

<p><b>Institution: Bath Spa University</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of assessment: UoA30: History</b></p>
<p><b>Title of case study: Britain at the End of Empire</b></p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b>          This study focuses on the impact of the controversial and polemical research of Professor John Newsinger, whose popular multi-layered Marxist approach to modern British political history has provided an intellectual framework that has served to inform sceptical Leftist public discourse and enhance public understanding in Britain and beyond. Professor Newsinger's framework exposes the violence that exists at the heart of empires and challenges triumphal readings of 20<sup>th</sup> century British history. His work has had a wide range of political, economic, societal and educational impact.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b>          Professor Newsinger's interest in reframing public perceptions of the British imperial past dates to before he joined Bath Spa University in 1992. His research, which began with studies of the Irish Republican movement during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is best exemplified in three important monographs, all researched and published while he was employed by Bath Spa as a Lecturer/Senior Lecturer and, after 2005, as Professor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Orwell's Politics</i> (1999; reprinted 2001, 2003, 2006); translated into French (2006); Portuguese (2010); Swedish (2011);</li> <li>● <i>British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland</i> (2002);</li> <li>● <i>The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire</i> (2006; reprinted 2010; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with new extended introduction and conclusion May 2013).</li> </ul> <p><i>Orwell's Politics</i> provides a critical reassessment of Orwell's political ideas, re-examining crucial debates in his political thought, focusing on a thematic examination of his changing views on imperialism, and demonstrating the important guiding principle of Orwell's socialism throughout. <i>British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland</i> (2002) takes a revisionist approach to the major counterinsurgency campaigns in which Britain has been involved since 1945 in Palestine, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, South Yemen, Dhofar and Northern Ireland. It posed a successful challenge to the triumphalist tone of the most current literature, arguing convincingly that Britain's successes in counterinsurgency, where they occurred, were due not to military processes but to the ability to create a critical mass of local political support. In particular, the volume featured Newsinger's on-going research into the brutality with which the British dealt with the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya in the 1950s and 1960s. This foreshadowed the recent political and legal developments regarding the brutal treatment of the Mau Mau and contributed to the reshaping of the current historiography. It also influenced military thinkers and strategists, especially in the United States.</p> <p><i>The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire</i> (2006) is a popular polemical counterblast to the sorts of imperial apologia published by historians such as Niall Ferguson. Newsinger takes a case-study approach to the imperial past, uncovering a neglected history of imperial repression and resistance, violence and blood. As a successful cross-over publication, popular with teachers and historians of the Left and the colonized, the volume has also inspired drama and poetry. The new, updated edition brings the book up to date, by considering the Obama administration and Britain's 'special' relationship with the US, while also engaging with the implications of the Arab Spring.</p> <p>John Newsinger joined Bath Spa in September 1992 and was awarded the Honorific title of Professor in March 2007. Professor Newsinger retired from his full time academic role on 31 August 2013 and took up a fractional appointment as Professor of History (0.2 fte) on 2 September.</p>

### 3. References to the research

- 1) *Orwell's Politics* (1999; reprinted 2001, 2003, 2006); translated into French (2006); Portuguese (2010); Swedish (2011).
- 2) *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (2002)
- 3) *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire* (2006; reprinted 2010; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with new extended introduction and conclusion 2013).

Newsinger introducing 'The Blood Never Dried - People's History of the British Empire' (Bookmarks 2006). The British Empire in the Middle East, Resonance FM Radio, 01.12.2006; online at: <http://archive.org/details/JohnNewsingerTheBritishEmpireintheMiddleEast>

- 4) Oxford Union, 'Colonialism Debate: This House would make reparations for colonialism' (26/11/09): president @oxford-union.org: <http://tinyurl.com/p2taoph>
- 5) Newsinger speaking at 'Rationalité, vérité et démocratie : Bertrand Russell, George Orwell, Noam Chomsky', at Collège De France, Paris. Audience c.200, 28/05/2010; online at: <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/jacques-bouveresse/colloques.htm#|p=../jacques-bouveresse/colloques.htm>.
- 6) Newsinger speaking at Marxism 2012; 05–09/07/2012; online at: <http://tinyurl.com/ptd3tt4>.

### 4. Details of the impact

#### Context

Very much a public intellectual and respected figure of the British Left, Professor Newsinger's research has been disseminated through books, articles, reviews, lectures and debates. Often controversial, his work has been influential in shaping modern political culture by contributing to an assertive, Leftist critique of modern British and American history, especially in light of recent political and military events, including the 'War on Terror'.

