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# Race and Pan-Asianism reactions against the White superiority network -attempted racial solidarity and its failure

Saho Matsumoto-Best\*

## **Abstract**

This article focuses on the racial aspect of Pan-Asianism and argues that Pan-Asianism movements were radicalized as a reaction against the White superiority network which was created by excluding Japanese and other Asian immigrants from the British White Dominions and United States. Particularly for a country like Australia, it was important to form national solidarity under the name of White superiority in order to fill the gap between Anglo-Saxons and Celts (Irish), which appeared following the Easter Uprising in 1916. The Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, was thus responsible for rejecting the racial equality clause presented by Japanese government during the Paris Peace conference of 1919. Since the Triple Intervention of 1895, the 'Yellow Peril' outcry during and after the Russo-Japanese War, the rejection of the racial equality clause, the dissolving of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1922, and ultimately the anti-Japanese immigration laws passed by the United States government in 1924 and the Canadian government in 1928, Japan felt racially humiliated and started to seek racial solidarity with other Asian peoples under the name of

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Pan-Asianism. It took another ten years to form an overtly pan-Asianism foreign policy namely the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.' For the British Empire this White superiority policy was a problem as India was the most important colony and the Indian soldiers were the largest number to be mobilized during the First World War. Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary, suggested using the Natal law, an English-language writing test, in order to exclude any coloured people (including the Indian people) from Australia, thus pretending that Australia was not racist country. Jan Smuts, the South African political leader, also stepped in after Gandhi was racially assaulted during his period in South Africa and formed a pact setting a quota for the admission of Indian immigrants. Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr, the prominent members of the Round Table, which advocated turning the British Imperial ruling body into more democratic Commonwealth organization, were behind the adoption of the Diarchy ruling system in India by giving limited autonomy to India. All of these British race-conscious policies worked in a way in order to counter Japanese pan-Asianism racial solidarity with India. Although Subhas Chandra Bose led the Indian National Army and collaborated with the Japanese Army in order to fight against the British Empire and the United States, the Japanese did not sincerely believe in racial solidarity with the Indians but wanted to take advantage of them. Japan's mistreatment of Indian POW and its brutal behaviour towards the other Asian people was soon revealed and the illusion of Asian race brotherhood and racial Pan-Asianism started to fade away. The Japanese were originally reluctant to be a part of the Asian race as they saw this identity as consigning themselves to a position of inferiority. Japan therefore treated other Asians as inferior and attempted to place itself on top of the Asian hierarchy under the name of Greater Easter Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Britain was in a way far more conscious and cautious about racial questions, and thus attempted to mediate between the White Dominions' White superiority policy and the Indians. Britain and British Empire were



therefore well prepared to fight the race war while Japan had a great chance to win the race war but it failed.

## Introduction

The origins of Pan-Asianism as a concept is a matter of debate but probably began in Japan around the time of the Meiji Restoration in the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, it was not an entirely unique phenomenon for Japan, for similarly in the case of Germany and Russia we can see the Pan-Germanic and Pan-Slavic movements respectively as basing themselves on perceived racial groups. These nationalistic racial ideas were an important ideology for both forming a national state and justifying imperial expansionist policies. There are quite a few works written on the subject of Pan-Asianism, but those that focus on race seem mainly to concentrate on intellectual history, including studies of thinkers such as Soho Tokutomi, Shigetaka Shiga, Koukichi Taguchi, Tokiti Tarui, Jyugo Sugiura, Tenshin Okakura and Fumimaro Konoe.<sup>1</sup> There are works written by some historians such as Kimitada Miwa and Cemil Aydin<sup>2</sup>, dealing with the Asian race as a brotherhood, but they do not address how the racial issue influenced the development of Pan-Asianism during its different phases. In this essay an attempt is made to address race from a more concrete approach. In other words, it looks at how the racial question, as a reaction against the White nations, influenced Japan's foreign policy, and how the latter attempted to mobilize other Asian peoples during the Second World War to fight against the British Empire.

There are mainly two categories of works regarding the racial aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> S. Yamamoto, *Shisokadai to Asia [Asia and Its ideological Theme]*, Tokyo 2001.

<sup>2</sup> K. Miwa, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japan: nationalism, regionalism and universalism", *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History, Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*, ed. S. Saaler, London 2007, 21-33.

pan-Asianism: the former has treated the Second World War as a race war, and the latter has dealt with the immigration issue. One of the former works, Gerald Horne's *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire*, is significant and designed to be controversial.<sup>3</sup> However, by exaggerating the extent to which the Japanese army was welcomed all over Asia during the initial campaigns in the Pacific War, it gives a misleading impression. The latter issue of immigration is important as a means of identifying the racial issue as a concrete element in international relations. However, in most of the existing literature it has been treated as a matter of domestic policy. The immigration issue though, as Lake and Reynolds have demonstrated, is inherently transnational in scope and should be approached from a more international stance.<sup>4</sup> For example, the anti-Japanese immigration legislation that the US Congress passed in 1924 was one of the elements which contributed to damaging diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States in the interwar period.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, while there are many works written on this topic regarding relations between the United States and Japan, there is not enough research on how this issue affected the ties between the British Empire and Japan. Considering the fact that Japan attempted to conquer a large part of British Empire under the name of pan-Asianism this is a surprising oversight;

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<sup>3</sup> G. Horne, *Race War! White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire*, New York 2004.

<sup>4</sup> M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line, White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge 2008.

<sup>5</sup> On the American anti-Japanese immigration legislation in 1924 and Japan-US diplomatic relations, see as follows. I. Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act*, Stanford University Press 2001; T. Minohara, *Hainichi Imin-ho to Nichibei Kankei [Anti-Japanese Immigration Legislation, Japanese-US Diplomatic Friction over an Immigration Issue]*, Tokyo 2002; T. Minohara, *California Shu to Hhainich imin-ho, Imin mondai wo meguru Nichibe Masatsu [California State and anti-Japanese immigration legislation, Japanese-US diplomatic friction over an immigration issue]*, Yuhikaku 2006.

indeed, it could be said that Anglo-Japanese relations over race are more important than American-Japan relations. Recently a significant work has been produced by Masataka Matsuura on pan-Asianism and the Japanese Empire including the Indian element.<sup>6</sup> It argues that Japanese-Indian trade networks played an important role in mobilizing anti-British Indians into the Pan-Asian movement, but again this work does not address racial issue directly.

One reason why Japanese scholars have avoided work on the racial aspects of Pan-Asianism is due to the belief that the Japanese people did not want to be seen as part of the Asian race because they ironically thought that the Asians were an inferior race to the Whites. All Japan's efforts since the Meiji Restoration were to establish a Western style of modernization in order to get rid of the unequal treaties. Moreover, the establishment of the Anglo-Japanese alliance gave the illusion that Japan had become an equal partner with the most powerful Western nation and thus had become almost a part of the White race. There is a work written during the Russo-Japanese War by Taguchi Koukichi entitled *Ha Ouka Ron* (Counter Yellow Peril), and one of the chapters argues that the Japanese belonged to the Aryan race.<sup>7</sup> However, after the end of the Russo-Japanese War there was even more of a Yellow Peril outcry in the West and the Japanese government was forced to counter these claims. Thus it could be said that the idea of Japanese racial identity being a part of the Asian race was formed as a reaction against the White race's attack, such as the 'yellow peril' outcry, and thus it is equally important to examine how White racial solidarity and its superiority was formulated.

This chapter attempts to take the argument further by investigating the

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<sup>6</sup> M. Matsuura, *Daitoa senso ha naze okitanoka, Han Asia-shugi No Seiji-Keizai shi*, [Why was Daitoa War? Political and Economic History of Pan-Asiansim], Nagoya 2010.

<sup>7</sup> K. Taguchi, K, 1904, *Ha Oka Ron* [Counter Yellow Peril], Kiezai zashi sha 1904, 39.

development of the racial element of Pan-Asianism in response to the White superiority network that linked the British White dominions. In other words, it argues that Pan-Asianism could not have been radicalized or even clearly formed without Western racism against the Japanese and other Asian races. Therefore race and racism played a vital role for the development of Pan-Asianism. Moreover, it even contributed to the Japanese government's moving towards a Pan-Asianism foreign policy. It also examines how Britain reacted against the White dominions' racial policies and subsequently undermined the Japanese claim of racial discrimination that underpinned its Pan-Asianism.

It therefore challenges the idea that there was a duel between the Asian racial group and the White racial group by showing that the situation was not simple as one might assume because neither side was monolithic. In the end it turned into a process in which the Japanese empire tried to use racial rhetoric in order to politicize the other Asian races while Britain mobilized the white as well as non-white races to fight back in order to protect the British Empire. The essay thus also addresses whether the Pacific War was a race war or not.

### **Pan-Asianism after the Yellow Peril outcry**

Pan-Asianism had existed within Japanese intellectual circle since the 1870s and 1880s, when it emerged as a reaction against the government's pro-Western foreign policy. It is often associated with right-wing radical nationalism, but, as an edited collection by Sven Saaler and Victor Koschmann entitled *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History*, has shown, Pan-Asianism was in fact a very complex phenomenon which many different people espoused for very different reasons. It was, for example, an ideology that was created as much by liberals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi as it was by

right-wing activists, such as Mitsuru Toyama and Yasuya Uchida.<sup>8</sup> The first pan-Asian organization to be established was the Toa Kai in 1880. It had about 400 members in the 1880s but although vocal in its judgments on Japan's foreign policy it had little impact. Indeed, by the time the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894, pan-Asian activism appeared to have largely died out. It only revived by the German emperor's 'Yellow Peril' claim and the Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese War. It was thus seems to have been simulated by the appearance in the West of the 'Yellow Peril'.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Japanese government was initially reluctant to admit that Japan was a part of the Asian or 'Yellow' race. However after the Russo-Japanese War broke out and the 'Yellow peril' outcry occurred in Europe and the United States, the Japanese government quickly stepped in by sending missions to America, Kentaro Kaneko, and Britain and Europe, Kencho Suematsu, in order to counter the anti-Yellow race claims.<sup>9</sup>

Some Japanese intellectuals reacted differently to this evidence of Western racial hostility. They already felt that Japan had been humiliated by the Triple Intervention and started to lean towards Ajia-shugi (Pan-Asianism) as a reaction against the Yellow Peril outcry in the West. Just after the Sino-Japanese War, Dr. Arinaga, a Japanese scholar of international law, started to preach the cause of 'Asia for the Asians', and in 1898 Konoe Atsumaro asserted that Japan should protect the other 'yellow races' by encouraging an alliance between the Asian countries.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he acted

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<sup>8</sup> S. Saaler, S, 2007, *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History, Colonialism, regionalism and borders*, London 2007, 1-18.

<sup>9</sup> M. Matsumura, M, 1980, *Nitiro Senso to Kaneko Kentaro, Kouhou Gaiko no Kenkyu*[*Russo-Japanese war and Kentaro Kaneko, a research on Public Diplomacy*], Harashobo 1980; idem, *Portsmouth Heno Michi, Okaron to Europe No SuematsuKencho*[*A road to Portsmouth, Yellow Peril and Kencho Suematsu in Europe*], Harashobo 1987.

<sup>10</sup> A. Nagao, 'Tou A gaiko no jyuudai monndai (Important question of East Asia diplomacy) in *Gaikou Jihō*[*Diplomacy Gazette*] 1:6, 1898, 29-30; Konoe Atsumaro, "Alliance of the same race-necessity of research on China (Sina)", *Taiyo*[*Sun*], 1 Jan. 1898.

on his words later in the year by forming the Toa Dobunkai (East Asian Cultural Association), an organization that sought to sponsor Chinese students in Japan and to open Japanese schools in China. There was also an awareness that cultural societies such as the Toa Dobunkai might be able to play a useful role in reaching Chinese opinion and thus encouraging resistance towards Russian aggression. The Japanese foreign ministry thus offered in secret to fund the Toa Dobunkai's activities.<sup>11</sup>

### **Creating the White superiority network**

Because of the Anglo-Japanese alliance the British government was always very cautious about the 'Yellow Peril' outcry and attempted to distance itself from such racially discriminatory statements. Not only the government but also the press, such as *The Times*, were very careful about the Yellow Peril. However a problem arrived from its White Dominions such as Australia and Canada. For example in the *Contemporary Review* of August 1904 an Australian, Richard Crouch, in an article entitled 'An Australian view of the War', took an anti-Japanese racial view. Commenting on his fear of the implications for Australia of a Japanese victory over Russia, he announced, 'It is because the victory of a coloured race over a white people would bring closer this danger that our interest as a Commonwealth impel us to desire a Russian victory.'<sup>12</sup>

The exclusion of the coloured race immigrants from the Dominions started after the gold rushes of the mid-nineteenth century which had led to an

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<sup>11</sup> Kuroki Morifumi, "The Asianism of the Koa-Kai and the AjiaKyokai: reconsidering the ambiguity of Asianism", in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History, Colonialism, regionalism and borders*, ed. S. Saaler, London 2007, 50-51.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Crouch, "An Australian view of the War", *Contemporary Review*, Aug. 1904.

influx of Chinese immigrants. In Australia gold was discovered in the 1850s in Victoria and NSW and it experienced an anti-Chinese riot as early as 1854. The state government therefore started restricting the entry of Chinese and by 1861 the Australian states had also passed legislation to prohibit the naturalization of those of Chinese race. By 1889 these laws had come to cover the whole of the Australian state including the Northern Territory and the islands in the Pacific.<sup>13</sup> The exclusion of Japanese immigration from the British White dominions and the US started about twenty years later after that of the Chinese. The motive for this was different; toward the Chinese it was almost entirely to do with labour market competition with the white workers, while toward the Japanese it was also to do with the security threat from Japan as a nation. For example, the Japanese people who were staying in Australia were perceived to be representatives of a Japanese nation which could threaten the Australian security position in the Pacific. One irony in Australia was that the image it had of Japanese workers overlapped with its view of Japan as a nation which had successfully modernized its economy as well as developing military forces by following the Western model.<sup>14</sup> In particular Australia felt that it faced a security threat around the time of the First World War as British transferred its naval units from the Pacific to European waters due to the German threat. Australia cried out about its fragile security situation, but as far as Britain was concerned Japan could defend Australia following the lines of Anglo-Japanese alliance. The Australians, though, could not trust the Japanese as they were seen as a 'Yellow peril' who would not defend them, but instead were likely to attack the White country. The Australian fear of Japan and Japanese immigrants in their country was epitomized by the very anti-Japanese politician, Billy

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<sup>13</sup> A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia, the Background to Exclusion, 1889-1923*, Melbourne 1967, 70-71.

<sup>14</sup> The National Archives (TNA), Kew, CO (Colonial Office)179/198, Natal Legislative Assembly, 25 March 1897, Sessional Papers, Fifth Session, First Parliament Enclosure.

Hughes, who came to power as Prime Minister in 1915. Once the First World War broke out, Japan occupied the former German territories in the Pacific islands, and Australia felt even more alarmed as Japan edged towards the northern part of the continent.<sup>15</sup>

Australia was not unique in identifying Japanese immigration with the Japan nation, even those in North America whose security position was far more secure, seemed to embrace a similar perception. Particularly California and British Columbia, where most Japanese immigrants were resident, started introducing strict anti-Japanese measures after the Russo-Japanese War. Australia, California and British Columbia, the territories facing the Pacific, thus seemed to share a similar fear of Japanese potential expansion in the Pacific Ocean, far more than Britain and the central governments of the US and Canada.<sup>16</sup>

This kind of anti-Japanese sentiment had its roots, as is well known, in the book by Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: a Forecast*, which was published at the beginning of 1893, and which created a great impact in the British White dominions as well as the United States. His book, as Lake and Reynolds have demonstrated, influenced important political figures such as Theodore Roosevelt and the Australian politician, William 'Billy' Hughes.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, around this time a number of publications about the superiority of the White race were published within the English-speaking world and these publications were easily circulated either across the Atlantic or the Pacific. Additionally several journals in English created an intellectual public sphere in which ideas about white unity were spread between the English-speaking

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<sup>15</sup> D. Goldsworthy, ed., *Facing North, a century of Australian Engagement with Asia, Volume 1, 1901 to the 1970s*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Melbourne 2001, 50

<sup>16</sup> P. Roy, *A White Man's province: British Politicians and Chinese and Japanese immigrants, 1858-1914*, Vancouver 1989, 202.

<sup>17</sup> M. Lake, Mand H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line, White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge 2008, 49-50.



countries, such as US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

It could be said that Australia had even stronger racial ideas and allegiance to white racial identity than the United States. One of the reasons for this was to do with its geographical position, as it felt itself to be surrounded by the coloured races, and as possessing a fragile defense status. In addition, however, it is also worth noting the strong presence of an Irish population.

The importance of the Irish in creating a heightened sense of white identity has already attracted the interest of historians of 'whiteness' in the United States. For example, David Roediger in his book, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, has described how Irish immigrants sought to claim a role for themselves in American life and to protect their jobs by emphasizing that as whites they deserved equality with the Anglo-Saxon elite. This, in turn, led them to look down on African-Americans and new Asian immigrants.<sup>18</sup> In Australia the situation was much the same. The Irish Australians possessed an important position within the trade union movement and thus within the Labour Party. However, their vocal opposition to the political elite could cause trouble for the unity of the newly formed country as it raised the potential of a division between Anglo-Saxons and Celts. An example of this problem can be seen in the fact that the Australian Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, who introduced conscription during the First World War, had to leave the Labour Party because of this policy. In part, this was because conscription was against the Labour party's ideology, but, what is more, the Irish deeply resented the forced mobilization of soldiers by the British government, particularly as this coincided with the time of the Easter Uprising of 1916 which was brutally suppressed by Britain. The Australian Irish were about 25% of the whole

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<sup>18</sup> D. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, London 2007, 36.

population of Australia, and, moreover, constituted 80% of the urban working-class population of the country. Thus conscription became an issue of great political controversy in which the Catholic bishops, including the influential Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne, were also involved.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in New Zealand the editor of a Catholic journal, who was also against conscription during the First World War, was arrested and imprisoned until the end of the conflict. We can therefore see a clear division within the White people -Anglo-Saxons versus Celts- Protestants versus Catholics.

Accordingly, it was important to use the rhetoric of racial solidarity in order to repair any cracks between the different White racial groups. As such, by the time of the end of First World War racial 'Whiteness' had become one of the important ideologies for nation-building in Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the difficult victory and the heroic struggles of the Anzac Corps also contributed to the evolution of 'Whiteness'. A similar argument in favour of White racial solidarity was also used in South Africa in order to avoid divisions between the British and the Afrikaners. Indeed, the White superiority policy was the only way to unify the white population by segregating the coloured races, the blacks and the Asians.

We can therefore see that a strong White superiority network was formed between the British White Dominions of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and Canada. Now it is necessary to examine how the White superiority ideology was put into practice in the form of immigration policy. Although Britain understood the White Dominions' colonial nationalism and their racial policy, it also believed that it was not to offend the coloured subjects of the British Empire.

The British colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, therefore suggested using the Natal law, which involved an English writing test rather than

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<sup>19</sup> M. Clark, *History of Australia*[*Australia No Rekishi*], trans. Mihoko Takeuchi, Tokyo 1978,244-247

automatically excluding any coloured people. The Natal law was originally invented by Natal in South Africa in 1894. It was based on, and used for the same purpose, as American legislation, namely to exclude illiterate black people from the franchise. Chamberlain thought that it was a good innovation as it was not directly offensive against Japanese or Indians who Britain did not desire to offend.

In 1901 Australia introduced an immigration law along line of the Natal act to exclude any coloured race and ensure the survival of White Australia. Tadasu Hayashi, the Japanese minister to London, complained about Australian immigration policy on the basis that it attempted to exclude Japanese people. However these complaints had little impact on the Australian attitude. Australia had full autonomy since 1901, and its leaders argued that immigration policy was an internal not external matter and that Britain did not have the right to intervene.<sup>20</sup> Hayashi and Japanese government had ill feeling towards Australian policies, however nothing could be changed in spite of the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

In the case of Canada, things were different. While British Columbia was opposed to Japanese immigration, the Canadian government in 1905 decided to sign a commercial treaty with Japan and accepted Tokyo's assurance that this would not lead to a wave of immigrants. This promise was, however, demonstrated to be valueless as the number of immigrants soon began to rise, which led in turn to the Vancouver riot of September 1907. The Vancouver riots shocked Japan. Newspapers in Japan reported the incident with sensational headlines, calling it "the most deplorable demonstration" and "a tragic incident unprecedented in the history of western Canada," and claiming that the "humiliation accompanying the damage caused by it was

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<sup>20</sup> National Archive of Australia, Canberra, Japanese Consulate File, Department of External Affairs, 01/203/01, 1901-1902, Include Hayashi's letter to Lansdowne, 4 July 1901, A6661/1, 422122, Immigration of Japanese

beyond words."<sup>21</sup>

California had a similar experience. In 1906 the state legislature introduced anti-Japanese immigration legislation such as separating the Japanese children from a local school. In 1907 there was anti-Japanese rioting in California, and afterwards Japanese were excluded from the right of purchasing land. Events in California influenced British Columbia, and the anti-Japanese riot in Vancouver should be seen as a chain-reaction. The Japanese government subsequently intervened to introduce a gentleman's agreement on immigration policy both with Canada and the United States, but the Japanese public felt that this was racial humiliation.

### **Japan's reactions to White superiority networks**

From the Japanese point of view, although Mitsukawa Kametaro, a Japanese right-winger, had argued that the Triple Intervention was a racial humiliation for Japan<sup>22</sup>, most Japanese intellectuals such as Taguchi were doubtful about the arguments for Asian racial solidarity, as they believed that the Japanese were not a yellow race but rather almost white. The immigration dispute of the 1900s, however, began to raise questions about whether the West would even treat Japan as an equal. Moreover in the afterward of the Russo-Japanese war many Asian nationalists began to look Japan for leadership.

In 1910, there were already a number of Indian revolutionaries in Tokyo, and their activities were linked with the Japanese Pan-Asianist, Okawa

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<sup>21</sup> Newspaper headlines are cited by M. Iino, "Japan's reaction to the Vancouver Riot of 1907", *BC Studies: the British Columbian Quarterly*, 1983, 40.

<sup>22</sup>C. Szpilman, "Mitsukawa Kametaro Shiron (Mitsukawa Mametaro and his discourse)", *Takusyoku Daigaku Hyakunenshi* [A hundred year history of Takusyoku University], 1&2, 2007, 91-106.

Shumei.<sup>23</sup> Around this time Tokyo became the centre of not only the Pan-Asianists from India, but also attracted radicals from other parts of Asia and even Pan-Islamic thinkers. There were a series of meetings in which representatives of the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asianist movement gathered and attempted to create global cooperation. Ibrahim, a Turkish revolutionary, and Mitsuru Toyama, Tsuyoshi Inukai and Yasuya Uchida, all prominent Japanese Pan-Asianists, formed the Asia Gi Kai (Association for the Defence of Asia) and enhanced contacts with Konoe's Toa Dobunkai as well as two other major ultra-nationalist organizations, the Kokuryukai and the Genyosha.<sup>24</sup>

However, the First World War was one of the turning points as Japan's Twenty-One Demands against China caused a strong anti-Japanese movement in that country and the possibility of racial solidarity between the Japanese and Chinese was eliminated, Japan therefore had to turn its eyes towards other Asian countries. During the First World War, in 1915, there was an Indian army mutiny in Singapore, and the Japanese government co-operated with Britain to suppress the riots but at the same time Japan became more conscious about the Indian element of Pan-Asianism.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, when the right wing gave asylum to an Indian revolutionary, Rash Behari Bose, the Japanese government turned a blind eye to his presence even after pressure from Britain.

All these proceedings were closely observed and monitored by British intelligence in India as well as in Japan.<sup>26</sup> The British were concerned about

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<sup>23</sup> S. Yamamuro, *Shiso kadai to siteno Asia [Asia and its ideological theme]*, Tokyo 2001, 92-93.

<sup>24</sup> C. Aydin, *The Politics of anti-Westernism in Asia, vision of world order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought*, New York 2007, 121. See also S. Esenbel, "Japan's Global claim to Asia and the world of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and world power, 1900-1945", *Asian Historical Review* 109:4, 2004, 1140-1170.

<sup>25</sup> Yamamuro, *Shiso kadai to siteno Asia*, 310-311.

<sup>26</sup> PRO (National Archive, Kew, UK) WO, WO106/1352, 8 February 1917, Indian

Japanese pan-Asianism and its close links with the Indian anti-British nationalism. A number of hostile and alarming reports were produced on the Japanese Pan-Asian organizations and their activities towards the end of the War. Japan was supposed to be allied with Britain, but instead it became rather un-trustworthy in British eyes.

In part this was the legacy of Aritomo Yamagata, one of the founding fathers of modern Japan. In 1914 when he had retired from mainstream politics but was still an influential figure, he made a warning about the possibilities of a world-wide racial struggle:

Recent international trends indicate that racial rivalry has yearly become more intense. It is a striking fact that the Turkish and Balkan wars of the past and the Austrian-Serbian and Russo-German wars of the present all had their origins in racial rivalry and hatred. Furthermore, the exclusion of Japanese in the state of California in the US, and the discrimination against Indians in British Africa are also manifestation of the racial problem. As a consequence, the possible further intensification of the rivalry between the white and colored peoples leading to an eventual clash cannot be completely ruled out. When the present great war in Europe is over and order restored, politically and economically, nations will again turn to advantages and rights they might again in the Far East. Then, the rivalry between the white and colored peoples will intensify, and perhaps it will be a time when the white races will all unite to oppose the colored people.<sup>27</sup>

Yamagata's view was shared by other Japanese political leaders, and thus Japan followed a foreign policy of avoiding any racial disturbances with the European powers, while Japan and the Western Powers, particularly Britain,

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sedition in Japan.

<sup>27</sup> Hackett, R, 1971, *Yamagata Aritomo in the rise of Modern Japan, 1838-1922*, Mess: Cambridge, 1971, 270.

became more conscious about the racial issue. For Britain it would be worrying as its relations with India, the Middle East and Egypt, were tied up with race. Yamagata pointed out on 10 August 1914:

The present war in Europe that began as a Balkan problem had its origin in a Slavic-German racial struggle that spread to include the racial rivalry between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin peoples. Already Indians with British citizenship cannot land in Canada.<sup>28</sup>

It was the Japanese pan-Asianists who realized that the Indian element in pan-Asianism could be important, particularly if Japan could mobilize the Indians as far as they were unhappy about the British White dominions' racism against them. The linkage between the Japanese Pan-Asianist and the Indian merchant communities in Japan made them realize that the Indian merchant diaspora network stretched all the way from Japan, Asia, India, Middle East to Africa. Pan-Asianism could take advantages from such a global network to propaganda in order to expand its appeal.<sup>29</sup>

Tokutomi Soho, one of the prominent and influential Pan-Asianists in the period, stated after the war that Japan must take up the "Yellow man's burden" referring to Kipling's famous phrase "White man's burden", as the leader of Asian civilization including not only the 'Yellow race' countries, like Korea, China and southeast Asia, but also India, Persia, Arabia, Egypt and Turkey. His emphasis was on the fact that, while Japan had never dreamt to confront the White Races, the other Asian countries were begging Japan to be their leader and it should therefore take responsibility by showing its example as a civilized modern national state.<sup>30</sup> Initially he asserted the need

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 277-278.

<sup>29</sup> M. Matsuura, M, 2010, "Japan and pan-Asianism", *International History of East Asia, 1900-1968*, ed. A. Best, London 2010, 251-252.

<sup>30</sup> Yamamuro, S, 2001, *Shiso kadai to siteno Asia [Asia and its ideological theme]*, Tokyo 2001, 298

for cooperation between the West and East by contending that Japan could mediate between the White and non-White races, but if the other Asian countries expected Japan to be the liberator from the White men's colonialism Japan should become the ruler of Asia and confront the Western Powers' interests.

In analyzing the racial aspect of pan-Asianism, it is also impossible to avoid mentioning the Racial Equality Clause which was proposed by Japanese government during the Paris Peace conference of 1919. It is known that the rejection of the racial equality clause caused Japan great disappointment and even humiliation, and eventually contributed to the radicalization of the pan-Asianism movement in Japan. However, it is not so well known that it was Billy Hughes who pressurized the British to vote against it. Britain was in a dilemma in terms of the racial question as the British Empire contained so many non-white contingents, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance was still valid. However Hughes threatened Lloyd George by arguing that while Australia would reluctantly compromise on the islands in the Pacific, it would not on the racial quality clause. He also emotionally blackmailed the British Prime Minister by reminding him of the large number of Anzac lives had been sacrificed at Gallipoli thanks to Britain's military mistakes.<sup>31</sup> In the end Lloyd George had to veto the Japanese racial clause. Thus it was the Australian prime minister's triumph that made the Japanese suggestion a dead letter.

After the First World War Japan also felt insulted by the treaties signed at the Washington conference of 1921-22, which were to some almost like a second Triple Intervention. In particular Japan thought that the abolition of the Anglo-Japanese treaty was to do with an American conspiracy, and that Britain did little to resist Washington's suggestion for Anglo-Saxon cultural and racial solidarity.

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<sup>31</sup> S. Brawley, *The White Peril, Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America, 1919-78*, Sydney 1995, 15-17



Furthermore the anti-Japanese immigration law in the United States in 1924 and then a similar episode in Canada in 1928, caused a White peril outcry and the further radicalization of Pan-Asianism in racial terms. Such clearly racially discriminative immigration act against the Japanese could only push the latter towards becoming more distant from the West and closer to Asia. Indeed, the 1924 act led the whole nation into a state of outrage which was symbolized by a day of national humiliation and some arguing that this again was a second and even worse version of the Triple intervention of 1895. The problem within Japan was that it was a great and humiliating disappointment for liberal political figures, such as Nitobe, who were already losing influence in the Diet, and that instead, more radical right-wing political movements could gain support as a reaction against the United States, Canada and Australia's racial humiliation of Japan.

One middle-aged man from the former samurai class committed ritual Harakiri next door to the American embassy in Tokyo in 1924, with a letter of protest on his chest addressed to the President of the United States. Tokutomi regarded this incident as a great opportunity to increase his influence, and in his newspaper, *Kokumin No Tomo*, he published this act asserting "this is the day when Japan's foreign policy swings away from the West to the East, disentangling itself from the United States in order to clasp hands with its Asian brothers."<sup>32</sup> Tokutomi, who once had attempted to cooperate with West, abandoned this idea completely and claimed that a racial war could break out between the 'Yellow peril' and the 'White peril', and that Japan should take the leadership of the 'Yellow people's' to fight against the evil White Americans and British White Dominions.

Mitsukawa argued in his writings on the black race, that in the house of black Americans in the US, there were portraits of Nobuaki Makino as well

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<sup>32</sup> K. Miwa, K, 2007, "Pan-Asianism in modern Japan: nationalism, regionalism and universalism", *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History, Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*, ed. S. Saaler, London 2009, 28

as of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>33</sup> Outside of Japan, for India, Turkey, Egypt, the Middle East and South-East Asia the settlement of the Paris Peace conference brought even more unsatisfactory consequences in spite of the great expectations raised by Wilsonian ideas of national self-determination. This naturally radicalized their nationalism which was now even more eager to link-up with the Pan-Asian and Pan-Islam movements. The Japanese Pan-Asianists responded keenly to their Asian brothers' appeals. In the Japanese political world there were increasing numbers of political figures who became sympathetic with Pan-Asianism, such as Okuma and Inukai, prime ministers rather than simply intellectuals.<sup>34</sup> However, in spite of all these elements, domestic as well as external, the Japanese government still did not adopt any foreign policy based on Pan-Asianism up until the late 1930's.

It was only when in 1937 Konoe Fumimaro became Prime Minister and attempted to build a united front among Japanese nationalists, that Pan-Asianism was put into practice. Under the name of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity sphere it was held that the Asian race should come together. A state mobilization law was introduced in 1938 in order to consolidate national resources at home in support of the war effort, and in 1939 Ishiwara Kanji formed the East Asia League (Toa Renmei) in 1939 to institutionalize Japan's hopes for forming an East Asia based upon ethnic nationalism. The East Asian League became an institution to oppose British imperialism and to liberate Asia from its rule. The League devoted itself to the co-existence of all of the ethnic nations of Greater East Asia. India was welcome to join and the Philippines and Burma were guaranteed the honor of independence. This might have been attractive for these Asian countries if it

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<sup>33</sup> C. Szpilman, C, 1999, "Mitsukawa Kametaro Shiron (Mitsukawa Mametaro and his discourse)", *Takusyoku Daigaku Hyakunen shi* [A Hundred Year History of Takusyoku University], I, 91-106.

<sup>34</sup> Imai, K, 1964, *Inukai Tsuyoshi*, Tokyo 1964, 305; J. Libra, *Okuma Shigenobu, Statesman of Meiji Japan*, Canberra 1973.

could be shown that the various ethnic groups of Asia could co-exist.<sup>35</sup> However in reality, but also in theory, the concept of a *Minzoku Chitsujo*, a hierarchical ordering of the various ethnic groups, was revealed, with Japan at the top of the hierarchy and others forced into a position of subordination; horizontal or even semi-equal relations were unthinkable. Even in Manchuria, when Shigemitsu Mamoru intended to give some power to the last Chinese emperor, the Japanese army blocked this idea. Thus the term "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" and the racial brotherhood of the East Asia League became largely used for the Japanese control of occupied countries during World War II, in which puppet governments manipulated local populations and economies for the benefit of Imperial Japan.

### **Britain mediates between the Asian and the White race**

In terms of its own racial policy Britain was confronted with a big dilemma, for the White dominions asserted the need for a White racial superiority policy which excluded any coloured race, even the Indians. However, if you look at the actual number of people who were mobilized for the First World War the Indians were top of the list, contributing three times more than the Anzacs. In other words, the British Empire could not be defended without the Indians. This was true both for during the war as well as in time of peace, and thus the British Empire could not be sustained if Britain mistreated the coloured race as the White Dominions' policy implied. It was the British government which realized this dilemma and thus it attempted to act as a mediator between the Whites and the coloured races. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was in a way useful for Britain's colour-blind policy, as it crossed the racial divide. However, after its abolition Britain faced a serious question

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<sup>35</sup> O. Nomura, *Towa Renmei ki no Ishiwara Kanji shiro, Document on Ishiwara Kanji in the period of Towa Domei*, Douseisha 2007.

about how to avoid a race war which it could potentially lose against the Japanese who were in a far more advantageous position to mobilize the Indian under the name of the Asian racial solidarity.

Jan Smuts, the South African military and political leader, who was conscious and cautious about race, was a keen supporter of the White superiority policy, but was also concerned about imperial solidarity at the same time. It was Smuts who negotiated with Gandhi over Indian immigration to the South Africa and made a reluctant compromise on his racial policy by accepting a very limited amount of reciprocal immigration.<sup>36</sup> This policy was also followed by Canada. In reality, hardly any Indians managed to enter South Africa and Canada in the inter-war period, but the mere fact that some were allowed meant that lip service was paid to the British Empire's colour-blind policy and an attempt was made, above all, to prevent the Indians from being seduced by the Japanese racial claim to be Asian brothers.

It is worth noting that Smuts was close to the people involved in the Round Table, although he was not a member himself. The Round Table movement was originally started in South Africa by the followers of Alfred Milner. In 1910 they had returned to Britain in Oxford and had founded a journal called the *Round Table*. Their activities focused on the need for closer cooperation between Britain and the Dominions. They originally pushed for federation, but, after coming to understand the desire of the Dominions for independence, they adapted their ideas to push for the creation of a British Commonwealth. It could therefore be said that the Round Table attempted to turn the hierarchical imperial system into a more democratic organization, in which Britain positioned itself to act as a mediator rather than a dictator. This change in attitude was not, however, limited to the Dominions, for the main players in the Round Table, such as Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr (later Lord Lothian) realized that if the empire was to evolve into a Commonwealth then

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<sup>36</sup> Brawley, *The White Peril*, 71-72

a degree of self-government had to be given to the colonies.<sup>37</sup>

Curtis, who had been to Australia, was invited to stay in India in 1916-19 to advise unofficially on the constitutional reform in India. This was partly to do with the question of Indian immigration to the White Dominions, as this was one of the major concerns for the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, 1916-21, who had previously been a Governor in Australia (Queensland and then NSW) between 1905 and 1913.<sup>38</sup> Curtis insisted that the Indians should be able to visit or work in the White Dominion but would have no right of permanent domicile, and this idea was partly adopted as the White Dominions' immigration policy.

Moreover towards the end of the First World War Curtis' idea of Indian Dyarchy helped the Secretary of State for India, Sir Edwin Montagu, to undertake reform of the Indian constitution, in other words, the way which Britain ruled India after the First World War. This resulted in the India Act of 1919. Meanwhile, the *Round Table* journal managed to influence other publications to accept that reform in India was urgently necessary.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to note that around the same time Milner as Colonial Secretary was forced to accept, when Egypt erupted into revolution in 1919, that Britain must accede to Egyptian demands to be independent. Additionally, it is no surprise that Smuts contributed to the founding of the League of Nations and that he viewed it as an attempt to expand on the ideas that underpinned the Commonwealth.

The sensitivity of Kerr to the importance of a colour-blind policy is evident in an article of the *Round Table* from September 1921 on the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in which he argued that 'to sever ties with Japan

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<sup>37</sup> The Papers of the *Round Table* and Lionel Curtis are mainly held at Bodleian Library, Oxford. There are also five boxes of files about Lionel Curtis at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), which Curtis originally founded in 1919.

<sup>38</sup> D. Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth*, Oxford 1995, 135-6.

<sup>39</sup> A. Bosco and A. May, 1997, *The Round Table, the empire, commonwealth and British foreign policy*, Oxford 1997, 355-364

would render another world war more likely and such a conflict would be of a racial character, based on “colour”.<sup>40</sup>

The influence of the Round Table continued to be felt into the inter-war period as the idea of the Commonwealth began to attract more supporters. In addition, Lothian in the early 1930s played an important role in pushing for the reforms that would lead to the 1935 Government of India Act which paved the way for the creation of provincial assemblies. Lothian was appointed a member of the Indian Franchise Committee in order to expand the number of Indian votes, and it was partly put in practice by allowing them a restricted franchise. As Lothian was also against racism against the Indians he argued that India should be treated in the same way as the White Dominions.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of the racial question, Britain therefore, under the influence of thinkers such as Curtis and Kerr, accepted the need to conciliate nationalist sentiment in the non-white colonies. Naturally, this did not go far enough to please figures such as Gandhi and Nehru, but it did at least demonstrate that Britain was not completely opposed to change and thus potentially opened the way to eventual independence. By doing so, it blunted the appeal of Japan whose record of behavior in Korea and China did not suggest that it was very different from the Europeans. Thus in 1942, when faced with Japanese victories in Asia, many Indians instead of turning to Japan for leadership, tried to use the crisis as an opportunity to press Britain for Dominion status.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 432

<sup>41</sup> D. Billington, *Lothian, Philip Kerr and the Quest for World Order*, Praeger Security International 2006, 106-108

## Conclusion

So was the Pacific War a race war? It is a matter of great debate and it is very difficult to prove that the Japanese government actually adopted a foreign policy based on Pan-Asianism racial ideology. However, as demonstrated above, it is clear that both sides, the Japanese and British Empires, were extremely conscious about racial policy.

After the Pacific War broke out, the Indian National Army led by Subhas Chandra Bose collaborated with the Japanese army and fought against Britain and the United States in 1941 and 42. It was a rare occasion when Japan formed a policy basing on racial solidarity, however the Japanese did it not do this because they sincerely believed in racial solidarity with the Indians but rather because the Indian anti-British revolutionaries were seen to be useful. Japan's mistreatment of Indian POWs and its brutal behavior towards the other Asian races was soon revealed and the illusion of Asian race solidarity and brotherhood started to fade away, as Japan regarded other Asians as inferior races and attempted to place itself on top of the Asian hierarchy under the name of Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Britain was far more conscious and cautious about race and racial policy than Japan, and as we have seen attempted to mediate between the White Dominion's white superiority policy and the Indians. Britain adopted a kind of class system in India by politicizing the Indian elite rather than considering the White Dominions' racial policy. Thanks to pan-Asianism and its racial claim Britain was very much warned and well prepared in advance to fight the race war while Japan was offered a great opportunity to win the race but it failed because the British empire was far more race conscious than the Japanese empire.





