



Arts as a Weapon of War, The: Britain and the Shaping of National Morale in World War II

Jorn Weingartner

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In 1834, Lord Melbourne spoke the words that epitomised the British government's attitude towards its own involvement in the arts: 'God help the minister that meddles with Art'. However, with the outbreak of World War II, that attitude changed dramatically when 'cultural policy' became a key element of the domestic front. Not only a propaganda tool, it aimed to boost morale and present a wartime cultural black-out. Jörn Weingärtner traces the evolution of this policy from the creation of the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), in 1939, to the drafting of the Arts Council's constitution in 1945, as CEMA outgrew its original wartime role. From the improvement of the National Gallery to Myra Hess's legendary concerts during the blitz, this was a crucial period in Britain's cultural history - as the government set aside its long-standing 'neutrality' towards the arts. Weingärtner engages with debate over the role of war in moulding social development, as well as the democratisation of 'high culture', to provide a fascinating account of the foundations of the modern relationship between government and the arts.

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