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# The American challenge in uniform: the arrival of America's armies in World War II and European women

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<sup>1</sup> In Iraq and Afghanistan today we see confirmed once more an ancient truth: that no matter how friendly the intentions of foreign armies upon their arrival in a given territory, no matter how short or long their stay, their presence always involves some form of dilution, suspension or transfer of sovereignty from local peoples to those armies. The question then arises of how willingly that transfer takes place, how to manage the conflicts that inevitably arise, in direct proportion of number and intensity to the length of time those armies remain.<sup>1</sup> In World War II it was the British who first identified the challenge represented by the American armed forces, after they began arriving in vast numbers in the UK from early 1942. It was British popular culture which best identified the three great complaints which would be heard against the Americans everywhere they went in the world from that time onwards. Americans in uniform were said to be 'over-sexed, over-paid and over here.' In other words they represented – among many other things - a vast male challenge to every local tradition of feminine identity, custom and practice. They possessed a unique currency of power in their material riches; and they upset all the definitions of local sovereignty taken for granted in matters large and small by peoples everywhere.

<sup>2</sup> This paper explores some of the consequences of this encounter between civilisations, seen from the perspective of local women in the 'liberated territories'. It suggests that wittingly and unwittingly, U.S. armed services did indeed act as agents of America's models of modernity. But if the medium was the message, its reception, translation and reconfiguration by the peoples exposed to this demonstration of cultural as well as material force suggests that a complex dialectical interaction took place over time, which changed both sides mentally and socially for years afterwards, perhaps permanently. In no social area is this reality more plain to see than in the confrontation

between the Americans in all their forms and the women of Britain, Italy, Austria and Germany from 1942 onwards.

<sup>3</sup> Every expeditionary army in history has, sooner or later, provoked forms of generalised resentment among local populations wherever it landed. But the wry British phrase also implies there was a different and new quality about the American military as a force of foreign invasion, of which it had only limited experience. The experience of all those involved – the men in uniform at all levels and the local peoples in all their social variety – soon suggested that a series of highly visible factors contributed to the impact of these forces when they arrived from across the Atlantic during World War II, and to the reception that subsequently greeted them:

4 A. the inheritance in any liberated territory of all the prevailing myths of America there, and of all the previous, direct experiences of its people of the reality of the U.S. in all its forms: the weight of stereotypes created by the mass media, Hollywood in particular; the legacy of memories and stories left by native emigrants, and by American tourists, bankers and industrialists come to Europe. <sup>2</sup>

5 B. the explicit ideology which the liberators brought. One legend said that the military banknotes the Americans brought to Italy bore the Four Freedoms printed on their reverse side. Obviously Wilsonian and Rooseveltian, the fighting 'United Nations' promised salvation from all the misery, backwardness, class struggle and wars of all the centuries.

6 C. the dynamism, technology, material comforts and subliminal messages of the American way of making war. The opulence flowed everywhere, blinding, distorting, often corrupting everything it came into contact with. Scholars would demonstrate later that this was not the casual thoughtlessness of a newly rich nation, but the key technique chosen by the General Staff under George Marshall to hold together armed forces which were not fighting to defend home and hearth; a huge, raw mass of individuals in uniform from a land with scarce military traditions, and a strong commitment to citizen democracy. <sup>3</sup>

7 D. the uniquely American might of Hollywood films. Everywhere the armed forces went, the movie industry followed right behind. With four thousand of its people in military service, and permission to act as 'the only commercial set-up' functioning in the war zones, Hollywood was determined to recapture markets, parade the products of the years of absence, turn the war itself into legend, myth and entertainment, and exalt the American way of life. For its part the State Department expected that the industry would send abroad films which would 'reflect credit on the good name of this country and its institutions.' <sup>4</sup>

8 E. an almost complete lack of preparation – historical, cultural, mental – for all the responsibilities awaiting a force of liberation in modern times. There were paper plans and schemes, there were 60-day courses in a specially created school. But no-one knew how to apply the lessons taught there, how to balance control and local initiative, civil and military priorities, relations with Allies and relations with the liberated peoples. <sup>5</sup> A semi-official report of 1948 recalled that Southern Italy "turned into a laboratory where we tested out our theories". <sup>6</sup>

9 F. together with all the apparent confidence and swagger, a self-critical attitude which would quickly emerge in newspaper reports, then filter into official reports and hearings, and into memoirs, novels, films. The paradoxes of 'imposed democracy'

– of peoples ‘forced to be free’ - escaped no-one, at the time or later. John Hersey’s *A Bell for Adano*, was written by a rising reporter from *Time* magazine to highlight the difficulties of bringing democracy to pre-modern societies like the villages of Sicily, burdened by time and Fascism. Although written as a novel, the text predicted that America was coming into the world with its armies, and would be judged by the behaviour of these armies and of the men serving in them. Over sixty years later, Hershey’s prediction would be acknowledged in an apparently quite different context.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. The British experience of America’s armed forces

