but the organs which should have expressed public opinion, the press, were seriously out of touch with their readership. This brings us to the third fundamental concern of Mass-Observation: the great gulf of ignorance dividing rulers from ruled, class from class. In February 1937 M-O wrote:

"As a result of the Abdication Crisis ... we realised as never before the sway of superstition in the midst of science. How little we know of our next door neighbour and his habits. Of conditions of life and thought in another class or district our ignorance is complete. The anthropology of ourselves is still only a dream."^{iv}

At the time of the Abdication Crisis Tom Harrisson had recently returned from an anthropological expedition to the New Hebrides and had settled in the Lancashire cotton town of Bolton to begin an anthropological survey of the English working class. Harrisson was born in 1911 in South America, the son of a General in the British Army turned managing director of the Argentinean railways. He was sent home to England to be educated at Harrow and, in the school holidays, stayed with a series of foster families; there are important similarities in Harrisson's early life to that of George Orwell and they, along with Raymond Williams's ideas on Orwell's lack of close family ties and of a sense of

England of which he was fully part, should be born in mind in looking at M-O.^v Further we should remember when looking at Harrison's later work in Bolton that by his early 20's, he was a nationally known ornithologist with two studies to his name, one of which used a team of 1000 nation-wide observers and both of which were recognised as classics in their field. The study of birds in their natural environment requires endless patience; the ornithologist must observe every aspect of the bird's existence; above all the observer must not be observed. While at Harrow, and while very briefly at Cambridge, Harrison took part in naturalist's expeditions to the Arctic, Lapland, and St. Kilda. In 1931 he led an Oxford University expedition to Borneo to study plant and animal life and from there moved on to Malekula in the New Hebrides and lived for two years among cannibals. He returned to England in 1936, although his original intention had been to take up Douglas Fairbanks Senior's offer and become a consultant on cannibals in Hollywood. In England he published an anthropological account of his two years in Malekula, *Savage Civilisation*, a book which became a best seller and later, somewhat surprisingly, became a Left Book Club choice.^{vi}

Early in January 1937, Charles Madge, a moderately well known leftist poet and a frustrated journalist on the Daily Mirror took up Pike's idea of an anthropology of ourselves. In a letter to the *New Statesman*^{vii} he wrote that a group of poets, painters and documentary film-makers based in Blackheath, London, had already formed an organisation which intended to create a new science of ourselves, Mass-Observation. Quite by chance on the same page of the same issue of the *New Statesman* there appeared a long poem, written by Tom Harrison, on the culinary habits of South Sea cannibals. Harrison saw Madge's letter and wrote to the Blackheath group, telling them of his Bolton, or, as he always called it, Worktown project. The result was that on the 30 of January 1937, a further letter appeared in the *New Statesman* signed by Tom Harrison, Humphrey Jennings, and Charles Madge, formally announcing the foundation of Mass-Observation.^{viii} The letter lamented the lack of a science of everyday life in modern society. There were, they wrote, sciences of primitive man, economic man, abnormal man, but the chaos of the past year necessitated a new science, a science of ourselves. The founders of M-O called for volunteers to contact them and suggested topics for investigation, the list, like the various interests of the founding members, suggests the eclecticism and the vagueness of the initial conception of MO; topics ranged from such serious matters on the behaviour of people at war memorials and anti-Semitism to suggested studies of bathroom behaviour, beards, armpits, and eyebrows, and the shouts and gestures of motorists.

Mass-Observation sprang, therefore, from a realisation that ordinary people were being mis-led by a complacent press and indifferent government, both deeply ignorant of the needs of working people and the desires of 'people of good will.' To counteract this situation the people needed to know the facts, about international affairs, government policies, and about themselves; only if the people were given the facts could democracy work. In this sense, M-O was a political challenge of the man in the street, of us against them; it was a populist demand that democracy should mean what it says, rule by

the people, appraised of the facts. M-O originated with the Abdication Crisis of 1936 but it stepped into the centre of populist politics following the Munich Crisis of September 1938. M-O was part of the articulation of a popular consciousness which would make its greatest impact in the early years of the war but it also links that war radicalism to the later 1930's.

I think it would be as well, at this point, to outline the general plan of the paper. Part 1, 'The Need to Know', sets Mass-Observation in the context of the late 1930's. There are four subsections to Part 1. 'Subsection 1, Social Investigation Between the Wars' (pages 5 - 8), looks at social survey, problem surveys, market research and public opinion polling. Subsection 2, (pages 8 - 12), examines the nature of the crisis of the late 1930's. 3. (pages 12 - 18), looks at organisations which attempted to meet the public's demands for 'the facts' and pays particular attention to the Left Book Club, while Subsection 4 (pages 18 - 20), looks at the documentary movement.

Part II (pages 21 - 49), is a chronological history of Mass-Observation itself, starting with 1, (pages 21 - 22) a description of the organisation's first year's work. Part II of the paper then goes on to look at 3, (pages 26 - 28), the Worktown and Holiday Project, 1937 - 1939, 4, (pages 28 - 31), the Day Survey and the Mass-Observers themselves, and 5, (pages 31 - 37), Mass-Observation and the Munich Crisis. Subsection 6 (pages 37 - 44), looks at Mass-Observation's activities during the war, while Subsection 7 (pages 44 - 46), attempts to assess M-O's contribution to war-time radicalism and to account for the organisation's eventual absorption into the mainstream of British political, economic and cultural life. Subsection 8 (pages 46 - 49), examines Mass-Observation's struggle to survive in the post-war world.

PART I. THE NEED TO KNOW.

1. Social Investigation between the Wars

Mass-Observation developed out of a need to know, but the realisation of national ignorance was not peculiar to M-O. Many surveys conducted in the 1920s took the Great War as their reference point. The war had made people revise their ideas of what was possible by way of reform and of what conditions it was impossible to accept as natural. It also formed a convenient divide, across which social conditions could be compared.^{ix} Before the war Booth, Rowntree, and Bowley had introduced new concepts of quantitative exactitude into social survey, concepts which allowed change to be measured with some degree of accuracy over decades. In 1923-4 Bowley made a new survey of the five towns he had studied before the war, Warrington, Northampton, Stanley, Reasing and Bolton. In 1928 the LSE began its New Survey of London Life and Labour, under the direction of Sir H Llewellyn Smith, who had himself worked under Booth. In 1936 Seebohm Rowntree repeated his 1901 survey of York, while many new studies of towns and cities were carried out, for example, studies of Bristol, Birmingham, Southampton and Merseyside.^x

Like these academic surveys M-O undertook a detailed study of one town, Bolton, but apart from illustrating the continuing interest in studies of working class life and leisure, for our purpose, the importance of these academic surveys lies in how they differ from M-O. Booth, Bowley and Rowntree were pioneers of the quantitative approach to social survey; over the years they developed increasingly sophisticated sampling techniques and established what they considered to be permanent measures of such important social indices as malnutrition and overcrowding.^{xi}

Despite their claims to scientificity, and their occasional displays of somewhat unreliable statistical tables, such quantitative approaches to social survey were quite foreign to the founders of M-O. Theirs was a religiously qualitative approach, the result of long, careful, unobserved observation. Instead of rigidly categorising people from above they would be part of the people. This brings us to the second major difference between Mass-Observation and the early academic social investigations. The latter's quantitative methods allowed them to make close analyses of the changes in social conditions over 20, 30, or 40 years: their methods necessarily gave them a sense of history. Mass-Observation had no such sense of history. M-O's methods were in any case new, but the methodology of participant observation, of being part of the people, allowed them no historical reference points. Further, M-O had its roots in anthropology and also in a vague surrealism, a search for a 'mass unconscious': such concepts were essentially a-historical. The historicity and academicity of the surveys of, for example, Bowley and Rowntree, served, to some extent, to shield the impact of their conclusions. Conversely the a-historicism of Mass-Observation served to popularise and de-

academicise M-O, to emphasise its claim to be part of the people, to make it very much involved in the present crisis.

War, and an urge to see if and to what extent social conditions had improved, prompted a growth in social investigation between the wars. The crisis of the early 30's, and its seeming insolubility, gave urgent impulse to this social investigation for academic, government, and business purposes. Groups such as the New Fabian Research Bureau, the Pilgrim Trust and Political and Economic Planning (PEP) produced substantial and even definitive reports on such subjects as unemployment, housing, the health services and the location of industry.^{xii} Marwick and Addison, among others, have pointed to the importance of such groups in the building of a new centre in British politics, a centre which would come into its own during the Second World War.^{xiii} M-O, too, was to be part of that centre, and was to base much of its war-time criticism on its experience and analyses of the 1930's; importantly, however, M-O unlike many of the 'problem' surveys carried out by political pressure groups, approached the problems from its position as being a part of the people and not from a stand-point of planning from above.

If M-O was close in some respects to academic social surveys and to political problem surveys it was also related to the growth of commercial research organisations. In 1950 Mark Abrams wrote:

"In the USA the veterans of market research can recall substantial surveys carried out 40, or 50 years ago. In Britain, claims that go back more than 20 years are likely to be apocryphal."^{xiv}

The slump presented both a severe challenge and a great opportunity to the suppliers of the domestic consumer market. In some areas spending power was pared to the bone, in other areas domestically oriented consumer industries and consumer spending held the key to recovery. Through the 20s and 30s two separate but closely connected strands of market research developed, and over the period gradually built up methodologies which promised some degree of accuracy. Some of the earliest market research work took the form of readership surveys of newspapers and periodicals, these being, for the most part, a service to advertisers, indicating where advertising campaigns should be placed to reach particular markets, which market research sought to designate.^{xv} Firms specialising in readership surveys would employ teams of interviewers, usually female, and would analyse the results of their surveys by age, class, sex and region. Techniques were, at first, primitive; for example the earliest readership surveys neglected to weight their samples for class.^{xvi} Such methodological naiveté should be born in mind when we later encounter strong attacks from market researchers on M-O's methodology.

Market research organisations themselves also struggled to establish an accurate approach to surveying. Researchers on the ground needed to be tactful, observant, wary, and able to differentiate between types of interviewee. As Lintas put it:

Every girl must be trained to be consistently alert to catch everything the woman tells her and not to accept anything she is not absolutely sure about."^{xvii}

Social class, a crucially important factor in all market research work was judged by the interviewer on the ground on the basis of the general appearance of the district, the type, age and size of the house, the appearance of the interviewee, on the number of servants and the appearance of children.^{xviii} It should be noted that there was considerable room for error in this market research approach (known in the trade as 'quota sampling'), depending, as it did, very much on the judgement of the individual researcher. Later, market researchers would attack M-O for being too lax and subjective. By the late 1930s market research work was being carried out across the whole field of consumer spending, and detailed analyses were being made of consumption of everything from motorcars to nail polish, from margarine to kitchen furniture. By 1936 annual surveys were being published comparing expenditure patterns in different parts of the country and among different classes and age groups.^{xix} This research would, of course, have been valuable to government and academic social investigators, but, for the most part, it was not intended for the advancement of sociological knowledge. As Lintas put it:

"... it must be admitted that the motive power behind all classifications ... is the assessment of spending power."^{xx}

A further method of commercial social investigation which was just beginning to appear in Britain at the end of the 30s was public opinion polling. Straw votes have been traced back in the USA to the early nineteenth century and by the twentieth century they were common-place. In the 1936 presidential election a new system of market research quota sampling based-polling was introduced with great success. In 1938 Dr Gallup opened an office in England, the British Institute of Public Opinion, the exclusive rights to which were bought by the *News Chronicle*. Little came of commercial public opinion polling until the post war years.^{xxi} In the meantime M-O made substantial and important investigations of public opinion both before and during the Second World War, using radically different methods. In the highly commercially competitive post-war years the two opposing methods, the quota sampling of the commercial organisations and the in-depth observational approach of M-O, clashed repeatedly.

Most social survey work of the interwar period was carried out by disinterested academics, charitable trusts, political pressure groups, commercial organisations and 'amateur' bodies'; there was very little government work.^{xxii} It was the coming of war which prompted the State to enter the social survey field in earnest. In 1936 the committee on Imperial Defence appointed a sub-committee to report on the measures which would be necessary in the event of food rationing. This sub-committee eventually

led to the War-time Family Food Survey, an investigation which, for the next ten years, covered 10,000 households annually. The work itself, however, was carried out by the Research Department of one of the three major commercial research organisations, the London Press Exchange.^{xxiii} During the war government became involved in social investigation of all kinds; governments lack of involvement before the war and the far-reaching extent of its involvement during the war is just one more instance of the revolution in government attitudes to social conditions which took place over this period. It was also, of course, a function of integration into government of those campaigning bodies which had stood outside and criticised government in the 30s and now became part of the new 'consensus'. M-O was one such body. We shall see later that M-O's relationship with government is crucial to its history. Lack of government involvement with social investigation in the 30s had two determined effects on the nature of M-O before the war. Firstly, lack of government financial support for social investigation limited M-O's scope: in its early years it lived from hand to mouth, from day to day. Secondly, the very fact that government seemed to take no interest in the people whom other, ad hoc, bodies were investigating, was one of the *raison d'être* of M-O. Before the war M-O was distant from government and criticised government for being so distant from the people. In the war, when formerly critical 'middle opinion' became the new centre, M-O would work closely with government, would be financed by government, and would support the reforming schemes of the new centre. It is not so much that M-O moved away from its original base and closer to the centre of power, but that power moved to that centre ground of which M-O was, in a complex and sometimes marginal way, a part.

By 1937, market research, press surveys, social survey and problem investigations were established, powerful means of social investigations. Public opinion polling had just begun. M-O, as we shall see, took a great deal from each form of social investigation. Like previous social surveys, it concentrated on one town, like press surveys, it was keenly interested in newspaper readership and in public attitudes to the press, like market research, it was concerned with the minutiae of everyday life, like problem investigation, it analysed particular subjects, for example, smoking and gambling, and, like public opinion polling, it attempted to establish what ordinary people really thought. Unlike all these organisations, M-O was determined that this information should be democratically available to all concerned, it was to be a science of ourselves, for ourselves.

2. The Crisis of the late 1930's

M-O can be set, therefore, in the context of a general 'need to know' which characterised the interwar period as a whole. But M-O itself was a phenomenon of the late 1930s and came into being in response to a particular kind of crisis. There are many ways of looking at the interwar period; the dominant popular image of the period, as M-O would have put it, is probably that of the slump of 1929-33, of the unemployed on street corners, of the hunger marches. In looking at the history of the

middle classes in England between the wars I have paid particular attention to two crises, the inflationary period following the First World War and the 1929-33 slump. It is now clear to me that it is easy to take the 'interwar period' too much for granted, for it was precisely what that phrase indicates, a period between two wars, a period in which no sooner had the memory of one war, the war to end all wars, begun to fade than the coming of a second war began to seem inevitable. The twenty-one years between Armistice Day of 1918 and the out-break of the Second World War in September 1939 in fact saw three major crises, crises equal in intensity but different in nature. The crises of 1918-24 and 1929-33 were sectional, they hurt some more than they hurt others, but the third crisis of the interwar period, 1936-39, affected all classes with equal intensity, for it was the crisis of the approach of war. We should note here that those people least hard hit by the slump of 1929-33 were precisely those people who were to feel most involved in third crisis of 1936-39, the employed middle classes, schoolteachers, civil servants, laboratory technicians, clerks. It was these people who made up a large proportion of the 'men and women of goodwill' who would play such a major part in the late 30s crisis and in the politics of the coming war. The crisis of 1936-39 was characterised not by class conflict but by a felt need for national unity, a concept likely, for many reasons, to appeal to the middle class. The ideas and policies of the 'new centre', emergent in the 1930s sought to establish such a unity, from both above and below, through a more generous sense of social responsibility and through drawing those whose needs and voices had previously been ignored towards the centre of power. If the Welfare State and consensus politicians of the 1950s and 1960s can be seen as the eventual solution of the crisis of the 1929-33 slump, the crisis of the coming of war can be seen as a major starting point in the determination of the nature of that solution. This latter crisis drew the new middle class towards the centre of national politics. It might be argued that the major beneficiary of the eventual solution was precisely this new middle class.

It was clear to people in the late 1930s that war would engulf everyone. Total war did not come as a surprise to the people of Britain in 1940, indeed it was considerably less total than many people had feared.^{xxiv} Baldwin's notorious remark that 'the bomber would always get through', Churchill's comment that London was:

"the greatest target in the world, a kind of tremendous, fat, valuable cow, fed up to attract beasts of prey"^{xxv}

could not help but spread anxiety throughout the population. In 1938 the Committee on Imperial Defence estimated Britain would suffer 1.8 million casualties in the first two months of the war. Twenty million square feet of timber would be needed for the coffins and, as this was an impossible figure, mass graves would be dug. By 1938 it was estimated that 175,000 people in London alone would die in the first 24 hours of war. J.B.S.Haldane toured Left Book Club groups warning that aircraft would machine gun refugees as they fled down arterial roads out of London, the bombers would glide over England to prevent early detection, the noise of the bombings would deafen survivors for life. Air

attacks would be the ultimate human disaster and it was likely that the bombs would be accompanied by poison gas. There would be no escape. How far the public heeded these warnings, which had been voiced since the 1920s, is difficult to tell, but it is inconceivable that they would have failed to instil a widespread fear, a fear which, while hopes for peace via collective security remained, could be pushed to the back of the mind. By 1937 collective security was effectively a dead letter. It was the task of M-O to analyse public attitudes to the coming of war and to break through the fantasy surrounding air attack to the true facts.

