

aid to poorer countries etc. helps to create a world in which the realisation of the social and economic group of human rights will become easier.

#### The Position Today

It is painfully clear that despite all the declarations, conventions etc., the present extent of human rights throughout the world falls far below Wells's hopes. With human rights in mind, we may classify the States of the world as follows:—

1) Stable democracies in which human rights are firmly guaranteed. Infringements are readily detected and remedied by ordinary legal process, or by appeal to an international tribunal, such as the European Court.

2) Communist states and others operating a one-party system of government. It is claimed that this system does give the citizen an effective share in law-making and that a written Constitution guarantees other essential rights. It is difficult to accept this claim since exercise of freedom of speech etc., such as is readily allowed in the democracies, is in these states treated as criminal. Substantial advance in human rights seems unlikely in these countries without a fundamental change in the form of government: but some progress has been made by persistent agitation on behalf of individuals in groups, or by invoking the relevant clauses of the Helsinki Agreement.

3) Traditional or military forms of non-democratic rule. Here the record of human rights is patchy and haphazard, but some of the governments are susceptible to propaganda.

Meanwhile, over this confused scene hangs the ominous shadow of nuclear armaments.

#### What Can Be Done?

How do we travel from a divided and dangerous world to a world united in upholding human rights? Mr. Dilloway quotes H.G. Wells as putting his faith in "a world-wide coalescence of all the scattered forces of creation and protest in the human heart into one consciously revolutionary movement based on the declared rights of man". One can imagine this happening in the democracies: can we see it happening in Communist countries?

In several of Wells's writings, two themes recur: (1) the emergence throughout the world of groups of intelligent, self-disciplined and internationally-minded people, capable of managing modern society — we see this in the *Open Conspiracy*, *Modern Utopia*, *Things to Come*. (2) a vast international conflict which destroys our present societies, with all their imperfections, and enables the thoughtful élite to take over: we see this in *Things to Come*, *Mr. Parham* and the *Holy Terror*. None of this is very attractive: international conflicts today would be far more destructive than Wells could imagine: and we have not much faith left in intelligent élites.

But if we are disappointed that Wells offers us no clear guide for the future, we must admit that we do not, so far, seem able to do much better. May I, however, suggest possible lines of advance:

1) The stable democracies are the main safeguards of such human rights as we have. They should therefore be ready to defend themselves, if need comes, against

attack. Yet, since world conflict could destroy all human rights, we must seek defence without provocation. The watchwords "détente" and "co-existence" are still valid.

2) The United Nations — and other groupings, such as the European Community — should be encouraged in all activities which make it easier to detect infringement of human rights and seek redress. There should be similar encouragement to voluntary bodies (e.g. Amnesty) seeking the same ends.

3) In view of the difficulty of promoting human rights in very poor countries, there should be a great increase, on the lines of the two Brandt Reports, in aid to developing countries.

### The Temper of an Age: H.G. Wells' message on war, 1914 to 1936

R. T. Stearn

*"He linked insights, articulated hopes and fears, educated masses, expressed the temper of an age."*

W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State*<sup>1</sup>

*"War is a horrible thing, and constantly more horrible and dreadful, so that unless it is ended it will certainly end human society."*

*The Outline of History*<sup>2</sup>

H.G. Wells' response to the Great War — from initial surprise and alarm to support and later to disillusionment — has been told and retold by Wells and his biographers. Before the war he had been interested in war, fought his little wars and written repeatedly with exceptional, if flawed, prescience, on war. Before 1914 he formed ideas on war and the military which he retained through and after the Great War, notably on the conservatism and incompetence of professional officers, and he pronounced on military topics from inadequate knowledge. This also he continued to do after 1914; there was basic continuity throughout his writing on war. This article considers his public message on war through his writings.<sup>3</sup> It considers also what he did not have to write, the unspoken assumptions and mental climate he and his readers shared.

#### The War That Will End War (1914)

Soon after the outbreak of the war, Wells' message on it began with the journalism he reprinted in October 1914 as the shilling paperback *The War That Will End War*. In this he declared his support for the war and asserted it was just and noble, against an evil adversary. Here he was typical of almost all his countrymen. This was the Rupert Brooke phase of the war, the period of Pals' battalions and a million volunteers, of idealism, self-sacrifice. Wells wrote in the *Times*, "Nobody wants to be a non-combatant in a war of this sort".<sup>4</sup> Yet he saw differently and further than most supporters of the war. A recurring theme of his fiction had been war destroying the old system and leading to the establishment of a world state. In 1914 the idea that war might shatter the existing system and end European civilisation,

was widely held in the ruling class and a reason why so many of them did not want war; Grey expressed it in his saying that the lights were going out over Europe. Wells, however, saw the Great War as potentially beneficial; as destroying the system which had caused the war, and resulting in a new world system from which the causes of war would be removed, hence the title of his book, the most famous phrase he ever wrote. He later in his *Autobiography* condemned the book. Though he was, arguably, unnecessarily condemnatory,<sup>5</sup> it was flawed. On the nature of the future of the war he was hasty and careless. He claimed the French were superior to the Germans in modern war, "the German is not naturally a good soldier",<sup>6</sup> the German army was twenty years out of date, and the war would end in 1914 or 1915. Such claims were common in Britain in 1914; that the war would be "over by Christmas" was widely assumed. Significantly, he accepted and repeated popular cliché and, as in his pre-war military writing, pronounced on subjects beyond his knowledge and experience. He did not apply his scientific training and his intelligence. He assumed, possibly in part from wishful thinking. In *The War That Will End War* he asserted themes which he continued to repeat throughout the war and the inter-war years; his denunciation of militarism and "Kruppism" as causes of war, his demand for the abolition of the private manufacture of arms, and his call for a new world order. After the war he shifted his emphasis from German faults, from Prussian militarism, but continued his basic themes.

What is Coming? (1916), War and the Future (1917) and pacifism

In 1916, Wells published a collection of his journalism, *What is Coming? A Forecast of Things after the War*. It was his response to the middle phase of the war, to the trench-war stalemate and realisation the war could continue for years longer. He claimed the war vindicated his prophecies in *Anticipations* of trench and aerial war, but that his "unfortunate prophesying at the outbreak of war" resulted from ignoring Bloch; "the prophet who emerges with most honour from this war is Bloch."<sup>7</sup> He claimed that the "war of attrition" might continue into 1918 or 1919 and since the Central Powers had fewer resources they would first be exhausted. He again denounced militarism and politicians, especially lawyer politicians.<sup>8</sup> He called for a forty-year alliance against German aggression and for a "World State", a "great League of Peace" to preserve peace.