<sup>10</sup> Between the start of their arrival and the demobilisation after VE-Day in May 1945, nearly three million Americans in uniform passed through Britain<sup>8</sup>. It was called the ‘friendly invasion’. It was generally friendly – but also as a result of vast and unique efforts by both governments to make it so. But it was undoubtedly an invasion. The US authorities accepted no limits to their sovereignty, and Parliament had to pass a special act, half in secret, to give the US armies exemption from British law. This was a precedent of enormous importance. American armed forces abroad from this time on would expect to enjoy a different kind of sovereignty to those of other nations. This had all kinds of consequences for dealing with conflicts on the ground, especially those involving local women.

<sup>11</sup> The Americans enjoyed unlimited material resources. They had their own vast bases, their own leisure facilities, their own radio stations. This separateness was negotiated on all sorts of issues, official and otherwise, but it was also because they were seen on both sides, in so many ways, as a anticipation of the future that so much attention was paid to how the impact and reception of the Americans functioned in wartime Britain. ‘Are you our destiny?’ was a question which re-surfaced once more among the British people, and soon began to disturb souls at every level of society, and not just among the almost 38,000 women who would become GI brides.

<sup>12</sup> If ever there was need for confirmation of the ‘soft power’ theory of America’s impact on the world, it must be surely found among the young women of Britain between 1942 and 1945. Nowhere in Europe was popular feeling so well documented as it was during that experience, and what all the surveys, opinion polls, interviews of the time and later confirm is that, as an ex-serviceman put it: ‘never in history has there been such a conquest of women by men as was won by the American army in Britain in World War II’. One of the many feminine witnesses on record recalled:

I suppose we were as jubilant as everyone else in the country when the Americans came into the war. In Bournemouth we had seen troops of almost every colour and nationality, but when these GIs hit town, commandeering our homes and our countryside, we were captivated at once. With their smooth, beautifully tailored uniforms, one could hardly tell a private from a colonel. They swaggered, they boasted and they threw their money about, bringing a shot in the arm to business, such as it was, and an enormous lift to the female population. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The lax discipline, lack of soldiery spirit, and conspicuous consumption of the invaders upset plenty of male minds, cultivated and otherwise. By mid-1944 even the GI’s themselves could tell the British were getting “edgy.”<sup>10</sup> But like so many products of American popular culture, America’s servicemen seemed to young women to possess

built-in features not easily found elsewhere. "It as if the cinema had come to life", recalled a woman who went onto have a screen career of her own, "They were so handsome and well groomed and *clean*." Another pointed out that "they used deodorants and after-shave – things unknown to 99 per cent of British men." Others talked of the exuberance, drive and confidence, while a woman Red Cross worker recalled how the GIs "brought with them colour, romance, warmth – and a tremendous hospitality to our dark, shadowed island."<sup>11</sup> There were of course conflicts, and these are well portrayed in the numerous films and novels which have come down to us from the experience, even in the present.<sup>12</sup> Although every film made featuring uniformed Americans in Britain dealt with the jealousies and tensions,<sup>13</sup> the most graphic of them came long after the end of the war. In John Schlesinger's 1979 production of *Yanks*, set in small-town northern England, Hollywood glamour in the form of Richard Gere plays an ordinary small-town American boy interpreting the Hollywood glamour of 1943. The film depicts the effects of money, alcohol, sex-appeal and above all the myths of the future the Americans bring, but doesn't hide the nasty side, especially the race divisions in the US army. In a heroic scene, taken from reality, it's local working class women who save the dignity of the black Americans by dancing with them, when the white boys try to prevent this. At the time, cinema was used extensively by the authorities as they tried to manage the inevitable surges of feelings on both sides as the war wore on and illusions wore off.<sup>14</sup> Even the anthropologist Margaret Mead was mobilised to try to explain to the authorities, and through them to the men themselves, the differences in courtship rituals which were causing so much friction.

