

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: *THE MARCH OF TIME* AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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*The March of Time* and the American Century examines the content and ideological orientation of *The March of Time*, a documentary film series produced by Time Incorporated between 1935 and 1951. *The March of Time* dealt with a vast array of topics during its production, with nearly half of its 208 films examining foreign affairs and the American role in the world. In its analysis of American domestic life and society, *The March of Time* proved to be moderately reformist, favoring some parts of the New Deal, while maintaining a generally conservative view, middle class view of the nature of American life.

In its presentation of American life, *The March of Time* engaged in a roiling, passionate ideological debate concerning the definition of America. The 1930s in particular saw deep divisions between left and right in the United States, resulting in a continual effort by the politically committed to appropriate historical symbols, past events, and to use modernist techniques to define a vision of America, both to control interpretations of the past and to orient the American future.

THE MARCH OF TIME AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY

by

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## *The March of Time* and the American Century

This dissertation will examine the content and message of *The March of Time*, a newsreel series produced by Time Incorporated between 1935 and 1951. The years of production of *The March of Time* coincided with the period of highest movie viewership in the history of the United States. The newsreel was seen by millions of Americans a month, and was distributed in Europe as well. During its life, *The March of Time* examined a number of controversial issues; including American entry into World War II, life inside Nazi Germany, the New Deal, and a variety of topics dealing with American domestic politics.

One of the main questions to be addressed is how *The March of Time* reflected the ideology of “The American Century.” This term refers to an essay by *Time* publisher Henry R. Luce in which Luce stated the rationale for American entry into World War II and issued a clarion call for internationalism. In this essay, Luce called for the United States to assert its responsibilities and power around the globe. Quite controversial at the time, the “American Century” ideal served as a blueprint for U.S. policy during the Cold War. In addition, the “American Century” had deep and serious implications for domestic politics and culture. Luce’s American Century idea was disseminated through all of his publications, including *The March of Time*. The construction of this idea and how it was presented to the American public is a critically important question.

Another vital question centering on *The March of Time* concerns the intellectual and cultural milieu in which it operated. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

saw an increasing association of photography and cinema with modernism and a belief that the camera could represent or document reality in ways previously unattainable.<sup>1</sup> How did *The March of Time* fit into this movement, and how did the technique and content of *The March of Time* influence reflect these ideas about representing reality?

If one accepts that a critical element of modernism is the destruction of older aesthetics and forms, then *The March of Time* made a critical contribution to American modernism in the twentieth century. Luce's intention was to create a new form of pictorial journalism, a radical experiment in communication. *The March of Time* planned to combine documentary techniques, including reenactment, with journalism to give audiences a heightened sense of reality. *The March of Time*'s producers and editors anticipated giving the viewer a more in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the news by literally taking him or her there, to the event, to the real, by use of cinematic techniques.

*The March of Time* also engaged modernist debates regarding the mechanical reproduction of reality via the photograph and the cinema. The technique of reenactment, central to *The March of Time*'s production, represented a modernist advance in the mechanical reproduction of reality. With the advent of the photograph, the public gained a sense that graphic representations of reality could be more "real" than actuality. *The March of Time*, using the techniques of the cinema to reproduce actual events,

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<sup>1</sup>John Tagg, *Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

represented a modernist step forward in graphic communication.

It is possible to see *The March of Time* as a product of what Theodor Adorno called the “culture industry,” produced by a large media corporation and then distributed by massive Hollywood studios who controlled their own theater chains. *The March of Time* used and was a product of the techniques of industrial, mechanized production, and had access to audiences because of its association with other components of a mass economy. Indeed, given the particularistic, even propagandistic viewpoint of much of *The March of Time*’s films, it is reasonable to posit that the series represented a logical step forward in the mechanization of the spread of ideology and information. Luce’s great journalistic innovation was the systematization and synthesis of information through his publications, particularly *Time*. This method of distilling critical information and presenting it to the reader was a modernist invention, one that rejected traditional notions of journalism. Luce, through his publications, was then able to present a coherent ideological viewpoint, reproduced on a mass scale, for dissemination to readers and viewers, while maintaining that his offerings served older notions of journalistic objectivity.

One of the more intriguing episodes during *The March of Time*’s history was its production of a feature film, *The Ramparts We Watch*, released in 1940. The filming of *The Ramparts We Watch* was an extraordinary event. An enormous media and press empire decided that one of its component pieces, *The March of Time*, should release nationally through another huge media enterprise, RKO Pictures, a feature film that took a decisive stand on the most important political issue of the day, American intervention in

Europe. The idea of journalistic objectivity, so cherished by Luce, has been turned on its head. Not only does the film take a particular viewpoint, it does so while employing the techniques of a modern feature film. In the case of *The Ramparts We Watch*, *The March of Time*, defining itself as a news organization, has taken a political stance and used its journalistic credibility to spread that message through a form that is several steps away from traditional journalism.

Also, the 1930s saw a roiling, passionate and raucous debate over the very definition of America itself. How America was defined (and what America believed about itself), how that definition was created, and who constructed that definition were vitally important questions, and *The March of Time*, through its spread of Luce's ideas, was at the center of those conflicts. A close analysis of the content of *The March of Time* reveals that the series was overwhelmingly political in its analysis; virtually every subject taken up by *The March of Time* was dealt with through a political prism. What began to emerge early in *The March of Time*'s releases was a point of view which, although muddled in its early years, cohered by the late 1930s. *The March of Time* defined America as overwhelmingly middle-class, suspicious of unions but generally favorable to business, technological innovation and respectful of authority. *The March of Time*, at variance with Luce's other publications, on occasion praised what they deemed worthy New Deal programs. By the late 1930s, *The March of Time*, always pro-military, had become a leading advocate for greater American involvement in world affairs, particularly in Asia.. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, *The March of Time* advocated aid to European democracies, vastly increased military spending, and

articulated the view that American entry into the war was increasingly likely.

The threat of and subsequent onset of war and ensuing “Great Debate” about American entry caused the political and ideological message of *The March of Time* to solidify. From 1938 on, an emerging theme in the series was cultural and political unity, a necessity in the face of overseas threats. A number of *March of Time* releases, culminating in the 1940 feature film *The Ramparts We Watch*, emphasized the importance of national unity, centered around the values of the American middle class, in preserving democracy. It was this vision of a middle-class America that *The March of Time* stressed in its analyses of immigration, cultural assimilation, the economy, political discourse and ultimately the projection of American values overseas, a recurring theme in Luce’s American Century.

Related to this question of a defining America is how *The March of Time* fits into the history of the American press. Luce, in his recommendation to Time Inc.’s Board of Directors that advocated the creation of *The March of Time* stated that *The March of Time* would be an experiment in “pictorial journalism” that would provide another step forward in the evolution the process of communication.<sup>2</sup> Luce and his chief lieutenant on the *March of Time* project, Roy Larsen, both believed that the newsreel in its contemporary format had failed artistically and journalistically. Luce’s goal for *The March of Time* was that the film series build on advances in cinema and photography to represent graphically

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<sup>2</sup>Henry R. Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors, November 1934, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

the events of the day, while exploiting the prestige and resources of Time Inc.<sup>3</sup>

The role of *The March of Time* as a component of the press and as an instrument of journalism was complicated by the series' extensive use of the technique of reenactment. Reenactment was a technique that was widely used by contemporary newsreels and documentary films. It was not associated with mainstream journalism, which purported to recount events objectively. The very presence of reenactment within *The March of Time's* regular format led inevitably and appropriately to concerns about bias. Reenacting an event inherently involves editorial decisions about lighting, staging, the position of the participants, language, backgrounds—all elements that can be manipulated during production to emphasize a particular viewpoint. Given the relentlessly political presentation of *The March of Time*, it is not at all surprising that the practice of reenactment led to charges of bias and even propaganda from the series' critics and admirers. Thus, it is difficult to assess *The March of Time* wholly as a journalistic product, or to analyze it in the same manner as *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*. This leads to the question of what, exactly, *The March of Time* was.

*The March of Time* was very much the brainchild of executive producer Louis de Rochemont, the guiding force behind the series from its inception in 1935 to mid-1943. For a number of years, a variety of individuals, including Luce's friend David O. Selznick, suggested that *Time* investigate the production of newsreels. While Luce and Larsen had agreed that it was time to investigate film after establishing that there "was a lot of money to be made in it," and that of course Time "would attempt to change the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

technique.”<sup>4</sup> Luce became involved in the project in 1934, and proposed in a prospectus to the Time Inc., board of directors that Time Inc., take the lead in creating a new kind of “pictorial journalism” that would harness the documentary power of the camera with the storytelling ability of *Time*. The newsreel project came together when de Rochemont agreed to join Time Inc., in 1934.<sup>5</sup>

DeRochemont had been heavily involved in the newsreel business for years. After working as freelance cameraman, DeRochemont worked with the U.S. Navy during and after World War I producing training and recruitment films. In 1923 he resigned from the Navy to enter the newsreel business, earning critical acclaim with his coverage of unrest in India which culminated in a highly praised documentary titled *The Cry of the World*. While at Fox Movietone News he produced a series of well-regarded travelogues and news shorts called *The March of the Years*, which centered on great news stories of other years and eras. These films were largely based on archival material combined with brief reenacted scenes. Previous proposals to start a newsreel series for Time Inc., had been based on the assumption that all scenes would have to be reenacted, which made costs prohibitive. DeRochemont instead proposed that current newsreel footage be linked with archival material thus limiting costs by reducing re-enactments.<sup>6</sup>

DeRochemont was an imaginative man, and he and Larsen were ambitious in their

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<sup>4</sup>Robert T. Elson, *The World of Time, 2 volumes*, (New York: Atheneum, 1968-1973), 1: 290.

<sup>6</sup>Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 145-146.

proposed scope for *The March of Time*. Their objective was to revolutionize the newsreel and give it a new journalistic purpose. The newsreel business was at a low ebb, one reason why DeRochemont wanted to leave Fox Movietone. But it had not always been in such poor shape. The motion-picture camera had entered journalism with its invention. Since before the turn of the century, it had been recording history—President McKinley’s inauguration, Admiral Dewey at Manila Bay, Queen Victoria’s funeral. There were cameramen filming the Balkan Wars and in the trenches on both sides during World War I. Following the war, worldwide organizations for covering news had been developed. One of the criticisms often leveled at the newsreels, that of recreating events and then presenting the staged footage as reality, was a common practice among early newsreel producers.<sup>7</sup>

The film companies that controlled the newsreels were not run by men with grand journalistic ambitions. Their interest was in profits to be made from feature films, and the expenditure on newsreels to them seemed unnecessary and excessive. There was little or no profit in the newsreels because they were sold as part of a package, a sideline to the features which kept customers coming to the box-office. Moreover, the editing of most newsreels was wretched. They were little more than moving snapshots of disasters or sporting events interspersed with such trivia as beauty contests and fads, prompting one critic to characterize newsreels as “war followed by a beauty pageant.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 3-29.

<sup>8</sup>Elson 292.

With the addition of sound in 1928, a new dimension was added to the camera's coverage, but sound brought added expense. The sound cameras were costly and heavy, and with them the cameraman lost his previous mobility. There was more pressure to economize. The newsreels faced additional difficulty in getting controversial subjects past local and industry censorship boards. By the early 1930s, newsreel production was concentrated among a few large producers connected with the major movie studios, among them *Fox Movietone News*, *Pathe News*, distributed by RKO, Hearst's *News of the Day*, *Paramount News*, and *Universal News*.<sup>9</sup>

The public liked newsreels and expected exhibitors to provide one as part of every program. The increasing popularity of the newsreel was largely due to technical innovations prompted by the introduction of sound. For the first time, the public could actually hear and see major figures of the day at the same time. Charles Lindbergh was the subject of one of the earliest Hearst sound newsreels, and in another early sound newsreel, John D. Rockefeller invoked God's blessing on Standard Oil. The presence of sound allowed narration and music and increased the theatricality of the newsreel presentation. Another phenomenon of the 1930s that demonstrated the popularity of newsreels was the opening of theaters devoted solely to newsreels and other short

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<sup>9</sup>Fielding, 88.

subjects.<sup>10</sup>

This can be seen as a manifestation of the documentary impulse so often associated with the decade. A desire to document real life came out of the economic and political upheaval of the Great Depression and by the end of the decade had been applied to efforts at promoting national unity in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The initial boost toward documentary film with a political slant occurred in Great Britain, where young film makers under the leadership of director John Grierson turned out pictures that aimed at exposing the unjust living conditions of the working class. These films had a profound influence in the U.S., leading prominent leftists to attempt production of a politically oriented newsreel called *The World Today* in 1937 and 1938. Additionally, the documentary impulse can be seen in such newspapers as the pro-labor, anti-fascist *PM*, the New Deal photography of Dorothea Lange and others and the layout and content of Luce's *Life*.<sup>11</sup>

Larsen and DeRochemont aimed at producing each week a short film dealing with contemporary subjects that might be found in any issue of *Time* and *Fortune*. What they wanted to do on the screen was what *Time* did in print—tell a story with a background and insight and in a coherent form. They first aimed at an overall length of ten

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<sup>10</sup>Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition: From Nanook to Woodstock*, (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1995), 107; Fielding, 162-168. Although early newsreels were often devoid of controversial content, that is emphatically not true of documentary films of the Depression era. See Martin Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film* and William Alexander, "The March of Time and The World Today" *American Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1977):182-193 for a discussion of the political content of 1930s documentaries and Terry Christansen *Reel Politics* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987) for an excellent account of the political content of feature films during the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition: From Nanook to Woodstock*, (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1995), 72-77; Paul Milkman, *PM: A New Deal in Journalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

minutes—the average running time of the current newsreels—divided into five episodes of two minutes each, the whole a blend of news clips, re-enactment and dialogue, linked by the voice of narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis.<sup>12</sup>

During its production, *The March of Time* combined newsreel, documentary and a dramatic presentation in a new form of compelling journalism. Television, the modern film documentary and cinema verite owe much to its methods. The highly praised Italian movie *The Battle of Algiers* is a good example of what *The March of Time* achieved in a more limited way—the re-enactment of an event so effectively that it simulates reality itself. Documentary historian A. William Blue wrote that *The March of Time* “stretched the limits of journalism by implicitly arguing that the picture as well as the world was, after all, only symbolic of reality. What mattered was not whether pictorial journalism displayed the facts, but whether, within the conscience of the reporter, it faithfully reflected the facts.”<sup>13</sup> Luce put it more bluntly: “*The March of Time* must be fakery in allegiance to the truth.” The producers did not in every case use actual films of an event or person even when available; they often used re-enactment if this served better to dramatize the narrative. The viewer could not in most cases distinguish re-enactment from reality. But every sequence was anchored in fact. However, as *The March of Time* matured and its resources expanded, the producers relied less and less on re-enactment and more on archival and documentary resources.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Fielding, 1978; Elson, 107.

<sup>13</sup>A. Martin Bluem, *Documentary in American Television*, (New York: Hastings House, 1965), 36.

<sup>14</sup>Jacobs, 108.

In fact, *The March of Time* in many ways served as a precursor to modern television news production. The series ceased production in 1951 as television was beginning to become entrenched in American culture and news was becoming a vital part of each network's programming. Its style can be seen in modern magazine shows such as *60 Minutes*, which explores a variety of subjects in depth each week for what is usually an extended period of time, approximately fifteen minutes. There are also echoes of *The March of Time* in the production of each networks nightly news programs. Each begin with a vibrant, orchestral score that states the importance of the broadcasts, the viewer is asked to accept the veracity of the reports presented because of the authority imparted by the respective news organization, and there is often a stentorian anchor narrating and directing the action, emphasizing what are judged to be key points.

In addition, the structure of individual stories within news broadcasts are reminiscent of the manner in which subjects were treated by *The March of Time*. A problem or situation is explored, footage from a variety of sources is shown, experts are often consulted on camera, shot from angles reminiscent of *The March of Time*, and a solution is then suggested to the audience. Also, *The March of Time* was political in its analysis of virtually every issue filmed and shown to the audience. Each subject was examined through a political lens. This method of examination is employed by the broadcast networks on virtually every subject dealt with by the respective nightly news programs. The political implications of every story covered are considered and the audience is informed of the politics of the issue, with its attendant impact on society, the economy or the larger culture.

A corollary consideration to *The March of Time*'s place in the history of the American press is its role within the Time Inc., media empire. Luce, for a period during the mid-1930s, was fascinated by the possibilities of using photography and the cinema journalistically. It was this fascination that led to the creation of *The March of Time* in 1935 and the emergence in 1936 of *Life* magazine. Luce and his top advisors hoped that *The March of Time* would provide publicity and advertising for other Time Inc., publications, in addition to providing a new journalistic form. However, on several critical issues, *The March of Time* held and disseminated views contrary to the staunchly Republican Luce. *The March of Time* favored certain New Deal programs, mainly because of producer Louis de Recumbent's fascination with technological progress. Luce was an opponent of the New Deal and President Roosevelt, favoring Republican candidates and causes throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

Also, *The March of Time* was far more interventionist than other Time Inc., publications, a stance that dated arguably from the inception of the series in 1935 but that was certainly evident by 1938, three years prior to Luce's publication of "The American Century." For example, *The March of Time*'s August 6, 1937 release "Rehearsal for War" was highly critical of General Francisco Franco at a time when Time Inc., was favoring the Nationalist side during the Spanish Civil War, and releases dealing with Hitler's Germany were far more critical of the Nazi regime than was *Time*, graphically demonstrating, through re-enactments and archival footage, the depths of Nazi repression and sounding the alarm about Hitler's territorial ambitions. Luce did not embrace the idea of intervention until 1940, with the exception of a continual interest in the American

role in Asia, with a particular emphasis on China. In fact, it can be argued that once *The March of Time* began to become more ideologically similar to *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* the series lost much of its early edge and bite.

There have been a number of studies of the technique and production of *The March of Time*, the most notable of which is Raymond Fielding's *The March of Time: 1935 to 1951* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). The series also receives treatment in James Baughman's *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), Erik Barunow's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), Martin Barsam's *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History* (New York: E.P Dutton, 1992), A. William Bluem's *Documentary in American Television* (New York: Hastings House, 1965), Lewis Jacobs, ed., *The Documentary Tradition: From Nanook to Woodstock* (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1995), and Roger Manvell, *Films and the Second World War*, (New York: Delta 1974). None of these brief analyses examine *The March of Time* beyond its technical achievements or its use of creative "re-creation" ignoring questions of content and the integration of *The March of Time* into the Luce media empire through its message. Fielding's book length treatment is heavily focused on the personalities responsible for the creation and production of the newsreel series and does an exceptional job of detailing the technical side of *The March of Time* story. However, there is relatively little consideration given to *The March of Time*'s content and more importantly, the crafting and construction of that content.

In addition to studies of *The March of Time*, there have been several biographies

of Luce that deal with his ideas and stewardship of Time Inc. John Kobler's *Luce: His Time, Life and Fortune* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968) and Charles Swanberg's *Luce and His Empire* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972) are both well-researched, although Swanberg's treatment is far more hostile. John K. Jessup's *The Ideas of Henry Luce* (New York: Atheneum, 1969) is an invaluable collection of many of Luce's most important writings, while Luce also appears frequently in David Halberstam's study of the mass media, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979). None of these studies pays much attention to *The March of Time*, treating the newsreel series as an adjunct to what are considered far more important publications, *Time, Life* and *Fortune*.

Time Incorporated and Luce's role in the creation and direction of the company is the subject of numerous books. Robert T. Elson's two volume *The World of Time* (New York: Atheneum, 1968-1973), and Curtis Prendergast's *The World of Time Inc.* (New York: Atheneum, 1986) both commissioned by Time Inc., are on occasion critical and well researched, as both writers had access to restricted Time Inc., documents and archives. Baughman's treatment is extensive and detailed as well, particularly on Luce's formulation of "The American Century." In addition, Robert Herzstein's *Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait of the Man Who Created the American Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994) is an outstanding analysis of Luce's ideas regarding foreign policy, his direction of his magazines regarding foreign affairs and in particular Luce's conception of the Cold War and communism.

What all of these works lack is a complete analysis of the content of *The March of*

*Time* and a thorough consideration of the film series' place in the Time Inc., "brand" that developed by the mid-1930s. There are a number of reasons for historians having not fully considered the importance of *The March of Time*. Of all the Time Inc., offerings created under Luce's stewardship, *The March of Time* was the least successful in the long term, ceasing production in 1951 after a sixteen year run. Newsreels produced by Hearst, Universal and other movie studios survived for much longer periods of time. In addition, *The March of Time*, although wildly popular in its heyday, never quite gained the iconic status that Time Inc.'s other experiment in visual communication, *Life*, achieved during its production between 1936 and 1972. However, *The March of Time* was integral to the culture of the 1930s for its creation of a new documentary form, what Luce called "pictorial journalism", its engagement in the 1930s debates over the definition of America, and being in the forefront of the mass media, including Time Inc., in advocating American intervention into World War II and greater American engagement in global affairs.<sup>15</sup>

A number of the issues regarding ideology, presentation, and propaganda can be profitably analyzed by examining what was a fairly typical *March of Time* release. "The 49<sup>th</sup> State" was issued by *The March of Time* on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1937.<sup>16</sup> Distributed by RKO Pictures, the film premiered in such movie theaters as the Palace Theater in Columbus, Ohio, the Cadillac Palace Theater in Chicago, and the RKO Hillstreet Theater in Los

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<sup>16</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 9, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Angeles, and was paired with RKO's 1937 release "Living on Love," a romantic comedy starring James Dunn and directed by Lew Landers.<sup>17</sup> During the period of "The 49<sup>th</sup> State"'s release the economy was entering a recession, Asia was rocked with invasion of China by Japan and the US Navy gunboat *Panay* had been seized by Japanese naval and marine forces on China's Yangtze River. In addition, Europe was in turmoil, as the Spanish Civil War continued with arms and men pouring in from Italy, Germany, the USSR and the Western democracies. Thus, foreign affairs and speculations about the American role in the world were logical topics for *The March of Time*. In that vein, "The 49<sup>th</sup> State" dealt with the possibility of statehood for Hawaii, then a U.S. territory.

Unlike prose journalism, *The March of Time* told the story of Hawaii in terms of the island's racial dynamics and strategic potential for the United States. It did not focus on any immediate issue or event, but rather on the large implications that statehood would raise. In this way *The March of Time* could analyze the long term importance of the islands, their large Japanese population and importance to the U.S. mainland. Indeed, it was generally a trademark of *The March of Time* to present issues in large, long-term, and highly ideological framework.

The film began with a dramatic shot of a cannon being leveled directly at the audience with *The March of Time* logo directly below, while the traditional *March of Time* theme music was synchronized with the movement of the gun. The opening narration by the stentorian Westbrook Van Voorhis stated, "During four New Deal years, the army and navy under the command of Franklin D. Roosevelt has seen increased and

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<sup>17</sup>Richard B. Jewell, *RKO Story*, (New York: Random House, 1985), Appendix.

necessary spending for more men, more arms.” Once again, *The March of Time* has expressed approval for an element of President Roosevelt’s New Deal program. The increase in defense spending since Roosevelt took office in 1933 has been clearly identified as important and needed, immediately establishing a critical theme for the remainder of the film. The narration states that the “traditional drill ground of the U.S. Fleet has been the Pacific from the Aleutians to the Panama Canal.”<sup>18</sup> An animated map shows the Central Pacific, including Hawaii, with sweeping, expanding shading showing the extent of American control.

The film then moves to a relatively brief historical overview of Western interaction with the islands. Block lettering flashes up on the screen, stating “Only forty years ago Hawaii was considered of little importance to the U.S.; its request for annexation were repeatedly refused.” This emphasizes the current importance of the islands, linked to a changed international situation. The film then discusses the discovery of the islands by British Captain James Cook. A shot of a statue of Cook identifies the Captain as the “Forerunner of Modern Civilization.” The implication here is obvious, an allusion to beliefs in the “white man’s burden” that help animate the drive for colonization in the nineteenth century. However, the film then notes that the islands had existed as a “democratic constitutional monarchy” until the “overthrow of the ambitious Queen Lilioukiani in 1893” by a group of planters led by the “missionaries son Sanford B. Dole.” A portrait of the Queen in regal dress is shown, followed by a still photograph of Dole and his cronies. The music here is interesting; during the sections dealing with

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<sup>18</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12.

Hawaii's pre-colonial history and independence, a lazy island hula plays, accompanied by a ukelele; when the scene moves to American control after Dole's coup, a much more up-tempo selection is played, emphasizing activity and industry.<sup>19</sup> The sequence concludes with Hawaii being granted territorial status, represented by an English language Honolulu paper with the headline "A New Flag." The film then discusses economic development under territorial status. Until 1908, the narration states, "planters flooded the island with cheap Oriental labor," as these "coolies" built fruit plantations and tended cattle. Later, tourism became a chief source of income for the islands. As apparently prosperous tourists disembark from cruise ships and are greeted by smiling Hawaiian girls, the music switches back to slow, traditional island mele and hula music.<sup>20</sup>

"The 49<sup>th</sup> State" then moved into a discussion of the racial dynamics of the island, having prepared the viewer for the transition with the previous discussion of annexation and the growth of American industry on the island. Another piece of block lettering appears on the screen, stating "More interesting to most visitors than the famous island welcome is Hawaii's polygot population, by now predominantly Oriental."<sup>21</sup> This statement is fascinating to the viewer, as it places Western interest in the islands in an anthropological context, almost as if tourists are able to view Asians in something akin to a zoo. The film then moves quickly into a discussion of Japanese influence on the islands. Those of Japanese descent make up 40% of Hawaii's population, approximately

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<sup>19</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

100,000 of the islands' total population of 400,000. Over traditional Japanese music that evokes the Shinto religion, the narration states that these large numbers are the result of "Japanese efforts at colonization in the nineteenth century, ordered by the Emperor."<sup>22</sup> In spite of this ominous wording, there is relative racial harmony on the islands, according to *The March of Time*. In a discussion of politics on the islands, it is noted that "Orientals are eligible for the post of governor general, now held by Oregon born Joseph B. Poindexter," accompanied by shots of a phlegmatic Poindexter shuffling papers on his desk. The scene then shifts to a series of shots of the Hawaiian legislature, with each racial group (Caucasian, Native, Japanese, Chinese) on the islands carefully represented, in a collegial way discussing some political issue.<sup>23</sup>

Having introduced government and politics to the viewer, the film then begins a discussion of the dynamics of statehood for Hawaii. Block lettering yet again flashes up on the screen, stating "Distasteful to Hawaiians is the fact that they shoulder all the burdens of U.S. citizenship but are denied many of its privileges."<sup>24</sup> This statement by *The March of Time* contextualizes the debates over statehood within the realm of fairness, equality and American historical tradition. A shot of prosperous whites leaving a church identifies them as the "descendants of planters and missionaries, the island's elite, most in favor of statehood."<sup>25</sup> The business elite is also in favor of statehood, mainly because of the tax burden of territorial status and the perceived lack of return of services for taxes

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<sup>22</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

paid to the federal government. This sequence on politics is accompanied by a series of interesting shots. An older white gentleman is shown talking to a well-dressed, younger Japanese, presumably a business associate on a bench or couch. The white man has assumed a paternalistic pose with his arm draped behind the Japanese, who is leaning forward listening intently to the Anglo, holding forth on some topic. Other shots of mixed race groups during this sequence all have whites at the center, speaking, while Asians and Natives politely pay attention. The image one receives is that whites are at the center of the islands' economy and political discourse, driving the move toward statehood.<sup>26</sup>

The film then moves into a concrete discussion of the prospects for statehood. Hawaii's non-voting Congressional Delegate, Samuel Wilder King, makes an argument for his statehood bill on the basis of "taxation without representation." King is filmed seated at a desk, holding a piece of paper, while he appears to read from a cue-card. *The March of Time* then intones that there is "opposition from Army and Naval circles, quiet but forceful...with \$100 million already spent, full military control of the islands is essential for American defense."<sup>27</sup>

Having reintroduced the overarching theme of defense into the discussion of statehood for Hawaii, the film then returns to an examination of the racial dynamics of the islands. With Shinto music as a backdrop, "The 49<sup>th</sup> State" makes note of statehood opponents referencing Japanese civilians in the islands, "who though they live in U.S.

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<sup>26</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

territory live in an atmosphere as oriental as Tokyo itself’ with unfailing loyalty to the Emperor.<sup>28</sup> A series of shots shows the Japanese in traditional garb, presumably worshipping at a Shinto shrine, then showing children in a Japanese language school.<sup>29</sup> The implication here by *The March of Time* is obvious to the viewer; the Japanese on the island represent the greatest threat to American security because they have not assimilated into the larger American culture and cannot be trusted. Thus, opponents say, the military must remain in control of the territory.

According to *The March of Time*, those in favor of statehood reject the possibility of disloyalty by the Japanese population of the islands. As energetic, Westernized, music swells, a group of young Japanese girls carry a large American flag down the steps of what appears to be an official building, while the narration states that statehood proponents “point to the racial amity of Hawaii” and assert that critics are wrong about Japanese customs. Asserting that the Japanese are “loyal Americans at heart”, those in favor of statehood believe that those who are suspicious of the Japanese in Hawaii are simply “jingoists.”<sup>30</sup> This sequence does not carry the force of pieces earlier in the film which cast doubt on the loyalty of the Japanese. The views of statehood advocates on the Japanese issue are not given much visual reinforcement, other than the shot of the Japanese girls with the U.S. flag. In contrast, the scenes of Japanese adults worshipping and children studying, when combined with the Shinto music in the background, impart

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<sup>28</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #12.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

an ominous tone.

The film concludes with, again, a focus on the military importance of the islands. As martial music provides the background, there are scenes of fortifications, railroad guns, and massed soldiers conducting close-order drill. The importance of Hawaii to American defense is stressed again, as *The March of Time* calls the islands the “Gibraltar of the Pacific.” The final shot of “The 49<sup>th</sup> State” shows a lone soldier in silhouette guarding a massive gun emplacement, as the narration concludes, “Time Marches On!”<sup>31</sup>

A number of the themes inherent in *The March of Time* series are at work in “The 49<sup>th</sup> State.” The film makes extensive use of re-enactment, particularly during the sequences on politics, racial harmony and statehood. *The March of Time* sounds an alarmist note regarding Japanese influence, mainly through the strength of visual images showing the Japanese as a culture apart. The loyalty of the Japanese population looms over every aspect of Hawaiian society, according to the film. In addition, “The 49<sup>th</sup> State” analyzes the issue with a particular emphasis on military necessity, a recurring theme throughout the series’ existence. Also, every aspect of the subject is politicized, particularly the film’s analysis of race relations. The issue of racial harmony is only relevant to the politics of statehood, and the racial hierarchy of Hawaiian society is accepted because it serves the imperative of military security.

A recurrent thought that strikes the contemporary viewer of “The 49<sup>th</sup> State” and many other *March of Time* releases is the seeming strangeness of the presentation. Some of this discomfort is no doubt related to cultural distance. The issues that confronted

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<sup>31</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3 #12.

America during the 1930s and 1940s are, after all, in the past and have been in some cases resolved. Also, the social, cultural and racial context of *The March of Time's* production has changed vastly during ensuing decades.

However, the oddity of many *March of Time* releases cannot be explained away merely by the passage of time. In producing *The March of Time*, combining dramatic cinematic techniques with elements of documentary and journalistic practice, Time Inc., succeeded in producing a new, modernist form of communication. Produced within a corporate environment, indeed, within the American culture industry, *The March of Time* represents an important step in the mass dissemination of ideology, and the construction of ideas based on the imperatives of a mass economy and society.

## Chapter One: The Luce Empire and Visual Modernity

The famed 1941 film *Citizen Kane* begins with an extended eulogy to the deceased press baron Charles Foster Kane. This eulogy is presented to the audience in a familiar form, that of a newsreel called *News on the March*. In order to structure the newsreel account of Kane's life, career and death, director Orson Welles imitates the form and structure of the most prominent newsreel of the day, *The March of Time*, itself the creation and property of a prominent press lord, Henry Luce.

The newsreel sequence in *Citizen Kane* is in every significant way a direct copy of the format of *The March of Time*. The film features a mix of reenactment and "actual" footage, aged and sped up by Welles to replicate older film, techniques used by *The March of Time*. Like *The March of Time*, the opening presentation of *News on the March* is quite dramatic. Thunderous orchestral music swells; a *News on the March* logo fills the screen, its lettering exactly the same as Luce's *The March of Time*. A deep-voiced announcer, pausing for dramatic effect throughout the narration, proclaims that "death, as it must to all men, has come to Charles Foster Kane".<sup>32</sup> The newsreel describes various aspects of Kane's life; these narrative transitions are announced to the audience through the use of superimposed graphics that break the visual flow of the newsreel, thus

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<sup>32</sup>*Citizen Kane*, (Los Angeles: RKO Studios, 1941). This piece of narration is an excellent example of director Orson Welles' use of "Time-Style" in the newsreel portion of the film.

underscoring the importance of the information to the audience, in a manner reminiscent of *The March of Time*. Welles' *News on the March* also employs "time-style," the unique narrative format employed by the Luce publications. For example, *News on the March* states through graphics "In Xanadu last week was held 1941's biggest, strangest funeral." As the newsreel transitions to Kane's colorful personal life, the *News on the March* states "To forty-four million American newsbuyers, more newsworthy than the names in his own headlines, was Kane himself, greatest newspaper tycoon of this or any other generation." In fact, almost the entire script for *News on the March* is written in this quirky, odd "time-style."

It is not particularly surprising that Welles chose to model the newsreel sequence for *Citizen Kane* on *The March of Time*. By 1941, *The March of Time* had achieved a high level of prominence in both American cinema and in the presentation of the news in the United States. Its publisher, Henry Luce, founder of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* was called the "new American Press Lord," the heir to Welles' subject William Randolph Hearst. Welles' choice is revealing; the director employed a format that would be instantly recognizable to most Americans and one that would convey legitimacy and authenticity to his presentation of Kane's life.

The historical importance of *The March of Time* does not so much in use of *The March of Time* format as a narrative device. Rather it lies in the ideology reflected in *The March of Time*. Luce's publications, including *The March of Time*, contributed mightily to an ongoing ideological debate throughout the 1930s that centered on to define America. Longtime *March of Time* producer Louis de Rochemont stated on numerous

occasions that the prevailing ideology of the series was that of a moderate, pro-capitalist, reform oriented liberalism.<sup>33</sup> However, what emerged over the course of *The March of Time*'s sixteen year production was a consistent effort by the producers, writers and editors to create and define a version of America. This process of definition occurred simultaneously with similar efforts at definition undertaken by Henry Luce's other publications, *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life*. Under the banner of Luce's "American Century" idea, all of Time Inc.'s publications reflected a particular viewpoint that was very much the creation of Luce. *The March of Time*, because of its reach, high level of production values, and visual imagery, was critical to the construction and spread of Luce's vision and influenced the use of the visual in Luce's other publications, particularly *Life*.

Related to these ideological positions was the *March of Time*'s participation in the construction of modernism and its relation to visual representations of reality through photography and cinema. As John Tagg wrote in *The Burden of Representation*, photography enables the production of a new, specific and highly contextualized reality. This is because photographs and film contained the authority of reality, of being real and directly communicating human experience. Likewise, documentary photography purports to represent direct reality, wherein the photograph functions as an official document, thus granting great authority to the producer of the photograph.<sup>34</sup> The ideological message present in any kind of photograph, Tagg writes, can be analyzed by

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<sup>33</sup>Memo from Richard DeRochemont to Louis DeRochemont, September 5, 1941, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1941, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. The memo concerned Louis DeRochemont's testimony to the United States Senate regarding the interventionist stance towards the war taken by Time Inc., publications.

<sup>34</sup>John Tagg, *Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 3-12.

considering the processes and procedures used to produce the photograph, the social utility of the photograph and the institutional framework within which the photo is produced and consumed.<sup>35</sup> This same kind of authority can be granted to the cinema because of its depiction of reality.

The authority given to the photograph dates to the late nineteenth century and is an outgrowth of industrialization and modernization. The scientific advances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries altered man's conception of physical reality, according to Tagg. A sense of instability and discomfort about what is actually known begins to become palpable. Thus, one of the primary quests of this "machine age" was to identify what is real and authentic.<sup>36</sup> The photograph, beginning in the 1880s, acquired a huge amount of cultural salience because of its purported ability to represent reality. For a population growing more comfortable with mechanization, the photograph and camera become a natural part of life in a industrialized and increasingly technical society. For the first time, a large segment of the public could replicate or recreate reality. Middle class Americans were able (or believed they were able) to experience different cultures, geographic spaces and societies through the direct imagery of the camera and photograph.<sup>37</sup>

However, the camera offered up a seemingly contradictory experience. As Miles Orvell writes, Americans appreciated "its ability to direct our close attention to 'the real

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<sup>35</sup>Tagg, 157.

<sup>36</sup>Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), xv-xix.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 73-75.

thing' and...its simultaneous capacity to estrange us from ourselves and from our reality, to compel our entrance into the aesthetic world of the image."<sup>38</sup> Although photography could literally show what was "real", the viewer was aware that the photograph is mediated, that the reality it showed was dependent on a number of factors, not the least of which is the intent of the photographer. In Orvell's view, the central problem for photography is the degree to which a mechanical instrument can create a picture of reality; in other words, was the reality presented by the photograph actually real? One of the most powerful uses of the photograph was as a direct historical record, literally a recording device designed to freeze a moment of historical time. The photographic representations of reality so avidly consumed by the public, however, were often staged, as in the case of Mathew Brady's Civil War photographs, or were manipulated for emotional effect by photographers such as Jacob Riis.<sup>39</sup>

Orvell posits that photography in the early twentieth century became a more active medium rather than a strictly passive and static one. Photographers were able to take advantage of better technology, such as increased shutter speeds, to interrupt the flow of time and record multiple images of the same event only seconds apart, thus heightening the sense of replication of reality through the photograph. The increased flexibility of the camera due to technological advance broadened the subject matter the photographer examined. Society itself became a spectacle worthy of capturing, rather than the unusual or spectacular.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>39</sup>Orvell, 85-95.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 99-101.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the camera became a symbol of man's humanity in the machine age. Rather than being exotic because it is a machine, the mechanical nature of the camera becomes its most important characteristic.

Photographers such as Alfred Steiglitz were able to impose their own vision on the camera, thus creating and synthesizing a personal reality by using the photographer's eye.<sup>41</sup> In the hands of a Steiglitz, the camera and photograph became an "instrument of revelation" with the goal of intensifying reality.<sup>42</sup> According to Paul Strand, Steiglitz's use of the camera symbolized man's control of the machine and revealed the inner spirit of man in the machine age. By the 1920s, Steiglitz and Strand had pioneered the photographic essay, telling a story through photographs.<sup>43</sup> Photography, because of its increased technological capabilities, was able to synthesize and compress reality.

As photography expanded its reach in the early twentieth century, the world of journalism, another medium that claimed to present facts and reality, was undergoing a radical transformation. The enduring contribution of Henry Luce to American journalism was introducing the idea of synthesizing information for public consumption. Luce, obsessed with facts and understanding that the middle and upper classes in America were becoming increasingly educated, created a style of journalism that claimed to give the reader or viewer all the information needed to understand issues of the day. Luce, through *Time*, *Fortune*, *The March of Time* and *Life*, gave his audience a view of reality that he himself visualized. In addition, all of the Time Inc., publications participated in

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 198.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 211.

an ongoing conversation about the true meaning of America and the American role in the world. Thus, Luce was highly important in giving America a definition of itself, a definition eventually projected onto the rest of the world.

Luce's publications are important not only for their scope and influence but for the fact that each of the Luce productions—*Time*, *Fortune*, *Life* and *The March of Time* had certain similar characteristics in their presentation and analysis of the news of the day. There was a special feel and look to Luce's publications that led to revolutionary changes in journalism. Luce explicitly presented the news as a "product;" and audiences came could expect similarities to Luce publications. In a sense, Luce practiced what can be termed "branding," the process of bringing disparate products under one corporate umbrella within a set style of presentation.

Thus, information conveyed in Luce's publications is not their only important component. What is critical is the manner in which it is presented and packaged. *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune* and *The March of Time* helped to change American journalism. Luce and his editors sought to create a new way of delivering information, and in so doing permanently altered the practice of American journalism.<sup>44</sup>

The formula employed by Luce consisted mainly of summarizing the news in a clear concise, frequently entertaining manner that was usually brief and reflected popular tastes and expectations. Complex stories were often simplified and information presented to the reader limited options for independent analysis. *Time* often emphasized "personality" or the promotion of representative individuals as the voice of authority on a

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<sup>44</sup> Swanberg,, 472.

certain topic or problem. This presentation of one central figure initiated each “cover story” that depicted what issue was deemed critical for that week or month. The Luce publications also presented themselves as an omniscient authority, an authority backed up by a barrage of facts and detail. Luce’s publications decided which facts were relevant and these publications often acted as mediators for a portion of the public desiring synthesis of news and events.<sup>45</sup>

It was Luce’s intent all along, beginning with *Time* and carrying over into other publications, to rationalize and synthesize the news for a middle class audience unable to get national and international news outside of major population centers, most notably New York. Luce intended to capture a large market of educated, middle class, families and businessmen who he believed were ill-served by local and regional news outlets, who needed concise information about national and international events (a perspective reinforced by *Time*’s mid-1920s relocation to Cleveland from New York).

Luce’s ideas about journalism are connected to an important shift in attitudes toward general knowledge among educated members of American society in the 1920s and 1930s. Both Luce and Hadden agreed with Walter Lippmann’s assertion that most of the public was ill-equipped to participate fully in a democratic society because of lack of information about current affairs.<sup>46</sup> More and more Americans attended college with the passing of each decade in the twentieth century. However, with the increasing complication of business, the expansion of government and the growth of technology,

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<sup>45</sup>Robert T. Elson, *The World of Time Inc.*, 2 vols. (New York: Atheneum, 1968-1973), 1:447-448.

<sup>46</sup>Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality*, (New York, London: Cassell, 1999), 149.

most colleges and universities had begun to abandon the idea that it was possible to fully educate an individual. Specialization in course study became the mode, forcing concentration on a certain discipline and often neglecting larger, more comprehensive study. Work itself became more focused, with people becoming less aware of the world around them. Luce played to this perspective in his publications; they would explain not only business and politics but the arts and society as well.<sup>47</sup>

Eventually, Luce's formula of information synthesis could be seen in radio and television news, along with an increasing number of newspaper columns and analyses. His legacy thus concerns a transformation of American journalism from information to synthesis, and another episode of what Raymond Williams has termed "the long revolution," the centuries old struggle, beginning with literacy and then the mass media to gain control of an increasingly complicated world. The most successful mass media managers devised forms that rendered a complex, diverse world understandable.<sup>48</sup>

*Time* magazine had, by the mid-1930s, become noted for a certain style, most commonly associated with its unique verbal form of expression, dubbed "time-style" by critics. This distinctive verbal style combined with an attention to detail and minutia that made *Time* stand out among its competitors. It also gave a certain visual aspect to *Time's* reportage that other publications lacked. *Time* offered its readers "body and color."

Writers for *Time* thus paid special attention to the physical surroundings of a setting or the appearance of a newsmaker. They gave *Time* readers a visual flavor in an

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<sup>47</sup>Swanberg, 52-57.

<sup>48</sup>Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961); James Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

era when more and more Americans, mainly because of the spread of photography and the popularity of the motion picture, possessed a greater visual sensibility. Readers became accustomed to “seeing” the news in their minds eye, an attribute that increased the acceptance and credibility of *The March of Time*. An eye for detail also gave readers the sometimes false impression that *Time* had covered an event when the writer actually relied on wire and newspaper reports. This same technique of recreation was prominent in *The March of Time* as well. News events were often staged or re-shot, sometimes with actors or the aid of participants. The inclusion of a “knowing” item often gave *Time* a level of authority that its competitors lacked.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, *Time* addressed the news as “stories.” A base-line of narrative, of story-telling, was vital to the overall presentation of the news and the impression left on readers. *Time* presented the news as complete; that is, once *Time* had covered a story, the reader had all the necessary information to be completely informed about that topic or issue. Hadden and Luce unwittingly revived a literary style that larger newspapers and wire services had abandoned in the late nineteenth century in favor of one that ritualistically organized individual news items in order of the importance of the information contained in each. Unlike newspaper reporters, *Time* writers did not have to justify to an editor or reader their entries by their first paragraph “leads.” Staff writers instead adopted a linear form. With color and facts serving to create a visual aspect and a lively tone, *Time* entries came to have an eyewitness or documentary quality lacking in

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<sup>49</sup>Baughman. Examples of these “knowing” items include sly references to a politician’s honesty and ethics or the identification of Wallis Simpson as the King of England’s “good friend” throughout *Time*’s coverage of the 1936 abdication crisis.

most newspaper accounts. A *Time* editor remarked in 1940 that “the basis of good *Time* writing is narrative and the basis of good narrative is to tell events 1) in the order in which they occur; 2) in the form in which an observer might have seen them—so that readers can imagine themselves on the scene.”<sup>50</sup>

*Time*’s emphasis on ordering the news and emphasizing business and politics stood in stark contrast to standard journalistic practice of the era. The 1920s and 1930s were a golden age for sensationalism in news reportage. Events like the death of film star Rudolph Valentino, the trans-Atlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh and a series of spectacular murders all gained massive newspaper and newsreel coverage. *Time* kept its focus on national and international news, combining news coverage with a focus on personality.<sup>51</sup>

This focus became all the more important with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929. Hard news became critical as readers groped for explanations of what had befallen the seemingly strong American economy. Mass poverty and the chaos of modern life revealed to the reader how problematic business and politics actually were, and necessitated changes in mainstream news coverage. The amount of Washington news carried by the wire services (and thus by local papers) expanded exponentially in the early 1930s. *Time* was uniquely prepared to cover the Great Depression as a news story, especially in comparison to a daily paper. The magazine’s blend of information and analysis suggested an authoritative understanding. *Time*’s synthesis of the news, its focus

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<sup>50</sup>Elson, 1:121.

<sup>51</sup>Warren Susman, “‘Personality’ and the Making of Twentieth Century Culture,” in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, ed. John Higham and Paul Conklin, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Swanberg, 63-66.

on government and the presidency, assumed greater importance just as the actions of government expanded to meet an unprecedented crisis.<sup>52</sup>

Newspapers, and later in the decade, radio news attempted to follow *Time's* formula of interpretation of the news along with straight reportage. Radio networks hired commentators to analyze the day's events in an understandable format. Larger papers allowed some reporters to interpret as well as report the news. These developments led to an increase in the numbers of analytical news columns and the ascendancy in the media of the pundit. In 1931, the *New York Herald Tribune* hired Walter Lippmann to write a column which appeared three times a week. Lippmann's column was the first to provide sustained analysis of events; most political columns at this time merely reported gossip. Others, such as Raymond Clapper and Dorothy Thompson, soon followed. Many of these analysts were syndicated, reaching into small and medium sized cities, thus increasing the reader's access to not only national news but expert analysis and opinion. In addition, major newspapers such as the *Kansas City Star*, the *Richmond News Leader*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and the *New York Times* published weekly segments synthesizing the news. Some newspapers experimented with layout changes to make their coverage more organized and comprehensible.<sup>53</sup>

Mainly by default, *Time* had replaced many dailies in their informational function and reliability. The politics of the 1930s had caused some newspapers to revert to a nineteenth century partisanship. Although Luce shared his rivals' disillusionment with

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<sup>52</sup>Curtis Pendergrast, *The World of Time*, (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 67-70.

<sup>53</sup>Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, (New York: Random House, 1980), 130-133.

Roosevelt—and his magazine could hardly be regarded as neutral toward the New Deal, *Time*'s coverage hardly displayed the tilt evident in a Hearst or McCormick paper. The magazine frequently criticized such reactionary publishers for their excesses, as in the October 12, 1936 issue which dismissed the Hearst charge that Roosevelt had secret ties to communists.<sup>54</sup>

Luce and his publication came much closer to an objective standard that most of his readers, whatever their anti-New Deal politics, welcomed. *Time* readers wanted to be told the “facts,” for example, that Landon’s campaign was faltering, that Roosevelt was likely to win the 1936 election. Indeed many who supported Roosevelt subscribed to *Time*. Bernard DeVoto praised the magazine. “*Time* has made itself indispensable,” he wrote in 1937. “Its coverage is amazing, its accuracy good, its editorializing stimulating and frequently fair.” “Mr. Luce’s publications have maintained for seven years a critical attitude towards the Roosevelt administration,” Dorothy Thompson wrote in 1940. “It has not, however, been a blindly partisan attitude. It has not been critical for the sake of criticizing, but critical according to the views of objective reality of the editors and readers.”<sup>55</sup>

Among journalists, *Time* was widely read and admired. In April 1924, *Time* listed about five hundred editors and publishers as regular readers. *Time*'s extensive treatment of the press explained some of this popularity; another factor was *Time*'s style and organization. Journalism students at the University of Minnesota found *Time* an

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<sup>54</sup>Elson, 1:45-47

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, 1: 48-54.

inspiration. “They all wished assiduously to mimick *Time*’s style.” “*Time* is not only a threatening competitor but a worthwhile stylebook,” a Springfield, Missouri editor confessed two years later. “For thoroughness of detail, vividness of description and the graphic simplicity of its literary style, *Time* is far ahead of most newspapers.” “Today the pattern seems to be the short, crisp, comma-studded phraseology typical of *Time*, *Variety* noted. Chain newspaper operators a home and abroad like Frank Gannett and Lord Beaverbrook began to encourage their staff members to read *Time*. Sociologist Leo Rosten found that 1930s Washington correspondents were more likely to take *Time* than any other magazine.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, not everyone celebrated *Time* and its prominence in American journalism. For example, the same *Variety* article that praised *Time* stated “editors avow it is the biggest nuisance in journalism today,” a comment that revealed the disdain of old-line journalists for *Time*’s perceived glibness and its synthesis of the news. In 1936 and 1937, the *New Yorker* and the *Nation* ran highly critical assessments of Luce and his magazine. A *New Yorker* profile of the publisher by Wolcott Gibbs mocked “Time-style”: inverted sentences, “knowing” descriptions, invented news titles. “Backward ran the sentences until reeled the mind,” Gibbs wrote, who spoke of an “ambitious, gimlet-eyed Baby Tycoon Henry Robinson Luce.” In 1937, *The Nation* ran a far more critical piece by a former *Time* writer, Dwight Macdonald. In what proved to be the first of repeated criticisms, Macdonald attacked *Time* not for its style but for its ideology, asserting *Time* was as guilty as any daily of political distortions. Macdonald went on

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<sup>56</sup>Leo C. Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937); Elson, 1: 55-60.

to compare Luce to Hearst. The difference was that Luce believed his distortions were backed up by evidence.<sup>57</sup>

Both attacks, however, ignored the importance of *Time*'s challenge to American journalism. *Time*'s rather odd prose could be abandoned. Macdonald's concern about relaying prejudices as news could perhaps be better understood by recognizing the magazine's upper and upper-middle class audience. Much of the bias that Macdonald decried was also present in daily newspapers, and often more apparent there than in *Time*. The real innovation and ethical problem posed by Luce's journalism was in its structure. Luce and his editors were making weekly decisions for their readers as to what was important and why. Readers who might earlier have sifted through more mounds of information now had *Time* to do it for them. Journalism had always involved summary, yet *Time* was redirecting the process of synthesis. Color, detail, description were added to give *Time* authority. The world was becoming more complicated and *Time* was rendering it easily, some would say falsely, comprehensible.

