

# Failing the Public: The BBC, *The War Game* and Revisionist History: A Reply To James Chapman

By Mike Wayne

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Abstract: James Chapman's revisionist account of the censorship of Peter Watkins's 1965 drama-documentary *The War Game*, argues that the outcome was the result of a diverse plurality of factors arranged with no strong pre-structuring of the outcome. In this reply to Chapman's essay I argue that by any plausible account of what happened, *The War Game* was censored for politically motivated reasons, that it was not done in an open and transparent manner, that the state was intimately involved in the BBC's decision and that there was nothing 'ad hoc' about the process.

James Chapman's recent essay in this journal (2006) offered a revisionist account of the censorship of Peter Watkins's 1965 drama-documentary *The War Game*. Watkins's film is a richly researched account of the likely consequences and aftermath of a limited nuclear strike on Britain. The BBC banned it from being broadcast for twenty years. Drawing on the BBC's own Written Archives Centre and files held by the National

Archives, Chapman argues that the prevention of the film being broadcast on television was not the result of ‘a political conspiracy...but demonstrates a rather more ad hoc process through which a range of institutional and cultural factors determined the BBC’s decision’.<sup>1</sup> This is the first example of Chapman’s extremely careful phrasing which is designed to finesse his argument to conclusions that will strike many as seriously flawed.<sup>2</sup> Chapman presents a stark choice: was *The War Game* a victim of political ‘conspiracy’ (a strong word designed to frighten us with images of smoke filled rooms and cabals of anonymous manipulators of events) or was it censored (even Chapman agrees that it was censored) as the result of a diverse plurality of factors arranged with no strong pre-structuring of the outcome? We shall see that by any plausible account of what happened, *The War Game* was censored for politically motivated reasons, that it was not done in an open and transparent manner, that the state was intimately involved in the BBC’s decision and that there was nothing ‘ad hoc’ about the process.

I will come onto the methodological weaknesses of Chapman’s essay shortly, but the broader political implications of Chapman’s essay – and why it deserves a robust response – are very worrying in the present

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historical context. Chapman offers an essentially apologetic defence of a public broadcaster's unhealthily close ties to the state, aligning himself with the elitist abrogation of the public's right to the fullest range of debate, perspectives and information on such a life and death issue as war. I find this deference to media and state power alarming in the context of the so-called 'war on terror'. Rather than defending media and state collusion and media self-censorship, the public would be better served by more critical media scrutiny of the aims, means, interests and consequences of western foreign policy. When the BBC's Radio 4 programme, *Today* took one particular line of investigation into Government claims of external threats in the run up to the war on Iraq in 2003, officials and ministers within the New Labour government virtually declared 'war' on the corporation. The subsequent fall-out led to the death of the government weapons inspector, Dr David Kelly, the government appointed Hutton Enquiry which lambasted the BBC, the resignation of the Director General, Greg Dyke and, having had their wrists very firmly slapped, the setting up within the BBC of an even more closely monitored and generally deferential news agenda than previously. This is not the time then to mount a defence of one of the BBC's less glorious moments from the past.

Leaving this broader political question aside, Chapman's essay suffers from several methodological weaknesses that are responsible for his implausible account. I will deal with these weaknesses in more detail below but to anticipate, they are: an insufficient historical contextualisation; no attempt to contact the still living principal protagonist of the events, Peter Watkins himself, an absence made good here; no comparative account of what happened to Watkins with other instances of censorship within the BBC both before and after *The War Game* and a blatant contradiction between the narrative Chapman constructs, the evidence he uncovers from the archives and the conclusions he comes to.

To begin with, in terms of historical contextualisation, Chapman offers a Whiggish account of institutional progress, with the BBC becoming 'more open and progressive during the 1960s'.<sup>3</sup> Pointing to the competition the BBC was facing from ITV, Chapman notes that during the 1960s it recruited a range of talented writers, directors and producers. There was, he argues, a 'new institutional climate in which creative and innovative talents could prosper'<sup>4</sup> and the clear implication is that Watkins could not prosper because he was difficult to work with and had

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unreasonable expectations of what could and should have been produced. This has indeed been one of the BBC's own rationalisations of the events surrounding *The War Game*, but I contest this in two ways. Firstly, as we shall see, a number of the other creative and innovative talents that entered the BBC in this period also had projects censored in various ways. Secondly, Chapman's account of a gradually liberalising institution is a one dimensional example of a belief in linear historical progress in which a special place is reserved for the 1960s as a time of unalloyed cultural and political liberalisation.