Probably his most important contemporary work on the Great War was his 1917 collection of journalism, *War and the Future* which combined reportage, opinion and propaganda. In it he described his visits to the front in France and Italy, to munitions works and airfields; asserted the superiority of British and French aviators over German, praised the French and Italians and condemned the Germans and Austrians. He asserted the importance of tanks and aircraft and claimed artillery was "now the most essential instrument of war"<sup>9</sup> and the bayonets were obsolete. Cavalry were obsolete, replaced by aircraft and automobiles; there was no future for horses in war except perhaps as parents of transport mules. British commanders had obsolete attitudes: "the equestrian tradition",<sup>10</sup> symbolised by the spurs they wore. In his pre-war military writings he had identified cavalry attitudes with military conservatism and stupidity, and this was to be a recurring theme and part of his indictment of the Western Front generals.<sup>11</sup> He asserted the necessity of securing a lasting peace after "the victory that should

end aggressive warfare in the world for ever",<sup>12</sup> by a League of Peace and by ending the private arms manufacture and trade. War depended on industry, only industrial states could produce weapons and munitions and they could stop military supplies to non-industrial states and so could prevent war.

An odd and possibly significant omission from *War and the Future* was poison gas, by 1916 one of the nastiest features of the war. This may be connected with his response to his visits to the fronts, for students of Wells himself possibly the most revealing section of the book. The British military authorities attempted to control reporting of the war, first banning correspondents, then permitting select correspondents under control and censorship. To boost civilian bellicosity the authorities took select persons they believed influential, including writers and trade union officials, on controlled visits to selected sections of the front. In 1916 Wells went on these official visits to France and Italy. He saw something of the war's physical destruction, damaged buildings and transport, visited trenches, heard gunfire, saw some wounded, and talked a little to officers and men. He apparently failed to realise how unlikely it was that — in the presence of N.C.O.s and officers and with the ruthlessness of British military punishment<sup>13</sup> — an ordinary soldier would tell a visiting celebrity what he really thought. After his visit Wells went home. As he wrote, he left the trenches in France at one o'clock in the afternoon and that night was back in his London flat, "going comfortably to bed".<sup>14</sup>

He had not been a combatant nor been in battle. Essentially he had neither witnessed nor experienced the war. Yet he failed to see the significance of the limitation of his own experience. He continued to pronounce on the war, claiming for example that it had been "overwritten" and that "the real horror of modern war is boredom"<sup>15</sup> — a sentiment not shared by survivors of the Somme or Passchendaele, or of Turkish captivity after Kut-al-Amara. Possibly this response resulted from his egocentricity and lack of empathy. Possibly he could not adjust from the stay-at-home civilian's incomprehension of the war. Possibly he did not want to know its reality. He admitted he had been reluctant to visit the front lest some horrible sight affect his judgement and turn him against the war, and later he wrote in *Joan and Peter*, "In war time we must not brood on death, one does not think of death if one can help it".<sup>16</sup> Possibly, believing his message based on his superior understanding of the world, he could not accept the validity and importance of an experience he himself lacked. His only real war experience was of air-raids in England, which threatened him and made a much greater impression on him than did the western front, hence the disproportionate coverage of them in the *Outline of History*. Apparently he never comprehended the Western Front. Though later he repeatedly described and denounced it in fiction and non-fiction, his accounts were distanced and, though not factually inaccurate, lacked authenticity.

Wells' support for the war divided him from some of his pre-war political associates, from that minority of radicals and socialists who opposed the war and were from 1916 conscientious objectors and their supporters. During the war Wells, expressing the emotion of the majority of his compatriots, condemned pacifists. In *War and the Future* he denounced them as pro-Germans, selfish and dishonest. He



categorised them as the "Resentful Employee", "de-socialised", bitter and driven by resentment; and the "Genteel Whig", target of his strongest invective, arrogant bourgeois, irresponsible and without sense of obligation to the state. In times of stress old animosities flare up. Wells still resented the class that patronised him when a shop assistant, the class of Chester Coote and the Walshinghams. He claimed conscientious objectors had an easy life compared to the troops and that their alleged suffering was trivial.<sup>17</sup> He wrote,

"I do a little understand what our soldiers, officers and men alike, have endured and done ... I cannot regard these conscientious objectors with anything but contempt. Into my house there pours a dismal literature rehearsing the hardships of these men who set up to be martyrs for liberty; So and So, brave hero, has been sworn at by a corporal; a nasty rough man came into the cell of So and So and dropped several h's ... So and So was put into a damp bed and has got a nasty cold. Then I recall a jolly vanload of wounded men I saw out there ...."<sup>18</sup>

#### Joan and Peter (1918)

In his writings from 1914 to 1918 Wells had muted his criticism of the conduct of the war. However, in 1918 he wrote the last of his major wartime works and the first of his retrospects and judgements on the war, *Joan and Peter*. He considered it superior to *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* and that it never had the recognition it deserved. It was a prolonged polemical indictment. In it he continued themes from his pre-war writings, including condemnation of politicians, British education and the Roman Catholic Church. He continued his attack on conscientious objectors as arrogant, pro-German, vilifying the Allies and callously indifferent to the suffering of those involved in the war: "a disposition to think the hardships of drowning by U-boats much exaggerated."<sup>19</sup> They led lives of relative ease — "suffered nothing worse than some unpleasant half-hours with Tribunals and the fatigues of agricultural labour"<sup>20</sup> — while their contemporaries were wounded or killed. He emphasised the human cost of the war and especially the deaths of the young. Old men made wars and young men had to fight them: "the tragedy of youth in the Great War was a universal tragedy."<sup>21</sup> He emphasised the horror of the Western Front, the war's destruction and futility.<sup>22</sup> He condemned the British politicians, generals and admirals for bungling the war. Before the war he had condemned Admiralty policy, especially on dreadnoughts. In *Joan and Peter* he condemned the Admiralty for their failure, despite Conan Doyle's prewar warning, to foresee the U-boat threat and develop anti-submarine warfare. He condemned the authorities' failure to adequately develop and use airpower. His prewar contempt for senior officers had been exceptional. Before 1914 famous generals — Wolseley, Roberts, 'Fighting Mac' MacDonald, like Wells a draper's apprentice who escaped to fame, and Kitchener — had been popular heroes. Crowds cheered them, children wrote admiring letters; they were celebrated in song and verse, in boys' fiction and commemorative pottery. However, during the war many fighting soldiers and junior officers, and also Lloyd George and some other politicians, became disillusioned with the Western Front generals, though much of the press continued to extol them. In *Joan and Peter* Wells condemned the Western Front generals, "the cavalry coterie who ruled upon land",<sup>23</sup> as stupid incompetent cavalrymen who

bungled the great opportunity of tanks and caused immense slaughter of British troops.<sup>24</sup> He was contemptuous; in the book a reactionary woman defended Haig's retention as commander-in-chief, "Sir Douglas Haig has been exactly where he is for two years. Surely he knows the ground better than any one else can possibly do."<sup>25</sup>