1936 was the turning point, the year in which public attention turned from domestic concerns to the wider problems of the world. In 1940 George Orwell wrote:

"I don't quite know in what year I first knew for certain that the present war was coming. After 1936, of course, the thing was obvious to anyone except an idiot."^{xxxvi}

The Jarrow Marches and the Battle of Cable Street were last flickerings of the domestic crisis of the early 1930s. A new King was on the throne, the BUF was a spent force and some form of recovery was underway. Abroad, however, 1936 saw the Occupation of the Rhineland, victory for Mussolini in the Abyssinian War, the founding of the Rome-Berlin Axis, the signing of the German-Japanese Pact and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. On the 31 December 1936 the *Daily Telegraph* wrote in a leader:

"... 1936 will not be memorable by the magnitude of its actual catastrophes. But it has abounded in events which have seemed to bring catastrophe near. Serious alarms at home, graver alarms abroad, a deepening sense of gathering storm, feverish military, naval and aerial preparations, revolution and civil war have kept Europe continually on tenter hooks."^{xxxvii}

The war in Spain was important as both a beginning and an end. For some, most notably the poets who had made their names in the early 1930s and the Marxist left a few years younger than the Auden group, it was the great testing ground of their analysis of the course of development of the 1930s. The war seemed to be a clear battle of good against evil, of the left against Fascism. The war was, on the surface, a test of commitment: here the choice between art and action was real. But Spain posed deep and complex problems. There was the problem of observation, recording, bias, the problem of how to tell the truth about war in general, about the cause of good against evil, and the complicated political and moral entanglement of the war. And there was the further problem of both personal and political defeat; many felt unable to take a full part in the war, many were unwilling to tell the liberal truth about Communist Party involvement, especially at time when rumours of the Moscow trials were beginning to leak out. All, eventually, had to accept the defeat of the Republic. Spain saw the deaths of major British Marxist writers, Fox, Cornford, Caudwell, and it also saw the beginning of the of commitment of the Auden generation of poets. How far these writers had really been involved in politics is a moot point. Certainly in comparison with the last generation of 30s activists, the

documentarists, their contact with political life and with the working classes was minimal. Yet it is clear that by 1937, as Hynes has written:

"there was a general withdrawal from action evident among English intellectuals, as they came to see no alternative to waiting for the end".^{xxviii}

Julian Symons has put it thus:

"After Spain, and indeed before the end came in Spain, there was little left of the 30s movement but a feeling of resignation and a sense of guilt."^{xxix}

But Spain was also a beginning. Firstly, many upper middle class intellectuals of the Auden and immediately subsequent generations who had been involved in leftist politics in the early and mid 30s did not lose all political faith, but turned instead to a new kind of political involvement, to what they saw as the true values of the everyday life of the common people in Britain. Julian Trevelyan, writing of the time he spent with M-O in Bolton, and, through Tom Harrison, with the Ashington Group of working class artists, Put it thus:

"I had also through M-O partly resolved for myself the problems that beset all my generation in the years before the war. We watched helplessly the growth of Fascism extinguishing, as it seemed, one after another the liberties amongst which we had moved in our carefree way ten years before. The long drawn-out struggle in Spain, the gradual shrinking of the Republican territory, where all our hopes lay this seemed only symbolic of the betrayal of all that we cared for. Like so many of my friends I had flirted with Communism and had been lured to meetings to hear Pollitt and Ted Bramley: As a surrealist I had cooked Bomblets and marched in May Day processions: as a member of the Artists International I had signed telegrams and badgered MP's. All this now seemed quite useless, and it was more by way of the enthusiasm of the Ashington miners for their paintings that I regained my faith in the more permanent values of our civilisation that had, so short a while ago, seemed to be running down to its own destruction."^{xxx}

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Spain provided examples, both on the Iberian Peninsula and in other non-Fascist countries, of popular front alliances of 'people of goodwill', peoples' fronts against Fascism, the kind of political alliance which called for little theoretical commitment to working class power, an alliance against something very real and threatening, rather than for an ideal, an ideal which had never been fully visualised. For Spain fascinated more than just left poets and intellectuals. The threat of Fascism brought into politics many with whom liberal goodwill had, in the early 30s, stopped short of the political involvement. These people, a large proportion of them from the lower middle class, now found themselves to be part of a wide political movement designed to stop Fascism.^{xxxi}

Spain, therefore, posed problems of observation and record for many outside the small groups of liberal-left intellectuals. To concerned people in England the British Government's attitude to non-

intervention seemed quite incomprehensible, and the Government itself never troubled to explain its stance. For many it seemed clear that non-intervention to all intents and purposes, was tacit support for the Fascist powers.^{xxxii} Further, newspaper coverage of Spain was bedevilled with bias, obvious bias in that no-one would expect the Observer, for example, to support the Republic, and subversive bias, in that many intellectuals and newspaper correspondents were prepared to tell lies about Spain for the sake of a hidden goal. The story of Claud Cockburn, aka Frank Pitcairn, is well known. Koestler, at the time a Comintern agent, posed as a liberal correspondent for the *News Chronicle*. Another Comintern agent, Kim Philby, was the Times' correspondent with Franco: his fellow journalists believed him to be a keen Fascist.^{xxxiii} There seemed to be, and to some extent was, a conspiracy against understanding on the part of Government, the press and certain individuals by means of obscuring the facts"

If 1936 was the turning point by 1937 the international situation was rapidly deteriorating. The war in Spain continued, MP's cheered in the House of Commons when British ships were sunk by Fascist submarines in the Mediterranean and in April Guernica was attacked. In July 1937 the Sino-Japanese war broke out again with the Japanese making huge and rapid advances. In Moscow Marshall Tuchachevsky, the Russian representative at the Jubilee celebrations of George V was sentenced to be shot for allegedly holding secret talks with the German Army.^{xxxiv} In March 1937 the first gas mask factories were opened in Britain and air raid sirens were tested for the first time. Throughout the year the British Army was rapidly refurbished and the slogan 'join the Modern Army' appeared.^{xxxv} By February 1938 Eden had resigned as Foreign Secretary and by March Germany had occupied Austria. In Britain the response to the worsening international situation took the form of the growth of a popular movement against Fascism, but there was also a growing sense of bewilderment with Government policy and of anger with press coverage of events. That there was a widely felt need for the articulation of public concern and for the provision of the facts of the situation can be seen in the growth of a number of organisations which took up the general anxiety of the people and moulded it into a populist attack on Government, the press, the 'Old Gang'. These new groups, one of which was M-O, based themselves on that amorphous constituency, 'people of goodwill'.

3. THE LEFT BOOK CLUB AND POLITICAL EDUCATION.

Pre-eminent among such groups was the Left Book Club (LBC), the most successful political and cultural organisation of the late 1930s. It may, therefore, be useful to look at the LBC in some detail and to note the many similarities and the important differences between the LBC and M-O. Announced by Victor Gollancz, John Strachey and Harold Laski in March 1936, the Club had 6,000 members before its first book was published, 20,000 within six months and 57,000 at its peak in April 1939. By that time there were over one thousand discussion groups linked to club, based on work places, suburbs and common interests, such as poetry, drama, rambling and cycling. For 2/6 a

month, the Club member received a copy of the monthly book 'choice', a copy of the Club's journal, *The Left Book Club News* (later renamed *Left News*), and could, if he wished, purchase a number of additional books at a reduced price. The main interests of the LBC were foreign affairs - the threat of fascism and the politics of other countries, Spain, China, Russia. Its aims were to encourage the formation of a popular Front at home, an alliance of all parties and individuals opposed to the National Government and to fascism, and to urge the formation of a Peace Front abroad, an alliance of democracies, primarily Britain, France and the USSR, against Nazi Germany. To all intents and purposes the Club was a 'front' for the Communist Party,^{xxxvi} but it was also particularly attractive to the middle class and was, largely, a middle class organisation.

At the height of the Munich Crisis Gollancz wrote:

"The Left Book club was founded a little over two years ago because some of us understood the nature of the impending catastrophe and were determined to do all in our power to prevent the catastrophe coming. We watched a public ignorant and unaware; we saw decent and politically innocent men and women welcoming as a policy making for peace - the thing for which above all they longed - a stampede in the face of fascist aggression that could only end in universal disaster ... There is nothing more horrible than the deception of the public."^{xxxvii}

The key to political success was, therefore, not working class solidarity and action but learning and knowledge. Such a formula could not help but appeal to certain sections of the middle class, especially the young, who, having learnt at secondary school to value education highly, an education which in most cases had been cut off at the age of sixteen, were keen to go on learning. As the *Left News* asked, "why should the LBC not be a 'Left Wing University'?"^{xxxviii} Gollancz explained in the first issue of the LBC journal that the Club was designed:

"To provide that indispensable basis of knowledge without which a united front of all men and women of good faith cannot be built. If we are to win we must have, each one of us, not less but more knowledge than the best informed of our enemies."^{xxxix}

Nor was the rhetoric of the LBC couched in socialist terms. Gollancz aimed at a wider appeal when he addressed the Club throughout the *Left News* during the Munich Crisis:

"I now plead with you on this September day of 1938, as I have never pleaded before, to work with all your heart and soul to forge the Left Book Club into an instrument of enlightenment which will help - if I may use words which, however worn they may be, carry with them a desperate appeal - to save civilisation"^{xl}

Moreover the LBC offered its members a crucial choice as to the form their political involvement could take. Membership of the LBC could be a strictly private affair, a matter of reading books in one's own home and perhaps corresponding with the Club's head-quarters in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.^{xli} Alternatively, through the local groups, LBC membership could draw the radically inclined middle

class individual out of his political and perhaps social isolation, and put him in touch with others of like mind in a culturally attractive environment, thus creating a new sense of fellowship. A 'Convenor' of a group in Kent, describing himself as 'a University graduate' wrote to Gollancz:

"I joined the Left Book Club in the first month of its existence. I belonged to no political party. My outlook, it is true, was left, but in a very confused, cynical and disillusioned outlook. But I wanted people to talk to. For various reasons I was sadly in need of intelligent personal contacts. So when the Left News announced that groups were being formed, and invited people to submit their names as convenors, I sent my name in I did not expect anything very much. I felt that the most that was likely to happen was that I should get in touch with a few cranky intellectuals like myself. (The first person to get in contact) ... was in the months to come to give me a new and intensely valuable friendship. For the next six months he and I were thrown together and formed a friendship which will, I know, last us both a very long time - and all because of that half-jesting post-card I sent to 14 Henrietta Street. I had offered myself as a convenor simply because I wanted to meet people, not because I wanted to join an organisation, still less because I wanted to run an organisation.^{xiii}

When asked why they joined Mass-Observation, many observers replied that they welcomed the chance to participate in a collective intellectual effort, the chance to gain a wider understanding of the crisis through which they were living, the chance to feel part of a wider movement. Some also admitted that they were lonely and turned to Mass-Observation to get their troubles off their chests through writing diaries.^{xiii}

The Left Book Club therefore attracted many who had not previously been politically active. Membership itself involved no prior knowledge of the complexities of left-wing politics and no test of doctrinal obedience. For the middle class individual moving towards political commitment in the late 1930s local political parties could seem somewhat forbidding. The Labour and Communist parties seemed to represent a different and difficult political culture. The local Conservative Association was probably dominated either by gentry (urban or rural) or by self-concerned local traders. As likely as not, by the late 1930s, a local Liberal Association did not exist. As John Lewis explained, the local LBC groups:

"are of great value, constituting as they do in many cases, practically the only progressive organisation to which people can belong and providing a sufficiently broad basis to make it possible for those to join who cannot, as yet, commit themselves publicly to any political party."^{xiv}

So it is not surprising that the Club was particularly successful in the suburban areas of London and throughout the relatively prosperous South. The *Left News* reported in February 1937:

"Great activity is to be found in such supposedly reactionary places like Plymouth, Brighton and Bournemouth, which what some of us always believed, that the less highly organised the progressive movements in such places, the more hungry souls are eager for a left organisation to bring them together and break down their

isolation. Tom Mann filled the Bournemouth Labour Hall with a crowd of middle class intellectuals and not only did them all good but made them all love him.^{xlv}

Members of practically every white-collar occupation, bank clerks, lawyers, social workers, teachers, advertising workers, accountants and many, many more, set up LBC groups, while groups based on working class occupations were conspicuous in their rarity. There was a busmen's group, a railwaymen's group and a print workers' group, but few others.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the activities of the group were likely to appeal more to the middle class individual than to the manual worker. Apart from the very business of talking about books the social activities of the groups centred around middle class interests. In June 1937 the *Left News* reported:

"Lefts of Richmond and Kew had felt themselves isolated until the Left Book Club came along and introduced them to one another. Now they are finding that even in this centre of reaction something can be done to rally such progressive opinion as exists. Next month they are trying something new - an evening party 'of a new type' - in an effort to make their influence felt in a wider circle. The slogan of the evening is to be 'Fascism Destroys Culture'. There will be a series of exhibitions illustrating this, a recital of music by composers banned by Fascists, and a dance, in the middle of which will be a solo by a Spanish dancer and one short political speech."^{xlvi}

Very much like the Clarion Movement the Left Book Club attempted to provide a full social, cultural and political life for its members. Rambles and cycle tours were turned to political advantage, the participants meeting up to discuss the Choice of the month over tea and sandwiches. At seaside resorts LBC groups made holiday makers especially welcome, rather in the manner of churches in such towns boosting their congregations with visitors anxious to hear a different preacher. In the south of England local groups emulated middle class charity organisations, 'adopting' a group of unemployed workers and sending them a copy of the monthly Choice.^{xlvii} Special tours of the depressed areas and of the East End of London were arranged.

Other Club activities a good way out of the reach of the financial resources, and, perhaps, of the cultural parameters of the working class, included weekend schools at seaside guest houses, summer schools at a Hertfordshire country house, trips to Russia at prices from £19 5s for 14 days, ten days at Easter holidays on the Riviera, under the aegis of Prospect Popular Front Holidays, including a dinner and reception with a metal workers trade union in Paris and Popular Front festivities at Nice, all for £7-17-6.^{xlviii} At this time the average wage for a manual worker was between £3 and £4 a week.

So, like M-O the LBC offered the previously politically uninvolved a chance to participate and was, perhaps, more successful than M-O in terms of membership through providing a wide range of cultural and social activities. Both organisations offered a sense of fellowship. But the LBC aimed further at creating a wider sense of fellowship, a new sense of national unity. In a crisis in which a felt

need for national unity arose from the urgency of the external threat to democracy, a broad-based movement, of which the LBC and M-O were part, sought to establish a new unity of 'the people' in opposition to a government which was fast losing its claim to be 'National'. The LBC set great store by its mass meetings, which were characterised, as Gollancz later put it, by "an extra-ordinary atmosphere of sober enthusiasm".^{xlix} On the platform sat figures calculated to appeal to an uncertain audience, anxious for leadership. Churchmen, non-socialist MPs, academics and writers were given pride of place. Alongside them Harry Pollitt, Sir Stafford Cripps or Ellen Wilkinson would represent socialism. Only occasionally would a trade unionist appear on the platform. Gollancz explained that such platforms were "truly *national*":¹

"We alone provide platform above the battle of party politics, above the battle, even, of the present Popular Front controversy itself: which means that we are in the forefront of the battle for uniting the people of this country ... against war and Fascism, which is to say ... against the National Government."ⁱⁱ

Here then, was a rhetoric of national unity which was to be used with great effect by radical politicians and commentators in the early years of the war. But the LBC itself did not carry the idea of 'the people' into 'the 'people's war', for, unlike other components of the radical fact-gathering and fact-disseminating populist movement of the late 1930s, the LBC was inextricably tied to a political party, the Communist Party, and, through the CP, to the actions of the USSR. If the ultimate goal of the LBC was a Peace Front of Russia, France and Britain, then the ultimate disaster was the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The defeat of Republican Spain dealt a severe blow to morale. In May 1939 Gollancz noticed "a widespread feeling of apathy, weariness and disillusion" but tried to lift the Club by appealing for a final effort to force Chamberlain into an alliance with Russia, "which will be a triumph for the Left Book Club which has explained the true meaning of the 'new civilisation' in Russia".^{lii} Writing in late July 1939, Gollancz announced that August would be "emphatically an 'up' month".^{liii} On 23 August 1939 the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed.

So the war which, as we shall see, brought Mass-Observation into its own, to all intents and purposes saw the death of the LBC. Gollancz had been wary of the CP link for some time and now vehemently repudiated the CP and its opposition to the war. The whole tenor of the Club changed: it was no longer to be a campaign but instead an open forum for airing different points of view. As the leaders debated angrily with each other as to whether the war was a struggle against fascism or an imperialist attack on socialism,^{liv} bewildered members wrote for guidance, which was not forthcoming. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that members left in droves. For tentatively committed newcomers to politics the arcane but vitriolic debates on Russia and imperialism seemed irrelevant; for Communists and tough fellow travellers Gollancz's new hostility to the USSR was too much to bear.^{lv}

While the Nazi-Soviet Pact and subsequent Communist opposition to the war robbed the LBC of the central focus of its campaign, the Club was further undermined on a more practical level. Logistically its position was just opposite of that of Mass-Observation. In the case of Mass-Observation hundreds of observers sent in reports from wherever they happened to be a fixed base. The LBC had to distribute books through booksellers, who might well close down or be bombed out, to a constantly shifting public. Perhaps the task would not have been beyond a man of Gollancz's energy had the inspiration still been there. As it was, from 1939 to 1942, the Left Book Club's membership fell from 57,000 to 15,000.

The Club struggled on, commenting in a changed rhetoric and in a now muted voice, on the main issues of war-time politics. The Club now sought to resolve, said Gollancz, "the twin problem of democracy and leadership" and found the solution in the creation of "professional citizens".^{lvi} Gollancz himself turned his attention to more abstract themes; justice, kindness, tolerance, while the *Left News*, now devoting much of its space to a journal of European émigrés, *International Socialist Forum*, was little more than a solid and worthy news-sheet, quite lacking in the zeal and energy of the pre-war days.

There were many similarities between the Left Book Club and Mass-Observation. On a practical level both organisations were run by dedicated and extraordinarily energetic people. It was perhaps their energy, their desire to oversee every aspect of their organisations work, which made both Gollancz and Harrison somewhat authoritarian individuals. Gollancz refused to 'democratise' the LBC despite considerable pressure from group convenors, while Harrison, especially after the outbreak of war, kept a very tight rein on M-O. Further, both organisations were very vague about their financial circumstances; Club members and Mass-Observers would write to their respective organisations asking where the money originally came from to set up the ventures and where the money from their subsequent publications went to.^{lvii} Neither organisation published accounts. It seems that Gollancz ploughed all the LBC subscriptions back into the Club. M-O was constantly short of money but it is not surprising that many observers complained when they had to pay 12/6 for the first M-O book they had helped compile, *May 12th*, when they knew that LBC members received the monthly Choice and a good deal more for 2/6. Gollancz and Harrison were, in the best sense of the term, cultural entrepreneurs; the conditions of the market in the late 1930's, clamouring demand and little rivalry from the established suppliers of news and knowledge, allowed them to succeed. It is difficult to see them doing so at any other time, before or since.

Like M-O, therefore, the LBC was a product of the crisis of the late 1930s; it identified that crisis as the threat to democracy and liberal values posed by fascism; it attacked the established media for failing to provide the man in the street with the facts of the situation; it presented knowledge and understanding as the keys to resolving the crisis and it gave the middle class a previously unavailable

chance to participate in that resolution. Both the LBC and M-O were part of a wider movement which would eventually succeed in building a new concept of 'national unity', the unity of 'all people of good-will', in opposition to anti-socialist unity, the concept which had prevailed throughout the interwar period and which had been so firmly established at the General Election of 1931.

