Countering Communist and Nasserite Propaganda: the Foreign Office Information Research Department in the Middle East and Africa, 1954-1963.

Simon M W Collier.

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Abstract

This thesis considers the role of the Information Research Department (IRD) in countering Arab nationalist and Communist propaganda directed at British interests in the Middle East and Africa between 1954 and 1963. It argues that the 1956 Suez Crisis and its fallout was the catalyst that drove a significant expansion of IRD's remit and responsibility. From 1956 the department – which up to this point had had a purely anti-Communist function – was given the responsibility of countering the increasing flow of Arab nationalist propaganda emerging from Egypt. The same year, the Communist powers mounted a renewed and concerted effort to culturally and ideologically penetrate Africa. IRD, who to this point had been excluded from directly operating in Africa, began counter-Communist work in the face of stiff Colonial Office resistance.

Analysis of IRD in the Middle East has rarely considered events beyond the immediate aftermath of Suez. IRD's work in Africa is almost wholly unexplored. It is a central contention of this thesis that the two regions cannot be viewed in isolation post-Suez. Egypt's standing was buoyed by the propaganda capital of victory over Suez, and Nasser's position as the figurehead of Arab nationalism was assured. In seeking the removal of colonial influence from the Middle East and Africa, Arab propaganda – particularly the *Voice of the Arabs* programme of Cairo Radio – ties the regions together. Communist and African nationalist propagandists were drawn to Cairo in the wake of the Suez Crisis. The former, building relationships through aid, sought to leverage Cairo's expanding influence to their own advantage. The latter sought facilities and support for their own propaganda efforts.

After Suez, IRD sought to manage Egyptian propaganda whilst avoiding direct confrontation, seeking to normalise relations. In Africa, the department sought to build an infrastructure for information work aimed at influencing future leaders, their efforts constrained

by the timetable of British decolonisation. In both regions, through developing relationships with local agencies and the BBC, and from initiatives such as the Transmission 'X' news commentary service, IRD continued to address Arab nationalist and Communist propaganda with a flexibility and responsiveness not recognised in the current literature on IRD.

Contents

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Abbreviations

ANA	Arab News Agency
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBCWAC	BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham
BIS	British Information Services
CO	Colonial Office
COI	Central Office of Information
COID	Colonial Office Information Department
COS	Chief of Staff
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CSC	Counter Subversion Committee
CSO	Counter Subversion Office
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States series
HBS	Hashemite Broadcasting Service
ICE	Information Coordination Executive
IO	Information Officer
IPD	Information Policy Department
IRD	Information Research Department

JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
LPS	London Press Service
MI5	Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEABS	Near East Broadcasting Station
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
RIO	Regional Information Office
SAVAK	National Security and Intelligence Organization (of Iran)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UAR	United Arab Republic
USIA	United States Information Agency
USIS	United States Information Services
VOA	Voice of America
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
'X'	Transmission 'X' News Commentary Service

Introduction

This thesis is about the Information Research Department (IRD) of the British Foreign Office, and that department's work in the Middle East and Africa between 1954 and 1963. Through this period, and in both regions, British power, influence and prestige were subjected to fundamental reassessment. IRD's role, and the department itself, expanded to cover Britain's changing situation. Three factors were at work: the growth of Communist interest and influence, the rise of Arab nationalism, and Britain's withdrawal from Empire.

IRD researched, created and distributed propaganda material, at home and abroad, to British and foreign recipients in positions of influence. Much of this propaganda was banal, factual information; sometimes these facts were twisted – 'spun' – and occasionally facts were stretched or massaged, but there is little evidence that IRD promulgated straight falsehoods.[1] IRD predominantly produced printed material, in the form of publications, factsheets, briefing papers, and radio scripts. If the department's material was often mundane, its mission was not. The purpose of IRD in 1954 was much as it had been from the department's creation in 1948: to support British and Western Cold War interests through the provision of counter- and anti-

[1] Without seeking too fine a definition, grey propaganda is information which may either be inaccurate, or the source of which may be disguised or hidden. It falls thus on the spectrum between white propaganda – truthful information from a known source, though supporting an agenda, and black propaganda – the 'big lie' – where the source of the information is hidden, and the information itself untruthful or fabricated. IRD was set up to provide unattributable information, and so its output was rarely white propaganda. The principle, learned through experience in both world wars was that truth, albeit carefully selected truth, was more effective than fabrication, and it would appear that IRD rarely crossed the line into black propaganda. Historians such as Phillip Deery have confidently asserted that IRD utilised both grey and black propaganda, though without examples. (Phillip Deery, "The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 02 (2003). John Jenks notes that though IRD did not appear to have ever fabricated any material, it had 'a propensity for speculation, rumour, and wilful disregard of the facts if they got in the way of a good story.' (John Jenks, *British propaganda and news media in the cold war* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 66). IRD officers tell a different story, however: IRD's Norman Reddaway is quoted as stressing that 'Anything but the truth is too hot to handle' was an IRD slogan. (Interview with Norman Reddaway by Anthony Gorst and W. Scott Lucas 6/1989, cited in Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's secret propaganda war* (Stroud, 1998), p. 36). H H Tucker, head of IRD's Editorial Section for much of the department's life, defended the department robustly: '[IRD] has been accused of all sorts of sinister methods, of waging black propaganda, of misleading people and so on, all of which - and I can speak of this as an insider - are false. It was an information department providing information based on good honest to goodness research.' (Harold Herbert Tucker, OBE, transcript of interview by J Hutson, April 19, 1996, British Diplomatic Oral History Project, (hereafter BDOHP), DOHP 11, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge).

Communist propaganda. In 1956 this remit was expanded, with IRD's skills turned to the task of countering Arab nationalism in the Middle East, and ultimately shaping and supporting the propaganda and information campaign directed at Egypt over the course of the Suez Crisis.

The study of such a department is naturally of interest in and of itself, but there is a wider historical relevance to the study of the propaganda within the confines of the Cold War. As David Caute has argued, the battle of culture and ideology between East and West was at least as significant as military and economic factors in bringing about the West's 'victory'.[2] Propaganda as a term defies easy definition, but within the context of what is under study here it suffices to define it as the methods and material by which government and private institutions sought to influence public or private opinion, and to bring it in line, supportive of their aims and goals within the confines of their interests and ideology. It was, as James Vaughan has explained, the 'psychological dimension' of diplomacy.[3] The ubiquity of propaganda during the Cold War had a profound and lasting impact; as Gary Rawnsley has argued, the mobilisation of culture and propaganda by all sides did not just further political aims but 'helped to define the unfolding drama in easily understood and readily acceptable terms of reference …[that] endured, giving shape and meaning to the remaining years of the Cold War.'[4] That the third dimension to Middle Eastern political discourse beyond the opposing Western and Communist ideologies – the Arab nationalist movement – was supported by a significant and far-reaching propaganda campaign centred on Cairo only adds to the justification for studying it here.

IRD's role within the wider study of the Cold War is also important. When the existence of IRD was made public by press revelations in 1978, it quickly became evident that Britain had been first amongst the Western allies to develop an apparatus for anti-Communist propaganda. The first scholarly account of IRD, by Lyn Smith, published in 1980, was quick to recognise this,

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[2] David Caute, *The dancer defects: the struggle for cultural supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford, 2003), p. 395.
[3] James Vaughan, *The failure of American and British propaganda in the Arab Middle East, 1945-57: unconquerable minds* (Basingstoke, 2005), Anthony Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited", *International Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (1988), p. 3.
[4] Gary D. Rawnsley, "Introduction", in Rawnsley, ed, *Cold War Propaganda in the 1950s* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 2.

and to note that IRD necessitated a broadening of research into Britain's role and importance in the Cold War.[5] It soon became clear that IRD was of great significance to an analysis of the Cold War as a whole, debunking the conventional wisdom of Britain's subservient – indeed, superficial – role to that of the US ascribed within the contemporary literature. Though Hugh Wilford's early study concluded that IRD, and Britain's propaganda effort generally was quickly subordinated to the needs and policy of the United States,[6] more recent and complete studies, especially those of Andrew Defty, James Vaughan, and John Jenks, have shown that Britain remained a significant player.[7] Britain and America evolved a complimentary approach – though in some areas with a divided focus – with America actively targeting those behind the Iron Curtain, and Britain's low-key approach more suited to combating Communism in the free world.[8] Christopher Warner, one of the architects of IRD, described this division of resources as 'shooting into the same target from different angles'.[9]

If Britain surged to the fore in respect of propaganda during the early years of the Cold War, then this was as much through necessity as any other reason. Wesley K Wark has argued that the importance given to propaganda by British policymakers was a direct result of the straightened circumstances the nation found itself in following the Second World War. When IRD was created in 1948, Wark notes, 'propaganda represented one of the few fronts on which a counter-offensive against the USSR could be conceived as possible.'[10] Taking this one step further, Scott Lucas and C J Morris have reasoned that, unable to compete on military terms with the Soviets, and playing a distant second fiddle to the Americans in terms of technology,

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[5] Lyn Smith, "Covert British Propaganda: The Information Research Department: 1947-77", *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1980), p. 68.
[6] Hugh Wilford, "The Information Research Department: Britain's secret Cold War weapon revealed", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1998), p. 354.
[7] Vaughan, *Failure*; Andrew Defty, *Britain, America and anti-communist propaganda, 1945-53: the Information Research Department* (London, 2005), Jenks, *Propaganda.*
[8] Defty, *Britain*, p.252.
[9] Christopher Warner, letter to Sir John Balfour, 26 Feb. 1948. FO 1110/1/7, cited in Wilford, "Information Research Department", p. 367.
[10] Wesley K. Wark, "Coming in from the Cold: British Propaganda and Red Army Defectors, 1945-1952", *The International History Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1987), p.50.

propaganda was the only means by which Britain could seek to preserve her standing as a world power, whilst disguising the shortcomings that would reveal her loss of status.[11]

In light of the above, studying IRD and British propaganda during the Cold War is easy to justify. The focus of this thesis on the Middle East and Africa, and the choice of timescale, requires further explanation. The most obvious answer is that beyond 1957 there has been no effort to do so. IRD was in existence from 1948 until its closure in 1977, a considerable timescale, and most studies have concentrated on the department's role during discrete events during that period, or have focussed on the earlier years of the department.[12] Of the general histories of IRD, Andrew Defty's *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda* ends its analysis in 1953. John Jenks' *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* also focuses on the earlier years of IRD's existence, though it extends analysis a few years beyond that of Defty's work.

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[11] W. Scott Lucas and C. J. Morris, "A Very British Crusade: The Information Research Department and the Origins of the Cold War", in Aldrich, ed, *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War* (London, 1992), p.86.

[12] There are several texts on IRD that provide an insight into the creation of the department and a general history of the early years of its operation. These include accounts of those involved in setting up the department, for example Christopher Mayhew, *A war of words: a cold war witness* (London, 1998). Further context for the creation of IRD can be found in Richard Aldrich, "Putting culture into the Cold War: the Cultural Relations Department (CRD) and British Covert Information Warfare", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2003); R. Merrick, "The Russia Committee of the British Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1946-47", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1985); and Raymond Smith, "A Climate of Opinion: British Officials and the Development of British Soviet Policy, 1945-7", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (1988). Particular campaigns by IRD are explored in Tony Shaw, "'Some writers are more equal than others': George Orwell, the state and cold war privilege", *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2003); Jacek Tebinka, "British Propaganda Directed at Poland Between 1947 and 1956", *Acta Poloniae Historica*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2007). IRD's role in conflicts or crises other than Suez include Anne Deighton, "'A Different 1956': British Responses to the Polish Events, June-November 1956", *Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (2006); Gary D. Rawnsley, "The BBC External Services and the Hungarian Uprising, 1956", in Rawnsley, ed, *Cold War Propaganda in the 1950s* (Basingstoke, 1999); Tony Shaw, "The Information Research Department of the British Foreign Office and the Korean War, 1950-53", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (1999). This thesis places particular emphasis on IRD's relationship with other information organisations, and so IRD's key relationship with the NATO Information Service (NATIS) – detailed in Linda Risso, "'Enlightening Public Opinion': A Study of NATO's Information Policies between 1949 and 1959 based on Recently Declassified Documents", *Cold War History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2007) – is of great interest. IRD's role naturally led it to target both international organisations and students, and analysis of this has formed part of a number of studies, but the focus of a few. The monitoring of Commonwealth students in Britain by IRD, over concerns of the political direction of the 'successor generation' of newly independent nations, is explored in J. M. Lee, "Commonwealth Students in the United Kingdom, 1940–1960: Student Welfare and World Status", *Minerva*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2006). IRD's role in the denial of access to delegates of the second World Peace Council in Sheffield is examined in Phillip Deery, "The Dove Flies East: Whitehall, Warsaw and the 1950 World Peace Congress", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2002). The role of the BBC is central to IRD work within the context of this thesis, and the relationship between IRD and the BBC is bookended by two studies: Alban Webb, "Auntie Goes To War Again", *Media History*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2006) which looks at the formative years of this relationship and Paul Gliddon, "Programmes Subjected to Interference: The Heath Government, Broadcasting and the European Community, 1970-1971", *History*, Vol. 91, No. 303 (2006) which examines IRD's role in shaping positive opinion on Britain's entry to the EEC via the nation's media. This list is not exhaustive.

Paul Lashmar and James Oliver's *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, whatever weaknesses it may otherwise display, aims to cover the whole of IRD's operations between its creation and closure, but it covers little about the Middle East outside of the Suez Crisis.[13] Indeed, Suez and its immediate aftermath have to this point provided the conclusion to studies of the department's role in the Middle East, and Africa has barely been touched upon. The most complete studies of IRD in the Middle East are those of James Vaughan, who has examined both the wider subject of British propaganda and diplomacy in the Middle East, and the role of IRD within it, though Vaughan's work also largely concludes with Suez.[14]

Of the number of published articles and general historical works that engage with IRD in the Middle East and Africa, Stephen Dorrill and Richard Aldrich, in general works on MI6/SIS and British intelligence respectively, contribute to the study of IRD but again find Suez to be the logical end-point for any examination of the department in the Middle East.[15] Susan Carruthers' exploration of IRD's work against a number of colonial insurgencies provides a tantalising early glimpse of IRD's early wranglings with the Colonial Office over Africa, this during the Mau Mau emergency of 1952.[16] Johan Franzén lays the blame squarely on IRD's shoulders for the British failure to adequately manage, or appreciate, the Communist threat to Nuri as-Said's regime prior to the 1958 coup in Iraq. As such his work bucks the trend of ending analysis with Suez, and hopefully presages further integration of IRD into post-Suez narratives in the Middle East and Africa.[17] Furthermore, there are three, unpublished, texts that engage with IRD's work in the

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[13] Defty, *Britain*, Jenks, *Propaganda*, Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*.
[14] James Vaughan, "Propaganda by Proxy?: Britain, America, and Arab Radio Broadcasting, 1953-1957", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2002); James Vaughan, "'Cloak Without Dagger': How the Information Research Department Fought Britain's Cold War in the Middle East, 1948-56", *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2004); James Vaughan, "'A Certain Idea of Britain': British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945-57", *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2005); Vaughan, *Failure*.
[15] Stephen Dorril, *MI6: fifty years of special operations* (London, 2000); Richard Aldrich, *The hidden hand: Britain, America, and Cold War secret intelligence* (London, 2001).
[16] Susan Carruthers, "'A Red Under Every Bed?': Anti-Communist Propaganda and Britain's Response to Colonial Insurgency", *Contemporary Record*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1995). See also Carruthers' expansion of that article in her book, Susan Carruthers, *Winning hearts and minds: British governments, the media, and colonial counter-insurgency, 1944-1960* (London, 1995) though there is no further exploration of IRD's role.
[17] Johan Franzén, "Losing hearts and minds in Iraq: Britain, Cold War propaganda and the challenge of communism, 1945-58", *Historical Research*, Vol. 83, No. 222 (2009).

Middle East and Africa beyond 1958: Chikara Hashimoto's thesis on intelligence and counter-subversion liaison and collaboration between Britain and Middle Eastern nations investigates IRD's work within this context, amidst the wider intelligence and security activities of MI5, MI6 and British Middle Eastern policy. James Brennan briefly explores IRD's Transmission 'X' ('X') news comentary service, IRD's response to the threat posed by Cairo Radio broadcasting to East Africa, as part of a general survey of short-wave broadcasting-as-propaganda in the region between 1940 and 1965. Philip Murphy's examination of the various British intelligence organisations, and their role within the decolonisation process, includes a discussion of the early difficulties between IRD and the Colonial Office over how to engage with Communism in British Africa in the mid 1950s.[18]

The post-Suez period is therefore ripe for exploration, both in the Middle East and Africa. This core of this thesis begins with the aftermath of Suez, though it is necessary to provide context for this period and so certain themes, and the general background for IRD work, Communist involvement and the rise of Arab nationalism, require a fresh look at events as far back as 1954, the year of the creation of the *Voice of the Arabs* radio programme. With this in mind, Chapter One separates out IRD's methods, products, structure and organisational relationships, and aims to provide a point of reference for what follows – essentially it is a snapshot of IRD as a department in 1954, and this is a snapshot almost exclusively concerned with the Middle East. Whilst IRD did produce material on Africa at that stage, the department

[18] Chikara Hashimoto, "British Intelligence, Counter Subversion, and 'Informal Empire' in the Middle East, 1949-63" (PhD Thesis, University of Aberystwyth, 2013); James R. Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965", (Paper delivered at the African Studies Center Seminar, University of Leiden, 15 May 2008); Philip Murphy, "Exporting a British intelligence culture: The British intelligence community and decolonisation, 1945-1960" (unpublished, 2004). IRD's counter-subversion work in the Middle East was conducted through the Baghdad Pact/CENTO Counter Subversion Office, and so Hashimoto largely focusses on the department's activities within the CSO. 'X' is not the main focus of Brennan's paper, but the inclusion of 'X' – which this thesis will argue is a one of the most significant developments for IRD and British information work in the region over the period under study – is notable, as is his inclusion of other British responses and IRD's role within them. The section on IRD and the Colonial Office in this thesis was written before Murphy's unpublished paper came to the author's attention, and both draw from broadly the same sources. Whilst this thesis does extend the examination of the particular situation between IRD and the CO, Murphy approaches the subject from a different angle, and his heavier emphasis on the Colonial Office provides a useful counterpoint. Murphy's article extends its analysis to the role of the Security Service and MI6, Brennan's provides much on the influence of Cairo Radio and regional broadcasting: both provide valuable context and wider analysis to sections of what follows.

did not have a direct role to play in either British or French African territories until 1956/7. The department did send a selection of material to the British Consulate General in the Belgian Congo, though up to the end of 1956 IRD saw 'no reports on what they do with it'.[19] Congo, however, was the exception. IRD material only found its way into British colonies when the Colonial Office, who handled both distribution and intelligence gathering, specifically requested it. For their part, the FO avoided any information work in French-controlled territories in Africa due to 'extreme French sensitivity' over any such actions.[20] A primary reason for this lack of activity was the absence of a Communist threat, which only became of serious concern by 1955/6. The only IRD work of interest during the pre-Suez period detailed so far is Susan Carruthers' investigation into propaganda during the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya from 1952. Carruthers showed that IRD creatively interpreted possible connections between Mau Mau and international Communism in an effort to generate propaganda.[21] In any case, whilst IRD were producing, or attempting to produce, material *on* Africa, this thesis is concerned with the department's activities *in* the regions under study. Africa, therefore, is somewhat conspicuous by its absence from what follows until Chapter Four.

Chapter Two examines the pre-Suez landscape of IRD's anti-Communist work in the Middle East, and the reaction from various Foreign Office posts to the material they received. The final sections of the chapter consider the emergence of Egypt-centred Arab nationalism as a concrete threat to British interests – a threat that after Suez would become highly significant to British territories in Africa. An analysis of the Suez Crisis – or even the entirety of IRD's involvement in it – does not form part of this thesis, and Suez is explored largely in regard to a pair of themes that have relevance for the later period under study. The decolonisation process

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[19] Minute, J Sanders (IRD), June 7, 1956, TNA FO 1110/922/PR1058/2. Responding to IRD enquiries, the Consulate-General reported that it had made material available to the *Sûreté,* the Belgian government's information department, and had placed some material in the press., though there were no more details. J R Cotton (British Consulate-General, Leopoldville) to L C W Figg (IRD), Spetember 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/922/PR1058/2'A'.
[20] Information work in North Africa, undated (1956), TNA FO 1110/1924/PG1281/2.
[21] See both Carruthers, "Red" and Carruthers, *hearts and minds.*

in Africa provides one reason for concluding this thesis in 1963, at the point at which Kenya, the last significant British colonial territory in Africa, gained independence. It was also the year in which IRD began to break free of the policy constraints imposed after Suez, and to recommence unattributable propaganda against Egypt. As explained later, it is the role and actions of Egypt after Suez that tie these two regions together and, as this thesis will argue, necessitate integrating the two regions.

The Suez Crisis of 1956 represents a pivotal moment in the history of British imperialism, and it was also one for IRD. The head of IRD, John Rennie, was in charge of the Information Coordination Executive (ICE) that was responsible for developing and executing Britain's propaganda strategy during the crisis, and the department took a central role. The Suez Crisis was a political-military disaster that exposed Britain's true global and regional standing. Britain's actions were neither justified, nor rationalised, by the propaganda campaign deployed in support of them. If the propaganda campaign was a failure, then by extension so was IRD's effort.

James Vaughan reaches a number of conclusions as to why British (and American) propaganda failed in the Middle East. There was a failure of perspective, with a continued casting of local issues in a Cold-War context that was not only erroneous, but also self-defeating. The Cold War was an issue that existed largely outside the day to day concerns of Arabs who saw the issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and Western colonialism as much more pressing and relevant. These issues provided potent fuel to the flames of regional, Arab nationalism. As regards the Arab-Israeli dispute, British propagandists were constrained by wider policy. There was also a separation between British policymakers and those responsible for directing British propaganda and information work in the region. This found its ultimate expression in the complete divorce of propaganda from policy during the Suez Crisis, where an ever-diminishing *clique* of policymakers, centred on the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, obscured the true

direction of Britain's policy – military intervention – from propagandists who believed they were supporting an altogether different agenda.[22] What this thesis will show is that the these issues, bar the latter, extended well beyond both the Suez Crisis and the Middle East, and the evidence herein serves to reinforce Vaughan's conclusions.

British propagandists' failure to manage the precipitous drop in British fortunes in the Middle East is exemplified by Suez, and the crisis appears to form a powerful coda to British efforts to counter Arab nationalism in the Middle East. Indeed, Vaughan concludes that, after Suez, British propaganda strategy largely returned to anti-Communism, and that IRD returned its focus to the Soviet Union. With regional issues now polarized within a Cold War frame of reference, IRD forewent much of the flexibility it displayed pre-Suez in dealing with issues of nationalism and Communism.[23] Within the context of the Middle East, and constrained by the Suez Crisis, Vaughan's conclusions hold much weight. Framed by these arguments, IRD's campaign preceding and during the crisis was largely exceptional, and brought to an end by the failure at Suez.

Moving beyond the Suez Crisis, and beyond the Middle East, Vaughan's conclusions regarding the variety and flexibility of IRD's future campaign require some qualification, however. IRD's return to standard anti-Communist work was in fact less complete than Vaughan suggests. The growth of Nasser's prestige after Suez, and the expanding regional presence of Egypt, moved the issue of Arab nationalism beyond the Arab Middle East and into North and East Africa, where IRD actively defended British interests against it. Additionally, Soviet strategists believed that they could leverage Egypt's expanding influence to bolster their own, renewed drive for influence in Africa.[24] IRD certainly believed that the Soviets were using

[22] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 239.
[23] Vaughan, "Cloak", pp. 76, 78.
[24] Galia Golan, *Soviet policies in the Middle East: from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 20.

Egypt and the Sudan as a bridgehead to further their own African agenda.[25] Furthermore, whilst Egyptian propaganda remained a threat to British interests, particularly in Africa, it was increasingly seen as a bulwark against Communism in the Middle East, and Egypt successfully manipulated Communist attention to her own advantage, without tying her own interests to those of the Soviets. These factors therefore muddied such clear water as existed between the issues of Arab nationalism and Communism.

It is a contention of this thesis that IRD continued to grow and diversify its propaganda campaign across the Middle East and Africa, not despite, but *because* of, British failures at Suez. The Suez Crisis exposed the limits of British propaganda in the Middle East, and was a substantial blow to British prestige in the region, but it by no means signalled the end – indeed should be seen as the beginning – of IRD's work against Nasserism and Arab nationalism. Vaughan has comprehensively shown that Western propagandists lost the battle for the 'unconquerable minds' of the Arab Middle East. But did this matter – at least to IRD – as much in the long run as it would first appear? Judged against the process of decolonisation as a whole, the Suez Crisis was more symptom than source of Britain's problems. If the battle to manipulate Arab nationalist attitudes towards Britain in the Middle East was lost at Suez, the battle against the same nationalist force across northern and eastern Africa was just beginning. The battle against Communist influence was far from lost. If British propagandists were subsequently more restrained in their actions against Nasser and Arab nationalism it was due to the constraints of policy, not a sense of defeat – the battle against Arab nationalism was surrendered as well as lost following Suez. A swift rapprochement with Nasser was seen as of central importance to future British strategy, initially for financial reasons to do with the Suez Canal and trade. Once it was evident that Egypt would not suborn its nationalist interests to Communist designs on the region, accommodation with Arab nationalism came to be seen as an aid in the fight against

[25] 'Soviet Penetration of Africa', February 1956, enclosure with H A H Cortazzi (IRD) to W T A Cox (CO), February 9, 1956, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.

Communism. In a Cold War context, the question became less about whether Arab nationalism could be tamed, and more about whether it could be relied upon to not impinge too greatly on British defence and oil interests, whilst providing an effective bulwark against Communism.

Shaped by the need to find a favourable position for Britain in Africa following decolonisation, IRD pressed hard for a direct role in propaganda to the nation's African colonies. Up to 1956, whilst IRD had provided material upon request to the Colonial Office, the CO had vigorously resisted IRD pursuing an unmediated campaign in Africa, believing that the department, the wider Foreign Office, and the Joint Intelligence Committee's assessment of the Communist threat to Africa was exaggerated – even fabricated. The CO was in error: 1956 heralded a renewed effort to culturally and ideologically penetrate Africa by both the Soviet bloc and China, and this drive was greatly aided by the Communist nations' relationship with Egypt, and Egypt's own drive into Africa following the Suez Crisis.

Egypt ties the regions of Africa and the Middle East together for a number of reasons. Egypt's strategic interests in the Sudan (jointly administered by Egypt and Britain until 1956) derived both from security concerns, and the wider diplomatic possibilities of influencing anti-Westernism during the process of decolonisation. Cairo supported Pan-Arabist and pan-African movements, and propagandised such themes to their own benefit. The new push of Soviet and Chinese interest in Africa quickly accelerated through 1956 to a point where IRD became fully committed to obtaining a role in countering it. With Egyptian influence and political capital enhanced by Suez, Communist influence-by-association was also enhanced, and this confluence of Communist and Egyptian interest in Africa adds further complexity to the relationship between Arab nationalist and Communist propaganda. Chapter Four examines the links between, and reasons for, both sides interest in Africa, and IRD's analysis of the situation. Colonial Office resistance caused significant delay to the expansion of IRD work across the colonies. It is reasonable to assume that that this resistance squandered much of the advantage

in information and propaganda networks and relationships that the British, as a colonial power, enjoyed through the few short years of the decolonisation process.[26]

During the period under study in this thesis, Arab nationalism was seen by British and Western policymakers as a more significant threat to their interests over the Middle East, northern and eastern Africa than that posed by Communism.[27] This propaganda threat, though it had several facets, was in the main supported by the broadcasting reach, and vituperative anti-Westernism, of Cairo Radio. One stand-out result of the Suez Crisis was the loss of credibility of the Near East Arab Broadcasting Station's *Sharq al-Adna* programme, a British, certainly MI6- and probably IRD-run programme that was arguably Britain's most useful asset. Developing *Sharq al-Adna* perhaps represented the one means by which IRD could have competed with Cairo Radio on anything approaching equal terms after Suez. The programme could not have competed like-for-like with Cairo, but in the climate of *rapprochement* would have been perfectly pitched to deflect Egyptian polemic without recourse to direct confrontation, by offering a more reasonable window on affairs. As Peter Partner explains, *Sharq* 'could not tackle head-on the pan-Arab challenge of the Voice of the Arabs. But at least it addressed part of the same audience.'[28] As chapter 3 will detail, British requisitioning of the station in direct support of Suez wholly undermined the station's credibility.

IRD was subsequently tasked with the management of the influence of Cairo Radio in the Middle East, and, perhaps more urgently, British dependent territories in northern and eastern Africa – territories that were approaching decolonisation. Unable to resort to

[26] Tareq Ismael and Jaques Baulin have both written on the UAR's cultural/political/religious drive into Africa. These are both useful studies, written in 1971 and 1962 respectively, though Ismael's is the more scholarly work. See Tareq Ismael, *The UAR in Africa* (Evanston, 1971); Jacques Baulin, *The Arab role in Africa* (Baltimore, 1962). Ali A`Mazrui's text on the relationship between Arabs and 'black' African nations is wider in scope, and provides a general historical overview. Ali A. Mazrui, "Black Africa and the Arabs", *Foreign Affairs; an American Quarterly Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (1975). Other relevant works analyse China's economic relationship with Africa in the early 1960s, and the BBC's role in developing a broadcasting infrastructure in Africa between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the decolonisation process in 1956: Jan Prybyla, "Communist China's Economic Relations with Africa, 1960-1964", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (1964); Charles Armour, "The BBC and the Development of Broadcasting in British Colonial Africa 1946-1956", *African Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 332 (1984).
[27] The Activities and Influence of Cairo Radio, December 11, 1958, TNA CAB/134/2342/JIC (58) 63.
[28] Peter Partner, *Arab voices: the BBC Arabic Service, 1938-1988* (London, 1988), p. 94.

confrontational or covert propaganda because of policy considerations, and robbed of the utility of *Sharq al-Adna*, IRD nevertheless developed a flexible, innovative and successful response to Cairo Radio: the rebuttal service called Transmission 'X'. Despite Information Policy Department and Colonial Office assertions that such a service – one that required a constant flow of supporting material and a near instantaneous response to any propaganda – was impossible to implement, IRD successfully built a limited response based on research sourced from the BBC's Monitoring Service, and delivered by the Central Office of Information's London Press Service. Transmission 'X' was essentially a news commentary service, and was so successful that it was rapidly turned towards combatting Communism in the Middle East and Africa, and subsequently deployed world-wide, though with an emphasis on developing regions. Chapter 5 explores the development of Transmission 'X', and asserts that the service grew into one of IRD's most significant and successful counter-Nasserite and (particularly) counter-Communist initiatives. IRD's development of Transmission 'X' counters arguments that IRD returned to a traditional anti-Communist role, and that IRD significantly halted its efforts to manage Arab nationalism. Chapter 5 also details the wider use of the London Press Service, an omission from current histories of the department.

As noted above, the BBC's Monitoring Service was integral to the operation of Transmission 'X'; in fact it was vital to IRD's operation throughout the Middle East and Africa – likely the most significant and regular source of material to the department. The significance of BBC Monitoring, though noted, has been somewhat underplayed in the literature on IRD to this point. There was a genuine relationship between IRD and the Monitoring Service, with IRD's need to combat Arab nationalism driving the expansion of monitoring across Africa from 1957, and the BBC directly contributing content written specifically for 'X'. IRD's connection to the BBC is emphasised throughout the following chapters. It is paralleled by the department's reliance on the Regional Information Office (RIO) in Beirut, but for a different reason.

As Vaughan and Defty have shown, IRD struggled to provide tailored, regionally-appropriate, locally-interesting material to the Middle East. This was largely born of the misplaced confidence IRD had in providing material intended to appeal to a world-wide audience, and Vaughan cites this as one of the main reasons for the failure of IRD's message in the Middle East. Any future success, therefore, rested on improving the appropriateness and diversity of material, and in this the RIO was key. Increased use of the RIO by IRD, and the fact that the RIO almost wholly took over production of Arabic-language material, progressively improved the reception of IRD material in the region. The fact that the RIO was run by old IRD hands aided the smooth interoperability of both. IRD's direct involvement in the Counter Subversion Office (CSO) of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) that replaced the Baghdad Pact also provided alternative, more acceptable (though limited), routes in to the region for the department's product largely centred on Turkey. These three institutions – the BBC, RIO Beirut and the CENTO CSO, and one product – Transmission 'X' – provided the framework for IRD's improving post-Suez campaign in the Middle East and Africa.

Transmission 'X' was far from the only means by which IRD sought to manage Communist and Nasserite propaganda in the Middle East and Africa. Chapter 6 considers IRD's direct involvement in Britain's African colonies, with the department having largely overcome CO resistance, and the nature of information work on all sides of the conflict. With Cairo's influence in decline by 1961 the focus is on IRD's counter-Communist work. The work of British information departments, and their counterparts in the Communist nations, largely amounted to a manoeuvring for a favourable position with the successor regimes of the various colonies prior to independence. IRD's work in Africa has not been analysed to this point, and this chapter seeks to address both the department's assessment of Communist tactics towards Africa, and IRD's response to them. It also touches on continuing issues of resistance to IRD work both in and outside of the Colonial Office, and issues of race and African nationalism.

The final chapter of this thesis returns to the post-Suez Middle East, again a period where the work of IRD remains largely unexplored. IRD work across the region was constrained by the policy of rapprochement with Nasser, and the difficulty of addressing Communism when the two most significant nations in the Middle East – Egypt and Iraq – were closed to IRD propaganda for political reasons. Chapter 7 explores the impact of British policy on IRD, and explains how that policy shaped propaganda work in the region. Much of the material for the Middle East was produced by the RIO, or if by IRD then distributed by the RIO or the CENTO CSO, and so an analysis of the work of these two institutions forms a major part of this chapter. Of particular significance is that by 1963 the policy of avoiding anti-Egyptian propaganda was under serious review. Pressure for a change of policy was driven by IRD and the RIO, and the department began to reinstate a (limited) campaign of unattributable propaganda against Egypt.

That IRD was able to diversify as noted above was itself a product of the Suez Crisis. The crisis forced British officials to properly implement many of the recommendations of the Drogheda report on the information services that had been delivered 3 years previously, and appoint Sir Charles Hill to both head up an enquiry, and maintain oversight of the information services to ensure that the lessons learned were applied. Hill's appointment, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was at Cabinet level. J M Lee has argued that Suez caused the British to adopt a more systematic approach to the merits of cultural diplomacy, previously seen as secondary to the 'more prestigious' fields of psychological and political warfare, and the effects of this would be seen over the remainder of the Cold War. During the period of Hill's oversight, which ended in 1961, government spending on the information budget rose from £13m to

£20m per year. Lee, though he does not expand on this comment, asserts that this period saw IRD enjoy 'a fresh lease of life'.[29] This thesis details that expansion.

This dissertation is open to criticism that it draws heavily on the records at the National Archives, especially those of IRD and IPD. Where other sources, such as the BBC's Written Archives Centre at Caversham have provided additional information, these have been integrated, though beyond Suez the lack of alternative primary sources parallels the absence of secondary ones. This thesis does not set out to provide a comparison of British and American propaganda, seek to integrate domestic British opinion, or to explore the political situation in the Middle East or Africa. This is a dissertation about IRD, and as such draws deeply from the department's own files. The release of IRD files has, in Andrew Defty's words, provided historians of the department with 'almost an embarrassment of riches'.[30] In the case of the regions under study following Suez, and the desired focus on IRD, said material is more restrictive than it would first appear. Much of what follows is pieced together from correspondence.[31]

[29] J. M. Lee, "British cultural diplomacy and the cold war: 1946-61", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998), pp.126-127, 130.
[30] Defty, *Britain*, p. 17.
[31] It has recently been reported in the British press that the Foreign Office has been withholding some 1.2 million files that should have been transferred to the National Archives at Kew under the Public Records Act. The inventory of these files, which are held at Hanslope Park in Buckinghamshire, includes records from IRD. Whether these files are genuinely of great interest, or have merely been retained to protect reputations is unclear – as is the timescale for their transfer to Kew, and to what extent they have been weeded. 'Foreign Office hoarding 1m historic files in secret archive', *The Guardian*, Saturday 19 October, 2013, p.24.

Chapter One

IRD, its Organisation, Relationships and Methodology in the Middle East, 1954-1956

The truth is an unexciting weapon[1]

Hugh Carleton-Greene, 1969

This chapter will examine in general terms how IRD was organised, and how the department generated and distributed propaganda in the Middle East prior to the Suez Crisis. IRD's organisational structure, distribution methods and relationships are relevant throughout this thesis, and so it makes sense to briefly tour what was in place at this point. This chapter does not look at sub-Saharan Africa; as already noted, IRD was not active there at this stage.

Though a large department, much of the decision making at IRD in London, and abroad on its behalf, was in the hands of a comparatively small number of people – the heads of various desks, partner offices and the department itself. These individuals are constantly referenced in what follows. That they are perhaps disproportionately so is a product of the correspondence-based archival sources that inform much of this thesis. Staff moved in and out of IRD to other departments, were promoted to roles that supervised IRD, or transferred to partner organisations. This can only have reinforced the department's position within the FO and with overseas information establishments. Without pausing to look at these personalities in brief, this thesis would be a very impersonal affair, and so this chapter looks first towards a number of personalities within IRD, and how they fitted in to the structure of the department.