Lovat Dickson later dismissed *Joan and Peter* as "not of much interest today".<sup>26</sup> In fact it marks a decisive stage in Wells' thinking on the Great War. His interwar writing on war, like that of so many of his contemporaries, was essentially a response to the Great War. In *Joan and Peter* he established his basic response, his message on the Great War, and thereafter he repeated it, hardly modified, until the Second World War.<sup>27</sup> It was the message of the horror and futility of the war and especially of Western Front, and of condemnation of the generals. This message was not unique to Wells, but one which he was among the first to publish and which, with his fame and wide readership, he was probably important in spreading. Gradually, partly though not primarily because of him but rather in reaction to the war itself and its human cost, the opinions he stated were increasingly accepted until probably in the 1930s the majority of the population held them. He contributed to the change in public opinion whereby after 1918 generals, and especially Haig, were believed stupid callous butchers. This was reinforced by the memoirs of wartime politicians, by Churchill's *The World Crisis* (1923-7) and Lloyd George's *War Memoirs* (1933-6) in which, attempting self-vindication, they blamed the Western Front generals with an indictment similar to that already published by Wells.<sup>28</sup> Wells' view of the Great War became the received view.<sup>29</sup>

#### Washington and the Hope of Peace (1922)

In the 1920s Wells was at the height of his fame and possibly his influence, and received enormous payments for his journalism. In 1921 he wrote articles for American newspapers on the Washington conference, and these were published as *Washington and the Hope of Peace* (1922). He had neither expertise nor inside knowledge and did not report the conference as did journalists nor analyse it as did naval and military experts. Its main achievement was naval limitation, marking the end of British naval supremacy, but he wrote almost nothing on this. Instead he wrote his impressions and opinions: what he believed the lessons of the conference, and propaganda for changed attitudes and world reorganisation. He commented on international relations, denouncing the French government as selfish, aggressive and preparing for war against Britain. He warned of Japanese aggression and the possibility of the Japanese bombing America from carriers, "an air base at sea" — one of his intuitive insights. He claimed the solution to Japanese population increase should be not imperial expansion but birth control. He claimed the governments with their ideology of national sovereignty were "in the preparatory stages of another war". He condemned the futility of "mere disarmament" which could not prevent war but cause only a "strategic truce". He condemned the arms industry for causing patriotism and hostility, and as the greatest enemy of world federation; it must be diverted to peaceful constructive use. He demanded the ending of jingoism, "this silly flag-wagging, bragging, shoving business".<sup>30</sup> He called on men, "to stop this foolery of international struggle, this moral and mental childishness of patriotic aggressions, this continual bloodshed and squalor, and

start out for a world of adult sanity."<sup>31</sup> He called for "building up a new spirit in the hearts of men and a new dream in their minds."<sup>32</sup> He warned that unless the international system were changed, war would remain possible: "There is no way out of war but an organised peace."<sup>33</sup> He called for a world government, an "Association of States" going beyond the League of Nations.

He warned against war. He claimed it was futile to debate on weapons and the practice of war, as the conference did, because in war the worst methods would be used: "Success justifies every expedient in warfare, and you cannot prevent that being so."<sup>34</sup> War was possible and would not be like the Great War, with stalemate. Instead combatants would attempt to so affect the enemy population by death, destruction and propaganda that they would surrender. The decisive attack would be by air, and the war would begin with massive bombing raids on capital cities with explosives, incendiaries and gas, causing immense destruction and mortality. Against such attack there was no effective defence. He wrote,

"The object of all fighting is to produce a state of mind in the adversary, a state of mind conducive to a discontinuance of the struggle and to submission and acquiescence to the will of the victor. Old-time wars aimed simply at the small antagonist Government, but in these democratic days the will for peace or war has descended among the people and diffused itself among them, and it is the state of mind of the whole enemy population that has become the objective in war ... few people have any clear ideas at present about the possibilities of air warfare ... we may certainly reckon on the biggest long-range airplanes possible, on the largest bombs and the deadliest contents for them. We may certainly reckon that, within three or four hours of a declaration of war ... huge bombs of high explosive, or poison gas, or incendiary stuff, will have got through the always ineffectual barrage ... (to) London. Because it is the peculiarity of air warfare that there are no fronts and no effectual parries. You bomb the other fellow almost anywhere, and similarly he bombs you."<sup>35</sup>

Here Wells was following his pre-1914 air-war writings and also expressing views then current especially among airpower advocates. On airpower he was no longer original because others had come to views he had earlier expressed, and he added nothing significant. He devoted only a few pages of *Washington and the Hope of Peace* to the nature of future war, but they were fundamental to his entire interwar message. Though his message on the nature of future war was not unique to him, he was important in publicising it. *Joan and Peter* established his message on the Great War; *Washington and the Hope of Peace* his message on the nature of future war and the necessity of its prevention. In the 1920s and '30s, striving to prevent war, he repeated the themes from these two books. He repeatedly denounced war and the military. Every year, he claimed in 1930, he devoted two hundred days of hard work to attacking war systems.<sup>36</sup>

#### Arms industry and pacifism

In his writings against war Wells repeated key themes. One was that armaments interests caused international tension and war. In his wartime propaganda he

denounced "Kruppism" and the German armament industry and demanded the abolition of the private manufacture of arms. After the war he denounced all private manufacture and trade in arms, in *Washington and the Hope of Peace* (1922), *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932), *The Shape of Things To Come* (1933) and *You Can't Be too Careful* (1941). In *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, for example, he claimed that, "the twin begetters of the war (1914-18) were the armament industry and aggressive patriotism".<sup>37</sup> He denounced Zaharoff and Krupp and, "this strange, monstrous, morbid development of human industry, science, loyalty, greed, vanity and tradition, the armament trade. It has slaughtered twenty million people and still it towers menacingly over all human life."<sup>38</sup> In so writing he was not original, but expressed a belief common before the war among radicals and socialists, which after the war became a leftist cliché, reinforced by the belief that arms races caused war, and further publicised by a spate of books in the '30s.<sup>39</sup> He wrote nothing new on armaments interests; rather he was typical of so many of his contemporaries. He wrote what he believed crucial and was influential, especially in the '20s, in increasing public awareness and concern.