## 2. Italy: liberation or occupation ?

<sup>14</sup>No such trouble was taken when the Allied armies arrived in Italy from July 1943 onwards. Because the Allies could not decide whether the Italians were to be treated as potential friends or defeated enemies, the net result of all their activities was profoundly ambiguous, and has continued to generate argument in all the succeeding decades.<sup>15</sup> The American army was different from all the others present not just because of the opulence of its facilities and its relatively loose discipline, but also as a result of its detached attitude to the Italian people and their politics. It was the army of a nation with - until this time - an extremely small stake in the country it was fighting over. The result was that the long-drawn out process of liberation gradually turned in many areas into a special kind of occupation.<sup>16</sup> In the second of Roberto Rossellini's neo-realist film classics, *Paisà* of 1946, the stages of this evolution are vividly depicted, with the effects of the black market, poverty and mass prostitution in Rome and the south particularly in evidence. An Afro-American soldier is brought to realise that there are people in Naples much worse off materially than he is, people who consider him a conquering hero. In the middle section of the film, set in Rome, time, money and idleness seem to turn every American soldier into a prostitute's potential client. Unemployment and starvation corrupt the finest local girl.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Liberated Naples of course had presented the most dramatic order of challenge, and the records of that experience from all sides – official material, memoirs, diaries, films, plays, novels, – portray something like a clash of civilizations erupting along with Vesuvius in the old Bourbon city. For the American soldiery, the bombed out, starving

metropolis allegedly represented everything they hated about the Old World. The soldiers “figured it this way”, wrote John Horne Burns in his postwar novel *The Gallery*:

‘These Ginsoes have made war on us; so it doesn’t matter what we do to them, boost their prices, shatter their economy, and shack up with their women...’

16 Burns the narrator comments:

In the broadest sense we promised the Italians security and democracy if they came over to our side. All we actually did was to knock the hell out of *their* system and give them nothing to put in its place. ...I remember that my heart finally broke in Naples.... I found out that America was a country just like any other, except that she had more material wealth and more advanced plumbing... And I found out that outside the propaganda writers...Americans were very poor spiritually. Their ideals were something to make dollars on. They had bankrupt souls. Perhaps this is true of most of the people of the twentieth century. Therefore my heart broke.<sup>18</sup>

17 In their desperate struggle for survival, many Neapolitans seemed to take pride in flaunting their anti-modernism. A British diarist claimed, with ample evidence, that the war had pushed them “back into the Middle Ages.”<sup>19</sup> Yet the playwright Eduardo De Filippo took a different view. His play *Napoli milionaria*, written and set in the midst of the liberation/occupation experience, became a triumphant symbol of the Neapolitan spirit in adversity, and made him a national hero. Later he recalled:

The new century, this twentieth century did not reach Naples until the arrival of the Allies; here in Naples, it seems to me, the Second World War made a hundred years pass overnight.<sup>20</sup>

18 The greatest Italian novel of the war, Curzio Malaparte’s *La Pelle*, also set largely in Naples, emphasized instead national abjection. In Malaparte’s deeply pessimistic world view, self-abasement turns into a form of exhibitionism. As such it represents a generalised defiance of the Anglo-Americans’ logic of liberation, especially their bizarre blend of moralism and materialism. Malaparte rejected the conventional definitions of victory and defeat, liberation and occupation. Once an unorthodox Fascist, now a liaison officer between the Allies and the remains of the Italian armies, the writer declared that the Neapolitans, with all their centuries of foreign invasions, were never likely to feel *defeated* just because a new invader had arrived. As for these Allied armies, it was useless for them to claim to liberate people and at the same time want to make them feel defeated. Either they were free or they were vanquished. In truth, claimed Malaparte, the Neapolitans felt neither.<sup>21</sup>

19 The novel and its narrator – who never disowned his Fascist past – ridicule American optimism and innocence. Not only was their hubris un-Christian, their pity and compassion for the defeated/liberated people of Italy were grotesquely hypocritical. Indeed they brought with them a plague of vice, provoking the Neapolitans to pay for their humiliation and starvation with every form of corruption: mercenary, carnal, moral; an abandonment of human dignity never seen under the Germans. In the end, the force of this plague overwhelmed its carriers, bringing shame and self-hate on the liberators and all their ideas.<sup>22</sup>

20 Yet in a short story which remained unpublished until 2007, Curzio Malaparte claimed that the total defeat of 1943 had sparked an exodus of people from the South – he mentions Sicily in particular – led by women, who saw an opportunity to escape from misery and search for a land which gave them plenty, justice, order and dignity. Malaparte however did not link this mass movement to the arrival of the Allies, but to an

age-old pattern in which the defeat of the existing order always brought an 'opportunity for liberty' to the poorest people.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, in the collective memory of the American and other allied armies it is their protracted experience in Italy's southern provinces and Rome which has left the greatest impact. And there - as seen in innumerable films and novels - the image of the prostitute comes to symbolise the behaviour of the nation, and not just the main means of survival of a desperate population. After all, to most outsiders, this looked like a people which, when things started going wrong, had dumped the leader they had worshipped for 20 years - Mussolini - and apparently without a moment's hesitation had sought to join the Anglo-American camp. Mike Nichols's 1972 film of Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22*, is the most explicit testimony of this perception from outside. In its famous brothel scene, the vile old man who lives there makes very clear to a young American aviator (played by Art Garfunkel) that whoever guarantees his survival will find his favour: Fascists, Germans, Americans to him they are all just passing waves of foreigners to be exploited and used. He has seen it all. As he solemnly tells the innocent young American: "I am 107 years old." In this sort of scenario, the women of the Resistance, of the families who sheltered Allied soldiers and airmen, the mothers, wives or girlfriends of the Italian soldiers working as prisoners-of-war for the Allies even after the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, or fighting alongside them, get no mention at all.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Austria: the start of 'coca-colonization' ?