The LBC and M-O followed similar courses of development. Both started out emphasising their more academic characteristics, the LBC its educational function, M-O its importance as a new science. By the time of the Munich Crisis both organisations had abandoned any pretence of providing disinterested enlightenment and had become highly effective propagandists for the new radicalism. The crucial difference between M-O and the LBC lay in the latter's explicit commitment to politics. Between 1936 and 1939 the LBC was tied to a particular set of issues and to a particular mode of political practice, a connection which gave it a political strength which other components of the radical documentary movement lacked. But this strength proved to be its weakness. The populist radicals came fully into their own during the early years of the war. The LBC, on the other hand, was shattered by its adherence to the CP and the USSR. As we shall see, the radical commentators, among whom should be numbered M-O, propounded a particularly malleable set of political principles. By the later years of the war, after it had done its best to leave its fellow-travelling past behind, the LBC came into line with the main concerns of the radical commentators. As such it was drawn into the new centre of British politics and, in the conditions of the post-war world, along with other components of the radical movement, was subsumed. The *Left News* ceased publication in March 1947 and the Left Book Club itself was wound up in October 1948. In the meantime, the LBC brought a large and increasingly politically significant section of the British people, the lower middle class, into closer contact with politics, politics which, it can be argued, they went a long way towards making their own in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. John Strachey has argued that the LBC "played considerable part in making possible the Labour victory of 1945"^{lviii} and hence in facilitating this important shift in the basis of power and personnel in British politics.

The public were not much more enlightened by the Fleet Street press over the deteriorating international situation than they had been over the Abdication Crisis. The press imposed self-censorship for fear of losing confidential Government news sources.^{lix} *The Times* in the 1930s was, in any case, virtually an 'official' newspaper. The silence on the part of the established press led to the proliferation of ad hoc, unofficial news sources, claiming to reveal to a worried and unenlightened readership the full facts of the complicated international entanglements. The most famous fact sheet was Claud Cockburn's *The Week*, another example being Commander King Hall's *The K.H. Newsletter*, the latter obtaining a circulation of some 50,000; there were many others, all publishing stories suppressed or over-looked by the established press.^{lx} So successful were these amateur organs that the popular press began to run columns entitled, for example, 'Inside Info' and 'Secret

Service.' In complete contrast to this popularisation of fact was the growing obsession of the yellow press with horoscopes, an aspect of popular superstition which particularly fascinated M-O.^{lxi}

Another example of this ever-increasing need for facts can be seen in the history of Penguin Books. Founded by Allen Lane in 1915, Penguin introduced its non-fiction series Pelican and its topical reporting series, Penguin Special, in 1937.^{lxii} In 1947 the Conservative Party organised an exhibition, one section of which was entitled 'How the People were told a Story'. In it, along with Michael Foot and Hannan Swaffer of the *Daily Herald*, appeared Allen Lane.^{lxiii} The pioneer of Penguin Specials was W.E. Williams, Secretary of the Institute of Adult Education, a pillar of the WEA and, from 1941, Director of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs.^{lxiv} M-O's most successful publication, *Britain*, which contained a stinging attack on Chamberlain, the press and the handling of the Munich Crisis, appeared in Penguin Special in 1939.

4. Documentary

In 1938 fact finding, fact-presenting journalism entered into direct competition with the established press with the founding of *Picture Post*. *Picture Post* was itself part of what has come to be known as 'the documentary movement', which, in turn, was part of that wider 'need to know' which so characterised the 1930s. Documentary had been established as a vital, new genre well before the full impact of the crisis of the late 1930s was felt. In 1934 Stefan Lorant, later to found *Picture Post*, launched a photo-magazine with Bill Brandt as cameraman. Humphrey Spender, brother of Stephen, unable to find work as an architect and who had, therefore, been working as a photographer for an advertising agency, joined the *Daily Mirror*, then still, primarily a women's paper, and, in the tracks of Priestley, set out on an English journey, his photographs being published by the *Mirror* under the name of 'Lensman'. In the same year William Coldstream and Humphrey Jennings both abandoned full time painting and joined the GPO Film Unit. The movement continued to expand through 1935 and 1936: in 1935 Paul Rotha's book *Documentary Film*, was published, Coldstream, Benjamin Britten, John Grierson (who described the documentary film movement as 'the beginning of an adventure in public observation'), Stuart Legg and W.H. Auden co-operated to produce the film 'Coal Face' for the GPO Film Unit and Spender's photographs appeared at least once a week in the *Daily Mirror*. In 1936 George Orwell set out on the road to Wigan Pier, the GPO Film Unit produced 'Night Mail' and Tom Harrisson returned from Malekula, immediately settling in Bolton to begin his anthropology of the English. In February 1937 the same month as Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* was published by the Left Book Club, the founding of M-O was formally announced in the *New Statesman*.^{lxv}

Although many of the practitioners of documentary knew each other, it was not a conscious movement. Looking back, Humphrey Spender recalled:

"I don't think there was ever a conscious awareness of that. I don't think I ever thought of myself as more than having drifted into an activity which became more and more challenging and more and more fascinating."^{lxvi}

The challenge and fascination lay in observing and recording areas of life of which Spender and many of his contemporaries knew very little. As Stuart Hall has written, the documentary movement was characterised by a:

"... passion to present, above all to present people to themselves in wholly recognisable terms; terms which acknowledge their variety, their individuality, their representativeness, which find them 'intensely interesting'."^{lxvii}

Much documentary work was part of that tradition which Peter Keating has referred to as 'the literature of social exploration'. Keating explains that:

"In the mid nineteenth century there develops a distinctive branch of modern literature in which a representative of one class consciously sets out to explore, analyse and report upon the life of another class lower in the social scale than his own."^{lxviii}

This nineteenth century literature based much of its imagery on the exploration of Empire. While missionaries attempted to bring Christianity to savages at the ends of the earth, a heathen, ignorant, dangerous native population was to be found in the heart of the Empire in England, and especially in the East End of London; there was an urgent need for the investigation of the life and leisure of this savage civilisation. Reviewing Bill Brandt's book of photographs, *The English at Home*, published in the spring of 1936 Raymond Mortimer wrote:

"Mr Brandt shows himself to be not only an artist but an anthropologist. He seems to have wandered about England with the detached curiosity of a man investigating the customs of some remote and unfamiliar tribe."^{lxix}

In his preface to the first edition of *London Labour and the London Poor* Mayhew had recommended his study to his readers as

"Supplying information concerning a large body of persons, of whom the public has less knowledge than the most distant tribes on the earth."^{lxx}

One English social explorer of the 1930's, Tom Harrisson, certainly had less knowledge of the English working class than he had of Malekulan cannibals. Looking back in 1947 Harrisson wrote:

"In my teens and twenties I was a biologist and I was sent to various and remote places of the world to study birds and animals and later to study human beings ... But it gradually became borne in upon me that what I was doing at great expense to various scientific bodies, as well as at considerable cost to my own time and health, could equally be done at home, within our own civilisation. The wilds of Lancashire or the mysteries of the East End of London were as little explored as

the cannibal interior of the New Hebrides or the head-hunter hinterland of Borneo ... In particular, my experiences living among cannibals in the New Hebrides ... taught me the many points in common between these wild-looking, fuzzy-haired, black, smelly people and our own, so when I came home from that expedition I determined to apply the same methods here in Britain."^{lxxi}

Another feature of the literature of social exploration which Keating points to is the tradition of the explorer himself attempting to become part of the poor as Booth had done, staying as a lodger in workers' homes in the East End.^{lxxii} Orwell, of course, is the best known interwar exponent of this device, but at exactly the same time as Orwell was exploring the spikes of England and the poor hospitals of Paris, so Tom Harrisson was tramping the East End, sleeping in Salvation Army hostels, mixing with the lowest poor. So Harrisson, like Orwell, born outside England, lacking a close family life, educated at Harrow (to balance Orwell's Eaton education) and briefly at Cambridge, and spending five years in and around South East Asia, returned to England, to Bolton, to explore the peculiarities of the English. As Tom Harrisson himself put it, and as Orwell undoubtedly believed:

"If you are not born and brought up in England, it gives you a much more objective attitude to the country when you arrive."^{lxxiii}

Harrisson chose Bolton because, as he later wrote:

"... the one and only thing which I could find that affected the lives of people in all the places I had been everywhere in the world was the Unilever Combine."^{lxxiv}

William Lever had been born in Bolton. Harrisson began by finding out all he could about the town, working in the day as a lorry driver, shop-assistant, labourer, cotton operative and ice-cream man, and in the evening touring the pubs, attending political meetings and visiting members of the Leverhulme family. Reading the *New Statesman* in a public library, Harrisson saw Madge's letter, 'Anthropology at Home', and within a month M-O was founded.

PART 2

1. Objectives

The aims and objectives of M-O were stated in an introductory pamphlet published in February 1937. The public, denied the facts by the press and the Government, were gripped by fantasy and superstition. They were imbued with a distrust of science which seemed to be employed against the people rather than to help understanding. In these circumstances the people fell back on a certain fatalism:

"This fatalism reaches its extreme in the general attitude to war and scientific methods of destruction. The fear of air raids and gas is part of the general fear of

what science may do next - exemplified in popular myths about a death ray. The fear of gas especially, the all-pervasive death which attacks all classes and all sections, combatants and non-defence is probably useless - brings with it that doubt and scepticism and despair from which our enquiry starts. But doubt of science, because it can thus deal death, may take either a scientific or an anti-scientific shape. Gas and the bomber, modern scientific products, are therefore calculated to make acute the controversy between science and superstition. The controversy becomes a very simple one: which gives us most hope of survival?"^{lxxv}

Science was not only used against ordinary people in war, it was also used at home to play upon peoples suggestibility through advertising:

"In 1937 the best advertising agencies and daily newspapers employ the best anthropologists and psychologists in the country. These great organisations base their work on the assumption that the human mind is suggestible and they aim their suggestions at that part of the human mind in which the superstitious elements predominate."^{lxxvi}

Mass-Observation would counteract this exploitation by showing people why they were so 'suggestible'. M-O therefore, started off as the declared enemy of advertising and market research.

A new science of ourselves was necessary. It would be truly democratic in that scientists would be the people themselves; the scientist and the subject would be one. The function of the observer would be:

"to describe fully, clearly and in simple language all that he sees and hears in connection with the scientific problem he is asked to work on."^{lxxvii}

Observers would be:

"meteorological stations from whose reports a weather map of popular feeling can be compiled."^{lxxviii}

The essential corollary of this army of amateur observers was a group of professional scientists:

"The work of the professional scientist helps to give us a more rigorous objectivity. So also can the use of scientific instruments of precision. Photography, film technique, sound recording, and physiological tests by experts will provide a check on our observations. We shall collaborate in building up museums of sound, smell, food, clothes, domestic objects, advertisements, newspapers, etc. We shall also build up files dealing with problems of assimilation - the practical difficulties of an observer in entering a new environment. He should be able to hear records of dialects which are strange to him. He should even be able to find in a field wardrobe the necessary outfit of clothing for effective assimilation ... We shall have to make a cultural survey of the British Isles. From the survey maps will be prepared, dividing the country into cultural zones in which to place our centres."^{lxxix}

The results of all this work would be made known to the widest possible public:

"The facts must be made accessible in plain English which everyone can understand. This is a science which can only work if it is kept free from scientific jargon, and also from the obscurity typical of the contemporary artist and intellectual. It has also to avoid the facile temptations of popular exposition. The entire population is impregnated with a catch-word culture ceaselessly diffused by the written and spoken word. Only the completely objective fact can escape the ill effects of such treatment. The idea, being more abstract, is a hundred times delayed or illegitimised before it reaches at fifth hand the ultimate consumer, the ordinary man who has no defence against what he is told. The lesson is to stick to facts and to set them down as intelligently as is humanly possible."^{lxxx}

This was the ideal of the founders of M-O a truly democratic science of ourselves. But the contradictions which would become acute in the late 1940's were already apparent in 1937. M-O wrote:

"A scientific knowledge of their own social environment, habits, behaviour, and those of forty or fifty million others is going to benefit most people. Their motives for wanting the knowledge will vary and they will put it to different uses - in some cases to opposite and conflicting uses. Such knowledge can be of use to both the pacifist who wishes to prevent recruiting and to the war office which wants to stimulate it. The advertising agency needs such knowledge to sell the products of his clients, and the man in the street needs the same knowledge to help prevent himself from being taken in by commercial and political propaganda."^{lxxxi}

2. First Year's Work

From the beginning M-O planned to have two bases; one, Charles Madge's house at Blackheath, the other a small terraced house in Davenport Street, Bolton, Tom Harrison's base. There would be two initial projects, Tom Harrison's Worktown project, his collection of facts through anonymous observation in Bolton, while Madge and Jennings in London would build up a collection of observer's diaries. These diaries would be written by volunteer, amateur observers on the 12th of each month and would deal with the every day concerns of the diarists' lives. Much has been made of this duality of Mass-Observation, both in the few brief academic comments which have been written on the organisation, and by Tom Harrison himself. The academics focus on the duality largely because they have taken too literally a line on M-O;^{lxxxii} Tom Harrison emphasised it as a weapon in his exceptionally vitriolic argument with Charles Madge in 1939 and 1940. Yet there is something in it, especially as regards the first two years' work of M-O. The key to the problem lies in an element of the cultural history of the 1930s which fed into M-O and we have not yet looked at, the surrealist movement.

In the introductory pamphlet Harrison and Madge seemed to have separate aims for the organisation. They wrote:

"Tom Harrison believes that M-O, by laying open to doubt all existing philosophies of life as possibly incomplete, yet by refusing to neglect the significance of any of them, may yet make a new synthesis. This may lead to something less fierce, more

understanding and permanent than the present miserable conflicts of dogmatic faith in race, politics, and religion."

Whereas, according to Charles Madge:

"M-O is an instrument for collecting facts, not a means of producing a synthetic philosophy, a super-science or super-politics. The availability of facts will liberate certain tendencies in science, war and politics, because it will add to the social consciousness of the time."^{lxxxiii}

One strange thing about these two statements is that one would have expected the latter statement to have been written by Tom Harrison, even if Charles Madge could never have written the first. Harrison was always the scientist, he was determined to collect facts and his ideas for M-O were usually more closely worked out than his statement in the introductory pamphlet would suggest. Much of the confusion lay at the Blackheath end of the operation. All three of the main Blackheath founders of M-O, Madge, Jennings and Stuart Legg, had been closely involved with the short-lived British surrealist movement, indeed, Legg's wife had been a living exhibit at the Surrealist Exhibition of 1936.^{lxxxiv} Madge started off with the idea of using the M-O diaries for surrealist purposes, to collect accounts of people's dreams, to search for coincidences, to search for mass fantasies, for what he called 'dominant images', to uncover the 'collective unconscious'. Kathleen Raine, who was married to Charles Madge in 1937, has since written:

"To Charles, who seemed a man inspired almost as a medium inspired or possessed, the idea of M-O was less sociology than a kind of poetry, akin to Surrealism He was the expression of the unconscious collective life of England, literally, in writings on the walls, telling of the hidden thoughts and dreams of the inarticulate masses."^{lxxxv}

It would seem however, that Madge and Jennings founded M-O when they were both at a point of transition, moving on from surrealism to something much closer to documentary. The first full-scale book produced by M-O was *May 12th*,^{lxxxvi} an account of the Coronation of George VI, based on newspaper cuttings, answers to a questionnaire leaflet "Where were you on May 12th?", the observations of a mobile squad of twelve 'professional' observers and the accounts of Coronation Day by volunteer diarists. The book owes much to documentary film, cutting from account to account, from shot to shot, building up an overall picture of Coronation Day. There are sections on the preparations for the procession, on the procession itself, on Coronation Day across the country as a whole and on individuals' responses to the occasion.^{lxxxvii}

Most critics have agreed that the book was something of a failure. In the press *May 12th* was given a mixed reception, but more importantly for M-O nearly every journal noticed it and bad publicity was better than no publicity at all. Woodrow Wyatt, a young under-graduate down from Oxford for the summer vacation, undertook to analyse press reaction.^{lxxxviii} He found that most reviews ridiculed M-O's claim to scientificity, *The Spectator* opining that:

"Scientifically, they're about as valuable as a chimpanzees tea party at the zoo."^{lxxxix}

While Evelyn Waugh found in the book:

"a great deal of pseudo-scientific showmanship."^{xc}

One of the few reviewers to praise M-O's subjectivity was William Hickey in the *Daily Express* who commented on M-O's "fine, objective reports": this however, could hardly be described as a fine, objective review, for William Hickey was Tom Driberg, an old friend of Tom Harrison. Most reviewers agreed that had some general interest and that it would be of great value to future historians. Papers of the right found a leftist bias in M-O, while left-wing journals were generally extremely hostile, G.W. Stonier writing a totally condemnatory review in the *New Statesman*. Papers of the centre, *The Listener*, *John O' London's Weekly*, *Night and Day*, were friendly. Apart from comments on scientificity the most common complaint was that M-O was meddling in concerns which were none of its business. *The Star* saw a more general problem in M-O noting that

"The inchoate desire to express themselves, especially among young people, who would be better employed doing something useful, seems to be a malaise of the times ..."^{xc}

The Daily Herald, later in the year, labelled observers "pschoanthroposociologic Nosey Parkers"^{xcii} but the most concerted attack came from the *London Evening News*. Mass-Observation presented:

"unequalled opportunities for the pettifogging, the malicious, the cranky, the interfering, the mildly dotty."^{xciii}

In a leader *The Evening News* commented:

"In the next few months, unless this game is stamped upon hardly and authoritatively, the furtive note-book, the licked pencil, the earnest, preoccupied expression are all going to have a sinister meaning."^{xciv}

M-O was beginning to trespass on the territory of the press, as it was later to trespass on that of market research; in both cases it met with a hostile reaction. In 1947 Bob Willcock, by that time M-O's Research Director, saw the major weakness of *May 12th* as being too great a proliferation of detail without any connecting commentary and with no conclusion being drawn. He thought, however, that the lack of conclusion was in some ways a good thing, for to have drawn conclusions on such a sensitive subject as the Coronation would have been bound to have angered some sections of the public and to have made enemies for M-O at the outset.^{xcv}

Hynes' criticism of *May 12th* touches on another important aspect of the 'duality' of M-O. He sees the book as an original idea, "the most substantial and most literary product of the entire movement."^{xcvi} For Hynes it fails due to "the flat repetitiousness of the prose,"^{xcvii} and due to its inability to live up to the claim of M-O to have successfully brought together the artist and scientist. In the introductory pamphlet they wrote:

"At the time that this pamphlet is being written, art and science are both turning towards the same field: the field of human behaviour which lies immediately before our eyes."^{xcviii}

And in the joint letter to the *New Statesman* M-O's founders had written:

"The artist and the scientist, each compelled by historic necessity out of their artificial exclusiveness, are at last joint forces and are turning back towards the mass from which they had detached themselves."^{xcix}

Ironically the first six months of M-O saw the period of greatest *separation* between artist and scientist. *May 12th* was wholly the work of the Blackheath group; Tom Harrison took no part in its production. It was put together by a number of poets under the direction of Madge and Jennings; Ruthven Todd, William Empson and Kathleen Raine were among the Blackheath workers involved in the production of the book. There was always a degree of separation between Blackheath and Bolton, but from late 1937 both began to move towards the centre of the documentary movement; in Bolton Harrison brought together artists, photographers, writers and sociologists to make an intensive study of Worktown, while in London Madge began to ask her diarists to record their reactions to more topical matters, Armistice Day, Munich, the coming of war.