A more complex historical framework would see the BBC and other institutions occupying a more contradictory situation. There was undoubtedly broader political and cultural movement towards more liberal attitudes and greater pressure amongst media and cultural organisations to articulate (re) emerging public scepticism towards established institutions and traditional mores. At the same time, the fundamental institutions of economic, political and social life remained intact and their hierarchical, undemocratic systems of operation unreformed. An institution such as the BBC in these circumstances becomes a site of struggle, tension and conflict between new and creative personnel and the internal structures of control that had been established

at the BBC and refined since its inception. As Stuart Hood – himself a former BBC controller in the early 1960s – has argued:

It was a time in television when playwrights like David Mercer and John McGrath wrote for television and directors like Tony Garnett and Ken Loach began to establish their reputations as critical commentators on social questions. It was the time, too, of the ‘satirical’ programmes in which some of the sacred cows of the establishment – the monarchy, the church, leading politicians and other previously taboo targets – were attacked. The Governors of the BBC were from the start nervous about such developments, deprecated what they saw as lapses in taste and began to report from their contacts that some government ministers were inclined to be sensitive; satirical programmes, they indicated, were ‘wearing thin’. Such reports caused *That Was The Week That Was* to be taken off the air.<sup>5</sup>

Chapman cites *That Was The Week That Was* (but not its early demise)<sup>6</sup> and Sir Hugh Greene’s tenure as Director-General during the 1960s as

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evidence for the BBC's liberalisation in this period. But again, Greene embodied the contradictions of the period rather than a simple linear advance towards greater freedom and responsiveness to the audience. There is no doubt that Greene personally had a view of the role of broadcasting and its relationship to the public that was unusual for a Director-General. As his biographer Michael Tracey notes, Greene believed: 'that broadcasting did not just have to be the amplifier of orthodox thoughts, that it could have a separate presence within the community'.<sup>7</sup> But Greene was also surrounded by a very conservative institutional apparatus, that included powerful members of the Board of Governors and the General Advisory Council, which meant that liberalisation took place within the extremely limited parameters of an *elite* dominated consensus. Greene caved in to pressure over *That Was The Week That Was*, as he did over *The War Game*. The tensions between Greene and establishment forces intensified after the appointment of Lord Normanbrook in April 1964. Normanbrook was to have a central role in banning *The War Game* – but Greene's acquiescence to this did not stop Normanbrook from concluding that Greene had to go because he was a danger to the BBC and the public interest as defined by the elite circles Normanbrook moved in.<sup>8</sup>

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This historical framework makes for a rather more compelling explanatory background to the events surrounding *The War Game* than Chapman's one-sided 'liberalisation' thesis that allows him to blame Watkins' personally for the way things turned out. Equally, Chapman's case against Watkins can only sound remotely plausible if the banning of *The War Game* had been an isolated event. But unfortunately it was not. Quite the contrary, it seems to have anticipated conflicts between the BBC and members of its creative workforce for some years to come. The lack of any comparative reference to such institutional conflicts is another serious flaw in Chapman's methodology. Briefly, we can cite a number of examples. The writer and oral historian Tony Parker mixed drama and documentary techniques in the manner pioneered by Watkins in *Culloden* (1964) and *The War Game*, in his piece for The Wednesday Play, *Five Women*. It was based on Parker's own 1965 book of interviews with women who had been in prison and it was produced by Tony Garnett. Parker's *Five Women* was subject to unexplained delays in transmission for nearly two years. Finally it was re-edited and broadcast under a new title, *Some Women*.<sup>9</sup> In response to the worsening atmosphere within the BBC, Tony Garnett, Roy Battersby (the director of *Five Women*), the well known producer Kenneth Trodd and others, wrote a joint letter to the

