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Cultural Expression, Public Morale and the Evolution of Dance in Germany and the United Kingdom During and Preceding World War II

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Abstract

This paper explores the contrasting ways in which dance was used as a method of securing public support in Nazi Germany and the United Kingdom during World War II and the years preceding the global conflict. It examines the Nazi governments' use of modern dance and folk dance as a propaganda tool designed to enforce its strict message of conformity and racial ideology. This is contrasted with the way in which the British government identified the potential of social dancing as an effective means to gain the support of the British population, outlining the key methods undertaken to achieve this objective.

Social responses to both government actions are studied, with the paper ultimately concluding on the efficacy of the two vastly different methods of utilizing dance. The greater effectiveness of the British government is ultimately evident in its success in achieving the trust and support of its people, while the German government under Nazi control was unable to replicate such a situation.

Keywords: History, Dance, World War II, Britain, Nazi Germany

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Adolf Hitler to the post of Chancellor of Germany marked the beginning of a 12-year period of Nazi rule in Germany. The party was characterised by authoritarian rule over the German people, with the blatant use of propaganda and military to do so. Under the Nazis, art became a medium of propaganda to broadcast, emphasise and ensure strict adherence of the German people to Nazi ideals. Amongst these ideals included the superiority of the Aryan race, anti-Semitism, and Volksgemeinschaft: the belief that contribution to the society as a whole transcended personal interest.[1]

The ruling predecessor of the Nazis, the Weimar Government (1918-1933) had allowed free expression in the arts to flourish, with new styles of dance, music, painting, and architecture developing.[2] This allowed artists to openly critique political and societal structures through their art. However, this liberty in expression of ideas was unacceptable to the Nazi Party, who emphasised strict government control and a return to more 'traditional' values. This control extended to censorship, with art forms such as jazz music being quickly banned and branded, 'degenerate.'[3] To facilitate the use of art as a medium to spread propaganda, in September of 1933, the Reich Chamber of Culture was created.[4] This chamber, headed by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, supervised all creation of art to ensure that it aided or was approved by the Party's agenda. Dance, in particular, played an important role in the propagation of Nationalist Socialist ideals throughout Germany, with a Master Academy for Dance even being established in 1935. Additionally, several prominent choreographers and troop leaders had to flee the regime and establish

practice in other parts of Europe and the world as a result of their art being branded 'degenerate.'[5] Simultaneously, in Nazi Germany's European Allied counterpart, Great Britain, dance emerged as an unlikely but effective propaganda tool that encouraged its population to remain optimistic and helped create a united national spirit. Art, specifically social dancing, was not subject to long-term control, and this freedom of expression was leveraged to influence public morale and support of the government during the war. Seen by the government and citizens alike as a welcome respite from the harsh brutalities of war, dance helped uplift the spirits of the British. It quickly became a favourite pastime of soldiers and civilians alike, who found sanctuary and community in local dance halls. After an initially hostile attitude towards allowing dance halls to operate, citing safety risks, the Ministry of Information soon realised the power of allowing these activities to flourish in mitigating protest and domestic unrest during the war. The government saw the opportunity to use the continuing popularity of dance to project an image of national resilience and fighting spirit, especially during the trying period of the Blitz, the eight-month long German campaign against the U.K.[6] Moreover, once women started being conscripted with the passing of the National Service Act in Parliament in December 1941[7] to provide labour as the war wore on, dance halls were provided to them to increase motivation levels. Additionally, families that were forced to evacuate to unfamiliar regions acclimatised to their new communities largely through participating in social dance.[8] This served the important purpose of dissuading displaced citizens from attempting to return to more dangerous areas.

This paper examines the contrasting roles that art, specifically dance, played in defining the relationships between the state and civilians in Nazi Germany and the U.K. during World War II and the years leading up to the global conflict (1930-1945). By comparing the employment of dance as a method to control both the domestic and international perception of the Nazi regime, with the central role that dance played in influencing public morale in Britain, it aims to analyse the effectiveness of duelling methods of cultural control on keeping citizens and the world in support of governments during conflict.

Dance in Nazi Germany - Shifting Forces from Expressionism to Authoritarianism in Weimar Berlin:

The rise of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party) to power in Germany marked a significant impact on the art and culture of the country and a shift from art's status and purpose under its predecessor, the Weimar Republic. The Weimar Republic or the German Reich (1918 to 1933)[9] came to power after the end of the first World War, emerging after Germany and its allies surrendered to the Allied Powers. This period was characterised by extreme exhaustion of troops, a deteriorating economy, and political revolution.[10] Following initial domestic and international challenges, the Weimar period became a period of recovery, progressive social reform and a cultural renaissance in Germany. 1920s Germany, particularly Berlin, grew into an extremely prolific intellectual and artistic centre. In part this was due to the rejection of classical art forms, like classical ballet, one of the prominent dance forms during the German Empire.[11] Traditional dance styles expectedly clashed with the surge of Expressionism and were seen as "superficial."[12] They were contrasted with the rising dance form of *Ausdrucktanz* or German 'modern dance', marking a shift from precise, sometimes restricted choreography to a spotlight on the performers' emotions and ideals.[13] This dance form was pioneered in large part by Rudolf von Laban, a Hungarian-born choreographer, who returned to Weimar Germany from abroad and opened schools of dance across the country, spreading the emphasis on his unique theory of movement, centred around the view that the body is foremost an instrument of expression.[14] During this period, Laban and other modern

dance pioneers trained students who evolved to become leaders in modern dance themselves, often known internationally for their craft. As the Weimar republic began to weaken during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the National Socialists began to consolidate power, several prominent figures of modern dance fled Germany. Others however, remained in Germany and were given important state-backed positions in cultural organisations with an aim to repurpose German dance as a propaganda tool during World War II.

Control and Censorship of Modern Expressionism Amid the Rise of Nazi Power:

With economic, political and social forces in flux at the end of the Weimar period, the Nazi party began to rise to prominence and threaten ruling power in the years leading up to the war. With the ultimate goal to hold on to power within Germany, and expand its influence and rule in Europe and the world, the Nazi party's tight grip on public perception heavily relied on the control of art. As public perception at the time was (and still remains) overwhelmingly shaped by media including entertainment-media, art, including dance stood out as a vital, effective means to narrow the ideas that the German public was exposed to and ensure that these all agreed with Nazi ideology. The use of the above described strategies of exclusion and exile of Jewish and non-Aryan dancers, the censorship of non-traditional dance forms that challenged Nazi ideology and the strict emphasis on themes of patriotism, folklore and Aryan culture contributed to a strong revival of National Pride among ethnic Germans under Nazi rule.