3. Worktown and Holiday Town

Looking back from 1970 Tom Harrison wrote of the Worktown project:

"We sought to fully penetrate the society we were studying, to live in it as effective members of it and to percolate into every corner of every day and every night of industrial life"^c

The aim was to understand Worktown by "looking, listening, observing, without asking any questions."^{ci} For the first eighteen months or so very few Bolton people realised that they were being observed; according to Harrison, the invisibility of the observer was an essential element of the operation.

To set up the project Harrison solicited financial gifts from two northern industrialists and received generous advances on four books to be written on the project from Victor Gollancz. When funds ran low Harrison would turn his hand to broadcasting, a talk for BBC Manchester, for instance, being

entitled "Art and the Ordinary Chap",^{cii} or to popular journalism, where he would produce his standard piece "I married a cannibal."^{ciii}

Harrison organised the project with tremendous energy and zeal:

"... all private life was killed and M-O was the only thing anyone was allowed to think about from dawn to dream."^{civ}

Through his extraordinary enthusiasm Harrison managed to persuade all kinds of people to come to work with him in Bolton. In the Spring of 1937 Humphrey Spender, who had come to know Harrison through his brother Michael, who had been on an expedition with Harrison in the early 1930s, first came to take photographs. In the summer of that year Julian Trevelyan and William Empson worked in Bolton, Empson being sent out to take notes on the contents of sweet-shop windows, while Trevelyan carried a suitcase full of old newspapers, magazines, gum bottles and scissors around the town, making collages of cotton mills and street scenes.^{cv} In the summer of 1938 two painters of the Euston Road realist group, William Coldstream and Graham Bell, came to Worktown; Coldstream painted a panoramic view of the town from the roof of the Art Gallery, while Bell produced plans and sketches for a whole series of Worktown pictures, of mills, pubs, markets, of a wedding, a funeral, a dance hall. Humphrey Spender stayed in Worktown as often as he could throughout 1938, but by the autumn of that year he had joined the newly founded *Picture Post*. In October Spender held a one man show in London of his Bolton paintings and photographs; in the notes to the exhibition he explained that photography was of pre-eminent importance because it was:

"the system which people can be pictured by the people for the people"^{cvi}

These artists were set to paint and photograph exactly what they saw. They were there to record the facts. Spender has recently recalled that there was:

"This great principle of never fixing anything up, it must be a genuine incident. Very much not what the *Mirror's* policy was of 'laying on', 'setting up' ... That was an absolute Golden Rule, if anyone knew they were being photographed then it was a failure; it had to be unobserved."^{cvii}

Many of the people who came to work with Harrison in Bolton, apart from the painters these included Dick Crossman, Woodrow Wyatt and Tom Driberg, came as social explorers, upper middle class young men who felt that it was their duty to make contact with, and to get to know, the working class. Humphrey Spender has explained it thus:

"My kind of class ... certainly came from a privileged background of nannies and governesses. There were always servants in the house and we were really protected from it (i.e. contact with the working class) ... so immediately that set up a peculiar attraction towards forbidden fruit, towards the common people."^{cviii}

However, like Orwell on his journey through the north in the previous year, many of the Worktown observers were fully conscious of the distance between them and the working class people of Bolton. Julian Trevelyan has recalled:

"I was aware, not for the first time, of the gulf that separated me from these English workers, the gulf of education, language, accent and social behaviour. It was my constant desire during these years to bridge that gulf and occasionally I succeeded."^{cxix}

Humphrey Spender, asked recently if he talked to the people he photographed, replied:

"No. I would have been terrified. The whole difficulty for me there was what happens when you talk to them. They are total foreigners, and it was acutely embarrassing ... there were occasions when I was very much on my own and really quite depressed and frightened ... for me to go into a north country pub, and really speaking a completely different language, to be a kind of 'hail fellow well met' person was very embarrassing ... the main anxiety, purpose, was to become invisible and to make my equipment invisible, which is one of the reasons I carried around an absolute minimum of equipment, which was often concealed in a dreary old mackintosh."^{cx}

Only Tom Harrison himself does not seem to have been beset by these problems, perhaps as much due to his self-confidence, and indeed arrogance, as to any inherent ability to merge with the working class. In 1960 he wrote:

"It is difficult to remember ... how in those far off days nearly everybody who wasn't born into the working class regarded them as almost a race apart. Even good books like Orwell's *Road To Wigan Pier* which really tried to get under the surface, started out from this underlying and sociologically miserable premise. The biggest thrill which this lately initiated cannibal experienced was finding it no more difficult to be accepted as an equal in a cotton mill, or as a lorry driver or an ice-cream man."^{cxii}

Harrison could get his observers to do practically anything for him - if Empson was asked to take notes on a sweet-shop window, he took them; Julian Trevelyan painted in the middle of the street. As Spender recalls:

"Tom literally did say: go into public lavatories and take pictures of people peeing."^{cxiii}

For a couple of months in the summer M-O would move from Worktown to Holiday Town, Blackpool. Observers were placed in various hotels and boarding houses, from the very best to the doss house. Their brief was to find out everything they could about the hotel, prices, menus, colour of the wallpaper, and everything about the guests, names, occupations, hobbies, even their dreams. They had to find out how each holiday maker spent his or her week or fortnight, following them at a discreet distance, watching how much money they spent and where they spent it. M-O was particularly fascinated by Blackpool's amusements and side-shows; the five legged cow, the museum of anatomy

featuring a pregnant, bearded, man, Professor Aubrey Winston Grey and his football pool winning Bhudda, scientific miracle robots appealed to the anthropologist in Harrison and to Spender's sense of the surreal.^{cxiii}

Very little of this Bolton and Blackpool work has been published. A short analysis of seaside music hall jokes was included in the book *First Year's Work*: M-O discovered that the same jokes were told in three separate theatres on the same night and that the most popular subjects for jokes were death and disease.^{cxiv} In 1943 John Sommerfield's book entitled significantly for the time *The Pub and the People* was published, the only one of the original four books commissioned by Gollancz to see the light of day.^{cxv} Some Bolton and Blackpool material from the late 1930s appeared much later in *Britain Revisited* (1960). The vast bulk of the Worktown and Holiday material, which Harrison estimated made up between 6 and 8 per. cent. of the entire collection, is stored in over fifty large cardboard boxes in the M-O Archive. A list of the contents of these boxes is given in the Appendices and this should give some idea of the scope of the project; but for its richness and for an appreciation of the depth of its involvement with the people of Worktown, the reader could do well to turn to *The Pub and the People*.

4. The Mass-Observers

For reasons of space it is impossible to deal with the Day Surveys and Diaries in any detail in this paper. In the early months of 1937, through advertisements in a variety of newspapers and magazines, Mass-Observation recruited something like 400 men and women whose first tasks were to write one-day diaries on the twelfth of each month (known as Day Surveys) and to reply to occasional questions (known as Directives) on topics such as smoking, reading-habits, Armistice Day and Christmas. During 1938 the Day Survey idea lapsed, except for a few special occasions, such as August Bank Holiday; the chief work of the Observers, voluntary and full-time, in 1938 seems to have been covering the Munich Crisis and its aftermath. Unfortunately many of the boxes holding the 1938 material have been damaged and some may have been lost. In 1939 the volunteer Observers, now known as 'The Panel', started to respond to regular monthly Directives asking for their opinions on, for example, class, race and the political situation. Sometimes Observers were asked to interview their family and friends on such topics.

For our purposes the importance of the Day Surveys and the Panel reports lies in the voluntary contributors themselves. Hynes has written that M-O was an organisation designed for bored and emotionally impoverished people. The diarists, he says, were largely young, single, provincial and lower middle class, "the lonely, bored livers of unexciting lives" turning to M-O for emotional relief.^{cxvi} Hynes account is a serious misrepresentation of the motives and interests of most of the voluntary Observers.

There were, it is quite true, a number of diarists who were lonely and depressed, yet the great majority of them, while certainly being lower middle class, volunteered to work for M-O because they wanted to be of some use in the fight against Fascism and against official neglect of the ordinary people. They, like the documentarists themselves, felt both a need to know and a desire to make their voices heard. The lower middle class diarists share certain common characteristics.^{cxvii} Few were in full-time education much past the age of 16, although many had won scholarships from elementary to secondary school. Those who did go on to university almost without exception returned to the lower middle class world as schoolteachers. Many had had childhoods interrupted by the crisis of the early years of the century: a number of fathers had been killed in the First World War, some families lost their savings in the inflation which followed the First World War, some had been ruined by the slump. Many of the diarists themselves had problems finding work in the 1930s and there are many accounts of unemployment. The unmarried diarists tended to live with their parents through their twenties and it is true that one thing which sets the lower middle class off from the more established middle class in these diaries is the wider scope of the latter's lives, university, foreign travel, a larger and more varied range of acquaintance. The homes of the lower class diarists tended to be in the suburbs of large cities, often in streets which were just beginning to go noticeably down in the world, streets which would have been eminently respectable when the 25 year old diarist was born. The diaries contain accounts of the work of clerks, shop assistants, draughtsmen, many school teachers, commercial travellers and laboratory technicians. Most complain about their work from time to time, but few seem fundamentally dissatisfied. Many complain of boredom, but one of the outstanding features of these accounts of lower middle class work is how little work is done. Few started before half-past nine, most took a mid-morning coffee break outside the office or shop, most took at least an hour for lunch and many were off home by four thirty; few stayed at work after five. This is in marked contrast to the accounts of working class diarists who were invariably at work by eight, and never left off until after five.

The majority of the diarists were intelligent young men and women; while some were, perhaps, pretentious, many more were keen to go on beyond their limited school education. They read widely, the *News Chronicle* and the *New Statesman* being representative journals and many, importantly, were members of the Left Book Club and recorded their excitement when the month's Choice arrived. Among the diarists there were examples of Orwell's youthful snob Bolsheviks, secret tee-totallers with vegetarian leanings and fruit juice drinking, nature cure quack Quakers: one diarist fitted Orwell's description almost exactly, except that he was in his sixties. He was a *New Statesman* reader, a member of the NUR, (he was a draughtsman and clerk), a tee-totaller who even refused to drink tea and took hot water instead, a member of the Manchester Anti-Smokers Defence League, a fresh air fanatic, a member of the Left Book Club, a Quaker, a sympathiser with the Communist Party but also an advocate of proportional representation, was anti cruel sports, anti football pools and, at the age of 64, a keen youth hosteller. On youth hostelling holidays in the Lake District, on which he took his wife,

he would slip out of the hostel at half-past five the morning and go and leaflet the nearest town for one of his worthy causes.^{cxviii} Most diarists however, were 'ordinary people of good will'. They were deeply worried about the coming of war: as early as spring 1937 some recounted dreams of being caught up in air raids, while others debated with themselves as to whether they should fight. The low church pacifist influence was strong, but also was a keen interest in scouting, indeed nonconformity, pacifism and scouting often went together. Those who chose not to join in such organised interests were often keen cyclists or walkers and many holidays in the summer of 1937 took the form, for the lower middle class young, of rambles through the West Country or cycle tours through rural Kent.

Only a few diarists were directly involved in politics and, by in large, it was left to working class diarists to provide accounts of trade union activity at work. As far as I know our draughtsmen mentioned above and another railwayman in the North East (who was victimised for his trade union activities during the General Strike)^{cxix} were the only white-collar workers among the 1937 diarists to be members of trade unions. Of the very small number of lower middle class diarists who were members of political parties, most were members of the Communist Party. But this is not to say that the majority of diarists were uninterested in politics or in the development of the crisis through which they were living. Like membership of the Left Book Club, participation in M-O was a kind of private commitment to a public cause. When M-O recruited 'the Panel' in 1939 they asked all voluntary contributors to write life histories and to describe the area in which they lived, their jobs and their political and religious views. There was little difference in the social composition of the 1939 group compared with that of 1937, indeed, it was perhaps even more solidly lower middle class, and no difference within the lower middle class in educational background, area of residence, etc. The noticeable difference between the 1937 and the 1939 contributor is that the latter seem more politically bewildered. In 1937 the war in Spain was not yet lost and there was a certain confidence in the diarists' expressions of their political views; by 1939 that confidence was gone. But lower middle class commitment to M-O had not diminished for M-O, along with Penguin Specials, *Picture Post* and the radical documentarists as a whole promised to give the lower middle class some purchase on the crisis, just as the Common Wealth Party with its ethical socialism would promise so much for these same people in the last years of the War.^{cxx}

Very little use has been made of these diaries in the years since they were written. The reports of the Coronation were used in *May 12th*, but the poor reception which the book received discouraged Madge and Harrison. During the war Harrison fleetingly thought of producing a book of war diarists' accounts of the home front but remembered the reviews of *12th May* and gave up the idea. As Harrison pointed out, the diaries become easier to deal with the further the lives and events they describe recede into memory.^{cxxi} However, little research into the diaries has, as yet, been undertaken. For the time being they remain packed away in boxes in the M-O Archive.

5. CRISIS: MUNICH, PUBLIC OPINION AND THE POLITICS OF THE PEOPLE

"be it our task to discern the sign of the times - to watch the progress of this crisis and to direct it for good instead of evil" Robert Owen 1832^{cxxii}

The feeling of relief which swept the country after Chamberlain's appeasing visits to Munich in September 1938 was short lived. It was clear that there was to be no peace in our time. By the New Year the situation was getting steadily worse. In January 1939 Barcelona fell. In February Britain recognised France and in March Madrid fell. In the meantime Hitler had made a number of speeches demanding the return of the German colonies. In March Germany occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia and the port of Memel was ceded to Germany by Lithuania. The British Press accepted 'D' notices, keeping the full gravity of the situation quiet, while the *Daily Express*, realising that fears of war were damaging business, saw it fit to run, in the early months of 1939, a 'No War This Year, campaign.'^{cxxiii} It was in this atmosphere that M-O's most important *published* contribution to the documentary movement appeared. It was, significantly, a Penguin Special, *Britain by Mass-Observation*.^{cxxiv}

The book contains examples of the many different approaches of M-O. There is a section on the newly imported craze of all-in wrestling and a section on the origins of the new dance style, the Lambeth Walk. There is a piece on the Westhoughton Wakes Week Festival taken from the Worktown study, a section on the Armistice Day interruption of 1937 taken from diarists' reports and a short comment on housing. But it is in the first piece, 'Crisis', a piece which takes up nearly half the book, that M-O stepped fully into the documentary tradition.

In the crisis of September 1938, there was an urgent 'need to know':

"It is naturally difficult for people to get to know the facts about these things (the international situation), because secrecy is essential when bluff and counter bluff are the order of the day. This is a democratic country, so we are supposed to have some idea of what is going on. For this we depend on wireless and newspaper presentation of the news. But can we believe what we read and hear? People want inside information; they want to get behind the news. This is impossible for the vast majority, so they have to accept what the newspapers say, or else stop bothering ... (therefore) ... Fact is urgent - we are cogs in a vast and complicated machine which may turn out to be an infernal machine that is going to blow us all to smithereens ... It is because of this situation - the urgency of fact, the voicelessness of everyman and the smallness of the group which controls fact-getting and fact-distributing that this book came to be written ... (The book) ... aims ... to ... give both ear and voice to what the millions are feeling and doing under the shadow of these terrific events."^{cxxv}

The first section of *Britain by Mass-Observation* is, therefore, an analysis of public opinion at the time of the Munich Crisis. It is a brilliant piece of journalism as well a significant new departure in public

opinion polling, making use of the entire arsenal of M-O techniques, field work, in-depth questionnaires, reports by 'professional' observers, diarists' accounts, overheard conversations, etc. Above all it is fully part of the documentary movement: not only does it show people to themselves, show them clearly what they were thinking at the time, it is also a damning attack on the official organs of public opinion, the Fleet Street press. It is a statement for us against them, populist, bitter, superficially non-political, an attack on the complacency of the 'Old Gang'. It may be that war was averted at Munich, put off for a year, but that popular discontent which would find fullest expression in the wartime radicalism of 'The Commentators', the new *Daily Mirror*, *Picture Post*, Michael Foot, J.B. Priestley, was being clearly voiced in the early months of 1939 by the documentarists. As Stuart Hall puts it:

"The documentary style, though at one level a *form* of writing, photographing, filming, recording was, at another level, an emergent social consciousness: it registered in the formation of a social rhetoric, the emergent structure of feeling in the immediate pre-war and war periods."^{cxvii}

Mass-Observation found that as the crises of the years before the war grew more serious, so public interest in them appeared to decline. M-O attributed this factor to a defence against nervous strain, to a kind of fatalism and to the general distrust of newspaper information.^{cxviii} M-O was not only concerned that the press misled the public but that Fleet Street misled the Government about what the public was thinking. Fleet Street claimed to have sole access to public opinion but, according to M-O, they did not measure it scientifically, indeed, they rarely measured it at all. In many cases what a newspaper stated to be public opinion was just as likely to be the proprietors own pet opinion of that day. For example, when the *Daily Mail* confidently stated that:

"The British nation unreservedly places its complete trust in the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain."^{cxviii}

The point for M-O was not so much whether this was true or false, but that the press took no trouble to find out what public opinion was. Sometimes, of course, the general feeling in the country would coincide with the political prejudices of sections of the press, at other times the views of the bulk of the press and public opinion would be disastrously out of step. M-O preferred that newspapers should take an honest line as, for example, did the *Daily Mirror* when, in the midst of the Munich Crisis, it declared:

"What do we know this morning? Not much."^{cxix}

Gauging public opinion at the beginning of the Munich Crisis M-O found:

"A resistance to the idea that war is coming and this resistance grows as the danger of war is brought nearer."

"Although most people are anxious and would like to know more about issues that they know to be a matter of life and death, they are discouraged and bewildered by the official secrecy and newspaper contradictions."