*Radio Times* where they summed up the attitude of senior managers to their own work:

...if you refuse to take our gentlemanly hints, we shall censor or ban any of your programmes which deal in social and political attitudes not acceptable to us. The odd rebel may be allowed to kick over the traces, occasionally. Provided this is an isolated event, and not part of a general movement, it only helps us to preserve our liberal and independent image.<sup>10</sup>

Their fears were borne out however in the 1970s, with the Play For Today slot the occasion for a number of acrimonious conflicts. Roland Joffe's *The Legion Hall Bombing* (1978) about a trial of suspected terrorists in Northern Ireland, was cut so much by the BBC that both Joffe and writer Caryl Churchill removed their credits in protest. Dennis Potter's *Brimstone and Treacle* was banned in 1976 and only finally transmitted in 1987, while Alan Clarke's *Scum* was banned by the BBC in 1977, only finally transmitted by Channel Four in 1991 as part of a season on censorship.

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These weaknesses in Chapman's methodology perhaps explain the curious disjuncture between the narrative he constructs, the evidence he uncovers and the conclusions he comes to. Recall that Chapman argues that the censorship of *The War Game* resulted from an 'ad-hoc' process. Ad-hoc, lest we need reminding, means unplanned, impromptu and improvised. None of this fits the narrative that Chapman himself constructs around the censorship of *The War Game*. However, before we come to that narrative, we may note once more how the lack of a historical perspective on the events, facilitates the erroneous ad hoc thesis. We do not need to go back to the BBC's role in the 1926 General Strike for an object lesson in how to retain a semblance of independence from the state while acting as a propagandist for it.<sup>11</sup>

Peter Goodwin has shown how in 1954 a proposed radio programme on the H-bomb led to a government demand to see the *script* of the programme in advance of its making. A letter from the Postmaster General, Lord De La Warr, was dispatched to the Chair of the BBC's Board of Governors, Sir Alexander Cadogan, in which he noted that 'the wide dissemination in a broadcast of information about thermo-nuclear weapons might well raise important issues of public policy.'<sup>12</sup> As a result

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of this initial interference, a meeting was set up between the BBC and the Government in February 1955, attended on the BBC's side by Cadogan and the BBC's Director-General, Sir Ian Jacob, while the Government was represented by the Postmaster General, the Minister of Defence, Harold Macmillan and the secretary to the Cabinet, one Sir Norman Brook, soon to reappear in our story as Lord Normanbrook, Chair of the BBC Governors! The upshot of the meeting was that the BBC agreed to maintain a close and informal consultation with the government on any programmes pertaining to the H-Bomb. As Goodwin argues, this: 'institutionalised the method of informal consultation between the BBC and the Government on programme matters'.<sup>13</sup>

We are here a long way from 'ad hoc' arrangements. But the practical effect of the meeting had also sent a clear signal to the BBC that this subject matter was dangerous territory and that it should be dealt with by preferably not dealing with it at all. The initial proposed radio programme was thus quietly dropped, while a *Panorama* programme on the H-Bomb, designed to coincide with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was censored. The programme was to include an interview with the distinguished nuclear physicist Professor Joseph Rotblat. However, the script which he had prepared for the programme

was to stray into territory that the Director General had identified, in a March 1955 meeting for senior BBC managers, as essentially too sensitive to handle: namely the issue of radioactive contamination and sickness that follows any atomic bomb blast.<sup>14</sup> Even after the American A-Bomb attacks on Japan in 1945, the Allies and Western media had attempted to cover up or at the very least downplay the devastating long-term effects of this kind of weaponry.<sup>15</sup> Evidently, this remained a sensitive issue, with the authorities concerned that public discussion of the capacity of such weapons to make the planet uninhabitable might, not unreasonably, erode public support for the nuclear arms race. Rotblat was asked to re-write the script so as to leave out any mention of radioactive fall-out. He refused and so was cut from the programme.