# Colonial Welfare and Women's Voluntary Groups in the Decolonization Era:

A Perspective from the Women's Institute during the 1950s

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## **Abstract**

In the analysis of social welfare in British history, it has become common to consider the mutually complementary relationship between state and non-state actors. While many studies have concentrated on this relationship in the UK, this focus should be extended overseas to the British Empire. After the First World War, colonial welfare emerged as an agenda in British imperial policy, reflected in such legislation as the Colonial Development and Welfare Act and in the creation of the Colonial Office Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee. While the roles played in colonies by non-state actors such as missionaries have been considered, especially in nineteenth-century British imperial history, this has yet to be explored after the Second World War when the decolonization process was in motion.

This paper describes a set of activities in colonial social welfare undertaken by British non-governmental agencies after World War Two, using the example of a women's voluntary organization, the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI). Although usually considered domestic, their activities were not confined to the UK. Cooperating closely with the government and other voluntary groups, the NFWI offered hospitality to people from the colonies and provided support to create similar organizations

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there. The 'domesticity' of the NFWI was compatible with its equally important principle, internationalism.

After the Second World War, the NFWI redefined its role to accommodate the new post-war reality. Duplicating old notions of a 'civilising mission', the NFWI saw its new role as leading colonial people to become decent members of self-governing civil society and preparing them for future independence. Indeed, the NFWI's main international activity in this period included teaching colonial people how to administrate women's voluntary organizations, an activity shared both by the Colonial Office and UNESCO. In 1950, reacting to an UNESCO paper stressing the need to start women's organizations in 'backward countries', the NFWI began to consider sending organizers to found Women's Institutes (WI) in colonies. This was implemented in 1952, when Lady Templer, wife of the High Commissioner in Malaya, asked the NFWI to help to start WIs there. The NFWI sent organizers to Malaya, and Malayan WIs were formed. However, the WI movement in Malaya does not appear to have succeeded in becoming a truly indigenous voluntary grassroots movement. While the NFWI had received trainees from Malaya, in 1957, when the Federation of Malaya became independent, the future of the Malayan WI was not bright.

Nevertheless, the project in Malaya influenced the redefinition of the British NFWI's international role. In response to the 'success' in Malaya, in 1954 the NFWI Annual General Meeting resolved that international understanding and friendship should be one of their objects, adopting the slogan 'think internationally'. In the 1960s the NFWI was involved in international work to assist in the economic and social development of poor countries, including colonies and ex-colonies.

**Key words:** colonial welfare, women, decolonization, international activities, non-governmental organization

## Introduction

Recently, with increasing recognition of the limitations of state welfare, it has become impossible to think about social welfare without taking into account the roles played by non-governmental voluntary actors. This is also true in the historical analysis of Britain. Especially since the 1990s, the historical collaboration between the state and voluntary agencies in modern and contemporary Britain has been well recognized.<sup>1</sup> Even William Beveridge, who wrote the blueprint of the British post-war 'welfare state', expected the continued importance of the voluntary element.<sup>2</sup> After 1945, voluntary organizations still remained partners of the state, filling gaps in welfare provisioning.<sup>3</sup>

Another indispensable facet in the analysis of modern British history, especially after the First World War, is social welfare in the empire. As J.E. Lewis maintained regarding colonial Africa, with international pressure for colonial governments to take responsibility for social conditions within colonies growing, and with the new principle of state intervention emerging at home, 'the metropolitan forms of social engineering and its corresponding bureaucratic manifestation were applied to colonial issues'.<sup>4</sup> A series of legislative acts to promote the development of colonial welfare epitomise this

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest example of such studies is Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in 1830–1990*, Oxford 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin eds., *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in the Wider British World*, Manchester 2011.

<sup>3</sup> For the historiography of the complementary relationship between the welfare state and voluntary associations, see Helen McCarthy and Pat Thane, 'The Politics of Association in Industrial Society', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2011, 217–229.

<sup>4</sup> J.E. Lewis, 'Tropical East Ends' and the Second World War: Some Contradictions in Colonial Office Welfare Initiatives', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, May 2000, 42–66.

situation, regardless of their efficacy: these include the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 and the creation of the Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee in the Colonial Office. Importantly, as this paper will demonstrate through an example of a women's group based at home, in the imperial arena as well as in the metropole, it was usual that voluntary organizations had closely cooperated for the betterment of social welfare not only with the state, but also such international organizations as the United Nations. Thus, the analysis of the role played by non-governmental agencies outside the UK is also important in considering the history of social welfare. Especially after the Second World War, when the relationship between the metropole and the colonies was changing under the increasing pressure for independence, social welfare, together with development, defined the relationship between metropole and colonies – or, after their independence, the relationship between an ex-colonial power and newly emerged third world countries.

While Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and voluntary agencies have begun to garner scholarly attention,<sup>5</sup> their influence beyond Britain remains to be studied. Furthermore, Christian missionaries, the non-state agents whose activities in the colonial social field were most visible, have attracted much attention in nineteenth century British imperial history, while the role played by non-state actors and their relation to both state and colonial peoples in the decolonization process remains to be explored.<sup>6</sup> Such studies would be important in considering the unequal relationship between

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2000, under the DANGO (Database of Archives of UK Non-Governmental Organisations since 1945) project based at the Centre for Contemporary History, University of Birmingham, the role of NGOs in the post-war era has become the subject of historical research. For the project's result, see Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay eds., *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, London 2009.

<sup>6</sup> While Christian missions in the twentieth century have received relatively little scholarly attention, some recent studies have appeared. See Brian Stanley ed., *Missions, Nationalism, and the End of Empire*, Cambridge and Michigan 2003.

the western, rich, modern, and sometimes humanitarian volunteers and those who were offered help, often living in the ex-colonial 'third world'.

This paper describes some of the activities undertaken by British non-government agencies relating to colonial social welfare after the Second World War, and especially in the 1950s, by taking as an example a women's organization based in the metropole, the Women's Institute (WI), and its national federated organization, the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI). Although this 'Jam and Jerusalem' organization is usually regarded as domestic, based mainly in rural districts of England and Wales, and as perpetuating 'traditional' English national identity,<sup>7</sup> this paper will show that its members were widely involved in activities for people coming from abroad and living within the empire. Cooperating closely with the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, the United Nations, and other voluntary groups, its members offered hospitality and taught the 'British lifestyle' to visitors from abroad, often from within the empire. They offered English lessons to refugees and immigrants, and travelled abroad to spread the WI movement. The 'domesticity' of WI was compatible with its equally important principle: internationalism.

NFWI was one of many voluntary groups (women's or otherwise) that acted in the British Empire and for the colonial people. NFWI documents show close cooperation with other voluntary groups. For example, the YMCA and the Victoria League were also involved in hospitalising and training students or guests from the empire, although NFWI tend to be singled out when discussing work in rural areas. At the same time, NFWI and its educational institution, the Denman College (founded in 1948), offered lectures on

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<sup>7</sup> Maggie Andrews, "For home and country": Feminism and Englishness in the Women's Institutes Movement, 1930–1960', in Richard Weight and Abigail Beach eds., *The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain, 1930–1960*, London 1998, 116–135. The membership of the NFWI has been limited to WIs in England, Wales and the Islands (Isles of Man, etc.). Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate organizations: the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes and the Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland.

colonies or international events to the Women's Corona Society. Christian missionaries should not be ignored, and some research about their activities during decolonization has been already done. It will eventually be necessary to outline the cooperative web between the various groups as well as their relationships with the government. However, doing so is beyond the scope of my research at this stage. This paper will therefore only cast a ray of light on part of the whole picture.

NFWI is worth attention for the following reasons. While NFWI was merely one of many voluntary groups that were involved in welfare works, it was especially prevalent in British society, with more than 400,000 members during the 1940s to the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Thus, NFWI was often mobilized by the government, and it voluntarily cooperated to supplement government welfare, mainly for women and children, and to help in domestic affairs, especially after the Second World War. Especially remarkable were the support activities for 'outsiders', whose welfare tends to be left out of official infrastructure. NFWI was involved in support activities for a range of refugees, foreign workers, and international students in twentieth-century Britain, often at the request of the government.<sup>9</sup> NFWI was one of multiple women's organizations mobilized, and they were usually invited to join an official co-ordinating committee for voluntary organizations. Nonetheless, it has been regarded as one of the most important organizations to cooperate with the government, making NFWI a representative example of a complementary relationship between state and non-state actors. Especially in the case of Malaya in the 1950s, which this paper will discuss at length, the formation of WI was regarded as an effective measure in building a stable

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<sup>8</sup> Although the NFWI's membership has decreased since the 1980s, it still has 212,526 members as of 2014. See the NFWI homepage at <http://www.thewi.org.uk/about-the-wi>.

<sup>9</sup> For an example from the 1940s, see Hiromi Mizokami, 'Teaching British Life Style: the Role of Women's Groups in Resettling Foreign Workers during the Attlee Yeas', *The East Asian Journal of British History*, Vol. 2, March, 2012, 81–107.

community under British imperial control.

NFWI, a domestic grassroots secular women's organization founded in the twentieth century, merits attention not only in relation to domestic but also imperial women's history. Of course, not all of the voluntary groups that acted in the colonial arena were women's organizations. Even in the case of Malaya, male organizations such as Rotary International were also active, and their role requires further study.<sup>10</sup> However, women often tend to be assigned a special gendered role in social welfare. In the British Empire, white women were involved in teaching modern, western home-care, and hygienic concepts to colonized women, and in emancipating 'oppressed' women in the colonies. This was true of NFWI. In women's history, the relationship between white women and people in the colonies has been studied since Margaret Strobel and Vron Ware raised the issue at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> Since then, many studies have addressed white Victorian women involved in the empire as missionaries, wives, and lady travellers. Much remains to be explored on this topic, especially after the 1950s. This is important because gender has often been tangled up with the hierarchical concept of modernization, which has had a lasting influence even in the post-colonial era.<sup>12</sup>

While NFWI tended to be ignored, even in women's history, because of its non-feminist and conservative characteristics, recently researchers including

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<sup>10</sup> T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, Cambridge 1999, 224–227.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, London 1992. As early as the 1980s, Hazel V. Carby criticised white feminists for their ignorance and disregard of the situation of black women. See Hazel V. Carby, 'White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, London 1982, 212–235.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Bush points out that the colonial discourse relating to gender and domesticity has affected gendered aid and development projects in the third world. See Philipp Levine, *Gender and Empire*, Oxford 2004, Chapter 4.

Maggie Andrews, Linda Perriton, and Caitriona Beaumont have begun to re-evaluate the role that such ‘mainstream’ women’s organizations played in improving the lives of indigenous women and educating women as citizens in the post-suffrage era.<sup>13</sup> For example, Beaumont points out that mainstream women’s organizations that positively recognized women’s roles as wives and mothers, including NFWI, eventually succeeded in securing those women’s interests that are closely linked with family life. Andrews even redefined NFWI as a ‘feminist organization’, as it made an effort to improve the situation for women within existing gender norms. However, these studies still concentrate on activities at home, and on white women, although Andrews briefly mentions the ‘colour-blind’ attitudes of WI members toward post-war immigrants from the Commonwealth. While not all the WI members were internationally minded, as this paper shows, the British WI has been far from a merely domestic organization.

### **The WI as a ‘grassroots’ organization at home**

Contrary to the domestic image suggested even by the name of the NFWI magazine, *Home & Country*, the WI did not originate in Britain but rather in Canada, where the first WI was founded in 1897. The movement was introduced to Britain by Mrs Watt, who had been a member of a WI in Canada and came to England to promote the movement. Mr Nugent Harris, the Secretary of the Agricultural Organisation Society (AOS), who had been hoping to involve more women in the AOS, showed interest in the WI

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<sup>13</sup> Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: the Women’s Institutes as a Social Movement*, London 1997; Linda Perriton, ‘The education of women for citizenship: the National Federation of Women’s Institutes and the British Federation of Business and Professional Women 1930–1959’, *Gender and Education*, Vol. 21, No. 1, December, 2009, 81–95; Caitriona Beaumont, ‘Citizens not feminists: the boundary negotiated between citizenship and feminism by mainstream women’s organisations in England, 1928–39’, *Women’s History Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2000, 411–429.



movement. He drew Mrs Watt into the AOS to set up WIs in British rural areas. In 1915, in the midst of the First World War, the first British WI meeting was held in Llanfairpwll on Anglesey in North Wales. In spite of the English-centric image evoked by their anthem 'Jerusalem', the birth of the British WI in Wales has been well recognized within WI. The NFWI paid considerable attention to the cultural particularity of Wales.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, as discussed in the next section in detail, internationalism has been one of the essential principles of WI. As leaflets by the NFWI repeatedly emphasize, 'since 1935, the NFWI has been a constituent member of Association of Countrywomen of the World (ACWW), a unique world-wide organization of more than seven million countrywomen, furthering mutual assistance, education and understanding. Every WI member automatically becomes a member of ACWW'.<sup>15</sup> Various WIs offered hospitality to visitors from overseas, and many members enjoyed the opportunity to go abroad, often to spread the WI movement. Even before the 1950s, when representing their own country, the WI showed the spirit of hospitality to various kinds of 'visitors' to the UK – from Spanish refugees in the 1930s to Allied troops during the Second World War. Immediately after the war, WI members helped Poles and European Volunteer Workers to resettle in the UK by teaching English and assisting in camps. While the misunderstanding that Poles were fascists aroused opposition to their resettlement among some rank-and-file members, the NFWI made an effort to persuade members to welcome these 'unfortunate' foreigners by circulating corrected information about them.<sup>16</sup> The NFWI also forged close ties with other international organizations, including the League of Nations before the Second World War.

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<sup>14</sup> For example, *Home & Country*, January 1950, 13.

<sup>15</sup> See NFWI leaflets held in WL (Women's Library at LSE), 5FWI/G/1/3/2/1, Box 242.

<sup>16</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/21 Box 19, minutes of Executive Committee, 28 November 1946; *Home and Country*, January 1947, 9; WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/21 Box 19, minutes of Executive Committee, 27 November 1947.

Members have long been encouraged to ‘think internationally’, especially since 1954, when the NFWI enthusiastically resolved ‘[t]o promote international friendship and understanding’.<sup>17</sup> From its early days, the NFWI has made an effort to offer its members lectures on imperial and international subjects by arranging for speakers.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, it should be remembered that the NFWI was born in the midst of the patriotic mood during the First World War. As mentioned, the WI movement in Britain was created under the umbrella of the AOS, which received aid from the government to promote cooperation in agriculture. The initial purpose of the WI movement in Britain was to revitalize rural communities and to encourage women to become involved in producing food during the war. The NFWI had a close link with the Women’s Land Army. According to the explanation offered in *Home & Country*, the cooperation between the NFWI and the Women’s Land Army was encouraged by the Board of Trade, the Board of Agriculture, and the AOS. Their goal was to make WI useful for national efforts by linking women who were doing war work in country districts, and especially members of the newly formed Women’s Land Army.<sup>19</sup> The NFWI cooperated with the government’s war effort and its members ‘spoke of duty and patriotism’.<sup>20</sup>

However, by the mid-1920s, the NFWI had become an independent, self-financing organization, making it a grassroots, ‘mainstream’ women’s group.<sup>21</sup> Its membership numbers increased rapidly in the 1920s, from 55,000 in 1919 to 250,000 in 1925, which might have enabled it to support itself financially. Nevertheless, the WI remained to be patriotic in its nature. Rather, in the inter-war years, the NFWI continued to nurture the notion of

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<sup>17</sup> WL, 5FWI/ G/1/3/2/1, Box 242, *Be World Wise with the WIs*, 1964.

<sup>18</sup> *Home & Country*, August 1936, 435.

<sup>19</sup> *Home & Country*, June 1980, 298.

<sup>20</sup> Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Englishness, representing family, home, and the English countryside.<sup>22</sup> As Maggie Andrew argues, starting especially in the 1930s, the WIs were closely associated with the construction of traditional notions of Englishness, treating villages and rural homes as the heart of England.<sup>23</sup> In 1923, William Blake's 'Jerusalem' was adopted as the WI's anthem, to be sung at each meeting. Even after the Second World War, this tendency survived, as epitomized by a competition held in *Home & Country* in 1961. The call for the competition, titled 'An English national costume', encouraged readers to send in their designs for a 'national costume suitable for an English woman'.<sup>24</sup>

Though English national character, or Englishness, has often been linked with masculinity, as epitomised by the gentleman, there is another representation of Englishness epitomised by 'home', family, and lifestyle, where women, mainly as housewives, played key roles in nurturing national identity.<sup>25</sup> This was the domain of WI members. The national characteristics represented by women tended to be firmly linked to home and family. Women have long been treated as 'second class citizens', as revealed by such examples as arguments over 'equal pay' and the lack of independent nationality for wives before the British Nationality Act of 1948. However, it is obviously too naïve to suppose that femininity could escape the fetters of nation in modern Britain. Virginia Woolf's famous statement that 'women have no country' would be too idealistic to fit with the reality of most women,

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<sup>22</sup> Andrews, *ibid*, 31-32

<sup>23</sup> Andrews, 'For home and country'.

<sup>24</sup> *Home & Country*, February 1961, 'Competition: An English National Costume'.

<sup>25</sup> For the masculinity of Englishness, see Marcus Collins, 'The fall of the English gentleman: the national character in decline, c.1918–1970', *Historical Research*, Vol. 75, No. 187, February 2002, 90–111. To the contrary, Alison Lights points out the emergence of a domestic, feminized version of national identity in the inter-war years when the WI developed rapidly, although Collins dismisses her argument using Virginia Woolf as an example. See Alison Lights, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*, London 1991.

if not an illusion. In the case of the WI, the ideal of Woolf might be best presented as its internationalism by advocating female friendship across borders, but this has been easily compatible with activities that aimed to foster the notion of Englishness. In considering the WI's international work and specifically that undertaken in the colonies, we must therefore take into account these national characteristics of the WI.

According to Andrews, the WI expanded during the decades when British women became enfranchised, it served as a training centre for citizenship for rural women who had newly won the right to vote. In spite of its present conservative image, in its early days the WI embraced some 'liberal' attitudes, and in some respects it challenged existing gender roles. The NFWI was linked to suffragist and suffragette organizations, as well as to other significant feminist campaigns and groups. Some WI members were also members of feminist groups.<sup>26</sup> In each WI, members were offered opportunities to learn about politics and international affairs, and were encouraged to state their own opinion, debate with each other, and take charge of administration.

As Helen McCarthy argues, like Rotary International, the British Legion, and the League of Nations Union, which also expanded during the inter-war years, the NFWI was one of the grassroots, inclusive, nationally based civic organizations born as a new form of democratic participation after the achievement of universal suffrage in 1918. In common with these organizations, the NFWI emphasized its 'secular' and 'non-party' character in order to incorporate all rural women regardless of class, religion, and political affiliation.<sup>27</sup> While the general 'secular' and 'non-party' principles of the NFWI have never assured absolute neutrality, they have effectively regulated the NFWI. In the 1970s, when the problem of Commonwealth immigration

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<sup>26</sup> Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, 27–28.

<sup>27</sup> Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No.4, 2007, 891–912.

became impossible to ignore, even for rural WIs, the WI rule was amended at the Annual General Meeting to clarify that the non-sectarian and non-party political rule 'shall not be so interpreted as to prevent Women's Institutes from concerning themselves with matters of political and religious significance, provided the view and rights of minorities are respected and provided the movement is never used for party political or sectarian purposes'.<sup>28</sup> It seems that individual WI members also respected these as essential principles of their organization. For example, a letter from a reader printed in *Home & Country* in 1990 displays a strong distaste for the intrusion of religious or political aspects into their activities. 'We have always understood the WI is non-political, non-religious, and non-racial [sic]. Politics, religion and racism should be left outside the door of every WI gathering as they are now, and we hope will always be.'<sup>29</sup>

With this inclusiveness, the NFWI has tried to remain democratic. However, the NFWI could not evade existing social hierarchies. It depended considerably on women from the upper and middle classes to serve as national executives and local leaders. It was not until 1961 that the NFWI had a non-titled chairman.<sup>30</sup> There were differences in opinion between middle class and working class members, as well as between the aristocratic executives of the NFWI and the 'ordinary' members in each local institute. In *Home & Country*, we can see dissension between the editor on the side of the NFWI executives and 'ordinary' members. For example, in 1933, a reader of *Home & Country* strongly protested against the editor's characterization of rural life as boring and underdeveloped. Her words vividly reveal the gulf: 'Step down from your office stool, dear Editor, and really come among us. That first page of yours could be such a joy, such an inspiration. But just as it is we are rather inclined to shake our heads and sigh *she does not quite*

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<sup>28</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1971*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> *Home & Country*, October 1990, 66.

<sup>30</sup> Andrews, *ibid*, 21

*understand*.<sup>31</sup>

Still, democracy has been respected as a basic principle of the WI movement among its members. Because citizenship education for countrywomen was one of the main purposes of the WI movement, WI members were encouraged to join discussions and to be in charge of something relating to the administration of their WIs. The structure of WI organizations themselves was supposed to be democratic, and each local WI was run by a committee elected by secret ballot. Although the democratic system within both the NFWI and individual WIs did not run smoothly, readers' letters to *Home & Country* show how much they valued democracy as a basic principle of their organization as well as their country. Some letters protested against 'undemocratic' aspects of the NFWI.<sup>32</sup>

In the next section we will see how this organization – domestic, patriotic, and diverse in its membership – was involved in activities overseas and for people within the empire.

### **International or imperial? NFWI international activities after WW2**

As was mentioned above, the national character of the WI and the NFWI has frequently been remarked upon. However, the perspective of the world expressed in *Home & Country* before 1945 was imperial as well as domestic in nature. It contained a lot of information about the empire and the colonies. The activities of WIs in India and their relationship with British WIs were specially reported.<sup>33</sup> An article about 'Women Institutes overseas' describes WIs in other countries in terms not of an international but of an imperial network.

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<sup>31</sup> *Home & Country*, October 1933, 526.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see *Home & Country*, 'our un-British constitution', July 1944, 110–111; 'True democracy' March 1955, 109; April 1955, 151; July 1955, 267.

<sup>33</sup> *Home & Country*, January 1929, 5–6; February 1929, 59; June 1929, 287–288.

In all the countries I have visited during the last twenty months – Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – I felt that real progress is being made. I first stayed with Mrs. De Mely, Treasurer of the Women's Institutes of Ceylon. Here much good work is being done, mostly by the educated Singhalese people for the peasant women, helping them in the malaria epidemic to learn, by the charts and speakers they send out, the necessity of milk for their children etc... New Zealand has over 900 Women's Institutes. It is very cheering news I get of them, all doing helpful work. In South Africa, the same story. Throughout Natal, the Transvaal, Cape Province, and Zululand, where I did Institute tours, everywhere I found splendid women meeting together trying to plan out how best they can help their many problems.<sup>34</sup>

While some articles including 'Fact about India'<sup>35</sup> and 'The West Indies'<sup>36</sup> intended to educate readers about the empire, others including 'Women Empire-Builders in South Africa' and 'Empire-Builders in Australia' proudly praised women who contributed to the consolidation of the British Empire.<sup>37</sup>

After the Second World War, this imperial character remained, but it was gradually modified to accommodate the new post-war reality. In November 1947, the NFWI held a two-day conference on Colonial Empire at Chatham House, inviting ten students from colonies. According to the report, 135 members from 43 Country Federations and sixteen other visitors also attended the conference.<sup>38</sup> Speakers for the conference included 'Sir Bernard Bourdillon (late Chief Secretary of Ceylon, ex-Governor of Nigeria, and

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<sup>34</sup> *Home & Country*, April 1937, 175.

<sup>35</sup> *Home & Country*, April 1941, 79; May 1941, 102.

<sup>36</sup> *Home & Country*, December 1943, 183-184.

<sup>37</sup> *Home & Country*, June 1928, 270-271; July 1928, 340-342

<sup>38</sup> *Thirty-first Annual Report of the NFWI*, 1947, 9. According to the minutes of the NFWI International Sub-Committee, conference attendance was confined to members who would speak to the Institutes, about which the Middlesex members raised a question. See WL, 5FWI/ D/2/1/1, Box 146, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 23 September 1947.

member of the Colonial and Economic and Development Council), Miss Harford (member of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee of the Colonial Office), Sir William McLean (member of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies 1932–8, and previously of the Egyptian and Sudan Civil Service), and Sir Frank Stockdale (Advisor on Development Planning at the Colonial Office and with long experience of West Indian administration)<sup>39</sup>. In 1948, an article published in *Home & Country* reporting on this conference appealed its readers as follows:

To many Institutes members – and other people – we can take the mere fact of the existence of this vast network of 36 countries containing 63 million people in widely different stages of development, all moving slowly towards the ultimate goal of self-government. Our relations with them are passing gradually from trusteeship to partnership, and it is felt important that progress should be at a pace slightly ahead of, rather than slightly behind, the capacity of the Colonial peoples... and what can the Institutes give? The Colonial students present were evidently intensely interested, they welcomed every chance of studying Institute work, and only asked for more. To them the Institute member can offer hospitality (through the Victoria League or the National Federation), and the opportunity to see more of our way of life, to the Institutes tentatively starting overseas a helping hand wherever contact can be made.<sup>40</sup>

As this quote shows, with the relationship between metropole and colonies ‘transforming from trusteeship to partnership’, the executives of the NFWI believed new roles had emerged. Duplicating old notions of a ‘civilising mission’, the WI, as a women’s voluntary organization, was now meant to lead colonial people to become decent members of self-governing civil society. Indeed, the main international activities carried out by the NFWI in the 1940s and 1950s consisted of providing hospitality visitors and students from

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<sup>39</sup> *Home & Country*, January 1948, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



abroad (many of them from colonies) and teaching them how to administrate women's organizations. Some WI members went abroad to spread the WI movement and to help individuals form similar groups in their home countries.

Importantly, these international activities were conducted in collaboration with both state and non-state institutions. For example, the following article printed in *Home & Country* in 1954 demonstrates that some requests to offer hospitality to overseas guests and international students came from the British Council and the Colonial Office, and were carried out in collaboration with other voluntary organizations. Also, NFWI offered courses and lectures on the colonial empire for other women's groups such as the Corona Club through Denman College.

Now a great deal is undertaken at the request of the Colonial Office and the British Council in introducing foreign and colonial students in this country to our activities in the Institutes and at Denman College. We are represented on the Advisory Committee on Social Development at the Colonial Office and are frequently asked to arrange tours for foreign and colonial students in our counties, or to speak at colonial courses run by the Y.W.C.A., or even to run, for the first time in 1953, a special small course at Denman College for the Corona Club, a society of wives of officials and colonial students who are anxious to start voluntary organizations like our own when they return to the Colonies. How often nowadays does one meet a colonial student attending a course at Denman College!<sup>41</sup>

The NFWI appointed representatives for various institutions. For instance, in 1952, apart from the ACWW, the NFWI sent representatives to organizations including the Equal Pay for Equal Work Committee, the National Council of Social Service, and the Women's Voluntary Service

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<sup>41</sup> *Home & Country*, March 1954, 82.

Advisory Committee.<sup>42</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, the relationship between the NFWI and the Colonial Office seems to have been especially close. Representatives from the NFWI attended committees and sub-committees on colonial welfare and colonial women that were held at the Colonial Office, and the NFWI representative was a member of the Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee, formed by the Colonial Office in 1942. Many of the discussions on colonial welfare in the NFWI International Sub-Committee were undertaken following requests or recommendations from Colonial Office committees.<sup>43</sup> According to the NFWI *Annual Report for the Year 1953*, ‘the International Sub-committee has worked in close touch with the Colonial Office in matters dealing with the welfare and instruction of Colonial Students’ in the UK, and ‘the NFWI is represented on a sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on Social Development in the Colonies’.<sup>44</sup> This indicates what the Colonial Office expected from the NFWI: filling gaps in social welfare in colonies, especially for women, as well as for colonial students at home. The NFWI itself acknowledged this, as its *Annual Report for the Year 1958* revealed. ‘A number of these visitors are from Colonial territories and their visits are of course the result of the policy of the Colonial Office, so it is very appropriate that institutes should be represented on a Colonial Office Committee concerned with the education and welfare of these visitors’.<sup>45</sup> One of the most appealing colonial welfare projects conducted by the NFWI in the 1950s was the formation of WIs in Malaya. In the next section, I will focus on the issue.

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<sup>42</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1952*, 50–51.

<sup>43</sup> See the files of the International Sub-Committee, WL, 5FWI/A/1/1.

<sup>44</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1953*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1958*, 19.

### **Colonial welfare and the NFWI – an example in Malaya**

As early as 1950, a paper from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) came before the Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee stressing the 'great need' to start women's organizations in the 'backward countries'. In the paper, WI was specially mentioned. Resulting from discussions at a working party especially appointed for this purpose by the Colonial Office, and in which a representative from the NFWI was invited to serve, the NFWI began to consider their possible involvement. In the discussion of the International Sub-Committee on 11 July 1950, it was pointed out that 'it seemed possible that a suggestion might be made that organizers went out to start Women's Institutes as it was recognized to be unwise for such a scheme to be in the hands of Government Officials'.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, the possibility of NFWI involvement in the formation of WIs in colonies had already been considered at the beginning of the 1950s, in collaboration with the Colonial Office. Cooperating with other women's non-governmental groups, the NFWI took on the role of encouraging the organization of colonial women. In the same committee, it was further suggested that 'in order to be in a position to give advice W.I. members who had experience of life in the colonies might be invited to come together for a discussion'.<sup>47</sup> Three months later, during the International Sub-Committee meeting on 10 October 1950, a general discussion was held on 'whether the pattern of Women's Institutes was suitable for these backward areas with mixed populations'. As a result, the following three points were raised when considering forming WI in colonies:

- a) [T]he teaching of practical skills as an essential starting point

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<sup>46</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/23, Box 20, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 11 July 1950.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

- b) [T]he W.I. pattern could be of great value but needed adaptation to suit individual circumstances
- c) [I]t was better that any move towards W.I.s or similar groups should be made by the people themselves rather than by officials or outside organisations<sup>48</sup>

Since 1950, the NFWI generally cooperated with the Colonial Office, and especially the Colonial Social Welfare Advisory Committee, to provide advice and hospitality to colonial students in the UK for training, without getting involved in starting WIs in colonies directly. However, in July 1952 a sudden request came to the NFWI. Lady Templar, wife of the British high commissioner in Malaya, wrote to the NFWI to request it send a training organizer to Malaya to start WIs there. Costs including living expenses, basic pay, clothing allowance, and round-trip travel would be borne by the Malayan government, not the NFWI.<sup>49</sup>

Since 1948, a state of emergency had been imposed on people in Malaya, where a communist guerrilla insurgency opposing British rule had spread, and the newly appointed High Commissioner for Malaya, Sir Gerald Templar, used psychological, social, and propagandistic means in conjunction with military action in order to draw popular attention away from the insurgents. In order to contain the insurgency and to keep Malaya under British control, as well as to combat related delinquency, he sought to develop a unified, stable, and multi-ethnic community in Malaya, a pluralistic society composed of Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Women and the youth were expected to play important roles in the process. Thus, to the British, forming WIs in Malaya was a part of colonial policy in the decolonization era than a social welfare aid for 'deprived areas'. Indeed, as T. N. Harper maintained regarding the

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<sup>48</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/22 Box 20, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 10 October 1950.

<sup>49</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/2 Box 35, private session minutes, Executive Committee, June 1952.

situation in Malaya after the Second World War, social welfare became one of the important tools of colonial administration. Immediately after the Second World War, the Malayan government had tried to transplant British-style trade unionism. While many indigenous voluntary organizations and local women's organizations were involved in social activities, especially since the inter-war years, the British still wanted to take the initiative on social welfare in their late colonial state in Malaya.<sup>50</sup> Introducing the British WI movement in Malaya was one of such attempts.

There are few studies on WIs in Malaya,<sup>51</sup> and it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine to what extent WIs in Malaya actually bettered the lives of indigenous women or maintained British control over local society. Harper points out that the WI movement in Malaya involved a first generation of Malay female administrators, some of whom were trained in social welfare in the UK, and many who were English-educated.<sup>52</sup> Using NFWI documents, this section describes how the NFWI engaged in this project and what the formation of WIs in Malaya meant for the NFWI rather than for people in Malaya.

At the request of Lady Temper, in a private session among executives of the NFWI, the selection of candidates to send to Malaya from NFWI Headquarters staff began in July 1952. From five short-listed women, the selection committee narrowed down their choice to two women: Miss Margaret Herbertson and Miss Viola Williams.<sup>53</sup> NFWI documents do not suggest that these women were long-established NFWI executives, nor titled ladies, which makes finding biographical information difficult. However, it is

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<sup>50</sup> Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*.

<sup>51</sup> Apart from a study by Harper (*ibid*), the formation of WIs in Malaya is mentioned in Lenore Manderson, 'The Shaping of the Kaum Ibu (Women's Section) of the United Malays National Organisation', *Signs*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1977, 210–228.

<sup>52</sup> Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, 314.

<sup>53</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/3 Box 36, private session minutes, Office and Finance Sub-Committee, 23 July 1952.

certain that both had a higher-educational background and some international experience. According to an introduction in *Home & Country*, Herbertson was born in Germany and brought up abroad: 'During the war, she served in Special Operations in the Middle East and Italy, as Intelligence Officer and Education Officer. After demobilization, she went to Oxford and took an Honours Degree in History and a Diploma in Public and Social Administration. She also spent some months in a Boy's Approved School, a Children's Residential Home and a Magistrate's Court and on Family Case Work'. She joined the NFWI as Public Questions General Organizer in October 1950<sup>54</sup> and it was not long before she attracted attention from NFWI executives as an outstanding woman. As early as in a private session of the NFWI Organisation Sub-Committee in 1951, 'it was noted that Miss Herbertson had made a very good impression in the counties, and that both the matter of her talks and the manner in which she gave them were greatly appreciated'. Thus the Sub-Committee agreed that she should be given practical experience of formations and Annual Meetings as soon as possible, because 'the Committee was reminded that Miss Herbertson has not had much Organisation experience'.<sup>55</sup> This offers a glimpse into how the NFWI executives found Herbertson a competent woman, included her in the NFWI Headquarters, and offered her experience as an organizer.

Williams' situation was similar. She joined the headquarter staff in September 1950 as an Agricultural Organiser. She was trained at Reading University and held a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Diploma in Horticulture. After working as head gardener at a school in Somerset and at Cheltenham Ladies' College, she worked as Assistant Horticultural Officer in Wiltshire. During the war, she served in Burma.<sup>56</sup> According to another article introducing Williams to readers, she had been a WI member since 1934 and came from a family with

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<sup>54</sup> *Home & Country*, March 1951, 85.

<sup>55</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/2 Box 35, private session minutes, Organisation Sub-Committee, 14 September 1951.

<sup>56</sup> *Home & Country*, January 1951, 21.

lively WI sympathies. Her father had been an active helper in WI drama and choirs, and her stepmother had been a group convener for years. Her home was in a very small village near Salisbury, Wiltshire, where water supply was non-existent at that time. It is possible that this background was regarded as rendering her suitable for the work in Malaya.<sup>57</sup>

As a result, it was decided that the NFWI would send Herbertson first to Malaya for six months, and at some later stage Williams would follow up the work she began.<sup>58</sup> In September 1952, in the Office and Finance Sub-Committee, it was reported that Herbertson had received a contract letter through the Crown Agents.<sup>59</sup> She arrived at Malaya in October 1952, and began her work. According to an article in *Home & Country* that reported about her planned departure to Malaya, she brought many kinds of simple visual aids concerning such topics as child care, hygiene, gardening, plain sewing, and toy making to show what the NFWI was expected to teach to women in Malaya.<sup>60</sup> This was shared by a WI member who had lived in Malaya with her husband at the end of the 1930s. In her letter titled 'Helping Kampong Women in Malaya', she described her experience of having taught Malay women how to feed their babies four-hourly (and not continually as they usually did), how to wash bottles and keep them in boiled water, how to put on a nappy without pricking the baby with the pin, and how to keep a cot sweet and clean with sheets and waterproofs – that is, the 'modern hygienic' child-rearing method. She seemed to be sure that her advice was welcomed and appreciated by local residents, and dispersed among them.<sup>61</sup>

*Home & Country's* January 1953 issue printed a letter from Herbertson in Malaya. According to her letter, she formed the first WI at a village called

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<sup>57</sup> *Home & Country*, April 1953, 152.

<sup>58</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/3, Box 36, private session minutes, Executive Committee, 24 July 1952.

<sup>59</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/3, Box 36, minutes of Office and Finance Sub-Committee, 24 September 1952.

<sup>60</sup> *Home & Country*, September 1952, 261.

<sup>61</sup> *Home & Country*, October 1952, 315.

Balik Plau on the Island of Penang on 5th November 1952, within about three weeks of her arrival. The Chairman was a local elderly lady who had experienced the pilgrimage to Mecca, entitling her to call herself Haji as a prefix to her name. As she was illiterate, she signed the WI rules with a large cross. The Secretary, named Che Sayang binti Mohhammed Saad, was a younger woman who could write Malay in the Latin script. In a gathering at a Malay school, Herbertson explained the aims and objectives of the WI movement through an interpreter. According to her letter, she had succeeded in forming the first Malayan WI so soon because Lady Templer had made arrangements before her arrival. Templer had toured nine states and two settlements, forming temporary organizing committees in each, with which Herbertson chiefly worked. However, as Herbertson described in the letter, it was more difficult to start a WI in other states, because 'it was a new idea that women should come together and Malaya was a country at war'.<sup>62</sup>

Another letter printed in a later *Home & Country* issue stated that the most popular activities in Malayan WIs were sewing (particularly for children's clothes), embroidery, and instruction in knitting and crochet, although the latter was, as Herbertson herself admitted, inappropriate for the climate in Malaya. On the other hand, health talks proved not to be so popular, although NFWI members considered them important for people in Malaya. The 'obstacle' for the prevailing 'modern' method, Herberston told British readers, was 'granny', who told young mothers not to bother with what the Health Sister said but rather to stick to the old methods, 'which were often dangerous'.<sup>63</sup> In this situation, Herberston asked UK readers to send rags and pieces of patterns for various crafts with visual instructions. While WI members responded to this request willingly, as we can see from letters to *Home & Country*,<sup>64</sup> this was subject to criticism from at least one

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<sup>62</sup> *Home & Country*, January 1953, 13.

<sup>63</sup> *Home & Country*, April 1953, 115.

<sup>64</sup> *Home & Country*, April 1953, 131.