At the other end of the line from IRD, so to speak, were the Information Officers (IOs) that operated in the information departments of embassies and chanceries, or regional offices, or

[1] Hugh Greene, "The third floor front: a view of broadcasting in the sixties" (The Bodley Head Ltd,: London, 1963), pp. 28-29 cited in full in Partner, *Arab*, p. 146.

alone. These were the individuals responsible for carrying out IRD's work abroad, though in the main they were not directly employed by the department, and for requesting and generating complementary material. The relationship between these individuals and the individuals in IRD formed the nexus through which the department's work in the Middle East and Africa was carried out. Discussion of the work of IOs, and of the two information organisations in the Middle East with which IRD had a major interest and role – the Regional Information Office in Beirut, and the Baghdad Pact Counter Subversion Office – forms the middle section of this chapter. The chapter finishes with an overview of the material produced by IRD during this period, and explains in broad strokes how IRD went about its business in 1954.

IRD's Organisation

IRD was under the direction of two heads of department during the period covered by this thesis. Both were career diplomats – one ex-IRD employee has stated that all the department's heads, deputies, and often heads of section were[2] - yet the first was more involved in information work than that assertion would suggest. John Ogilvie Rennie had worked from 1942 to 1946 as head of the radio section of the British Information Services in New York, producing radio programmes in support of British interests. Joining the FO's Information Policy Department in 1946 he held two commercial first-secretary positions in Washington (1949) and Warsaw (1951) before his appointment as head of IRD in 1953. Rennie was therefore responsible for steering IRD through the waxing of Nasser's influence in the Middle East, and the fallout from the Suez Crisis. During the crisis itself, he headed up the Information Coordination Executive, the committee responsible for coordinating the British political warfare campaign, whilst his deputy, Norman Reddaway, ran the department. Following his tenure, Rennie was appointed

[2] Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11.

commercial minister in Buenos Aires in 1958. He would repeat this post in Washington in 1960, and became assistant under-secretary for the Americas at the FO in 1964 and deputy under-secretary for concerned with defence issues in 1966. Rennie's most significant achievement was in 1968, when he was appointed 'C', the head of the Secret Intelligence Service, a post he held until 1974.[3]

Succeeding Rennie, Donald Hopson was head of IRD from 1958 to 1962. Hopson presided over IRD's increasing involvement in Africa, and the process of decolonisation, as well as consolidating IRD's expanded remit in the Middle East. Hopson was at Oxford during the war; afterwards he entered the diplomatic service, rising to head the Chancery in Buenos Aires by 1955. He followed his stewardship of IRD with a return to mainstream diplomatic work, becoming Ambassador to Laos in 1962 and Chargé d'Affaires to Peking in 1965, followed by further postings as Ambassador.[4]

Reporting directly to the head of the department were three First Secretaries, who supervised various geographical desks. These desks were responsible for research, for maintaining contacts with posts and IOs abroad, and for issues of a technical nature. By 1960, the staff of the various desks numbered 'several dozen'.[5] Between 1958 and 1961, Hugh Carless was responsible for the Middle East and Africa. Carless had extensive experience of the region; his appointment followed foreign service postings to Kabul, Brazil and Iran. Carless also took an interest in IRD's publishing activities. Carless became a Private Secretary to a Minister of State, Lord Dundee, following IRD, before further foreign postings culminating in Chargé d'Affaires to Buenos Aires from 1976 to 1980.[6]

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[3] Nigel Clive, 'Rennie, Sir John Ogilvy (1914–1981)', rev. Michael Smith, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31597, accessed 27 Feb 2013].
[4] Obituary, Sir Donald Hopson, *The Times*, Wednesday August 28, 1974, p. 15.
[5] Hugh Michael Carless, CMG, transcript of interview by Malcolm McBain, February 23, 2002, BDOHP, DOHP 55.
[6] Carless transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 55.

The Middle East desk itself was run by Ann Elwell, a wartime and post-war MI5 officer, who had married another MI5 officer, Charles Elwell, in 1950. She joined IRD in 1955, and stayed with the department for the next twenty years until her retirement. Elwell travelled extensively to the Middle East, above and beyond the high-level meetings which Carless also attended.[7] The Baghdad Pact Counter Subversion Office and the Regional Information Office in Beirut were both within Elwell's area of responsibility.

The business of IRD was of course to produce material – everything from background briefings based on their research, to regular printed books, publications, articles, news stories and radio programmes. These were the responsibility of the Editorial Section, which took the research of the regional desks and turned it into propaganda. An old SOE hand, Leslie Sheridan, initially ran the section. Sheridan had joined SOE from Fleet Street. Working in neutral cities and using journalists as cover, he had organised propaganda and espionage networks during the war, before joining IRD in 1948 at the department's inception. He also worked as a PR consultant.[8] In the 1950s the department again turned to Fleet Street for expertise. H H 'Tommy' Tucker had worked for the regional press after the war, alongside a short spell in the government's Economic Information Unit which was tasked with promoting British economic interests and encouraging growth. He subsequently returned to full-time journalism, rising to Chief Foreign Sub-Editor at the *Daily Telegraph*. Predominantly evening work, this left him substantial free time during the day, so when he was approached in 1951 by the department's head, Ralph Murray, to help 'knock into shape' IRD's briefing and background papers on a part-time basis he agreed. As Sheridan's replacement, Tucker was required to shape the raw information from the regional desks into material tailored for particular audiences. This was an onerous task in the Middle East, as can be seen later. He remained at IRD until 1974, having

[7] Anne Pimlott Baker, 'Elwell, Ann Catherine (1922–1996)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/60758, accessed 27 Feb 2013].
[8] Jenks, *Propaganda*, p. 63.

risen to be the assistant to the department's head. When he left, it was to become the director of British Information Services in Australia. In 1979 Tucker became Consul General in Vancouver, before being recalled to London as Disarmament and Arms Control Information Coordinator, in which role he found himself positioned against the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).[9]

IRD was of course directly supervised by the Foreign Office. The most significant figure here was Ralph Murray. Ex-BBC, during 1939-1945 Murray had worked at SOE preparing 'black' radio programming aimed at Germany, and for the Political Warfare Executive. Murray subsequently worked for the Allied Control Commission for Germany and Austria before returning to London in 1947 to become the first head of IRD in 1948. When he left IRD in 1951, he became a counsellor at the embassy in Madrid. He was appointed minister at the embassy in Cairo in 1954, but following the nationalisation of the Canal he returned to London to coordinate the Anglo-American OMEGA plan. He worked as political advisor to General Keightley during the Suez operation and its aftermath, before becoming assistant under-secretary of state at the FO in 1957 and deputy under-secretary of state, responsible for information work, in 1961. In this latter post he was directly responsible for IRD. He left the FO in 1967 for various commercial positions including time spent as a BBC governor.[10] Murray, perhaps more than anyone in the information services, is a thread that runs through all of IRD's work in the Middle East and Africa, and he was deeply involved in the formulation of the wider strategy into which IRD's work fitted.

[9] Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11; Mary Tucker, wife of H H Tucker, letter to Andrew Defty, November 1996, Defty, *Britain*, p. 78.
[10] Michael T. Thornhill, 'Murray, Sir (Francis) Ralph Hay (1908–1983)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64928, accessed 27 Feb 2013].

Information Officers: IRD's Contacts Abroad.

IRD was by no means the only British information organisation at work in the Middle East, nor was anti-Communism the only game in town. The Cairo Embassy in 1952 was unequivocal that their 'main information task [was]…to proclaim that Britain is still strong and a Power…and whose friendship is well worth having.'[11] On balance, IRD had comparatively less to do with this form of propaganda than the other branches of the Foreign Office and the British Council, who were its major exponents.

As James Vaughan has pointed out, a number of factors – primarily anti-Imperialism and British 'cultural assumptions' (particularly the colonialist, stereotypical, Orientalist assumptions that shaped the viewpoint of many British officials)[12] – provided British cultural diplomacy in the Middle East with a unique set of challenges. Taking a positive view of these challenges, J M Lee has concluded that '[o]nly the circumstances of the Middle East in the mid-1950s obliged policymakers to find ways of coordinating the [cultural diplomacy] apparatus at their disposal.' The weight of cultural propaganda deployed by the British in the years to follow underlines the significance of this statement. Of all the cultural avenues available to the British, education was a particular focus, and a number of British officials saw the provision of British schools as an especially important strand of cultural diplomacy; in the case of the Ambassador in Beirut 'the best single contribution we could make to the future of the Middle East.'[13] IRD would turn its hand to other work.

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[11] Chancery (Cairo) to IPD, October 7, 1952, TNA FO 953/1316/PG1161/12 cited in Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 78.
[12] Orientalism is a somewhat elastic term. Of relevance here, the term defines the Western view of the East – in this case the mid- or near-East – as culturally separate from the West, backward, inextricably linked to Islam, despotic, yet full of wonders; it's population childlike, often cruel, and in need of guidance. This positioned the Orient, therefore, as lacking when weighed against Western modernity, Christian values, and established superiority. Orientalism draws on these assumptions to also describe the paternalist and dominant forms of government, influence and imperialism through which Britain and France interacted with the East, and attempted to shape it. For a fuller explanation of the term and its importance in the study of Britain's propaganda campaigns in the Middle East see Vaughan, *Failure*, Ch. 2, and more generally Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003).
[13] Vaughan, "Certain idea", p. 153; Lee, "Cultural", p. 132; Chapman Andrews (Ambassador, Beirut) to P F Grey (FO), May 2, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/3/G cited in Vaughan, "Certain idea", p. 155.

If IRD was but one department among many tasked with information work abroad, it was unique in the sense that its wide-ranging activities were (at this stage) all deployed in support of Cold War, anti-Communist aims. This narrow focus often brought it into conflict with other foreign departments, most significantly the Colonial Office (CO), who saw other factors as both more pressing and more relevant to local issues. The CO agreed with the FO regarding the threat from Arab nationalism, and in 1954 IRD had been asked to pass on all information on the impact of Egyptian cultural propaganda to Colonial territories.[14] Where Colonial Office senior officials disagreed with IRD was on whether there was a significant - or any – Communist threat to the territories they administered. Whilst information work within the CO was handled by the Colonial Office Information Department (COID), this had no comparable function to that of IRD. The COID had, therefore, looked to IRD to supply anti-Communist material 'as and when we think it desirable to "place" it in the Colonies', as the Colonial Office's C Y Carstairs described it. IRD had been pushing for a direct role for itself in the colonies since the late 1940s, but had been consistently rebuffed. As discussed in Chapter 4, this situation would only begin to change in 1956, facilitated in large part by a change in leadership in the COID. In the meantime, Carstairs' view of IRD and the department's material was typical, though far from the extreme, when he explained how

> we in the Colonial Office have been somewhat discriminating in our approach to the value of this kind of material, considering that not every Colony is necessarily a suitable place for its widespread use, and having to bear in mind also the suitability of the means at our disposal for its dissemination. We have also to bear in mind the nature of our total policy in respect of given territories, in a way that this branch of the Foreign Office are not in a position to do. Furthermore, I understand that the attitude of other branches of the Foreign Office, and of many diplomatic posts abroad, is much the same as ours – I have heard it described as "all very interesting but not in my territory, please."[15]

It is worth remembering that by and large British information agencies operated at the forbearance of the host government, though certain propaganda methods – broadcasting in

[14] Minute, June 25, 1954; Minute, September 7, 1954; TNA CO 1035/20/S811 (signatures unclear).
[15] Memo, C Y Carstairs (CO), April 20, 1956, TNA CO 1035/117/ISD127/03.

particular – operated across national borders. Agencies were expected to respect local sovereignty, and to combat Communism by advising local governments, disseminating information, exposing Communist activities and suggesting ways to tackle the problem – to provide the tools for a country to act for itself. IRD often went further than this, however: 'where local governments are weak, ignorant and unreceptive, as they often are', explained the department – who were presumably the arbiters of such criteria – 'it may be necessary for us to take a hand ourselves'.[16] In these circumstances, British Information Officers – the foreign service staff responsible for coordinating and disseminating British propaganda in all its forms from within a host nation – would exploit contacts outside of government channels.

IRD was predominantly a Whitehall-based organisation; whilst staff would regularly visit posts or tour regions, and were in any case in constant contact, it was the job of the IOs to disseminate IRD output locally (over time a small number of IRD staff were posted overseas). As discussed later, IRD was often roundly criticised that this approach consistently failed to produce material with any local appeal. Whilst IRD intended for their material to be tailored by the recipients (and often translated by them), it was often considered wholly unsuitable. It was the job of IOs to adapt material where they could, and request changes where they could not.

Information Officers were employed in the press or information offices at local embassies and chanceries. In smaller posts they often worked alone. There was also a Regional Information Office (RIO) in Beirut, which co-ordinated information work and produced propaganda of its own. RIO Beirut existed to tackle the thorny problem of producing material in Arabic with local relevance, and handled the lion's share of British Arabic-language propaganda and information. The RIO and local information offices were responsible for maintaining contacts with the press and radio, the primary avenues for distribution of widespread propaganda, alongside printed pamphlets and book schemes. IRD material in

[16] 'Soviet bloc penetration and Communist subversion in the Middle East', undated, but November 9, 1955, TNA FO 1110/834/PR10104/118/G.

particular targeted individuals, rather than being intended for mass consumption, and so IOs' personal contacts with local persons of interest was accordingly of great importance. The particular linguistic and cultural landscape of the region explains why experienced Information Officers, with local knowledge and 'of the highest calibre', were identified by the Drogheda Report as being of the utmost importance in the Middle East.[17] The situation in Africa could not have been more different. Prior to 1956, there were only two (Colonial Office) IOs covering the whole of Britain's African colonies, and IRD were less than impressed by one of them.[18] There was no equivalent to the RIO. This was far from ideal, though indicative of the paucity of the Communist threat to Africa as seen by the Colonial Office.

'The Information Officer is essentially a salesman and like any other salesman he has to discover the needs of his customers and try to provide them with what they want', explained the FO's Bob Marett in the early 1960s. The purpose of information officers was to cultivate both rulers and leaders of opinion, in order to 'assist Her Majesty's Government in the prosecution of foreign policy in the broadest sense' through long term publicity designed to promote the national life, and everyday publicity aimed at explaining policy or advancing a particular aim. The main source for the continuous flow of material necessary for the information officers to do their jobs on the political side – IOs also had a significant commercial role – were guidance telegrams and 'intels' provided by IPD, supported by material from the COI. IOs were responsible for selling British policy abroad, and for reporting back on the market for information that was their post.[19]

The maintenance and development of contacts, and the other particulars of IRD work, often meant that lone information officers, responsible for all the duties noted above, found it

[17] 'Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services' (Drogheda Committee Report), Annex 1, p.33, July 27, 1953, TNA FO 953/1459.
[18] Minute, Hugh Cortazzi, May 31, 1956, FO 1110/958/PR10109/55.
[19] 'Note on the Work of an Information Officer', R H K Marett (FO), August 7, 1962, TNA FO 953/2096/1004/48.

hard to strike a balance. R E Gamble, a foreign service officer with experience of several small information offices, argued that it was difficult for the lone IO

> however well served with local staff, to divert adequate time to I.R.D. work. He has to make and cultivate contacts, and it takes some months to know people well enough to make use of them in this way. Moreover, he will want to make some I.R.D. contacts outside the capital, which is usually possible only when on tour, and he will not have the time or the means to cover the same ground very often… material still has to be read, selectively distributed and, preferably, followed up occasionally…the information officer has many pressing, short term demands on his time… I.R.D. work tends to take a lower priority, to be fitted in when time permits… the Information Officer may find it difficult to secure the cooperation of other Departments of the Embassy… there is the problem of language… reproduction facilities at the post are often strained to the limit… I have always found that I could make a minimum of useful I.R.D. contacts without difficulty… It is the extension beyond this nucleus which presents problems.[20]

At the other end of the scale were the regional information organisations through which IRD material was passed, and with which the department supplied staff and advice. There were two distinct groups into which propaganda could be divided, although with some overlap: material produced in Britain and dispatched for use abroad, and material produced locally or regionally. These organisations formed the foreign end of information production. One of these was a wholly British affair, the aforementioned RIO in Beirut, which by 1955 had largely supplanted its controller-cum-predecessor, the British Middle East Office (BMEO). The other was a multinational affair, the information and counter-subversion arm of the wider regional alliance known as the Baghdad Pact.

Middle East Agencies: the BMEO and RIO Beirut

Set up in 1945 to aid British territories in the region, pressure from the Chiefs of Staff two years later had secured political responsibilities for the BMEO.[21] The BMEO was in essence a

[20] Minute, R E Gamble, January 4, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1355/PR1011/1/G.
[21] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 538.

development office and provider of technical expertise, yet it held the responsibility for coordinating information policy through the RIO, and this expanded its role beyond development into the realms of political intelligence. The RIO fell under BMEO supervision, until this function was removed in 1955, leaving the RIO effectively independent.[22]

The BMEO were sceptical of the suitability of IRD material, having concluded that IRD's campaign for the Middle East had been concocted with Europe as the focus; an assessment that Andrew Defty has argued had some basis in fact.[23] For their part, IRD saw BMEO practice as flawed, and fundamentally disagreed with the basis of their future strategy. Responding to a comprehensive and widely distributed report put forward by the BMEO in 1955, IRD noted that the BMEO suffered from the 'erroneous idea that we can and should answer Communist propaganda point by point...I.P.D. are, I think, suggesting politely to the B.M.E.O that it is time to get on with the job [of producing propaganda] and [to] stop proliferating theoretical paper.'[24]

IRD in fact produced their own report, 'Communist Propaganda and Developments in the Middle East', which was produced on a bi-monthly basis and covered much the same ground as this fledgling BMEO report. Despite a second report from the BMEO in July 1955, IRD and RIO Beirut had taken over such work from the office, and nothing further was produced. The BMEO reduced its anti-Communist propaganda and increased production of material that focussed on a positive spin on Britain. The office also scaled back production and distribution, concentrating on delivering background pamphlets, mainly to select recipients.[25]

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[22] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 538. This independence would sever a direct military tie between British forces and propaganda agencies in the Middle East, which would need to be rebuilt before Suez, 'British Defence Co-ordination Committee Middle East: Psychological Warfare', April 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/874/PR10112/19/G.
[23] Defty, *Britain*, p. 89.
[24] J H Lewen, Minute, Febuary 17, 1955, TNA FO 1110/832/PR10104/21/G.
[25] 'Communist Propaganda in the Middle East January – June 1955', Information Division BMEO, July 14, 1955, TNA FO 1110/833/PR10104/87/G. See as an example of IRD's output 'Communist Propaganda and Developments in the Middle East, Nos. 15/16: August 15 – October 15, 1955', TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/8/G; Information Division, BMEO to IPD, March 29, 1955, TNA FO 1110/833/PR10104/50/G.

The RIO managed a complicated blend of IRD, IPD and other output, both positive and negative, and did not just exist to service IRD. Yet in its own words, by 1955 the RIO was 'increasingly becoming, in one of its capacities, what might be described as a field branch of Information Research Department.' The RIO acted somewhat as a clearing house, with all correspondence, despatches and the like relating to Soviet bloc action in the Middle East forwarded there from the various posts in the region. Later, as concern over Arab nationalism grew, the RIO would take on similar responsibility for that issue. RIO Beirut translated and adapted IRD pamphlets and articles for distribution, and increasingly wrote its own. Publishing and translation of appropriate foreign books was also part of the office's purview. In 1954 the RIO spent £1,500 on this activity, rising to £2,000 in 1955. RIO Beirut was a concentration of staff for editorial and translation functions, and by April 1956 almost all Arabic written material for posts in the Middle East was produced there.[26] As the period under study here progressed, RIO Beirut – though semi-autonomous – increasingly became IRD's extended arm overseas, and indeed from 1960-1964 was headed by an old IRD hand, Norman Reddaway.

Reddaway had served with the army's GHQ liaison unit ('Phantom') during the Second World War, a unit responsible for gathering front-line intelligence for forces on the continent, and, pertinently, for the Middle East. He joined the FO after the war and under Christopher Mayhew, with whom he had served in Phantom, had been part of the team that established IRD. After postings to Canada and Italy, he returned to IRD in 1955 as Rennie's deputy, taking over the running of the department whilst Rennie was otherwise engaged during Suez. In 1960 he was appointed Director of RIO Beirut, and his appointment underscores the ties between the RIO and IRD. Reddaway's previous experience and his subsequent counter-propaganda field postings – he left the RIO in 1964, and was active during the Malayan insurgency and the

[26] 'Soviet bloc penetration and Communist subversion in the Middle East', enclosure with L C Glass (BMEO) to J O Rennie (IRD), November 9, 1955, TNA FO 1110/834/PR10104/118/G; Secret, From Beirut to Foreign Office, November 15, 1955, TNA FO 1110/834/PR10104/121/G; CCB Stewart (IPD) to Levant and other Departments, April 24, 1956, TNA FO 953/1631/P1041/36.

overthrow of Sukarno in Indonesia – lend context to the work he was drafted in to do at the RIO. Chargé d'Affaires to Khartoum until 1970, he returned to London as Assistant Under-Secretary for Information and Cultural Affairs at the FO between 1970 and 1974 – involved once again with IRD – before a final posting as Ambassador to Warsaw until 1978.[27]

RIO Beirut served IRD interests in the Middle East, and the department supported it. Often it was relied upon to manage IRD material by regional posts. In the case of Egypt in 1954, the embassy staff were so busy handling general 'day to day' information work that they relied on the RIO almost exclusively 'to adapt or re-write I.R.D. material to suit local needs.'[28] It was IRD's main, local connection to the region, though it was not the only one. The other, the Counter Subversion Office of the Baghdad Pact, was, if not a 'field branch' of IRD, more akin to a franchise.

The Counter Subversion Office of the Baghdad Pact[29]

The Egyptian *coup* of 1952 that ultimately brought Nasser to power would be followed two years later by a shift in power in Iraq that would return Nuri as-Said to the premiership. This return to a pro-Western regime paralleled worsening relations with Egypt. With Britain forced to look at alternatives to a regional defensive strategy based around their facilities in the Suez Canal Zone, Iraq proved increasingly attractive. As Nasser's Egypt, through nationalist propaganda, nascent hegemony, and increasing links with the Eastern Bloc, came by 1956 to stand as pariah to the West, the Iraq of dependable pro-Western Nuri as-Said formed the core around which Britain

[27] Obituary, Norman Reddaway, Michael Adams, *The Independent*, November 3, 1999, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/obituary-norman-reddaway-1122084.html#, accessed 27/02/2013; Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on Political Warfare, August 13, 1956, TNA FO 1110/876/PR10112/46/G; Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, pp. 6, 105.
[28] Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy (Cairo), July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17
[29] Counter-subversion refers to the measures taken against threats to national security that stop short of armed force, for example economic or political pressure including strikes and protests, propaganda, and limited acts of violence. The CSO therefore had a wide remit that included 'policing, intelligence-sharing, protective security, security training, special political action (so-called covert action), and propaganda'. IRD were responsible for the British input on propaganda at the CSO, MI5 for defensive activities such as security training and protective security, and MI6 for clandestine activities and political action. Hashimoto, "British Intelligence", pp. 12-13, 15.

and America sought to build the Baghdad Pact, the alliance that would act as bulwark against the Soviet threat to the north, and against Nasser's Egypt to the West.[30]

The British saw the pact as vitally important. Macmillan, the British Foreign Secretary, declared to the American Secretary of State in late 1955 that he realised 'the special importance of the Pact in relation to Communist propaganda….because it is a real partnership, on a basis of equality, between Western countries and Moslem Asian countries. Moreover since it includes a leading Arab State, Iraq, it makes a convenient link with the Arab world, now so important to us.' This concept of a partnership would replace previous bilateral arrangements.[31]

The Pact's Counter Subversion Committee (CSC) met on an ad-hoc basis to discuss subversive threats faced by members of the pact, or by the pact as a whole. The Counter Subversion Office (CSO)'s remit included propaganda, and was of great interest to both Britain and America. Though America ultimately chose not to commit itself fully to the pact, it was fully involved in the workings of the CSC. The US Embassy in Iran recognised that the CSC's objective was an 'integral part [of] US foreign policy'.[32]

The pact was set up as a defensive organisation, and so its various organs were not to be mobilised for offensive operations of any sort. The CSO directive was simple: to respond to '[a]ny attack on the purposes of the Pact, from whatever quarter and *whether directly Communist-inspired or not*' [my emphasis].[33] This broad-reaching definition would cause problems later when, as discussed in Chapter 7, certain regional member nations tried repeatedly to get the CSO

[30] For a clear and well-presented exploration the pact and other Western defence issues in the Middle East see Michael Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied contingency plans, 1945-1954* (London, 1997), *passim* but particularly relevant here are chapters 9 and 10. For a shorter look at just the formation of the pact itself see Ara Sanjian, "The formulation of the Baghdad pact", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (1997).
[31] Letter, Macmillan to Dulles, November 25, 1955, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), Vol. XII (1955-57), Document 83, pp. 205-206; 'Notes on British Foreign Policy IV. The Middle East', undated but 1958, TNA FO 953/1856/P10020/49.
[32] 'Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State', April 17, 1956, FRUS XII (1955-57), document 123, p. 286.
[33] 'Brief for the Secretary of State', M Wright (FO), June 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/977/PR146/63/G.

involved in their own regional disputes, something the Western members would not countenance. IRD was Britain's voice at the CSO.

The CSC was quick to call for IRD material for their use, and optimistic that the CSO would aid its distribution. BBC monitoring reports that detailed broadcasts from the Middle East as well as those to the region from Eastern Europe, the Far East and South East Asia, were dropped by BBC van to London Airport each morning, ready for the next available dispatch to Baghdad. IRD articles pertaining to the Middle East, IRD Central Research Unit background notes, pamphlets, booklets, books and 'Basic Papers' were all provided. In common with arrangements in place within NATO, information could be passed via the pact's secretariat to its member countries, bypassing the local information officers.[34] Philip Adams, the head of RIO Beirut, at this time attended all CSC meetings. In late 1956 consideration was given to raising Britain's profile, with attendance at perhaps under-secretary level – highlighting the significance placed upon the CSC – but this was not pursued.[35]

Whilst Adams attended the CSC, the main British representative was in fact an IRD employee, and the first national representative to begin work there.[36] British contributions to the CSO were met by the FO, and the committee was initially a function of the general FO mandate. IRD representation at the CSO office in Baghdad caused early controversy: the 'material activities' of an early IRD representative, A J Speares, were seen much more as IRD work than 'ordinary F.O. establishment work'. When he requested an assistant, it was suggested that perhaps IRD would like to 'take him back again [and] look after his staff needs'.[37] IRD later took

[34] J A Speares (Baghdad) to L C Figg (IRD) July 10, 1956; Minute 'Action for Editorial Section – if approved:', H V W Staff July 31, 1956, TNA FO 1110/934/PR1093/10/G.
[35] J O Rennie (IRD) to P G D Adams (RIO Beirut), December 27, 1956, TNA FO 1110/859/PR146/8.
[36] Draft Memorandum (suspended), L C W Figg (IRD), January 16, 1957, TNA FO 1110/976/PR146/58/G.
[37] H H Hughes(?) (FO) Minute, April 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/976/PR146/28/G.

over responsibility for funding the British commitment to the CSO, drawn out of departmental funds secured through the Secret Vote.[38]

The heterogeneous nature of the Baghdad Pact meant that it attracted significant negative propaganda along religious/ideological lines, as well as over economic and military issues. Despite this, by mid-1956, with the pact a year old, the British were buoyant regarding its progress, and its potential in the cultural sphere. Roger Makins, the British Ambassador in Washington, believed that development of the Pact's radio station at Baghdad would overcome the advantages in communications enjoyed by those who opposed the Pact, and help generate an audience for, and interest in, the Pact's publicity.[39] This radio station and facilities, into which the British invested heavily, acquired a new significance after the loss of credibility of Britain's foremost broadcasting asset in the region, the Near East Broadcasting Station (NEABS) at Limassol, Cyprus, as a result of mismanaged government requisitioning during the Suez Crisis.

IRD's product

Over and above the work for the Baghdad Pact, and paralleled by the work of the RIO, it was IRD's function to counter Communism, and later Arab nationalism, across the region. This work forms the basis for later chapters. Before looking at this however, it is worth a general review of the types of material IRD made available at this point, and how it went about its business.

IRD aimed itself at those who formed public opinion, across the political spectrum but with extra emphasis placed on the left-wing, for whom Communism was likely to hold greater potential appeal. Indeed, as John Peck, IRD's head between 1951 and 1954, put it, 'We make no

[38] A D Peck (Treasury) to H W Minshull (FO), 6th May, 1957, TNA FO 1110/976/PR146/58/G and *passim*.
[39] Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, June 7, 1956, FRUS XII, Document 131, pp. 305-306.

emotional appeals to those already converted, and we regard propaganda issued by right-wing elements designed only to appeal to other right-wing elements as dangerous to us and helpful to the enemy'.[40] The vast majority of material that IRD produced during this period in this region was printed, although the particular requirements of propaganda in an area of widespread illiteracy meant that a proportion of this material was eventually broadcast rather than published.

IRD material at this point fell into several broad categories. The first of these were 'Basic Papers', which were designed for 'serious thinking people' and contained factual information drawn as much as possible from Communist sources. Readers were left to draw their own conclusions. Basic Papers were mainly aimed at government contacts and provided that their provenance was not further communicated recipients were made aware of their origin to reinforce their authenticity. 'Basic Booklets', written in 'a slightly more popular style', were suitable for (unattributable) publication, aimed at journalists, and carried an argument that pointed to the moral of the subject at hand. 'Facts About' booklets provided reference material on certain subjects, largely for journalists. IRD aimed to produce one 'Basic Paper' per month, and one 'Facts About' booklet every six weeks.[41] Through 1955, the department also increased the number of illustrated pamphlets it published.[42]

IRD produced a number of regular publications. The *Interpreter* – available in English, French, Italian and Spanish versions and so widely relevant to the Middle East and Africa – was designed to be 'one of I.R.D.'s chief weapons in the campaign to expose the threat behind Soviet political warfare.' It was 'a factual analysis of all the agencies of Soviet policy, designed primarily for intelligent people'. *The Interpreter* often carried a supplement. The *Asian Analyst* was a variation on the *Interpreter*. The *Digest* and *Religious Digest* were a collection of shorter items, designed to be extracted and passed on by IOs as appropriate, the latter for use by religious

[40] 'Brief for Discussion with Dulles and Stassen, Political Warfare', January 28, 1953, TNA FO 1110/533/PR102/8/G, cited in Defty, *Britain*, p. 229.
[41] 'The Use of I.R.D. Material. A note for the Guidance of Information Officers and Chanceries', January 1953, revised August 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR101/2/G.
[42] Regional Information Office to posts, April 15,1956, TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/44.

leaders in church or by the ecclesiastical press. *Trends of Communist Propaganda* was a fortnightly, and self-explanatory, document produced to mainly inform the FO. IRD at this stage also commissioned around 17 feature articles a month targeted at a specific market, obtained second-rights for articles that had appeared in the British or foreign press, and provided a spread of miscellaneous articles and papers as the need arose.[43] This portfolio expanded significantly between 1956 and 1963, encompassing greater scope and numerous regional or topical variations as discussed throughout this thesis. IRD also produced briefing material when necessary for ministers. All of these various products were 'open' material, as IRD made clear:

> It should be emphasised that every statement in any of the books or papers quoted above is an open statement and can be used by anybody anywhere. What is secret or confidential about them is that there is a department of Her Majesty's Government engaged in collecting anti-Communist material, in producing and disseminating it. The conditions under which any of them are given to people outside of Government circles are that they shall, as far as possible, not disclose the fact that the material was obtained from Her Majesty's Government.[44]

IRD was clear that its material was aimed at a 'world-wide market…and we hope to attain the highest common factor of usefulness. Certain types of material are palpably designed to interest one part of the world more than another, but much of it…[is] relevant and important in all parts of the world.' (For example, material such as the *Interpreter* was intended to be relevant to all posts.) 'If there is a lack of interest in them locally', the department asserted, 'that is an indication of weakness in the face of the Communist threat which it is expected that Her Majesty's Missions will do their best ultimately to eradicate.'[45] The importance of this statement, and the view it encapsulated, cannot be overstressed, for it sets the stage for the single most significant and oft-repeated criticism of IRD's work in the Middle East and Africa, one that the

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[43] 'The Use of I.R.D. Material. A note for the Guidance of Information Officers and Chanceries', January 1953, revised August 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR101/2/G; 'Material Produced by the Information Research Department', enclosure with H H Tucker (IRD) to D Roberts (Dakar), June 13, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1303/PR1069/5.

[44] The Use of I.R.D. Material. A note for the Guidance of Information Officers and Chanceries', January 1953, revised August 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR101/2/G.

[45] The Use of I.R.D. Material. A note for the Guidance of Information Officers and Chanceries', January 1953, revised August 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR101/2/G.

department struggled for years to overcome. The majority of Arabs and Africans, educated or not, were not interested in the Cold War except as to how it affected them, as IOs continually reported.

Indeed, the Nicholls Committee of 1952, set up to review the overseas information services, had singled out the Middle East and Asia as the areas where the greatest amount of material had failed to connect with local audiences.[46] This inability to make material topically relevant did not just mean that personal contacts might not be interested. Editors and broadcasters, were unlikely to carry material – there was little if any revenue to be made from newspapers that did not sell, or radio programmes that did not attract listeners or advertisers. IRD would expand rapidly in size as it sought to develop expertise for specific markets.[47] Developing relevant, attractive material – that would be useful, and used by its recipients – was the foremost challenge that IRD faced in the Middle East and Africa. IRD would also be forced to develop its expertise beyond Communism to address the threat of Arab nationalism to British interests abroad, and the early years of this dual role are examined in the following chapter.

IRD had initially been directed to target the broad-base of the general population. However, the department quickly returned to the existing practice of targeting intellectuals and opinion-shapers, as did the FO in general. Students and graduates, professionals, and the English-speaking sections of society would be propagandised: the former, seen as the most susceptible to the lure of Communism, should be engaged in Arabic; the latter, with the most to lose in any shift to Communism, would be both largely in agreement with, and thus open to, IRD propaganda. Radio, in a region of widespread illiteracy, would be able to reach the broadest cross-section of society. The literate, educated population would be reached through the press, with articles placed there by information officers. Articles could also be placed in the British

[46] Defty, *Britain*, pp. 234-237.
[47] Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11.

press, with these either translated and passed on by information officers, or picked up via syndication.[48]

Despite the obvious importance placed on radio propaganda, Vaughan has shown that written material, specifically articles prepared for use in local newspapers or other printed media, proved the 'mainstay' of IRD work in the region.[49] (This balance would change in the aftermath of Suez.) Articles placed in the Middle Eastern press could be picked up by other Middle Eastern publications, which could also access articles published in Britain through a print syndication subscription. These articles could therefore be republished or drawn from many times, widening their distribution and obscuring their original source. IRD could also then purchase 'second rights' to these subsequent reprints – of their own material, no less – providing it with valuable local attribution to a publication they had never approached. IRD's John Cloake described this as 'place, pick-up and play back', and stressed that this technique 'was a very important part of IRD dissemination procedure' in the Middle East and elsewhere.[50] Consequentially, the majority of IRD contacts were with the press and officials. The department had discussed whether it would be possible to diversify contacts, and engage with more 'base' entertainment – pulp fiction, popular film, clubs and their associated acts – but to no avail: J V Riley concluded that 'I.R.D. could not begin to compete at that level of pornography.'[51] In all cases, the BMEO was unequivocal: material printed in Arabic was 'worth ten times any material in English or French.'[52]

It is worth noting at this point that the BBC was not just a receiver of IRD material. The corporation also supplied the department with a significant volume of information: in fact, according to Hugh Carless, '[m]uch of the research material… [for IRD] came from the

[48] Defty, *Britain*, pp. 65, 90-92, 248.
[49] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 61.
[50] John Cloake, letter to Andrew Defty, October 3, 2002 (unpublished), author's copies of personal correspondence.
[51] Minute, J V Riley, June 20,1950, TNA FO 1110/316/PRI, cited in Jenks, *Propaganda*, p. 88.
[52] Information Division, BMEO to IPD, March 29, 1955, TNA FO 1110/833/PR10104/50/G

Summary of World Broadcasts produced daily by the BBC at Caversham.'[53] Data on Communist and nationalist radio propaganda broadcast into and from the Middle East was provided by the BBC, who held a reciprocal arrangement with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) of the CIA, pooling information and dividing resources to ensure the maximum coverage. The responsibility for the output of the Soviet Union and her satellites, and for the Middle East, rested with the BBC. The BBC Monitoring Service provided two products: the News Bureau's 'ticker' of information, which in 1958 provided around 20,000 words of information daily to both the BBC and the Foreign Office, and the Reports Department's Summary of World Broadcasts noted above. Both products drew their information from the combined take of the BBC and the FBIS.[54]

Based at Caversham Park in Reading, the BBC Monitoring Service ostensibly monitored broadcast news over much of the world in order to inform the BBC's news and programming, as well as that of certain subscribers. In fact – a rather open secret – Caversham provided information on great swathes of broadcasting, both overt and covert, and fed this to various government organs as a provider of open intelligence. As regards the Cold War in Africa and the Middle East over the period studied here, BBC monitoring covered the full range of broadcasts across the Middle East and Africa. It provided valuable intelligence on everything from clandestine 'black' radio stations during the Suez crisis, to the daily output of Egyptian, Soviet and Chinese and local broadcasts.[55]

In October of 1956, just prior to the outbreak of hostilities in the Suez Crisis, the volume and growth of propaganda disseminated by the Arab nations, particularly Egypt, was such that the gap between what was produced and what the BBC could monitor was wide enough to cause

[53] Carless transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 55.
[54] Roland A. Way, "The BBC Monitoring Service and its U.S. Partner", *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 2, No. (1958), pp. 76-77: http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000606559.pdf, retrieved 17/08/2013.
[55] Whilst the Summaries of World Broadcasts produced by Caversham, and some correspondence with government departments and IRD, are available at the BBC's Written Archives Centre, the files detailing the running and organisation of the monitoring service itself remain closed to researchers.

concern. Radio monitoring was IRD's 'main source of material for immediate use in counter propaganda on the Middle East, as well as for background information.' Printed propaganda took time to distribute and taxed IRD's limited translation resources. Radio propaganda was, in IRD's own assessment, 'the most effective propaganda weapon in the Middle East'; consequentially it would be hard to overstate how important BBC monitoring was to the department.[56]

Pressure from IRD therefore began in late 1956 for an expansion in The BBC's monitoring of Arabic broadcasts. The daily Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) produced by the BBC's monitoring service was a significant undertaking. Part IV focussed on the Middle East, and would be expanded to report verbatim as much Cairo traffic as possible. IRD was interested in as much of the 'full raw material' as was available. Any particularly virulent propaganda not included in the SWB would be sent to IRD by bag. There was an uphill climb to improve things however: only five Arabic monitors (plus one in training) were available to monitor broadcasts – based both in Cyprus and back in Britain – in late 1956, compared with some 18 or 19 dedicated to Moscow Radio.[57] These monitoring reports allowed the British to keep track of (particularly) Cairo Radio broadcasting, and adjust their propaganda output accordingly. It was post-Suez, and with the need to monitor broadcasting in north and east Africa – particularly in British colonial territories – that the relationship between IRD and the monitoring service became even more crucial to IRD.