Newsinger has, throughout his career, been committed to asking incisive, often uncomfortable, questions of established power structures — state, military, and commercial — in order to explore intellectual currents and expose the machinations of power. His research serves to enhance public understanding and provide intellectual underpinning and analysis, which improves the quality of evidence, argument and expression regarding major issues. His impact extends beyond academe through:

- inclusion in the popular Leftist press (domestic and international);
- an active programme of public speaking engagements which take on major national and international issues and contribute to public discourse and civil society. These range from lectures at such local institutions as the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (2002, 2004, 2008) (attendance 50–100 ea.), through talks to such special interest groups as the London Socialist Historians Group (<http://london-socialist-historians.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/reminder-upcoming-events-at-bookmarks.html>) (2012), to lectures to an international public, alongside with leading figures of the global Left, such as Noam Chomsky;
- via crossover into policy and defence/strategy thinking, international secondary and HE education, and the creative industries.

As an academic, Newsinger's work inspires visceral responses. Denigrated in *The Independent* by John Rentoul for espousing 'feeble-minded punk Marxism' (2/10/12), he is simultaneously praised in *English Historical Review* for 'vigorous left-wing restatement of the inequities of empire ... in the tradition of George Orwell and V.G. Kiernan'

<http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/content/CXXII/499/1350.short> (23/11/12)].

### Impact on the public discourse on global politics

While these are difficult to quantify, Newsinger's engagement with audiences beyond academe is extensive, particularly through his public engagements and through on-going contributions to the Leftist political press (book reviews, think-pieces and articles). It is a testimony to his reach and significance that his works are quoted by, and used to support the claims of, such leading journalists of the mainstream British Left as George Monbiot and feature in considerations of global politics, such as 'Captive Nation — Egypt and the West', MediaLens (09/02/2011) and blogs such as 'Orwell, Power and the "Totalitarian" State': YDS: The Clare Spark Blog (15/10/2012) [<http://clarespark.com/2012/10/>], and Rania Masri's Green Resistance (teaching, organizing and eco-thinking) [<http://greenresistance.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/crimes-of-the-british-empire-the-blood-never-dried/>] (18/04/2012).

Newsinger's reach and significance is also evidenced by his contributions to public debate. He appeared at a crowded Oxford Union debate on colonial reparations alongside Professor the Lord Parekh and Toyin Agbetu against a panel consisting of Count Nikolai Tolstoy, Dr Tiffany Jenkins and Philip van der Elst (audience c.400, 26/11/2009). The debate was widely advertised, including on Nyansapo, an online community radio station hosted by the Ligali Organisation: [http://www.ligali.org/newsletter/nyansapo\\_17nov09.htm](http://www.ligali.org/newsletter/nyansapo_17nov09.htm). This debate was followed by a panel discussion with former Guardian journalist, Richard Gott, and Dr Tom Lawson at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies workshop on 'Imperialism, Empire and Genocide' (04/03/2011) and, internationally, by an invitation to speak alongside Noam Chomsky at a public colloquium, 'Rationalité, vérité et démocratie : Bertrand Russell, George Orwell, Noam Chomsky', at Collège De France, Paris (audience c.200, 28/05/2010; online at: <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/jacques-bouveresse/colloques.htm#p=../jacques-bouveresse/colloques.htm>). It is a mark of the breadth of Newsinger's reach and the various audiences which find his work significant that he was asked to address the Socialist Workers' Party event, Marxism 2012 (05–09/07/2012; online at: [http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lldlsjKWLv0&desktop\\_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DlldlsjKWLv0&gl=GB](http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lldlsjKWLv0&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DlldlsjKWLv0&gl=GB)) and, in 2013, to deliver the closing plenary on British Counterinsurgency, Kenya and the Mau-Mau at the Journée d'études, Université des Sciences Humaine et Sociales – Lille 3 (25/01/2013, attendance c.50).