By the late 1920s, *Time* was profitable enough for Luce to begin considering other ventures. The first of these was *Fortune*, the product under the Time Inc. banner for which Luce deserves the most credit. Luce had the idea for *Fortune* and spent more time overseeing its production than any other Time Inc. publication. *Fortune*, according to a contemporary of Luce, was his real passion among his magazines.<sup>58</sup>

Luce had begun to think of creating a business periodical as early as 1928. By this

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<sup>57</sup>Baughman, 59-60; Swanberg, 121.

<sup>58</sup>John Kobler, *Luce: His Time, Life and Fortune*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 143-144; Swanberg, 80.

point, Luce had started to think of himself as much if not more of a businessman than a journalist. The economic expansion of the 1920s reinforced Luce's belief in modern capitalism, and it was his belief that existing journalistic practice of the era suited to explaining the success of the modern economy. Luce blamed journalists and their subjects for this under-coverage. Reporters were by and large ignorant of economics. As a result, they were often at the mercy of public relations specialists employed by firms for explanations about complex financial transactions and business practice. Captains of industry, for their part, avoided publicity whenever possible.<sup>59</sup>

The new Time Inc. magazine would focus instead on what Luce called "the coming tycoon." He was neither the founder nor the heir to a business, but its manager. The model would be not an inventor like Ford but an executive like Owen Young of GE, holder of a law degree. New corporate enterprises required executives with generalized knowledge, not specialized expertise.<sup>60</sup>

Luce's ideas about the changing nature of capitalism were not unique. In *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (1932), Adolph Berle and Gardiner C. Means described corporate managers, mostly college educated, some holders of graduate degrees from new and prestigious schools of business administration, running increasingly large businesses. In comparison to an earlier generation of business leaders, they held little of their company's stock and had little knowledge of the production process. A popular joke of the era told of the president of US Steel who supposedly saw his first blast furnace

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<sup>59</sup>Elson, 1: 70-71

<sup>60</sup>Elson, 71-78; Swanberg, 81-93.

shortly after his death.<sup>61</sup>

The leaders of the organizational revolution that accompanied a more interdependent and bureaucratic economy required a more comprehensive, analytical journalism. Walter Lippmann viewed the new corporate manager as a coordinator of information concerning markets and resources. Lippmann observed “The more clearly he realizes the nature of his position in industry, the more he tends to submit his desires to the discipline of objective information.”<sup>62</sup>

Luce determined that the typical *Fortune* reader had the time to absorb a far more in-depth journalism. He was more likely than not a civic leader; he and his contemporaries had gone to similar schools and had similar cultural tastes. The “coming tycoon” Luce believed was “a cultivated citizen of the world,” a likely devotee of classical music and high art, with a broad perspective on life.<sup>63</sup>

*Fortune* was intended to be *Time*’s opposite. The magazine would carry fewer and longer stories, not brief summaries but lengthy expositions. A four hundred word story in *Time* was considered verbose. The standard *Fortune* piece could run up to ten thousand words. Corporations and capitalism in general would be the focus, not personalities.<sup>64</sup>

*Fortune* appeared in February 1930 after two years of planning. *Fortune* cost one dollar a copy and a subscription was ten dollars a year, in comparison to five dollars a

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<sup>61</sup>Kobler, 143-149.

<sup>63</sup>Kobler, 150-151.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 149-151.

year for *Time*. *Fortune* was not intended to be cheap; Luce wanted *Fortune* to be “as beautiful a magazine as exists in the United States. If possible, the most beautiful.” An expensive heavy paper was employed to avoid the glare of paper used in other magazines (*Time* included) and had to be sewn by hand. The magazine was heavily illustrated with photographs, drawings and paintings.<sup>65</sup> *Fortune* readers undoubtedly noticed the heavy use of illustration in the magazine. Each story was illustrated, a break with common magazine practice. Most American newspapers had long used photographs; however, only the tabloids had begun to try to connect pictures to stories (and most used photos in a disorganized manner).<sup>66</sup> Luce’s vision for *Fortune* was to use writing and photos synergistically to tell a story. One of Luce’s first hires for the magazine was a young Cleveland photographer named Margaret Bourke-White. Bourke-White’s photographs of industrial facilities were beginning to be recognized for their aesthetic qualities. Smokestacks, blast furnaces and assembly lines were turned into highly stylized representations of modern America. Luce believed in her vision as well, telling her “The camera should explore every corner of industry, showing everything...from the steam shovel to the board of directors. The camera would act as interpreter, recording what modern civilization is, how it looks.”<sup>67</sup>

The photos included in a *Fortune* story often helped tell that story, moving it along and giving it a sense of progress and narrative. For example, photographs gave

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 152-154.

<sup>66</sup>Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke White*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 98-99.

<sup>67</sup>Goldberg, 112; C. Zoe Smith, “An Alternative View of the 30s: Hine’s and Bourke-White’s Industrial Photos,” *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (Summer 1983), 305-310.

force to a moving 1932 story about the housing crisis; captions helped connect the photo in ironic juxtaposition to the text. One caption read underneath a photo of Richmond slums: “Back of the fashionable streets.” In a feature on the Swift Company, Bourke-White’s photos of a line of pigs being led to slaughter added impact to the story.

*Fortune* also made extensive use of “candid” photographs to add depth and drama to stories. German photographer Erich Salomon had pioneered the use of small, hidden cameras to capture unposed, spontaneous events. Ingersoll heard of his work and persuaded him to come work for *Fortune* in 1932. Readers discovered unexpected images: normally staid President Hoover with a slight grin, diplomats top hats on a table next to a conference room, investment bankers whispering to each other behind a slightly ajar door. A Time Inc. history written a few years later noted that Salomon’s photos marked a fusion of photography and journalism “getting the camera where you want it and making it record not only a picture but also a fact.”<sup>68</sup> These techniques also marked the visual style of *The March of Time*.

*Fortune*’s use of photography reflected a growing belief that photography could more effectively represent reality than any other medium. The photography of Margaret Bourke-White in particular was key to this dialogue. Bourke-White’s emphasis on machines was seen as symbolizing the alienation of humanity in mass society, a theme with resonance during the Great Depression. In her emphasis on the machine, Bourke-White was carrying forward the work of photographers such as Paul Strand, who in the 1920s became interested in photographing the machine as a sign of the camera’s modernity.

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<sup>68</sup>Elson, 230-231; Lewis, 10-15.

Strand believed that new laws of composition based on the modern world called for changes in photographic composition.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Bourke-White's work in *Fortune* marked a major innovation in the history of photojournalism, establishing the first time that a story was told primarily through photos rather than text.<sup>70</sup>

Critics began to discuss reality as represented through photography as being more "real" than in any other form, including direct observation of an event. Lewis Hine wrote that "it is often more effective than the reality would have been, because, in the picture, the non-essential and conflicting interests have been eliminated."<sup>71</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, commenting on reality and photography noted that the photographer functioned as a "camera-eye" and had an affinity for unstaged reality. Photography tends to stress the fortuitous and random, and "has an affinity for the indeterminate," that is, it could represent ambiguous events or scenes well because it allows the viewer to understand the photograph based on his or her own biases.<sup>72</sup>

Fernand Leger, in his essay "A New Realism" wrote about the ability of photography and cinema to give images, through closeups and enlargement, a personality. What Leger was referring to was a "superrealism...a harder, rougher, heightened sense of reality that reveals the essence of things."<sup>73</sup> Photography, more than other media, could

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<sup>69</sup>Orvell, 218.

<sup>70</sup>Goldberg, 108-109.

<sup>71</sup>Lewis Hine, "Social Photography" in Alan Tractenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography*, (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 111.

<sup>72</sup>Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" in Alan Tractenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography*, (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 257-265.

<sup>73</sup>Orvell, 215-218.

deal with the complicated nature of the modern environment of the 1920s and 1930, what Lewis Mumford identified as an “expansion of the vocabulary of the camera.”<sup>74</sup>

Although photographs could document what appeared to be reality in an exact manner, they did not operate outside of a method of cultural production. The relationship of the photograph to the real was dependent on several things. One: how was the photography produced? What technical procedures were used in procuring the image, and how do these factors alter the meaning of the photography? Two: what is the social utility of the photograph? Did the photographer have a specific intent in shooting the picture in a particular way? Three, what was the institutional framework in which the photograph was produced and consumed?<sup>75</sup> The meaning that audiences gave to the photography in *Fortune* (and later *Life*) was dependent on the status of the producing agent, in this case Time Inc. Authority was granted to the photograph, creating it as an official document.<sup>76</sup>

The debates about photography during the 1920s and 1930s centered on definitions of modernism versus realism, and how the two movements related to one another. Modernism offered a break with traditional realist and naturalist literature and their emotional and moral frameworks. Modernists insisted that reality could not be known logically, systematically or objectively. The world had to be built around the vagaries of memory, thought and awareness rather than just direct observation.

According to modernists, the counterpoint to changes in science, literature and the arts

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>75</sup>Tagg, 157.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 172.

was the photograph. The photograph, at once commonplace and fantastic, embodied the condition of art in the era of industrialization and also encouraged the emergence of a totally visual understanding of the world.<sup>77</sup>

Writers such as James Agee embraced photography as a more accurate representation of reality than words while John Dos Passos believed that photography could not be bested for portraying perceived actualities and had thus made realistic painting obsolete.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, one of the recurring characters (along with the newsreel) in Dos Passos' trilogy *USA* was the all-seeing "Camera-Eye." Writers saw the camera as "virtually unrivaled as a documentary tool, but capable of adoption as a serious art form...photography, poised between art and reportage...manages to signify instantaneously a range of possibilities concerning the role of creator, subject and medium," as Nancy Shawcross wrote.<sup>79</sup> Thus photography, a medium that holds the power to authenticate, mediated the terrain between modernism and realism and the conflict between observable reality and truth that is universal, metaphysical and timeless.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, some observers believed that the introduction of widespread photography made America a modern society. According to Susan Sontag, "a society becomes modern when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Paul Hansom, "Introduction," in Paul Hansom, ed., *Literary Modernism and Photography*, (Praeger: Westport, CT, 2002), xiii-xiv.

<sup>78</sup>Mark Durden, "The Limits of Modernism: Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*" in Hansom, 25; Janet Galligani Casey, "Focus Left: Modernist Angst and the Proletarian Camera" in Hansom, 33.

<sup>79</sup>Casey, 47-48.

<sup>80</sup>Nancy M. Shawcross, "Counterpoints of View: The American Photo-Text, 1935-1948," in Paul Hansom, ed., *Literary Modernism and Photography*, (Praeger: Westport, CT, 2002), 71-72.

<sup>81</sup>Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 153.

The spread of photographic technology made the camera a tool for understanding, predicting and interfering with human behavior, while the photo itself became a means of gaining control over its subject.<sup>82</sup> The camera, along with being a vehicle for modernization, became a democratizing force, implementing “an aesthetic view of reality by being a machine toy that extends to everyone the possibility of making disinterested judgments about importance, interest and beauty.”<sup>83</sup>

With the economic crisis of the 1930s, the nature of photography and the reality it represented underwent a transformation. Observers began to discuss photography as a social document, evidence of the reality of the times. Harkening back to earlier photographers such as Jacob Riis, photographers again embraced the camera as a tool for reform and exposing the underlying conditions of society.<sup>84</sup> The rhetorical power of the camera to reveal the state of things and to point to action reemerged.<sup>85</sup> The camera served as an instrument of truth and fact, reverting to a nineteenth century ideal where the particular or individual represents larger groups or forces.<sup>86</sup> This movement toward the representation of truth and fact had a powerful and logical appeal for Luce, who had always had a passion for representing reality.

Several times during 1934 several intimates of Luce, including his future wife

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 155-157.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 176.

<sup>84</sup>Lili Corbus Bezner, *Photography and Politics in America: From the New Deal Into the Cold War*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1; Orvell, 226.

<sup>85</sup>Orvell, 227.

<sup>86</sup>Bezner, 5-10; Miles Orvell, *American Photography*, (New York, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 79.

Clare Booth Brokaw, suggested to the publisher that he consider producing a picture weekly. Brokaw's idea was that Luce purchase the dying humor magazine *Life* and reorient it towards photography. Luce himself was already considering such a venture. The commercial and artistic success of *Time* and *Fortune* respectively had satisfied his ambitions. In the fall of 1933, Luce considered three options: buy a newspaper, start a ladies magazine or start a picture weekly. "We have practically decided to go into the 'experimental stage' on a new magazine," Luce informed one his editors late in the year. The design was to be a "weekly or fortnightly (review of) current events for large circulation, heavily illustrated."<sup>87</sup>

The decision to publish a picture magazine seemed a logical one for Luce. *Time* was distinctive not just for its brevity and prose but for its layout, visually appealing for readers. The magazine's editors were also innovative in placing and arranging photographs, using them as an integral part of telling a particular story. Editors enlivened posed photos of newsmakers with descriptive captions illustrated and drew readers to a story. In 1932, photographer Edward Steichen praised *Time*'s picture presentation as one of the most fascinating aspects of the magazine.<sup>88</sup> *Time* often moved beyond the strictures of newspaper display, running pictures that the dailies refused to publish. One of the most striking examples was the nude victim of a lynching. *Time* famously published in 1934 a full page of photographs of the assassination of King Alexander of

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<sup>87</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Lem Billings, Fall 1933, Luce Correspondence, Time Inc. Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Elson, 1: 270.

<sup>88</sup>Edward Steichen, "'News'-Photography," in *America as Americans See It*, ed. Fred J. Ringel, (New York: The Literary Guild), 290; *Time*, March 4, 1929; February 15, 1933.

Yugoslavia; the sequencing of the photos gave the spread a newsreel feel.<sup>89</sup>

Most newspapers used illustration in a rather haphazard manner and failed to capitalize on the public's thirst for the visual. In the 1920s, new tabloids owed their success primarily to the publication of often grisly photographs. Some, like the *New York Daily News* and the *New York Graphic*, allowed photos to "tell" an entire story. A movement towards unstaged, "reality" photographs was reflected in some tabloids, largely because cameras had become more portable.<sup>90</sup> Other more respectable dailies used photos on occasion; the Associated Press started a wire photo service in 1935. Most editors, however, were unfamiliar with how to use photographs or considered pictorial journalism to be for the lower classes and the less educated. Many associated the tabloids with a new "yellow journalism."<sup>91</sup>

This association was apparently at variance with public desires. Newspaper readership surveys conducted by George Gallup in the 1920s for the *Des Moines Register* indicated that readers wanted photos, not just alone but as integral parts of news stories. When the *Register* added a Sunday pictorial supplement, circulation rose by almost 50 percent. Other surveys conducted by Gallup confirmed the popularity of photographs as part of the news. Gallup found that readers were three to four times more likely to look at a picture as a news story and welcomed efforts to relate photographs to the news.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Elson, 1:270-271.

<sup>90</sup>Goldberg, 147; Rick Friedman, "40 Years of Pictures, Newsmagazine Style," *Editor and Publisher*, (March 23, 1963), 47-48.

<sup>91</sup>Daniel J. Boorstein, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 13-14.

<sup>92</sup>John Drewry, "A Picture-Language Magazine," *Magazine World* 1 (November 1945): 19.

Luce also understood this greater demand, based largely on the reaction to *Time* and *Fortune*. Selection of photos should not be arbitrary but suggest a “mind-guided camera,” he wrote, which “can do a far better job of reporting current events than has been done before.” “Photojournalism” had an audience, as the public wanted “to see and be shown.” Indeed, this was the public’s expectation.<sup>93</sup>

Changes in technology supported Luce’s vision as well. Advances in photography made more vivid and realistic pictures possible. During the 1920s German manufacturers had perfected a camera far more mobile than the cumbersome models then used. The German Leica could take up to thirty six shots before reloading, had greater depth, and in most indoor settings did not need a flash. These innovations freed the photographer to take more pictures more rapidly, while greatly increasing his or her mobility. Consequently, editors had more photos to choose from, and could more easily construct “photo-essays” to inform a subject. The small size of the camera allowed photographers to take more intimate, candid photos, as the subjects were less aware of the presence of a camera and photographer.<sup>94</sup>

Most newspapers, however, were slow to embrace the new technology. Tabloids had experimented with the photo essay and unposed shots but generally failed to adapt to the smaller camera and the flexibility it offered. Newspaper engravers and developers complained that the smaller negative of the Leica required more time and precision to develop than the plates used for standard cameras. Thus large scale use of smaller

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<sup>93</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Lem Billings, Fall 1933.

<sup>94</sup>Bert W. Woodrum, “Reader Interest in Newspaper Pictures,” *Journalism Quarterly* 24 (September 1947): 147-151.

cameras could conceivably lead to delays in publication. Some daily newspapers refused to buy the enlargers needed to properly utilize film shot by smaller cameras and most refused to allow their photographers to use Leicas.<sup>95</sup>

A magazine using this new technology to create a different kind of photojournalism might, Luce and others suspected, find a willing and enthusiastic audience. The country's most popular magazines, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*, were well and even lavishly illustrated, but contained more sketches than photography. The photos they did run often had a soft focus or were formally posed, as opposed to harsh, "realistic" portraits. Also, the success in Europe of photo-journals like *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* tempted American imitators. Several publishers, even prior to Luce's November 1933 musings on a photo magazine, were considering starting a photo magazine. William Randolph Hearst had one under consideration until financial difficulties forced him to abandon the project. The Cowles brothers also considered such a publication.<sup>96</sup>

Luce began preliminary planning for *Life* magazine in 1934, while at the same time continuing to explore production of a newsreel under the *Time* imprimatur. Luce's chief collaborator in planning a photo-journal was Daniel Longwell, and together with *Time* staffer Laura Z. Hobson, Longwell assembled a picture book history of *Time* magazine and *The March of Time* titled *Four Hours A Year* as a dry run in pictorial journalism. Photography, not prose, told *Time's* story in *Four Hours A Year*.<sup>97</sup> In spite of

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<sup>95</sup>Erich Salomon, *Portrait of an Age*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 217.

<sup>96</sup>James Howard Lewis, "The Saga of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*," *Magazine World* 1 (May 1945): 9-11.

<sup>97</sup>Baughman, 84-87; Time Inc., *Four Hours A Year*, (New York: Time Inc., 1936).

Longwell's efforts, Luce was not completely convinced of the idea of a photo-magazine. Some within the organization suggested *Time* could simply carry more photos, a solution that Longwell, as *Time*'s picture editor, found unsatisfactory. Luce's vision for the magazine also frustrated planning. The magazine should be inexpensive, although at ten cents an issue it would be twice the price of the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Collier's*. Luce was also adamant that the magazine be published on shiny white paper, ideal for photos but expensive. By comparison, he knew, photos in newspapers would look drab and lifeless. However, no paper producer could give Luce and Longwell a reasonably priced stock that adhered to their specifications. Luce hesitated for a period of time, finally agreeing to begin production at the urging of his new wife Clare Booth Brokaw, whom he married at the end of 1935. Clare Booth Luce shared Luce's passion for journalism and over the course of a two month honeymoon in Cuba, she was able to persuade him that a photo-magazine would be a viable venture. Luce's right hand man Ralph Ingersoll visited Luce and his bride in Havana in November 1935 and came back with orders to begin layout and production of the new magazine.<sup>98</sup>

Luce was distracted by his new marriage and left a good deal of the planning for the magazine to Ingersoll. Ingersoll decided the company's vision for the magazine in a series of long memoranda (a process similar to the hashing out of the vision for *The March of Time*) in the course of which he justified the decision to begin production. As he noted, pictures appealed to everyone from all walks of life. Advances in photography offered journalism a new way of telling stories that newspapers were reluctant to adopt;

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<sup>98</sup>Lem Billings, "A Prospectus for a New Magazine" [1936], 1-5, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Inc. Archives, Time-Life Building, New York; Baughman, 86-87.

again, a theme voiced in the rationale for the creation of *The March of Time*. Time Inc. had to act, Ingersoll wrote, because “through the next decade the movement of pictures into journalism will be so rapid as to possibly revolutionize the journalistic machinery of the world.”<sup>99</sup>

As Time Inc., was preparing to publish the first issue of *Life*, Ingersoll recalled the experiences that Roy Larsen and Louis de Rochemont had when planning *The March of Time*. Both publications were identified by Time Inc., as “new kinds of pictorial journalism.” Ingersoll, later a frequent critic of *The March of Time*’s content within the corporation, admired the technical style *The March of Time* achieved in its early issues, and adopted elements of its narrative style, particularly the pacing and use of frequent cuts and edits to show an image from several different angles.<sup>100</sup>

*The March of Time* grew out of a radio program produced by Time Inc., of the same name. Luce and his top lieutenants, most notably Roy Larsen, had been discussing a newsreel since 1931. Luce was particularly fascinated by the possibilities of what he termed “pictorial journalism.”<sup>101</sup> It is important to note that production of *The March of Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*’s continued growth all occurred at roughly the same time in the early 1930s. All of these productions were influential inside Time Inc., as well as outside. They were created (this is particularly true for *The March of Time* and *Life*) and

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<sup>99</sup>Hoopes, 140.

<sup>100</sup>Ralph Ingersoll, Memorandum on LIFE No. 9, October 30, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Memo to Henry Luce from Dan Longwell, February 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>101</sup>Henry Luce, The Moving Picture as Journalism, August 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

existed within the same intellectual milieu and ferment. *Time* had redefined traditional journalism; Luce now wanted to create a new kind of journalism based on the image, and *Life* and *The March of Time* were to be the vehicles for that creation.

Luce, Ingersoll and Longwell faced numerous practical obstacles in producing the new magazine, not the least of which was coming up with a name. After several suggestions were considered and discarded, Luce purchased the rights to the failing magazine *Life* for the princely sum of ninety-two thousand dollars—four times what it had cost to begin publication of *Time* in 1922. The production values that Luce insisted on proved to be a more difficult standard. Luce wanted the magazine to be published weekly on coated paper to give photographs the most striking reproduction quality.<sup>102</sup>

In addition, a format had to be determined for the magazine itself. *Life* would carry photos of the major newsstories of the week through agreements with major syndicators. This arrangement did not guarantee that the magazine would have enough material to fill its forty to forty-eight pages every week. Also, using exclusively syndicated photos might make *Life*'s content indistinguishable from newspapers and other magazines, and Luce was determined that *Life* stand out from the start.<sup>103</sup>

*Time* offered the model for *Life*'s identity. Like the newsmagazine, *Life* would be departmentalized. For example, there would be a regular "President's Scrapbook" similar to *Time*'s Presidency section and the weekly makeup of each department would center around availability of photographs. The magazine would emphasize significant news

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<sup>102</sup>Hoopes, 140-141.

<sup>103</sup>Elson, 1:295.

which had been recorded by a camera but by not means all the significant events of the week.

Putting together a sample layout proved difficult. None of Luce's top lieutenants had experience with using photos to construct a story. They had previously used photographs as supplements to text and had a difficult time using them in a narrative fashion. Another difficulty was in the general orientation of the magazine itself. One prototype seemed to Ingersoll to be "middlebrow"; another used nudes in an attempt at sensationalism. Difficulties over style and tone made everyone, including Luce, nervous. Ingersoll detailed some of these concerns in a memo, stating that "at this point the project appears poorly focused and scattershot. In a word, undefined."<sup>104</sup>

Another related problem centered on *Life's* potential audience. Should the magazine cater to the middle and upper-middle class customer who regularly read *Time* or should *Life* appeal to a more mass audience? Luce denied wanting to compete with the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Collier's* but the prospectus for *Life* indicated he did not want the magazine to appeal exclusively to the "busy men" on Eastern commuter trains he and Britton Haddon had identified as *Time's* customers in 1922. Luce wanted the magazine to appeal to "half of mankind."<sup>105</sup> A promising indication of the magazine's mass audience potential was the sale of about \$1.7 million in advertising contracts prior to publication—a reflection too of the confidence advertisers had in Luce and his products. Time Inc. sales representatives based *Life's* rates on a circulation of two hundred fifty

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<sup>104</sup>Elson, 1:297; Ralph Ingersoll, Memorandum on LIFE, October 30, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File, 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>105</sup>Baughman, 91; Ingersoll, Memorandum on LIFE.

thousand. Advertisers could extend those rates for a full year after *Life*'s first number.<sup>106</sup>

After overcoming numerous production and personnel difficulties (Luce had to replace the first editor for *Life*, John Martin, relatively late in the planning process) the magazine made its debut on November 19, 1936. After an almost frantic search for a cover photograph, the new editor Lem Billings decided on one by Luce favorite Margaret Bourke-White that he called "an answer to our prayer."<sup>107</sup> Bourke-White had taken photos of the new Fort Peck Dam in Montana that seemed exotic, making the massive concrete structure look like a medieval castle. Inside, she contributed a photo-essay on the workers of New Deal, Montana who were building the dam. *Life* also ran the first aerial photo of the King Edward VIII's country retreat and another of the newly constructed San Francisco Bay Bridge. The theater department featured the Broadway hit *Victoria Regina* while the film department featured Greta Garbo's *Camille*. In addition, *Life* carried a three-page spread of the paintings of contemporary artist John Steuart Curry. The magazine also "went to a party" for the British ambassador to France.<sup>108</sup>

Within a few hours of *Life*'s arrival on newsstands, seemingly fantastic stories began to filter back to Time Inc.'s offices. Vendors across the country reported they had sold out their allotments of the new magazine within hours. The original run of two hundred thousand had virtually disappeared. Some customers paid vendors extra to be placed on waiting lists for the next issues. Reports began to circulate that some couples

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<sup>106</sup>Elson, 1:329-331.

<sup>107</sup>Billings Correspondence, November 5, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Inc. Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>108</sup>Elson, 1:341-342.

were having cocktail parties where the guest of honor was the first issue of *Life* magazine. Combining newsstand and subscription sales, the new magazine had an initial circulation of four hundred thirty five thousand, a phenomenal figure.<sup>109</sup>

After only one month the circulation figure rose to five hundred thirty three thousand, making *Life* the fastest magazine to reach half a million in circulation after its initial release. By January 1937, *Life* had a circulation of seven hundred sixty thousand. Newsstands ran out of copies as *Life*'s Chicago printing plant ran out of coated paper. Circulation continued to climb thorough 1937, passing the million mark in the spring. By the end of 1937 *Life* had a circulation of 1.7 million, second only to *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* and twice that of *Time*. Market surveys indicated the magazine might achieve a circulation of 5 million. This demand led to a crisis in production as the company could not meet the demand for copies. Production, including purchase of the needed paper stock, had been planned for a weekly run of three hundred fifty thousand. To acquire the needed paper, Time Inc. had to pay vastly inflated sums to meet demand. A far more dangerous crisis centered on advertising. The executives planning *Life* had severely underestimated demand. In order to ensure a continual revenue stream for the fledgling magazine, *Life*'s sales representatives had offered ad space in the magazine at a reduced rate and allowed advertisers to renew at those reduced rates for up to one year. This made *Life*, with its enormous reach, an ad bargain for advertisers. This shortfall in revenue also exacerbated the crunch on production resources. This problem could not be

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<sup>109</sup>Lewis, 11.

addressed until 1938 at the earliest because of the structure of the advertising contracts.<sup>110</sup>

Initially, Time Inc. was losing three million dollars a year on *Life*. Advertising cutbacks due to the 1937-38 recession added to the company's problems. Time Inc. had its lowest profit for more than a decade and the value of Time Inc. stock declined by approximately 45 percent. The future of the magazine seemed to be at a crossroads. Luce demanded and got higher advertising rates but these contracts would not be effective until November 1938. He even considered raising the newsstand price to 15 cents, a plan that was quietly dropped. Acting on Larson's recommendation, he decided to maximize circulation, a decision which ultimately ensured *Life*'s profitability. Advertisers could not ignore the vast audience the magazine acquired; by early 1939, *Life*'s circulation was a staggering 2.4 million. In addition, 80 percent of *Life*'s subscribers renewed their subscriptions in 1938. A study indicated that *Life*'s "pass along" number (the number of people who actually read or saw each magazine produced and sold) was fourteen; this brought *Life*'s "eyeball" circulation to about 17 million. So in spite of increased ad rates, *Life* was a highly valuable tool for advertisers seeking to reach generally affluent consumers.<sup>111</sup>

In spite of its enormous readership, *Life*'s appeal was segmented to some degree by social class. Like most magazines, it appealed primarily to a middle and upper-middle class audience. Most surveys indicated that the magazine's audience most closely resembled that of *Time* and that its readership was the most affluent of the major

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<sup>110</sup>Elson, 1: 345-348; Kobler, 276-278.

<sup>111</sup>Elson, 1: 350-356.

magazines of the era; it *Life* was the preferred mass magazine of top level and middle level professionals.<sup>112</sup>

*Life*'s immediate success had little to do with editorial consistency, particularly in its early years. Layouts were often confused; pictures crowded together, and the magazine really failed to jell until its third year of production. Luce even conceded that the magazine, though improving, was "still unsatisfactory" in 1937 and 1938. This was not surprising, as most magazines groped for an identity in their first years. It took *Time* at least five years to achieve the tone that Luce and Hadden wanted initially. However, because *Life* seemed unique and the demand for a photo magazine so high, *Life* achieved immediate public acceptance and leadership role among other, less glamorous competitors.<sup>113</sup>

The day to day management of the magazine was occasionally chaotic, as Luce, Billings and Longwell each had to learn how to produce a picture magazine. Luce, although ostensibly giving most of the responsibility for *Life* to Billings, often interfered; in Billings words, the publisher "botches details." Luce believed that producing a picture magazine should be a collective enterprise, just as *Time* was. Each individual of whatever status in the hierarchy of the magazine should expect to have input in the final product. The selection of material for a photoessay called for a collective spirit, according to Luce's vision.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Baughman, 96.

<sup>114</sup>Transcripts of Time Inc., oral history of Daniel Longwell, January 31, 1956, Time Inc. Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 5-6.

This tendency towards decentralization gave *Life's* photographers a considerable amount of freedom and prestige. The news photo services were woefully inadequate for use by *Life*, wedded as they were to older traditions in photography. As a result, *Life* depended on its staff of photographers, and treated photographers as equals to writers, an action unprecedented for the time. At *Life*, the photographers decided what to shoot, a reversal of traditional roles. Taking advantage of advances in camera technology, *Life* photographers aimed for greater realism. One advantage they had in striving for reality was that they were not on the tight production schedules that news service photographers labored under. *Life's* photographers had the luxury of taking multiple photos over time of a given subject; the best would be selected to form a photoessay. As a result, *Life*, over time, perfected the photoessay as a journalistic method. Arthur Coford Jr., Margaret Bourke-White and Alfred Eisenstadt all contributed extensive photoessays to the magazine in its first months of publication. Each was distinguished by the air of realism they gave their disparate subjects; Coford's shots of the Hindenburg disaster were considered quite graphic, and a January 10, 1938 story on the Japanese seizure of the Chinese city of Nanking was unsparing in its detail. The "reality" portrayed on the pages of *Life* was reflected in a comment made by Archibald MacLeish to Luce that "the camera tells...The camera shall take its place as the greatest and by all measurements the most convincing reporter of contemporary life."<sup>115</sup>

Like *Time*, *Life* sought to synthesize the news, the obvious difference being that

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<sup>115</sup>William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 75-92; Goldberg, 160-161; Letter from Archibald MacLeish to Henry Luce, May 29, 1936, Luce Correspondence File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

photos were the tool of storytelling as opposed to prose. Luce wrote that *Life* “will be the complete and reliable record of all the significant events which are recorded in pictures.” *Life* would tell the story of an event with credibility, but often the story was too complex for a safe, simple narrative tale, and not all stories lent themselves to photo-essays. Furthermore, how could the “reality” shown by *Life* equal a complete and accurate record? A 1942 analysis of *Life* by John R. Whiting and George R. Clark which appeared in *Collier's* noted “*Life's* greatest admirers are occasionally troubled by a quality of its pictorial journalism which is hard to pin down, but which might be called a subtle distortion of reality. To some extent this seems to result from an overtone which *Life* shares with the other Luce publications, an overtone of which conveys a highly conscious, humorless certitude about them, as if they were saying, ‘Here are the facts, and here is the truth they add up to, and that’s that.’ There never seems to be any real doubt that the Luce papers know all the answers.”<sup>116</sup>

*Life*, in its own defense, was definitely true to the documentary expression movement of the 1930s in one critical aspect: It favored impact over true representation. The photograph, according to this theory, could convey more reality than being at an actual event. A photo could be more “real than reality.”<sup>117</sup>

In addition, *Life*, *Time* and *The March of Time* were situated in the midst of an ongoing debate about how to define American culture, or what “the American Way of *Life*” actually was. This discussion, as noted by Warren Susman in *Culture as History*,

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<sup>116</sup>Baughman, 101-102.

<sup>117</sup>Stott, 129-130.

was central to the ideological conflict of the 1930s. Susman believed that although ideology “may indeed have been important in the Thirties...many of the most brilliant and long lasting contributions to political analysis written in the period were distinctly anti-ideological”.<sup>118</sup> The Thirties were marked by efforts to find and define an American culture, as a source of strength and continuity in contrast to the vagaries of the economy. Indeed, Luce’s publications were engaged in the creation of a national, popular culture that sought to unify disparate groups around a hegemonic vision of America. In earlier decades, newspapers and magazines had been key to this process.<sup>119</sup> This effort to define America could be seen in the documentary photography of the decade and the growing reliance on technology (for example, the practice of polling) to gauge public opinion.<sup>120</sup> Photographic realism, through *Life*, other photo-magazines and documentary photographers, reached an enormous audience in the 1930s. The expectations for graphic, image based realism and immediacy laid the groundwork for cinematic representations of reality.

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<sup>118</sup>Susman, 152.

<sup>119</sup>Landy, 31-39.

<sup>120</sup>Susman, 157-158.

## Chapter Two: *The March of Time*

*The March of Time* newsreel evolved out of a radio program titled *The March of Time* produced by Time Incorporated. This radio program was the brainchild of Henry Luce's right hand man, Roy Larsen. Larsen's innovation, which began production in 1931 and continued for fourteen years, was enormously successful. The radio program provided publicity for Time Inc., publications that was of great value and was consistently rated in industry conducted polls as one of network radios most popular dramatic programs.<sup>121</sup>

Intended as advertising for *Time*, the show did not make money, it cost money. By the end of 1931 it was reported to have cost *Time* \$211,000. Luce, concerned about losses as he was contemplating expanding his print ventures, announced that the series would be discontinued early in 1932. To Larsen's delight, over 22,000 listeners wrote to CBS, the network that broadcast the *March of Time*, and demanded that the program remain on the air. This protest put Time Inc., executives in an awkward position. In a two-page spread in *Time* on February 29, 1932, Luce thanked its public for their support and asked, given the radio series' unprofitability, whose responsibility it should be to

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<sup>121</sup>Elson, 1:289.

continue the program.<sup>122</sup>

CBS chief William Paley arranged for the network to continue airing the program for a while, with editorial control remaining with *Time*. Larsen noted that *Time* got credit for the production because of the tag-line, “Presented by the editors of *Time*.” In the years that followed, some commercial sponsors were found for the series, including Electrolux, Remington Rand, and Wrigley, the chewing gum giant. Wrigley’s sponsorship came to an end in the late 1930’s, according to Larsen, because of protests from German groups who complained about *Time*’s growing anti-Nazi positions. The series was suspended in 1939, revived in 1941 and lasted until final cancellation in 1945.<sup>123</sup>

In view of Larsen’s flair for journalistic innovation, it was inevitable that he would consider translating the *March of Time* into a film series. Furthermore, “pictorial journalism” was a notion that interested Luce, and as discussed earlier, Luce was considering launching a picture magazine along the lines of the *Illustrated London News*. Luce’s intention was to exploit the possibilities of the still photograph and advancing photographic technology. In the early 1930’s, research and development on a photo-magazine was undertaken by the corporation. The new magazine was intended to extend the integration of photographs and text which had already been initiated in *Fortune*. In 1934, however, Luce decided that the project had not developed satisfactorily and

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<sup>122</sup>Elson, 1:290; Louis De Rochemont Reminiscences, *March of Time* Movie File 1959, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 10.

<sup>123</sup>Elson, 1:291; Memo to Henry Luce from Dan Longwell, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, 8-1934.

suspended it.<sup>124</sup>

Larsen began planning a motion picture version of the *March of Time* as early as 1931. A number of proposals were submitted to Time Inc., by independent contractors, but Larsen was unimpressed with each in turn, as none explained how the series could be put together and work. More important, Larsen had not found the right man to produce the series.<sup>125</sup>

In the end, the right man turned out to be a veteran newsreel cameraman and producer named Louis de Rochemont, who had begun his film career as a teenager and by the 1930s had risen to become head of short subjects and producer of *The Magic Carpet* and *Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman* series at Fox Movietone Corporation. De Rochemont had also introduced and produced for Columbia Pictures a novel film series called *The March of the Years*. *The March of the Years* re-created, with professional actors, news events of the past, such as the Lizzie Borden murder case and the political career of Boss Tweed.<sup>126</sup>

Larsen and de Rochemont were eventually put in contact with each other by a mutual acquaintance. Larsen was impressed with de Rochemont's energy, insight and experience. De Rochemont had a clear idea of how *The March of Time* should be put onto film. It became obvious that if such a film series were to succeed, it would have to integrate substantial amounts of newsreel footage with specially photographed material. Larsen asked de Rochemont to put together a sample issue of *The March of Time* so that

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<sup>124</sup>Elson, 1:291-292.

<sup>125</sup>Elson., 292; DeRochemont Reminiscences, 10.

<sup>126</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 2-12.

he could see at first hand approximately how much time and money it would cost.<sup>127</sup>

Larsen and de Rochemont set to work at once, with de Rochemont instructing Larsen in the art and technique of film making. Larsen worked side by side with de Rochemont at the editing tables and eventually the two men had a finished product to show to Luce. Luce liked the film, but was bewildered, asking Larsen in a memo, “It’s terrific, but what is it? Please spell it out for me; what is this all about?”<sup>128</sup>

Larsen prepared a prospectus for Luce which Luce reedited, and then presented to Time Inc.’s board of directors. The board approved further experimentation so Luce authorized expenditures of about \$200,000 for research and preparation.<sup>129</sup> The prospectus and subsequent internal documents dealing with *The March of Time* revealed a great deal about the thinking of Luce and his top lieutenants regarding what exactly Time Inc., was attempting to accomplish in launching a newsreel. Luce was greatly intrigued by creating a new form of pictorial journalism, exploiting advances in film-making to communicate in a new format. The publisher was also acutely aware of the need to appeal to audiences, stating that the success of *The March of Time* would be dependent not just on its coverage of significant news items but its acceptance by audiences. Luce also stated that even if *The March of Time* proved a financial bust, it would still provide invaluable promotion for *Time* and *Fortune*. From the beginning, *The March of Time* was viewed by Luce as an integral part of the Time Inc., brand. An August 1934 press release

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 12-13; Elson, 1:295.

<sup>128</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 13-14; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, *March of Time* Movie File 1959, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>129</sup>Henry R. Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors, November 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

announcing the creation of the newsreel declared that Time Inc., was crossing into “Journalism’s fourth dimension.” The release declared that *The March of Time* was not a newsreel, and would use recreation in its presentation. According to Time Inc., what was being produced was a “newsdrama,” literally an entirely new brand of journalism. With typical hyperbole, Time Inc., declared that “*The March of Time* was another step in the process of communication, a process that stretched back to beginning of literate man.” *The March of Time* would combine words and pictures in a heretofore never seen manner.<sup>130</sup>

The prospectus written by Luce and Larsen was a revealing document. Drafts that passed between Larsen and Luce demonstrate that *The March of Time* was considered an integral part of the Time Incorporated empire, and that the proposed venture would “bring all of TIME’s proven journalistic passion, all of TIME’s proven journalistic integrity and all of TIME’s proven journalistic zeal.”<sup>131</sup> Larsen and Luce were also fixated on the potentially huge audience that attended movies daily and weekly and recognized the staying power of the traditional newsreel.<sup>132</sup> Both men were scathing in their criticism of the newsreel as it existed, calling it “stupid” and having no journalistic integrity or merit. According to Luce, even the Hearst newsreel, which should have had some of the great

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<sup>130</sup>Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors; TIME gives journalism a New Dimension, draft of press release, 8-27-1934, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, Time-Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>131</sup>Henry Luce, *The March of Time* In Moving Pictures (draft of prospectus) 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 3.

<sup>132</sup>Luce, *The March of Time* In Moving Pictures, 1.

media mogul's imprint on it, was devoid of character and journalistic value.<sup>133</sup> Luce believed that the main fault of the newsreel as it existed was that it was not produced by real journalists. The newsreel's content was driven by what could be shot by cameramen scattered throughout the globe with no direction from producers and editors versed in the tenets of journalism.<sup>134</sup> Luce wrote that "the art of journalistic editing is the ability to select stories or facts and direct how those facts or stories are to be told."<sup>135</sup> Most newsreel producers were former reporters who were excessively focused on simply getting a story and unable to provide context for the stories that they shot. Newsreel assignments were never thought-out in terms of providing all the angles of a story; newsreel editors simply dispatched their cameramen to a given event and each newsreel told roughly the same story with roughly the same pictures.<sup>136</sup>

In addition, Luce and Larsen believed that newsreel editors and producers "have such a small amount of journalistic backbone and character that they have weakly allowed a sort of self-imposed censorship to grow up and become meekly accepted."<sup>137</sup> The newsreel as an institution had no self-confidence and no ability to deal with pressure from interest groups or individuals who might be in the news. This was due in large part, according to Larsen and Luce, to the newsreel being simply part of the movie studios

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<sup>133</sup>Henry Luce, *The Opportunity*, August 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1-2.

<sup>134</sup>Luce, *The Opportunity*, 2.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>137</sup>Luce, *The Opportunity*.

offerings to their theater chains, and not really independent journalistic entities. Another factor was the reluctance of movie exhibitors to upset audiences unused to seeing controversial subjects in the newsreel.<sup>138</sup>

What Luce and Larsen proposed was revolutionary. Luce believed that journalism was not a business or even a profession but an art; “the art of collecting varying kinds of information (commonly called “news”) which a few people possess and of transmitting it to a much larger number of people who are supposed to desire to share it.”<sup>139</sup> There was no set of rules governing what journalism was any more, simply that when information had been transmitted, journalism had been practiced. Luce and Larsen also believed modern journalism consisted of two devices for dissemination of information: words and pictures. With advances in technology, the picture was fast becoming more important than words in communicating facts and information. However, pictures had limitations. They could not tell every aspect of a story, even though they told with “a force, an explicitness, an overwhelmingness which reportorial words can rarely equal.”<sup>140</sup> Luce predicted that in the near future (perhaps foreshadowing the success of *Life*) a successful format for a picture publication would be perfected.<sup>141</sup>

With regard to the newsreel, Luce stated that the moving picture possessed an even greater potency than the still photograph, and that the newsreel was distinct from

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>139</sup>Henry Luce, The Moving Picture as Journalism, August 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

printing-press journalism.<sup>142</sup> Luce and Larsen believed that the newsreel could be treated journalistically. The fusion between motion pictures and quality journalism that Luce and Larsen envisioned could only be accomplished by a reputable journalistic organization with no ties to the movie industry as it existed, namely Time Incorporated. Luce's vision for *The March of Time* was that the newsreel series would be an extension of *Time* magazine. According to the prospectus, all the resources of *Time* and Time Incorporated would be available to the newsreel; all the accumulated expertise in reporting, editing, and story-telling that *Time* had accumulated over the years would be part and parcel of the new venture. A highly organized staff of photographers, writers and editors would approach stories in a journalistic fashion, delving deeply into each subject explored by *The March of Time*. In addition, *The March of Time* would have access to existing stock footage to tell its stories. Luce and Larsen also forthrightly advocated a continuation of the practice of reenactments that had been part of the *March of Time* radio program. These reenactments of newsworthy events would be an integral part of filling in gaps in individual stories.<sup>143</sup>

Another fundamental difference between the traditional newsreel and Luce's and Larsen's vision was the length of stories in each issue and the frequency of release. Luce proposed that instead of covering five stories in two minutes each, which was the basic newsreel format, *The March of Time* cover three to four subjects in depth in each issue, devoting at least four minutes to each story presented. Luce's reasoning was that the

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<sup>142</sup>Henry Luce, Draft of prospectus sent to Roy Larsen, 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>143</sup>Luce, *The Moving Picture as Journalism*, 4-5.

longer form would be more reflective, it could deal with trends rather than just the news of the moment.<sup>144</sup> By 1938, *The March of Time* would explore just one story per issue. Luce also wanted a monthly rather than weekly release for the same reasons. A monthly release would give audiences a more intelligent, deeper reflection of important subjects, while remaining timely. In the future, perhaps *The March of Time* could be adapted to a weekly format, but Luce believed that initially it should, for the sake of journalistic integrity, remain a monthly release. The monthly format would enable *The March of Time* to probe issues in greater depth and give the editors and producers time to develop stories thematically, rather than simply reacting to daily events, a criticism Luce and Larsen both made of the newsreel.<sup>145</sup>

One of the recurring questions that observers had about *The March of Time* was what, exactly, it was. Was it a traditional newsreel, or a new form of journalism, as touted by Time Inc., in announcing the series? Could *The March of Time* be classified as a documentary?

Americans, now accustomed to the variety of news, public affairs, and documentary programming that television broadcast and cable networks offer, must be reminded that, with the exception of the newsreel, the motion picture that was seen by the American public prior to the introduction of *The March of Time* was fictional entertainment feature fare. If you wanted melodrama, adventure, fantasy or comedy, you went to the movies. If, on the other hand, you wanted information, you got it from books,

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<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. *The March of Time* remained a monthly series throughout its sixteen year run.

magazines, newspapers or radio. Until the coming of *The March of Time*, there was no documentary film movement in the United States so far as the mass cinema audience was concerned. The early documentary impulse and the films that resulted from it may have had considerable influence on filmmakers around the world, but hardly any of the many independently produced documentary features and shorts that were made during the 1920s and early 1930s were ever seen by mass audiences in America. It was *The March of Time* alone which successfully introduced and established the documentary format for film audiences in the United States. And all of this occurred before the films of Pare Larentz, Joris Ivens, Willard Van Dyke, and Herbert Kline, or the wartime propaganda films of Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak or the appearance of postwar television public affairs programs.<sup>146</sup> John Grierson, writing in 1937, stated "...something more intelligent has already arrived. It has crashed through from the America that succeeded the slump and learned with Roosevelt the simple braveries of the public forum. It is called *The March of Time* today, but tomorrow, so strong is the growth, so strong the need and so different the younger generation which handles cinema, it will be called by a dozen names—Window on the World, World Eye, Brave New World, and what not...Only three years old, it has swept through the country, answering the thin glitter of the newsreels...In no deep sense conscious of the higher cinematic qualities, it merely carries over from journalism into cinema, after thirty-eight years, something of that bright and easy tradition of free-born comment which the newspaper has won and the cinema has been

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<sup>146</sup>Barsam, 63-64. There were a number of documentary style films produced by the Workers Film and Photo League between 1930 and 1935 that did not have mass distribution, as they had no access to studio controlled cinema chains. See William Alexander, *Film on the Left*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

too abject even to ask for.”<sup>147</sup>

It can be argued, of course, that *The March of Time* was not a documentary at all. What are considered documentaries have nearly always been produced as isolated, one-shot films. Often made on a modest budget, each have tended to be the product of a single director’s style and vision, on which production might take months or years.

By contrast, *The March of Time* was a corporate product, whose title did not even carry the names of the people who made it, fashioned by scores of people over a sixteen-year period during which time more than 200 issues were produced and 300 subjects explored. The budget was substantial by conventional documentary standards, but the length of time allowed for the completion of any single issue was minimal. As for a political and social point of view, *The March of Time*’s staff did indeed have one, and during the 1930s it was predominantly liberal.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, the expression of that point of view was not the central thrust of the film’s production. Released within the context of commercial, theatrical exhibition, *The March of Time* was designed to vend information and to provoke public discussion on current issues. De Rochemont never considered *The March of Time* a documentary, believing that the term documentary was bad for box office receipts. This concern over the commercial viability of the documentary was shared by other members of the *March of Time* organization, who were intimately familiar with the international documentary film movement and sympathetic to

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<sup>147</sup>Barunow, 33-35.