"A sense of hopelessness which makes it seem to one in every two that there is nothing we can do about it."^{cxxx}

Older people tended to expect war more than young people, men more than women. But generally:

"as the danger of war comes nearer, so are people less able to admit it, partly through their own increasing wishful thinking, partly through the scarcity of facts."^{cxxx}

In M-O's analysis of the press coverage of Munich Tom Harrisson's anthropological instincts came to the fore. The Press treated Hitler as the bloodthirsty enemy, the evil god, and Chamberlain as the magical old man who goes up into the sky to bring peace of the world.^{cxxxii} On Chamberlain's second visit to Munich there was a huge movement of public opinion in his favour but as the terms began to leak out, as it became clear that Britain had virtually handed over Czechoslovakia to Hitler, public opinion turned against Chamberlain. As *The Times* later put it, with typical understatement:

"The general character of the terms submitted to the Czech government for their consideration cannot in the nature of things be expected to make a strong *prima facie* appeal to them."^{cxxxiii}

M-O commented:

"The joy with which the masses welcomed Chamberlain's peace flight, the speed with which the men turned against him when the terms became known, and their readiness to fight Hitler rather sooner than later are in themselves striking enough examples of the rapidity with which popular opinion remoulds itself. They show clearly enough that the reasons why the mass mind is changeable is not any inherent fickleness, but simply that the masses are not given the facts or are deliberately mis-led."^{cxxxiv}

As the crisis deepened one section of the public clamoured for the facts while another section, much, it is clear, to Harrisson's anthropological delight, turned to superstition: in the last week of September 1938 it seemed that the whole country was praying. Beverly Nicholls wrote of a photograph of Mrs Chamberlain at prayer beside the tomb of the Unknown Soldier:

"That is one of the pictures that make history beautiful."^{cxxxv}

When it was announced that Chamberlain would fly to Munich to see Hitler for the third time the Archbishop of Canterbury was allotted time during the BBC news to opine that this invitation was due to all the praying the nation the been doing.^{cxxxvi} Godfrey Winn wrote in *The Sunday Express*:

"Praise be to God and Mr Chamberlain. I find no sacrilege, no bathos, in coupling these two names."^{cxvii}

It would seem, however, that by the time of the announcement of Chamberlain's third visit the press and public opinion were to some extent back in harmony. Chamberlain flew to Munich on the Wednesday.

Since the weekend gas masks had been distributed and the unemployed were being used to dig trenches in London's parks. According to M-O it was the distribution of gas masks which finally convinced the public that war was coming.^{cxviii} Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 September 1938 were days of great confusion. The press was unable to find out what was going on in Cabinet: all they could do was to report to the nearest minute the times of emergency Cabinet meetings. In their uncertainty as to what the ordinary British citizen was thinking journalists tried hard at gauging German public opinion. They announced that the average German was against war as was the ordinary Italian. Hitler was out of touch with German public opinion. *The Herald* and *The Mail* published the same picture of a happy scene in a German cafe entitled 'The average German does not want war': Unfortunately the cafe's customers at the time were English journalists.^{cxix} The English public tried to get to the facts of the situation. A Penguin Special on Czechoslovakia sold out of a first print of 50,000 copies in 24 hours and soon a further 100,000 copies were sold.^{cx} Everywhere there was confusion: the telephone system was disorganised by the number of calls, there was a huge boom in marriages, bus companies did big business in one way tickets out of London. Extraordinary rumours spread through the country, rumours which, according to M-O, originated in Fleet Street and the Stock Exchange: 200,000 SS men had been mobilised to control the German population, during a military parade in Berlin a car had collided with a tank and splintered it.^{cxli}

It is not, therefore, surprising that when Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons that he was to visit Munich on the invitation of Hitler, the news was greeted with hysterical relief. Here was solid news, a chance to resolve the confusion. The hysteria was at its height in the House of Commons itself. M-O had an observer in the Lobby. He wrote:

"A young member rushes out, shouts: 'You're not going to be called up now, you needn't worry' followed by six others who wave their hands and laugh and shout the news ... Then out comes the Archbishop of Canterbury lifting his head, his eyes red and filled with tears. John Strachey strides in from outside the Hall, passes the police. They are taken aback but he is through and in the Inner Lobby, too quickly for a policeman to follow him. He reappears with Maisky who is smiling ... Grandi comes out, a raincoat slung over his shoulders like a cape: he switches on an electric grin."^{cxlii}

It seems true that much of the relief felt in high places was shared throughout the country, but M-O alleged that much of the hero-worship of Chamberlain was trumped up by the press. The crowds in Downing street numbered about 5,000, that is, M-O wrote:

"... half the number of people that can be counted on at a routine CP rally in Trafalgar Square ... No second division football team could survive on a Chamberlain gate. Nevertheless, the next morning the press arrayed photos and headlines which gave the impression of enormous crowds."^{cxliii}

It did not take long for the realisation to dawn on the public that Munich was no great triumph of diplomacy, but a shoddy betrayal of Czechoslovakia. The press, however, continued to laud Chamberlain through into 1939; in an effort to get business moving again Fleet Street declared that permanent peace was now assured.^{cxliv} Everyone, the press declared, was pro-Chamberlain; the Conservative Party was almost convinced and made plans for a snap election.^{cxlv} M-O concluded:

"During one whole week, no outsider reading an English newspaper could have guessed that an increasing proportion of the population were once more increasingly bewildered, fearful and ashamed."^{cxlvi}

The rhetoric of M-O's study of the Munich Crisis was that of the documentary movement and of the radical commentators of the early years of the war. It was a piece of popular journalism written for the people, about themselves. There could be no doubt where M-O's commitment lay; there was little attempt to create any distance from their subject for the sake of scientific analysis. The piece was a sustained attack on the establishment, the press, the Church, the Government. That undifferentiated body, 'the people', who would within a year, be fighting 'the people's war', had been recognised: 'men and women of goodwill', threatened by Hitler, hoodwinked by the press, made shameful by Chamberlain.

As with most other components of the documentary movement, M-O was nominally apolitical; it was, in fact, part of that alliance of the non-aligned which reached its most articulate form in the wartime Common Wealth Party. Harrison liked to regard himself as an objective scientist whose scientific interests occasionally included political affairs. In 1940 he wrote to Charles Madge:

"I am political in the same sort of way as H.G. Wells or Bertrand Russell, and not quite so political as Julian Huxley ... These people have no interest in party politics, though one could at a scratch call their activities political. I regard them as merely polemical."^{cxlvii}

Harrison had shown his 'scientific' attitude to politics while working in Bolton. All the political groups had been observed and a book on Worktown politics was planned, but it would have been quite against Harrison's conception of the Worktown project for M-O to have actually taken part in Bolton's politics.

The Worktown project had, however, been conceived during Harrison's most anthropological period. By the end of 1938 M-O was, as we have seen, being drawn into direct involvement in the national

crisis, being drawn in on the side of the people. That the press analysis of public opinion was wrong and that M-O's was right was clearly shown in the results of the series of seven by-elections which took place in the autumn following the Munich Crisis.^{cxlviii} In each contest the main anti Government candidate increased his share of the poll and in two constituencies, which had previously been Government seats, anti Government candidates opposed to the Munich settlement were returned. In Oxford a Lib-Lab pact was formed, largely on the instigation of Roy Harrod and Dick Crossman, at that time an Oxford City Councillor and soon to be a close collaborator with Tom Harrisson. A veritable popular front of speakers turned up to support the compromise candidate Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, against the young Government candidate Quintin Hogg. Beveridge, Acland, Haldane, Harold Macmillan, Randolph Churchill and Ellen Wilkinson spoke for Lindsay. Hogg was returned but the Government vote fell.^{cxlix} For our purposes the most important of these seven by-elections is that in Bridgewater, Somerset, a safe Tory seat. Sir Richard Acland, MP for North Devon and local Left Book Club group, had been trying for a year to promote a non-party candidate to oppose the Government in Bridgewater and eventually secured the agreement of the Liberal and Labour Parties. Vernon Bartlett, Senior Foreign Correspondent of the liberal *News Chronicle* was chosen: he had been with Chamberlain on all three trips to Germany and was bitterly opposed to appeasement. The press converged on Bridgewater, as did Tom Harrisson and a Mass-Observation team. Harrisson went to work analysing local opinion, sorting out which issues seemed likely to swing the election. He did not hold out much hope for success for Bartlett, but nevertheless advised him on popular opinion. Bartlett, a man of strong personality, was returned, his victory being an early forerunner of the numerous by-election victories of independent candidates in the later years of the war.^{cl} M-O's involvement in Bartlett's victory was itself a precursor of their later involvement in wartime radicalism.

Throughout 1938 M-O continued to analyse popular opinion with regard to the likelihood of war and to criticise the press for leading the public to believe that peace was assured. In August M-O took regular opinion polls and found that the pattern they had noticed in September 1938 had grown more marked. As war came obviously nearer so fewer people said that they expected war. When Anthony Eden had resigned early in 1938 34 per cent of those questioned expected war in the near future. In August 1939 only 18 per cent expected war. On 31 August 1939, the day before Hitler's invasion of Poland, a large majority of those questioned thought Hitler was bluffing. On the day of the invasion those who on the previous day had not expected war were hard to find. There was a general feeling of relief, of wanting to get on with it.^{cli}

The early years of the war were to see Mass-Observation come into its own, along with other components of the documentary movement. In this sense it seems inadequate to see M-O, as Hynes and others have seen it, as the tail end of the literary movement of the 1930s. M-O years of greatest achievement lay between 1938 and 1942; M-O carried over from the thirties the sense of 'need to know', it associated that 'need to know' with a particular vision of ordinary people and, along with the

rest of the documentary movement, brought the concerns of the common people to the forefront in the years of greatest crisis in 'the peoples war'. As we shall see M-O, also inevitably given the nature of its basic concepts, ushered the people into a more participatory social democracy within the overall limits of a capitalist State. In the later years of the war and in the immediate post-war period, M-O's roots in the wider social survey movement of the 1930's would become clear: M-O would analyse for the Government popular reaction to the coming of the Welfare State and would, through market research, co-operate with business in ushering in the 'age of affluence'. Nevertheless, with *Picture Post*, the documentary film makers, writers like Orwell and Priestley and photographers like Spender and Brandt, M-O bridged the gap between the 1930s and the war. Amidst the elegies of the thirties written between 1937 and 1939 and subsequent academic placings of the end of the decade in 1937, this is a salutary reminder of continuations.^{cliii} Most importantly of all, being a popular organisation, an organisation based on an enthusiastic, concerned, voluntary, participating public, M-O carried 'the people' with it from the 1930s to the 1940s. As Michael Green has written:

"Of the many moods of writing in the 30s, too quickly collapsed in retrospect, the most tenacious, carried through the mass media in the early years of the war, is the detailed evocation of a determined resilience against official contempt and neglect. By 1940 there could be a widespread and simultaneous attack on behalf of the suffering people against an incompetent and narrow ruling class."^{cliii}

No group more clearly brought out this determined resilience than M-O. Looking back on the period Tom Harrison wrote:

"We truly tried to bridge a gap, left achingly void, between the working streets in Worktown and the sanitube, clean ... deodorant, Ginsbergised layers of LSE sociology, so called. Between, too, Worktown, Melanesia and Borneo. In that time of European squalor, 1937-39, M-O at least did throb, and *felt* undefeated. Perhaps that was its peculiar contribution - why so many people who were young and tortured then think kindly of it today."^{cliv}

6. War

According to Tom Harrison the war brought Mass-Observation "into its own sort of own".^{clv} M-O had two special services to offer in competition with other bodies which had recently sprung up with the aim of studying public opinion. Firstly M-O had developed a method of studying public opinion in detail along with interpreting broad trends such as morale. Secondly, as Tom Harrison wrote to Charles Madge while he was negotiating a contract with Mary Adams and Dick Crossman, both old friends of M-O and Harrison, at the Ministry of Information:

"Everything is blowing into our hands ... We have got what no-one else has got, facts before the war."^{clvi}

The documentarists Priestley, Orwell, Jennings, Spender and Harrison had explored English life before the war and they, along with the people themselves, knew the facts. They were, therefore, especially well qualified to appeal for the unity of all the Englands they had found, a unity of the working class, the lower middle class, all people of 'goodwill', against Fascism and against the 'Old Gang'.

M-O demonstrated their expertise in a book published in early 1940 in which they studied the first four months of the war, *War Begins At Home*.^{clvii} They looked at, among other things, the impact of the blackout, air raid neurosis, blimp reassurance, class conflict during evacuation, the Ministry of Information and the drought of news. The book was strongly critical of established bodies. Sociology and social psychology had deserted their obligations, according to M-O, just when they should have been bridging the gap between leaders and led, the Institute of Sociology had evacuated itself to Malvern before war broke out and had not returned. It planned to carry out an anthropological and historical study of rural Worcestershire.^{clviii} It was, said M-O, geographically and intellectually isolated. More importantly M-O launched a strong attack on Chamberlain and his Government:

"Perhaps the thing which most distinguishes our present leaders is that most of them have hereditary ties or marriage relationships with others in the ruling classes, have had public school and university education, and have been leaders for a very long time, many of them during the 1914-18 war too. Some, like the present Prime Minister, have come into politics just as others succeed in their Fathers' chip shops ... Mr Chamberlain believes that a luncheon at the Dorchester will have a steadying effect on morale on the home front which will be most valuable. This is the level on which many of our leaders actually think."^{clix}

By the time *War Begins At Home* was published M-O was working for the Ministry of Information (Mol). They saw this work as helping to create true democratic unity in Britain, a unity in which the interests of ordinary people would be paramount. They saw their task as indicating to the Government the wishes of the people and helping the Government to explain its actions to the people. With M-O's guidance the Mol would no longer produce slogans such as "Your courage, your cheerfulness, your resolution, will bring us victory."^{clx} M-O would bridge the gap between leaders and led and both would be provided with the facts. Tom Harrison had a further reason for working with the Mol. In September he wrote to Charles Madge:

"I am in favour of the Ministry taking on as many different market research and information organisations as they can get, and I don't think we have set out to be big shots. Surely what we want is to do enough useful work to be allowed to keep going, so that after the war we may tell the truth for the first time."^{clxi}

Bob Willcock writing in 1947, by which time he had succeeded Harrison as Director of M-O, summed up the organisations activities in the summer of 1940:

"The period from the invasion of Belgium to Dunkirk was the most intensely active of M-O's existence. Detailed records of peoples' reactions to the news were kept

daily, both through the direct method of questioning and by recording all sorts of overheard remarks and conversations in the street, in pubs, cafés and buses. People were observed in their homes listening to the news on the radio, their day-to-day and sometimes hour-to-hour expectations and fears were recorded and through the diaries the long records of their private conversations and actions were collected. Rumours, including the first version of the parachutist-nun with hairy hands, which persisted for many months later in various forms, were carefully collated and sifted each day. In March M-O began asking the question 'What do you think of the news today?', a standard question which has been asked on at least two days a week for the whole war period. Analysed in a standard scheme, answers to this question give one index to the blend of hope, expectation, interest and forward looking which help to make up the elusive quality 'morale'.^{clxii}

Through commissioning such investigations the Mol angered the jealous press. The full force of their wrath was directed at the Government body established by the Mol, Social Survey, but M-O did not escape, being dubbed by the *Daily Express*, 'Cooper's Snoopers', after the Minister of Information, Duff Cooper. Such investigations, the press argued, were likely to make people introspective and to depress morale; only the *Manchester Guardian* and the *News Chronicle* spoke out in favour of the investigators.^{clxiii} So great was the outcry that in the early summer of 1940 a Parliamentary debate was held on the matter. In the house, Sir Richard Acland (a close associate of Tom Harrisson, and one of M-Os Parliamentary advisers, along with Vernon Bartlett and, Nigel Nicolson, who had himself been viciously attacked by the press over his comment on Parliamentary hysteria during the Munich Crisis),^{clxiv} led the support for the Ministry of Information. Duff Cooper told a pack of lies, saying the Mol had used M-O only occasionally and then only as a source of statistics. In fact M-O were already in receipt of large payments from the Mol and had briefed Duff Cooper before the debate. Tom Harrisson travelled back to the Mol with Cooper in the official car after the debate. Acland's and Cooper's defence of the investigators took the wind out of the critics sails. The Blitz silenced all criticism. Harrisson told this story with a certain understandable relish, yet it does illustrate two disturbing implications for M-O during wartime. Firstly, they were part of Government and although they were severely criticised by Government Ministers, notably by Bevin and Morisson, they were also legitimate targets for the press, who in some ways could be seen as taking over M-O's role of the protecting the public from propaganda. Secondly, by prompting Duff Cooper to lie in the House of Commons, M-O were themselves guilty of obscuring the truth and distorting facts, actions for which, for the past two years they had been bitterly criticising both the press and Government. In the early summer of 1940 this was of little importance, M-O were still clearly on the side of the people. Its implications for the future were nevertheless, disturbing.

Meanwhile, M-O had suffered an internal crisis. Humphrey Jennings had left the organisation early in 1938 and since then Madge and Harrisson had been in charge. At the beginning of the war Madge strongly disagreed with Harrisson's proposal to work with the Mol; he wrote to Harrisson in January 1940

"I see grave danger of it becoming propagandist."^{clxv}

For six months the two men argued bitterly, often in the form of long letters detailing each others supposed short-comings. Harrison alleged that Madge's work was uncoordinated and unsystematic, that he made no attempt to co-ordinate his diarists' work with the Bolton project. Madge's heart, according to Harrison, was not in his work, whereas, Harrison wrote;

"For me, M-O has become practically an obsession, and I am not really interested in anything else at the moment."^{clxvi}

According to Madge Harrison not only wanted to be the sole boss of M-O, he also had wider ambitions. He liked to dazzle Sir Richard Acland and his Parliamentary cronies, and wanted to turn M-O into a political movement in its own right. Harrison denied these charges, claiming that since war broke out he had tried to be especially democratic in his administration of M-O and had curtailed his authoritarian tendencies. He claimed that he was flabbergasted by the allegation that he wanted to turn M-O into a political party, but it is clear that Madge was worried by M-O's movement into the centre of wartime radicalism. In 1940 none of the various discontents were articulated in party form but it was clear that there was a strong political feeling held in common by certain closely associated groups and individuals. Madge cannot have been reassured when Harrison wrote to him:

"I think it is just conceivable if a constituency offered me a one hundred per cent safe seat, free of all expense, and allowed me to stand as an independent without any policy except to really represent the opinion of the whole constituency in Parliament, that I might, provided that I didn't have to take any whip or work more than I wanted to on it, accept nomination as a candidate."^{clxvii}

Such circumstances might now sound unlikely, but in 1940 anything was possible, as Tom Harrison was, no doubt, well aware. I have mentioned the more serious aspects of the argument between Madge and Harrison; there was much petty abuse and the conflict was as much as anything one of personality. Madge would appear to have been at that time a quiet man living a troubled personal life. Harrison was arrogant and full of energy: you either got on with him or you gave up. For some months Madge had been in contact with J.M. Keynes, and largely due to Keynes influence he was able to set up a research project on wartime economics for the Institute of Economic and Social Research. A Book resulted, *Wartime Patterns of Saving and Spending*.^{clxviii} Madge later become Professor of Sociology at the University of Birmingham. From mid-1940, therefore, Harrison was in sole charge of Mass-Observation.