Now all this is particularly germane to *The War Game*, which deals repeatedly with the question of radioactive contamination. In an early scene we witness an attempted mass evacuation of the population. This is followed by a map showing that at least 20% of the areas into which people would be evacuated would themselves be rendered completely uninhabitable from radioactive fallout following nuclear strikes on the then known military and civilian targets. This is followed by unscripted

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vox-pops with members of the public who admit they know nothing about Carbon 14 and Strontium 90. A caption informs us of a 1959 Home Office statement promising that public information on the effects of radioactivity would be progressive over the next few years.

The events of 1954/5, ten years prior to the making of *The War Game*, helps explain the incongruity between Chapman's narrative and his 'ad hoc' thesis. Huw Wheldon, the Head of Documentaries who commissioned the film confessed to supporting the project, in a memo to Kenneth Adam, Director of Television, only with great anxiety.<sup>16</sup> Chapman records Wheldon's own warnings that the film may never be broadcast.<sup>17</sup>

From a very early stage, again as Chapman's own narrative makes clear, Wheldon had plans to screen a cut of the film to Home Office officials or other 'special people' to get their views on the acceptability of the film for the government.<sup>18</sup> All this fits in with the precedents established ten years earlier as we have seen and was not some special arrangement that had to be implemented because of Watkins' supposed unreliability. Above Wheldon in the BBC hierarchy, there was even less support.

Chapman quotes the Director General, Hugh Greene and his Chairman of the Board of Governors, Lord Normanbrook, as saying that the film was ‘not worth attempting’.<sup>19</sup> This is a fairly extraordinary statement, and again indicates that from the start, the BBC knew that they would have to take ‘advice’ from the government and Whitehall and had good reason to know what the tenor of that advice would be. The BBC even went to such bizarre lengths as to employ Gilbert Phelps, an ex-BBC employee to follow Watkins around, making notes of the production process.

All of which begs the question as to why the film was made at all. The answer surely is that Huw Wheldon, who was instrumental in getting *The War Game* into production, embodied the same contradictions as Hugh Green. Undoubtedly he was a man of a liberal disposition, and like Greene he was keen to bring in and keep new talent, but he was also working within structures that were powerfully resistant to altering the BBC’s hierarchical and elitist relationship with the public. According to Chapman, Wheldon ‘remained Watkins’s principal champion within the corporation through-out the *War Game* controversy.’<sup>20</sup> However, from Watkins’s perspective, his relationship to Wheldon changed after the latter was promoted to Controller of Programmes:

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In 1965 Donald Baverstock (who was Controller of Programmes for BBC1) resigned in protest at a decision by Hugh Carleton Greene that Baverstock and Michael Peacock, who was the Controller of BBC2, should swap places. Alistair Milne (another senior executive and a future Director-General of the BBC) followed Baverstock into retirement. As a result of this internal upheaval at the BBC (which I dubbed ‘the Night of the Long Knives’), Huw Wheldon was promoted two positions up the hierarchy, from Head of the Documentary Film Department to Controller of Programmes for BBC Television, in charge of both BBC1 and BBC2. And if memory is correct, all this was happening during precisely the time that I was filming and editing *The War Game*. The result was that at exactly the time I needed the support of my department boss Huw Wheldon, it was suddenly gone... I vividly recall meeting with Huw Wheldon in late summer of 1965, after he was promoted, when it became apparent that the BBC had contacted the government over its decision how to handle my film - and found myself dealing with an utterly changed man, who was suddenly hedging in everything he said to me. I then realized I had completely lost the one ‘champion’ who Professor

Chapman correctly describes had earlier helped me so much with my work at the BBC.<sup>21</sup>

Here Watkins reminds us how the wider historical context and its political, social and cultural pressures were really beginning to bite into the BBC. According to Tracey, Baverstock left over a combination of institutional turf-warfare, personality clashes and the increasingly sensitive political situation, which *That Was The Week That Was* had illuminated.<sup>22</sup> It is this context and his new position within the BBC hierarchy that might explain Wheldon's sudden cooling towards the film at the first internal official screening. Significantly Wheldon's less than enthusiastic reaction, as mediated by Phelps, is in aesthetic terms – it is ‘not a sufficiently brilliant overall statement to override other concerns’,<sup>23</sup> which certainly flies in the face of Wheldon's earlier confidence in Watkins and is at odds with how the film has been viewed subsequently, where its ‘brilliance’ has been widely recognised. One suspects that from Wheldon's new position within the BBC, no statement could have been ‘brilliant’ enough to ‘override’ those ‘other concerns’.