<sup>22</sup> Austrian historians who ponder the theme of the 'Americanization' or 'Westernization' of their nation after the Second World War - making inevitable comparisons with West Germany - all emphasise the role of the occupation experience, and its centrality in that effort of national re-definition which went on as soon as physical survival was guaranteed in the beleaguered country. In the long term, they say, the methods the Americans used to socialise and legitimise their hegemony made certain key sectors of the populace - especially youth and women - ' "mature" (?) enough for the central message of the American way of life: *the culture of consumption*.'<sup>25</sup> The GIs, says Reinhold Wagnleitner, played their own role in this transformation: ' while (they) did not always act like victors, they certainly looked the part.' They could supply extraordinary forms of provocation and inspiration:

In 1946, the starving and freezing people of Salzburg were quite impressed when they learned that the U.S. occupation army managed to feed its fifteen thousand troops sixty thousand portions of ice cream as dessert on a daily basis.

<sup>23</sup> An army fighting on its stomach in this fashion invited all sorts of disparagement and scorn from traditionalists of every hue. But the "daily demonstration of abundance and wealth' left its mark, endearing the GIs 'to large groups of the young who had had more than enough of senseless order and military marching music." In the 1950s they would turn into the "children of schmaltz and Coca-Cola," argues Wagnleitner.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> But in the years right after the war few of these silent transformations were on display.<sup>27</sup> The only group which seemed to have a glimpse of the revolution of rising expectations was those young women from rural western Austria who began to spend time in wealthy Switzerland to make money. They would be the ones most likely to strike up friendships with the GI's in their neighbourhood on their return. The phenomenon of these *Amibräute*, as they were derisively known, 'was simply the manifestation of a shifted

horizon of expectations on the part of young females in general', judges Ingrid Bauer. Through the GIs, these women had "instant access to .. money, leisure time and pleasure". They anticipated the "hedonistic intensification of life" which the rest of society would come to know only years later.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> But they paid a heavy price for the privilege. In the conservative media, in bishops' sermons, in police reports and elsewhere, they were accused of a form of betrayal of 'Austrian honour', and their life-style evoked much disparaging comment at a time of 'dreary forced frugality'. "Honourable" women were directed by one newspaper letter writer to show their contempt directly to the 'chocolate girls', and to "boycott all those who besmirch your honor and that of your family and drag Austria's good name into the dirt."<sup>29</sup> At the same time the reconstruction of national identity which took place after the war - 're-Austrification' - was an overwhelmingly conservative movement. If technological and economic renovation there had to be, then the family - and the women in it in particular - were expected to be a stronghold of re-discovered traditional values.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, a general postwar return to the home was also a form of revolt against an excess of modernity, whether of the warlike or peacetime varieties, an attempt by the traditional sources of authority to restore moral and social hierarchies in the family and in the nation. In Austria this meant coming to terms with the meaning of seven years of membership of the Third Reich, at least as much as understanding the world of the Four Freedoms, the GIs and Hollywood. Returning veterans were the most bitter, with a sense of grievance which would endure in the years. Already compromised by defeat, the manliness of these individuals was directly threatened by the liberators. One pamphleteer wrote: "They took five years to achieve victory over German soldiers but he [i.e. the foreign soldier] only needs five minutes for the conquest of some Austrian women!"<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. Germany: relieving the occupation G.I. blues

<sup>27</sup> "The first human contact with the Allies was via us women."<sup>32</sup> So wrote one of the many witnesses whose memories have survived, and been incorporated in a vast German effort to reconstruct a form of national identity partly on the basis of what happened in those years.<sup>33</sup> Through women Germans discovered that Allies were not so censorious or fearsome as the official public relations machine in the early years made them out to be. Witnesses talked of "soldiers who appeared extraordinarily rested and well-cared for", while an actress who later married one of them, said: "they had beautiful teeth, they were so healthy, clean and well-fed." Another feminine voice talked of them sitting in outdoor cafés reading "funny books" and drinking Coke from a straw. She wished she could "erase all the sad memories of the past and act as young and spirited as they did". Petra Goedde comments that contacts with GIs "enabled young women to tap some of that material abundance and carefree leisure time."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For their part the local women helped American men to overcome or at least cope with some of their inhibitions, the stereotypes they had brought with them, and their sense of existential alienation. It was the women who quietly convinced the Americans that their stern non-fraternization policies could never work, and as such opened the way to the end of the notion of undifferentiated, collective guilt. They made sure that when non-fraternization was finally dropped in October 1945 a great boom of relations would take place: 'Army investigators estimated that 50 to 90% of American troops "fraternized"