WI member. In the following letter, entitled 'the right teaching in Malaya', Mrs Avery of Sevenoaks, Kent, questioned the way Herbertson organized WI in Malaya:

Dear Editor – It seems to me such a pity that the W.I. is apparently taking the easy way out in Malaya and teaching people, with their beautiful natural handicrafts, to do patchwork and smocking and make sponge cakes. The W.I. had surely an unprecedented opportunity to teach them elementary hygiene, vegetable cultivation, care of hens: such things would help the women to improve their standard of living, rather than impoverish their culture with alien arty-crafts.<sup>65</sup>

In response, the editor printed this explanation from Herbertson:

The programmes of the Malaya Institutes *must* consist of activities which the members themselves like and ask to learn: colourful, new crafts make a very great appeal. It is certainly intended to introduce talks on hygiene, child care and food values: in fact, this is already being done, but the process must be tactful and gradual, for there is no real desire to give up old-established customs... for some of these simple countrywomen to come together at all socially, at WI meetings, is a big step and this initial enthusiasm to create attractive things with their hands must not be lost. A too rapid concentration on less attractive "improvement" will cost the Institutes their membership all together.<sup>66</sup>

There was clearly a gap between what the British WI wished to teach for the 'improvement' of local women's lives and what indigenous people in Malaya actually welcomed. It is not clear whether this gap finally lessened, but it is certain that British paternalism in the form of 'modernity' clashed with local rules and customs. After returning to England, Herbertson again talked about the difficulty of introducing 'new ways', especially 'to Malaysians

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<sup>65</sup> *Home & Country*, September 1953, 311.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

who were Muslims and had many religious taboos which affected such matters as hygiene, bringing up children and health'. Unlike the impression the previous *Home & Country* article about the first WI in Malaya might give us, as Herbertson admitted, the movement was largely dependent on a small handful of European women who were constantly moving to other posts.<sup>67</sup>

After staying in Malaya for about six months, Herbertson left Malaya in May 1953 and her work was taken over by Williams, who was also accepted by Lady Templer and who worked in Malaya until at the end of 1953. After returning to the UK, Herbertson was frequently asked to speak about her experience in Malaya at various events, including the NFWI Annual General Meeting. Some counties, including Gloucestershire, also invited her as a speaker. However, she decided to resign from the NFWI staff in December 1954 to 'replenish her ideas and energies through some new sources'.<sup>68</sup>

By the beginning of 1954 when Williams finished her duty, there were 250 WIs and 40 Territorial Associations in Malaya.<sup>69</sup> However, around this time, when the NFWI itself started to set up projects for international work (as will be discussed later), it faced difficulties in finding a British organizer to go to Malaya. In November 1954, because the first vacancy advertisement produced no results, the NFWI placed it in the *Times* and the *Telegraph*. Because the only application received was from a woman aged 50 who could not drive a car, the NFWI even decided to lift the age limit.<sup>70</sup> Though this difficulty finding applicants seems to have been resolved later, this episode demonstrates that the NFWI recruited its international workers widely beyond WI.

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<sup>67</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/24, Box 22, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 6 October 1953.

<sup>68</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/3, Box 36, private session minutes, Office and Finance Sub-Committee, 27 October 1954.

<sup>69</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/24, Box 22, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 24 January 1954.

<sup>70</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/3/3/ Box 36, private session minutes, Office and Finance Sub-Committee, 24 November 1954/ *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1954*, 6.

At the same time, the NFWI started to train people in Malaya as WI organizers, in order to 'localize' Malayan WI and to shed its European-led nature. Williams stated that Malaya presented the challenge of having a 'very thin crust of educated people to help the mass of uneducated people who were clamouring for help'.<sup>71</sup> Miss Lomas, Chairman of the National Union of Malayan WIs, also made a request to the NFWI, asking that they train a Malayan in England who would be appointed as an organizing secretary. The NFWI Organisation Sub-Committee showed hesitation, pointing out the problems involved in such a project, including lack of experience on the part of the NFWI, the risk that the trainee might prove unsuitable during the training or be unwilling to return to Malaya, and the difficulty of adapting the pattern of a mature movement of 37 years standing to the very different pattern that was necessary in Malaya.<sup>72</sup> However, the Malayan Union continued to stress the importance of training Malaysians in England. In 1956, Mrs Davis, the Secretary-Organiser of the Malayan WIs, reported that her non-European successor had been appointed. The appointee, Miss Minuira Ma, was a Chinese Muslim girl. As such, she was 'expected to be acceptable to the Malaysians'. This time, the plan was made to bring her to England for six months of training.<sup>73</sup> The NFWI decided to sponsor her. However, Miss Ma was a refugee from Communist China and not yet a citizen of Malay.<sup>74</sup> Mrs Davis appears to have concentrated her effort on finding a suitable 'local' candidate, though she described the difficulty she faced 'because of there being so few trained Malays to carry on'. Nevertheless, she found another woman, named Che Kamsiah bte Ibrahim.

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<sup>71</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/24, Box22, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 24 January 1954.

<sup>72</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/24 Box22, minutes of Organisation Sub-Committee, 9 September 1954.

<sup>73</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/25 Box23, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 3 January 1956.

<sup>74</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/25, Box23, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 7 February 1956.

In cooperation with the YWCA, the training programme in England for these two women started, though Miss Ma eventually resigned.<sup>75</sup> The NFWI documents on these training projects reveal the racial stereotypes and cultural or religious friction with this only one left Asian visitor, Che Kamisiah. Because she was a 'strict Muslim' who was 'unable to eat any food which came from the pig and forbidden to touch a dog', the Norfolk county office had difficulty in finding a hostess. From this experience, the NFWI International Sub-Committee recommended that the NFWI only accept one more trainee, and that training should take at most four months: two with YWCA and two with NFWI.<sup>76</sup> A British observer described Miss Che Kamsiah as having the 'typical Malay character of not liking hard work, and lack of perseverance', but being 'meticulous over financial affairs'.<sup>77</sup>

In 1957, when the Federation of Malaya became independent, Mrs Davis was invited to the NFWI in England, where she talked about the WI movement in Malaya. Though she still thought that training state organizers was essential for continuing the movement in Malaya, 'which even with these organisers might not survive the departure of Europeans for very long', her words suggest the changing times. She continued that 'even if it did not flourish in the future, it had been politically necessary at the time Lady Templer started it'.<sup>78</sup> Judging from her statement, the WI movement in Malaya remained basically British-led, and seems not to have succeeded in becoming an indigenous voluntary grassroots movement.

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<sup>75</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/25, Box23, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 12 June 1956; Executive Committee, 26 June 1956.

<sup>76</sup> WL, 5FWI/A.1/1/25, Box23, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 18 September 1956.

<sup>77</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/26, Box 24, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 8 January 1957.

<sup>78</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/26, Box 24, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 9 April 1957. Another difficulty she pointed out was difference in attitude among races. Especially, she said, 'the Chinese did not take to the movement very easily as their main preoccupation was to earn money so Institutes in the Chinese Kampongs had not flourished'.

At this stage, it is difficult to estimate to what extent the WI in Malaya bettered indigenous women's lives, or what became of it after 1957. However, the experience of forming WIs in Malaya did cause some change in the NFWI international work. Although NFWI had begun to redefine its mandate in terms of international work after the end of the Second World War, the request from Lady Templer and the resultant work accelerated the expansion of NFWI's international activities. In April 1953, the NFWI International Sub-Committee recognized that 'the scope and the bulk of the work handled by International Sub-Committee had increased considerably during the last few years and showed every signs of continuing increase'. Thus, while the NFWI 'Executive Committee still had to adhere to their policy of economy,' the International Sub-Committee noted the necessity of increasing its staff, especially because there had already been 41 applications for Herbertson to speak on Malaya. Among various works, the committee had been involved in cooperation with international organizations, international education at Denman College Schools, hospitality for foreign visitors, and lectures for WIs: 'the committee thought that Colonial welfare was perhaps worthy of claiming'.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, the successful example (at least in the short term) in Malaya seems to have stimulated other parts of the empire for similar activities. An article in *Home & Country* in 1953 reports the increase of enquiries and visitors from overseas.<sup>80</sup> The annual report of NFWI also noted that 'there is no doubt that the publicity given to the starting of Women's Institutes in Malaya encouraged many of these visitors to pay us a visit to enquire about our aims and objects and our methods of organization'.<sup>81</sup> A WI member from Surrey saw the example of Malaya as applicable to other colonies. Her letter to *Home & Country* suggested that in order to improve the social conditions in

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<sup>79</sup> WL, 5FVI/A/1/1/23, Box 21, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 28 April 1953.

<sup>80</sup> *Home & Country*, September 1953, 295

<sup>81</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1953*, 18.

Jamaica, which she insisted were responsible for the recent increase in Jamaican immigration, the NFWI should help to form WIs in Jamaica. She continued that ‘the impression created has been intensified by discussions in the Women’s Institutes in Malaya suggests to us that the situation might be improved by a similar organization in Jamaica, since the reports indicate that in country districts Jamaican Women’s Federation and similar organizations find it difficult to get in touch with the individual housewife’.<sup>82</sup> These examples suggest how the experience in Malaya may have stimulated the NFWI’s concept of international work.

In this context, at the Annual General Meeting of the NFWI in 1954, it was resolved that the promotion of international understanding and friendship should be one of the NFWI’s objects. With this resolution, in addition to offering hospitality to visitors and students, in the 1960s the NFWI was involved in various kinds of international works, including those to help the economic and social development in poor countries that included colonies and former colonies. The NFWI supported the ‘Freedom from Hunger Campaign’ run by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.<sup>83</sup> The biggest project was the ‘Karamoja project’, which established a farm institute in Karamoja, Uganda in order to educate the youth of Karamoja and enlighten them about their country’s problems, which included over-grazing and erosion.<sup>84</sup> It may be argued that anachronistic imperialist ‘missionary’ works by British women gradually transformed into modern international works for developing countries with the cooperation of the United Nations, and that the former and the latter often overlapped. As we have seen, especially in Malaya in the 1950s, the word ‘colonial’ sometimes overlapped with the word ‘international’.

It is important to ask to what extent the international mind-set of the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> WL, 5/FWI/G/1/3/2/01 BOX242, *Achievement: the WI Contribution to the Freedom from Hunger Campaign*, April 1967.

<sup>84</sup> *Home & Country*, January 1962, 9.

NFWI Headquarters and certain WI members was shared across all of the British WIs in England and Wales. This question is difficult to answer because the NFWI and WIs have been diverse entities, in terms of social class, region, religion, political orientation, and ethnicity. While some letters to *Home & Country* show that members expressed their keen interest in NFWI's international works, especially in colonies, other NFWI documents also reveal indifference to such activities among members to whom the 1954 NFWI slogan 'think internationally' might be expected to appeal. For example, in 1955, the annual report of the NFWI stated that among several lecture courses offered at Denman College, 'United Nations and Ourselves' and 'Home Life in the East' did not attract as many applications as had been expected. The most popular lecture on international affairs was 'A Journey to Holland'.<sup>85</sup> To the disappointment of Headquarters, in 1957 lectures on the United Nations had to be cancelled due to the lack of applicants. As for the NFWI activities in Malaya, the International Sub-Committee requested that a map be printed in *Home & Country* clearly indicating Malaya's geographic location, as WI members in the UK seemed so vague about it.<sup>86</sup> In another International Sub-Committee, as Herbertson worried that members would be confused about who paid for her and Williams to go to Malaya, it was agreed that 'on every appropriate occasion it should be explained that it was the Malayan Government and not the NFWI which bore the cost'.<sup>87</sup> This may imply that there was criticism from WI members who opposed the NFWI spending money for people abroad, rather than for UK members.

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<sup>85</sup> *NFWI Annual Report for the Year 1955*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> WL, 5FWI/A/1/1/24, Box 22, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 12 January 1954.

<sup>87</sup> WL, 5FWI/ A/1/1/24, Box 22, minutes of International Sub-Committee, 6 October 1953.

## Conclusion

In the 1950s, the NFWI treated colonial welfare as an important part of its international work in close cooperation with official institutions including the Colonial Office and Colonial government. Malaya is a good example of the supplementary relationship between official and non-governmental actors in the provision of social welfare beyond borders. It was also important that such international work was carried out with other voluntary organizations. While the NFWI's attitude toward colonial people was still paternalistic, reflecting the out-dated imperial idea of a 'civilising mission', its activities changed after the Second World War. They became more actively involved in the development of welfare in the colonies, which were intended to be on their way to future independence. Their main purposes were teaching modern and hygienic home-care and child-rearing and organizing grassroots civic women's associations. It is doubtful how helpful these activities actually were to indigenous people, and this information could not be obtained from the NFWI documents. However, it is of great significance that the formation of WIs in Malaya, which was essentially an imperial project undertaken at the behest of the wife of the High Commissioner and in accordance with a recommendation from UNESCO, was regarded as the symbol of international work in the new era. While the NFWI remained primarily a domestic organization, in the 1960s it was involved in various developmental welfare activities for 'deprived countries' under the 'Freedom from Hunger Campaign', again in cooperation with various governmental and non-official institutions.

This paper reflects the early stages of my research, and there is still much left to be studied. For example, I could not consider the discussions at the Colonial Welfare Advisory Committee, which will be vital to clarify the relationship and division of roles between the Colonial Office and voluntary organizations, as well as among different organizations including the NFWI. At this stage, I cannot suggest how colonial welfare activities undertaken by



voluntary organizations in the 1950s connect to today's humanitarian activities by NGOs, nor, as far as the NFWI is concerned, when the overlap between the word 'colonial' and 'international' disappeared. Nonetheless, it is certain that the change of metropolitan–colonial relationships from imperial to international in the 1950s and 1960s is a key to understanding these subjects.

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# ‘The Politics of Exhibiting Fine Art in the Soviet Union: the British Council’s activities 1955-1960’

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the politics lying behind the British Council’s selection of British art work offered for exhibition in the Soviet Union and its satellites during the early Cold War period, roughly during the mid-1950s and reaching a peak in the year 1960, when a major British Fine Art Exhibition was first held in the Soviet Union. They are important years because they cover the start of a remarkable cultural relationship between Britain and the Soviet Union. Focusing on the 1950s, it seems apparent that, in the case of the Soviet Union, the Council departed from its usual formula for cultural exchange – a balance between various genres – because the Soviets placed great emphasis on art in the form of large-scale cultural manifestations and were prone to find examples of Western decadence in visual forms. The Council’s strategy throughout the period was characterized by compromise and accommodation in order to meet Soviet ‘requirements’; so much so that internal correspondence reveals angst-ridden decisions about what examples of British visual culture might be acceptable to Soviet tastes. In a sense, this amounted to the ‘Other’ both defining and consuming British culture. What I would like to show, however, is the way in which the Council’s undoubted

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willingness to compromise was in fact a positive thing, and in some cases bore fruit. With shrewd judgment, the Council managed to showcase a good and broadly representative range of art in the Soviet Union during the period in question, including pieces of modern British art, many of which had hidden messages, which they hoped would reach the Soviet public. The relationship between the British Council and the Soviet Union turned out to be somewhat unique in the prominence that the arts sector was given, rather than education, which was traditionally the core of the Council's fieldwork around the world.

**Key words:** The British Council, the Soviet Union, cultural diplomacy, Fine Art Exhibition ('British Paintings: 1720-1960')

### **Introduction**

It is always difficult to gauge how art influences politics, whether at the level of an individual piece, or as a movement. There has been much research dedicated to exploring the influence of politics on art, but much less in the other direction. One need go no further than the great era of Soviet Realism and its relationship to strands of Bolshevism to see an example of this predominantly top-down relationship. It is in fact during the great ideological struggle between Communism and Capitalism, that the interaction between politics and art appears at its most transparent, yet, this paper argues towards greater complexity through an examination of the politics of the British Council's selection of British art works offered to the USSR as part of reciprocal cultural manifestations during the early Cold War period.

When 'culture', generally defined as 'the creation and communication of memory, ideology, emotions, life styles, scholarly and artistic works, and other symbols', is applied to the study of international relations, it amounts

to 'the sharing and transmitting of consciousness within and across national boundaries, and the cultural approach as a perspective that pays particular attention to this phenomenon'<sup>1</sup>. In the climate of hope for worldwide peace that accompanied the end of the Second World War, Ruth McMurry and Muna Lee, both researchers of the US State Department, operated with what to modern eyes may seem a rather naïve definition of what a nation's culture is: 'the sum total of its achievement; its own expression of its own personality; its way of thinking and acting. Its program of cultural relations abroad is its method of making these things known to foreigners'.<sup>2</sup> In *The Cultural Approach* (1947), they recognised that if peace was to prevail, countries needed to understand each other's history, politics, way of life – in short, their culture. Despite much goodwill, however, and although they pointed to a new consensus which held that cultural exchange and mutual understanding was best pursued free from political interference, latent mistrust about the intentions and motives of other nations ensured that governments carefully controlled cultural dialogue. According to Archibald MacLeish, former Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs (1944-45), who contributed an introduction to their book, the overriding aim of 'cultural relations' is that of correcting the 'image of that nation formed abroad by those who only know it through its soldiers and diplomats or its men of business...'.<sup>3</sup> This leads to the conclusion that the condition of possibility for 'cultural relations' is, a) that there is always a strong image of the other, and b) that this image is always false and therefore in need of correction. 'Cultural relations' aim to dispel these 'falsehoods', and to insert into the minds of the other the 'real culture' of the nation. However, this idealised view does not always fit with

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<sup>1</sup> Akira Iriye, 'Culture and International History', in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth McMurry and Muna Lee, *The Cultural Approach: Another Way in International Relations*, Chapel Hill 1947, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Archibald MacLeish, 'Introduction', in McMurry and Lee, IX.

reality on the ground: these American scholars of the period and the British Foreign Office differed in their view of how to use ‘cultural relations’. As will be argued in detail below, the British Foreign Office seemed ready to relinquish control over its own cultural image to the Soviet authorities – at least in part.

With the outbreak of the Cold War, American cultural projection was once again tainted by the charge of hard ‘ideology’, and the falling (rather than the drawing) of the ‘Iron Curtain’ signalled the last performance of soft – though never benign – cultural diplomacy on the international stage. Henceforth, the term ‘cultural propaganda’ best described the understanding of the Cold War combatants in the exchange of art and artists in which culture was used to conduct a proxy war between the superpowers in lieu of physical conflict. This period has been euphemistically called, the ‘long peace’.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, cultural contestation between the United States and the Soviet Union has been analysed by a great number of scholars.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, detailed research on British cultural diplomacy, which was the exclusive remit of the British Council is by and large lacking.<sup>6</sup> The few

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<sup>4</sup> See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War*, New York: Oxford University Press 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938–1950*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1981; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War*, Basingstoke: Macmillan 1997; Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*, Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1998; Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press 2003; Richard T. Arnt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books 2005.

<sup>6</sup> In the British context, scholarly attention in this field of cultural propaganda has been given to the activities of the Official Information Services, intelligence agencies, and BBC transmissions, as well as covert propaganda strategies. See, for example, Douglas Busk, *The Craft of Diplomacy: Mechanics and Development of National Representation Overseas*, London: Pall Mall Press 1967; Robert Marett, *Through the Back Door: An Inside View of Britain's Overseas Information Services*, Oxford: Pergamon Press 1968; Fife Clark, *The*

scholarly works that are available such as by J. M. Lee's have promoted theses that characterise Britain's post-war diplomatic activity as passive.<sup>7</sup> This, though not without its faults generally, might go some way towards explaining why the 'British case' has not drawn as much attention as it deserves. However, when it comes specifically to Britain's cultural diplomacy towards the Soviet Union and its satellite countries, Britain's strategy was far from passive, and should be considered as active and even provocative: culture was recruited as a way of gaining influence, as analysis of the relationship between the British Foreign Office and the British Council shows. As Black has noted, propaganda has 'become a regular peacetime instrument of foreign policy for most states, be they large or small',<sup>8</sup> but the very lack of physical warfare and a clear 'enemy' fostered conditions in which doubts and fears emerged, leading to a state of 'psychological warfare', and as Phillip M. Taylor argues, cultural propaganda 'increasingly assuming a political dimension'.<sup>9</sup> When straightforward diplomatic tactics no longer met the more opaque political conditions, the British Council attempted to increase the influence of democratic public diplomacy in the USSR.

Exhibitions put on by the British Council backed by the British Government reflected a distinctive kind of 'Britishness', which may say as much about the tension between culture and politics in Britain as it does international relations. The paper rotates around the central question: what was exhibited under the auspices of the Foreign Office/British Council behind

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*Central Office of Information*, London: George Allen & Unwin 1970; Richard J. Aldrich, *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51*, London: Routledge 1992; Andrew Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945-53: The Information Research Department*, London: Routledge 2004.

<sup>7</sup> See J. M. Lee, 'British Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War: 1946-61', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 9/1 (1998), 112-34.

<sup>8</sup> John B. Black, *Organising the Propaganda Instrument: The British Experience*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1975, iv.

<sup>9</sup> Phillip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 234.

the Iron Curtain? More importantly, what brand of Britishness was purveyed, and why? We ought, I suggest, to be asking not how well such cultural offerings as Peter Brook's *Hamlet* (1955) were received, but how representative they were of the British visual cultural scene, drawing a distinction between representing the 'British way of life', its customs, traditions and mores expressed *in* British art on the one hand, and on the other, the British art scene itself.

This paper is based on archival research at the National Archives in London since the internal documents of the British Council are almost exclusively located there. Owing to the lack of accessible Russian-produced archival materials, however, a fuller analysis of official Soviet documents has not been possible. This is because, although in principle Russian archival material has been open for public inspection, the declassifying of archival documents is still in progress and full disclosure of any significant material related to cultural diplomacy is yet to come.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, 'The Survey of Documents and Manuscripts in the United Kingdom Relating to Russia and the Soviet Union' indicates that 'Little material relating to educational and cultural life in Russia or the Soviet Union has been found'<sup>11</sup>, whilst

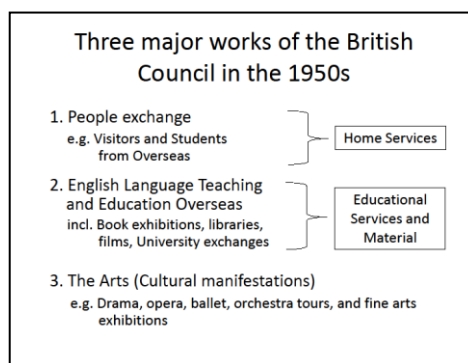


Table 1

<sup>10</sup> For example, the on-line database service called 'Access to Russian Archives', 'containing descriptions of approximately 80,000 archival fonds (record groups) from more than 20 guidebooks on Russian federal archives and 40 regional archives published from 1987 to 2004' is now available on the internet in Russian as well as in English transliteration, but the covering categories and period are still limited. – See <http://online.eastview.com/projects/ticfia/#ara>.

<sup>11</sup> Janet M. Hartley, 'The Survey of Documents and Manuscripts in the United Kingdom Relating to Russia and the Soviet Union' in *The Study of Russian History from British Archival Sources*, ed. Janet M. Hartley, London and New York: Mansell 1986, 15.



‘Inevitably, diplomatic material constitutes the largest category of records in the survey’<sup>12</sup> and ‘The amount of material relating to religious and scientific relations between Britain and Russia exceeded expectations’.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, since the focal point of this paper is to investigate the way in which the British side ‘anticipated’ and adjusted to the Soviets’ intention when projecting its national culture, the bulk of my archival research sheds light upon this largely neglected field of study.

### Background issues

The British Council is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), created in 1934, and operates under the auspices of the British Foreign Office. It was granted a Royal Charter in 1940, which defines its aims as promoting ‘a wider knowledge of [Britain] ... and the English language abroad and developing closer cultural relations between [Britain] ... and other countries...’.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the main work remit of the Council has always been to encourage people exchanges (especially young people) and English language education, so the post-war circumstances were not exceptional in that regard. (see, Table 1: ‘Three major works of the British Council in the 1950s’). The Director-General from 1954 to 1968, Paul Sinker, also describes how ‘Our main task is the making and fostering of contacts between

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>14</sup> Royal Charter (1940).

Cf. The current objectives of the Council under the Royal Charter and Bye-laws (1993) is:

- (a) promote a wider knowledge of Our United Kingdom;
- (b) develop a wider knowledge of the English language;
- (c) encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational co-operation between Our United Kingdom and other countries; or
- (d) otherwise promote the advancement of education.—Royal Charter and Bye-laws (London: British Council, 1993).

See also: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/structure/status> [Accessed 29/12/2013]

individual people'.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, throughout the Council's history, the arts sector has never been a dominant area. The allocation for the visual arts has been consistently less than 10%<sup>16</sup>, and the post-war period was actually even worse: huge financial cuts brought a real winter-hardship to the arts field. Table 2 ('The British Council: budget breakdown') shows how the Council only allocated 1% of its total budget to the arts-sector.<sup>17</sup>

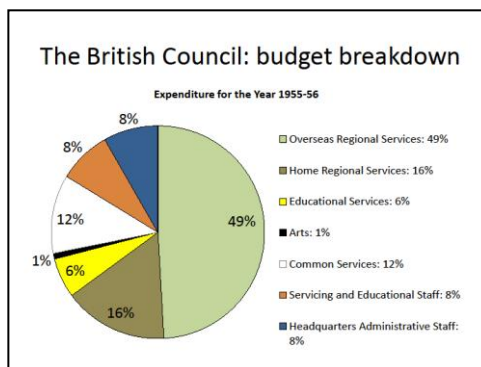


Table 2

Reflecting these unfavourable conditions, when the British Council's Soviet Relations Committee (SRC),<sup>18</sup> was set up in 1955 'to develop cultural relations with the U.S.S.R.',<sup>19</sup> with no exceptions, the committee tenaciously attempted to pursue the policy of promoting student and youth exchanges between Britain and the Soviet Union'.<sup>20</sup> However, it soon came to light that this 'was something on which the Russians were not keen.... [T]he Russians did not like student and youth exchanges and wanted major

<sup>15</sup> Paul Sinker, 'The British Council Now', *Economic Digest: A World Review*, London: Economic Digest Ltd. July 1959, 201.

<sup>16</sup> See in detail, Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: the First Fifty Years*, London: Jonathan Cape 1984.

<sup>17</sup> See *The British Council Annual Report: 1956-57*, 91-93.

<sup>18</sup> On this matter, see in detail, Aiko Watanabe, 'The British Council's Soviet Relations Committee: A Departure from its "Cultural Brief" or the Manifestation of an Inherent Political Tendency?', *Odysseus (The Journal of Area Studies)*, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo), 7, 2003, 74-95.

<sup>19</sup> 'Special British Council Number', *Economic Digest: A World View*, London: July 1959, 205.

<sup>20</sup> The National Archives: Public Record Office, Kew (hereafter TNA), BW1/502, 'The Financing of Major Manifestations to the Soviet Union', 31 March 1966, USSR and Eastern Europe (01/01/1962-31/12/1968).

manifestations...'.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there were only two suggestions left, but both seemed feasible: 'the organisation of glamorous public manifestations (theatre, music, ballet, etc.) or the patient multiplication of personal contacts between representative individuals'.<sup>22</sup> Archival documents suggest that the British Council chose both options, leaving behind English language education in its initial stage, were that the SRC wanted '(i) to bring influential Russians to this country in order that they should see with their own eyes that a lot of what they have been told about the West is false'; and '(ii) to create some effect on public opinion in the U.S.S.R. by means of 'major manifestations'.<sup>23</sup> As for the first option, it is inferred that the Soviet Union did not want to send especially young people to the West for fear that they should feel more freedom there and be influenced by western cultures. It was purely because of this possibility, however, that Britain wanted to welcome as many young Russian people to Britain as possible.

Indeed, there seems to have been several reasons why the Soviet side preferred and insisted upon large cultural manifestations to exchanges of people and English language education. Firstly, visual culture can be enjoyed and interpreted without language proficiency. As Richard Arnt argues 'The arts have always had the advantage of transcending language barriers',<sup>24</sup> this is probably the reason why language

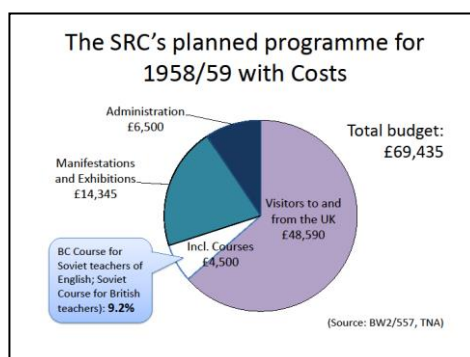


Table 3

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> David Kelly, 'Cultural Relations with Soviet Russia', in *The British Council Annual Report: 1956-57*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, BW2/519, 'Letter to Director-General from Nancy Parkinson, Controller, Home Division', 23 November 1955, Soviet Relations Committee: correspondence (1955-56).

<sup>24</sup> Richard T. Arnt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century*, Dulles, Virginia: Potomacs 2005, 360-61.

education was avoided in the first place by the SRC. Secondly, cultural manifestations have an enormous, spectacular impact on the public, for both sides.<sup>25</sup> The Russians wanted to show how impressive Tchaikovsky's music was, and Britain wanted to let the Russian public know that the Bolshoi is not the only ballet they should see. Thirdly, when dealing with the Soviet Union, the question of 'reciprocity' should not be overlooked, as the Soviets always set this policy for cultural manifestations in order to encourage a wider principle for cultural relations. That meant, for example, when four groups of six persons in the fields of science went in one direction the same scale of group visits was expected in return; a visit by a theatre company implied a theatre company in return. To finance each programme, basically, 'it was agreed that the exporting country should bear the cost of the fares of its delegations to the territory of the other, while the importing country would be responsible for arranging programmes and offering hospitality'.<sup>26</sup>

For most of the arts, the reciprocity policy worked well, because Britain had plenty of artistic forms with which to match those of the Soviet Union: for example, the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra [more traditional] or USSR State Symphony Orchestra for the London Philharmonic Orchestra or Hallé Orchestra; the Bolshoi Ballet for Sadler's Wells, and so on. Historically, the Russians were very good at performing arts, such as music, ballet, and dance, although they had some films to export, too. Ruth McMurry and Muna Lee argue that the direction of Soviet cultural propaganda was always towards what might be best described as high culture: 'the highest value was always placed on literature, art, music, the theatre, and the cinema',<sup>27</sup> whilst they also highlight the Soviet's eagerness for scientific exchanges too. To be sure, evidence suggests that by the 1950's the dominant features of the

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<sup>25</sup> See 'Special British Council Number', 205.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, BW2/532, 'Report on Activities: April 1955 to December 1956', Soviet Relations Committee: correspondence on matters of concern to the Committee including affairs of the British Soviet Friendship Society (1956-57).

<sup>27</sup> McMurry and Lee, 114.

Soviet's cultural relations programme were the scientific and technical elements.<sup>28</sup> Eleven months after the establishment of the SRC, the Committee's appraisal of what the Soviets wanted was '(1) to send delegations to this country which are directed primarily at the acquisition of technical knowledge, and (2) to get Soviet performances (ballet, musicians etc.) shown in Great Britain. They are not so interested in the straightforward professional exchange which is the first priority of the Soviet Relations Committee'.<sup>29</sup> In the late 1950s, in an interview with the British Ambassador for Moscow, D. P. Reilly, G. A. Zhukov, the president of the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries,<sup>30</sup> still insisted on proposing 'a big development of scientific and technical exchanges...'.<sup>31</sup> It seems that under the heading 'cultural exchanges' the Soviets wanted to push for scientific and technical exchanges. It is plain that the type of things that the SRC and the Soviet authorities

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, TNA, BW2/555, 'Notes presented at the meeting of the British Council Executive Committee – Soviet Relations Committee, "Exchanges with the U.S.S.R. from May 1957"', 10 July 1957, Soviet Relations Committee: draft agenda and matters for discussion (1957-59).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, BW2/532, 'Note on the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council', November 1955, Soviet Relations Committee: correspondence on matters of concern to the Committee including affairs of the British Soviet Friendship Society (1956-57).

<sup>30</sup> 'Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries' was established in February in 1958 to replace its forerunner, notorious VOKS ('All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries': 1925-58). G. A. Zhukov, former Chairman of the VOKS, was this time became the president, and most of the board members were also from the VOKS. According to the political advisor of Radio Europe, therefore, this 'new union is merely VOKS under another name'. – 'New Organization to Control "Friendship"', 25 April 1958, Radio Free Europe/Munich, Office of the Political Advisor, Background Information USSR (Box Folder-Report: 55-3-16), Open Society Archives.  
<http://fa.osaarchivum.org/background-reports?col=8&id=42427>[Accessed 30/12/2013]

<sup>31</sup> TNA, BW2/572, 'Letter to Miss H. Tripp, Secretary of the SRC from F.G.K Gallagher (F.O)', 6 January 1959, Soviet Relations Committee: correspondence, including scientific visitors from USSR; delegation to Moscow.

hoped to place under the umbrella concept of 'cultural exchange' was very different. Though there was a contest being fought between the Soviets and the SRC in terms of who managed to hold the balance of cultural trade profit, with the aim of cultural exports exceeding cultural imports by the largest margin possible, this was arguably not the case where technical and scientific exchanges occurred. Indeed, the reverse situation arose whereby the Soviets wished to import as much of this form of 'culture' from Britain as possible while the SRC resisted such attempts fiercely. It is even possible to say their underlying assumption was that the Soviet interest in 'culture' was somewhat of a veneer for what was a desire to gain technical expertise that would have very real tangible benefits to the economy of the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, this does not mean that the artistic side of cultural exchanges was unimportant, for they should be separated out into two distinct areas. The aim of the big artistic and musical manifestations was surely for prestige and the demonstrable celebration of the quality of Soviet art, the scientific exchanges had the more practical aim to significantly advance the Soviet's technological skill base. It is indicative of how important these cultural contacts were deemed to be that in the midst of the 1950s' financial stringency, 'glamorous' (read expensive) public manifestations were being envisaged and coming to fruition. Table 3 is the SRC's Programme of Events for the year 1958/59 with costs. After a couple of years of rather unhappy neglect, although the language teaching started with the exchange of teaching specialists in January 1958,<sup>33</sup> as we can see in the planned programme of the SRC for 1958/59, the proportion of education is much smaller. In spite of the rigid reciprocity policy, however, the only performing

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<sup>32</sup> See also, Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press Chapter 1, 1-27.

<sup>33</sup> '...as a result a course for twenty-eight Soviet teachers of English was held in Scotland this summer and a course for a similar number of British teachers of Russian was held in Moscow.' – *The British Council Annual Report: 1957-58*, 16.

arts that the Soviets had not got the equivalent for was 'drama'. Britain had a worldwide reputation for its theatrical performances of English dramatists such as Shakespeare but the Soviets, mainly because of the language problem, could never bring their dramas without translation, which was less appealing.

Although performances of Shakespeare were the most popular in the history of British theatre, domestically, theatre in 1950s Britain saw new phenomena. The young playwrights called the 'Angry Young Men', rejected establishment plays creating rebellious theatre. Also, what is called 'The Theatre of the Absurd', represented by Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter, brought new perspectives to the drama-scene in Britain. However, these distinctive theatre movements were not promoted overseas by the British Council – not just in the case of the Soviet Union, but basically anywhere. What they showed overseas was actually predominantly Shakespeare and the traditional canon of plays.<sup>34</sup> The reason for this reticence was that potential language problems were even a concern for the British side. In 1955, the SRC committee decided that 'Performances have limitations of language and hence should be confined to well-known classics – Shakespeare on our part, Chekov or something similar on theirs'.<sup>35</sup> This policy may also have

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<sup>34</sup> For example, see the list of drama performed by companies for the year 1955 in question: ENGLISH OPERA GROUP with 'The Turn of the Screw' [by Henry James] – *Schwetzingen, Munich; Florence Festival; Holland Festival; Knocke*. May-July 1955.

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE COMPANY with 'King Lear' and 'Much Ado about Nothing' – *Vienna; Zürich; Holland Festival*. June-July 1955.

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE COMPANY with 'King Lear' and 'Much Ado about Nothing' – *Berlin Festival, Hanover, Bremen, Hamburg; Copenhagen; Oslo*. September-October 1955.

TENNET PRODUCTIONS LTD. with 'Hamlet' – *Moscow*. November 1955. – See *The British Council Annual Report: 1955-56*, 85

<sup>35</sup> TNA, BW2/540, 'Future Projects: Anglo-Soviet Cultural Relations: Note by [Sir Kenneth Loch,] Controller, Arts and Science, Executive Committee:

been influenced by the fact that the Council were exclusively connected with some traditional theatres such as the Old Vic, ‘one of the main protégés of the Arts Council’,<sup>36</sup> the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre or Tennent Productions Ltd. There was also an underlying belief that canonical works (by definition) were most representative of British drama.

Given this, when in 1955 Britain took *Hamlet* directed by Peter Brook to Moscow, ‘the first British theatre company to visit Russia since the Tsarist days’<sup>37</sup> It was returned by a visit of the Bolshoi dancers the following year, who were opportunely invited to see another Shakespearean play, *Othello*, by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. By 1955, Peter Brook had already directed plays overseas: in 1950, *Measure for Measure* performed in Berlin was so successful that it ‘received particularly good notices in the Press of the East Sector’.<sup>38</sup> This might be one of the reasons why the young, up-and-coming Brook was spotted to direct a performance in the Soviet Union, and the play was welcomed by 15,000 Russians ‘with the sharpest enthusiasm’.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, interestingly, the same production performed in London afterwards suffered such severe criticism that Brook himself regretted that ‘he had treated it *too traditionally*, in a convention too academic, an austerity that detached it from the theatre’ (Emphasis added).<sup>40</sup> These different receptions to his *Hamlet* suggest that each audience had different taste and expectations, and that each nation had

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Sub-Committee on Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R.’, 21 April, 1955, Soviet Relations Committee: minutes of meetings (1955-57).

<sup>36</sup> TNA, FO371/116814, ‘Letter from Kenneth Johnstone, British Council to Paul F. Grey, Foreign Office’, 23 December 1954, Proposal for Russian Moiseyev Folk Dance Ensemble to perform in London; Tennent’s Productions Limited’s performances of Hamlet at the Moscow Arts Theatre, November 1955.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly, 2.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, FO371/116814, ‘Letter from Kenneth Johnstone, British Council to Paul F. Grey, Foreign Office’, 23 December 1954, Proposal for Russian Moiseyev Folk Dance Ensemble to perform in London; Tennent’s Productions Limited’s performances of Hamlet at the Moscow Arts Theatre, November 1955.

<sup>39</sup> J. C. Trewin, *Peter Brook: A Biography*, London: MacDonald 1971, 90.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



a different theatrical climate. Cultural organisations such as the British Council were presented with the difficult challenge of understanding and reconciling what was popular, representative, or *de jour* in the arts domestically – with the desire to project this abroad – and what would be appreciated in a specific country. The latter half of a difficult equation ran the risk of, either upsetting the host, or pleasing but projecting a distorted self-image that could be politically and culturally damaging.

### **The ‘culture’ debate in international cultural relations**

The discourse of Fine Arts has been developed in a number of different ways. After the war, a number of new waves, such as ‘abstract expressionism’ (e.g. Peter Lanyon, Roger Hilton and William Gear) or Social realism (e.g. John Bratby), appeared. Unlike in the case of drama, the British Council reacted quite quickly to these movements and organised ‘Contemporary Art Exhibition overseas’, although controversially, some works of abstract expressionism (e.g. William Gear’s *Autumn* which won a prize of £500) was not really accepted in Britain itself and the controversy among the public over a work of art was sometimes brought to the House of Commons!<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps, a good way of understanding what kind of fine arts the British Council wanted to present in the Soviet Union is to look at work shown at the Venice Biennale, the International Exhibition, which originally started in 1895. The British Council ‘assumed the management of the British Pavilion, taking responsibility for the British presentation at the Biennale, organising its first exhibition there in 1938’.<sup>42</sup> In that year, the Council brought a small group show including contemporary British paintings and sculptures to the

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<sup>41</sup> David Christopher, *British Culture: An Introduction*, London: Routledge 1999, 160.

<sup>42</sup> <http://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/about/> [Accessed 29/12/ 2013]

venue (e.g. Paul Nash, Matthew Smith, Stanley Spencer, and Christopher Wood). When the Biennale resumed in 1948 after the war, the Council's Fine Arts Department 'decided to send to Venice the works of Britain's greatest painter and her greatest modern master. Paintings by [J. M. W.] Turner were sent from the Tate Gallery accompanied by works by Henry Moore'.<sup>43</sup> In this exhibition, Moore won the International Sculpture Prize<sup>44</sup> and from this time onwards, the Council started to exhibit abroad many more works by living artists such as Graham Sutherland and Ben Nicolson, noted for their abstract works. Since the British exhibition at the Venice Biennale was regularly organised by the British Council, it affords the opportunity to follow trends, or as the Council Chairman stated, gives 'a fair conception of the Fine Arts Committee's opinions and judgment'.<sup>45</sup> Here is the list of exhibitions from 1948 to 1956:

- 1948: Painting: J. M. W. Turner. Sculpture: Henry Moore
- 1950: Painting: John Constable; Matthew Smith. Sculpture: Barbara Hepworth
- 1952: Painting: Graham Sutherland; William Wadsworth. A few works each by eight young sculptors: Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi, William Turnbull.
- 1954: Painting: Ben Nicholson; Lucien Freud; Francis Bacon. Sculpture: Reg Butler's first-prize-winning design for a memorial to the Unknown political prisoner.
- 1956: Painting: Ivon Hitchens; a few pictures each of four young painters: John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch, Jack Smith. Sculpture: Lynn Chadwick.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Donaldson, 148.