The Nazi agenda was uplifted through every art form that was deemed appropriate by the party leaders, with a particular focus on conveying the superiority of the Aryan race. This emphasis of Nazi racial theory in art extended not just to who could produce art, but what the art itself was. Several modern art forms that had prospered during Weimar rule were denounced and even banned as 'degenerate' art, with artwork of expressionist painters removed from museums and jazz music banned, among other targets. Any art form that was not deemed pliable under strict authoritarian control was prohibited. Techniques to achieve this included sanctions on 'degenerate artists', forcing them to give up university appointments, being banned from selling or showing their art and even in some instances being forbidden from making their art.[15] This widespread shift very prominently impacted modern dancers, who had been enjoying a period of prosperity and international recognition bolstered by the popularity of *Ausdrucktanz*.

Adolf Hitler was appointed the Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, a day that came to mark the official beginning of the Nazi regime.[16] By July of 1933, all Jewish dancers had been banned from dance schools and companies, an expulsion that then became extended to all non-Aryans as well.[17] Other Jewish artists affiliated with the performance of modern dance including composers and accompanists were also removed from their positions. Soon after, on September 22nd, 1933, the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was established with one of Hitler's most trusted advisors, Joseph Goebbels at its helm[18] with an aim to centralise and legitimise the control of art by the state. The Ministry was given control over all art that was produced in Germany. Additionally, it had control of all national artistic institutions, like the Berlin State Opera Ballet. In large part, Nazi leaders and cultural officials expectedly began focusing on cultivating traditional dance forms - ballet and folk dance promoting Aryan values, in lieu of modern expressionism. Owing to their origins in America from the black community, who were considered racially inferior to Aryans, jazz and swing music and dance was also considered a threat to Nazi racial 'purity.' They considered swing dancing as too 'loose,' which went starkly against their agenda of strict regimentation and order.[19] Sweeping bans were placed on swing bands so that the German public's access to them would be restricted. An example of such bans is one placed by a Nazi *gauleiter* (district leader[20]) in Bohemia, which read: 'Pieces in foxtrot rhythm (so- called swing) are not to exceed 20% of the

repertoire of light orchestras and dance bands.'[21] This clearly reflects the Nazis' contempt for dance forms that they thought to be 'un-German.' Outside of these confines, however, artists who were able to adapt or confine their work to fit within stringent Nazi policies, remained in favour of the Nazi party, though the nature and quality of their output and their standing in the eyes of the totalitarian state remained in constant flux.

The Nazi Control of Modern Dance: The Case of Rudolf Von Laban:

Highlighted above as one of the fathers of German progressive modern dance predating Nazi rule, Rudolf Von Laban was able to adapt his modern dance practice to satisfy Nazi ideals and remained a leading figure in the world of dance before and during World War II. While several of his counterparts fled the state, Laban found power and influence under the regime, first as the head of the Berlin State Opera Ballet and then becoming the head of the *Deutsch Tanzbühne* (German Dance Theatre) in 1934.[22] Although Laban's compliances with the Nazi mission are well studied in several contexts, his contributions to dance during Nazi rule provide a valuable case study for the understanding of how Nazi policies on dance served to control the population and altered the trajectory of the growth of the quintessentially German *Ausdrucktanz* in the post-Weimar era.

Rudolf Von Laban had shown early signs of acceptance of Nazi ideals and a desire to cooperate with the Party. Many of his early writings indicated an alignment with Nazi Party values, including racial theories and nationalism.[23] Unlike several contemporaries who fled Germany in protest, Laban instead willingly expelled non-Aryans from his dance schools even before official Ministry orders were issued. As he continued to gain favour with the Nazi state, he acquiesced to altering vital choreographic and performance tenets of his modern dance practice and instead made space for intricately choreographed mass performances. Laban has been quoted stating, "dance, when approached correctly…can promote the larger values of national camaraderie."[24] His large-scale and ideologically driven performances eschewed the connection between the performers and free expression of their emotions, and of other emphasized facets of *Ausdrucktanz,* such as the exploration and connection of the performer with his or her performance space and surroundings.

The German Dance Theatre that Laban headed under early Nazi rule, had been created under the guidance of the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda. His job was to oversee all dance activities in Germany to ensure that they promoted Nationalist Socialism, and motivate dancers to create works to help publicise these ideals. He was largely successful in this respect, with young dancers all over Germany going as far as to embrace the state control over their productions and enthusiastically creating choreographies to further Party ideals. In the year of his appointment, Laban was tasked with organising the German Dance Festival, a week-long display of the achievement of German artists under Nazi rule.[25] The festival was meant to display the fact that Germans were scaling new heights under the leadership of the Nazis, and of the potential of greatness that was promised under Hitler. It turned out to be a roaring success, and Goebbels was so happy with the outcome that he sanctioned another such festival to be organised the following year. In the following year, the Master Academy for Dance was opened with Laban also at its head.[26] The purpose of the Academy was to impart a centralised, Nationalist Socialist training for German dancers. The training required and ensured that no dancer opposed Nazi ideology, and early immersion was used as a means to align all prominent, prestigious dance education in Germany with the party's ideological goals. To maximise control, the Ministry mandated in 1935 that all dancers had to obtain certification from the Academy as permission to teach, choreograph, or perform.[27] This ensured that no prominent dancers and

dance educators in Nazi Germany could flourish without first having been through the rigorous, Nazi-subscribed training program that ensured their loyalty to the state above any other artistic or exploratory principles. In addition, every dancer in Germany had to affiliate themselves and their schools with a prominent Nazi organisation, examples of which include the Nationalist Socialist Teachers' Organisation and the Strength Through Joy organisation.[28]

Laban remained in favour with Nazi rule through much of the pre-World War II era, as he was able to harness the power of his new, Mass Movement Choirs into to promote national unity in the eyes of the state, which was useful to the Nazi aim of uniting all Germans under the Swastika. Additionally, he was a huge proponent of choric dance as a "new fold dance movement of the white race."[29] His own idea of his choreography shifted from one to bring people together en masse in order to 'find a higher reality together.'[30] This shift in Laban's interpretation of the purpose of dance, specifically modern expressionist dance was noticed and written about at the time as well, with Oskar Bie in the Berlin Borsen Courier stating that Laban's greatest strength was choreography involving large groups.[31] Laban's unique artistic talent, ability to meld his art form to alter its major meaning and purpose, and his ready adherence to the Nazi agenda provided the Party with a perfect opportunity to use dance to legitimize its cultural message, backed by a prolific and avant-garde German dance visionary.