Another expression of his changed attitude to war after 1918 was his response to pacifism. In the Great War he had condemned it but in the '20s his attitude changed, a process some Wellsian scholar may be able to trace through the Illinois archive. By 1928 he had changed to a position similar to that he had earlier so condemned. In *The Open Conspiracy*, which was "an organised resistance to militarism", he advocated refusal to serve in war, except for the world state, "on behalf of the commonwealth for the suppression of nationalist brigandage."<sup>40</sup> In *Experiment in Autobiography* he wrote that his wartime condemnation of pacifists had been wrong, and what he had then written was "unforgivable." However, later in the '30s, with Spain and the Nazi threat, he moved back to fuller acceptance of the use of force. In these changes he was typical of so many of his compatriots; his changes approximately matched the rise and decline of the interwar pacifist movement in Britain.

#### Chemical warfare

Two fears dominated attitudes to war in the 1920s and '30s; fear of gas and fear of bombing. Poison gas as a weapon, anticipated by Wells in *The War of the Worlds*, was used in the Great War from 1915 and caused many casualties and much suffering. During the war the British feared the Germans would use it in air attacks on England, and in 1915 the British authorities warned the public against gas attack.<sup>41</sup> In 1918, planning the 1919 offensive, the British proposed to spray mustard gas from aircraft against German troops, and the R.A.F. planned a massive bombing offensive against Berlin and other German cities in the spring of 1919 using bombs, incendiaries and poison gas including Lewisite<sup>42</sup> — and after the war this was public knowledge.<sup>43</sup> After the war a few publicists — notably Professor J.B.S. Haldane and Captain Basil Liddell Hart — argued that gas, causing few deaths relative to total casualties, was a humane weapon, and so advocated it. In 1925 Liddell Hart called it, "the ideal weapon".<sup>44</sup> This, however, was exceptional. The general response was revulsion and fear. Poison gas seemed to epitomise the horror of war. Most politicians, professional soldiers and civilians, including war veterans, loathed and feared it. British governments repeatedly attempted



international agreement to ban chemical warfare: at Paris, Washington and by the 1925 Geneva Protocol which the British and some others signed. This did not remove the threat of chemical war. Not all states signed it — the U.S.A. did not until 1974 — and it banned first use but allowed manufacture, stockpiling and retaliation in kind if chemical weapons were used by others.

The great powers prepared for chemical warfare, and in Britain it was generally believed that if there were war gas would be used not only on the battlefield but, primarily, dropped by bombers on London and other great cities, and that it would inflict catastrophic casualties. When persons thought of war, they thought of terrifying poison gas attacks. This was a repeated theme in the '20s and '30s: in the speeches and writings of leading establishment politicians such as Baldwin, then Prime Minister, Churchill and Grey, of scientists, of military pundits, of leftist politicians and publicists of the growing pacifist and anti-war movement.<sup>45</sup> Grey, for example, wrote in 1925, "War ... used to imply a contest between armies; it will henceforth, by common consent, mean the destruction by chemical agencies of crowded centres of population; it will mean physical, moral and economic ruin."<sup>46</sup> Thomas Edison claimed that an air attack with Lewisite could in three hours kill the entire population of London. His claim was repeatedly cited in Britain in the '20s and '30s, in the House of Commons and in pacifist propaganda. Fenner Brockway wrote in *The Bloody Traffic* (1933), "all the War Offices know very well that immediately war is declared their air-fleets will sweep over enemy countries with bombs stocked with poison gas."<sup>47</sup> Beverley Nicholls' best-selling *Cry Havoc!* (1933), which began with a report of his discussion with Wells of conscientious objection, was probably the most influential single work of interwar pacifist propaganda. In it he claimed, "gas will be used ... You can no more 'outlaw' gas than you can 'outlaw' the wind or waves ... and millions of the population will be subjected, in the event of war, to the deadliest gases with which bombs can be filled."<sup>48</sup> Fear of gas was reinforced by reports of its use in Abyssinia, dropped from planes, and in China, by speculative fiction of future war,<sup>49</sup> and by daily reminders that included gas-masked toy soldiers<sup>50</sup> and, above all, the surviving blinded or coughing bronchial victims of Great War gassing.

Thus the threat and fear of poison gas was a crucial context of Wells' message such that he did not need to emphasise it, though he sometimes did. Here he was not original, but rather a spokesman of his generation. His descriptions of future war — notably in *Washington and the Hope of Peace*, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* and *The Shape of Things to Come* — repeatedly presented poison gas as a crucial and horrible weapon, on battlefields and against civilians in the great cities. He wrote, for example, in *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*,

"An inexpugnable nastiness and repulsiveness, however, invaded the brightness of military science at the thought of "gas" .... Nobody likes it. Yet no one in his senses believes that "gas" can be excluded from the next war .... Lewisite, the gentle and insidious, so that you hardly know you are dead; or phosgene, which seems a small matter at the time and kills distressingly the next day ... the suffering caused by mustard gas ... the fine gases that can get through any mask to the wearer within. These last do not kill, generally speaking; their purpose is to produce an

intolerable discomfort so that the mask is torn off, and the heavier, deadlier gas given access to its victim. Gas treatment can now be extended to whole countrysides."<sup>51</sup>

### Bombing

"It is an intolerable idea that millions and tens of millions of human beings, the highest results of the age-long development of the human race, should continuously be exposed to the danger of annihilation by this most modern and most terrible weapon — bombing from the air."

W. Schwartz, at the National Peace Congress, Oxford, July, 1933.<sup>52</sup>

The second fear which dominated 1920s and '30s attitudes to war was fear of bombing and this, like the related fear of poison gas, derived from Great War experience. Before the war and especially after Blériot's 1909 cross-Channel flight, the threat of aerial bombing of Britain was seriously considered by the defence authorities and by some civilian commentators, including Wells. He had already in futurological works and in fiction portrayed air war with bombing, apocalyptic destruction of cities, panics and the ending of the old society. In response to Blériot's flight he wrote an article 'The Coming of Blériot' warning that within a year a continental power might be able to bomb London with hundreds of planes and that ground defence would be unable to stop them.<sup>53</sup> The Northcliffe press warned that Germany would begin war by air attacks causing great destruction, and in 1911 in Libya the Italians first used aerial bombing. In the Great War both sides used aircraft tactically on the Western front, and the Germans bombed England with zeppelins, then with planes.<sup>54</sup> These raids, and especially the June 1917 Gotha raid on London, inflicting what seemed much destruction and many casualties, had an immense impact on the British government and public. There were panics and riots, with troops enforcing order. British defence defeated the zeppelins but failed to stop the Gothas. Angry, the public and press demanded retaliatory raids: the *Daily Mail* published a 'Reprisal Map of Germany' showing towns within range of British bombers.