Regional propaganda: *Al Alaam*, *Sharq al-Adna* and the Arab News Agency.

One area of publishing that IRD was involved with that was particularly successful was the magazine *Al Alaam* (The Globe). *Al Alaam* was putatively an independent magazine published

[56] Minute, 'Middle East Monitoring', H A H Cortazzi (IRD), October 6, 1956, TNA FO 1110/945/PR10104/141.
[57] Minute, 'Middle East Monitoring', J L S Stirling, October 2, 1956; Minute, K R Oakeshott (IRD), September 25, 1956; TNA FO 1110/945/PR10104/141.

in Iraq, but was in fact heavily subsidised by both the British oil companies and the Foreign Office's Central Office of Information (COI). By December 1954 the COI was ensuring that each issue carried 2 or 3 anti-Communist pieces sourced from the IRD publication *The Digest*. There was a degree of resistance, however, as the editors preferred to emphasise the promotion of Britain and avoid too controversial a topic. The magazine's circulation was significant, and rising. Between 1952 and 1956 it raised its average sales from under 28,000 to over 50,000 per issue. [58] It not only supported British counter-Communist efforts; the head of IPD, Robert Marett, also considered it to be of particular importance to British interests that the newsstands of the Middle East carried a pro-British Arabic publication to mitigate the extreme anti-British message of the Egyptian magazines with which it competed.[59] *Al Alaam* certainly attracted criticism – to IRD's evident satisfaction - with at least one local Communist incensed enough to write in condemning 'a purely parasitic and imperialist magazine.'[60] The magazine proved resilient, too, and even after Suez *Al Alaam* (at least as far as the COI was reporting) had the highest circulation of any Arabic-language magazine outside Egypt.[61]

Both British and American agencies saw the value in using news agencies as cover for stories authored by their own national propagandists. In the British case, this had been going on since the First World War, the government having arranged with Reuters for that agency to carry certain news items for a fee. In the Middle East in the 1950s this arrangement had developed, with the Arab News Agency (ANA), based in Cairo, obtaining rights to distribute Reuters material to certain countries in the region from 1954. In a way matters had come full-circle: ANA, operating under a veneer of independence, was in fact owned and run by the British, with

[58] Vaughan, *Failure*, pp. 29-30; Vaughan, "Cloak", pp. 56-84; Vaughan, "Certain idea", p. 158.
[59] R H K Marett (IPD) to D C L Johnstone (Treasury), May 4, 1954, TNA FO 953/1478/P1049/13.
[60] 'Letter to the Editorial Committee of Imperialist Magazine of Al Alam [*sic*]', undated but end of 1953, TNA FO 953/1478/P1049/2. This letter was being passed to IRD as evidence of having 'got the local Communists on the raw'. Leslie Glass (BMEO) to A R H Kellas (IPD), December 29, 1953, TNA FO 953/1478/P1049/2.
[61] Vaughan, "Certain idea", p.159.

heavy MI6 involvement. Lashmar and Oliver suggest that a great deal of IRD material was fed into ANA, which serviced nearly all Middle Eastern newspapers.[62]

Originally installed in Palestine, *Sharq al-Adna* was a programme of the Near East Broadcasting Station (NEABS), that had moved to Cyprus as part of the British withdrawal in 1948 following the creation of Israel. By 1955, a new 100,000 watt facility meant that only Cairo's radio facilities could compare with its broadcasting power. *Sharq* was a government-funded station, and British government involvement was something of an open secret as far as many of its listeners were concerned. The BBC, with an experience of Arabic broadcasting that pre-dated the Second World War, was wary of becoming too involved with the station for fears that it may tarnish their reputation for impartiality. Professional links were maintained, however, and at the outbreak of hostilities during the Suez Crisis the station was rebranded and requisitioned by the British government as the *Voice of Britain*, with the intention of placing it under BBC control.[63] Similar to ANA, Stephen Dorrill notes that *Sharq* was by managed by MI6, and that both were handovers from the wartime Special Operations Executive who had created them.[64]

Sharq's news was more focussed on the Arab world than the BBC's was. Peter Partner notes that *Sharq*

> was in effect, the light programme to the BBC's Arabic Home Service, but by 1955 with the advantage of medium-wave transmission which got it blared out in all the taxis of Cairo and Beirut. All the audience research surveys of the period show it enjoying a very high rating indeed in the listening habits of the Middle East Area… The news policy of Sharq al-Adna was explicitly pro-Arab and anti-Zionist in a way that the BBC was not… Its production has sometimes been referred to as propagandist… Possibly the distinction is that at times of political crisis the BBC consciously strove for objectivity in news reporting, whereas Sharq al-Adna was not constitutionally inhibited, as the BBC was, from having to

[62] John Tulloch, "Policing the public sphere: the British machinery of news management", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1993), pp. 370, 380; Vaughan, *Failure*, pp.25-26; Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, pp. 77-79.
[63] D. A. Boyd, "Sharq Al-Adna/The Voice of Britain: The UK's 'Secret' Arabic Radio Station and Suez War Propaganda Disaster", *International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 65, No. 6 (2003), pp. 446, 448-450.
[64] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 536.

> follow a Foreign Office line…Few people who listened to the station were in much doubt that there was a British hand in its control… But it should not be thought that the station was operated in a cloak and dagger atmosphere: it was not.[65]

ANA supplied much of Sharq's news material, in a further continuation of the British propaganda trail.[66] The significance of *Sharq* to IRD is twofold. Firstly for the ANA connection, and the other trails through which IRD material would have found its way onto the station, but secondly, and most importantly, for IRD's central role in the running of the *Voice of Britain* programme from the facility following the requisitioning of the station during the Suez Crisis. Omitted from most analyses, Gary Rawnsley makes the IRD connection, noting that it has never been admitted, and that the documentary evidence is tangential.[67] However, testimony and documents do now make the connection clear. IRD was in control of the station's output throughout the crisis and beyond, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Conclusion: IRD in 1954

Going into the period under study, IRD was well established in the Middle East, and had a portfolio of products, which, whilst well developed, was not altogether suitable for the Middle East. As noted above, the department believed that their standard material would be of interest across the region, if only information officers could convince recipients of the seriousness of the Cold War. This seems a rather weak argument, transferring the problem from IRD to the IOs, and it did not endure. IRD, following constant requests from posts, began to diversify their material and develop it for a Middle Eastern and African audience from this point – the lesson was largely learned by the time IRD began its campaign in Africa.

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[65] Partner, *Arab*, pp. 91-92.
[66] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 540.
[67] Gary Rawnsley, "Overt and Covert: The Voice of Britain and Black Radio Broadcasting in the Suez Crisis, 1956", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1996), p. 498.

The department was highly reliant on the support of information officers both to distribute their material and to provide feedback on its suitability and distribution. It was similarly reliant on RIO Beirut. The RIO would become increasingly important to IRD as it diversified and expanded its work in the Middle East, paralleling the work of the department on a local level, and providing the greater share of Arabic-language material. The RIO would also later provide material for certain parts of Africa.

In contrast, the Baghdad Pact CSO was in 1955-6 still very much a work in progress. There would be a number of setbacks to its development, not least the revolution of 1958 that would result in Iraq's withdrawal from the pact the following year. Its tentative, early work was rather eclipsed by the Suez Crisis, and left British efforts to build up Iraq as an alternative to Egypt's centrality to Arab affairs exposed as cynical, self-serving and largely in tatters. Vaughan notes that the CSC 'suffered from an inability to transform ideas into practical policies and a lack of dynamism'.[68] Even after the rebranding of the pact as the Central Treaty Organisation following Iraq's secession in 1959 these issues continued, but there were promising later developments in the relationships built up between IRD and the information services of Turkey and Iran, even if the pact itself continued to underperform.

During this period IRD largely aimed its propaganda at individuals – the educated opinion-shapers who could then effect change themselves – and largely through printed material and personal contacts. The overarching strategy was to provide truthful information based on research, but to obscure its source. IRD was a relatively small organisation at this stage, but grew rapidly through the 1960s, largely as a result of diversifying its products to accommodate 'specific markets'.[69] The 1952 Drogheda report into the information services had concluded that the time had come for an expansion of overseas information staff in several key posts, including the Middle East, and the creation of information posts in Africa. There should also be an

[68] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 177.
[69] Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11.

expansion of domestic technical services to support said, including the London Press Service (LPS) of the Central Office of Information.[70] All of these developments will be important in the chapters that follow. As to the importance of the information services, the Drogheda Report concluded that

> [A] modern government has to concern itself with public opinion abroad and be properly equipped to deal with it…It is the unanimous view of all the Heads of Mission, Colonial Governors and Military Commanders…the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Colonial Office and the Board of Trade…the Federation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress. And the same view is held by the Chiefs of Staff who regard the Overseas Information Services as a weapon no less essential than those employed by the fighting forces.[71]

[70] Defty, *Britain*, pp. 233-238.
[71] 'Report of the Independent Committee of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services' (Drogheda Committee Report), p.3, July 27, 1953, TNA FO 953/1459/P1011/2.

Chapter Two

The Early Communist Threat in the Middle East, and the Rise of Arab Nationalism

> What the Russians are really saying…is this: "Your contacts with Western thought and influence have brought you nothing but humiliation. They are exploiters, colonialists, imperialists, and have no real basis of understanding with you".[1]
>
> Macmillan to Dulles, November 25, 1955

The competition for cultural and ideological currency in the Middle East diversified considerably between 1954 and 1956. There were several reasons for this. In Egypt, Nasser supplanted Neguib's titular presidency in November 1954, and his adoption of the mantle of leader of the pan-Arab movement began from that point. Britain began her withdrawal from the Suez Canal Zone, and to search for alternative arrangements for the regional defence of her national and Cold War interests. The result of this, the Baghdad Pact of 1955, was a defensive coalition of Middle Eastern nations that formalised the division of the region's political and rhetorical landscape between Egypt and Iraq. America's (ultimately limited) participation, in a defensive organisation that was nonetheless clustered around the USSR's southern flank, raised the profile of the region in Cold War terms sufficient to force deeper Soviet involvement. The Soviets were in any case by this point in a position doctrinally – through their post-Stalin reappraisal of foreign policy – to see advantages in exacerbating tensions in the Middle East, and agitating against the West.

As discussed in the previous chapter, IRD began this period treating the Middle East – at least conceptually – in a similar fashion to their work in Europe. The emphasis on a 'world-wide market', commissioning only a few articles tailored for a local audience, was advocated in the

[1] Letter, Macmillan to Dulles, November 25, 1955, FRUS XII (1955–57), Document 83, pp. 205-206.

Middle East as much as it was elsewhere. In a document on 'Combating Communism', revised in 1954 and issued to the Iranian government, IRD advised that regional propaganda material that embodied 'the general principles of anti-Communist propaganda' should consist of '[f]acts about life in the Soviet Union… about life in Soviet dominated states… [and] about Soviet methods and intentions towards the outside world.'[2] The reaction from posts in the region made it quite clear that what was needed, rather than the above, were facts about how Communism and the Soviet Union directly affected the Middle East. As the Embassy in Benghazi emphasised to RIO Beirut in 1956, it was important to maintain a Middle Eastern angle to any propaganda that was supplied.[3] Little of IRD's product was so tailored, and so by extension little of it was suitable for the Middle East.

It was, however, a deeper problem than simply making material geographically relevant. IRD needed to find a style that resonated with audiences in the region: topically, culturally and stylistically. Their normal product was often seen to be too dry, or out of context. 'I am in agreement with Cairo that much of what we receive here is very dull', the British Embassy in Tripoli reported in 1954; 'generally speaking no one here is interested in whether people behind the Iron Curtain enjoy good or bad living conditions.'[4]

To rectify these issues would require a shift in IRD's *modus operandi.* The department was quickly disabused of the notion that material tailored for a 'world-wide market' would carry any weight in the Middle East, yet change took time to implement – longer than the time available to the department before the Suez Crisis took hold. The issue in the Middle East was connecting material to local issues and getting it distributed locally either in the news or via contacts, and for this RIO Beirut would be key. IRD believed the issue was 'not so much for large news pegs

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[2] C A E Shuckburgh (IRD) to Sir Roger Stevens (British Ambassador, Tehran), August 24, 1954 and enclosure 'Combating Communism', TNA FO 1110/676/PR1034/4/G. 'Combatting Communism' was originally produced in 1952.
[3] W H G Fletcher (British Embassy, Benghazi) to P G D Adams (RIO Beirut), June 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/891/PR 1013/14.
[4] R W Fay (British Embassy, Tripoli) to L C Glass (BMEO), November 5, 1954, TNA FO 1110/660/PR1013/5.

manufactured in London as for a continuing supply of small ones manufactured in the Middle East.'[5] How IRD saw the Communist threat to British interests in the Middle East naturally informed the department's policy- and decision-making. IRD's assessment of the threat it faced is outlined in the first section of this chapter, alongside a number of examples of the scale and direction of the department's work therein. The second and third sections go into further detail on IRD work in the two most significant nations (in terms of power, influence and as the opposite foci of British strategy) in the Middle East: Egypt and Iraq. The Sudan was at this time administered jointly by Egypt and Britain. Since it was as a British-administered African territory and one that achieved independence before Suez, the Sudan is discussed in the second section to illustrate several issues that would be repeated across Africa after 1956. These sections are all concerned with IRD and Communism, and much of this is by way of background.

The penultimate section of this chapter is concerned with the expansion of IRD's remit to include countering Arab nationalism, and the threat that Egypt posed as the centre and driving force of its expression. The emergent issue for IRD in the Middle East from 1954 was the rapid development of Egypt's propaganda apparatus. Egyptian – Nasserite – propaganda ideologically shaped opposition to Britain and the West, and politically underpinned and legitimised Nasser's leadership of Egypt. The most substantial development on a technical level was the creation, then rapid expansion, of Cairo Radio's *Voice of the Arabs* programme, an examination of which forms the final section of this chapter. Britain struggled to adequately respond to the *Voice of the Arabs*, even before the Suez Crisis, and the programme's reach and influence expanded significantly following the crisis to constitute a major – in many areas *the* major – threat to British interests over much of the period under study. Whilst there were other factors at play, for example the provision of education and cultural exchange between Egypt and African nations, it was the *Voice of the Arabs* that constituted the prime link between the Middle East and wider Africa.

[5] J O Rennie (IRD) to L C Glass (BMEO), February 10, 1955, TNA FO 1110/776/PR1016/2/G.

The Communist propaganda drive in the Middle East

The timing of, and increase in, Soviet involvement in the Middle East was brought about by a combination of factors. Galia Golan has summarised the reasons for a changed Soviet policy 'towards Egypt, and towards the Arab cause', as:

1) The post-Stalin reassessment in Soviet foreign policy
2) openings within the region itself; and
3) the need to combat what was perceived as American inroads into the region [the Baghdad Pact][6]

This new Soviet policy was a direct response to fears about escalation in a nuclear age. 'Peaceful coexistence', a tension release-valve that eschewed the Stalinist policy of direct confrontation between the superpowers, was matched by the abandonment of the bipolar restrictions of 'two-camp' politics (essentially, "you are with us, or you are against us"). No longer were partnerships with other nations determined by ideology. Nikita Khrushchev championed anti-imperialism, believing that the situation in Europe had stabilised, and that the waning colonial empires of the West presented a new opportunity for the Soviets to gain an advantage within the constraints of their new foreign policy. The struggle for Arab leadership that took place in the mid-1950s between Egypt and Iraq both facilitated a more active Soviet policy in the region, and allowed the USSR to exploit such competition. It was enough for the Soviets to support nonalignment in the Middle East, Golan notes, 'in the interest of removing the West in what was basically a political competition', and it was not until the late 1960s that the Soviets sought to consolidate true alliances.[7] The Soviets held a trump card in their negotiations with Cairo. Mohamed Heikal, editor of the *Al-Ahram* newspaper and confidante of Nasser, explains that 'the Egyptians saw the

[6] Golan, *Soviet*, p. 45.
[7] J. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: the great powers and their allies* (Harlow, 2008), pp. 221; Golan, *Soviet*, p. 18, 20, 45.

Soviet Union as coming to them with clean hands, free of the taint of any imperial past.'[8] Soviet political policy in the Middle East recognised that the forces of nationalism and Islam made the rise to power of any Communist regime therein unlikely, and so the USSR limited its objectives towards securing bases and facilities in the region. Soviet strategists also realised that improved relations with an influential nation such as Egypt may further influence other nations in the Third World, such as those in Africa.[9]

Soviet broadcasting to the Middle East was fledgling at this stage: 14 hours per week in 1955 rising to 17.5 hours by the middle of 1956. In this respect the British effort far outstripped their Soviet competitors. By 1956, Communist broadcasting to the region had expanded, with a new Bulgarian service wedded to increased Soviet output, and the start of English-language broadcasts from China to Egypt, though the sum of these was still below Western efforts. Contrastingly, IRD believed that Soviet printed propaganda circulated much more widely than that of the British, though admitted that it was difficult to judge the scale of this with any accuracy.[10] This latter deficiency did not unduly trouble the department. IRD did not necessarily seek to compete directly, and by 1955 the department was concentrating on 'quality rather than quantity' in its Arabic pamphlets.[11]

Communist techniques and relationships aimed towards influencing the press in the Middle East echoed British methods in large part, and IRD research detected a 'standard pattern' in how the Soviets went about it. The suppression of Communism in certain states limited the number of newspapers that could openly support it, and the department concluded that to compensate the Soviets were insinuating Communists onto the staff of newspapers, and

[8] Mohamed Heikal, *Sphinx and commissar: The rise and fall of Soviet influence in the Arab world* (London, 1978), p. 65.
[9] Golan, *Soviet*, p. 20.
[10] 'Communist Estimated Output to the Near and Middle East', November 25, 1957, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBCWAC) E1/2,453/1; Minute, G F N Reddaway, June 26, 1956; Minute, J O Rennie, June 16, 1956; TNA FO 1110/942/PR10104/85/G.
[11] Regional Information Office to posts, April 15,1956, TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/44.

manipulating editorial and journalistic opinion. Attempts were also made to create and support various associations of journalists.[12]

The amount spent on propaganda by the Soviets in the Middle East was increasingly significant. In 1954 it was estimated that they had spent the equivalent of £12 million, and gifted any revenue generated back to publishers.[13] This should not be a surprise. Throughout this period, the Soviets subordinated economic interests to political and strategic ones: it was the start of a competition over the *provision* of economic benefits, rather than their receipt, through which political and strategic gains could be obtained. It was not until the 1970s that economic considerations achieved parity.[14]

In IRD's assessment, the Communist bloc held two distinct advantages over the British when it came to distributing propaganda in the Middle East. On the one hand they could finance overt propaganda on a level matched only by the Americans, and they could afford to be wasteful; on the other, they could rely on the assistance of local Communists, an 'organised body of friends' to which the British had no equivalent. Yet, with few exceptions, Soviet overt propaganda was not offensive and was distributed under imprint.[15]

One of the main, early thrusts of Communist propaganda in the region sought to exploit the concept of neutralism. This concept found a sympathetic audience within Egypt. The embassy in Cairo reported that '[t]he neutralist attitude of Mr. Nehru and the Indian Congress Party has a marked attraction for most Egyptians.'[16] This was a difficult theme to counter without appearing to interfere in Arab nations' foreign policy. British propaganda, and IRD, did so by turning the issue into one of hypocrisy, developing the idea of the Soviet Union as an imperialist, colonial power. Nations who sought neutrality laid themselves vulnerable to Soviet

[12] 'Communism and the Middle East Press', July 27, 1955, TNA FO 1110/834/PR1014/93.
[13] Chancery (Beirut) to IRD, July 21, 1954, TNA FO 1110/696/PR1088/3; roughly £280m adjusted for inflation.
[14] Golan, *Soviet*, p. 18.
[15] Minute, J O Rennie, June 16, 1956; G F N Reddaway, June 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/942/PR10104/85/G.
[16] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy (Cairo), July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.

imperialism. The fate of the Baltic States, and of Belgium in the Second World War, were highlighted by way of example.[17] In Europe, partitioned less than a decade before, the theme of Soviet imperialism would have resonated strongly, and this was a core IRD subject. The Middle East, with the exception of Iran, had no experience of Soviet occupation – yet there was ample experience of Western imperialism, and any British propaganda campaign that warned of the Soviet imperial threat suffered by comparison. Though this theme of Soviet imperialism was popular with a small minority of Middle Eastern posts, the British Embassy in Lebanon assured IRD that countries which had never experienced Soviet occupation or dominance simply could not countenance that it would be worse than the experience of British imperialism.[18]

From September 1955, IRD analysis of Soviet propaganda suggested that it had abandoned its emphasis on neutralism, and had begun to push for closer links between the countries of the Middle East and the Soviet Bloc. Particular focus was on Iran and its entry into the Baghdad Pact, and on the behaviour of Western oil companies in the region. Whilst the 1955 Czech arms deal with Egypt was portrayed by the Soviets as fostering peace and stability, Iran's accession to the Baghdad Pact prompted the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, to warn the Iranian *Chargé d'Affairs* that such a move worked against the 'good neighbourly relations' between their two countries. *Pravda* wrote about the violation of neutrality, that the Pact was directed against the Soviet Union, and that it was supported on the back of Western arms.[19]

The Baghdad Pact was increasingly central to Britain's Middle East policy. The British connection generated negative propaganda from both Egypt and the Soviet Union, divided public opinion, and increasingly marginalised the Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri as-Said, not least by association with a British regime that had colluded with Israel over Suez. Even amongst her allies, Britain's membership was divisive. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles believed that

[17] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 70.
[18] I D Scott (British Embassy, Beirut) to IRD, July 28, 1954, TNA FO 1110/696/PR1088/4/G.
[19] 'Communist Propaganda and Developments in the Middle East, Nos. 15/16: August 15 – October 15, 1955', TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/8/G.

Britain's colonial past tainted the pact to the degree that it was impossible for America to fully associate herself with the organisation.[20] Ultimately, it would all be for nought, with Nuri deposed, and murdered, and the new Iraqi regime severing its relationship with the Pact soon afterwards.

By the beginning of 1956, anti-colonialism was recognised by the FO as 'the dominant theme in Communist propaganda towards "under-developed" areas'. (One would assume nations chafing under colonial rule and those with a comparative lack of development from a Western perspective would likely be one and the same.) Against this, British posts were to 'take every opportunity' to publicise the positive achievements of British Colonial policy, and the 'facts' about Communist treatment of satellites and colonies. In the case of the latter, IRD publications such as "Communism and National Rights", "Facts about Communism" (a staple), and "The Economics of Soviet Penetration" were to be drawn upon.[21]

IRD had to tread carefully lest their propaganda raised the profile of Communism in places in which it was largely insignificant, something the British deemed the Americans to be guilty of.[22] Ronald Fay in Tripoli put the point bluntly, but less than eloquently: overtly anti-Communist material could only serve to 'tell people something about a thing about which they knew practically nothing.' Targeting an intellectual audience, as IRD largely did, the charge was even levelled by the Governor in Tripoli that at least one of their pamphlets was essentially *pro*-Communist, since it fully explained all the tenets of Communism, and only criticised them afterwards (the implication being that most Libyans would not bother to read to the end).[23]

The perception and reality of Communism was not equal across the region. Indeed in some countries, most notably Yemen, there was little or nothing for IRD to do. A patriarchal,

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[20] Simon C. Smith, *Ending empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and post-war decolonisation, 1945-1973* (London, 2012), pp. 121, 101.
[21] Foreign Office No. 19 Intel, 'Anti-Colonialism', February 10, 1956, TNA FO 1110/907/PR1034/2.
[22] W H G Fletcher (British Embassy, Benghazi) to P G D Adams (RIO Beirut), June 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/891/PR 1013/14.
[23] R W Fay (British Embassy, Tripoli) to L C W Figg (IRD), July 10, 1956, TNA FO 1110/891/PR1013/20.

Islamic, traditional state, it had little interest in foreign affairs and the Soviet Union appeared to show little interest in return. Local newspapers were similarly ambivalent, the population by and large poorly educated, and these factors combined with a poor relationship with Britain to effectively remove it from IRD's concern.[24]

Yemen was, of course, at the extreme of one end of the scale, but IRD had to bear in mind – in fact was made to by local British officials – that there was often little in the way of Communist activity in many Middle Eastern states. At this stage the department often had no role, warned away lest its propaganda served to educate about Communism rather than against it.[25] In Libya the fear was that too much anti-Communist propaganda could only serve to raise its profile, in a country seen as 'not yet fertile ground' for the growth of Communism.[26] Despite interest in Communism at the intellectual level in Bahrain and Kuwait, no party organisation was sufficiently developed to attract sympathisers into an organised body. In Kuwait, the lack of job opportunities, and the inefficiency of the ruling family, appeared to provide openings for Communist propaganda. The Bahrain embassy believed that IRD material had some promise, but any overtly anti-Soviet propaganda was tainted by being so evidently Western, and particularly British, in origin that there was a degree of 'sales resistance' no matter what the content.[27]

The situation in Saudi Arabia was clear-cut, according to the British Embassy: Communism had made no inroads into what was dismissed as 'a country without party politics, where the illiterate masses accept without questioning the inefficient but adequate rule of the Royal Household round which a handful of sycophants jostle for favour and power'.[28] Getting

[24] R McGregor (Chargé d'Affairs, H M Legation, Taiz) to P F Grey (IRD) July 7, 1955, TNA FO 1110/826/PR1098/1. Things change: South Yemen would, in 1970, prove to be the one Middle Eastern nation that ultimately embraced Communism.
[25] W H G Fletcher (British Embassy, Benghazi) to P G D Adams (RIO Beirut), June 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/891/PR 1013/14.
[26] R W Fay (British Embassy, Tripoli) to L C Glass (BMEO), November 5, 1954, TNA FO 1110/660/PR1013/5.
[27] British Residency, Bahrain to IRD, November 29, 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR1034/5/G.
[28] H Phillips (British Embassy, Jedda) to IRD, August 14, 1954, TNA FO 1110/671/PR1025/1.

material distributed and into print was anything but easy, with only one newspaper and one radio station, and access to both vetted by the Foreign Ministry. To compound the issue there was little public interest in IRD pamphlets, even those specially tailored for the Middle East. There was, the embassy admitted in 1955, 'nothing to be gained by our launching a deliberate I.R.D. campaign'.[29] In Ethiopia, the information infrastructure, and so attendant opportunities for IRD work, was even less developed. Ethiopia was reported to be 'practically in the Stone Age as regards information media'. Tightly argued IRD material had little relevance, perhaps was barely understood, and though it was assiduously distributed by the embassy in Addis Ababa, the view there was that it was 'dishonest...to pretend to believe that it has any real effect.'[30]

In Iran, IRD would find its most outspoken and senior critic in the Middle East, in the form of the British Ambassador, Sir Roger Stevens. In 1954, IRD were tasked with advising the Iranian authorities on their future anti-Communist strategy. As part of this, IRD provided advice to the Iranian Foreign Minister in July 1954, accompanied by a supply of pamphlets. These were cut back to just one – 'International Organisations' – on the back of Stevens' vituperative reaction to both this, and IRD work in general:[31]

> I must confess that I can never see the arrival of I.R.D. material and the voluminous correspondence which so often accompanies it...without a sinking of the heart...this reaction is shared by all members of my staff...[the Iranians] are willing to indulge in anti-Communist propaganda, but they wish to keep it in their own hands...I am convinced we are wise to follow them in their policy...I have never yet met a member of the senior branch of the service here or elsewhere who found that the bulk of I.R.D. material was anything but indigestible jargon...most of the I.R.D. material which has come my way seems wildly unsuitable for this, or any other under-developed country, or indeed any community that I can visualize...in short, we are getting too much anti-communist material, most of it quite useless.[32]

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[29] H Phillips (British Embassy, Jedda) to P F Grey (FO), July 10, 1955, TNA FO 1110/784/PR1025/3/G.
[30] J E Killick, British Embassy, Addis Ababa to Harold MacMillan (Foreign Secretary), September 9, 1955, TNA FO 1110/760/PR101/4.
[31] Sir Roger Stevens' letter of July 6 to Mr P F Grey', Editorial Advisor (IRD) to J O Rennie (IRD), July 11, 1955; P F Grey (FO) to Roger Stevens (Ambassador, Iran), July 18, 1955, TNA FO 1110/791/PR1034/3/G.
[32] This quote contains some of the choicer phrases from what can only be described as a mild rant, of over 3 typed pages, in which Roger Stevens has absolutely nothing positive to say about IRD in Iran, the Middle East, or in general. Roger Stevens (Ambassador, Iran) to P F Grey (FO), July 6, 1955, TNA FO 1110/791/PR1034/3/G.

Stevens' views on IRD material do of course represent the extreme, but the department had difficulties elsewhere. One particular challenge they faced was the varied status of Communism and Communist parties across the region.

In the Lebanon, the generalisation of poor literacy rates in the Middle East did not hold true, with 80% of the population able to read and newspapers 'avidly read'. Although the Communist party was illegal, the Beirut embassy reported that it was 'well organised and active', attracting intellectuals, fellow travellers, and successfully penetrating a number of nationalist organisations. Getting IRD material published was reliant on the 'connivance' of members of the government, and few were prepared to openly oppose Communism. IRD material was considered too impersonal, and too negative (rather than comparative).[33] By 1954 links had been established with the chief of the Security Police,[34] though one could argue that this association was hardly with the sort of opinion shapers that IRD would want to cultivate.[35]

In Jordan, too, the local Communist party was illegal yet active. One large- and two small-scale newspapers published IRD material, but only 'on payment'. RIO Beirut was the main conduit of IRD material into Jordan. In December 1953 a record number of 61 anti-Communist items were placed in the Jordanian press, and by August 1955 this had significantly increased, passing 100 in September of that year.[36] These items were not all sourced from IRD, but in six months prior to May 1955 136 articles supplied by RIO Beirut and based on IRD material were published; of the 18 articles placed by RIO Beirut in the Jordanian press between March 10 and

[33] I D Scott (British Embassy, Beirut) to IRD, July 28, 1954, TNA FO 1110/696/PR1088/4/G.
[34] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 61.
[35] British connections with Middle Eastern security agencies was in fact fairly developed by this stage, with British police/security advisors not only involved in security liaison with intelligence, security and police institutions in a number of Middle Eastern nations, but also provided training on counter-subversion techniques, propaganda and protective security. See throughout Hashimoto, "British Intelligence".
[36] C B Duke (British Embassy, Amman) to IRD, July 7, 1955, TNA FO 1110/815/PR1080/4/G; C E Fouracres (British Embassy, Amman) to L C Glass (BMEO), December 31, 1953, TNA FO 1110/694/PR1080/1; Usage reports (various), August-September 1955, TNA FO 1110/815/PR1080/8.

March 20 1956, 15 were of an anti-Communist nature, and of those 12 were based on IRD source material.[37]

Communism was not illegal everywhere. Even so, Arab Communists, even where their political predilections were legal, suffered by association with the Soviet Union, and were thus seen as *foreign* in outlook and sympathy.[38] In a comparatively more democratic nation such as Syria, Communists were afforded greater freedom.[39] This advantage was counterbalanced by a greater freedom for Western agencies to distribute anti-Communist propaganda. Consequentially, British officials were busy with IRD material. Some 1,700 professionals and personalities were in receipt of anti-Communist material, although the Information Department in Damascus was keen to balance this with factual and positive information. The Central Office of Information's London Press Service (LPS) distributed news and commentary bulletins to 1,000 people per day by April 1954.[40] By March 1955 Damascus had more than doubled the amount of LPS material published.[41] The significance of the LPS to IRD is discussed in Chapter 5. In six months preceding May 1955, 172 anti-Communist articles sourced by RIO Beirut were published, along with 13 IRD and 8 IRD 'second right' articles.[42] Given the proportions noted, it would be difficult to overstate how important RIO Beirut had become, even as early as 1955.

Publishing was not the only means by which IRD sought to get its message heard. The department sought to mobilise faith against Communism in both the Middle East and Africa. In the light of Khrushchev's crackdown on religion in the late 1950s and 1960s, religion certainly appeared to be a worthwhile avenue of attack against the Communists, but information on IRD's involvement is sparse. What is notable is that in the Middle East Islam was not seen by IRD to

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[37] RIO Beirut to IRD, April 9, 1956, TNA FO 1110/926/PR1086/2; Editorial Advisor (IRD), Minute, May 20, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/2/G.
[38] Golan, *Soviet*, p. 215.
[39] Albeit temporarily; when Syria joined with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic in 1958, Egypt's tough stance against domestic Communism was applied across both nations.
[40] Information Department, British Embassy Damascus to J H Lewen (FO), March 13, 1954; Chancery, British Embassy, Damascus to IRD, July 20, 1954; TNA FO 1110/697/PR1089/1;/8.
[41] Information Department, British Embassy, Damascus to IRD, March 5, 1955, TNA FO 1110/821/PR1089/1
[42] Editorial Advisor (IRD), Minute, May 20, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/2/G.

be as effective a tool against atheistic Communism as it would have appeared at first blush. In Egypt, despite the strong, cohesive nature of nationalism, and the Muslim faith, these factors were not believed to be necessarily antithetical to Communism.[43] Yet, as with other factors, the outlook varied. Bahrain held a contrary view; as far as propaganda there was concerned, emphasising the 'anti-religious nature of Communist theory and practice' was seen as important, and a much more effective approach than highlighting other issues in Russia or her satellites.[44]

Given the almost inseparable association between Islam and the Middle East, it is easy to forget that the Muslim faith was not all-pervasive. In the Lebanon, for example, the Greek Orthodox and Maronite[45] churches held great sway. Religion, the Beirut Embassy reported, was 'not necessarily an antidote to Communism, because to many Moslems Soviet Russia is the champion of the peoples in their struggles for independence, while an important section of the Greek Orthodox Church...accepts Communism as not incompatible with its own doctrine.'[46]

There were a number of religious avenues through which IRD sought to promulgate its message. Direct comparisons were drawn between atheistic Communism and Islamic Middle Eastern society in a number of pamphlets, and attempts were made to mobilise religious leaders, Islamic centres of learning, and to get the message across via Friday sermons.[47] IRD pamphlets on atheism and Communism were also distributed to Jordanian religious leaders.[48] The department obviously made efforts in other areas, arranging for Italian translations of the monthly religious edition of its *Digest* so this could be distributed in Libya.[49] Predominantly,

[43] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy (Cairo), July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.
[44] British Residency, Bahrain to IRD, November 29, 1954, TNA FO 1110/676/PR1034/5/G.
[45] The Maronites are Christians, with strong links to the Roman Catholic Church but with their own separate practices. They were (and are) politically active, and influential at the highest level of government.
[46] I D Scott (British Embassy, Beirut) to IRD, July 28, 1954, TNA FO 1110/696/PR1088/4/G.
[47] Vaughan, "Cloak", pp. 62-63.
[48] RIO Beirut to IRD, April 9, 1956, TNA FO 1110/926/PR1086/2; Editorial Advisor (IRD), Minute, May 20, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/2/G.
[49] D R M Ackland (IRD) to R W Fay (British Embassy, Tripoli), June 17, 1955, TNA FO 1110/773/PR1013/2.