The Nazis not only used dance to unite "racially pure" German citizens and party members and supporters under their extreme Nationalist Ideology, but also used dance to convey a strong, unflinching image to the international community before and during the Second World War. A final instance that highlights the shift in focus from the unconstrained growth of expressionist dance that had taken place under progressive Weimar rule, is the use of dance and physical performance during the 1936 Olympic Games, hosted in Berlin, just three years before the beginning of the War.

The event was preceded by extensive preparations of large-scale dance choreographies that incorporated elements of modern dance, once again pioneered in the pre-Nazi era by Laban and his contemporaries. Laban was assigned the creation of a grand piece for the opening ceremony of the Games, which he called *Vom Tauwind und der Neuen Freude* (*Of the Spring Wind and the New Joy* or *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy).*[32] The Nazis even assigned a party member to Laban's team to ensure that the team members used the Nazi salute and didn't dare speak against the Party. However, the final piece created was badly received by Goebbels and Hitler at a rehearsal preview, who considered it 'too intellectual or abstract.'[33] Laban's "crime" was creating a piece that remained somewhat open to the viewer's interpretation, perhaps driven by his respect of the early tenets of free expressionist dance, which he played a significant part in sculpting in the progressive Weimar era. This was considered an amplified issue, as the world was watching the Olympic opening ceremony, which had already been plagued by fears and denouncement of Nazi propaganda from the international community.

This marked the decline of Laban as a kind of Nazi confidante, used singularly to mould artistic initiative and prowess into loyalty to the state. The Ministry began to highlight Laban's past associations with the freemasons and allegations about his homosexuality to swiftly disgrace him and label him politically unreliable, finally dismissing him from his state-instated positions. Laban's concept of 'reaching a higher reality' that Laban advocated for was abandoned and replaced with a more frivolous and easily controllable festive Nazi culture. After Laban's termination, dance was demoted from an integral part of national identity and made nothing more than a simple, superficial distraction from the war. Though not highlighted in this paper in detail, this treatment was also inflicted on other German choreographers, like one of Laban's most significant proteges, Mary Wigman. The state spread rumours of Wigman being a "leftist

Jew-lover" (despite evidence to the contrary) and was eventually banned from performing in Germany during the war, in 1942 due to a steadily lowering tolerance of modernist influences on then prevailing trends in German dance.

It can be argued that intellectualism was truly the highest crime in the eyes of the Nazis, as it directly opposed the Nazis' overt and subliminal encouragement of communal thinking. Free thought and expression was a direct, supreme threat to total control. While the impact of this on the German public, or the subjects of Nazi control is evident and explored in greater depth below, it is also worth highlighting that Nazi censorship, the building intolerance for even minimal expression through dance, and the exile of modern dancers severely stunted and even undid the once thriving and fast-blooming tradition of modern expressionist dance, on the German *and* International stage. German choreographers, the mothers and fathers of *Ausdrucktanz,* made essential, and more importantly unique marks on the international expressionist dance movement, a result of the history of the German Empire and artistic eras that predated it, which all came together to shape the Germany in which they were born and then freely practiced their art. It is therefore evident that with the onslaught of Nazi restrictions on dance as described above, not only German artists, but creators and consumers of expressionist dance worldwide suffered a great loss. This was in the form of this period of history where avant-garde contributions of dancers like Laban and Wigman remaining in Nazi Germany during the war were no longer making contributions to this international movement and exchange, resulting in loss or even reversal of growth of the art form in addition the suffering of artists and the general public caused during the Second World War.

Legitimization From the Root - Folk Dance Under Nazi Rule:

The Nazis promoted folk dance and song as a means to legitimise their foreign incursions and emphasise the idea of a racially superior Aryan community strongly linked to Germanic heritage and history. Folklore was used to justify and propagate Nazi expansionism into neighbouring countries, as well as portray British traditions as inherently German. Folk dance became a symbol of a biologically and culturally united German people, as it was considered a testament to the perseverance and superiority of the Aryan race in standing the test of time. Propaganda was used to make folklore synonymous with German culture and a sense of pride was fostered in this culture, as a part of the Nazi ideal of creating a racially and culturally united community, the *Volksgeimenschaft*.[34] German folklorists traced Aryan history to begin from descriptions of youth in German tribes, then through the medieval times of Shrovetide processions and finally, manifest in the performances in villages in Nazi Germany. This, according to the Nazis, served as evidence of the German peoples' strength and character in staying 'uncontaminated' through history to emerge as a superior, united population in contemporary times. To amplify this message to the German population and emphasize it in their everyday lives, the Nazis set up various organisations. As early as 1933, immediately upon Hitler's rise to power, the *Reichsbund für Volkstum und Heimatpflege*, the Reich Association for Folk culture and Homeland care was set up.[35] Its role was to promote folk dance as a cultural expression that aligned with the Nazi ideals of community and tradition. In 1935, the *Ahnenerbe*, the Office of Ancestral Inheritance, was set up by Herman Wirth, a specialist in ancient Germanic folk religion and Richard Walther Darré, an advocate of the 'German aristocracy of the soil.'[36] The purpose of this organisation was to keep a strict watch over all research, teaching and publications that were related to Folklore, History and Germanic culture in Germany. It was essential that the Nazi perspective on this subject was what was presented to all Germans, with no opposing or individual views to inspire contradiction. The Rosenberg Bureau was also established, with the broader goal of overseeing the cultural

policy of the party.[37] In order to truly legitimise their theories, it was essential to convince the German public of their validity. To carry this out, the Nazis created Folklore departments across German universities that were staffed by members of the *Ahnenerbe* and the Rosenberg Bureau and included curriculums on history and the arts, including folk dance.