We have seen above M-O's wartime work on morale for the Mol, creating, as they called it, a 'war barometer'. M-Os second major war project was a study of the social effects of aerial bombardment. As Willcock wrote:

"M-O is particularly concerned with people's behaviour, their subjective feelings, their worries, frustrations, hopes, desires and fears ... The Blitz period, despite and even partly because of its human tragedies, was a field day for M-O."^{clixix}

M-O were employed to write factual accounts of what they saw and heard on the spot during all major incidents of violence inflicted on civilians, their reports being submitted to the Mol and to the Director of Naval Intelligence in the Admiralty, who had a special interest in the effects of bombing on morale in Southern ports. The first occasion on which M-O carried out such a survey was the attack on Coventry in November 1940.^{clix} As Coventry was a relatively small city and as its centre was almost completely destroyed, the damage seemed all the greater and rumour spread faster. There was unprecedented dislocation and depression and more terror, hysteria and neurosis than anywhere previously. Arrangements for casualties and for dealing with fire, gas and debris were efficient but there was no help forthcoming from the authorities to deal with the psychological problems of the homeless and the bereaved. M-O sent the Government an urgent report, which was not very well received, pointing out that at least 200,000 people were in a state of considerable distress following the raid: if Coventry had been bombed again the next night there would have been panic. M-O urged that more help should be given to voluntary social workers, rest centres should be better sited and better equipped, greater help should be given to people to repair their houses and transport should be better organised. Further, people should be given the facts of the situation: exaggerated reports in the press of courage did not accord with the shocked mood of the people of Coventry. They wanted to be treated as responsible citizens who should know the facts, not fobbed off with concocted heroics. Above all the press should not attribute to the public opinions which they did not hold. After the Coventry air raid the Beaverbrook press had initiated a hate campaign claiming that Coventry people were crying out for merciless reprisals on German cities. Harrison, by this time an experienced and eloquent broadcaster, was given the postscript time following the BBC six o'clock news. He took the opportunity to criticise Beaverbrook - not for the first, nor the last time. M-O's Blitz reports reached Churchill himself and had a considerable impact, leading to major reforms in welfare provision for affected areas. But these reports, always produced soon after the attack had taken place, caused a lot of trouble for M-O on their way up to Churchill, arousing, particularly, the anger of Bevin and Morrison.

Just before war broke out, Harrison offered the 'Panel' of voluntary contributors a choice of either continuing to answer Directives or of writing day-to-day diaries, covering every aspect of their war-time lives. About 500 at some time during the war wrote a diary, while over 2000 answered at least one Directive; some did both. Some contributors sent in only one report, some ceased writing if they were drafted overseas and a few were killed. It seems, however, that the vast majority continued their association with M-O for several months and a very sizeable group carried on for years. There would be a number of questions in each month's Directive. For example, in June 1942 there were questions on peoples attitudes to obscenity and swearing, glass objects, the desirability of invading Europe and

the cost of living. The Directives were divided into three sections; one for everyone to answer, one for those with extra time and one for those with access to special information. Panel members were also quick to volunteer information; for example many teachers sent in accounts of the evacuation of their schools. Some information from these diaries and reports was used in the preparation of reports for the Mol, but Tom Harrison has since written that ninety-nine per cent of the material was never touched.

The war-time diarists and Directive respondents were the same sort of people, with the same sorts of background, occupational, political and religious as had first given their support to M-O in 1937.^{clxxi} It seems likely that the crisis of 1936-39 and of the early years of the war had a particular impact on the lower middle class. This was not a crisis of class antagonism, indeed it tended to draw classes together.^{clxxii} The crisis called for, and received, a populist response, one in which many lower middle class people could feel fully involved without having to cast aside what they saw as their own, separate concerns in the interests of the working class. Involvement in M-O was one means of articulating their concern, other means were voting for Independent candidates in war-time by-elections, for the Common Wealth Party and, in 1945, for Labour.

Throughout the war M-O prepared hundreds of special reports. It is impossible to list even a representative selection here; a selection made by Tom Harrison in 1960 is included in the appendices. Along with these special reports each full-time observer covered one particular topic for the duration of the war. Topics covered included: fashion, women, radio, films, music hall, theatre, religion, economics, ARP and political organisations. Further M-O moved into the business, which had originated with groups such as PEP in the thirties, of preparing long detailed reports on particular problems, reports laid out in the manner of Parliamentary reports and carrying a similar impression of weight. One example of this work is *People in Production*, prepared, significantly, for the Advertising Service Guild in 1942 and published, again significantly, in Penguin Special.^{clxxiii} Again, this project was full of the rhetoric of war-time radicalism and goes a long way to indicating the limits of that radicalism, or at least to indicating how it could be taken up and remoulded in the post-war world. The report dealt with the human problems of industry, the various factors which, by lowering industrial workers' morale, restricted production. M-O criticised leadership of both management and trade unions for their allegedly antiquated attitudes, for continuing to fight a class war instead of coming together to fight Fascism. As might be expected M-O found that ordinary people had different ideas. They wrote:

"All through we find industry, in all leadership sections on both sides, thinking predominantly in terms of the return to something like the pre-war structure, whereas the rank and file (and most other sections of the community) are tending more and more to think in other terms"^{clxxiv}

M-O emphasised the need for widespread restructuring of leadership:

"... the particular problems on the leadership side are the problems of women. Yet these problems are being handled by men, mainly men with specialised education and outlook; the handling suffers in consequence. The general absence of younger persons of either sex in areas of decision and administration is also noticeable in every aspect of war production."^{clxxxv}

Above all M-O emphasised the need look after the welfare of workers:

"If an offensive spirit is required in Britain as a whole it is most certainly required on that side of our war production effort generally known as 'welfare' ... important initial advances have been made. But it cannot be said that they have been so rapid or so extensive as had been hoped or as is necessary, if we are to have total war mobilisation - which means a good deal more than mobilising the total number of machine tools. It's the woman who works the machine tool. It's the mind and heart and hope of the woman ... The financial and economic approach is essential, but over and over again it ignores the central fact that work is done by *people*, and money is paid to *people*, the time is lost by *people*, some people are going to lose the war and some people are going to win it."^{clxxxvi}

For M-O the problems of industry were also those of politics. The old forms, which had, in the inter-war years, given rise to class conflict and to the virtual death of democracy, were still powerful, and would remain powerful after the war unless populist, democratic policies were adopted during the war. In *People in Production* M-O commented on the Grantham by-election of March 1942, the first of a series of by-elections to be won by Independent candidates:

"There is no-one more initially advantaged today than a distinguished Air Marshall (Air Marshall Sir Arthur Longmore) but he was beaten in a 'safe' Conservative seat by the Managing Director of a local works. Mr Kendall (Independent) is an industrialist of the rather 'enlightened' type described in this report. Young and vigorous, he stood on a party production 'platform', but did not blame any particular section of the community as responsible for inefficiency production. He stressed rather the high degree of efficiency operating in his own factory, where, for instance, as well as a first class canteen there is a fine 'social hall' with a dance floor, daily danced on by many workers during the lunch hour. Grantham is only one expression of a wide dilemma. Many people are feeling less and less attached to the old structure of industry, which is also very much the structure of party politics (Cons vs Lab). Yet the structure remains ... and people and groups controlling it (minority though they often are) have power ... far beyond their numbers."^{clxxxvii}

From the Munich Crisis onwards M-O covered nearly every by-election. In 1970 Tom Harrison wrote:

"Looking back over those reports one is struck by the large number of votes which were obtained by individual amateurs against the National Government Coalition of accepted parties with control of all the machines and reflecting total 'national unity'."^{clxxxviii}

One such amateur was M-O's old friend Tom Driburg.^{clxxxix}

Throughout this time M-O worked hard on their methods of political prediction in the face of growing opposition from more professional and scientific organisations. Tom Harrisson always maintained that his was the more reliable approach and in justification pointed to M-O's work on the General Election. Like *Picture Post* and the *Daily Mirror*, M-O got it right as much through their involvement in war-time radicalism as through their particular public opinion methods. But of course their very methods were a major part of their contribution to the documentary movement, the methods and the politics were inextricably one thing and made up the whole. In the post-war years, as M-O became increasingly a commercially oriented market research organisation, they changed their methods relying much more on direct interviewing and questionnaires, instead of what is known as 'indirect interviewing'; that is long, unstructured discussions and observation. Mass-Observation's war-time methods necessitated their being part of the people, in amongst the people.

Harrisson was quite right to pride himself on his political analysis of the war years. Not only did he predict a Labour victory but he knew why Labour would win. In January 1943 Orwell wrote:

"Well the crisis is over and the forces of reaction have won hands down."^{clxxx}

A year later in an article in the *Political Quarterly* Harrisson predicted that the Tories would lose the next election "unless the alternatives commit suicide", and went on to give an acute analysis of popular feeling:

"Anxiety for the future expresses itself in the political sphere in a focusless striving towards something new and as yet unformulated and unled. About two out of every five people today feel that their political outlook has changed since the war began. So far as it has any direction at all this change is predominantly leftward, hardly ever rightward ... But much of it is a change from vague apathy to equally vague unrest and disquiet; and little of the leftward change is party-ward. Overwhelmingly it is a change towards wanting things different, as yet directed onto no party, no persons, no leader ... The leaderless urge for change has found temporary focus at various times; in independent by-election candidates, in Sir Stafford Cripps, in the Archbishop of Canterbury for instance. For one reason and another, but chiefly because no-one has yet given immediate tangible proof that they are really going to do something to make things different, these figures have only filled the gap for a few short periods. In the Services all the signs indicate that the want of a focus for forward thinking is even more urgent. A survey ... showed that four out of five thought no existing party could do things as they wanted after the war. Half of the very small minority who had faith in any party placed it in the Communists."^{clxxxi}

In 1945 only the wartime radicals, many of whom had in the late 1930's been part of the documentary movement, expected Labour to win. The Labour leadership did not expect victory, nor did Churchill expect defeat.^{clxxxii} In a long analysis of the election result and its causes M-O concluded that the vote for Labour was a worried, anxious, leaderless electoral decision.^{clxxxiii} It was, however, rooted in the public's long memory; they would neither forget nor forgive the shoddy treatment they had received at the hands of Chamberlain and his backers in Fleet Street. M-O had analysed reactions to Munich, to

the Phoney war, to the crisis of 1940: M-O itself had, in a small way done something to channel that reaction; it had been part of the people during the war and therefore knew which way the people would vote when the war ended. M-O summed up the 1945 election thus:

"The major part of the Labour vote was registered as a last a 'last hope', was a vote for change from the old pre-war insecurities and a swing away from the past rather than a swing *towards* understood principles and approved leadership."^{clxxxiv}

7. The Incorporation of Radicalism

By 1945 Tom Harrison, the last remaining founder of M-O, had left the organisation. Late in 1942 he joined the army as private and spent a year in a camp in Yorkshire, in what spare time he had overseeing the publication of the one book to come out of the Worktown Project, *The Pub and the People*. In 1943 Harrison was given a commission; he joined Special Operations Executive and the following year parachuted into Japanese-occupied Borneo to establish a resistance movement. Apart from occasional trips to Europe he stayed in the Far East for the next twenty-five years. Harrison later said that he left M-O because official pressure grew too great. There were rumours, later proved to be unfounded, that Churchill had had Priestley taken off the air; the *Daily Mirror's* Cassandra had been conscripted following threats to close the paper; Harrison had run foul of Bevin, Beaverbrook and Morrison, a powerful trio. Further, according to Harrison, M-O was becoming too much a part of Government, something he was not prepared to countenance.^{clxxxv} The incorporation of M-O into the new centre of power was, to some extent, inevitable. The Cultural History Group of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies have written:

"Not being sharply defined, nor standing as a clear threat to established power, war radicalism was readily adaptable because of it's very vagueness and plasticity."^{clxxxvi}

Mass-Observation was part of the documentary movement which itself gave expression to, and was an essential part of, wartime radicalism. It was, however, a movement which, as Stuart Hall has explained:

"Without the benefit of conscious radical leadership and articulation, would crest and find its limits."^{clxxxvii}

In 1938 Harrison and Madge had written:

"The function of M-O is to get written down the unwritten laws and to make the invisible forces visible."^{clxxxviii}

It is Stuart Hall's contention that the documentary movement as whole ultimately lacked the necessary language and political consciousness to make invisible *social* relations visible.

M-O also had other links to the 1930s. By 1940 its fragile links with the left intellectuals of the mid-1930s, to Surrealism and to Marxism, had been broken; Jennings had left before the war broke out, Madge soon after the start of the war. Madge's departure (as, later, was Harrison's) was due, to a large extent, to his realisation that M-O stood in danger of cementing its ties to other less acceptable aspects of the thirties 'need to know'. In WPCS 9 he wrote:

"... The State had to organise both the economy and the mobilisation of the population as a whole; the first task required the direct involvement of the unions in meeting production targets, the second necessitated education of troops and civilians alike into 'citizenship' ... Yet while the situations logic demanded such developments, they could not be introduced without difficulty; their implementation had to be negotiated."^{clxxxix}

Mass-Observation played a significant part in this negotiation: it was in many ways the perfect arbitrator, a ready-made go-between. M-O showed the Government what the people wanted and advised the Government how best to put over its policies to the people. M-O's concern for welfare was a concern for the people, certainly not a concern for the resultant profit, yet the insights M-O offered to Government officials were also available to post-war industrialists. Yet in the early years of the war M-O did manage to keep its independence and played a central part in changing Government attitudes and policies. Harrison's ambition, stated in 1940 to be able to tell the truth after the war, was fulfilled; M-O retained the rights to all the work they did for the MoI and Naval Intelligence and never signed the Official Secrets Act. M-O succeeded, therefore, in its stated aim of forming a bridge between leaders and led in the interests of the people. Above all M-O remained part of the people, yet here lies its ultimate paradox. Without being part of the people M-O could not have been successful, but being successful meant, eventually, not only ushering in a more aware social democracy but also a more aware and more consumer oriented business system. Julian Symons has written of M-O:

"It was not the masses who had fun with the new science, but science which had its own sort of fun with the masses."^{cxc}

Symons' comment refers, inappropriately, to the late 1930s. By the mid-1940s there is more than a grain of truth in it, although not until 1949 was it fully true.

8. The Post-War World: Market Research And The Struggle To Survive

From 1943 M-O began to work on the problems of post-war reconstruction, investigating public attitudes to housing social services, education and health. When the war began M-O was an amateur organisation, living on gifts from the benevolent rich and on the proceeds of Harrison's talks on cannibals. By 1945 it was an established research organisation, but as the war came to an end so did much of M-O's work for the Government. To survive it had to make headway in the field of commercial

research in which, in the immediate post-war years, there was a tremendous boom. Those research organisations which had been tied up with Government work during the war now all scrambled for the commercial work. Consumer industries were desperate to know what six years of war had done to their markets, so there was plenty of business to go round, at least for the first two or three years. M-O had done some market research before the war, largely as a result of the dire need for money, although, it is undeniable that in carrying out such market research work in 1938 and 1939 M-O betrayed the trust of the voluntary observers. Mass-Observation's market research techniques were not those of the major established organisations. In an investigation for Lintas on social attitudes to margarine, carried out in 1938, M-O had written:

"It is worth noticing that the answers from Mass-Observers are of lucid and revealing quality different from the bald replies obtained by ordinary market research interviewing techniques."^{cxci}

M-O claimed that their techniques gained greater insights into consumers tastes, just as they claimed that their observational and indirect methods of opinion gauging were more accurate than purely quantified, direct interview, Gallup-style opinion polling. The competition in the years following the war was severe and much of it came from established, large scale commercial organisations. Something like a concerted attack was mounted on M-O's research techniques, an attack which M-O struggled to withstand. One of the most direct attacks came from Mark Abrams in 1950.^{cxcii} For Abrams true social survey was a quantitative study of a defined group of people with the aim of analysing a particular social problem, isolating its causes and indicating a solution: it was not a vague, qualitative study of 'ordinary people', merely for the sake of what he termed 'abstract knowledge'. Opinion polling should be similarly quantitative and, following their failure to predict the result of the 1948 Presidential Election, American opinion pollsters were devising more scientific methods, such as the Quintamimensional Plan of Question Design (sic), developed by Gallup.^{cxciiii} Such new techniques were, in fact, M-O's methods hiding behind a fancy name: pollsters had realised that direct interviewing, with fixed questions requiring a 'yes' or 'no' answer, were inadequate.

