

3. Kent Cooper, *Barriers Down* and *The Right to Know*

True and Unbiased News—the highest original moral concept ever developed in America and given the world. (Cooper 1942, p.v)

To understand comparative communications as the exclusive property and practice of the academy is to overlook contributions made in non-academic institutional contexts and the impact of such research beyond and on the academy. Kent Cooper (1880–1965) was from 1925 until 1943 general manager of the Associated Press (AP), one of the world's largest news agencies (press associations), the largest in the US, and had a worldwide impact on communication policies. It is crucially important to study the work of non-academics because they have influenced as much, or sometimes even more, than academics themselves how comparative communications has been practised and understood by politicians, policymakers, journalists and general audiences. I argue that Cooper's writings, especially his books *Barriers Down* (Cooper 1942) and *The Right to Know* (Cooper 1956), show how boundaries between academic and non-academic writings were not fixed and how comparative communications, from its very start, in its policy science orientation, became influenced by the writings of non-academics.

Cooper was not an academic; he was a man of practice. His writing was atheoretical, he did not present a methodology or list his sources, but he did write about international news and propaganda comparatively and with a view to promoting international structural change. In Chapter 1 I defined early comparative communications in the US as that where researchers or research teams with diverse cultural, practical or academic skills, and in different locations, developed specific theories, concepts and/or methods to analyse materials or data concerning communications often from more than one source or (geographical) location simultaneously. Cooper's 'research' is based on his practical skills and his experience, his use of concepts, his access to materials and his comparison of locations, but it is not academic research. His writings could hardly be called research even when using Lasswell's policy science

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criteria, but he did provide 'policymakers with pragmatic, problem-solving recommendations' (Lasswell 1951a, p.4) and presented results that made 'the most important contributions to the intelligence needs of the time' (Lasswell 1951a, p.13). Cooper used concepts, mostly borrowed and undefined, including propaganda, news flows, freedom of news, monopoly and the right to know, that became widely used in policy science dealing with news for several decades. The titles of his two books have been borrowed even by academics (Lemberg 2019; Schudson 2015). Cooper emphasised the independence of news from propaganda and saw governments as enemies of free flows of information. He used the institution he worked for to promote policy science and succeeded in making major impact on US communication policy during and after World War II. Cooper's writings were both utopian and ideological and consequently influenced future research in international communication even decades later.

Cooper was a member of an organisational elite, and studying his work helps us to understand the relationships between different elites and how they contribute to society at large (Mannheim 1934, p.108). If we only study academic institutions, we easily fail to understand the influence of non-academic elites who are often more powerful than intellectual elites because of the institutional power their organisations such as the AP held and practised. Cooper's work shows how and why men of action were able to influence the development of comparative communications and how difficult it is to separate academic research from political actions. Similarly, Cooper's life story can be analysed through the concepts of ideology and utopia, of generational conflicts, and of Insideness/Outsideness. Because his professional life was so closely connected with one organisation, this chapter also highlights the role of institutions, not only individuals, in the production and mobilisation of knowledge. Cooper's writings are an early example of work that politicised news agencies as the most powerful actors in international news flows after World War II, and would become an object of criticism in the 1970s (Carlsson 2003, p.35).

Cooper was born in Columbus, Indiana, a town of 4,000, to a lawyer and Democratic congressman, George W. Cooper (1851–1899), and a teacher, Sina (née Green) (1849–1904), who, unlike most women of her time, had attended university (Cooper 1959, p.5). This was a family of the political elite and the young Cooper spent two winters in Washington, DC, (Cooper 1959, p.311), but later, as a result of his father's early illness and death, had to leave his studies at Indiana University in 1898 after only one year to become a newspaper reporter. After working for three years as a reporter, bureau manager and travelling representative for the United Press Associations (UP) founded in 1907, the AP's new competitor, he joined the AP in 1910, working first as a travelling traffic inspector before slowly climbing to become general manager in 1925 (Cooper 1959; Schwarzlose 1989a). Faithful to this same organisation almost all his working life, Cooper was a company man and what Lasswell

(1951a, p.13) called a man of action. He devoted his life to the AP, which he described as 'the greatest co-operative effort' and as dedicated to 'cooperative, non-profit-making news collection and dissemination, honestly collected, and truthfully written' ('A.P. Called Greatest Cooperative Effort' 1926). For Cooper, the AP itself was his ideology. His belief in the superiority of its cooperative ownership model, and then in its expansion outside the US, could sound almost religious.

Since Cooper's career is so bound up with the organisation he worked for, it is important to look first at the AP itself. After introducing the AP and Cooper's key 'concepts', the chapter is divided into three further parts, following the stages of Cooper's career. The first of these stages I call 'Cooper as a liberal internationalist, 1914–1925', the second 'Cooper as a pragmatic policymaker, 1925–1936' and the third 'Cooper as an ideologist, 1942–1956'. In each of these periods, Cooper played a different role on the Insider/Outsider spectrum either in relation to his organisation or to other organisations and individuals whose work has been analysed in this book. Of the three, the third period was the most public as a result of several campaigns run by the AP, of Cooper's subsequent publications (1942; 1956) and of the attention he received. Cooper as a liberal internationalist (1914–1925) partly coincided with Lasswell's academic period of progressive internationalism and as an ideologist brings together all characters in this book to support the US during the Cold War.

3.1 The AP as a national and international news agency

As one of the world's oldest news agencies, the Associated Press (AP) of New York dates from 1846, when five New York City newspapers funded a pony express route through Alabama to bring north news of the Mexican War faster than the US Post Office could deliver it (Komor 2021; Schwarzlose 1989a). The AP was organised as a cooperative, a non-profit agency where members shared their news with each other but with nobody outside the organisation. Its early history was marked by rivalries from both inside (there were several regional Associated Presses) and outside the organisation (Knights 1967). It gradually became the largest news agency in the US and, then known as the AP of Illinois, achieved a practical monopoly in 1893 (Rantanen 2012; Schwarzlose 1989c).

After a monopoly suit against it, the AP of Illinois was reorganised in 1900 under a new charter of the State of New York as the immediate successor of a former Illinois corporation carrying the same name and as a 'mutual and co-operative organization for the interchange and collection of news' (*Inter-Ocean Publishing Co. v. Associated Press* 1900). Its members were required to exchange news between themselves but also received news from the AP correspondents in return for membership fees. Its charter prohibited it from

seeking profit or declaring dividends.¹ The most radical change made in the new by-laws, compared with the Illinois by-laws, was the introduction of an unqualified veto power of certain members over the admission of an applicant that competed with existing members of the AP ('AP Enjoined from Observing Membership Provision By-laws' 1944).

The AP's leading position in the US domestic market had long been secured thanks to its contract with the European news cartel consisting of Reuters in the UK, Havas in France and Wolff in Germany, which since 1870 had divided the world's news market between themselves by signing mutual agreements with one national agency in each country (Rantanen 1990; Rantanen 2006). The AP's membership of the cartel, although subordinate to Reuters, Havas and Wolff, had secured its monopoly over the cartel's foreign news in the US market, and had often played a key role in its competition with other domestic agencies, as in 1893 when Melville E. Stone (1848–1929), Cooper's predecessor, travelled to London to ask for an agreement with Reuters ('Directors and Members of the AP' 1918) for the then newly founded AP of Illinois. The AP made an agreement with Reuters that granted exclusive rights to the cartel's news for AP members inside the US, but at the same time prevented AP members from operating outside their home country or receiving foreign news from any agencies outside the cartel (Rantanen 2012). The agreement was a final blow to AP's main competitor of that time, the United Press (UP), which went bankrupt in 1893 (Gramling 1940/1969; Rantanen 2012; Rosewater 1930; Schwarzlose 1989c).

The AP's monopoly on the domestic market did not last long. Two new private news agencies, the United Press Associations (later confusingly also UP) and the International News Service (INS), were founded in 1907 and 1909, respectively (Rosewater 1930, p.346), and became the AP's new private competitors. Unlike the AP, whose foreign operations were restricted by the cartel agreement, the new UP and INS were free to operate anywhere in the world and especially encouraged by the US government, as early as 1916, to work in South America (Rantanen 1992, p.15; Renaud 1985, p.11). The UP could potentially have replaced the AP in the cartel, and archival documents show evidence of many meetings between the UP and Reuters over 20 years.² Several times Reuters toyed with the idea of substituting the UP for the AP, but it never happened. Instead, the UP started establishing its own correspondent networks round the world. Roy W. Howard (1883–1964), president of the UP in 1912–1920, remained critical of the cartel, writing that:

The reason for my deciding against the alliance was that I knew it would put the UP as much at the mercy of the moribund and venal agencies, as the AP was. (Rantanen 1992, p.13)

The AP continued to dominate the domestic market. By the early 1940s, 81 per cent of US morning newspapers and 59 per cent of evening newspapers were

AP members. Their aggregate circulation represented 96 per cent of the total circulation of morning newspapers, and 77 per cent of that of evening newspapers ('Text of Federal Court's Decision' 1943). In 1942, 1,703 of the 1,747 English-language daily papers in the US received the services of one or more of three major press associations: the AP, the UP or INS. In the same year almost 1,200 papers were receiving AP services, 817 subscribed to UP and 261 to INS. This became a problem because the AP's membership was restricted and existing members could block the entry of new members, with voting power centralised in the hands of its largest and most influential members.³

In 1942, the AP faced an antitrust lawsuit based on the Sherman Act of 1890 and the Clayton Act of 1914. The lawsuit, brought by the US Department of Justice, claimed that AP membership restrictions violated the basic principle of non-profit consumer cooperatives, which was that membership should be open, on equal terms ('Supreme Court Rules against AP' 1945). This was a major blow to the AP, which immediately organised a public campaign, using its own members as a forum to fight against the lawsuit. Cooper's book *Barriers Down* (1942) was written at the request of the AP Board when the agency faced this lawsuit. It was during this period that Cooper was also asked to be interviewed by the Hutchins Commission, which reviewed the AP's ownership in critical terms, although the commission's final report did not address the AP specifically.