In the latter part of the war airpower enthusiasts, service and civilian, claimed strategic bombing could win the war, and that in future war also it would be decisive. Some even advocated withdrawing the army from the continent and defeating Germany by airpower alone. Strategic bombing appealed because it appeared to offer an alternative to trench warfare stalemate and its horrifying casualties. Strategic bombing, and therefore a separate air force was advocated by General Smuts' 1917 report which claimed, in a passage later repeatedly quoted.

"And the day may not be far off when aerial operations with their devastation of enemy lands and destruction of industrial and populous centres on a vast scale may become the principal operation of war, to which the older forms of military and naval operations may become secondary and subordinate."<sup>55</sup>

The Royal Air Force was established in 1918 largely for strategic bombing, and planned a massive bombing offensive against German cities for the spring of 1919.

At the beginning of the war Wells ignored airpower but after the Western Front

stalemated he was among its early advocates, in his popular journalism.

In his 1915 *Daily Express* article 'The Quick Way to Essen' he blamed lawyer-politicians for British aerial weakness and called for massive strategic bombing: for two thousand bombers to destroy Essen, and a "daily service of destruction to Germany."<sup>56</sup> This would cost less in money and lives than the western front; "It is the cheapest and easiest way of bringing the war to an end". He ignored airpower in *What is Coming?* (1916). In *War and the Future* (1917) he condemned the enemy bombing of towns, an atrocity, "silly, futile assassinations".<sup>57</sup> He advocated tactical airpower as crucial — "aerial ascendancy, properly utilised, is victory"<sup>58</sup> — with strafing rather than bombing, in support of ground troops to overcome the Blochian stalemate and then pursue the retreating Germans. He experienced air raids, arguably his only real war experience, and Rebecca West and their son had a narrow escape from a bomb, and her cat was killed by German machine-gun bullets. In 1918 in *Joan and Peter* he condemned the British politicians and military commanders for not effectively using airpower, despite the 1915 press demands for a great air offensive, and for not launching a great air offensive in 1918. Thus, despite his prewar writings, during the war he was an intermittent and inconsistent advocate of airpower; one among the airpower advocates, and not the most influential.

The Great War changed airpower from science-fiction fantasy to strategic doctrine. After the war the ideas of the airpower enthusiast — Douhet in Italy, Mitchell in the U.S.A. and Trenchard in England — were influential and much publicised. The postwar R.A.F. under Trenchard, Chief of Air Staff from 1919 to 1929 and "Father of the Royal Air Force" was, in intention and doctrine if not in capability, primarily a strategic bombing force.<sup>59</sup> The airpower enthusiasts' case — and R.A.F. orthodoxy and British government in defence planning — was based on a set of assumptions from the Great War experience. First was that bombing could win a war by the 'knock-out blow' against the enemy homeland and population, apocalyptic destruction and casualties that would break enemy morale.<sup>60</sup> Trenchard claimed in 1921, "The next war could be won by bombing alone by destroying the enemy's will to resist", and in 1923 he claimed, "The Army policy is to defeat the enemy Army — ours is to defeat the enemy nation".<sup>61</sup> The second assumption was that, as Wells claimed in *Washington and the Hope of Peace*, there was no effective defence against bombers; that in the famous phrase of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin in 1932, "the bomber will always get through."<sup>62</sup> These assumptions were near-unanimously accepted not only by the government and R.A.F., but also by opposition politicians, the press, the general public and the anti-war activists. From these assumptions a third was drawn by Trenchard and other airpower enthusiasts; that although enemy bombers could not be stopped if they attacked, the enemy could be deterred from attacking by the threat of British bombing — the strategy of 'deterrence'. This became government policy and was stated by Baldwin in his 1932 'bomber' speech to the House of Commons.

"I think it well ... for the man in the street to realise that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed. Whatever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through. The only defence is offence, which means that you will have to kill women and

children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves."<sup>63</sup>

An alternative conclusion was to prevent bombing by international agreement banning it, as the British government attempted, notably at the Geneva disarmament conferences of 1932-4,<sup>64</sup> or to prevent all war, as the anti-war and pacifist movement demanded.

Through the 1920s and '30s there was in Britain much "air anxiety" about the "air peril", long before there was any actual threat of bombing; the Luftwaffe was not re-established until 1935.<sup>65</sup> Belief that war would begin with cataclysmic air attack was widely held and much publicised. It was official defence policy and was repeatedly stated by ministers including Baldwin and Churchill, by other politicians of all parties, by military pundits including Liddell Hart and Fuller, and by pacifists and anti-war activists including Fenner Brockway and Philip Noel-Baker.<sup>66</sup> It was repeatedly stated in official reports, in Parliament, in the *J.R.U.S.I.* and other journals, in books on future war, speculative fiction and anti-war propaganda, and was reinforced in the '30s by the news, and especially the newsreels, of bombing in Spain. Many examples might be cited. A subcommittee of the Committee of Imperial Defence appointed in 1922 concluded that an air attack on London would cause enormous casualties, destruction and disruption and that probably, "the population would be so demoralised that they would insist on an armistice."<sup>67</sup> In 1935 Tom Wintringham claimed of future war,

"In the more thickly populated and highly organised countries of Europe the immense power of the air weapon will appear at once ... London will be starving ... The failure or destruction of gas, electricity and water services will make the city practically uninhabitable ... Fires, lit by incendiary bombs, will destroy large areas ... A planless rush out of London, and out of other big cities will begin ... it seems possible that 25 per cent of the population of London ... will be killed. Typhus and enteric seem probable".<sup>68</sup>

In 1936 Bertrand Russell claimed the result of air attack would be,

"London for several days will be one vast raving bedlam, the hospitals will be stormed ... the city will be a pandemonium ... the Government at Westminster ... will be swept away by an avalanche of terror. Then will the enemy dictate its terms."<sup>69</sup>

Future war was seen primarily in terms of air attack. Disarmament demands concentrate on it: "Public opinion ... regards air disarmament as the most important and the most urgent part of the whole disarmament procedure."<sup>70</sup> Rearmament advocates, notably Churchill, concentrated on the air threat and air rearmament, and when the government rearmed from 1935 priority was given to the R.A.F. and later to anti-aircraft defence. Also the authorities planned to use the army to control panic-stricken mobs from bombed cities.