The Nazis identified that non-political means were more likely to convince the citizens of invaded countries to accept Nazi control than being forced into doing so by local Nazi parties and the spread of folklore played a significant part. Before carrying out their plans for occupation, the Nazis tried to identify researchers and connoisseurs of folk-dance performance who likely would support the party. The idea was that by bringing these representatives of culture to sympathise with Party views, the rest of the population could be convinced to follow suit. This would make expansion into foreign territories much easier for the Nazis, as no threat or challenge would be posed by local citizens. In order to carry out this aim, various measures were taken. In 1935, the International Association for Folklore and Ethnology was founded in collaboration with the Rosenberg Bureau, with its purpose being to have scholars from the 'Germanic' countries of Europe come together.[38] It can be assumed that the aim was to have leading cultural figures discussing folklore with the influence of German ideology. This was successful in making them willing to cooperate with the Nazi party. When many of their countries were invaded, non-German members of the Association became associated with the *Ahnenerbe*. The *Ahnenerbe* was key to the Nazis' international aims. A separate department of the organisation was established, called the *Germansicher Wissenschaftseinsatz* (GWE). Its role was to mentor Folklorists in European countries such as the Netherlands, Flanders (now the Flemish region of Belgium), Wallonia, France and Norway to spread Nationalist Socialist Germanic theory in the region. In addition, *Ahnenerbe* members made frequent visits to England in an attempt to understand and communicate back to Party officials the contrasting political climate in the country under the pretence of cultural exchange. These officials were widely considered to be 'dancing spies.'[39] A prominent example of the same is Hans Ernst Schneider, who was sent to the English Folk Dance and Song Society's Annual Summer School at Stratford-upon-Avon by his SS superior, Richard Wolfram. He was instructed to use folk dance meetings and congresses as a means to 'observe and politically assess' folk enthusiasts as potential Nazi sympathisers and give names of anyone he found suitable. Similarly, the Nazis used their influence to appoint Germans as representatives in various international organisations for Folklore and sent them to places that were relevant to Nazi aims.

There was a consistent effort consisting of other small steps to disseminate Nazi cultural ideas all over the world. The government regularly provided the de Vriers' International Association for Folklore and Ethnology with funds on the condition that its publications propagated anti-Semitic ideas and that its board conformed to Nazi research ideology.[40] Karl Haiding, a dance specialist from the Working Community for German Folklore, was given the job of "re-establishing pure German life" by eradicating "decadent" and "foreign folk elements which were dangerous for the Reich and German folk" in "re-claimed" areas. This simply meant removing the threat of non-German folk ideas from occupied regions that might contradict the Nazis' ideals.[41]

Finally, of particular relevance to this study is the Nazi's perception and capitalization of the burgeoning popularity of dance in the U.K. during the war, with the state launching a cultural campaign to emphasize that British dance traditions in fact stemmed from German practices. English customs such as the Sword and Morris dances were portrayed as versions of weapon dances performed by the young men of Aryan prehistory.[42] Nazi folklorists therefore claimed that the 'historical continuity' of Germanic traditions was "an uncompromising affirmation of the eternal values of the Nordic race" which was bigger than the

geopolitics of the modern day. Ironically, the Nazis' bold claims on the tradition of British dancing, one that came to afford freedom, respite and purpose to the British public, did nothing to afford those same qualities to the German people during the world war, and was instead included in a cache of strategies to quell these same values in the German people.

Social Dancing in World War II Britain:

The U.K. remained a strong Allied Force during the Second World War, opposing the Axis powers, including its nearest Axis foe, Nazi controlled Germany. British domestic policy happened to also be in stark opposition to that of the Nazis, a modus that extended to the public's access to media, entertainment and the arts, including dance. Specifically, social dancing as well as the British ballet played an essential role in keeping up public morale during the Second World War, which was vital in the face of relentless bombing campaigns from the Germans and resulting curfews and other curtailments that encroached on everyday life. For the British during World War II, dance eventually emerged as a symbol of resilience and courage in the face of unimaginable adversity, inspiring strength amongst soldiers and civilians alike. Initially dismissed by the government as a viable tool to influence public sentiment and a morale booster, its importance was recognised soon after the war began. The combined efforts of dance (mostly ballet) companies, local citizens running dance halls in towns big and small, the government, and the dancers themselves provided the suffering population some respite from the challenges of a second international conflict.

Immediately after the start of the war, the British government ordered for all entertainment venues including theatres, cinemas, and dance halls be closed down in the interest of keeping the public safe from anticipated mass bombing.[43] The now modern and highly specialised German air force, the Luftwaffe, posed a significant threat to people and was an unknown challenge for the authorities. During World War One, military action was mostly limited to the land and sea, but the discovery of new technology made air raids a viable option to decimate enemy land and populations. Nazi Germany intended to do just that; bomb the masses of Britain into submission.[44] Anticipating this deadly onslaught from the Germans, authorities were quick to remove any chance of mass casualties in crowded public spaces. However, they soon faced mass resistance to these bans, including the closure of dance halls that created unique third spaces for community and joint expression. The hotels on London's West End started reopening their dance halls, with the Berkeley Hotel in September of 1939 justifying this by saying, "dancing will make people forget their worries."[45] Local authorities began to take action as well, with those outside London permitting dancing late into the night. The Mayor of Brighton, J. Talbot Nansen, was quoted saying that, "We feel it is our duty in the national interest to keep up the spirits of the people and encourage legitimate forms of entertainment."[46] What all these people had already realised, before it came to the national government's attention, was that the need for entertainment only increased during difficult times like war. Society needed the relief, the distraction, and taking it away from them would only cause strife.