3.2 Cooper and his key 'concepts'

There are many connections between Cooper, and the other men, both academics and men of practice, studied in this book. After World II there were several research projects that studied international news coming from news agencies, and news flow studies have continued their popularity to-date (Chapters 4 and 5). The work of Peterson, Siebert and Schramm (Chapter 6) was also connected to Cooper through the Hutchins Commission's report and the monopoly lawsuit against the AP. Cooper popularised several 'principles', as he calls them, that became influential concepts in international communication and in policy science related to it. They included: propaganda, the right to know, free flow, and freedom of information.

Cooper traces back the concept of propaganda to the Roman empire, but writes that a 'simple-non-aggressive, non-war-mongering form of *news* propaganda' was first used by Reuters in the 19th century (Cooper 1956, p.75). According to Cooper (1956, p.84), the Germans copied Reuters' model and put it into use in a more aggressive and militant way and it was later adopted in Russia, Eastern Europe and China. Cooper writes that propaganda has two functions: (1) to gain converts or patronage by teaching people that there is something for which they should yearn that would bring them personal, individual satisfaction and (2) to show all of those who yearn how to gain fulfilment (p.270). Cooper (1956, p.84) writes that:

Germany was the first European nation to realize that propaganda for national unity, taught in school for the young and printed as news for adults, was essential in any country where the intellectual level of all the people had advanced almost to universal literacy.

However, for Cooper (1956, p.xii) the government suppression of news was worse than news propaganda, and he saw European government-controlled news agencies as propaganda vehicles, unlike the cooperative AP. According to Cooper, what follows from the US constitutional freedom of the press, 'the right to print', is 'the right to know', which extends the principle to people around the world (p.16). Cooper writes:

The citizen is entitled to have access to news, fully and accurately presented. There cannot be political freedom in one country, or in the world, without respect for the 'right to know.' (Cooper 1956, p.xii)

To guarantee 'the right to know', as shown later in this chapter, resolutions were needed at national and international levels. To Cooper's disappointment, the freedom of the press was changed into freedom of information (Cooper 1956, p.184). As Lemberg (2019, pp.31–33) shows, one of Cooper's most well-known principles, 'free flow', was not invented by him but came from the dean of Columbia journalism school, Carl V. Ackerman (1890–1970), who used 'free flow of information to the American press' in his speech in 1934. Cooper referred to the 'purpose of obtaining freer flow of international news exchange' in the AP–UP contract signed at the Ritz–Carlton Hotel in New York to join their forces against Reuters in 1934 (Cooper 1942, p.252). Three years later it was used as 'free flow of words' by former president Herbert Hoover (1874–1964). The wording found its way to the mandate of the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1942 as 'accurate and consistent flow of information' and then was changed into the 'free flow of information' proposed by the US delegation for UNESCO in 1945 (Lemberg 2019, pp.31–33; Schiller 1975, p.80).

3.3 Cooper and his contemporaries

Cooper was 22 years older than Lasswell but they belonged intellectually to the same forefront generation, influenced by the two world wars. Professionally, Cooper and Lasswell lived in different, although not completely separate, worlds. Cooper's and Lasswell's ideologies were similar in reflecting US policy interests worldwide, although their views about the role of government in news transmission were different. They both became members of elites, albeit different ones, one scholastic and the other an organising elite, and each

producing 'different patterns of culture in the various spheres of social life' (Mannheim 1934, p.108). My analysis of the two men's life stories shows how close these elites were to each other, even in a society as vast as that of the US.

The archival records show their paths crossing only a couple of times, most notably when Cooper gave a witness interview to the Commission on Freedom of the Press (Hutchins Commission), of which Lasswell was a member, in the early 1940s.⁴ The Hutchins Commission's report on international mass communications, *Peoples Speaking to Peoples* (White and Leigh 1946), devoted a whole chapter to 'Merchants of Words and Images', where they reviewed the history of US press associations and their European counterparts. Cooper thought that the majority of the 'self-named' commission members were 'college professors, some of them quite liberal in their thinking' but 'not one of them was a newspaperman with current professional experience in the business or first-hand knowledge of the perplexities of collecting news or publishing newspapers' (Cooper 1956, pp.177, 295). According to Lemberg (2019, p.37), of the commission members 'Lasswell in particular insisted on what the government could do to promote press and speech freedoms'. The commission wrote in 1944 in its synopsis that:

no government or private agency can be trusted to get at the truth. The purpose of society may be furthered if we have mixed institutions—both governmental and private. We may keep the aim of truth uppermost, and use all means to that available. The determination by private processes has the advantage that people can take it or leave it—no police back the statements of authenticity. The role of the state is kept at a minimum.⁵

Many newspapers saw the Hutchins Commission's suggestions as forms of governmental intervention in their operations (Blanchard 1977, p.9). This is why Cooper's attitude was not surprising, especially when the commission showed special interest in the AP. McIntyre (1987, p.149) observes that 'the public interest argument made at both Appeals Court levels in the AP decisions (*Associated Press v. United States* 1943; 1945) was relevant to the Hutchins Commission's thinking on the media as a public utility'. Some of its members questioned the AP's alleged monopoly. For example, one of them, Zechariah Chafee Jr. (1885–1957), had supported the Justice Department's antitrust case against the AP in 1942 (Lemberg 2019, pp.18, 35; Pickard 2014, pp.137–38).

The Hutchins Commission also discussed Cooper's *Barriers Down* (1942) (McIntyre 1987, p.155) but it was only one of their sources and was described as a 'readable, autobiographical account' (White and Leigh 1946, p.113). The commission's proposal to Congress and the State Department was rather general, stating that the 'U.S. seek, through negotiations of bilateral treaties with as many nations as possible' to:

guaranty for any authorized press associations, newspaper, news-picture agency, syndicate, magazine, book publisher, writer, radio station, or motion picture of one country of *the right to sell* its product directly any individual newspaper, radio station, motion-picture exhibitor, magazine, book publisher, or dealer in the in other country. (White and Leigh 1946, p.110, my emphasis)

If Cooper had hoped for a stronger statement from the commission to support his mission of the role of the AP in breaking international barriers, he may have been disappointed. However, he himself wrote: 'Don't Tell It—Sell It!' (Cooper 1956, p.273), implying that 'the right to know' meant 'the right to sell'.

In Chapter 2, I described Lasswell as an intergenerational figure who managed to avoid conflict between generations by shifting between utopias and ideologies. Cooper, in contrast, was not an intergenerational man and was known for a number of conflicts, both within and outside his own organisation: with company managers, with his predecessor Melville E. Stone, general manager of the AP between 1893 and 1921 (pictured, Figure 3.1),

Figure 3.1: Kent Cooper, Melville E. Stone, Frank B. Noyes and Frederick Roy Martin at AP's annual meeting, 1925



Source: Courtesy of Associated Press, AP Corporate/Alamy Stock Photo.

Notes: The first three general managers and president of the Associated Press at their annual meeting, Waldorf Astoria, New York, 1925. Left to right they are Kent Cooper (who was elected as general manager at the meeting and would serve until 1949), Melville E. Stone (general manager 1900–1920), AP president Frank B. Noyes (president 1900–1938) and Frederick Roy Martin (general manager 1920–1925) (AP Photo/Corporate Archives).

Figure 3.2: Roy W. Howard with Kent Cooper, c. 1920s or 1930s

Source: Roy W. Howard Photograph Collection, The Media School, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. https://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/images/item.htm?id=http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/media_school/VAD9735/VAD9735-001600&scope=media_school/VAD9735

Notes: Exact date unknown. Cooper pictured left; Howard right.

with Howard, president of the United Press Associations (UP) in 1912–1920 (with whom he is pictured in Figure 3.2), the AP's most important domestic competitor, and most famously (and made public by Cooper's own account in *Barriers Down* (1942)) with Sir Roderick Jones (1877–1962), general manager and chairman of Reuters (1915–1941) in the UK (see Figure 3.4).