<sup>148</sup>Speech by Louis DeRochemont titled Importance of Presenting Social Problems on the Screen, February 4, 1939, Louis DeRochemont Speeches File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

its thematic and artistic aims.<sup>149</sup>

If *The March of Time* was not a documentary, then what was it? As noted previously, Luce, De Rochemont and Larsen coined the term pictorial journalism to describe it. *The March of Time* was not a newsreel. There are several distinctions between *The March of Time* and the traditional newsreel worth noting. *The March of Time* made no attempt to report up to the minute news. It was released once a month, while the regular newsreel was released twice weekly. *The March of Time* dealt with a limited number of subjects in each issue; after May 1938, it contained only one subject in each issue. The newsreel dealt with as many as eight or ten different topics in each release. Each *March of Time* issue ran as long as twenty minutes, allowing a fairly in depth exposition of subject matter. The traditional newsreel rarely ran more than ten minutes, often less. *The March of Time* was an interpretive, discursive reel that elaborated with titles, maps, narration, and supplementary archival footage upon the subjects it treated. The newsreel, with rare exceptions, treated the news with far less depth. *The March of Time* spent from \$25,000 to \$75,000 on each issue.<sup>150</sup> During the same period of release, the newsreel spent \$8,000 to \$12,000 on each of its releases.<sup>151</sup> Both the newsreel and *The March of Time* staged and recreated events, but *The March of Time* did so to a far greater extent—sometimes in the early years, to the almost complete

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<sup>149</sup>Speech by Richard DeRochemont on American documentary films given to the English Speaking Union, London, October 7, 1937, Richard DeRochemont Speeches File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>150</sup>Three-Year Plan for March of Time; Memo on Budget and Resources, dated September 1935, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>151</sup>Fielding, *The American Newsreel*, 82.

exclusion of footage gathered in the field. Moreover, it frequently used impersonators of celebrities when it was found that actual footage was not available. *The March of Time* admitted and even publicized its use of reenacted scenes.<sup>152</sup> The newsreel never admitted publically to its own similar practices. The intention of *The March of Time* was to create and exploit controversy and to provoke discussion of politically and socially difficult subjects. The newsreel producers tried to avoid controversy whenever possible. Luce stated in the prospectus laying out the rationale for *The March of Time* that “this experiment in pictorial journalism will by necessity court notoriety.”<sup>153</sup> *The March of Time* was sometimes openly partisan, while the newsreel rarely was.

Was *The March of Time* a dramatic production? After all, the radio version of *The March of Time* was classified in broadcasting circles as a dramatic show rather than a news broadcast, and the film version sometimes also used dramatically staged reenactments with actors. Nonetheless, the emphasis in the film, unlike the radio version, was clearly on journalistic rather than dramatic interpretation of the news.<sup>154</sup> De Rochemont’s recreations were integrated continuously with real newsreel footage, and with the maps, diagrams and frequent title inserts that were used, the resulting style was as much informative as dramatic. Furthermore, as time passed and the film version of *The March of Time* gained in prestige and popularity, it became feasible to replace the professional impersonators who had been used in the early issues with the actual

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<sup>152</sup>Time Gives Journalism a New Dimension; Jack Glenn, *The March of Time Handbook For Shooting*, September 1942, *March of Time Movie File 1942*, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 2-7.

<sup>153</sup>Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors.

<sup>154</sup>A New Time Venture (Announcement to the Readers of TIME); Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 11.

celebrities they featured, playing themselves on the screen. Certainly film reviewers of the day never regarded *The March of Time* as a dramatic product. Entertaining as it was, *The March of Time* was not likely to be confused with heavyweight contemporary drama. Indeed, some of the more sophisticated critics referred to the series derisively as *Time's* amateur theatricals, because of the occasional stiffness of reenactments or the ham-handedness that *The March of Time* used in getting its point across. *The March of Time* was neither documentary, nor newsreel, nor dramatic product, and yet it had elements of each.

Within a month of Luce and the board's authorization, de Rochemont and Larsen rented the second floor of Fox Movietone News's New York headquarters at 460 West 54<sup>th</sup> Street, took over a projection room, created studio space, installed production equipment, and began auditing tens of thousands of feet of 35mm newsreel footage from which they hoped to take the raw material of their series. De Rochemont succeeded, at this point, in securing the right to buy footage from Fox Movietone's archives. Access to this material was absolutely crucial to *The March of Time's* early operations. In the years that followed, *The March of Time* built up its own library until it contained more than ten million feet, but without Fox Movietone's footage, de Rochemont could never have made the series work.<sup>155</sup>

Early news of the experimental work reached the public in November 1934, through Daniel Longwell, then assistant to Henry Luce. It was announced in the *New York Times* on November 24 that, if produced, the series "would bear the same relation to

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<sup>155</sup>Louis DeRochemont Memoir, DeRochemont Papers, Box 2, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming, 19-21; Louis De Rochemont Reminiscences, 13-17; Elson, 1:296.

the present newsreel as a discursive magazine bears to the newspaper.”<sup>156</sup> At that time the corporation had not yet decided to commit itself to production, and arrangements had not yet been made for distribution.<sup>157</sup>

After several months’ work, three experimental newsreels had been completed, each running approximately 20 minutes long and covering such subjects as the Indianapolis 500, the Dionne quintuplets, Admiral Tojo and the Pacific navies, the conflict between Englebert Dollfuss and Adolf Hitler, the drought of 1934, the sinking of the SS Morro Castle, and a profile of the Saar region of Germany.<sup>158</sup>

Each of these experimental reels incorporated both newsreel and “re-created” scenes, the latter of which were based upon real-life events which were performed by impersonators who looked like the political figures, scientists, artists, military leaders and other celebrities selected for these issues. Some of the very earliest *March of Time* issues were shot without sound and later, in the studio, the dialogue was dubbed by actors and actresses who sounded like the celebrities on the screen. The object was superior sound recording quality and a saving in time and money. This approach proved unworkable, however, and much more expensive than on the spot sound recording, and after a short period was abandoned.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>A New TIME Venture (Announcement to the Readers of TIME), October 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>157</sup>Elson, 1:296-297; Time Gives Journalism a New Dimension, August, 1934, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building.

<sup>158</sup>Memo from John Martin to Roy Larsen, October 9, 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 18.

<sup>159</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 18-20; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 23; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 14.

Though crude and unpolished, these experimental reels showed promise as a new type of motion picture reportage. After extensive internal criticism, particularly from the skeptical Ralph Ingersoll, the directors of Time Inc., approved a schedule of commercial release, and preparations were made for the launching of the newsreel. The experimental shorts themselves were never released in their original form; however, several of the sixteen sequences were later included in the commercial releases.<sup>160</sup>

*The March of Time* was founded in 1934, separate from but under the control and ownership of Time, Incorporated, with business offices and general headquarters in New York. Roy Larsen was president and treasurer and Louis de Rochemont was vice-president. Contracts were signed with First Division Pictures, a small distributor in the March of Time, Inc., had bought a controlling interest. This proved to be a mistake, as the undercapitalized First Division was nearly bankrupt.<sup>161</sup>

The production staff was gradually enlarged to include a permanent complement of cameramen, researchers, writers, editors and technicians. Production of film issues were increased to provide for a projected distribution schedule of one issue per month. Richard de Rochemont, Louis de Rochemont's brother, was hired to head European operations. Richard de Rochemont had a long career in the newsreel business as a reporter, editor, and manager for France of *Fox Movietone News*.<sup>162</sup>

An intensive publicity campaign, through the pages of *Time* and *Fortune*

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<sup>160</sup>Luce, Recommendation to Board of Directors; Memo from John Martin to Roy Larsen.

<sup>161</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 20; Henry R. Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors; Memo from Charles Stillman detailing agreement with First Division, April 2, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>162</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 2-5.

magazines, the radio version of the *March of Time*, and local level advertising, prepared the public for the coming series. In a widely circulated publicity brochure titled *Introducing the March of Time*, the corporation outlined the contents of the first issue, revealed plans for later releases and carefully differentiated between the *March of Time* on radio and on film: “Is the *March of Time* a promotion scheme for *Time Magazine*? No. The motion picture is a distinct, independent project. A separate company, THE MARCH OF TIME, Inc., has been formed to produce the feature. This is sold to motion picture exhibitors on its own entertainment value. It must pay for itself or it will be discontinued.”<sup>163</sup> By January 26, 1935 some 509 theaters had booked the series in advance.<sup>164</sup>

On February 1, 1935, the first issue of *The March of Time* premiered at the Capitol Theater in New York City and opened at seventy first-run movie houses throughout the country. Running 22 minutes, it covered a wide variety of subjects in a style which the film’s producers called “pictorial journalism.”<sup>165</sup>

The first sequence of the film described the role of Prince Saionji in Japan’s internal struggle between democratic leadership and growing militarism. The second sequence described the devices and ruses used by the proprietors of Manhattan’s famous 21 Club to frustrate the efforts of federal agents during the prohibition era. The third

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<sup>163</sup>Introducing *The March of Time*, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Elson, 1:298.

<sup>164</sup>Memo from Dan Longwell titled *The March of Time on the Screen*, January 10, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>165</sup>Letter from Louis DeRochemont to Richard DeRochemont, January 7, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 23.

showed the attempts of Britain's transport minister, Leslie Hore-Belisha, to erect traffic lights throughout the country, despite the hostility and vandalism of British motorists. The fourth sequence recounted a foreign incident involving an American tourist, Moe Buchsbaum, who refused to pay a traffic fine in France unless the payment was applied to France's unpaid World War I debt to the United States. The fifth investigated the National Recovery Administration and the conviction of Fred Perkins, a small battery manufacturer, who had refused, as a matter of principle, to abide by NRA wage-scale directives. The last sequence, which incorporated the first sound pictures ever taken of the Metropolitan Opera, described the last-night performance, resignation and retirement of Giulio Gatti-Casazza, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera for twenty-five years.<sup>166</sup>

The film's continuity depended largely on the frequent use of "re-creation." With the exception of the first sequence, which dealt with Japan, the contents of the entire film were staged by *The March of Time* directors and cameramen, who either persuaded the principals to reenact the incidents shown as they had originally occurred or used impersonators in their place. The sequence on Japan relied heavily on newsreel stock shots. However, even in this episode, at least one of the scenes of Prince Saionji was made in New York with a Japanese nonprofessional look-alike, who was paid \$30 for his brief on-camera performance.<sup>167</sup> Even when authentic newsreel material was available,

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<sup>166</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 1, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. The entire run of *The March of Time*, including special features, is held by the National Archives in College Park, Maryland

<sup>167</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, # 1 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park Maryland. These production files contain drafts of scripts, "dope sheets" with pertinent technical information, expense reports and other material relating to the production of each *March of Time*

impersonation was sometimes preferred by the film's editors in the interest of dramatic effectiveness. Clearly, the more or less literal format of the conventional newsreel had been abandoned for a more dynamic and dramatic motion picture treatment of current events.

Critics generally seemed pleased with the early releases. Alistair Cooke wrote in the *Listener* on November 20, 1935, "There are papers, and in a fainter way documentary films, that are intelligent. There are some that are energetic. There are some that are aloof. It has been left to *Time*, and now 'The March of Time' to combine, for the first time in journalism, intelligence, energy and aloofness."<sup>168</sup> Luce was also generally pleased, although he had a number of concerns about editing, believing that some of the sequences were excessively jumpy and in some cases that the action on the screen was unclear, and "that there are too many places in the picture where you do not instantly understand exactly what is going on and why."<sup>169</sup> Luce also ruminated on whether it was desirable to focus on one subject in each release, allowing for greater depth of exploration and audience understanding. In spite of these criticisms, Luce predicted that over time the production staff would smooth out any early problems and produce a much more effective film.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>First Reactions to *The March of Time*, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. These "first reactions" are clips from critics, newspapers and magazines compiled into a lengthy memorandum for internal Time Inc., use.

<sup>169</sup>Henry R. Luce, memo titled Very Preliminary Remarks on the Further Development of THE MARCH OF TIME, *March of Time* Movie File, Time-Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>170</sup>Luce, Very Preliminary Remarks.

Worries at the home office about the newsreel's commercial potential gradually faded as the public endorsed the new series at the box office. *Variety*, the industry trade paper proclaimed in its February 5, 1935 issue, "From the exhibitor angle, the cinematic 'March of Time'...is boxoffice...The same skillful news merchandising which has distinguished the weekly news magazine finds a counterpart in the 'March of Time' reel which may well become a No. 2 feature for the average exhib. It's more than a newsreel, and even the deluxers, playing single features, first run, may well be deemed offering a dual bill every month when the new 'March of Time' rolls around."<sup>171</sup> With its first offering well-received, March of Time, Inc., released the second issue in its first year schedule. By now, distribution of the series was well-enough planned to ensure a fairly wide audience for the film.<sup>172</sup>

Following each issue's appearance in key, first-run theaters, the prints were passed on to smaller houses throughout the country until, at the end of the first run, the issue had appeared in 417 movie houses in 168 cities. The cost to exhibitors varied with the size and prestige of the house, the size of the city, and whether the release was first run or second run. First run rates varied from \$500 to \$1500 per booking for independent houses. Lower rates were quoted to houses belonging to large theater chains; lower still to theaters that ran it weeks later as second and third runs. March of Time, Inc., optimistically predicted its average gross revenue from all 417 theaters during this

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<sup>171</sup>First Reactions to *The March of Time*.

<sup>172</sup>Three-Year Plan For March of Time, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, October 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Distribution Memo to Henry R. Luce, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

first year at \$200,000 per issue.<sup>173</sup>

The second issue, unlike the first, was mildly controversial. One of its episodes was devoted to a sequence on Adolf Hitler, briefly describing his rise to power, political maneuvers, and preparations for war. Up to this time, photographs of Hitler had rarely appeared on American movie screens because of the film industry's reluctance to arouse its audiences and create controversy. The film contained one of the most celebrated shots ever shown of Hitler, made late at night as the dictator sat before a fireplace staring moodily into the fire. The shot had been staged by *The March of Time* in its New York studios, with an impersonator. Over it, somber narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis intoned, "To a mountain retreat in the Bavarian alps, an ultimatum from the great powers of Europe sends a lone, strange man to brood over a bitter fact. He has just been forced to realize that he is the most suspected, most distrusted ruler in the world today. In two short years, Adolf Hitler has lost for his country what Germany had nearly regained—the world's sympathy."<sup>174</sup>

From Canada, two sequences of this second issue were removed and shipped back to New York by a Canadian theater chain. The Ontario Board of Censors found the Hitler sequence belligerent in its attitude, despite arguments from March of Time, Inc., that the

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<sup>173</sup>Time gives journalism a New Dimension, August 27, 1934, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Three Year Plan For March of Time; Memo titled Production Expenses, August 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>174</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 8, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #2, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

sequence paralleled coverage of the Nazi dictator in newspapers and magazines.<sup>175</sup> Also deleted by the Ontario board was the second sequence of the issue—a description of the methods used by the *New York Daily News* in scooping its competitors with news of the Bruno Hauptmann death sentence. Deletion of the sequence by the Censor Board was in line with its general ban on all newsreel clips of the Hauptmann trial as being in bad taste.<sup>176</sup>

If de Rochemont and Larsen were disturbed by the censorship that their second issue had provoked, it was not apparent. The third issue, released in April 1935 was still more controversial. It featured, first, a satirical study of Huey P. Long, Louisiana's famed "Kingfish." *The March of Time* used Long's own statements and activities in what became a devastating portrait.<sup>177</sup>

*The March of Time* had managed to talk Long into appearing personally in sound film sequences which were photographed in his Senate office. In addition, an impersonator was used to reenact some of Long's more obnoxious behavior, including receiving the captain of the German cruiser *Emden* in his pajamas. *March of Time* cameramen and editors also mocked Long's personal secretary, a woman who Long had appointed acting governor during his long absences from Louisiana. She foolishly agreed to appear before *March of Time* cameras and inarticulately stumbled through several takes

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<sup>175</sup>First Reactions to March of Time; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 24.

<sup>176</sup>Elson, 1:299.

<sup>177</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, # 3, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 19, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Notations on the script jokingly suggest that the woman in question was barely literate.

for the camera crew, the worst of which were purposely incorporated into the finished film.<sup>178</sup>

*The March of Time* staff also re-created an alleged true-life incident in which Long, momentarily unprotected by his bodyguards, became involved in a brawl in the men's room at a private Long Island club, and ended up with a black eye. All of this was amusing, but it must be remembered that at this point Huey Long was a fairly powerful figure, a demagogue who posed a threat to the reelection chances of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936.<sup>179</sup>

When the film opened at the Loew's State Theater in New Orleans on April 16, 1935, patrons found the sequence on Huey Long conspicuous by its absence; Long appeared in all other screenings of the film and was mentioned prominently in advertising for *The March of Time's* third issue. Whether the Kingfish, who had rushed to New Orleans shortly before the print of the film arrived in the city, had directly ordered the deletion of the print has never been made clear. The management of Loew's claimed to have run the print as they got it and denied any pressure from Long or his minions. Shortly thereafter, Long introduced into the Louisiana legislature a bill, subsequently passed, which provided for censorship of motion pictures, including newsreels, in the state.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup>*March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3, Production File. Notations on the script indicate the woman was barely literate.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup>First Reactions to *March of Time*; Louis DeRochemont *Reminiscences*, 26; "Huey Long A Film Censor Now? Kidding Subject Deleted From 'Time' in N.O.," *Variety*, April 24, 1935, p. 1. The Time Inc., Archives in New York City contain numerous copies of *Variety*, *Nation*, *Spectator*, *New Republic* and other periodicals reviewing and analyzing Time Incorporated publications.

The fourth and last sequence of this issue described the bridging of the Pacific Ocean by Pan-American Airways' giant flying boats, then the height of aviation technology. Although inherently non-controversial, the subject had profound geopolitical implications, as it reflected the US governments desire to maintain a dominant presence in the Pacific, a desire contested by growing Japanese naval and air power. It also illuminated the economic cooperation between an American corporation, Pan-American, and the Chinese government—a theme with resonance for Time Inc., chief Henry Luce. The issue was also unique operationally; most *March of Time* issues contained re-enacted events, while this issue pre-enacted an event that had not yet taken place. The inauguration of flying boat service across the Pacific started after it was depicted in *The March of Time*.<sup>181</sup>

*The March of Time's* fourth issue, covering only three subjects, was surprisingly mild in tone considering the controversial nature of it featured subject, the Soviet Union. Fairly simple-minded in its analysis, the film was both laudatory and sympathetic to the Soviet experience, most of the footage having been photographed by freelance cameraman Julien Byran. Missing were references to political purges then in progress, the well-known suppression of religious freedom throughout the country, the execution of political dissidents under Stalin and the liquidation of recalcitrant peasant populations. Only the most skeptical viewer would have questioned that the promise of the revolution had been fulfilled, given the smiling faces, well-dressed citizens and happy children

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<sup>181</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1 #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 31, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, # 4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

presented in the film.<sup>182</sup>

*The March of Time* did concede that 150,000 anti-communist prisoners were being used as forced labor in the construction of a canal linking the White and Baltic Seas, but fitted this revelation into a series of statements regarding the astonishing progress being made in industrializing and modernizing the country. The newsreel concluded that the communist rulers of Russia were doing a far better job of building a nation than did the old imperial government.<sup>183</sup>

Scattered charges of “communist propaganda” were heard from the Hearst press following the film’s release, while liberal reviewers seemed to find it a fair and impartial presentation. *Variety* perceptively concluded on June 5 that “Even the American Communists who are attacking ‘March of Time’ as bourgeois, in choice of subject and treatment thereof, could scarcely charge that Russia failed to receive ample recognition of its accomplishments and a generous neglect of its failures at the hands of *Time*’s editors.”<sup>184</sup>

By now, some observers began to believe that *The March of Time*, rather than avoiding controversy, was deliberately provoking it. The appearance of a controversial newsreel was a new experience for critics. Some were pleasantly surprised. Wrote the *New York World Telegram* on April 24: “Any doubts about the necessity of a supplementary newsreel like ‘The March of Time’...should disappear after a glance at the

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<sup>182</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4, *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4 Production File. Notations on the dope sheet for this issue indicate which material had been acquired from Bryan.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup>*Variety*, June 5, 1935, p. 3.

third issue...By far the finest of the three already released, not only from the point of view of subject matter but treatment as well, the current issue shows anew how forceful and influential a well thought-out motion picture commentary on the current scene can.”<sup>185</sup>

Others were less hopeful for its continued success. On February 20 the *Nation* warned, “Sooner or later the producers will be forced to recognize between a news magazine, like *Time* or the *Literary Digest*, and a journal of opinion, like the *Nation* or the *New Republic*. And the moment that they realize the hazards which the latter choice would involve they will undoubtedly be forced to turn out a product which is not essentially very different from the old-fashioned newsreel. The choice is clearly between bare presentation and critical interpretation of the news; and only the most sanguine optimist can persuade anyone that the great motion picture audience is ready for the latter.”<sup>186</sup>

In June 1935 contracts between March of Time, Inc., and its distributor, First Division Pictures, were canceled by mutual agreement. The breakup resulted from the inability of First Division, a relatively small distributor, to offer a complete national and European release for the high budget series. It was also felt that *The March of Time* alone could not support the company’s exchanges. Shortly thereafter, *The March of Time* signed a new distribution contract with the RKO distributing organization, thus ensuring intensive promotion and widespread release of the series. This relationship worked well and lasted until July 1942. RKO’s distribution head, Ned Depinet, enjoyed *The March of*

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<sup>185</sup>First Reactions to the March of Time.

<sup>186</sup>*Nation*, February 20, 1935, 14.

*Time* and gave its releases special attention.<sup>187</sup>

As a result of the change of distributors, release of the fifth issue was delayed until August 1935. The twenty minute film dealt with three controversial subjects. The first was Father Charles Coughlin, the politically minded Catholic priest, the second dealt with the French fascist organization, the Croix de Feu, and third, US Army maneuvers under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. In fact, *The March of Time* had asked General MacArthur to simulate an actual mobilization of the Army to counter an invasion of the US through the St. Lawrence Valley. One curious sequence in the film revealed the odds that were then being offered by Lloyd's of London on war breaking out anywhere in the world: 20 to 1 against a Russian-Japanese War; 100 to 1 against the US being drawn into any overseas conflict; 500 to 1 against any invasion of the US.<sup>188</sup>

The Father Coughlin story, given his prominence, received special attention from de Rochemont and his editorial staff. De Rochemont sent a cameraman out to travel around the country with Coughlin in the latter's private plane, producing an intimate kind of coverage which is common today but was rare in the 1930s. The segment featured several staged incidents from Coughlin's life, including his alleged confrontation with a group of Klansmen at a cross-burning ceremony. Coughlin cooperated in the making of

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<sup>187</sup> Memo from Charles Stillman, April 2, 1936; The Deal With RKO, Warner Brothers or Paramount, undated *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 9-10; Letter to Richard DeRochemont from Roy Larsen, April 25, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter from Henry Luce to Ned Depinet, May 27, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>188</sup> *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 16, 1935) *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.05, National Archives and Records Administration, Motion Picture Sound and Video Branch, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.05, National Archives and Records Administration, Motion Picture Sound and Video Branch, College Park, Maryland.

the film.<sup>189</sup>

The film had very little to say about Coughlin one way or another. In this respect, it encouraged audiences to read whatever meaning they wished into the scenes. It never referred to the priest as being fascist or anti-Semitic, but relied upon the familiarity of the general public with Coughlin and his National Union of Social Justice. It probed, in some detail, Coughlin's position within the Catholic Church, concluding that priests who become too conspicuous often find themselves transferred to "out of the way places."<sup>190</sup>

As for the Croix de Feu, the political situation in France was quite unstable at the time. The organization was threatening to mobilize and attempt a takeover of the French government. Representatives of the organization told Richard de Rochemont, who had directed the film, to delay the release of the completed newsreel segment until October. *The March of Time's* chiefs, most notably Louis de Rochemont, decided to release the film on schedule, and received a good deal of cooperation from the Croix de Feu's leader, Colonel Eugene de la Rocque.<sup>191</sup>

Critical reaction to the film was explosive. George Dangerfield, writing in the *New Republic*, stated that the film had something for both rightist and leftist elements, while being particularly kind to the Croix de Feu and de la Rocque. Left-wing publications were particularly vocal in their denunciation of the issue. On September 3, 1935, an editorial in the *New Masses* proclaimed, "This was the signal for *The March of*

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 28; Louis De Rochemont Memoir, 27; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 8-9.

*Time* to unfurl their true flag; the swastika...The political status of *The March of Time* is no longer a matter of speculation...It is open and brazen fascism.”<sup>192</sup> A March 1936 article appearing in the radical journal *American Spectator* charged that the directors of Time, Inc., had ties to the Morgan banking house, which in turn supposedly had ties to the Croix de Feu through its Paris firm. Dangerfield had rejected the charge, stating that the real danger of *The March of Time* was not that it was right or left but non-ideological and irresponsible, interested only in exciting the public.<sup>193</sup> The controversy was further aggravated overseas by British censorship of scenes in the Croix de Feu sequence that indicated the source of the organization funds. Alistair Cooke, writing in the November 8 issue of *The Listener*, called the deletion “a serious act...The film becomes, by what it omits...a vehicle for the most pernicious kind of propaganda—propaganda by implication. ‘The March of Time’ must be left as it was composed.”<sup>194</sup>

Taken as a whole, this August 1935 issue became one of *The March of Time*’s most controversial films. No group was more unhappy with it than the Hollywood motion picture industry. The Hays Office, watchdog of the film industry’s morals, began a careful consideration of *The March of Time*, hesitant to place it in the same classification as regular newsreels, which did not come under their production code control.<sup>195</sup>

Completely in line with Hays Office concerns was an editorial in the November 2

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<sup>192</sup>George Dangerfield, “Time Muddles On,” *New Republic*, August 19, 1936, 43.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.

<sup>194</sup>Alistair Cooke, “History in the Making,” *Listener*, November 20, 1935, 931.

<sup>195</sup>Elson, 1:302.

issue of the *Motion Picture Herald*, the film industry's leading trade paper, which concluded: "Now with 'The March of Time' leading a trend toward the presentation of screen material of viewpoint, if not opinion, a whole set of problems looms. The problem is not what the pictures may stand for, but that they may stand for anything. The motion picture theatre as the servant of the millions has never been able to afford opinion, attitude, ideas—anything but sheer entertainment pabulum."<sup>196</sup>

In September 1935 *The March of Time* released its sixth issue, covering the Ethiopian crisis, employing a *March of Time* office worker named Hugh Fettis as a double for Emperor Haile Selassie; malcontents and undesirables in the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps; and a coal-miners' strike against management in Pennsylvania which resulted in the digging and bootlegging of coal by the miners. By now, partisan reviewers and politically inclined critics were reading whatever they like into *March of Time* releases according to their own beliefs. Although this sixth issue was generally praised as a worthwhile release, some groups found the bootleg coal sequence unduly sympathetic to the union workers while others deplored its support for management.<sup>197</sup>

With the release of *The March of Time*'s seventh issue in October, the number of individual sequences rose again to four, including a dramatic staging of Joseph Furnas's shocking article in the *Reader's Digest* on car accidents, titled "...And Sudden Death"; a

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<sup>196</sup>*Motion Picture Herald*, November 2, 1935.

<sup>197</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, # 6, (New York: Time Incorporated: September 20, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, # 6, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Fettis is identified in a notation on the shooting script.

discussion of neutrality and the refusal of an American barbed-wire manufacturer to sell his product to belligerent countries; a description of the summer theater movement; and a detailed segment on Palestine.<sup>198</sup>

The Palestine footage was particularly well-crafted, discussing the background of oppression of Jews in Nazi Germany, the flight of some to Palestine, and the rebuilding of Haifa, Tel Aviv and other locations into a new home for the refugees. This sequence proved controversial, as censorship boards in Ohio and Chicago deleted sections of the film. The Ohio action followed protests by both Jewish and German community leaders in that state. Ohio officials ordered the cuts on grounds that the scenes depicting Nazi attacks on Jews would provoke bitter class feeling between Germans and Jews in Ohio. These cuts involved scenes of Nazi storm troopers raiding stores operated by Jews, which were staged *March of Time* camera crews in New London, Connecticut, and the burning of books by Jewish authors. In addition, censors were exercised by the narrator's statement that "Hitler is the man who has brought more evil on the Jews than any man in this generation."<sup>199</sup>

*The March of Time's* first year of production was now drawing to a close. Issue No. 8 covered the upcoming presidential election and the efforts of Republicans to defeat Franklin Roosevelt; a review of the work of the US Biological survey in preserving

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<sup>198</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 18, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #7, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. A copy of Furnass's article is contained in the Production File.

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid*; Memo from Dan Longwell detailing reaction to Palestine story, June 15, 1951, *March of Time* Movie File 1951, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; *March of Time* Press Release criticizing censorship of Palestine story, October 25, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

migratory wildfowl; and an account of the expulsion of professional strike-breaker Pearl Louis Bergoff from Georgia by Governor Eugene Talmadge.<sup>200</sup>

In December 1935 the ninth and last issue of the first volume was released, covering the Japanese occupation of China and the formation of the puppet state of Manchukuo, the US Coast Guard and Secret Service's fight against narcotics smuggling and the economic program advocated by Dr. Francis Townsend.<sup>201</sup>

With the completion of the first volume of *The March of Time*, film critics and political observers paused to gain perspective and to evaluate this new and unpredictable motion picture phenomenon. In his August 19, 1936, article in the *New Republic*, George Dangerfield found fault with the producers apparent attempt to achieve objectivity, "There is a lot of money involved in *The March of Time*, and how can it afford to risk offending anyone by telling a deliberate truth?...I wish that the editors of *The March of Time*, since they have at their disposal these fictions which excite and enrage people, would use them to some purpose...I wish they would say—outright, beyond question—that somebody was right or wrong...Then we could attack them or defend them, and they would be exciting their audiences honestly."<sup>202</sup>

Alistair Cooke outlined the danger of "witless" imitation of the series by other

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<sup>200</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 13, 1935) *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.08, National Archives and Records Administration, Motion Picture Sound and Video Branch, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>201</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 13, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.09, National Archives and Records Administration, Motion Picture Sound and Video Branch, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #9 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT, 1.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>202</sup>Dangerfield, 43-44.

film companies in *The Listener* of November 20, 1935, stating “ ‘The March of Time’ is not the result of bright inspiration. Behind it is ten years’ of experience with a magazine of the same style; an army of correspondents and cameramen scattered throughout the world; an historical film library it took two years to prepare; a newspaper cutting library as exhaustive as anything extant; and in New York and Chicago a vast research staff alert to trace the origins of any family, war, author, statesman, treaty or breath or rumour. With no less than this should any film company irresponsibly compete.”<sup>203</sup>

Although *The March of Time* had achieved a mass audience from its inception through its access to the Hollywood studio system and the authority granted to the series because of its association with Time Inc., there were contrasting viewpoints to its self-defined moderate reform-oriented liberalism. One of these alternative views, the most prominent was found in the Federal Theater Project’s series of “Living Newspaper” plays. The Federal Theater Project was part of the Works Progress Administration, one of the most prominent of the myriad government agencies created by the New Deal to alleviate the dislocation caused by the catastrophic downturn in the American economy during the 1930s. The project, by 1936, had become a haven for leftist, even radical writers, who saw the “Living Newspaper” as a vehicle for engaging an audience that had moved from traditional stage productions to the movies, and for moving that audience towards political activity. As a result, playwrights who achieved critical and public acclaim through the “Living Newspaper” series turned to and were briefly embraced by

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<sup>203</sup>Cooke, 931-932.

Hollywood in the late 1930s<sup>204</sup> The stage productions produced by the FTP represent an attempt to rethink America and show America a “true” vision of itself.<sup>205</sup>

The Federal Theater Project used documentary techniques to represent American history on stage, while calling for action on the part of the audience. Highly ideological, the plays produced by the FTP were heavily influenced by refugees from fascist regimes in Europe who arrived in the United States in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The historical topics taken up were often bound up with New Deal politics, attempting to place the New Deal in the mainstream of perceptions of the American past. Reflecting, perhaps, early Soviet uses of theater to influence the masses, the plays mostly focus on large, impersonal forces in society and the economic system rather than individuals. The problems of depression-era America were addressed as a whole, not through appeals to the individual. There were also attempts at giving the audience analytical tools to critique newspapers and the newsreels. Conscious of charges of bias, administrators, writers and directors associated the FTP constantly argued that their productions were within the cultural mainstream, at one point comparing the series of plays to *The March of Time*.<sup>206</sup>

One of the most successful FTP plays, titled *Strike Marches On*, was an obvious imitation of the *March of Time*. *Strike Marches On* has as its subject the 1937 strikes directed at General Motors. The play, like *The March of Time*, makes heavy use of

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<sup>204</sup>Laura Browder, *Rousing the Nation: Radical Culture in Depression America*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 2-10. By the mid 1930s the movie audience was estimated at 60 to 75 million a week.

<sup>205</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>206</sup>*Ibid.*, 121-127.

documents, speeches and newspaper reports that the audience has heard or seen in other formats to drive home its point and impress upon the audience notions of authority. The play encourages the audience to reexamine current events by understanding other sources of information critically. *Strike Marches On* cast the strikers as heirs to a long and essential tradition of civil disobedience and urges audiences to define the meaning of American citizenship for themselves, using the tool of historical knowledge, rather than allowing corporations to define Americanism.<sup>207</sup>

The most fascinating episodes in the life of the FTP surrounded the attempt to take the most successful play produced under the FTP, *One Third of a Nation* and make it into a successful Hollywood film. *One Third of a Nation* concerned the housing crisis in urban America and took its name from a famous line in President Roosevelt's 1937 inaugural address. Purchased by Paramount Studios in 1938, the film received a massive amount of publicity, particularly in the New York papers and in leftist journals such as *New Masses*. But the film was a resounding flop, particularly in rural areas, shocking industry observers who thought, in light of the success of "social problem" films produced by Warner Brothers, that *One Third of a Nation* would have broad appeal. The reasons given for the film's failure were varied. Some observers noted that there was growing recognition and more attention to the fascist threat in the media and less interest in domestic social problems, particularly as the nation began to emerge from the 1937-38 recession as the film was released (*The March of Time*'s "Inside Nazi Germany" appeared in 1938 to generally rapturous reviews and a good deal of controversy). There were also

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<sup>207</sup>Browder, 129-139.

major changes to the plot, blunting its impact, and to the staging as the production moved from stage to film. The experimental, modernist stage direction associated with *One Third of a Nation* during its stage run was abandoned for a more Hollywood look and feel, with the redemption of the main character, an heir whose wealth was concentrated in tenements, through the love of a dedicated social worker. The group based solution advocated in the play was abandoned in favor of reform through changing the attitudes of one individual.<sup>208</sup>

*The March of Time's* distinctive style was an amalgam of many features and stylistic touches, fresh in their day, unique in their combination and imitated in the years that followed. The cutting was quite rapid. According to the final continuity scripts individual shots were often cut as short as two seconds, while an occasional shot ran 2/3rds of a second.<sup>209</sup> An examination of the scripts reveals that during the 1930s an average issue ran 19.39 minutes, contained 288 shots with the average length of the shot being four seconds. Following World War II the cutting rate slowed slightly. Shots within scenes, as well as scenes within sequences, were almost always connected by straight cuts, in a fashion that is widely used today.<sup>210</sup>

It was de Rochemont's rule that camera movements were never allowed except under the most extraordinary circumstances. Scenes were always photographed with the camera mounted on a tripod. Rock-steady shots such as these were undeniably static, but

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<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 156-167.

<sup>209</sup>Continuity scripts are contained in the Production Files held by the National Archives.

<sup>210</sup>*March of Time* Production Files.

that was what de Rochemont wanted. The rapid editing which he favored more than compensated for the static quality of the shots. Indeed, without static shots, he could not have cut rapidly at all. So-called dynamic or montage cutting only worked when each of the individual camera shots was made from a steady platform.<sup>211</sup>

The angle of view de Rochemont required was straightforward and conventional, and *The March of Time's* photographic style was simple and austere. Much of the footage was photographed in authentic locations—apartments, offices, factories and the like. Shooting in such places meant that working space was limited and camera angles cramped. In order to photograph the widest possible angle and to secure their establishing shots under these conditions, and also produce a substantial depth of field, 25mm wide angle lenses were frequently used. These often produced optical distortion around the edges of the frame, which meant the actors had to be positioned toward the middle of the picture lest they appear grossly inflated and out of shape. Props that appeared at the edges of the frame, such as cups, saucers, dishes and ash trays would have to be propped up with wooden blocks and adhesive, at strange angles, in order to come out on even keel in the finished picture.<sup>212</sup>

It was also standard *March of Time* procedure to place the camera at the height of a sitting person's eyes. The idea behind this was to look at the scene from the audience's perspective. Camera positions such as this tended to dramatize the individuals who appeared in the frame, making them appear slightly larger than life when they were

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<sup>211</sup>Glenn, *March of Time Handbook for Shooting*, 8-11.

<sup>212</sup>Glenn, 10, 12.

standing.<sup>213</sup>

One of the unintended but inevitable consequences of this combination of short-focus lenses and lower than normal camera angles was the frequent inclusion of ceilings in the shots. Although not unknown in theatrical feature films, Hollywood film makers usually kept the appearance of ceilings in scenes to a minimum. In 1941, Orson Welles attracted a good deal of attention by purposely emphasizing ceiling shots throughout the whole of *Citizen Kane*, the plot of which involved a thinly disguised version of *The March of Time*.

Because of the speed with which *March of Time* camera crews worked, the cramped space in which they operated, and the limited amount of electrical power available to them, the lighting used was as realistic as possible. Although always well composed and properly exposed, scenes were lit flatly, without the theatrical backlighting, accent lights and atmospheric shadings Hollywood's audiences had become accustomed to.<sup>214</sup> This never bothered Larsen or de Rochemont, as it fitted perfectly with their concept of pictorial journalism, and helped to make the images more believable. Ironically, in time some Hollywood film makers began to imitate *The March of Time's* lighting, especially after the war when, due to de Rochemont's innovativel feature-film productions for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox (*Boomerang*, *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street*), a so-called documentary style of film making was introduced into theatrical features. De Rochemont wrote in an unpublished memoir that "the features started using some of the same

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<sup>213</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>214</sup>Glenn, 6-7.

techniques that we had used on *March*...you can see it a number of places.”<sup>215</sup>

De Rochemont never allowed the use of “talking heads”—a kind of shot familiar to television news audiences of today in which a person is photographed up close speaking directly to the audience. By contrast, in a *March of Time* shot, there was always enough set detail around the subject so that the audience knew where he or she was located—at a table, at a podium, in front of a piece of machinery, in a kitchen, and so forth. The subject did not talk to the audience; he or she talked to someone else. If there was a talking head shot utilized, it was placed within the context of other action in the story.<sup>216</sup> *The March of Time* never used an on or off-camera interviewer; producer Richard DeRochemont noted, “If we wanted to talk about the effects of mobilization on the national economy in 1942, we would have two fictional businessmen meeting in a club car on a train...and this was the way we put the point across.”<sup>217</sup>

“*Time*’s amateur theatricals” and the dialogue that went along with them may have been trite, but the narration which was read by Westbrook Van Voorhis was beautifully and meticulously crafted, without a spare word or phrase. According to some observers, what made *The March of Time* stylistically different was the attention de Rochemont gave to the script; often the written word dominated the picture. The text and the photography were given equal value in production. De Rochemont believed that the documentary maxim that the pictures must tell the story was an oversimplification, and the narration

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<sup>215</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 32; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 6-7.

<sup>216</sup>Glenn, 12-13; Letter from Louis DeRochemont to Richard DeRochemont, dated June 16, 1938, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1-2.

<sup>217</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 25.

reflected this view.<sup>218</sup>

The narration was almost always indirect, amplifying rather than repeating the information provided on the screen. De Rochemont's first rule of editing was to try to frame the story with pictures alone; if narration must be used, it should not repeat what the picture describes. For example, given a scene of a man seated at a breakfast table buttering a piece of toast, direct commentary would tell us that this is Mr. Jones, sitting at his breakfast table, buttering his toast. Indirect commentary might explain that he will leave shortly for his job in the city, where, still part of a depressed economy, he earns a salary that is inadequate for his family's needs. It would comment upon the growing size of his food bills during the previous quarter-year, the result of drought and a poor harvest in the mid-west and then (as the picture of a graph appears) goes on to explain why the price of dairy products has risen so high.<sup>219</sup>

An example of indirect narration from an early *March of Time* issue depicted the affairs of wealthy, aged munitions manufacturer Sir Basil Zaharoff. The following narration concluded over shots of tombstones in a cemetery: "For close as he is to making his final peace with his Maker, he is still today, the chief adviser, the wisest, and richest of the dealers in death."<sup>220</sup>

On occasion, Van Voorhis's powerful narration would stop abruptly and an informational subtitle would flash across the screen, backed up with dramatic music.

Like chapter headings in a book, these provided for a shift in subject matter, locale, time,

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<sup>218</sup>*March of Time* Production Files.

<sup>219</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3, April 19, 1935; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3 Production File.

or point of view. They were also useful in filling gaps in visual continuity. The following title examples are taken from several different issues:

GAY WAS THE VIENNA INTO WHICH OTTO OF HABSBURG WAS BORN  
TWENTY FOUR YEARS AGO. (Vol. 2, # 6)

OLD DEIBLER'S LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT IN THE SERVICE OF THE  
GUILLOTINE, BUT YEARS AGO HE SOUGHT TO ESCAPE HIS  
GRUESOME CAREER. (Vol. 2, # 1)

LUSTY AND GLAMOROUS WAS THE THEATER OF YESTERDAY. (Vol.  
3, # 4)

CHIEF CHARACTER IN ANY MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS OF 1939 WILL BE  
EUROPE'S NO. 2 SWORDRATTLER—BENITO MUSSOLINI. (Vol. 5, # 8)<sup>221</sup>

The relationship between narration, sub-titles and staged live action sequences was always intimate and carefully designed. Care was taken that each element complemented the other and advanced the story forward. In other cases, insert scenes such as newspapers or magazine headlines took the place of titles. Sometimes, several of these would appear in rapid succession, the juxtaposition of one headline after another telling a story of its own and making an unmistakable editorial comment. For example:

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<sup>221</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 12, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 7, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 27, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated March 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

*Magazine Title:* WHAT IS HITLER GOING TO DO NEXT?

*Magazine Title:* DESTROY, DESTROY, DESTROY!

*Magazine Article:* Photograph of Hitler and Mussolini shaking hands.<sup>222</sup>

In the early years of the series the literary construction of the narration was identical to that of *Time* magazine—that is to say, grammatically eccentric. This was entirely intentional, as a great deal of effort having been made to adapt “Time-speak” to the motion picture series. It was important that *The March of Time* be seen and understood by the public as part of the *Time* tradition of journalism and identified with Time, Inc’s other publications. Examples include, “Bright is the prospect for renting agents during Coronation time...” (Vol. 3, # 8); “Great fun has the self-styled Kingfish in running Louisiana...” (Vol. 1, # 3); “Soon, than Captain Trujillo no young officer was more diligent and alert.” (Vol. 2, # 7)<sup>223</sup> It was this high-density narration that produced this last example of Time-speak, surely one of the most convoluted and bizarre sentences ever written for an information film, “Arrested, this bogus Ethiopian is unmasked as a lovesick Japanese college boy, trading on Ethiopia’s current popularity to make an impression on a waitress.”<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 15, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #9 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>223</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 19, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3; *March of Time* Vol. 1, #3 Production File; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 10, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 2, #7 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>224</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #6, September 20, 1935.

Henry Luce had a passion for facts, and he mandated lavish display of them in all of the company's publications. Larsen carried this passion to *The March of Time*, illuminating abstract ideas and concepts with concrete statistical data whenever possible. For example, "6,000 men dig in to build a ditch designed to be twice the length of the Suez—four times the length of the Panama." (Vol. 2, #. 4)<sup>225</sup> Another example comes from this title in a issue concerning Mexico.

TODAY, THERE ARE FEWER PRIESTS IN MEXICO THAN THERE ARE  
GENERALS IN THE MEXICAN ARMY—ONLY 300 AUTHORIZED PRIESTS  
TO SERVE 14,000,000 MEXICANS. (Vol. 1, No. 3)<sup>226</sup>

Narration was compressed, as in *Time* magazine, by coupling powerful adjectives with the first mention of each personality's name. This often had obvious editorial intent. Czechoslovakian President Eduard Benes was described as "...crafty little Benes..." (Vol. 2, # 6) while a prominent labor leader was identified as "...shrewd, Russian-born Sidney Hillman..." (Vol. 7, # 5) Thomas Dewey was a "young and able lawyer" (Vol. 4, # 2) while another story discussed "France's swarthy little Pierre Laval..." (Vol. 1, #5).<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 17, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland ; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.04, National Archives and Records Administration..

<sup>226</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1 #3, April 19, 1935; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3 Production File.

<sup>227</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 12, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park Maryland ; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #6 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 1, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #2 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.02, National Archives and Records Administration; *March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5, August 16, 1935, ; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5 Production File.

In less than a couple dozen words, the narration provided a transition from one scene to the next, set the stage for action that followed, and told the audience exactly what *The March of Time* thought of the people appearing on the screen. A story on radio priest Charles Coughlin stated “Publisher Randolph Hearst, keen student of mob psychology, calls Father Coughlin to his ranch to look him over.”<sup>228</sup> A 1941 story on aid to Britain intoned, “Bitterest opponent of American aid to the embattled democracies is the number one appeaser—ex-hero, ex-colonel, Charles Augustus Lindbergh...”<sup>229</sup> By contrast, when it did no suit *The March of Time*’s interests to commit itself openly to a particular point of view, potentially controversial judgments were put into the mouths of “thoughtful observers”, “serious commentators” or “some there are who say.” Examples include “Today, with U.S. labor split in two, some there are who say that miner Lewis is seeking power in steel because his grip on coal is slipping.”<sup>230</sup> An issue exploring Japanese expansion in Asia noted “...as Japan’s militarists march on behind their Emperor, observers may well wonder what a nation whose war dogs go mad at home might do if allowed to run loose throughout the world.”<sup>231</sup>

And sometimes, the combination of dramatically fashioned language and Van Voorhis’s powerful reading of it, was electrifying, as shown by a *March of Time* issue

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<sup>228</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5.

<sup>229</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #10 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>230</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 30, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>231</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 13, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland..

dealing with the Spanish Civil War. “THEN CAME MADRID! The air squadrons he sent to bomb the city should theoretically have demoralized its people, destroyed their will to resistance. Instead, an outraged populace rushed to volunteer, began drilling in the streets. Loyalist morale ran high when, from friendly Russia, came vital weapons for defense—Soviet armaments as effective as any from Italy or Germany.”<sup>232</sup>

Was *The March of Time* propagandistic? Not in the usual sense of the word and not in the sense that its existing principally to realize a political or economic end; not in the sense that its producers possessed an ideologically coherent and consistent point of view. Its editors and producers consistently denied any overt political intent or editorializing.<sup>233</sup>

However, implicit in all of *The March of Time* issues was a kind of uncomplicated American liberalism—general good intentions, a healthy journalistic skepticism, faith in enlightened self-interest, and substantial pride in American progress and potential. Richard DeRochemont observed that *The March of Time* was “not partisan in a small way...it was partisan in a big way.” It’s bias was against fascism at home and abroad and the “petty adventurers” who rose to domestic prominence during the depression.<sup>234</sup>

Always provocative, *The March of Time* investigated numerous subjects internationally and domestically and illuminated them for American audiences. The

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<sup>232</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 6, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>233</sup>Press Release titled TIME and The Movies, July 1934, *March of Time* Movie File 1934, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; A New TIME Venture (Announcement to the Readers of TIME); TIME Gives Journalism a New Dimension.

<sup>234</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 30.

demagogues and cranks whom *The March of Time* attacked in the 1930s may seem like obvious targets now, but they were not so then. They were popular, powerful, often frightening figures, and *The March of Time* often stood alone as a theatrical journalistic muckraker.

### Chapter Three: Technique and Criticism

*The March of Time*, celebrating its first year in February 1936, was still in its experimental stage. During the next few years, the film's production techniques, format, and style were all to vary from time to time. The quality of photography, editing and direction was gradually improving. Reviewing the first issue in February 1935, one critic had held that the new feature was below the level of both the ordinary newsreel and the regular Hollywood film.<sup>235</sup> By February 1936, however, the quality of the photography alone had risen sufficiently to elicit frequent praise from film reviewers.<sup>236</sup>

Although the overall length of *The March of Time* remained the same, the number of episodes in each issue steadily decreased, from six in the first issue, to three in the fourth issue, to two in the fifth issue and finally to one featured subject. Such a reduction of episodes within the individual releases allowed for a more complete treatment of each subject. Roy Larsen, who was intimately involved with the production of the early *March*

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<sup>235</sup>Early Reaction to the March of Time.

<sup>236</sup>Letter from Dan Longwell and Bernard Barnes to Roy Larsen, detailing reaction of film critics to early *March of Time* releases, September 20, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Memo from Ralph Ingersoll to Roy Larsen and Henry Luce titled Current Issues of MARCH OF TIME, March 17, 1936, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

*of Time* releases, said that he much preferred the earlier format and regretted the necessity of reducing the number of subjects in each reel. The decision, according to Larsen, was an economic rather than artistic or journalistic one. It simply became too expensive to present many different subjects in the same reel. At about the same time that the single-subject issue became standard, Larsen was obliged to leave his day-to-day work with *The March of Time* and devote virtually all of his time to the design and production of Time, Inc.'s new magazine, *Life*.<sup>237</sup> As for de Rochemont and other members of *The March of Time* staff, they were delighted to move toward a single subject format, running fifteen to twenty minutes in length, as it gave them time to develop subjects more fully, from both cinematic and journalistic points of view.

Despite the short time allotted each subject in those early issues, writers and directors made every effort to present each subject as a polished, coherent, dramatic unit. Commercially, the series was a qualified success. Although it was not making a profit, it was not losing a great deal of money either, and provided valuable exposure for Time, Inc.'s other publications. Although the foreign distribution program was still in its formative stages, domestic release had jumped from 417 theaters in February 1935 to 5236 theaters by April 1936, an increase attributable to the distribution deal *The March of Time* struck with RKO Pictures in 1935.<sup>238</sup>

In November 1936, *The March of Time*'s staff moved to new quarters on the

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<sup>237</sup>Memo from Roy Larsen titled March of Time Organization, April 20, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Ralph Ingersol, Memorandum on Life No. 9.

<sup>238</sup>Unsigned memo to Henry Luce titled Points in connection with a distribution contract with a major distributor, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter from Henry Luce to Ned Depinet, May 27, 1935; Letter from Roy Larsen to Richard DeRochemont, April 25, 1935; The Deal with RKO, Warner Brothers or Paramount.

second and third floors of a new building constructed for Time Inc.'s motion picture and radio divisions at 369 Lexington Avenue in New York City. The new quarters provided over 10,000 square feet of library, laboratory, editing and office space. On December 10, 1936, Larsen announced to *The March of Time* staff that de Rochemont would become the producer of the film series. In March 1937, Time Inc., officially announced the organization's new "publisher system," at which time Larsen was designated publisher of *Life* magazine. On behalf of the corporation, Larsen continued to supervise *March of Time* operations until its demise in 1951 but was never involved in day to day operations.<sup>239</sup>

By the start of its third year, *The March of Time* was firmly established as a successful journalistic phenomenon. Unlike the newsreel, it was billed as a kind of second feature. Its name was featured on theater marquees, and audiences looked forward with some enthusiasm to each month's release. Reviewers alternately praised and criticized it, while rival news organizations attacked it. Politicians and other public figures both courted and condemned it, and Time Inc.'s busy corporation lawyers were kept hard at work defending the producers against numerous court suits for libel and defamation.<sup>240</sup>

The first issue of 1937 featured an episode that de Rochemont in later years regarded as one of his favorites. Titled "Conquering Cancer," the film described the history and nature of the disease and traced the progress being made to combat it.