### Inter-disciplinary impact on defence studies

Newsinger also has crossover impact in other disciplines, particularly through his work on counterinsurgency, which extends his reach into the realm of professional military education and strategic and defence studies in both the UK and the USA. As a result, he was invited to speak at Sandhurst and to 3 Commando Brigade at the Brigade Study Week (12/05/08), as part of the preparation of 8,000 servicemen and women for deployment to Afghanistan. While he was unable to take up this invitation due to personal circumstances, his work features in Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst's Bibliography on Counterinsurgency (2010), and is referred to frequently in such journals as *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (1992, 1995, 2006), the *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2009), the *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Journal* (2007), *Defence & Security Analysis* (2009), the *RAF Air Power Review* (2010), and the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom *Defence Academy Yearbook 2011*. It is also cited in Jochen Hippler, *Counterinsurgency and Political Control: US Military Strategies regarding Regional Conflict* (INEF Report 81/2006). It is a mark of the breadth of his reach and significance that his work on counterinsurgency is referred to by postgraduate US naval and air officers training at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey California and at Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

### Impact on teaching curriculum

*The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire* has had impact both in and outside of academe. Praised by Vinay Lal (UCLA) in *The Times of India* (15-01-07) for 'unimpeachable politics, wide canvas, and quest for justice', it features as a set text for Grade 12 students at the International School of Tianjin, China, on the undergraduate syllabus for 'Comparative Colonialisms' taught at the Department of History at Jadavpur University, India, and

as one of four core textbooks for 'The Worlds of the British Empire, 1700-1960' on the King's College London Preliminary Reading List for First Year's, 2011–12:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/history/study/ug/prelim.pdf>.

**Cultural and economic impact through theatrical interpretation** While it informed Ed Hill's eye-witness documentary, 'Return to Palestine' (2006), *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire's* most quantifiable cultural impact was on Anna Chen's play, *The Steampunk Opium Wars*, which featured a cast of ten plus two musicians. Chen reflected: 'I already shared his [Newsinger's] perspective on the imperialist morally bankrupt nature of the Opium Wars and [*The Blood Never Dried*] filled many gaps. The most useful ... were the eye-witness accounts of the devastation which I incorporated into speeches for the character, Captain Ironside.' The play was performed at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (16/02/2012) to an audience c.300, as well as being live-streamed. It was followed immediately by a Farrago Poetry Slam with c.10 participants reading poems inspired by the play's themes. The video of the winning poem is available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcaoDcfJc8A>. The play was performed again at the St Ives Arts Club for the St Ives Arts Festival in September 2012 to a capacity audience of 60+. (A. Chen, email, 05-06-13)

#### **Publications & Sales:**

*The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*, June 2006 – March 2013 (including e-book and pre-orders for the second edition): 6,308

*Imperiets Skugga* (Swedish edition), 2011–12: 1,100

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**

- 1) **Review:** *Orwell's Politics* (1999; reprinted 2001, 2003, 2006); translated into French (2006); Portuguese (2010); Swedish (2011). The doyen of Orwell studies, Bernard Crick, *Political Quarterly* (2000) praised it as 'the most balanced and sane account of Orwell's politics that I have read ... Newsinger has given as good an account of Orwell as a political thinker ... as we are likely to find in this generation.' For Robert Colls, *History Workshop Journal* (2000), it was: 'A vigorous thrashing defence of Orwell'.
- 2) **Commentary:** In his examination of the expenses scandal in *The Guardian* (08/06/09), George Monbiot cited *The Blood Never Dried* and referred to the 'fraud on a massive scale' that Newsinger uncovered regarding the bankruptcy, and subsequent British takeover of Egypt in 1882: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/08/british-empire-colonies-banks-reform> Richard Drayton, in reviewing Richard Gott's, *Britain's Empire*, in *The Guardian* (7/12/11), noted Newsinger's *The Blood Never Dried* as seminal: 'only John Newsinger's shorter *The Blood Never Dried* (2006) has ever portrayed with such system the dark side of the British empire, or told so fully the stories of those who resisted it.' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/dec/07/britains-empire-richard-gott-review>
- 3) **Commentary:** In her blog, 'Green Resistance (teaching, organizing and eco-thinking)' (18/04/12), Dr Rania Masri, assistant professor in Environmental Sciences (Balamand, Lebanon), claimed the book should be required reading for students: 'There is an excellent book — one that should be mandatory reading for history classes throughout the UK and throughout the UK's former colonies — that discusses, in vivid details and in powerful images, the multitude of crimes that were committed by the UK against revolutions and freedom fighters in the colonies. That book is: *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*.' [<http://greenresistance.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/crimes-of-the-british-empire-the-blood-never-dried/> ]
- 4) **Individual:** Writer, performer, poet and broadcaster Anna Chen. Impact on cultural life. 'The Steampunk Opium Wars', Anna Chen, 2012 <http://madammiaow.blogspot.co.uk/p/steampunk-opium-wars.html>