3.4 Cooper as a liberal internationalist, 1914–1925

As a news agency manager, Cooper set himself the task of expanding the AP's activities abroad. Despite being a company man, he described himself an Outsider, not an Insider, in the AP, stating that between the years 1921 and 1924 there was only one person who believed in him, his secretary, Sarah A. Gibbs (1898–1993) (whom he later married, leaving his wife for her). Cooper claimed that he did not have a mentor: his relationship with Stone was strained, since he felt he was never one of the 'MS boys' and that Stone never wanted him to become his successor. When Stone retired in 1921 it was Frederick Roy Martin (1891–1952) who became general manager of the AP. Cooper had to wait four more years to achieve the top position (Rantanen 1998, p.18). Until 1925, when he finally became general manager, he could not improve the AP's international position independently since he did not have the power to do so. He is photographed in Figure 3.1 on the occasion with his two predecessors and AP's president.

Cooper fought hard against Stone, feeling even after he became general manager that he did not have the freedom he wanted. His relationship with Frank B. Noyes (1863–1948),⁶ the long-time president of the AP (1900–1938), was not without problems either (Rantanen 1992, p.19). Stone and Noyes had been among the AP's founders in 1893, when they brought to an end its

competitor, the forerunner of the first UP, largely thanks to their exclusive contract with Reuters, which gave them a monopoly in foreign news in the US. Both Noyes and Stone felt gratitude to Reuters, first to its founder, Baron Julius Reuter (1816–1899) and his son Herbert (1852–1915), who succeeded him, and then to Sir Roderick Jones (1877–1962), Reuters' general manager between 1915 and 1941.

In *Barriers Down* – and we must remember that this is Cooper's own narrative – he claimed that he had no previous knowledge about Reuters or the European news cartel and that in 1914 he found a cablegram from *La Nación* – 'the great Buenos Aires newspaper' – asking for AP news service, which had been left unanswered and copied to the Havas correspondent to whose exclusive territory South America 'belonged' (Cooper 1959, p.65). This was the same European news cartel about which Lasswell received detailed information in London in 1923, when he talked to a member of the news department of the British Foreign Office (see Chapter 2). Cooper claims he discussed this in 1914 with Stone, who described to him the nature of the cartel agreement that prevented the AP from selling its service to *La Nación* (Cooper 1942, pp.15–16).

Cooper's account seems doubtful, since the agreement with the cartel had already been a major issue in the news war that preceded the founding of the AP of Illinois (Knights 1967). In 1893, the AP had negotiated concessions with Reuters in South America. The AP Board discussed in 1914 whether to make an attempt to break through Havas' control over South America (Rantanen 1992, p.16). It also seems odd that Cooper, as a member of the AP's management team, even though he was responsible for internal matters, would be ignorant of the situation, when, for example, annual reports regularly included information about the agencies with which the AP had agreements.

South America became a market for the AP's competitor, the UP, who started selling UP news to several newspapers there in 1916. The AP could do nothing because of the contract with the cartel (Rantanen 1992, pp.15–18) but managed to extract, with Reuters' support, a major concession from the cartel by concluding a separate agreement with Havas in 1918 giving the AP access to the South American market, where the AP competed with the UP. A letter in the Newberry archive shows that in 1918 Stone was told in London that 'Sir Roderick Jones had no interest in South America.'⁷ As a result, both US agencies now operated in South America, and both had been encouraged to do so by the State Department (Renaud 1985).

At the time of the World War I peace negotiations in Paris, Cooper was the AP's chief of traffic, while Stone was general manager and Noyes was chair of the board. Both Noyes and Stone supported a long-term relationship with Reuters, with whom Stone negotiated for the AP. Sir Roderick Jones of Reuters ran individual negotiations in Paris with Havas, Wolff and the AP in 1919, where all decided to continue the cartel without giving the AP a role as equal partner, agreeing 'that arrangements between the AP on the one hand and the three great European agencies on the other, had not been broken by the war'.⁸ According to the new agreement, 'the U.S. shall be common to the Havas Agency and to Reuters Limited, and the profits shall be divided between them

in equal parts,⁹ without giving the AP an equal role and dropping the Wolff agency from financially benefitting from the agreement. According to Jones, this happened without any objection from Stone, who said that ‘we now happily could go on exactly as we did before the war.’¹⁰

When we explore Cooper’s writings, we can see how he keeps on referring to World War I, although he was writing after the war’s end. (See, for example, Figure 3.3, in which Cooper’s *Life* magazine article from 1944 is illustrated with a diagram of world news cartels from 1919.) Like Lasswell, Cooper did not fight in the war, but he was a witness to victory celebrations in Paris in 1919 – the event that defined his generation. In his own words, Cooper was deeply influenced by what he saw in Paris at the Bastille Day military parade on 14 July, when he watched the Allied troops march down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.¹¹ He later commented on this experience, writing that:

the only time that millions of them had ever been near to other millions was when they were at death grips. They had come from all corners of the world for one purpose and it was to kill!¹²

Cooper had also noticed the similarity between all those soldiers: ‘the soldiers of most any one of the nations might seem to have fitted into the ranks of any other nation by the mere change of uniform’. Later he had the same thought when he was in Germany and saw discharged German soldiers,¹³ writing:

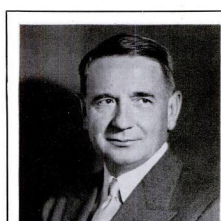
They only believed they had nothing in common with the enemy as life was going on in their separate spheres. Many governments had disseminated tainted news before that war, well aware that the decision as a result of their poison ultimately would rest on the number of dead in the field of battle.

Prejudice, [when] once aroused, is indeed a consuming passion. It can be fed easily and people become slaves of it ... Prejudice takes on the color of hate. So, it must have been with what all those millions who fought in that war read in their newspapers; either they or those back home who sent them. So, it must be as to those who bring on any war.¹⁴

In this way, Cooper identified newspapers as a main cause of wars. But where did newspapers receive the news that caused this prejudice? For Cooper – and this became a main thesis in his later work – government sources were responsible for the untruthful news that in turn fed prejudice. He concluded that:

many governments had disseminated tainted news before that war, well aware that the decision as a result of their poison ultimately would rest on the number of dead in the field of battle. (Cooper 1945b)

Figure 3.3: Diagram of the World News Cartel in 1919, as depicted by Cooper in a *Life* magazine article in 1944



Both party conventions last summer adopted resolutions in favor of worldwide freedom of information. Both houses of Congress have unanimously endorsed the idea. All this is largely due to the efforts of Kent Cooper, executive director and general manager of the Associated Press, who for years has made world-news freedom a personal crusade. Mr. Cooper explains the issue in this article.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Head of Associated Press calls for unhampered flow of world news

by KENT COOPER

Before and during the first World War the great German news agency, Wolff, was owned by the European banking house of Rothschild, which had its central headquarters in Berlin. A leading member of the firm was also Kaiser Wilhelm II's personal banker, friend and loyal subject. Such an arrangement can be understood by supposing that a U. S. President, through his personal banker, controlled the Associated Press and thus could dictate what the A.P. would send to the U. S. press to print about him and his policies. What actually happened in Imperial Germany was that the Kaiser used Wolff to blind and excite his people to such a degree that they were eager for World War I.

Twenty years later, under Hitler, the pattern was repeated and enormously magnified. D.N.B., Wolff's successor, became the official Nazi news agency and spewed out the deceptions and propaganda that made the German people again

ready to attack their neighbors. In Italy, Mussolini used Stefani, the official Fascist agency, for the same propagandistic ends. In Japan, where the news agency and daily press have always been subservient, the government leaders were careful to subvert it completely before starting the Japanese aggressions.

It has always been so: when a government wants to make war it first takes control of the news. In the peace conferences of World War I we overlooked this basic element of world peace. In the peace conferences of War II—even in the earliest discussions—we should not forget it.

"Freedom of the press" is a phrase that covers many arguments. Whatever it once meant, it is too limited to define the problem of international news in relation to world peace. A better phrase is "freedom of information." There should be freedom for journalists everywhere in the world both to seek out news—with equality of

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Source: *Life*, 13 November 1944, p.55. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3UEEAAAAMBAJ&q=cooper#v=snippet&q=cooper&f=false> (also available in the Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.1. Kent Cooper Papers, Box 49, The AP Archives).

Cooper's lifelong suspicion of governments' influence on news transmission can be traced back to World War I and to the role of news agencies in disseminating propaganda in news (Cooper 1956, pp.75–79).