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<sup>239</sup>Memo from Roy Larsen to March of Time Staff, December 10, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Elson 1:349.

<sup>240</sup>Early Reaction to March of Time.

Included in the story was strong criticism on Norman Baker, who had been previously been convicted of practicing medicine without a license in Muscatine, Iowa, and who achieved notoriety by advertising alleged cancer cures over radio. Baker was called a quack and the film incorporated studio-made shots of Baker, using an impersonator. Baker filed suit against RKO Radio Pictures, Inc., and Time, Inc., but his suit was unsuccessful. During the legal proceedings, it was revealed that the primary source of Baker's cancer cure was dandelion juice.<sup>241</sup>

Issue 7, Vol. 3, released in February 1937, featured an account of the Westernization of Turkey by dictator Mustapha Kemal, which involved the outlawing of Arabic writing, the adoption of Western dress and architecture, and the Westernization of social and industrial institutions. On March 10, *Variety* called it “a blatant piece of tom-toming in the Ataturk's behalf reveals some neat skirting of the issue. The other side of the case is not even hinted. The bit glorifies the dictator's efforts of forcing the Turks into the latest models from Hart, Schaffner and Marx, and into cramming themselves with a Latinized version of their language.” Much of the footage in the film had been taken on location in Turkey, while de Rochemont also incorporated combat footage he had photographed years earlier as a newsreel cameraman in Turkey.<sup>242</sup>

On the evening of March 4, 1937, the film industry paid tribute to *The March of*

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<sup>241</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 22, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #6 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 19; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 31.

<sup>242</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 19, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #7 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.07, National Archives and Records Administration; *Variety*, March 10, 1937, 4.

*Time* with the presentation of a Special Academy Award for the film's "...significance to motion pictures and for having revolutionized one of the most important branches in the industry—the newsreel." This special award had been given only four times previously by the Academy for outstanding contributions to the art of the motion picture. Despite the award's citation, however, *The March of Time* had not had the slightest effect on the form, style or content of the newsreel. In fact, the granting of the award to *The March of Time* was bitterly protested within the film industry as an insult to the quality of the regular newsreel. Executives of the major newsreel companies charged the Academy's citation with being irrelevant and biased.<sup>243</sup>

Everyone at *The March of Time* was pleased with the award, however, and by way of celebration released the next issue in March 1937 as a "Special Award Edition." The billing was wholly for promotional purposes as the film contained neither a review of past issues nor new material of unique caliber. The principal subject of the issue was a discussion of child labor in the United States which appeared to favor a proposed amendment to the Constitution outlawing the use of minors in industry. On March 24, *Variety* called its pictorial treatment "a strong convincer, with the arguments against the amendment from the Catholic Church and Massachusetts and Vermont officials tepid in comparison." The issue also included a pictorial description of the introduction of voodoo into Harlem. This episode, based on a special feature appearing in the New York *World Telegram*, described voodoo worship as a racket for confidence men and bogus

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<sup>243</sup>Roy Larsen, Press Release dated March 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Glenn, Handbook For Shooting, 1; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 35.

witch doctors. The reel concluded with a discussion of England's coronation crisis, precipitated by the abdication of Edward VIII. Shopkeepers and souvenir manufacturers, investing heavily in Edward's coronation, panicked following the abdication. In the end, King George VI's coronation was scheduled on the original date, Lloyd's of London paid off on modest business losses, and many manufacturers found a ready market in the U.S. for discounted souvenirs of the original ceremony.<sup>244</sup>

By now, a clear indication of Louis de Rochemont's thematic interests was emerging. They were interests that prevailed with some consistency during the entire period of his administration, as an examination of subjects in the history of *The March of Time* reveals. Throughout the entire series, 1935-1951, the percentage of episodes dealing with a single country and its affairs was about a third the total number of episodes being far fewer in the later years due to the change in the format to a single episode per issue. During the prewar period, 1935-1941, approximately a quarter percent of all episodes dealt with war or the threat of war. From Pearl Harbor until the close of the war, nearly every issue dealt with some aspect of the subject. The balance of *March of Time* issues dealt with cultural affairs, economics and domestic politics. This emphasis on foreign affairs presaged Luce's later focus on global affairs and the American role in the international system.

The emphasis under Louis de Rochemont's control of *The March of Time* was profoundly personal. His political and historical vision focused on the individual,

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<sup>244</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 19, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 3, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *Variety*, March 24, 1937, 5.

interpreting broad political, economic and military events in terms of the personalities associated with them. During this period numerous episodes dealt specifically with particular individuals. After de Rochemont's departure from the series in 1943, the number of subjects devoted specifically to individuals dropped dramatically. The other subject emphasized by de Rochemont was that of the navies and waterways of the world and the geopolitical role they played in international affairs. From 1935 to 1943, this was a recurring theme in *The March of Time*.

It was becoming clear that this film series was capable of stimulating and perhaps influencing large segments of the public. Film critics had previously been impressed with the technique and style of the series. They now viewed the production with a new respect for its propaganda potential. British scholars D.A. Spencer and H.D. Whaley, writing in *The Cinema Today* in 1939, observed "Although the ideal behind these films is to present as objectively as possible, accounts of world happenings, there is no doubt whatever that they are helping to mould our views on such happenings. In America legislation regulating child labor...has at last passed both House of Congress by a narrow margin which is believed to due to the 'March of Time.' Their film on cancer has done a good deal to arouse the national conscience of America to the evils of the quackery that battens on fear of this scourge, while in England, before the present campaign for National Fitness was under way, their film *Food and Physical Training* aroused enormous interest and debate in that it brought home to many people's minds the fact that the animals at the

zoo are better fed and housed than many of the nation's children."<sup>245</sup>

Issues 11 and 13 of Volume 3, and issues 1 and 3 of Volume 4, all released during the summer and early fall of 1937, featured a succession of tightly knit, carefully prepared resumes of political crisis around the world. The group included "Poland and War," "Rehearsal for War," which featured the crisis in Spain, "War in China," and "Crisis in Algeria."<sup>246</sup>

Although *The March of Time* was professedly nonpartisan, a clear and persistent antifascist tone was becoming apparent in its analysis of world politics and rising militarism. Looking back in 1946, Jean Benoit-Levy wrote in *The Art of the Motion Picture*, "*The March of Time* exercised a considerable influence on public opinion in the various democracies, but could not capture it all alone...*Rehearsal for War*, for instance, produced in 1937, should have provoked free peoples to action if they had not already been obsessed by the fear of communism which Nazi propaganda had skillfully distilled and spread like a poison."<sup>247</sup>

"Rehearsal for War" was unquestionably anti-Franco, which was exactly what liberal staff members had intended. The point of view presented in the film was at

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<sup>245</sup>D.A. Spencer and H.D. Waley, *The Cinema Today*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 46; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #7 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>246</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 11, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 6, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 10, 1937) *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.01, National Archives and Records Administration; Vol. 4, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 29, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>247</sup>Jean Benoit-Levy, *The Art of the Motion Picture*, (New York: Coward-McCann, 1946), 178.

variance with the coverage that General Franco and his Nationalists had received in *Time* magazine; Laird Goldsborough, the foreign news editor of *Time*, was notoriously anti-Communist and accused of having a pro-fascist bias on occasion. In an unpublished memoir, Louis de Rochemont called Goldsborough an “authoritarian.”<sup>248</sup> Henry Luce, according to some *March of Time* staffers, was convinced that Franco was the man to save Spain from communism. However, Luce did not interfere in the production of the film and de Rochemont allowed a decidedly biased portrayal to proceed.<sup>249</sup>

September’s release, “War in China,” featured some of the earliest and, in this case, most brutal of the newsreel clips of the Chinese-Japanese conflict in and around Shanghai. Included were exclusive shots of the Japanese bombing of the Cathay Hotel and surrounding neighborhoods, and the explosion of the USS *Augusta*. This footage was smuggled past Chinese censors and forwarded to *The March of Time* in New York, arriving barely in time for the China release.<sup>250</sup>

Not all the footage was genuine, of course. Reenactments made in New York City and reported in the scripts included a scene of the British ambassador to China being removed from a car by his aides after being wounded by Japanese aerial gunfire; dead Japanese soldiers, photographed in a New York garage; Japanese pilots looking out of their aircraft at the carnage below, filmed at Peterboro Airport in New Jersey; and a reenactment of a Chinese woman, lying dead amidst debris in Shanghai, with dust flying

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<sup>248</sup>Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 12.

<sup>249</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 4; *March of Time* Vol. 3, #13 Production File. Notations made on the script indicate some disdain for the Spanish dictator.

<sup>250</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #1, Production File; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 40.

to give the impression of nearby shelling. There was also a miniature reproduction of the city of Shanghai in flames, that was apparently not included in the final film.<sup>251</sup>

In domestic release, the series now reached between 22 and 26 million people each month at 9800 theaters. Internationally, it was screened at another 1200 theaters or so, in English, Spanish, French and Dutch versions.<sup>252</sup> In New York City alone, over 150,000 people saw each monthly issue at the Radio City Music Hall. In a gigantic, multi-page announcement, running simultaneously in several national magazines in January 1938, *The March of Time*'s publishers claimed that the film played in more theaters than any other regular motion picture attractions.<sup>253</sup>

Considering the size of the audience, it may have been just as well that the public had been conditioned to expect a consistently provocative treatment of current events from *The March of Time*. Even with such a reputation, the producers released an issue in January 1938 that so aroused the public and shocked political observers and the film industry that for some time afterward *The March of Time* was in danger of permanent censorship, even within the United States, by pressure group boycott, government action and film industry agreement.

The film in question was titled "Inside Nazi Germany" and it quickly became the

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<sup>251</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #1, Production File. Information about reenactments and unused footage was attached to scripts and dope sheets detailing shooting sequences.

<sup>252</sup>Report to the President on *March of Time* Operations 1938, *March of Time* Movie File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Memo from John Wood on *March of Time* domestic and foreign distribution dated February 15, 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. Information on the size of *The March of Time* audience, it should be noted, is simply presented in the Report to the President with no accompanying research material.

<sup>253</sup>Mockup of *March of Time* promotional ad, January 1938, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

most controversial release in the history of *The March of Time*. Released in January 1938, the film could not been more ingeniously designed to rouse audiences and provoke controversy. It featured the figure, voice and hysterical histrionics of German dictator Adolf Hitler, a man whose whose motion picture representation was usually taboo in American movie theaters.<sup>254</sup>

*The March of Time*'s new film examined the insidious Nazi program of racial purification. It was labeled both pro-Nazi and anti-Nazi at a time when public opinion was isolationist and most public figures were unwilling to get involved in European affairs. Also, the film was promoted by its producers as a provocative, controversial film issue. Such promotion, coming from a organization that already had a reputation for sensational motion picture journalism, did a great deal to make the film almost irresistible to movie audiences.<sup>255</sup>

Disappointed with footage taken in Germany by a free-lance cameraman, de Rochemont decided that the only way to properly tell the story with the desired thrust was through wholesale recreation. *March of Time* director Jack Glenn found a colony of anti-Nazi German-Americans in Hoboken, New Jersey whose homes, stores, and beer halls were virtually identical to those in Germany. These German-Americans agreed to

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<sup>254</sup>Elson, 1:328; What the Nation's Press Thinks, press packet produced by March of Time Inc., on the controversy surrounding "Inside Nazi Germany," 1938, *March of Time* Inside Nazi Germany File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. This packet contained clips from items concerning "Inside Nazi Germany" from newspapers and magazines across the country, in addition to reaction from political figures, movie industry executives, film reviewers and other prominent individuals.

<sup>255</sup>What the Nation's Press Thinks.

cooperate with the filming and as a result, the film's scenery was quite authentic.<sup>256</sup> In addition, individuals in the Hoboken community appeared in the film in appropriate costume to illuminate various aspects of life in the Third Reich. Included in these recreations were scenes of propaganda activities; scenes of military men pursuing their studies; a scene of an elderly German couple listening with trepidation to one of Hitler's radio speeches; scenes of concentration camps; shots of German censors examining mail; a scene of a storm trooper collecting funds from a housewife; a shot of a German radio announcer; scenes of political prisoners; and many others.<sup>257</sup>

Glenn's greatest coup was in talking pro-Nazi German-American bund leader Fritz Kuhn into appearing in the film. The scenes were filmed in Kuhn's offices. Intercut with these shots were scenes of Kuhn addressing a pro-Nazi rally. For all the footage, authentic and staged, de Rochemont gradually fashioned a strongly anti-Nazi narration. He and his researchers were assisted in this task by a German refugee who had recently escaped from a Nazi concentration camp who served as a consultant on the film.<sup>258</sup>

In hindsight, the scenes that *The March of Time* presented do not seem so startling. But in 1938 the film made statements that no other commercially released motion picture had dared, and for that matter precious few newspapers or magazines either. The narration was unsparing in its criticism of the Nazi regime. Examples

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<sup>256</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 21, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 4, #6, Production File *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.06, National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, Maryland; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences 42; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 29.

<sup>257</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6; *March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6 Production File; Glenn, Handbook for Shooting, 7; Richard DeRochemont Memo on Reenactments dated 1944, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1944, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City

<sup>258</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6 Production File; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 28-29.

include:

“Though six years ago, six million Germans voted a communist ticket, every known radical, every known liberal today is either in hiding, in prison or dead.”

“Still going on, as pitilessly, as brutally, as it did five years ago is Goebbels’s persecution of the Jews...And on the Christian churches, Goebbels’s propaganda machine is today bearing down savagely, for these-almost gone-are still offering resistance to the new order. The Nazi state tolerates no rival authority...to the good Nazi, not even God stands above Hitler...”

“From the time the German child is old enough to understand anything, he ceases to be an individual, and is taught that he was born to die for the Fatherland.”

“...Germany is serving notice that all territories she lost in the World War must eventually be given back to her.”

The film ended with the prophetic words, “Nazi Germany faces her destiny with one of the great war machines in history. And the inevitable destiny of the great war machines of the past has been to destroy the peace of the world, and the governments of their time.”<sup>259</sup>

It was only a matter of time that the freelance cameramen engaged by *The March of Time* to shoot footage in Nazi Germany, Julien Bryan, found out what had happened with his film. Bryan was furious, not because he was at all sympathetic to Nazism but because he worked overseas and needed access to foreign governments. He, in order to

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<sup>259</sup>Ibid.

get access to Germany, had promised that his footage would be used in a neutral manner, and thought that the way “Inside Nazi Germany” had been edited would preclude his ever being able to work there again. Bryan was so upset that he considered suing to get an injunction against the release of the film.<sup>260</sup>

Just before the film’s release the staff invited Fritz Kuhn to a private screening of the film at *March of Time* headquarters. Columnist Walter Winchell, on good terms with *The March of Time*, was also invited. De Rochemont had his technicians bug the projection room with a hidden microphone connected by cable to a recorder. Kuhn was not amused. “If Hitler sees the film, I will be ruint!” he screamed on the recording. Kuhn’s terror was duly noted by Winchell, who wrote about the scene in his column.<sup>261</sup>

An official of the German consulate in New York was also invited to a private preview of the film. According to de Rochemont, he was white-faced with rage when he left the projection room, stomping off in the midst of an expletive filled tirade.<sup>262</sup>

There was a great deal of excitement in New York surrounding the release of the sixteen minute film. Concerned police officials assigned detectives from the police force’s “alien squad” to mingle with members of the Embassy Theater audience, while a special detail of police was stationed outside the theater to deal with crowds. The *New*

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<sup>260</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 43-44; Memo from Louis DeRochemont to Roy Larsen dated March 1938, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Copy of Deposition give by Julien Bryan dated January 21, 1938, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>261</sup>What the Nation’s Press Thinks; Clip From Walter Winchell’s On Broadway Column, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 31. It is unclear which *March of Time* staffers talked to Winchell.

<sup>262</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 44; Statement from German Counsel, New York, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Statement from Time Incorporated in reply to German Counsel, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

*York Times* reported some scattered cheering and booing at successive showings and no arrests or disturbances.<sup>263</sup>

Following the New York premiere, public interest in the film mounted as descriptions of the controversial issue appeared on the news pages and in the editorial columns of newspapers and magazines. The film was both praised and damned by motion picture critics and political observers. Regardless of political leanings, all writers criticized the obvious dissimilarity between the film's visual content and the narrator's comments. A.G. Rudd, general manager of the Embassy Theater in New York, wrote in the *Motion Picture Herald* that the film was controversial and the theater had received protests from those who felt the film was either pro or anti-Nazi. *Life* magazine stated in its January 31, 1938 edition that "Fact is that a majority of the scenes, showing the German populace, the youth program and the Army, are not unfavorable to Germany and a deaf movie-goer might consider the film more pro-Nazi than anti-Nazi. The MARCH OF TIME, conscious that no camera can portray all the darker aspects of Nazism, has evened the score with a vigorously pro-democratic commentary."<sup>264</sup> Because of the dissimilarity between the visual material and the narration, politically inclined reviewers found it difficult to determine the exact point that *The March of Time* was taking.

Martin Proctor, allegedly a lifelong resident of Germany, newspaperman and UFA Studio employee who had recently fled to the United States, labeled the film a pro-Nazi story, according the February 5, 1938 issue of the *Motion Picture Herald*. Proctor wrote "What do you really see? Youth marching, singing and working. Iron factories and other

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<sup>263</sup>Clip from *The New York Times* contained in What the Nation's Press Thinks.

<sup>264</sup>Clip from the *Motion Picture Herald* contained in What the Nation's Press Thinks.

plants going full blast...soldiers and brown shirts well clad and well fed, and dictators orating and people cheering.”<sup>265</sup>

On February 9, 1938, Otis Ferguson, the *New Republic*'s film critic, wrote in praise of the anti-Nazi slant of the film, calling it an “editorial with pictures, an editorial for democracy an against suppression, militant nationalism and shoving people around.” Ferguson also said the film was a departure for Time Inc., writing “for a while I had a sneaking idea that it might be just as well not to encourage anything so rickety in social theory as Luce enterprises to go in for open crusading, this being the kind of gun that as likely to blow its breech out as produce a true salvo. But that is a consideration for the future, which already seems to be in the proper hands...the majority of this staff seems to have been working on something it believed in. And in making any good thing, belief tells in the end.”<sup>266</sup>

During the next few weeks, the offices of *The March of Time* were inundated with positive and negative reviews. Political repercussions quickly followed the film's release. Thirty members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee sent Time Inc., a telegram praising the content of the film and opined that “every American should see it.” The head of the American Legion, Dr. John A. Lechner expressed similar sentiments.<sup>267</sup> Across the country, German embassy and consular officials decried the film and its producers. In Baltimore, German consul Frederick Schneider protested directly to the Maryland Censor Board; in Washington DC, it was first announced that the film would not run, a decision

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<sup>265</sup>Martin Proctor, Review of *Inside Nazi Germany*, *Motion Picture Herald*, February 5, 1938, 2.

<sup>266</sup>Otis Ferguson, “Time Steals A March,” *New Republic*, February 9, 1938, 19.

<sup>267</sup>Clips from What the Nation's Press Thinks.

that was later reversed. In New Orleans, numerous cuts were made in the film before its release to general audiences. In New York, Radio City Music Hall yielded its first run right to the Embassy Newsreel Theater, where the film ran for a record sixteen weeks.<sup>268</sup> According to Time Incorporated's press packet concern the *Inside Nazi Germany* furor, 25,683 column inches and 1,282,550 words were devoted to the controversy in American newspapers.<sup>269</sup>

In Chicago, according to the *Motion Picture Herald* of January 29, the Police Board of Censors found the film anti-Nazi and banned it on the grounds that it might increase sentiment against Germany, a nation identified by the board as friendly to the United States. Chicago newspapers, supported by civil rights leaders and some church officials, charged the board with suppression of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The Chicago censors lifted the ban.<sup>270</sup>

The most bizarre circumstance of the controversy occurred when Warner Brothers refused to carry the film on the grounds that it was pro-Nazi propaganda.<sup>271</sup> Henry Luce's reply to Warner's charges was quoted in the *Motion Picture Herald* on January 29. Luce stated "Mr. Warner's assertion that the March of Time is 'pro-Nazi propaganda' is ridiculous...Mr. Warner also says that movie audiences pay little or no attention to the sound that comes from the screen. This is an amazing observation to come from the man

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<sup>268</sup>Unsigned Memo on Theaters Reaction to *Inside Nazi Germany* dated 1938, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>269</sup>What the Nation's Press Thinks.

<sup>270</sup>"Chicago Censorship of MOT," *Motion Picture Herald*, January 29, 1938, 1.

<sup>271</sup>Telegram from Harry M. Warner to J. T. McManus, Time Magazine, January 21, 1938, *Inside Nazi Germany* File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

generally credited with introducing the talking picture...Fortunately, Mr. Warner does not control the entire motion picture industry.”<sup>272</sup> In refusing to show the film, Warner Brothers, which had the right to exhibit the film in more than 200 theaters across the country, forfeited its exclusive contractual rights to this particular issue. Competing exhibitors scrambled to book the film and ran it profitably throughout the nation.

Within the movie industry, opinion on the film was diverse, reflecting the larger public debate. Producer David O. Selznick sent *The March of Time* a complimentary telegram praising the film and its importance to the public. British documentary director Basil Wright noted that the film’s “avoidance of physical horrors focused the audiences’ attention on the corruption of the human soul” in Nazi Germany, and that the professionalism of the film demonstrated the propaganda power of the motion picture.<sup>273</sup> On the other hand, some observers, most notably *Motion Picture Herald* publisher Martin Quigley, were deeply concerned that controversial, overtly political films would drive away audiences. This prompted a consideration, by Dorothy Thompson in her *New York Herald Tribune* column, as to whether a motion picture could deal effectively with controversial subject matter. Thompson believed film could, writing that “Inside Nazi Germany” was “highly exciting, a realistic portrayal of Germany today, and a magnificent piece of journalism.”<sup>274</sup>

From the beginning, production at *The March of Time* was carried on under intense deadline pressure. De Rochemont, often highly disorganized, could count on 80

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<sup>272</sup>Henry Luce, “Editorial,” *Motion Picture Herald*, January 29, 1938, 2.

<sup>273</sup>Clips contained in What the Nation’s Press Thinks.

<sup>274</sup>Dorothy Thompson, “The March of Time Film,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January 26, 1938.

to 100 hour weeks from his non-unionized subordinates. Often working around the clock, some March of Time employees recalled working to the point of incoherence and collapse. On one occasion in 1937, de Rochemont reportedly worked 86 hours without sleep. Roy Larsen often kept similar hours.<sup>275</sup>

The tension and stress under which the *March of Time* staff worked was due in part to short, inflexible deadlines. De Rochemont and his staff were committed to releasing a new film every month, each of which had to be researched, scripted and shot on a very tight timeline. The regularity of March of Time releases is all the more extraordinary when one considers the equipment the staff used. The heavy, tripod mounted 35mm cameras and optical sound equipment weighed several hundred pounds, compared with today's much lighter and mobile technology. In addition, today's television news benefits from being able to use reporters to provide live narration that fill in the gaps in continuity. By contrast, *The March of Time* used one off-camera narrator, the commentary of which was written and rewritten with meticulous attention to style, accuracy and impact. Each *March of Time* issue had to stand on its own, as complete and as professionally made as a theatrical feature film. Editorially, the shots had to cut together properly, and transitions had to be smooth and stylistically consistent. The photography was rarely elegant but was always professional. Each shot was properly lit, compositionally right, accurately exposed and editorially capable of being cut together with every other shot in the sequence. The sound, in original dialogue recording, narration and musical accompaniment, had to meet Hollywood standards—no static or

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<sup>275</sup>Memo from Roy Larsen titled March of Time Organization, April 20, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 20-21; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 18.

extraneous noise. If the sound was not right, de Rochemont would have the whole sequence redone, or record it in the studio with impersonators. The combination of high, theatrical film standards and news gathering pressures made the business of producing *The March of Time* extremely difficult.<sup>276</sup>

For *March of Time* staffers, pressure and work conditions often lifted stress to intolerable levels. As each month drew to a close and the deadlines loomed, the entire crew routinely put in 20 hour days, in a frantic effort to get the film into the can and off to the laboratory for the making and shipping of prints to theaters around the country. As each issue neared completion, de Rochemont worked continuously in the projection room, passing judgment on the clips, shots, sequences and tracks brought to him for his appraisal.<sup>277</sup>

As in all enterprises, there were limits to one's enthusiasm and endurance. The price paid by *March of Time* staffers in both emotional and physical stress was enormous. At least three *March of Time* staff members were alcoholics; two others had nervous breakdowns; and another had stomach ulcers which required extensive surgery.<sup>278</sup>

In the end they had little to show for it. Apart from Larsen and de Rochemont, both of whom were officers of the organization, the rank and file received pitiful salaries. This was especially the case with editorial workers in the cutting rooms, upon whose effectiveness and skill *The March of Time* depended. In 1935 an apprentice's salary was about \$16 a week and an experienced cutter around \$50. By 1937, these had risen only

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<sup>276</sup>Glenn, *Handbook For Shooting*; Louis DeRochemont *Reminiscences*, Richard DeRochemont *Reminiscences*.

<sup>277</sup>Larsen, *March of Time Organization*, 5-7.

<sup>278</sup>Richard DeRochemont *Reminiscences*, 3.

slightly to \$20 for the former and \$55 to \$60 for the later.<sup>279</sup> According to contemporary memos, the men in the cutting room worked two weekends and every evening overtime for two weeks out of every four with no additional pay. A memo from a cutting room supervisor to de Rochemont suggests the conditions under which his men worked in the 1930s: “I know you feel the same as I do, but if you had seen the physical torture endured by the cutting force the last few days, it would seem as big an imposition to you as it does to me. This...was only a repetition of the 7 or 8 special reels we have put out in the last six months. When it was finished there was no expression of thanks and extra recompense. And then when I heard there a few slight criticisms about the finished job, it began to seem that the whole set-up was nothing more than tyranny on one side and slavery on the other. We don’t mind and we don’t complain about the work on the *March of Time* release...This we feel is our job, even if it does run into a lot of overtime. But is it our job to be expected to do anything extra asked for...with no consideration for our personal lives, no thanks in any way, of any kind, even though the work is all done on additional overtime? I think it is nothing but exploitation of the staff.”<sup>280</sup>

This belief in being exploited was not unique to *The March of Time*. The late 1930s was a time of considerable dissent and labor turmoil at all of the Time Inc., publications. Early 1939 saw the publication of a clandestine newsletter in the Time Inc., offices, “High Time” which billed itself as a publication of the Communist Party. “High Time” urged employees to join the Communist Party as a defense against termination and

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<sup>279</sup>Three Year Plan for The March of Time.

<sup>280</sup>Unsigned Memo to Louis DeRochemont detailing labor conditions within *The March of Time*, 1937, *March of Time* Movie File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter from Roy Larsen to Henry Luce discussing labor issues at each Time Incorporated publication, June 28, 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time-Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 2-5.

its first issue contained an attack on recently departed *Time* Foreign News editor Laird Goldsborough, who was considered by many employees and outside observers a fascist sympathizer.<sup>281</sup> Luce was shaken by the “High Time” episode and had to be convinced not to fire those responsible out of hand. Walter Winchell reported that Luce had hired detectives to investigate the episode. It was also rumored that some of those involved in “High Time” were high up in the organization, possibly including *Time* editor Ralph Ingersoll.<sup>282</sup> Luce finally sent out a memo that stated: “Most of you have seen the sheet ‘High Time’ put out by the ‘Communist Party Members at Time Inc.’ I think that just as a gossip sheet it’s a pretty amusing job of writing. I also think that the authors of it were disloyal to the organization and to all their fellow workers...A publication by ‘The Communist Party at Time Inc., is as offensive as one would be by a ‘Nazi Bund in Time, Inc.’,...It has been a cardinal principle with us that editors, writers and researchers have a right to spout to one another their views...We have had people of all shades of political thought on our staff and I maintain the right of every one of them to speak to every other member of the staff with as much intellectual freedom—and carefreeness—as he would in his own family...Free speech in confidence is essential to group journalism. It would be intolerable if our editors had to feel that they could not open their mouths without having some half-uttered thought plucked out and used to stab them publically in the back....I think you will agree with me that one of the things not to do is to start a Red hunt..We

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<sup>281</sup>High Time: A Publication of the Communist Party, January 1939, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>282</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 45; Memo titled C.D. Jackson’s Relationship with Labor, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1942, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 4-5. Jackson was a top official at Time Incorporated who frequently served as Luce’s point man on labor issues, mainly because of his background in mediating industrial disputes that arose from his family’s business.

cannot get along on any basis except that of free expression toward one another in private and assurance that such confidence will not be violated. If anyone feels that he cannot make that confidence mutual, he ought to resign. Certainly if the management discovers any employee making public gossip of matters that are properly confidential between members of the staff, he will be fired.”<sup>283</sup>

The writers of “High Time” charged in their second issue that by calling the broadsheet gossip, Luce was attempting to legitimize censorship. They also alleged that *Time* on occasion had slanted the news to favor certain advertiser, had continually denigrated the New Deal, and that Luce hoped to use Time Inc.’s influence to become a political kingmaker.<sup>284</sup> In the wake of the “High Time” episode, editor Ralph Ingersoll left the company in April 1939 to begin working for the radical daily newspaper *PM*, while Luce was left to ruminate once again on the intended audience for Time Inc.’s publications, reiterating in an unpublished memo that *Time*’s audience (and by extension that of *Life*, *Fortune* and *The March of Time*) were relatively well-educated professionals interested in the world, but lacking the time to absorb every bit of relevant information available. Thus, the audience required a synthesis, and Luce pointed to Time Inc.’s circulation figures as evidence of the company’s journalistic success.<sup>285</sup>

If the staff members, whether in the cutting room or out in the field, thought they would be rewarded when *The March of Time* began to make some money, they were

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<sup>283</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Time Inc., Staff, dated March 1939, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Swanberg, 161-162.

<sup>284</sup>High Time, A Publication of the Communist Party, dated 1939.

<sup>285</sup>Swanberg, 161-163; Letter from Ralph Ingersoll to Henry Luce dated October 28, 1938, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1-3.

certainly disillusioned, because the series never made any money at all. It was always an expensive series to produce compared with newsreels and other movie short subjects. According to estimates, the early issues cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000 each. With the passing of the years and a gradual increase in production costs, this rose to about \$40,000 per issue during World War II, and then to over \$50,000 in the late 1940s. Other competing short subjects, such as travelogues or newsreels, cost much less and were never intended to make a profit. Such intermission fare was offered as part of the block-booked program that major producers provided for theater owners to support their money making features. In *The March of Time's* case, however, the corporation had no other income from feature film production to offset their losses on the short subject, as the short was the only Time Inc., film product. Because of *The March of Time's* enormous promotional value to *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, the corporation was satisfied if it simply broke even, something the series rarely did over the course of its run.<sup>286</sup>

To a considerable degree, de Rochemont's hands were tied regarding salary during the 1930s. The salary scales were set by the corporation and he was required to abide by them. For that matter, de Rochemont had his own problems in dealing with the corporation's business managers, who were frequently shocked by his careless management and what they considered reckless spending. De Rochemont once recalled that his practice of handing out money to New York city policemen for tips and

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<sup>286</sup>Three-Year Plan for the March of Time; Memo from Roy Larsen titled March of Time Organization; Budgets and expenses are detailed within *March of Time* annual reports; Letter to Louis DeRochemont from Roy Larsen negotiating his departure from March of Time Inc., June 1942, *March of Time* Movie File 1942, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter from John R. Wood, Jr., to Roy Larsen, April 28, 1941 detailing domestic and overseas revenue, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1941, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1-3; Report from Ernst and Ernst Accountants & Auditors, April 27, 1939, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 2-4.

information was impossible to explain to the business office.<sup>287</sup>

*The March of Time* was underbudgeted by conventional film production standards, and had it not been for the loyalty and commitment of the rank and file staff, it could have never survived on the funds provided by Time Inc., or its own profits. This lack of funds and de Rochemont's demanding working style led inevitably to labor-management problems in the late 1930s.<sup>288</sup> There appear to have been three shocks to *The March of Time's* corporate structure sufficient to change the style of operations from a certain point forward. The first of these was the unionization of all Time Inc., employees by the Newspaper Guild in 1937-38.<sup>289</sup>

*The March of Time's* cameramen, sound recorders, and projectionists were already members of the New York locals of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, but the more numerous editors, cutters, researchers and writers were not.<sup>290</sup> The Newspaper Guild was desirous of organizing these workers, perhaps to deal a blow to staunch Republican Luce.

De Rochemont fought unionization to the last. Many of *The March of Time* issues produced by him, such as "Bootleg Coal," "King Cotton's Slaves," and "Strikebreaking" had seemed to champion the right to organize, but de Rochemont's attitude towards his

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<sup>287</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 49; Letter from Roy Larsen to Louis DeRochemont, June 1942; Letter from Ralph Ingersoll to Henry Luce, October 28, 1938.

<sup>288</sup>Unsigned memo to Louis DeRochemont detailing labor conditions within *The March of Time*, 1937.

<sup>289</sup>Letter from Roy Larsen to Henry Luce, July 9, 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter from Roy Larsen to Henry Luce, June 28, 1937.

<sup>290</sup>C.D. Jackson's Relationship with Labor, 4-5; Letter from Roy Larsen to Henry Luce, June 28, 1937.

own shop was decidedly different.<sup>291</sup> There was no doubt that unionization would place strict limits on working hours or require substantial payments for overtime. With the series barely breaking even as it was, it followed that *March of Time* operations would have to be made a good deal more efficient and that de Rochemont's paternalistic style of management would have to end.

De Rochemont valued personal and professional loyalty highly. He may have been difficult to work for, but there is evidence that he protected loyal subordinates and found ways in which to reward them unexpectedly, often with loans or working vacations with few demands. In 1939 De Rochemont had the company pay for a trip to Germany so that an employee could move his mother to England prior to the outbreak of war.<sup>292</sup>

The working conditions at *The March of Time* always had contradictory qualities—punishing hours and a demanding boss combined with a sense of companionship and loyalty—and given these contradictions the Guild fight was predictably divisive. Many employees supported the Guild, while others backed de Rochemont. For those who actively backed the Guild, life at *The March of Time* could be extremely difficult and uncomfortable. One cutting room supervisor was asked to resign for the good of the organization; he refused, and received one five dollar a week raise over the next three and a half years. A female staff member was especially active in trying to address the imbalance in salary between men and women at Time Inc. She eventually achieved a rough pay equity throughout the organization but was compelled to

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<sup>291</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, #6, *The March of Time* Vol. 1, #8; *March of Time*, Vol. 2, #8..

<sup>292</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 33.

leave shortly afterwards, taking a job at the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>293</sup>

In July 1938 the Guild won its fight and became the official representative of workers throughout the publishing empire of Time Inc.<sup>294</sup> Overnight, as Guild proponents predicted, de Rochemont and Larsen found they could produce *The March of Time* on less than an 80 hour week. Routines were readjusted and conditions normalized but the old paternalistic relationship de Rochemont enjoyed was gone. De Rochemont remained bitter about the Guild's activities for decades.<sup>295</sup>

From 1938 on the company was located in what became its own permanent headquarters in a new building at 369 Lexington Avenue. The facilities were located a block or so from the Time Inc., headquarters. De Rochemont and his staff much appreciated the physical separation as it kept visits from Henry Luce and other corporation executives to a minimum. Originally, *The March of Time* occupied the second and third floors of the building. The third floor held the executives' and writers' offices, the research library, the conference rooms and the projection room. The floor below held all of the cutting rooms, shipping and receiving, the film library files and the processing laboratory. *The March of Time* processed all of its own 35mm negatives and struck its own positive work prints. Release printing was contracted out. Sound recording, music scoring and sound mixes were done at RCA's studio in New York

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<sup>293</sup>Swanberg, 164.

<sup>294</sup>Letter from Ralph Ingersoll to Henry Luce, October 28, 1938.

<sup>295</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 53; Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 13; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 41.

City.<sup>296</sup>

There were always at least three full-time production crews on duty within the United States, each ordinarily comprised of a director, a cameraman, an assistant cameraman, a sound recordist, and a grip. These were supplemented by a property man and a contact man as needed. Continuously moving throughout the United States or at work in *The March of Time*'s New York studios, these crews generated the original background material, the interview sequences, and the reenactments that de Rochemont required for his various issues. The foreign production crews, operating out of Paris and London, did the same thing under Richard de Rochemont's direction. Finally, freelance cameramen, scattered across the globe, were hired as needed to photograph special subject matter to which their geographical location gave them access.<sup>297</sup>

The logistics involved in moving these people from place to place and assignment to assignment were complicated. For example, during production of *The March of Time*'s 1937 issue on child labor, de Rochemont had five different cameramen out in the field, with sound recordists, assistant cameramen, and support technicians, working in widely separated parts of the country. According to the production files, work began in Washington DC on February 2 with filming of government officials involved in a proposed constitutional amendment banning child labor. Between February 24 and March 5, another crew filmed children at work in textile mills in Greenville and

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<sup>296</sup>Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES ON: A Step By Story Report On Production of March Of Time, 1947, *March of Time* Movie File 1947, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1; Elson, 1: 367.

<sup>297</sup>Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES ON, 1; Office Memo from E.M. Lancaster to Richard DeRochemont, September 25, 1940, *March of Time* Movie File 1940, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Glenn, Handbook for Shooting, 8. In addition, each *March of Time* production file details the technical and logistical aspects of shooting each issue.

Allendale, South Carolina. Starting on February 25, the crew that had working in Washington was back in New York filming in slum areas, while still another was shooting in the garment district of the city. In early March, still other crews were filming factories and political debates on proposed child labor laws in the New England states. Still another crew was shooting children working in southern California cabbage and carrot fields.<sup>298</sup>

Supplementing the original footage that *The March of Time* cameramen shot were thousands of feet of newsreel footage specially ordered by de Rochemont from both American and foreign newsreel companies. Finally, *The March of Time* had its own library of stock material to draw upon which eventually grew to immense proportions. In some cases, all of these different kinds of footage would be stockpiled for months, as de Rochemont waited for the right kind of news break to come along. In other cases, a particular sequence would be rushed to completion within a period of days.<sup>299</sup>

For each reel of film shot, a so-called “dope sheet” was prepared by the cameramen and sent to New York independently of the film. Dope sheets indicated the exact order, location, date and subject of each shot exposed on each roll of film, together with the names of the cameraman and sound recordist, the production number, the amount of footage exposed, the kind of film stock used, processing instructions to the laboratory, information about the presence or absence of competing newsreel cameramen, and information about the way in which the film was being shipped. The names of all

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<sup>298</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 3, #8.; *The March of Time* Vol. 3, #8. An unsigned memo in the Production File lays out the schedule and movement of the camera crews assigned to the story.

<sup>299</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 22; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 11; Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES ON, 1.

individuals shown in each shot were indicated, as were their positions within the shot.<sup>300</sup>

Dope sheets were accompanied by memos prepared by cameramen and directors in the field regarding the subject matter being photographed and containing background information that they thought would be helpful to the script writers—economic and political summaries, statistical data, biographical information on individuals photographed, on-site impressions of social conditions, explanations of complicated issues or problems which would have to be clarified by the narrator, and general gossip about the circumstances under which the film had been photographed. Newspaper clippings, ceremonial programs, press releases, and other relevant documents were also frequently attached. Many of these memos which survive in *The March of Time's* production files were scribbled on hotel stationery from hotels all over the United States.<sup>301</sup>

The editorial staff in New York who had to make sense out of the mass of material pouring into its offices divided each month's work into A, B, C and D weeks. A-week was devoted to clearing up material remaining from the previous months D-week. B-week was given to routine jobs that had been held up because of the rush to finish the last release. C-week was the beginning of editorial work on the current month's release. D-week saw every cutter at work on the release at hand. Even with Guild limitations on working hours and overtime, the fast pace at which they worked never let up.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup>Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES ON, 1; See *March of Time* Production Files.

<sup>301</sup>Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES, ON, 1-2; See *March of Time* Production Files.

<sup>302</sup>Richard DeRochemont, HOW MOT MARCHES ON, 2; *March of Time* Organization, April 20, 1936; Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 12-14.

As each month's issue moved toward fine cut and completion, de Rochemont and his writers refined the narration to be read by Westbrook Van Voorhis. For years, chief editor Lothar Wolff served as narration supervisor for the English-language version, a somewhat ironic assignment, given Wolff's thick German accent. Van Voorhis was by the late 1930s a celebrity—the only individual associated with the film's production who was known (or whose voice was known) by the general public. Van Voorhis recorded his narration independent of the film; the film was then adjusted to fit Van Voorhis' cadence and delivery.<sup>303</sup>

Different sound tracks, in different languages, were recorded in New York for the foreign countries in which *The March of Time* was released. The British version was narrated initially by Westbrook Van Voorhis and starting in January 1938 by Alistair Cooke. The American, British and Canadian versions were virtually identical, although some words were changed in the British to conform to local dialect. Also, some sequences were shot exclusively for foreign audiences. This was the case for the British and French versions. In other cases, particular shots in American-produced sequences were changed to accommodate foreign sensibilities. In "Movies March On," for example, a sequence featuring very early motion pictures showed American-made films in the American version and French-made films in the French. Finally, as a result of censorship, particular sequences in the American edition of *The March of Time* were sometimes moved by foreign authorities and so were never seen by overseas audiences.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup>Press Release Biography of Westbrook Van Voorhis, 1941, *March of Time* Movie File 1941, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>304</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 43; *March of Time* Vol. 5, #12 Production File; Letter from Richard DeRochemont to Louis DeRochemont discussing removal of certain scenes from *March of Time* issues released in Great Britain, March 4, 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life

All of the music for *The March of Time* was original in the sense that it was created expressly for the series. However, for any significant issue, only part of the music would be newly written, while the other parts would be borrowed from the library of music scores that musical director Jack Shaindlin and staff continually generated for *The March of Time*. These pieces were often written under considerable time pressure. With the passing of years stereotyped, predictable scenes and sequences appeared in *The March of Time*. In these cases, Shaindlin simply went to his collection of previously written scores and pulled out an appropriate piece of music. By varying both the length and tempo of the various musical selections, Shaindlin could be sure of exact synchronism between the music, the edited footage on the screen, and the narration.<sup>305</sup>

One last decision-making step remained before release of the finished film. Without exception, all releases were viewed by Time Inc.'s legal staff, whose were tasked with anticipating actions for libel, slander and invasion of privacy. There is no way of knowing what conversations took place over the years between de Rochemont and Larsen and how many changes may have been required of the former by the latter. It is highly unlikely that any release of *The March of Time* would be allowed to endanger Luce's publishing and journalistic empire. For that matter, journalistic practice throughout the country, in some instances led by Time Inc., publications was undergoing rapid changes during the 1930s, becoming more sophisticated and aggressive. *Time* and *Life* magazines themselves were regularly sued and censored throughout the United States and foreign countries. The regular, pre-release examination of *March of Time* issues by the legal staff

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Building, New York City, 2-3.

<sup>305</sup> Glenn, Handbook for Shooting, 10.

provided a monitoring function which allowed executives to assess the likelihood of legal actions, to determine the extent of their probable liability and to prepare for such legal eventualities as seemed likely. As a result, *The March of Time* rarely lost a case. Nearly all suits were either dropped along the way or settled out of court with symbolic settlements.<sup>306</sup>

By 1938, *The March of Time* had begun more systemic examination of foreign affairs, a particular interest though at this point latent interest of Time Inc., founder and chief Henry Luce. Even prior to Luce's 1940 articulation of his American Century ideal, *The March of Time* began hinting that a more assertive American presence in global affairs was necessary and probably inevitable. In the third release of 1938, *The March of Time* began examining the multiple failures of the nearly irrelevant League of Nations. In a bitter review, the film's editors paraded the failures of the League—German rearmament; Japan's invasions of China in 1931 and 1937 (a particular sore spot with Luce); the Italian invasion of Ethiopia; and Japan, Germany and Italy quitting the League. Van Voorhis' narration concluded "With mounting bills the nations move toward war." The film had been put together mostly with newsreel stock footage, although a shot of Italian League delegates booing Haile Selassie was recreated in *The March of Time*'s New York studios.<sup>307</sup> The *New Yorker* found the release particularly sobering, stating that "the chapter on the League of Nations in 'The March of Time,' tracing its story from Wilson to Eden, deserves all your attention and may well occupy your mind during the

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<sup>306</sup>Elson, 1:338-339.

<sup>307</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 18, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time* Vol. 4, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

long hours of the night.”<sup>308</sup> A pervasive pessimism hangs over the film; the failures of 1930s collective security make it plain that eventually the United States will have to play a more active role in world affairs, even if purely for self-preservation.

*The March of Time*'s April 1938 release, titled “Nazi Conquest—No. 1” was another spirited look at Adolf Hitler and his return to Austria, the place of his birth, following the Anschluss. The March of Time slyly noted that the Anschluss had been predicted in Hitler's autobiography *Mein Kampf* fully fourteen years before the German takeover of Austria. The editors and writers labeled the event a prelude to further expansion outlined by Hitler in the book. Included in the film was an admiring reenactment of the coverage from Vienna of NBC radio correspondent Max Jordan.<sup>309</sup> Again, the viewer was left with the impression that European events will eventually ensnare the United States.

The international situation provided graphic material for eight issues appearing between July 1938 and January 1939. “G-Men of the Sea” examined the role of the Coast Guard as protector of American territorial waters and in fighting crime.<sup>310</sup> “Threat to Gibraltar” explained British and French efforts at fighting pro-fascist uprisings among Moroccan natives of the International Zone of Tangier, forty miles from the British base

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<sup>308</sup>Clip contained in *March of Time* Vol. 4, #8 Production File.

<sup>309</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 15, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 4, #9, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>310</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 8, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

at Gibraltar.<sup>311</sup>

“Prelude to Conquest,” *The March of Time*’s September release, provided a striking example of the producers success in anticipating news events and provided another dire warning of the dangers of Nazi expansionism in Europe. The film continued the examination of Hitler’s rise to power and his designs on Europe begun by *The March of Time* in its earlier film, “Nazi Conquest No. 1.” In this second film, audiences found Hitler in possession of Austria and eyeing Czechoslovakia. *The March of Time* carefully outlined the position of the Sudeten German-speaking population of Czechoslovakia as pawns in Germany’s bid for territorial expansion. Cameras showed mobilization of German troops as Czech President Eduard Benes denied German demands. The film was released on September 2, 1938. Within three weeks of its release, the Czech crisis, brewing all summer, finally climaxed at Munich. Although some reviewers praised *The March of Time*’s prescience in anticipating the crisis, Hitler’s designs on the Sudetenland were well documented and reported throughout the spring and summer of 1938. *The March of Time*’s issue on the crisis was well-planned and timed, but was also the result of careful and extensive research and knowledge of European politics by the film’s staff.<sup>312</sup> Yet again, the implication is that America will eventually have to involve itself in international affairs.

*The March of Time* issues released throughout the late 1930s also demonstrated an

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<sup>311</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 6, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.

<sup>312</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 2, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #1 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland .

obsession with military affairs and preparedness, a natural outgrowth of the producers growing concern over the international situation. However, the prescience shown by *The March of Time* in its analysis of European politics did not necessarily translate into an understanding of how the next war would be fought. This was amply demonstrated by *The March of Time*'s October 1938 release, titled "Inside the Maginot Line." A single subject issue, with vivid, exclusive footage, the film displayed the French fortifications along the German-French border. The narration and sequencing of the shots left the reader with the impression that the Maginot Line was impregnable. Extending 125 miles from the Belgian border to the Swiss frontier, stocked to withstand a year's siege, the Maginot Line was shown supported by an army described in the film as "the most formidable fighting machine in Europe today." The film lavished praise on French commander-in-chief Marie Gustave Gamelin, calling the General an able strategist equal to any task. This assessment was not born out by events.<sup>313</sup>

If de Rochemont had looked a little more carefully at the pro-French script that he and his staff had written, he might have realized that *The March of Time* was engaged in a bit of whistling past the graveyard when assessing French preparedness. For example, the narration over a scene of sloppy, disorganized French soldiers intones "In comparison with soldiers in armies where strict attention is paid to every detail of military dress, a company of French recruits may appear slovenly...After a few months training, while their bearing may lack traditional military smartness, French recruits are on their way to

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<sup>313</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 28, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #3 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

becoming soldiers...”<sup>314</sup>

The film had originally been planned and produced as akin to a feature, running about an hour. Richard de Rochemont, based in Paris and running *The March of Time*'s operations in Europe, scooped the newsreels by gaining access to the fortifications of the Maginot Line, shooting thousands of feet of film exhaustive in its detail. De Rochemont wanted to premiere the 60-minute film at a theater on the Champs Elysees, at about the same time it was released in the United States. De Rochemont had secured the cooperation of the French army but at the last moment the French Foreign Office demanded that it be withdrawn entirely. Richard de Rochemont was told that the film might annoy the Germans, a not irrelevant consideration, given the divisions within the French government over how to deal with Germany in the wake of the Munich conference.<sup>315</sup> De Rochemont was compelled to withdraw the film and the American version was shortened to a more conventional 20-minute length for domestic release in October 1938.

The November release, “Uncle Sam: The Good Neighbor,” showed Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s efforts to recruit well qualified Americans for the Foreign Service. US efforts to improve and strengthen relations with Latin America and improve anti-Fascist solidarity within the Western Hemisphere were emphasized.<sup>316</sup>

The last of this group of films focused on the worsening global situation was “The

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<sup>314</sup>Ibid.

<sup>315</sup>Richard DeRochemont Reminiscences, 23-24; *March of Time* Vol 5, #3 Production File.