<sup>44</sup> <http://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/timeline/1948> [Accessed 29/12/2013]

<sup>45</sup> TNA, BW78/3, 'Chairman's Memorandum on the Function and Achievements of the Fine Arts Department', 24 April 1956, Fine Arts Advisory Committee: minutes and papers; meetings 62-73 (1956-1960).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

From this list, it can be said that 1950 marked the end of a transition from classic to contemporary art: the last appearance of an old master, John Constable. In the same vein, the trend in the British Council's projection of Fine Arts overseas had, by the 1950s, lurched towards 'modern art'. The Fine Arts Committee established 'the pattern of showing the work of either one accomplished artist in mid-career, or a small group' and 'the practice of exhibiting the work of artists from the past, initiated from Italy, was concluded after the 1950 Biennale...'.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it seems to be reasonable enough to use traditional and modern art as the basis for a diagnosis of the British Council's strategy in its cultural dealings with the Soviet Union.

In an internal document of the Council, there are details of the type of exhibition the British Council *wanted* to present in the Soviet Union. In March 1956, Kenneth M. Loch, Controller, Arts and Science of the Council, told F. C. K. Gallagher, the Foreign Office, that the proposed exhibition of British Art in Moscow 'should not be "Old Masters" but rather something to show that this country has a live and vigorous contemporary contribution to these matters'.<sup>48</sup> This was in fact quite the opposite opinion than that expressed by the British Embassy, which was ready to diplomatically compromise with the country they were dealing with: 'The exhibition confirms the truth that at this stage in our cultural relations with the Soviet Union, only the best exhibits or works of art should be sent here. The public image of our country is to a considerable extent projected by such exhibitions and we are judged critically by what we send'.<sup>49</sup> Self-evidently, the type of

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<sup>47</sup> Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot, *Britain at the Venice Biennale 1895-1995*, London: The British Council 1995, 11.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, BW2/525, 'Letter from Kenneth M. Loch to F.C.K. Gallagher, The Foreign Office', on 29 March 1956, Soviet Relations Committee: delegations from Britain to Soviet Union.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, BW64/32, 'Letter from D. P. Reilly, British Embassy in Moscow to Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Office', 10 May 1960, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at

representation of oneself is dependent upon the image that one wishes to project. For example, in the Sadler's Wells Ballet performances in Moscow, where could we find the millions of British industrial workers? From the outset, clearly, the notion of 'culture' that the Foreign Office held to was 'high culture', and this tendency to regard a nation's culture as best represented by 'high culture' was a generally shared understanding in the early post-war period.

Obviously, the Council wanted to ensure that they did not project an image of Britain that appeared rooted in the past, and especially in empire, but a dynamic and forward looking country, comfortable with its heritage but not dependent on it. Modern art was not simply a British phenomenon, and there was a feeling that to expunge it completely from the cultural meal being offered to the Soviets would not be a true reflection of British creativity and artistic trends in the West. In this way, British cultural relations can be viewed as a metonym for all democratic (more specifically, English-speaking) economically advanced nations. Kenneth Loch continues: 'As a result, modern art as we understand it might be open to embarrassing criticism in the Soviet Union. On the other hand the Soviet must be aware of these trends and to ignore them entirely would lay us open to the criticism of not being genuine in expounding the way in which we are thinking...'.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps this seems unsurprising, for after all the British Council's brief charges it with promoting contemporary Britishness, but another aspect of the same communiqué showed the Council's preoccupation with selecting the 'right' artwork according to its anticipated reception in the Soviet Union ('On the whole it would perhaps be better for the Soviet to take the lead in any

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the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, BW2/540, 'Future Projects: Anglo-Soviet Cultural Relations: Note by [Sir Kenneth Loch,] Controller, Arts and Science, Executive Committee: Sub-Committee on Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R.', 21 April, 1955, Soviet Relations Committee: minutes of meetings (1955-57).

exchange programme of Fine Arts').<sup>51</sup> The British Council thus extended beyond its original remit, demonstrating how it not only promoted, but had a crucial hand in the defining 'British culture', and in circumscribing what Soviet Culture consisted of.

In reality, however, Kenneth Loch was not as determined to ensure that the British Art exhibited was balanced and reflected current artistic trends, than his statement suggested. For he observed that 'The Soviet has little or no "avant garde" movements such as exist in this country and in Western Europe',<sup>52</sup> and therefore, 'Such art is not readily comprehensible to people accustomed to the more sedate art forms'.<sup>53</sup> His interpretation of Soviet art appreciation was developed more fully:

In the contemporary field it is felt that the 'avant garde' movement, though virile enough and widely appreciated abroad, would not go down in the Soviet Union and might even be classified as a decadent product of Capitalism. Accepting this point of view, we must turn elsewhere. The more sedate products of our painting and sculpture might in some ways be considered suitable to Soviet taste. On the other hand anyone over there with any knowledge of these things would know that we were not thereby sending what represents the way of our modern artists are thinking.<sup>54</sup>

This being so, we must seek some other solution. We had hoped that the Soviet would like the photographic exhibition of modern architecture got together by the Arts Council. Mr Mikhailov saw it when over here. He did not like it, because he said there was too much glass. Whether that was the real reason or not, the fact remains we cannot force an exhibition on them when they do not like it.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, BW2/525, 'Letter from Kenneth M. Loch to F.C.K. Gallagher, The Foreign Office', 29 March 1956, Soviet Relations Committee: delegations from Britain to Soviet Union 1956.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

This note of caution reflects a genuine desire by the British to make cultural relations work in what was only the infancy of their relationship with the Soviet Union. In the negotiations over the art exhibitions, The British Council was an astute political operator (in the lower case sense), demonstrating great deference to political sensitivities. In this sense, it should not be argued that the decision to steer clear of an offensive or provocative act is self-evidently maintaining the Council's 'neutrality', but it is also 'performing' a 'political' act in the light of the Foreign Office's stipulation to avoid creating an atmosphere of mistrust. This begs the very real question as to the extent to which the British Council was culturally impotent, when it was desperate for its 'cultural manifestations' to be well received. Thus if, the British Council was designed to promote and celebrate British achievement in the arts, it was ironically foreign countries that inadvertently (or deliberately) decided what was a 'good' or 'representative' image of British culture. The British Council thus went down a blind alley. As a vehicle for promoting the 'British Way of Life' *on British terms*, in this aspect of their work, perhaps the British Council failed. It begs the question whether this argument can extend to 'cultural propaganda' in general, such that we should not focus our attention on how a nation is able to self-promote in a 'missionary-like' way, but rather how it shapes its own identity by trying to shape that of the 'other'? In other words, countries always have a cultural veto. The Fine Arts Exhibition in question, although it was originally planned just after the launch of the SRC, became bogged down in wrangling over the exhibits.

On the other hand, some Council staff were, more bearish against the recipient country of other aspects of British culture. When the SRC was planning a book exhibition in August 1957, for example, the Chairman of the SRC, Christopher Mayhew, and the then Director-General, Paul Sinker, were against the idea of making 'the book exhibition in Russia dependent upon the Russian reply to the question about taking orders for British Books at the

exhibition'.<sup>56</sup> The exhibition was actually held in late 1959 (21 November to 4 December), with the 'exhibition of 4,000 books and 650 periodicals displayed in the Lenin Library, Moscow ... the largest ever mounted by the British Council in any country'.<sup>57</sup> However, the result was that, just before the exhibition started, the Soviet authorities removed 'at the last moment from the shelves some thirty of the books and several periodicals'.<sup>58</sup> This last-minute 'censorship' was a common manoeuvre of the Soviet Union at that period, and whilst predictable, was not preventable ('It was only sad that the Russians should, as so often, have proved their own worst enemies by exercising the right of "censorship" which we had had to concede to them...').<sup>59</sup> Considering this bitter experience, it is understandable that the British Council was so sensitive towards the selection of art work for the coming Fine Arts Exhibition, especially when they were brave enough to endeavour to bring the modern, 'abstract' art work, which the Russians officially dismissed at that time.

### **'British Paintings: 1720-1960'**

The long-projected Fine Arts Exhibition was finally realised in May and July 1960, entitled 'British Paintings: 1720-1960'. This was a return event for the Russian and Soviet painting exhibition in London at Burlington House in 1959.<sup>60</sup> According to D. P. Reilly, British Embassy, in his letter to Mr

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<sup>56</sup> TNA, BW64/26, 'Memo "Book Exhibition for Russia" from Literature Group', 21 August 1957, Book and periodicals exhibition, Moscow: draft agreement for reciprocal exhibitions (1957-1959).

<sup>57</sup> *The British Council Annual Report: 1959-60*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, BW64/67, Book exhibition in Moscow 1959.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> TNA, BW64/32, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum,

Kuznetsov, Deputy Minister of Culture, this fine art exhibition in Moscow ‘aroused great interest among the British public’<sup>61</sup> and he explained the ‘selection of the pictures and the preparatory work in the United Kingdom was carried out by the British Council’.<sup>62</sup> It is interesting to see how Britain managed to make this happen; what the proportion of the style of the art work was; what the assumptions/anticipations by the British side were; and still more: what the reception by the Russian side was.

To retrospect, this manifestation was tabled because the first cultural agreement between Britain and the USSR was concluded in late 1959, which was, as will be described in more detail later, a solid and more official tie than just having an *ad-hoc* cultural programme, so this agreement seems to have helped Britain to insist on what *they* wanted to represent: ‘This collection of paintings constitutes part of the mutual exchange of exhibitions between the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom provided for under the terms of the Anglo-Soviet Cultural Agreement’.<sup>63</sup> Another encouraging event for Britain was the lifting of the Zhdanov Decree, a notorious doctrine, denouncing *avant-garde* movements, which had exerted an overwhelming influence over

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Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Letter from D. P. Reilly, British Embassy, Moscow, to Mr Kuznetsov, Deputy Minister of Culture (Enclosure to Moscow dispatch No. 56 of 24/6/60)’, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Letter from D. P. Reilly, British Embassy, Moscow, to Mr Kuznetsov, Deputy Minister of Culture (Enclosure to Moscow despatch No. 56 of 24/6/60)’, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



Soviet culture and arts over the past decade.<sup>64</sup> It was officially lifted in May 1958.

The Fine Arts event which was described in *The British Council Annual Report: 1959-60* as ‘the first important exhibition of British painting ever to be shown in the Soviet Union’ opened at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow,<sup>65</sup> and it was subsequently exhibited in Leningrad: ‘It contained 141 paintings covering the period from 1720 to 1960 lent by sixty-six museums and private owners, among them Her Majesty the Queen and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. The National Gallery and the Tate Gallery between them lent thirty-four works.... It was enthusiastically received by the Russian public and was seen by 370,000 people in all, an average of 7,000 a day’.<sup>66</sup> Some examples of the paintings are:<sup>67</sup>

From the eighteenth and nineteenth century:

- Hogarth’s ‘Cholmondeley Family’, ‘Calais Gate’,
- Reynolds’s ‘Self-portrait’, ‘Garrick as “Kitley”’,
- Gainsborough’s ‘Portrait of Dr. Schomberg’, ‘The Watering place’,
- Constable’s ‘Leaping horse’, ‘The Valley Farm’,
- Landseer’s ‘Dignity and Impudence’,
- Frith’s ‘Railway Station’,
- Egg’s ‘The Travelling Companion’,
- Millais’s ‘The Blind Girl’,
- Whistler’s portrait of ‘Thomas Carlyle’

From the twentieth century:

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<sup>64</sup> It was first conducted in 1946, by Andrey A. Zhdanov (1896-1948), the Central Committee secretary. Even after his death in August 1948, this doctrine remained officially effective until May 1958.

<sup>65</sup> *The British Council Annual Report: 1959/60*, 40.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>67</sup> Revised from the list in BW64/32.

- John Orpen, Matthew Smith, Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer, Ben Nicholson and Graham Sutherland, Lucian Freud, and many more artists

As shown in Table 4, the allocation of paintings was quite well balanced, and there were a substantial number of modern art paintings exhibited. However, although D. P. Reilly, British Ambassador for Moscow, expressed his pleasure that ‘we

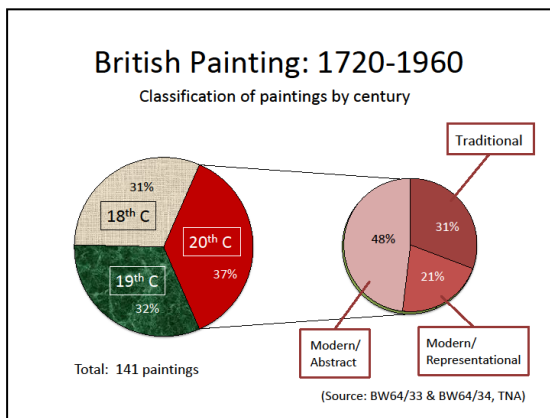


Table 4

Soviet Union a collection of paintings which includes not only examples of the work of our greatest masters of the past but also examples of our best contemporary paintings’,<sup>68</sup> for the British, there had been a great deal of anxiety over the selection of artwork behind the scenes. In January 1960, in the heat of preparation for the exhibition, the Director of the Fine Arts Department was extremely concerned about the possibility of a part or all the twentieth century paintings being withdrawn:

There are about 25 paintings including works by Graham Sutherland and Ben Nicholson which the Russians might describe as examples of bourgeois decadence, out of a total of 52 works of this century. Whoever represents the Council at the opening should be briefed as to what is to be done in the event of

<sup>68</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Letter from D. P. Reilly, British Embassy, Moscow, to Mr Kuznetsov, Deputy Minister of Culture (Enclosure to Moscow despatch No. 56 of 24/6/60)’, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

suppression by the Russians. Possibly he should be instructed to withdraw all the 52 paintings of this century.<sup>69</sup>

The Director-General, Paul Sinker, also anticipated the worst, perhaps remembering what had happened to the book exhibition in the previous year: ‘The possibility of suppression of modern British paintings might land us in a very awkward situation which if it occurs, is likely to occur at the last moment’,<sup>70</sup> He also thought that ‘Unfortunately, in dealing with the Russians we cannot separate Art from politics and I think therefore that we should be wise to let the FO see the Foreword and Introduction [of the catalogue] in draft’.<sup>71</sup> In this way, every aspect of the exhibition had potential political pitfalls which the Council staff diligently attempted to navigate. Here again, the British Council demonstrated great deference to political sensitivities.

Notwithstanding all these concerns, in the end, the exhibition was conducted without any omission by the Soviet authorities. D. P. Reilly was exhilarated by the Soviet public reaction, noting that ‘The public reaction, as far as I could judge from the day of our visit, was enthusiastic and it was encouraging to note the spontaneous interest displayed, at least by the younger members of it, in the modern works on show. It was obvious, however, that it was the abstract paintings, rather than the representational modern

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<sup>69</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Circular from Director, F. A. Dept. [L. Somerville]: “Exhibition of British Paintings 1720-1960 for USSR 1960”’, 4 January 1960, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960’.

<sup>70</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Circular from DG: ‘Exhibition of British Paintings –USSR 1960’, 8 January 1960. Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960’.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

ones, which aroused the real interest':<sup>72</sup>

The exhibition has already proved a great success. The gallery over the last weekend was full of people, many of them young and as one would expect from the intelligentsia. The museum experts were unanimously delighted with the quality of the 18th and 19th Century paintings.... The Constable paintings had been a revelation. As regards the modern section, it drew the young the artists and the curious like a magnet. Abstract art is officially frowned on in the Soviet Union and is usually described as the outpourings of decadent bourgeoisie. But a member of my staff saw a young Soviet artist vehemently defending the works of Passmore [*sic.*] before an attentive group of Soviet bystanders. There were some who tittered, a few who jeered, but no more perhaps than in any English gallery.<sup>73</sup>

Reilly also sent a letter to the Soviet officer, thanking him for his co-operation, convinced that the exhibition contributed to furthering the embryonic cultural relationship between the two countries, and that it had reflected the richness of British art:

We likewise believe that cultural exchanges between our two countries will play a positive role in the reduction of world tension.... We hope that our exhibition will afford you pleasure and that it will serve as a token not merely of the richness of our cultural heritage but also of the vitality, variety and high quality of contemporary British painting.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> TNA, BW78/3, 'A Letter from D. P. Reilly to Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Secretary', 21 June 1960, Fine Arts Advisory Committee: minutes and papers; meetings 62-73 (1956-1960).

<sup>73</sup> TNA, BW64/32, 'Letter from D. P. Reilly, British Embassy in Moscow to Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Office', 10 May 1960, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

The first press reaction was not too bad, either: ‘The day after the opening, *Pravda* carried a short account, and articles appeared in other newspapers. On the whole, they have been favourable and have in particular praised highly the work of Constable, Gainsborough and Hogarth’<sup>75</sup>. Again, Reilly observed that: ‘little has been said about the modern painting’; ‘it may well be that the official line is to ignore rather than criticise’.<sup>76</sup>

However, a couple of months after the exhibition, the first negative comments on British painting by the Soviets began to emerge. In the Council report of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1960, there is a translated review of the exhibition by the Moscow newspaper, *Sovietskaya Kultura*.<sup>77</sup> The review comment was read and introduced by a Council staff member as follows:

While paying warm tribute to a splendid exhibition, and especially to the paintings by Gainsborough and Constable, he [= the writer of this column] regretted the ‘dull’ choice of Turners, and poured scorn on Frith, Landseer, Watts and the Pre-Raphaelites. He applauded the excellent representation of the ‘realistic art’ of ‘the American Whistler’ and his successors Augustus John, Orpen and Sickert, and criticised the emphasis on ‘the monotonous splodges of the representatives of abstractionism’, and the exposition of it by the authors of the catalogue, especially Miss Chamot of the Tate Gallery (‘the main propaganda centre for abstract and surrealist art in England’).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *Sovietskaya Kultura* [SOVETSKAIA KUL’TULA (Soviet Culture)] was ‘a newspaper of the Central Committee of the CPSU, founded in 1973. *Sovetskaia kul’tula* is published in Moscow twice a week and consists of eight pages. From 1953 to 1972 a newspaper bearing the same name was published by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and the Central Committee of Trade Union of Cultural Workers’. – *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, New York: Macmillan, c1981, vol 24, 338.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, BW78/3, ‘Fine Arts Committee: Report on Progress to the 73rd Meeting’, 25 October, 1960, Fine Arts Advisory Committee: minutes and papers; meetings 62-73 (1956-1960).

Which particular painting the writer of the review meant by ‘the monotonous splodges of the representatives of abstractionism’ is unknown, but what is sure is that he intended to express his disgust towards modern, abstract paintings. This kind of comment or criticism, to some extent, must have been expected, and possibly could have been avoided by the British side, if they had excluded at least the art works with ‘monotonous splodges’. In spite of previously having worried about the Soviet reaction so much, why, in the first place, did they decide to include them?

On selecting the art work, there were indeed more aggressive, alternative opinions towards the Soviet authorities. Christopher Mayhew, Chairman of the SRC, insisted on 10 March 1959 that ‘We are anxious that the scope of the exhibition, in so far as it concerns the representation of living artists, should be as wide as possible. It is important in our view to give the Russians a comprehensive picture of what is being done in this country at the present time.’ He continues: ‘The D.G. also expressed ... verbally his hope that the committee would not omit examples of modern art which might be difficult for the Russians to appreciate as he considered it was politically very important to stress the freedom of the artist in Great Britain to work in any style he pleased’.<sup>79</sup> Whilst he was meticulously careful not to provoke with any paintings destined for the exhibition, he actually would not countenance the airbrushing of modern art altogether. Of course, the Director-General wanted to avoid deliberate provocation by content that might be objectionable, but wanted to show modern-art forms. He took modern art itself as a genre being expressive of liberalism, and wanted to use the existence of a thriving modern art scene in Britain as a political message, emphasising the liberal and tolerant characteristics of British society.

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<sup>79</sup> TNA, BW64/32, ‘Circular: ‘Exhibition of British Painting for USSR 1960) from Somerville, Director, Fine Arts’, 8 February 1960, Correspondence. Includes 7 photographs depicting: Fine art: Exhibition of British Paintings (1720-1960) at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, 1960: Sir John Rothenstein at opening ceremony; visitors viewing exhibits, dated 1960.

This kind of exhibition did seem to have an impact on people. Dmitrii Sarab'yanov, a Russian art historian reflected on the 1950s, around the time when he was teaching at the Institute of Art History, Moscow:

[S]trangely enough, at least in the 1950s we did have some access to modern Western art, especially via exhibitions.... And access meant that they 'knew more about Western Modernism than about the Russian avant-garde.... So you see that we did not live in a complete cultural vacuum...'.<sup>80</sup>

There is no way to know whether he actually saw the British Painting exhibition in the year of 1960, yet all in all, this exhibition must have been a positive experience for Britain.

### Conclusion

British cultural diplomacy with the Soviet Union in the 1950s represented an amalgam of shifting opinions, expressed differently by members of the Foreign Office, British Council and the SRC, sometimes rather fragile and hesitant – but never selling British culture out completely. However, they were determined to ensure that representative contemporary British artwork was exhibited, bearing the underlying political message that the West permitted freedom of expression in all the liberal arts. It was hoped that such exhibitions would also provide a template for mutual understanding and trust that would allow better communication in political discourse. In so doing, the British managed to show-case modern or *avant-garde* art work which the Soviets officially dismissed in the Soviet Union for certain political

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<sup>80</sup> John E. Bowlt & Dmitrii Sarab'yanov, 'Keepers of the Flame: An Exchange on Art and Western Cultural Influences in the USSR after World War II', *Journal of Cold War Studies* (Special Issue: Culture, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War) 4, 2002, 85-86.

purposes, reaching an interested public. This paper does not determine who 'won' the cultural battle, nor what influence this particular cultural manifestation had on the respective peoples. Assessing the impact of culture/art on political culture is problematic, and the fact that the arts section of any cultural organisation the world over today, struggles to win satisfactory subsidies or to justify its worth, indicates that its value as an arm of diplomacy is questionable. Such a conclusion still seems to suggest that politics (and economics and military matters) are always located at centre in international relations, whilst art/cultural matters are always shunted off to the periphery sphere. The Cold War period was no exception. Nevertheless, this paper tried to show the way in which the British Council successfully injected examples of 'British culture/art', both contemporary and historic into the Soviet Union in the 1950s and early 1960s, at a time when political relations were extremely stretched: the arts in this period were certainly useful for political purposes<sup>81</sup> and arts might have potential to change political courses.

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<sup>81</sup> It is inferred that Britain's prospect for itself started to change at around 1960, and from the late 1960s onwards, British external cultural policy was determined on the basis of a 'commercial' motivation, rather than political or military one. This was triggered by the government's decision to retreat from all countries East of Suez, announced on 16 January 1968. The Duncan Report (1969) took this new decision on foreign and defence policy seriously, and concluded the Britain should 'shift from politico-military to commercial and cultural representation'. This report strongly admonishes separation of politics and culture. – See 'Report of the Review Committee on Overseas Representation 1968-69, Chairman: Sir Val Duncan [Duncan Report]', Miscellaneous No. 24 (July 1969), Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by Command of Her Majesty, Cmnd. 4107.



# The Conservative Party's Opposition to the 'Voluntarist' Approach towards Trade Unions under the Macmillan and Home Administrations 1957-1964\*

Tae Joon Won\*\*

## Abstract

This article seeks to explore the gradual erosion of the Conservative Party's post-war 'voluntarist' approach towards the trade unions during the administrations of Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) and Alec Douglas-Home (1963-1964). Before going into the main content in earnest, the article first looks at the change of attitude of the Conservative Party leadership from its anti-trade unionism stance during the interwar years to its trade unionism-friendly position in the aftermath of the massive defeat in the 1945 General Election. The article then seeks to argue that from the 1960s, however, both the grassroots and the higher echelons of the Party slowly began to pressure the Party leadership into abandoning its stubborn adherence to the voluntarist approach. In order to support this argument, the article will explore various evidence including the speeches made at the subsequent Party Conferences, the Conservative grassroots' 'Contracting-Out' campaign activities that aimed to inform trade unionists of their right to opt

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out of having to pay the political levy which was automatically imposed on their wages, and the reaction of the Party faithful in regard to judicial decisions on the Electrical Trade Union elections dispute and the landmark *Rookes v. Barnard* case.

**Keywords:** Conservative Party, Trade Unions, Voluntarism, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home

### Introduction

The post-World War II consensus among the Labour and Conservative Parties, frequently dubbed ‘Butskellism’ after the names of two leading moderates of the time (Richard Austen ‘Rab’ Butler of the Conservatives and Hugh Gaitskell of Labour), was in effect the successive Conservative administrations from 1951 to 1974 adhering to the economic agenda which was spelled out by the Labour government of Clement Attlee from 1945 to 1948. Whilst there is still some debate among contemporary historians about whether such consensus ever actually existed at all, the ‘acceptance by the Conservatives of the nationalisation of major industries [...] of full employment and the need for government economic action, if necessary, to realise it [...] acceptance that the trade unions had an important role to play and should be consulted over economic policy [...] acceptance of the welfare state [such as the creation and maintenance of the National Health Service]’<sup>1</sup> all serve to persuade the majority of the notion that British society, for the thirty years between the destruction of WWII and the economic crises of the 1970s, was content for its successive governments to pursue a relatively

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<sup>1</sup> C. More, *Britain in the Twentieth Century*, Harlow 2007, 162.

similar pattern of economic management regardless of whichever party happened to be in power.

The position of the Conservative grassroots supporters on such consensus during the 1950s and 1960s has been taken for granted by some historians as having been by and large submissive to the desire of the Conservative leadership. The mainly positive response of those rank-and-file party members present at the 1947 Conservative Party Conference in relation to Rab Butler's trade union-friendly Industrial Charter is regarded in particular as evidence of the Conservative voters' acquiescence to their party leaders' determination in mirroring the Labour line on industrial relations.<sup>2</sup> However, as A. Lawrence Lowell, Robert McKenzie and others have analysed, the Conservative Party Conference in general was no more than proof that the extra-parliamentary party was 'a transparent sham'<sup>3</sup> and 'primarily a demonstration of party solidarity and enthusiasm for its own leaders',<sup>4</sup> and therefore was nothing more than an event where 'the rank and file can see and hear and even meet the Olympians of the Party'.<sup>5</sup> With such a dubious reputation, therefore, utilising the atmosphere of a Party Conference as a gauge of the Party grassroots' true feeling towards the leadership's policy announcements has significant potential for inaccuracy and misjudgement. But subsequent emphasis on analysing the political willpower of the high-ranking decision-makers of the Conservative Party as a result of accepting the Party Conference attendees' superficial approval as accurate has shifted the observer's attention away from the voices of the traditional die-hard Conservative followers, who felt that the leadership had abandoned the free-market ideals of the Conservative Party in order to shore up and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>3</sup> A. L. Lowell, *The Government of England, Vol. 1*, London 1908, 563.

<sup>4</sup> R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power within the Conservative and Labour Parties*, 2nd edn., London 1963, 193.

<sup>5</sup> I. Bulmer-Thomas, *The Party System in Great Britain*, London 1953, 196.

widen its support base to include those with whom the Conservatives had never been, and should never be, ideological bedfellows.

In accordance with this author's opinion that dissent by the Conservative Party loyalists over their own government's stance on the post-war consensus should not be left unnoticed, this article seeks to observe the actions of Conservative Party supporters, both in Parliament and in the wider country, in their attempt to voice their opposition to the Macmillan and Home administrations' mollification of the trade unions. In the course of this observation the article pays particular interest to the supporters' participation in the 'Contracting-Out' campaign from the political levy and the lobbying of their government's leaders to introduce at times when the political position of the trade unions were particularly vulnerable due to scandal or to judicial decisions.

### **The Conservative Party and Trade Unionism during the Interwar Period**

It is historically appropriate to state that the story of the Conservative Party's complex and tumultuous relationship with the trade unions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century began with the eruption of a national disaster in the shape of the 1926 General Strike. Called by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) after coal mine owners demanded the extension of the seven-hour working day to eight and a reduction in wages for all miners in their employment starting from May 1926 and refused to budge on the issue despite the rejection by the Miners' Federation and the subsequent intervention by the government, the strike lasted nine days from 4 May to 12 May in which not only a million miners but also a million and a half transport workers, electrical workers, dockers, ironworkers, steelworkers and

other such industrial workers around the country were called out. Although the strike effectively failed after the TUC, who themselves 'did not want the strike to go on indefinitely [...] and began to look round for line of retreat'<sup>6</sup> decided to accept a government compromise (known as the Samuel Memorandum) that included wage cuts, the Conservative Party leadership realized that some sort of legislation to curb trade union power was needed in order to appease disgruntled Tory backbench MPs and their voters in the constituencies. After much wrangling about how such legislation should be shaped (for example, Harold Macmillan, the new MP for Stockton-on-Tees, agreed that a Bill was necessary 'but also wanted to ensure that the conditions for a general strike should not reoccur',<sup>7</sup> while the more hawkish elements such as the Secretary of State of India, Viscount Birkenhead, wanted a Bill that comprehensively circumscribed a whole range of trade union activities), the Baldwin administration passed the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act. Under the Act, any strike that was started by workers in one industry but supported by workers in other related industry (otherwise known as 'sympathy strikes') was illegal. The Act also abolished 'contracting out' of the political levy and allowed trade union members to voluntarily 'contract in'. Mass picketing and civil servants joining the TUC were also forbidden under the Act. As a result of these measures, coupled with mass unemployment following the economic depression, union membership plummeted to less than 4.5 million by 1933 from a peak of 8 million in 1920,<sup>8</sup> and as a result the 1930s was a decade of relatively few industrial disputes.

However, the trade unions would soon find their influence and importance

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<sup>6</sup> T. Lloyd, *Empire, Welfare State, Europe: History of the United Kingdom 1906-2001*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn., Oxford 2002, 128.

<sup>7</sup> C. Williams, *Harold Macmillan*, London 2009, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in P. Dorey, *The Conservative Party and the Trade Unions*, London 1995, 33.

in British society restored and expanded with the outbreak of World War II. Despite the passage of the 1927 Act, 'most Conservatives had come to accept that trade unions were a permanent and important feature in industrial life in Britain'<sup>9</sup> by the 1930s, and with the declaration of war in September 1939 the government had to rely upon the trade unions in order to increase the war effort as much as possible. Neville Chamberlain was admittedly less than enthusiastic about appeasing trade union leaders; when asked by the TUC to consider amending the 1927 Act in exchange for supporting the government's war effort, Chamberlain replied that 'it depended on the behaviour of the unions during the war'.<sup>10</sup> But Winston Churchill, when asked to form an administration in May 1940 after Chamberlain's resignation, appointed the leader of the TUC General Council, Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labour and National Service. Bevin concentrated his efforts in bringing union leadership into the decision-making process; he established a Joint Consultative Committee comprised of seven employers and seven trade union leaders and put forward various proposals for their advice. In spite of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act of May 1940, which authorized the government to 'issue regulations making provisions for requiring persons to place themselves, their services, and their property at the disposal of [the government], as appears to [the government] to be necessary or expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of the realm, the maintenance of public order and the efficient prosecution of any war',<sup>11</sup> Bevin would only authorize orders under the Act which, in his judgment, would not compromise the welfare of labourers. Also, despite the issue of Order 1305 which banned strikes and lockouts, there were few prosecutions due to the Labour

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>10</sup> H. Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Basingstoke 1972, 215.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in C. Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship – Crisis Government in Modern Democracies*, Princeton 1948, 187-188.

Minister's determination to sustain this new spirit of cooperation between government, employers and workers. For instances of industrial disputes, the government set up a National Arbitration Tribunal Compulsory for the Minister of Labour to refer cases to, rather than sending the striking workers to prison under the Order. All in all, the exceptional circumstances of being in a state of war and having a prominent trade unionist oversee the government's labour policy enabled trade union officials to participate heavily in the government's policy-making process at every level. By the end of the war, trade unions were regarded by the both the politicians and the public of having done a great service for the nation, and trade union membership had surpassed 1920 levels; the total number of trade union membership rose from 6,053,000 in 1938 to 7,803,000 in 1945.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence, the Conservative Party now needed to 'adopt a much more positive attitude and approach towards the unions'.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Conservative Party and Trade Unions after 1945 – The 'Voluntarist' Approach**

The necessity for a more conciliatory, or 'voluntarist', approach towards the trade unions was cemented by the crushing defeat of the Conservatives in the 1945 general election. This completely unexpected disaster for the Party brought the leadership into a state of deep soul-searching and it soon led to a formal reappraisal of its trade union and industrial policies, thereby hoping to catch floating voters by appealing to them via constructive policies. Under the guidance of Rab Butler, the Chair of the Party's newly-created, nine-member Industrial Policy Committee, the Tories launched the

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<sup>12</sup> Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 222.

<sup>13</sup> Dorey, *The Conservative Party and the Trade Unions*, 36.

'Industrial Charter' in May 1947. Eager to 'counter the charge and the fear that [the Conservatives] were the party of industrial go-as-you-please and devil-take-the hindmost, that full employment and the Welfare State were not safe in [Conservative] hands',<sup>14</sup> the Industrial Charter 'accepted much that had developed in industrial and employment policy since 1940'<sup>15</sup> and emphasised the Party's commitment to cooperating with the trade unions. It argued that, since trade unions could only be effective and wholly representative with a large and active membership, trade unions should endeavour to register all workers as members, but it also stressed that joining a trade union should be a voluntary choice made by the individual worker and by no one else. In the 'Workers' Charter', the final section of the Industrial Charter, the Party made it clear that it no longer believed that there were 'two sides' of industry and emphasised that everyone participating in industry, having the same interests of generating greater profits and being more efficient, needed to work more closely together. The Workers' Charter also stressed that 'industry should provide to those engaged to it security of employment, incentive to do the job well and to get a better one, and status as an individual',<sup>16</sup> thereby aiming to reduce the hostility the workers might harbour towards their employers in the hope of making industrial relations more harmonious. The Charter, however, made it clear that the Conservative Party leadership did not regard government legislation as a desirable method of cementing good industrial relations: instead, it argued that the government's role was only to encourage management and workers to develop a trusting working relationship. In order to 'bring back into large-scale industry the personal contact and interest at present found most strongly in the small firm just as [the Conservatives] make general among

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<sup>14</sup> R. Butler, *The Art of the Possible*, London 1971, 146

<sup>15</sup> C. Wrigley, *British Trade Unions 1945-1995*, Manchester 1997, 5.

<sup>16</sup> "Conservative Plans for Workers' Charter," *The Times*, 12 May 1947.



small firms that higher standard of welfare service which has been the special contribution of large firms',<sup>17</sup> the Charter suggested the reintroduction of the joint consultation production committees that had been a great success during the war. This theme was echoed in *The Right Road for Britain*, a 1949 policy pamphlet which, in its 'commitment to de-centred government [...] against the encroaching might of the State',<sup>18</sup> declared that the issues facing British industry were not problems to be solved by government-led legislation but by the improvement of personal relations between management and the workers.

Such 'human relations' perspective in industrial relations 'constituted the orthodoxy amongst senior Conservatives' during the 1950s.<sup>19</sup> Upon returning to power in the 1951 General Election, Winston Churchill appointed Walter Monckton as Minister of Labour. Monckton was seen as a strong believer in the 'conciliatory' approach to industrial relations, and this could not have been made more clear than when he spoke at the 1953 annual Industrial Welfare Society dinner, during which he argued for the employer-employee relationship to 'be gradually developed into something nearer membership of a working team' which 'will certainly not be brought about by Government or employers or workpeople alone. It calls for a greater measure of give and take, of working together, than we in this country have so far been able to achieve in our structure. Certainly we cannot afford to look backward to outworn methods of discipline or to practices that had as their objective the furtherance of sectional interests'.<sup>20</sup> Monckton's successor Iain Macleod, who was appointed in 1955 by the new Prime Minister, Anthony

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> M. Cragoe, "We Like Local Patriotism: The Conservative Party and the Discourse of Decentralisation 1947-51", *The English Historical Review* 122:498, 2007, 967

<sup>19</sup> Dorey, *The Conservative Party and the Trade Unions*, 39.

<sup>20</sup> "Call for New Spirit in Industry", *The Times*, 10 December 1953

Eden, was equally sympathetic to the human relations approach and diligently toed the government line of opposing trade union legislation. At the Party's 1956 Annual Conference in Llandudno, Macleod stated that he did not believe the notion that introducing compulsory strike ballots would reduce strikes overall: he rejected the conventional idea that workers were less militant than their union leaders by way of his 'experience' as Labour Minister, and presented his 'honest belief' that 'if every single cause of friction [...] could be made the subject of a call for a pre-strike ballot, the numbers of strikes would increase'.<sup>21</sup> Six months later, when answering a question in the House of Commons on plans to introduce legislation to enforce registration of restrictive practices in trade unions, Macleod made it clear that while he believed that there were 'restrictions on both sides of industry', he '[did] not think [...] that registration would be a practical proposition' and '[did] not believe that these kinds of problems can be solved by legislation'.<sup>22</sup>

However, by the latter half of the 1950s Britain was facing rising inflation (of a rate that was 'higher on average than that ruling in the rest of the world')<sup>23</sup> brought on by unreasonable increases in pay. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Harold Macmillan, was forced to produce an emergency budget in 1955 which cut government spending, restricted hire purchase and raised rates on distributive profits tax and purchase tax. The Eden administration felt that there was a need to make the trade union membership understand that excessive pay rises were detrimental to the British economy, and to that end the government published a White Paper in March 1956 entitled *The Economic Implications of Full Employment*, which argued for restraint in pay increase demands in order to prevent rising inflation and the reduction of

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<sup>21</sup> "Britain 'More Prosperous than Ever Before'", *The Times*, 13 October 1956

<sup>22</sup> *House of Commons Hansard*, 11 April 1957, Vol. 568, col. 1284

<sup>23</sup> D. Laidler, "Inflation in Britain: A Monetarist Perspective", *The American Economic Review* 66:4, 1976, 488.

exports. In addition the government, now with Macmillan as Prime Minister, set up the Council on Prices, Productivity and Incomes (known as the Cohen Council after its chairman) in August 1957 'having regard to the desirability of full employment and increasing standards of life based on expanding production reasonable stability of prices, to keep under review changes in prices, productivity and the level of incomes (including wages, salaries and profits) and to report thereon from time to time'.<sup>24</sup> However, despite such attempts by the government to change the trade unions' attitude towards income hikes, the administration still refused to pass any legislation curbing trade union power or setting up a formal wage policy, and this was owed in no small part to the political inclinations of the new Prime Minister.

### **The Macmillan Administration and Trade Union Reform**

Harold Macmillan was a committed One Nation Conservative who, by way of his experiences as an MP in the depressed Stockton constituency in the 1930s, cared deeply about the welfare of the lower classes. Indeed, Clement Attlee privately described him as 'the most radical man I've known in politics [...] He was a real left-wing radical in his social, human and economic thinking'.<sup>25</sup> Such political philosophy focused the Prime Minister's mind on reducing unemployment, and this led to his opposing deflationary measures (which would have meant cuts in government spending), which was the Treasury's official advice in the attempt to improve Britain's deteriorating economy. Instead, he introduced two controversial methods to

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<sup>24</sup> R. Hawtrey, "The Fourth Report of the Council on Prices, Productivity and Incomes," *The Economic Journal* 72:285, 1962, 251.