In his writings and in reports of interviews he gave, Cooper repeatedly tells the story of how he, as an individual, brought his findings about the

European news cartel to the attention of the peacemakers at Versailles, but was told that press freedom would not be part of the peace treaty because all matters affecting news had been settled privately (Cooper 1945a). He writes:

As a newspaperman I did so during the last war and found that the aggressor countries controlled the press and perverted truth in news. That plainly was one of the chief causes. (Cooper 1945a)

He also writes:

So, in Paris, I sought out Colonel House. He seemed interested and promised to discuss the matter with President Wilson. Later, he explained that the President felt the League of Nations could satisfactorily deal with the problem of opening up new channels.¹⁵

I have not found any evidence for this except Cooper's own words, but he was in Paris at that time and it is very possible that this happened. At the same time, it may seem rather odd that Cooper would independently approach Colonel (Edward M.) House (1858–1938) at a time when his then superior, Stone, was negotiating a contract with Reuters. The American Peace Mission in Paris also had an adviser on the political aspects of international communication by telegraph, cable and radio, Walter S. Rogers (1877–1965) ('International Congress Will Consider Plans' 1919). There was nothing in the peace treaty about the role of media and communications, although the topic had been discussed in several documents. Wilson met journalists only twice at the conference (Coggeshall 1942, p.2), in Paris, and it is possible that Cooper asked his question on one of these occasions. According to James Lawrence (Larry) Fly (1898–1966), chairman of the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) (1939–1944) and chairman of the wartime Defence Communications Board (later Board of War Communications from 1940), Wilson did carry in his pocket a memorandum written at the peace negotiations by his communication adviser, Rogers, but it was never discussed.¹⁶ The memorandum, according to Fly, emphasised:

the important part which the distribution of the President's addresses and other American news had played in bringing the war to a conclusion and in clearing the way for a common understanding. Mr. Rogers pointed out plainly that when communication facilities are lacking the opportunity for growth of international misunderstanding is encouraged. He emphasized the need to avoid at all costs any extensive control of communications facilities by one nation which favors its own people and its own commerce. Mr. Rogers asserted that the ideal of a worldwide freedom of news and the breaking down of existing barriers, chauvinism, or lack of vision. He

called for adequate facilities, for the fair control thereof, and for the provision that there must be direct, unhampered communication.

As John (2020) has argued, Rogers, the US mission's adviser, was a liberal journalist who 'firmly believed that foreign press was systematically distorting U.S. news by foregrounding sensationalistic atrocity stories and underreporting uplifting accounts of current events.' Rogers' wartime experience led him to promote ideas of 'journalism-centric liberal internationalism' shared by many after World War I. Many of his ideas from the memorandum found their way into Cooper's writings, which emphasise the role of news in preventing prejudice. In his view, it was governments that spread tainted news, as Lippmann (1922) had argued in his *Public Opinion*. Cooper's thinking was aligned with that of Lippmann and of other forefront generation intellectuals, journalists and academics, who started for the first time to think of the role of news in causing and preventing wars. Unlike Lasswell, who concentrated on propaganda in general, Cooper borrowed the concept of propaganda and used it solely to refer to news, specifically to foreign news.

In retrospect, Cooper thought that what took place between news agencies in the negotiations of 1919 should rather have been a matter for the governments that signed the Versailles peace treaty. He saw this as a major mistake, later reflecting:

At Versailles, the power that could have been exercised by the peace negotiators to bring the operations of the news cartel into the open and to establish arrangements by which the Germans and their neighbors could have truthful news of each other's activities was never utilized ... This was done by the British and French news agencies exercising control of all the news in countries that bordered Germany ... All this was fuel for the rapidly developing fire of Nazism.¹⁷

... Barriers against freedom of news exchange and free press were erected in Europe trying to recover from the devastations of war. Without question the processes then set up to control news exchange contributed largely in bringing about the second war. (Cooper 1945a)

There is an interesting contradiction in Cooper's thinking. On the one hand, he criticised European news agencies for being controlled by governments and for controlling the news. On the other hand, he expected governments to have interfered in the negotiations held privately by the agencies and to have reflected the changes that had happened in world politics as a result of World War I. This did not happen, and Cooper, as a pragmatist, set himself the task of liberating the AP from Reuters, after which the former was free to expand its activities all over the world. Until 1925, Cooper's actions were restricted by

his own position in the AP. He still felt an Outsider in the organisation, and increasingly that the AP was itself an Outsider in the transmission of international news by virtue of not having an equal position to Havas, Wolff and especially Reuters. All this was about to change when Cooper became general manager in 1925.

3.5 Cooper as a pragmatic policymaker, 1925–1934

Cooper started to be active internationally after World War I and before becoming general manager. In 1919 Stone sent him for two months to Europe to try to speed up the transmission of the AP's news dispatches. He visited both Reuters in London and Havas in Paris. Cooper wrote to Stone:

While nations and people are seeking liberty, the agencies are actually tightening the cords of the form of domination of the press. If there is to be a new liberty in Europe the press will play no small part in it and the AP had no connection with the European press.¹⁸

While Cooper was critical of Reuters and Havas, he concluded his report by writing that 'I do not want to break with the agencies. I repeat that.'¹⁹ He did, however, express doubt about the value of the European agencies to the AP, arguing that they were no longer indispensable, and that Reuters was more *dependent* (my emphasis) on the AP than the AP was on Reuters. In this report Cooper also started questioning the principle of exclusivity and of 'home territories', where no other agencies could operate except the one whose territory it belonged to. Cooper wrote that 'the ideal arrangement, of course, would be one as between *cooperative* agencies of the various nationalities' (my emphasis).²⁰

The old AP generation to which both Stone and Noyes belonged felt gratitude to Reuters for the 1893 contract, but Cooper did not share those feelings. Cooper himself was still on good terms with Reuters in 1925, when he reported to have spoken of Jones and Reuters in a friendlier way than ever and of 'the two great agencies marching together hand in hand, like two comrades, to greater and greater fields of progress and development'.²¹ (Figure 3.4 was taken at a dinner hosted by Stone and Cooper in honour of Sir Roderick Jones in 1926.) He was still in favour of exclusive territories in 1926, when writing about the AP's relationship with the European news cartel ('allied agencies'):

It was my idea that you were going to continue your negotiations with Sir Roderick ... since I made my first study of it in 1919, namely, that any allied agency could make its service contract with any allied agency that it might choose, all the allied agencies first to be signatory to a general contract that would designate some

Figure 3.4: Photograph of dinner given for Sir Roderick Jones of Reuters by Melville Stone and Kent Cooper, 18 October 1926



Source: Reuters Archive, 1/897905, LN321, PHO, reproduced with permission.

Notes: Complimentary dinner given to (Sir) R. Jones by M. Stone and K. Cooper in New York. Guests include R. McLean, J.S. Elliott, J.J. Pulley, E. Root, F.B. Noyes, M.E. Stone, J. Lamont, L.C. Probert, W.C. Cannon, M. Love, M. Garges, F.T. Birchall, P. Crowth, F. Williams Douglas, T.J. O'Reilly, G. Harbord, J.S. Mason, C. Brown, W.H. Hays, J.L. Merrill, (Dr) N. Murray Butler, N. Carlton, W.S. Gifford, C.D. Gibson, C.S. Smith, J.R. Youatt, L. Pickering, B. Rickatson-Hatt, O. Reid, A. Draper and N.A. Huse.

territories and unlimited activities therein, and, where a country had no organized agency to enter the alliance, the country would be open territory.²²

One of the reasons for Cooper's changed attitude towards Reuters may have concerned the UP. At the League of Nations press conference in 1926 in Geneva, 16 of the news agencies attending belonged to the group of 'allied agencies', i.e. were members of the European news cartel. The allied agencies, most of them government-owned or government-run, included the AP, but the UP belonged to the 'independent group'. The principal spokesman for the independent agencies was Howard, who had already, in 1913, spoken at the conference for press freedom ('Will seek laws to guard news property' 1926)

in terms very similar to those that Cooper would use in 1942 ('World Wire Services Meet at Geneva' 1926).

Under Cooper, the AP managed to achieve major concessions from the cartel, and in 1927 it signed a four-party contract with Havas, Reuters and Wolff. The AP was given North America and its possessions, with the 'reservation that Reuters and Havas shall have a free hand in Canada and Mexico and that the AP shall have a free hand in Central America, South America and Cuba'.²³ The four-party agreement was a significant achievement, for the first time acknowledging the AP as an equal partner with Reuters, Havas and Wolff. However, it still restricted the AP's operations and defined exclusive territories for each of the agencies.

Cooper's biggest generational conflict was with Jones, general manager and chairman of Reuters, the world's most powerful news agency of that time. Cooper and Jones were born just three years apart, but were separated by nationality, wealth and status. Jones was described as one of the influential men in the British empire, leading a news agency whose general managers in India, Australia and South Africa were known as Baron Reuter's proconsuls. Donald Read, Reuters' company historian, writes that 'Reuters regarded itself as an empire within the British empire, and was accepted as such by Ministers in London and by Governors and other imperial officers overseas' (Read 1990, p.175).

Jones's own background was rather modest. He was born in Dukinfield, England, as a hat salesman's only son and after his parents lost all their money could not attend public school or go to university (Read 1990, p.175). He later left the UK for South Africa, where he became general manager of the Reuters office for British South Africa in 1902. After Baron Herbert de Reuter (1852–1915), the founder's son, killed himself in 1915, Jones was appointed as general manager and continued in that role until he was forced to retire in 1941. He was knighted in recognition of his services to journalism in 1918, which could also be seen as a reward for Reuters' service to war propaganda during World War I (Read 1999, p.137). Jones was described as 'not being universally popular' and as being 'imperious and autocratic' (Entwisle no date). According to Read (1990, p.176), he:

compensated for his modest background by dressing with excessive correctness, never missing a chance to make money and living in conspicuous style at Hyde Park Gate and in a country house. Bells at Reuters would ring to announce his comings and goings and the sidewalk was swept each morning, just before his chauffeured Rolls Royce pulled up the curb. ('The Press: Young Man with a Mission' 1946)

Although Jones and Cooper were as different in appearance and personal style, they were not so different from each other in their management styles.