<sup>316</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 25, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Refugee–Today and Tomorrow,” which starkly portrayed the plight of homeless, persecuted refugees in Central Europe and Asia.<sup>317</sup> The authentic material was powerful, especially that photographed by *March of Time* cameramen in Amsterdam. The following excerpt from their dope sheets give a hint of their difficulties:

(DEC. 1938): Shot of sign, Dutch Jewish Hospital. End of reel. All these shots have been made with difficulty; the Jews are so scared and afraid to be photographed, for fear that German agents may recognize them in America and take revenge on their relatives in Germany. This sounds absurd but many refused to come into the shots.<sup>318</sup>

Reenactments included scenes of a Gestapo headquarters and a concentration camp. The film was well received by critics and established beyond all doubt the anti-fascist position of the film’s producers. Basil Wright, reviewing the film in *Spectator* on January 13, 1939 wrote “it attacks Japan and it attacks Hitler and his gang with stinging and unequivocal accusations of barbarisms and the commentator’s grim story is punched home point-by-point by the well-edited scenes, many of which are in themselves accusations...”<sup>319</sup>

From the small group of film workers at the old 54<sup>th</sup> Street Fox studios in 1935, *The March of Time* had now grown to fifty-eight permanent employees, not including

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<sup>317</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 23, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #5 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>318</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #5 Production File.

<sup>319</sup>Basil Wright, “The Cinema,” *Spectator*, January 13, 1939, 52. Wright’s article contains a review of “Refugee, Today and Tomorrow.”

numerous contributing cameramen throughout the world and the reporting resources of Time Inc. Expanding as well were the production and editorial facilities of the organization. In April 1938, a portion of the administration offices were moved to the Time/Life building in Rockefeller Center, where the publishing offices occupied the upper seven floors. A year later, another floor was taken by *The March of Time* for its production facilities on Lexington Avenue, giving the film series three floors.<sup>320</sup>

*The March of Time* now reached a theatrical audience estimated at between 20 and 26 million a month. The series was shown in approximately 10,000 theaters in the United States alone, an unprecedented scope for a regular film series. Recreating and staging of certain scenes (usually because the film was unobtainable) remained a prominent feature of *March of Time* productions. For example, as much as 40 percent of the controversial "Nazi Conquest No. 1" had been staged.<sup>321</sup>

As time passed, another notable feature of *The March of Time* emerged, the willingness of prominent individuals to appear in the series.<sup>322</sup> In spite of the risks involved, these individuals appeared because *The March of Time*, with its enormous audience, provided visibility for them and their ideas which was unprecedented and of incalculable value. No matter how minimal a person's contribution to society, or how odd his personality or behavior, his appearance on *The March of Time* conferred

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<sup>320</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 39; Elson, 1: 355; Memo from Roy Larsen to Henry Luce describing new production facilities, April 20, 1938, *March of Time* Movie File, 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>321</sup>Report to the President, 1938, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Memo on Reenactments, dated 1944, *March of Time* Movie File 1944, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; *March of Time* Vol. 4, #9 Production File.

<sup>322</sup>Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 36.

legitimacy. This was a result not only of the film series audience and prestige but of the greater imprint of Time Inc., itself. The Time “brand” had enormous authority and credibility with the public; this authority transferred itself to *The March of Time* as it had previously with *Life* and *Fortune*.

The early releases of 1939 continued *The March of Time*’s focus on foreign affairs and a darkening global picture. “The Mediterranean—Background for War” found Mussolini seeking control of Tunisia and with it a stranglehold on European shipping and trade. The film showed French Premier Eduard Daladier assembling the French navy to meet the Italian threat.<sup>323</sup> “Japan-Master of the Orient” reviewed that empire’s aggressive foreign policy in Asia. Van Voorhis intoned “Sober Japanese wonder fearfully how long the patience of the great Western nations will brook this lawless threat to the peace of the world,” a statement that revealed a paternalistic and colonial point of view and seriously, perhaps willfully, misread the mind of the Japanese public.<sup>324</sup> “Soldiers with Wings” covered the growth of American aeronautics and the vast changes that air power had brought to global trade, commerce, politics and military strategy. The film bemoaned American unpreparedness with a pointed comparison to German airpower and related the fear that Europeans felt at the military air buildup on the continent.<sup>325</sup>

The film was released on September 1, 1939. On the same day, German bombers

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<sup>323</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>324</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #9 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>325</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 6, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.01, National Archives and Records Administration.

swept unchecked over Poland as Hitler finally launched his long threatened European war. Within 48 hours, Britain and France had declared war on Germany.

#### Chapter Four: Mr. Luce's Century

*The March of Time* from its inception 1935, had emphasized foreign relations and the changing nature of global politics in its subjects and presentations. A definite influence on *The March of Time*'s content was producer Louis de Rochemont, a former Navy man with a lifelong interest in foreign and military (particularly naval) affairs. A close examination of the content of *The March of Time* during its sixteen year run and in particular through the stewardship of Louis de Rochemont from 1935 to mid-1943, reveals a consistent emphasis on European politics, military preparedness, the possibility

of greater American intervention in world affairs, the Americas and appeals for American ethnic and cultural unity in face of the fascist threat.

The evolution of *The March of Time*'s editorial thinking on the issues of American preparedness, the often chaotic global situation of the 1930s, American intervention in world affairs and ultimately war, outpaced other Time Inc., publications. But by the early 1940s, *The March of Time*, *Life*, *Time* and *Fortune* all reflected an internationalist, interventionist viewpoint that followed the thinking of publisher Henry Luce. However, analysis of the content of early *March of Time* releases revealed that the film series displayed a viewpoint on international affairs that was more aggressively internationalist than other Time Inc., publications. Advocacy of a continual American activism in foreign affairs was a position that some observers saw as antithetical to traditional American values.

Thus, *The March of Time* took a controversial position on the ongoing 1930s conversation about the definition of America and Americanism.

One of the first *March of Time* issues, released on March 8, 1935, analyzed the rebirth of Germany under Adolf Hitler. Titled simply "Germany," this relatively brief story (until 1938 *The March of Time* presented three segments in each release) detailed the recovery of the German economy under Hitler, the Nazi suppression of the unions and rival political parties, and the dictator's promises of rearmament. Older footage showed the desperate straits of the German people after defeat in World War I and the "humiliation" of Versailles. A series of animated graphs and charts showed the decline of German industrial power and the collapse of the German mark. The overall tone was

mixed, noting Hitler's economic accomplishments while decrying the erosion of civil liberties within Germany. The visual imagery of the piece was positive however; most of the shots were of seemingly happy Germans getting on with work, while discussion of ongoing repression was limited to narration and not dramatized or shown.<sup>326</sup> Notes within the production file and on the "dope sheets" did not reveal any particular bias in one direction or another regarding the regime. Overall, the presentation was decidedly mixed and made no clear, definitive statement about the nature of the Nazi regime, a fact criticized by some reviewers. Ray Ludlow and Eva Goldbeck, writing in *New Theater*, called the presentation of Hitler "strange in its attempted objectivity."<sup>327</sup>

Yet, a series of *March of Time* issues produced in 1935 centered on American preparedness and the issue of neutrality. The first, titled "Navy War Games," was released on May 31, 1935. "Navy War Games" focused on the Pacific Fleet stationed at San Francisco, San Diego and Hawaii. Granted access to the planning and execution of wartime preparation exercises by the Navy Department, *The March of Time* began its examination with a description of a meeting of top Naval personnel in Washington DC. Narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis boomed, "Expert in warfare, our admirals start planning with an assessment of any and all threats to the United States on the high seas." The scene then shifts to navy crews in the Pacific, with a description of the capabilities of each battleship then in service and a projection of increasing American strength in years to come. The threat mentioned in the film is clearly Japan, identified obliquely; "any

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<sup>326</sup> *March of Time* Vol. 1, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 8, 1935) *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland .

<sup>327</sup> *March of Time* Vol. 1, #2; *March of Time* Vol. 1, # 2 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT, 1.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; Ray Ludlow and Eva Goldbeck, "Time Marches Where?" *New Theater* March 1935.

threat from the East can be dealt with from American bases throughout the Pacific” according to *The March of Time*. An animated map showed all of the American possessions and bases in the Pacific in relation to Japan, with the clear implication being that of an American barrier to Japanese expansion stretching across the Pacific. The audience was left with the impression that the Navy was equal to any conceivable challenge in the Pacific.<sup>328</sup> Given de Rochemont’s lifelong identification with and passion for the Navy this presentation was not surprising. Notations on his copy of the script directing the editors to “include more shots of ships steaming in line and more shots of polished drill” in a sequence detailing battleship firepower demonstrate his commitment to showing the Navy in the best possible light.<sup>329</sup>

A second film in this sequence dealt with the Army. Titled “Army” it was released by *The March of Time* on August 16, 1935. Like its predecessor “Navy,” “Army” dealt with American preparedness for a potential global conflict. The film begins with shots of the War Department in Washington DC, identified as the “nerve center of American might.” Maps of Europe and Asia are displayed prominently as officers and men discuss dispatches, review telegrams, answer phones and briskly enter and exit offices in what appears to be a beehive of activity. After this historical background, the film then discussed past American military triumphs, when “roused to war and victory was this peace-loving nation.”<sup>330</sup> Each past war is dramatized with archival and recreated

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<sup>328</sup>*March of Time* Vol. 1, #4; *March of Time* Vol. 1, #4 Production File.

<sup>329</sup>Shooting script for *March of Time* Vol. 1, #4, Louis de Rochemont Collection, Box 6, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming.

<sup>330</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 16, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

footage of combat showing American forces advancing and at the point of triumph. The next sequence is a series of shots showing Army maneuvers. The contrast between past glories and present condition is obvious and critical. The narrator notes that American forces train with outdated weapons left over from the First World War while small companies of soldiers have to represent larger units during training because of the paucity of recruits. A graph showing the strength and size of the US Army relative to other world powers flashes on the screen; America rates sixteenth, below Portugal.<sup>331</sup> The message could not be more obvious to the viewer. America has to begin the process of rearmament or face dire consequences.

The third and final installment of this exploration of American military preparedness, "Neutrality," was released on October 18, 1935. "Neutrality" dealt with the issue of American engagement in the larger world, coming on the heels of passage of the Neutrality Act limiting American trade to belligerents by Congress. "Neutrality" began with what became a standard *March of Time* technique, a discussion between two "men on the street" about the international situation. The two are standing on a street-corner near a newsstand; one is reading a newspaper with the blaring headline "Crisis in Europe!" The first man states "We need to stay out of Europe's mess...we have enough problems over here." In response, his companion says that "If we don't look out, their problems will become our problems."<sup>332</sup>

The film then warned of the impossibility of America remaining completely out

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<sup>331</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, #5.

<sup>332</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 18, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

of foreign affairs, explaining the necessity of global trade to the recovering American economy, and in particular the need for free movement of raw materials to power industry around the world. An animated globe shows the movement of finished products and raw materials around the world, while the narrator notes that “war or other disruptions in a far-off corner of the world can have dire consequences to the average American.”<sup>333</sup> A leading sponsor of Neutrality legislation in Congress, Senator Gerald P. Nye, speaks directly into the camera, telling Americans that the recent past has shown the folly of getting involved in foreign conflicts. Following Nye’s statement, the internationalist viewpoint is given by an unidentified professor, stating that “America cannot retreat completely from the world.”<sup>334</sup>

The viewer is left with a somewhat muddled impression of the issue of neutrality that contrasts with the straightforward sentiments expressed in “Army” and “Navy.” De Rochemont himself was disappointed with the sequence of films, saying in a production memo attached to the file for “Neutrality” that “we haven’t made the point forcefully enough...this is far too ambiguous and I fear blunts the impact of early efforts.”<sup>335</sup> Presumably the unidentified writer of this note, possibly de Rochemont, was concerned that the tone of this particular release was not interventionist enough. Critics also criticized the film for not taking a clear stand on the issue. In an otherwise glowing review of *The March of Time* in the *Listener* dated November 20, 1935, Alastair Cooke

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<sup>333</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #7.

<sup>334</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #7; *March of Time* Vol. 1, #7 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Notes in the Production File do not identify the professor but indicate that he may be an actor playing the role.

<sup>335</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #7 Production File; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences.

noted that “The lack of clarity in this issue is, one hopes, a rare occurrence...”<sup>336</sup>

The December 13, 1935 release of “Japan-China” by *The March of Time* addressed ongoing conflicts in Asia. Not surprisingly, this film was forthright in its denunciation of Japanese strategy and policy towards China. Reflecting Luce’s interest in China, *The March of Time* regularly examined Chinese affairs. Directed by newsreel and *March of Time* veteran Jack Glenn, the film opens with a description of a peaceful China, “learning to work together under...respected leader Chaing Kai Shek.” A series of shots show Chaing and his wife touring farms, factories, greeting diplomats and high officials, and Chaing working at his desk surrounded by aides. Interestingly, the film makes mention of Chaing’s Christianity, stating “the leader is rare among his people in his choice of faith.”<sup>337</sup>

This idyll of industry and contentment was shattered by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, according to *The March of Time*. The narration contended that an unprovoked invasion of China by Japan’s Kwantung Army “violated in a manner most base international law, and provoking the outrage of the civilized world.”<sup>338</sup> The film then shows Japanese troops ravishing the Manchurian countryside, burning crops, and demanding papers at gunpoint from Chinese civilians. There is further speculation about the motives of Japan in the rest of China and Asia. The narration states that there is little reason to suspect that the conflict between China and Japan, then in a lull, was over, and

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<sup>336</sup>Cooke, 932.

<sup>337</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 1, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 13, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #9 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>338</sup>*Ibid.*

that the rest of the world must watch developments between the two Asian behemoths with great care and caution.<sup>339</sup>

Luce himself took a great interest in this particular release, injecting himself into the editorial process, rare for *The March of Time*. During this period Luce was consumed with planning *Life* magazine and settling into his new marriage. Yet in a memo to de Rochemont, Luce asks to see “all scripts pertaining to the proposed China film,” and on one occasion asked for updates on shooting.<sup>340</sup> Given Luce’s lifelong passion for China, his interest in this *March of Time* release is not surprising.

The *March of Time* release dated April 17, 1936 contained a short film titled “Veterans of Future Wars.” “Veterans of Future Wars” had as its subject a growing peace movement among college men. An offshoot of similar organizations at English universities, the Veterans of Future Wars took the viewpoint that the potential carnage of a future war was, based on the experience of the Great War, so potentially vast that all attempts must be made to maintain peace. Furthermore, the young bore the responsibility of preventing cataclysms like the First World War. The critical issue for the Veterans of Future Wars was rearmament. The group is shown to be completely in favor of disarmament, believing that “rearmament leads to aggression.”<sup>341</sup> The students do not make much of a distinction, if any, between the military policies of the fascist nations and the Western democracies, a crucial point noted in the narration. The activities shown

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<sup>339</sup>Ibid.

<sup>340</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Louis de Rochemont, October 1, 1935, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Memo from Henry Luce to Roy Larsen titled “Info on MOT China” October 1935, Luce Correspondence File, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City

<sup>341</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 17, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

being undertaken by the Veterans of Future Wars largely consist of making speeches at orderly demonstrations. In the end, the film praised their commitment to the cause of peace while leaving open the question of their efficacy.<sup>342</sup>

“Veterans of Future Wars” was significant because it pointed to the growing unease that Americans had regarding global affairs. This sense of dread about the possibility of being dragged into another European war did not become acute until 1940-41, when polls indicated a majority of Americans believed that the United States would eventually become embroiled in a foreign war in spite of public support for neutrality. However, the presence of organizations like the Veterans of Future Wars and *The March of Time*’s respectful treatment of the group indicated that there was an awareness of foreign threats on the part of the general public and decision-makers like the producers and editors of *The March of Time*. What was missing at this point was a consensus about what to do. *The March of Time*, early on, had staked out a position in favor of military preparedness and in the case of friendly nations like China, the possibility of direct aid.

*The March of Time* again took up affairs in Asia with its December 24, 1936 release titled significantly “China’s Dictator Kidnapped.” The issue here was the capture and detention of Chaing Kai Shek by a cadre of his own generals dissatisfied with Chaing’s policy towards Japan, which they viewed as overly lenient and soft. Chaing was taken prisoner in late November 1936 and held for a number of weeks, a sensational story that caused a flurry of speculation about the future course of Chinese politics and the potential for a wider military conflict in Asia. The sequence opens with shots of Japanese soldiers moving through Chinese villages and cities, while the narrator intoned that “the

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<sup>342</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #4.

remorseless Japanese conquest of China has begun again.”<sup>343</sup> An animated map showed the areas of China already under Japanese control, while the next scene shows a harried Chaing Kai Shek conferring with his generals. The serene confidence exuded by Chaing in “Japan-China” (and by extension of *The March of Time*) was gone; the viewer was left with the impression of a rout of disorganized Chinese troops, streaming into the interior under inept Nationalist leadership. A disheveled Chaing is shown at a news conference, surrounded by his captors. The overall impression left by “China’s Dictator Kidnapped” was that China was tottering, with serious implications for the rest of Asia and America. Somewhat surprisingly, the film makes note of Mao Tse Tung’s Communists, stating that they are willing to carry the fight to the Japanese.<sup>344</sup> Unlike the earlier release “Japan-China” there is no indication in this issue’s production files of any intervention or detailed interest by Luce in the subject matter.

However, Asia and its relationship with the United States was to be a perennial topic for *The March of Time* throughout its sixteen year history. The reasons for this are both practical and philosophical. Between 1935 and 1951 Asia, particularly East Asia where Japan and China competed for regional supremacy until 1945, was the scene of constant conflict, with vast military campaigns, revolutionary upheavals and dramatic changes in Asia states. The Asian world was newsworthy, with colorful personalities stimulating interest and news coverage. In fact, the final release by *The March of Time*, August 1951's “Formosa: Island of Promise,” examined Chaing Kai Shek’s exiled

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<sup>343</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 3, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 24, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>344</sup>*Ibid.*

Nationalist regime on Formosa (Taiwan).<sup>345</sup> Also, a large portion of American elite opinion believed that Asia was the emerging region of the world, a possible successor to Europe and a future competitor to the United States. Luce certainly shared this view; it reflected the beliefs inculcated in him during his missionary childhood in China. Luce's experience in China was to influence him in profound ways. Luce had perhaps an exaggerated sense of the kinship between Asian peoples and the United States, believing that Asians were naturally predisposed to accept American values.<sup>346</sup> Also, his missionary childhood gave the publisher a somewhat distorted view of American life, particularly with respect to small town America and the middle class. This view, highly sentimental and filled with a sense of religious mission, profoundly influenced *The March of Time's* and other Time Inc.'s publication's portrayal of America.

1937 saw a number of *March of Time* issues devoted to foreign affairs. One of the more interesting was titled "Britain's Food Defenses" released April 16, 1937. Since reaching an agreement to distribute *The March of Time* in Great Britain in mid-1936, the series had undertaken a number of subjects of interest to British audiences, including "England's Tithe War" concerning funding for the Church of England, "Coronation Crisis," a recapitulation of the abdication of King Edward VIII and a preview of the upcoming investiture of George VI, and "Irish Republic-1937" an analysis of conditions within the Irish Free State and the possibility of complete independence for Ireland. Both de Rochemont and Luce viewed the United Kingdom and British Empire as fertile

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<sup>345</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 17, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 1951), *March of Time* Collection, MT 17.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>346</sup>Robert Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait Of The Man Who Created The American Century*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 35-44, 186-197.

territory for expansion for *The March of Time* and de Rochemont in particular was cognizant of giving British audiences material they could embrace.<sup>347</sup>

“Britain’s Food Defenses” was notable for its assumption of the likelihood of a general European conflict, and took note of the measures that British officials were taking to deal with the economic ramifications of a new war. The utter dependence of Britain on overseas trade was stressed, with a series of shots of busy English ports unloading foodstuffs and other raw materials “culled from the farthest reaches of the Empire, upon which the sun never sets.”<sup>348</sup> A number of British officials, including a leading member of the Board of Trade, were interviewed, each stressing the necessity for maintaining open seas lanes in any conflict. Thus, the burden for maintaining Britain’s food supply at an acceptable level would fall to one of the traditional sources of British strength, the Royal Navy. Narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis stated that the key to British survival in a European war would be maintaining control of the high seas for communication and trade. A map showed the ring of British bases circling the globe.<sup>349</sup> Shots of the Royal Navy at maneuvers were shown, and a table demonstrated the superiority in tonnage of the Royal Navy in comparison to American, French, Italian, Japanese and German naval forces.<sup>350</sup> The implication here was obvious; Britain was wholly dependent on free access to the seas, and it was thus necessary for the British to maintain a dominant naval

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<sup>347</sup>Louis De Rochemont Reminiscences, 44.

<sup>348</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated April 16, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>349</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #9 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. A memo to Louis de Rochemont contained in the file indicates that the footage of the British Navy was obtained from “British *Pathe*” and supplemented by *The March of Time*’s extensive stock footage library.

presence to ensure the island nation's survival in any future war. This necessity for freedom of the seas to the American economy was stated in a discussion of the extensive trade ties, particularly in agriculture, that the United States maintained with Britain and Europe.<sup>351</sup>

*The March of Time* explored tensions in Central and Eastern Europe with its June 11, 1937 release titled "Poland and War." De Rochemont and his production team, including writer Lothar Wolff, proved prescient in their exploration of the twin pressures on Poland from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. At this time, most attention regarding Europe was focused on the Spanish Civil War. "Poland and War" began with a historical overview of the multiple partitions of Poland among more powerful states and its disappearance as a nation-state at one point in the late eighteenth century. There were several allusions to the strong Catholic faith of the Polish people; the Church was described as a "source constant of moral strength for the brave Poles." A map illustrates the vulnerable strategic position of Poland's borders, with wide and flat terrain and an expansionist Germany to the West and a covetous Russia to the East. The government of Marshal Josef Pilsuduski (who died in 1935) was praised for giving order and stability to the Poles in the 1920s, and for its attention to military detail. The film showed a squadron of "superbly trained" Polish cavalry and an airfield filled with modern fighter planes. In conclusion, the narrator stated that "historical enemies may surround Poland, but the greatest asset of this new nation is the courageous and faithful Pole."<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol., 3, #9.

<sup>352</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 3, #11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 11, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.11, National Archives and Records Administration; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #11 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

By the end of 1937 *The March of Time*'s position on foreign affairs was becoming more and more coherent and overt. In general, *The March of Time* editorially advocated a strong national defense, opposition to aggression and free trade—hardly radical positions for the time. De Rochemont believed or maintained that, right up to mid-late 1941, that *The March of Time* was not interventionist, as some of its critics claimed.<sup>353</sup> However, as the world situation worsened in the late 1930s, the thrust of *The March of Time* regarding the American role in the world changed, becoming more forthrightly opposed to aggression and advocating robust American engagement in the wider world. This shift occurred in tandem with Henry Luce's growing interest in international affairs and American involvement in the world, culminating in his articulation of “the American Century” in 1940.

Between 1938 and the end of 1941, *The March of Time* greatly increased its coverage of international affairs and in particular its examination of the American role in the world. There are several explanations for this phenomenon. First, in late 1938, *The March of Time* permanently abandoned its multi-subject per release format, to analyze one topic per issue. Starting in 1938, *The March of Time* experimented with single subject issues, usually fifteen to twenty minutes each, with a permanent change to a single subject format coming in the fall of the year. Most issues released during 1938 examined only two topics where three had been the norm previously. This change allowed more in-depth examination of relevant events and personalities, a format de Rochemont, in

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<sup>353</sup>Memo from Richard de Rochemont to Louis de Rochemont concerning Senate hearings, September 5, 1941, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1941, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

particular, had pushed for years.<sup>354</sup> The advantages were obvious. Complex topics could be examined in much greater depth, while the resources of *The March of Time* organization were much more focused. Editors, writers and producers all concentrated on a single subject each month, rather than having to keep track of several projects in production simultaneously. There could be greater advance planning for contemplated topics, with the ability to allocate more time and effort to research, writing and shooting. Finally, what emerged after *The March of Time* moved to the single subject format was a more documentary, harder edged style in the series' productions. Reflecting the worsening international situation, frivolous fare largely disappeared from *March of Time* releases.

The first single subject format film released by *The March of Time* was "Inside Nazi Germany," which premiered on January 21, 1938. "Inside Nazi Germany," relying almost exclusively on recreated scenes, was instantly the most controversial *March of Time* release during its sixteen year run. As discussed in Chapter Three, the film led to a poisoning of relations between the German government and Time Inc., officials, threats of legal action by German consuls, boycotts of *The March of Time* in several cities, and the possibility of censorship by U.S. government officials.<sup>355</sup>

The increased emphasis on foreign affairs continued throughout 1938. *The March of Time* released "Arms and the League" on March 18, 1938. Personally written by de Rochemont, "Arms and the League" had as its subject the continued ineffectual

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<sup>354</sup>“ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A SINGLE SUBJECT FORMAT FOR MOT, Louis de Rochemont to Roy Larsen, January 8, 1937, *March of Time* Movie File 1937, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>355</sup>What the Nation's Press Thinks; De Rochemont Reminiscences.

performance of the League of Nations in the face of growing violence and strife around the world. The film began with a review of trouble spots around the world and the League's failure to address them: civil war in Spain, continued fighting in Asia between China and Japan, renewed demands for European territory by Hitler's Germany. In each case the efforts of the League were examined and found wanting. The film concluded with speculation that the Wilsonian dream of collective security was perhaps dead and that the only reasonable course for the democratic world was increased vigilance and preparedness, with the associated costs of an increased defense burden.<sup>356</sup>

*The March of Time* continued its emphasis on foreign affairs throughout 1938. "Nazi Conquest # 1" focused on Hitler's annexation of Austria, predicting through its title that the German dictator's appetite would not be sated by occupying his country of birth.<sup>357</sup> The "Threat to Gibraltar" to Britain posed by the possibility of a fascist triumph in Spain and the resultant instability to British shipping throughout the Mediterranean was explored.<sup>358</sup> The French army and its preparations for combat was examined in "Inside the Maginot Line," released in the fall of 1938. This *March of Time* production, heavily influenced by *March of Time* Paris chief Richard de Rochemont, greatly overestimated the capacities of the French army, deficiencies starkly revealed by the

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<sup>356</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 18, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 4, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>357</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 4, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 18, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>358</sup>*March of Time* Vol. 4, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 6, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

German Whermacht in the spring and summer of 1940.<sup>359</sup>

The years immediately prior to American involvement in World War II saw *The March of Time* examine the way in which Americans viewed their country's proper place in international relations. "War, Peace and Propaganda," released in June 1939, examined these debates, taking as its subject the conflict between interventionist and isolationist groups in the United States, noting that each side on occasion employed hyperbole and used methods of propaganda when it suited their purposes. What the film rather cleverly did was to juxtapose the nations and ideologies overseas that might exploit continued American isolation, in contrast to democratic countries. This was accomplished through a series of montages and dissolves stressing the similarities of American society with European democracies.<sup>360</sup> This particular release was well received; for example, Edgar Antsey, writing in his column "the Cinema" in *Spectator*, called "War, Peace and Propaganda" a "welcome tonic...artfully done with a skillful, almost sly style of exposition."<sup>361</sup>

*The March of Time* reviewed America's relations with Latin America in "Uncle Sam: The Good Neighbor" released on November 25, 1938. The film tended to gloss over past American conflicts with Latin American nations, choosing to emphasize recent developments in the wake of President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, articulated in

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<sup>359</sup>*March of Time* Vol. 5, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 28, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time* Vol. 5, # 3 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>360</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, # 11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #11 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; Glenn, Handbook For Shooting, 11; Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 48.

<sup>361</sup>Edgar Antsey, "the Cinema", Review of "War, Peace and Propaganda," *Spectator*, August 1939, 302.

1933. Stressing the benefits of good relations between the US and the nations of the Southern Hemisphere, the film noted the increase in trade between America and Latin America during the 1930s and the necessity of maintaining free and open access to the Caribbean and the South Atlantic for both the United States and Latin American states. It also stated that Latin America could be susceptible to “foreign ideologies” and that strong American engagement in the region could prevent the subversion of local governments.<sup>362</sup>

Prompted by De Rochemont, *The March of Time* was becoming more and more interventionist, ahead of other Time Inc., publications and Luce’s own thinking. Films such as “Uncle Sam-The Farmer,” “America’s Youth” and “The US Navy-1940” all explored the implications of greater American involvement overseas, American preparedness and the potential impact on ordinary Americans.<sup>363</sup> This emphasis on the possibility of American intervention and its implications reached its culmination with the production and release of *The March of Time*’s feature length production, *The Ramparts We Watch* in 1940.

For some time, de Rochemont had been trying to bring Time Inc., into the production of feature-length motion pictures. The closest he had come was “Inside the Maginot Line,” scrapped because of pressure from the French government. The leadership of Time Inc., ever sensitive about its image, debated the notion of feature film-

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<sup>362</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 5, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 25, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland ; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>363</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 6, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 6, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 6, # 11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

making for a number of years.

At one point in the late 1930s, serious consideration was given to the release of a feature length documentary based on footage shot by cameramen in the Belgian Congo. The problem of colonialism was being widely debated and it was thought that the footage might provide a point of departure for a serious film discussion of the subject. *The March of Time* eventually rejected the idea and a film exploring the subject, titled *Dark Rapture*, was released by MGM in 1938.<sup>364</sup>

By late 1938, de Rochemont and Larsen had begun plans for a film which would draw a parallel between the international tensions and political pressures then current in the world and similar events which had drawn the United States into World War I. It was decided to re-create these earlier events, interpreting the political and military issues of World War I through their impact on the day-to-day lives of the middle-class members of typical American town. De Rochemont chose New London, Connecticut as the backdrop for the story.<sup>365</sup>

The film's script emphasized the reluctance of the town's citizens to face political and military realities in 1914; the eagerness of the town's young men to get into the war before it ended; the disruptive effects of the war, once declared, upon the small community and its various ethnic groups; and inevitable despair of parents, wives and lovers who saw their men disappear into the maw of trench warfare.<sup>366</sup> The argument of

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<sup>364</sup>Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 35.

<sup>365</sup>*The Ramparts We Watch*, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT Ramparts, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The Ramparts We Watch* Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT Ramparts, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. *The Ramparts We Watch* was distributed nationally by RKO Pictures.

<sup>366</sup>*The Ramparts We Watch*; *The Ramparts We Watch* Production File; Louis DeRochemont Memoir 11, 41-42.

the film was that world peace, the integrity of small nations and the American ideal of democratic government were threatened by foreign ideologies and militarism. The tendency of Americans toward isolationism and the nation's lack of preparedness (both psychological and military) in 1914 and by implication the late 1930s were also highlighted.<sup>367</sup>

Production was authorized by early 1939. Soon thereafter, *March of Time* staff began the process of collecting special newsreel and stock footage for the film. By the time the film, titled *The Ramparts We Watch*, was produced, the staff had viewed tens of thousands of feet of both newsreel and official World War I footage for battle scenes, military and political personalities, and contemporary America. It was intended that whenever possible authentic locations were to be used for the film's dramatic scenes. The practice of filming a drama on location rather than on Hollywood sound stages or studio back lots was relatively novel in 1940, although for certain costume epics and westerns location filming was more common.<sup>368</sup>

More than 1400 townspeople and other nonprofessionals played parts in the production. Of these, approximately seventy-five had speaking parts. The role of an aged German professor was played by a doctor and his son by a Brown University undergraduate. The parts of a clergyman and a Hungarian housewife were played by their real-life counterparts. The only professional actor used was John Adair, who played a fictitious editor of the local paper. Intercut throughout were authentic shots of well-

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<sup>367</sup>*The Ramparts We Watch*.

<sup>368</sup>*The Ramparts We Watch* Production File. Memos and copies of the shooting script indicate locations and reenacted scenes.

known World War I personalities—Woodrow Wilson, General Pershing, Kaiser Wilhelm, Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, and many others. The costuming and staging was as authentic as the producers could make it.<sup>369</sup>

Production on the film began in the spring of 1939 and continued until August 1940, delayed on occasion by the fact that monthly issues of *The March of Time* had to be produced and released during the same period. Midway through production, World War II, which the film foretold, erupted in Europe with the German invasion of Poland. The German blitzkrieg rolled across Poland, and turned to Western Europe, requiring numerous revisions and reshooting to keep pace with events. Eventually the film's budget doubled to almost \$400,000.<sup>370</sup>

The film's story had been designed in such a manner that only the most obtuse members of the audience could fail to grasp the message or see the similarities between the ambitions of the Kaiser in 1914 and Hitler in 1939. The film was in some ways too harsh in its description of German actions in 1914, ascribing total blame for the European catastrophe on Germany, a stance hotly debated by later generations of historians. Given the progressive revelations about the barbarity of Nazi rule, this approach was not surprising. De Rochemont stretched the parallels to their logical limits and looked for a finish that would bring the film up-to-date in the most dramatic manner possible. He finally found his ending in a recently released Nazi propaganda combat film titled *Feldzug in Polen* (a version of which was released in the United States as *Baptism of*

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<sup>369</sup>*The Ramparts We Watch*; *The Ramparts We Watch* Production File. A list of cast members indicates the background of the various "actors" who worked on the film, along with comments about their strengths and weaknesses. The *March of Time*'s library of stock footage was used extensively in the film.

<sup>370</sup>Budget memo contained in *The Ramparts We Watch* Production File.

*Fire*), an account of the successful invasion of Poland. The film had been intended by Hitler and Goebbels to be seen widely throughout Europe and the western hemisphere, with the intent of intimidating leaders in neutral countries. It was privately screened for officials in many foreign capitals, for whom it provided an impressive portrait of Nazi military might.<sup>371</sup>

De Rochemont decided to end *The Ramparts We Watch* with a few carefully edited and narrated experts from *Feldzung in Polen*. He had to acquire the rights to it from the German film studio UFA, but the Nazi government, already having had unhappy experiences with *The March of Time*, would not license the film for de Rochemont's use unless he incorporated the original narration, unedited. De Rochemont was able to obtain a duplicate negative of the German film by methods that were not entirely clear. The best explanation was that a secret duplicate was made during a screening by German consular officials at *The March of Time*'s New York offices. The explanation by *The March of Time* was that the copy of *Feldzung in Polen* used had been seized in Bermuda by British officials.<sup>372</sup>

*The Ramparts We Watch*, with new footage and narration from *Feldzung in Polen*, was finally released at the end of August, 1940. It opened first at Loew's Palace Theater in Memphis, Tennessee and was booked nationally by Warner Brothers, Fox, RKO and

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<sup>371</sup>Louis DeRochemont Memoir, 43.

<sup>372</sup>Westbrook Van Voorhis Reminiscences, *March of Time* Movie File (undated) Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 12-13. UFA was a famed German film studio that by the late 1930s was completely controlled by the Ministry of Propaganda and its chief, Joseph Goebbels.

other circuits. The film generated controversy even before its release. Officials at the German embassy were furious. First Secretary Baron von Gienanth threatened both *The March of Time* and its distributor, RKO Radio Pictures, with legal action and reprisals, including expulsion from Germany of Time Inc., employees. In addition, UFA notified RKO and Time Inc., that it intended to sue for an injunction to restrain use of the *Feldzug in Polen* footage on grounds on infringement. Both Time Inc., and RKO stood pat and the Germans gave up their threats of legal action.<sup>373</sup>

The film played to audiences of respectable size and enthusiasm. New York Times critic Bosley Crowther wrote on September 20, 1940 “Like the man who suddenly switched from a diet of creampuffs to hardtack, we find ourselves this morning with a bite that is tough to chew...A more provocative or challenging motion picture has not been placed before the public in years—or maybe, on second thought, never...By a brilliant conception of Louis de Rochemont, producer of the film, non-actors were used to play the numerous roles of the townsfolk, thus imparting the illusion of photographed actuality. Through this device, the old newsreel and the fictionalized story blend perfectly.”<sup>374</sup> Edgar Antsey wrote in the British weekly *Spectator* on April 11, 1941 that “the film is so skillfully constructed that it is often hard to tell where news-reel ends and acted scene begins...*The Ramparts We Watch* is a fit climax to Louis de Rochemont’s years of

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<sup>373</sup>Unsigned memo to Roy Larsen and Louis DeRochemont explaining legal problems concerning the release of *The Ramparts We Watch*, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1940, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>374</sup>Bosley Crowther, “The Ramparts We Watch,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1940, 5:8.

experiment in the reconstruction of modern history for the screen and it will have more influence on the development of cinema than any other film of recent years.”<sup>375</sup>

With the release of *The Ramparts We Watch*, *The March of Time* committed itself to an unabashed pro-interventionist stance. This stance developed over several years and reflected the thinking of the series writers and editors, along with producer Louis de Rochemont. Ironically, given the moderately liberal tone the series generally adopted, *The March of Time* now found itself in ideological kinship with more radical film-makers. Frontier Films, an outgrowth of the leftist Film and Photo League, had during the late 1930s produced a number of films dealing with the rise and threat of fascism. Joris Ivens’ *The Spanish Earth* dramatized the struggle between Loyalists and Fascists in the Spanish Civil War, while *China Strikes Back* showed the strength and vigor of Mao Tse-Tung’s Red Army in its battles against the Japanese invader and Chiang Kai Shek’s Nationalist government. In contrast to *The March of Time*, which focused on the Nationalist movement, *China Strikes Back* presented Mao’s forces as the saviors of China and its future. Later Frontier Films productions such as Herbert Kline’s *Crisis*, which examined the German annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, and *Lights Out in Poland*, a film about the German conquest of Poland and the outbreak of war in Europe, also called for greater American involvement in world affairs.<sup>376</sup>

*The Ramparts We Watch* reflected a growing concern of Luce’s regarding

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<sup>375</sup>Edgar Antsey, “Review of ‘The Ramparts We Watch,’” *Spectator*, April 11, 1941, 15.

<sup>376</sup>Alexander, 158-172, 201-205.

America's role in global affairs. The Time Inc., publications had been accused of taking an inconsistent line against the Fascist threat, but beginning in the late 1930s all of Luce's publications, including *The March of Time* shifted to advocacy of a more robust role for America in the world, which meant confronting Nazi Germany. In fact, *The March of Time* had for a number of years had placed more emphasis on foreign affairs than other Time Inc., publications. Luce, preoccupied by the crisis facing free enterprise during the 1930s, had neglected foreign affairs through much of the decade. International affairs, a vital matter to him on leaving Yale University in 1920, had not engaged his interest in the 1920s and early 1930s. Until about 1938, he underestimated the dangerous militarism and rise of fascism in Germany and Italy.<sup>377</sup>

Problematic to developing a consistent stance in all its publications on foreign policy was Laird Goldsborough, *Time's* Foreign News editor. From the magazine's earliest days, Goldsborough had written virtually all of *Time's* overseas stories and thus had immense influence over the direction and tenor of Time Inc.'s overall, corporate coverage of the growing fascist threat. An unwritten rule understood among Time employees was to not touch a word of Goldsborough's submissions.<sup>378</sup> The leeway accorded Goldsborough created trouble for *Time* in the 1930s. Goldsborough could not bring himself to abandon a post-Versailles equivalence toward European leaders. He continued to blur fundamental and obvious differences between the German and British

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<sup>377</sup>Elson, 2: 40-42.

<sup>378</sup>High Time 1, February 1939, 4, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

governments and their respective approaches to European affairs. Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia drew no condemnation and the magazine was not particularly alarmed by the Nazi party in the mid-1930s.<sup>379</sup>

Most journalists at first underestimated Hitler and attempted to rationalize his behavior. In 1933 and 1934, Walter Lippmann deplored the Nazis persecution of Jews yet insisted that even under Hitler, Germany could be regarded as civilized. The peace settlement of 1919 had been too harsh, the victors incapable of statesmanship. Like *Time's* Goldsborough, Lippmann found himself out of sympathy for any European power. "As long as Europe prepares for war," Lippman wrote in May 1934, "America must prepare for neutrality." Popular magazines like *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* shared Lippman's sanguine view. Repeatedly, excuses were offered for Hitler's conduct. Moral condemnation of Nazism and Fascism smacked of Wilsonian self-righteousness.<sup>380</sup>

At *Time*, the handling of the European crisis played into a larger crisis over the editorial direction of magazine during the late 1930s. Younger staff writers, supporting the Left's Popular Front against fascism, hated Goldsborough. No one found him more frustrating than Ralph Ingersoll. *Fortune* editor between 1931 and 1935 and subsequently Luce's chief aide until 1936, Ingersoll had been named publisher of *Time* in 1937. Unlike Luce, Ingersoll embraced the decade's radical spirit. Although he refused to join the Communist Party, he participated in Party study groups and in long memos, begged Luce

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<sup>379</sup>Elson, 1:314; Mary Fraser, The Ideology of *Time*, July 21, 1953 memo, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1953, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>380</sup>Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, (New York: Random House, 1980), 330-334.

to turn Time, Inc., publications, including *The March of Time*, leftward. Quietly, Ingersoll tried to instill his own values into *Time*, a process aided somewhat by having like-minded writers on staff. Under Ingersoll, *Time* avoided condemning the controversial sitdown strikes of 1937 while anti-union activities received harsh words, stances that were reflected in *The March of Time* on most occasions as well. *Time* nevertheless remained within a Republican oriented center of the political spectrum. For example, Roosevelt's court-packing scheme was heavily criticized and a cover story on American Communist party chief Earl Browder was most unflattering. But privately, Party members on the *Time* staff bragged of their ability in injecting stories with subtle propaganda while old hands bemoaned the radical drift of the magazine under Ingersoll.<sup>381</sup>

For two years, Luce lacked the will, time and interest to do much of anything about the movement of *Time* towards the left. Luce was consumed with the management of *Fortune* during this period and was also distracted by the monumental task of launching *Life*, which had a critically praised but financially draining launch in 1936-37. Luce also tended to shy away from personal confrontation on occasion, and this proved the case with Ingersoll.

The relationship finally came to a breaking point in early 1939, when *Time* designated Hitler as its "Man of the Year". The decision was not meant as a tribute, as

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<sup>381</sup>High Time 1, 3-4; High Time 2: A Publication of Communist Party Members at Time, 1939, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time Life Building, New York City, 2; Memo from Henry Luce to Time Inc., Staff, dated March 1939; Swanberg, 161-163; Memo from Ralph Ingersoll to Henry Luce on *March of Time* content, April 28, 1938, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1938, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

Germany had just annexed the Sudetenland and was planning to take the remainder of Czechoslovakia, but a recognition of the Nazi dictator's newsworthiness. To Ingersoll's dismay, however, the cover portrait of Hitler chosen by an underling was flattering. At great cost, he ordered a last minute switch to a less appealing portrait. Luce was annoyed both by the expense and the intervention of Ingersoll. According to Ingersoll, Luce's belief was that a journalist should always remain dispassionate and his only responsibilities were accuracy and ability to hold the attention of the audience.<sup>382</sup> Frustrated, Ingersoll left *Time* in April 1939, taking some staff with him to start the left-liberal tabloid in New York, *PM*. A number of *Time* veterans were not sorry to see him go, considering Ingersoll egotistical and unable to separate his politics from his reporting.<sup>383</sup>

Ironically, Luce himself had begun to abandon his pretense of journalistic detachment at the same time Ingersoll was leaving Time Inc. Luce had already begun to hold his own study groups, inviting underlings to lunch, asking for input about what Time Inc. should stand for and what kind of positions his publications should take on major issues of the day.<sup>384</sup>

Two books Luce read in the late 1930s, Jose Ortega y Gasset's *Revolt of the Masses* (1930) and Peter Drucker's *End of Economic Man* (1939) greatly affected his

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<sup>382</sup>Wolcott Gibbs, "A Very Active Type Man," *New Yorker*, May 2, 1941, 27.

<sup>383</sup>Letter from Lem Billings to Roy Larsen, May 1939, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1939, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>384</sup>Elson, 1:317.

thinking. Both authors were European traditionalists deeply disturbed by trends in European politics. According to Gasset and Drucker, traditionally optimistic Americans had no realization of the extent to which political and economic upheavals since 1914 had changed European life. The crises that ensued with the collapse of aristocratic legitimacy fostered an enthusiasm for extremist solutions that menaced Luce's vision of an American democratic, capitalist centrism.<sup>385</sup>

Both Drucker and Ortega attributed the rise of fascism to larger, transnational historical forces. Ortega viewed the modern economy's insistence on specialization of education and work fostering a dangerous political and historical illiteracy. The people had become an indiscriminating mob, trampling underfoot individuality and tradition.<sup>386</sup>

Drucker's analysis was similarly pessimistic and impressed Luce as well. Drucker attributed fascism's rise to a loss of faith in a rationally based political and economic order. The masses, he wrote, were less to blame than events. To Drucker, the Great War demonstrated the isolation of individuals in a world of larger forces and the Great Depression reinforced this anomie. The mediocrity of Europe's postwar leadership further undermined accepted forms of governing in Europe, discredited old leadership classes, and compelled European publics to reach for panaceas on both the left and right.<sup>387</sup>

Modern society's rejection of tradition and its susceptibility to anti-capitalist, anti-

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<sup>385</sup>Swanberg, 171.

<sup>386</sup>Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932), 18.

<sup>387</sup>Peter F. Drucker, *The End of Economic Man*, (New York: The John Day Co., 1939), passim.

democratic systems were themes in the writings of both Ortega and Drucker that inspired Luce. Ortega was too pessimistic, Luce told a 1937 gathering. A socially responsible mass media, Luce believed, could help to counteract the forces Ortega saw undermining liberal thought and institutions. Thus *Life*, *Fortune* and *The March of Time* (*The Ramparts We Watch* is an example of this trend) periodically offered history and civics lessons, generously illustrated and vividly filmed. Luce himself in 1940 helped to found the Council for Democracy, a committee of liberal and moderate journalists and academics, to promote democracy in American society. The Council, in its publications, tried to explain why the crisis of democracy in Europe had the potential to imperil liberal democracy in America.<sup>388</sup>

Drucker's writings encouraged the nationalist side of Luce. However troubled Europe was, Drucker contended that America remained a beacon of hope. Capitalism was doomed in Europe but the free enterprise system constructed in America was worth saving, according to Drucker. Statist intervention was permissible, but only to allow for a socially responsible free enterprise system that promoted economic equality rather than class antagonism. America had been a model to Europe of capitalism's possibilities and the collapse of the American economy had driven many Europeans to embrace fascism. However, the lure of America as a land of equality and possibility remained for many Europeans, according to Drucker. America could serve as a successful counter-argument

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<sup>388</sup>John Jessup, ed. *The Ideas of Henry Luce*, (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 41; Richard W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 79.

to extremists of both left and right.<sup>389</sup>

Luce's concern over the problems of Europe might have come regardless of the writings of Drucker and Ortega; however, the success of *Life* drove Luce into a more contemplative, public role. By the late 1930s, only chewing gum manufacturer William Wrigley had his name on more printed pieces of paper, and Luce began to glimpse the possibility of actually driving public opinion through his various publications.<sup>390</sup>

Thus, by 1939 Luce's mission had taken on an international dimension. He had already started to find the time to criticize the New Deal publically as a threat to private enterprise. Drucker's work suggested that in Europe capitalism and freedom were even more threatened. Roosevelt, he believed, must be defeated at home and the dictators abroad by an enlightened free enterprise system supportive of democracy and tradition.

Even before he read *End of Economic Man*, Luce began moving *Fortune* toward this vision. Beginning in December 1938, the magazine sponsored the *Fortune* Round Table. Leaders in business along with economists, an engineer, a farmer and a union representative, began meeting to fashion statements on the economy. The first, published in March 1939, noted the disappearance of free enterprise in Russia, Italy and Germany and warned that it could happen here. In America, federal spending outpaced economic growth and had to be restrained, the experts advised. Subsequent reports echoed Luce's call for a restoration of confidence in business, and a more dynamic, growth oriented yet

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<sup>389</sup>Drucker, 44-50.

<sup>390</sup>Swanberg, 181; Wilfrid Sheed, *Clare Booth Luce*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982), 79.

socially responsible capitalism.<sup>391</sup> As noted, *The March of Time* had already begun to reflect a more internationalist and interventionist viewpoint, sounding the alarm about European statism to a huge monthly audience.

The content of *Life* reflected the growing coherence of Time Inc.'s coverage of the international situation. Germany's March 1938 annexation of Austria prompted a sixteen page layout that explained, in highly critical terms, Hitler's rise to power. The magazine forcefully denounced the Nazi's persecution of Jews in Germany and Austria and gloomily forecast Hitler's plans for expansion in Europe. Significantly, *Life* demanded increased U.S. defense expenditures. Hitler's appetite, whetted by Austria and expanded by the annexation of the Sudetenland (and British and French weakness in facing the Nazi threat) necessitated a buildup and suggested that new demands on America were in the offing. In a theme repeated over the next three years, *Life* questioned the ability of the British Royal Navy to protect the Americas from aggression. For over a hundred years, *Life* noted, the British fleet, not the Monroe Doctrine, had kept European powers out of the Americas. The American navy had to be expanded, particularly in the Atlantic. Airpower had made the traditional protection afforded by the ocean's obsolete; long-range bombers currently in development could attack the eastern United States. America must immediately develop an effective air raid defense network along the coast. In addition, the weak state of the Army had to be addressed. Finally, American industry, exhausted by ten years of depression and government interference, needed to be unshackled so that war

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<sup>391</sup> "Round Table," *Fortune*, March 1939, 59.

preparations could begin.<sup>392</sup>

By late 1938, *Time*'s foreign news section began to sound the alarm about Europe and the fascist threat. Guest-editing *Time* in late November, Luce finally confronted Goldsborough's benign view of fascism and removed him as foreign news editor. With Goldsborough out of the picture, *Time* admitted that the September 1938 Munich agreement had only raised false hopes of a European settlement. Critics of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain received favorable coverage, while Nazi policies were regularly and stridently denounced. Germany's March 1939 conquest of Czechoslovakia removed any doubt about the ultimate ambitions of Hitler to dominate the Continent, according to *Time*.<sup>393</sup>

Such advocacy journalism did not usually come directly from Luce, but from like minded staff. With the expansion of the Time Inc., conglomerate, Luce monitored rather than managed his publications on a day-to-day basis. To keep himself abreast of staff and editorial changes at each magazine, he personally edited each publication for several months a year. He bombarded the editorial staffs at *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* with memos explicating his vision for each respective publication. Luce appointed one of his most trusted lieutenants, Roy Larsen, to help direct the operations of *The March of Time*.<sup>394</sup>

What began to emerge across all Time Inc., publications and media by the late 1930s,

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<sup>392</sup>*Life*, March 28, 1938, 11-27; *Life*, December 19, 1939, 45-46.