In Chapman's narrative, successive meetings and re-edits fail to assuage doubts within the BBC hierarchy about the viability of broadcasting the film. Following a screening with Greene and Normanbrook, it was decided that the time had come to consult the government and Whitehall. 'Thus it was' explains Chapman, 'that the contingency suggested before the film had been even made...was implemented.'<sup>24</sup> While any evidence of 'contingency' planning undermines Chapman's 'ad hoc' thesis, a 'contingency' plan that was understood as dependent on *not very likely* future conditions could still just about be reconciled with Chapman's vision of diverse multiple factors in play that could have gone in many different directions. The evidence however points in another direction: that this moment of consultation was less a 'contingency' plan than an always highly likely eventuality. As in the earlier case in 1954/5 over the planned radio programme on nuclear weapons, the Chair of the Board of Governors plays a key role in providing a point of contact between the BBC and the government and the state more broadly. Thus in the incestuous world of a compact and cohesive ruling elite, Lord Normanbrook, former Secretary to the Cabinet, writes to his successor, Sir Burke Trend (whose name suggests an irresistible allegorical point) to alert him to the BBC's need to take 'advice' from the government on whether to broadcast *The War Game* or not.

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It is at this point that Chapman makes use of some very interesting empirical documents from the archives, principally correspondence between the various parties involved. But as E.H. Carr reminded us, ‘facts’ always have to be interpreted within an adequate historical and explanatory framework. The shortcomings I have found at this level in Chapman’s essay perhaps explains why he does not ‘see’ what seems to me the obvious import of these documents. In particular there is a memo from Sir Burke Trend that is worth quoting at length:

Lord Normanbrook and Sir Hugh Greene . . . indicated that, if it were decided on grounds of public policy that the film should not be shown, the BBC might be prepared to issue a statement to the effect that they themselves had decided on these grounds not to show it. On the other hand we cannot take this for granted; and the fact that the producer has just resigned from the BBC on the ground that he ‘was not happy about their decision’ suggests that, even if the Corporation rejected a public showing of the film on their own responsibility, it is unlikely that the matter would be allowed to rest there or that all criticism would be deflected from the Government. The difficulty, for the BBC no less than for the Government, is to

think of some reason for suppressing the film which would not stir up controversy or provoke suspicion that it was motivated by political prejudice, whether of the pro- or anti-CND type.

And Chapman's interpretation of this most revealing memo?

Trend's memorandum is a masterly example of civil service discretion and obstupefaction: he carefully avoids suggesting that the film should be suppressed or whether the government should instruct the BBC not to show it.<sup>25</sup>

But it is not Trend's prose that suffers from stupification. For in the first sentence of the quoted paragraph Trend blows out of the water the BBC's long-standing claim that it alone was responsible for censoring the film. Trend quite clearly states that 'if it were decided on grounds of public policy' (and the BBC had made clear that this was a government/Whitehall judgment, otherwise why were they consulting them?) to prevent the film from being broadcast, 'the BBC might be prepared to issue a statement to the effect that they themselves had decided on these grounds not to show it'. In other words, the BBC would

provide cover for the state by taking to the stage once more, in its traditional role as an independent body. There is *no* obfuscation here. Trend then goes on to suggest that given the circumstances (namely Watkins's resignation from the BBC after he had learnt of its plans to consult the government) the semblance of non-intervention which threatens the credibility of both the state and the BBC, might not be enough to deflect public criticism. Trend concludes that both government and the BBC need 'to think of some reason for suppressing the film which would not stir up controversy or provoke suspicion that it was motivated by political prejudice'. Is there any doubt that Trend's memo definitively shows that the government (or Whitehall) was looking to suppress the film if at all possible while disguising both its role in the decision and the political motivations that lay behind this suppression? Indeed one might ask whether the word 'conspiracy' is entirely inappropriate.