In 1940, the Chamberlin government was replaced by Churchill's Conservative Party. Once this change in government occurred, policy towards dancing and entertainment eased significantly. Churchill's officials better understood the needs and wants of the masses, and were aware of the importance of the entertainment industry to the spirits of the people.[47] This pressing need for a more positive and optimistic atmosphere increased exponentially with the onset of the Blitzkrieg (often referred to simply as the 'Blitz.') in 1940, an intensive eight-month bombing campaign carried out by Nazi Germany. The Blitz targeted the civilian population of London, aiming at forcing the people into admission of defeat out of

sheer terror and exhaustion. This idea initially worked to subjugate the population into retreating to their private residences, with dancers disappearing from the halls of London and streets emptying quickly after curfew. However, as the campaign wore on, the British population, including Londoners seemed to develop an indifferent attitude to constant air raids and returned to dancing in halls and pubs. The government and mass media quickly seized the opportunity to turn this phenomenon into messaging about the resilient and never-say-die attitude of the people. In March 1941, Home Secretary Herbert Morrison completely withdrew all restrictions on night dance sessions and developed a new policy of simply making dancers aware of the threat of air raids, and then leaving them to decide the suitable course of action.[48] In 1942, Morrison stated to the House of Commons that dancing would not be included in the list of 'recreations that are to be restricted to prevent interference with the war effort.' His explanation for this was that "it is not proposed to make total war total misery."[49]

This collective evidence demonstrates how the government came to see dancing less as a hindrance and more as a benefit to the war effort in Britain, as a vital artistic outlet for the people, essential to maintaining a positive domestic image of the Churchill government. The government also made special efforts to license the numerous dance halls that kept opening; In 1943, 250 licenses for public dancing were issued in Newcastle.[50] The continuation of dancing amidst the bombing became a major contributor to the 'Myth of the Blitz.' This propaganda campaign carried out by the British government portrayed Londoners 'carrying on' as usual in the face of the destruction that had befallen the city.[51] Images of carefree and jubilant dancers filling dance halls in large numbers allowed the government to make it look like the British people were unaffected by the attempts of the Nazis to destroy their city. Dance halls became a symbol of bravery, resilience and optimism.[52] Much unlike the strict control of dance by the Nazis that was marked by sweeping restrictions that only allowed dance to remain as a vehicle of totalitarian propaganda, British cultural policy had been shaped before and during the war and did not seem to broach the idea that dance could be used as a means to control the population.

In the Thick of the War - Continued Initiatives to Promote Dance for Social Harmony:

In this vein, the government took initiative to make dance accessible to even more segments of the British public, extending access to dance halls and venues to workers in factories and soldiers. In 1942, Morrison wrote that "the harder the work, the greater the need for some degree of reasonable recreation….An excessive interference with customary recreation might defeat its own end by lowering morale and this, in turn, might affect production."[53] This belief was reflected in many of the actions taken by the authorities and management staff at factories all over Britain. Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, urged employers in war industries to make their workplace facilities better.[54] The Ministry of Labour promoted dancing by introducing social centres in war factories. The idea was that women who had been mobilised to work in these establishments for the first time would participate in social activities that made them more familiar with their brand-new surroundings and counterparts. An example of this initiative is the free dancing arrangements made for female labour in the Royal Ordnance Factory in the outskirts of London in September of 1941.[55] In the same year, war factories in Coventry made provisions for dance halls and bands for women workers, and in Edinburgh a large munitions factory opened a dance club for its employees. In Northern England, a factory of the Royal Air Force arranged for a 'magnificent ballroom' as well as dancing tuitions in clubs for its workers.[56]

Aside from manual labour, dancing was also used as a form of encouragement for soldiers. In fact, the

Secretary of State for War himself agreed that dancing should be made available as a form of entertainment to active servicemen. Several steps were taken to facilitate this. Military bases all over the country created facilities for dancing. A prominent example was the Donnington Army Depot in Cheshire, where the soldiers themselves laid the dance floor so that they could dance. This willingness to take on extra work despite the burdens they already faced reflects the importance of this activity in their lives. If dance halls could not be organised within the camps, dances were held elsewhere, with the military providing transportation facilities for the soldiers. Additionally, the War Office encouraged bases to grant 'sleeping out' passes to married soldiers so that they could go out and dance with their wives. At times, groups of young women from branches of the Service were brought to the camps so that soldiers could have partners to dance with, or instead invitations were extended to civilians residing in villages that were close to the camps.[57] An article in the 1947 Radio times even suggests that the authorities went as far as to provide the entertainment themselves. It states that the popular Pauline Grant Ballet Group visited numerous service camps between 1942-44 under the guidance of the Entertainments National Service Association.[58] A unit's Entertainments and Welfare Officer regularly arranged dances for his men in nearby dance halls.[59] Several instances have also been recorded of female dancers being exempted from the draft if they could provide proof that they were in 'work which exempted them on the grounds of the cultural value of their occupation.' Sometimes, male dancers were allowed leaves and deferments so that they could travel to participate in dance performances in faraway towns and cities. For example, dancer Frederick Ashton was granted leave so that he could participate in performances put up by the famous dance company Vic Wells.[60] Such concessions by the military are particularly significant as they were made in a time of intense need for soldiers, further highlighting the national significance of dance during the war. Aside from military bases, dancing arrangements were also made at the special Service clubs that were set up in Britain's towns and cities, whose purpose was to provide certain facilities for men and women engaged in active service. One such instance was the United Merchant Navy Club in South Shields, that held dances as often as thrice a week for its members.[61]

Dance and the 'People's War':

Dance was also vital to the British government's mission of creating a 'People's War.' They wanted to explicitly connect the 'Home Front' and the 'Fighting Front' in order for civilians and those on active duty to feel united, and therefore more motivated to help Britain fight.[62] This propaganda campaign was essential to stimulating action amongst the general public who were more removed from the political and military aspect of the war. The ability of dancing to gather large crowds played an essential role in achieving this aim of community action. For instance, the 'War Savings Campaign' that was put out by the Ministry of Information was often carried out with the help of dance performances. The Campaign set out a fundraising target for local communities, who often held events to achieve this target. Dances were generally a focal point of such events. A staggering £12 million were raised in 1941 in Glasgow over the duration of 'Warship's Week,' with fundraising dances being organised city-wide.[63] In the same year, the Manchester Ritz in London conducted a 'Tank Week.' Every night, a large, inflatable model of a tank made its way around the ballroom, and dancers dropped coins upon it. The system led to over fifty pounds being raised in a single week, which was put towards building a new tank.[64] In 1943, the *Birmingham Mail* reported that 2,908 pounds had been raised for the Lord Mayor's War Relief Fund by the local Workers' Dances at the Town Hall.[65]