<sup>25</sup> J. Margach, *The Abuse of Power: The War Between Downing Street and the Media from Lloyd George to Callaghan*, London 1978, 116-117.

bring about a permanent wages policy which would solve the biggest problem of salaries being increased faster than the rate of growth in manufacturing output; the implementation of the 'pay pause' in 1961 and the creation of the National Economic Development Council (NEDC) in 1962. The NEDC, or Neddy as it was known collectively with the National Economic Development Office (NEDO), was a corporatist forum which was set up with members from 'trade unions, management and government, who would participate in central planning advice'<sup>26</sup> with the objective of 'creat[ing] a plan which would indicate a target growth rate [of around 4 per cent] for the British economy agreeable to the three partners':<sup>27</sup> Macmillan's opinion was that incorporating trade unions into the economic policy-making process via the NEDC would enable them to understand the economic situation and therefore make it easier for the government to persuade them to accept lower wage settlement (via an incomes policy set by the government) while increasing manufacturing output; in Macmillan's own words, the involvement of the TUC in the NEDC 'would at least lead them to greater understanding of the real problems with which this nation was confronted'.<sup>28</sup> Macmillan was firm in his determination to push through wage control, saying that the government was 'determined to keep Government expenditure under control, but [were] equally determined to follow through the policy of wage and income restraint as a basis for future growth'.<sup>29</sup>

However, there was no denying that a significant proportion the Conservative Party faithful as well as a considerable number of Tory MPs was deeply concerned about the power of the trade union movement as

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<sup>26</sup> H. Macmillan, *At the End of the Day 1961-1963*, Basingstoke 1973, 49.

<sup>27</sup> S. Mitchell, *The Brief and Turbulent Life of Modernising Conservatism*, Newcastle 2006, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Churchill College Archives, HLSM 2/5/18, *Papers of Lord Hailsham*, Letter from H. Macmillan to Q, Hailsham, 27 February 1962

Britain entered the 1960s. A good example of this was the Party's 1961 Annual Conference, which saw the introduction of a motion that was brought forward by a Mr. T. Wray, which proposed that the conference 'would welcome an inquiry by H.M. Government into the affairs of trade unions, and is of the view that the nation would support H.M. Government if subsequently they decided to introduce reforming legislation' under the premise that legislation should 'confine the legal privileges of trade unions to those unions registered with an official arbitrator' and that the Minister of Labour should 'refuse registration to those unions which failed to protect the rights of their members, and could have the power to strike off those unions which failed most miserably to end restrictive practices'.<sup>30</sup> The motion was defeated after the strong intervention of the Minister concerned, John Hare, who reiterated the government's position that passing Acts of Parliament in order to curb illegal trade union strikes would be counterproductive, and that it could only be done by 'persuasion and by constant appeals to common sense and common interest' because the government's position was that 'the future of the unions and management was as partners of the Government in a new, responsible, imaginative approach to the challenge that faced British industry'.<sup>31</sup> Despite such insistence by the government on harmonious relations between management and the trade unions, however, the issue refused to disappear. In late 1961, the Conservative MP for Tynemouth, Dame Irene Ward, accused the Chancellor of the Exchequer and *ex officio* Chair of the NEDC, Selwyn Lloyd, of 'think[ing] that this country consists only of the T.U.C. and the employers' organisations' and 'not [being] aware that there are many hundreds of thousands of people who are not associated with either' and challenged him to 'pay more attention to a lot of other people

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<sup>30</sup> "Conservative Reject Inquiry into Trade Unions", *The Times*, 14 October 1961, 5

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

who are just as interested as are these bodies'.<sup>32</sup> Earlier, the Tory MP for Harrow West, John Page, had deplored the use of the term 'both sides of industry' when describing the formation of the NEDC, stating that it was 'grossly inaccurate and wholly misleading to give the impression that there are two sides of industry. There are six or seven sides, or six or seven parts, and industry is not complete unless all those parts are there'.<sup>33</sup>

The most important issue surrounding the debate of industrial relations at the time was the problem of the significant number of Conservative trade unionists and their votes. The concern that the Conservative Party had towards this seemingly illogical grouping was evident: the Conservative Central Office's Industrial Department's opinion was that '[n]o-one can doubt the decisive impact of trade unionists on the Party's vote. Hugh Gaitskell has said that 3 out of 10 trade unionists and 4 out of their wives vote Tory'.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the question that needed to be addressed most urgently in order to formulate a consistent and coherent Conservative Party policy towards trade unionism was naturally *why* many trade unionists voted Tory in the first place. The government's position on this dilemma, of which the prime proponent was Iain Macleod (now Party Chairman), was spelled out in a speech to the Conservative Trade Union Conference in March 1963 which stated that 'because these millions [of trade unionists] vote Tory, no Tory Government could ever embark on a course of legislation or of any action that was deeply or profoundly abhorrent to trade unions as a whole'.<sup>35</sup> In short, while the Conservative government did value and appreciate the importance of the existence (and the votes) of the Conservative-supporting trade unionists, it was only because the Party needed them 'to act as trained

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<sup>32</sup> *House of Commons Hansard*, 14 November 1961, Vol. 649, col. 183.

<sup>33</sup> *House of Commons Hansard*, 23 October 1961, Vol. 646, col. 661.

<sup>34</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/2, *Miscellaneous Trade Union / Contracting Out*, Note by J. McDonald Watson, 5 March 1965.

<sup>35</sup> "Mr. Macleod's Chimera," *The New Daily*, 12 Mar. 1963.

gossipers in their factories and works, so that they are constantly spreading Conservative ideas'.<sup>36</sup> There was little effort on the part of the Party leadership to understand the actual reasons the unionists voted Tory instead of Labour, and this in part led to the misunderstanding that doing something 'abhorrent' to Labour-supporting trade unionists would also be completely unacceptable to Conservative-supporting trade unionists. The government took a benign and fatherly but otherwise indifferent and patronising attitude towards this lower-class franchise, preferring to lump all trade unionists together as one and the same regardless of voting intentions and to treat them as such and to be wary of their power for the same reasons. This rather unsympathetic point of view was clearly shown by Quintin Hailsham when he described his trade unionists in a Party Consultative Committee paper as 'inarticulate and somewhat miserable, ground down as they are between the upper millstone of Socialist oppression and the nether millstone of middle class hostility to the Unions'.<sup>37</sup> Such unenthusiastic and uninterested attitude taken by the government was not lost on the wider Conservative electorate: party members were now 'questioning the wisdom of keeping [Conservative] trade unionists in a special hot-house of their own [...] We'll never really get anywhere so long as we insist on treating them as if they were Africans or something'.<sup>38</sup>

However, the Conservative Party leadership's muddled policy on trade unions had actually exasperated a rising number of Conservative trade unionists who themselves started to demand a certain degree of reform of

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<sup>36</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CRD 207/7/6, *Trade Unions and Employment papers*, Paper entitled 'Report of the Working Party on the Approach to the Industrial Worker', 20 July 1950. See also P. Dorey, *British Conservatism and Trade Unionism, 1945-1964*, Farnham 2009, 50.

<sup>37</sup> Churchill College Archives, POLL 3/2/1/7, *Papers of Enoch Powell*, Consultative Committee Paper entitled 'Trade Unions' by Q. Hogg, 11 February 1965.

<sup>38</sup> "Labourers of the Tory Cause," *Sunday Times*, 8 March 1964.

trade union practices, as was evident in the wrangle over how best to proceed with educating trade union members over their legal rights. In January 1946 the Attlee Government had repealed the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act and as such the ‘contracting-in’ aspect to the political levy was once again replaced with ‘contracting out’ which meant that trade unionists would no longer be automatically opted out of paying the political levy as they had been for the previous twenty years. In response to the change in legislation, the Conservative Party started an all-out ‘Contracting-Out’ campaign across the country ‘to bring to the notice of fellow Trade Unionists their rights under the law, advise them to get forms [allowing the applicant to be exempt paying the political levy] from the Trade Union branch secretaries and if these are not forthcoming council members should be in a position to supply’.<sup>39</sup> The campaign placed particular emphasis on party workers talking to the unionists concerned on a one-to-one basis since ‘[e]xperience teaches us that the personal talk, the simple verbal explanation is a hundred per cent more effective than is the most vigorous “written” publicity campaign’.<sup>40</sup> However, this by no means meant that the campaign was less committed to its distribution of printed materials. Hundreds of thousands of leaflets, drawn up and edited afresh every year, were distributed to the Conservative Trade Unionists Councils across the country to be given out in the streets: for example, the leaflet for 1963 titled *A Tidy Sum*, ‘draws attention to the huge sums being contributed this year to the funds of the Labour Party. As a lead in to the campaign, a very large number of the leaflet “Trade Unions and the Political Levy” have been distributed during the past

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<sup>39</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/2, *Miscellaneous Trade Union / Contracting Out*, Letter from E. Adamson to Secretaries of Councils of Conservative Trade Unionists, 20 October 1948.

<sup>40</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/2, *Miscellaneous Trade Union / Contracting Out*, Letter from E. Adamson to Secretaries of Councils of Conservative Trade Unionists, unspecified date, 1949.



three months'.<sup>41</sup> Along with the leaflets, simple but imposing posters were produced in order to catch the eye of anyone passing by them. Also, in order to appeal to the wider audience, the Conservative Party also took to writing 'Letters to the Editors' of major national, as well as local, newspapers. The best example of this was a letter published in November 1962 in the name of Ray Mawby, Conservative MP for Totnes (and the first President of the Conservative Trade Unionists' National Advisory Committee), which stated that '[o]ver one million trade unionists have already realised [that they can contract out of paying the political levy] themselves, have exercised their legal rights and so do not contribute through their unions to the Labour Party funds. It is surely important, therefore, that all trade unionists at present paying political levy should seriously consider contracting out in the interests of greater unity throughout the trade union movement'.<sup>42</sup> Party workers strongly believed that 'the best form of propaganda is that of having letters published in the Press. The more we have published the better'.<sup>43</sup>

The 'Contracting-Out' campaign became more vocal after the Conservatives regained power in the early 1950s and continued in office until 1964 because in spite of their return to government, the Conservative administrations did not seem all that keen to re-introduce 'contracting in'. This led many Conservative trade unionists to strongly prod the government into bringing back the automatic opt-out of paying the political levy. A motion proposed at the annual Conservative Trade Union National Advisory Committee (TUNAC) meeting in 1962 was that 'this conference is of the opinion that

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<sup>41</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/2, *Miscellaneous Trade Union / Contracting Out*, Letter from R. Carrick to Constituency Agents, 5 September 1963.

<sup>42</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/7, *Contracting Out Campaign*, Proof of article by Ray Mawby MP, November 1962.

<sup>43</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/7, *Contracting Out Campaign*, Letter from W. Jenkins to Chairmen and Secretaries of Divisional Councils of Trade Unionists, 18 Oct. 1962

contracting in to the political levy should be re-introduced',<sup>44</sup> while the year after another motion stated that 'instead of the present "contracting out" system it should be changed to "contracting in", as previously operating prior to the alteration in the law by the Labour Government in the 1947 Act'.<sup>45</sup> Of course, not every Conservative trade unionist was in favour of this course of action: for example, in the 1961 annual TUNAC meeting, a proposed motion was of the opinion that 'for the present the policy of contracting out of the political levy should be retained'.<sup>46</sup> But this was not so much because they agreed with the principle of contracting-out as because Conservative Party workers also had the opportunities to talk to their target audience of the 'evils' of socialism in general during the course of the 'Contracting-Out' campaign. Their strong belief in the merits of such opportunities is reflected in a boast made by an individual which was that '[t]he anti-Socialist vote in recent by-elections has been in the ratio of 2 to 1, a fact which accounts for the intensive Publicity Campaign carried by the Party'.<sup>47</sup> Despite the divisions, the demand by Conservative trade unionists for the government to reverse the previous Labour administration's policy on the political levy had become too significant to ignore, as was evident when the Nuneaton Divisional Council of Trade Unionists were forced to write to TUNAC warning that 'there is a growing demand among Conservative Trade Unionists for the reintroduction of 'Contracting-In', which could well be

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<sup>44</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/2/2, *Trade Union Conference – General Correspondence*, Motion by the Merton and Morden Divisional Council of Trade Unionists, 17 March 1962

<sup>45</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/2/19, *Trade Union National Advisory Committee (TUNAC) Meetings*, Minutes of the 87<sup>th</sup> TUNAC meeting, 5 September 1963.

<sup>46</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/2/2, *Trade Union Conference*, Motion by the East Midlands Area Trade Unionists' Advisory Committee, 25 March 1961.

<sup>47</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/3/7, *Contracting Out Campaign*, Letter from W. Jenkins to Chairmen and Secretaries of Divisional Councils of Trade Unionists, 18 Oct. 1962.

hiding a reluctance on the part of its supporters to continue with the campaign to encourage trade unionists to 'contract-out' [...] [W]e have this division in our midst which threatens to nullify all the gains so far made [...] [T]his council is of the opinion that there is urgent need for a clear statement of intentions by the Conservative Parliamentary Party in the matter'.<sup>48</sup> In short, the Conservative trade unionists, rankled by the government's continued ambivalence, were now themselves pressing the administration towards taking a firm, unilateral line on the issue of trade union reform by making maximum use of specific related policies, such as the political levy.

Such pressures from the bottom end of the Conservative Party for the government to show a stronger commitment to legislation concerning the reform of trade union practices resulted in the division of the Party leadership over whether to give the benefit of the doubt to the trade union bodies concerning their own ability to correct themselves, a fact that was made evident in the case of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) in 1961. In 1960, the ETU was a radical left-wing organisation where nine of the fourteen executive officers were members of the Communist Party of Great Britain: the President, Frank Foulkes, his General Secretary, Frank Haxell, as well as the Assistant General Secretary, Bob McLennan, were all prominent Communists. In December 1959, an election was held in the ETU to choose a new General Secretary, with Frank Haxell running for re-election. His most fierce rival was John Byrne, an anti-Communist Scottish area official. Haxell was declared the winner of the closely-run election in February 1960, but not before votes in 109 branches were disqualified. It was clear that the Communist leadership had rigged the election to help Haxell keep his job, and Byrne (together with another non-Communist executive member, Frank Chapple) went to the High Court in April 1961 to contest the

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<sup>48</sup> Conservative Party Archive, CCO 503/2/6, *Trade Union Conference – Motions*, Letter from F. Lawton to R. Carrick, March 1964.

election result and to expose the fraud that Communists had perpetrated. In June of the same year, the High Court found that the election was indeed rigged and ruled that Byrne was the valid winner of the December 1959 vote. Consequently, the TUC demanded that the ETU immediately take steps to debar its current office-holders for five years, and upon the ETU leadership's refusal to do so the ETU was expelled from the TUC and later from the Labour Party.

The Macmillan government followed the ETU case with great interest, and some within the administration naturally hoped to use the incident as an impetus for trade union reform: in particular, the Attorney General, Reginald Manningham-Buller, thought that '[i]f we are ever to do anything about Trade Unions, there could hardly be a better opportunity than at the end of this outcome'.<sup>49</sup> The problem was, as always, how to set about doing anything. Incidentally, despite the argument of Kenneth O. Morgan and others that the Minister of Labour and government point-man on this issue, John Hare, found it easy to argue that trade unions could be contained without 'inflammatory' measures such as government legislation,<sup>50</sup> Hare was, as Peter Dorey argues, 'initially inclined towards legislative action'<sup>51</sup> to be passed in order to ensure voting procedures within trade union elections would never again be subject to rigging and other illegal activities. Time and time again Hare argued that he was 'by no means convinced that the action which the T.U.C. have taken, or are willing and able to take, is a satisfactory answer to the problem of rigging of trade union elections'<sup>52</sup> and that it was

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<sup>49</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Letter from R. Manningham-Buller to H. Macmillan, 26 April 1961.

<sup>50</sup> K. O. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Oxford 2001, 180.

<sup>51</sup> P. Dorey, *British Conservatism and Trade Unionism*, 122

<sup>52</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Draft of Cabinet Memorandum by J.

his 'personal opinion that there is a gap in the law about trade union elections which needs to be filled'.<sup>53</sup> Many of the Conservative backbench MPs were supportive of this hard-line stance: Hare warned his Cabinet colleagues that 'our own backbenchers are pressing for Government action on ballot-rigging. Indeed I have been warned that unless there is reference to this subject in The Queen's Speech [in November 1961] we may expect a hostile amendment'.<sup>54</sup> In fact, discontent among the Tory backbenchers concerning trade union voting procedures was brewing even before the ETU scandal broke: the Conservative MP for Ilford North, Tom Iremonger, wanted to 'bring in a Ten-Minute Rule Bill to regulate the voting rules of Trade Unions and, according to [the MP for Hereford] David Gibson-Watt, "[was] not going to let this drop"' even before the ETU election was held.<sup>55</sup> Nor was this issue a concern purely for the Conservative Party: Hartley Shawcross, a former Labour MP for St. Helens who was recently ennobled as a crossbench life peer, wrote to Harold Macmillan suggesting that his newly-formed law reform organisation, JUSTICE, 'examine the extent to which the law should provide, or the courts protect, the rights of individuals including their right to a livelihood as they are affected by membership conditions, powers of expulsion, voting systems and other actions of unincorporated association'.<sup>56</sup> Such

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Hare, 22 September 1961.

<sup>53</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Speaking Brief for J. Hare's Meeting with TUC on Election Rules, 28 September 1961.

<sup>54</sup> The National Archives, LAB 10/1608, *Trade Union elections: proposals for legislation following case in the Electrical Trades Union*, Cabinet Memorandum by J. Hare, October 1961.

<sup>55</sup> The National Archives, LAB 10/3727, *Electrical Trade Union controversy: allegations of vote-rigging; influence of the Communist Party; transcripts from the BBC 'Panorama' programme*, Letter from M. Redmayne to E. Heath, 3 December 1959.

<sup>56</sup> The National Archives, LCO 2/8536, *Trade Union elections: possibility of legislation following the judgement in the Electrical Trade Union case; Lord Chancellor's view*, Letter from Lord Shawcross to H. Macmillan, 21 June 1961.

pressure from all sides of the political spectrum rendered Macmillan to instruct Manningham-Buller, in the latter's role as Attorney General, to look into possible forms of legislation which would be acceptable to both pro-reform hawks and trade union leaders. Manningham-Buller's recommendations were that the 'Registrar of Friendly Societies should be empowered to examine the election rules of trade unions so as to reveal drafting defects, unintelligibility and unworkability and possible omissions in the election rules. These would then be brought to the attention of the trade union concerned for correction'.<sup>57</sup> This idea was largely in tune with that suggested by the *Economist*, which hammered the point home by declaring that 'Mr. Hare should regard it as his duty to introduce such legislation in the next Session of Parliament'.<sup>58</sup>

Despite pressure from both the Minister responsible and a disgruntled set of MPs for government reform, however, Hare's initial position was by no means shared by all in the government. There was still a significant voice within the administration which called for the government's complete non-interference in trade union reform. A memorandum written for Macmillan argued passionately that '[i]f the Government took some such line as an act of faith in the essential soundness of the T.U. movement it would be enormously appreciated by responsible T.U. opinion. The Government's hand would be strengthened in its approaches to the T.U. movement in countless ways [...] It is sound "Tory democracy" and it is eminently a palatable doctrine for conservative trade unionists'.<sup>59</sup> The Attorney-General's proposal concerning a new role for the Registrar of Friendly Societies was also met

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<sup>57</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Draft of Cabinet Memorandum by J. Hare, 26 September 1961.

<sup>58</sup> "Mr. Hare's Buck", *The Economist*, 16 September 1961.

<sup>59</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Memorandum entitled 'A Positive Approach to the E.T.U. Affair', 28 April 1961.

with some opposition: some thought the proposal had 'no teeth' because the 'union could ignore any suggestions made by the Registrar and this might lead to pressure for further action to impose the rules on a recalcitrant trade union'.<sup>60</sup> To add to this, such sympathetic views held by some in the Party willing to give the trade union leadership the benefit of the doubt were unsurprisingly seized upon by the trade unions themselves. In an exchange of letters with John Hare, George Woodcock, the General Secretary of the TUC, argued that the 'E.T.U. case was quite exceptional and not too be reckoned as in any way typical of the way in which trade union elections generally are conducted [...] it would not be right to consider a problem of trade union elections in the light of one incident. In any case the position in the E.T.U. was, as I am sure you will agree, adequately dealt with [...] The T.U.C. has authority to deal with individual unions whose conduct either in respect of elections or in other respects is detrimental to the interests of the Trade Union Movement [...] we see no justification and therefore no need for any additional or special measures directed towards trade union elections'.<sup>61</sup> Some in the Ministry of Labour felt that Woodcock's letter was a 'pretty unsatisfactory reply to the Minister's letters [...] It is very defensive. It does not suggest a new outlook or a new and more vigorous determination to prevent abuses in the conduct of trade union elections. It gives the general impression of arguing that everything is under control in the trade unions and even cited the outcome of the ETU case as evidence of this'.<sup>62</sup> But the

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<sup>60</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Note entitled 'Should the Government take action on trade union elections?', 21 September 1961.

<sup>61</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Letter from G. Woodcock to J. Hare, 3 January 1962.

<sup>62</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/362, *Electrical Trades Union: issues raised about court case on trade union elections*, Letter from D. Barnes to P. St. John Wilson, 10 January 1962.

opposition from within the Party, the Ministry of Labour and the trade unions themselves was enough to undermine Hare's initial determination to take a hard stance against the trade unions by introducing legislation. Shouted down by colleagues in government and in the Party, Hare had no choice but to revert to the Tories' time-old position of voluntarism and non-confrontation with the unions, forcing him to argue that '[l]egislation would [...] end the prospect of further progress [and] cause a head-on collision with the trade union movement. It might lead them to withhold their co-operation over the whole field of relation with the government'.<sup>63</sup> It was an embarrassing turnaround for the Minister who had tried and failed to break away from the conventional Tory thinking on dealing with trade unions. Indeed, Joseph Godber, Hare's successor as Minister of Labour, later deplored this 'general line of avoiding sharp controversy with the trade union movement [which had] dominated our policy in greater or lesser degree in this field over thirteen years in office' as having 'incurred the lively dissatisfaction of the right wing of our Party [...] [A] feeling that we had not faced up sufficiently to the built-up inertia of trade union practices, which were hampering our economic development, has become much more widespread'.<sup>64</sup>

In short, despite the ultimate failure by the Macmillan administration to drop the Tory Party's traditional approach to trade union affairs, by the early 1960s there were now clear divisions among leading government figures over whether the once iron-cast principle of voluntarism was still feasible. There was indeed scope for hope that another major political jolt on the matter could push the government to completely reassess its previous position and take a more assertive stance in trade union reform.

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<sup>63</sup> Conservative Party Archive, ACP 3/10/63/103, *Papers, 1950-79*, Paper by J. Hare entitled 'Industrial Relations – Official Strikes', 28 January 1963.

<sup>64</sup> Churchill College Archives, POLL 3/2/1/7, *Papers of Enoch Powell*, Consultative Committee Paper entitled 'Relations With The Trade Unions' by J. Godber, 28 January 1965.



### The Home Administration and *Rookes v. Barnard*

Notwithstanding the failure to capitalise on the ETU affair, the Conservative administration tried to keep up the pretence of exerting pressure on the trade unions in order to appease disappointed Tory hardliners, with Hare warning the unions that it was ‘essential that [the TUC’s decision to embark on a fundamental review of its purposes and structure] should lead to effective reform [...] Should it fail to do so, we shall be confronted with a very serious situation. We should not under-estimate the strength of feeling up and down the country there is on all this’.<sup>65</sup> However, the Conservative Party’s long-awaited excuse to deal with trade union reform came about in January 1964, when the House of Lords ruled on a legal action brought by a draughtsman named Douglas Rookes. Rookes, an employee of the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), was also a member of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen (AESD) as was required by the ‘closed shop’ agreement between BOAC and AESD. However, Rookes had disagreements with the branch secretary and subsequently resigned from the union in 1955 but continued in his job at BOAC. The union did not want to set a precedent of having a non-member employed at the company and tried to get Rookes to rejoin. When Rookes refused, the AESD, threatening strike action, forced BOAC to first suspend Rookes from his duties and then to dismiss him. Since BOAC ‘neither broke their contract with [Rookes] nor committed any tort against him’,<sup>66</sup> Rookes sued two members and an official of AESD on the grounds that AESD had wrongly forced BOAC to dismiss him. In the first instance, with Mr. Justice Sachs presiding, Rookes won his case and was awarded £7,500 in damages. But the Court of Appeal overturned the ruling by finding that the defendants

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<sup>65</sup> “Hare tells unions: ‘Get up to date,’” *Evening Standard*, 9 March 1963.

<sup>66</sup> *Rookes v Barnard*, *House of Lords* [1964], AC 1129.

had not committed any tort against Rookes and that even if they had, they were protected from any liability under the 1906 Trade Disputes Act because their actions were done in furtherance of a trade dispute. However, that ruling was again overturned in the Lords where it was stated that the defendants were not protected by the 1906 Act because it was unlawful intimidation to 'to use a threat to break their contracts with their employer as a weapon to make him do something which he was legally entitled to do but which they knew would cause loss to the plaintiff'.<sup>67</sup> The Lords decided that Rookes was indeed entitled to damages, and ordered a new trial to decide the appropriate amount.

The *Rookes v. Barnard* finding caused huge interest within the Alec Douglas-Home administration and the Conservative Party as a whole: it was the most significant opportunity in decades for the Party to unite in discussing trade union reform in depth and in earnest. The administration had already set up a Committee on Trade Unions and the Law, made up of officials mainly from the Ministry of Labour, the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Office, with the brief of 'consider[ing] the law relating to trade unions and employers' associations, and to report what changes, if any, are desirable'.<sup>68</sup> Whilst the initial Report of the Committee argued against an immediate wholesale change in trade union legislation policy and asked that 'consideration be given to legislation under which an employer would have to be able to justify a dismissal and an employee would have a right of appeal to an independent tribunal against unjustifiable dismissal', it nevertheless also recommended that '[i]f the danger of irregularities [in trade union elections] again become serious, the government should urge the T.U.C. to take

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> The National Archives, LAB 43/416, *Trades unions and the law: inquiry following Rookes v. Barnard judgement*, Report of the Committee on Trade Unions and the Law, 1

effective action and, in the absence of this, should consider legislation'.<sup>69</sup> It also recommended a more active involvement of the state in trade union affairs by suggesting that 'registered unions with more than 500 members or £5,000 in assets might be required to employ professional auditors', that 'registered unions with superannuation funds might be required to have the funds valued every five years, and new schemes might be certifiable by an actuary', that 'it might be provided that no alteration of rules of a registered union is to be valid until registered', that 'the law might require that registered union's rules should set out the statutory right of members to be sent a copy of the rules for more 1 s. on request, to have a copy of the annual return to the Registrar [of Friendly Societies] free on request, and, if the union provides death benefit, to nominate a person to whom the benefit is to be paid', and that the Registrar 'might be given power [...] to withdraw a certificate [that the Registrar, under the 1913 Trade Union Act, can issue to an unregistered trade union to make it a registered one] on his own initiative and to require a union periodically to give evidence that a certificate is still justified'.<sup>70</sup> The Report concluded that the 'need for [trade union] reform is becoming more and more urgent and if the T.U.C. does not carry it out, and cannot be persuaded to, then in the long run the more drastic remedy of legislation, and with it greater oversight of trade union affairs by the State, may become inevitable'.<sup>71</sup> The Committee was later asked to report back to the government on the implications of the *Rookes v Barnard* ruling, and it presented a Supplementary Report arguing that while the Lords' decision did 'not appear to make legislation urgently necessary', it was 'doubtful whether [leaving the law as it is] would be satisfactory or perhaps even practicable' and it would 'not seem justified' to amend the law in order to reverse the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 29.

effect of the decision since it gave ‘a jolt to those who thought that all strikes however irresponsible were beyond the reach of the law’.<sup>72</sup> Backbench Tory MPs now had no hesitation in immediately taking up the crusade for trade union reform: in a meeting of the 1922 Committee on the evening of 13 February, several speakers ‘suggested that the recent decision of the House of Lords in *Rookes v. Barnard* clearly demonstrated that the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, was outdated’ and a group of around 30 to 40 MPs tabled a motion urging the government ‘to set up a Royal Commission to study the law and practice relating to trade unions’.<sup>73</sup>

Conservatives in the wider country were also voicing their strong desire for trade union reform. In February 1964, a pressure group called the Freedom Group commissioned a Gallup Poll on trade union reform to be published in the *Daily Mail*.<sup>74</sup> On the question of whether the respondents ‘approved or disapproved if the Government were to set up a Royal Commission to suggest new laws on problems affecting the trade unions’, 50% of the respondents approved (with 67% of Conservatives and 48% of trade unionists approving). On the question of whether the respondent would be more inclined to vote Conservative ‘if the Conservative Party included in their General Election programme the setting up of a Royal Commission to deal with union problems’, 17% of the respondents replied in the affirmative (with 33% of Conservative voters and 23% of trade unionists being more inclined), while only 5% of the respondents replied in the negative (with 1% of Conservative voters and 6% of trade unionists being less inclined). The poll concluded that all sections of society were in favour of trade union reform, and despite

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<sup>72</sup> The National Archives, CAB 129/118, *Cabinet Memoranda*, Supplementary Report of the Official Committee on Trade Unions and the Law (Annex to the Memorandum by the Minister of Labour), June 1964, 6-7.

<sup>73</sup> “M.P.s Want Change In Union Law,” *The Times*, 14 February 1964.

<sup>74</sup> For the whole survey, see the National Archives, LAB 43/416, *Trades unions and the law: inquiry following Rookes v. Barnard judgement*, Gallup Poll on Trade Union Reform on behalf of Freedom Group.

arguments by the Ministry of Labour civil servants that the questions were somewhat 'loaded' and therefore could not be regarded as fully reflecting the public opinion,<sup>75</sup> the findings were nevertheless seized upon by the Chief Whip, Martin Redmayne, who wrote to Home arguing that he had 'said on several occasions that a step in this direction, if it were deemed possible, would be very popular with Conservatives both in the House and in the country. This Poll would seem to confirm that view'.<sup>76</sup> Redmayne also wrote to the Minister of Labour, Joseph Godber, saying that the Chief Whip was 'not trying to pressurise you, but you will agree that the Poll is interesting'.<sup>77</sup> Redmayne was not the only Cabinet heavyweight to lend his weight behind trade union reform. Another opinion of the time that is worth noting was that of Rab Butler. Whatever the Foreign Secretary's opinion was before, there is no doubt of his belief on the matter as the government went into 1964. In a letter to the Prime Minister, after claiming that the *Rookes v. Barnard* ruling presented 'a opportunity which we have not had for more than ten years and which it would be a very great pity to miss', Butler argued that it had 'been clear for a very long time indeed that the law relating to trade unions [...] needs to be comprehensively reviewed and probably fairly extensively revised both in matters of detail (e.g. arrangements for the auditing of union accounts) and in matters of principles (e.g. the extent of corporate responsibility, relationship with the individual, the judicial nature of strikes, etc.)' and suggested the setting up of 'a Royal Commission with broad terms

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<sup>75</sup> National Archives, LAB 10/2138, *Inquiry into the law relating to Trade Unions, Employers' Associations and Trade Disputes*, Letter from D. Barnes to J. Godber, 6 February 1964.

<sup>76</sup> National Archives, LAB 43/416, *Trades unions and the law: inquiry following Rookes v. Barnard judgement*, Letter from M. Redmayne to A. Douglas-Home, 4 February 1964.

<sup>77</sup> National Archives, LAB 43/416, *Trades unions and the law: inquiry following Rookes v. Barnard judgement*, Letter from M. Redmayne to J. Godber, 4 February 1964.

of reference to review the whole body of law relating to trade unions and to recommend how it could be brought to date and adapted to the present position of trade unions in our society'.<sup>78</sup> With such pressure from all sides of the Party membership, it was decided on 3 March 1964 at a meeting between Douglas-Home, Godber and Redmayne that such a Royal Commission would indeed be set up if the Conservatives were returned to power in the general election.<sup>79</sup> However, in a Cabinet meeting on 17 March, it was argued that 'it would be inadvisable at this stage to purport to give any precise indication of the ground to be covered in the inquiry'<sup>80</sup> and such an ambiguous statement did little to dampen the dissatisfaction felt by the wider Party on the matter. But, as fate would have it, the Conservatives would go on to lose the October general election and a Royal Commission would be set up, ironically, under a Labour administration instead.

### Conclusion

The lengthy preservation of the post-war consensual agreement among the upper echelons of the main political parties has led many observers to disregard the discontent concerning such consensus amongst the Parliamentary members as well as the grassroots membership of the Conservative Party throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. But this article has demonstrated that whilst post-war Conservative Prime Ministers such as Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home had found it

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<sup>78</sup> Trinity College, Cambridge, RAB H51, *The Papers of Richard Austen Butler*, Copy of letter from R. Butler to A. Douglas-Home, 17 February 1964.

<sup>79</sup> The National Archives, PREM 11/4871, *Trade union law: proposal to set up Royal Commission*, Paper entitled 'Note for the Record: Trade Unions', 3 March 1964.

<sup>80</sup> The National Archives, CAB 128/38, *Cabinet Conclusions C.M. (64)*, 19<sup>th</sup> Conclusions, 17 March 1964.

conducive, even necessary, to go along with the collectivist atmosphere of the era, this was by no means a political decision which was consistently and wholeheartedly supported by the Party's faithful. A significant portion of Conservative supporters was deeply dismayed by the left-wing actions of their own right-wing administrations, especially concerning the governments' tolerance and affability towards the perceived enemies of industrial modernisation and the free market system, the trade unions. Whatever the political motivations behind the reluctance to change posture might have been, there is little doubt that the continuation of the Conservative administrations' outward amenableness on trade unions during the 30-year consensus was little more than habitual veneer covering up the cracks which were rapidly appearing on the wall of party opinion on this most contentious matter. The façade would soon go on to finally dissolve itself entirely with the end of consensus and the advent of Thatcherism in the late 1970s.

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# Scottish Propaganda at the End of Empire

Bryan S. Glass\*

## **Abstract**

This article investigates the disputes among Scottish middle-class professionals over the Central African Federation in the early 1960s. The Scottish Council for African Questions, composed mainly of intellectuals, lawyers, and clergy, wanted to bring the Central African Federation to an end because of their opposition to a white minority regime that seemed destined to institute the colour bar over the whole of the region. Their position was opposed by another Scottish middle-class organization called the Scottish Study Group on the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, which was headed by an influential businessman named William Thyne. In *The Scotsman*, the Scottish Study Group proclaimed its dedication to 'setting the record straight' on the Central African Federation in Scotland. The archives, however, show that the group was in constant, direct contact with Roy Welensky, the Prime Minister for the Central African Federation, and many other officials of the white minority regime. Both of these organizations engaged in a sometimes covert propaganda battle over the Federation, meant to sway the opinion of the imperially-engaged Scottish public. Overall, this article represents the vastly differing views on the Federation held by important and influential professionals in Scottish society and reiterates that

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the Scots were constantly aware of and engaged with the empire — even if they wholeheartedly disagreed about what should come of it following the Second World War.

**Keywords:** British Empire, Nyasaland, Central African Federation, Scottish Council for African Questions, Scottish Study Group, Roy Welensky, Colour bar, William Thyne, Kenneth MacKenzie, Propaganda, Scotland, Scottish Propaganda

## Introduction

The rise and fall of the British Empire profoundly shaped the history of modern Scotland and the identity of its people. From the Act of Union in 1707 to the dramatic fall of the British Empire following the Second World War, Scotland's involvement in commerce, missionary activity, cultural dissemination, emigration, and political action cannot be dissociated from British overseas endeavours. In fact, Scottish national pride and identity were closely associated with the benefits bestowed on this small nation through access to the British Empire. The empire, after all, had taken the Scots to the pinnacle of global power. During the era of decolonization (1945-1965), in which the empire quickly unravelled over the course of 20 years, the Scots paid close attention to the British Empire through newspapers, the committees of the Church of Scotland, and the educational system, and their interest was further amplified by propaganda organizations dedicated to swaying the imperially-engaged Scottish public. No area of the empire received more attention from the Scots than Central Africa, following the formation of the white settler-dominated Central African Federation in 1953. Included within this political construct was the

Protectorate of Nyasaland, a territory that was incorporated into the British Empire in the late nineteenth century mainly through the work of Scots. Accordingly, the Scots were very keen to monitor the situation in Central Africa and this was made easier through two major propaganda organizations, the Scottish Council for African Questions and the Scottish Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

On Friday, 7 October 1960 an article appeared in *The Scotsman* newspaper describing a press conference held the previous day in Edinburgh. The press conference announced the formation of a new organization dedicated to the spread of information about the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland to the Scottish public. Named the Scottish Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland (SSG), the organization claimed to be non-political and concerned with ensuring that Scots were given the facts about the Federation and not the tainted propaganda provided by many within the Church of Scotland.<sup>1</sup>

Although never mentioned, their target was the Scottish Council for African Questions (SCAQ), an anti-imperial propaganda organization formed in 1952 to voice displeasure at the creation of the Federation. Established by an Edinburgh lawyer, Gerald Sinclair Shaw, the SCAQ was comprised of numerous Church of Scotland ministers and missionaries, foremost among them Reverend Kenneth MacKenzie, as well as leading Scottish academics like Professor George Shepperson.<sup>2</sup> The SCAQ was immediately suspicious of the SSG and aired their grievances in the Letters to the Editor section of both *The Scotsman* and *The Glasgow Herald* newspapers. A battle had broken out over the type of information Scots were being proffered about the

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<sup>1</sup> "Study Group on Rhodesia and Nyasaland Formed: Independent; non-political," *The Scotsman*, 7 October 1960, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Sinclair Shaw liked to introduce himself to others as "a friend of Dr. Hastings Banda." Letter from Sinclair Shaw to Mr. Mkandawire, 1 November 1960, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections (hereafter EULSC), MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions.

Federation as its end rapidly approached. But while the SCAQ was willing to admit its anti-Federation bias, the SSG refused to reveal its pro-Federation sentiments and connections. They claimed to be fully independent with a singular desire to counter the inaccurate propaganda disbursed to the Scottish public. As this article will show, this was a mendacious claim.

Both the SCAQ and the SSG were organizations that operated solely through volunteer labor. The people who volunteered for both organizations were, in many ways, obsessed with the Federation: one of the most controversial imperial issues in the post-war period. Accordingly, the amount of time demanded of the volunteers made it necessary for them to come from the classes of Scottish society that had the financial means to support unpaid effort. Thus, these volunteers were either from the business and professional middle classes or the aristocracy.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above, the Scots cared a great deal about Central Africa because of the role of their forebears in the inclusion of Nyasaland within the British Empire. Accordingly, many Scots felt Nyasaland was a Scottish concern and this played a major role in the passion exhibited by these two propaganda organizations as they debated the merits of the white settler-dominated Central African Federation. The mere existence of these two completely voluntary propaganda organizations also demonstrates that whether Scots categorized themselves as proponents, opponents, or victims of empire, one conclusion is clear: they were aware of and constantly engaged with the empire during the era of decolonization from 1945 to 1965.<sup>4</sup> The Scots were not about to see the empire recede into history without taking notice. They would stay involved to the very end.

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<sup>3</sup> The members of the working class do not factor into this article except as recipients of the propaganda.

<sup>4</sup> For the high level of Scottish interest in the British Empire during the era of decolonization see: Bryan S. Glass, *The Scottish Nation at Empire's End*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2014.



### **The Scottish Council for African Questions (SCAQ)**

The Scottish Council for African Questions appeared in 1952 as a reaction towards the British Government's policy of creating a Central African Federation, "irrespective of the wishes of the Africans."<sup>5</sup> Composed mainly of Churchmen and intellectuals, the Council's origins can be traced to February 1952 when a meeting of protest against plans for the Federation was organized in the Church of Scotland's General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh. "At that meeting 1200 people were present" to listen to speeches by the missionary Kenneth MacKenzie and the future head of an independent Malawi Dr. Hastings Banda.<sup>6</sup> Given the success of the meeting, Sinclair Shaw, Kenneth MacKenzie, and Sir Gordon Lethem, amongst others, decided that something more permanent was needed. Eventually it was decided that the Scottish Council for African Questions should be formed. It would last until 1976 and, in the intervening twenty-four years, take up any and all topics related to Africa. But the main arena of interest remained the fate of the three Territories of Central Africa: Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia.