<sup>393</sup>Swanberg, 159.

<sup>394</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Roy Larsen, January 1939, Luce Correspondence File, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

certainly by 1939, was a worldview heavily influenced by Luce that combined advocacy of a broadly liberal and democratic capitalism and an advocacy of a much more active American role in global affairs.

The great question which raged across the American body politic in 1940 and 1941 was whether or not the United States should oppose German aggression or remain neutral? By early 1939, most American newspapers and magazines appear to have abandoned the moral relativism that had equated Germany, France and Britain, as Hitler's intentions and the nature of the Nazi regime became obvious. Despite the efforts of German agents virtually no one in the United States was prepared to support the Nazis if a European war came. Most publications, including Colonel Robert McCormick's isolationist *Chicago Tribune*, believed along with Time Inc. that America must rearm.<sup>395</sup> Still, a "great debate" emerged over the size of America's arms build-up and whether or not Roosevelt was using the crisis as a pretext for expanding his personal power. An overriding question was, in the event of a German-British conflict, to what extent should the U.S. help Britain? Did a German victory pose a threat to America's security?

*The March of Time* had reflected Luce's evolving viewpoint for some time, arguably back to its earliest films and certainly by the release of "Inside Nazi Germany" in 1938. The film *The Ramparts We Watch* vividly demonstrated an appreciation for the need to stand up to aggression. Luce's magazines also began to show an increased militancy and advocacy for rearmament and intervention. *Fortune* was the most detailed

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<sup>395</sup>Philip E. Jacob, "Influences of World Events on US 'Neutrality' Opinion," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 4, (March 1940), 48-65.

in its description of American preparation (or lack thereof) and the economic stake that the U.S. had in Europe and Asia. By comparison, *Time* shared less information than opinion, criticizing Roosevelt's caution while praising British pluck and resolve.<sup>396</sup>

Of the Time Inc. publications, *Life* proved the most militant when it came to American involvement in the war. The magazine acquired a seriousness that was not reflected by its covers of actresses and models. Stories reminded Americans of the nation's long martial history, attempting to refute the self-image of America as a peace-loving nation that had developed during the years of neutrality and isolation. Extensive coverage of the fall of France was presented not only as news but as a warning. A special issue, "The Defense of America," offered solutions to the problems of rearmament and argued that America would have to abandon such traditions as a small standing army to fight a modern war. The military needed highly professionalized training, *Life* argued, and the scope of fighting would necessitate a peacetime draft. Like other Time Inc., publications, *Life* gave an authoritative view of events and issues that was presented as news, not opinion. There were no doubts or counterarguments. The dangers presented by Hitler were real and could not be discounted.<sup>397</sup>

To Luce, the nation must be united to deal with the fascist threat. Arms alone could not defeat Nazism. The ethnic divisions that had followed the Great War and the class antagonism of the 1930s had to end. Luce concluded that France had fallen and

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<sup>396</sup>Curtis Prendergrast, *The World of Time Inc.*, (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 201; David Cort, *The Sin of Henry Luce*, (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1974), 252-253.

<sup>397</sup>*Life*, June 24, 1940, 32; *Life* October 28, 1940, 23; *Life*, July 22, 1940, 57 passim.

England was in dire straits because of their failure to overcome interwar factionalism. America, in contrast, still had time to unite and provide a liberal democratic answer to German efficiency and ruthlessness.

Luce did not believe that national unity would come solely through assimilation and voluntary efforts. He believed, and this belief became more fervent over time, that President Roosevelt could have done a good deal more to unite the country. In a foreword to John F. Kennedy's 1940 *While England Slept*, Luce wrote "America will never be ready for any war, not in one year, nor in two nor in twenty—until she makes up her mind there is going to be a war." Roosevelt, in Luce's view, believed that America could somehow avoid conflict. At a time when the President should be leading public opinion, Roosevelt was following it.<sup>398</sup>

Luce also criticized President Roosevelt's defense plans as inadequate but another telling indication of the administration's poor relations with business and industry. Requests for planes, tanks and heavy equipment remained far too conservative, and given the crisis of rearmament, relations between business and political leaders remained problematic. With other interventionist Republican voices such as the *New York Herald Tribune*, Luce called for a partnership between government and industry focused on rearmament.<sup>399</sup>

Thus Luce, through all his publications, expressed his assertive position on

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<sup>398</sup>Henry Luce, Introduction to *Why England Slept* by John F. Kennedy, (New York: 1940), xv.

<sup>399</sup>Kobler, 122; Editorial, "The Presidency," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 10, 1940.

American intervention. The American people had to recognize their interests or responsibilities, whether led by Roosevelt or a new president. Luce had made up his mind and Time Inc.'s publications reflected that decision. America had to confront fascism. America must rearm and in order achieve that goal needed desperately to improve relations between government and business. Luce, for his part, was not going to remain passive; rearming America and supporting the British became almost a religious cause to him, suggested by the biblical analogies of his editorials.<sup>400</sup>

Most Time Inc. writers and editors had little difficulty in injecting such views into their work and with the departure of Goldsborough were in sympathy with Luce's goals. Some of the older *Time* hands were concerned that Luce was not following standard journalistic practice in injecting so much opinion into the news but was outnumbered. *The March of Time* had in fact anticipated Luce's growing interventionism. In fact, *The March of Time* was seen as being so pro-interventionist that isolationist Senator Gerald K. Nye launched hearings on the film series' content in September 1941.<sup>401</sup> Louis De Rochemont's statement to the Nye hearings was revealing, both for its defense of the journalistic integrity of *The March of Time* and for its forthright account of the reasoning behind many *March of Time* issues that seemed to advocate intervention. Richard DeRochemont wrote his older brother that all the promotion of *The March of Time* focused on the film series taking a stand on issues, that the "MOT interprets the news and

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<sup>400</sup>Luce, "America and Armageddon."

<sup>401</sup>Memo from Richard DeRochemont to Louis DeRochemont concerning Senate Hearings, September 5, 1941, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1941, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

gives it meaning.”<sup>402</sup> According to Louis DeRochemont’s testimony and statements to the committee, the conclusions that *The March of Time* generally reached on major issues were those that reasonable men usually arrived after much deliberation; in no way was *The March of Time* unreasonable in its views or outside the mainstream of public opinion. Domestically, *The March of Time* was in favor of gradual reform, was fearful of radicalism in the labor movement, and occasionally, as with endorsing Wendell Willkie, took sides politically. De Rochemont stated, rather defensively, that *The March of Time* “liked the USA and resented any attempts at revolutionary change” from within or without. Thus, logically, the series was completely opposed to any foreign aggression that sought to bring unwelcome political and social change to any sovereign nation. As to the prospect of war, *The March of Time*’s attitude was “realistic...and that in this field as well as others, America must be ready to act if need be.”<sup>403</sup> If anything, DeRochemont believed the views of Senator Nye and other isolationists were naive and dangerous.

To Luce, no matter how much Americans might want to avoid another war, the nation could not base its foreign policy on the avoidance of conflict. In several speeches and a February 1941 editorial in *Life*, Luce argued that Americans had to reconcile themselves to the burdens that went with being the most powerful country in the world. “The fundamental problem with America,” Luce wrote, “has been, and is, that whereas their nation became in the twentieth century the most powerful and most vital nation in the

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<sup>402</sup>Ibid.

<sup>403</sup>Ibid.

world, nevertheless Americans were unable to accommodate themselves spiritually and practically to that fact.”<sup>404</sup> This denial had to end. Americans could not ignore any longer the “fundamental issue which faces America as it faces no other nation,” an issue peculiar to America and peculiar to America in the twentieth century—now.” The twentieth century had become the American Century, and Americans had to “accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full import of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.”<sup>405</sup>

The declaration of an “American Century” was to a large degree the result of a particular moment in history. Luce, in fact, argued with both sides debating American foreign policy early in 1941. He disagreed with interventionists who envisioned an Anglo-American postwar order, with the United States and the British Commonwealth on equal terms. In any arrangement with Great Britain after the war, America would be the dominant partner. The American eclipse of Britain a generation earlier made a political association based on equality a chimera based on sentiment rather than logic. The same theme of American ascendancy informed Luce’s argument against isolationists. The United States was no longer a weak state, for whom neutrality was not only possible but on occasion necessary. The success of the American political and economic experiment, according to Luce, left the nation with almost imperial responsibilities it could no longer

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<sup>404</sup>Luce, “The American Century,” in Henry Luce, *The American Century*, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941), 7.

<sup>405</sup>Luce, “The American Century,” 23-24.

avoid.<sup>406</sup>

Much of the essay reflected traditional justifications for American expansionism. At times, Luce appeared to be reviving the nineteenth century argument of a Manifest Destiny, that America was duty-bound to share with the world her exceptional political institutions and liberties. There were references to the open door of trade, of the need for a developed American economy to secure new markets and fuel global economic growth. Asia was an area of particular interest and opportunity.<sup>407</sup>

Most of the editorial was both a criticism of past policies and a warning of perils to come. As Luce concluded, he began to suggest what America's postwar duties might be and was, for all his criticism of Roosevelt, vague. Luce did not call for a huge peacetime army and navy or declarations of war against Germany, Italy and Japan. Instead, he advocated what has come to be called "soft power"; an adaptation of the missionary experience that would export American expertise to the less developed world. Luce also discussed an American role as protector of freedom of the seas, and as the leader of global trade.<sup>408</sup>

Of course, there would be limits on the nation's role, Luce conceded. He wrote "...our only alternative to isolationism is not to undertake to police the whole world or to impose democratic institutions on all mankind...America cannot be responsible for the

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<sup>406</sup>,"America As A World Power," Speech by Henry Luce to American Association of Colleges, Pasadena, California, January 9, 1941, *March of Time* Luce Speeches File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>407</sup>Luce, "American Century", 36-37.

<sup>408</sup>Luce, "American Century," 40.

good behavior of the entire world.”<sup>409</sup> There would still be dictators after the war and warfare itself could not be eliminated by America or transnational organizations. Overall, however, Luce offered an extravagant assessment of America’s postwar role. Although freedom and democratic capitalism would not flourish everywhere, Luce expected it spread through most of the world.

“The American Century” drew its ideology from other sources as well. In early 1939, *Life* had carried an essay by Walter Lippmann titled “The American Destiny.” Luce’s assessment of the American peoples spirit has much in common with Lippmann’s. “The American people are profoundly troubled,” Lippmann wrote. “They are oppressed by doubt,” but “the American spirit is troubled not by dangers, and not by the difficulties of the age, but by indecision.” To Lippmann, this mood stemmed from the nation’s reluctance to accept the large responsibilities that accompanied “the American Destiny.” Lippmann stated that a watershed event had occurred since the turn of the century, namely the transfer of global power in the West across the Atlantic from the Old World to the New. Lippmann argued “What Rome was to the ancient world, what Great Britain is to the modern world, America is to the world of tomorrow.” Americans, whether they wanted it or not, had the power and responsibilities that came with being “a very great nation at the center of the civilized world.”<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>409</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>410</sup>Walter Lippmann, “The American Destiny,” *Life* June 5, 1940, 47-73; Henry Luce, Speech to the Poor Richard Club, Philadelphia, December 10, 1940, *March of Time* Luce Speeches File, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

Luce and Lippmann's assertion of historical destiny had a number of adherents. Columnist Dorothy Thompson, writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, quoted with approval from "The American Century." Thompson wrote, "To Americanize growth of the world so that we shall have a climate favorable to our growth is indeed a call to destiny." Americans had to accept the challenge that Luce and Lippmann had made. Thompson further stated that a more robust, interventionist American foreign policy could have prevented the war, and if America failed to take up its responsibilities its decline was a historical inevitability.<sup>411</sup>

Luce's "American Century" was, by and large, in the mainstream of governmental and political thinking at the time of its articulation. The publisher reflected the thinking of the Roosevelt Administration and a large swath of press opinion. However, the "American Century" was revolutionary in its advocacy for a permanent American presence overseas and highly influential because of the reach of Time Inc., publications. Also, it can be argued that the "American Century" began a permanent, fundamental shift in the nature of conservatism and the Republican party. Luce, seen by the late 1930s as a partisan Republican, began the long process of moving the GOP from its post-World War I adherence to isolationism to a much more internationalist approach to foreign affairs. In this movement, the Republican party nationally became more aligned with the internationalist segments of the Democratic party, laying the groundwork for a bi-partisan foreign policy that last until at least the late 1960s and in some respects until the end of the

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<sup>411</sup>Dorothy Thompson, "The American Century," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 21, 1941.

Cold War.

Also, the “American Century” had enormous implications for domestic politics. Luce, by advocating continual American engagement overseas, helped cement a massive and permanent military establishment necessary to protect American interests. In so doing, Luce helped establish the rationale for huge defense budgets and a massive, irreversible government presence in the economy. Luce, who always identified himself as a “free-enterpriser,” thus helped change traditional notions among conservatives and Republicans about the proper level of federal involvement in the economy. The “American Century” helped cement the uneasy and often contradictory alliance between fiscal conservatives and internationalists within the Republican party. Also, by helping to create a consensus in favor of internationalism and its attendant military budgets, defense installations, and overseas investment, Luce’s “American Century” provided a rationale for the acceptance by the American people of a large-scale and permanent government presence in everyday life, in some respects completing a process that began with the New Deal.

There is scant evidence that *The March of Time*’s content directly affected Luce’s thinking. The publisher rarely took a direct hand in the content of the series, trusting one of his top lieutenants, Roy Larsen, to supervise the occasionally disorganized de Rochemont. However, Luce viewed most issues of *The March of Time*, sometimes providing feedback to Larsen regarding content. For example, a memo written by Luce to Larsen regarding “Inside Nazi Germany” called the film “powerful, well-done...and don’t

let any of the criticism bother you.”<sup>412</sup> Another memo by Luce written to Larsen following the release of *The Ramparts We Watch* stated “In spite of all the costs and difficulties, this movie, I think, will do a great deal for the cause of American strength...it certainly notes (and demonstrates) things that have been on my mind, as you know...my heartiest congratulations to you, Louis, and all involved.”<sup>413</sup> As noted, Luce also paid more attention to releases dealing with China and Asian affairs than other *March of Time* films.

A number of *March of Time* films released during the formulation of Luce’s American Century concept reflect the publisher’s ideas and the increased ideological cohesion of the series. These issues also developed themes presented in *The Ramparts We Watch*. “Arms and Men—U.S.A.” released in November 1940, explored expanding American arms production. The film began with a description of the rapidly expanding American army because of the implementation of the first peacetime draft. A table showed the projected increase in men in uniform over the next three years. Block lettering then flashed on the screen, stating:

FOR THESE SOLDIERS, WEAPONS ARE NEEDED.

TANKS, RIFLES, PLANES—ALL PRODUCED IN AMERICAN FACTORIES

BY AMERICAN MEN.

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<sup>412</sup>Henry Luce to Roy Larsen, February 4, 1938, Luce Correspondence File, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>413</sup>Current Time Inc., Projects, Henry Luce to Roy Larsen, October 1940, Luce Correspondence File, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. Luce’s comments to Larsen on *The Ramparts We Watch* were the last item in a brief memo concerning Time Inc., business.

MEN FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS AND NATIONALITIES.<sup>414</sup>

This emphasis on different ethnic groups pulling together for a common American goal was reflected in “Americans All!”, released in early 1941. “Arms and the Men–U.S.A.” made a pointed comment on the scarce resources given to the Army prior to the war, noting that “often men drill with models or outdated weapons dating to the last century.” The film also provided the audience with a breakdown of the staggering industrial capacity of the U.S., predicting that the factories that produce consumer goods during peacetime will smoothly transition to the necessities of weapons production.<sup>415</sup>

In “Labor and Defense,” released in November 1940, *The March of Time* analyzed the role labor unions would have in the burgeoning national defense effort. *The March of Time* had, in the past, been somewhat skeptical of unions. In de Rochemont’s view, unions were often un-democratic and the producer was still angry about efforts to unionize *The March of Time* during the late 1930s.<sup>416</sup> However, he set aside his personal animus in the filming of “Labor and Defense,” directing the production of a film that celebrated unions patriotism, linked the union movement with traditional American values, and described them as “vital” to national defense and the victory of democracy.<sup>417</sup>

“Uncle Sam–The Non Belligerent,” issued in January 1941, examined the

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<sup>414</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>415</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup>De Rochemont Memoir, 49.

<sup>417</sup>*March of Time*, Vol. 7, # 5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

historical dimensions of American foreign policy. The quintessential American character, “Uncle Sam,” speaking to a class of grade school students, described how, since the beginning of the American republic, the United States had taken pains to stay out of foreign conflicts and protect the Western Hemisphere. Actors portraying Washington, Monroe, Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt were all shown reviewing maps and the globe, then putting pen to paper to draft statements on neutrality, the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary. “Uncle Sam” then noted “we Americans don’t like war, but when we get pushed, we don’t mind a scrap,” a clear warning to outside aggressors, as well as a reminder to the audience, of American military prowess in past wars. “Uncle Sam” also reviewed American efforts at disarmament and referred to the failure of successive Neutrality Acts to lessen international tensions during the 1930s. But, the film made no prediction as to whether the United States will have to go to war.<sup>418</sup>

“Americans All!”, released by *The March of Time* in February 1941, was a celebration of the strength that immigrants had brought to the American body politic over the early decades of the twentieth century. Different European immigrant groups, along with some African-Americans, were shown working in factories, laboratories, shops and in professional settings, all contributing mightily to strengthening America’s defense. To underscore the point, workers were shown walking past Kossuth and Pulaski streets to their factory and defense jobs. The film also catalogued the contributions and ethnic backgrounds of prominent Americans such as Robert Wagner, Fiorello LaGuardia, and

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<sup>418</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

William B. Knudsen, all identified by their ethnicity. Special care was taken to note the voting strength of immigrant voting blocs in Northern cities, and the growing influence of immigrants in the union movement was duly noted.<sup>419</sup>

An unspoken contrast with the Nazi beliefs in Aryan supremacy and racial purity pervaded the film. American society was ultimately stronger and healthier than Nazi Germany because of the contributions and vigor of immigrant groups. Through a strict policy of assimilation and adherence to American values, immigrants could quickly become valuable members of American society. In fact, anonymous scribbled notes on drafts of scripts for “Americans All!” urged *March of Time* writers and editors to stress this point more forcefully, for example saying “must stress americanism in sequence on politics.”<sup>420</sup>

Taken together, as intended by Roy Larsen and Louis de Rochemont, “Arms and the Men–U.S.A.,” “Labor and Defense,” “Uncle Sam–the Non-Belligerent,” and “Americans All!” reflected the increasingly propagandistic tone taken by Time Inc., publications in the wake of Luce’s propagation of his American Century idea. They also demonstrated a definite ideological coherence on the part of *The March of Time* after the production and release of *The Ramparts We Watch*. In a September 1940 memo to Roy Larsen, de Rochemont laid out his plans for a “sequence of MOT releases that will

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<sup>419</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>420</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #7 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. None of the markings on the shooting script or dope sheets indicate whose opinion was being given.

provide the history backdrop for efforts that are going to be undertaken as the country gears up for war.”<sup>421</sup>

The rest of 1941 saw *The March of Time* cover the war extensively. Directed by Jack Glenn, “Australia at War” focused on Australian contributions to British led campaigns in North Africa, as well as Australia’s own preparations for possible conflict in the South Pacific.<sup>422</sup> “Crisis in the Atlantic” dealt with the ongoing U-Boat war in the Atlantic Ocean. The threat to British resistance was clearly explained to the audience, along with the high risks for American merchant shipping. The US Navy’s efforts at patrolling and convoys were described, and the viewer was left with the impression of a volatile naval war in which America was already a participant.<sup>423</sup> “China Fights Back,” another of *The March of Time* numerous issues that described the fighting between Japan and China, stated that “struggling against a cruel, relentless foe, the armies of China have emerged once again to battle for the freedom of their sacred homeland.” Continued American support, according to *The March of Time*, was vital to Chinese victory.<sup>424</sup>

August 1941's “Peace—by Adolf Hitler” spelled out the implications of a Nazi

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<sup>421</sup>Upcoming MOT Issues, memo from Louis de Rochemont to Roy Larsen, September 22, 1940, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>422</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, # 8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Notations in the production file state the footage of Australian troops fighting was obtained from “British sources.”

<sup>423</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>424</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

victory. Germany had invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941 and at this point in the campaign seemed unstoppable, driving the Russian army back on all fronts and capturing hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers. Sober military analysts in Britain and America concluded that the possibility of a Soviet defeat was high, with huge implications for the Western democracies. Written by Lothar Wolff, “Peace—by Adolf Hitler” used extensive reenactments to show what life was like for European nations already under the Nazi yoke, demonstrating what other nations could expect from a Nazi peace. The film then spelled out what the results of a Nazi victory would be for the United States. Trade would evaporate, the US could expect Nazi attempts at subversion in Latin America; the Church would suffer persecution, America would have to remain on a permanent war footing far into the future, with no guarantee of lasting peace. In short, America would be isolated and alone in the world, with no natural allies or ideological brethren.<sup>425</sup>

The 1941 releases by *The March of Time*, like their counterparts between from roughly 1938 through 1940, displayed a definite advocacy for greater American involvement in global affairs and intervention, if need be, in the war. Whether that intervention would take the form of actual American involvement or serving as the “arsenal of Democracy” was often unclear or left deliberately obscured by the series. Louis de Rochemont, in his 1941 testimony to the U.S. Senate, made it clear that he believed that *The March of Time*, while an advocate for Britain and other democracies,

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<sup>425</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 7, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 7, #13 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

did not endorse American entry into the fighting.<sup>426</sup> What differentiated films released by *The March of Time* in 1941 was an apparent acceptance that the United States would eventually be embroiled in the war. “Crisis in the Atlantic” and “Peace—by Adolf Hitler” in particular make it clear that the results of a German victory in Europe would not be acceptable to the United States.

After Pearl Harbor, *The March of Time* quite logically shifted its primary efforts toward coverage of American troops in combat, the fighting fronts, and the home front. However, *The March of Time* continued its traditional emphasis on foreign affairs as part of its wartime subject matter. Films such as the “The Argentine Question,” examining the possibility of the spread of pro-fascist regimes in South America, and “India in Crisis” and “India at War,” all released in the first half of 1942, were examples of *The March of Time* attempting to bring a global perspective to its audience. “India in Crisis” and “India at War,” for example, discussed the question of Indian independence in the wake of the war, while at the same time detailing the importance of India to British and American campaigns in Asia and the Indian contribution to the British war effort.<sup>427</sup> Another factor in this continued focus on foreign affairs was *The March of Time*’s format.

Released monthly with a single subject per issue, *The March of Time* had the luxury of

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<sup>426</sup>Memo from Richard de Rochemont to Louis de Rochemont concerning Senate hearings.

<sup>427</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated Archives, March 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #11, (New York: Time Incorporated June 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

continued in-depth examination of given topics, while the coverage of breaking news was not suited to *The March of Time*'s production process.

*The March of Time* also gave increasing attention to ideological issues in its war-time releases dealing with foreign affairs. "Inside Fascist Spain" clearly identified Franco's regime as an ideological ally of Nazi Germany; only the changing fortunes of war had prevented Spain from joining the Axis.<sup>428</sup> This kind of clarity with regard to Spain had been lacking in Time Inc.,'s coverage of the Spanish Civil War and the rise of Franco during the late 1930s. An August 1944 film, titled "British Imperialism," dealt with the difficulties the British would have at the end of the war in holding together their far-flung empire. Despite the American elite's traditional affinity for Britain, admiration Americans had for British resistance during the dark days of 1940, and the continued wartime alliance, "British Imperialism" was critical of the ruling practices the British used and pessimistic about the long-term prospects for the Empire. The film concluded that the British would likely be exhausted by war and the Empire, at least in its traditional form, would inevitably change.<sup>429</sup> This point of view had been articulated by Luce in "The American Century." The mantle of leadership of the civilized world would inevitably pass to America from Britain as a matter of course and national destiny.

Of course, the major ideological divide that *The March of Time* would have to

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<sup>428</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1943), *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>429</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 1944), *March of Time* Collection, MT 10.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #13 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 10.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

deal with during the war years was America's alliance with the Soviet Union. Prior to the war, the existence of the USSR was barely acknowledged by *The March of Time*. Between the premiere of the film series in 1935 and American entry into World War II in December 1941, only two *March of Time* releases dealt with the Soviet Union.<sup>430</sup> Both of these subjects, titled "Russia" and "Moscow" were released prior to the adoption of a single subject per release format and each touched only on general conditions of life in the Soviet Union, with cursory examination of Stalin's industrial program. Both prompted some controversy when *The March of Time* received negative audience feedback at its offices in New York City.<sup>431</sup> Also, de Rochemont was extremely unsympathetic to communism and these ideological conflicts may have played a role in the lack of early coverage of the Soviet Union.<sup>432</sup> With the American entry into the war, the Soviet experiment could no longer be neglected editorially. Thus, *The March of Time* provided its audience with extensive coverage of the Soviet Union during the war and of the nascent Cold War in the years after 1945.

*The March of Time's* special issue on the Soviet Union, titled "One Day of War–Russia" was released in January 1943, just as the tide of war was turning in the east

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<sup>430</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4, May 31, 1935; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #2, February 14, 1936.

<sup>431</sup>Audience Reaction to RUSSIA, unsigned memo to Louis de Rochemont, *March of Time* Movie File 1935, Time-Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City; Letter to the Editors of *The March of Time* from Brigadier John Dewry, Bury St. Edmonds, Norfolk, England, dated March 19, 1936. The memo to de Rochemont gives instances of audience disapproval and approval to the "Russia" release culled from movie theater owners and operators. The letter from Brigadier Dewry denounces in forceful language "cinematic Bolshevism" distributed by *The March of Time*.

<sup>432</sup>De Rochemont Reminiscences, 61-62.

with a decisive German defeat at Stalingrad looming. “One Day of War” followed the Soviet people through a typical day of warfare. The film opened with a chorus of whistles as Russian men and women trudged off to work in armaments factories and other industries, transported by trolley or by foot. Care was taken to show the extensive damage done to Russian cities by German air-strikes and in the case of Leningrad, artillery bombardment. The narration made comparisons between the suffering of the Russian people under the constant threat of German attack, and the destruction inflicted by the Luftwaffe’s air “blitz” of Great Britain. Thus, a sense of Allied unity in the face of Nazi aggression was stressed.<sup>433</sup> The film also had extensive scenes of Soviet children; at school, diligently applying themselves to their lessons, at play and attempting at least to assist their beleaguered parents in daily tasks. There was no comment made about indoctrination of the youth or the training of a new generation of loyal communists that one could reasonably have expected in a pre-war release. In addition, Stalin was praised as a strong leader, dedicated to his people and the defeat of Nazism, with only a passing mention of his authoritarian rule.<sup>434</sup> Clearly *The March of Time* portrayed the USSR positively to serve the war effort and maintain good terms with and access to the Soviet Union.

“What To Do With Germany,” released in October 1944, explored the problems

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<sup>433</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 1943), *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #6 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. A notation in the production file indicated extensive cooperation of Soviet authorities in obtaining file footage of fighting and destruction in combat areas.

<sup>434</sup>*Ibid.*

posed by Germany's inevitable (by this point in the war) defeat. *The March of Time* noted that Germany's future had been a primary subject at each wartime conference between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin and given the central location of Germany and the importance of the German economy to the overall economic performance of Europe and the prospects of a general European postwar recovery, resolution of the German question was vital. The various proposals afloat for Germany at the time (partition into five states, deindustrialization, occupation for an indefinite period) were each examined, with the conclusion that Germany could not simply cease to exist as a nation, given its economic and political importance.<sup>435</sup>

“Report on Italy,” released in January 1945, discussed the chaotic situation then prevailing on the Italian peninsula. Italy had surrendered to the Allies in September 1943 and later declared war on Germany. There were at present two Italian governments, a rump fascist state “ruled” by Benito Mussolini but dominated by Germany, and a largely discredited, semi-constitutional monarchy led by the aged King Victor Emmanuel III. The most vital political force in Italy at this time appeared to be, according to *The March of Time*, the communist dominated partisan movement fighting the Germans and remnants of Mussolini's Fascist party in the north. Any long-term solution to Italy's problems would have to take into account the presence of large numbers of communists and communist sympathizers, along with traditional forces such as the church and the political parties, particularly the Christian Democrats, driven underground during

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<sup>435</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 11, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 1944), *March of Time* Collection, MT 11.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Mussolini's rule. No one group was at present strong enough to rule the country and a muddled coalition was the most likely result.<sup>436</sup> European postwar problems were further explored in "Report on Greece" released in February 1946 and "The Soviet's Neighbor—Czechoslovakia" issued in November 1946. Both films were highly critical of Soviet efforts at expanding their sphere of influence over Greece and Czechoslovakia, and sounded a somber note about the prospects for democratic governance in Southern and Central Europe.<sup>437</sup>

"The Cold War: Act 1: France" released in early 1948, was part of a series planned by *The March of Time* that dealt with the problems of post-war Europe and stressed the need for American intervention to prevent the fall of Western Europe to communism. The film detailed the life of an average Frenchman, prosaically named Pierre Jouet, as he dealt with the privations of the post-war economy. Jouet was shown worrying about his ability to provide for his family in a France riven by political strife and economic austerity. Fortunately for Jouet, he is able to supplement his family's meager diet by acquiring food from his farmer cousin, active in a thriving black market. The film skillfully showed the relationship between political instability and the declining economy. The French Communist party was portrayed in a manner that had been reserved in the pre-war era for European fascists, disrupting political meetings, blocking needed

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<sup>436</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 11, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 1945), *March of Time* Collection, MT 11.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>437</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 22, 1946), *March of Time* Collection, MT 12.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 13, # 3, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 1, 1946), *March of Time* Collection, MT 13.3, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

legislation. Interestingly, Charles De Gaulle and his followers were also criticized and shown in poses, again, reminiscent of pre-war European fascists.<sup>438</sup> The subsequent films in the series, “The Cold War: Act II–Italy” and “The Cold War: Act III–Greece” employed the technique of using the daily experience of an individual to demonstrate the need to aid Europe in resisting communism.<sup>439</sup>

In addition to this Cold War series, two other 1948 releases written and co-directed by Lothar Wolff, “Battle for Germany” and “Answer to Stalin” addressed the growing crisis in Europe. “Battle for Germany” discussed in highly detailed terms the importance of Germany to the economy of Europe and the importance of a free, capitalist Germany oriented towards the west for a general European economic and political recovery. The traditional *March of Time* antipathy towards communism was on full display in “Battle for Germany.” Christian Democratic political leaders such as Konrad Adenauer were noted for their courage in resisting Nazism, with an implicit contrast drawn between Adenauer and other pro-western politicians and German communists, who were “taking orders from Moscow.” The stakes for America, then in the midst of the Berlin Airlift, were clearly drawn, as a communist takeover in Germany would lead

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<sup>438</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 14, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 23, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park; *The March of Time* Vol. 14, #6 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>439</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 14, # 8, (New York, Time Incorporated, March 19, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.08, National Archives and Records Administration,; *The March of Time*, Vol. 14, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 14, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.10, National Archives and Records Administration..

inevitably to American isolation.<sup>440</sup>

“Answer to Stalin” focused on the internal American debate over how to deal with the seeming intransigence of the Soviet dictator. The film began with average Americans debating what to do about the Soviet threat. A sense of the pervasiveness of this threat was rendered by the technique of spinning newspapers with screaming headlines, news-tickers on the outside of buildings and bulletins on the radio all trumpeting the latest Soviet outrage. A variety of opinions, from “dropping the big one” to outright appeasement, were expressed at the start of the film. “Answer to Stalin” then dismissed extreme responses advocated by the far left and far right, stating that the current bipartisan policy developed by the Truman administration was the only reasonable way to deal with the Soviets. The stakes for America in Europe and throughout the globe (although the film interestingly neglects China) were stressed in a dramatic format, with a reenactment of the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia and commentary that discussed the threat that atheistic communism posed to Western civilization.<sup>441</sup>

Luce proved prescient in his prediction of an “American Century” in the wake of victory in World War II. Observers who commented on Luce’s vision usually stressed its implications for American foreign relations with not as much consideration given to the changes that an “American Century” would necessitate on at home. However, Luce’s

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<sup>440</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 14, #15, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 1, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.15, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>441</sup>*March of Time*, Vol. 14, #17, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 26, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.17, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *March of Time*, Vol. 14, #17 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.17, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

vision had profound implications for American domestic life and was communicated through all his publications, including *The March of Time*.

#### Chapter Five: The American Century at Home

From its inception, *The March of Time* made defining American politics, society and culture its subject. What emerged in *The March of Time*'s subject matter was what can be termed a "family portrait" of the United States, one that adhered to Luce's vision for the country. Highly sentimental, dedicated to progress and technology, respectful of institutions and authority, this ideal America constructed by Luce could be seen across all Time Inc., publications. By the time Luce's "American Century" was articulated, this mental image of America had been fully presented in *The March of Time*. The war years and early Cold War were to give it further elaboration and cohesion.

In addition, *The March of Time*, through its depiction of American life, participated fully in the lengthy 1930s conversation concerning the definition of America and what being an American actually meant. Which image of America was to triumph and thus define the nation? Was it that of Luce, the Federal Theater Project's "the Living Newspaper", or the radical newsreel *The World Today*? Through its editorial and production decisions, *The March of Time* contributed significantly to America's self-definition and to the changes to American life that Luce's American Century demanded and ultimately produced.

One of the earliest *March of Time* releases contained a short subject titled

“Washington News.” Released on May 31, 1935, “Washington News” took as its subject the continual controversies surrounding President Roosevelt’s New Deal and his advocacy for new policies such as Social Security. In the style of *Time* magazine, “Washington News” focused on personalities rather than ideological differences, leaving the viewer with the impression that the entire New Deal was dependent on personal relationships rather than any overarching political philosophy. There were few if any connections drawn between different pieces of mentioned legislation, with virtually no exploration of the general philosophy of New Deal proposals, while the narration noted only that “a series of new laws have come down from the President’s desk.”<sup>442</sup>

Roosevelt was almost omni-present during “Washington News.” A series of clips show him in rapid succession signing bills, conferring with reporters, and behind the wheel of a motorcar, conveying a sense of action. The image of Roosevelt imparted to the viewer was a vital figure at the center of events—certainly accurate, given the organizational chaos that often surrounded Roosevelt’s administration. However, what emerged was a one-sided portrayal of the President’s leadership style. *The March of Time* then set the stage for the 1936 elections, intoning that “the changes wrought by the President are dependent on his political fate” thus tying the New Deal entirely to Roosevelt. At no point in the short film did *The March of Time* take note of the necessity for political and economic changes in the country when Roosevelt took office in 1933; discussion of the overall national economic condition was absent. In addition, there was

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*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 31, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

a vague insinuation of looming fascism in the script, as the narration noted “in other countries too, there has been the belief in strong leadership” during a sequence showing the President employed at a variety of tasks.<sup>443</sup>

The upcoming 1936 elections were explored by *The March of Time* in its November 13, 1935, release. Titled “G.O.P.,” this short subject dealt with Republican presidential contenders vying for the nomination. The main contenders, according to the conventional wisdom of the day and *The March of Time*, were Kansas Governor Alfred Landon, Senator William E. Borah of Idaho and longtime political insider and businessman Frank Knox of Illinois.<sup>444</sup> Footage of each man was shown: Landon waving to crowds and opening a hospital in Kansas; Borah making a speech and chatting with other unidentified politicians; Knox conferring with a group of men in what appeared to a gentleman’s club. The visuals used by *The March of Time* clearly reflected the prevailing political stereotype about each man. Landon, who by this point had acquired a reputation as a dynamic, popular governor, was shown interacting with admiring crowds. Borah, an “elderly warhorse” associated with reform causes during the Progressive era, was portrayed consulting with other politicians, thus reinforcing an image of the Senator as a creature of Washington, while Knox, considered the consummate insider, was shown in

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<sup>443</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>444</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 13, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT, 1.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. A page of notes taken in longhand indicate that Landon, Borah and Knox were the probable nominees “based on info available from our research and thus should be the focus of the story.”

sedate, sober surroundings. Through text and visual imagery, *The March of Time* supported Landon over the other Republican candidates. The Kansas governor was praised as a “popular, effective chief executive...having led the Jayhawk state through difficult times with a firm and steady hand.”<sup>445</sup> Landon was shown moving briskly through the statehouse, consulting with engineers, and working on a farm. The contrast with the other contenders was obvious, along with a subtle comparison with Roosevelt’s health. The overall question of whether or not any Republican nominee would have much of a chance to defeat Roosevelt was unanswered.<sup>446</sup>

“Townsend Plan” released by *The March of Time* on December 13, 1935, dealt with the old-age pension scheme advocated by retired California doctor Francis Townsend. Townsend had amassed a large following by advocating direct pension payments to retired Americans. Townsend believed that this plan would alleviate the ongoing problem of poverty among the aged, which had been exacerbated by the Depression. The film explored Townsend’s plan in some detail, while mentioning the recent passage of Social Security. The visual imagery used in the short film was striking. An ideal America for the aged was shown; all the elderly shown in the film seemed to be in relatively comfortable circumstances, with little exposure of the large numbers of older Americans living in abject poverty.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8.

<sup>446</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #8.

<sup>447</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 13, 1935), *March of Time* Collection, MT 1.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

*The March of Time* provided interesting and varied political coverage during 1935. In addition to Dr. Townsend, the series released detailed stories on Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin, discussed in Chapter Two. Taken as a group with “G.O.P”, the series provided its audience with a fairly in-depth exploration of Roosevelt’s critics, while brutally satirizing the buffoonish Long. The treatments of Townsend, Coughlin and the putative Republican candidates was respectful and in some cases (like that of Landon) verged on adoring. Roosevelt, facing what was assumed to be a stiff reelection challenge in 1936, was presented as a capable politician while the long term survival of the New Deal without his presence was left in doubt.<sup>448</sup> The political orientation of *The March of Time* was beginning to emerge. Favoring a cautious liberalism, the series was in favor of reform but in moderation, and was highly skeptical of what the producers, writers and editors considered demagoguery. This viewpoint reflected producer Louis de Rochemont’s beliefs and to a large extent those of Time Inc., publisher Henry Luce.<sup>449</sup>

The series provided a comical look at the 1936 election process in its September 2, 1936 release titled “The Lunatic Fringe.” “The Lunatic Fringe” took as its subject matter the large number of “political cranks and crackpots” then operating at the edges of legitimate political discourse. The film implied that men such as the late Huey Long, some elements of the followers of Father Coughlin and Dr. Townsend, along with the

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<sup>448</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #3; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #4; *The March of Time*, Vol. 1, #5; *The March of Time* Vol. 1, # 9.

<sup>449</sup>Memo from Richard de Rochemont to Louis de Rochemont regarding Senate testimony; Louis de Rochemont Reminiscences, 9.

small numbers of American fascists and communists, could be described as having lost touch with political reality in their solutions for the Depression. “The Lunatic Fringe,” like the earlier *March of Time* film on Huey Long, was devastating through mockery, while presenting fringe political elements as operating outside traditional American political and cultural values.<sup>450</sup>

*The March of Time* turned its attention to one of Roosevelt’s most ambitious New Deal projects, the Tennessee Valley Authority in its January 7, 1936 release. Titled “TVA” and directed personally by Louis de Rochemont, this short subject was the first of several that examined economic and labor conditions in the US during the election year. The “TVA” examined the structure and intent of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a massive regional planning project intended to electrify and modernize the middle South. Highly controversial, the TVA attracted intense opposition because to its critics the project was deemed socialistic. One correspondent to *The March of Time* called the project “Soviet-communism with the intent of bolshevizing the South,” while another said that the TVA represented “another step towards the destruction of individual liberty in America.”<sup>451</sup> The “TVA” began its examination with a series of visual shots of southern poverty: poorly clad children, crops withering in the fields, badly maintained roads, and lean-to shacks and ramshackle dwellings. The intent of the TVA, according to

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<sup>450</sup> *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, # 1, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 2, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.01, National Archives and Records Administration; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #1 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland..

<sup>451</sup> Audience Reaction To TVA, Memo to Louis de Rochemont, February 22, 1936, *March of Time* Movie File 1936, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. The memo is a series of excerpts from letters written to *The March of Time* offices or forwarded from local theaters.

*The March of Time*, was to bring the “American South, long proud and productive, fully into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>452</sup> The film emphasized the size and potential of the project more than its political implications. In fact, no opponents of the project were shown in the film, rare for *The March of Time* when discussing a controversial political issue. The film’s focus on the possible energy production and long term goals of the TVA were probably a factor in some of the criticism levied at *The March of Time* for “TVA.”<sup>453</sup>

*The March of Time* undertook a more in-depth exploration of the American South in its eighth release of 1936. Titled “King Cotton’s Slaves,” and written by longtime *March of Time* staffer Jimmy Shrute, the film examined the practice of sharecropping and tenant farming in the South, a recurring theme in the 1930s documentary expression movement examined by Margaret Bourke White and Erskine Caldwell in *You Have Seen Their Faces* and by James Agee and Walker Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. White and Agee both worked for Time Inc., with Bourke-White being a major contributor to *Fortune* during its formative years, and Agee working as *Time*’s film critic during the 1940s.<sup>454</sup>

“King Cotton’s Slaves” as indicated by the title, vividly exposed conditions in the South and the exploitation of the practice of sharecropping. Unlike “TVA,” which had

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<sup>452</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 7, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>453</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #1.

<sup>13</sup>Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke White, *You Have Seen Their Faces*, (New York: Viking Press, 1937); James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939); Goldberg, *passim*; Baughman, 69-72.

also dealt with the particular economic problems of the South, “King Cotton’s Slaves,” clearly articulated a viewpoint and was forthright in its advocacy of reform. The film’s narration began with an important sounding clutch of Time-speak: “Of great necessity has cotton production long been to the American economy,” and was accompanied by a benign shot of cotton fields laying lazily in the sun. This was followed by a map of the United States with arrows representing exports of cotton to Europe and other parts of the globe, as Westbrook Van Voorhis solemnly continued “vital has cotton been in American overseas trade.”<sup>455</sup> He then listed the number of commercial and industrial uses of cotton.<sup>456</sup>

Turning to cultivation and production of cotton, the narrator noted that “while cotton is often associated with the romance of the Old South, the reality is different,” explaining that cotton was grown and harvested through a plantation system, with two primary forms of labor. “King Cotton’s Slaves” explained the mechanics of both tenant farming and sharecropping, taking note of the advantages to the system to the landowner and the disadvantages to the tenant or sharecropper. The film offered a ray of hope; the efforts of sharecroppers and tenant farmers to organize in trade cooperatives and unions, describing these efforts as a “...possible solution to an intolerable situation.”<sup>457</sup> For *The*

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<sup>455</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, # 8, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 7, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>456</sup>Interestingly, the narrator for this issue was not Westbrook Van Voorhis, who was the narrator for virtually all of *The March of Time* releases until the end of the series in 1951. The narrator is not identified on the production notes or script. *March of Time*, Vol. 2, # 8 Production File.

<sup>457</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #8. This release predates efforts at unionizing *The March of Time* by about two years. These efforts are discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

*March of Time*, usually ambivalent at best about unions, this was an unusual, and particularly given the overall attitude of Time Inc toward unionization, remarkable stance. With the attention to both black and white sharecroppers and tenants, in roughly in the same material condition; the film suggested that race was no a real factor in the controversies over tenancy and sharecropping.

The same release of *The March of Time* contained a short subject titled “Highway Homes,” about a growing number of Americans who were using trailers and campers as permanent homes. The segment described the phenomenon in a somewhat bemused tone, concluding that “the trend seems likely to continue,” while not providing the audience with much analysis of what the longer term implications of a roving middle class (the trailers shown obviously cost money, and the users appeared to be comfortably middle class) might have meant for American cultural cohesiveness and traditional notions of community.<sup>458</sup>

“Highway Homes” demonstrated that *The March of Time*, while concerned with presenting weighty issues in some depth to its audiences in service of what Luce called “pictorial journalism” was not above presenting more traditional newsreel fare.<sup>459</sup> In addition to coverage of the presidential election, economic problems, and warfare and diplomatic crises’ abroad, *The March of Time* in 1936 and 1937 presented films such as the “Jockey Club” about horseracing, “The Football Business,” “Harlem’s Black Magic”,

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<sup>458</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 2, #8, August 7, 1936.

<sup>459</sup>Luce, Recommendation to the Board of Directors; Luce, The Opportunity.

“Business Girls in the Big City,” “Midwinter Vacations” and “Amateur Sleuths.”<sup>460</sup> All interesting subjects, to be sure, but also reflecting Time Inc.’s belief that the company could competently explain all aspects of American life to its audiences, a belief reflected in all of Time Inc.’s publications.

*The March of Time* continued its exploration of American economic and political issues with the release of “Labor vs. Labor” on September 30, 1936. Directed by Tom Orchard, “Labor vs. Labor” took up one of the most controversial political issues of the day, the growing split within the labor movement. The American Federation of Labor (AFL), long dominant within the movement and representing skilled workers, was being challenged by the nascent Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), led by fiery United Mine Workers chief John L. Lewis. Lewis, a frequent subject in all Time Inc., publications, was, by his appearance and presence, a controversial figure. Tall, imposing, outspoken, blunt, with a shock of black hair and gargantuan eyebrows, Lewis made what journalists called “good copy.” The battle between the two organizations was presented as a “fight for the soul of labor and the future of unions.”<sup>461</sup> The points of contention between the AFL and the CIO were laid out in some detail; the AFL’s more conservative

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<sup>460</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 10, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 2.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 30, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 3, # 5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 24, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, # 7, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 22, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; ; *The March of Time* Vol. 3, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 16, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.09, National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>461</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 30, 1936), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

nature and its emphasis on skilled crafts contrasted with the increasing militancy of the CIO's member unions, particularly the United Auto Workers and the United Mine Workers and their focus on organizing the bulk of unskilled laborers. The entire conflict was placed in the broader context of the 1935 passage of the Wagner Act, which established the National Labor Relations Board and gave workers the right to strike and collective bargaining. Given the increased rights gained by labor, *The March of Time* suggested that the outcome of this struggle for control of the orientation of the labor movement would have huge implications for the future course of the American economy. While granting that all workers, in theory, should have the right to organize, "Labor vs. Labor" pessimistically noted that these rights, "like any, can be abused," particularly if the CIO gained control of the direction of the labor movement.<sup>462</sup>

The production notes for this *March of Time* release revealed a certain amount of anti-pathy towards the union movement and its leaders. On a shooting script labeled "de Rochemont" a scribbled notation stated "these men hardly look like Bolshie types...reshoot?"<sup>463</sup>

*The March of Time* further focused on labor issues with its March 19, 1937 release titled "Child Labor," a fairly straightforward look at the practice of child labor in the United States. "Child Labor" began with the statement "numerous are the children who labor in the United States." Following this, the film presented the reasons for child

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<sup>462</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #2.

<sup>463</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 3, #2 Production File.

labor: necessity, lower costs and exploitation by employers. A doctor discussed the long term physical effects of hard labor on the young, along with the problem of lack of schooling “that will limit opportunities in the future.” The opposition of major labor organizations to the practice was discussed, along with the proposed Fair Labor Standards Act, which contained provisions outlawing child labor. The film concluded with Senator Robert Wagner of New York speaking against the practice and in favor of legislation banning child labor.<sup>464</sup>

*The March of Time* followed “Child Labor” with a comprehensive examination of the persistent problem of unemployment in “U.S. Unemployment” released on May 14, 1937. “U.S. Unemployment” began with a sobering detailing of the numbers of out-of-work Americans in early 1937. Charts showed the estimated number of unemployed since 1929, showing massive increases in the early 1930s with gradually better numbers since 1933. This presentation concluded that although unemployment figures had improved, that fact “is little solace to the man in search of work for his family.” The film then showed President Roosevelt famously stating in his 1937 inaugural address that “one third of the nation is ill-housed, ill-fed and ill-clothed.”<sup>465</sup>

The film then turned to an analysis of the reasons for chronic unemployment, detailing lack of business investment, low incomes that limit consumption, and an

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<sup>464</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 19, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #8 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.08, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>465</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, # 10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 14, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

erosion of overseas trade. Only when these persistent problems were dealt with will the U.S. reach acceptable employment levels again, according to *The March of Time*. The New Deal agencies that provided millions of public works jobs were praised for their efforts in resuming activity and providing the unemployed with some hope and purpose, “as every man must believe he is of use,” but “U.S. Unemployment” did not consider the New Deal a long term solution to the Depression, noting that “it is the belief of some observers that government intervention is hindering growth.” On the other hand, *The March of Time* identified British economist John Maynard Keynes, shown working at a desk, as a leading proponent of greater government spending to solve the unemployment problem.<sup>466</sup>

Another film in this sequence dealing with the economy was “Dust Bowl,” released on June 11, 1937. “Dust Bowl” took as its subject matter the devastation of the soil of the Great Plains and the subsequent destruction of the region’s farm economy, already filmed by Pare Lorentz in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and documented by photographers such as Dorothea Lange from the Works Progress Administration. “Dust Bowl” began with a sweeping shot of verdant, productive farmland that gradually dissolved into a cracked, dry desert—one of the more dramatic opening sequences filmed by *The March of Time* during its sixteen year run. Narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis stated, “...crumbled into dust has this once lush garden, breadbasket to the nation and

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<sup>466</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #10; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #10 Production File. Keynes is identified as a “English professor-egghead type” on dope sheets that indicate film of the professor was obtained from British *Pathe News*.

world.” The struggle of farm families was depicted as the film documented falling agricultural production after a decade of relative farm prosperity. A series of shots show farm families leaving the Plains states for the far West, in search of jobs and opportunity. “Dust Bowl” then recounts New Deal efforts at reviving the farm economy: more comprehensive study of soil erosion at state-funded colleges and universities, rural electrification to increase efficiency, expansion of roads, and increasing irrigation projects. Unlike *March of Time* presentations of other New Deal efforts, “Dust Bowl” seemed to approve of the federal government’s efforts on behalf of farmers and the farm economy, stating “the traditional ingenuity of American science and the ethic of the American farmer are surely the best weapon against the ongoing destruction of the soil.”<sup>467</sup> “Dust Bowl,” in comparison to other documentaries about the subject, was far more optimistic in its belief in an ultimate resolution to the crisis afflicting the Great Plains, with a belief in technology as being the ultimate savior of the American farmer.