Cooperation with the authorities achieved through dance is also exemplified by the fact that evacuated

women were persuaded not to return to Scottish cities by establishing dance clubs for them. In 1941, the Scottish Department of Health made arrangements for such clubs in the hope that social dancing would help the evacuees settle into their unfamiliar surroundings and therefore convince them not to attempt going back to the more dangerous areas.[66] Dance also became a central factor in persuading citizens to participate in government schemes. In 1941, the Holidays at Home scheme was introduced, with the purpose of saving scarce resources like petrol and coal. This was to be achieved by encouraging people to celebrate holidays at home, rather than travelling as they usually would, to protect vital resources. To do this, local authorities had to provide alternative entertainment to engage people and prevent them from leaving. One of the methods employed was the opening of new dance halls, which saw success in various cities. In Edinburgh in 1943, the city council collected massive profits from the open-air dancing events at the Princes Street Gardens, which were attended by more than 200,000 dancers. The profits were so plentiful that the council was able to use them to fund the implementation of the 'Holidays at Home' scheme in the entire city. In Leeds, the local authorities allocated parts of their £21,000 budget to providing free dance lessons to the public.[67] Dance, specifically social dancing, therefore, became a unifying factor in the United Kingdom, inspiring the country's people, regardless of class and race, to collectively fight for the Allies.

"We never thought of stopping. We didn't feel afraid." - Impacts of the British State's Attitude Towards Dance:

The positive impact of dance on the British people is evident in their response to it, especially during times of more intense stress. Early in the onset of the war, evidence emerged to show that dancing was a leisure activity that was resilient to sudden changes like the implementation of the blackout. Mass Observation reported that only 2% of men and 6% of women had reduced the frequency with which they went to dance halls as a result of the blackout.[68] Compared to other activities, like cinema-going and visiting friends, this was one of the least changing figures. Social dancing began to emerge as a way of coping with the hardships caused by the air raids and blackouts. Not only did it inspire some sense of optimism and joviality, it provided for a much-needed distraction from the constant suffering everywhere.[69] After a temporary collapse in dancing at the immediate start of the war, it quickly picked up by the end of 1939. For instance, reports show that at the Streatham Locarno in London in November 1939, the attendance greatly exceeded that of before the war, with over 1,000 people present. In fact, Glasgow even saw the opening of a new dance hall called the Berkeley in late 1939.[70] The performers themselves were unwaveringly dedicated to their shows: on multiple occasions, dancers and musicians continued performing through air raids, seemingly unfazed. In November 1941, dancers in London's West End continued on as usual after a heavy bomb dropped right next to them. Reports reveal that the patrons of the hall and the musicians simply 'brushed off the plaster and brick dust from their clothes' and resumed their activities.[71] Hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs in the West End even saw business increase as a result of the war, as reported by American war correspondent Edward R. Murrow. Most prominently, he observed that more dance bands were now given prominence, as opposed to before the war.[72] Business owners responded in kind to this enthusiasm by opening new places almost every week, as reported by Irene Raines in February 1940.[73] Often, performing artists dismissed the risk that the bombing posed to their lives, and made extraordinary efforts to be able to perform. One of the most famous examples is Kenrick Johnson, a popular professional swing musician. He was the leader of the dance band West Indian Dance Orchestra and died in the bombing of the Café de Paris, a popular London nightclub and restaurant in

1941. Accounts state that on 8 March 1941, Johnson was unable to find a cab, and instead chose to walk to the Café de Paris. In doing so, he ignored warnings from his friends about the risk of heavy bombing expected in the area that evening.[74] The fact that he cast aside considerations of personal safety in order to perform clearly showcases the magnitude of the importance that dance had come to hold for the British community. Mass Observation, a social research organisation founded in 1937, even reported that people were willing to risk going to communal shelters over their personal ones.[75] This was because they enjoyed the sense of normalcy and friendship there, which was created primarily through singing and dancing. These events are useful to understand the extent to which British people came to prioritise dance; they were willing to risk their own survival for the relative sense of happiness it gave them.

To better convey the role of social dancing to the lives of the public, Mass Observation conducted a study in collaboration with the Home Intelligence department. Observation of the city of Liverpool revealed that it had a mood of liveliness and cheer, perpetuated by its many dance halls, theatres and cinemas that were open long into the night. These venues were found teeming with patrons, all engaged in frivolous socialising. In sharp contrast, Manchester, which had only one dance hall open, that too occupied by just 60 people, was far gloomier and demoralised. The conclusion clearly emerged that cities with entertainment available to their citizens had much higher morale.

Dancing became presented almost as a form of resistance- a refusal by the British people to be intimidated by the Nazis. The armed forces also benefited from the provision of dance facilities. Accounts by British soldiers during the war reveal that after tough days at work, paying a visit to the local dance hall always cheered them up again. As the war wore on, the importance of dance to servicemen only increased, a fact that is reflected in the use of the activity to help injured soldiers recover. It was reported by doctors that dancing made them trust limbs they were otherwise hesitant to use again. A September 1944 issue of the magazine Danceland reveals that doctors in Royal Air Force rehabilitation centres even began recommending dance to soldiers as a part of their rehabilitation efforts.[76] The love for dancing continued all through the war, evident in the way that the British celebrated their ultimate victory: dancing in the streets on VE[77] (Victory in Europe) Day (8 May 1945), when the Allies formally accepted German surrender and the world war officially ended.[78]

This boom in the popularity of dance provided an opportunity for formal dance institutions to flourish as well. A prominent example is the Royal Ballet, known at the time as the Vic Wells Ballet. The government saw in the dance company the potential for a useful propaganda tool; a way to keep morale up while extending British influence over other parts of Europe. In the spring of 1940, the ballet dancers were given instructions to embark on a propaganda tour of the Netherlands, France, and Belgium; all of which were areas that the German Nazis were interested in taking over. To prevent German influence from spreading in these countries, the Vic Wells Ballet was sent to perform and entertain audiences in the hope that this would keep them connected to Britain. Before the German offensive of 1940 began, the dancers were beginning to see success in this mission. On May 6, they performed at The Hague in the Netherlands to a packed audience who had turned out in their full evening dress to see the performance. However, the tour was cut short when four days later, Germany began its incursion into Western Europe. The very fact that the government was willing to send civilians into such a high-risk area makes it evident that they saw dance as a powerful propaganda tool that could help uplift spirits and maintain British influence internationally.