While the object of the SCAQ could be succinctly put as "arousing in Scotland a greater interest in British Africa and to help in the promotion of full political rights for all, whatever their colour, race or creed, in British Africa," its constitution went even further.<sup>7</sup>

1. To strengthen and further the best traditions of British policy in relation to Africa, especially with regard to the moral and legal obligation to

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<sup>5</sup> Gerald Sinclair Shaw, "Speech at Perth in June 1959," EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Winifred S. Hardie (Honorary Secretary to the Council) to various dignitaries, "Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland 1960 Review Conference," 30 November 1959, EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

safeguard the rights of all communities against domination by any minority or majority.

2. To promote in Scotland a fuller understanding of the aspirations of the people of Africa and an informed sympathy with them in their problems.
3. To promote in Britain policies ensuring the economic and social development and the equitable political rights of all communities in Africa.
4. To assist peoples in Africa in their struggle against unfair discrimination and inequality of opportunity in their educational, economic and social progress and to foster in all non-self-governing territories responsible forms of self-government.
5. To encourage practical projects of development which will provide a living experience in Africa of economic, social and political co-operation, in the true sense of the word, amongst people of different races.<sup>8</sup>

The SCAQ wanted a movement towards independence sooner rather than later in Africa, which was in direct conflict with the desires of the Federal regime in Central Africa to maintain white minority rule for as long as possible. Even more interesting, and underscoring the close affiliation of many SCAQ members with the Church of Scotland, was their stated goal of pressuring governmental officials to ensure the economic and social advancement of indigenous peoples in a Westernized world. Independence for Africans was not enough. The civilizing mission was alive and well within the Constitution of an anti-imperial propaganda organization during the era of decolonization.<sup>9</sup>

The SCAQ was composed of numerous branches throughout Scotland. The cities of Glasgow, Perth, and Aberdeen all had branches. However, the main center of activity resided with the first branch in Edinburgh, founded

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<sup>8</sup> "Constitution of the Scottish Council for African Questions," EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

<sup>9</sup> The civilizing mission is defined as intervening in a territory in order to spread Western values to indigenous peoples.

by Sinclair Shaw. In almost all instances the branches would organize their own activities and compose letters to members of the British Government on areas of concern in Africa. However, in perceived critical situations, such as the drafting of a memorandum for the consideration of the Monckton Commission in 1960, they would issue a combined statement.<sup>10</sup> The branches, though separate, worked very closely together as all were bound to adhere to the SCAQ's Constitution.

So what, exactly, were the propaganda methods employed by the SCAQ to increase Scottish interest in Africa while at the same time winning adherents to their anti-Federation point of view?<sup>11</sup> The first method was the organization of lectures by like-minded, distinguished Scots. This was the preferred technique used by the SCAQ to convey their message to the Scottish public. Perhaps the most famous speech organized by the SCAQ featured Dr. Hastings Banda on Monday, 25 April 1960. Held in the Central Hall in Edinburgh, "every one of 1,100 seats were occupied and people were standing at the back both upstairs and downstairs."<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of the speakers were Africans, intellectuals, or clergy. Speeches of note included Mr. Anthony Sampson on "Black and White in Johannesburg" (Tuesday, 30 April 1957), Mr. M. W. K. Chiume, member of the Nyasaland Legislative Council and the Nyasaland African Congress, on "What Nyasaland Africans

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<sup>10</sup> "Memorandum submitted to The Monckton Commission by The Scottish Council for African Questions," January 1960, EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this article, propaganda is defined as "the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another, with the specific intention of influencing the recipients' attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced." For this definition see: John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1984, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Handwritten notes, presumably of Sinclair Shaw, on the inside of an envelope addressed to him, n.d., EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

are Thinking Today” (Wednesday, 28 January 1959), Tom Colvin, the Church of Scotland missionary famously banned from the Federation for making disparaging remarks about its Federal Government, on “Nyasaland and its Future” (Wednesday, 11 February 1959), Julius Nyerere, President of the Tanganyika African National Union, on “Problems facing Central and East Africa Today” (Tuesday, 30 June 1959), Guy Clutton-Brock, a white founding member of the African National Congress in Southern Rhodesia, whose speech on Tuesday, 26 January 1960 was meant to counter propaganda emanating from Rhodesia House, George Shepperson, Reader in Imperial and American History at the University of Edinburgh, on “The Challenge of Pan-Africanism” (Monday, 25 February 1963), and Dr. Terence Ranger, who was exiled from Southern Rhodesia in 1963 (Friday, 11 October 1963).<sup>13</sup> The speeches hosted by the SCAQ sometimes occurred as often as twice a month and proved to be a huge success. But these did not constitute the only lectures of importance for the SCAQ’s cause.

Members of the SCAQ also presented lectures to branches of the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) and Adult Education Councils in Scotland. Of the members, the two most active in adult lecturing were George Shepperson and Kenneth MacKenzie.<sup>14</sup> These courses were meant, especially in the case

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<sup>13</sup> The dates and titles of the speeches are available in EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions. The Edinburgh branch of the SCAQ actually wanted Guy Clutton-Brock to speak to every branch of the organization in Scotland to help counter the propaganda released by Rhodesia House under the auspices of Sir Gilbert Rennie, who would play an important role in the SSG in 1960. For the internal correspondence about the significance of Clutton-Brock speaking throughout Scotland see: Kenneth MacKenzie to Sinclair Shaw, 27 October 1959, EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions.

<sup>14</sup> These men are forever connected in that George Shepperson arranged for Kenneth MacKenzie’s archives to be deposited in the Edinburgh University Library Special Collections following the latter’s sudden death from a coronary at the age of 50 in 1971. See: Handwritten letter from Margaret MacKenzie (Kenneth’s widow) to Sinclair Shaw, 5 April 1971, EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish

of the WEA, “to support the educational needs of working men and women who could not afford to access further or higher education.”<sup>15</sup> George Shepperson began teaching courses for the South East Scotland District of the WEA during the 1951-52 academic year, just as the SCAQ was getting started.<sup>16</sup> These courses were either weekend schools, such as the one Shepperson presented on 26 and 27 April 1952 entitled “Africa in the Modern World,” or one-day schools such as his 7 December 1952 class in Galashiels entitled “Africa Today.” As the 1950s progressed, Shepperson changed the titles of his classes from these safe choices to the more informative and provocative “The Colour Bar” (Bathgate, 27 March 1955) and “The Rise of Nationalism in Nyasaland” (Edinburgh, 13 May 1962). Although the syllabi for these courses are not available in the archives, his membership in the SCAQ leads to the assumption that these classes were sympathetic towards the plight of Africans in the Federation, especially in relation to the white settlers who dominated the government.

The Reverend Kenneth MacKenzie, who was a driving force behind the SCAQ along with Sinclair Shaw, most certainly provided his students with a version of events that was sympathetic towards Africans.<sup>17</sup> In the late

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Council for African Questions.

<sup>15</sup> This quote is available from the Workers Educational Association website at <http://www.wea.org.uk/about>.

<sup>16</sup> The South East Scotland District of the WEA catered to about 1000 students per year in 1958-59. Annual Reports for South East Scotland District of the Workers' Educational Association, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Acc. 11551/31.

<sup>17</sup> MacKenzie, who served as a Church of Scotland missionary from 1945 to 1956 in both Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia (Nyasaland: 1945-1948 and Northern Rhodesia: 1948-1956) was described by the Rev. Neil C. Bernard as “the confidant of African leaders who were planning for independence.” For Rev. Denis Duncan, MacKenzie’s “life interest was Africa and the Africans. No African ever had a greater worker and indeed warrior, for his cause than he had in Kenneth MacKenzie.” “Kenneth MacKenzie, Minister of Restalrig Parish Church 1968-1971: In Tribute and to his Memory,” EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Folder 64.

1950s and early 1960s, MacKenzie served as the Secretary on the Church of Scotland's Committee anent Central Africa, which was charged with investigating and reporting back on the troubles in the region. The Committee was headed by the Rev. George MacLeod, following his stint as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1957-58.<sup>18</sup> According to someone who knew George MacLeod well, Kenneth MacKenzie was influential in convincing MacLeod to turn against the Central African Federation in 1959.<sup>19</sup> This statement makes sense when it is considered that MacKenzie, "the Kirk's foremost authority on African affairs" was responsible for briefing MacLeod on the situation in Central Africa.<sup>20</sup>

MacKenzie taught his first course for the WEA, "Racial Policies in South Africa" in Alloa on the weekend of 5-6 October 1957, following his return from Northern Rhodesia. It is evident from the title that this course was meant to inform the students about the colour bar and, given MacKenzie's background, condemn the practice. Shortly following the declaration of a State of Emergency in Nyasaland in March 1959, MacKenzie gave a lecture in Edinburgh entitled "Political Effects of Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland" (14 June 1959).<sup>21</sup> In early 1961, and fast on the heels of the formation of the SSG the previous October, MacKenzie delivered a one-day

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the Rev. George MacLeod and his views on the Central African Federation see: Bryan S. Glass, "Protection from the British Empire? Central Africa and the Church of Scotland," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41: 3, 2013, 475-495. At the 1958 General Assembly MacLeod successfully persuaded the Church to appoint the Committee and report annually until 1962.

<sup>19</sup> Informal conversation between author and Dr. Lesley Orr, Fall 2010. To read George MacLeod's speech to the General Assembly as Convenor of the Committee anent Central Africa in May 1959 see Appendix D of Glass, *The Scottish Nation at Empire's End*.

<sup>20</sup> Ron Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community*, Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications 2001, 299.

<sup>21</sup> Annual Reports for South East Scotland District of the Workers' Educational Association, NLS, Acc. 11551/31.

lecture entitled “Nyasaland Grows Up” for the Linlithgow Adult Education Council, part of the Edinburgh University Extra-Mural Committee (2 March 1961).<sup>22</sup> His other courses for the WEA included “The Crisis in Central Africa” (Edinburgh, 7 April 1963), a two-part course “Continued Revolution in Africa I & II” (Edinburgh, 8 and 15 March 1964), and one-day schools on “Africa To-day” (Cowdenbeath, 18 October 1964) and “The New Nations of Africa” (Hawick, 7 March 1965).<sup>23</sup> Combined, these lectures from a leading member of the SCAQ served to increase awareness of the British Empire in Central Africa amongst adult learners in Scotland. It is also highly likely that the lectures helped fulfill the SCAQ’s agenda of propagandizing against the Central African Federation.

In addition to the organization and presentation of lectures throughout Scotland, the SCAQ and its members wrote letters to Members of Parliament and to newspapers, crafted and signed petitions, and engaged in debates about the CAF. For instance, Kenneth MacKenzie wrote frequently to Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament pressing them to uphold Britain’s guarantees about the protectorate status of Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia.<sup>24</sup> He also called on all Scots to take an active role in protecting the peoples of Nyasaland by writing to their MPs. In “Our Brethren in Revolt,” written following the Nyasaland Emergency, MacKenzie

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<sup>22</sup> This class was part of “A Course of Ten Lectures on ‘Other Lands and Other Peoples’” given at the Linlithgow Academy. EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Box 11.

<sup>23</sup> Annual Reports for South East Scotland District of the Workers’ Educational Association, NLS, Acc. 11551/31.

<sup>24</sup> One such letter elicited a very warm reply from James Callaghan MP. Callaghan, the future Prime Minister, stated that “You can be assured that we shall continue to press the Government to fulfill its responsibilities towards the Protectorates and to see that the undertakings given to the Protectorates in the Preamble to the Federal Constitution are firmly upheld.” James Callaghan to Kenneth MacKenzie, 6 March 1959, EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Box 1.

asked his readers:

Are you prepared to write to your M.P., to the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, suggesting:

- (a) That the Africans in detention should be given a fair trial now:
- (b) That Nyasaland be given a Territorial Constitution permitting an absolute African majority in the Legislative Council:
- (c) That the 1960 Conference reviewing the Federation should be held in this country and not in Central Africa:
- (d) That at that Conference Nyasaland Africans get a chance to discuss secession:
- (e) That at that Conference some federal functions be returned to the Territorial Governments:
- (f) That there be no Dominion status for the Federation without the consent of the majority of the inhabitants of the races within the two Northern Territories.<sup>25</sup>

In order to rouse his fellow Scots into action, MacKenzie indicated that MPs were saying the people of Scotland did not care nearly as much about the people of Nyasaland as the newspapers claimed. He was dedicated to overturning this perception.

In addition to MacKenzie and Shaw, letters to newspapers appeared by numerous members of the SCAQ. On the debate about the formation of the SSG, for instance, SCAQ members Winifred Hardie, W. Calder, and Sir Gordon Lethem wrote in along with George MacLeod, whose sympathies with the organization made him, for all intents and purposes, an honorary member following the Nyasaland Emergency in March 1959.<sup>26</sup> A petition

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth MacKenzie, "Our Brethren in Revolt," n.d., 3, EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Box 19.

<sup>26</sup> See the discussion below on the debate in the Scottish newspapers following the press conference announcing the formation of the SSG on 6 October 1960.



distributed by the branches of the SCAQ in 1959 called on Scots to join them in telling the British Government “that it would be wrong for Britain to concede [claims amongst Europeans in the Federation for Dominion status] unless they are acceptable to a majority of both Africans and Europeans in the Protectorates.”<sup>27</sup>

Kenneth MacKenzie never shied away from the spotlight in his quest to inform the Scots about the Central African Federation. He even tried his hand at debating no less a figure than James Graham, the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Montrose, immediately following the declaration of a State of Emergency in Nyasaland. This debate, for the “In Perspective” program, was broadcast on Friday, 3 April 1959.<sup>28</sup> The debate did not feature any fireworks with MacKenzie holding to an anti-Federation line and Montrose espousing the beliefs of the Dominion Party, the main opposition party in the Federation that would eventually morph into the Rhodesian Front and pass the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) for Southern Rhodesia in November 1965. They were in grave disagreement over the fitness of the Africans to run their own affairs in any of the Territories of the Federation, although Montrose was willing to let Nyasaland leave along with the portions of Northern Rhodesia that did not contain the copper mines that proved so important to the Federal economy. What is even more interesting about this debate is what the Duke of Montrose took away from it. In a letter to Mr. Robert Hay, the man in charge of the Duke’s estates in Scotland, he claimed that:

It is quite appalling the way the Church of Scotland have been behaving over the Nyasaland affair. As I realised from my private talk with the Rev. Kenneth

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<sup>27</sup> Petition of the Scottish Council for African Questions, 1959, EULSC, MS. 2495: Scottish Council for African Questions.

<sup>28</sup> “Discussion between the Duke of Montrose and the Rev. Kenneth MacKenzie,” 3 April 1959, EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Box 19.

McKenzie, both before and after our mutual broadcast discussion, he is aware of the true situation as much as I am, namely that it would be a disaster for Nyasaland to become independent, not only financially, but because they are quite unable to produce a fraction of the men required with education, technical or professional knowledge, to form a Government and an administration.<sup>29</sup>

Given MacKenzie's complete dedication to the Africans of the region and his disgust at the behavior of the white minority regime, Montrose's testimony about what MacKenzie really thought rings hollow. MacKenzie was, after all, helping to formulate the Church of Scotland's actions over Nyasaland after the Emergency. This appeared to be his own attempt at influencing a subordinate in the hopes that Mr. Hay would relate this propaganda to other Scots.

A final, very important point is the influence that the founder of the SCAQ, Sinclair Shaw, had on George MacLeod's famous speech to the 1959 General Assembly. The Deliverance that passed the General Assembly as a result of this speech stated:

The General Assembly, recognising that the time has come for a radical revision of the Territorial Constitution for Nyasaland, earnestly recommend to Her Majesty's Government that effective power be given to the African community in that land, which admits the possibility of an African majority in the Legislative Council.<sup>30</sup>

This move to transfer effective power to Africans in Nyasaland was a major step in the process of dissolving the Central African Federation. MacLeod took inspiration in preparing his speech from an op-ed column written by

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<sup>29</sup> Duke of Montrose to Robert Hay, 18 June 1959, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), GD220/7/4/176.

<sup>30</sup> "Supplementary Report of the General Assembly's Committee anent Central Africa," 6 May 1959, NRS, CH 1/8/95.

Sinclair Shaw. The column, entitled “Nyasaland Parallel with Cyprus: Africans unalterably opposed to Federation they distrust,” appeared in *The Scotsman* on 17 March 1959. In the article, Shaw described the manner in which the Federation was imposed on four million Africans in the protectorates of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland by 30,000 European voters of Southern Rhodesia in the 1953 referendum. Shaw continued that “it is surely impossible to deny that this was an act of racial discrimination of the first magnitude. Nothing can hide the fact that Federation was imposed upon four million unwilling Africans.”<sup>31</sup> Shaw went on to describe in detail the composition of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and how these needed to be altered to properly consider African opinion before the 1960 constitutional review conference. Otherwise, Dominion status might be granted to the Federation and Britain’s pledge to protect the two northern Territories would be abandoned.

This column made a powerful impact on MacLeod. In a letter to Shaw right after the 1959 General Assembly, MacLeod expressed his indebtedness. “If you heard my speech you would hear some interesting figures of the ‘muffling’ of African Representation. You would recognise them as having been culled from your own article in the Scotsman in March: for which many thanks! That was a terrific indictment!”<sup>32</sup> By waging their public battle to inform the Scots about the situation in the Central African Federation, Shaw had helped influence the writing of, perhaps, the most important speech ever made on behalf of Africans to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The SCAQ, through the labors of Sinclair Shaw and Kenneth MacKenzie, had played a major role in giving the Africans a voice, especially in Nyasaland.

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<sup>31</sup> Sinclair Shaw, “Nyasaland Parallel with Cyprus: Africans unalterably opposed to Federation they distrust,” *The Scotsman*, 17 March 1959, 8-9.

<sup>32</sup> George MacLeod to Sinclair Shaw, 29 May 1959, EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions.

This voice would reverberate throughout Britain and help destabilize the foundations of the white settler-dominated Federation.

Overall, there is little doubt that the SCAQ helped build awareness of the events unfolding in the Central African Federation during the 1950s and early 1960s. However, the mere existence of this propaganda organization is owed to the level of importance many Scots placed on the British Empire during the era of decolonization. In fact, the SSG may never have developed if not for the effectiveness of the SCAQ in putting forward an anti-federation message through their propaganda. The SCAQ was doing its part to ensure that the Scots did not forget their duty to protect the indigenous peoples living in the Federation, even if it was from kith and kin.

### October 1960

The announcement of the SSG's formation brought out an immediate response from many within the SCAQ mainly because of what was stated and who was present at the press conference on 6 October 1960.<sup>33</sup> First, the SSG chose Brigadier Bernard Fergusson to lead the press conference because of his interest in Central Africa and his supposed reputation for integrity and impartiality.<sup>34</sup> Fergusson's speech, however, appeared to be anything but impartial. According to *The Scotsman*, Fergusson stated that "The Church of

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<sup>33</sup> The press conference was held at the North British Station Hotel in Edinburgh. A total of 22 people attended including journalists from the following newspapers: *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, *Dundee Courier*, *Evening Times*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Scotsman*, and *British Weekly*. Minutes of a Meeting of the Scottish Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 6 October 1960, York University Archives, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (hereafter YUA), William Thyne Papers.

<sup>34</sup> William Thyne, "Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Replies to Readers' Questions," *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1960, 8.

Scotland has been pronouncing hitherto on the subject of Rhodesia and Nyasaland with a voice briefed from the anti-Federation lobby only.”<sup>35</sup> This quote was verified in a similar article by *The Glasgow Herald*.<sup>36</sup> Sir Gilbert Rennie, the High Commissioner for the Federation, also attended the press conference and spoke to the attendees.<sup>37</sup> Rennie, known for running propaganda campaigns for the Central African Federation in Britain, “welcomed the formation of the group as a means of counteracting inaccurate and prejudiced views and propaganda in Scotland.”<sup>38</sup> For his role as Chairman, William Thyne, a successful Edinburgh printer and paper manufacturer, claimed that the group’s aims were to disseminate factual information about Central Africa that would serve to enlighten public opinion in Scotland.<sup>39</sup> The Letters to the Editor columns of *The Scotsman* lit up in response to the emergence of the SSG.

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<sup>35</sup> “Study Group on Rhodesia and Nyasaland Formed: Independent; non-political,” *The Scotsman*, 7 October 1960, 14.

<sup>36</sup> “Finding the Truth about Federation: Scottish Group’s Meeting,” *The Glasgow Herald*, 7 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Sir Gilbert Rennie had been Governor of Northern Rhodesia and showed himself to be such an ardent supporter of Federation that he was made its first High Commissioner in London (1954). According to A. J. Hanna, Rennie championed the Federation’s “fair name against its critics, notably in the Church of Scotland.” A. J. Hanna, *The Story of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, London: Faber and Faber, 1960, 252-3.

<sup>38</sup> “Study Group on Rhodesia and Nyasaland Formed: Independent; non-political,” *The Scotsman*, 7 October 1960, 14. For an attack by Sinclair Shaw on Rennie, “who was constantly making speeches in Scotland about the need to retain the Federation” see “Note by Sinclair Shaw on letter to Judith Hart M.P.,” 30 May 1960, EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions. Rennie was also attacked for “working Sir Roy Welensky’s propaganda machine in this country at full pressure. Newspapers continue to carry large expensive advertisements blaring the social and economic benefits of federation and giving not the slightest hint of the opposition of vast African populations and many local white Liberals to the very existence of the Federal Government.” See: John M. Kellet, “Information on Federation,” *The Glasgow Herald*, 10 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>39</sup> “Study Group on Rhodesia and Nyasaland Formed: Independent; non-political,” *The Scotsman*, 7 October 1960, 14.

The first person to respond was Rev. George MacLeod, the man responsible for leading the Church of Scotland to call for an end to white minority rule over the peoples of Nyasaland in the momentous General Assembly of 1959. MacLeod took Brigadier Fergusson's attack against the Church personally. "Writing...as one who convened the committee which 'briefed the Church of Scotland' till last Assembly, am I unduly sensitive in resenting the obvious implication that we did not examine the evidence on both sides of the case?"<sup>40</sup> MacLeod also wanted a deeper probing into the source financing the SSG since the group planned "to address groups, especially Church bodies,...to present the Monckton Report in a balanced way" and to "disseminate information in the form of pamphlets, booklets and a weekly newsletter."<sup>41</sup> MacLeod ended the letter by defending himself and the Committee anent Central Africa along the lines of Thyne: "we are completely independent, entirely non-political. Our only concern is to see that the true facts are disseminated throughout Scotland."<sup>42</sup>

Rev. Thomas Maxwell's letter to *The Scotsman* appeared on the same page as MacLeod's. Maxwell was perturbed that his name had been listed as a member of the newly formed SSG. He was also disillusioned by Fergusson's attack on the Committee anent Central Africa: "Indeed the fact that I have been a member of the Assembly's Special Committee...and in cordial

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<sup>40</sup> Rev. George MacLeod, "Central African Study Group: Some Questions and a Disclaimer," *The Scotsman*, 8 October 1960, 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* Sir Gordon Lethem, Honorary President of the SCAQ and a member of the Church of Scotland's Committee anent Central Africa, responded in a similar way to the accusation by Brigadier Fergusson that he was against the Federation: "I write to express my deepest resentment of the insinuation that my colleagues and myself have been animated – in putting forward reports and recommendations to the General Assembly – by an anti-Federation bias and have been deliberately blind to arguments and facts put forward by the supporters of the Central African Federation in its present form." Sir Gordon Lethem, "An Insinuation Resented: Church Committee and Central Africa," *The Scotsman*, 14 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

agreement with its reports to the Assembly, would seem to make me an unhelpful member of a group, one of whose spokesmen...made an unjustified attack on the ... committee."<sup>43</sup> This was just the beginning. The criticism would get much worse.

The next letter was printed in *The Scotsman* on Monday, 10 October 1960. A truncated version of this letter appeared in *The Glasgow Herald* on the same day.<sup>44</sup> In the letter, by John M. Kellet, William Thyne's objectivity was attacked due to the fact that he owned a farm in Southern Rhodesia. "That such a person could be disinterested in the present political and emotional circumstances is surely asking too much of human nature." He also condemned the SSG for the arrogant assumption that Scotland had been missing out on what was occurring in the Federation.

A glance at the programmes during the last two winters of such organisations as the Royal Commonwealth Society, the United Nations Association, the Workers' Education Association, the Universities' Extra-Mural Department, the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland...to mention only a few, will show how untrue and ridiculous this suggestion is.<sup>45</sup>

The Scots, according to Mr. Kellet, were anything but apathetic towards the future of the Central African Federation. They wanted and received all the information they desired about the British Empire during the era of decolonization.

A correspondent who went simply by the name Enquirer asked numerous questions regarding the formation of the SSG. But the most interesting and important part of the letter dealt with the assertion by William Thyne that

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<sup>43</sup> Rev. Thomas Maxwell, "Central African Study Group: Some Questions and a Disclaimer," *The Scotsman*, 8 October 1960, 6.

<sup>44</sup> John M. Kellet, "Information on Federation," *The Glasgow Herald*, 10 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>45</sup> John M. Kellet, "High-sounding claims," *The Scotsman*, 10 October 1960, 6.

the SSG was non-political. According to *Enquirer*, the future of the Federation was a purely political affair that was the source of bitter party strife both in Britain and the CAF. As a result, the SSG would have to be a political body if it planned to express views and distribute literature that might influence the Federation's future.<sup>46</sup> The Rev. L. David Levison poured additional skepticism onto this non-political assertion. He went so far as to state that the only men who have interests in a vital political problem and claim to be non-political "have always been on the extreme Right wing of political thought, and I refuse to be taken in."<sup>47</sup> Although Thyne would prove to be less right-wing than Levison assumed, the point about the group being political was one that Thyne would acknowledge in his attempt to answer the flood of letters appearing in the press.

William Thyne responded to the criticisms leveled against the SSG in a letter printed on 12 October 1960. He began by restating the purpose of the group:

Those of us who have close associations with the territories concerned have been aware, from personal contacts and through correspondence, that the facts of the situation are not always presented accurately, either in the Press or elsewhere. Both African and European suffer from the publication of distorted facts. A study group was therefore formed to work independently of any political party; and I, more than anyone else, was responsible for its formation.<sup>48</sup>

He did accept that the Federation was a political affair, although he claimed that important matters such as these should be above party politics. The confusion, perhaps, arose from his belief that if political parties were not

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<sup>46</sup> *Enquirer*, "Non-political politics," *The Scotsman*, 10 October 1960, 6.

<sup>47</sup> L. David Levison, "Sheer hypocrisy," *The Scotsman*, 10 October 1960, 6.

<sup>48</sup> William Thyne, "Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland: Replies to Readers' Questions," *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1960, 8.



involved the issue was no longer political. But in the most interesting section of the letter he continued to try to convince readers of *The Scotsman* that the formation of the SSG was in their best interests and declared that no one associated with the group should feel any embarrassment about being involved. In Thyne's opinion they were, after all, an informational organization and nothing more.

On the same day that Thyne attempted to clear the air, a column by Miss Winifred Hardie, Honorary Secretary of the SCAQ, appeared in the Letters section. Hardie provided historical background to the SCAQ and outlined the organization's aims. She also declared that while the members of the SCAQ came from all political parties, the Council never made a claim to be non-political. The SCAQ "is proud of the fact that, since its inception, it has consistently condemned the imposition of federation on the Rhodesias and Nyasaland in [line with] ... the bitter opposition of the great majority of Africans in those territories."<sup>49</sup> The SCAQ was proud of its propaganda against the continuation of the Federation because, in their minds, they were upholding Britain's obligation to protect the indigenous peoples of Central Africa, especially in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Such a political topic needed a political response. If this revelatory letter was, however, the SCAQ's plea for the SSG to come clean as a pro-Federation propaganda organization, it fell on deaf ears.

Margaret Gray found the formation of the SSG insulting to Scots and their knowledge of imperial issues. She believed that the Scots were intelligent enough to take the information presented by sources like the BBC and made available in the newspapers about the Central African Federation and arrive at their own conclusions. The inaugural meeting of the SSG for her was "an insult to our Scottish brains." The Scots could get by just fine without the

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<sup>49</sup> Miss Winifred S. Hardie, "The Scottish Council for African Questions," *The Scotsman*, 12 October 1960, 8.

interference of the SSG and its propaganda: “I suggest to this body, who are so anxious to educate, that they divert the money set aside for Federation propaganda to the building of schools and colleges for Africans who, if treated rightly, can become worthy partners of liberal-minded whites.”<sup>50</sup> She would not be the only correspondent to feel offended by the SSG’s desire to educate the Scots about the empire: a topic they understood quite well.

A final letter of importance condemning the formation of the SSG appeared in *The Scotsman* on 17 October 1960. The letter said that there was no need for another group to educate the Scots about the situation in Central Africa given the existence, since 1952, of the SCAQ. The author, W. Calder, believed that Thyne and his group obviously had an axe to grind against the perspective of the SCAQ. He then wondered, “What kind of people do these gentlemen think Scots folk are? The imputation lies that we, a people usually credited with shrewd political insight, are a lot of suckers. There must be many like myself who resent an attempt to ‘educate’ us in the way some would like us to go.”<sup>51</sup> This letter was an attempt by Calder to make plain the level of engagement of the Scots with political issues in general and Central Africa specifically. Also of interest, Calder’s letter was discussed with Kenneth MacKenzie in private correspondence before it appeared in *The Scotsman*. Although MacKenzie’s replies are unknown, given the tone of Calder’s correspondence MacKenzie provided him with material used to craft the letter. Calder promised MacKenzie at the end of the first letter that he would do what he could “to expose the hypocrisy of Rennie and the Groupers.”<sup>52</sup> MacKenzie never involved himself in the debate that followed

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<sup>50</sup> Margaret D. Gray, “Presenting Monckton report,” *The Scotsman*, 13 October 1960, 8.

<sup>51</sup> W. Calder, “Redundant,” *The Scotsman*, 17 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Calder to MacKenzie, 15 October 1960, EULSC, Kenneth MacKenzie Collection, Gen. 1871/Box 19.

the October 1960 press conference, but there should be little doubt that he stayed abreast of developments and, perhaps, even had a hand in what others published.

The SSG generated a great deal of negative publicity in the correspondence columns of *The Scotsman* in the weeks following the press conference. But there was also a great deal of sympathy amongst the correspondents for the work of the new group. For instance, the Rev. John Gray, Convenor of the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland, believed that he would be able to gain additional insight through the information released by the SSG because it provided him with the point of view of, most likely, those supporting Federation in Central Africa. He did not feel that the information that was in circulation in Scotland shed proper light on this perspective before.<sup>53</sup> The Rev. Dr. J. Kennedy Grant went further and ridiculed the correspondent (John M. Kellet) who called Thyne's views about Southern Rhodesia into question simply because he owned a farm in Southern Rhodesia. This, for Grant, was the type of smear often used by self-claimed "liberals" against "white settlers." Grant, who was a Rhodesian, felt that "nothing but good can come from the efforts of a group seeking to reach the truth and to put it before their fellow countrymen."<sup>54</sup> The SSG, to their minds, was offering valuable information that would only increase Scottish knowledge of the situation. Despite the controversy, the SSG had arrived. But where did it begin and what was its focus?

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<sup>53</sup> Rev. John R. Gray, "An Insinuation Resented: Church Committee and Central Africa," *The Scotsman*, 14 October 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>54</sup> Rev. Dr. J. Kennedy Grant, "Points from a Rhodesian," *The Scotsman*, 13 October 1960, 8.

### **The Formation and Functioning of the Scottish Study Group**

The inaugural meeting of what became the Scottish Study Group occurred on 8 April 1960 in Edinburgh. William Thyne, Councillor Melville Dinwiddie, former BBC Controller in Scotland, and Sir Gilbert Rennie, the High Commissioner for the Federation, attended.<sup>55</sup> The beginnings of the Group can be traced back to almost a year before when William Thyne started corresponding with Lord Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. Thyne introduced himself as the owner of a farm near Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia and claimed that other whites in the Territory asked him to lay certain points before Home. He requested a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss the problems in the Federation from the perspective of the settlers.<sup>56</sup> Following the meeting between the two men on 18 April 1959, Home sent a letter thanking Thyne for his analysis of the situation and his suggestion that the British Government needed to dispatch a Parliamentary or fact-finding mission to the Federation and not simply rely on the report of the Nyasaland Commission of Inquiry (the Devlin Report).<sup>57</sup> Thyne, buoyed by Home's reception to his approach, wrote back and offered to become an informational conduit between his white settler friends and the Secretary of State.<sup>58</sup> It is obvious from this correspondence that Thyne was motivated to act by the Nyasaland Emergency because he felt it might harm the long-term solvency of the Federation. Home's warm reception, in turn, encouraged Thyne to become more deeply involved in the quest to save the Federation.

Thyne next appears, discussing the possible formation of an informational group, in early 1960. In a letter to Home, re-opening their previous

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<sup>55</sup> Minutes of a Meeting held on Friday, 8 April 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Thyne to Home, 9 April 1959, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Home to Thyne, 19 April 1959, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Thyne to Home, 21 April 1959, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

correspondence, Thyne claimed that over the past few months a friend of his, a Member of the Federal Parliament named James Swan, had been home in Scotland on leave. During this time, Thyne helped Swan meet newspaper editors and arranged a discussion with the English-Speaking Union in Edinburgh. This activity meant that the two men saw a great deal of each other. According to Thyne, they used these meetings and the time together to discuss the opinions of Scots towards the Federation following the Emergency in Nyasaland. They came to the conclusion that public opinion of the Federation was at an all-time low in Scotland. With the approach of the constitutional review conference at the end of 1960, they believed that it was time to act in order to maintain the status quo in Central Africa. They agreed that “there should be a Scottish Committee, or small group of people in Scotland, recognised by the Federal Parliament, who could disseminate information on affairs in these Territories.” In the letter, Thyne provided the names of influential Scots who would be interested in helping this proposed propaganda organization “improve goodwill and understanding between this country and the Territories concerned.”<sup>59</sup> Home responded that he thought this was a worthwhile endeavor to increase knowledge in Scotland about the Federation.<sup>60</sup>

In a separate letter to the High Commissioner, Sir Gilbert Rennie, Thyne claimed that the desire to create the group emanated from the lack of proper Scottish knowledge about the situation in the Federation. Thyne argued that the people of Scotland knew very little about what was really happening in the Federation and yet, to his dismay, this did not stop them from voicing their anti-Federation opinions. The Scots, for Thyne, felt passionate about the situation in Central Africa but they had been misled by anti-Federation

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<sup>59</sup> Thyne to Home, 15 March 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Home to Thyne, 22 March 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

propaganda. This was a situation that needed to be put right.<sup>61</sup>

The SCAQ was not blindsided by the announcement of the existence of the SSG in October 1960. They knew that this organization was brewing from June 1960. They were tipped off about its formation by Robin Barbour in a letter dated 25 June 1960. Barbour received an invitation from Dr. Melville Dinwiddie dated 24 June asking him to join the SSG, most likely as a Correspondent and not a Member. Dinwiddie offered to send Barbour information to help him “form a balanced judgment on the vital issues that have to be discussed and decided during the next year [at the constitutional review conference].”<sup>62</sup> Barbour explained to Sinclair Shaw that he felt compelled to join the SSG “since it might be useful to have a liaison officer, or a spy, or something between the two, serving on both bodies.”<sup>63</sup> It is unknown whether Barbour agreed to become a Correspondent of the SSG, but the information was out there and the SCAQ was able to prepare for the appearance of its propaganda rival.

The SSG functioned as a propaganda organization with the full financial support of the Federation. Even though Thyne felt passionate about the need to re-educate a Scottish public tainted by anti-Federation propaganda, he was not willing to pay for it. Much of the propaganda sent out to members of the SSG originated from Rhodesia House in London, the headquarters of the High Commissioner for the Federation. This alone undermines Thyne’s contention in the press that his group was non-political. Even more importantly, however, Thyne expected Rhodesia House to pay for the postage used to disseminate the propaganda to the SSG’s members and correspondents. Rhodesia House, the mouthpiece for Sir Roy Welensky and

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<sup>61</sup> Thyne to Rennie, 3 March 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>62</sup> Melville Dinwiddie, “Scottish Study Group for Rhodesia and Nyasaland,” 24 June 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>63</sup> Barbour to Shaw, 25 June 1960, EULSC, MS. 2497: Scottish Council for African Questions.

the Federation Government, was paying all of the expenses related to the group including the printing or purchasing of the propaganda and its diffusion.<sup>64</sup> George MacLeod wondered where the money was coming from to fund the SSG in his letter to *The Scotsman* in October 1960. He, most likely, had a suspicion that the Federation was funding the entire enterprise and he was right.

So what, exactly, were the Terms of Reference for the SSG and did they match the wording used by William Thyne in private correspondence? The Terms were distributed to every potential Member of the SSG as the mandate of the organization. They were:

1. To disseminate in Scotland, reliable information about Rhodesia and Nyasaland, with the express purpose of promoting a better understanding of, and a sympathetic outlook on, affairs in the Federation, and of countering inaccurate and prejudiced views and propaganda in Scotland.
2. To arrange for Europeans and Africans with first-hand knowledge of the Federation to address groups and societies, especially Church bodies, in Scotland.
3. To use every endeavour to make certain that the Monckton Report is presented in a balanced way by Press and Radio in Scotland and that Scottish Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Lords are made aware of all shades of opinion in Scotland on Federal affairs.<sup>65</sup>

The Terms underscore that this was a propaganda organization through and through. They wanted to influence the recipients' attitudes in order to convert them to the SSG's way of thinking. Creating a sympathetic outlook on affairs in the Federation, ensuring that the Monckton Report, crafted in preparation for the 1960 constitutional review conference, was presented in a balanced manner, and informing Scottish MPs and Lords about the opinion of

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<sup>64</sup> Thyne to Rennie, 16 June 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>65</sup> "Terms of Reference," YUA, William Thyne Papers.

those in Scotland who favored the continuation of the Federation laid bare their intentions.

William Thyne distributed propaganda from many sources to the Members and Correspondents of the SSG. The main, though by no means exclusive, source of this propaganda was Rhodesia House in London. Rhodesia House produced a Newsletter each Friday about the Federation that was trimmed down for the purposes of the SSG to take into consideration mainly political, constitutional, and some economic matters. The Newsletter makes for rather dull reading but one constant was the extended coverage of the Federal Prime Minister's speeches. The Newsletter also made a point of playing up everything done by the Federal Government to provide for indigenous Africans. The Newsletter from Friday, 26 April 1963 is instructive. It included an article on "More African Housing Planned for S.R." and in "N. R. Mercy Flight to Katanga" discussed how the Federal Ministry of Health provided blood and drugs to the victims of violent rioting in the area within hours of receiving urgent requests for assistance from the Katangese authorities.<sup>66</sup>

Additional propaganda included the dissemination of statements by leading Central African politicians. Thyne distributed one to the SSG on 5 December 1960 that focused on Sir Edgar Whitehead's comments about the need to gradually advance African interests in economics, politics, and land ownership.<sup>67</sup> The key, however, was gradual advancement and never the rapid moves to self-government favored by the SCAQ and many within the Church of Scotland. According to Thyne, in a personal letter to the Southern Rhodesian settler A. J. L. Lewis, Africans could only advance at a slow rate.

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<sup>66</sup> "Newsletter: Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland," 26 April 1963, 4-5, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>67</sup> "Statement by the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia in Regard to the National Convention," distributed by William Thyne to the SSG on 5 December 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.



“At every turn in this country – Church of Scotland, Government, most newspapers – it is represented that the Nationalist leaders are speaking for the majority: hence the demand, although they are not ready for it, for an African controlled Parliament, and one man one vote.”<sup>68</sup> The propaganda disbursed by Thyne to the SSG never betrayed his sentiments. He was a staunch supporter of the Federation and although he never mentioned the SCAQ by name it is obvious that all of his work on behalf of the SSG aimed at undermining the propaganda generated by this anti-Federation rival organization.