“Youth in Camps” released by *The March of Time* on August 6, 1937, examined the activities of the Civilian Conservation Corps, one of the more ambitious New Deal programs. The CCC was intended to alleviate the enormous problem of youth unemployment in the United States, greatly exacerbated by the Depression. “Youth in Camps” began with two young, almost frail, men jumping onto a moving train. The narration stated that “John and Mike” were part of “millions of youths compelled to take

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<sup>467</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #11, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 30, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.11, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

to the roads and rails” in a “bitter quest for work and purpose.”<sup>468</sup> “John and Mike” are shown being threatened by a group of much older “hobos” on the train, and, frightened, jump off the train at a stop in a small, rural town. The two see posters for the Civilian Conservation Corps, promising “Work And Opportunity For Young Men.” They enroll in the program and in a rapid sequence are shown taking classes, working on a road and erecting what appears to be a log cabin, and laughing and eating at picnic tables in the open air with other young men. The atmosphere and environment in the Civilian Conservation Corps camps was shown to be healthy and wholesome, as earlier undesirables had been weeded out, and the narration states “of signal benefit of these camps has been the restoration of the work ethic and hope for thousands of young men.”<sup>469</sup>

Taken as a group, “TVA,” “King Cotton’s Slaves,” “Labor vs. Labor,” “Child Labor,” “Dust Bowl,” “Youth in Camps” and “U.S. Unemployment” presented a selective look at the most newsworthy and extreme aspects of American economic problems, labor issues, debates over the New Deal and proposed solutions to the Depression. *The March of Time* advocated a cautious, moderate, reform-oriented liberalism in discussing the economic crises’ of the 1930s, rejecting extreme solutions

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<sup>468</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 6, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #13, Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 3.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Notes in the production file identify “John and Mike” as school friends of the daughter of Time Inc., executive Roy Larsen. Other notes indicate the extensive cooperation of Civilian Conservation Corps officials in Virginia.

<sup>469</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 3, #13.

on the right and left while differing to some degree with other Time Inc., publications in its presentation of the New Deal. In fact, the early years of *The March of Time* can be seen as something of an ideological muddle, moderately liberal on some issues, conservative with regard to labor and projecting an optimistic, middle-class oriented centrism on most subjects. While somewhat skeptical of the New Deal in general, particular programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority were presented in a positive light.

Wary of unionization and some aspects of the New Deal, *The March of Time* stood in marked contrast to other, more radical films of the period. Frontier Films, which had produced a number of well-received films dealing with the worsening international situation, released a number of films dealing with American politics, economy and society in the mid to late 1930s. Inspired by Pare Lorentz's *The River* and *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, films such as *People of the Cumberland* (1938), *The City* (1939) and *Native Land* (1942) dramatized the plight of the common American in the face of large, impersonal forces that ground down individuality and personal liberty.<sup>470</sup> *People of the Cumberland* in particular was notable for its assertion that the TVA and other New Deal programs were "a good beginning, but only a beginning," stating that the real solution for the dire material conditions in the Cumberland Valley was greater unionization, organization and resistance to the forces of capital by the

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<sup>470</sup>Alexander, 172-178.

common people.<sup>471</sup> The producers of Frontier Films were, like the playwrights associated with “The Living Newspaper” aware of *The March of Time* and admirers of its technique, but believed that the film series was ill-serving its audiences by engaging in “corporate propaganda.”<sup>472</sup>

These kind of charges about the content of *The March of Time* were not new. Nykino, another radical offshoot of the Film and Photo League which took its name from Soviet cinema, had decided by the mid-1930s to produce its own newsreel, what the group styled “a kind of progressive *March of Time*” or a “pro-labor film with the frame-work of *The March of Time*.”<sup>473</sup> Film-maker Irving Lerner believed that Nykino could build on *The March of Time*’s technical innovations without its use of a recognizable style. Lerner planned to involve the subjects in the actual plotting of the film and the drafting of scripts, with the hope that Nykino would present a more complete exploration of news events than did *The March of Time*. What emerged from Nykino’s efforts was a newsreel titled *The World Today* which never reached a wide audience because of difficulties with distribution. Produced by Frontier Films, subjects filmed by *The World Today* included an examination of homeowner evictions in Queens and an expose of the Michigan Black Legion, a vicious racist group like the Ku Klux Klan. *The World Today*, like *The March of Time*, used actors to play various parts to

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<sup>471</sup>Alexander, 177.

<sup>472</sup>Ibid, 125-126.

<sup>473</sup>Ibid.

make the resulting film look like a documentary.<sup>474</sup>

According to film historian William Alexander, *The World Today* was not a revolutionary film. Rather, it was a document produced by “the popular front, a film looking for an audience among those who are renewing their belief in America.”<sup>475</sup> *The World Today* was overtly populist, placing its protagonists in the tradition of the American pioneers who had conquered the West. The film had its faults, most particularly an emphasis on technique over story, a frequent criticism of *The March of Time*. However, the film was strong enough, according to Lerner, “to amaze many members of the *March of Time* staff when it was shown to them.”<sup>476</sup>

*The March of Time* continued to focus on politics and the economy through 1937 and 1938. In the spring of 1937, the most controversial domestic issue of the day was the attempt by Franklin Roosevelt to “pack” the Supreme Court with extra numbers in order to ensure a more favorable response to New Deal policies and programs. The subject was treated in considerable detail in *The March of Time*’s issue released in April. The film included several shots, both posed and candid, of Supreme Court justices. The justices were especially reluctant to be photographed, and *March of Time* scripts indicate that several of the shots were made under great difficulty. Shots of both President Roosevelt and Montana’s Democratic Senator Burton K. Wheeler, respectively

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<sup>474</sup>Ibid, 126.

<sup>475</sup>Ibid.

<sup>476</sup>Alexander, 128-129.

defending and opposing the plan, were incorporated into the episode. The editors took care to include both opposing and supporting viewpoints into the program, and did not believe that this would be a particularly controversial *March of Time* issue.<sup>477</sup>

In Kansas, however, a politically appointed censor ordered the opposing remarks by Senator Wheeler removed from the film. The grounds for removing the cuts were that they were partisan and biased. De Rochemont protested the proposed cuts, noting that it was the first time *The March of Time* had been ordered to remove footage because of domestic politics. However, de Rochemont ultimately complied with the Kansas censors demands.<sup>478</sup>

An immediate storm of protest swept across the nation from political leaders, the press and Roosevelt's political opponents. An irate Senator Wheeler blamed Kansas Governor Walter Huxman, a Democrat, for the cuts, saying his actions qualified him to be dictator of the United States and that the action was "in keeping with the trend of the times. It is the Hitler philosophy."<sup>479</sup> The censorship board stressed the bipartisan nature of the decision, noting that the vote to enact the ban was unanimous. Ultimately, however, the board bowed to public and political criticism and restored the footage in

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<sup>477</sup> *March of Time*, Vol. 3, #9; *March of Time* Vol. 3, #9 Production File. The Production File for this issue contains a good deal of background material on the court-packing controversy.

<sup>478</sup> Louis DeRochemont Reminiscences, 39; Roy Larsen, Report on Washington Trip, August 30, 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City, 1; *March of Time* Press Release on Kansas Censorship, May 1937, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1937, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>479</sup> Press Release on Kansas Censorship.

the film.<sup>480</sup>

The October 1, 1937 release of *The March of Time* featured a story on New York's feisty, colorful mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, written by Tom Orchard. The Republican LaGuardia had become something of a folk-hero because of his anti-corruption efforts and his battle against the growing influence of the Mafia. LaGuardia was committed to using his office to clean up unions controlled by the mob, working closely with special prosecutor Thomas Dewey, who figured prominently in *The March of Time* issue.<sup>481</sup>

“Fiorello LaGuardia” was notable for a number of reasons. *The March of Time* praised his efforts in using New Deal-style programs within New York City, stating that the mayor “swiftly took action to deal with the growing army of unemployed” upon taking office. Also, the mayor’s Italian heritage was considered to be a factor in his immense popularity, as he “was a hero to millions who have come recently to these shores” and was termed a “fine example” for newly Americanized immigrants. Also, LaGuardia’s longtime opposition to European fascism was noted, while the loyalty of other immigrants was left in question. LaGuardia was shown making a speech denouncing Nazi activities which was intercut with footage of German-Americans in a beer garden and street scenes of Little Italy, while the narration stated “all new

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<sup>480</sup>Ibid.

<sup>481</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 1, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #2 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Americans should follow the ‘Little Flower’s’ lead.”<sup>482</sup> These kind of sentiments about Americanization were expressed a number of times by *The March of Time*, most notably in “Americans All!” released in February 1941.<sup>483</sup>

A series of *March of Time* releases in late 1937 and into 1938 dealt with law enforcement, in what could be seen as a follow-up to “Fiorello LaGuardia.” “U.S. Secret Service” described the activities of the Treasury Department’s Secret Service, particularly its battles against counterfeiters and other forms of organized crime. Of particular interest and dramatic effect was a re-enacted raid on a counterfeiting operation said to have taken place in upstate New York.<sup>484</sup> “Crime and Prisons” was an examination of the American penal system, which concluded criminals were in fact rehabilitated while incarcerated, while the treatment of convicts in the United States was the “most just in the civilized world.”<sup>485</sup> “G-Men of the Sea” took as its subject the United States Coast Guard, and focused on its efforts at ending illegal smuggling in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, while praising its performance during Prohibition in battling bootlegging on the Great Lakes. In one sequence, Coast Guard vessels were shown tracking cigarette smugglers off the Florida coast, with the pursuers in constant contact with the Coast Guard headquarters that arranged the arrest of the smugglers’

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<sup>482</sup>Ibid.

<sup>483</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #7.

<sup>484</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, October 29, 1937), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>485</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 15, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

underworld contacts on land. The Coast Guard was identified as primarily a law enforcement agency rather than a branch of the American military, in spite of discussion of its role in coastal defence.<sup>486</sup> “U.S. Firefighters,” while praising the efforts of American firemen in protecting life and property, also noted the key role firemen played in uncovering arson and other crimes.<sup>487</sup>

There was no indication that the producers of *The March of Time* intended “U.S. Secret Service,” “Crime and Prisons,” “G-Men of the Sea” and “U.S. Firefighters” to be part of a coherent sequence in the manner of *March of Time* films. However, a distinct point of view regarding law enforcement and crime and punishment emerged from the releases. The competency of police agencies was always stressed, the use of apparently unlimited legal authority to battle crime was easily and always justifiable, and the need for eternal vigilance against crime was apparent.

*The March of Time* returned to a familiar subject, the American South, for a release titled “Old Dixie’s New Boom,” released on February 18, 1938. The film examined the reasons for an apparent upturn in the South’s economic fortunes. The main factor in the stirring of the South was, according to *The March of Time*, a partial recovery in agricultural prices along with infrastructure development prompted by the New Deal. The greatest factor in “Old Dixie’s” recovery, however, was the burgeoning

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<sup>486</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 8, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>487</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #2, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 30, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.02, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

tourism industry. The narration turned to the growth of Miami and South Florida, stating that “where only a few years ago existed inhabitable swamps, new luxury hotels and resorts have risen” with a series of shots of comfortable looking tourists playing tennis, golf and fishing. The film notes other similar tourist development along with Gulf Coast and in the Carolinas, with similar footage.<sup>488</sup>

The film then analyzed some of the underlying economic reasons, beyond climate, for greater investment of the South. The “business friendly” policies of state governments in the South was noted and praised. In addition, a favorable climate for construction “with abundant local resources and a population willing to work” without the interference of unions was cited. The cooperation of tourism boards in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Florida was noted at the end of the film, which suggests the reasoning for *The March of Time*’s uncritical boosterism.<sup>489</sup>

Many of these themes about favorable business conditions in the South were expanded upon in a May 1939 release by *The March of Time*, “Dixie–U.S.A.” However, “Dixie–U.S.A.” did not just examine the South’s economy but attempted to penetrate the regions unique psychology and culture. The premise of the film was that although the South was different from the rest of America because of historical events, it was rapidly becoming more integrated into the American national character, as modernization

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<sup>488</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 18, 1938), *March of Time* Collection, MT 4.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>489</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #7. The cooperation of state officials in film production, common today, was unusual in this era of limited location shooting.

blurred some of the region's distinctiveness. The factor of race relations was not addressed in any systematic way, other than an oblique reference to the Civil War and subsequent reconstruction.<sup>490</sup>

*The March of Time's* focus on the American South was not surprising, as the region was a center of New Deal development programs and had been particularly devastated by the Depression. Each of *The March of Time's* releases dealing with the South attempted to place the region more fully within its definition of a national character, one that was overwhelmingly middle-class, relatively materially comfortable, accepting of prevailing values and authority, and skeptical about large institutions that were seen to impinge on personal liberty.

In fact, *The March of Time* attempted to define the national character more explicitly in its January 1939 release titled "State of the Union–1939." Directed by Jack Glenn and co-written by de Rochemont and Glenn, "State of the Union–1939" took as its subject a "complete analysis of the nation in all aspects" as the close of the thirties. The film began with a series of shots of warfare in Europe and Asia, with closeups of Hitler, Mussolini, Emperor Hirohito and significantly Stalin making speeches and reviewing troops. Narrator Westbrook Van Voorhis intoned, "Abroad, there is tumult and strife. Men and machines march inexorably toward war, while the world awaits the start of battle." In contrast, America at the start of 1939 was shown to be a happy, contented place, with a shot of what is identified as "Main Street U.S.A" showing children walking

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<sup>490</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

to school, and shopkeepers opening their stores, along crowded bustling streets. The next shot shows workers filing into a factory, clearly in good humor, while an engineer reviews plans on a construction site.<sup>491</sup> The reasons for America's relative calm and peace as opposed to the chaos engulfing much of the world were listed: "In America, differences are settled at the ballot box rather than by violence;" a shot of men and a few women entering voting booths is intercut with Nazi thugs beating up a elderly man, presumably Jewish, on the street.<sup>492</sup> Even in periods of discord, exemplified by shots of the sit-down strikes that swept across the auto industry in 1937 and what appears to be a labor rally from decades past, "Americans, taught the art of compromise by democratic governance and tradition" were able, according to *The March of Time*, to resolve their differences peaceably and without rancor.<sup>493</sup>

"State of the Union-1939" was disingenuously titled. There were few of the concrete facts and figures which *The March of Time* and Time Inc., typically utilized in making an argument. "State of the Union-1939," makes its point at an emotional rather than logical level. The film posited an ideal America, as continuing problems in the economy, labor strife, serious ideological differences over the New Deal, and racial

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<sup>491</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* Vol. 5, #6 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. The "engineer" is identified as such on the shooting script. Also, Louis de Rochemont is identified as one of the primary writers on the script, rare for *March of Time* practice.

<sup>492</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #6. The scene of Nazis attacking the man on the street appears to have been taken from "Inside Nazi Germany-1938," *The March of Time*, Vol. 4, #6.

<sup>493</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #6.

tensions were not explored in any great depth, or dismissed as the byproduct of a democratic system of governance. In the America presented by “State of the Union–1939,” the greatest American asset was a general consensus in favor of a nebulous “Americanism,” defined by sentimentality and unity.

The “Americanism” shown in “State of the Union–1939,” depicted a fictive nation that is relatively classless. Every representation of what *The March of Time* defined as typical America was middle class and comfortable. The economic problems associated with the Depression—unemployment, underemployment, industrial strife, lack of opportunity for youth, all subjects sometimes explored dispassionately by *The March of Time* during the 1930s—were at best skimmed over and generally ignored. In the context of other *March of Time* releases of the late 1930s and early 1940s which sounded the alarm about the necessity for military preparedness and outpacing other Time Inc., publications in advocating a greater American role in the world, the tone of “State of the Union–1939” was not particularly surprising. By this time, *The March of Time* had moved squarely into the interventionist column, so the production of a film that celebrated, and created, American cultural and social consensus was a logical step for the series. “State of the Union–1939” represented an ideological shift in the tenor of the series. The equivocation over economic and political issues, with *The March of Time* taking either a right, center or left position on some subjects, began to disappear. What began to emerge was a focus on national unity, traditional American values as defined by the middle class, and a sense of historical destiny for the United States as the guarantor

of democratic ideas and free enterprise throughout the world.

A notable pair of releases issued by *The March of Time* in 1940 and 1941 dealt with, again, American youth, a subject that appeared frequently in the series since its inception. “Young America,” released in February 1939, was a generally light-hearted look at the fads, fashions and mannerisms of teenagers and college-age youth. A recurring theme in the film was a generational divide between today’s young people and their parents’ generation. This divide was found in many aspects of life, from young people’s appreciation of “swing” music in opposition to their parents’ taste, their preference for certain film stars over others, and fashion. The film also delved into evolving patterns of socialization between young men and women, examining the relatively rapid change in courtship over the past twenty-five years.<sup>494</sup> Significantly, the “youth culture” examined by *The March of Time* was completely white and middle-class, with a focus on the activities of university undergraduates, then a relatively small percentage of America’s youth population. The young people who had taken to the roads in *March of Time* releases such as “Youth in Camps” or were compelled to work in factories as in “Child Labor” were nowhere to be found. This reflected a cultural bias at work frequently in all Time Inc., publications, and other media outlets. Also, the focus on the middle class demonstrated an emerging theme in *The March of Time*--the necessity for cultural unity and cohesion in the face of gathering dangers overseas. In this emphasis, *The March of Time* was creating a middle class America worth defending

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<sup>494</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated., February 1939), *March of Time* Collection, MT 5.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

from all possible dangers.

A second film about young people, “America’s Youth,” had an entirely different tenor and attitude. Released in April 1940, “America’s Youth” analyzed the enormous number of responsibilities and challenges faced by the young in coming years. These difficulties mostly centered around the worsening international situation. War had erupted in Europe, with the Nazi conquest of Poland in September 1939; in the months immediately following the release of “America’s Youth,” Western Europe would be overrun by Germany and Britain would stand alone. In fact, the service of English, French and German youth in their national militaries was contrasted with the United States, where according to the narration, “unlike other countries, today’s youth still has a choice of professions and destinies.”<sup>495</sup> In contrast to “Young America,” there was no discussion in “America’s Youth” of fads or fashions. The film consisted of a cataloging of the difficulties American young people would face in coming to adulthood, namely war abroad, the American role in foreign affairs, the problem of material prosperity, and maintaining national unity in a changing world. The somber film ends on a upbeat note, stating that “steeled by adversity and raised in a democratic tradition, America’s youth will prove equal whatever challenges lie in their collective future.”<sup>496</sup>

In the years immediately prior to Pearl Harbor and US entry into the war, *The March of Time* continued its exploration the American character and the contribution of

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<sup>495</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>496</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #9.

different regions to America's cultural identity. June 1941's release, "New England's Eight Million Yankees," saw *The March of Time* examine the folkways, culture and contributions to American history of the New England states. The film began with a recounting of New England's democratic past, stating that, "American democracy began with the Compact signed at Mayflower some 320 years ago." The considerable ethnic diversity of the region was noted, with the film declaring that it was a source of strength, as "the talents of the world have poured onto New England's shores." "New England's Eight Million Yankees" stressed what many consider stereotypical New England values of industriousness, thrift and honesty, suggesting these traits had been passed to the "new" Americans who began arriving in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The film concluded with a celebration of the "New England town hall meeting, most American and democratic of institutions, where all, be he rich or poor, can have his say."<sup>497</sup>

Another *March of Time* release "Thumbs Up, Texas!" praised the contributions of what was considered a unique state in the American nation, much in the same manner as "New England's Eight Million Yankees." "Thumbs Up, Texas!" began its examination of the Lone Star State by noting that Texas had in its history been under the control of five different nations, and was at one point independent. The narration then stated that "...this history of independence has given Texas a rare and outlandish

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<sup>497</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, June 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 7.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

character, and proud is the Texan of his state's colorful history."<sup>498</sup> A series of shots demonstrated activities that most would associate with Texas: a rodeo, oil derricks pumping, a cattle drive and agricultural production, while noting the importance of Texas to the nation's overall economy. "Thumbs Up, Texas!" concluded by discussing the traditional patriotism and pride of Texans in both their state and America, calling them "true Americans who will fight to defend the land they love."<sup>499</sup>

On the eve of war, *The March of Time* continued its examination of the American character with "Main Street U.S.A." Released in November 1941, "Main Street U.S.A." continued to stress themes discussed in "State of the Nation-1939," *The March of Time's* films on different regions of the country, and its feature length effort, *The Ramparts We Watch*. "Main Street U.S.A." celebrated the values of the American middle class. The focus of the film was a typical day in an unnamed American town, whose center of activity is "Main Street." The film began with the opening of shops, housewives going to market and children scurrying off to school, much like a sequence in "State of the Union-1939." Reenacted extensively, the film followed typical middle-class citizens engaged in discussions of a variety of topics: local politics, the prospects for the high school's football team, and the possibility of a harsh winter, as the camera moves down the street. The scene then shifts to a barber shop, where a cross section of the town's citizens discussed the worsening international situation. In a wide ranging

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<sup>498</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, # 1, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>499</sup>*Ibid.*

discussion, patrons talked about the war in the Atlantic, British troubles in North Africa and German victories in Russia. The barbershop sequence was made particularly poignant by the statement by one rather prosperous looking customer that he “had one boy in the service and he sure didn’t want the other to go in” given the state of the world. The final comment in the barbershop was made by a man in laboring clothes who stated “we can’t let these Nazis take over the world...what’ll happen to us?”<sup>500</sup>

The normality of the world presented in “Main Street U.S.A” was undercut by the looming threat of war, by now assumed by many to be a certainty. The simple pleasures of life in this small, neat, overwhelmingly middle class town were threatened from without by foreign ideologies bent on the destruction of the American way of life, according to *The March of Time*. The world of “Main Street U.S.A” was in many ways a perfect distillation of the simplified America that Time Inc., had presented to its audiences; middle class, stable, prosperous, sober, moderately conservative and cherishing American democracy.

*The March of Time* took up the projection of these values overseas in its May 1940 release, “The Philippines, 1898-1946.” Although preceding both *The Ramparts We Watch* and “Main Street U.S.A,” “The Philippines, 1898-1946” reflected many of the same attitudes about American institutions and values as these later releases. What made “The Philippines, 1898-1946” particularly interesting was its justification for

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<sup>500</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #4 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

American imperialism in Asia and its articulation of many of the same arguments that Henry Luce made in his American Century essay. “The Philippines, 1898-1946,” purported to be a historical account of the American stewardship of the Philippine Islands, acquired from Spain during the Spanish-American War. The compelling reasons for American possession were listed, as *The March of Time* stated that the strategic location of the islands made them vital for American defense, while the Filipinos needed protection from other European and “regional” powers, a clear indication of the Japanese threat to the islands. The film then turned to a discussion of the nature of the relationship between the Filipinos and the Americans, described as “friendly and warmhearted.”<sup>501</sup> The film then showed examples of the increasing Americanization of the Philippines; English being taught in schools, the integration of the Philippine and American militaries in the islands, and the increasing commercial ties between the Philippines and the U.S.<sup>502</sup> “The Philippines, 1898-1946” then turned to the cultural ties between Filipinos and Americans, stating that the early years of American occupation had been “difficult” with the upheavals of the Aguinaldo rebellion, but anti-American sentiments among the population had ebbed with the promise of self-rule and independence, unique among colonial powers in Asia.<sup>503</sup> Now, the Filipinos admired and respected Americans, while the Americans in the islands felt a kinship with the

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<sup>501</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #10, (New York: Time Incorporated, May 1940), *March of Time* Collection, MT 6.10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>502</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>503</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #10.

Filipinos. The key to the success of the relationship was the acceptance of American political values, and the willingness of the United States to impart those values in the form of limited autonomy under American tutelage leading to eventual independence.<sup>504</sup> The connection here to Luce's ideas was obvious. American values, investment and direction could be of aid to any nation in its quest for statehood, democracy and prosperity.

In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor and American entry into the war, Luce followed up "The American Century" with a rumination on his vision of America as a global savior. Writing in *Life* in February 1942, Luce stated that Europe had fallen to Hitler and fascism because corrupt and ineffective regimes had allowed class and interest group politics to run amok. The American experience was different, as the nation was founded "on ideas and ideals which transcend class and caste and racial and occupational differences." Luce believed that the American example could lead to a "family of nations" that would require direction from a strong power as older countries shed their class differences and emulated America.<sup>505</sup>

This missive from Luce, like "The American Century" essay, prompted some agreement between left and right elements uneasy over Luce's idea that America should serve as patriarch directing the destinies of nations. To older skeptics of internationalism like Herbert Hoover, the task seemed both daunting and inappropriate.

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<sup>504</sup>Ibid.

<sup>505</sup>Luce, "America's War and America's Peace," *Life* February 16, 1942, 85-91.

Vice-President Henry Wallace, a preeminent liberal democrat, stated a truly egalitarian post-war order would need no leader.<sup>506</sup>

Wallace rejected Luce's formulation of an American Century, believing that instead the post-war world "must be the century of the common man." America could provide an example in its freedoms and should provide economic assistance to help raise the standard of living where possible. Wallace, however, drew the line at what he perceived as Luce's desire for a dominant economic position for America at the expense of other nations. In order to avoid the problems of the past, no one nation could be allowed to engage in what he called "military and economic imperialism." Wallace tried privately to downplay his differences with Luce, with whom he had become friendly as they discussed theological and economic questions. In his communications with Luce, Wallace stressed that he had intended his "century of the common man" address to overseas nations who were somewhat discomfited by Luce's aggressive nationalism.<sup>507</sup>

Isolationists shared some of Wallace's concerns. Luce and his adherents wanted a "Pax Americana", according to Herbert Hoover, who also believed that the American Century as articulated by Luce was too vague to be useful. A more exercised Senator Robert Taft of Ohio devoted an entire speech to denouncing Luce's ideas. Taft stated that America could not impose her values on the rest of the world and to attempt to do so would require a peacetime military establishment that would prove intolerable

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<sup>506</sup>Henry Wallace, *PM*, May 10, 1942.

<sup>507</sup>Kobler, 151.

economically and ideologically. Taft also noted that American values had not turned American possessions like Puerto Rico into havens of peace and prosperity. Taft was greatly distressed by the “arrogance” of Luce’s vision. America had no special knowledge of what was right for the rest of the world and should not pretend otherwise; in addition, the American Century as articulated by Luce assumed that Americans would always be right and other nations wrong. Taft believed that nationalism in both the Old World and post-colonial world would make it impossible for American hegemony to establish itself.<sup>508</sup>

Luce reacted defensively to criticism of his vision. His critics had not read his editorials with enough attention, for he claimed he was not advocating imperialism in the American Century. In addition, Luce believed that his detractors had not thought through the implications of America’s probable economic and military advantages after victory over the Axis powers. Shortly after Taft’s criticism Luce noted, “While Americans realize that they have never entered into any compact with each other or with their forebears to provide well being for all mankind, they may nevertheless contribute to the welfare of mankind in greater measure than any other nation in history.” Luce also rejected Wallace’s postwar plans for America’s role as too ambitious, thus agreeing in part with Taft that America could not be all things to every nation. “Not every mission is appropriate to the political state...to claim for it an unlimited mission to do good is to

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<sup>508</sup>Ronald Radosh, *Prophets on the Right*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 138-139.

invite confusion, ugly strife and ultimately, disaster.”<sup>509</sup>

In spite of tension with the Roosevelt administration, Luce set out to offer the thoughts and speculations of his own staff and outside theorists on the postwar order. In *Life* editorials Luce and his chief writers and editors attempted to fill in some of the vaguer aspects of the American Century. *Fortune*, as it turned out, was the publication most suited for this kind of journalism. *Fortune* introduced an “America and the Future” section of three or four articles an issue and also ran a series of editorials and special reports on the economy and foreign affairs.

*Fortune* wanted a “new democratic capitalism” to balance postwar corporate needs with political pressures for greatly expanded federal role in the economy. In the process, the magazine challenged the accepted wisdom of corporate America and conceded the impact of the Great Depression on American politics. The typical American voter no longer believed that depressions were utterly random events and this voter would likely in the future vote for additional social spending to deal with the pain caused by the market. After the war, both business and government had to accept this shift in political reality. Business had to recognize the right of labor to organize, mainly to stop the rise of union militance that had plagued the economy during the 1930s. Government should at least consider the “pump-priming” economic theories of John Maynard Keynes. Between the wars, the British economist Keynes had challenged decades of economic dogma by arguing that the government could and should play a

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<sup>509</sup>Jessup, ed., 122-123.

positive role in free market economies. By adroitly using a combination of budget deficits and well-timed tax cuts, government could prevent severe economic downturns. This new economic theory had proved difficult for the Roosevelt administration to accept, because it challenged balanced-budget orthodoxy. *Fortune* urged business leaders to consider the Keynesian approach. According to *Fortune*, the postwar era was likely to be prosperous. However, if another depression was in the offing, the federal government would have to respond with a system of public works expenditures to keep money in the economy.<sup>510</sup>

*Fortune* also saw a link between economic growth and access to overseas markets. The magazine took a more expansive view of free trade than the administration and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. The United States, Great Britain and her dominions, and the nations of Latin America should agree to end all tariffs on imports. Gradually other nations would be drawn into this free trade orbit; over time, it was hoped that the entire political world would embrace free and open trade. *Fortune* asserted that trade restrictions and other irrationalities in the market had slowed economic growth and the expansion of wealth in the past, leading to increased political tensions among nations.<sup>511</sup>

With American entry into World War II in December 1941, *The March of Time* began a wide-ranging effort to cover the U.S. effort at home and abroad and eventually began to articulate some of Luce's ideas about the domestic postwar order. One

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<sup>510</sup>Editorial, "Freedom from Want," *Fortune*, October 1942, 127; "The Domestic Economy," supplement to *Fortune*, December 1942, 4-5; Richard Bissell, Jr., "The Anatomy of Public Spending," *Fortune*, May 1942, 94-95.

<sup>511</sup>Bissell, "The Anatomy of Public Spending," *Fortune*, June 1942, 105-108.

emphasis of *The March of Time* during the war years was coverage of the fighting, although rarely immediate because production schedules for the series did not permit up-to-the minute coverage. The primary focus for the series during the war was coverage of the home-front in the emerging American Century, foreign affairs, and the contours of the post-war world.

A December 1941 “special issue” titled “Battlefields of the Pacific” was rushed into production and released just after Christmas. Directed by Jack Glenn, who figured prominently in *The March of Time*’s wartime releases, “Battlefields of the Pacific” discussed each potential fighting front in the Pacific. Japanese attacks on Malaysia, India, the Philippines and Hawaii were predicted, with an animated map of the Pacific showing probable lines of Japanese advance. The film then turned to American forces in the Pacific, depleted by the attack at Pearl Harbor but still “capable of a fierce defense until new units, ships and men come into service.”<sup>512</sup> The tone of “The Battlefields of the Pacific” was somber yet confident, and the end of the film noted the cooperation of the Navy Department in producing the film. Response to “Battlefields of the Pacific” was positive; one theater owner called it “dynamite,” while another termed the film “just what’s needed.”<sup>513</sup>

The emerging war effort was discussed in *The March of Time*’s regular

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<sup>512</sup>*The March of Time*, “Battlefields of the Pacific” Special Issue, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT “Special Issue”, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time* “Battlefields of the Pacific” Special Issue Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT “Special Issue”, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>513</sup>THEATER REACTION TO MOT’S BATTLEFIELDS OF THE PACIFIC, January 1942, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1942, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

December 1941 release, titled “Our America at War.” According to notations on the script from writer Jimmy Shrute, “Our America at War,” was intended to be an examination of America’s military buildup prior to Pearl Harbor.<sup>514</sup> With the attack on Hawaii and the coming of war, the film changed drastically, with somewhat uneven results. “Our America at War” began with reenactments of typical Americans receiving the news of Pearl Harbor, followed by what was presumably the content of the original film. *The March of Time* compared the size and strength of the military in early 1940 as opposed to late 1941, making note of vast increases in numbers of men, tanks, artillery pieces, transport vehicles, aircraft and small weapons. The action then shifted back to a group of typical Americans discussing prospects for the war and expressing confidence in the nation’s military and productive capacity. One well-dressed man in the street says, “Why, we’ve got the biggest factories in the world to make weapons,” while another said “our Army boys get good training, they can do the job.”<sup>515</sup> “Our America at War” then returned to the theme of American military strength, with extensive footage and descriptions of training and a projection of the size of the military in two and then three years time, with the prediction “others may have started this fight, but end it America shall.”<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>514</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #5 (New York: Time Incorporated, December 1941), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #5 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>515</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #5.

<sup>516</sup>*Ibid.*

The theme of preparedness and military capability was taken up again by *The March of Time* in “America’s New Army,” released in April 1942. “America’s New Army” employed the simple device of following a recruit through induction into the Army and the start of training. Unlike other *March of Time* films that focused on an individual, the recruit was not named, but simply referred to as “the recruit” throughout the film.<sup>517</sup> The “recruit” was given a physical, transported to a unnamed base, placed in ranks, issued uniforms and marched to a barracks. A scene of the recruit in his bunk was particularly poignant; pensive looking, he wonders if “he can cut it.” As the recruit was inducted, transported and begins training, the narration described each activity and the purpose for it, along with detailed statistics about the number of young men undergoing the same training. Also, the quality of the training by “skilled, veteran non-commissioned officers and a growing officer corps” was praised. The film ended with the recruit on the rifle range, hitting targets, as his drill instructor looks on approvingly.<sup>518</sup>

Throughout 1942, *The March of Time* attempted to cover all fronts and theaters of the widening war. “When Air Raids Strike,” released in January 1942, analyzed the probable effect of airpower on the coming fighting; “Far East Command, issued the following month, discussed the American chain of command and relations with its allies in the Far East, particularly focusing on the importance of China in defeating the

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<sup>517</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>518</sup>*Ibid.*

Japanese; “Men of the Fleet,” released in July 1942, described the Navy’s and its post-Pearl Harbor recovery and “The F.B.I. Front,” issued in September 1942, described the Federal governments’ anti-espionage efforts.<sup>519</sup>

Of particular interest were a group of 1942 *March of Time* releases that examined the home-front. “Men in Washington–1942” took as its subject the growing government control of the war economy. Written by longtime *March of Time* staffer Lothar Wolff, “Men in Washington–1942” discussed the rationale behind wage and price controls, and discussed the “no-strike” pledge then being negotiated by labor unions and defense industries. “Men in Washington–1942” also mentioned the precedent of greater government control of the economy from World War I, and mentioned how some current officials, such as Bernard Baruch, had served the government during the first World War. Baruch, in fact, made an appearance in the film, stating that only the federal government “had the authority and organizational ability to put the country’s economy on a war footing.”<sup>520</sup>

“Mr. and Mrs. America,” released by *The March of Time* in November 1942 focused on the efforts of ordinary Americans in prosecuting and winning the war. The tone of “Mr. and Mrs. America” was relentlessly upbeat, as the film began with a

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<sup>519</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, January 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.06, National Archives and Records Administration; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.06, National Archives and Records Administration; *The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>520</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #12; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, # 12 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 8.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Wolff is identified as writer and co-director on a copy of the script.

recounting of American victories since the beginning of 1942; a Naval triumph at Midway that blunted the Japanese offensive in the Pacific; the invasion of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands; and the successful Allied landings in North Africa.<sup>521</sup> Victory, it seemed, was no longer a distant possibility but definite. This change in American fortunes was due, according to *The March of Time*, to the efforts of ordinary men and women on the home-front. Again, the focus was on the middle class, as all of the families shown in the film appear to be materially comfortable. A list of patriotic sacrifices was given. Instead of using the family car, the head of the household took a bus or trolley to work. The wife recycled canned goods and metals and grew a “victory garden.” Some men, ineligible for the military, served in other ways in vital professions. Other women were shown working in airplane and tank factories, “their contributions allowing men to serve in all branches of the military.”<sup>522</sup>

Continuing the optimistic tone of “Mr. and Mrs. America” was “Prelude to Victory,” *The March of Time*’s December 1942 release. “Prelude to Victory” expanded on the theme of a turning tide of war and inevitable victory, detailing speculative plans for widespread offensives on all fighting fronts, culminating in an invasion of Nazi-held Europe. *The March of Time* stated, in its emphasis on the European theater in “Prelude

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<sup>521</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 1942), *March of Time*, MT 9.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #3 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. A revised script shows changes made to accommodate Allied landings in North Africa, which took place on November 7 and 8 1942. The footage of the North Africa landings was provided to *The March of Time* by the War Department, according to a note in the Production File.

<sup>522</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #3.

to Victory,” that Europe, not Asia, was the decisive theater of the war.<sup>523</sup> This was a logical stance for *The March of Time*, as the series had been warning its audiences about the dangers of Nazism well before the war, and had a coherent presentation of European fascism prior to other Time Inc., publications. This viewpoint would become more pronounced in later releases that focused on post-war planning and reconstruction, both at home and abroad.

In fact, the July 1943 *March of Time* release, titled “Bill Jack vs. Adolf Hitler,” focused the American war effort entirely the defeat of Germany, with virtually no mention of Japan. Written and directed by Jack Shandlin, “Bill Jack vs. Adolf Hitler” was an examination of the societies of democratic America and Nazi Germany. “Bill Jack” was a typical American defense worker, and was shown constructing aircraft at an enormous factory, then retiring to a comfortable, if not lavish, home with his wife and children. A representative American archetype was often utilized by *The March of Time* to demonstrate the universality of experiences and values, and as a useful plot device. Later in the film he was in a local tavern “discussing politics, or any other subject he wishes, with his fellows.”<sup>524</sup> The film then examines life in Hitler’s Germany. In contrast to the America of “Bill Jack,” there was no hint of individuality in Germany.

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<sup>523</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #4, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 1942), *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.04, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>524</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 1943), *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #12 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 9.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. The German factory sequences were apparently reenacted, while the footage of Hitler and other Nazi leaders was obtained from German newsreels smuggled out of Europe.

German civilians faced increasing privation, exemplified by a long line outside a partially stocked shop, while glum-faced workers trudge off to bombed out factories, while being exhorted to greater sacrifice by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, declaring “total war” at the Berlin Sportpalast.<sup>525</sup>

A number of films released by *The March of Time* in 1943 and 1944 continued the series’ examination of American culture and society. “Show Business at War,” issued in May 1943, showed the participation of Hollywood and the entertainment industry in the war effort. Movie stars such as Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, and Ronald Reagan were shown in uniform and performing their duties, while other major actors and actresses worked at U.S.O.’s established in Los Angeles and New York, and headlined war bond and recycling drives. Even the efforts of Hollywood in releasing what were termed “realistic, morale boosting” features were praised.<sup>526</sup> “Youth in Crisis,” released in November 1943, presented a sobering look at the rising rate of juvenile delinquency in the country, brought on by wartime stresses, particularly the departure of male authority figures for military service.<sup>527</sup>

“Post War Jobs,” issued in February 1944, speculated about the prospects of the post-war economy. The nation was at full employment because of war production, and with victory in sight, there was concern about whether or not the economy would

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<sup>525</sup>Ibid.

<sup>526</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 9, #10.

<sup>527</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #3, (New York: Time Incorporated, November 1943), *March of Time* Collection, MT 10.03, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

contract sharply with the end of fighting and just how wrenching the shift to peacetime would be. *The March of Time* took note of both those who anticipated a return to straightened economic circumstances and those who expected a post-war boom. The key factor, according to *The March of Time*, was the restoration of exports and international trade, which could provide expanded markets for American goods.<sup>528</sup> In this emphasis on postwar trade and the necessity for international investment, *The March of Time* reiterated a point made by Luce in his reflections on the shape of the post-war world, pleasing the publisher. In a note to producer Richard de Rochemont, Luce praised “Post-War Jobs” as “exceptionally well-done.”<sup>529</sup> “Post War Jobs” expanded on subjects that “Americans All!” released in July 1944, had discussed earlier. Building on a previous *March of Time* release also titled “Americans All!,” this 1944 film examined the contributions of various ethnic groups to both the military and wartime production. The 1944 version of “Americans All!” concluded that the contributions of all Americans, regardless of background, had been so profound that it was a moral imperative to find meaningful post-war work for those who want it.<sup>530</sup> A May 1945 release by *The March of Time*, “The Returning Veteran,” continued this discussion of

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<sup>528</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 1944), *March of Time* Collection, MT 10.7, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>529</sup>Henry Luce to Richard De Rochemont, March 16, 1944, Luce Correspondence File 1944, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>530</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #12, (New York: Time Incorporated, July 1944), *March of Time* Collection, MT 10.12, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #7. The first “Americans All!” primarily dealt with the contributions of different ethnic groups in the United States and is discussed in Chapter 4.

post-war economic and social prospects with its analysis of the challenges faced by the millions of servicemen returning to the peacetime economy. Victory over Germany had just been achieved, and a final triumph over Japan was in the offing, although it was presumed at this point that an invasion of the home islands could prolong the war. In addition to material aid and assistance with employment, *The March of Time* assumed veterans would require emotional support and in some cases psychological assistance in adjusting to life outside the service. *The March of Time* sounded a hopeful note about the economy, stating that “many experts” believed there would be a post-war expansion that would provide jobs for returning servicemen, while programs like the G.I. Bill (passed by Congress in 1944) would create greater opportunities for veterans.<sup>531</sup>

The subjects and themes *The March of Time* articulated during the war years were in some ways perfectly distilled in its film titled “The New U.S. Frontier,” released on August 10, 1945. Written by Jack Shandlin and co-directed by Jack Glenn, “The New U.S. Frontier” discussed the prospects for a permanent American military, economic and political presence overseas. The “new American frontier” would literally be the world, and a permanent American involvement overseas was necessitated by the need to secure markets, support democratic trading partners and opportunities for business expansion. In addition, Germany had to be occupied for at least some period of time while its future was decided, and it was assumed there would have to be an American presence in Asia, if only, according to *The March of Time*, to protect

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<sup>531</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 11, #9, (New York: Time Incorporated, April 1945), *March of Time* Collection, MT 11.09, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

American interests and secure stability.<sup>532</sup> The idea of a permanent American involvement overseas was presented as a logical extension of American historical development and “The New U.S. Frontier” reflected many of Luce’s ideas, articulated before, during and after the war.

Taken as a group, *The March of Time*’s wartime releases could be described as propagandistic, as they certainly promoted the aims of the government. However, these films also fit logically into the orientation of the series in its early years and continuing into the debate over intervention. The United States must achieve class unity and embrace the values of the middle-class in order to reach its historical destiny.

Through the course of the war, it became apparent that the coming ideological conflict would be between the liberal, democratic, capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. Luce’s magazines and *The March of Time* were initially generous in their treatment of the Soviet Union. In 1942 and 1943, when the USSR stood virtually alone against the German Wehrmacht, Time Inc., publications described in detail the valiant suffering of the Russian people. Political repression employed by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was generally ignored, as was the command and control nature of the Russian economy. *Time*’s 1942 Man of the Year was Stalin; the famines and political purges of the 1930s, which had done so much to weaken the Soviets, were discounted. Even the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 was rationalized. Any sign that the

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<sup>532</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 11, # 13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 10, 1945), *March of Time* Collection, MT 11.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 11, # 13 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 11.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Soviets were abandoning their advocacy of global revolution for domestic development was stressed. *Time* informed its readers that the Soviet people wanted and expected the same kind of political rights and freedoms that the American people enjoyed. Once again, echoing older coverage of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Time Inc., publications displayed an enthusiasm for a modernizing, strong leader.<sup>533</sup>

Luce, for his part, took a more cautious view of the Soviet-American alliance. A visit to the USSR in 1932 had confirmed his antipathy toward communism and he was critical of a *Fortune* feature on the USSR published that year. However, in 1942 and 1943 Luce did not particularly fear the Soviet Union, believing that Stalin would focus on internal development after the war and that the Soviets would revert to a passive foreign policy. The Soviets would not seek to impose their system on the West and the USSR would be an isolated power after the war. A September 1943 editorial in *Life* argued that the postwar era need not necessarily be one of conflict between the USSR and United States. *Life's* editorial stated that ideological differences did not mean that the Soviets and US would by necessity fall into a postwar rivalry; it was important to at least try to get along with the Soviets after the war, a course that the United States (and the West) had not really tried before. In addition, Americans should be encouraged by a perceived moderation of the Soviet government domestically.<sup>534</sup>

As the war came to a close Luce viewed the USSR with increasing suspicion and

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<sup>533</sup>William L. O'Neill, *A Better World: The Great Schism, Stalinism and the American Intellectuals*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 59; Elson, 2: 172.

<sup>534</sup>John K. Jessup, "America and the Future, II—Our Foreign Policy," *Life*, September 20, 1943, 108.

rejected the argument of some policymakers that the US had to accept Eastern Europe as necessarily being within the Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviets had greater ambitions, in Luce's view, and were prepared to press an aggressive foreign policy throughout the world. As the war ended, other press figures began to directly criticize the Soviets.<sup>535</sup> Given the press's traditional emphasis on the newsworthiness of conflict, this was hardly surprising. Newspapers provided extensive coverage of Soviet-American conflicts over Eastern Europe and Iran. Many American commentators blamed Stalinist intransigence for the erosion of the wartime alliance between the Soviets and the US. By early 1946, polls showed that most Americans believed that post-war cooperation with the USSR was impossible and blamed the Soviets for the breakdown in relations.<sup>536</sup>

These shifts in public opinion and press coverage could partly be explained by the return of the Soviets to their pre-war status as international outsiders. Luce also blamed Roosevelt for the American public's shock and disillusionment about the Soviets pursuing a policy of self-interest in Europe. Roosevelt had done little to prepare Americans for a realistic post-war world and had spent far too much time implying that international agreements and organizations would be able to blunt national self-interest for governments around the world. Thus, when the Soviets behaved predictably and logically, Americans were bound to be disappointed. Also, the Russian leadership had

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<sup>535</sup>Henry Luce, Memo on Editorial Suggestions for *The March of Time*, September 29, 1947, *March of Time* Movie File 1947, Time Incorporated Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>536</sup>Ralph Levering, *The Cold War, 1945-1972*, (Arlington Heights, Ill: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 27-28.

virtually no interest in courting American public opinion, a factor noted by *Life* in May 1945.<sup>537</sup>

*The March of Time* covered the nascent Cold War extensively, tending to focus on the global dimensions of the conflict in its releases. However, a number of post-war *March of Time* films were notable in their analysis of the ideological struggle through the context of American life at home. These films, while not presented as sequences or series in the manner of *The March of Time*'s earlier coverage, demonstrated a definite point of view on the emerging society of the Cold War.

“Atomic Power,” released by *The March of Time* on August 9, 1946, dealt with the issue of how to utilize the American monopoly of atomic power and gave an extensive history of the atomic bomb's invention and use. J. Robert Oppenheimer, Vannevar Bush, General Leslie Groves, James Conant, Enrico Fermi, Dean Acheson, Bernard Baruch, Leo Szilard and Albert Einstein all agreed to appear in the film, a tribute to the continuing prestige of *The March of Time*. Directed by Jack Glenn, the scientists agreed to reenact key moments in the development of the bomb. *March of Time* producer Richard de Rochemont later recalled, “I think they had a sense that they had participated in something historic...just trying to reproduce the way it happened.

Telling us how it was.”<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup>Filmore Calhoun, “The Russians,” *Life*, May 7, 1945, 40; Levering, *Public Opinion*, 202.

<sup>538</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #13, (New York: Time Incorporated, August 9, 1946), *March of Time* Collection, MT 12.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; *The March of Time*, Vol. 12, # 13 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 12.13, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; Richard De Rochemont Reminiscences, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1959, 24-26, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. The film was released to coincide with the first anniversary of the

The process of creating the bomb was explained in some detail, within government security limits. Fermi recreated for the cameras the first controlled fission of uranium at the University of Chicago in 1942, and an actor portraying President Roosevelt received a letter from Einstein detailing the potential power of the atom. The construction of nuclear labs at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and later Los Alamos, New Mexico, was described, with considerable attention given to the mammoth size of the construction. The sequence about the construction of the bomb concluded with real footage of the actual testing of the bomb on July 16, 1945, in New Mexico. In a reenacted sequence, James Connant and Vannevar Bush were shown stretched out on the desert floor, watching the distant bomb tower explode. Glenn then panned around to show the awe-struck faces of the scientists viewing the mushroom cloud, while Connant and Bush shook hands, still lying prone in the desert.<sup>539</sup>

The film then spliced in footage obtained from the War Department of the actual moment of attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, along with film shot of the devastated cities in the weeks after the Japanese surrender. One rather macabre shot showed an American soldier pointing at the silhouette cast upon pavement at the moment of detonation.<sup>540</sup> “Atomic Power” then discussed the potential peaceful uses of nuclear energy, showing a quick series of shots of homes, factories and entire cities “powered by

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Nagasaki bomb.

<sup>539</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #13.

<sup>540</sup>*Ibid.*

cheap atomic energy.” Another sequence centered on the strategic advantages that the sole possession of the atomic bomb gave the United States, with the concluding comment that “there is still great debate among scientists” about whether or not America should make atomic research available to all nations or maintain control of the information.<sup>541</sup>

Richard de Rochemont stated that “Atomic Power” was one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult, *March of Time* releases he had produced. How, he asked rhetorically, does one instruct Albert Einstein to act on film? Einstein finally agreed to be photographed in the library and on the porch of his Princeton, New Jersey, home, with only two words of dialogue, “I agree!”<sup>542</sup>

“Atomic Power” was one highlight in what was not a particularly strong period creatively or economically for *The March of Time*. The film series was strongest in the post-war years when it focused on foreign affairs (discussed in Chapter 4), a particular interest of the cosmopolitan Richard de Rochemont. Still, the series produced several notable films after 1945, revealing the influence of Luce’s ideas and the emerging American Century.

The March 21, 1947 release by *The March of Time*, titled “The Teacher’s Crisis,” discussed the current and projected shortfall of trained professionals remaining in the teaching profession. In addition to the obvious difficulty that a teacher shortage would

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<sup>541</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #13.

<sup>542</sup>Richard De Rochemont Reminiscences, 27; *The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #13.

present in management of schools, “The Teacher’s Crisis” stated that the problem could manifest itself in national security, as a less educated population would be unable to deal with problems and “threats from within and without,” and that the civic education of young Americans was critical so that “today’s students could fully appreciate the gift of American democracy...and will resist those who would subvert it.”<sup>543</sup> The references to “threats within and without” and the implication of subversion were the only references that *The March of Time* made to the growing “Red Scare” in its post-war releases.