with German women in 1946; among married servicemen, one in eight had “found a home” - that is, entered a relatively stable relationship - in Germany.’ By the end of 1947 2,262 women had married occupation soldiers.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The love market generated controversy then and forever after. Until the currency reform of June 1948, which largely killed it off, female company and sex were among the major items available in the all-encompassing barter economy. Once more, the Americans supplied the demand, the locals the supply. Some women offered domestic services, others the warmth and comfort of a home environment, still others brought German luxury items and souvenirs to the market. The Americans could provide almost any material good, but what mattered above all in the desperate years was food. “Some women resorted to prostitution to save themselves and their families from starvation”, reports Petra Goedde, “(f)or others it became an additional source of income... whatever the original motivation, food had become a central aspect of American-German interactions.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Commercial sex rapidly acquired similar meanings, and there was a great deal of unease among authorities on both sides of the relationship, as well as among the male and older population in general.<sup>37</sup> The Yanks sweetheart was “no heroine”, comments Elizabeth Heineman. “She became the symbol of Germany’s moral decline - and, as such, implied that the decline occurred with the collapse of, rather than during, Nazi rule.”<sup>38</sup> Just as in Austria, Veronika Dankeschon (Veronika Thank-You-Very-Much, whose initials were VD) was seen as a great slur on national honour, and yet another threat to the positive heritage in the German national identity. She got pleasure out of what to others was bitter material necessity, and confirmed that the loss of national self-determination extended to the sexual order. Here was the true meaning of defeat. In Hans Habe’s novel *Off Limits*, a best-seller of 1955, the prostitute becomes a metaphor for the entire society in which she lives. The character is killed off in the novel after the currency reform of 1948, but the Yanks are depicted as missionaries “with the Bible in one hand and the knout in the other”... “unless you are willing I shall have to use force”. The message, says Elizabeth Heineman, was that the West Germans had to attain their own form of national sovereignty and oblige the foreigner to return home.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Anne O’Hare McCormick of the *New York Times*, reporting from Vienna in August 1945 said: “In an unhappy and uncertain world [the GI] seemed happy and confident of the future.” The youth of America, the GI, incarnated not just its wealth, and new-found power. The comment he commonly provoked, she noted, was: “America must be a happy country.”<sup>40</sup> But time quickly shifted that judgment. All armed liberations quickly turn into occupations by a foreign army, no matter how friendly or high-minded the intentions. After many months in Bavaria a veteran British relief worker wrote:

All large armies of occupation are disastrous. They strangle the conquered and demoralise and make helpless the conqueror.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The Americans of World War II and after convinced themselves nevertheless that their armies were different, that they were a revolutionary force promoting democracy, liberty and progress as Americans understood it. Right after the outbreak of the Korean war the Marshall Planner Harlan Cleveland asked:

Wasn’t the American GI, with his wrist watch and his flash-light, his jeep and his airplane, one of the most revolutionary forces that has ever been let loose in the world? The revolution that is now endemic in Asia is not Communism - it might better be called the ‘*revolution of rising expectations*’.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ms McCormick put it this way: the “well-fed, well-equipped, opulent doughboy”, had left behind him, “a rosy and disturbing vision of a plenty more widespread than any other country has achieved...(he) sowed in his wake the fertile seeds of envy and rebellion.” <sup>43</sup> In Britain, “It was so drab when they had gone,” lamented one English woman, “The whole world had been opened up to me and then it was closed down again...We realised how confining England was..”. The social historian Juliet Gardner, who wrote a classic book on the impact of the GI’s, on women in particular, suggested that the American armies had camped such a long time on British soil that by the end one conclusion seemed obvious: it wasn’t the American troops who were overpaid, it was the British who were underpaid. <sup>44</sup> In western Germany the true revolution of material expectations that an American army could inspire happened after the GI’s return on a massive, long-term scale after 1951, under the auspices of NATO. A ‘Gold Rush’ atmosphere broke out, reports Maria Höhn, requiring a great crusade by the defenders of re-born German moral integrity for its containment. And once again women were the key protagonists. <sup>45</sup>