British propaganda sought to highlight the incompatibility of Islam and Communism, rather than draw straight comparisons between Islam and Western religion.[50]

It is worth noting here that the Arab-Israeli dispute, described by Vaughan as 'perhaps the single greatest political obstacle to the successful pursuit of British and American psychological objectives in the Middle East' scarcely registered on IRD's radar. This may well be because the policy of neutrality meant a hands-off approach to the issue, the West having little to compete with the fiery rhetoric from either the Arabs or the Israelis. The (stillborn) Anglo-American ALPHA plan of 1954/55 proposed ceding or transferring differing parcels of land between Israel and Jordan – mostly concessions from the former to the latter – transfer of refugees, the division of demilitarised zones, and distribution of Jerusalem and Jordanian waters, all supported by the cessation of Western economic sanctions, the provision of financial assistance, and Western guarantees of the outcome.[51] Even those elements of ALPHA that were designed to broker a start of Egyptian-Israeli talks on the matter were off-limits as far as propaganda was concerned, as the issue was so potentially toxic for Britain.[52]

Egypt and the Sudan

IRD waged a comparatively successful campaign in Egypt before the Suez crisis severed diplomatic ties. Indeed, the *coup* of 1952 had ushered in a period of improved relations with Egyptian intelligence, and there was evidence that this increased the amount of regular IRD material distributed through both government and civilian circles.[53] Propaganda between Egypt and Britain was toned-down in 1953, whilst the British and the new Egyptian regime

[50] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 121.
[51] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 607; Shamir Shimon, "The Collapse of Project Alpha", in Louis and Owen, eds, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 81-82.
[52] Vaughan, *Failure*, pp. 128, 147, 153-4, 159. To put IRD work towards Israel in to some sort of context, the IRD series at the National Archives contains 10 files specifically relating to Israel between 1948 and 1967 – only twice as many as for Luxembourg.
[53] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 60.

negotiated.[54] There were other obstacles, however: 'Anti-British feeling, neutralism, parochialism and nationalism' all worked against the effectiveness of British propaganda.[55]

Communism was outlawed, though in any case the Cairo Embassy felt that Communism was not widely understood outside of intellectual circles. There were still areas of concern, however. Alongside religion, IRD saw Egyptian students, always a potent political force, and increasingly powerful trade unions with links to the government, as both at risk from Communist influence.[56]

The Embassy in Cairo was unhappy about their success rate in placing anti-Communist material. The material they received in 1954 was, they argued, 'too dull' for the Egyptian press. There was a need for material to be relevant to an Egyptian audience, and diversity was not necessarily an issue over which IRD should concern itself unduly. Such themes as the Egyptians were prepared to publish spoke 'to the interests of Egyptians as Moslems and Arabs...those themes can be used over and over again and we feel that the material we receive suffers from an undue anxiety for novelty.' Too-literal translations of English-language material, and a slavish adherence to the truth, made placing material difficult.[57] Any material IRD could supply that exposed the persecution of Muslims, or Soviet untruths, was seen as most effective.[58]

The main avenue for IRD propaganda outside of contacts within the Egyptian government was the provision of printed propaganda, predominantly pamphlets. Contacts outside of government or journalist circles were difficult to make, since there was a fear amongst Egyptians that they would 'be accused of sedition' if they associated with Embassy staff. Material was therefore distributed to them by mail, and there was evidence that this was 'proving effective and is in some instances preventing the spread of Communism', according to the

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[54] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 171.
[55] Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy (Cairo), July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.
[56] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy (Cairo), July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.
[57] Clifford Jubb (Information Officer, Cairo) to Leslie Glass (BMEO), October 16, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/25.
[58] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy Cairo, July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.

British Embassy in Cairo – a bold assertion. Prepared by IRD in London, material was subsequently translated by RIO Beirut into Arabic.[59] These distribution methods were undoubtedly successful, with the Embassy passing information to 1,700 contacts by the end of 1953. In 1954 Ralph Murray, the ex-head of IRD, was attached to the British Embassy and had an immediate effect on an already improving situation: by the first quarter of 1955 the Embassy had sent 3,659 pamphlets, of which 2,148 had been passed on by the Egyptian government, who had taken over distribution. RIO Beirut successfully published an average of 9 anti-Communist items per month in the local press, all translated and sourced from IRD material.[60]

Yet through 1955 the Press Office in Cairo found it harder to get its material published, and asked IRD for help and for fresh content. IRD was less concerned than the Embassy over their problems, as increasing links between the Press Office and the Egyptian government were seen to outweigh decreasing press output. IRD viewed the press as 'only one outlet and not necessarily the most important'. Material moved by other channels was seen as 'heartening'. By mid-1955, the Embassy in Cairo was increasingly concerned with the greater freedom afforded to left-wing organisations. Communism remained outlawed, and the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior declared that it kept the left wing under control, but the Embassy believed that the Egyptians were less competent than they believed themselves to be.[61]

A major source of division between Egypt and Britain was over the 'condominium' of the Sudan, under their shared administration since 1899. Britain had perpetuated this arrangement since the Second World War, shaping the country for independence rather than let it fall under Egyptian jurisdiction. Vaughan has shown how following the 1952 *coup* in Egypt, the British were forced into an 'essentially reactive' propaganda campaign; the positive nature of

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[59] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in Egypt', British Embassy Cairo, July 23, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/17.
[60] 'Sir Roger Stevens' letter of July 6 to Mr P F Grey', Editorial Advisor (IRD) to J O Rennie (IRD), July 11, 1955, TNA FO 1110/791/PR1034/3/G; Editorial Advisor (IRD), Minute, May 20, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/2/G.
[61] C N Jupp, (Press Office, Cairo) to J O Rennie (IRD, January 11, 1955; J O Rennie (IRD) to Leslie Glass (BMEO), February 10, 1955; British Embassy Cairo to P F Grey (FO), July 18, 1955, TNA FO 1110/776/PR1016/10/G.

Egyptian propaganda, aimed as it was towards unity, leant the Egyptians the advantage, at least initially. Vaughan has described the propaganda campaign waged by the British as 'one of the more sophisticated British responses to the challenge of Egyptian and Arab nationalism in this period.' From 1955, with the Sudanese having opted for independence, British propaganda became somewhat more triumphalist.[62] Whilst the Colonial Office excluded IRD from operating in Africa at this stage, the Sudan represents the one sub-Saharan (at least in part) nation that the department was actively working in prior to 1957-8. This was because of its special status – it was not a true colony – and the FO, not the CO, recruited officials. It was also at this stage the one nation in which Egyptian propaganda was fully active outside of the Middle East, and directed at Britain. In essence both a British and an Egyptian colonial territory, and with a developing interest from the Soviet bloc, the Sudan is significant as a precursor to the later decolonisation process, and contained many of the same elements: tripartite interest, information work aimed at post-independence organisations, and increasing IRD involvement accompanied by local resistance.

Prior to 1954, the Public Relations Office of the Sudanese government had blocked distribution of British anti-Communist material because of its political nature. Despite a delicate constitutional position whilst the Sudan transitioned to independence, Leslie Glass at the BMEO saw an opportunity to exploit the UK Trade Commission for political means, and to foster links with the new Sudanese government. 'The Sudanese Government', noted Glass, 'will above all wish to be reassured by precedents – they will ask "what is the practice of the Egyptian and Iraq Governments in this matter? What do other Arab countries do?"' Via a pamphlet campaign, regular papers, media links and 'unobtrusive' links with the Sudanese police, it is clear that IRD were keen to shape Sudanese practice more along the lines of British requirements rather than Arab precedent, before independence removed the British government's unique position of

[62] Vaughan, *Failure*, pp. 166-169.

influence.[63] Having outmanoeuvred the Egyptians, the British now had other competitors. The Communists were also courting the Sudanese, and the opening of Russian and Eastern Bloc liaison offices in the Sudan were a cause for concern to the Trade Commission, and they wrote to IRD for advice. A report on 'Soviet External Propaganda Media and Techniques' – detailing print propaganda, 'propaganda imparted in the guise of culture' and the use of local nationals – was dispatched by IRD, and, though this was seen by Khartoum as 'most useful', they were obviously already well briefed: the methods detailed were seen as 'relatively orthodox'.[64]

IRD also suggested making contacts with left-wing associations, and forging contacts between Sudanese and British left-wing organisations. The department believed these could be made by Trade Commission officials; cautiously, and conscious of both the potential unreliability of such individuals, and the potential impact on relations with the Sudanese government. IRD, it would appear, were not averse to making these suggestions without consulting the Governor General. Perhaps they should have been more circumspect: the letter carrying these suggestions was sent in error *to* the Governor General rather than to the Trade Commission. The Governor General was unequivocal that 'under present conditions I seriously question [the] desirability of [the Trade Commissioner] being involved in such matters'. Given the situation, and such a response, IRD were forced to agree.[65]

Iraq

IRD found it difficult to get material published in Iraq. Lack of editorial appeal, remoteness of subject matter, and imperialist taint were all contributing factors. The Baghdad Information

[63] 'British Sponsored Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Sudan', Leslie Glass (BMEO), March 3, 1954, TNA FO 1110/662/PR1016/8.
[64] D A Marston (UK Diplomatic Mission, Khartoum) to IRD, October 28, 1955; 'Soviet External Propaganda and Media Techniques', January 9, 1956; Marston to L C W Figg (IRD), January 27, 1956, TNA FO 1110/776/PR1016/18.
[65] Original letter missing, but identical to P F Grey (FO) to Michael Wright (Ambassador, Baghdad), April 18, 1955, notes confirm distribution to Khartoum; Telegram Khartoum to Foreign Office, May 2, 1955; Telegram, Foreign Office to Khartoum, May 4, 1955; TNA FO 1110/833/PR10104/50/G.

Department reported that there was, however, widespread interest in the subject of Communism:

> The lower classes…are interested in any system which appears to offer some alleviation of their material miseries…students and minor professionals led by a small but devoted nucleus of indoctrinated communists tend to see in communism, a way out of their present frustrations, and to imagine themselves as a managerial elite in some future Soviet Iraq.[66]

The Information Department in Baghdad believed it would be an uphill struggle, and without 'exploiting every local situation and current of feeling' even material that was published would not be read. As a last resort, even bribery should be considered.[67] In contrast to British travails, the Embassy felt that Communist propaganda only needed to improve on conditions that already existed in the country – stalled land reforms and economic recovery exacerbated ill-feeling, and prepared fertile ground for Communism. IRD propaganda, again, needed to be made relevant to a local audience, and Baghdad doubted 'whether the results of a desk study in London could be sufficiently "angled" to the local scene to effective'. There was faith that the existing regime had sufficient grasp on local Communist activity, though it could be better informed on where Iraq fitted in to wider Soviet aims.[68]

The long-term answer to the grievances of the left-wing in Iraq (and the right-wing, too) was economic and social reform, and this had stalled. In the short term, and conscious of the delicacy of the situation, IRD suggested to Baghdad that tentative steps should be made to foster discrete contacts with the non-Communist left, and for contacts to be encouraged between reliable Iraqi organisations and left-wing political parties and organisations in Britain and elsewhere,[69] no doubt to keep them away from fellow-travelling. But leveraging the non-Communist left in Iraq was problematic; the administration branded all on the left as

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[66] Information Department Baghdad to IRD, January 12, 1954, TNA FO 1110/700/PR1093/7/G.
[67] Information Department Baghdad to IRD, January 12, 1954, TNA FO 1110/700/PR1093/7/G.
[68] J Y Mackenzine (British Embassy, Baghdad) to J H Lewen (IRD), March 8, 1954, TNA FO 1110/700/PR1093/7/G.
[69] P F Grey (FO) to Michael Wright (Ambassador, Baghdad), April 18, 1955, TNA FO 1110/833/PR10104/50/G.

Communists, and this drove all such groups underground and left them diffuse. Maintaining contacts with such groups left the British open to criticism from the Iraqi regime. Left wing trade unions did not exist, and the British Ambassador dismissed other trade unions as 'creatures of the Government'.[70] Distributing supporting material to those in Iraq who were already anti-Communist was no problem – to that end the embassy in Iraq could make use of as much quality product as IRD could send – it was propaganda aimed at 'progressive' elements that proved much more problematic. The Ambassador in Baghdad argued that:

> The target here is not a small and sympathetic minority but a much larger class of left wing politicians, intellectuals, students and other politically conscious members of the middle and lower middle classes. By virtue of a combination of bitter nationalism and profound dissatisfaction with the existing order, these people are wide open to Communist propaganda and already deeply suspicious of the Western Powers...Much of the material the Information Research Department send is, moreover, is written from a Western point of view, and the implicit comparison of conditions in Communist countries is with conditions in Western Europe and the United States. Stories of corrupt officials, inefficient public services, rural poverty and suppression of free speech make little impact in the Middle East.[71]

Despite these difficulties, by mid-1955 IRD were getting around 8,000 words sourced from IRD material into the Baghdadi Arabic press per month. In the eight months preceding May 1955, '11 I.R.D. articles; 3 I.R.D. second right articles; and 30 articles from R.I.O. Beirut based on I.R.D. material' were successfully placed. Political and professional contacts included the 'Minister of Interior [*sic*], the Director-General of Propaganda...and the Prime Minister himself', among others. Proactive and widespread distribution – 'evangelism' – proved difficult, and the Embassy argued that this sort of 'salesmanship' would only serve to work against good relations. In addition, no matter how hard the Embassy protested that IRD material was 'factual intelligence' rather than propaganda, they had to report that 'the independent Iraqi is quite frankly not prepared to believe it.' Compounding the situation, it was self-evidently easier for the Iraqis to verify Communist propaganda about British activities in the Middle East, than it was to

[70] M Wright (Ambassador, Baghdad) to P F Grey (FO), June 1, 1955, TNA FO 1110/823/PR1093/3/G.
[71] M Wright (Ambassador, Baghdad) to P F Grey (FO), July 8, 1955, TNA FO 1110/823/PR1093/5.

check British propaganda regarding Communism in the Soviet Union or Europe. The Embassy still believed IRD material to be 'excellent of its kind'; the problem was getting it distributed without attracting negative consequences, and getting people to believe it.[72]

In 1954, the British had brokered a deal with Iraq to set up an Iraqi Broadcasting service, supported by the FO. The station was recognised as vulnerable to local issues, and alongside other projects outlined below were 'regarded as hostages to fortune'. In comparison, Egyptian state broadcasting was powerful, long range and expanding. Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia had all placed orders for large transmitters that would expand their broadcasting capability.[73] Whilst British propagandists were involved in a number of local stations, and *Sharq al-Adna*, their most significant investment for the future was in Iraqi (and Baghadad Pact) broadcasting.

It is significant, therefore, that given the importance of Iraq to the West, British policymakers fatally misread the local political situation. In 1953 the JIC assessed Communism in Iraq to be a problem of security, rather than of politics; in a report the previous year Communism was seen to be of little concern.[74] However the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) made significant strides in linking domestic, Iraqi Communism with resistance to imperialism and the Western bias in ruling politics. The popularity of this message forced their political opponents to adopt the policies of radical anti-Imperialism and land reform lest they lose ground, and these twin issues soon became the leading issues for debate, with all the significance that this would hold for events in 1958. Johan Franzén lays the blame for this squarely at the feet of IRD as the lead agency of anti-Communism in Iraq. The failure to engage head-on with local Communism, and IRD's focus on Soviet issues which held less local significance than information officers believed, alienated potential supporters of the British (or Communist gainsayers). The perennial

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[72] M Wright (Ambassador, Baghdad) to P F Grey (FO), July 8, 1955, TNA FO 1110/823/PR1093/5; British Embassy Baghdad to IRD, July 27, 1955, TNA FO 1110/823/PR1093/6; Editorial Advisor (IRD), Minute, May 20, 1955, TNA FO 1110/820/PR1088/2/G.
[73] 'Top Secret: Broadcasting Overseas', undated but enclosed with P Dean (FO) to John Rennie (IRD), September 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/947/PR10104/170/G.
[74] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 101.

problem of centrally distributed IRD material lacking editorial appeal and not being tailored for local audiences made getting articles published difficult: because of this, the ground was left open for the ICP to associate Communism with anti-imperialism, and consequentially taint what anti-Communist articles were published with an imperialist agenda.[75]

The inevitable corollary of anti-imperialism – nationalism – was also mishandled in Franzén's analysis. The more Britain tried to shape Iraq, the greater the anti-imperialist sentiments were likely to be, and continuing to support Nuri as-Said only exacerbated tensions. A failure to appreciate the rise of mass politics in Iraq, the agency of local political actors, and a firm belief in the 'politics of personalities' would endure led to an almost blind faith that supporting Nuri was the best policy, and increasingly limited British options and influence as Iraq headed towards revolution.[76]

From anti-Communism to Arab nationalism

In 1956, Russian overtures towards better relations with the West stood in stark contrast to increased British concern over rising Arab nationalism, and this effected a sea-change in the work of IRD. By April, Eden, alive to the improving situation with the Soviets, was mindful of IRD's actions, conscious that there might 'be a need for some adjustment of the directive on which I.R.D. is working' and that some efforts might need to be curtailed.[77] In its counter-propaganda role IRD maintained comprehensive files on extremely diverse subjects sufficient to support their output across a wide range of media; this information was supplied by, or gleaned from, both overt and covert sources. As the perceived nationalist threat from Egypt developed, these research skills and methods were turned towards localised issues in the Middle East, with

[75] Franzén, "Iraq", pp. 748, 753, 757-8
[76] Franzén, "Iraq", pp. 760-762
[77] Eden to Lloyd, April 30, 1956, M 86/56, AP 20/21/84, Avon Papers, Birmingham University Library cited in Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p. 484

the department's Middle East and Africa desks set to monitoring and studying both Arab nationalism and Egyptian affairs in general, alongside their usual work:[78]

> A close watch is kept on Egyptian attempts to influence the rest of the Arab world and in Africa. Card indices are kept of M.E. and African personalities linked with extreme nationalist (right or left) as well as Communist or left wing activities. Information is culled from all available overt and covert sources, and written up in various ways for use by F.O. Depts and selected persons outside who have access to regular IRD material, as well as by our usual propaganda media.[79]

Threats to British and Western interests in the Middle East were driven in significant part by the groundswell of anti-imperialist/anti-colonial sentiments throughout the region. This was recognised by all sides in the propaganda conflict. Defusing and countering anti-Colonial rhetoric was a central part of propaganda work directed at Arab nationalism. Communist propaganda agencies were in turn quick to leverage colonial themes in propaganda directed at both the Middle East and Africa. By 1956 the volume of Communist propaganda directed at colonialism was on the increase, leading IRD to declare in February that '[u]nless more is done to counter this propaganda and to expose the hypocrisy of the Communist position, there is a danger of the Western case going by default.'[80] The United States Information Agency (USIA), too, recognised that the Soviets had 'adopted increasingly flexible tactics…[including] blatant resort to anti-colonial propaganda.'[81]

A meeting of information officers at RIO Beirut in March 1956, chaired by the head of IRD, set out to fundamentally reassess and expand propaganda work in the Middle East directed at both Communism and anti-British activities on the part of Egypt and the Saudis. Despite IRD's anti-Communist campaign being relatively successful in Egypt, Communist propaganda

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[78] IRD was organised on a regional basis into corresponding 'desks' (there were two exceptions by the end of 1956: one desk dealt with Communist front organisations, another with economics).
[79] Note by A E Davidson (IRD), October 24, 1956, TNA FO 1110/873/PR10111/144/G.
[80] Intel for Foreign Office and Whitehall distribution on 'Anti-Colonialism', February 10, 1956, TNA FO 1110/907/PR1034/2.
[81] 'Circular Airgram From the United States Information Agency to all USIS Missions', April 11, 1956, FRUS IX, document 197, p. 575-576.

far outstripped British distribution, which remained relatively modest in comparison. Limited printed material was being supplied to certain individuals, but this could do nothing to counter the populist, mass-appeal of widely distributed Communist propaganda. Further channels of distribution would be required.[82] A number of posts continued to raise concerns that existing IRD material was difficult to place. Baghdad in particular 'criticised IRD articles on the score of length and diffuseness, and lack of local twist'. Calls for illustrations in IRD articles, cartoons (with jokes) and 'translation[s] of anti-Communist thrillers and detective stories' – immediate, simplified, accessible and somewhat disposable propaganda in other words – shows the type of material information officers felt they could use to broaden both distribution and appeal. Often a degree of *quid pro quo* was required to get an article published: Khartoum, Damascus and Beirut stressed the relationship between British advertising in local newspapers and success in placing articles. In Beirut 50% of published material was supported by such revenue. In all areas, the closest cooperation with American counterparts was to be encouraged.[83]

IRD's involvement with the Baghdad Pact's Counter Subversion Office was also proving less fruitful than initially hoped. IPD were aware that any publicity supporting the Pact that came from one of its regional members would have been of far greater value than any British contribution. Yet IPD had 'never been under any illusion that the Information services of these countries would show much initiative or efficiency in this direction.'[84] The Pact was at this stage contributing little in support of Britain's position or the West's Cold War objectives. Later, once Iraq had ceded from the pact, a degree of regional defensive cohesion was lost, as well as the potency of Iraq's regional standing as counterbalance to the regional aspirations of Egypt. Yet, as shown in Chapter 7, IRD still forged useful relationships with Turkey and Iran, the former of particular significance to the department.

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[82] Secretary of State to C B Duke (Amman), March 2, 1956; 'Anti-Communist Propaganda', note by HM Embassy Cairo, March 2, 1956, TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/19/G.
[83] 'Notes on Conference of Middle East Information Officers', Beirut, March 21, 1956, TNA FO 1110/941/PR10104/35/G.
[84] CCB Stewart (IPD) to G R Gauntlett (Beirut), January 11, 1956, TNA FO 953/1629/P1041/1.

The formation of the pact had far reaching consequences. As already noted, its creation helped draw the Soviet Union into greater involvement in the region. Adeed Dawisha cites the formation of the Baghdad Pact as the point at which Egypt, too, fully committed to a place in regional politics.[85] It was, for Egypt, an intraregional issue that demanded a regional presence to counter – although it was of course not the only reason Egypt became so involved. Egypt's engagement with the Baghdad Pact may have been driven more by the head than the heart: In the analysis of Hermann Frederick Eilts, a US Diplomat to the Near East, it was difficult not to conclude that 'Nasser deliberately chose to make the Baghdad Pact, and Iraq's membership of it, a contrived source of tension and division in the Middle East. He deliberately misrepresented its purposes in order to further his Arab objectives.'[86] It was significant in respect of the challenge faced by IRD for another reason: Dawisha argues that the severance of diplomatic channels after the creation of the Baghdad Pact meant that propaganda was elevated by necessity to the major instrument of Egyptian foreign policy.[87]

An assessment on the state of British information work in the Middle East, conducted in April 1956, identified a number of further areas for improvement, and recruitment of better quality information office staff at key posts was foremost on the agenda. Expansion of the BBC's transcription service – a function of the BBC's monitoring service that would later prove central to IRD work in both the Middle East and Africa – was also considered. Better cooperation between British information officers and their American counterparts, and development of the Iraqi government's own information activities, were to be encouraged. Work directed at the newly-formed and expanding trade unions in the Middle East needed to be expanded, as did support for the considerable overt work of the British Council. In all aspects, the uneven playing field of information work *vis-a-vis* Egypt, and the policy of leaving Egyptian

[85] A. Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab world: the elements of foreign policy* (New York, 1976), p. 11.
[86] Hermann Frederick Eilts, "Reflections on the Suez Crisis: Security in the Middle East", in Louis and Owen, eds, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 354, 356-7.
[87] Dawisha, *Egypt*, p. 13.

negative propaganda towards the British largely unchallenged because of policy considerations, was under significant review.[88] Each of these requirements, identified before the Suez Crisis, would have to wait until after it before they could be implemented. Seeking to improve Britain's image, IRD placed particular emphasis on information officers establishing contacts with 'key personalities of the small broadcast stations in their countries so as to ensure that through such friendly contacts, anti-British criticism is reduced and a little more space is given to objective news about Britain.'[89] This move would ensure that contacts were in place when, having lost the facility for widespread direct broadcasting to the Middle East (outside of the BBC) with the loss of *Sharq al-Adna*, IRD's emphasis shifted to rebuttal of Cairo Radio propaganda which relied on friendly editors to publish and broadcast its material.

This emphasis on radio was key. Nasser was quite clear that radio was the only means by which he could reach his power base of 'the Arab masses.' In 1958, when Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary General of the United Nations, asked Nasser to tone down the amount and tone of propaganda flowing from Cairo Radio, Nasser refused. 'Disarming the radio', Nasser replied, 'would for me mean complete disarmament.'[90] It was not simply a case of poor literacy levels across the region. Radio was preeminent because traditional Arab social values meant that Western social pastimes such as clubs, theatres, dance halls and the like did not exist. It was a cultural medium, and Cairo Radio's broadcasting exploited the cultural centrality of Egypt to the Arab world to full effect.[91] It was a potent combination of medium and message.

By 1954, the *Voice of the Arabs* was proclaiming independence from imperialist influence for the Arab world was a central tenet of Egyptian foreign policy, and the service itself as

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[88] 'Suggestions for Improving Information Work in the Middle East', S Hebblethwaite (IPD), April 5, 1956, TNA FO 1110/942/PR1014/52/G.
[89] Minute, S Hebblethwaite (IPD), March 27, 1956, TNA FO 953/1650/PB1041/30 cited in W. Scott Lucas, *Divided we stand: Britain, the US, and the Suez Crisis* (London, 1991), p. 132.
[90] Mohamed Heikal, *Nasser: the Cairo documents* (London, 1972), p. 164.
[91] A. I. Dawisha, "The Role of Propaganda in Egypt's Arab Policy, 1955-1967", *International Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975), p. 897.

speaking for Arab, rather than solely Egyptian, voices.[92] The *Voice of the Arabs* served a dual purpose. It progressed Nasser's pan-Arab and, later, pan-African political agenda, but it also legitimised his own, elite, regime and the control it exercised.[93]

Alongside the development of Baghdad Radio, FO projects in the Persian Gulf, Benghazi and Tripoli, and a CO project in Aden, formed the backbone of a concerted effort to diversify and expand British broadcasting in the Middle East. When the projects had stalled by early 1956, Eden wrote

> It is sad and disappointing that, although it is eighteen months since I was in Bagdad, when we agreed to give first priority to a broadcasting station for Iraq, this station is still not operating.
>
> Meanwhile the voice of Egypt [*sic*] continues unchecked and pours out its propaganda into the area of our oil fields. We have simply got to take action as quickly as possible to establish a broadcasting station of our own to compete with the Egyptians…even when the Iraqi station comes into operation, we cannot rely on them to do our propaganda for us.[94]

Plans were drawn up for a chain of six low power VHF transmitters, to be located in Aden, Muscat, Kuwait, Sharhjah, Qatar and Bahrain. This alternative was given the go ahead by Eden, but the project was delayed due to the Suez Crisis and financial constraints. When these plans were dusted off in 1957, IRD was the lead agency, though the problem continued to be one of finance. IRD could afford to pay for three of the transmitters, and for 1,000 subsidised receivers to be distributed (these would have had the advantage of expanding the audience whilst preventing owners from listening to competing medium- or long-wave broadcasts). But the department could not afford to pay for or supply the necessary staff, and plans were finally scrapped in March 1958.[95]

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[92] Dawisha, *Egypt*, p. 11.
[93] Anas Alahmed, "Voice of the Arabs Radio: Its Effects and Political Power during the Nasser Era (1953-1967)", (Paper delivered at the Joint Journalism Historians Conference, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, New York University, March 12, 2011), pp. 4, 8.
[94] Prime Minister's Personal Minute, May 4, 1956, TNA FO 1110/943/PR10104/110.
[95] Prime Minister's Personal Minute, May 15, 1956; Guy Millard (Private Secretary to the PM) to Pat Hancock (FO), May 27, 1956, TNA FO 1110/943/ PR10104/111/G; PR10104/95/G; 'V.H.F. Wireless in the Persian Gulf':

By April 1956 the perceived threat from Egyptian nationalism, driven in large part by the *Voice of the Arabs*, had increased to the point that IRD's anti-Communist campaign was subordinated to the need to deal with Nasserism. In that month, Philip Adams, the newly appointed Regional Information Officer in Beirut, wrote to Paul Grey of the Foreign Office raising concerns. The propaganda machinery in the Middle East was, he wrote, 'fairly good', but there was very little material to support it: 'we have the means of making H.M.G.'s policy known but...we are ourselves largely in the dark as to what it is...I have the feeling our publicity directed to the Middle East will tend to drift again…unless we can give it a new sense of direction'.[96] Adams was certainly in a position to know: almost all Arabic written material for posts in the Middle East was produced in RIO Beirut by April 1956; it was a concentration of staff for editorial and translation functions.[97]

Grey's reply set out the immediate position for IRD, and Foreign Office fears of what Nasser could achieve if given propaganda ammunition – ammunition that Suez ultimately provided:

> It is...clearly recognised that direct propaganda by British agencies against the Egyptian [*sic*] and Saudis can only be...counter-productive, and that we must avoid giving any occasion for Nasser to burst out in fury against us. He can at present do us grave damage, and nothing would be worse than to have to live with him after he had scored another victory over us...This means that our main and continuing effort must be on the clandestine and unattributable side. To this end, Information Research Department have been given a new charter to include anti-subversive work in general in the field of propaganda and publicity, and as an immediate objective, this work in the Middle East will, in I.R.D., take priority over anti-Communism.[98]

Grey's decision to avoid going head-to-head with Egyptian propaganda went partially against the advice of IPD's Sidney Hebblethwaite, who had placed the policy of leaving Egyptian

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'Summary of a meeting to be held in Mr. Murray's Room at 11.30 a.m. on March 21 [1958]'; Draft Submission, D Hopson (IRD), March 27, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1067/PR126/12/G.

[96] P G D Adams (RIO Beirut) to P F Grey (Foreign Office), April 18, 1956, TNA FO 1110/942/PR10104/59/G.

[97] CCB Stewart (IPD) to Levant and other Departments, April 24, 1956, TNA FO 953/1631/P1041/36.

[98] P F Grey (Foreign Office) to P G D Adams (Beirut), May 3, 1956, TNA FO 1110/942/PR10104/59/G.

polemic towards the British largely unchallenged under review the month before.[99] Critically, the largely successful and well-developed anti-Communist effort in Egypt came to an abrupt halt as the Suez Crisis gained momentum. The campaign directed at Nasser was by this point directly undermining IRD's anti-Communist campaign:

> In view of the current situation as a whole and the recent allegations that "a foreign embassy" has been circulating a subversive bogus Egyptian pamphlet, we have decided to suspend for the moment our issuing of anti-Communist material. Moreover, as it is not material of the kind we would want to leave in the Embassy, if by any chance we had to close down, and it is bulky to destroy, we have decided to ship all our anti-Communist material away. You will consequently be receiving under separate cover the remaining stocks we have of material deriving from Information Research Department.[100]

Cairo Radio and the Voice of the Arabs, the Voice of Cairo and the Voice of Free Africa.[101]

First broadcast on July 4, 1953, Egypt's, and subsequently the United Arab Republic's, main device for spreading pan-Arabic propaganda – specifically, the Nasserite view of pan-Arabism – was Cairo Radio's *Voice of the Arabs*. Initially a half-hour radio programme, it swiftly developed into a service broadcasting for 105 hours a week by 1961, second only to Cairo Radio's Home Service. The station was a direct challenge to British interests. Whilst anti-imperialist rhetoric railed against the British and the French, Arab leaders who found themselves in opposition to Nasser would also find themselves targeted by the *Voice of the Arabs*. The station was a source of grave concern to IRD, who in 1961 summarised its activities thus:

> It constantly extols President Nasser's concept of Arab nationalism, and adroitly exploits and intensifies points of difference between the West and the countries to which it is directed...Its violent abuse and incitement has been directed against Nuri-as-Said, General Qasim, President Bourguiba, and – most consistently –

[99] 'Suggestions for Improving Information Work in the Middle East', S Hebblethwaite (IPD), April 5, 1956, TNA FO 1110/942/PR1014/52/G.
[100] A J Williams (British Embassy, Cairo) to L C W Figg (IRD), September 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/893/PR1016/18.
[101] Respectively: *Sawt al-Arab*, *Sauti ya Cairo* and *Sauti ya Africa Huru*.

> King Hussein. To Aden and the Gulf, it offers a continuous stream of 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric which includes vicious personal attacks on British officials and gives currency to totally false reports on the situation in Muscat and Oman.[102]

Sustained rhetorical campaigns by the *Voice of the Arabs* were in part responsible for the dismissal of the (British) head of the Arab Legion, John Bagot Glubb, by King Hussein in 1956, and for the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy and Nuri as-Said's government in Iraq in 1958, as well as pushing Nasser to the forefront of the Arab nationalist cause even before the events at Suez. Although these successes would not be matched subsequently, the potential and threat of Cairo Radio was clear. The central voice of the *Voice of the Arabs*, both as announcer and director, was Ahmed Said, who guided the service throughout its numerous successes and to its ignominious failure in 1967.[103]

It is a measure of how seriously Britain saw the threat from Cairo Radio that Brigadier Fergusson, Director of Psychological Warfare during the Suez Crisis later recalled that '[i]t had been agreed in London, and there was no shadow of a doubt about this part of the plan, that the very first stick of bombs to be dropped…would be on Cairo Radio.' Despite this, a change of plans meant that Cairo Radio operated for three days before it was finally knocked off the air, albeit temporarily. The bombing of Egypt's broadcast infrastructure during Suez forced Egypt to increase the number and dispersal of transmitters as a security measure, to keep Cairo Radio on the air in the event of any further bombing. As a consequence, Cairo Radio's broadcast reach was extended deep into East and North Africa. In 1958, when the United Arab Republic (UAR) was formed between Egypt and Syria, the transmission power of Damascus Radio bolstered Cairo Radio's reach still further.[104]

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[102] 'Hostile Radio Propaganda from Cairo', February 15, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1370/PR10116/4/G.
[103] Douglas Boyd, *Broadcasting in the Arab world: a survey of the electronic media in the Middle East* (Ames, 1999), pp. 325-329, 28.
[104] Bernard Fergusson, *The trumpet in the hall, 1930-1958* (London, 1970), pp. 265-266; Boyd, *Broadcasting*, pp. 327.

In February 1957, IRD were still firmly behind the plan to expand British VHF/FM broadcasting capabilities to provide a counter to Cairo Radio, as well as attempting to bolster Baghdad Radio. In the case of the latter, efforts were hampered by the disparity between the 'mechanical potential of the station' and the quality of local expertise. Though providing some material, aiding with staff, and intending to provide an advisor, IRD were concerned to not 'force the pace…in the present state of local feeling.' Adams of RIO Beirut was at this point either unconvinced of, or prepared to underplay, the continuing threat from Cairo Radio, believing that 'vituperation and disregard for truth' was working against it (in the Levant at least), and it should be noted that his views largely aligned with those of IPD at this point. It is clear, however, that the broadcasting station at Limassol (the old NEABS/*Voice of Britain* facilities) was still seen as the main British regional asset (once it was back under 'professional' control). None of these factors – the VHF scheme, Baghdad Radio or a resurgent NEABS – would develop as hoped. In any case, Adams was realistic in his assessment of British potential to compete on equal terms with Arab broadcasting:

> If we had been given money, staff and facilities five years ago, the contribution we could now be making would be very different…radio in the Arab world is far better fitted for starting fires than putting them out. However many transmitters we have, and however resourceful our staff, we shall always be hard put to it to sell the virtues and attraction of hard work, peaceable behaviour and unquestioning respect for the authority of the British or the established and often reactionary rulers.[105]

Away from the centres of British power in the Middle East, reliance on local support to protect British interests meant that the *Voice of the Arabs* broadcasts could directly threaten British security: the British Military advisor in Bahrain – a British protectorate in all but name – wrote to the Foreign Office in early 1958 to outline his concerns regarding the possible effect of broadcasts on the morale and loyalties of the Trucial Oman Scouts, the British trained security force responsible for internal security in the British Trucial States (now the United Arab

[105] P G D Adams (RIO Beirut) to J S H Shattock (POMEF, Cyprus), February 15, 1957, TNA FO 1110/967/PR136/15/G.

Emirates).[106] Further afield, eventually broadcasting in Amharic, Arabic, Hausa, Somali, Swahili, English and French, Cairo Radio supported 'extremist movements and policies, and exacerbate[d] anti-Western tensions by misrepresentations of British French and US policy in Africa.'[107]

Starting in July 1954, the *Voice of Cairo* [*Sauti ya Cairo*] broadcast in Swahili, and is described by James Brennan as '[t]he seminal development of Egyptian propaganda to East Africa...[its] first Swahili broadcast encapsulated the radicalism and paternalism of Egypt's African policy'. The service, prefaced by readings from the Qur'an, would increase its programme length from an initial 40 minutes to an hour and a half by 1961.[108]

In April 1957 the *Voice of Free Africa* – purportedly broadcasting from 'the heart of Africa' though in fact from Cairo – was an even more vituperative thorn in Britain's side. Eschewing the *Voice of Cairo's* religious tenor, it was 'violently abusive of the remaining white administrators and residents in the Continent, whom it [described] as "pigs" and "dogs" who must be driven out by force.'[109] By 1961 the *Voice of Africa from Cairo* was broadcasting 68 ¼ hours per week in English, French and at least 7 African languages. Cairo Radio remained, in IRD's opinion, the most significant broadcast threat to Western interests in Africa despite the increased involvement of both Moscow and Peking.[110] This is despite the fact that, in Brennan's analysis, Cairo Radio programming to Africa 'was becoming rather stale and hackneyed by 1961', having lost its monopoly on anti-Colonial broadcasting and failing to an extent to adapt to changing local issues.[111]

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[106] Information Section, British Residency Bahrain to Information Executive Department, January 18, 1958, TNA FO 953/1924/PE1912/3.
[107] 'Hostile Radio Propaganda from Cairo', Brief, February 15, 1961 TNA FO 1110/1370/PR101116/4/G.
[108] Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965", p. 13.
[109] 'Hostile Radio Propaganda from Cairo', Brief, February 15, 1961 TNA FO 1110/1370/PR101116/4/G.
[110] Anti-Western Broadcasts to Africa (South of the Sahara), IRD confidential report to NATO, undated but between August and October 1961, TNA FO 953/2042/PB5455/11.
[111] Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965", p. 35.