At Reuters, Cooper was described as 'volatile and temperamental',²⁴ and as a 'conservative, ruthless, aggressive American businessman' (Rantanen 1994, p.21).²⁵ One Reuters employer wrote:

Kent Cooper is an aggressive fighting type – so rough in fact that he finds it hard even to be tactful at times, and with him such tact is more in the nature of hypocrisy than anything else. He has a tremendous ego and so much vanity but with it all a certain ruthlessness which is no doubt most valuable to the AP. His power in the organization appears to be unlimited and I fully believe that Noyes gives him an entirely free hand, while Cooper is of course clever enough to exert such authority without disturbing Mr Noyes' dignity. His attitude towards his own staff is Czar-like and he makes and unmakes people with little consideration for them or their superiors.²⁶

Archival documents show an increasing tension between Reuters and the AP and between Cooper and Jones that became very personal. Cooper was described as having almost a phobia about Jones.²⁷ Minutes from a Reuters board meeting reveal personal antipathy to Cooper.²⁸ What would have been seen as a 'normal' rupture between business partners became an ideological battlefield where views of news were to play the key role. This ideology again goes back to World War I, to utopian notions of how to prevent wars in the future.

Asia still 'belonged' to Reuters, which was reluctant to let the AP into its territory. After many years of difficult negotiations between the AP and Reuters, the cartel agreement was finally broken in 1934 through the efforts of Cooper, aligned with the UP, which refused to replace the AP in the cartel (the so-called Ritz–Carlton agreement; Silberstein-Loeb 2014, p.217), the Rengo agency in Japan (Iwanaga 1980) and the TASS agency in the Soviet Union (Rantanen 1994). The breaking of the European news agency cartel was thus far from purely a personal victory but was achieved in collaboration with other agencies and individuals. According to the new agreement, the AP was free to use any news without restrictions in the Western hemisphere and anywhere in the Eastern hemisphere outside the British empire.²⁹ This was a huge achievement, not only for the AP but also for the other national news agencies. However, because the world was in turmoil, these major changes only took place after World War II and the liberation and remained rather unnoticed outside the world of news agencies. Cooper himself writes:

I never gave up my destination to see the international news cartel broken. That was not achieved until 1934 and by that time, Hitler was already in the saddle of Germany, and war lords of Japan were getting ready to send their arms marching. Indeed, the world was in no mood to embrace freedom of information.³⁰

What Cooper does not say is that the Wolff agency was taken over by the Nazis in December 1933 and was renamed the Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro (DNB). It purged its Jewish employees, including those whose wives were Jewish, and they were replaced with Nazi supporters, and the AP replaced its own Jewish staff in Germany. DNB continued its collaboration with the former cartel members including the AP by making new agreements with them (Tworek 2019, pp.170, 183, 186–87; Scharnberg 2016, p.25). Understandably, neither Jones (1951) himself nor Storey (1951), in his authorised history of Reuters, shared Cooper's enthusiasm about the end of the cartel. In Jones's view, 'a new era in the relationship of the allied agencies to each other' was inaugurated (Jones 1951, pp.390). Jones thought that this would have happened in any case, at the latest with the outbreak of World War II. He also claims that at Reuters they believed (and Jones was satisfied with it) that

by the release not only of ourselves but also of the Associated Press and our two international partners, Havas and the German Agency, from the stipulations, conditions, and restraints which ever since the 1914–1918 War had been proving less and less advantageous, less and less tolerable, at all events to Reuters and to the Associated Press, we had removed from the area of our mutual operations causes of misunderstanding and friction that had become seriously embarrassing to us; thereby we had given new life to an international league which, if not radically reformed, very soon would have broken down (Jones 1951, p.389).

The end of the European cartel was, however, over, but the rise of the US agencies, the AP, UP and INS, only took place after World War II. By 1952, these three agencies were listed together with Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP), which had succeeded Havas in France, and TASS as world agencies (UNESCO 1953).

3.6 Cooper as an ideologist, 1942–1956

Cooper's professional achievements may have been limited to the AP, but his book *Barriers Down* (Cooper 1942) made him famous outside the world of news agency operations. He himself called the book his 'crusade' against the European news cartel in which Reuters was the leading member and dominated the world's news market. *Barriers Down* was not based on thorough academic research, being without academic references or bibliography, even though there were already journalistic articles and research available (see, for example, Desmond 1937; Douglass and Bomer 1932; Stowe 1927). It was based on Cooper's own recollections and written documents and its aim was to improve the reputation of the organisation he worked for as well as his personal reputation. It is Cooper's recollection of how he discovered the nature

of the international news cartel and how he personally broke it down in 1934, arguing that the AP was morally superior to European agencies because of its ownership form.

Cooper's *Barriers Down* was written at the request of the AP Board. All the royalties from the book were paid to the AP's Employees' Benefit Fund and its copyright belonged not to Cooper but to the AP for the benefit of the fund.³¹ The AP also bought 5,000 copies of the book for educational and promotional purposes and had it translated into Spanish.³² The book did not save the AP from the lawsuit by the US Department of Justice against its own monopoly in the US. After losing the case, the AP appealed to the Supreme Court, which in 1945 also ruled by five votes to three against it ('Special meeting of board is called' 1945). Finally, in the same year, the AP agreed to review its by-laws and accepted a new member earlier rejected. According to Cooper himself in 1959, his book influenced the members of the Supreme Court, whose decision destroyed neither the exclusive contract the AP had with the Canadian Press nor the exclusive right of the AP to news from its regular members (Rantanen 1998, p.25).

In *Barriers Down*, Cooper told a story of the 'overlordship' of Reuters over all national news agencies, and especially over the AP, and of how he liberated the AP from this:

I personally believe that the overlordship of Reuters in the matter of consenting or denying agency connections between agencies ... is not only antiquated but is wholly inconsistent with the progressive thought of today. Indeed, I personally believe that such overlordship may potentially lead to serious international misunderstandings. Certainly such overlordship can and I believe has, acted as a deferment to the widest possible development of news exchange upon salutary basis.³³

Barriers Down has been described as 'breath-taking', 'inspiring', 'fascinating' and 'sensational' (Rantanen 1998, p.25; see also Figure 3.5). Its author was hailed as a 'crusader for the freedom of the press' (Willens 1951) and the book was to have a profound impact on future comparative communications studies, especially in international communication, as well as on actual news agency ownership worldwide. As one reviewer wrote (quoted by Rantanen 1998, p.25),

perhaps no one but Kent Cooper could have done the job that he did, and this great fighter has the barriers come down one by one of his ideal, a truly American ideal, which, pray heaven, will always remain with us.

The reviews reveal the ideology of that period and how uniformly well received the book was. It is hard to understand this now, but only by contextualising the period during which it was written can we see why it happened.

Figure 3.5: Advertisement for Kent Cooper's *Barriers Down*, in *Editor & Publisher*, 12 December 1942

FOR DECEMBER 12, 1942 27

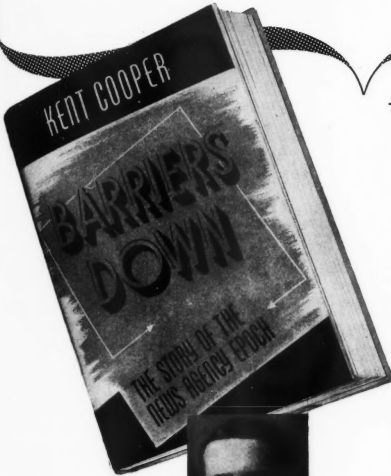
**"Breath-taking
"Inspiring
"Fascinating
"Sensational**

IN ITS CANDOR"

IN ITS IDEALISM"

AS THE STORY OF
A NOBLE CRUSADE"

AS AN EXPOSURE OF
MACHINATIONS WHICH
VITALLY AFFECTED
THE WELL-BEING OF
PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.*




* From Max Henrici's 1400-word review of "Barriers Down" by Kent Cooper in the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, the first review printed by any newspaper on the story of how The Associated Press battled 20 years to break a stranglehold on world news — one of the greatest contributions to a free press ever made.

Writes the Sun-Telegraph: "This important new chapter which Cooper has added to the history of the modern world is not, as so many books dealing with contemporary affairs are, a mere re-hash or elaboration of facts already known, but brand-new stuff from cover to cover. . . ."

"It is to be hoped that it will gain widespread circulation and study not only in America but throughout the world."