In a small book on social survey, in which no other person or organisation received more than four pages attention, Abrams devoted thirteen pages to attacking Mass-Observation by name. When M-O adopted standard market research techniques and used direct interviews, their samples were too small. Their indirect interviewing was valueless as it was neither systemised nor controlled; interviewers were untrained and research directors had insufficient grasp of the subjects they were investigating. Participants observation suffered from being limited in scope and from unconscious omission and distortion on the part of the observer. The diaries and the Panel were too middle class; they were not an adequate cross section of the population and not even an adequate cross section of the middle class. As Abrams put it:

"It is likely that the average man in the street would regard the M-O volunteer as a bit of a crank."^{cxiv}

Lastly, it was impossible to analyse such qualitative material scientifically. No two analysts would draw the same conclusions. Abrams concluded:

"In short the methods are inchoate and uncontrolled, and this is perhaps the biggest disappointment about the work of the innovators. In thirteen years of prolific activity they have contributed nothing that can be called a scientific method of content analysis - the process which aims at a quantitative classification of a given body of content in terms of a system of categories devised to yield data relevant to specific hypotheses concerning the content."^{cxv}

M-O tried to defend itself, issuing publicity sheets announcing:

"(M-O's) ... services are available to any individual or organisation ... M-O clients have included government departments, advertising agencies, railway companies, manufacturers of patent medicines, food manufacturers, retail establishments."^{cxvi}

Willcock defended his middle class Panel in a manner which can have cut little ice with commercial concerns in a hurry for quick results. He wrote:

"It is quite impossible to recruit a panel which is 'representative' of the general population for the simple reason that large sectors of the population are not of the type who would be interested in such work, or capable of carrying it out. But a representative sample is of little value if its 'representativeness' consists only in characteristics of sex, age, income, voting behaviour and all the rest, if its verbal statements consist largely of truisms and the repetition of socially respectable opinions and attitudes, a sample which is a perfect microcosm of the population still reflects only the topmost level of social talk. An imperfect sample which tells the 'truth' provides data of far greater objective value than a perfect sample which skims the surface of safe conversation."^{cxvii}

It is clear that M-O was caught between its functions of ten years previously, a populist, documentary vision, a science of ourselves, and its new role as a government social survey unit and a commercial market research organisation. Throughout the late 1940's M-O continued to carry out documentary and academic investigations as can be seen from the selection of topics they covered given in the appendices, but their ultimate handicap in a competitive commercial world was precisely this lingering sense of principle from their past. As Bob Willcock explained in 1947:

"In M-O greatest stress is laid on the necessity for retaining copyright on work done, and the right to publish results as and when publication seems desirable. On several occasions M-O could have obtained life-long security and prosperity by selling its services to clients who would have kept the results for their own private use. Such suggestions are invariably turned down because M-O does not consider that its job ends with the collection of information. It believes that the real job of sociology only begins there. The circulation and the wide dissemination of fact is of paramount importance and through its work in this direction M-O believes that it has contributed in some small measure towards a greater social consciousness not

only at the professional level of scientist, politician and journalist, but also among ordinary men and women in their everyday lives ...^{cxviii}

In the late 1960s and 1970s Tom Harrisson often returned to this argument between market research methods and M-O's technique, always believing that his was the correct approach. By that time the early gloss had worn off market research and their brash, self-confident claims of the post-war years now sounded hollow. In 1950 Abrams had written:

"Armed with the results (of quantitative social surveys) successive governments have destroyed the conditions described ... There is no longer in Britain any minority group whose health suffers from an inadequate diet ...^{cxclx}

Harrisson continued to claim that the best way to ascertain both public and private opinion was to observe people and for people to observe themselves. He wrote the early 1970s:

" ... it is natural enough for social scientists to push themselves push away from the full subject matter and to develop artificial stranger situations in order to try to offset the natural conflict between subjective and objective states on the part of the investigator. Despite some initial difficulties, it becomes easier to put everything in terms of questions, which can be answered either orally or postally and which results can be organised, tabulated or otherwise given some form (preferably statistical) which can then be taken to be 'scientific' and therefore reasonably accurate ... Interviewing, statistical sampling and all the associated jargon ... has led a large sector of public thinking up the garden path that narrows as you proceed and ends up in the rubbish dump ..."^{ccc}

Harrisson was particularly gratified by the opinion polls failure to predict correctly the result of the 1970 General Election; the polls had only managed to identify the superficial public mood in the early summer of 1970. Harrisson was amused at the polls attempt to account for their failure by suggesting that the electorate had changed their minds in the time between Heath's 'At a Stroke' pronouncement and polling day. In Harrisson's view the voters behaviour in 1970 was very much akin to their behaviour in 1945. They were not voting for any new ideal, certainly not for Selsdon Man, but they had memories which went back beyond Jenkins managed economic upturn of 1969 and 1970 to Callaghan's debacle of 1967, just as voters in 1945 remembered Chamberlain's neglect and indifference of 1939-1940. Harrisson was sure that had M-O carried out a study of electoral opinion in 1970 they would have got it right.^{ccci} Of course we cannot tell, but we can say that Harrisson's strictures against quantitative market research and social survey methods do now seem, to some extent, justified. Mass-Observation did not fulfil Harrisson's ambition of creating a new philosophical synthesis, but neither did quantitative research right all the social problems it tackled. The analytic visions of both quantitative research and M-O were, and are, inadequate; yet in retrospect Mass-Observation's populist, qualitative approach was in many ways the more imaginative, and clearly the more noble, method.

In Conclusion

In 1947 Bob Willcock left M-O and joined the Government Social Survey Unit. In 1949 Tom Harrison exchanged his rights to M-O in return for control of all pre-1949 material; Mass-Observation Ltd still exists today as a quite independent market research organisation. Between 1947 and 1966 Harrison was Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Museum of Sarawak, involved in diverse scientific pursuits, studying turtle's breeding habits, working on archaeological digs looking for Stone Age Man, making a film study of Sarawak swifts for which he, along with Hugh Gibb, won the Eurovision Grand Prix. In 1966 he was appointed Visiting Professor of Anthropology at Cornell University, a job he soon passed on to his ex-wife. In 1967 Harrison returned to England and deposited all pre-1949 Mass-Observation material in Sussex University. In 1975, he deeded the material to the University and was given a Chair. He intended to sort through all the material and to write a series of books; only one was written, *Living Through the Blitz*. In January 1976 Tom Harrison and his wife were killed in a motor accident near Bangkok.

Harrison left a quite remarkable collection of material, which is now slowly and carefully being catalogued, preserved and microfilmed at Sussex University. Included in the appendices is a list of what M-O called File Reports, these being short reports, written up but not published. These reports were based on a minute part of the raw material now in the Archive. There are over a thousand File Reports and over thousand boxes of raw material, each box containing at least five hundred sheets. In all M-O published only twenty-six books and pamphlets, and while Tom Harrison was in control, only twelve.

Most comments on M-O have been based on a cursory reading of only two or three pre-war books. There is no history of M-O and it will be a long time before anyone gets to grips with the full extent of the material in the Archive. When a full history does appear it will be clear that M-O was far from being a curious little literary movement, tacked on the end of the 1930s: it was a considerable organisational and intellectual achievement on the part of a group of talented people, most notably among them being Tom Harrison, a major component of a crucially important structure of feeling and a tribute to the good will of the hundreds of people who collectively constituted Mass-Observation.

ⁱ *New Statesman and Nation*. 7 September 1936. Pike himself was a remarkable man who had founded a progressive school in Cambridge and later, as a wartime 'boffin', invented 'iceberg' ships for use during the D-Day landings. The decision to use 'mulberry harbour' instead was taken at the last minute and at the highest level. Before the war Pike was a travelling speaker for the Left Book Club.

ⁱⁱ *New Statesman and Nation* 12 December 1936 It is ironic, but perhaps helpful in gaining an impression of the weight which Pike's statement carried, that as I revise this paper for publication, the newspapers are full of pieces on Prince Charles, now thirty and not yet married. Will he go the way of Edward VIII? Enoch Powell warns that, should the Prince marry a Roman Catholic, the nation would be split asunder. Meanwhile, the television series 'Edward and Mrs Simpson', is huge popular success.

ⁱⁱⁱ Graves and Hodge. *The Long Weekend*. London 1940. Penguin 1971. pp.356-370

^{iv} Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson. *Introductory Pamphlet: Mass-Observation*. Frederick Muller. London 1937. p.10

^v Raymond William. *George Orwell*. Fontana Modern Masters.

^{vi} For biographical information on Tom Harrisson see *Tom Harrisson The World Within*. The Cresset Press, 1959. Timothy Green. *The Adventurers*. According to a letter to the TLS, 26 November 1976, at the age of 20 Tom Harrisson was one of the organisers of the 'historic Greater Crested Grebe enquiry', in which he inspired and organised the efforts of 1,300 voluntary observers. He conducted a correspondence of 5,000 letters and wrote to every well-known ornithologist in England. The TLS's correspondent wrote: "It is ironical that whereas the contribution of M-O to the development of social science proved to be ephemeral, the type of ornithological enquiry which Harrisson pioneered has since emerged as the central technique of one area of field biology after another."

^{vii} *New Statesman and Nation*. 2 January 1937

^{viii} *New Statesman and Nation*. 30 January 1937

^{ix} viz. Stevenson. *Social Conditions Between the Wars*. Penguin Books 1977. pp.46-61
Mark Abrams. *Social Surveys and Social Action*. Heineman 1951

^xA.L. Bowley and A.R. Burnett-Hurst. *Livelihood and Poverty*. P.S. King and Son. 1915.
A.L. Bowley *Has Poverty Diminished*. P.S. King and Son. 1905
B.S. Rowntree. *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*. 1901
B.S. Rowntree. *Poverty and Progress*. Longmans. 1941
Charles Booth. *Life and Labour of the People of London*. Macmillan. 17 vols. 1892-1900
Sir H.L. Smith. *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*. P.S. King and Son. 9 vols. 1930-1935
D.O. Jones. *The Social Survey of Merseyside*. Liverpool University Press. 3 vols. 1934
P. Ford. *Work and Wealth at a Modern Port*. London. 1934
Herbert Tout. *Standard of Living in Bristol*. Bristol. 1934

^{xi} Stevenson. op cit. p.50

^{xii} For example: Pilgrim Trust. *Becontree and Dagenham*. A report made for the Pilgrim Trust by Terence Young. 1934

Pilgrim Trust. *Men Without Work*. 1938

PEP. *The Entrance to Industry*. London 1935 (school to work)

PEP. *The Exit from Industry*. London 1935 (retirement)

PEP. *Report on the British Press Etc*. London 1938

PEP. *Report on the British Social Services Etc*. London 1937

PEP. *Report on the British Health Services Etc*. London 1937

PEP. *Britain's Health*. Penguin Special 1939 (based on a report on the British health services)

The founding of the New Fabian Research Bureau and a general increase in research work within the Labour Party were reactions to the failure of the Labour Government of 1929-1931 to deal with the economic crisis and to Labour's consequent electoral defeat. Pimlott has shown how certain factions within the Labour Party realised that Labour's ability to govern and at the same time to deliver socialism, had lagged far behind the Party's electoral success. Any future Labour government should enter office fully conversant with the problems it would face. Ben Pimlott. *Labour and the Left in the 1930's*. (esp. chapter 2 'Watershed')

^{xiii} For the 'new centre of British politics' see:

Angus Calder. *The People's War*.

Paul, Addison. *The Road to 1945*.

Arthur Marwich. *Britain in the Century of Total War*.

Arthur Marwich. *Middle Opinion in the Thirties*.

English History Review. April 1964

Cultural History Group, Centre for Contemporary Studies. *Out of the People the Politics of Containment 1935-1945*

Working Paper in Cultural Studies 9. Spring 1976. pp.29-50

^{xiv} Abrams op cit. p.61. Abrams also noted that "Before the war, probably two thirds of all market research done in Britain was carried out by the market research departments of three advertising agents - London Press Exchange Ltd., J. Walter Thompson Co., and Lintas (Lever Bros.) Ltd." My remarks on market research in Britain between the wars are based on research carried out in the archives of these three agencies whom I should like to thank for allowing me to look at their archives and for granting permission to quote from them.

^{xv} For examples of press readership surveys in this period see:

London Research Bureau. *Press Circulations Analysed*. 1928

Institutes of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising. *An Analysis of Press Circulations*. 1934

Institutes of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising. *Survey of Press Readership*. 3 vols. 1939

^{xvi} London Press Exchange, Statistical Department. *Report on Investigated Press Circulations*. (Repfords) June 1932.

^{xvii} Lintas. File Report No.387. *Report on Fieldwork and Training in Darlington*. Jan 20 - Jan 28 1938.

^{xviii} Lintas. File Report No.296. *Report on Experimental Survey in Barnsley and Harrogate*. 6 September - 5 November 1937

^{xix} viz. e.g. Cecil Chisholm (ed.). *Marketing Survey of the United Kingdom*. London Business Publications Ltd. 1936. p.37, etc.

^{xx} Lintas. File Report no.296. op cit.

^{xxi} Abrams. op cit. pp.63-80

^{xxii} Stevenson op cit. p.55. It would be useful to look in more detail at Mass-Observation in relationship to academic anthropology and sociology in the 1930s. Certainly Harrison and Madge saw themselves as counteracting the dry, detached approach of academic sociologists. In the *Introductory Pamphlet* they wrote that current sociology was inadequate and that recent social surveys of London (H.L. Smith) and Merseyside (D.C. Jones) had not "tackled the ordinary behaviour, superstitions and ideas of those surveyed". The best effort in that direction had been American, the Lynds' *Middletown*.

Introductory Pamphlet op cit. p.36. Looking back, Madge has described British sociology at that time as "bookish, timid, unproductive". The best work came from fellow independents, for example, Michael Young. Charles Madge. Postscript. *Britain Revisited*. Gollancz. 1961. p.278

^{xxiii} Abrams. op cit. p.84-86

^{xxiv} This paragraph is based on chapters of Tom Harrison *Living Through the Blitz*. Collins. London 1970. Harrison saw the strategy of saturation bombing as yet one more example of the gulf of understanding between rulers and ruled. The strategists distrusted and despised the matter, believing that they would crack up under pressure. Britain's defensive preparations were also based on a contempt for the masses, on the firm belief that ordinary people would panic under aerial assault.

^{xxv} Quoted idem. p.22

^{xxvi} George Orwell. *My Country Right or Left. Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*. Vol. 2. p.590

^{xxvii} Quoted Graves and Hodge

^{xxviii} Samuel Hynes. *The Auden Generation*. The Bodley Head. London. 1976. p.264. Or as Graves and Hodge put: "Like everyone else in the last two peace years, the poets in general were in a state of expectant, fearful, inactive confusion". Graves and Hodge op cit. p.430

^{xxix} Julian Symons. *The Thirties. A Dream Resolved*. The Cresset Press. London 1960

^{xxx} Julian Trevelyan. *Indigo Days*. London 1957. p.102

^{xxxi} "The Nicest People in England have always been the least
Apt to solidarity or alignment
But all of them must now align against the beast
That prowls at every door and barks in every headline."
Louis Macnece. *Autumn Journal*.

^{xxxii} Branson and Heineman. *Britain in the 1930's*.

^{xxxiii} Claud Cockburn. *I Claud*
Page et al. Philby. *The Spy Who Betrayed a Generation*
Symons. op cit. pp.116 ff.

^{xxxiv} This footnote is redundant and has been omitted.

^{xxxv} Idem. p.413

^{xxxvi} The objects of the LBC and the CP were identical, a Popular Front at home, and a Peace Front abroad. As Pimlott has put it, "Until the end of 1938, if not later, the Club pursued Communist aims with a diligence which made the absence of formal controls unimportant." (Pimlott op cit. p.158) In the first twelve months of the Club's existence 15 out of the 27 books published were written by Communist Party members; Gollancz admitted that the publication of books by non-Communists was largely a tactical move to attract the uncommitted to the Club. Through the LBC the CP gained, at no cost to themselves, a respectable and highly organised vehicle for propaganda and recruiting. The activities of the LBC and the emphasis placed by both the LBC and the CP itself on foreign affairs and the threat of fascism in the late 1930's, help to account for the rapid rise in CP membership in the London suburbs during this period, so that by 1939, 40% of CP members lived in the London area compared with 14.6% in 1926. (See Kenneth Newton. *The Sociology of British Communism*. Allen Lane. London. 1969. Chapter 6 'Communism and the Middle Class' and Appendix 5 'Published District Membership Figures.)

^{xxxvii} *Left News* (LN). October 1938. p.995

^{xxxviii} *Left News*. September 1937. p.495

^{xxxix} *LBCN*. May 1936. p.2. This message was constantly hammered home in *Left News*. John Lewis, the local groups' organiser, wrote in January 1937: "The main work of the Club must always be enlightenment and education ... The point is that right political and other forms of action are impossible without fuller, clearer and more correct understanding of the situation." *Left News*. January 1937. p.193

^{xl} *Left News*. October 1938. p.998

^{xli} According to John Lewis, in his history of the LBC, such correspondence was particularly important, both for the Club organisers and for the members, who wrote hundreds of letters a week to Henrietta Street, asking advice on such issues as pacifism, the Labour Party and the Popular Front, and occasionally offering criticisms. John Lewis. *The Left Book Club: An Historical Record*. Gollancz. 1970
Mass-Observers too conducted much personal correspondence with headquarters at Blackheath, over and above the commissioned reports which they sent in once a month. Many Observers were anxious to be reassured that their contributions were of some value. Some criticised M-O publications. Others offered suggestions for new topics of research. One woman Observer wrote for example: "I think one of the chief causes of the hitch in civilisation is the backwardness of women. Actually, very noticeable progress has been made in the last 25 years, but it is not generally realised, especially among women, that the progress could have been further and faster and that fascism would put a stop to what little progress has been made. So I think a book (on the lines of *May 12th*) on 'Lives Women Lead' would be good work" (Mass-Observation Archive. Day Surveys 171. 1937)

However, the tone of most of the correspondence between Observers and Blackheath, and, one suspects, of the correspondence between LBC members and Henrietta Street, was very much that of a diffident student asking questions of an eminent professor. That most Mass-Observers and LBC members accepted their position as the taught has wider implications, too complex to go into here, with regard to the acceptance of authority in culture and education before the Second World War.

^{xiii} *Left News*. April 1938. p.770-1

^{xiii} For example one Observer wrote "I joined M-O because I liked the democratic smack of its name, because I thought I saw in it the makings of a new sociology, because I know it will be an even better guide than current newspapers for social historians of the future, and because I wanted to help in this necessary work." (Day Surveys. Men. 327 December 1937)

Another explained: "I think it (M-O) is a pacifist organisation. By showing that the little man likes his pipe and his mantelpiece and his Sunday dinner you are doing a positive work for peace. Isn't it better to say 'What are you doing? Then don't?' By the same token it is better to show that the little man likes his house rather than blare, that he doesn't want war." (Letter to M-O. Day Survey writer. Men 470. 9th September 1937)

Another joined M-O "because it might be able to do something to postpone the approaching catastrophe." (Day Surveys. Women 100. December 1937)

One lonely woman wrote: "I hope to gain mental tranquillity from Mass-Observation. I am unhappy, and hope, from the observation of others, to realise that most people have as to bear as I have, and yet get over it." (Day Surveys. Women. December 1937)

^{xiv} There were more mundane, but nonetheless important reasons why the LBC was largely a middle class organisation. The price of each compulsory monthly 'choice' was 2/6 which, although much cheaper than the average publicly available hardback, was still beyond the financial resources of many working class people. Further, there were, by 1938, 6 tempting additional choices every month. As one Mass-Observation, a clerk, reported, his LBC bill came to "about 8/- per month, but I feel uneasy about this!" (Reading Survey. 1937. Day Survey writer Men 490)

Gollancz promised that if membership increased sufficiently the prices of books would be reduced "so as to bring them within the financial resources of the millions." (*LBCN*. May 1936. p.2)

In August 1937, because "It was apparent that the Club had not penetrated deeply enough into the organised working class" (Lewis. op cit. p.81), an 'Associate Membership' scheme was introduced, by which, for 6d a month, the member received a special, simple Educational Choice, but not the main monthly Choice and not the *Left News*. This scheme was not a success.