At home, the dance company spent several months touring the country, putting up performances for soldiers and civilians alike. Beryl Grey, one of the dancers, reveals in postwar accounts that the dancers

suffered through trying conditions and frequently performed through air raids. However, she says that, "We never thought of stopping. We didn't feel afraid."[79] This reflects the resilience that the dancers themselves developed to the horrors of the war; a resilience that they made it their goal to inspire in their audiences as well. This enthusiasm for dance came to be mirrored by the viewers, with several of them leaving their precious rations of steak, eggs, and butter for the dancers.[80] The British audiences also took immense efforts to redecorate the Opera House in Convent Garden[81], which had been leased by Mecca Leisure Group[82] to turn into a dance hall. Notably, they used their own coupons to buy lampshades for the venue.[83] At a time when such commodities were almost impossible to come by, the generosity of the patrons reflects the importance that these performances had come to hold. As Grey herself most pertinently puts it: "The war made British ballet."

While it had a number of positive effects, the social dancing phenomenon had its limitations as well. Despite the illusion created by the 'People's War' that social divisions such as class, gender, race, religion, etc were erased in the face of collective action, conflicts persisted. In particular, racial segregation continued to remain an issue, with conflicts arising over whether interracial dancing should be permitted.[84] Policemen also had to be frequently called to break up fights between American and British troops in the dance halls.[85] Additionally, while the dance halls that remained upon during air raids were given much media emphasis, there were several venues that closed as a result of the attacks as well. The German offensive of 1940, which involved the invasion of Western Europe, led to a disheartened and panicked atmosphere that saw attendance at leisure events decline significantly. (we danced while they bombed) The government's early fears about mass casualties resulting from crowded dance events did manifest at times. For example, in November of 1943, a German bomb fell on a London dance hall, leading to several grave injuries and casualties. Eye-witnesses reportedly described the scene as looking 'like a battlefield.'[86] Even the Vic Wells Ballet faced its challenges, often having to deal with soldiers mocking and jeering at the male dancers, and showing little interest in the performances. Some soldiers held contempt for the dancers, believing that their uniform held them in higher regard than men frivolously dancing in tights.[87] Another problem that arose was increasing greed amongst the owners and operators of dance halls, as they saw the opportunity to make unprecedented profits. *Modern Dance and Dancer* reported that fees had been raised to absurdly high levels, describing them as almost 'black-market dimensions.'[88] This evidence could indeed make argument for more government control of dancing and in turn, cultural institutions, as in the case of Nazi Germany. However, this analysis highlights that the argument would be shortsighted at best, since the positive impacts of this boom in social dancing to the peoples' spirit during the war do greatly overwhelm the (still important) instances of disorder and danger that resulted from this lack of curtailment of public gatherings.

Instances of Civil Resistance to the Control of Dance:

As described above, the government of the United Kingdom, particularly in the Chamberlain era, initially curtailed social dancing and public gatherings, mainly as an economic and safety concern during the war. Later in the war, while the government did capitalize on the major public interest in social dancing to convey a positive message of unity and public satisfaction during a gruesome international conflict, this benefit arose somewhat by chance as a result of the people's resilience in demanding that closures of dance halls be lifted. Soon after bans on gathering in dance halls across the country were announced, the media and public began protesting against the sudden closure of entertainment places, and soon began openly defying the orders. The press launched a campaign trying to convince the government to ease the

restrictions. *The Spectator* published an editorial in which they claimed that, "it is as clear as can be that such a ban on entertainment could not possibly remain general without an incalculable loss to the good spirits and morale of the nation."[89] Following the government's swift response to this pressure, virtually no recorded instances of public resistance to the curtailment of dance in the U.K. during the Second World War are available to reference.

In Nazi Germany, however, resistance to the strict regulation of the arts would have been par for the course. Despite the regime being largely extremely 'successful' at quelling dissent, which were only beneficial in the short term given the legacy of the state, meaningful resistance was seen across the country and the span of the war. One facet of this resistance was in contrast to methods chosen by Weimar dance visionaries like Laban and Wigman. Another very prominent German choreographer and teacher, and a major contributor to the creation of *Ausdrucktanz,* Kurt Jooss steadfastly resisted early Nazi curtailments to diverse participation in dance and culture, including the banning of all Jews from dance companies. Jooss, arguably one of Laban's most influential early students[90], refused to comply with state instructions to expel Jews and non-Aryans from his company. This in turn led to him being repeatedly harassed by Nazi officials, driving him to soon leave the country, in fear of his life and that of his newly marginalized company members. A day after he fled, the Gestapo arrived at his house with an arrest warrant.

A source of more ongoing resistance through the years was a widely known group that resisted against the Nazi policies was the *Swingjugend*, or Swing Youth. The *Swingjugend* was a group of teenagers and young adults who defied the authorities by promoting listening to 'degenerate' jazz music and dancing in ways inspired by American films and styles, which were in part decried by the Nazi state because of their origins in the African-American community, tying back to their foremost ideal of white or Aryan supremacy. Moreover, the fun-loving, liberal style of Western music and dances had been condemned in Germany, labelled as 'dangerous' due to its representation of a way of life that was too carefree and even sexual for Nazi culture.[91] This only increased its appeal and the desire to rebel against the Nazis for the Swing Youth, who continued to express themselves through the Western Culture. While they were not an organized group or movement, their influence spread to groups of teenagers in cities all over Germany, including Hamburg, Berlin, and Frankfurt. Their idea of rebellion included listening to banned jazz music, dressing in long, English-style sport jackets, wearing colourful scarves, carrying umbrellas and leaving their hair long.[92] This way of life was intentionally a drastic contrast to the regimented way in which the Nazis wanted the youth of Germany to lead their lives, and was reminiscent of the more liberal culture in Britian and the United States. Since all forms of media, they had access to were heavily censored to avoid foreign influence, the Swing Youth were forced instead to come up with creative solutions to access jazz and western music and dance. One of these was using anti-jazz propaganda to their advantage. Anti-American propaganda reels in cinemas were valuable for learning dance steps, as they showed Americans dancing the Lindy Hop. Repurposing and reclaiming these allowed the Swing teenagers to mimic their movements and then practice them in dance halls and clubs in their cities, which was quite the opposite of the state's intent in distributing these materials. This style of dancing as emulated by the Swing Youth was also flagged by the Nazi authorities due to its 'vulgar' and 'sexually promiscuous' nature, which defied the ideals of regimentation and 'traditional' values.[93] Finally, the Nazis also routinely conducted tours to inform the public what types of dances and music was disapproved of, which included American jazz records. These records were often stolen by the Swing youth after distracting the party officials on duty.