<sup>34</sup> In Italy, however, as the journalist Eugenio Scalfari wrote in *L'autunno della repubblica* in 1969, the arrival of the Americans was credited with setting in motion the subterranean psychological processes – a revolution of rising expectations ? - which produced the great internal migrations of the boom era of the 1950’s.<sup>46</sup> For sure their presence left memories whose sweetness was related directly to its brevity. In Bologna the Allies remained roughly six weeks. A 1995 celebration of the city’s liberation, published by the local edition of the post-Communist newspaper *L’Unità*, dwelt on the music and dancing the Americans had brought, the baseball and Camel cigarettes, the colour-filled images of a renewed way of life and an un-dreamt of prosperity. But a memoir from Naples, where the Allies stayed over 18 months, published in the same year by another post-Communist writer, Ermanno Rhea, offered a pained and bitter portrait of the experience, seen as prelude to a long-term occupation under the flag of NATO. <sup>47</sup>

<sup>35</sup> To conclude: these Americans left, in effect, a rather ambiguous legacy, as one may read in the testimony from a young woman who witnessed the liberation of Bologna, as reproduced in the 1995 *Unità* supplement :

“... we all ran out to see the Americans arrive. There were all sorts of colours, whites, blacks, Indians.. They were our salvation. They were nice and friendly, just like in their films. They didn’t act like liberators.. They were free men, they came from a country where life had never been interrupted [by war] and you could tell. They were full of energy and cheer. Like us, but ours was a cheerfulness which exploded after twenty years of terror. Mamma suddenly started singing *Red Flag* at the top of her voice. Just like when we were kids, when we learned to sing the *International* from a priest who was our cousin.” <sup>48</sup>

<sup>36</sup> To each one, in other words, her own revolution of expectations.

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## NOTES

1. Eric Carlton, *Occupation. The Policies and Practices of Military Conquerors*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 1,5.

2. German case in Detlef Junker, "The Continuity of Ambivalence: German Views of America, 1933-1945", in David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds, *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions. Germany and America since 1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Hilary Footitt, *War and Liberation in France. Living with the Liberators* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2004), 28; Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War. The Cultural Mission in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 27, 44
3. David Reynolds, *Rich Relations. The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945*, (London: HarperCollins 1995), Ch.6; rawness vividly evoked in Edwin P.Hoyt, *The GI's War. American Soldiers in Europe during World War II*, (New York: Macmillan, 2000), xvii, Ch.2-4, based on individual accounts; some of the extraordinary privileges of the U.S. citizen in uniform are listed in Franklin M. Davis, *Come as a Conqueror. The United States Army's Occupation of Germany 1945-1949*, (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1967), 35-6.
4. Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, 237-9; Paul Swann, "The Little State Department: Washington and Hollywood's Rhetoric of the Postwar Audience", in Ellwood and Rob Kroes, eds, *Hollywood in Europe. Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam: VU Press, 1994).
5. Davis, *Come as a Conqueror* 20-6, 50-2.
6. Merle Fainsod, "The Development of American Military Government Policy during World War II", in C.J. Friedrich et al., eds., *American Experiences in Military Government in World War II* (New York: Rinehart, 1948), cit. at 31.
7. Robert D.Kaplan, "Supremacy by Stealth", in *Atlantic Monthly*, July/August 2003, 69. In discussing the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, Kaplan makes explicit reference to Hershey's novel.
8. Juliet Gardiner, "*Over Here*". *The GI's in Wartime Britain* (London, Collins & Brown 1992), 41.
9. Cit. in Gardiner, "*Over Here*," 110; a typical encounter is reconstructed 'verbatim' in Hoyt, *The GI's War*, 3-4.
10. The novelist and playwright J.B.Priestley, vastly prominent in his day, gave a glimpse of working class male resentment in the character of Tommy Loftus, a non-combatant, in his instant end-of-war novel *Three Men in New Suits* (London: Allison & Busby, 1984, reprint of 1945 edn.), 54, 59; GI reaction to British testiness reported in Hoyt, *The GI's War*, 290.
11. Cit. in Gardiner, "*Over Here*", 52-3, 111-12 (emphasis in original); GI experiences of the encounter recounted - with poems - in Hoyt, *The GI's War*, 73-4, 283-90; the other north Americans in Europe - the Canadians- could also provoke the same reactions on occasion, as the Dutch liberation experience testified; summary in David Stafford, *Endgame 1945. Victory, Retribution, Liberation* (London: Little, Brown, 2007), 350-2.
12. In 1982 London Weekend Television produced a 12 hour mini-serial set in a fictional small town in Suffolk, *We'll Meet Again*. Annie Groves's novel *The Grafton Girls* (London: HarperCollins, 2007) graphically portrays the illusions and disillusion experienced by a group of local and imported English girls, of various social classes, in contact with different levels of American soldiery in wartime Liverpool.
13. Wartime cinema-society relationship explained in Angus Calder, *The People's War. Britain 1939-1945*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 367-73. The Ministry of Information promoted the production of a number of films in the cause of Anglo-American understanding, particularly *A Yank in the RAF* (Lou Edelmen 1941), *The Way to the Stars* (Anthony Asquith 1945), *A Matter of Life and Death* (Powell and Pressburger 1946).
14. A glimpse of the documentary material made for this purpose may be seen in *A Welcome to Britain* (1943) and *Letter from Ulster* (1943) available from Panamint Cinema ([www.panamint.co.uk](http://www.panamint.co.uk)); discussion by George Orwell of propaganda problems in 'Letter to Partisan Review', 3 Jan. 1943, in *The Collected Essays..Vol. 2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 321-22.