The fear of bombing was the context of Wells' message in the 1920s and '30s. Before and during the Great War he had been an airpower advocate. After 1918 he condemned airpower. In the 1920s and '30s he described war as apocalyptic destruction by air attack. He warned, and repeatedly urged its prevention, notably



in *Washington and the Hope of Peace, The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* and *The Shape of Things to Come*. After 1918 he wrote nothing new on airpower. Nevertheless the catastrophe of aerial bombing, even when not explicitly stated, was a continuing assumption in his works, and of his readers. It was a continuing motive force of his efforts towards the world state which alone, he believed, could make such destruction impossible.

#### The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind (1932)

In 1932 Wells published *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, the last of his trilogy of 'outlines' which he had begun so successfully with *The Outline of History*. He saw his trilogy as a "Bible of Civilization" ... a world citizen's ideology ... a clearer, fuller and compacter summary of what the normal citizen of the modern state should know, than any other group of books in existence."<sup>71</sup> Despite its quasi-encyclopaedic format and though written with collaborators, *Work, Wealth and Happiness* was typically Wellsian in its values and polemics; in it he condemned parliamentary democracy, party politicians and international diplomacy. He again condemned war, war preparation and the armament industry and its "fostering belligerence". He claimed the Great War had been a catastrophe and condemned the generals, especially over tanks and telferage, claiming they had prolonged the war by two years. He warned against the fascination of weaponry and war. In *The Open Conspiracy* (1932) he had written, "Man has pranced a soldier in reality and fancy for so many generations that few of us can altogether release ourselves from the brilliant pretensions of flags, empire patriotism and aggression."<sup>72</sup> In *Work, Wealth and Happiness* he wrote, "There is something that stirs our unregenerate natures in the foaming advance of a great battleship and in the emphatic thud of gunfire, the flash, the swift ejection of a ball of dense smoke which slowly unfolds. Most of us could watch aerial warfare with undiluted pleasure if the promiscuous use of bombs were barred."<sup>73</sup> He emphasised the harmful psychological effects of military training, and revived the suggestion from William James' *The Moral Equivalent to War* of compulsory non-military service. He condemned the failure to improve living conditions because resources were used for military preparation. He condemned military research and application of science and technology to war,

"The Science of Warfare is now a very active occupation. It is a sort of ugly and dwarfish twin sister running at the side of scientific research. Her difference is that she tries to be secretive, and her ends are murderous. She is perpetually seeking to seize upon and pervert scientific advances."<sup>74</sup>

He emphasised the horror and suffering of war, and claimed that in future war gas would be used and could, "constitute lines of defence that are for a time impenetrable."<sup>75</sup> Biological weapons would probably be used; "there is every prospect that in the next war all the more dreadful airborne infections will be released abundantly in the great cities of an enemy's country."<sup>76</sup>

#### The Shape of Things to Come (1933) and armoured warfare

A major vehicle for Wells' message in the early '30s was *The Shape of Things to*

*Come* (1933) which he took very seriously. Written as a future history of the twentieth century it included wars in the 1940s and later. In it he again condemned the horror and futility of the 1914-18 war, British generals, the arms trade and military research, and described how war-preparation changed society. He condemned espionage and counter-espionage. Like other writers on land warfare, he had over the years fluctuated in his assessment of the relative strengths of defence and attack. In *The Shape of Things to Come* he asserted the dominance of defence; a quasi-Maginot mentality.

*The Shape of Things to Come* marked a further stage in his appraisals of the potential of armoured fighting vehicles. Though he claimed credit for his presence in 'The Land Ironclads' and condemned the Great War generals over tanks, in fact his own attitudes to armoured fighting vehicles fluctuated. He had dismissed them in *Anticipations*, portrayed them as successful against trench war stalemate in 'The Land Ironclads', but thereafter not advocated them until after the Great War development of the tank. In *War and the Future* (1917) he envisaged in the future — if there were no world pacification — enormous tanks, possibly the size of battleships, crushing and stripping the country they moved over; he ignored the potential of anti-tank weapons. In *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932) he claimed soldiers "in the next war ... will also have the prospect of being pulped into a sort of jam by glorified tanks."<sup>77</sup> Some who in the Great War had advocated tanks, later believed they had been countered and in future war would be relatively ineffective; these included Churchill and Wells. Yet in the '20s and early 30's Britain temporarily led the world in armoured warfare development, with the writings of Liddell Hart and Fuller, and the Experimental Mechanised Force. Wells, like Churchill, rejected their vision of armoured warfare. In *The Shape of Things to Come* he wrote contemptuously of the queer vehicles, and that, "the British dream of the next definitive war seems to have involved a torrent of ironmongery tearing triumphantly across Europe."<sup>78</sup> In the European war he described, which began in 1940, armoured fighting vehicles proved ineffective. They were stopped by artillery, mines, traps, defensive belts of persistent poison gas, "an ingenious system of poison-gas barriers — chiefly Lewisite and Blue Cross", and by "slime pits."<sup>79</sup> Thus Wells who earlier had been possibly the first to envisage a form of blitzkrieg, repudiated it at the time when it was becoming technically feasible and was soon to be disastrously successful.

He described a war of massive bombing raids, 'aerial torpedoes' (presumably rockets), chemical and biological warfare and deliberate burning of crops and forests, immense destruction and civilian casualties and suffering, and the disintegration of civilisation. This has been seen as part of the continuum of his apocalypsm, of the themes of *The War in the Air* and *The World Set Free*. But essentially in *The Shape of Things to Come* he expressed fears then widely held and much publicised; for example in *What Would be the Character of a New War?* (1931) which he cited. In his vision of future war, apart from such idiosyncracies as the slime pits, apparently original to him, he was typical rather than original: again the voice of his generation. *The Shape of Things to Come*, and possibly even more the film version, probably did influence public opinion, reinforcing existing attitudes. The young shop assistant, recorded by 'Mass-observation' in 1938, was

probably typical of many when she said, "I saw that film of H.G. Wells' — *Things to Come*. Makes you realise what things are going to be like."<sup>80</sup>