Overall, William Thyne wanted to see the continuation of the Central African Federation and he believed that sending pro-Federation propaganda to influential Scots might help turn the tide of public opinion in Scotland that had been moving in the opposite direction since the Nyasaland Emergency and the Church of Scotland’s subsequent calls for decolonization. Thyne asked the Members of the SSG to target Church groups in an attempt to change the opinion of the Kirk, that most important of Scottish civil society institutions, from within.<sup>69</sup> The SSG occasionally helped sponsor lectures by pro-Federation speakers, such as the visit by Mr. Godwin Lewanika in January 1962, but for the most part they relied on their Members to spread the information culled from the propaganda chosen by Thyne.

### Thyne and Welensky

Lord Home encouraged Thyne to take an active role in the politics of the

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<sup>68</sup> Thyne to Lewis, 26 April 1963, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>69</sup> See Bryan S. Glass, “Protection from the British Empire? Central Africa and the Church of Scotland,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41:3, 2013, 475-495 for more information on the role of the Kirk as the surrogate Scottish parliament during the era of decolonization.

Central African Federation and James Swan channeled this energy into the formation of the SSG. But the most important relationship sustaining Thyne and his work on behalf of the Federation was that with Sir Roy Welensky, the Federation Prime Minister between 1956 and 1963.

On 3 March 1960, William Thyne composed his first letter to Welensky about the formation of the SSG. They would continue to correspond until Thyne's sudden death on 24 August 1978. Thyne explained that Scotland needed to be enlightened about the true situation in the Territories that comprised the Federation. With the foundation of the group he wanted to inform the Scots about "the genuine desire of the Federal Government to further, in the proper way and in due course, the wellbeing of the African."<sup>70</sup> This became a major focus of the propaganda distributed by the SSG over the ensuing years. Thyne attached an outline of the proposed group that ended by asking Welensky whether he found the organization acceptable. If Welensky was in agreement that the group should be started as an unofficial propaganda organization for the Federation in Scotland, he would appoint Thyne as the Convenor.<sup>71</sup> Welensky's response, written entirely by J. M. Greenfield, Minister for Law in the Federation, agreed with the formation of Thyne's proposed group.<sup>72</sup> The letter ended with an expression of thanks for taking up this very important work on behalf of the Federation.<sup>73</sup>

This correspondence makes it clear that Welensky approved the formation of the SSG as a propaganda organization working on the Federation's behalf.

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<sup>70</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 3 March 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>71</sup> "FORMATION OF A SMALL COMMITTEE OR ASSOCIATION (suitable name yet to be found) FOR PROMOTION OF GOODWILL AND UNDERSTANDING OF RHODESIAN AFFAIRS IN SCOTLAND," Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford (hereafter RH), MSS. Welensky 675/10.

<sup>72</sup> Memo from J. M. Greenfield to Welensky, 12 March 1960, RH, MSS. Welensky 675/10.

<sup>73</sup> Welensky to Thyne, 21 March 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

According to an article by Andrew Cohen, Welensky was never one to hide the Federation's funding or support of public relations campaigns in Britain. Welensky had hired Voice and Vision, a London public relations firm, to try to improve the image of the Federation in Britain following the outcry over the handling of the Nyasaland Emergency.<sup>74</sup> Cohen claims that a man named David Cole, head of a Salisbury-based public relations company and the person responsible for arranging Voice and Vision to run the campaign, told Welensky that the Federation should not be viewed as directly supporting this propaganda. An independent campaign would be more effective at winning over public opinion in Britain. At the same time that Welensky was agreeing to the creation of Thyne's propaganda group (March 1960), he was rejecting the offer of a secret campaign by Voice and Vision because "the allegiance which would be shown by the consultants to the Federation would inevitably be linked to the Federal government [and] as such it would be better to openly employ them."<sup>75</sup> Cohen claims this would turn out to be a prophetic move by the Federation Prime Minister because of the damage done to South Africa by a tacit campaign in the 1970s. The experience of the SSG shows that Welensky was no prophet when it came to propaganda. Obviously he felt that the SSG could get away with a secret campaign on behalf of the Federation while Voice and Vision could not. And despite the cries of conspiracy by MacLeod and others, the SCAQ and their anti-Federation compatriots never produced any evidence directly linking the

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<sup>74</sup> According to Andrew Thompson, a Gallup Poll found that 80 per cent of the people in Britain knew about the Nyasaland Emergency. More importantly for the image of the Federation, 30 per cent responded that their sympathies lay with the Africans while 18 per cent favored the settlers. Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, London: Pearson Longman 2005, 212.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew Cohen, "'Voice and Vision' – The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland's Public Relations Campaign in Britain: 1960-1963," *Historia* 54:2, November 2009, 116.

SSG to the Federation. Welensky and the Federation were never irreparably harmed by their tacit support of William Thyne and his Scottish Study Group.

As Thyne and Welensky became better acquainted their letters were more direct. One of the major topics of conversation was the African nationalists. The first letter attacking the nationalists was written by Thyne shortly after the public launch of the SSG at the October 1960 press conference. Thyne believed that the “undreamed of difficulties” faced by Welensky emanated from the extreme views of the nationalist leader in Nyasaland Dr. Hastings Banda.<sup>76</sup> This struck a chord with Welensky, who would later admit to Thyne that the Federation was unraveling because of Nyasaland. For Welensky this was even more tragic because neither he nor Malvern ever wanted Nyasaland included in the Federation.<sup>77</sup> It had been forced on them by the British Government to make the creation of the Federation more palatable.<sup>78</sup>

Thyne’s attacks on the nationalists became even more pronounced in mid-1961. Interestingly enough, Thyne only aired these attacks in his letters to Welensky. The two men had met for the first time in Salisbury in January of 1961 and obviously hit it off because their correspondence picked up in its frequency and warmth during the year. They were now feeling secure enough with each other to share their innermost, uncensored thoughts on the African nationalists.

A letter from Thyne on 6 July 1961 claimed that even though Welensky had made reasonable proposals for the further advancement of Africans in

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<sup>76</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 28 November 1960, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Welensky to Thyne, 5 December 1962, YUA, William Thyne Papers. Lord Malvern, also known as Godfrey Huggins, was the fourth Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia (1933-1953) and he became the first Prime Minister of the Central African Federation (1953-1956) following its formation.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of why Nyasaland was included in the Federation see: Philip Murphy, *Central Africa, Part I: Closer Association 1945-1958*, London: TSO 2005, xlix-li.

Northern Rhodesia, Kaunda and the other “extremists” would still create numerous difficulties. He hoped that moderate Africans would come into power in the Northern Rhodesian and Federal parliaments and this would allow them to “keep their more unruly brethren in order.”<sup>79</sup> But the problems for the Federation went well beyond its Central African borders. Thyne was having trouble controlling the negative propaganda against the Federation in Scotland:

I regret to say that some of the publicity and some of the Press reports on events in the Federation are not what they ought to be. Goodness knows, some of us here do all we can to put things right, but there seems to be an odd quirk in the minds of a lot of the editors on this whole question, and it still amazes me that they should listen to extreme African opinion – people like Dr. George McLeod and others – and ignore the sane council and advice of people like yourself and moderate Africans, and very many others.<sup>80</sup>

This quote shows that Thyne and the SSG were losing the propaganda battle to the SCAQ and anti-Federation opinion leaders like the Rev. George MacLeod. MacLeod, by standing up for the rights of indigenous Africans to self-determination, was becoming a major target of Thyne’s hostility, at least in his letters to Welensky. In response, Welensky attacked the African nationalists, especially Kenneth Kaunda in Northern Rhodesia, for their violent nature. Welensky was quick to point out that although Kaunda claimed to be in favor of non-violent methods to achieve his aims, he was a hypocrite because the violence in the territory was being perpetrated almost exclusively by his party’s members.<sup>81</sup>

The final attack on the nationalists to appear in this correspondence

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<sup>79</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 6 July 1961, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Welensky to Thyne, 21 August 1961, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

occurred in a letter from Thyne to Welensky dated 8 January 1962. As public opinion in Scotland continued to be against the Federation, Thyne wished that the Scots were aware of the fact “that a large number of educated, civilised and decent Africans think quite differently from some of their extremist leaders.”<sup>82</sup> According to Thyne, these nationalist leaders did not care for the interests of their fellow Africans. They were concerned solely with seizing power for themselves, which Thyne believed would be infinitely worse for everyone in the Federation. Thyne and Welensky would lose this battle, but their exchanges on paper further solidify Thyne’s position as an all-out supporter of Federation even as he attempted to hide his true feelings from the Scottish public.<sup>83</sup>

### **Endgame**

The SSG continued to disseminate its propaganda on behalf of the Federation through 1962 and into 1963. Following the Victoria Falls Conference of June and July 1963, which determined that the Federation should come to an end, Welensky was quick to write to Thyne and express his gratitude for the work that the SSG did on his behalf.<sup>84</sup> In his response, Thyne admitted that the SSG was not able to make much headway against the entrenched anti-Federation opinion in Scotland. He singled out the

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<sup>82</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 8 January 1962, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Thyne was careful to avoid getting involved in public debates about the Federation because, as he explained to Welensky, he might accidentally reveal his political views and, thereby, harm the purported neutrality of the Scottish Study Group: “Naturally of course I have my own views – pretty strong ones – but I feel that an expression of these publicly would spoil the work we are doing in Scotland.” Thyne to Welensky, 22 March 1961, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>84</sup> Welensky to Thyne, 30 July 1963, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

Church of Scotland and *The Scotsman* for their dedicated opposition to the CAF, which left him “exasperated and distressed.”<sup>85</sup> In retrospect, there seems little that Thyne or the SSG could have done to change opinion in Scotland following the pronouncement by the Church of Scotland against the settlers’ handling of the Nyasaland Emergency in 1959. The very reactionary and condescending nature of the SSG also did not endear them or their efforts to a Scottish public that prided itself on its understanding of imperial affairs. The timing and the message were simply all wrong.

On 4 August 1964, William Thyne sent a letter to Roy Welensky informing him that the SSG had suspended its activities and referred its members to a London organization called the “Friends of Rhodesia.”<sup>86</sup> Although he continued to take an active interest in the affairs of Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland was now the independent Malawi, and Northern Rhodesian independence lay just around the corner on 24 October 1964. The maintenance of the Federation, which was the primary concern of the SSG from the very beginning, was no longer an issue following its dissolution on 31 December 1963, making the group obsolete. The SSG had failed to alter Scottish public opinion on the Federation following the disastrous handling of the Nyasaland Emergency. George MacLeod, Kenneth MacKenzie, the SCAQ and the rest of the anti-Federation lobby controlled Scottish public opinion on this topic well before the appearance of the SSG. This was a propaganda organization that was doomed to fail from the beginning.

Overall, the high profile enjoyed by the SCAQ and the SSG reiterates the strong attachment of the Scots to the British Empire. Even after the SSG ceased operations, William Thyne turned his attention to opposing the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in Southern Rhodesia. Thyne, perhaps surprisingly for some, remained engaged with the empire as it

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<sup>85</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 5 August 1963, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>86</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 4 August 1964, RH, MSS. Welensky 775/4.

rapidly disintegrated. Although Thyne despised African nationalists, he also harbored great hostility for the far right wing Rhodesian Front, even going so far as to categorize their members as “stupid.”<sup>87</sup> He believed that UDI was a “drastic step which would [mean]...ruination for the whole country, black and white alike.”<sup>88</sup> For him, the British Empire brought stability to the region and that would be lost with UDI. The SCAQ, meanwhile, survived as an organization and continued to tackle issues in Africa even after the British Empire collapsed on the continent. Involvement with the British Empire had been engrained in the Scots and even following its demise many in Scottish society remained engaged with the consequences left in its wake. The Scottish nation maintained a powerful interest in the British Empire throughout the era of decolonization and beyond.

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<sup>87</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 22 March 1961, YUA, William Thyne Papers.

<sup>88</sup> Thyne to Welensky, 13 October 1965, RH, MSS. Welensky 775/4.



# Building an Invisible Border?: Refugee Acts of the John Major Government

Youngjoo Jung \*

## **Abstract**

This paper aims at analyzing the official discourse of the Major Regime on asylum seekers and refugees. A comparative research is undertaken on the interactions among the main actors in British politics and several interest groups of the society with regard to the legislative processes of refugee acts. The trajectories of enactment with particular references to the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 are explored through cross-examining newspaper and magazine articles, Hansard, various reports from the governmental organizations and refugee councils.

The author finds out that the official statements of the Home Secretaries consistently placed emphasis on three issues: 'number' 'bogus asylum' 'better racial relations'. These three critical elements also represent the perceptions of the Major regime on asylum, and illustrate the ways in which restriction system was placed to control the entry of people seeking asylum in Britain.

Britain is one of the States who first proposed an international convention on refugee matters. However, the will to provide protection for those

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persecuted by their own country seemed to have almost faded away in the 1990s, when the number of asylum seekers rapidly increased. This change of action is partly helped by the Convention itself, for interpreting the clauses of the Convention is entirely up to each signatory, and refugee is defined not to flee for economic reasons, but political. Thus, asylum seekers who failed to be officially recognized as refugee are regarded as 'bogus', that is, 'economic' asylum. This would give an inaccurate account of asylum seekers, while the boundaries between 'economic' migrants and 'bogus' asylum became blurred to the public perception.

Thus, the increase in asylum requests was seen as a new form of 'immigration wave'. As a result, despite the fact that the number of asylum seekers who successfully secured the status of refugee dramatically decreased, their presence still made the mainstream British society uncomfortable. In addition to bogus claims, the Home Secretaries of the Major regime would be particularly concerned with the racial character of asylum seekers including their cultural background. They implicitly suggested that they would not meet the standards of the British society, thus incite or exacerbate racial tensions in some communities.

The fear of the Major regime felt on the rapid increase in the number of people seeking asylum in Britain was genuine and to a certain extent justifiable due to the long struggle of controlling immigration in the country. However, what cannot be justified is that the regime misrepresented asylum seekers, and violated human rights for the purpose of establishing restriction system. It is obvious that refugee acts were built on various biases of the regime, and became one invisible border to most of asylum seekers.

**Key words:** Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Refugee Act, John Major, Restrictions, Numbers Game, Bogus

## Introduction

The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol specify the responsibilities of the signatories to protect refugees who are persecuted for reasons of religion, race, nationality, having particular political opinions and belonging to certain social groups.<sup>1</sup> Britain who first suggested the regulations of the 1951 Convention has emerged as one of the most significant recipients of refugees. The nationalities of refugees seeking asylum in Britain vary: Hungarians, Ugandans, Vietnamese, Iranians, Iraqis, Somalis, Eritreans etc.<sup>2</sup> In general, these people are forced to flee from their own countries under various circumstances, and referred as ‘asylum seekers’ and ‘refugees’.

Before undertaking further examinations on the subject, I should give a focus on the definitions of these terms. Peter Aspinall and Charles Watters at the University of Kent, funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, UK, analyze asylum seekers and refugees in Britain with the perspective of equality and human rights. They use the term, ‘asylum seekers’ for: firstly, those who have applied (and re-applied) for asylum; secondly, those who await decisions on their applications; thirdly, those whose applications are refused. ‘Refugee’ is someone: who is officially recognized as refugee; secondly, who is not accepted as refugee, yet receives the status of either ‘Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)’, or ‘Indefinite Leave to Remain’.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Refugee Agency, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva: UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service 2010, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Eritrea gains independence from Ethiopia in 1991. One of the main reasons of Eritreans fleeing from the country is religious persecution. Among various religious groups, Independent Non-Protestant Evangelicals and Wahabi Muslims are the main targets of the persecution.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Aspinall, and Charles Watters, *“Refugees and asylum seekers: A review from an equality and human rights perspective” Equality and Human Rights*

In the report to the Home Office, Jenny Carey-Wood articulates the differences between refugees and asylum seekers. According to her, refugees are officially granted the refugee status, while those who obtain ELR are not. She still admits the fact that both refugee and ELR experienced similar problems in their home countries, thus accepts the whole asylum seekers as refugees in the wider sense.<sup>4</sup> Differently from Aspinall, Watters, and Carey-Wood, Alice Bloch finds crucial to distinguish among refugees, asylum seekers, and ELR, because the British constitution differentiates the rights of the citizens on the basis of status distinctions.<sup>5</sup> The Refugee Council use three categories of refugee, asylum seeker and refusal.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike most academics in social and political sciences, psychiatrists work directly with asylum seekers and refugees to examine their mental (often including physical) health. They find meaningless to categorize these people for the fact that they all suffer from similar trauma, regardless their official statuses.<sup>7</sup> After a deep consideration on the various ways of understanding these terms, it is decided to use the same categorization as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, because it is the most common way to definerefugees: asylum seeker and refugee. According to its distinction,

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*Commission Research Report 52*, Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission 2010, 2-5. People who obtain the status of 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' are given a 'permanent residency' without citizenship.

<sup>4</sup> Jenny Carey-Wood, *Meeting Refugees' Needs in Britain: The Role of Refugee-Specific Initiatives*, Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate, Home Office, London: Home Office Publications Unit 1997, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Alice Bloch, 'Refugee settlement in Britain: The impact of policy on participation', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 1, Aug. 2010, 75-88.

<sup>6</sup> [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_research/the\\_truth\\_about\\_asylum/the\\_facts\\_about\\_asylum](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/the_facts_about_asylum). The Refugee Council, UK is one of the leading charities, established in 1951 in response to the 1951 Convention, and aims to support refugees to rebuild their lives in the UK.

<sup>7</sup> Helen McColl, Kwame McKenzie, and Bhui Kamaldeep, 'Mental healthcare of asylum-seekers and refugees', in *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 14, 2008, 452-459 at 452-453.

asylum seekers are people who apply (and re-apply) to be recognized as a refugee.<sup>8</sup>

Applying for refugee status is a difficult and complex process, and not all asylum seekers apply immediately after the plane reaches its destination. Most applicants first come to Britain as students, visitors, tourists, and then if/when the situations in their home countries become too volatile to return, they submit their applications.<sup>9</sup> The British Home Office publishes the annual statistical reports on refugees, asylum seekers, and the rejected. However, these statistics hardly reflect the reality, because it is extremely difficult to obtain the figures of how many asylum seekers are waiting for the results of re-application, and the actual numbers of returnees and of people who postpone returning and eventually remain in hiding. Therefore, it seems to be almost impossible to grip on the precise numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

However, there are clear evidences mainly produced by individual researchers and the Refugee Councils that a great number of asylum seekers, especially those whose first applications were rejected, and thus who still await the official decisions on re-application, including those unable or unwilling to return home, are trapped in destitution.<sup>10</sup> The media warn that unless some drastic measures are drawn to tackle the economic situations of

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<sup>8</sup> Asylum seekers including those rejected tend to stay on in Britain, like refugees.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Gordon, and Annie Newnham, *Passport to Benefits? Racism in Social Security*, London: Child Poverty Action Group & the Runnymede Trust 1985, 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Karen Wren, 'Supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Glasgow: The Role of Multi-agency Networks', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice, University of Glasgow 2007, 391-413; Clare Daley, 'Exploring community connections: community cohesion and refugee integration at a local level', *Community Development Journal* 44, 2009, 158-171; The Children's Society, *A Briefing from The Children's Society: Highlighting the gap between asylum support and mainstream benefits*, London: The Children's Society 2012.

asylum seekers and refugees, a large number of them will become homeless.<sup>11</sup> ‘Destitution’, often used to describe their situation, is defined as “not having adequate accommodation or support for themselves and their dependants for the next 14 days”<sup>12</sup>.

In 2008 61 percent of the British opposed to compel refused asylum seekers to repatriate under the pretext of ‘destitution’<sup>13</sup> However, many repliers on internet reject the idea of supporting the refused asylum seekers: they were already given opportunities under the British legal system, and thus it would rather be ‘unfair’ if they stay on in Britain illegally! British politicians, academics, and reporters often mention the ‘great’ British ‘tradition’ of accepting and protecting refugees.<sup>14</sup> However, it is not certain how this ‘great tradition’ has been materialized in reality.

The aim of this paper is to identify the various discourses on and the understandings of asylum seekers and refugees throughout the Major regime. The author will illustrate the ways in which debates on asylum seekers and refugees developed during the period concerned, while highlighting the key issues, especially the complex processes of legalizing restrictions on asylums. By exploring the process of enactment, I will endeavour to articulate the differences and similarities of the views on the subject among various social actors in Britain, such as political parties, refugee agencies, social activists, and so on.

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<sup>11</sup> Billy Briggs, ‘Failed asylum seekers in Scotland living below UN global poverty threshold’, *The Guardian*, 1 Oct. 2012; John Packer, ‘The UK is failing in its duty to protect vulnerable asylum seekers’, *The Guardian*, 4 Feb. 2013; Stef Lach, ‘Asylum seekers are “trapped in poverty”’, *Evening Times*, 14 April 2013, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Aspinall, and Watters, ‘Refugees and asylum seekers’, vii.

<sup>13</sup> House of Commons Hansard (2008b) Written Answers. 20/2/2008, Col. 785W[185087], quoted in Aspinall, and Watters, ‘Refugees and asylum seekers’, 62-63.

<sup>14</sup> Randall Hansen, and Desmond King, ‘Illiberalism and the New Politics of Asylum: Liberalism's Dark Side’, *Political Quarterly* 71, 2000, 396-403 at 397.

There are numerous academic works on asylum seekers and refugees, which deal with a variety of aspects of asylums, including social policy, education, health care, asylum children without parents etc. However, it is rather unfortunate that historians have not paid much attention to asylum seekers in the contemporary period. Due to this lack of secondary materials in History, several primary sources, particularly newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, governmental reports, and documents from the Refugee Councils have been widely explored. 'Britain', 'Asylum', 'Refugee', 'Asylum Seekers' are used as keywords to search relevant research materials in the national as well as regional newspapers between 1989 and 1997. Several newspaper articles produced in France, Canada, USA, etc., all written in English, also have provided different perspectives on the subject.

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Problematized**

Asylum seekers have not always been represented as 'a problem' in Britain. In the 19th century the British seemed to be relatively generous towards refugees, until the Eastern Europeans came to Britain at the end of the century. The first modern law, aiming at the restriction of immigration, is the Aliens Act of 1905. The 1905 Act and other series of Acts related to immigration, such as the Aliens Restriction Act of 1919 and Aliens Order 1920, attempted to ensure that the immigrants were capable of supporting themselves and their dependents. Therefore, poor aliens except for 'genuine' refugees were not allowed to reside by law in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

In consequence of the Nationality Act of 1948, labour-immigrants from the British Commonwealth countries were freely accepted to make up for the

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<sup>15</sup> Gordon and Newnham, *Racism in Social Security*, 5-6.

shortage of labour after the end of the Second World War. However, the concept of a common Commonwealth citizenship, the core of the Act was virtually eroded from 1962 onwards by legislation, and restrictions on immigration began.<sup>16</sup> However, refugee was a different matter. The British governments were obliged to provide protection for asylum seekers, and thus established various refugee programmes to support the victims of, for instance, the 1968 reform movement in Czechoslovakia, military dictatorship of Chile, Vietnam War, etc.

From 1981 to 1988 the average number of asylum applications in the UK was no more than 4000 per annum. Until 1988, Britain provided relatively generous welfare service for asylum seekers whose applications were still on the process of deliberation. They were recognized as the subjects of Supplementary Benefit, and after the abolishment of the Benefit, still entitled to receive Urgent Needs Payments which were designed to assist the British who were not regular employees, and whose income was found low after means-tested.<sup>17</sup>

Towards the end of the 1980s, the number of asylum seekers began to increase. Between 1980 and 1989, there were around 46.000 applicants on the individual base, but from 1990 to 2001 the number rapidly increased to around 55.900. At the end of the 1980s, almost 50 nationalities applied for the status of refugee in Britain, and the list includes the major

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<sup>16</sup> The system of work voucher was introduced in 1962. The 1968 Immigration Act targeting East African Indians only permitted people whose parents and/or grandparents were born in the UK, and who were adopted into British homes and naturalized as British citizens.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon and Newnham, *Racism in Social Security*, 15-17; Amendment to Supplementary Benefits Regulation Affecting persons From Abroad: submission to Social Advisory Committee from CPAG, 1984, quoted in Gordon and Newnham, *Racism in Social Security*, 17. Child Poverty Action Group suggested the Welfare Consulting Committee, Home Office, to ensure that asylum seekers no longer suffered from financial difficulties after having been through all traumatic experiences.



refugee-producing countries, such as Iran, Iraq, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Africa, Somalia, Nigeria, and Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, accommodating the applicants until the final decisions were made on their application was becoming a big ‘problem’ for the governments. The circumstances that forced people to leave their home countries on the road of exile hardly allowed any means of living. As a result, the provision of welfare services for asylum seekers became one of the significant political issues in the government.

With the rapid growth of people seeking asylum, various derogatory terms, been used to address the Commonwealth immigrants and the decedents, seemed to have found their new targets. Asylum seekers have been illustrated as ‘criminals’, ‘malingers’, ‘carriers of disease’<sup>19</sup>, ‘scroungers’, ‘heath tourists’<sup>20</sup>, ‘the undeserving’<sup>21</sup>, ‘non-belongers’ who ‘swamp’ed Britain like ‘tidal waves’, and ‘floods’. It has also been argued that due to this ‘national disaster’, Britain has been under ‘invasion’ and the land ‘overcrowded’ in which Britain and the citizens are the victims.<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly enough, these derogatory expressions were frequently used by politicians and the media. Under the circumstances, the rights of asylum seekers specified by the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol were being gradually forgotten in people’s mind. Instead, people were afraid that the

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<sup>18</sup> Institute for Public Policy Research, *Asylum in the UK: an ippr fact file*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research 2003, 7-8.

<sup>19</sup> James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging: Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005, 184.

<sup>20</sup> In 2003 the Conservatives’ Shadow Health Secretary, Liam Fox, cynically addressed asylum seekers as ‘health tourists’, and Britain as the ‘health equivalent of Disney World’, *The Economist*, 9 Aug. 2003, quoted in Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging*, 197.

<sup>21</sup> Rosemary Sales, ‘The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain’, *Critical Social Policy* 22, 2002, 456-477.

<sup>22</sup> Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging*, 110-111, 184-185, 188 and footnote. 2, 203.

presence of asylum seekers would generate huge economic and social consequences in Britain.

Then, what are their rights? Some of the clauses of the Convention articulate the unity of family as 'an essential right of the refugee'. There are also other relevant clauses in terms of employment and education. All signatories to the Convention have the responsibilities to treat refugees as the same as their own nationals in terms of elementary education. Moreover, no restrictive measures which ultimately aimed at protecting the national labour market, be imposed on the employment of refugees.<sup>23</sup>

### **Asylum Appeals Act of 1993 and the 'Numbers Game'**

In the general election manifesto of 1992, the Conservative leader, John Major promised to make Britain respected, and safer and more prosperous. Differently from Neil Kinnock, the labour candidate whose election manifesto not at all mentioned immigration and refugee matters, Major categorized seven issues under the title of 'Immigration and Refugees'. It is summarized as: further restrictions on the entry of asylum seekers to distinguish 'bogus', while protecting 'genuine' refugees; the reintroduction of the Asylum Bill which was delayed due to the election; to create a faster and more effective system of deliberating applications; to introduce finger-printing system so as to prevent multiple applications and fraudulent benefit claims.<sup>24</sup> The refugee policy of the Major regime was kept along similar lines until his resignation in 1997.

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<sup>23</sup> The UN Refugee Agency, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva: UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service 2010, 3-4, 10, 11, 13-16, 22, 24-25, 29-30.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1992/1992-labour-manifesto.shtml>;  
<http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page86.html>

However, this policy line was not the Major regime's own, but heavily reflected that of the previous Tory governments. For instance, under Thatcher a series of immigration and nationality laws were enacted through which the restrictions of immigration became further controlled and legalized. Among them, the most important of all was the Immigration [Carriers' Liability] Act of 1987, established by Home Secretary Douglas Hurd(1985-1989). This Act imposes a fine of 2000 pounds per person to an airplane company who carries an asylum seeker without proper visa. However, the problem is that no one could obtain a visa for the reason of seeking asylum. Furthermore, the persecuting state would not issue a visa for the persecuted. Nevertheless, these circumstances were not taken into account, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The purpose of the 1987 Act was to reduce the number of people seeking asylum in Britain from the very own place where they are produced.<sup>25</sup> The last Home Secretary of the Thatcher regime, David Waddington who succeeded Hurd worked only one year before Thatcher's resignation. Yet, his attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees can be seen through his statements during the Parliamentary debates. He seems to have tremendous pride in the British tradition of protecting refugees, and at the same time the obsession to restrict their entries, and to remove those who are found to have made false claims.<sup>26</sup> After all, it would not be completely wrong to suggest that these understandings on asylum seekers and refugees of the Thatcher government were carried out by the Major government.

Under the leadership of John Major, three Home Secretaries were appointed: Kenneth Baker (1990.11.28–1992.4.10), Kenneth Clarke

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<sup>25</sup> *HL Deb* 03 March 1987 vol 485 cc537-538; *HC Deb* 04 March 1987 vol 111 c872.

<sup>26</sup> *HC Deb* 05 March 1987 vol 111 cc1016; *HC Deb* 12 April 2000 vol 348 cc438-439.

(1992.4.10–1993.5.27), and Michael Howard (1993.5.27–1997.5.2). As soon as Kenneth Baker took his job, he began to argue for tighter controls on asylum seekers, emphasizing the rapid growth of applications which reached almost a thousand per week. His answer to the increasing applications was the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill with an aim of restricting the entry of asylum seekers, sifting out ‘bogus’ applicants, and strictly limiting the rights of asylum seekers to appeal.<sup>27</sup> After its first formal reading, the Bill passed the House of Commons by the votes of 116 to 73, and expected to receive Royal Assent by the end of the year.<sup>28</sup> However, the whole processes of deliberation of the Bill in the House of Commons and House of Lords met strong resistances not only from the opposition parties, but from the various sections of the society, such as the leading churchmen including the Archbishop of Canterbury, lawyers, asylum rights campaign groups, humanitarian organizations and refugee agencies etc.

However, the fierce criticism of the Labour party did not mean a total objection to the basic concept of the Bill. The Labour agreed on the necessity of controlling the entry, changes in the application procedures, and fast repatriation of those whose applications were rejected as unfounded. Several politicians from the opposition party were concerned with the obsession of the Government to keep out ‘bogus’ asylum seekers, because that might affect the entry of those ‘genuine’, and abuse human rights in the process rather than rejecting the whole concept of choosing ‘genuine’ from ‘bogus’. The church leaders, refugee agencies and associations, and human rights campaigners were particularly uneasy with the inclusion of the Carriers’ Liability clause, the denial of access to free legal advice from the solicitors of their choice, and

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<sup>27</sup> Stephen Goodwin, ‘MPs attack tighter asylum rules’, *The Independent* (London), 3 July 1991.

<sup>28</sup> John Carvel, ‘Wounded Kurds denied refugee status’, *The Guardian* (London), 27 April 1991; Peter Mulligan, “‘Racist taunt’ anger MPs”, *The Times*, 9 May 1991.

fast track.<sup>29</sup> The purpose of free legal advice was to assist British citizens with financial difficulties. Most of asylum seekers were not able to afford their own legal representation, unless the advisory service was given on the free base. The principle of 'fast track' was to repatriate the applicants whose claims were found to have no substance, without an oral interview.<sup>30</sup>

While the Bill was deliberated in the both Houses, the principles of the Bill were heavily criticized by the opposition parties. 'Black' parliamentary members (MPs) of the Labour party and the refugee agencies called the regime as 'racist', and Baker, as a 'Minister for xenophobia'.<sup>31</sup> In particular, Bernie Grant, the Labour MP for Tottenham pointed out that the government restricted the entry of asylum seekers, only because most of them were 'blacks or Asians' from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and China. Ron Moodley, the Director of the independent Refugee Forum also made a similar, but more sarcastic remark that if they had been the White Europeans, the British government would definitely have welcomed them without any pre-condition at all.<sup>32</sup>

Faced with these severe criticisms from the politicians and various sections of the society, Baker confronted these objections with the ever-repeated story of the rapid increase of applications and of 'bogus' applicants. It is not clear

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<sup>29</sup> Nick Cohen, and Stephen Goodwin, 'Curbs announced on refugees seeking asylum', *The Independent* (London), 3 July 1991; — 'Britain accused of racism over anti-immigration laws', *Agence France Presse-English*, 3 July 1991; Sarah Helm, 'There's no room at the EC', *The Independent* (London), 1 Oct. 1991; Alexander MacLeod, 'Britain Moves Towards Reversing Long Tradition of Welcome for Refugees', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 22 Nov. 1991.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Goodwin, 'MPs attack tighter asylum rules', *The Independent* (London), 3 July 1991; — 'Britain accused of racism over anti-immigration laws', *Agence France Presse-English*, 3 July 1991.

<sup>31</sup> Melanie Phillips, 'Commentary: Mr Baker's bogus boggy', *The Guardian* (London), 5 July 1991.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Goodwin, 'MPs attack tighter asylum rules', *The Independent* (London), 3 July 1991; — 'Britain accused of racism over anti-immigration laws', *Agence France Presse-English*, 3 July 1991.

who started the story of 'bogus' and when. However, the story was (and is) familiar with the British public over the past few decades. A British Journalist, called Melanie Phillips, makes a significant point to Baker's refugee policy. She explains that around 95 percent of refugees of the world would seek refuge within their own region, while only 5 percent go to Europe. Britain receives only a small segment of the whole refugees, that is, around 5 percent of the 5 percent who choose the continental European countries. Therefore, she argues that the government plays nothing, but the 'numbers game'.<sup>33</sup> If that was true, the game never seemed to stop during the Major years!

Then, let's find out the numbers of applications for asylum in Britain that were submitted during the 1990s? In 1990, the total applicants excluding their dependents were 26,205 and 44,840 in 1991. In 1992, there were 24,605 applications. As above, it is true that the numbers of applications in the 1990s rapidly rose in comparison to the 1980s. However, this number seems to be meager, for instance, if compared with Germany: from 1990 to 1992, 193,000, 236,000, and 438,000 applications respectively. However, if we want to figure out accurately how much the presence of asylum seekers and refugees affects the countries concerned, these numbers should be analyzed in relation to the total population of the country, the size of the land, and, if possible, the Gross Domestic Product. It is unfortunate that there is no such analytical work available both in the Office of National Statistics, UK, and Hansard, and in the newspapers.

Thus, it is rather questionable whether this would mean that the Major regime was not much interested in finding out the impacts of the socio-economic and demographic pressures on the country from the presence

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<sup>33</sup> Nick Cohen, 'Immigration adviser is bailed on fraud charge', *The Independent* (London), 24 July 1991; Melanie Phillips, 'Commentary: Mr Baker's bogus bogey', *The Guardian* (London), 5 July 1991.

of asylum seekers. Would it also be possible to suggest that what was important to them was something of rhetoric rather than the actual reality? Regardless the truth, neither precision nor accuracy seemed to have mattered, because no one in the regime asked for more analytical work on the subject. It might have been much more convenient for them to use the already familiarized story of ‘tidal wave’ of immigrants ‘swamping’ the country just to convince the public of their policy. In accordance with the UK Census 1991, the minorities occupied 5.5 percent of the total population of 54.8 million. South Asians and the Caribbeans altogether were over 2 million.<sup>34</sup> Under the circumstances, the Major government never overlooked the fact that most applicants were, so called, ‘black’s, though never admitted this charge.

Then let’s discuss about the term, ‘bogus’, another significant theme consistently used for the enactment of restriction. Here, I am not concerned about finding out the actual number of ‘bogus’ applicants, or their situations. I am more interested in analyzing the perceptions of the Major regime on ‘bogus’ applicants, and illustrating whether it is appropriate to treat the applicants whose claims were found not to have substantive, as ‘bogus’. Table 1 shows the result of the decisions made on asylum applications between 1990 and 1997.<sup>35</sup>

There are three different categories of asylum seekers: ‘Refugee’, ‘ELR’ and ‘Refusal’. As explained before, people who are granted ELR are those who are not given official refugee status, but recognized the circumstances that forced them to seek asylum, and who will face the death penalty, murder, torture, punishment, if/when returned. That is, ELRs are not recognized as refugees,

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<sup>34</sup> “Immigration Bill Published Facts on File”, *World News Digest*, 31Dec. 1992.

<sup>35</sup> This table is created by the author, based on the statistics of the Refugee Council, 1998 and Chart 1(Applications for Asylum in the UK excluding dependents) of the *ICAR Statistics Paper 1: Key Statistics about Asylum Seeker Applications in the UK* 2009, 6.

but their causes of seeking refuge. Thus, they are given the right to stay in Britain ‘temporarily’ on humanitarian grounds whether for the purpose of health treatment or until their safety is ensured after the return. However, the problem arises from the fact that the status of ELR is often than not subject to interpretation.

<b>Table 1) Decisions on Asylum Applications 1990-1997</b>								
<b>Year</b>	<b>Refugee</b>		<b>ELR</b>		<b>Refusal</b>		<b>Processed Applications</b>	<b>Number of Total Applicants</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total number (excluding dependents)</b>
<b>1990</b>	23	920	60	2400	17	705	4025	26205
<b>1991</b>	10	505	44	2190	46	2325	4570	44840
<b>1992</b>	6	1115	80	15325	14	2675	19115	24605
<b>1993</b>	9	1590	64	11125	27	4705	17420	22370
<b>1994</b>	5	825	21	3660	74	12655	17140	32830
<b>1995</b>	5	1295	19	4419	76	17705	23419	43965
<b>1996</b>	6	2240	14	5055	80	28040	35335	29640
<b>1997</b>	12	3985	11	3115	76	22780	29880	32500

On the contrary, people who oppose the restriction system of the government argue that ELR are the same victims as ‘Refugee’, and thus given the right to remain. In addition, some of ELRs can renew their stay, and even apply for permanent residency. However, the problem is that the British government only acknowledges ‘Refugee’ as ‘genuine’, while the others, ‘bogus’. This different interpretation of the status of ELR leads to an



interesting, yet significant result: the government argues that there were only 23 percent to 6 percent of 'genuine' refugees between 1990 and 1992, while the opposition, 83 to 86 percent.

Then who are the ELRs? Let's bring out an example here. With the outbreak of the Yugoslavian war, the Major government immediately operated the governmental refugee programme, and sent airplanes to Bosnia to bring some of the war victims to Britain. There would be no question that these people were the victims of genocide and systematic sexual assaults in addition to all kinds of violence involved in the war. However, these war victims were granted the status of ELR. And as mentioned above, ELR was treated as 'bogus' in accordance with the official criteria used to determine the applications. To the critics' eyes, the refugee policy of the government was rather confusing: while the policy aimed at restricting the entry, the Asylum Division of the Home Office in charge of deliberation was granting almost 80 to 90 percent of applicants the permission to stay (and social services accordingly) in Britain.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime, the Appeals Bill that had passed the examinations in the House of Commons in May, 1991, was expected to receive the Royal Assent around November. However, the whole process of deliberation of the Bill came to a halt due to the general election in April 1992. In the next chapter, I will explore the refugee crisis in Europe, the changes occurred to the refugee policy with the appointment of Kenneth Clarke, and the ways in which these whole situations were reflected on the process of enactment.

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<sup>36</sup> Melanie Phillips, 'Commentary: Mr Baker's bogus bogy', *The Guardian* (London), 5 July 1991.