“Marriage and Divorce,” issued by *The March of Time* on February 20, 1948, took as its subject the growing number of divorces in the United States. The film stated that the old stigma of divorce, while still powerful, had eroded over the years and the practice had become more common because of the stresses of World War II. In fact, *The March of Time* showed statistical evidence that many wartime marriages were failing, presented as hardly a surprise given the dimensions of wartime courtship. The film then advocated pre-marital counseling from trusted individuals, economic stability, longer periods of engagement and good communication as essential to successful marriages and reversing this disturbing social trend. Also, solid and long-lasting marriages were presented by *The March of Time* as essential for national security, as “fundamental to our democracy are secure and loving families.”<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>543</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 13, #8, (New York: Time Incorporated, March 21, 1947), *March of Time* Collection, MT 13.08, National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>544</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 14, #7, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 20, 1948), *March of Time* Collection, MT 14.07, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Two 1950 *March of Time* releases issued toward the end of the series' production and could be considered something of a final statement from *The March of Time*. "Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?" was released on February 3, 1950. The film, according to press materials, was a "look at the progress of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a view of America's future."<sup>545</sup> "Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?" in a rapid fire sequence recounted the dramatic events of the first decades of American life in the twentieth century: rapid industrialization, immigration, the First World War, the Roaring Twenties, the stock market crash and subsequent Depression, the New Deal, World War II and the current Cold War. These events were presented in a rapid-fire, almost dizzying fashion, underscoring *The March of Time*'s point about great changes having occurred since 1900. The film then turned, in a speculative fashion, to America's destiny in the next fifty years, again showing scenes of typical middle-class life. While not making specific predictions about changes in material life, *The March of Time* predicted that "America would become more prosperous, more developed and more engaged with the world," while maintaining the "root of its strength, the traditional American adherence to liberty and freedom."<sup>546</sup>

The film also discussed the American role overseas. After showing footage of American troops occupying Germany and Japan, an animated map showed the extent of

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<sup>104</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 16, #1, (New York: Time Incorporated, February 3, 1950), *March of Time* Collection, MT 16.01, National Archives and Records Administration; *The March of Time*, Vol. 16, #1 Production File, *March of Time* Collection, MT 16.01, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>546</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 16, #1.

the American military presence overseas since 1945. This continual, seemingly permanent American engagement with the rest of the world manifested itself not only militarily but financially, as “Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?” detailed the increased amount of American investment overseas and the huge amount of U.S. foreign aid dispensed since 1945. The key change in American life, and the one that would influence the direction of the next fifty years, was the conscious decision to abandon isolationism, according to *The March of Time*.<sup>547</sup>

In a logical follow-up to “Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?” *The March of Time* released “The Gathering Storm” on September 29, 1950. The film was issued as a sense of crisis had descended over the American body politic, with the North Korean invasion of South Korea and American intervention in the war to this point going badly. “The Gathering Storm” described in some depth the growing communist movement in what would come to be called the Third World and the problems associated with the decline of the European colonial powers. The film also described the threat to American interests in Asia posed by the communist takeover of China and the necessity to continue support of Chaing Kai-Shek’s rump regime on Formosa (Taiwan).<sup>548</sup>

“The Gathering Storm” then discussed the necessity for, again, continual American vigilance in the face of overseas threats. The post-war world was proving to be a much more dangerous place than Americans had hoped for or realized with the

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<sup>547</sup>Ibid.

<sup>548</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 16, #6, (New York: Time Incorporated, September 1950), *March of Time* Collection, MT 16.06, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

flush of triumph in 1945. In order to preserve the material gains of victory, the United States had to maintain its military establishment, support vigorous diplomacy and action overseas, and remain “strong and unified” at home to deal with a chaotic international situation.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>549</sup>Ibid.

## Conclusion

*The March of Time* ceased production in August 1951. There are several reasons for this, related to the series' position within Time Inc. *The March of Time* never made money; for most of its sixteen year run, it lost money. This was at variance with other Time Inc., publications and always rankled Luce, who once asked his top lieutenant Roy Larsen, "why the hell do we continue to make this thing since it never makes a dime for the company?"<sup>550</sup> Another factor was *The March of Time*'s exploding post-war budget. The cost of producing the series increased greatly year after year.<sup>551</sup> In addition, from its inception, the series encountered some difficulties with distribution. *The March of Time*'s first distributor, First Division Pictures, went bankrupt, and the series was distributed by both RKO and MGM during the rest of its run. Another, probably decisive, consideration in Time Inc.'s ending *The March of Time* in 1951 was the emergence of television and the general decline of the newsreel industry in the face of the medium. The public always considered *The March of Time* to be a newsreel, although it was in reality a documentary series, and with television's growth in the late 1940s newsreels began to be seen as passe. *The March of Time* itself took editorial note of the

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<sup>550</sup>Memo from Henry Luce to Roy Larsen, MOT Business, June 18, 1946, Luce Correspondence File 1946, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

<sup>551</sup>Memo on MOT Budget, 1948, *March of Time* Movie File 1948, Time Inc. Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City.

new medium in its December 28, 1945, release, “Challenge to Hollywood,” concerning the development of television networks by radio companies and the refinement of television technology.<sup>552</sup> The audience for *The March of Time* began to erode, removing its rationale as advertising for other Time Inc., publications, a factor that surely influenced Luce. In fact, by the mid-1950s, Time Inc., had begun to acquire television stations and in 1945 seriously considered buying the nascent American Broadcasting Company.

Also, *The March of Time* declined in quality with the departure of founding producer Louis de Rochemont in mid-1943. De Rochemont’s brother Richard, formerly the head of *The March of Time*’s Paris office, took over for his brother after his somewhat acrimonious departure from Time Inc.<sup>553</sup> Louis de Rochemont was often frustratingly disorganized but had a definite flair for documentary style film-making. The series after his departure seemed flat and life-less. One longtime *March of Time* cameraman remarked in the late 1940s that of the “last eighteen or so issues of *The March of Time*, he considered only three really good.”<sup>554</sup> Perhaps, though, the perceived decline of *The March of Time* had less to do with a decline in quality than changes in the world that *The March of Time* attempted to cover. *The March of Time* premiered in early 1935 in the

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<sup>552</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 12, #5, (New York: Time Incorporated, December 28, 1945), *March of Time* Collection, MT 12.05, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>553</sup>Roy Larsen, Instructions to MOT Staff Regarding Louis De Rochemont, September 20, 1943, *March of Time* Miscellaneous File 1943, Time Inc., Archives, Time-Life Building, New York City. The memo from Larsen instructs staff “under no circumstances” are the particulars of de Rochemont’s departure to be discussed either within or outside the company, in particular rumors of any financial impropriety.

<sup>554</sup>Fielding, 299.

midst of the greatest economic calamity the United States had experienced. The series tried to show the definition and future direction of America, questions that also preoccupied intellectuals of the left and right. Indeed, for many, Time Inc., and *The March of Time* created an ideal version of America, one at odds with other visions. The issues discussed in the early years of *The March of Time* were immense and had immediate impact on the lives of the audience. With regard to foreign affairs, the series participated fully in, and even led, the “Great Debate” on American intervention in World War II and the changing nature of American engagement in the world. Following World War II, it is possible that the Cold War and the problems of peacetime simply did not have the dramatic resonance as did the ideological battles of the 1930s and early 1940s fights over the definition of America.

In addition, *The March of Time*, through its influential format, may have been a victim of its own success. The “magazine” style organization of the series during its early years was mimicked by television news, and the single subject format adopted by *The March of Time* in 1938 presaged long form news stories later in fashion in television news production. *The March of Time* had participated in the evolution of modern notions of photography and cinematic representations of reality, and had in fact hastened its demise by preparing its audience for television.

One of the large questions that requires assessment in understanding *The March of Time*'s legacy is what, exactly, it was. The series had elements of documentary, using the technique of re-creation, and identified itself as being “pictorial journalism.” Luce,

Larsen and de Rochemont's intent was to create an entirely new form of journalistic communication, building on what they believed to be the failed example of the newsreels and adding the expertise and prestige of the Time Inc., empire.

What emerged from Time Inc.'s efforts is something that can best be termed a documentary series. There are a number of reasons for this definition. Like most documentaries, *The March of Time* had a particular ideology, in this case related to that of the Time Inc., "brand." However, on a number of subjects, *The March of Time* took stances contrary to that of Time Inc., and was ahead of the corporation on some vital issues, most notably American intervention into World War II. For example, *The March of Time*'s August 6, 1937 release, "Rehearsal for War" dealing with the Spanish Civil War took a much harder line toward General Francisco Franco's Nationalist movement than did *Time*. In addition, films such as "TVA" and "King Cotton's Slaves" were more pro-New Deal and pro-unionization than other Time Inc., publications.<sup>555</sup> The structure of the series worked to move the viewer toward a predetermined understanding, a critical characteristic of documentary; viewing the films, there is a sense that the audience needed to be directed to a logical conclusion.

Another factor to consider in defining *The March of Time* as a documentary series concerns an ongoing theme that emerged over the length and breadth of the series sixteen year production. *The March of Time* dealt with a variety of topics between 1935 and 1951, of which nearly half concerned foreign affairs. One consistent message that

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<sup>555</sup>*The March of Time* Vol. 3, #13, August 6, 1937; *The March of Time* Vol. 2, #1, January 7, 1936; *The March of Time*, Vol. 2, #8, August 7, 1936.

becomes clear over time is the persistent effort by *The March of Time* to “define” America; its meaning, its values, its attitudes and its proper course. Of those *March of Time* films that explored foreign relations and global politics, a prevailing theme centered on the effects of a given topic on the United States. For example, *March of Time* releases dealing with the Cold War crouched their analysis on the potential impact of the rise of communism for the United States, films that dealt with trade disputes and access to the seas made constant observations about the American economy, and the series of films produced by *The March of Time* dealing with the fascist threat in late 1930s Europe had at their heart the potential impact of the rise of fascism on American politics, institutions and society. America, and its role in the world, was at the center of *The March of Time*’s exploration of the larger world.

Also, *The March of Time* attempted to define American politics, culture and society at home. This effort at definition was of particular importance during the 1930s, which saw a continual and passionate debate along all points of the political spectrum about the essence of true Americanism. The America that *The March of Time* presented to its audiences was overwhelmingly middle-class, white, centered in small towns and accepting of authority. When other ethnic groups were shown in the series, it was invariably within the context of assimilation to a larger American ideal. Outstanding examples of this from the series include the 1941 and 1944 films “Americans All!” which examined the contributions of immigrant groups to the national fabric. Both films of the same name detail the contributions of prominent Americans of various backgrounds,

while emphasizing that individual success in America can be traced to embracing the values of the dominant American middle-class and abandoning the culture of respective homelands.<sup>556</sup> While this theory of immigrant acculturation and success was not new, dating to the Progressive Era, it was presented with a great deal of force and vigor by *The March of Time*.

In addition, *The March of Time* undertook a number of regional and cultural studies of different parts of the American nation. The purpose of these films was to demonstrate the strength of the various components of the country. While emphasizing regional differences rooted in outward manifestations of culture (music, dialect, food, entertainment), the overall point made by *The March of Time* in such films as “New England’s Eight Million Yankees” and “Thumbs Up, Texas” was the pan-national nature of Americanism.<sup>557</sup> Each region of the country was bound together into an American whole by a set of shared values that focused on the beliefs and mores of America’s small town middle class, in contrast to urban, industrial America. During the period before World War II, *The March of Time* produced a number of films that examined the nation’s most unique, outlying region, the American South. A number of these focused on the impact of New Deal projects in the region while others dealt with the impact of industrialization and unionization on traditional Southern patterns of life. In each film, the solution prescribed was the embrace of dominant American values and the increased

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<sup>556</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #7, February 1941; *The March of Time*, Vol. 10, #12, July 1944.

<sup>557</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #12, July 1941; *The March of Time*, 8, #1, August 1941.

tempo of American life that emerged with industrialization.

*The March of Time* also undertook, as it sought to define America, a number of films that purported to look at the “state of the nation” in a particular moment in time. Films such as “State of the Nation–1939,” “Young America,” “America’s Youth” and “Main Street U.S.A.” were extremely ambitious undertakings, seeking to provide an understanding of the attitudes and values of the entire country through an examination of the nation as a whole, not by looking at individual topics and then extrapolating the necessity for embracing American beliefs by disparate groups or to solve discrete problems.<sup>558</sup> Each of these releases attempted to define an ideal America, and in the case of “Young America,” and “America’s Youth” predict the future responsibilities of emerging generations within the context of a changing America. In fact, each of these “national character” films demonstrated elements of Henry Luce’s American Century. The American relationship to the world was evolving and the central challenge for Americans was to maintain traditional values at home and if necessary be prepared to disseminate Americanism abroad.

It is important to note the influence of *The March of Time*’s production structure and release format on the content of its pre-war releases. By late 1938, *The March of Time* had adopted a single subject format for each release, allowing the series to probe issues in much greater depth than in years past. Also, the series throughout its production was released monthly. While *The March of Time* advertised itself as “pictorial

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<sup>558</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #6, January 20, 1939; *The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #7, February 1939; *The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #9, April 1940; *The March of Time*, Vol. 8, #4, November 1941.

journalism” and relied on the prestige of *Time* magazine and the Time Inc., empire for its journalistic credibility, the monthly release format made it virtually impossible for the series to operate within the traditional news cycle or to cover breaking news stories as they happened. As a result, *The March of Time* was distinguished throughout its sixteen year production by a more contemplative nature in examining its subjects than can be found in the newsreels of the era. Although the production of *The March of Time* was often harried and chaotic, the monthly release, single issue format gave the production team time to plan for releases far in advance, to research topics in some depth, and to take up subjects that were on occasion more ruminative and philosophical. This is the dynamic at work in *The March of Time*’s national character films in particular, which emphasize broad trends and a long term view in their analysis.

It is also interesting to note that not many of these films dealing with a national character were made after World War II. One reason for this is obvious, the focus on the Cold War as a critical theme and topic; indeed, *The March of Time* films dealing with the Cold War made continual references to the need for national unity in dealing with the communist threat. However, the paucity of films directly appealing for and advocating cohesive national values suggests that by 1945, a broad consensus over a definition of America had emerged and that the ideological battles over Americanism were over, even if they were not.

The question of how *The March of Time* defined America leads quite logically to a consideration of the nature of the films themselves. The charge of bias and

propagandizing was leveled toward *The March of Time* from its inception in early 1935. Depending on the political orientation of the viewer, the series was either pro-fascist or a tool of leftist, even communist influence. *The March of Time's* producers and staff, including Louis and Richard de Rochemont respectively, considered themselves to be moderate liberals or centrists, reflecting the views of the educated, mature man in street on most issues. *The March of Time* consistently rejected charges of bias in its productions throughout its history.

However, upon close and detailed examination of the series, the charges of bias and even propagandizing have considerable merit. *The March of Time* had a distinctive point of view, rooted in a sentimentalist view of middle class America, the necessity of national unity centered on middle class values, and the importance of American engagement with the world and if necessary the global imposition of American institutions to ensure national security and economic prosperity. The bias or propagandizing tone of the series on virtually every issue is best revealed by the tendency of *The March of Time* to focus its analysis of every topic through the prism of politics. According to *The March of Time*, all aspects of culture, society and the economy were best understood through an examination of the political dynamics of each subject.

There are numerous examples of *The March of Time's* ideological bias throughout the course of the series' production. Each issue on China and Asian affairs stated the necessity for further support for Chaing Kai-Shek's government, ignoring the ineptitude and massive corruption endemic to the regime. *The March of Time* releases that dealt

with broad trends in American culture invariably assumed the dominance of middle-class values and tended to reify institutions, while asserting a vague and often simplistic belief in progress. *The March of Time*'s analysis of military affairs was inevitably upbeat, even flying in the face of accumulated evidence of American martial weakness during the pre-war years. Even on the New Deal, an area of disagreement ideologically between *The March of Time* and the rest of the Time Inc., the film series emphasized a consistent faith in technological progress and some approval of New Deal programs.

The most prominent example of *The March of Time* propagandizing an issue centers on the "Great Debate" over American intervention into World War II. Here, *The March of Time* took a consistent position in favor of greater American involvement, one that was ahead of that of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* during the 1930s and far more militant than the general public. Virtually from the inception of the series, *The March of Time* warned against Nazi expansionism in Europe, demonstrated the brutality of the Nazi regime, took a firm stand against Franco's Nationalist movement, highlighted the problems of the fascist threat to American trade, and once the war began, consistently, although not overtly, advocated American entry into the war. This viewpoint culminated in the 1940 release of the pro-interventionist film *The Ramparts We Watch*, but can be seen in such *March of Time* films as "Uncle Sam—the Non Belligerent," "War, Peace and Propaganda," "The Philippines—1898-1946," "Crisis in the Atlantic" and "State of the Nation—1939."<sup>559</sup> Each of these representative films was released prior to Pearl Harbor

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<sup>559</sup>*The March of Time*, Vol. 7, #6, January 1941; *The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #11, June 1939; *The March of Time*, Vol. 6, #10; *The March of Time* Vol. 7, #10; *The March of Time*, Vol. 5, #6, January 20, 1939.

and American entry into the war, and each had the same message revealed through examination of disparate topics: that the United States had to realize that it was in a mortal struggle, that American participation in the war was likely and must be prepared for, and that America's future as a global actor and the preservation of the American way of life demanded greater engagement in the world. All of these themes were articulated by Henry Luce in his American Century essay, and provided the cohesion for *The March of Time's* examination of domestic and foreign affairs.

*The March of Time* identified itself as a journalistic enterprise throughout its history, and often emphasized its connection to the larger Time Inc., empire. However, a close examination of the production and content of the series makes it impossible to conclude that *The March of Time* operated as a traditional news organization in any significant way. The series had an ideological viewpoint that was almost relentlessly articulated on all subjects throughout its history. Also, the production and release schedule made it difficult to impossible for *The March of Time* to respond in a prompt fashion to events as they occurred. Thus, the series took by necessity an editorial tone towards its subjects. This allowed for a more contemplative tenor to emerge in the content of the series but the detached pace of the series enabled the consistent imposition of *The March of Time's* ideological biases on the audience. A recurring question among contemporary viewers and historians is whether *The March of Time* can be classified as a documentary series. Given that the traditional definition of documentary film allows for the articulation of a distinct viewpoint, it is difficult to conclude that *The March of Time*

was not a documentary series, given its ideological content and consistent analysis of given subjects through a political lens.

Given that *The March of Time* can be defined as documentary that defined a vision of America and provided a portrait of a era, the impression of the films themselves on viewers should be examined. Viewing *The March of Time* today can be a jarring experience. The re-enactments seem obvious and staged, the language orotund and pompous and the presentation of sometimes mundane events overly dramatic. Perhaps the cultural distance for the contemporary viewer from the 1930s accounts for the discomfort in watching *The March of Time*. It must also be considered that the relentless ideological and political content in the films quite possibly makes them seem so bizarre, given that the America presented by *The March of Time* bears little resemblance to historical reality. However, one must also recognize that in comparison to the 1930s and 1940s, this is a relatively non-ideological age. Despite the viciousness of what passes for public discourse in today's America, there is a broad consensus on the definition of American and Americanism. The ideological divide in 1930s and early 1940s America was of greater depth and importance than that of today. The debates of *The March of Time*'s peak years centered on the fundamental structure of the economy, the viability of democracy and the challenge to the Western liberal democratic tradition from communism and fascism, and the appropriation of the American past and the symbols of American patriotism for ideological ends. Viewing an ideological artifact from past decades when the definition of America was being hotly debated in all forms of media

seems rather jarring in an era of relative consensus.

Appendix: List and Breakdown of *The March of Time* subjects, 1935-1951

<u>Volume</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Titles of Episodes</u>	<u>Release Date (US)</u>
1	1	“Saionji” “Speakeasy Street” “Moe Buschbaum” “Fred Perkins”	Feb. 1, 1935
1	2	“Germany” “New York Daily News” “Speed Camera” “Mohawk Disaster” “Leadbelly”	Mar. 8, 1935
1	3	“Trans-Pacific” “Munitions” “Huey Long” “Mexico”	April 19, 1935
1	4	“Navy War Games” “Russia” “Washington News”	May 31, 1935
1	5	“Army”  “Father Coughlin” “Croix de Feu”	August 16, 1935
1	6	“Ethiopia” “Bootleg Coal” “CCC”	Sept. 20, 1935
1	7	“Palestine” “Neutrality” “Summer Theaters” “Safety (“Sudden Death”)	Oct. 18, 1935
1	8	“G.O.P.” “Wild Ducks” “Strikebreaking”	Nov. 13, 1935

1	9	“Japan-China” “Narcotics” “Townsend Plan”	Dec. 13, 1935
2	1	“Pacific Islands” “TVA” “Deibler”	Jan. 7, 1936
2	2	“Moscow” “Hartman Discovery” “Father Divine”	Feb. 14, 1936
2	3	“Tokyo, Japan” “Devil’s Island” “Fisheries”	Mar. 13, 1936
2	4	“Veterans of Future Wars” “Arson Squads” “Florida Canal” “Field Trials”	Apr. 17, 1936
2	5	“League of Nations Union” “Railroads” “Relief”	May 15, 1936
2	6	“Otto of Hapsburg” “Texas Centennial” “Crime School”	June 12, 1936
2	7	“Revolt in France” “An American Dictator” “Jockey Club”	July 10, 1936
2	8	“Albania’s King Zog” “Highway Homes” “King Cotton’s Slaves”	Aug. 7, 1936
3	1	“The ‘Lunatic Fringe’” “Passamaquoddy” “U.S. Milky Way”	Sept. 2, 1936

3	2	“Labor vs. Labor” “England’s Tithe War” “The Football Business”	Sept. 30, 1936
3	3	“The Presidency” “New Schools for Old”	Nov. 6, 1936
3	4	“A Soldier-King’s Son” “St. Lawrence Seaway” “An Uncle Sam Production”	Nov. 27, 1936
3	5	“China’s Dictator Kidnapped” “Business Girls”	Dec. 24, 1936
3	6	“Conquering Cancer” “Mormonism-1937” “Midwinter Vacations”	Jan. 22, 1937
3	7	“Father of All Turks” “Birth of Swing” “Enemies of Alcohol”	Feb. 19, 1937
3	8	“Child Labor” “Coronation Crisis” “Harlem’s Black Magic”	Mar. 19, 1937
3	9	“Britain’s Food Defenses” “The Supreme Court” “Amateur Sleuths”	Apr. 16, 1937
3	10	“Irish Republic-1937” “U.S. Unemployment” “Puzzle Prizes”	May 14, 1937
3	11	“Poland and War” “Dust Bowl” “Dogs For Sale”	June 11, 1937
3	12	“The 49 <sup>th</sup> State” “Babies Wanted”	July 9, 1937

3	13	“Rehearsal for War” “The Spoils System” “Youth in Camps”	Aug. 6, 1937
4	1	“War in China” “Pests of 1937”	Sept. 10, 1937
4	2	“Junk and War” Fiorello LaGuardia”	Oct. 1, 1937
4	3	“Crisis in Algeria” “Amoskeag-Success Story” “U.S. Secret Service”	Oct. 29, 1937
4	4	“Alaska’s Salmon War” “Britain’s Gambling Fever” “The Human Heart”	Nov. 26, 1937
4	5	“Finland’s 20 <sup>th</sup> Birthday” “The Laugh Industry” “Ships-Strikes-Seamen”	Dec. 27, 1937
4	6	“Inside Nazi Germany”	Jan. 21, 1938
4	7	“Russians in Exile” “Old Dixie’s New Boom” “One Million Missing”	Feb. 18, 1938
4	8	“Arms and the League” “Brain Trust Island”	Mar. 18, 1938
4	9	“Nazi Conquest-No. 1” “Crime and Prisons”	April 15, 1938
4	10	“England’s Bankrupt Peers” “Racketeers vs. Housewives” “Friend of the People”	May 13, 1938
4	11	“Men of Medicine”	June 10, 1938

4	12	“G-Men of the Sea”	July 8, 1938
4	13	“Threat to Gibraltar”	Aug. 6, 1938
5	1	“Prelude to Conquest” “Father Divine’s Deal”	Sept. 2, 1938
5	2	“The British Dilemma” “U.S. Fire Fighters”	Sept. 30, 1938
5	3	“Inside the Maginot Line”	Oct. 28, 1938
5	4	“Uncle Sam: The Good Neighbor”	Nov. 25, 1938
5	5	“The Refugee-Today and Tomorrow”	Dec. 23, 1938
5	6	“State of the Nation-1939”	Jan. 20, 1939
5	7	“Mexico’s New Crisis” “Young America”	Feb. 1939
5	8	“The Mediterranean”	Mar. 1939
5	9	“Japan-Master of the Orient”	Apr. 1939
5	10	“Dixie-USA”	May 1939
5	11	“War, Peace and Propaganda”	June 1939
5	12	“The Movies March On”	July 1939
5	13	“Metropolis–1939”	Aug. 1939
6	1	“Soldiers With Wings”	Sept. 1939
6	2	“Battle Fleets of England”	Sept 1939
6	3	“Uncle Sam–The Farmer”	Oct. 1939

6	4	“Newsfronts of War–1940”	Nov. 1939
6	5	“Crisis in the Pacific”	Dec. 1939
6	6	“The Republic of Finland”	Jan. 1940
6	7	“The Vatican of Pius XII”	Feb. 1940
6	8	“Canada at War”	Mar. 1940
6	9	“America’s Youth”	Apr. 1940
6	10	“The Philippines-1898-1946”	May 1940
6	11	“The U.S. Navy–1940	June 1940
6	12	“Spoils of Conquest”	Aug. 1940
6	13	“Gateways to Panama”	Sept. 1940
7	1	“On Foreign Newsfronts”	Sept. 1940
7	2	“Britain’s RAF”	Oct. 1940
7	3	“Mexico”	Oct. 1940
7	4	“Arms and the Men-USA”	Nov. 1940
7	5	“Labor and Defense”	Dec. 1940
7	6	“Uncle Sam-the Non-Belligerent”	Jan. 1941
7	7	“Americans All”	Feb. 1941
7	8	“Australia at War”	Mar. 1941
7	9	“Men of the FBI-1941”	Apr. 1941
7	10	“Crisis in the Atlantic”	May 1941
7	11	“China Fights Back”	June 1941

7	12	“New England’s Eight Million Yankees”	July 1941
7	13	“Peace—by Adolf Hitler”	Aug. 1941
8	1	“Thumbs Up, Texas!”	Aug. 1941
8	2	“Norway in Revolt”	Sept. 1941
8	3	“Sailors With Wings”	Oct. 1941
8	4	“Main Street USA”	Nov. 1941
Special Issue		“Battlefields of the Pacific”	Dec. 1941
8	5	“Our America at War”	Dec. 1941
8	6	“When Air Raids Strike”	Jan. 1942
8	7	“Far East Command”	Feb. 1942
8	8	“The Argentine Question”	Mar. 1942
8	9	“America’s New Army”	Apr. 1942
8	10	“India in Crisis”	May 1942
8	11	“India at War”	June 1942
8	12	“Men in Washington-1942”	July 1942
8	13	“Men of the Fleet”	Aug. 1942
9	1	“The FBI Front”	Sept. 1942
9	2	“The Fighting French”	Oct. 1942
9	3	“Mr. And Mrs. America”	Nov. 1942
9	4	“Prelude to Victory”	Dec. 1942

9	5	“The Navy and the Nation”	Dec. 1942
9	6	“One Day of War–Russia”	Jan. 1943
9	7	“The New Canada”	Feb. 1943
9	8	“America’s Food Crisis”	Mar. 1943
9	9	“Inside Fascist Spain”	Apr. 1943
9	10	“Show Business at War”	May 1943
9	11	“Invasion!”	June 1943
9	12	“Bill Jack vs. Adolf Hitler!”	July 1943
9	13	“...And Then Japan!”	Aug. 1943
10	1	“Airways to Peace”	Sept. 1943
10	2	“Portugal–Europe’s Crossroads”	Oct. 1943
10	3	“Youth in Crisis”	Nov. 1943
10	4	“Naval Log of Victory”	Dec. 1943
10	5	“Upbeat in Music”	Dec. 1943
10	6	“Sweden’s Middle Road”	Jan. 1944
10	7	“Post-War Jobs”	Feb. 1944
10	8	“South American Front-1944”	Mar. 1944
10	9	“The Irish Question”	Apr. 1944
10	10	“Underground Report”	May 1944
10	11	“Back Door to Tokyo”	June 1944
10	12	“Americans All”	July 1944

10	13	“British Imperialism”	Aug. 1944
11	1	“Post-War Farms”	Sept. 1944
11	2	“What to Do With Germany”	October 1944
11	3	“Uncle Sam, Mariner?”	Nov. 1944
11	4	“Inside China Today”	Dec. 1944
11	5	“The Unknown Battle”	Dec. 1944
11	6	“Report on Italy”	Jan. 1945
11	7	“The West Coast Question”	Feb. 1945
11	8	“Memo from Britain”	Mar. 1945
11	9	“The Returning Veteran”	Apr. 1945
11	10	“Spotlight on Congress”	May 1945
11	11	“Teen-Age Girls”	June 15, 1945
11	12	“Where’s the Meat”	July 13, 1945
11	13	“The New US Frontier”	Aug. 10, 1945
12	1	“Palestine Problem”	Sept. 17, 1945
12	2	“American Beauty”	Oct. 5, 1945
12	3	“18 Million Orphans”	Nov. 2, 1945
12	4	“Justice Comes to Germany”	Nov. 30, 1945
12	5	“Challenge to Hollywood”	Dec. 28, 1945
12	6	“Life With Baby”	Jan. 25, 1946
12	7	“Report on Greece”	Feb. 22, 1946

12	8	“Night Club Boom”	Mar. 22, 1946
12	9	“Wanted—More Homes”	Apr. 19, 1946
12	10	“Tomorrow’s Mexico”	May 17, 1946
12	11	“Problem Drinkers”	June 14, 1946
12	12	“The New France”	July 12, 1946
12	13	“Atomic Power”	Aug. 9, 1946
13	1	“Is Everybody Happy?”	Sept. 7, 1946
13	2	“World Food Problem”	Oct. 4, 1946
13	3	“The Soviet’s Neighbor- Czechoslovakia”	Nov. 1, 1946
13	4	“The American Cop”	Nov. 29, 1946
13	5	“Nobody’s Children”	Dec. 27, 1946
13	6	“Germany-Handle with Care!”	Jan. 24, 1947
13	7	“Fashion Means Business”	Feb. 21, 1947
13	8	“The Teacher’s Crisis”	Mar. 21, 1947
13	9	“Storm over Britain”	Apr. 18, 1947
13	10	“The Russians Nobody Knows”	May 16, 1947
13	11	“Your Doctors-1947”	June 13, 1947
13	12	“New Trains for Old”	July 11, 1947
13	13	“Turkey’s 100 Million”	Aug. 8, 1947
14	1	“Is Everybody Listening”	Sept. 6, 1947

14	2	“T-Men in Action”	Oct. 3, 1947
14	3	“End of an Empire?”	Oct. 31, 1947
14	4	“Public Relations—This Means You”	Nov. 28, 1947
14	5	“The Presidential Year”	Dec. 26, 1947
14	6	“The Cold War: Act 1-France”	Jan. 23, 1948
14	7	“Marriage and Divorce”	Feb. 20, 1948
14	8	“The Cold War: Act II— Crisis In Italy”	Mar. 19, 1948
14	9	“Life With Junior”	Apr. 16, 1948
14	10	“The Cold War: Act III- Battle for Greece”	May 14, 1948
14	11	“The Fight Game”	June 11, 1948
14	12	“The Case of Mrs. Conrad”	July 9, 1948
14	13	“White Collar Girls”	Aug. 6, 1948
14	14	“Life with Grandpa”	Sept. 3, 1948
14	15	“Battle for Germany”	Oct. 1, 1948
14	16	“America’s New Air Power”	Oct. 29, 1948
14	17	“Answer to Stalin”	Nov. 26, 1948
14	18	“Watchdogs of the Mail”	Dec. 24, 1948
15	1	“On Stage”	Jan. 21, 1949
15	2	“Asia’s New Voice”	Feb. 18, 1949
15	3	“Wish You Were Here”	Mar. 18, 1949

15	4	“Report on the Atom”	Apr. 15, 1949
15	5	“Sweden Looks Ahead”	May 13, 1949
15	6	“It’s in the Groove!”	June 10, 1949
15	7	“Stop–Heavy Traffic!”	July 8, 1949
15	8	“Farming Pays Off”	Aug. 5, 1949
15	9	“Policeman’s Holiday”	Sept. 2, 1949
15	10	“The Fight For Better Schools”	Sept. 30, 1949
15	11	“MacArthur’s Japan”	Nov. 11, 1949
15	12	“A Chance to Live”	Dec. 23, 1949
16	1	“Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?”	Feb. 3, 1950
16	2	“The Male Look”	Mar. 17, 1950
16	3	“Where’s the Fire?”	Apr. 28, 1950
16	4	“Beauty at Work”	June 9, 1950
16	5	“As Russia Sees It”	Aug. 18, 1950
16	6	“The Gathering Storm”	Sept. 29, 1950
16	7	“Schools March On!”	Nov. 10, 1950
16	8	“Tito–New Ally?”	Dec. 1950
17	1	“Strategy for Victory”	Feb. 1951
17	2	“Flight Plan for Freedom”	Mar. 1951
17	3	“The Nation’s Mental Health”	Apr. 1951
17	4	“Moroccan Outpost”	June 1951

17	5	“Crisis in Iran”	July 1951
17	6	“Formosa: Island of Promise”	Aug. 1951

### Breakdown of Subject Matter

*The March of Time* produced and released approximately 204 films between 1935 and 1951. These 204 films included 286 different subjects or topics, broken into representative categories below.

#### **Foreign Affairs: 137 subjects, 47.9% of total.**

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Number of Subjects:</u>	<u>Percentage of Foreign Affairs Films, Percentage of MOT output:</u>
Europe	42	31%; 14.6%
US Intervention	23	16.8%; 8%
WWII/Military	26	19%; 9.1%
Asia	22	16.1%; 7.7%
Cold War	24	17.5%; 8.4%

#### **Domestic Affairs: 149 subjects, 52.1% of total.**

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Number of Subjects</u>	<u>Percentage of Domestic Affairs Films, Percentage of MOT output:</u> <u>Percentage</u>
New Deal	24	16.1%; 8.4%
Politics	29	19.5%; 10.1%
Labor	16	10.7%; 5.6%
Culture/Society	48	32.2%; 16.8%

Americanism/  
National Unity

32

21.5%; 11.2%

**Note:** These are approximate breakdowns of *The March of Time*'s subject matter. Many of the films produced by *The March of Time* can fit into two or even three of the above categories.

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### Appendix: List and Breakdown of *The March of Time* subjects, 1935-1951

<u>Volume</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Titles of Episodes</u>	<u>Release Date (US)</u>
1	1	“Saionji” “Speakeasy Street” “Moe Buschbaum” “Fred Perkins”	Feb. 1, 1935
1	2	“Germany”	Mar. 8,

				1935
			“New York Daily News” “Speed Camera” “Mohawk Disaster” “Leadbelly”	
1	3		“Trans-Pacific”	April 19, 1935
			“Munitions” “Huey Long” “Mexico”	
1	4		“Navy War Games”	May 31, 1935
			“Russia” “Washington News”	
1	5		“Army”	August 16, 1935
			“Father Coughlin” “Croix de Feu”	
1	6		“Ethiopia”	Sept. 20, 1935
			“Bootleg Coal” “CCC”	
1	7		“Palestine”	Oct. 18, 1935
			“Neutrality” “Summer Theaters” “Safety (“Sudden Death”)	
1	8		“G.O.P.”	Nov. 13, 1935

		“Wild Ducks” “Strikebreaking”	
1	9	“Japan-China”	Dec. 13, 1935
		“Narcotics” “Townsend Plan”	
2	1	“Pacific Islands”	Jan. 7, 1936
		“TVA” “Deibler”	
2	2	“Moscow”	Feb. 14, 1936
		“Hartman Discovery” “Father Divine”	
2	3	“Tokyo, Japan”	Mar. 13, 1936
		“Devil’s Island” “Fisheries”	
2	4	“Veterans of Future Wars”	Apr. 17, 1936
		“Arson Squads” “Florida Canal” “Field Trials”	
2	5	“League of Nations Union”	May 15, 1936
		“Railroads” “Relief”	
2	6	“Otto of Hapsburg”	June 12,

		“Texas Centennial” “Crime School”	1936
2	7	“Revolt in France”  “An American Dictator” “Jockey Club”	July 10, 1936
2	8	“Albania’s King Zog”  “Highway Homes” “King Cotton’s Slaves”	Aug. 7, 1936
3	1	“The ‘Lunatic Fringe’”  “Passamaquoddy” “U.S. Milky Way”	Sept. 2, 1936
3	2	“Labor vs. Labor”  “England’s Tithe War” “The Football Business”	Sept. 30, 1936
3	3	“The Presidency”  “New Schools for Old”	Nov. 6, 1936
3	4	“A Soldier-King’s Son”  “St. Lawrence Seaway” “An Uncle Sam Production”	Nov. 27, 1936
3	5	“China’s Dictator Kidnapped” “Business Girls”	Dec. 24, 1936

3	6	“Conquering Cancer”  “Mormonism-1937” “Midwinter Vacations”	Jan. 22, 1937
3	7	“Father of All Turks”  “Birth of Swing” “Enemies of Alcohol”	Feb. 19, 1937
3	8	“Child Labor”  “Coronation Crisis” “Harlem’s Black Magic”	Mar. 19, 1937
3	9	“Britain’s Food Defenses”  “The Supreme Court” “Amateur Sleuths”	Apr. 16, 1937
3	10	“Irish Republic-1937”  “U.S. Unemployment” “Puzzle Prizes”	May 14, 1937
3	11	“Poland and War”  “Dust Bowl” “Dogs For Sale”	June 11, 1937
3	12	“The 49 <sup>th</sup> State”  “Babies Wanted”	July 9, 1937
3	13	“Rehearsal for War”	Aug. 6,

				1937
			“The Spoils System” “Youth in Camps”	
4	1		“War in China”	Sept. 10, 1937
			“Pests of 1937”	
4	2		“Junk and War” Fiorello LaGuardia”	Oct. 1, 1937
4	3		“Crisis in Algeria”	Oct. 29, 1937
			“Amoskeag-Success Story” “U.S. Secret Service”	
4 26, 1937	4		“Alaska’s Salmon War”	Nov.
			“Britain’s Gambling Fever” “The Human Heart”	
4 27, 1937	5		“Finland’s 20 <sup>th</sup> Birthday”	Dec.
			“The Laugh Industry” “Ships-Strikes-Seamen”	
4 21, 1938	6		“Inside Nazi Germany”	Jan.
4 18, 1938	7		“Russians in Exile”	Feb.
			“Old Dixie’s New Boom” “One Million Missing”	
4 18, 1938	8		“Arms and the League” “Brain Trust Island”	Mar.

4 15, 1938	9	“Nazi Conquest-No. 1” “Crime and Prisons”	April
4 13, 1938	10	“England’s Bankrupt Peers” “Racketeers vs. Housewives” “Friend of the People”	May
4 10, 1938	11	“Men of Medicine”	June
4 1938	12	“G-Men of the Sea”	July 8,
4 1938	13	“Threat to Gibraltar”	Aug. 6,
5 2, 1938	1	“Prelude to Conquest” “Father Divine’s Deal”	Sept.
5 30, 1938	2	“The British Dilemma” “U.S. Fire Fighters”	Sept.
5 28, 1938	3	“Inside the Maginot Line”	Oct.
5 25, 1938	4	“Uncle Sam: The Good Neighbor”	Nov.
5 23, 1938	5	“The Refugee-Today and Tomorrow”	Dec.
5 20, 1939	6	“State of the Nation-1939”	Jan.

1939	5	7	“Mexico’s New Crisis”	Feb.
			“Young America”	
1939	5	8	“The Mediterranean”	Mar.
1939	5	9	“Japan-Master of the Orient”	Apr.
1939	5	10	“Dixie-USA”	May
1939	5	11	“War, Peace and Propaganda”	June
1939	5	12	“The Movies March On”	July
1939	5	13	“Metropolis–1939”	Aug.
1939	6	1	“Soldiers With Wings”	Sept.
1939	6	2	“Battle Fleets of England”	Sept
1939	6	3	“Uncle Sam–The Farmer”	Oct.
1939	6	4	“Newsfronts of War–1940”	Nov.
1939	6	5	“Crisis in the Pacific”	Dec.
1940	6	6	“The Republic of Finland”	Jan.
	6	7	“The Vatican of Pius XII”	Feb.

1940				
	6	8	“Canada at War”	Mar.
1940				
	6	9	“America’s Youth”	Apr.
1940				
	6	10	“The Philippines-1898-1946”	May
1940				
	6	11	“The U.S. Navy–1940	June
1940				
	6	12	“Spoils of Conquest”	Aug.
1940				
	6	13	“Gateways to Panama”	Sept.
1940				
	7	1	“On Foreign Newsfronts”	Sept.
1940				
	7	2	“Britain’s RAF”	Oct.
1940				
	7	3	“Mexico”	Oct.
1940				
	7	4	“Arms and the Men-USA”	Nov.
1940				
	7	5	“Labor and Defense”	Dec.
1940				
	7	6	“Uncle Sam-the Non-Belligerent”	Jan.
1941				
	7	7	“Americans All”	Feb.
1941				

1941	7	8	“Australia at War”	Mar.
1941	7	9	“Men of the FBI-1941”	Apr.
1941	7	10	“Crisis in the Atlantic”	May
1941	7	11	“China Fights Back”	June
1941	7	12	“New England’s Eight Million Yankees”	July
1941	7	13	“Peace—by Adolf Hitler”	Aug.
1941	8	1	“Thumbs Up, Texas!”	Aug.
1941	8	2	“Norway in Revolt”	Sept.
1941	8	3	“Sailors With Wings”	Oct.
1941	8	4	“Main Street USA”	Nov.
1941	Special Issue		“Battlefields of the Pacific”	Dec.
1941	8	5	“Our America at War”	Dec.
1942	8	6	“When Air Raids Strike”	Jan.
	8	7	“Far East Command”	Feb.

1942				
	8	8	“The Argentine Question”	Mar.
1942				
	8	9	“America’s New Army”	Apr.
1942				
	8	10	“India in Crisis”	May
1942				
	8	11	“India at War”	June
1942				
	8	12	“Men in Washington-1942”	July
1942				
	8	13	“Men of the Fleet”	Aug.
1942				
	9	1	“The FBI Front”	Sept.
1942				
	9	2	“The Fighting French”	Oct.
1942				
	9	3	“Mr. And Mrs. America”	Nov.
1942				
	9	4	“Prelude to Victory”	Dec.
1942				
	9	5	“The Navy and the Nation”	Dec.
1942				
	9	6	“One Day of War–Russia”	Jan.
1943				
	9	7	“The New Canada”	Feb.
1943				

1943	9	8	“America’s Food Crisis”	Mar.
1943	9	9	“Inside Fascist Spain”	Apr.
1943	9	10	“Show Business at War”	May
1943	9	11	“Invasion!”	June
1943	9	12	“Bill Jack vs. Adolf Hitler!”	July
1943	9	13	“...And Then Japan!”	Aug.
1943	10	1	“Airways to Peace”	Sept.
1943	10	2	“Portugal–Europe’s Crossroads”	Oct.
1943	10	3	“Youth in Crisis”	Nov.
1943	10	4	“Naval Log of Victory”	Dec.
1943	10	5	“Upbeat in Music”	Dec.
1944	10	6	“Sweden’s Middle Road”	Jan.
1944	10	7	“Post-War Jobs”	Feb.
1944	10	8	“South American Front-1944”	Mar.

1944	10	9	“The Irish Question”	Apr.
1944	10	10	“Underground Report”	May
1944	10	11	“Back Door to Tokyo”	June
1944	10	12	“Americans All”	July
1944	10	13	“British Imperialism”	Aug.
1944	11	1	“Post-War Farms”	Sept.
October 1944	11	2	“What to Do With Germany”	
1944	11	3	“Uncle Sam, Mariner?”	Nov.
1944	11	4	“Inside China Today”	Dec.
1944	11	5	“The Unknown Battle”	Dec.
1945	11	6	“Report on Italy”	Jan.
1945	11	7	“The West Coast Question”	Feb.
1945	11	8	“Memo from Britain”	Mar.
1945	11	9	“The Returning Veteran”	Apr.

11 1945	10	“Spotlight on Congress”	May
11 15, 1945	11	“Teen-Age Girls”	June
11 13, 1945	12	“Where’s the Meat”	July
11 10, 1945	13	“The New US Frontier”	Aug.
12 17, 1945	1	“Palestine Problem”	Sept.
12 1945	2	“American Beauty”	Oct. 5,
12 1945	3	“18 Million Orphans”	Nov. 2,
12 30, 1945	4	“Justice Comes to Germany”	Nov.
12 28, 1945	5	“Challenge to Hollywood”	Dec.
12 25, 1946	6	“Life With Baby”	Jan.
12 22, 1946	7	“Report on Greece”	Feb.
12 22, 1946	8	“Night Club Boom”	Mar.
12 19, 1946	9	“Wanted—More Homes”	Apr.
12 17, 1946	10	“Tomorrow’s Mexico”	May

12 14, 1946	11	“Problem Drinkers”	June
12 12, 1946	12	“The New France”	July
12 1946	13	“Atomic Power”	Aug. 9,
13 7, 1946	1	“Is Everybody Happy?”	Sept.
13 1946	2	“World Food Problem”	Oct. 4,
13 1946	3	“The Soviet’s Neighbor- Czechoslovakia”	Nov. 1,
13 29, 1946	4	“The American Cop”	Nov.
13 27, 1946	5	“Nobody’s Children”	Dec.
13 24, 1947	6	“Germany-Handle with Care!”	Jan.
13 21, 1947	7	“Fashion Means Business”	Feb.
13	8	“The Teacher’s Crisis”	Mar. 21, 1947
13	9	“Storm over Britain”	Apr. 18, 1947
13	10	“The Russians Nobody Knows”	May 16,

			1947
13	11	“Your Doctors-1947”	June 13, 1947
13	12	“New Trains for Old”	July 11, 1947
13	13	“Turkey’s 100 Million”	Aug. 8, 1947
14	1	“Is Everybody Listening”	Sept. 6, 1947
14	2	“T-Men in Action”	Oct. 3, 1947
14	3	“End of an Empire?”	Oct. 31, 1947
14	4	“Public Relations—This Means You”	Nov. 28, 1947
14	5	“The Presidential Year”	Dec. 26, 1947
14	6	“The Cold War: Act 1-France”	Jan. 23, 1948
14	7	“Marriage and Divorce”	Feb. 20, 1948
14	8	“The Cold War: Act II—	Mar. 19,

			1948
		Crisis In Italy”	
14	9	“Life With Junior”	Apr. 16, 1948
14	10	“The Cold War: Act III-  Battle for Greece”	May 14, 1948
14	11	“The Fight Game”	June 11, 1948
14	12	“The Case of Mrs. Conrad”	July 9, 1948
14	13	“White Collar Girls”	Aug. 6, 1948
14	14	“Life with Grandpa”	Sept. 3, 1948
14	15	“Battle for Germany”	Oct. 1, 1948
14	16	“America’s New Air Power”	Oct. 29, 1948
14	17	“Answer to Stalin”	Nov. 26, 1948
14	18	“Watchdogs of the Mail”	Dec. 24, 1948
15	1	“On Stage”	Jan.

			21, 1949
15	2	“Asia’s New Voice”	Feb. 18, 1949
15	3	“Wish You Were Here”	Mar. 18, 1949
15	4	“Report on the Atom”	Apr. 15, 1949
15	5	“Sweden Looks Ahead”	May 13, 1949
15	6	“It’s in the Groove!”	June 10, 1949
15	7	“Stop–Heavy Traffic!”	July 8, 1949
15	8	“Farming Pays Off”	Aug. 5, 1949
15	9	“Policeman’s Holiday”	Sept. 2, 1949
15	10	“The Fight For Better Schools”	Sept. 30, 1949
15	11	“MacArthur’s Japan”	Nov. 11, 1949
15	12	“A Chance to Live”	Dec.

			23, 1949
16	1	“Mid-Century–Halfway to Where?”	Feb. 3, 1950
16	2	“The Male Look”	Mar. 17, 1950
16	3	“Where’s the Fire?”	Apr. 28, 1950
16	4	“Beauty at Work”	June 9, 1950
16	5	“As Russia Sees It”	Aug. 18, 1950
16	6	“The Gathering Storm”	Sept. 29, 1950
16	7	“Schools March On!”	Nov. 10, 1950
16	8	“Tito–New Ally?”	Dec. 1950
17	1	“Strategy for Victory”	Feb. 1951
17	2	“Flight Plan for Freedom”	Mar. 1951
17	3	“The Nation’s Mental Health”	Apr. 1951

17	4	“Moroccan Outpost”	June 1951
17	5	“Crisis in Iran”	July 1951
17	6	“Formosa: Island of Promise”	Aug. 1951

#### Breakdown of Subject Matter

*The March of Time* produced and released approximately 204 films between 1935 and 1951. These 204 films included 286 different subjects or topics, broken into representative categories below.

#### **Foreign Affairs: 137 subjects, 47.9% of total.**

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Number of Subjects:</u>	<u>Percentage of Foreign Affairs Films, Percentage of MOT output:</u>
Europe	42	31%; 14.6%
US Intervention	23	16.8%; 8%
WWII/Military	26	19%; 9.1%
Asia	22	16.1%; 7.7%
Cold War	24	17.5%; 8.4%

#### **Domestic Affairs: 149 subjects, 52.1% of total.**

<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Number of Subjects</u>	<u>Percentage of Domestic Affairs Films, Percentage of MOT output:</u> <u>Percentage</u>
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New Deal	24	16.1%; 8.4%
Politics	29	19.5%; 10.1%
Labor	16	10.7%; 5.6%
Culture/Society	48	32.2%; 16.8%
Americanism/ National Unity	32	21.5%; 11.2%

**Note:** These are approximate breakdowns of *The March of Time*'s subject matter. Many of the films produced by *The March of Time* can fit into two or even three of the above categories.