^{xiv} *Left News*. February 1937. p.220. The few available figures suggest that the groups were predominantly lower middle class in social composition. For example, the Essex Group consisted of several clerks, physicist, a school teacher, a bank clerk, a draughtsman, dental mechanic, a printer and a road mender. (*Left News*. September 1937. p.370)

In the largely working class district of Hackney in East London, the LBC group was made up of 6 factory workers, 1 railway guard, 5 office workers, 1 chemist and several housewives. (*Left News*. op cit. p.28)

^{xvi} *Left News*. June 1937. p.389

^{xvii} Bearing this in mind, there is a certain irony in Laski's Review of Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* for the Club Choice for March 1937. According to Laski, Orwell's socialism was vague and abstract and ignored the problems of the State, class antagonisms and "the historic movement of the economic process". Orwell "might persuade people in Streatham and Chichester and Cheltenham that socialists are 'really quite nice people ... but ... would not bring socialism nearer. I am not sure that Mr Orwell's kind of socialist would be prepared to pay the price of socialism. And I think he would not pay it because the appeal to be a socialist to which he responded did not in fact make him a socialist at all ... At bottom, in fact, it is an emotional plea for socialism addressed to comfortable people. When the facts make them feel uncomfortable, charity seems to act as sufficient anodyne." (*Left News*. March 1937. p.276)

For Orwell's remarks on the 'West Bletchley revolutionaries' of the Left Book Club, see *Coming Up for Air*. Gollancz 1939. Penguin Edition pp.143-160

^{xlviii} Activities at the Summer Schools included dancing, drama, discussions and lectures. At the 1937 Summer School, Tom Harrison gave a talk on Mass-Observation. An analysis was made of the social composition of one week's students at the 1938 Summer School. The occupations of 81 of the 130 students were recorded. These were: 18 industrial workers 11 clerks, 25 teachers, 15 professional workers and 12 students. (*Left News*. September 1938. p986)

For details of LBC holidays see: *Left News*. March 1938. p.747

^{xlix} *Left News*. August 1945. p.3252

^l *Left News*. February 1939. p.1154

^{li} *Left News*. March 1939. p.1189

^{lii} *Left News*. May 1939. pp.1283 and 1289

^{liii} *Left News*. July 1939. p.1352

^{liv} Strachey argued that Czechoslovakia, which had been merely 'weakly liberal', and Austria and Poland, which had both been 'pro-fascist', were not worth fighting for. (*Left News*. December 1939. p.141).

In a *Daily Worker* article reprinted in *Left News*, Gollancz himself was labelled 'a fascist'. (*Left News*. December 1940)

Strachey eventually rejected opposition to the War in May 1940.

^{lv} Stuart Samuels. *Journal of Contemporary History*. The Left Book Club Vol.12 No.2 p.81

^{lvi} *Left News*. April 1941. p.1678

^{lvii} As one Mass-Observation put it in a letter to Blackheath: "What I want to know about M-O is how it is financed ... I have told Charles Madge a good deal about myself but I don't know the first thing about him." (Day Survey Writer. Men. 470. Letter to M-O 9 November 1937)

Another Mass-Observation, a bank clerk and a member of the LBC, described a lunch-time conversation. A note of anti-Semitism might be detected in his colleague's criticism of the LBC: "After I had finished eating, I remarked that the Left Book Club had now obtained 50,000 members. My friend smiled sceptically and remarked that Mr Gollancz would be able to buy a nice new Rolls Royce this month. This, of course led to a heated discussion." The Observer pointed out the advantages of "cheap publications of authoritative books on political and social questions. My friend could not get rid of the idea of Mr. Gollancz, wearing an expensive looking coat with fur collar, rubbing his hands with satisfaction as he raked in the half-crowns from the 'poor mugs who came under his spell' " (Day Surveys. Men. November 1937. 291)

^{lviii} Quoted Samuel op cit. p.78

^{lix} Graves and Hodge op cit. p.426

^{lx} Idem p.421

^{lxi} Idem pp.422, 423.

See chapter 1 'Astrology and the British Association' in *Britain* by Mass-Observation. Penguin Special 1939

^{lxii} See Graves and Hodge pp.419, 420 and Branson and Heinemann pp.278, 279

^{lxiii} Addison op cit. p.128

^{lxiv} Idem pp.147, 148

^{lxv} This section on the documentary movement is based on:

Stuart Hall. *The Social Eye of the Picture Post*. Working Paper in Cultural Studies 2

David Mellor. 'Humphrey Spender and the Visual Imagination of Mass-Observation. A Descriptive Chronology' in Humphrey Spender *Worktown Photographs of Bolton and Blackpool taken for Mass-Observation. A Catalogue*. 1977

^{lxvi} Interview with Humphrey Spender 27th July 1977 by Derek Smith in *Worktown. Photographs of Bolton and Blackpool taken for Mass-Observation* op cit.

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- lxxvii Hall op cit. p.83
- lxxviii Peter Keating *Into Unknown England*. p.13
- lxxix Quoted Mellor op cit.
- lxxx Keating op cit. p.13
- lxxxi Tom Harrison in 'Introduction' to Bob Willcock *Polls Apart* unpublished survey of M-O 1947 p.2
- lxxxii Keating op cit. p.16 ff
- lxxxiii Tom Harrison quoted in Timothy Green op cit. p.162
- lxxxiv Tom Harrison *The World Within* op cit. p.159
Priestley, in *English Journey*, had written of Bolton: "The ugliness is so complete that it is almost exhilarating. It challenged you to live there." Quoted in Mellor op cit.
- lxxxv *Introductory Pamphlet*. Mass Observation op cit. pp.16, 17
- lxxxvi Idem p.20
- lxxxvii Idem p.31
- lxxxviii Idem p.30
- lxxxix Idem pp.35, 43
- lxxxx Idem p.40
- lxxxxi Idem p.46
- lxxxxii See especially Hynes op cit. pp.280-288, Symons op cit. pp.102-103, Harrison letter to Charles Madge 18th January 1940, especially pp.4-5
- lxxxxiii *Introductory Pamphlet* op cit. pp.47-8
- lxxxxiv It may be that I should have paid more attention to the importance of surrealism in the early years of M-O. I would welcome any comments any reader might make on the British surrealist movement and on its relevance to Mass-Observation.
- lxxxxv Kathleen Raine *The Land Unknown* Hamish Hamilton, London 1975 p.81
- lxxxxvi Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings *May 12th* Faber and Faber, 1937
- lxxxxvii For a full treatment of *May 12th* see David Chaney *A Public Imagery: Mass-Observation and the Coronation of 1937*. Paper to conference of the British Sociological Association, April 1978
- lxxxxviii Charles Madge and Tom Harrison *First Year's Work* Lindsay Drummond London, 1938 pp.48-63
- lxxxxix Quoted Bob Willcock *Polls Apart* op cit. chapter 11
- xc *Night and Day* 14 October 1937 and *First Year's Work* op cit. p.60
- xci Idem p.48
- xcii Quoted idem p.59. Spike Hughes in *Daily Herald* 11th December 1937
- xciii Quoted idem p.58. *Evening News* 26th June 1937
- xciv Idem p.63
- xcv *Polls Apart* op cit. chapter 11
- xcvi Hynes op cit. p.284

^{xcvii} Idem p.286

^{xcviii} *Introductory Pamphlet* op cit. p?

^{xcix} *New Statesman and Nation* 30th January 1937

^c Tom Harrison. Preface to the new edition of *The Pub and The People* Seven Dials Press, 1970 p.6

^{ci} *Britain Revisited* op cit.

^{cii} Mellor op cit.

^{ciii} Trevelyan op cit. p.97 For the Worktown project Tom Harrison solicited gifts from Lord Simon of Wythenshawe and Sir Thomas Barlow. The advances made by Victor Gollancz on books which, in the main, were never to appear, were extremely generous.

^{civ} Letter from Tom Harrison to Charles Madge 18th January 1940 p.18

^{cv} viz. Trevelyan op cit. and Mellor Humphrey Spender *Catalogue Chronology* op cit.

^{cvi} Quoted Mellor op cit.

^{cvi} Spender interview with Derek Smith op cit.

^{cviii} Idem

^{cix} Trevelyan op cit. p.85

^{cx} Spender interview op cit.

^{cx} Tom Harrison et al. *Britain Revisited*. Gollancz 1961. p.26

The Pub and the People. John Sommerfield. Seven Dials Press 1970. Preface by Tom Harrison p.6

^{cxii} Spender interview op cit. Woodrow Wyatt has recalled: "My main job was to keep the gramophone round up and playing George Formby records to make a suitable Lancashire background." *The Times*. 30th January 1976

^{cxiii} For a lively description of M-O's Holiday Town activities see Trevelyan op cit. pp.96-99

^{cxiv} The thrice told joke being: "I wish you were with Carl Rosa" "Do you?" "Yes. He's dead and buried." *First Year's Work* op cit. p.46

^{cxv} John Sommerfield and Mass Observation. *The Pub and the People*. Gollancz. London 1943. See George Orwell's thoroughly appreciative review of this book for *The Listener*, reprinted CEJL Vol. III pp.61-2. Of one piece of reported speech Orwell wrote: This little piece of prose, which impresses itself upon the memory like a poem, would in itself be a sufficient justification for beer, if indeed it needed justifying.

^{cxvi} Hynes op cit. p.282

^{cxvii} The following account of the M-O diaries is based on a reading of over 200 diaries and life histories.

^{cxviii} M-O diarist no. 490

^{cxix} M-O diarist no. W152

^{cxx} Calder op cit. esp. pp 631-5. Calder writes: "The typical Commonwealth member, it might be said, was a comfortably off schoolteacher living in one of the pleasanter of Liverpool, who had never been active in politics before, and quite likely would never be active in them again." p.634

^{cxxi} Tom Harrison. Report on the M-O Archive. 1970. Unpublished.

^{cxxii} Prospectus to Vol.1 of Robert Owen's journal *The Crisis*. Quoted in *Britain* by Mass-Observation p.29

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- cxiii Graves and Hodge op cit. p444
- cxiv Britain by Mass-Observation. Penguin Special 1939.
- cxv Idem pp.7-9
- cxvi Hall op cit. p 100
- cxvii Britain op cit. pp 27-28
- cxviii Idem p.36 *Daily Mail* 19.9.1938
- cxix Idem p.39 *Daily Mirror* 23.9.38
- cxx Idem p.50
- cxxi Idem p.56
- cxxii Idem p.57
- cxiii Graves and Hodge op cit. p.439
- cxiv *Britain* op cit. pp.77,78
- cxv Idem p.82. *Sunday Chronicle* 28.9.38.
- cxvi Idem p.83
- cxvii Idem p.82. *Sunday Express* 28.9.38
- cxviii Idem p.88
- cxix Idem p.93
- cxl Idem p.86. The Left Book Club distributed 2.5 million leaflets on the 'Hitler Menace'
- cxli Idem p.95
- cxlii Idem pp.99, 100
- cxliii Idem p.103
- cxliv Graves and Hodges op cit. p.440. *Britain* op cit. p.105
- cxlv *Britain* p.107. Roger Eatwell, Munich Public Opinion and the Popular Front. *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 6 No.4 1971 pp.122,123
- cxlvi *Britain* op cit. p.105
- cxlvii Letter from Tom Harrisson to Charles Madge. 15.1.1940. p17
- cxlviii The by-elections were Dartford, where Labour took the seat from the Tories, Bridgwater, an Independent gain from Conservative, Oxford, Doncaster, West Lewisham, Walsall and Fylde. Labour's increased share of the vote cannot be explained simply in terms of the swing of the pendulum. Labour's vote at the Parliamentary by-elections had been increasing very slowly, if at all, up to 1938. In the local elections of May 1938 there had been an overall swing against Labour. The swing against the National Government in these seven by-elections is attributable, largely, to reaction to the Munich Crisis. The smallest swing against the Government was at Walsall, where foreign affairs played little part in a campaign dominated by local issues.

^{cxlix} For accounts of the Oxford by-election see Iain Maclean. Oxford and Bridgwater, in Chris Cook and John Ramsden (Eds.) *By-Elections in British Politics*. Macmillan. 1937. Also Eatwell op cit. and especially The Crisis By-Election, Tom Harrison in *Picture Post* 5.11.1938

^{cl} For Bridgwater see Maclean, Eatwell and Pimlott op cit. and also *Left News*, December 1938 which claimed, with some degree of justification that the Left Book Club had been ultimately more responsible than any other factor for striking this decisive blow against the National Government. p.1078

^{cii} Willcock. *Polls Apart* op cit. Chapters XII and XIII

^{ciii} For a most interesting discussion of the obituaries of the decade see Hynes op cit. pp.382-393

^{cliii} Out of the People WPCS 9 op cit. pp.34-35

^{civ} Tom Harrison. *World Within*. op cit. p162

^{clv} Idem p162

^{clvi} Letter from Tom Harrison to Charles Madge 20.9.39.

^{clvii} Mass-Observation. *War Begins at Home*. Chatto and Windus. 1940

^{clviii} Idem pp.13-14

^{clix} Idem p9-11

^{clx} Quoted Addison op cit. p165

^{clxi} Letter from Tom Harrison to Charles Madge op cit. 20.9.39

^{clxii} Bob Willcock. Mass-Observation. *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. XLVIII No 4. January 1943

^{clxiii} This paragraph is based on Tom Harrison. Report on the M-O Archive. Unpublished.

^{clxiv} Nicolson was National Labour MP for West Leicester. He put out a widely publicised statement describing the behaviour in the House of Commons on the Wednesday of the announcement of Chamberlain's third visit to Germany as "one of the most lamentable exhibitions of mass hysteria that great institution has every witnessed." *The Daily Express* carried a leader, criticising Nicolson, entitled 'Let him Resign'. *Britain* op cit. p104

^{clxv} Letter from Charles Madge to Tom Harrison. 2.1.40

^{clxvi} Letter from Tom Harrison to Charles Madge. 18.1.40. p24

^{clxvii} Letter from Tom Harrison to Charles Madge. 25.1.40. p.22

^{clxviii} Charles Madge. The Birth of Mass-Observation. TLS. 5.11.1976 pp.1394-5

^{clxix} Willcock. *American Journal of Sociology*. 1943 op cit. p.450

^{clxx} The fullest account of M-O's Blitz activities is Tom Harrison's *Living Through The Blitz* op cit., on which the following paragraph is based along with Willcock, *Polls Apart* op cit. and Harrison's *Report on the Archive*, unpublished. At the same time as M-O began work on the Blitz for the Mol Bill Brandt was also signed up to photograph the social consequences of the Blitz in London. Mellor op cit.

^{clxxi} Tom Harrison. *Report on the Mass-Observation Archive*. No. 5. 1970 Unpublished. Directives continued to be sent out until well into the 1950's. Diaries were also received until then and some as late as 1965, although M-

O, by that time Mass-Observation Ltd. a commercial research and social survey organisation, for reasons we shall see below made little use of them. Day Surveys were temporarily revived in 1977 Philip Ziegler and the Mass-Observation Archive in connection with a study of the Silver Jubilee. The results of this modern mass-observation can be found in Philip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, Collin 1973. It is also interesting to note that when M-O appealed again for volunteers in 1947 a very large proportion of the replies was from middle class people. But over ten years the internal composition of the middle class group had changed. There was an increase in the proportion of technical and scientific workers. Civil servants and clerks remained well represented.

clxxii It might be argued that the focal point of the crisis was *within* the ruling class.

clxxiii Mass-Observation. *People in Production*. Advertising Service Guild, 1942 and Penguin Special 1942.

clxxiv *Idem* p.403

clxxv *Idem* p.405

clxxvi *Idem* p.404, 407

clxxvii *Idem* p.406. See also Calder p.334

clxxviii Tom Harrison. Report on the M-O Archive. 1970 Unpublished.

clxxix In June 1942 immediately following the capture of Tobruk and the loss of 33,000 British soldiers as prisoners, Tom Driberg transformed a Conservative majority of 8,000 at Maldon, Essex into an Independent majority of 6,000. Calder. *op cit.* p.345

clxxx George Orwell. CEJL. Vol.2 p.317

clxxxi Tom Harrison. Who'll Win? *Political Quarterly* Vol. XV. January 1944

clxxxii See Calder and Addison. Calder: *Never Again?* Ch. December 1942 to August 1945. Addison: *Conservatism in Eclipse*. Ch.18

clxxxiii Willcock. *Polls Apart*. *op cit.* Ch.XX

clxxxiv *Idem* Ch.XX

clxxxv Tom Harrison. *World Within*. *op cit.* p.164

clxxxvi *Out of the People*. WPCS 9 *op cit.* There is a danger of circularity here. The argument that a 'new centre' in British politics was born in the 1930s and matured during the Second World War, drawing in radical, critical, unaligned politicians and commentators, has been best stated by Calder and Addison (*op cit.*). The work of the Cultural History Group of the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies published as *Out of the People, the of Containment, 1935-1945* in WPCS 9 (*op cit.*), was heavily dependent on Angus Calder's book, *The People's War*. Calder's thesis was confirmed by Addison's extensive research when *The Road to 1945* appeared in 1975. Both Calder and, to a lesser extent Addison, made use of Mass-Observation's File Reports as a major source. M-O, as we have seen, was not so much an independent, analytic, scientific organisation, more a major articulator and, at times, originator, of this increasingly important structure of feeling. The argument, of course, stands, but evidence from other and diverse sources should be sought to rule out any vestige of circularity.

clxxxvii Hall *op cit.* p

clxxxviii *Mass-Observation Introductory Pamphlet*. *op cit.* p.8

clxxxix WPCS 9 *op cit.* p.35

cx^c Symons *op cit.* p.103

cx^{ci} Lintas. File Report 390A. 'Social Attitudes to Margarine. An Enquiry by Mass-Observation.' December 1938.

cx^{cii} Abrams *op cit.* p

^{cxci} Idem p.79

^{cxci} Idem p.111

^{cxci} Idem p.112. William Albright, writing primarily for an American readership in 1956, was much kinder to M-O. He wrote: "I cannot discern a statistically accurate representative sample of subjects in any of the M-O studies ... But the publications of M-O are written with color, brilliance, cleverness and occasional wit. Nothing comparable, as interesting reading is to be found in any of the reports of pollsters or attitude researchers in the US." William Albright. *Modern Public Opinion*. McGraw Hill 1956. p.195

^{cxci} Mass-Observation. Draft publicity handout. Dated 30.1.47 p.3

^{cxci} Idem p.15

^{cxci} Willcock. *Polls Apart*. op cit.

^{cxci} Abrams op cit. p.87

^{cc} *The Pub and the People*. New preface by Tom Harrison. op cit. pp.9-10

^{cci} Tom Harrison. *Report on M-O Archive*. 1970. Unpublished op cit.