### Strengthened Refugee Acts, Improved Racial Relations?

After John Major won the 1992 general election, Kenneth Clarke was appointed to work as the Home Secretary. Immediately after his appointment, Clarke did an interview with a BBC radio programme, *The World at One*. During the interview, Clarke explains the government's refugee policy and his own thoughts about asylum seekers. He states that an 'appropriate' number of refugees would be accepted in order not to disturb British economy and public services. He also emphasizes on having clear rules on asylum, which should be applied with force, if necessary. He repeats himself by saying that unless the number is controlled, Britain would be under great pressure in terms of house supply, welfare service, health service, education, and employment market. Unless controlled, he adds, the biggest victims of all would be the British homeless and poor city dwellers.<sup>37</sup>

Around the time when Clarke was appointed as the Home Secretary, the refugee situation was changing not only domestically, but also throughout Europe. There were relatively new incidents that were hardly witnessed before. Some racially motivated violence began to take asylum seekers and refugees as the targets. While Clarke was further strengthening the existing refugee policy of playing the 'Numbers Game' and 'weeding out bogus', the critics from the various sections of the British society, especially politicians, lawyers, human right activists, social movement organizations, and even the Commission of Racial Equality expressed concerns with this newly emerging phenomenon. They insisted on renewing Racial Relations Act, instead of further controlling the restrictions on asylum. By then, about a third of racially motivated violence in the eastern part of London was towards asylum

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<sup>37</sup> Nikki Knewstubb, 'Clarke Stresses Need for Stricter Laws on Asylum', *The Guardian* (London), 3 Nov. 1992; Heather Mills, 'Protest at secrecy over EC's policy on refugees', *The Independent* (London), 28 Nov. 1992.

seekers and refugees.<sup>38</sup> This was also happening in the most of European countries including Germany, France, Austria, Greece, and Italy. As a matter of course, racial violence was not particularly new to Germany. However, it was relatively new that the hostels where asylum seekers and refugees stayed were frequently attacked by neo-Nazis. It was becoming much clear that refugees were now the victims of racial violence in the country.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime, the British media broadcast racial violence in Europe, using familiar expressions with a negative tone: for examples, ‘a flood of bogus’<sup>40</sup>, ‘under siege from a tidal wave of bogus refugees’, ‘a massive wave of ... will swamp the rich countries’<sup>41</sup>, etc. The UK Refugee Council urged to be more cautious with the language that the media used to describe asylum seekers and refugees. The Council argued that after having shown the documentary film on the increase of racial discrimination and crimes in Germany, copy-cat crimes were on the increase in Britain, though temporarily. The Council also insisted that even publishing the statements of some Conservative politicians with a negative tone could encourage racial discrimination and cause fear among the British public.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Heather Mills, ‘Knock on the door brings growing fear of racial abuse and attack’, *The Independent* (London), 9 Nov. 1992.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Helm, ‘There’s no room at the EC’, *The Independent* (London), 26 March 1992; Anthony Bevens, ‘Hurd’s racism fears’, *The Independent* (London), 26 March, 1992; Heather Mills, ‘Knock on the door brings growing fear of racial abuse and attack’, *The Independent* (London), 9 Nov. 1992; Sue Leeman, ‘European Community Agrees To Speed Up Expulsion of Asylum Seekers’, *The Associated Press*, 30 Nov. 1992; Anna Tomeforde (BONN), Paul Webster (PARIS), John Hooper (SPAIN), and Duncan Campbell, ‘Refugee Tide Encounters Wall of Racism’, *The Guardian* (London), 6 Feb. 1993.

<sup>40</sup> “Britain accused of racism over anti-immigration laws”, *Agence France Presse-English*, 3 July 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Melanie Phillips, ‘Commentary: Mr Baker’s bogus bogey’, *The Guardian* (London), 5 July 1991.

<sup>42</sup> Heather Mills, ‘Knock on the door brings growing fear of racial abuse and attack’, *The Independent* (London), Nov. 9, 1992; Christopher Bell, ‘Help for Town Halls Swamped by Surge of Refugees’, *Daily Mail* (London), 3 Nov. 1992;

Due to the Yugoslavian war, the issues of asylum seekers and refugees were in the centre of political discourses around the end of 1992. The war was forcing people to find refuge. Thus, refugee problems were a common concern among the European countries, and Britain was not an exception. Almost 2 million Yugoslavians already fled the country to search for refuge. Thus, the events were broadcast in Britain in great details, and it would only be normal for the British public to be fearful when told by the media that the Serb President, Slobodan Milošević, was preparing for the attack of Kosovo, and if so, no one would be sure how many, if not several more millions, would 'flood' into Europe.<sup>43</sup>

On the 17th of November, 1992, Clarke announces further restrictions on issuing visa for refugees from ex-Yugoslavia in order to control the procedures of seeking asylum in Britain. This measure has almost similar intention as in 1985 when Britain limited visa-issuing for Sri Lankans who were the victims of the civil war, re-occurring in the country, producing massive refugees. With the outbreak of the Yugoslavian war Clarke announces in the Parliament that the British government would accept 150 refugees, and maybe more after a discussion with the United Nations and Red Cross. He also pleads not to compare with the case of Germany which already accepted around 220,000 refugees, because there are numerous Yugoslavian communities well-established in that country.<sup>44</sup> After a few days, Clarke rejects outright the request from the German government to allow more refugees. Instead, he promises to take around 600 per month, but

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Peter Thompson, 'LETTER: An Island and a Rising Tide of Racism', *The Guardian* (London), 10 March, 1993.

<sup>43</sup> ECON, 'Concerted policy eludes Europeans REFUGEES', *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), 5 Dec. 1992.

<sup>44</sup> *HC Deb* 17 November 1992 vol 214 cc141-50.

no more than 4000 in total.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, despite the war in ex-Yugoslavia the top three refugee-producing countries in Britain were still Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Pakistan.

On the 26th of July 1993, the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act came into effect for the first time in the British legal history. This Act comprises various articles from the previous Nationality Acts and Immigration Acts, all related to asylum seekers and refugees. In the part of the Introduction, the Appeals Act clarifies the main purpose of the Act as making provisions for asylum seekers and their dependents. It is also specified that the rights of appeal under the Immigration Act 1971 are subject to amendment, and the provisions of the Immigration Carriers' Liability Act 1987 are extended to transit passengers. Finger-printing system is introduced to prevent multiple applications on welfare service under false names. In addition, refused asylums and those without proper documents are also given the right to an oral appeal.<sup>46</sup> However, even before the Appeal Act came into effect, some of the Conservative politicians requested for new and further strengthened refugee act. As the Yugoslavian war intensified in mid-1993, Winston Churchill, the Conservative MP stated that the flow of 'new' immigrants (meaning asylum seekers) was directly causing social uneasiness in Britain, and thus should be imminently stopped to preserve the British way of life. This statement was received as courageous.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Sue Leeman, 'European Community Agrees To Speed Up Expulsion of Asylum Seekers', *The Associated Press*, 30 Nov. 1992.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/23/introduction>; Richard Ford, 'Government seeks to tighten controls on immigration', *The Times*, 23 Oct. 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Mail on Sunday, 30 May 1993, quoted in John Gabriel, *Whitewash: Racialized Politics and the Media*, London and New York: Routledge 1998, 104. He is the grandson of Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill. One of the leading right wing newspapers, the *Daily Mail* also prints an article written by the award-winning journalist, Mihir Bose who severely criticizes Winston

In April 1992, the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd praises the Conservatives' refugee policy as 'firm but fair'. He finds that the far-right political party, the National Front, is "virtually extinct" and the communities are in better terms than a decade ago thanks to the refugee policy which acts against racial discrimination. The Home Secretary, Baker articulates a similar story that Britain could prevent the emergence of the neo-Fascists, and resist from creating conditions for racism, when/if the entry of asylum seekers was further limited.<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Clarke who succeeded Baker also uses the issue of controlling the entry of asylum seekers not to repeat racial violence occurred in Germany. He insinuates 'strengthened refugee acts, better racial relations' by stating that the rising number of refugees in Germany is responsible for the increasing racist attacks.<sup>49</sup> In 1994 Michael Howard, the last Home Secretary of the Major regime argues that "firm control of immigration and good race relations go hand-in-hand", pointing out that most of new applications are from Nigeria, Ghana, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Ghana.<sup>50</sup>

As above, it is amazing to see such a consistency in the statements of the Home Secretaries under Major. They all seem to see asylum seekers at the core of racial problems in Britain. Their solutions to the problems were to speed up the process of examining applications, and quickly repatriate the

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Spencer-Churchill. Mihar Bose, 'Why race can no longer be a taboo subject', *Daily Mail* (London), 31 May 1993.

<sup>48</sup> Anthony Bevins, 'Hurd's racism fears', *The Independent* (London), 26 March, 1992; David Utting 'Don't make race issue, Tories told', *The Independent* (London), 29 March 1992; Richard Ford, 'Critics force softening of political asylum bill', *The Times*, 7 May 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Heather Mills, 'Knock on the door brings growing fear of racial abuse and attack', *The Independent* (London), Nov. 9, 1992, p. 3; K. Livingstone, etc., 'RACISM ON THE MARCH', *The Guardian* (London), 27 Nov. 1992, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Travis, 'Howard acts on refugees', *The Guardian* (London), 16 Feb. 1995; Jason Bennetto, 'Straw to abandon Tory asylum laws', *The Independent* (London), May 29, 1997.

refused applicants. It seems to have never occurred to their political minds that educating the British public to rid of racism would be more effective than the restrictive policies. However, Andrew Lansley, the Director of Research at Conservative Central Office speaks for the party that it was simply playing ‘race card’ in the elections rather than having a firm discriminatory policy on refugee. He says that the Conservative party used the issues of race and immigration to win the elections in 1992 and 1997, and the 1994 Euro-elections.<sup>51</sup>

<b>Table 2) Top Ten Sending Countries to Britain</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Top Ten Sending Countries to Britain</b>	<b>- The No. of Applications - Rate</b>
<b>1980-1984</b>	Iran, Ghana, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Poland, Uganda, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and South Africa (including dependents)	- 14,791 - 86% of the total applications of 17,165
<b>1985-1989</b>	Sri Lanka, Iran, Turkey, Somalia, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Iraq and Ghana (excluding dependents)	- 23,519 - 86% of 28,549
<b>1990-2001</b>	Somalia, Sri Lanka, FRY, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire)	- 272,895 - 49% of 558,755

Thus, it is important to find the racial character of asylum seekers and the ways in which it was perceived by the Conservative politicians. Table 2 clearly shows that most asylum applicants except people from former Yugoslavia were, so called, ‘black’ from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.<sup>52</sup> The politicians repeatedly emphasized this. They also argued that

<sup>51</sup> Lansley stated this after his retirement. He insisted that the Tories could still win, if the issues were played particularly well in the tabloids. Nick Cohen, “Fortress Britain; Only a fifth of those seeking asylum succeed”, *The Independent* (London), 29 Oct. 1995.

<sup>52</sup> The author has created this table on the basis of the statistics, in Institute for Public Policy Research, *Asylum in the UK: an ippr fact file*, 5-15.

seeking political asylum was the only way to enter Britain, and people from 'backward' countries attempted to explore the opportunities at any given time. Therefore, it was far from convincing when Baker said that every single applicant was provided with 'equal treatment' and the Conservatives' asylum policy was "colour blind".<sup>53</sup>

In addition, Table 1 illustrates the ways in which the Conservative's political strategy was played at the decisions made on the asylum applications. As mentioned above, it was repeatedly argued that imposing tighter restrictions on asylum seekers would improve racial relations among the communities in Britain. Lansley's contention that the Conservatives were playing a 'race card' may not be totally wrong. However, there are statistical evidences that prove the fact that the Major government had a certain strategy to reduce the rate of ELR. In 1992, the rate of ELR was 80 percent, but rapidly decreased to 21 percent in 1994. More surprisingly, the rate of the refused applications among the processed in 1990 and 1992 were 20 and 14 percent each, but rose to 80 percent 1994 onwards. By mid 1990s, the Conservative politicians could proudly present the percentage of 'genuine' refugees as mere 5 to 6.

Therefore, the outcome of deliberation on asylum applications shown on Table 1 proves that the whole process of deliberation could be manipulated in accordance with the manual of the governmental policy. Otherwise, it is simply not possible to explain the sudden increase of ELR and the refused, 1994 onwards. The 1951 Geneva Convention symbolizes the passion for humanitarian work of the signatories to protect the victims of political

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<sup>53</sup> John Carvel, 'Baker Denies Plans To Play Race Card', *The Guardian* (London), 15 Feb. 1992. The enactment with regard to immigration including asylum is: Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962, 1968, 1971, British Nationality Act of 1981, Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Act of 1987, Immigration Act of 1988, The Appeals Act of 1993, Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996, and Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999 etc.



persecution. The refusal of and the suspension of deportation of asylum seekers would work against the spirit of the Convention.

Having said that, however, it would be equally significant to understand the position of the Major government on refugee issues. Table 3 shows the total numbers of asylum from 1991 to 1997.<sup>54</sup> Examining the table would help understand the ‘genuine fear’ that the Major regime must have felt. The workload imposed on them hardly decreased due to the ‘backlog’. For instance, in 1991 there were around 45,000 new applicants, and almost 60,000 unprocessed applications carried over from the year before. Moreover, several tens of thousands of asylum seekers were wandering streets of the cities of Britain, waiting for deliberation of the Asylum Division of the Home Office. Therefore, issues related to the ‘backlog’ were frequently discussed among politicians.

<b>Year/UK</b>	<b>Unprocessed Asylum Applications / Numbers of Applicants (including Dependents) = Approx. Total</b>	<b>Year/UK</b>	<b>Unprocessed Asylum Applications / Number of Applicants (including Dependents) = Approx. Total</b>
<b>22 Nov. 1991</b>	60,000 / 44,840 = 104,840	1994	55,255 / 42,200 = 97,455
<b>7 May 1992</b>	60,000 / 24,605 = 84,605	1995	69,650 / 55,000 = 124,650
<b>1993</b>	45,805 / 28,000 = 73,805	1996	57,450 / 37,000 = 94,450
		1997	51,795 / 41,500 = 93,295

Therefore, one of the first things, if not the first, that Baker did to tackle the backlog and new applications was to increase the staff of the Division, and so did Howard. Howard recruited 150 more officers in addition to 500 existing staff in the Division in charge of examining asylum cases, and so did more to

<sup>54</sup> The author has created this table based on the information in some newspaper articles, Table 1, Institute for Public Policy Research, *Asylum in the UK: an ippr fact file*, 42.

handle appeal adjudications in the Department of Lord Chancellor. Despite this grand scale of investment, the expected effect was reviewing 7,000 more application forms only. Moreover, there was an even bigger backlog in the following year of 1995 due to rapid increase of new applications. Irritated by this increase, Howard introduces an enforcement policy designed to curtail the stay of asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected, and who lost their appeals.<sup>55</sup> However, even this measure seemed to be insufficient to cut off the increasing backlogs. Under the circumstances, the only remedy to the problem seemed to actively operate three elements of refugee acts: restrictive entry, fast review and swift repatriation.

At the beginning of 1995, Howard announced that there would be new Asylum Bill. The ultimate goal of this Bill would be making Britain less attractive destination to asylum seekers. The Act would reduce the number of 'bogus' applications; prevent immigration fraud; quicken the process of appeal; cut back social benefits. Howard explained the new Bill in the Parliament, arguing that only 5 percent of the applicants were 'genuine'.<sup>56</sup> He diligently pursued his job, and at the end of 1996, successfully reduced not only the number of asylum applications, but also of unprocessed forms. At the time severe complaints were heard from all sections of the society that the word 'bogus' would always follow whenever asylum seekers were mentioned. However, it was obvious by then asylum seekers and refugees were at all times portrayed in a distorted, unfair way.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Alan Travis, 'Howard acts on Refugees', *The Guardian* (London), 16 Feb. 1995.

<sup>56</sup> Julian Samboma, 'BRITAIN-REFUGEES: NEW IMMIGRATION LAWS DEEMED RACIST', *IPS-Inter Press Service*, 24 March 1995; Alan Travis, 'Howard Acts On Refugees', *The Guardian* (London), 16 Feb. 1995; *HC Deb* 11 December 1995 vol 268 cc699.

<sup>57</sup> Nick Cohen, 'Fortress Britain; Only a fifth of those seeking asylum succeed', *The Independent* (London), 29 Oct. 1995; *IPS-Inter press Service*, 20 Nov. 1996.

This Bill was quickly reviewed despite strong resistance from the opposition parties, and received Royal Assent. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 1997 the Bill was officially recognized as the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996. In accordance with the Act, asylum seekers awaiting the result of their applications would receive food voucher instead of cash, and were dispersed to reception centres throughout the country. Moreover, those whose passage of entry was not clear could not appeal, and refused applicants were automatically removed from social security services.<sup>58</sup> The 1996 Act, the last enactment on asylum under Major, further restricted the rights of asylum seekers than ever before, and began to tread the new path that was quite different than before.

### Concluding Remark

A single refugee is a heroic figure, welcome to asylum.

A thousand are a problem. A million are a threat.<sup>59</sup>

The writing of William Wallace, the international affairs specialist at St. Antony's College, Oxford, represents the Tory's understandings on asylum seekers and refugees better than any other statements. If Douglas Hurd felt necessary to enact the Carriers' Liability Act of 1987 when the number of applications was far less (around 4,000 annually) than the level of 'threat' in Wallace's term, it would not be difficult to understand how urgent refugee issues were to the successive governments. In the 1990s, asylum applications increased 10 times more than the Thatcher years, and each year almost

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<sup>58</sup> Sales, 'The deserving and the undeserving?', 456-477.

<sup>59</sup> Alexander MacLeod, 'Britain Moves Toward Reversing Long Tradition Of Welcome for Refugees', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 22 Nov. 1991.

60,000 backlogs were present. The Major regime was determined to stop 'new' immigration: if 'new' immigrants who were mainly 'black' were not properly controlled, it would bring disastrous consequences to the white-dominated society. Britain already had too many of them! They thought.

The Appeals Act of 1993 and the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996 were established under such circumstances. Despite the active roles played by the opposition parties and various social actors to avoid legalization of further strengthened restrictions on asylum, their objection was marked conditional commitment. The Labour party empathized with the Conservative government, accepting the core principles of the Acts. Even worse, the Labour politicians agreed that there were too many asylum seekers and 'bogus' applicants in Britain.

After examining the process of enactment, I realize that the Major regime saw asylum seekers and refugees through their skin colour and culture rather than as the victims of political persecution who needed protection. Moreover, they saw through the eyeglasses of racial prejudice, and never 'colour blind'. Asylum seekers and refugees were another 'black immigrants' who disturb racial relations and exhaust welfare services of the country, and thus their entry was strictly controlled.

Refugee under the 1951 Convention is confined to those who suffered from 'political' persecution, which means that other forms of suffering, for example, destitution, are not officially recognized as the cause for seeking refuge. Thus it was largely ignored that most of the citizens in a country under dictatorship severely suffered from tragic economic conditions. Due to the criticism on economic asylum, the boundaries between economically-motivated asylum seekers and immigrants became rather blurred. As a matter of fact, asylum seekers and immigrants have different motivations and backgrounds to leave home countries. Some of the immigrants may be encouraged to go abroad for marriage and employment,

while some others are due to poverty. And one cannot just disregard the influences of the relatives in the process of making a final decision on immigration. Under Howard, only 5 percent of asylum applications were given refugee status, while the others were treated like opportunists who came to Britain for better economic conditions. Thus, the presence of asylum seekers and refugees still made the white British uncomfortable, though the number of refugees was dramatically decreased.

As seen above, the Major government actively operated three principles of refugee acts: playing the 'Numbers Game', 'weeding out bogus refugees' and 'restricting asylum seekers for better racial relations'. In terms of relations with the European countries regarding refugee matters, the British government would cooperate with them, but most of times attempt to free itself from interference of their cooperators. The 1951 Geneva Convention suggests the signatories to abide the regulations. However, it was up to the signatories whether to follow the regulations specified in the Convention. Thus, the ways with which the states observed asylum seekers and refugees heavily influenced their own refugee policy.

In this article, I have not attempted to answer whether the enactment of the Major government contributed to the prevention of the rise of far-right political party. I have also not tried to find whether the government was able to establish better racial relations, while their refugee policy was working against racism, as Major's Home Secretaries consistently argued, or the enactment resulted in neglecting and even exacerbating racism already existed in the society. Probably, analyzing the general effects of the Major government's refugee policy in terms of racism and racial relations would be one of my next research subjects in the future.

The Major regime established refugee acts for the first time in the British legal history. Then, to what extent did this enactment influence the successive governments? I am going to conclude this article by quoting from

1997 Labour election manifesto rather than going through the passage of making the 1999 Asylum Act, which would be beyond my concern:

Every country must have firm control over immigration ... All applications, ..., should be dealt with speedily and fairly. .. The system for dealing with asylum seekers is expensive and slow — there are many undecided cases dating back beyond 1993. We will ensure swift and fair decisions on whether someone can stay or go, control unscrupulous immigration advisors and crack down on the fraudulent use of birth certificates.<sup>60</sup>

Refugees seeking asylum in Britain had to face refugee acts, which were another un-crossable border, fortified with wrong pre-conceptions about refugees. And this grand existence often disheartened their hopes for new home

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1997/1997-labour-manifesto.shtml>

**[Book Review]**

David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*.  
(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010)

Rebecca Spann\*

*Palmerston: A Biography* is an immensely detailed account of Henry John Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston's life and politics. From his lineage, education, and his political career in its immense entirety, David Brown attempted to reveal the man and politician Lord Palmerston was in a more complete portrait than other Palmerston historians had yet achieved. In his own words, Brown wanted "to 'make sense' of Palmerston" (4) as a man of his times, as a "prism through which to view (Whig-Liberal) nineteenth-century Britain," (4) and to assert the existence of and the consistencies of the "Palmerston mindset" (4). The development of this mindset created a politician who fully asserted a "belief in liberal progress, conceived within the carefully prescribed limits of moderate concession to responsible opinion" (6). Of Irish decent, Palmerston was not immediately within the social peerage that would allow for easy entry into the political sphere. These beginnings developed a stronger tie to the people than most of his contemporaries. Though he was a "flamboyant politician" (6), garnering him significant opposition within the British Government, he was "acutely aware of the need to carry popular support with him" (6). Brown's study on Lord Palmerston fully delves into the intricacies of mid-Victorian politics and foreign policy through the man himself and how they evolved with his influence.

In his introduction, Brown discusses Palmerston's gunboat diplomacy toward China and Greece as exceptions to his foreign policy rather than the

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rule. He goes into great depth in issues involving Portugal, Spain, Syria, Egypt, and Belgium, yet in his chapter that covers 1835-1841, and the subsequent chapter covering 1841-1846 there is scant mention of China. When China is discussed at greater lengths, Brown ties it into Peelite and protectionist disapproval of Palmerston's more colorful politics they feared would keep them in "perpetual hot water," . This aspect of the political power struggle contributes to many historians' criticisms of Palmerston as a gunboat diplomat and an international bully. It was Palmerston's long history of working with the press to encourage public support for his Whig-Liberal agenda that justified his actions against China. Brown uses *The Times*, the *Morning Post*, and other newspaper sources to describe this justification as a part of a mission to "teach to it's partner [China] better mercantile manners" (401), to ensure "liberty and security" (401) for British commerce. Newspapers, particularly far-reaching and influential ones like *The Times* worked to create a public opinion that remained pro-Palmerston and also insured a successful Whig majority in the general election of 1857 even though there was much controversy over the war being fought in China. The papers treated China as a nation of barbaric peoples who needed to be brought into the civilized world, and Britain should be the nation to do so. This hostile view toward China justified "Britain's robust response" (401) in the outbreak and continuation of war. This generated a popularity for Palmerston (not only in regards to China) that kept his public popularity "red hot" (404), though there were many who opposed him in the British Government.

Palmerston did not carry any exceptional interest in empire or imperial affairs except where free trade was concerned. China was purely of an economic interest and trade regulation. In terms of imperial policy, Palmerston "lacked... 'an intellectually robust philosophy on empire and its responsibilities'" (405), so long as Britain remained influential as a great world power. Even in the "crown jewel" colonial holding of India, Palmerston paid no major attention in imperial matters until an economic crisis



originating in America threatened to collapse banks across the whole of India. An uprising against imperial rule was sparked from a controversy over whether or not the British were greasing guns supplied to Indian troops with pork and beef fat, a major slight against Indian Muslim and Hindu populations. Violence erupted in India in which no British man, woman, or child escaped. The result was the transfer of jurisdiction of India from the British East India Company to the Crown, fundamentally altering “the way power was exercised” (407). This shift in imperial control was not without its own controversy: it was not popular to shift control from the middle class to the aristocracy, but for Palmerston, the need for Britain to maintain control and order was a matter of international concern – Palmerston feared any sign of weakness in British international opinion, particularly Russian opinion. The main concern he had in Colonial India was to insure British prowess and protect economic interests.

Palmerston’s response to international occurrences in places of interest like Belgium, Afghanistan, India, and many other places is, in Brown’s account, driven by asserting Britain’s standing as a world power and her economic interests. He argues that Palmerston did not concern himself too greatly with imperial policy unless Britain’s superiority or trade interests were compromised. Brown discusses in great detail the various countries and colonial holdings Britain from the beginning of his role as Foreign Secretary in 1830 through his role as Prime Minister up to his death in 1865. China, however is not discussed at great length until Palmerston became Prime Minister in 1855, though conflict with China began toward the end of the 1830s. Brown’s assessment of Palmerston’s foreign policy ties the conflict in China not only to a power struggle among opposing Whig and Liberal forces in parliament, but also to Palmerston’s view on empire and foreign policy in regards to free trade. Above all, Palmerston’s chief concern was protecting British economic interests in China, even if that trade flooded Chinese markets with a highly addictive drug—opium. Unlike his response in India that had a moral agenda after the massacre of innocent men, women, and

children, there was no moral justification for military action in a country that stood outside of the British Empire.

Brown's discussion on Palmerston's foreign policy and his position on imperialism is enlightening and thorough, affirming his argument that Palmerston's gunboat diplomacy was more the exception rather than the rule. The continual emphasis on the impact of Palmerston's classical liberal education at Edinburgh University under the guidance of Dugald Stewart throughout the book as a deep root for the "Palmerston mindset" creates a cohesive and consistent politician that, in part, responded to and informed nineteenth-century British politics. His "brutish" approach in China in the 1850s was certainly not overlooked, however, Palmerston's role in the initial conflict with China in the late 1830s and early 1840s (with the exception of a few vague references) was missing. Further explanation of the First Opium War would not discredit Brown's thesis. A deeper understanding of why China embarked in a conflagration with Britain as more than just a resistance to the free trade Britain had achieved in 1842 (see page 396-398) would inform readers more on the exception China really was in Palmerston's foreign policy. A more complete perspective on Palmerstonian Anglo-Chinese relations would also stand as an example of nineteenth-century British policy on free trade better than it currently does.

*Palmerston: A Biography* is a valuable and immense account not only of the life of an extraordinarily long-lasting British politician, but of the complexities of British Politics during the nineteenth-century. Brown successfully redeems Lord Palmerston's popular criticism as an international bully by explaining his policies toward many other nations as an encourager of liberalism over violent revolution without skipping over his bullying against China and also against Greece in the 1830s. If China is to stand as a major example of the exception to Palmerston's approach to foreign policy, it is important to fully denote his role in the conflict with China from the beginning of that conflict.

**[Book Review]**

Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907:  
Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*  
(Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013)

Frank Jacob\*

Evgeny Sergeev is correct when he states that the Great Game between Russia and Great Britain “must be re-examined by historians from temporal, geographical, sociopolitical, economic, and cultural perspectives” (p.1). Furthermore, he is providing such a re-examination by his new book, which is analyzing the history of the Great Game from 1856 until 1907. In actuality, this reviewed book provides an extensive study of the reasons – economic, geostrategic, personal, and political – for the Great Game, also known as the “competition between different models of early globalization”, “complex, multilevel decision-making and decision-implementing activity,” and “crucial period in the development of the Russo-British relationship in Asia” (p.13). Beginning in the late 1850s as a consequence of the end of the Caucasus War (1859), the Sepoy Mutiny (1857/58), the Second Opium War (1856-1860), the Anglo-Persian struggle for Herat (1856/57), the British economic expansion in Asia as well as the start of Russian industrialization and the American Civil War (1861-1865) (p.14), the Great Game took place in the geographical sphere bordered between 50-20 degree northern latitude and 50-130 degree eastern longitude (p.18). There it was responsible for the development of large ancient states such as China, Persia or Afghanistan, old khanates and emirates like Bokhara, Khiva, Kokand, the Punjab or Kashmir and territories which were inhabited by proto-state tribes (p.19). Despite the fact that Sergeev is going to

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describe a part of European diplomatic history, he is eager and successful in providing the reader with the global perspective of the Great Game which had a tremendous effect on Asia as well.

In the first chapter (pp.23-63), he begins with a description of the prologue of the Great Game by analyzing the reasons leading up to the diplomatic struggle of Russia and Great Britain in this sphere. In addition to this, he is tracing the players or supporters of the Game by analyzing the influence of 1) monarchs and bureaucrats, 2) military or diplomatic agents, and 3) journalists, explorers and freelancers. With regard to the origin of the Great Game, Sergeev also takes a look at the Asian regions and states, to find out, how far they were involved in the struggle as well. Due to this, he is able to find out that there was not only the wish for natural and “scientific borders” or strongholds in Asia, but also a need for economic markets which should become part of the sphere of influence (pp.24-27). Despite the weight of these reasons, Sergeev is able to determine “personal ambitions as a main driving force of the Great Game” (p.46), which were traceable not only in Russia and Britain but especially on the frontiers, where lower military ranks hoped for promotion, and in the Asian countries, where spies and scouts were recruited (p.49).

In the following chapter (pp.65-104), the author analyzes the role of India for the Great Game (pp.65-80). The Anglo-Persian War, the Sepoy Mutiny, the Taiping Rebellion and the Second Opium War had weakened Great Britain in Asia, causing the Russian military to discuss a possible invasion of India, an act that would trigger the Great Game itself (p.76). These Russian plans of the late 1850s and early 1860s finally provided the starting point when a “spirit of adventure” and a “thirst for decorations and higher ranks” (p.94) of the Russian military was responsible for the antagonism of the two European Great Powers in Asia where Russian diplomatic missions visited Khiva, Bokhara, Kabul and Peking in the following years.

The assault on Kokand, the Russian conquest of the khanates, and the formation of the governor-generalship in Turkestan are the main topics of chapter 3 (pp.105-148), which also describes the British popular view on the

events in Asia. This focuses particularly on the events in Turkestan (pp.133-142) and a British diplomatic interference which led to an aggravation of the relations between the two powers. Meanwhile, the fall of Khiva the khanate, which had prevented a Russian control of the lower Oxus and provided an anti-Russian ally in Asia, led to the climax of the Great Game. This is analyzed in further detail in the following chapter (pp.149-210).

Despite the Gorchakov-Granville compromise of 1873, the diplomatic struggle proceeded during the following decades, regardless of the insecurities of the people in both countries concerning a possible victory in the dispute. In the following years, the Afghan knot determined the Anglo-Russian relationship. When on 22 August 1878 a Russian delegation entered Kabul and received a warm welcome, the British government had every reason to become nervous. The Treaty of Gandamak at the end of the first phase of the Second Anglo-Afghan War granted the needed concessions for Great Britain to feel safe with regard to Russian approaches in Afghanistan (p.189). Due to this, Turkmenia remained the only independent region on the chess board of the Great Game. Until 1884, the Turkmen problem (pp.189-201) was unresolved when the powers decided to establish a commission which would deal with the border issue. As a consequence of the several treaties and developments, Britain and Russia reached a “fragile equilibrium” or a “strategic stalemate” (p.209) during the following decades.

Chapter 5 (pp.211-274) provides a survey of the consequences of this strategic stalemate which led to a scramble for new territories in the Far East and a diplomatic struggle with regard to India. The Pamirs (pp.212-228) became an interesting target for new direct actions in addition to Tibet (pp.249-274), where Britain wanted to establish a connection between its Indian and Chinese territories. India, which was of elementary importance for Britain, and its self-concept of the great power status had to be secured with every possible step. However, the possibilities of both powers were limited in these regions. Because of this, the end of the game, which is analyzed in the last chapter (pp.275-335), took place in the Far East where Russia and Britain found new places for their expansionist ambitions.

In Korea, Manchuria and China, the two powers found sufficient perspectives and opportunities to continue their struggle; however, the Russian government and its agents were finally forced to acknowledge that the Great Game had to come to an end in order to prevent too much pressure on the system of autocratic rule (p.275). The Russo-Japanese War and the Japanese victory set an end to the Russian ambitions in the Far East, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 finally ended the diplomatic struggle of the two countries. While this was a first step to the creation of the alliance, it was also an expression of Western chauvinism in later years, due to the fact that the rights of the people, especially those living in Persia and Afghanistan, were of no interest for the signing great powers (p.320). Despite this neglect of their existence, the Great Game itself had a tremendous effect on the people living in Asia.

In conclusion, by adding an epilogue (pp.337-345) Sergeev underlines this “multifaceted impact” (p.347) on Asia; furthermore, he concludes that the motivations for the Great Game varied in the same way as its geographical scenes were varying during the several decades (p.346). In addition, he makes the points that the game had come to the end, that neither Britain nor Russia had won or lost the game, and that the game, in and of itself, had not been a kind of “Victorian cold war” (p.347).

The work of Sergeev must be highly valued as a detailed description of the Great Game, for which it will become a type of standard reading due, in part, to his providing a dual perspective on the topic, which is so decisive for Russian and British history of the 19th and early 20th century. Next to this, Sergeev was successful in providing a global perspective on the diplomatic struggle of two European great powers and its impact on the people who were living in Asia. Due to this, the reviewed book is a must-read for all those who are interested in Russian or British history, diplomatic history and global or transnational history. The years of Sergeev's research culminated in a very well-researched and highly recommended account of history and will, hopefully, be recognized as such.

**[Book Review]**

Kiyotaka Sato, *Life Story of Mr Terry Harrison, MBE: His Identity as a Person of Mixed Heritage*

(Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Tokyo: Meiji University, 2013)

Yumiko Hamai\*

*Life Story of Mr Terry Harrison, MBE: His Identity as a Person of Mixed Heritage* is the sixth in the series which Prof. Kiyotaka Sato, Meiji University, Tokyo has been publishing since 2010, *Memory and Narrative*. (The series can be purchased through Tousui Shobou, Publishers & Co., Tokyo.) It is also part of the fruit born from a joint research project between Meiji University's Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity and the East Midlands Oral History Archive.

Since 2001, Sato has been conducting detailed research on the history of multiculturalism and ethnic communities in Britain, especially in Leicester, which is reputed to be one of the most 'multicultural' cities in the U.K. The 2011 census data show that only 45.1 per cent of those residing in Leicester identify themselves as 'majority' White British. Its largest ethnic 'minority' group is the Indian community, which consists of 28.3 per cent of the population, and within this multicultural city a wide range of ethnic communities live side by side with each other. Sato's works have tried to demonstrate how people of these disparate communities over the different generations have settled and lived in the city.

The approach he has adopted to document these people's lives is to interview hundreds of the members from various ethnic communities.

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According to Colin Hyde who reviewed the first five books in the series<sup>1</sup>, Sato, as of March 2013, had conducted around 700 interviews with about 400 people. For example, the preceding five instalments respectively present life stories of Mrs Elvy Morton (an African Caribbean woman who was the first chair of the Leicester Caribbean Carnival), Mrs Claire Wintram (a Jewish woman), Mrs Jasvir Kaur Chohan (a Sikh woman), Mr Sarup Singh, MBE and Mrs Gurmit Kaur (a Sikh artist and his wife), and Mr Jaffer Kapasi, OBE (a Muslim businessperson who was expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972). In total, Sato plans to publish 15 books on completion of the series. He states on the cover pages of the series that the purpose of his oral history project is 'to enable the UK's many and various ethnic minority communities and indigenous groups to record and preserve their memories, life experiences and traditions, and to ensure access to this rich inheritance for present and future generations'.

The sixth book, as its title indicates, presents the life story of Terry Harrison, a person of mixed heritage. He was born in 1944 in a small village in Leicestershire, to a Welsh woman and a Black American GI who was stationed there during the Second World War. Since his father had died before he and his twin sister were born, Terry was brought up in a white family, and went to school in Leicestershire. After leaving school, he joined the Royal Marines, and then the Police Force in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1980 he became a Leisure Services Officer in the Leicester City Council, where he would go on to play major parts in such events as the 1989 Special Olympics. Today he remains a proactive community leader, and has been chairing the African Caribbean Citizens Forum, an umbrella organisation representing 63 African Heritage community organisations in Leicestershire, as well as Highfield Rangers, a multiethnic football club. He has also been a magistrate since 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Hyde, 'Kiyotaka SATO, *Memories and Narrative Series 1-5*, Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Meiji University, Tokyo, 2010-2012', *SUNDAI SHIGAKU (Sundai Historical Review)*, No. 148, March 2013.



Thus Harrison's personal and career background, through the telling of his life story, provides us a small, yet fascinating facet of the 'multicultural' history of Leicestershire and Britain. His existence as a mixed heritage person in itself resulted from an intriguing episode of history—the American Black GI's stationing in a Leicestershire village in the 1940s. He frankly admits difficulties of living in rural Leicestershire as one of few 'black' kids in the 1950s, and tells his experiences of racial prejudice at the military and police forces through the 1960s and 1970s. His eyewitness accounts document some of the changes Leicester has experienced in the past decades, which have transformed it into a 'multicultural hotspot'.

As a young black boy brought up in a white family, he lacked any role models he could aspire to be like (he admits, 'I struggled with my identity', pp. 18-19). His recent experience as a magistrate has stimulated his enthusiasm in supporting disadvantaged young people including those with ethnic minority backgrounds. As a result, he has established an organisation supporting troubled youngsters, 4Sure, and now expresses his desire to be a role model for black youngsters, just like one he craved for as a boy.

Like the preceding five books in the series, this instalment contains a helpful introduction by Sato, the editor and author, which helps the readers in locating Harrison's story in the broader historical background. It also contains a large number of photographs, maps, and extracts from local newspaper articles which covered some of the relevant topics and events (GIs stationed in Leicestershire, Highfield Rangers, royal visit to Leicester in 2012, etc.) as appendices.

We could regard this book and the rest of the series as part of an innovative approach to the history of immigration into Britain. Panikos Panayi suggests, in his comprehensive book on immigration history into Britain over the last two centuries, that there has been a shift in emphasis from what he calls the 'ethnic block' approach to a more individual-based 'oral history' approach<sup>2</sup>. The former tends to flatten and ignore differences within ethnic groups, often

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<sup>2</sup> Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*, Pearson, 2010. .

based on a range of factors such as class, gender, places of birth, etc., whereas the latter can show us the experiences of migrants and their descendants in more complex ways. Oral histories of people from ethnic communities give us a more complex picture of how ‘multicultural’ Britain has become what it is now, and can suggest clues as to how it should be in the future. Cynthia Brown suggests in her 2006 article in *Oral History* that the joint project Sato has been engaging provided the opportunity to test if ‘oral evidence [could provide] an essential record of the hidden history of migration’ and by ‘explor[ing] institutional and individual responses to what Trevor Phillips recently described as “the difficulties of different kinds of people learning to live together”’, it could add to the current (and hot) debate on British multiculturalism<sup>3</sup>.

This new approach might be particularly effective in exploring the experiences of people who possess ‘mixed heritage’ identities, just like Terry Harrison. According to the 2011 census, some 2 per cent of the total population (1,250,229) in the UK identify themselves as members of ‘mixed/multiple ethnic groups’ and this almost equates with two thirds of those who identified as ‘Black or Black British’ (1,904,684). With more and more people marrying and forming relationships outside of their own ethnic groups (and much more people accept it as a norm compared with 1980s<sup>4</sup>, the number of people with these complex identities will continue to increase. Life stories such as Harrison’s would certainly give us opportunities to look into how people with mixed heritage struggle to establish his/her identity, and more generally how ‘identity’ itself works.

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<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Brown, ‘Moving On: Reflections on oral history and migrant communities in Britain’, *Oral History*, Spring 2006.

<sup>4</sup> British Future’s report *The Melting Pot Generation: How Britain became more relaxed on race*, shows that only 15 per cent of the respondents expressed concerns about mixed marriages in 2012, compared with 50 per cent in the 1980s.

<http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/reports/new-report-the-melting-pot-generation/>

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