The intelligence community shared IRD's concern over the *Voice of the Arabs*. In 1958, the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) identified the Egyptian State Broadcasting Service as the 'most effective instrument of Egyptian propaganda'. Radio Cairo had, in their assessment, 'played a large part in fomenting almost every recent crisis in the Middle East'. In Africa, the expectation was that Cairo Radio would increase its coverage, and that while (to the JIC at least) it was not a given that Cairo Radio would achieve the same sort of success in Africa as it had in the Middle East, the committee concluded that 'in the absence of really effective counter-measures, its influence will increase progressively in the Colonial territories of East and Central Africa, until it becomes a serious threat to British interests there. In West Africa, especially in those countries which have already achieved or are about to achieve independence, its prospects of success are more problematic.' This threat was seen as exclusively a Nasserite one – no evidence could be found that Moscow exerted any influence on the content of Cairo Radio broadcasts, but this was seen as largely irrelevant: the rather grim observation was that whilst Soviet involvement might become a factor in the future, at the close of 1958 it was hard to see how that involvement could make UAR radio propaganda any more effective than it already was.[112]

This obviously raises two important questions: firstly, why was Cairo Radio so effective, and secondly, how did it remain so when it was broadcasting to two distinctly separate audiences? That Cairo Radio stood paramount in the Arab world in terms of popular entertainment was key. There was 'no comparable alternative' in the region, and no other broadcaster able to provide the same calibre of film and radio personalities. The service was seen as an 'unrivalled vehicle for propaganda throughout the Middle East and North Africa.'[113] This meant that even those for whom the any message would appear to have had little relevance would tune in to Cairo Radio for its entertainment value. As noted previously, the formation of

[112] The Activities and Influence of Cairo Radio, December 11, 1958, TNA CAB/134/2342/JIC (58) 63.
[113] The Activities and Influence of Cairo Radio (annex), December 11, 1958, TNA CAB/134/2342/JIC (58) 63.

the UAR added Damascus Radio's transmitters to Egypt's already significant broadcasting power, and so both in reach *and* quality the service was without parallel. Nasser's regime also exerted influence over neighbouring countries' radio output through force of presence, and provision of technical personnel and expertise. In this sense, Cairo Radio was in direct competition with the technical services that Britain offered to the Middle East. Douglas Boyd has argued that since the station broadcast in Arabic, a language that Boyd argues 'especially lends itself to an emotional rather than a logical appeal', a programme such as the *Voice of the Arabs* was, if one accepts his premise, particularly blessed as a medium of agitation and incitement.[114]

Whilst IRD struggled to provide locally targeted, appropriate propaganda in the Middle East and East Africa, Cairo Radio succeeded in producing varied, topical and regionally attractive programming. Abdel-Kader Hatem, Egypt's information minister, notes that regional scope but local appeal was part of the *Voice of the Arabs* remit from the beginning.[115] Although the majority of radio sets in sub-Saharan Africa were of insufficient power to receive Egyptian broadcasts, Cairo Radio could still be listened to in the hotels and coffee shops of the region, in an atmosphere of political discussion, and passed on from there by word of mouth. '[T]he better the propaganda, the more likely it is to be passed on' noted the JIC, '[its] effect cannot be gauged with any accuracy from estimates of listeners...a single item of news broadcast may eventually, perhaps in an even more distorted form, reach an almost unlimited public'. In the British East African territories, the fact that the *Voice of Free Africa* appeared to be being broadcast from within central or eastern Africa leant it additional weight, and, by targeting the issue of anti-colonialism, engaged a unifying issue beyond the Middle Eastern messages of religion, pan-Arabism and opposition to Israel which would have found little resonance.[116] Although Africans were just as likely to listen to locally broadcast material, political commentary from these sources

[114] Boyd, *Broadcasting*, p. 27.
[115] M. Abdel-Kater Hatem, *Information and the Arab cause* (London, 1974), pp. 166-7.
[116] The Activities and Influence of Cairo Radio (annex), December 11, 1958, TNA CAB/134/2342/JIC (58) 63.

was less likely to be trusted as that from the *Voice of Free Africa*, as the local stations may well have been seen as espousing the local government line. The strength and vitriol of the broadcasts stood them in good stead: 'Only two or three reports have been received of Africans showing disgust at the violent tirades poured out by Sauti ya Cairo and Sauti ya Africa Huru', noted the post in Tanganyika. 'The vast majority of African listeners thoroughly approve of them, for this is what they want to hear.'[117]

Conclusion: the state of play before Suez

The situation that faced IRD in the Middle East in mid-1956 was slightly artificial – in the sense that the fallout from the Suez Crisis would fundamentally alter the landscape for propaganda in the Middle East within a few short months. As it stood, however, IRD found itself diversifying to meet the challenge of Arab nationalism to British interests whilst struggling somewhat to find its rhythm against Communism in the region. In essence this situation would not change – in fact it would become more problematic – after Suez. IRD had been comparatively active and successful in placing anti-Communist material in Egypt prior to 1956, and the Crisis would immediately halt their improving campaign there. IRD (and British propagandists in general) would be excluded from a position of influence with Egypt, a position that the Communist nations subsequently used to further their own agendas. Increasing emphasis would have to be placed on the Baghdad Pact, and the withdrawal of Iraq following the Iraqi coup of 1958 recast the pact on altogether more modest lines (see Chapter 7).

Soviet propagandists had a somewhat easier time of it than those of the British, in that they had at that point no interests to protect, and stood largely at the beginning of their cultural relationship with the Middle East. Anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism were key themes in

[117] 'The Impact of Cairo Radio on East Africa' Report by the East Africa Intelligence Committee, undated but early 1958, TNA CO 1027/237/INF111/020.

both Soviet and Arab nationalist propaganda. Tied to the history of British policy in the region, this was a powerful narrative. Excepting Iran's experience of Soviet occupation, the region had no context for IRD to exploit such as the department had in Europe, and casting the Soviets in the role of imperialist oppressor was a combination of naiveté and hypocrisy that was patchily received, at best. The two real issues in the region for the local population were Western Imperialism and the Arab-Israeli dispute. In the case of the former, Britain sought to emphasise its role as benevolent – as educator, benefactor, protector and partner. The greater share of this task fell to other departments and organisations. In the case of the latter, the issue was so poisonous that IRD stayed well away.

The reaction to the perceived threat of Arab Nationalism should rightly be seen within a Cold War context. Fears of regional destabilisation and of the influence of Communism on countries asserting their independence from the West played heavily on the minds of Western nations. Policymakers and propagandists found it hard in the mid-1950s to deal with the issues in isolation. When, in the aftermath of the Czech arms deal, Nasser stressed to the British that he was hardly likely to trade British domination of his country for Soviet, the British failed to take him at face value.[118] Nasser, Heikal notes, 'insisted he was importing arms, not ideologies.'[119] Whilst Western fears largely failed to play out between the mid-1950s and early 1960s – as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, Soviet-Egyptian relations and rhetoric blew hot and cold throughout this period – a rapprochement in 1964 resulted in air and naval rights being granted to the Soviets in 1966 in Egyptian airfields and ports. Western fears were far from ungrounded.[120]

Cairo Radio – in particular its *Voice of the Arabs* programme – was seen by many in Foreign Office and defence circles as the preeminent propaganda threat to British interests in the

[118] Dorril, *MI6*, p.605.
[119] Heikal, *Sphinx*, p. 63.
[120] Golan, *Soviet*, p. 56.

region. The propaganda coup of withstanding Britain, and the concomitant damage to British prestige wrought by the Crisis, extended Nasser's popularity beyond already supportive areas within the Middle East to British colonial territories in North and East Africa.[121] Paul Grey's fears of Nasser 'bursting out in fury' at the British were well realised after Suez, and, as the following chapter shows, Britain succeeded in wholly devaluing the one propaganda asset in the region with which they could have even potentially addressed the vitriol of Cairo Radio on anywhere approaching equal terms. To have any effect after Suez, therefore, IRD would have to adapt.

[121] The Activities and Influence of Cairo Radio, December 11, 1958, TNA CAB/134/2342/JIC (58) 63.

Chapter Three

Suez

information work [is] the hand-maiden of policy

Sidney Hebblethwaite (IPD), April 5, 1956 [1]

IRD was significantly involved in the propaganda effort that aimed to support and legitimise British military action over Suez. That effort was a failure, and by extension so were the department's efforts. Yet IRD's two major contributions – the coordination and support of the British information campaign, and the supply of material to the requisitioned *Sharq al-Adna* – were undermined, respectively, by the separation of policy from planning, and by poor decision making born of desperation and limited options. Neither of these factors were the fault of the department.

The aim of this short chapter is to examine the two contributions noted above, and why they failed. Both failures had significant repercussions for IRD's future work against both Nasserism and Communism, as they did for British information policy over the Middle East as a whole. Because of the crucial decision to requisition *Sharq* to broadcast the *Voice of Britain* programme, *Sharq* was fully exposed as British-run, and wholly devalued. As a consequence, Britain was left without a viable broadcast capability in the region under direct government control.[2] From this point IRD would have to compete with an increasingly dominant Cairo Radio on an unequal footing and court local broadcasters instead. Prior to the crisis, plans for an invasion of Egypt were confined to an ever-decreasing inner-circle surrounding Eden. Eden concealed his intentions from the information services. This fatally undermined the efforts of

[1] 'Publicity in the Middle East', S Hebblethwaite (IPD), April 5, 1956, FO 1110/942/PR10104/52/G.
[2] Whatever the relationship was between the BBC and the Government, the corporation was not under its control.

the propagandists, and was a crucial lesson, but as we will see, IRD and IPD were already fully aware of the implications well in advance.

Psychological and Political Warfare: The Information Coordination Executive[3]

As discussed in Chapter 2, the RIO in Beirut had previously operated under the umbrella of the British Middle East Office. When BMEO supervision was withdrawn in 1955, the military lost its direct link with the main propaganda agency in the Middle East, and it would have to be re-forged in the event of any future military action that required a psychological warfare dimension. When plans for coordinating psychological warfare across British forces and NATO were developed in 1956 (prior to the Suez Crisis), current and ex-IRD personalities such as Jack Rennie, Ralph Murray, Norman Reddaway and Hugh Cortazzi were involved at the highest levels. IRD would assume significant responsibility for peacetime propaganda and wartime psychological warfare operations. As part of this process, the question of linking in the RIO to British forces in the Middle East once again became pertinent.[4] This fledgling planning process would soon be superseded by real-world planning, as the department assumed a lead role in the Information Coordination Executive (ICE) as Suez approached.[5]

Alongside overt propaganda methods such as the LPS, BBC, and feature articles commissioned for circulation in the Middle East, Suez Crisis propaganda was also dispersed via covert circulation by RIO Beirut and the Embassy in Cairo and via the ANA. ICE would coordinate it all.[6] In August 1956 John Rennie, Head of IRD since December 1953, was

[3] For a detailed look at the plans for psywar in the Middle East in 1957 see FO 1110/986 *passim*.
[4] This process is outlined through a succession of drafts and IRD objections to them in FO 1110/874, FO1110/875 and FO 1110/876.
[5] IRD did in fact carve a place for itself in future planning for psychological warfare outside the Middle East on both a limited and general scale, and forged links with both NATO and the US, but these future efforts, whilst deserving of attention, fall outside the scope of this thesis. See for example 'Psychological Warfare', J O Rennie, February 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/981/PR10112/2/G. See also Risso, "NATO", though Risso does not draw from the documents cited in this or the preceding notes.
[6] 'ICE Progress Report', undated but either late-September or early-October 1956, BBCWAC R34/1580/1.

appointed chief executive officer of ICE at its inception. ICE would consist of CRO, CO, MOD, CoS, SIS, BBC and COI representatives, and would feed an advisory committee, thence on to the Egypt Committee itself. Norman Reddaway would replace Rennie as the department's head.[7] James Vaughan has argued that these moves are illustrative of the Eden administration's desire to use force against Nasser, and to use the Suez Crisis as an opportunity to do so.[8] Murray, IRD's first head, had been minister at the Cairo Embassy from April 1954, before returning to Britain to co-ordinate the OMEGA plan from London. OMEGA, the successor to ALPHA, signalled intensification both of covert propaganda, and of efforts to encourage political opposition to Nasser. The plan also called for 'economic warfare' aimed at Egypt, and bolstering of pro-Western regimes alongside efforts to overthrow those that were pro-Nasser.[9] As the crisis developed, Murray helped to organise invasion plans, before being appointed as political advisor during the military operation.[10] Murray was originally put forward as the ICE liaison with the BBC, although ultimately he would find himself attached to General Keightley's unit in Cyprus.[11]

IRD staff would form the 'hard core' of ICE,[12] and the committee itself would form part of IRD, at least as regards 'cover and administration'.[13] Under direction from Rennie, much had already been done to shift the emphasis of the department's work towards Nasser before the first ICE meeting on 24 August.[14] Scott Lucas notes that as early as May, Reddaway and Rennie were

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[7] Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on Political Warfare, August 13, 1956, TNA FO 1110/876/PR10112/46/G.
[8] Vaughan, *Failure*, pp. 206-207.
[9] Scott Lucas and Ray Takeyh, "Alliance and Balance: The Anglo-American Relationship and Egyptian Nationalism, 1950-1957", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1996), p. 644.
[10] Michael T. Thornhill, 'Murray, Sir (Francis) Ralph Hay (1908–1983)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64928, accessed 11 April 2011].
[11] 'Organisation for Political Warfare', J O Rennie (IRD), August 8, 1956, TNA FO 1110/880/PR10131/1/G.
[12] 'Organisation for Political Warfare', J O Rennie (IRD), August 8, 1956, TNA FO 1110/880/PR10131/1/G.
[13] Memorandum, 'Information Coordination Executive', Ivone Kirkpatrick, August 23, 1956, TNA FO 1110/880/PR10131/1/G.
[14] 'Record of a Meeting of Mr. Dodds-Parker' Advisory Committee', August 24, 1956, TNA FO 1110/880/PR10131/G.

actively agitating for more black propaganda to be directed at Egypt.[15] Encouragement for this tactic came from many sides. John Bagot Glubb, recently dismissed by King Hussein as the head of the Jordanian army, was deeply concerned at the amount and success of Egyptian propaganda in the Middle East. Glubb wrote to Evelyn Shuckburgh at the FO to argue that Britain would do better to reduce 'expenditure on useful purposes which actually help the development of the countries concerned...and spend the money, as the Egyptians do, on subversive action and propaganda.'[16]

ICE was an active organisation, and a useful bridge between disparate government and non-government bodies. For example, Rennie passed a secret Treasury paper on Egypt's economic position to the BBC outlining various factors that led to her straightened economic position.[17] ICE was in fact explicitly 'an organisation for political warfare', according to the Egypt Committee;[18] it was also largely a failure. As Stephen Dorril points out, ICE turned out to be largely ineffective because it was kept in the dark over British actions and vital intelligence, and about the Anglo-French-Israeli collusion.[19] Without proper guidance, the committee was basing its decisions on flawed assumptions.

An ICE/IRD paper prepared for the Egypt Committee makes this clear. The most significant assumption was that there would be prolonged negotiations or a long period of pressure applied to Nasser. That this paper was prepared for a mid-October meeting – Israel invaded the Sinai on October 29 – shows how flawed that assumption was. ICE/IRD could not have been clearer: '[W]here there is a change or reversal of policy…it is important that all the organs of propaganda should have as long notice as possible...to prepare the ground for any such

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[15] Lucas, *Divided*, p. 132
[16] C A E Shuckburgh (Foreign Office) to P Dean and E Grey, April 6, 1956, TNA FO 1110/941/PR10112/18/G.
[17] The slightly shaky conclusion was that these difficulties stemmed 'mainly from the inherent problems of an under-developed primary producing country pursuing a 'neutralist' and nationalist policy, and not by the measures taken by the United Kingdom on July 27'. 'Secret: Weaknesses in Egypt's Economic Position' enclosure from J O Rennie, October 24, 1956, BBCWAC R34/1580/1.
[18] Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on Political Warfare, August 13, 1956, TNA FO 1110/876/PR10112/46/G.
[19] Dorril, *MI6*, p. 641.

change, and incidentally be prevented from being left too far out on a limb'. The main themes for British propaganda focussed on Egypt's economy and the interests of other Arab nations, and played on Nasser's relationship with Communist states. The latter theme required some delicacy, it was noted, lest the message appear to be that Communism was going to succeed in Egypt, therefore 'encouraging a tendency to get on what appears to be the winning side.' Of overriding concern was that whatever settlement arose from the crisis it had to be shown that Britain had won, Nasser had lost, and to ensure the acceptance of that fact throughout the Middle East.[20]

The Foreign Secretary set out British propaganda themes in late October 1956. They were: Egypt's economy, the 'sanctity of contracts', the interests of other Arab states, to play on fears of Communism, and to constantly reinforce that Britain's proposals were 'fair and reasonable' to all parties. These were the themes to which ICE would bend their effort, and at no point were they informed that they should be preparing for an imminent invasion. There were two main long-term aims identified by ICE: 'to weaken Nasser and to strengthen our standing in the Arab world.' It is abundantly clear that British propaganda was unable to achieve either aim. In the short term, the aim was 'to strengthen our hand in negotiation and help the prospects of an agreed settlement satisfactory to us.' In this, ICE was wholly undermined, as this was not what the Egypt Committee were aiming for at all.[21] Given the above, it is not surprising that the propaganda campaign in support of military action was less than effective. Yet the situation was made worse still by a decision that smacked somewhat of desperation: the requisitioning of *Sharq al-Adna*.

[20] 'Top Secret: Propaganda and Political Warfare in the Middle East', K E Oakeshott (IRD) to Hugh Carleton-Greene, October 1956, BBCWAC R34/1580/1.
[21] 'Propaganda and Political Warfare in the Middle East', Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary, October 24, 1956, TNA FO 1110/880/PR10131/10/G.

Radio Broadcasting and *Sharq al-Adna*

As the Suez Crisis progressed, it became obvious that *Sharq al-Adna* (a programme of the Near East Broadcasting Station at Limassol, Cyprus) was the only British-controlled programme of sufficient reach and influence to support Britain's propaganda offensive.[22] *Sharq* was ostensibly an Arab station; this cover would be comprehensively blown by the British requisitioning of the station during Suez, though as early as June 1956 the Embassy in Tripoli were reporting that *Sharq*'s coverage of the situation in Algeria had already marked it out as 'imperialistic'.[23]

There were a number of British clandestine radio stations operating in the Middle East. However, whilst the IRD files illustrate the technical aspects of setting up these radio stations – and the amount of paperwork such things can generate – they are dark on the actual use of these for propaganda purposes at least as far as the department's involvement is concerned. It is the case that Britain covered the full gamut of broadcasting, from the white, attributable propaganda of the BBC, through the murkier, grey programmes of *Sharq* and the *Voice of Britain*, to the black propaganda that Scott Lucas asserts Britain and France began broadcasting into Egypt from Aden, Cyprus and Libya on 28 July 1956.[24] Britain was operating two secret radio stations, perhaps more. One of these was called S*cant*.[25] Gary Rawnsley cites personal IRD sources that connect IRD to *Scant*. The department provided information on the effect Nasser's actions over Suez would have for the Egyptian economy. Rawnsley's source asserts that, given that British policy was 'to denounce Nasser by all means, all government agencies – MOD, FO, CRO and the Security Services would be expected to provide what they could'.[26] (The possibility remains, therefore, that despite being involved with black propaganda, IRD did not actually generate it itself.) *Scant* covered a wide area, but only directed an hour of programming at Egypt, Iraq,

[22] 'Top Secret: Broadcasting Overseas', undated but enclosed with P Dean (FO) to John Rennie (IRD), September 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/947/PR10104/170/G.
[23] W H G Fletcher (British Embassy, British Embassy, Benghazi) to P Adams (RIO Beirut), June 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/891/PR1013/14.
[24] Lucas, *Divided*, p. 173.
[25] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 208.
[26] Rawnsley, "Overt and Covert", pp. 512, 521-522n.

Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and part of the Gulf.[27] Much beyond this, the extent and specifics of any IRD involvement with covert radio are at this point unclear, and any conclusions speculative. This is not, however, the case with *Sharq*.

Arab staff provided authenticity, and a degree of separation from Britain. It was also true that their position *vis-a-vis* the Middle East would have been rendered untenable by too pro-British, or anti-Egyptian, a stance. As early as 1953, there had been increasing pressure from the Foreign Office on the BBC to respond to anti-British propaganda from Cairo in kind. The BBC resisted, in no small part due to the response of their Arab staff, which made it clear to the head of the BBC's Eastern Service that continued employment was conditional on the BBC remaining objective and impartial in its reporting.[28] Similarly, the FO knew that the Arab staff of *Sharq* would likely desert if it were used 'to put over the British point of view in a big way'.[29]

On October 30, as Israel continued its attack on Egypt through the Sinai, the British government requisitioned *Sharq* and began broadcasting a new programme, the *Voice of Britain*. As Douglas Boyd notes, 'almost everything that could go wrong did.' The station, toeing the government line, often directly contradicted BBC broadcasts, undermining further a station that was quite obviously a British tool and roundly accused of being so by Cairo Radio.[30] Mohamed Heikal was less than complimentary about the service. As Heikal later described, the *Voice of Britain*'s broadcasts 'displayed a surprising ignorance of Egyptian affairs and thinking.' On one occasion, when a broadcast suggested a list of eight Egyptians who could replace Nasser in government, two were already dead. 'These broadcasts', Heikal notes, 'only served to increase Nasser's popularity.'[31]

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[27] 'ICE Progress Report', undated but either late-September or early-October 1956, BBCWAC R34/1580/1.
[28] Interview with Gordon Waterfield (Head of the BBC's Eastern Service) by Richard Fletcher 21/11/1979 cited in Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, p.64.
[29] Top Secret minute to Rennie, P Dean (FO) September 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/947/ PR10104/170/G.
[30] Boyd, *Broadcasting*, p. 453. It is perhaps worth clarifying that the VOB was a programme, not a station.
[31] Heikal, *Nasser*, p. 109.

Though BBC Arabic Service material was to have been relayed through *Sharq* following its requisitioning, technical difficulties meant that this was impossible at that time. The majority of the spoken material output by the station between 30 October and 5pm on 7 November was in fact provided by IRD from London, as well as from Cyprus, where IPD's Sidney Hebblethwaite was likely the source.[32] IRD was, in the words of H H Tucker, 'the London end of the Voice of Britain...it was our job to provide scripts in Arabic and English to the relay station in Cyprus...We were heavily involved in this for, I suppose, about six months, even after the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez [*sic*]. We still ran Voice of Britain providing general information, general talks to whoever was in fact listening (I suspect not all that many people).' IRD, a report noted, provided 'dozens of scripts' over the period of the ground offensive.[33]

IPD's Sidney Hebblethwaite was made director of the *Voice of Britain* on December 3, 1956, and tasked with 'submitting recommendations on the future of the station, on programme presentation and content, and composition of the future staff.'[34] Plans were subsequently developed to move the *Voice of Britain* to London in order to tighten political control of the programme, and improve efficiency and economy. With Hebblethwaite in charge, and either two or three, out of a proposed total of four, scriptwriters to be provided by IRD, it seems plausible that it would have been a IRD-run affair had such plans matured.

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[32] Fergusson, the Director of Psychological Warfare during the Suez Crisis – in his own words, his 'qualifications were nil…[his] Arabic was negligible' – notes in his memoirs that Sidney 'Hepplethwaite' (Hebblethwaite) and he were the subject of a 'silly wrangle' between the FO and the MOD as to who was to be in charge of psychological operations. Whether having a professional like Hebblethwaite at the helm would have made a difference is open to discussion, yet he would have been the stronger candidate for the job. Additionally, Fergusson notes that along with 'Hepplethwaite' the FO sent Valentine Reilly ('a war-time pilot with a D.F.C.'). Valentine Reilly is highly likely to be IRD's J V Riley, of note at various points throughout this thesis, but particular in regards of Transmission 'X' of which he was in charge. (The Foreign Office notes that J V Riley had a DFC). If so, then IRD had personnel in Fergusson's unit. Fergusson, *Trumpet*, pp. 260-261; Great Britain Foreign Office, *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic Consular Year Book* (London, 1949), p. 62.

[33] Answer and Note for Question by Mr Collins (Labour) to Mr Anthony Head (MOD), 20 November 1956, TNA FO 1110/948/PR10104/249; Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11, p. 9; Confidential Cypher, 'From Political Office with the Middle East Forces (Nicosia) to Foreign Office', December 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/855/PR139/2.

[34] 'Future of the Voice of Britain', S Hebblethwaite (IPD), December 20, 1956, TNA FO 1110/971/PR139/124.

There was a political dimension to the *Voice of Britain*. The Labour opposition had mounted increasing pressure throughout November for an inquiry into Suez. This was ruled out on 22 November 1956 by Deputy Prime Minister Rab Butler, on the rather tenuous basis that the Suez Crisis had been 'primarily the responsibility of Government',[35] yet before this questions in the Commons threatened to expose IRD involvement. A call via question in the House for the MoD to publish scripts of broadcasts by the *Voice of Britain* required some subtle political manoeuvring to avoid – the publication of such voluminous material, largely of only ephemeral interest, would, it was argued, be too costly. The fear was that if these 'dozens' of scripts were to be published, IRD would 'become the subject of debate...and [this would] provide a basis for further criticism' of British propaganda policy.[36]

The switch to the *Voice of Britain* was doubly ruinous because *Sharq*, now fatally undermined, had been of genuine worth to British propagandists. For instance, in the case of the Czech arms deal – all too aware of how popular it was in the Arab world – the British initially downplayed the issue, before framing it as an act of irresponsibility and focussing on Russian motives rather than Egyptian. *Sharq* at least meant that the British had another avenue through which they could be more vituperative.[37] Paul Grey of the FO summed up the *Voice of Britain* debacle very well: 'Sharq was very popular and drew a great many listeners away from the Egyptian broadcasts. It failed because, although it was supposed to be secretly under control, the secret got out while the control became ineffective.'[38] It also upset the BBC. As noted above, the *Voice of Britain* often contradicted the BBC, an organisation that was anyway smarting from FO interference: J B Clarke, Director of External Broadcasting at the BBC, was clear that

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[35] R A Butler, 22 November 1956, HC Deb (1955-56), vol 560, cols 1932-5, cited in Charlotte Peevers, *The Politics of Justifying Force: The Suez Crisis, the Iraq War, and International Law* (Oxford, 2013), p. 123.
[36] 'Future of the Voice of Britain' and Annex, S Hebblethwaite (IPD), December 20, 1956, TNA FO 1110/971/PR139/124; P. McKearney (Voice of Britain, Limassol) to H K Matthews (POMEF), December 16, 1956; McKearney to Hebblethwaite, December 17, 1956; TNA FO 1110/855/PR139/14/G Answer and Note for Question by Mr Collins (Labour) to Mr Anthony Head (MOD), 20 November 1956, TNA FO 1110/948/PR10104/249.
[37] Vaughan, *Failure*, pp. 193-194.
[38] P F Grey (FO) to Sir Alexander Johnston (Treasury), January 10, 1957, TNA FO 1110/971/PR139/48/G.

he felt 'that the Foreign Office seemed to be calling for a distortion or suppression of news in a manner which had never been called for even during the war'.[39] Even the name could be construed as a slight. If the new service called itself the Voice of Britain, asked Ian Jacob, the corporation's Director-General, what was the BBC?[40]

In the weeks after the invasion, the VOB broadcast a composite service of 'entertainment records from Cyprus and news and talks originated by the Foreign Office in London [specifically IRD], both supplementing the relay of the whole of the BBC's Arabic Service.'[41] Rennie, alongside Donald Stephenson of the BBC, organised a committee on the future of the VOB in December 1956.[42] Paul Grey made the FO's position extremely clear: '[T]he Foreign Office never wanted to operate a Government broadcasting service. We did so on instructions and in view of the breakdown of everything else. We are certainly advocating the "liquidation" of the Voice at the earliest possible moment.'[43]

By February 1957 the decision had been taken to phase the *Voice of Britain* out, and to replace it with BBC programming, with the station initially rented out to the BBC for a period of 6 months.[44] Progressively, but fairly rapidly through 1957, the BBC Arabic Service increased its programming to 9 1/2 hours a day, began to transmit on medium wave, and rebalanced itself as more of a light programme, filling in the gap left by *Sharq* somewhat. This transformation was an attempt to provide a viable alternative to the *Voice of the Arabs* for Arab listeners, much as *Sharq* had before. Many of the new BBC staff that supported this expansion of the Arabic Service came from *Sharq*.[45]

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[39] J B Clarke to Director General, BBC, November 2, 1956, BBCWAC R34/1580/2.
[40] 'Note of a Meeting with the Postmaster General' (Charles Hill), Ian Jacob (BBC), January 8, 1957, BBCWAC R34/1580/3.
[41] 'Report by Director of External Broadcasting, 1st September to 30th November 1956', BBCWAC R34/1580/2.
[42] 'Record of a Meeting of Mr Dodds-Parker's Advisory Committee held at the Foreign Office at noon, December 7, 1956', BBCWAC R34/1580/2.
[43] P F Grey (FO) to Sir Alexander Johnston (Treasury), January 10, 1957, TNA FO 1110/971/PR139/48/G.
[44] Telegram, FO to Beirut, February 5, 1957, TNA FO 1110/971/PR139/93/G.
[45] Partner, *Arab*, pp. 122, 124.

Conclusion: lessons learned.

There were many lessons to be learned in the wake of the Suez Crisis. Keeping the focus on IRD, a significant effect of the crisis was the severing of diplomatic relations with Egypt, which cut IRD's route for material into the country. The Egyptian press would therefore be beyond their reach. As if to underscore the shift in balance, the Americans reported that by December use of the Soviet TASS news agency was on the increase in Cairo.[46] The loss of *Sharq* as an asset left Cairo Radio unchallenged in reach and audience. This, when combined with the collapse of the VHF projects noted in the previous chapter, left IRD unable to respond in kind to the threat of the *Voice of the Arabs* programme, even if the department had wanted to.

Planning for damage-limitation propaganda had swung into full effect by mid-November. The aim was to repeatedly 'plug' certain themes: that British action was a 'limited intervention', that Nasser's aim for hegemony had been shattered by British action, and that the Soviets intended to use Nasser as a 'cat's paw' by which Russia would secure domination of the Middle East were all proposed. Additionally, covertly, via *Scant* and other channels, themes such as that of Egyptian military weakness, or assertions that the Soviet Union's vocal complaints over Suez were simply self-serving – to cover up their atrocities in Hungary – were more carefully distributed.[47] IRD and IPD cast their nets across posts worldwide for any foreign press comment favourable to British action, but understanding was difficult to come by.[48]

The Suez Crisis drove home the point that without unity of message between Parliament and the press, political direction of all aspects of propaganda and psychological warfare, and the broad support of the country, psychological warfare would be largely doomed to failure. 'The basic lesson to be learned from our experience in the Suez Crisis', wrote Rennie, 'is the need for

[46] D A Marston (RIO Beirut) to IPD, December 21, 1956, TNA FO 953/1616/P10118/220.
[47] Paper submitted November 15, 1956 to Egypt Committee. BBCWAC R34/1580/2.
[48] See throughout TNA FO 953/1606/P10118/40.

a coherent policy with some appeal to the target audience. Psychological warfare will have to make the best of whatever the policy is, but it cannot transform a bad case into a good one.' The purpose of ICE was precisely this sort of coordination, but it was working under a misapprehension of the true direction of British policy.[49] IPD's Sidney Hebblethwaite had made Rennie's point as early as April 1956. Discussing the shortcomings of British information work in the Middle East, he argued that there was

> room for improvement, no doubt, but...criticisms are less than fair when they mix up policy and information work, the hand-maiden of policy. If our policy is not liked by the Egyptians, no amount of disguise will make our information policy palatable to the Egyptians and their friends.[50]

In the aftermath of the Crisis, the FO assessed existing propaganda themes as out of date. The lack of a 'master theme' crippled any overt propaganda.[51] At least one post in South East Asia was already highlighting a perceived lack of direction and forward planning in British information policy for the Middle East.[52] One theme that remained constant was full support of the Baghdad Pact, but it was recognised that care had to be taken not to embarrass the Iraqis by being too blatant about it.[53] British actions at Suez had not just severed IRD's access to Egypt and dramatically increased Nasser's standing in the region, but had also made the British connection to the Baghdad Pact and the CSO a cause for concern.

Paul Grey of the FO summed up the British publicity failure in the Middle East. There were, of course, difficulties and limitations, but there were two main issues that went wrong at the outset. The first was the lack of warning of action for the information services, which Grey blamed squarely for the 'shock' to the staff of both *Sharq* and the BBC Arabic services, and led to strike action in the case of the former. This resulted in a programming deficit at a crucial time

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[49] 'Psychological Warfare', J O Rennie, February 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/981/PR10112/2/G.
[50] 'Publicity in the Middle East', S Hebblethwaite, April 5, 1956, FO 1110/942/PR10104/52/G.
[51] 'Propaganda in the Middle East.', Alec Kirkbride, January 11, 1957, BBCWAC, R34/1580/3.
[52] Commissioner General (South East Asia) to FO, November 10, 1956; FO to Singapore, 23 November, 1956, TNA FO 953/1608/P10118/72.
[53] 'Record of a Meeting of Mr. Dodds-Parker's Advisory Committee held at the Foreign Office at noon, January 11, 1957, BBCWAC R34/1580/3.

(though IRD helped to fill the gap). Secondly, the RAF decided to reverse the FO's request to take out the transmitters for Cairo Radio. By the time the Crisis was in full swing, there was insufficient time between the FO's discovery of the omission and the cease-fire to rectify the issue.[54] The *Voice of the Arabs* broadcast throughout this period. General Keightley also identified the short notice period before hostilities as especially damaging to public relations – 'We had no time to organise our press representatives, to study the conflicting claims of would be accredited correspondents, or to try out press communications in the light of the length of reports correspondents insisted on sending.'[55] The Foreign Office, like the US State Department, had seen OMEGA as part of a longer game aimed at rehabilitating Nasser. Eden, however, saw in it the opportunity to immediately engage in political – and actual – warfare. The FO information services therefore found themselves marginalised, and fatally asynchronous to the real direction of Eden's strategy.[56]

The Foreign Office thus reached the same conclusion as Vaughan: that the failure of British propaganda in the Middle East was due to a 'policy miscalculation', a fundamental disconnect between the perceived aims of the propagandists and the actual direction of British policy.[57] Vaughan makes further conclusions that require some qualification in light of the following chapters (into a period beyond the scope of his research). Vaughan argues that 'after Suez…an intriguing experiment in the way Britain fought its Middle Eastern propaganda war had been cut short at an early stage…Suez served to undermine IRD's more flexible approach towards the relationship between communism and nationalism in the region.' The result was that '[t]he collapse of Britain's Suez policy during October and November 1956 returned British propaganda strategy to more conventional anti-Communist terrain.'[58] Vaughan concludes that

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[54] Confidential, P F Grey (FO)November 29, 1958, TNA FO 953/1613/P10118/65.
[55] 'Extract from General Keighley's Despatch on Operations in the Eastern Mediterranean Nov/Dec 1956 Part 2', October 11, 1957, TNA FO 1110/982/PR10112/14/G.
[56] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 206.
[57] Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 239.
[58] Vaughan, "Cloak", pp. 78, 76.

'[t]he reordering of the Middle Eastern political landscape after Suez thus produced a reorientation of IRD's priorities towards a narrower focus upon the Soviet Union.'[59]

IRD stepped away from direct confrontation with Nasserism in the Middle East because of policy considerations, over and above any failure at Suez. Britain, largely for financial reasons, wanted to normalise relations with Nasser as quickly as possible. With the above policy consideration in mind, IRD's primary broadcast strategy in the Middle East after Suez aimed to influence local broadcasters, via material carried by the London Press Service and the Transmission 'X' news commentary service. The examination of the Transmission 'X' service in Chapter 5 will show that IRD built on the flexibility it had developed in the years before Suez, and continued to deal with both Nasser and Communism. Whilst an accommodation with Arab nationalism in the Middle East was quickly seen to be desirable, IRD continued to address the preeminent Nasserite propaganda vehicle – Cairo Radio – on a daily basis. Indeed, given that the threat from Cairo extended after Suez to include British interests in North and East Africa, IRD's counter-Nasserite work expanded, rather than reduced, after Suez.

The involvement of ex-IRD personalities in the campaign, and the campaign infrastructure on the ground, were of short-lived duration, and of limited value outside of the crisis. For example, it would be wrong to view the psychological warfare unit under Ralph Murray as anything other than small and task-specific. Suggestions that the unit could become involved in the wider propaganda effort were swiftly rebuffed by Murray:

> As you know, I am warmest advocate of intensification of propaganda, but I cannot (repeat not) advise C-in-C to undertake responsibilities in a matter for which this H.Q. has no organic connexion and for which it is by function and situation totally unfitted. It is quite misleading to imagine that existence of a skeleton Allied psychological warfare section here is relevant to the problem of

[59] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 78.