324 Pages — \$3.00
at all bookstores



Kent Cooper

Barriers Down

Just Published by
FARRAR & RINEHART
232 Madison Ave., New York

Source: *Editor & Publisher* 1942-12-12, vol. 75, no. 50, p.27. https://archive.org/details/sim_editor-publisher_1942-12-12_75_50/page/n28/mode/1up?q=Cooper

Cooper wrote several books in addition to *Barriers Down*, including one about Anna Zenger (Cooper 1946), the first female journalist in the US, and *The Right to Know* (1956). He was also a composer and lyricist of songs

and marches (Cooper 1959). But none of his books after *Barriers Down* would become as famous. In *Barriers Down*, he was never shy about taking full credit for his achievements. He believed that if his personal crusade had been won within five years, instead of 20, World War II might have been averted.³⁴ Cooper described his book as follows:

This book is not about the suit. It is about an activity of mine on behalf of the AP for 20 years that I consider the most important thing that I have ever done for the AP. Moreover, in all modesty, I think it's the most important thing that ever was accomplished on behalf of world journalism, provided the accomplishments are used as groundwork on which to build a free press for the civilized world.³⁵

Barriers Down is an example of a generational story in which one member of the generation tells a story where his own role is emphasised over others. The success of the book made it difficult to offer an alternative version. The book clearly irritated Roy Howard, whose organisation, the UP, was founded to resist the AP's monopoly both at home and abroad. According to Howard, the book gave 'a picture ... utterly misleading and as false as hell', and Cooper:

had so thoroughly scrambled facts, fiction, sanctimony, and distorted or improperly emphasized truth, that it would be a ten year job and would take ten volumes to segregate the real truth from the false innuendo that have been combined to present an utterly inaccurate, unfair, and completely misleading picture of the press association business, and especially of the handling of foreign news to American consumption. (Rantanen 1998, p.26)

Howard thought that even the title of the book was ridiculous: 'the whole thing was phoney and a defensive fabrication in which he was doing a lot of things that he was compelled to do willy-nilly by us'. He made the mistake of thinking no response was necessary since few would ever read *Barriers Down*.³⁶ He also wrote:

My opinion, not confidential, is that it [AP] is the damndest, meanest monopoly on the face of the earth – the wet nurse of all other monopolies. It lies by day. It lies by night and it lies for the very lust of lying. Its news gatherers, I sincerely believe, only obey orders.³⁷

Howard's view was privately shared by other UP men. One of them wrote, even 10 years after *Barriers Down* was published:

It always struck me as an exhibition of supreme gall for Kent, or anybody else of the AP to lay any claim that he or the AP 'slew the

dragon.' Anybody who knew from personal observation anything about early news agency relationships ... especially relationships between Reuters and the AP ... must know that the AP was hand in glove with Reuter's idea of promoting a world news monopoly.³⁸

Despite telling only one side of the story, in *Barriers Down* Cooper's starting point was comparative: Cooper compared the AP with Reuters, concentrating on the unfair nature of their relationship. It was based on Cooper's Insider knowledge about the cartel, his access to sources that were unavailable to Outsiders. It paved the way for his next book, *The Right to Know: An Exposition of the Evils of News Suppression and Propaganda* (Cooper 1956), but the ideas behind the latter were developed and put into action already after *Barriers Down* was published. As Schudson (2015, p.50) points out, in *The Right to Know* Cooper picked up on a phrase he claimed to have invented. Schudson (2015, p.50) writes:

In the book, Cooper calls for a 'right to know' constitutional amendment because, he argues, what needs protecting is not the privileges of an industry (the 'free press') to write what they please but the rights of citizens to have access to the information they need. In his foreword, Cooper explains the sense of urgency in the book: government treatment of news was 'slowly pressing toward the totalitarian pattern.' He concludes the foreword by holding, 'Our government can more profitably accept the broader principle of the Right to Know and ardently maintain it for the benefit of its citizens than to continue totalitarian methods of news suppression and propaganda.'

Cooper had already argued, in *Barriers Down*, that the AP's cooperative ownership form ensured that its news was unbiased, since it was owned by newspapers and was a non-profit organisation. The basis for his argumentation was that:

The membership of the AP includes persons of every conceivable political, economic and religious advocacy. The one thing upon which they are united, as far as the AP news service is concerned, is that it shall be wholly free from partisan activity, or even the expression of any opinion whatever.³⁹

By combining the AP's ownership form with non-partisan news, Cooper developed an ideology that was later spread worldwide not least through the influence of the 1948 UN General Assembly's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the preamble of which refers to 'the advent of a world in which humans shall enjoy freedom of speech' and is more fully elaborated in Article

19 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948). Governmental news agencies became the object of his criticism for propaganda in news because unlike the AP they were government-owned. This he then combined with the people's right to know, again going back to the situation before World War I. Cooper had visited Germany a year before World War II and found that:

the peoples of other nations [were] being depicted by the German press and radio as so monstrously fictional as to seem like peoples from openly malignant. Not only were the large European agencies under government control or influence, but it was fashionable to serve the crown—not the people.⁴⁰

During and after World War II, Cooper increasingly felt that what had happened in Versailles must not happen again, and he started actively campaigning for what he called the worldwide freedom of the press (Cooper 1945b; Cooper 1956) without governmental interference. He wrote:

If at Versailles we had insisted upon freedom of the press in Germany, and if we had compelled our French and English allies to put aside their selfish plans for the establishment of their own news hegemony over Germany, this war may not have occurred so soon, if at all ... In other words, the emphasis of the negotiators was on the material effects of the war rather than on the underlying cause of the war. There was not one word of discussion at any time as to how it happened that the people of the vanquished countries had been given mental food that bred their hatreds.⁴¹

Cooper was convinced that it was the cooperative ownership form that would guarantee the unbiased flow of news and had started advocating for a worldwide expansion of this ownership form. Meanwhile, however, Reuters' ownership form had been changed and Jones was forced to resign in 1941 (Read 1999, p.188). Cooper himself ceased to be general manager of the AP and became executive manager in 1943. More importantly, Great Britain was the US's ally in World War II. Cooper now started promoting the inclusion of the concept of a free flow of news in future peace negotiations and treaties again going back to Versailles:

At Versailles, scarcely anyone dreamed that all means of communication in the new Germany would one day fall into the hands of a war-mad dictator. It did happen, as I feared it would, and it can happen again, if the rights to news and information are not set forth in treaties, and vigilantly protected.⁴²

Cooper began actively campaigning for his proposal. His plan, according to his own words, was that future treaties should: (1) require that the vanquished nations guarantee their people a free press as known in the US; (2) require that any nation requesting help in re-establishing itself economically would guarantee such a free press; (3) leave to the press itself the missionary work to bring the same result in other countries; and (4) announce the determination of the US to foster and bring about news transmission facilities at a nominal rate that would guarantee the free flow of news between all the capitals of the world.⁴³

The positive publicity that *Barriers Down* received resulted in promotion both for Cooper and for the AP. Cooper first made sure that he received his own organisation's backing in 1943. He also approached Reuters, which was now under new management and ownership and whose board of directors approved his proposal.⁴⁴ He then paid a personal visit to the Department of State, which started to investigate the proposal. He also approached individuals, prior to the Republican and Democratic Conventions in Chicago, with a view to the platform committees of both conventions being urged to adopt a position favouring freedom for news agencies (Forrest 1945). Cooper's influence was clearly shown in different documents from that period. Senator Tom Connally (1877–1963) writes:

That the Congress of the United States believes in the world right of all men to write, send, and publish news at uniform communication rates and without interference by governmental or private monopoly and that right should be protected by treaty; that the representatives of the United States at the peace conference and at the conference called to create an international organization for the maintenance of peace be requested to urge that there be incorporated in the peace treaty or in the treaty creating the international organization for peace provisions to guarantee that each nation signatory to the treaty shall give to all responsible press and radio representatives the same access to information at the source and the same freedom from censorship as may be accorded to press services and radio representatives of such country; and that such agreements provide for the freedom of accredited press and radio representatives to write, transmit, and publish the news without private or governmental interference and at the same rates of charge for communications, national and international, as are given to the press and radio representatives of such nation.⁴⁵

Cooper's dislike of any government interference was shared by Connally, even if they both must have known that communications technology was often governmentally owned in many countries. The importance of news agencies was however acknowledged, and the US Congress unanimously adopted a resolution in 1944:⁴⁶

Resolved by the Senate (The House of Representatives concurring), That the Congress of the United States expresses its belief in the world-wide right of interchange of news by news-gathering and distributing agencies, whether individual or associate, by any means, without discriminations to sources, distribution, rates, or changes; and that right should be protected by international contract.