### Conclusion

Before 1914 Wells, like so many of his generation, had been interested and excited by war. He had written on it at length, demanded the application of science and technology to military preparation and fought his 'little wars' with toy soldiers: as Kitson Clark wrote, "the toys men choose are often an index to the working of their minds, moreover what starts as a toy may in the course of time become something of deeper import."<sup>81</sup> The Great War changed his attitude to war, like those of so many others, to revulsion. He never again wrote of war with his pre-1914 enthusiasm or his pre-1914 detail and length. He ended his 'little wars'. After 1918 he wrote against war, repeatedly. He warned against the fascination he had formerly felt. He condemned the application of science and technology to war. He repeated some of his pre-1914 themes, notably the stupidity and conservatism of professional officers, and war bringing the collapse of civilisation and then possibly a reconstructed new society. But his basic message was what he like most of his compatriots — though not his contemporaries Hitler and Mussolini — had learned from the Great War: the destruction, horror, futility and unnecessary of war. Future war with bombing and poison gas attacks on civilians, would be worse than the last war; would be catastrophic. He was concerned with the nature of war not for its own sake, but to warn and prevent war, through building the world state that would finally make war impossible. After 1918, despite occasional insights such as anti-tank slime, he wrote almost nothing original or exceptional on war, though he was one of the first to publicise views — for example on airpower and on the Great War generals — later widely accepted. He liked to see himself as personifying the age in which he lived; he called himself in 1939, "the trace of the flow of thought during the past half century."<sup>82</sup> Warren Wagar has written that his "favorite conceit was to pose as the *Zeitgeist*" and that he "expressed the temper of the age."<sup>83</sup> In his post 1918 writings on war his significance was his typicality, the extent to which, while helping to lead and shape public opinion, he was in harmony with what was probably the majority opinion in Britain.

How far his interwar writings on war were influential must remain conjectural. Yet paradoxically while more persons shared his views, especially on war, than ever before, his own reputation and influence were declining and seen to be declining. He was written off as "simply a grabbling old dodo" and "the survivor of a prehistoric time."<sup>84</sup> He lost the allegiance of those he most valued and who had especially supported him before 1914, the leftist young, and became an object of Marxist contempt, harshly dismissed in Caudwell's *Studies in a Dying Culture*. Nevertheless his writings on war probably were influential and contributed to the interwar shift in public attitudes. His writings between the wars cannot be understood except in the context of his attitudes to war. Attitudes to recent and especially to future war were the context, and largely the motive, of his message and of his readers' response to it.

### Notes

This article is based on my paper to the H.G. Wells Society Conference, Connaught Hall, London University, September 1984, and is a sequel to my 'Wells and War: H.G. Wells's writings on military subjects, before the Great War,' *The Wellsian* (1983) Kitson Clark warned against history-writing based on impressionistic generalization, quotation and inadequate quantification. This applies to the problem of interwar public opinion: revisionist historians now argue that what has been accepted as public opinion was rather the quotable propaganda of vociferous pressure groups, and that pacifistic sentiment has been exaggerated. Possibly in this article I may sometimes have oversimplified and distorted interwar attitudes and have exaggerated the typicality and acceptability then of Wells' ideas on war: available evidence would appear inadequate. In the notes below I have indicated some recent research findings and historians' controversies on topics on which Wells wrote. Works cited without author are by Wells. Again I am indebted to my wife for her help and encouragement.

1. W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State* (1961) pp.1-2.
2. *The Outline of History* (1920, 1930) p.1150.
3. This article does not attempt to describe Wells' total response to war, but his public message on war. It does not adequately consider Wells and disarmament, on which Dr Parrinder has written: nor attempt psychological explanation of Wells' attitudes. One hopes scholars working from the Wells Archive will produce a fuller account of his response to war, including his relationship with the interwar peace movement and the rearmament controversy.
4. Quoted John Terraine, *Impacts of War 1914 & 1918* (1970) p.47.
5. On the then-available evidence of German militarism, aggression, treaty-breaking and atrocities it was reasonable for members of the British public to support the war.
6. *The War That Will End War* (1914) p.16.
7. *What is Coming?* (1916) p.29.
8. The law was a frequent route into politics and disproportionately many M.P.s were lawyers. Lawyer politicians included both Great War prime ministers, Asquith and Lloyd George, and Haldane, McKenna, Isaacs (Reading), Smith (Birkenhead) and Carson. Wells repeatedly denounced lawyer politicians.
9. *War and the Future* (1917) p.138.
10. *Ibid.*, pp.116, 118.
11. e.g. in 'The Cyclist Soldier', *Fortnightly Review* LXVIII NS (Dec 1900) Stearn 4. Orwell later claimed all Wells' early books included "violent propaganda against horses", 'Wells, Hitler and the World State' (1941).
12. *War and the Future* p.139.
13. v Anthony Babington, *For the Sake of Example* (1983). The British