> British propaganda to combat Nasser's influence in the Middle East or, in the absence of active operations, even in Egypt.[60]

Almost immediately after Anglo-French military action was brought to heel in Egypt, the MoD proposed the creation of a 'covert political warfare group', to be based in Cyprus. Egyptian Radio had only suffered a temporary setback at the hands of allied bombing, and following the cease-fire the ad-hoc psychological warfare unit found itself without a mandate. The MoD encouraged Sefton Delmer to try and reprise his Second World War PWE black propaganda radio activities, this time sowing seeds of distrust between the Arab nations. The FO, Rennie and Murray moved quickly against this idea; the latter was 'extremely doubtful about the wisdom of attempting large scale black propaganda from Cyprus and hoped that it would not be pursued.' Domestic political considerations also played their part: 'The opposition attacks on V.O.B.', wrote Paul Grey of the FO, 'are likely to be nothing compared with what they could do if concentrated on our black activities'; to defuse potential MoD complaints of 'obstruction', Delmer was to be encouraged to make the case against the plan himself, and demur.[61]

Eden was quick to appoint Charles Hill, the Postmaster General, to head a review of the British Information Services following Suez, a post confirmed by Macmillan in January 1957 when he made Hill Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a seat in Cabinet, but no ministerial responsibilities. Whilst Jenks has viewed Hill as a *de facto* Minister of Information,[62] Tony Shaw argues that, without 'control functions', he was nothing of the sort. The effect of Hill's appointment 'was to upgrade the role of propaganda at home and overseas whilst ensuring that ministers and officials spoke with one voice.' Hill would ensure integration of propaganda with policy, and secure increased funding.[63] Hill's actions largely followed the recommendations of the 1953 Drogheda Committee report, which had still not been put into place, and in which,

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[60] Top Secret by Cypher, Ralph Murray (Allied Forces HQ) to Paul Grey (FO), November 13, 1956, TNA FO 1110/947/PR10104/227/G.
[61] 'Covert Propaganda to the Middle East', P F Grey, November 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/948/PR10104/245/G.
[62] Jenks, *Propaganda*, p.149.
[63] Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez, and the mass media: propaganda and persuasion during the Suez crisis* (London, 1996), pp.195, 196.

as noted previously, particular importance was placed on increased staffing and funding for the Middle East and Africa.[64]

There is no doubt that Nasser had won a propaganda victory over the British but, given the ubiquity of anti-imperialist rhetoric to anti-British propaganda, Cairo Radio was quick to emphasise that whilst the British and French withdrawal was a victory for Egypt, imperialism had not been beaten:

> 'My Arab brother, do not say that the conspiracies of the colonialists have ended…Do not succumb to those who say that the aggression of colonialism is dead and buried. If the aggression of colonialism against Egypt has met with utter failure, it still thinks of plotting another aggression by which to secure victory…'[65]

The vituperate outpourings from Cairo Radio on this theme would provide IRD with a continued role in countering Arab nationalist propaganda in the Middle East. Cairo Radio propaganda would extend from this point down into Africa, leveraging anti-Imperialist and pan-African sentiments. It would be paralleled by a surge in interest from the Soviet Union and China. How IRD handled these new commitments, and the department's existing ones in a region where British prestige had been rocked by the Suez Crisis, are discussed over the remaining chapters.

[64] A junior minister, Dennis Vosper, replaced Hill in October 1961. Vosper was not a member of Cabinet, and his appointment signalled a further change in political direction regarding the information services. From 1964 no single minister would have responsibility for the information services. Lee, "Cultural", pp.130-131.
[65] Ahmed Said, broadcasting on the Voice of the Arabs, December 9, 1956, SWB IV, 120, December 11, 1956.

Chapter Four

Into Africa

Goodness knows we are shorn enough of African gambits.[1]

Norman Reddaway (IRD), January 1958

One of the core assertions of this thesis is that IRD expanded its work against the Nasserite brand of Arab nationalism following the Suez Crisis. ICE may have been disbanded, alongside the Egypt Committee that it served, but IRD continued to combat the threat that Arab nationalism posed to British interests in the Middle East and Africa. This threat was considered to be greater than that posed by Communism over much of North and North-East Africa. Whilst IRD's campaign was waged less aggressively, and was narrower in scope than it had been during Suez, it was nonetheless significant. It was predominantly aimed at rebutting the worst excesses of Cairo Radio propaganda, as British policymakers desired a rapprochement with Egypt as quickly as possible. However, as shown in Chapter 7, there are indications that British resolve stiffened towards the end of the period under study, with a partial return to unattributable propaganda directed at Egypt and formulated by IRD. This chapter illustrates IRD's continuing flexibility and development post-Suez in the face of the diverse and fresh challenge presented by Africa.

An examination of IRD's efforts to combat Nasserite propaganda post-Suez makes it clear that the Middle East is only half the picture, and perhaps less than half: Egyptian propaganda targeted Africa as well, and the Communist nations used their influence and association with Egypt to support their own foreign policy drive into Africa. As this thesis seeks to incorporate both regions, it is necessary to provide some background to IRD's early campaign

[1] Minute, N Reddaway, January 28, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/6/G.

in Africa, which paralleled their work over Suez in 1956. Firstly, therefore, this chapter seeks to lay the background for IRD's initial years of direct involvement in Africa and how the department saw the Communist threat to the continent. It will also examine the role of BBC monitoring in Africa. Resisted by the Colonial Office, but reliant on them for information, IRD was denied much of the intelligence and information that supported their research. The department was therefore even more dependent on the BBC's monitoring service than it was in the Middle East – almost wholly so. Monitoring coverage across Africa was far less comprehensive however, and so IRD and the BBC worked in tandem to expand the latter's capability to cover both Soviet and Egyptian broadcasts. Both of these issues have only previously been examined tangentially, if at all.[2]

Preceding Suez, 1956 was the year that the major Communist powers took renewed interest in Africa. As noted in Chapter 2, Soviet foreign policy towards Egypt hoped to exploit that relationship to extend Communist influence into Africa. An unclassified brief authored by IRD in February 1956 on the 'Soviet penetration of Africa' argued that Egypt and the Sudan formed the 'axis' of a new drive into the continent by the Soviets, and that French North Africa was being targeted as a bridgehead from which to spread influence south.[3]

As many African countries headed towards independence, the fear of Communist-supported or -inspired nationalist movements, and the fear of Communist or Communist-leaning governments rising to lead newly independent countries, exercised the Western nations mightily. Africa had by and large existed on the periphery of the Cold War in its early stages. By the late 1950s a number of factors conspired to change this. The increasing industrial capacity and economic muscle of both China and Russia, fuelled by their deteriorating relationship towards each other, enabled the expansion of each both politically and economically via

[2] See Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965".
[3] 'Soviet Penetration of Africa', February 1956, enclosure with H A H Cortazzi (IRD) to W T A Cox (CO), February 9, 1956, TNA CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.

programs of 'trade and aid', cultural exchange, and radio propaganda. How IRD saw this threat forms the second part of this chapter.

IRD's efforts to take a direct role in combatting Communism in Africa were complicated by a continued British imperial presence. The issue was not just the anti-imperialist sentiments caused by occupation. Colonial territories were administered by the Colonial Office and local colonial governments, and at this stage these were anything but convinced of the worth, or relevance, of IRD work towards the nations they controlled. Before 1956, IRD was a client of the CO, providing material on request and working to CO requirements. From 1956 onwards, IRD aimed to take a proactive rather than responsive role. These efforts brought the department into conflict with the CO, who did not agree with IRD's assessment of the Communist threat to the colonies. Thirdly, therefore, this chapter will examine IRD's efforts to establish its own brand of counter-Communist propaganda on the continent, in the face of CO resistance. This resistance undeniably delayed and slowed the commencement of IRD's campaign in Africa. A tentative conclusion is that this delay – across the whole of 1956 and into 1957 – squandered some of the initiative the British held as a colonial power when measured against the Communists' minimal presence on the continent at that time.

The collapse of Britain's reputation following Suez was matched by the dramatic growth of Nasser's prestige. For the nations of Africa, under colonial rule or approaching independence, there were a number of implications. Themes of resistance to colonialism, British fallibility, and nationalism found a ready audience in Africa. Buoyed by the propaganda capital of his victory over Suez, Nasser's expansionist policy began to drive into Africa beyond the Middle East, for the security and political reasons outlined below. That this was possible was due to the broadcast reach of Cairo Radio. The threat from Cairo Radio has been examined in Chapter 2; IRD's response to it is detailed in the following chapter. The final section of this

chapter sets aims to set out the background for Egypt's interest and actions in Africa immediately following Suez

IRD and the Communist threat to Africa

In 1956, as IRD was accelerating considerable resources towards the Middle East, comparatively little was being directed at Africa. In the information field Africa was, by and large, not a Foreign Office concern. Indeed, of the portfolio of regular IRD productions such as the *Interpreter*, 'Facts About' series and others that was distributed across the FO, the FO's African department received just one copy of IRD's 'Developments in the Middle East', and nothing else, in January 1956.[4] This was hardly comprehensive, nor topically relevant. Information work in the African colonies was a CO responsibility.

IRD had to overcome resistance within the CO to their output that bordered on the wilful. Part of the problem was that the CO held most of the cards. Since the CO controlled the information and intelligence apparatus within the colonies, IRD were reliant on them as a source of information, as well as a distributer. IRD work in general was extremely reliant on the compliance of posts to gather information and to assess both the quality and, to what extent this was possible, the impact of IRD material. As the department's Tommy Tucker admitted, 'reaction from posts is the only effective market research we have.'[5] Next to nothing was forthcoming from CO posts in Africa in 1956. Partly this was due to the lack of IRD's usual source of information: at this time there were only two IOs in colonial territories in Africa, and only one – an ex-IRD man – to whom the department looked with any enthusiasm.[6] With a resistant administration, and an absence of IOs and their networks of personal contacts, IRD's

[4] 'Circular reviewing distribution of I.R.D. material to Foreign Office departments', H V W Staff, January 27, 1956, TNA FO 1110/8708PR10111/13/G.
[5] H H Tucker (IRD) to D Roberts (Dakar), June 13, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1303/PR1069/5.
[6] Minute, Hugh Cortazzi, May 31, 1956, FO 1110/958/PR10109/55.

options were limited. Information could not simply be sent to journalists or news offices. Notwithstanding the security implications of forwarding information direct, the recipient editor was hardly likely to print or handle something that had come from an anonymous source.[7]

Though their numbers, and their freedom to operate, expanded over the next few years, IOs in Africa operated on a very uneven playing field, as British officials, writing in 1961, appreciated:

> The effectiveness of Information Services must depend to a large extent on the acceptability of the policies which they promulgate and defend, and Information Officers are likely to be inhibited, in varying degrees according to the country in which they are operating, by the need to explain and justify to the public certain positions which are liable to be unpopular. In view of the very different stages of advancement reached by the various countries in Africa, attention has to be paid also to differences in timing, so that policies warmly advocated in one part of Africa must be more cautiously upheld in others.[8]

Comparatively poorly educated, the concerns of the majority of Africans were with Africa first and foremost. The Cold War was not at this point of significance outside of intellectual circles, and casting any propaganda in the wrong light would only seek to alienate populations for whom different priorities mattered far more. A British paper on information policy in Africa argued that: 'Both on the international scene and in our individual dealings with them, we must make it clear that we approach the peoples of Africa as friends and equals and in no spirit of superiority or condescension; that our partnership with them is important in itself and not merely a weapon in the Cold War'. A failure to manage this distinction was seen by certain British analysts to be a fundamental 'defect' in America's information strategy.[9] Africa was geographically removed from the Soviet Union, thus shorn of the proximity that lent a certain context to anti-Communist propaganda directed at Middle Eastern nations. Portraying

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[7] H H Tucker (IRD) to J W S Corbett (British Embassy, Lomé), May 25, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1411/PR10178/2.
[8] 'Information Policy for Africa', June 30, 1961, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/76.
[9] 'Information Policy Report', F W Marten (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to R H K Marett (FO), May 24, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/20; 'Information Policy for Africa', June 30, 1961, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/76.

the 'threat' from Communism to Africa in the same terms would arguably add weight to the belief that the Cold War was someone else's problem.

These issues were of serious cause for concern in territories either heading for or achieving independence. It is perhaps stating the obvious to point out that IRD's work was shaped by British policy in Africa, but also in a wider, global context. There was perhaps a tension between how the FO and CO interpreted or validated aspects of this policy, yet there was harmony in the overarching aims. Information Officers in East Africa saw that policy in so-called 'emergent nations' thus, and the same applies for the west of the continent:

> All post-war U.K. thinking on information policy has accepted as a major premise that "information" has no validity in its own right but reflects…Government policies. If this has nowhere been explicitly stated, it is implicit in the structure of the government information services…the long-term purposes of the U.K. information effort in East Africa are the same as those of Government policies:
>
> (a) To keep East Africa in the Western and out of the Communist camp;
> (b) To encourage the new governments to continue to look to Britain for moral and material support;
> (c) To maintain and expand markets for British goods.[10]

IRD, and the other practitioners of British information and intelligence work, concentrated their limited resources in Africa on elites.[11] The audience for British propaganda and information work in in the continent was divided by IRD into 3 categories: leaders, the 'up-and-coming [é]volués',[12] and the masses. The first group were the responsibility of diplomatic representatives and their staffs, the second of information officers, and the last group were

[10] This is the original wording. Pencil notes amalgamate (a) and (b) to read '(a) to encourage the new governments to continue to look to Britain for moral and material support, and to keep them out of the Communist camp;', 'Information Officers' Conference, Nairobi, 1961. 'Information Work in Emergent African Countries.' Note by British Information Services, Kenya.', TNA FO 1110/ 1578/PR10585/3.
[11] MI5 trained special branches in colonial territories; M16 trod a complementary path in other territories. Both targeted elite opinion and relationships where possible. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p. 603.
[12] The term évolué (literally 'evolved') was used in a broad sense to describe Africans who had adopted European language, behaviour, norms, etc., particularly as part of the French drive to assimilate colonial Africans into their citizenry.

considered far less important, except with regards to trade unions, for example.[13] American propaganda also prioritised local elites over the wider population, termed 'leadership groups' by the USIA.[14] USIA, it is worth noting, eschewed mass propaganda, focussing on students, intellectuals, educators and the military – much as IRD did – but also paralleled the British Council in providing English-language education. US policy was undoubtedly complicated by the colonial situation. As Kenneth Osgood has written, '[n]owhere were the pitfalls of promoting an anticolonial message while supporting a colonial power more evident than North Africa.' This contradictive position would bedevil American propaganda policy and actions across the continent. America was forced to thread its policy between African suspicion of the USA's support of colonialism, and European suspicion of American support for nationalist movements. The key for American planners was to ensure that nationalism did not turn to extremism or Communism for its realisation, and to do so without alienating their Western allies.[15] Up to 1960, US policy towards sub-Saharan Africa was built around denial of the region to Communist control, 'orderly political evolution', and the continued provision of African supply and markets to Western Europe. It was acknowledged that the tension between nationalism and colonialism was the most significant issue in the region. As a US National Security Council report noted, '[o]ur policies in any field will be of little or no value if we ignore this issue. The problem is enormously complicated and no pat answers are possible.'[16]

IRD recognised 1956 as a tipping point for Communist interest in Africa. There were, the department believed, three pillars of soviet expansionism: economic, political and intellectual. The Soviet economic offensive was now in IRD's opinion 'being carried out on such a scale that they cannot be ignored any longer…The Soviet move into some strategically situated under-

[13] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49.
[14] Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's secret propaganda battle at home and abroad* (Lawrence, 2006), p. 114.
[15] Osgood, *Total Cold War*, pp. 126, 130.
[16] 'Statement of U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara to Calendar Year 1960', enclosure with 'Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council on U.S. Policy South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960', August 23, 1957, NSC 5719/1, FRUS XXI, Africa, Document 24, pp. 78, 79.

developed countries is all the more significant as it is clearly the result of a revision of policy'. Increased extension of credit, 'trade-for-aid' programmes, technical assistance and bilateral trade were motivated by politics, not economics. In the case of Egypt, even if Nasser remained tough on domestic Egyptian Communism, trade links provided ample propaganda benefit to the Soviets. On a more straightforward political front, IRD saw the Soviets also increasingly targeting personalities over parties in Africa – the department agreed that 'leaders rather than creeds' would prove a more effective influence – and the provision of training, education and support to African nationals was increasing to support this. Across Africa, as colonies moved towards independence, there were opportunities for increased diplomatic representation and support of growing trade unions. Alongside the education of African nationals there was a concerted move to generate a discipline of African studies in Soviet academia, and so co-opt the narrative of African history within a Marxist context. This revisionist history would be positioned against the opposing Western narrative of colonialism and occupation in the contest for the alignment of newly independent states across the continent.[17]

The general FO view of the matter was one of concern, and very much in line with that of IRD. The FO reported that the CIA believed that Russia and her satellites were increasingly laying the foundations for a penetration of Africa, but the agency was 'short of direct evidence'. The FO too lacked anything like a smoking gun, and this proved problematic in efforts to convince the CO, who believed they had the right assessment of the situation.[18] From a likely combination of truculent defence of interests considered their sole purview, especially in the climate of decolonisation, and a degree of inexperience in dealing with a fully-fledged Communist propaganda and cultural campaign, the CO stood alone in their analysis.

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[17] 'African Studies in the USSR'; 'Communist Organisations and Communist Parties in Africa (Independent Territories and Foreign Colonial Territories)'; 'Economic Penetration: An Analysis of Soviet Economic Diplomacy (in Particular in Underdeveloped Countries)'; enclosures with L C W Figg (FO) to W T A Cox (CO), August 16, 1956, TNA CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.

[18] The *Interpreter*, February 1956; 'Soviet Penetration of Africa', February 1956;, enclosure with H A H Cortazzi (IRD) to W T A Cox (CO), February 9, 1956; J H A Watson (FO) to C Y A Carstairs (CO), March 23, 1956; Sir Patrick Dean (FO) to C Y Carstairs (CO), June 28, 1956; TNA CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.

The efforts and involvement noted above make it clear that broadcasting constituted a major investment from all sides of the Cold War. Beyond Soviet efforts, Chinese, domestic African and Egyptian broadcasts also presented a danger to Western interests. Prior to 1961, Egyptian broadcasting directed at the countries of North and West Africa, and particularly to the nearby nations of the North East, was of greater concern to the West than that from Communist nations. A US regional conference on Africa, held in Nicosia in August 1961, concluded that

> [w]hile the countries concerned, many with authoritarian regimes and most with low standards of living, were admittedly highly vulnerable to Communist penetration, the consensus of the ambassadors was that the bloc had not registered significant success. The danger was an increasing one, however. The ambassadors from the countries surrounding the UAR (Sudan, Libya, and Somalia in particular) felt that Egyptian propaganda at the present time was more effective and therefore more dangerous to the West than that from the Communists.[19]

Communist cultural and information work in Africa was multi-faceted. It had to be: the cultural penetration of Africa that the French and British had achieved via colonialism – a positive as well as a considerable negative – had no equal for the Communists, and so a concerted cultural drive was necessary. From 1956 the USSR and China stepped up their (largely independent) involvement in the continent markedly. It was also something that on the Soviet side was often executed by proxy, through the cultural and information programmes of East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

In 1956 Mao declared China's support for 'all the national and independent liberation movements not only in Asia but also in Africa and Latin America.'[20] That year, Chinese radio broadcasts to Africa began at a modest 7 hours per week, to Egypt and Central Africa. After a brief hiatus in 1958, these resumed in 1959, and their reach expanded into East, West and South Africa. By 1961, broadcasting in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese, Radio Peking's output

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[19] Memorandum, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Fredericks) to Secretary of State Rusk, August 11, 1961, FRUS XXI (1961-63), Document 2, p. 4.
[20] *DangdaiZhongguowaijiao* [China Today: Diplomacy] (Beijing: Shehuikexueyuan, 1987), p. 128, cited in: Shu Guang Zhang, "Chinese Strategic Culture and the Cold War Confrontations", in Westad, ed, *Reviewing the Cold War: approaches, interpretations, theory* (London, 2000), p. 267.

had swelled to 105 hours a week, by this point equalling total Soviet output of 102 hours.[21] It is clear from these figures why IRD appreciated that China posed such an equivalent threat to Africa as that of the Soviet Union.

Broadcasting was an easy and effective way to reach into Africa, but would not carry the propaganda battle by itself. By the end of 1957, the Soviets had embarked on a programme of aid to under-developed nations, including those in Africa, encompassing both technical and economic assistance. As part of a joint US/UK working group, IRD and the USIA worked to expose for propaganda purposes instances where this aid had proven problematic for the receiving country. Dr Werner Klatt, IRD's economic advisor, noted that the Soviet Union was only preparing the ground for 'economic and political penetration' into Africa. Any issues were therefore rare, and at that stage any examples were often obtained from such sources as made their use for propaganda purposes impractical, or impossible (intelligence assets, for example). The USSR had only recently, and for the first time, achieved a surplus of industrial goods that could be traded to developing countries. This industrial growth fed demand for raw materials, in which developing countries in Africa often found themselves in surplus. The trade born of this situation was likely to increase and diversify, involving such ancillary sectors as processing, banking and insurance. 'In all these fields', noted Klatt, 'the Soviet Union is as inexperienced as its partners, and cases of disappointments are therefore likely to multiply for some time to come.' Klatt caveated that the Soviets had proven to be fast learners in other spheres, however. Ralph Murray's advice was that both Britain and America should 'be careful not to overstate Soviet deficiencies but aim unobtrusively and indirectly to put about the news of the established failures of which we obtain reasonable evidence; in fact we regard this as a job for which it would perhaps be better to use C.I.A. and I.R.D. channels rather than officially issued material.'[22] In

[21] Prybyla, "Communist", p. 1143.
[22] Secret, Ralph Murray to IRD, December 9, 1957; Secret, Werner Klatt (IRD), January 3, 1958; Secret, Ralph Murray to W Barker (Washington), January 7, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1058/PR10109/109/G. That IRD and the CIA

contrast, China's aid and trade with Africa was limited by her commercial infrastructure, geographical remoteness and comparatively limited economic development.[23]

IRD kept a 'memorandum in general terms' regarding the above, kept under constant review, which was from 1958 made available to the Americans. IRD offered the – perhaps obvious – assessment that the Soviet 'bloc's trade with underdeveloped countries has by no means been dictated by commercial considerations only. Political motives have been strong if not overriding.' The timing of trade links, and the selection of partners, all supported this conclusion.[24]

In 1950, China did not merit 'desk' rank at IRD, and was considered only as part of the South/South East Asia and Far East region, which – perhaps surprisingly - was at that time the responsibility of just one officer. A decade later, with the department 'only too aware of the effectiveness of the appeal of Chinese Communism to the uncommitted and underdeveloped areas, especially…Africa', the China desk was in full swing. During the 1950s, IRD noted, the Chinese had achieved a great deal towards industrialising, educating and uniting the country. These efforts and achievements would, it was believed, have great appeal by example to the developing nations of Africa. By late 1960, the growing rift between China and the Soviet Union meant that China, and the threat from Chinese Communism, increasingly became an issue to be addressed separately from the Soviet threat. J V Riley (the IRD officer responsible for the 'Transmission 'X'' news commentary service during its early stages) summed the situation up: IRD 'should train effective fire on Communist Chinese infiltration into Africa. In fact', he asserted, 'we have already begun to do so although we have suffered so far from inadequate

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are mentioned together in such a way certainly speaks to the view that IRD work often stepped beyond the boundaries of information work.

[23] Prybyla, "Communist", p. 1136.

[24] Ralph Murray to W Barker (Washington), January 7, 1958; 'Difficulties and Disappointments encountered in Soviet Trade and Aid', IRD Memo, January 1, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1058/PR10109/109/G.

(though accumulating)…knowledge, and the development of variety of weapons and muzzle velocities in the barrage [*sic*].'[25]

The head of the China Desk at IRD outlined two further difficulties in addressing Chinese cultural propaganda. Firstly, the Chinese invited as many representatives as they could from developing countries to view their achievements first-hand. The effect on an African visitor must be 'staggering' he thought – and it probably was. Secondly, the precarious status of the British mission in China, complicated by continued British relations with Taipei and a delicate relationship with China at the UN, meant that the department was 'forced to be exceedingly careful in the nature of our propaganda on China and Chinese Communism.' With these restrictions in place, the main thrust of IRD's counter to Chinese propaganda was to expose as much as possible the 'human costs' to the Chinese under Communism, and to link this to the inexperience, short-sightedness and authoritarianism of the regime. By the end of 1960 IRD were looking to increase the amount and topicality of output on China for Africa.[26] Contemporary academic analysis noted that 'China's strident denunciations of "imperialism" find a ready response in many African countries as does her appeal to Africa's quest for cultural identity.' 'China's *forte*', it was noted, was 'her revolutionary theory, and the zeal with which it is preached tends to make the Russians look in African eyes like incipient bourgeois.'[27]

BBC Monitoring

Given that all sides invested heavily in broadcasting to Africa, IRD needed a way to keep track of as much of it as they could so that they could adequately respond. The BBC had a highly significant role to play, both as supplier and consumer/transmitter of information. Whilst

[25] Minute, E M Draycott (IRD), November 21, 1960; Minute, J V Riley (IRD), November 9, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1305/PR1072/2.
[26] Minute, E M Draycott (IRD), November 21, 1960; Minute, J V Riley (IRD), November 9, 1960; Ralph Murray (FO) to J H A Watson (British Embassy, Dakar), December 6, 1960; TNA FO 1110/1305/PR1072/2.
[27] Prybyla, "Communist", pp. 1143, 1136.

attempting to build contacts and operations in Africa, IRD were largely forced to make do with the CO's monthly Colonial Intelligence Summary as the major source of information and intelligence for the department, and this was less than satisfactory, as noted below. To supplement the summary, IRD had to rely on 'British periodicals, the journals of the [Communist] front organisations and monitoring summaries'.[28]

In Africa, the monitoring situation was far less favourable than in it was in the Middle East. Across both regions, a BBC survey concluded that the official Arabic broadcasts of the major regional players – Moscow, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan – were reasonably well covered, as were a number of clandestine broadcasts. Less well covered were the broadcasts of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco and Tunisia. Those of the Sudan, Libya, the Gulf States and Albania, Communist China, and Eastern European broadcasts from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany were not monitored at all. Regarding broadcasts into Africa, there was a particular cause for concern, with Cairo-based broadcasts in Swahili and the *Voice of Free Africa* in Swahili inadequately covered, and Cairo broadcasts in Somali, Amharic and Sudanese dialects, and all African stations of interest not monitored.[29]

To address this issue, staffing levels at the BBC's monitoring service at Caversham were increased in 1958 by the addition of three Arabs and one part-time Somali. This was only intended as a stop-gap solution, and the BBC's J G T Sheringham and a team from BBC monitoring set out for Africa to survey for a site on which to erect a supplementary monitoring station to fill in the gaps in Caversham's coverage.[30] All of the East African territories that were surveyed were keen to construct a monitoring station within their borders – all the better to get a quick line on broadcasts to their region. It was in Kenya that the final go-ahead was given for

[28] Hugh Cortazzi, Minute, February 20, 1956, TNA FO 1110/956/PR10109/22/G.
[29] J T G Sheringham (BBC) report (JTGS/SMV), August 14, 1958, in response to questions posed by S J L Oliver (FO) to J T Cambell (BBC), August 8, 1958, BBCWAC E1/1, 470/1.
[30] J T G Sheringham (BBC) report (JTGS/SMV), August 14, 1958, in response to questions posed by S J L Oliver (FO) to J T Campbell (BBC), August 8, 1958; J T Campbell to Director External Broadcasting, December 3, 1958 BBCWAC E1/1, 470/1. Sheringham is a constant presence in correspondence about the BBC's monitoring service. However, all files relating to his activities remain closed at the BBC WAC at Caversham.

construction of the receiving station at Karen, near Nairobi, in December 1959.[31] It should be noted that IRD's relationship with BBC monitoring cut both ways, and IRD would alert the service of possible trends to be aware of, as well as simply receiving their take.[32]

The local monitoring service in Africa was a vital source of material for IRD, local IOs and other organisations, but later developed another use, built on the neutrality and veracity both of the BBC and of the nature of monitoring as a service. The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation received 'a courtesy copy of the local service direct'. In 1963, preliminary efforts were made to provide the same service to Kenya's Special Branch – and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In all three cases this was with a view to independence and the continuation of these institutions under post-colonial governance. 'Africans are more likely to accept the indisputable black-and-white of monitoring than any unattributed brief from a Western political service', wrote the BIS in Kenya, 'and if we could accustom the trainees [of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] to make proper research use of the complete service between now and independence, there is a good chance after independence they would not only accept, but expect, the service…[providing] at least one link between them and the High Commission.'[33]

The BBC would also be used to research for IRD in other ways. Walter Kolarz, Head of the BBC Central Research Unit, was despatched by the corporation to North and West Africa in April 1961 to study African nationalism. His aim was to 'try to find out as much as possible about the ideological content of the principle political movements in the countries which I am visiting, and also something about the organisational structure of the leading parties' as well as a few side projects. Bearing in mind his tour was arranged by, for, and financed by the BBC, the fact that he contacted Hugh Carless of IRD to make the arrangements for contact with local

[31] 'Report on Visit to East Africa of Survey Team from BBC Monitoring Service 1958/1959', undated; W W Morris (GPO Radio Services Department) to Betts, December 4, 1959; BBCWAC E1/1, 470/1.
[32] Minute, J K Drinkall (IRD), March 18, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1666/PR10171/1.
[33] J G McMinnies (BIS, Nairobi) to D A Roberts (IRD), March 27, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1720/PR131/35.

embassies, and presented IRD with a comprehensive report on his findings (of some 40 pages), clearly illustrates the close links – if not a degree of integration – between the BBC and IRD.[34]

The BBC could also be used as cover. In 1961, IRD worked hard to insinuate a representative into Mali Radio. The idea was to fund a visit by Evelyn Gibbs, a French-speaker with considerable broadcasting experience, to Mali for a fortnight, under the auspices of the BBC. Ostensibly, she was there to collect material for the corporation. Her real objective, however, was to try and obtain a contract as a technical advisor with Radio Mali. She was to 'exercise a constructive influence in a sphere…the Communists are trying to control.' This was, as the department appreciated, a 'long shot'. Despite considerable efforts over 8 months, with arrangements made for funds to be rerouted through a front organisation, and the co-option of the BBC in the initial effort, the position with Mali Radio never emerged. This was not the only such attempt. There were concurrent efforts to subsidise Swiss journalists to set up a Mali Press Agency, but the records of this remain closed.[35]

The IRD-BBC relationship was not all encompassing, and IRD had no direct access to, or contact with, the BBC's General Overseas Service (GOS), which covered all of English-speaking Africa and much of Francophone Africa. The GOS addressed itself to territories that fell under the jurisdiction of either the CO or the CRO – neither of whose information sections had access to the GOS, whether through omission or precedent. Roberts of IRD was keen to get IRD material into a service that covered the majority of the population of sub-Saharan Africa. There is a sense of Roberts' feelings on the matter when he describes the 'content of the G.O.S. programmes…[as] still designed for nostalgic expatriates of slightly lower than average intelligence.' Roberts conceded that such émigrés were 'as much entitled to a radio programme as anybody else', but given the weight of resources the Communists were directing on Africa, it

[34] 'African Nationalism Between East and West', report on Duty Visit to North and West Africa by Walter Kolarz (April 14-May 20, 1961); Walter Kolarz (BBC CRU) to Hugh Carless (IRD), March 17, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1436/PR10555/4.
[35] Secret Memorandum, H M Carless, April 21, 1961; Minute, signature unclear, December 7, 1961; FO 1110/1408/PR10172/19/G; See FO 1110/1408.

was worth debating whether IRD should perhaps 'seek to inject at least some of our thinking on African political and economic matters into the General Overseas Service.'[36]

Colonialism and the Colonial Office

With no comparable department within the CO to the FO's IRD, up to 1956 the CO had drawn such material as it required from the department. However, the CO believed that IRD had consistently pushed for increased use of their material to an extent that was quite inappropriate. It was, complained Carstairs of the CO,

> no business of theirs, since we and not the Foreign Office are responsible for counter-communist policy and its execution in respect of the Colonies: but I.R.D. conceive themselves as in some sense the keeper of H.M.G's conscience in the matter and have never taken kindly the [CO's] doctrine…We cannot allow either that the Foreign Office should be determinants of our counter-Communist activities…or that the extent and efficacy of our counter-Communist efforts are to be simply measured by the amount of I.R.D. material that we manage to dispose of.'[37]

Paralleling the push into Africa by the Communist powers, IRD made plain their desire for direct involvement in countering this move. The department laid out to the CO their assessments noted earlier. There were differences of opinion within the Colonial Office as to how seriously to view IRD's pronouncements. The negative extreme was exemplified by the CO's Dixon Barton, who saw no evidence of the 'new Soviet drive on Africa' announced by IRD, and wanted to see the evidence on which IRD was basing its analysis. Barton's view of the department was hardly complimentary; this was, to him, another chapter in what appears to have been a contretemps of some long standing. Barton reported that there had been difficulties '[a] year or two ago…with that department of the Foreign Office which literally saw a Communist behind every gooseberry bush, and the paper now sent to us is another instance of crying "wolf".

[36] 'I.R.D. Liaison with the B.B.C. General Overseas Service', D A Roberts (IRD), February 12, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1720/PR131/7.
[37] Minute, C Y C Carstairs (CO), April 20, 1956, CO 1035/117/ISD/127/03.

(Indeed, I regard it as perilously near a fake).' Barton did not believe that he was being complacent: for him, the evidence was that in 1955 there was a *reduction* in the threat from Communism in Britain's African colonies, and the evidence deployed by IRD was simply a misreading of perfectly understandable and regular diplomatic moves by the Soviets. It was only after considerable insistence by both the FO and the JIC that Barton was prepared to contact posts regarding their concerns.[38]

The Foreign Office had raised Colonial Office hackles by discussing the matter, on a consensus arrived at by the FO/JIC, and without CO consultation, with the governments of the other African colonial powers and with the US. Chafing at possible departmental 'embarrassment', convinced that the JIC – who broadly agreed with IRD – could not see the issue in 'a detached and rational way', and frustrated with the FO's analysis and actions, N D Watson of the CO saw that the department needed 'to put our foot down quite flatly on all this nonsense'. The CO should warn colonial governors to keep their eyes open, and consider that a wholly sufficient stance to take.[39] The CO subsequently met with the FO, MI5 and MI6, and a combined decision was made to draft a memorandum restating Communist doctrine, detailing the changes in techniques and methods of Communist expansion and subversion, explaining the establishment of a Communist 'bridgehead' on the continent in North Africa and the Congo, and exploring how the Communist effort was likely to intensify. This was a moderate concession however. It should be noted that this did not tie the CO or colonial governments to taking any action. C Y Carstairs, the CO representative at the meeting believed that there had been 'little concrete evidence to support the Foreign Office thesis of a new drive on Africa'.[40]

IRD had much more success in achieving a meeting of minds over the threat from Cairo. IRD work had been seen already by the CO as 'very valuable' in tracking the Indian

[38] Minute, J Barton (CO), February 14, 1956; Minute, Barton, April 20, 1956; TNA CO 1035/18/ISD61/01.
[39] Minute, N D Watson (CO), April 26, 1956, TNA CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.
[40] Minute, C Y Carstairs (CO), July 12, 1956, TNA CO 1035/17/ISD61/01.

government's activities towards British colonial territories. As early as 1954 the CO had decided that IRD should open a file on Egyptian influence in Colonial territories, and that it was 'essential that all the depts. concerned should keep IRD informed of every gobbet of information that comes their way.'[41] It was the Communist threat that was the source of the tension between the CO and IRD.