Cooper became increasingly anti-government in his battles concerning both international and domestic markets (Cooper 1956). He saw government interference in news everywhere, not only in Europe but also in his own country (Cooper 1947, 1956). Outside the US, his primary target had been Reuters, which, although privately owned, like many other news agencies did have a close relationship with the British government (Read 1990; 1999). Cooper also claimed that the UP, in the same way as Reuters, was intimate with the government.⁴⁷ In doing this he conveniently forgot that when the government-owned TASS in the Soviet Union failed to sign an agreement with the European news cartel in 1934 this helped to bring down the cartel (Rantanen 1994). Cooper remained worried about government influence abroad, and the AP again gave him its support by issuing a statement:

The AP stands committed to the principle of freedom of access to the news and to the free flow of news throughout the world. It holds that news disseminated by non-governmental news agencies is essential to the highest development of mankind and to the perpetuation of peace between nations. It recognizes the possibility of useful purpose served by governments in the maintenance throughout the world of official libraries of information. It applauds the vigorous manner in which the present national administration has advanced the doctrine of press freedom. It holds, however, that government cannot engage in newscasting without creating the fear of propaganda which necessarily would reflect upon the objectivity of the news services from which such newscasts are prepared.⁴⁸

In the US, Cooper opposed not only the lawsuit against the AP but also government control of the wireless telegraph, and even government war propaganda (Cooper 1947). At the same time, he did not find it problematic that the AP served the US government with its news during the war, or that many of its correspondents were located in embassies or US army headquarters.⁴⁹ In his view, the main enemy of the international flow of free news was government-owned and/or government-controlled news. He writes:

While government control of the flow of news and information must be prevented, major governments of the UN should lend their benediction to the development of independent news agencies,

responsible only to the publications, radio stations and other outlets they serve, which in turn are responsible to their public.⁵⁰

As the first of the world's news cooperatives, I say with humility that in my country the world ever has gotten any ethical standard to embrace, it consists of a method by which people assuredly can get the truth while freedom lasts. This method is the control of the collection of the news by the newspapers themselves rather than by opportunists or by governments.⁵¹

Cooper's *Barriers Down* and his other writings exceeded the life of his own biological generation and achieved a fame that crossed national boundaries. Despite the historical inaccuracies and biases of his writings, their deeply ideological tone seems to have spoken to succeeding generations who feel a need to justify the operations of their own organisations against those of other organisations, often their competitors or those owned or supported by governments. At a more general level, *Barriers Down* served as a tool for supporting US hegemony in news transmission on the basis of the nation's moral superiority. With an interesting generational twist, its ideas would go on to be used in the preparations of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate in the 1970s and early 1980s, when US news agencies (including the AP) were themselves criticised on the same grounds as those on which the AP had criticised Reuters. As Cuthbert (1980, p.106; see also Renaud 1985, p.36) shows, the representatives of 59 non-aligned countries who drafted the New Delhi Declaration on Information Media in 1976 observed that 'the peoples of the world are forced to see one another, and even themselves, through the medium of the international news agencies' (Communicator 1976, quoted by Cuthbert 1980, p.106). Their declaration notes that:

In a situation where the means of information are dominated and monopolised by a few, freedom of information really comes to mean the freedom of these few to propagate information in the manner of their virtual denial to the rest of the right to inform and be informed objectively and accurately. (Non-aligned Conference of Ministers, New Delhi Declaration on Information Media, New Delhi, July 1976, quoted in Cuthbert 1980, p.99)

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter critically evaluates a non-academic book that has probably achieved more impact than many academically acclaimed works in comparative communications. I have tried to understand Cooper's books through the development of the organisation it was written for and whose values its author promotes throughout. *Barriers Down* is without doubt a book with many faults

and, as I have shown using other materials, one that does not even present an accurate narrative but often twists the facts to serve a self-congratulatory project. However, there is something about it that has appealed to successive generations.

Anyone reading *Barriers Down* for the first time can see that the author paints a picture of himself as a hero, a veritable dragon-slayer – the dragon in this case being Sir Roderick Jones, managing director of Reuters. There was a relationship where Jones saw other news agencies as children⁵² he had nurtured, and therefore felt betrayed by Cooper. *Barriers Down* might thus almost be seen as a Shakespearean drama or analysed in terms of an Oedipal relationship where the son must kill his father in order to liberate himself. It can also be seen as depicting a transnational and intragenerational relationship, with the coloniser and oppressor (Great Britain) being defeated by its vibrant and more successful former colony, the United States. Cooper's book has a sense of drama that goes beyond what could otherwise be seen as the breakdown of a relationship between two long-time business partners – a rather mundane and commonplace event.

Cooper's other generational conflict was a domestic one, with the AP's competitor, the UP. Despite their age difference, Cooper and Howard belonged to the same generation. They both wanted to change things in their respective organisations but Cooper had less freedom and had to wait longer than Howard, who had an earlier start with a new organisation. They competed fiercely but also wanted the same things. With the AP's foreign expansion, Cooper followed Howard's path in the UP, and in the end it was the UP that, by not signing with Reuters, guaranteed the AP's independence from the cartel. They both signed up to the ideology of expanding American ideas abroad through news transmission. Despite being competitors, Howard and Cooper were influenced by similar utopias and ideologies concerning the role of US news worldwide.

Howard wrote as early as 1916, when the UP signed its first agreement with *La Nación* in Argentina, long before Cooper liberated the AP from the European news cartel:

[that] America is destined to play a new part in things international is fully evidenced by the arrangements just concluded ... Summed up: these arrangements mean that New York is to become the news-gathering center, second to none – not even to London. ('New York to Be the News-Clearing House of the World' 1916)

The timing of Cooper's book was a key factor in its success. After Pearl Harbor and the US entry into World War II, the country needed all kinds of heroes and even news agency directors, not often seen as the most heroic characters, had to do their patriotic duty. Cooper certainly did his duty, at the right time but also potentially at the wrong time, since Great Britain and the US had now become allies fighting against a joint enemy, Nazi Germany.

Thus, although the timing of this was not right in terms of the military alliance, it was lucky for Cooper that Reuters' change of ownership and of director offered him a chance to return to London as a celebrated hero and a freedom fighter, whose values were now also Reuters' values (Willens 1951). The expansion of the cooperative ownership form into a Europe in ruins had just begun and was now adopted by many national news agencies, old and new, just as Cooper had envisioned in 1922.

Cooper's starting point was also undoubtedly comparative, since he compared his own news agency with agencies in Europe, and especially with Reuters. His work has similarities to propaganda studies, depicting a scenario of US propaganda versus enemy propaganda, discussed in Chapter 4. Not unlike much writing in propaganda studies, it takes sides – 'us versus them' and 'good versus evil'. Cooper's book wholly lacks any attempt to hide its biases, since in his thinking both the AP and the US represented freedom and other superlative values that other agencies and countries should adopt in order to join a worldwide free press community that would lead to lasting peace.

Was Cooper, then, an Insider or an Outsider? He was an Insider by virtue of his membership of an elite, of his running the biggest news agency in the United States, but his agency was not an equal member of the European news cartel. Cooper himself felt that not only his agency but he himself were underdogs in relation to Reuters and to Reuters' director, Sir Roderick Jones. By changing its position vis-à-vis the European news cartel the AP became an Insider, one of the biggest international news agencies, which would go on to dominate the world's news market for decades to come. Thus, Cooper showed, perhaps not intentionally, that, given it was possible for the AP to liberate itself from the dominance of the cartel, it was also possible for other news agencies that had become dependent on the big Western agencies to liberate themselves, an idea that was again taken up in the 1970s. In this way, it is also possible to analyse conflicts inside a transnational elite, often seen as homogenous and all-powerful Anglo-American hegemony by those outside it (Schiller 1969; 1976; Tunstall 1977). Since *Barriers Down* is not the story of a whole generation but mainly about Cooper himself, it has been crucial, in order to support or contradict his claims, to use materials from various different archives as well as previous research on his competitors.

Analysing Cooper's work at the AP, often seen by those outside the country as representative of the dominant US ideology and even at one time media imperialism (Mattelart 1979, pp.60, 149), also gives an opportunity to investigate generational conflicts inside organisations, where the struggle for power and for access to information may be even more atrocious than in academia. *Barriers Down* (1942) can be read as the story of national and international, intra- and intergenerational, conflict, which is rather unusual considering when it was published, just after the US entered World War II. The book is also an example of how utopias and ideologies are intertwined and how utopias are used to justify ideologies. It exemplifies what happens when the past is used to validate the future, and when utopias are transformed into new ideologies.

Intellectually, however, Cooper was an Outsider, since he did not have an academic position. Nonetheless, as the author of *Barriers Down* he outperformed his academic contemporaries by writing a book that reached both non-academic and academic audiences. By sharing some of the concepts, such as those of propaganda and of news flows, that academics were also using, he popularised them. The popularity of Cooper's work also shows how weak comparative communications then was, and how easy it was for him to have access to it, especially as a member of an elite. Since most of the work being done was applied, the boundaries between non-academic and academic work were extremely permeable – in practice there were no boundaries. Access to materials was one of the key features when defining an Insider or an Outsider. Cooper, as a member of an elite, had access to materials that very few people, including academics, had. His position as general manager of the AP also gave him an authority and status, especially outside academia, that few academics had.

Cooper's life and work reveal what it takes to transform utopias into ideologies. One has to question whether Cooper's utopias really originated in Paris in 1919, as he claimed in *Barriers Down* and in his various speeches, or whether this was just his rhetoric. Cooper's view that the AP could liberate itself from its contractual dependence on Reuters was certainly utopian even in the 1920s. He was not alone in his critique: for example, in German propaganda during World War I Reuters was called the headquarters of lies (Tworek 2019, pp.53–54). Of course, Cooper's ideas were not only his own individual ideas but reflected a change in international politics when Great Britain started losing its power of empire. Cooper not only conveniently forgot the UP's role in his struggle for liberation, but also how the US government offered discounts in wireless telegraph states and encouraged US news agencies to expand their activities. However, even taking all this into consideration, Cooper's pursuit of this utopia was successful. His methods may have been immoral and blameworthy but there is no doubt that he strongly believed in the superiority of the AP because of its cooperative ownership form.