15. Early semi-official assessment in George C.S. Benson and Maurice Neufeld, "American Military Government in Italy", in Friedrich, *American Experiences*; some 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary debates captured in Eric Gobetti, ed., *1943-1945. La Lunga liberazione* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).
16. Ellwood, *Italy 1943-1945. The Politics of Liberation* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), Ch.7.
17. Full contextualisation in Christopher Wagstaff, "Italian Cinema of the Resistance and Liberation", in *Italy and America 1943-44. Italian, American and Italian American Experiences of the Liberation of the Mezzogiorno* (Naples: La Città del Sole, 1997), esp. 538-9.
18. J.H.Burns, *The Gallery* (New York: Bantam Books, 1947), 280-2, emphasis in original
19. Norman Lewis, *Naples '44* (London: Collins, 1978), 108, 132, 145, 151.
20. Cit. in "Naples '44 / 'Tammurriata Nera', *Ladri di Bicicletta*", in *Italy and America 1943-44*, 442; on the play, Gabriella Gribaudo, "Napoli 1943-45. La costruzione di un'epopea," in *ibid.*, 303-5; the piece was written from direct experience and first staged in May 1945.
21. C.Malaparte, *La pelle* (Milan: Adelphi 2010; first edition Milan: Aria d'Italia 1949; film version Liliana Cavani 1981), 4; similar sentiments are expressed by the old man the young American flyers find in a Roman *bordello* in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (London: Corgi Books, 1982; reprint of 1962 edition), 258-64; full discussion of Malaparte, Burns, Lewis and others in John Gatt-Rutter, "Naples 1944: Liberation and Literature," in *Italy and America 1943-44*.
22. Malaparte, *La pelle*, 25-32; Burns, *The Gallery* 280 *passim*, 367; Gribaudo, "Napoli 1943-45"; although seriously concerned by the situation, the case-hardened British were much more detached in their judgments: journalistic comment in Alan Moorehead, *Eclipse* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945), 62-3 and *The Listener*, 6 April 1944; a celebrated reconstruction of his experience as an intelligence officer is in the writer Lewis's 'diary', *Naples '44*.
23. Malaparte, *Il compagno di viaggio* (Milan: Excelsior 1881, 2007), 74-5. Malaparte's outlook continues to be controversial in Italy, cf. Raffaele La Capria, "Malaparte gran bugiardo. Il suo trucco c'è e si vede," *Corriere della Sera*, April 21, 2009. This was a highly critical discussion published on the occasion of the re-appearance of key Malaparte texts; contrasting judgment, qualifying *La pelle* as 'a great book', from leading literary and film critic Goffredo Fofi, in *Internazionale*, Feb.11, 2011.
24. Even in Spike Lee's *Miracle at St. Anna* of 2005, the two young Italian women glimpsed are characterised only in sexual terms.
25. Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, 271 (emphasis in original); cf. *The Americanization / Westernization of Austria*, Contemporary Austrian Studies, Vol. 12, Günther Bischof, Anton Pelinka, eds., (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004); Günther Bischof, "Two Sides of the Coin: The Americanization of Austria and Austrian Anti-Americanism," in Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe. Culture, Diplomacy and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).
26. Wagnleitner, "The Empire of the Fun, or Talkin' Soviet Union Blues: The Sound of Freedom and U.S. Cultural Hegemony in Europe," in Michael J.Hogan, ed., *The Ambiguous Legacy. U.S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 474; Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization*, Ch.9.
27. There is no mention of them in the day-by-day memoir of the military government officer Whitnah, even in the generally positive summing up; Donald R.Whitnah and Florentine E.Witnah, *Salzburg Under Siege. U.S. Occupation, 1945-1955* (New York: Greenwood Press,1991), 15-16, Ch.12; the author was a military government officer in Salzburg, his wife a local girl.
28. Ingrid Bauer, "Americanizing/Westernizing Austrian Women: Three Scenarios from the 1950s to the 1970s", in Bischof, Pelinka, *The Americanization*, 172.
29. Cit. in " 'Austria's Prestige Dragged into the Dirt'? The 'GI-Brides' and Postwar Austrian Society (1945-1955)," in Günther Bischof et al., eds, *Women in Austria*, Contemporary Austrian Studies Vol. 6 (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 44.