In 1956, IRD's efforts to involve the CO in counter-Communist work, and requests for information and intelligence, had been met with the bureaucratic equivalent of a blank stare. The CO had its own Information Department, and its head, W T A Cox, had clear views on IRD's anti-Communist work. The populations of the Colonies, he believed, had little interest in Communism, or in free material on the subject. It would be, he asserted, 'practically impossible' to get material published. Cox resisted IRD on a practical level, too. He argued that the CO did not have the resources to produce intelligence for IRD, or monitor to what use, if any, the department's material was put. IRD's editorial advisor was moved to conclude that

> …what Mr Cox says confirms what we have long believed, but without definite evidence: the Colonial Office, or at any rate such reaches of it as Mr. Cox penetrates, has no intention of carrying on anti-Communist work; few facilities for doing it if it wanted to; and little intention of creating any. It therefore seems to me that the Foreign Office has either to tackle the matter at a much higher level, or abandon any attempt to do substantial and effective anti-Communist work in the Colonies.[42]

Hugh Cortazzi concluded, not unsurprisingly, that given 'the increasing Soviet emphasis on the anti-Colonial theme', the editorial team's conclusions were 'disturbing.'[43]

In February 1956, Douglas Dodds-Parker, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the FO, wrote to David (Lord) Lloyd, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, to urge him to consider further use of IRD material. Dodds-Parker stressed that the effect of IRD

[41] Minute, June 25, 1954; Minute, September 7, 1954; TNA CO 1035/20/S811 (signatures unclear).
[42] Secret Minute, Editorial Advisor (IRD) to Hugh Cortazzi, March 5, 1956, TNA FO 1110/956/PR1019/31.
[43] Secret Minute ' I.R.D. Material and the Colonies', Hugh Cortazzi (IRD), March 7, 1956, TNA FO 1110/956/PR10109/31.

material abroad would be enhanced if it was supported by a similar campaign across the Colonies, and noted the Prime Minister's particular emphasis on the utility of counter-subversion measures in less developed countries. There was a need to get a comprehensive strategy in place before independence was granted.[44] This final point was essentially the policy that informed IRD work in pre-independence nations. Lloyd replied that much IRD material was already used and that in his opinion current arrangements between the CO and IRD were satisfactory. IRD material was distributed where and when the CO deemed it appropriate, Lloyd said, but the department's material was 'naturally not often aligned to the situation which presents itself in individual territories.' Norman Reddaway found this response 'exculpatory'; Lloyd's letter would have been encouraging 'if the picture it paints of cooperation between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office in the field of anti-Communist propaganda squared with the facts…their attitude remains both dilatory and complacent.' It was in his view hardly surprising that IRD material failed to align with the needs of CO posts, when they were so unwilling to share intelligence or engage with the perceived Communist threat. It was Reddaway's opinion that Ministerial action would be needed to improve the situation.[45]

Information work cuts both ways, and CO constraints meant that IRD were forced to rely on the CO's monthly Colonial Intelligence Summary as their main source of information. 'The more I read of these reports the more I am impressed by their inadequacy', noted Cortazzi, drily. Extending over 26 pages by the time Cortazzi made this observation, the report was only of limited interest to IRD. As if to illustrate its inadequacy, one piece contained within was in fact drawn from IRD's own information material.[46]

The CO was even obstructive towards projects they appeared to sanction, as the protracted process of approving IRD's *Handbook on Communism* makes clear. IRD, with the CO's

[44] Douglas Dodds-Parker to D Lloyd (CO), March 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/957/PR10109/48/G.
[45] David Lloyd (CO) to Douglas Dodds-Parker (FO), April 24, 1956; G F N Reddaway (IRD) to Mr Grey and Mr Dean, May 22, 1956; TNA FO 1110/957/PR1019/48/G.
[46] Minute, Hugh Cortazzi (IRD), January 4, 1957; Minute, M Turney (IRD); 'Colonial Intelligence Summary No. 11', November 1956, TNA FO 1110/1055/PR10109/1/G.

agreement, worked to produce the handbook for distribution to officials in colonial governments, and submitted the final draft for approval on February 4, 1955. The CO returned this draft 'with a request for further amendments' over ten months later, on December 22. IRD resubmitted the handbook on January 24, 1956. It was not until after a further ten months, on October 1956, that the draft was accepted, some 20 months after its original submission.[47]

Having only two information officers in Africa as of mid-1956 – and Colonial Office ones to boot – was a constraint on IRD. Of the two, McMillan, based in the Gold Coast, had by this point produced only one report, and that, in the view of IRD, was 'disappointing to say the least'. Colin MacLaren, the IO in Nigeria, was ex-IRD – one of two contracted officers that made up the editorial section in the late 1940s[48] – and accordingly held in much higher esteem. MacLaren was 'doing well', but suffered from a paucity of local information from which to draw – and a dearth of British sourced information on Communism in Nigeria. This latter fact Cortazzi found 'really astounding.' MacLaren used the majority of IRD material to inform the local information office – he did not believe it was suitable for distribution. To clarify the point here, MacLaren was largely on IRD's side, and so there was clearly some issue with the material he was being sent. Where MacLaren disagreed with the general CO line was over whether any threat existed at all. Even so, MacLaren believed Communism was a future, rather than current, danger. Cortazzi saw this as underplaying the facts.[49] MacLaren's views were much more positive than some at the CO, however. The CO's Barton was unequivocal: 'I wonder whether there are in Nigeria 300 Communists in the 32 million population.' Barton feared that

[47] Minute, 'Communism and the Colonies', G F N Reddaway, May 18, 1956, TNA FO 1110/957/PR10109/48/G; Minute H A H Cortazzi, October 19 and November 9, 1956, TNA FO 1110/956/PRPR10109/95/G.
[48] and possibly later, though this is unclear. John Cloake, letter to Andrew Defty, October 3, 2002 (unpublished), author's copies of personal correspondence.
[49] Minute, Hugh Cortazzi, May 31, 1956; Minute, Mr Speares, June 11, 1956; Minute, Hugh Cortazzi, June 26, 1956; Anti-Communist Propaganda in Nigeria, undated, but the first half of 1956, FO 1110/958/PR10109/55.

MacLaren's assessment of the Communist threat in Nigeria would 'lead to a logomachy with the IRD' and that his view was 'not authoritative.'[50]

By mid-1956, requests for intelligence and specimen propaganda continued to elicit 'an almost complete lack of interest' from the CO. The CO refused to let its Public Relations Officers (who performed work analogous to IOs) become involved in anti-Communist work,[51] and the department obstructed the work of MacLaren and McMillan. Both IOs stressed the need for up-to-date information, information that IRD were making available to the CO but that was still not being distributed to the IOs. IRD raised concerns at the lack of interest in anti-Communist books reported by the CO; the IOs replied that there was plenty of interest. Both stated that they 'reported in detail' their use of IRD material to the CO. These reports did not make it back to IRD – and were reports that in any case the CO had not asked the IOs to make. Despite the CO's assertions to the contrary, it was the opinion of MacLaren in Nigeria that political immaturity and the delight of a dependent people in seeing the British countered left the country open to the influence of Communist propaganda. In the Gold Coast, McMillan saw the pre-independence situation in the country as the 'calm before the storm'.[52]

In spite of the above, MacLaren at least began to make headway. By October 1956 he was forwarding such IRD material as had been provided through the CO to 'key chaps', with what seems a highly positive reception. He had also forwarded to select recipients a variety of Background books and imprintless booklets, and there had been 'a good response.' IRD's book series had been sent, where the subject was departmentally relevant, to various regional and federal ministers. School principals were also targeted, alongside editors and other opinion-formers. MacLaren broadcast a weekly 15-minute world-affairs commentary, which always contained at least one anti-Communist segment, and he was getting RIO and IRD material

[50] Minute, J Barton (CO) May 3, 1956, TNA CO 1035/121/ISD 127/14/01.
[51] Minute: 'Communism and the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 13, 1956, TNA FO 1110/959/PR10109/66/G.
[52] 'Meeting with United Kingdom Information Officers from the Gold Coast, Nigeria and Trinidad', H A H Cortazzi, June 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/959/PR10109/60.

placed in the printed news. On a small scale, it was clear that MacLaren was pressing forward with IRD material through the department's traditional channels.[53]

In Nigeria, and the Gold Coast before independence, IRD viewed its relationship with MacLaren and McMillan as 'fairly satisfactory'. The same was not the case with the other colonial territories in Africa and the Middle East. Some Colonial Governors, it was reported, held 'rather old fashioned pro-Consular ideals.'[54] The relatively autonomous nature of many Colonial governments, tied to the PROs' responsibility to local governors or ministers, was a clear barrier to the acceptance, let alone distribution, of IRD material. Some PROs were locally born, and so could not be trusted (on a security basis) with sensitive work. The trick, then, was to get some additional, compliant, IOs in place. This was unlikely to happen while Cox remained in charge of the CO's information department, and so it must have been with some relief that IRD greeted his departure as the year came to a close.

By October 1956, Tucker in particular was convinced that further meetings with the CO would serve no purpose.[55] But then the following month Cox was posted to Somaliland, and replaced by J W Stacpoole, with whom Cortazzi had been to school. 'I am sure there will be great improvements', declared Cortazzi,[56] and his faith was well placed; Stacpoole was a breath of fresh air as far as IRD was concerned. Interested in IRD work, and cooperative, Stacpoole arranged for all IRD material to be forwarded to IOs as soon as it was received – and (cautiously) distributed elsewhere. The gathering and supply of information to IRD was a function of the Political Departments of the CO, yet Stacpoole was at least able provide copies of Colonial newspapers and certain annual reports. However, this fragmentation of responsibility, and the significant independence of Colonial Governments from the CO

[53] C F MacLaren (CO) to W T A Cox (CO), October 4, 1956, TNA FO 1110/960/PR10109/95; C F MacLaren (CO) to S H Evans (Head of Information Dept., CO), October 11, 1956, TNA FO 1110/960/PR10109/100/G.
[54] 'Colonial Territories', H A H Cortazzi, March 20, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1056/PR10109/33; 'IRD Work in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, December 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/1055/PR10109/7/G.
[55] 'I.R.D. Work in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, October 11, 1956, TNA FO 1110/960/PR10109/95/G.
[56] Minute H A H Cortazzi, October 19 and November 9, 1956, TNA FO 1110/956/PRPR10109/95/G.

continued to be issues, as did the attitude of local governors and PROs.[57] There remained fundamental disagreements over method, too. For example the CO and colonial governors would not accept any material that criticised British policy – something that IRD believed would lend balance to propaganda and thus help to win African confidence. [58]

In the East African territories of Kenya, Uganda and Nyasaland, the resistance to publishing anti-Communist propaganda – on the basis that it may inform rather than warn – disappeared under Stacpoole, and anti-Communist articles were carried in local newspapers from that point. In West African Nigeria, March 1957 was a 'record month' for the information office, with 100 articles published, of which 17 were anti-Communist in content.[59] Cooperation with America was also increasing. Whilst the USIA, Stacpoole reported, had 'acquired a reputation for insistent and unskilful anti-communist propaganda' in Nigeria, this meant British information work was welcomed as a useful 'counterweight' to that of the Americans. Stacpoole was firm on the need for cooperation. '[T]he hunger for reading matter and the curiosity of Nigerians about the outside world is increasing faster than we can hope to satisfy it with the resources which are likely to be available to us', he noted. Coordinating resources with the Americans seemed the only way to meet such demand.[60]

By mid-1957, though intelligence gathering remained an issue, the outlook for IRD was generally positive. From this point IRD began to contribute to CO publications, provide more material through RIO Beirut to African territories, and to assist the CO in clearing and purchasing book rights.[61]

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[57] 'IRD Work in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, December 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/1055/PR10109/7/G.
[58] Minute, 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 31, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65.
[59] C F MacLaren, (CO Nigeria) to J F Stacpoole (CO), April 17, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1056/PR10109/47.
[60] 'General notes on British information services in West African Colonial Territories', J W Stacpoole, June 1958, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/57.
[61] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 19, 1957; 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 29,1957; TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65.

At the same time the CO outlined plans to create UK information posts in Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda by the start of 1958, and several regions of Nigeria would receive posts within 2 years with MacLaren in a general supervisory role.[62] The first of these, Hugh Young, began work at the UKIO in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, in November 1957; he struck Cortazzi as 'both intelligent and keen.'[63] With more IOs in place, increased output on Africa was reliant on IRD streamlining their communications to the CO. In Norman Reddaway's words, IRD output would 'not be very topical if we have to rely on the forgetful charity of four different departments of the Foreign Office'. However, use of the Foreign Office's Permanent Under-Secretary's Department as a point of contact was seen as workable.[64]

By August 1957, the CO was sending copies of all relevant CO printed material to Rennie at IRD. By October, Stacpoole was forwarding copies of inward and outward telegrams he thought would be of interest.[65] By January 1958, IRD's relationship with Stacpoole was considered to be sufficiently strong that the department could rely on him 'to do what he can for our material.' However, the situation was not wholly resolved in IRD's favour going forward. There remained in the CO the prevalent view that dissemination of anti-Communist propaganda might arouse interest in Communism. This was, to Cortazzi and IRD

> a dangerous misconception. In Colonial territories discontented intellectuals, for instance, even though unsympathetic to Communism may well become tools of the Communists without even realising the fact. To deal with this kind of situation the earliest possible education in the realities of international affairs is essential. We have frequently stressed this point to the Colonial Office but we have had little success in getting it accepted.[66]

IRD began pressing for direct involvement in Africa from the beginning of 1956. It was not until the replacement of Cox by Stacpoole at the end of that year that there was any sign that

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[62] Minute, 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 31, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65.
[63] Minute, H AH Cortazzi, November 21, 1956, TNA FO 1110/1058/PR10109/92.
[64] Minute, G F N Reddaway, August 1, 1957; TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65.
[65] Minute, H A H Cortazzi, August 27, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65; J W Stacpoole (CO) to H A H Cortazzi, October 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65/A.
[66] Minute H A H Cortazzi, January 8, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/3.

they would get their way – even the involvement of one of the FO's parliamentary under-secretaries, Dodds-Parker, had not elicited any shift in CO policy. It was not until early 1957 that significant progress was made in the volume of IRD material being used by CO posts, not until the end of 1957 that the number of IOs began to increase, not until 1958 that IRD began to be wholly satisfied with the cooperation they received. Given that the British enjoyed an unparalleled position in Colonial nations by default, CO resistance meant that IRD could not leverage that position to gain an early advantage over the Communists. It is impossible to be certain whether this had any long-term implications, but it seems reasonable to draw the conclusion that at some level it did. IRD's increasing agitation with the situation illustrates that they at least were convinced they could have turned in profitable work during this period. Given the limited timescale IRD were operating on during this stage of their campaign – preparing the ground before independence – the delay of almost two years constitutes a significant portion of the time available to achieve the department's aims.

Egypt in Africa

In the climate of the Cold War and Europe's withdrawal from empire, the role of the Arabs in Africa had, in a certain sense, turned full-circle. Just as culpable as Western states in the African slave trade, by the 1950s and 1960s they were thrown into stark contrast with the nations of the West, recast as supporters and enablers of African liberation, independence and unity. European, Christian influence had somewhat checked the spread of Islam in East Africa; in the West, it spread much more widely. Arabic language, too, heavily influenced the most widespread, non-European languages of Swahili and Hausa.[67]

[67] Mazrui, "Black Africa", pp. 725-727.

Trade and religion guaranteed Arab involvement in Africa. Egypt, so dependent on the Nile throughout its history, focussed herself primarily on the Sudan – the river's source – until Sudanese independence in 1956. This in any case drove Egyptian interest down into the African continent nearly to the equator. Freed from the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, under which it had been co-administered since the turn of the century, Sudan retained its strategic importance in developing Egyptian strategy, which saw in Africa a direct correlation between decreasing Western influence and increased Egyptian security.[68] 'The Nile is the artery of life of our country', wrote Nasser. '[Sudan's] boundaries extend deep into Africa…We cannot stand aside in face of what is taking place in Africa on the assumption that it does not concern or affect us.'[69]

Indeed, the centrality of the Nile to the fortunes of Egypt had been recognised by the British during the Suez Crisis. *Scant* 'black' radio broadcasts on 25 September 1956 observed that if Britain set aside Egypt's rights to the waters of the Nile, assured under international agreement, Egyptian cotton – and food – crops would fail, leaving Egypt 'ruined' and her people starved.[70] The British flirted briefly with the idea of leveraging the 'hydropolitical' potential of the river to bolster the British position vis-à-vis the canal, by diverting or reducing the river's flow through Uganda (a British territory), or by increasing upstream usage in the Sudan. These were both long-term plans that stalled in relative infancy once the interests of other Nile basin nations were fully taken into account, but were seriously considered by elements of both the FO and the CO.[71]

As Western-Egyptian relations deteriorated, Egyptian strategists saw the African nations surrounding Sudan as 'bases of influence', as one historian has put it, from which to bring

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[68] Tareq Y. Ismael, "The United Arab Republic in Africa", *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1968), p. 175.
[69] Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution: Book One* (Cairo, 1955), pp. 69-70.
[70] NAPRO [TNA] PREM 11/1149, SCANT No. 44, 25 September, 1956 cited in Vaughan, *Failure*, p. 216.
[71] See Terje Tvedt, *The River Nile in the Age of the British: Political Ecology and the Quest for Economic Power* (London, 2004), Chapter 7 (pp. 300-318).

pressure against Western colonial interests.[72] Simply put, if the Africans could eject the Western powers from Africa, good for them – but all to the good for Egypt, too. Mohamed Heikal, editor of the Egyptian, Nasserite newspaper *Al-Ahram*, was convinced that the fate of Egypt was linked to that of the African nations moving towards independence. Egypt 'should be associated with the anti-imperialist movement', he wrote. 'In Africa itself this existing and necessary association is not only a matter of principle but is a matter of security and protection.' 1955 and 1956 would prove to be catalysts for Nasser's push for influence in Africa: the Bandung Conference of 1955 would inspire Nasser's role as a spokesman for African nationalism, Sudanese independence would provide the imperative for involvement, and Suez would grant Nasser the status to make his voice heard.[73] 'Nasser', contemporary comment noted, 'was quick to become Africa's herald of neutralism.'[74]

In 1956 the Egyptians set up an African Affairs section within their Foreign Office, tasked with developing strategy for the continent. African bureaus, each associated with the nationalist movements of individual African nations, were later created to foster nationalist, anti-Western sentiment – in large part through their use of Cairo Radio facilities. At the end of 1957, an African Association was established to coordinate the bureaus and develop relationships with nationalist movements that would continue past independence, with the hope of shaping the future direction of those nations. These moves were paralleled by a political drive into Africa that saw Egyptian embassies in ten African states by 1960 (up from 2 in 1952); in 1965 this had grown to 22.[75] A concerted effort to develop influence through education meant that, at a time when Egypt was limiting university places for its own citizens, their doors were thrown open to students from African nations.[76]

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[72] Ismael, "United", p. 176.
[73] Mohamed Heikal, *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), December 24, 1969, p. 1, cited in Ismael, "United", pp. 176-177.
[74] Baulin, *Arab*, p. 67.
[75] Ismael, "United", pp. 178-180.
[76] Baulin, *Arab*, p. 51.

As Tareq Ismael has argued, the *de facto* alliance in foreign policy between the Soviet Union and Egypt allowed the former to offer support and aid to African nations on the back of Cairo's connections, and to involve itself directly in the continent. Via the African Association, the Soviets could establish relationships with nationalist movements, and so provide aid, issue propaganda and offer scholarships. Nasser could use the weight of Soviet support to 'give potency' to Egyptian African policy.[77]

Nasser and the UAR courted African opinion on three fronts. The first leveraged the concept of Pan-Africanism, fuelled by Cairo Radio rhetoric, which sought to locate Egypt within an African continent viewed as a whole, defined and united entity. This paralleled views such as that of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, who saw Algerians (for example) as fellow Africans. The second played to concepts of Afro-Asianism, seeking again to foster links between the Arab Middle East and Africa. Finally, UAR propaganda extolled the history of the struggle and successes of Egypt and the Arabs 'in the vanguard of anti-Imperialism in the Third World'.[78] M Abdel-Kader Hatem, Egypt's information minister, sums the situation up well: 'President Nasser and the Egyptian People did all they could to foster the cause of African freedom, which was ably championed by the Egyptian information media.'[79]

There were two distinct Afro-Asian influences on Africa. The first was (in IRD's words) the 'relatively respectable neutralist Bandung philosophy, which manifests itself mainly through the activities of the "Afro-Asian Group" at the United Nations'. The second, of almost infinitely more concern to IRD, was the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Committee (AAPSC). The AAPSC was a vehicle for the UAR to extend its influence in Africa, both politically and culturally. Its Permanent Secretariat was based in Cairo, and funded by both China and the Soviet Union as its anti-colonial stance and rhetoric served all sides equally. Though in 1959

[77] Ismael, "United", pp. 185-188.
[78] Mazrui, "Black Africa", p. 733.
[79] Hatem, *Information*, p. 171.

links between the AAPSC and the pan-Africanist movement were tenuous, IRD was concerned that the AAPSC would make 'persistent efforts to influence the development of pan-Africanism' and take advantage of the anti-Colonialist sentiment which was a genuine point of agreement between the two movements. Cairo was a 'rallying point for African extremist politicians and exiles', and was widely believed to be 'a sounding-board for propaganda and political action in Africa'. Fearing that the AAPSC would work to blur the distinction between Afro-Asian and pan-African movements, IRD argued that exposing the AAPSC for what it was whilst promoting those areas of pan-Africanism that did not harm the West was necessary to provide an effective counter.[80]

IRD's conclusions regarding pan-Africanism were more thoughtful – it could not be prevented in any case, and was 'not basically hostile to the West, save on the colonial issue.' Britain and the other colonial powers would need to be as sympathetic as possible to the movement. If pan-Africanism could be cultivated, it could provide 'an internal defence' against influence from both Communism and from Egypt; if the colonial powers failed to cultivate the movement and alienated it instead, it 'could become a vehicle for Soviet subversion instead of providing a barrier against it.'[81] American information services also believed that one of the most effective tools against Communist penetration in Africa was development of a 'sense of national interest' amongst Africans.[82] It goes without saying that this accommodation with the movement did not mean that the sustained rhetoric from Cairo did not need to be addressed.

[80] Draft, 'Afro-Asian Influence on Africa', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G.
[81] IRD noted that pan-Africanism was a somewhat artificial construct when applied across Africa as a whole, but did have attraction for countries on both sides of the Sahara. Draft, 'Pan-African Movements', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G.
[82] R D Clift (UK Delegation to NATO) to D A Roberts (IRD), January 11, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1564/PR10554/80.

Conclusion: The first years of IRD in Africa

Though there was both Soviet and Chinese involvement in Cairo's domestic and foreign policy, and (as Tareq Ismael noted above) an apparent harmony in policy aims towards Africa, this was no cosy relationship, and in the propaganda sphere much depended on the UAR's aims at the time. As historian Jacques Baulin wrote in 1962, '[p]raise and criticism of the U.S.S.R. have followed each other with bewildering suddenness ever since 1959.'[83]

Indeed, by mid-1959 Nasser and Khrushchev's relationship had deteriorated markedly. Cracks had begun to appear with the division of support along nationalist and Communist lines in post-revolutionary Iraq. One early source of tension was the refusal of Nasser to hand over to the Soviets documents liberated from the Baghdad Pact offices following the Iraqi revolution. Khrushchev had attacked Nasser during the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party in January-February 1959 for a failure to appreciate the inevitable progression of Egyptian socialism towards Communism. Regular public sniping between the two leaders preceded an exchange of letters beginning in April 1959 that brought things to a head. Khrushchev condemned Nasser's interference in the affairs of the other Arab nations, and decried Egyptian nationalist rhetoric that argued against Soviet aid. Khrushchev offered to withdraw Soviet aid if it was no longer required. For his part, Nasser argued that the disparate Communist parties across the Arab states were actively working against Arab nationalism, and so had to be countered, even if this meant Soviet approbation.[84]

The issue of colonialism was such a potent theme to use against the British, that propaganda from both Communist and Arabic sources exploited it. A broadcast from Radio Moscow in 1959 conflated every issue by asserting that, '[i]mperialism is not only military

[83] Baulin, *Arab*, p. 72.
[84] Heikal, *Nasser*, pp. 135-143; Heikal, *Sphinx*, p. 101.

conquest and economic enslavement, it is also strangulation of culture'.[85] That the issue was so clearly divisive meant that Egypt, too, could make propaganda hay even to the benefit of the Communists:

> 'Tell me, my dear listeners: the hardships, difficulties, oppression and distress we experience in our countries, who is causing them to us…Who are dominating East, Central, Western and South Africa…Who are oppressing, persecuting and killing the peoples of these parts of Africa, are they the Communists or the democratic States?'[86]

Contrastingly, the British Consulate General in Somalia noted in 1959 'the strident cries emanating recently from Cairo Radio and Egyptian newsreels denouncing Communism', and with a degree of irony noted as a consequence that the Consulate found itself 'Egypt's collaborators in this matter'.[87] Through Cairo Radio's semi-clandestine *Voice of Free Africa,* broadcast in Swahili, the distinction between imperialism and Communism often fell away (in, it has to be said, a mildly confusing fashion) to the point that both issues were dealt with hand-in-hand, as in the following message, broadcast in 1961:

> What we hate is to see communism in East Africa. We are against this in our countries. If this happens, then the imperialists will have a very good chance to destroy us and all that we have been struggling for for many years… We should all unite to fight against the imperialists and stooges. We should also fight against those who want to bring communism to our countries. We don't want to be ruled by the pigs, the Americans, the British, the Belgians and others…We hate a government controlled by the stooges and don't want to be ruled by one. We don't want to have a government which will serve the communists. We want our countries to form good governments by and for Africans themselves. We want to be free.[88]

As Cairo Radio's reach spread across the Middle East and Africa, Egyptian, and later UAR, propaganda leveraged Islam and concepts of pan-Arabism, pan-Africanism and Afro-

[85] 'From a talk entitled: "Afro-Asian Writers in the Struggle for Peace and National Independence"', January 3, 1959: Paper No.4, 'Extracts from Broadcasts by Radio Moscow in English, January 1st – 31st 1959', BBCWAC, E1/2, 434/1.
[86] Exert from Cairo Radio broadcast in Swahili, April 28, 1957, BBCSWB IV, 233, April 30 1957.
[87] C J H Keith (British Consulate General, Somalia) to W Wilson (IPD), May 20, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1207/PR1071/1.
[88] Voice of Free Africa in Swahili, 17.00 GMT, March 3, 1961, BBCSWB IV, II, 582/B/2, BBCWAC.

Asian solidarity deep into Africa, in an effort to erode both Western and Communist influence. Britain was unable to counter it in kind. The ubiquity of Cairo Radio in North and East Africa meant it *had* to be addressed, despite the fact that British *realpolitik* required a rapid normalisation of relations with Nasser, and a hands-off policy towards UAR propaganda. IRD was forced to adapt, and the result was the Transmission 'X' news commentary service detailed in the following chapter. This proved so successful it would be adopted as IRD's foremost anti-Communist tool in Africa, once developed. What Cairo propaganda espoused – *ad nauseum* – was anti-colonialism, as did the Communist powers to what by sheer force of presence had to be a lesser extent. What is surprising, then, is that IRD had to fight hard to bring the colonial administration on side to counter it.

1956 was a significant year across the Middle East and Africa within the context of the Cold War. The Soviet Union took a renewed interest in Africa, and Egypt, too, began culturally and politically to penetrate far deeper into the continent than before. For IRD, 1956 was the year that the department expanded its remit to counter Arab nationalism, and IRD pushed hard against the Colonial Office for a direct role in the colonies. A limited information infrastructure meant that IRD draw heavily on, and helped develop, the BBC's expanded monitoring service across Africa. The following chapter will again consider the threat to British interests from Cairo Radio, this time in more detail, and examine IRD's use of the London Press Service, the utility of which provided the infrastructure and inspiration for the development of Transmission 'X'.

As noted above, the recalcitrance of WTA Cox, even in the face of sustained and high-level FO pressure, must have frittered away at least some of the advantage that IRD would have had over the department's Communist contemporaries, when conducting business in British Colonial territories with little history of Communist penetration. One should be cautious of leveling such an accusation based largely on the evidence of the aggrieved party – IRD – yet it can be said with certainty that IRD saw Cox as the spoke in the wheel. Once Stacpoole replaced

Cox, the situation improved immeasurably, but with enough resistance on the part of Stacpoole to suggest a genuine relationship rather than a capitulation.

If one needed further convincing of the above, the contrast between colonial territories and the Congo may prove illustrative. As far back as 1956, IRD already dispatched what could probably be termed their 'standard package' to the Belgian colony of the Congo – the *Interpreter* and *Asian Analyst* periodicals (both in French and English), the 'Background Books', Basic Papers and Booklets, 'Facts About' series, and the *Digest*. In territories that were the sovereign possession of the British government, IRD was wholly blocked from operating by their colleagues in the Colonial Office[89]

[89] Confidential Minute, J Sanders, June 7, 1956, TNA FO 1110/922/PR117/74/56.

Chapter Five

Cairo Radio, IRD and the Transmission 'X' News Commentary Service.

The Voice of the Arabs did not merely irritate: it intimidated[1]

Peter Partner, *Arab Voices*

This chapter will examine IRD's Transmission 'X' ('X') news commentary service. Originally devised as a rebuttal service directed at Cairo Radio propaganda in the Middle East and Africa, the service quickly expanded across Africa and into Asia, and assumed an anti-Communist function. The threat that the *Voice of the Arabs* presented to British interests in the Middle East has been covered in Chapter 2. 'X' is significant as it speaks to the flexibility IRD displayed post-Suez, the responsiveness of IRD to the disparate needs of posts in both regions under study, and the combined approach IRD maintained towards combatting nationalism and Communism. 'X' confirms the connections between the regions of the Middle East and Africa, and clearly shows that IRD did not immediately turn away from engaging Arab nationalism in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis.

Egyptian propaganda and influence, primarily via radio, expanded into Africa after Suez, and, as discussed in Chapter 4, IRD increasingly took a direct role in combatting both Egyptian and Communist propaganda across Africa. By 1958, the Hill Committee's investigations into the information services had emphasised the need to address Cairo Radio propaganda, within the constraints of British policy seeking a rapprochement with Nasser. IRD, then established in Africa alongside its role in the Middle East, was tasked with coming up with, if not a solution to,

[1] Partner, *Arab*, p.93

then at least a means of limiting the effectiveness of, Cairo Radio broadcasting. Ralph Murray believed there were two criteria to which any response had to adhere:

> a) It must be intrinsically clever and attractive enough to secure an audience and to be effective in countering hostile propaganda
> b) It must avoid prejudicing our relations, actual or potential, with Arab states in the area.[2]

In Murray's opinion, these criteria were best met by an attempt to undermine 'the credibility of Cairo Radio and other hostile stations, rather than by attacking direct the governments and their policies.'[3] IRD would largely restrain itself from attacking Egypt either overtly or unattributably, but the department would nonetheless continue to counter Egyptian polemic.

The only other option, given policy constraints, was to jam Cairo Radio broadcasts, but this was no option at all. Jamming – illegal in any case – was prohibitively expensive: by 1959, jamming the *Voice of the Arabs*, just within the confines of the Gulf and Aden, would have cost an estimated £800,000 a year to set up, and another £250,000 a year to run. Any increase in Cairo Radio's broadcast strength would have needed to be met with a commensurate increase in the strength of jamming, and in expenditure.[4] Pressure to instigate a rebuttal service of the sort Murray had in mind was already present in the region, particularly in Bahrain and Aden. However, there was some disagreement within the Information Services as to whether this was the right idea, and there were available alternatives: Radio Aden was being built up by the Information Section in Bahrain in an effort to counter *Voice of the Arabs* broadcasts, and there were requests by both the Political Agency, and the Residency in Bahrain, relayed through IPD, for the BBC and Aden Radio to refute information carried on the *Voice of the Arabs*.

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[2] Confidential Memo Ralph Murray to Sir Roger Stevens (Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office), December 2, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1097/PR1125/5.
[3] Confidential Memo Ralph Murray to Sir Roger Stevens (Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office), December 2, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1097/PR1125/5.
[4] Zanzibar Monitoring of Radio Cairo Kiswahili broadcasts for week ending 4 August 1956, enclosed in British Resident to Lennox-Boyd, 9 August 1956, FO 371/19223/E1433/82, cited in Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965", p.30

The Foreign Office's Information Policy Department (IPD), and – almost inevitably – the Colonial Office, were unconvinced that a rebuttal service was workable. The CO advocated that local needs proscribed a centralised service, arguing that '[t]he wisdom of rebuttal must depend on local circumstances; it would not do to draw attention to broadcasts from Cairo which would otherwise command few listeners'. This was the stock argument of the CO, as we have seen previously, and not one to which IRD attached much merit. The CO was alive to the benefit of better monitoring of foreign broadcasts, but not to rebuttal.[5] IPD objected from a technical standpoint, and believed in any case that the style and substance of Cairo Radio's broadcasts meant that the station would soon discredit itself without any outside interference. Any attempt to engage directly with the *Voice of the Arabs* would, asserted IPD, involve 'a running propaganda battle in which Cairo would always have the initiative. Our denials coming at least several days after the original rumour could hardly fail to sound feeble and unconvincing and would probably do more harm than good.' There would also need to be enough material produced to support an extended campaign, as in IPD's opinion starting and then being forced to stop would be worse than simply letting things go by default.[6]

IRD, though, already had solutions to both of the issues raised by IPD. The expansion of the BBC Monitoring Service discussed in Chapter 4 meant that IRD would have access to timely information, and a wealth of it, on which to base any rebuttal. The Central Office of Information (COI)'s London Press Service (LPS) had from 1946 provided a variety of news and news commentary services – some sent daily, others slightly less frequently – to overseas posts by telegraph, airmail, bag and, later, *Hellschreiber*.[7] The service had been established to keep press attaches abreast of current commentary on the news.[8] IRD already used the LPS to distribute

[5] 'Brief for the Secretary of State', Colonial Office, October 21, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/48/G.
[6] J P Tripp to E F Given, January 25, 1958; Information Section Bahrain to IPD, January 30, 1958; IPD to Information Section Bahrain, February 18, 1958; Minute, Saunders, February 13, 1958; TNA FO 953/1924/PE1912/6.
[7] The *Hellschreiber* was a form of teleprinter, an early form of facsimile designed to operate by cable, or radio, at very low levels of fidelity.
[8] Minute, R H K Marett , February 22, 1962, TNA FO 953/2095/PE1004/38.

anti-Communist articles and news items, and a significant amount of anti-Communist material picked up by Middle Eastern new outlets was drawn from the service. The infrastructure of the LPS, which made same-day distribution of material to large numbers of posts possible, was the logical choice for IRD to use for the distribution of 'X'. IRD's use of the LPS has not been properly explored to date, and so the first section of this chapter examines the LPS both as a conduit for IRD material, and as a basis for 'X'. The second part of this chapter will look at how 'X' was developed, and how the service was turned towards anti-Communism. The third part examines how the service was viewed in different regions and by the different foreign departments of the British government, before finally forming some conclusions regarding its importance.

IRD and the London Press Service

Following the post-war closure of the Ministry of Information in 1946, responsibility for British information policy was decentralised, and divided between various government departments. The Central Office of Information (COI) was created to provide centralised production and distribution services, and, acting as facilitator and advisor, provide the technical means by which information departments could distribute their product. The COI was responsible for producing and despatching overseas all manner of printed material.

Andrew Defty notes Ralph Murray's early recognition of the LPS as a potential outlet for IRD work. As an attributable and recognisable arm of the British Government's information services, and following the COI mandate of a positive projection of Britain overseas, the LPS would seem to have been of limited worth to IRD. Yet, as Defty explains, by 1949 the initial

resistance within the COI to a (relatively mild) co-option of the service by IRD had been overcome, and IRD was involved on a daily basis with LPS content and output.[9]

The LPS, as IRD recognised, was in place to 'tell the story of this country and the British Commonwealth in its relation thereto'. IRD's thus limited remit included use of the service to promote speeches and statements by ministers and opinion leaders, and by the occasional inclusion of the department's own commentary under the cover of the by-line of 'informed opinions'. These constraints did not devalue the service in IRD's eyes: the LPS and its associated services were worth 'serious consideration as regular vehicles for IRD material.'[10] Attendance at the daily meetings on LPS output was at a senior level, so that the IRD officer attending could cover the diverse requirements of the various IRD desks, and be able to answer questions on IRD policy. (It was noted, however, that the decentralised nature of IRD organisation made it extremely difficult to do so.) Initially, IRD was not directly responsible for the content of LPS bulletins; rather, they sought to 'inspire' anti-Communist comment within the LPS, within the constraints of the service's aims. By 1954, IRD occasionally placed articles that were wholly authored by the department, again using the device of 'informed opinions', and by this stage influenced other content in such a way as to ensure that – in their view – enough anti-Communist comment from the British press was included.[11]

Attendance at LPS meeting benefitted IRD in other ways. It enabled the department, as one officer noted, to make an incursion into 'the precincts of the main Foreign Office [picking up] a certain amount of peripheral office gossip...which might otherwise escape one'. By 1954, the need to be alive to current trends within the Information Policy Department (IPD) and the wider Foreign Office was well recognised by the department. This engendered a need for closer

[9] Murray was head of IRD at this point. Defty returns to the LPS in his conclusion, noting the emphasis placed on it in the Drogheda Report of 1953; Defty, *Britain*, pp. 84-85, 236.
[10] 'LPS as an outlet for IRD material', B Ching (IPD), March 4, 1954, TNA FO 1110/715/PR10111/15.
[11] 'LPS as an outlet for IRD material', B Ching (IPD), March 4, 1954; Confidential Memo, F C Stacey (IRD), March 5, 1954, TNA FO 1110/715/PR10111/15.

interdepartmental contact, particularly between the regional desks of IRD and IPD.[12] Despite this closer contact, the department still encountered resistance in the meetings as late as 1958, with IRD's Hugh Cortazzi noting that attendees needed to 'be prepared to argue against timidity from IPD, or dislike of anti-Communist propaganda from the COI', and subsequently to '[e]nsure by careful checking that the agreed items are in fact sent'.[13]

A January 1958 report from the Information Department of the British Embassy in Beirut shows the extent to which information officers used LPS material. Whilst ten anti-Communist articles sourced from Regional Information Office (RIO) material were placed in local papers that month, the number sourced from the LPS stood at 15, with most of the latter reported by more than one newspaper, so that the number of actual appearances of the articles stood at 46.[14]

As part of the organisational changes that took part throughout the British information services following Suez, the COI was relocated to new offices in closer proximity to the Overseas Departments. Changes within the LPS also came into effect in May 1958 following the move, and were primarily aimed at strengthening the region-specific output of the service. By this time the LPS, as Ralph Murray told Information Officers, could 'be regarded as being semi-official in so far as it aims at providing an authoritative reflection of current British policy.' Facilities at the new premises would provide increased capacity for simultaneous transmissions, regional staffs were to be strengthened, and every effort was to be made, Murray directed, 'to develop the LPS as a comprehensive service of information and comment about

[12] 'LPS as an outlet for IRD material', B Ching (IPD), March 4, 1954; Confidential Memo, F C Stacey (IRD), March 5, 1954, TNA FO 1110/715/PR10111/15.
[13] 'The London Press Service' H A H Cortazzi (IRD), January 3, 1958, TNA FO 1110/871/PR10111/57.
[14] Information Officer, British Embassy Beirut to IRD, February 13, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1154/PR1088/2. It is worth noting that the Middle East was by no means the main market for IRD inspired LPS material. In the first 8 months of 1959 a total of 474 anti-Communist articles were successfully placed and published in a total of 13 countries around the world, with Rangoon, Burma and Venezuela placing the majority (329 articles in Rangoon alone), 'LPS Usage', Minute, J Sanders (IRD), September 11, 1959 TNA FO 1110/1229/PR10114/22.