Cooper's ideological thinking with regard to the supremacy of his own values was combined with utopian thinking about the role of news in maintaining and promoting peace. It reflects both the dominant ideology of the time, in the midst of World War II, and the emerging ideology of the role of news in the US and in the world at large. What Cooper and Howard together achieved was dominance by US news agencies, with the International News Service (INS) together with AFP in France, Reuters in the UK and TASS in the Soviet Union, as the new international news agencies that played a dominant role in the post-war world (UNESCO 1953). This was achieved only thanks to a US generation that shared a similar ideology of the supremacy of US news transmission. What Cooper did not know was that his generation's ideas would be turned against his own agency, all US agencies and the US itself in the 1970s by the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order, a new utopia.

Notes

- ¹ Text of AP answer to Government monopoly suit. *The Chicago Sun* on 28 October 1942. Scrapbook, AP 39.07, Box 11, Folder 1. The Associated Press (AP) Corporate Archives.
- ² According to Howard, he first went to London in 1913 'at the request of Baron Reuter to discuss with him a shift to the Reuter service from the AP to the UP that I first started dreaming of a rally international news agency that would compete around the world with Reuters and its satellites in the news cartel'. R.W. Howard to K. Bickel on 20 April 1950. Roy W. Howard Papers, The Media School Archive, Indiana University; Note by Sir Roderick Jones on conversation by Atlantic telephone with Mr. Karl Bickel. Private and Confidential on 24 January 1934. Section 2. Sir Roderick Jones Papers. Reuters Archives.
- ³ Draft report of Commission on Freedom of the Press. Box 2, Folder 2. Commission on Freedom of the Press Records. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
- ⁴ Document No 33A, World Freedom of the Press & Mr. Cooper's Proposals on 24 January 1945. Box 2, Folder 2; Document No. 53, A Note on Sources. Reports on International Mass Communications, May 31, 1945. Box 2, Folder 11; Kent Cooper Statement, at luncheon meeting with the Commission; Associated Press Building, Rockefeller Plaza, on 5 June 1945; Document No. 66A, Addendum to Summary of Kent Cooper Statement, Document 66, pp.37–38. Based on Notes Made by Zechariah Chafee, Jr. Box 3, Folder 3. Commission on Freedom of the Press Records. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
- ⁵ Commission of Freedom of the Press (1944) Document No 17. Synopsis of the meeting of 8–9 May 1944. Harold Dwight Lasswell Papers, General Files, Series I, Box 27, Folder 342. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
- ⁶ R.W. Howard to K. Bickel on 11 May 1933. Roy Winston Howard Papers, the Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
- ⁷ M.E. Stone to R. Martin on 29 July 1918. Melville E. Stone Papers. The Newberry Library.
- ⁸ Memorandum by Sir Roderick Jones of conversation with Mr. Melville Stone on Friday morning on 19 December 1919, at the Hotel Mirabeau, Paris. Microfilms 186. Reuters Archives.
- ⁹ Havas-Reuters Treaty on 16 January 1919. R/1/8715530. Reuters Archives.
- ¹⁰ Memorandum by Sir Roderick Jones with Wolff (and AP's Mr Stone) on 20 December 1919. R/1/8715519. Reuters Archives.

- ¹¹ Cooper, K. Truthful news, a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ¹² Cooper, K. Truthful news, a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ¹³ Cooper, K. Truthful News, a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ¹⁴ Cooper, K. Truthful News, a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ¹⁵ World Freedom of Press and Radio. Reprints of Cooper's address before the National Editorial Association on 21 October 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 45, Folder 2. The AP Archives.
- ¹⁶ Document No. 68. Commission of the Freedom of the Press. Fly, J.L. Freedom of Communication. Roundtable discussion on The United Nations and the organization of Peace and Security before the Twenty-First Institute of the Norman Wait Harris Foundation, at Chicago, Illinois, 9–13 July, 1945. Box 3, Folder 4. Commission on Freedom of the Press. Records. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
- ¹⁷ Cooper, K. Truthful News, a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ¹⁸ K. Cooper to M. Stone on 1 September 1919. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ¹⁹ Cooper, K. Memorandum of agency contracts on 17 May 1920. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ²⁰ Memorandum of agency contracts on 17 May 1920. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ²¹ D. Williams to Sir Roderick Jones on 2 July 1925. Box File 2. Sir Roderick Jones Papers. Reuters Archives.
- ²² K. Cooper to F. Noyes on 19 May 1926. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ²³ Copy of Treaty on 8 August 1927. R/1/864921. Reuters Archives.
- ²⁴ Report to the Board by Mr W.J. Healey on 1 July 1942. R/1/8746805. Reuters Archives.

- ²⁵ Special meeting of the board on 20 June 1933. Box File 38, Sir Roderick Jones Papers. Reuters Archives.
- ²⁶ F.D. Williams to Sir Roderick Jones on 7 July 1926. Box File 2, Sir Roderick Jones Papers. Reuters Archives.
- ²⁷ Report to the Board by Mr W.J. Healey on 1 July 1942. R/1/8746805. Reuters Archives.
- ²⁸ Mr Buchan: I doubt whether we shall have any peace as long as Kent Cooper is at the head of affairs. I have never liked the man. He is a low stamp American, of a different class altogether from the old AP man. Sir Roderick: He descends to methods which are enough to make Melville Stone turn in his grave. Special meeting of the board on 20 June 1933. Box 38. Sir Roderick Jones Papers. Reuters Archives.
- ²⁹ Two-party contract between the AP and Reuters dated on 13 February 1934. R/1/871243412. Reuters Archives.
- ³⁰ Cooper, K. So They Do Not Need to March Again, Manuscript, no date. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper papers, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 13. The AP Archives.
- ³¹ Meeting of the Board of Directors on 12 January 1943, p.4. The AP 44th annual volume for the year of 1943 (printed in 1944). Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 42, Folders 13–14. The AP Archives.
- ³² Meeting of the AP Board of Directors in New York on 12 January 1943. 44th annual volume for the year of 1943 (printed in 1944). Records of the Board & Annual Meetings, Charters & Bylaws 1922–1963, AP 01.01, Series 1, Box 2. The AP Archives.
- ³³ K. Cooper to J.F.B. Livesay on 23 January 1934. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ³⁴ K. Cooper. A practical idealist, no date. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 48, Folder 14. The AP Archives.
- ³⁵ K. Cooper to multiple receivers on 27 November 1942. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folder 7. The AP Archives.
- ³⁶ R.W. Howard to W.W. Hawkins on 19 March 1952. Roy W. Howard Papers. The Media School Archive, Indiana University.
- ³⁷ R.W. Howard to W.N. Bankhurst on 15 August 1938. Roy W. Howard Papers. The Media School Archive, Indiana University.
- ³⁸ J.H. Furay to R.W. Howard on 28 March 1952. Roy W. Howard Papers. The Media School Archive, Indiana University.
- ³⁹ Cartel members, the AP, on 1 July 1930. AP collections online. The AP Archives.

- ⁴⁰ Cooper, K. Free Press – Antidote to Atomic Bomb. Address before the Boston Conference on Distribution on 16 October 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folders 14–15. The AP Archives.
- ⁴¹ Cooper, K. Truthful News a Basis for Peace. Address given at Congregation Emanu-el Temple on 21 January 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 1. The AP Archives.
- ⁴² Cooper K. Free News. First Step in Peace, 1944. Reprinted from *Free World*. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folder 13. The AP Archives.
- ⁴³ Cooper, K. Free Press – An Antidote to Atomic Bomb. Address before the Boston Conference on Distribution on October 16, 1945. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folders 14–15. The AP Archives.
- ⁴⁴ Cooper, K. World Freedom of Press and Radio. Address delivered before the National Editorial Association at Chicago on 21 October 1944. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 45, Folder 2. The AP Archives.
- ⁴⁵ Senate Concurrent Resolution 52 by Senator Tom Connally, of Texas, chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations. 1943. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folder 6. The AP Archives.
- ⁴⁶ Senate Concurrent Resolution 53 unanimously adopted on 21 September 1944 by the Senate and House of Representatives. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folder 6. The AP Archives.
- ⁴⁷ Cooper, K. Memorandum on Far Eastern news situation on May 27, 1933. Cooper mss. 1921–1935. Lilly Library, Indiana University.
- ⁴⁸ The AP 47th annual volume for the year of 1946 (printed in 1947). Meeting of the Board of Directors, New York on 9 January 1946. Records of the Board and Annual Meetings, AP 01.01, Series 1, Box 2. The AP Archives.
- ⁴⁹ Foreign service bureaus, January 1944. The AP Collections Online. The AP Archives.
- ⁵⁰ Cooper, K. Free News: First Step in Peace, September 1944. Reprinted from *Free World*. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 43, Folder 12. The AP Archives.
- ⁵¹ Reuters Centenary Address on 11 July 1951. Records of General Manager Kent Cooper, AP 02.01, Box 44, Folder 8. The AP Archives.
- ⁵² K. Cooper to F.B. Noyes on 23 July 1933. Cooper mss. Lilly Library, Indiana University.

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