The close institutional relationship between the BBC and the state, the network of personal ties amongst the upper echelons of society and the desire on the part of both the BBC and the state to maintain the semblance of an independent broadcasting system means of course that there was no formal decision by government or Whitehall (and there is evidence to suggest that it was the latter who were more concerned by the

programme) to censor the programme because the signals had already been sent and the BBC was perfectly prepared to act on those signals. As a memo from Normanbrook to Trend notes: ‘It is also clear that Whitehall will be relieved if the BBC decides not to show it.’<sup>26</sup> No doubt one could have an interesting philosophical discussion on the nature of agency assumed by the term ‘decides’ in Normanbrook’s memo, but surely the bottom line is that the BBC was not acting in anything like the independent manner its public stance suggested. Far from being ‘ad hoc’, the whole process is all so wonderfully British, contrasting with the more transparent subordination of broadcasting to the state that was typical across much of Europe in the post-war period.

With his narrative behind him, Chapman largely abandons his ‘ad hoc’ thesis, which would be difficult to convincingly sustain after all the evidence to the contrary, and offers instead a straightforward rationalisation of the BBC’s decision. Chapman argues that the BBC never promised to broadcast the film in the first place and so could not be accused of acting in bad faith. But neither did they make it clear to Watkins that what senior figures within government and/or the state thought about the film, would weigh so decisively in the decision. But the broader issue here is not just the BBC’s relationship to Watkins, but the

public it ostensibly exists to serve. After the decision was announced, the BBC cited fears for the elderly should the film be broadcast. This is of course part of a very long tradition in which the apparently ‘weak-minded’ or easily frightened are invoked to justify censorship. However it is clear that the BBC and the state did not have top level meetings to discuss the possible impact of the film on the elderly. As Watkins himself notes:

What is crucial to understand is that the BBC broke its own Charter of Independence in deciding to approach the Government for ‘guidance’ in their decision about what to do with *The War Game*. The disastrous ramifications of that decision (which probably set the BBC on the slippery slope down which it is still descending) are something that Professor Chapman studiously avoids.<sup>27</sup>

Chapman then suggests that ‘the decision not to show *The War Game* on television was largely consensual. The balance of opinion, within the BBC, in Whitehall and on the part of the press – was in favour of the ban.’<sup>28</sup> As Tony Shaw notes, there was indeed a ‘culture of self

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censorship...across the mass media' on the effects of nuclear war.<sup>29</sup> A film that challenged this elite dominated consensus could hardly expect to be welcomed by a mass media that was implicitly indicted for their collusion and participation in it. Chapman is effectively endorsing this culture of self-censorship, which is a perfectly legitimate position to take, but we should not mistake *this* consensus with a genuine public consensus that is forged out of a healthy exchange of information, perspectives and debate. Just how narrowly based Chapman's consensus is, may be indicated by the fact that in the early 1960s, between one quarter and one third of the public supported the aims of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).<sup>30</sup> That support for CND had declined by the time *The War Game* arrived on the scene and no doubt for a complex set of reasons, but it cannot be that chief among them was that there had been a healthy public debate and that now an informed public were happy to live with the bomb.<sup>31</sup>

Finally Chapman suggests that because the BBC gave a limited theatrical release for *The War Game* through the British Film Institute, as evidence that 'there was no deep-rooted conspiracy to keep the 'truth' of nuclear

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warfare from the public.'<sup>32</sup> After one year, around 1.5 million people had seen the film in this manner.<sup>33</sup> But both the BBC and the state were well aware that this mode of exhibition hardly compared in terms of public impact with the simultaneous broadcast on television to much larger numbers of people. Would Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966) have led indirectly to the setting up of the housing charity Shelter had it been given a limited theatrical release instead of being broadcast on BBC television to an audience of twelve million? One thinks not. Ironically what happened to *The War Game* merely confirmed Watkins's view that access to information about nuclear weapons and civil contingency plans was highly selective and stratified. Chapman wonders why the BBC allowed the film to be distributed at all and notes that there was 'growing pressure for the film to be seen',<sup>34</sup> although clearly that pressure could hardly be coming from the 'consensus' that supported the ban. A less 'innocent' eye might concur with Arrowsmith that benefits to the BBC of a limited theatrical release include defusing the controversy and blocking any possibility of Watkins remaking *The War Game* as a feature film.<sup>35</sup>