Conclusion

Ultimately, it is evident that the efficacy of the British government in garnering support among their citizens through the use of dance was far greater than that of the Nazi Government in Germany. This can be largely explained by the fact that in Germany, its use created a sense of oppression and suffocation, whereas in Britian the effect was the opposite, a feeling of liberation and release. This difference is evident in the purpose with which each government set out to use dance; while the ultimate goal for both was to gain popularity among and loyalty of their people, the British wanted it to become a distraction from the war to boost morale, while the Germans wanted it to enforce a Nationalist Socialist message that had to be strictly adhered to. Because it was so strictly tied to Nazi war motives and ideology, the German public did not respond to modern dance in the Nazi period the same way they had during the Weimar period. Hitler and Goebbels tried to institutionalise the art form in order to achieve uniformity by setting up a national German Dance Theatre. Therefore, it came to represent yet another symbol of repression in a state that was unrelentingly monitored and controlled, leading to further disillusionment with the Nazi government and their motives. Ultimately, the party came to the realisation that the endeavour they had set out on- to create perfect uniformity and adherence to a particular thought process- was futile. Dance, being a form of art, was fundamentally self-expressive, which meant that attempts to control it could never work. This realisation is evident in the fact that Hitler and Goebbels ultimately accepted defeat and tried to eliminate the importance they had earlier given to modern dance.

Conversely, the British government identified and used the potential of dance to distract its people from the war, creating a more positive and expressive environment. Their approach was to nudge people in the direction of an already popular phenomenon, and the result was a more organic burgeoning in its popularity. The fact that their government was willing to put in effort to keep their morale and spirits high made the British population more likely to offer their support, which is usually weakened during times of crises like wars. Additionally, the Germans used folk dance to try and emphasise the barriers of race within the nation, promoting Aryan Germans as the superior race and justifying it through a manipulated version of folklore. On the other hand, although its efforts were not entirely successful, the British government propagated the image of dance as a socially unifying factor. As a part of maintaining the campaign of a 'People's War,' dance was frequently advertised to erase social divisions such as race can bring the people of Britian together in their fight to lead their country to victory. In a time of intense crisis such as war, uniting the people of the nation may have been more productive than enforcing divisions. Not only were the British quick to recognise the potential benefits of dance, they were also quick to rectify their mistake in closing down all entertainment venues at the start of the war. The Churchill government realised that its people had a valid reason for protest, and responded in a befitting manner by encouraging its citizens to engage in social dancing. Meanwhile, the Nazis tried to fight the rebellion their oppressive dance reforms, among other things, had caused, with more oppression: violently cracking down on any display of resistance by sending perpetrators to concentration camps, where they were forced to live in inhumane conditions and act as forced labour. This eventually led to disillusionment with the party: many in Germany began to question the intentions of the government and its operations. These diverging paths of support and rebellion ultimately manifested in the victory of the Allies over the Axis, and the collapse of the Nazi government in Germany. Thus, this paper concludes that while culture, and dance in particular, can be an effective propaganda tool, its success is determined by the way in which governments choose to use it.

As a final note, while it can be tempting to study phenomena like these as significant historical trends, it

is essential to recognize that these patterns don't solely exist in the past, and are prevalent in modern times as well. This is even more vital in today's political climate, with a growing resurgence of right-wing authoritarian political parties and governments that had significantly lost prominence in the latter part of the twentieth century. While these shifts haven't formed a stronghold in much of the Western World so far, a prominent case bearing several similarities to the totalitarian control of the arts in Nazi Germany is the use of culture, including dance, in North Korean domestic and international propaganda. Every year, at the anniversary of Victory in the Fatherland Liberation War, a massive performance called the Arirang Mass games is held. This show includes visual arts, folk music, dance, and gymnastics in order to deliver a positive and unified image of North Korea. As described by the Russian news agency Tass, "The extravaganza unfolds an epic story of how the Arirang nation of Korea, a country of morning calm, in the Orient put an end to the history of distress and rose as a dignified nation with the song Arirang." Involving over 100,000 performers, the mass games utilise intricately choreographed dances to folk songs of the region to convey a message about the importance of socialist principles and glorify the Kim dynasty.[94] Visually, this large-scale synchronised performance emphasises unity and strength in numbers, strongly reminiscent of the large-scale choreographed display in the 1936 Berlin Olympic games. The similarity in the use of large performances to create a sense of unitedness between the Nazis and the North Korean government is striking. Another point of similarity includes the special focus on folk dance in order to highlight the tradition and superiority of their respective states. In China, the China National Day performances, which are similar to the Arirang games, showcase choreographed ballets from the Cultural Revolution (1966-67) in order to instil a sense of pride in the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), thereby promoting their ideals. Mao Zedong's wife, Jiang Qing, oversaw the choreography of ballet pieces that directly furthered the propaganda that glorified Mao and the CCP. By re-showcasing these ballets, the Chinese government hopes to re-ignite the sentiments of the time in order to gain the absolute loyalty of their people. This bears resemblance to how Hitler and Goebbels mandated Laban to specifically choreograph pieces that were meant to inspire unwavering devotion to the Nazi state.

Contrastingly, the Germany of today, post its reunification in 1990, strives to promote artistic freedom rather than curtail it as the Nazis did. Several of its prominent dance companies, such as the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* and the Sasha Waltz & Guests, address complex and experimental themes through their choreographies. They are known to explore themes like personal identity, societal issues, and matters of philosophy. This drastically opposite direction that the German state has taken to the Nazi methods illustrates clearly that controlling freedom of expression in culture is a failed experiment.

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