- executed more soldiers than did the Germans.
14. *War and the Future* p.132.
  15. *Ibid.*, pp.184, 191.
  16. *Joan and Peter* (1918) p.389.
  17. He was essentially right; v John Rae, *Conscience and Politics* (1970); A.J.P. Taylor, *A Personal History* (1984) pp.36-7.
  18. *War and the Future* p.202.
  19. *Joan and Peter* p.372.
  20. *Ibid.*, p.362.
  21. *Ibid.*, p.353.
  22. The "futility" of the great War has been disputed by John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire* (1980) pp.220-7.
  23. *Joan and Peter* 436. That the Western Front generals were mostly cavalymen has been disputed by Terraine pp.161-7.
  24. That tanks were bungled potential war-winning weapons has been disputed by Terraine 123, pp.148-60.
  25. *Joan and Peter* p.435.
  26. Lovat Dickson, *H.G. Wells* (1967, 72) p.318.
  27. The greatest change was in his attitude to pacifists.
  28. Despite the coincidence of views on the war, Wells condemned Churchill as a puerile dangerous war-monger, *Autobiography I* p.102; Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure 1900-1937* (1970,1973) pp.425-6.
  29. This view has been challenged by the revisionist historian of the Great War and apologist of Haig and the Western Front generals, Mr John Terraine, President of the Western Front Association, notably in *The Smoke and the Fire* which, though not so intended, might be read as a reply to Wells' post-1917 writings on the Great War. Mr Terraine's interpretations have been disputed by other historians.
  30. *Washington and the Hope of Peace* (1922) p.222.
  31. *Ibid.*, p.232.
  32. *Ibid.*, p.154.
  33. *Ibid.*, p.162.
  34. *Ibid.*, p.17.
  35. *Ibid.*, pp.165-7.
  36. *Literary Digest* (New York, 22 Nov 1930), Ingvald Raknem, *H.G. Wells and his Critics* (1962) p.202.
  37. 38. *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1932) p.619.
  39. e.g. Fenner Brockway, *The Bloody Traffic* (1933), Beverley Nichols, *Cry Havoc!* (1933), H.C. Engelbrecht & F.C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death* (1934). For a reply to their accusations v Clive Trebilcock, 'Radicalism and the Armament Trust' in (ed) A.J.A. Morris, *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914* (1974) and Dr Trebilcock's other writings on the armament industry. For the argument that the private armament industry, through aircraft development despite official incompetence, saved Britain in the Second World War v David Divine, *The Blunted Sword* (1964).
  40. *The Open Conspiracy* (1928) p.109.
  41. Berry D. Powers, *Strategy Without Slide-Rule: British Air Strategy 1914-1939* (1976) pp.39-40.
  42. L.F. Haber, *Gas Warfare 1915-1945: The Legend and the Facts* (The Stevenson Lecture 1975, Bedford College, London) 9. Powers p.106.
  43. Repeatedly cited in anti-war propaganda e.g. Brockway p.239; Norman Angell et al, *What Would be the Character of a New War?* (1935).
  44. B.H. Liddell Hart, *Paris, or the Future of War* (1925) quoted Brian Bond, *Liddell Hart: A Study of his Military Thought* (1977) 41. Liddell Hart had been gassed in 1916.
  45. Angell pp.354-91; Nichols pp.60-72; Powers pp.121-57.
  46. Grey, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 II* (1925) p.276.
  47. Brockway p.237.
  48. Nichols pp.63-4, 69.
  49. I.F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984* (1966, 1970) pp.169-72.
  50. Messrs W. Britain, the world's leading toy-soldier manufacturer, maker of those Wells used in *Little Wars* and which Oswald gave Peter in *Joan and Peter*, made gas-masked infantrymen.
  51. *Work, Wealth* p.611.
  52. (ed) G.P. Gooch, *In Pursuit of Peace* (1933) pp.129-30.
  53. 'The Coming of Blériot', *An Englishman Looks at the World* (1914) p.4.
  54. In *War in the Air*, Wells had foretold the replacement in war of airships by aeroplanes. Before 1914 the C.I.D., Churchill and the Admiralty mostly held similar views on aeroplanes' superiority over airships.
  55. Powers p.90.
  56. *Daily Express* (23 June 1915), W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells: Journalism and Prophecy 1893-1946* (1964) p.69.
  57. *War and the Future* p.68.
  58. *Ibid.*, p.163.
  59. In fact the R.A.F. lacked heavy bombers and strategic-bombing capability, and was largely an imperial policing force, Divine pp.114-7; Robin Higham, *Air Power* (1972) p.71; Michael Howard, *The Continental*

- Commitment* (1972, 1974) pp.113-4; Powers pp.167-82.
60. Official projected casualty statistics, extrapolated from those of the Great War air raids, were grossly exaggerated, Basil Collier, *A History of Air Power* (1974) p.97; Powers p.97.
  61. Divine pp.100, 113.
  62. House of Commons 10 November 1932, quoted Robert Paul Shay, *British Rearmament in the Thirties* (1977) p.37. Balfour's claim was probably then true; in 1932 increased aircraft speed made acoustic and visual detection inadequate warning for defending fighters, before radar.
  63. Shay p.37.
  64. The British government's case was weakened by its attempting to retain bombing for imperial 'air control', for which it was castigated by Wells, pacifists and foreigners.
  65. In the 1920s British defence planners considered the French notional enemies but, despite deteriorated relations, did not expect war. The Germans, despite the Versailles restrictions, maintained an aircraft industry and aerial training in neutral states and the U.S.S.R. German air rearmament essentially began after Hitler came to power, and not until 1939 did the Germans plan aerial attacks on Britain. As far as is known, no power planned aerial attack on Britain between 1918 and 1939, though the British could not know this.
  66. Powers pp.120-56; Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939* (1980) pp.3-4, 44-8.
  67. Howard p.82.
  68. T.H. Wintringham, *The Coming World War* (1935) pp.35-9.
  69. Bertrand Russell, *Which Way to Peace?* (1936) quoted Bialer p.47.
  70. Gooch p.128.
  71. *Experiment in Autobiography II* (1934, 1969) pp.721, 723.
  72. *Open Conspiracy* p.98.
  73. 74. *Work, Wealth* 610. Despite the claims of anti-war propaganda e.g. Brockway pp.235-9, there was little British interwar chemical weapon research and development, Haber 9; because of official secrecy this was not then known.
  75. *Work, Wealth* p.611.
  76. *Ibid.*, p.612.
  77. *Ibid.*, p.611.
  78. *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) p.167.
  79. *Ibid.*, p.207.
  80. Charles Madge & Tom Harrison, *Britain by Mass-Observation* (1939) p.17.

81. G.S.R. Kitson Clark, *An Expanding Society: Britain 1830-1900* (1967) p.113.
  82. *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (1939) p.84.
  83. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State* (1961) pp.61, 1.
  84. Quoted *Ibid.*, p.248.
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### *The War of the Worlds in the Classroom*

C. E. C. Greely

As a schoolteacher, I have always attached great importance to the shared experience of a class reader, but am only too aware of the difficulty of finding texts suitable for the third year of a mixed comprehensive. It is therefore particularly rewarding to note the success of *The War of the Worlds* with an upper-band third-year class.

When I chose the book, reasons for caution readily sprang to mind: it is manifestly an adult book written with an adult readership in mind; it features no teenagers; the narrator is hardly cast in the heroic mould, while the prose, with its wide vocabulary and 'period' style, might not find instant favour with the young readers of the 1980s. Indeed, how would the sophisticated fourteen-year-old react to the suggestion of an invasion by creatures from one of the more accessible planets?

In fact, my fears were groundless. The story-line immediately captured the attention of the class and proved a splendid springboard for creative work, while to my intense relief the response of the girls was as positive as that of the boys. I think it was particularly the author's attention to realistic details and very specific location, together with his ability to convey the feelings of mounting terror and despair, leading swiftly to the collapse of civilisation, which accounted for its success.

As I expected, some of the class were already familiar with the Jeff Wayne musical version of the story and the exciting music, coupled with the inimitable voice of Richard Burton, had its role to play in promoting the book. Likewise there are numerous episodes which lend themselves to visual interpretation and there was a ready supply of illustrations of Martians emerging from their cylinders or tripods marching across the landscape with heat rays at the ready.

For creative work, we began with local newspaper reports of the landing of the first cylinder in the school field, an exercise which focused attention on Wells's concern for authenticity. This was followed by reports sent back by the Martians to their mission control — an attempt to view the Earth through alien eyes.

After listening to a tape of the famous Orson Welles spoof report of a Martian invasion, the next project was the script for a similar spoof item: this time a TV news report of the sighting of the Loch Ness monster — a programme which included eye-witness accounts and interviews with 'Scottish scientific experts'.