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It is immensely difficult for individuals, when they come up against institutional power, to retain their beliefs and integrity. It is all too easy instead to trim according to the prevailing wind. In this respect, I believe Watkins' deserves better than an account of events that appears to lay significant responsibility for the censoring of *The War Game* on Watkins himself. Insofar as Watkins refused to concede defeat quietly, his personality was important. But insofar as the outcome was almost certain to end in censorship, Watkins' personality is irrelevant. This was about politics, not personality. The censorship of *The War Game* was the result of a complex but highly structured set of determinations that are still relevant to us today in the era of 'the war on terror'.<sup>36</sup> Watkins himself believes that current media structures bear a heavy responsibility for failing to adequately provide the public with the information and debates they need to be able to address the many pressing issues, from war to environmental degradation, that are pressing in on the human race.<sup>37</sup> He also takes a rather dim view of media educators, who he regards as insufficiently critical of the media. I am afraid that James Chapman's essay is more grist to his mill.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 41, 1 (2006) 75.

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank Joseph Gomez, Deirdre O’Neill and Peter Watkins for their assistance in the writing of this reply.

<sup>3</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’, *ibid.*, 76.

<sup>4</sup> James Chapman, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Hood, *On Television* (London 1987) 49.

<sup>6</sup> The programme rapidly acquired 6.5 million viewers, and had 10 million by the time it was pulled, after only thirty-seven broadcasts. See Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene*, (London 1983), 208, 214.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene*, (London 1983), p.219.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Tracey, *ibid.*, p.251.

<sup>9</sup> Dave Rolinson, ‘Tony Parker’

<http://www.hull.ac.uk/filmstudies/FilmPFTParker.htm> accessed 10th August 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Tony Garnett, Jim Allen, Roy Battersby, Clive Goodwin, Ken Loach, James MacTaggart, Roger Smith and Kenneth Trodd, *Radio Times*, 13 February 1969, 2.

<sup>11</sup> See Stuart Hood, op.cit., 45.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Goodwin, ‘Low Conspiracy? Government interference in the BBC’ in *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Vol. 2,1 (2005) 101.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Goodwin, *ibid.*, 105.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Goodwin, *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas*, London 1998, 491.

<sup>16</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 81.

<sup>17</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 81.

<sup>18</sup> James Chapman, *ibid.*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 81-82

<sup>20</sup> James Chapman, *ibid.*, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Watkins, personal email correspondence with the author, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Baverstock was in at the heart of the process in which the BBC, in Dr Johnson’s words, was being ‘blown about by every wind of criticism’’. Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene*, (London 1983), 257.

<sup>23</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>24</sup> James Chapman, *ibid.*, 84.

<sup>25</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 87

<sup>26</sup> James Chapman, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Peter Watkins, personal email correspondence with the author, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

<sup>28</sup> James Chapman, James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’, *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>29</sup> Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and The Cold War, The State, Propaganda and Consensus*, (London 2001) 132.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Harmondsworth 1990) 122.

<sup>31</sup> Between 1965 and 1980, Parliament ‘did not once debate the nuclear arms race’, according to John Pilger in *Hidden Agendas*, (London 1998) 512.

<sup>32</sup> James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and The Cold War, The State, Propaganda and Consensus*, (London 2001) 139.

<sup>34</sup> James Chapman, James Chapman, ‘The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game*’ *ibid.*, 91

<sup>35</sup> S.M.J. Arrowsmith, ‘Peter Watkins’ in *British Television Drama* edited by George W. Brandt, (Cambridge 1981) 228.

<sup>36</sup> See Tony Shaw’s ‘The BBC, the State and Cold War Culture’ in *English Historical Review* vol. CXXI no.494, for a further discussion of the range of contextual factors that made censorship of *The War Game* highly likely rather than the outcome of ‘ad hoc’ decisions.

<sup>37</sup> See Peter Watkins’ website at: <http://www.mnsi.net/~pwatkins/>