30. Ibid., 42-4, 50.
31. Ibid., 47-8; this quote came from the French zone, but would have been even more appropriate in the US-controlled areas: Bauer, "The GI Bride': On the (De)Construction of an Austrian Postwar Stereotype', in Claire Duchon and Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, eds, *When the War Was Over. Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940-1956* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 223, 226-9.
32. Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* 101/2 (1996): 390.
33. Cf. Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society 1945-1955* (Providence/Oxford: Berg, 1993); Reiner Pommerin, ed., *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Providence/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore, eds, *The German-American Encounter. Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures, Part 2* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001); Alexander Stephan, ed., *Americanization and Anti-Americanism. The German encounter with American culture after 1945* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005); Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Federal Republic at Sixty", in *German Politics and Society* 28/1 (2010): 10-29.
34. Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans. Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 106-7.
35. Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman", 81 and n. 68; Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 42-60, 71-9; Stafford, *Endgame*, 493-5.
36. Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 91; for semi-official American views, Davis, *Come as a Conqueror*, 115-17; Harold Zink, *The United States in Germany 1945-1955* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 137-8.
37. Detailed examination of the comparable situation in France in Mary Louise Roberts, "The Price of Discretion: Prostitution, Venereal Disease and the American Military in France, 1944-1946," *American Historical Review* 115/4 (2010): 1002-30. This analysis demonstrates that while the French authorities insisted that their nation was neither liberated or occupied – the Free French forces of de Gaulle had done it all – the ruthlessness of the American armies in their demands for and use of prostitutes revealed all the attitudes of a force of occupation.
38. Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman," 380-1; cf. Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler. Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32
39. Heinemann, "The Hour of the Woman," 383-6. The ambiguous feelings and behaviour produced on both sides by these realities are effectively dramatized in the Billy Wilder film, *A Foreign Affair* (1949) and by Rainer Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978). However, the German film expert Thomas Elsaesser insists that the millions of GI's who passed through the Federal Republic in all the postwar years 'seem to have left virtually no trace in the German cinema.' The one major, partial, exception is Fassbinder's production, a highly allegorical film in which the heroine survives by bestowing her 'love' on an Afro-American GI, only to kill him when the husband she married under the Anglo-American bombs finally returns from the war; cf. T.P. Elsaesser, "German Postwar Cinema and Hollywood", in Ellwood and Kroes, *Hollywood in Europe*, 285
40. McCormick, "The Revolutionary Influence of the American Soldier," *New York Times*, August 1, 1945.
41. Cit. in Stafford, *Endgame*, 507-8.
42. Cleveland, "Reflections on the "Revolution of Rising Expectations," Address before the Colgate University Conference on American Foreign Policy, July 9, 1950, in *National Archives*, Washington D.C., Record Group 469, Assistant Administrator for Program. Deputy Assistant Administrator, Subject Files of Harlan Cleveland; (emphasis added).
43. Mc Cormick, "The Revolutionary Influence."
44. Mc Cormick, "The Revolutionary Influence"; Gardiner, "Over Here", 211-13.

45. Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins. The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 19, 31-6, 39-51, 226-9.
46. Eugenio Scalfari, *L'autunno delle Repubblica* (Milan: ETAS Compass, 1969), 95-6.
47. Ermanno Rhea, *Mistero napoletano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995).
48. *L'Unità*, April 21, 1995.
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## RÉSUMÉS

A vast body of material exists – memoirs, diaries, films, plays, novels, official records – on the impact and reception of America's armed forces armies in Europe after 1942. Britain, Italy, France, Austria and of course Germany all offer relevant evidence. The popular British phrase about the GI's being 'over-paid, over-sexed and over here' brilliantly sums up many of the tensions the encounter threw up: over money and life-styles, courtship rituals and the treatment of local women, over sovereignty and the American impulse to requisition every local resource they could get their hands on. Local men thought 'their' women were being requisitioned. The Americans had not come to do 'nation-building', and yet their presence left memories, changed attitudes and altered prospects on the future, especially among women. Afterwards American experts claimed that their armed forces had set off a 'revolution of rising expectations'. Although a contradictory, complex encounter, there is enough evidence to suggest they might have been right.

## INDEX

**Keywords** : Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Liberation, occupation, US armed services, western Europe, women and war, World War II

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