British policy and the British way of life.'[15] The LPS had provided 7 programmes (reduced to 4 by 1958 due to budgetary considerations), supplemented by regional programmes, and each broadcast to a different schedule. The new, streamlined LPS provided a single, regionally tailored service; a combination of items of both regional and general interest, diplomatic and general commentary, press extracts, and feature articles. Information officers were encouraged to help develop the information in these regional bulletins to be as relevant as possible, and to feed back information on local issues and events. The LPS, Norman Reddaway admitted, provided only a one-sided view of the British press; a full summary of all press comment was made available to Information Officers, but this was to be for information only, and not for dissemination. An anti-Communist theme could still only be developed as part of a presentation of the wider, official British view on any item of interest, and the reliance on the Information Officers at the British overseas posts to place items carried by the LPS rendered any polemic impractical – heavily slanted material would prove impossible to place.[16] Despite these restrictions, IRD valued the service for what it provided them, and one almost unique benefit was speed of distribution.

Apart from the BBC, LPS was IRD's only 'speedy outlet abroad'. In contrast to the BBC, the LPS was completely – explicitly – under government control. It was, IRD's Hugh Cortazzi emphasised in 1958, important that the department used 'to the utmost the services which it [LPS] provides'.[17] At least one IRD official had noted several years earlier that this emerging combination of ability and desire to rapidly turn around information illustrated a shift in IRD from a strategic to a tactical focus as a department (a change of emphasis perhaps not paralleled at that point by a change in organisational structure).[18] This combination of cultural change and additional facility provided one of the foundations of IRD's revised mission in the

[15] Confidential PP12/2, Ralph Murray (FO), May 19, 1958, TNA CO 1027/88/INF57/01.
[16] 'London Press Service' G F N Reddaway (IRD), May 12, 1956, TNA FO 1110/871/PR10111/57.
[17] 'The London Press Service' H A H Cortazzi (IRD), January 3, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1100/PR10111/14.
[18] Confidential Memo, F C Stacey (IRD), March 5, 1954, TNA FO 1110/715/PR10111/15.

Middle East. The utility of LPS for IRD in its anti-Communist role was proven, and it was clear that LPS was considered to be an important, and appropriate, vehicle for the new, post-Suez propaganda strategy of the British Government, a major element of which was Transmission 'X'.[19]

Transmission 'X'

Transmission 'X' had a simple remit. It aimed, as described by Donald Hopson, to provide 'Information Officers with topical raw material that they can adapt for unattributed use in the local press or radio.'[20] IRD generally described 'X' as a rebuttal service, though outside the department a more nuanced view prevailed in some quarters. Cairo Radio mostly engaged in distorting facts whilst lacing them with emotion, and so 'X' did not so much seek to rebut lies from Cairo Radio, but rather to undermine the credibility of the service itself,[21] and this view is more technically correct. As originally devised 'X' was political commentary, issued daily, often consisting of only two or three items per service, in a form in which individual posts could easily adapt to their requirements.[22] The trick, of course, was making sure that this initially limited supply of information was as topically relevant as possible for the broadest audience. This was centrally-authored propaganda; a key issue for many of the receiving posts was whether the one-size-fits-all propaganda issued from London was appropriate, or workable, for local use. The Colonial Office (CO) in particular was unconvinced, and sure that their men on the ground

[19] The LPS still exists today, 'funded by UK Trade & Investment, a government department that supports business', its website proclaims, at pains to point out that 'the day to day operation is in the hands of a team of highly experienced professional journalists. This ensures objectivity, quality and focus on real news that the world's media appreciates.' http://www.londonpressservice.org.uk/about_us, consulted September 4, 2010; Following cuts to the information services budgets in 1964, the LPS was re-engineered as a service supporting British commercial interests overseas. A Moore (IPD), Draft minute on propaganda work, undated but June/July 1964, TNA FO 1110/1843/PR1125/10.

[20] Original emphasis; D C Hopson (IRD) to T A H Scott (CRO London), September 1, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.

[21] 'Note of a meeting held at the Colonial Office on 20th November on proposed monitoring and guidance service to East Africa', TNA CO/1027/239/INF III/027.

[22] Confidential Circular, Kit Barclay, January 29, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1011/2/G.

could do better.[23] This resistance far outlasted the CO's general resistance to IRD work in the colonies. To survive, therefore, 'X' had to expand relatively quickly into a "multi-directional" service, tailored to specific needs, and this was driven in large part by resistance to its original form.

Transmission 'X' would run parallel to the LPS as part of a suite of different material already used in combination by posts in the Middle East, and by RIO Beirut. For 'X', speed and coverage were of the essence. IRD already had cause to believe such an approach would work. Successes such as that described below, of an RIO campaign against the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo in late 1957, set the scene for the adoption of 'X' later in 1958:

> We distributed privately and on a personal basis much background briefing material (your Intel was particularly useful here), kept up running fire in our LPS bulletin, and commissioned a number of articles from our "panel". Three of these, attacking the final resolutions of this Conference, appeared in the press the morning after the Conference dispersed, and before anyone else had had the time to digest the resolutions. These articles…set the tune for subsequent comment, and exercised a noticeable and wholly salutary effect upon public opinion. By the end, the Conference was being freely spoken of as a Communist "racket"'[24]

This was what 'X' would aim to do: get topical, relevant information out to information officers, the BBC, and media and opinion shapers with such speed that pieces of Cairo Radio propaganda did not have time to find a foothold, and could be defused.

It was the conclusion of the Hill Committee that the effect of Cairo Radio was so serious in Aden and the Horn of Africa that by late 1958 there was a need to address the situation. Donald Hopson, IRD's head, thoughtfully set out both the threat from Cairo Radio, and the issues pertaining to any British response:

> The Cairo Radio broadcasts are not in general straight falsehood, but extremely clever angled commentary based on distortions of truth and couched in the customary colourful Arab idiom. It is therefore not usually so much a question of "nailing the lie", as of exposing the distortions with enough ridicule and wit

[23] O H Morris (CO London) to H M Carless (IRD), January 21, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/3.
[24] Information Officer, British Embassy Beirut to IRD, February 13, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1154/PR1088/2.

> not to bore the audience. There are two inhibiting factors, one political and one psychological. On general policy grounds and in view of the U.N. Arab resolution and present efforts to encourage a radio truce, radio polemics against the Egyptian Government must be restricted. Secondly, this is a negative defensive measure; it will not reduce Cairo Radio's audience but may even increase it; and it cannot replace positive measures to improve our broadcasting as a real counter-attraction.[25]

By mid-October 1958, IRD's Donald Hopson was setting out the framework for what would become IRD's Transmission 'X' news commentary service. The issue was to ensure that the BBC, and the radio stations of the CO and of friendly states in the Middle East and Africa, could be provided with both the material and the means to broadcast counter-propaganda programming. Each carried their own obstacles to overcome: the BBC had editorial independence, Colonial broadcasters were often poorly equipped, and friendly states were often unwilling to use 'provocative' material. In addition to this, Hopson identified 3 areas that required attention:

a) The improvement of monitoring services,
b) the provision of material for commentary,
c) communications.[26]

Both a) and b) were down to the BBC. IRD drove an expansion of the BBC's local monitoring service across Africa in partnership with the corporation, who ultimately constructed the new monitoring station at Karen as noted earlier, with the main aim of monitoring Cairo Radio programmes directed at the region. Both the BBC and IRD took on extra staff. At this stage, the only colonial post that received the London Press Service by *Hellschreiber* (rather than airmail) was Aden, and IRD sought the expansion of this service to other posts so that their commentary service could be distributed quickly as possible. In order to provide IRD with the raw material on which to base their new commentary, the BBC were to produce a daily monitoring summary on Middle East themes, along the lines of the existing summary produced for Soviet broadcasting, and this equivalence speaks to the importance placed on the summary. IRD would

[25] 'Countering Cairo Radio, D C Hopson (IRD), October 18, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/48/G.
[26] 'Countering Cairo Radio, D C Hopson (IRD), October 18, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/48/G.

be directly responsible for a significant increase in the work of by the BBC at Caversham.[27] BBC Monitoring would take an even more direct role from 1959, providing a 'preamble' to 'X', of between 100 and 150 words, summarising 'hostile radio propaganda themes'.[28]

'X' was turned around from idea to execution with commendable speed: a succession of dummy runs were produced throughout November and early December 1958, with the first 'edition' produced on the 15th of that month. It was first announced to the posts that would receive it on 24 November. The whole process was overseen by Ralph Murray, the ex-head of IRD, now assistant under-secretary of state at the FO. Murray commented, often at length, on each successive revision, and was instrumental in shaping the initial form of the service.[29] The service was essentially in two parts, with the first section covering various themes of Cairo Radio propaganda, offering a paragraph or two on each. The second section consisted of one or two full-length essays, or radio scripts, intended to be used verbatim. The two other interested parties in 'X', IPD and the CO, who had both raised objections, would retain some control over the service's output. The Middle East Regional Advisor in IPD would, in consultation with relevant political departments, be responsible for providing political clearance for 'X' material, and the same would be true for the Colonial Office within their sphere of responsibility.[30]

Whilst IRD designed 'X' to be picked apart and used as appropriate, much as the *Digest* was, the department were very particular about how it was written. As noted, the original intention – which would barely outlast the first few weeks – was that it would be a single, blanket service for use by all receiving posts. IRD wanted to ensure that the 'most subtle and appropriate slant or angle' was applied to any commentary, and 'X' was therefore almost wholly written or commissioned by the department. This was not just to ensure tight editorial

[27] 'Countering Cairo Radio, D C Hopson (IRD), October 18, 1958; Memo, D C Hopson, October 28, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/48/G.
[28] 'Transmission 'X' Progress Report, D C Hopson (IRD), May 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/23
[29] See throughout FO 1110/1097.
[30] Confidential Memo Ralph Murray to Sir Roger Stevens (Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office), December 2, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1097/PR1125/5.

compliance; the service needed to be guarded as much as practicable against 'unfriendly monitoring'. Transmission 'X's delivery method meant that it could be easily monitored by anyone with the appropriate technical means, and so information officers' contacts identified by marrying content to output.[31] The fear was of course that this would enable enemies to make life difficult for certain recipients, or to capitalise from exposing the service. These concerns would seem to have been unfounded: IRD detected no use of either LPS or 'X' material to bring pressure to bear on contacts or recipients, by either the Russians or the Egyptians. The reason was, Hopson surmised, 'that the LPS as a whole is so much a part of the landscape in the propaganda world, and not by Russian standards a very sensational or important feature, that it has just not been worth our opponents' while to bother about the 'X' part of it'.[32] Despite the care that IRD exercised over content, there was by its nature a need to turn content around rapidly, and this did produce detractors, even amongst ex-IRD staff: 'I'm sorry if the letters I write from time to time about Transmission 'X' all seem rather nagging', wrote one recipient, 'but I cannot help feeling that it would be worth from time to time a day's delay in transmission in order to produce a more coherent argumentation.'[33]

As originally intended, 'X' held the sole remit of countering hostile propaganda originating from Cairo. In this role, the service slotted neatly into the anti-Nasser role of IRD in the Middle East, and, as it was originally envisaged, Transmission 'X' would have no anti-Communist role whatsoever, except, perhaps, to indict Egypt through any association with the Communists in the course of rebuttal. In a matter of months, and even before IRD had conducted its first review of the service, it had expanded considerably in scope, scale and purpose. The political climate had changed: a tentative *rapprochement* with Egypt, and the resumption of diplomatic relations with Cairo were seen to be fundamental in protecting British

[31] Minute, M Terry (CO), TNA CO 1027/239/INF111/027; Much of 'X' was delivered '*en clair*' – unencrypted.
[32] D C Hopson (IRD) to R Murray (Assistant Under Secretary of State for the FO), December 1, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[33] J M O Snodgrass (RIO Beirut) to C F R Barclay (IRD), February 5, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1583/PR1125/3.

interests both strategic and economic, and the perceived threat of Communism was on the rise throughout the Middle East and Africa.

Although the FO wished to increase its engagement with Cairo Radio propaganda, they were chary of becoming embroiled in a 'radio war' which would be contrary to their stated aim of achieving a *modus vivendi*, and in which Britain would fight from a position of weakness. 'Our principle endeavours in these areas must be positive and factual and our intention predominantly constructive...put out on the London Press Service, it will, of course, be accessible to monitoring and therefore known to foreign governments as officially sponsored. Controversial or critical material will therefore be attributed to "well informed circles" or other suitable source[s] in order to render it, so far as tactically necessary, disavowable'.[34] This obfuscation backfired on one occasion: 'Could you possibly send us Transmission 'X' by airmail..?' asked the Embassy in Khartoum in March 1959, to which a mildly aggrieved IRD replied '[w]e have in fact been posting to you every day by airmail three copies..[it] is identified as 'Daily Radio Commentary' with the attribution 'By a Middle East Correspondent.'[35]

As 'X' expanded, it grew from something with the air of a project, with a team self-contained in all respects and headed by J V Riley, into a part of the general editorial function of IRD. From the start of 1959 the team was headed by an IRD officer, with Hugh Carless acting as liaison with the political departments and briefing the BBC, Leslie Sheridan in charge of technical administration and production, and Riley acting as advisor on affairs in the Middle East and Africa, along with a general staff of writers, so it was coordinated at the highest level of IRD.[36]

[34] Foreign Office Telegram 809 to Beirut, November 24, 1958, TNA CO 1027/239/INF III/027.
[35] E F G Maynard (British Embassy Khartoum) to IRD, March 31, 1959; IRD to Maynard, April 8, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/14.
[36] Confidential Minute, J V Riley (IRD), January 21, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/10.

In early 1959, 14 FO posts received 'X' across North Africa and the Middle East, along with the 6 CO posts in East Africa.[37] By 1960 'X' was received in 47 posts across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe, by *Hellschreiber*, air mail/diplomatic bag, or by RTT. Whilst its original remit had been to rebut and undermine propaganda from Cairo Radio aimed at British interests in the region, it was developed into a service to counter all propaganda and broadcasting so aimed, with particular focus on that emerging from Communist sources.[38]

The thaw in relations with the UAR and the expansion of anti-Communist content in Transmission 'X'

Whilst, following the resumption of diplomatic relations with the UAR in 1960, 'X' continued to be aimed at Cairo Radio, in reality the beginnings of a thaw between London and Cairo were paralleled by a number of other events, which resulted in far less 'X' output being aimed at the regime. 'X' was in any case already being used far more within IRD's traditional context of anti-Communism.

In the Middle East, few newspapers had been happy to carry Cairo Radio related material, except in the few instances when co-option of Transmission 'X' material could be used to further the agendas of local newspapers in local feuds – hardly what IRD had in mind.[39] In Aden, one of the main battlegrounds between Britain and Arab nationalism, it was the purview of the CO to request Transmission 'X' material – the legacy of early run-ins with IRD over content, and this was only asked for infrequently. By late 1960, the CO was reporting that the effect of Cairo Radio in East Africa had significantly diminished, and with the independence of British Somaliland (freeing Britain of a direct interest in the country), IRD could clearly see that

[37] 'Transmission 'X' Progress Report', D C Hopson (IRD), May 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/23.
[38] D C Hopson (IRD) to T A H Scott (CRO London), September 1, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.
[39] Though mentioning this issue, IRD do not provide any examples of this in their correspondence.

the traditional market for Transmission 'X' was much reduced.[40] IRD, through 'X', maintained the ability to rebut any serious excesses from Cairo Radio in the years following, and by 1963 an expansion in use of the LPS and 'X' was again being considered.

But this did not mean that 'X' no longer had a function. Much as 'X' had come about through the existing means of delivery of the LPS, so the increasing need to counter Communism in the region found an existing tool in 'X'. Its future, IRD recognised, lay increasingly in Afro-Asia rather than the Middle East; the rise of independent states and the targeting of this 'neutral bloc' by Moscow, along with the increasing presence of propaganda emanating from Peking, meant a rebalancing of the service to deal with these threats. The extension of Britain's wireless telegraph network into Asia and the Far East was also seen as giving vital extra reach to the service.[41] Kit Barclay noted in 1961 that 'X's 'original terms of reference are at present no longer strictly applicable.'[42] Lord Norwich summed up the general feeling:

> The days of anti-Nasser transmission have gone and are unlikely to return. As an anti-Communist weapon, however, Transmission 'X' seems to me to be quite excellent and certainly has a considerable effect in the M[iddle] E[ast]…its primary purpose should now formally be set down as discrediting Communism…the Afro-Asian countries are the battleground of the Cold War. It is obviously to them, in the first instance, that it should be directed.[43]

Despite the fact that Britain was scarcely engaging with UAR propaganda, nor producing anti-Nasserite propaganda itself to any great degree, convincing the Egyptians of this fact proved problematic. The Foreign Office in general asserted in 1960 that they had not been engaged in anti-Egyptian or anti-Nasser propaganda since the latter part of 1959 – and this is an important point, though one that carried a mild caveat: 'There has been no anti-Nasser propaganda on our

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[40] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'", J G McMinnies (IRD), October 18, 1960, and Minutes, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[41] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'", J G McMinnies (IRD), October 18, 1960, and Minutes, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[42] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'", C F R Barclay (IRD), January 5, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/8.
[43] 'Transmission 'X'" Minute, handwritten notes, Lord Norwich, April 17, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.

part in the last nine months', noted David Roberts of the FO. 'The UAR authorities could be assured of this. (But we should consult IRD...first)...Transmission 'X' has rebutted the lies of Cairo Radio from time to time...I do not think it can reasonably be called "overdoing" it, however'.[44] In targeting Communism, the UAR was a subject of Transmission 'X' material, particularly when highlighting the issues and perceived dangers of Soviet aid, but J O Wright of IRD asserted that it had 'been more than fair in publicising Egyptian anti-Communist pronouncements' whilst admitting that this support may not have been entirely welcome.[45] Mohamed Heikal was but one avenue through which the British sought to reassure the Egyptians that they were being both scrupulous and fair. In a conversation between Heikal and Colin Crowe, the British *chargé d'affaires* in Cairo, Crowe brought up the subject of British anti-Communist propaganda in the region – surely this was no cause for Egyptian concern? Crowe noted that

> Heikal replied that it severely embarrassed them. They were fighting an all out battle against Communism and articles about the dangers of the arms deal with Russia, or on the disadvantages of positive neutralism as opposed to working with the West, did not help. Nor was it useful to be told, on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the UK, that at last the UAR had seen the light and cooperation with the West was the right line to follow[46]

D A Roberts at the FO sought to explain the Egyptian position in a memo of March 1960. In his opinion, the Egyptian propaganda campaign was faltering at that moment, and that it was logical that their propagandists, 'who must earn their keep like everyone else', would look to point the blame for their misfortune elsewhere. Additionally, given the plethora of agencies working in the region, it was, Roberts felt, perhaps understandable that some of the activity was blamed on the British. Neatly summing up the FO position, Roberts noted

> Now clearly there is no point in our annoying the Egyptians unless it pays us commensurate dividend, but it seems that merely to be in the business of propaganda in the Middle East annoys the Egyptians by being in a field which

[44] Minute by D A Roberts, March 10, 1960, TNA FO 371/150926/VG1051/37.
[45] Minute by J O Wright (IRD), March 17, 1960, TNA FO 371/150926/VG1051/37.
[46] C Crowe to R Stevens, March 5, 1960, TNA FO 371/150926/VG1051/37.

> they regard as their exclusive property. Presumably it is in our interests on balance to remain in business and we can afford the luxury of not pleasing Nasser.[47]

With the service now holding an anti-Communist focus, its concerns regarding Cairo Radio were limited to 'occasional refutations of some of the more outrageous lies in the UAR broadcasting services about HMG'. Information officers in the Middle East, whose task it was to make use of Transmission 'X' material, were by this point concentrating far more on projecting a favourable image of Britain in the region, by and large ignoring the anti-British rhetoric emerging from Cairo.[48]

And so 'X' horizons had broadened. Whilst nominally retaining, but rarely exercising, its original mandate, it was now focussed on expanding an anti-Communist role throughout Asia and Africa. Having established itself already as an effective tool in the Middle East, it was seen (at least by IRD) as the only existing 'quick-reaction' service of the sort required. In 1960, with the LPS being extended into West Africa, 'X' continued to be rolled out to the territories there. Serious consideration was also being given to wireless transmission to posts where it was to that point only received by airmail, and the possibility of developing a complementary, South American service was also being considered. The flexibility of 'X' to respond to specific requests for material, honed through CO and CRO usage and criticism, meant that it was now providing special services for the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) that had replaced the defunct Baghdad Pact. These included a weekly, 600-word report for use by CENTO's Counter Subversion Office.[49]

In 1961 the official terms of reference for Transmission 'X' were redefined; they were:

a) to cover the Afro-Asian world generally as its target;
b) to continue its special tasks for CENTO and African posts;

[47] Minute by D A Roberts, March 10, 1960, TNA FO 371/150926/VG1051/37.
[48] P M Crosthwaite to R Stevens, March 10, 1960, TNA FO 371/150926/VG1051/37.
[49] 'The Future of Transmission 'X', January 3, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.

c) to be prepared at short notice to concentrate on specific targets in its general area as policy requires;
d) to continue to monitor Cairo Radio with a view to countering it when necessary.[50]

By 1962, Transmission 'X' had expanded out of all proportion to its original mandate, by then consisting of 9 different services: a 'Daily Commentary', general Scripts, West and East Africa Specials, specific African and Asian Scripts, a French/English Commentary, Exclusive Services for Ankara and Tokyo, and a Weekly Themes centred on Cairo Radio. Far from being a Middle Eastern affair, as it had begun, Transmission 'X' was distributed across the Middle East, the whole of Africa, in Asia, South America and various British posts throughout Europe.[51]

The 'Daily Commentary' of Transmission 'X', its bread and butter, covered a wide range of issues. The 10 July 1962 edition, under its usual 'Special Correspondent' by-line, explored the following themes: East/West Berlin, and the views of Algerian workers 'lured' to East Berlin to work of the conditions they found there; the Soviet propaganda campaign aimed at improving farm production, reports of thousands of university students being sent to work on farms, and the commonality of this problem throughout Communist states; the attempts of Communist front organisations to disguise the food shortages and rationing faced by Cuban families, food riots in Cuba, and the 'Communist indoctrination' of Cuban school children. In the 'West Africa Special' of the same day, the issues of Communist-sponsored 'peace congresses' was explored, and the issue of minority Communist groups attending, purporting to be official representatives of their countries of origin. Arab nationalist issues are not mentioned.[52]

[50] 'Transmission 'X', IRD Memo to recipients of Transmission 'X', February 28, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/8.
[51] 'Distribution of Transmission 'X" July, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1583/PR1125/19.
[52] Daily Commentary/West Africa Special, July 10, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1583/PR1125/19.

The reaction to Transmission 'X' in Foreign Office posts.

In the Middle East, there was a generally favourable response to the initial 'X' output. This gradually improved as the service itself improved, and was paralleled by increasing success in placing material in the region's media. Of course, in many cases, local politics and state control meant that placing anti-Nasser or anti-Communist material was often wholly prohibited. If relations with Cairo or Moscow were good or improving, such as in Ethiopia, there was little market for 'X' material – even displaying 'X' material in Embassy reading rooms could prove problematic. It was not just resistance from the authorities that made things difficult: Rabat reported that it was 'the attitude of Moroccan opinion, not just Moroccan Government opinion to the cold war which hamstrings us'. Baghdad was no longer the friend it once was, and no material could be placed in the media there. In situations such as that in Kuwait there was simply nothing that could be done to place material, with no printed press, and a radio service so apolitical that news itself was seen to be too controversial to broadcast.[53]

Information officers in the Middle East provided generally positive feedback and were quick to call for anti-Communist material, and these constituted some of the earliest suggestions made to IRD regarding content. These suggestions chart the market for propaganda across the Middle East at the end of 1958, and called for information on: Russian oil exports; politically-motivated Sino-Soviet economic activity; the hostility of Communism towards nationalism; the isolation of Iraq; the situation in Eastern Europe (especially Hungary); reassurances about the Common Market; the employment of women for hard labour in Communist countries; Sino-Soviet tensions; the propaganda link between Cairo, Damascus and Moscow; Egyptian propaganda in general.[54] In many cases, posts asked for material on Arab nationalism to be explicitly excluded. Here, then, is another reason for British information departments, including

[53] British Embassy Rabat to IRD, September 28, 1959; British Embassy Addis Ababa to IRD, September 24, 1959; Political Agency Kuwait to IRD; October 8, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1236/PR1125/50.
[54] 'Beirut Information Conference, Discussion of Transmission 'X', H M Carless (IRD), January 12, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/10.

IRD, cutting back on the amount of material dealing with Arab nationalism and Nasserism. This was the case in Tripoli, for example, which wanted anti-Communist material, but no anti-Nasser commentary to be sent.[55] Given the proximity both physically and emotionally to the cause of Arab nationalism in the region, the anti-Communist message arguably had an immediately greater utility across the Middle East, and this use swiftly rose to the fore of the service's output.

In some instances, 'X' was immediately successful – Ankara placed up to 60% of 'X's output in the local press in the first year via the CENTO Counter Subversion Office, and 'X' was also distributed to a number of opinion leaders throughout the country. Attempts were also made to make it 'a source of talking points for a 'grapevine' of selected foreign diplomats.' 'X' therefore achieved coverage across the board, proving a flexible tool. RIO Beirut managed to place around 20% of 'X's output in the press. Radio was another matter however, with much less success in Turkey and none in the Lebanon – perhaps the point to be made here is that 'X' was not having much success combating Cairo Radio in its own medium. In any case, Radio Cairo and its affiliates ruled the airwaves in the Middle East. In Jordan, however, the situation was reversed, with no success in print, but some apparent success in placing articles in the talks and commentaries of the Hashemite Broadcasting Service – at least according to the Hashemite Broadcasting Service: the Embassy were unable to ascertain to what extent scripts that were passed to them were used, 'despite repeated requests.'[56]

Things had improved by 1961, and whilst the amount used, and ability to use, 'X' varied significantly across the region, it was the conclusion of the Regional Information Officers that the service was 'most valuable'. Tehran considered 'X' to be 'part of their "daily bread"', and Radio Iran used up to 40% of the 'X' material given to them by the information officer there.

[55] Information Section, Tripoli to RIO Beirut, April 4, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/14.
[56] British Embassy Ankara to IRD, September 30, 1959; RIO Beirut to IRD, October 17, 1959; British Embassy Amman to IRD, September 25, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1236/PR1125/50.

Success in placing 'X' material was also evident in Rabat and Tripoli, although in the latter the Libyan Broadcasting Service took pains to disguise the source of the material.[57]

There were still issues, however. In Beirut, whilst material was successfully placed, it often needed to be 'watered down', rehashed by local journalists employed to pass the work off as their own. The quality of the in-house translations of articles into Arabic by IRD were often deemed to be so poor that they would not be acceptable to Middle Eastern newspapers (RIO Beirut vetoed a suggestion that the RIO that it should handle the translations itself because this would delay getting topical articles out).[58] This contrasts with early reception in Bahrain, who considered the translations to be of good quality.[59] Opinions as to the quality of the Arabic translations varied significantly from post to post, both in style and in the accuracy of any translation itself, although quite why this should be so perhaps speaks more to the quality of translators available at the various posts. In any case, often the material was seen by RIO Beirut as unsuitable for Arab consumption – too complicated – an opinion held by J Snodgrass whose views, with regrettable Orientalist overtones, are worth quoting in full:

> The average Arab newspaper-reader has an untrained mind which does not easily follow a sustained argument. In particular he is often unable or too idle to follow the process of reasoning which we frequently employ, wherein a premise, for example a quotation from some Soviet leader, is first stated and then methodically picked apart. The Arab will not grasp anything more than the premise set out at the beginning of the article, and the resulting effect is counter-productive. This is, of course, a criticism of the Arab, not of Transmission 'X', but it is one which conditions all our work.[60]

In general, shorter articles were found to be easier to place than the full-length commentaries also supplied as part of 'X', but beyond this posts found it difficult to assess to

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[57] 'The Future of Transmission 'X', Usage and Reactions', January 3, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[58] J M O Snodgrass (RIO Beirut) to C F R Barclay (IRD), November 10, 1960 and December 10, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/40.
[59] R McGregor (Bahrain) to H M Carless (IRD), May 19, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/14.
[60] J M O Snodgrass (Beirut) to C F R Barclay (IRD), November 10, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/40. It should be noted that these comments represent the extreme, and are not representative of the norm. 'Parochial' seems to be a common critique of the Arab audience by those involved with 'X', exemplified by the views of O H Morris of the Colonial Office and J V Riley, of IRD and originally in charge of 'X', detailed below in the text. For Vaughan on this see: Vaughan, "Proxy", pp. 160, 162.

what extent material was used. In some instances 'X' output was reproduced verbatim; in other instances output was either rewritten internally or by local editors before printing or broadcasting. What is impossible to assess is to what extent editors were influenced by reading 'X' articles, picking and choosing the odd fact or comment, or shaping how they dealt with information from alternative sources.

Difficulties in East Africa: The Colonial Office

A point worth repeating here is that the Foreign Office, and therefore IRD, needed to both pay attention to, and make compromises with, other Whitehall departments with interests in Africa. The Colonial Office (CO), Dominions Office (DO) and the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) all had to be consulted and considered. Each Office of course held its own views on the threat from Communism or Nasserism, and how IRD sought to address them, whilst each was, in its own way, occasionally as guilty of the single-mindedness and parochialism of which they sometimes accused IRD.

British colonial posts raised concerns over Transmission 'X' via the CO as early as January 1959, mere weeks after the service had begun on December 15, 1958. The 6 Colonial territories in East Africa and the Gulf had received 'X', known to the CO as RIVAROL, to almost universal disapproval. Impressions of the service were varied, but almost wholly negative, prompting a number of early observations from the CO that questioned whether the service was in fact workable.

In Aden the early content of the service was deemed to be lacking in local value, and too detailed – and too boring – to arouse any local interest. There was, in general, 'too much detail,

too many names and not enough punch.'[61] Perhaps the strongest negative views could be found in Dar es Salaam. There, the post noted that one that item in a RIVAROL piece referred to a Cairo Radio broadcast a fortnight old – 'so much for our emphasis on speed' – and noted 'feeble attempts to catch Cairo out in self-contradiction, and the elaborate refutation of specific items from the Cairo Radio broadcasts...The allegedly delicate angles put on the items by the Foreign Office can only be described...as a lot of hoo-ha.'[62]

This led O H Morris of the CO to comment:

> the material is for the most part too remote in interest. The outlook of the relatively unsophisticated inhabitants of our territories tends to be extremely parochial and their interests tend to centre on purely local affairs...obliquely slanted stories are not appropriate for local consumption and what is needed is something very much more simple and factual.

Morris also believed the basic premise of the service to be flawed, and dispensed his wisdom on the matter to IRD's Hugh Carless in no uncertain terms:

> I am not at all sure in my own mind that it will be possible to devise a centralised service in London to provide the kind of information which our territories appear to need. I am doubtful whether it is possible to conduct counter-propaganda on a centralised basis. The most effective counter-propaganda within a territory is that which (i) is based on knowledge or experienced judgement of the actual impact of a particular piece of enemy propaganda on the local population and (ii) attempts promptly to counteract that impact in a way which will itself make an impact upon or be acceptable to local opinion. I am not even sure that it is practicable to attempt to prepare counter-propaganda on a general East African basis; perhaps, after all, we shall have to look to the individual territories to devise their own material.[63]

The CO was most certainly not on board with Transmission 'X' in its early form. 'It seems probable', wrote Morris to D C Hopson, 'that we will be making some fairly substantial

[61] O H Morris (CO London) to H M Carless (IRD), January 21, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/3.
[62] R H Young (CO Dar es Salaam) to O H Morris (CO London), December 22, 1958, TNA CO/1027/239/INF III/027.
[63] O H Morris (CO London) to H M Carless (IRD), January 21, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/3.

excisions...we shall need to do some careful rethinking about this whole exercise. It may be that we need to put in a Colonial Office hand at an earlier stage in the preparation of this material."[64]

Following a subsequent meeting between Morris and Hopson, it was decided that IRD would focus the efforts of Transmission 'X' and RIVAROL on the Middle East. An 'Africa Only' script would be produced, if necessary, in response to Cairo Radio's targeting of an issue in Africa. This script would not be forwarded to Middle East posts: they had stated that the material would not be of any interest to them. IRD's first couple of efforts at 'Africa Only' scripts did little to impress the CO in the few weeks after this decision, however, and consultation between the CO and the African posts concerned revealed the extent of their misgivings:

> IRD are unable to assess accurately the kind of topic which is likely to have interested listeners in our RIVAROL territories...IRD do not seem to be able to write up topics in an appropriate form...We might overcome this to some extent by more consultation with IRD during the initial stages of drafting these articles, but to some extent, the difficulty stems from the nature of IRD. By and large, they are not so constituted as to be able to explain in a positive way HMG's political and constitutional polices in respect of African territories. There is not a lot we can do about this...[65]

The solution the CO proposed was that the individual posts would drive the East African content of 'X', requesting information as and when it was required and tailored to its needs. In the CO's opinion only the posts in question were in a position to assess either the effect of Cairo Radio in their particular territory, or the extent that they needed special material over and above that available through channels such as intels and guidances.[66] Resistance to 'X' had been fierce: Margaret Terry of the CO would have withdrawn RIVAROL scripts from issue to posts as soon as was practicable, had this proven possible. Terry would push for a separate East Africa service, and for a summary of Cairo Radio trends that she would arrange for through

[64] O H Morris (CO London) to D C Hopson (IRD), January 3, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/3.
[65] M Z Terry (CO London) to O H Morris (CO London), February 27, 1959, TNA CO 1027/244/INF111/031.
[66] O H Morris (CO London) to D C Hopson (IRD), undated, but end of February 1959, TNA CO 1027/244/INF111/031.

Riley. These would join the Daily Commentary as regular 'X' output and add breadth and flexibility enough to begin to placate the CO.[67] The Cairo Radio propaganda report (later known as Cairo Radio Themes) was a one-page, weekly summary of *Voice of the Arabs* and *Voice of Free Africa* broadcast themes, entirely without IRD commentary or critique, purely to inform, and though this was initially intended for the CO, it would subsequently be widely distributed across most if not all recipients of 'X'[68]

IRD therefore lost a degree of editorial control over some of the content of 'X', and the intended uniformity of the service had been exposed as unworkable – a microcosm of the general issue IRD faced in all material intended for a Middle East or African audience. However a certain degree of caution should be exercised over the first point: as noted above, IRD were keen to receive suggestions from local information officers as to subjects that 'X' should carry – and there was a standing request for these – so content was to a degree shaped by the needs of individual posts in any case. Formalising this process, at the point of an annual review of the service in September 1959, IRD made a specific request to each post for any suggestions as to content or subjects to be made.[69]

It is clear in the meantime that RIVAROL/'X' continued to be produced in its original form despite these concerns and suggestions. The CO's misgivings were enough, however, to show IRD that, if they wanted 'X' material to be used in CO posts, they would need to adapt the service. '[T]he service we have attempted to give so far can never fully serve the interests of both Arab posts and colonial posts, since the latter are largely parochial and unconcerned with Arab politics', reported Riley, 'if the service is to continue, it will have to attempt to produce a separate service for colonial posts...a new formula will have to be devised for it, since it has

[67] M Z Terry (CO London) to O H Morris (CO London), February 3, 1959; M Z Terry to O H Morris, January 1 1969, TNA CO 1027/244/INF111/031; M Z Terry to J V Riley (IRD), December 9, 1958, CO 1027/239/INF111/027.
[68] For an example see 'Cairo Radio Propaganda' December 24-28, 1962 in TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1011/2/G.
[69] 'Transmission 'X', Minute from IRD to RIOs, September 10, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/43.

grown out of the original one.'[70] Despite the concerns raised by the territories over RIVAROL/'X', McMullen at the CO confessed to 'a sneaking suspicion I have that *no one* knows or has thought very deeply about the right way to counter UAR/Communist propaganda.'[71] The territories were quick to criticise IRD output, but not so quick to provide alternatives. Among the limited positive suggestions from the CO was that topics that related to African subjects should be attributed to a named author. Not only would this make the articles more attractive to editors, but it 'would also partly dispense with the need for such a rigmarole as "informed circles", which bears the taint of Government handouts.' Hopson agreed that this would be something worth doing.[72]

Alongside the previously mentioned complaints about a lack of relevance and over-complexity, which, McMullen noted, IRD seemed anxious to correct, there were other issues to which the department seemed much less responsive: those of style and approach. As noted in the previous chapters, IRD repeatedly faced the charge that they were far too Eurocentric in their approach to propaganda, a view shared at all levels of the Colonial Office. In the CO's opinion, IRD seemed to 'aim at the European liberal exclusively e.g. they always assume that their target disapproves of violence...they seem far too emotionally involved in their anti-communism or anti-Nasserism...they seem to have got their needle stuck in a groove both as to the approach...and as to language: the same clichés have been cropping up regularly and monotonously to my knowledge since the late 40's.' McMullen asserted that it would not be difficult to improve the RIVAROL service – it was simply a question of expense, and the effort involved to do so. The CO would do well, in his opinion, to hold off further comment on

[70] Confidential Minute, J V Riley (IRD), January 21, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/10.
[71] Author's emphasis. M McMullen (CO London), June 5, 1959, TNA CO 1027/243/INF111/031.
[72] 'Transmission 'X' Progress Report', D C Hopson (IRD), May 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/23.

Transmission 'X'/RIVAROL until it became clear whether the service would be of any use in the long term.[73]

Despite the CO's reservations, Transmission 'X' continued to provide a service for CO posts. With the expansion of domestic broadcasting in East Africa, there was now a viable, local alternative to Cairo Radio, and as a consequence its impact was reduced. The focus of 'X' switched to Communist propaganda, particularly that emanating from China – the English language broadcasts from Moscow were not seen by the CO as having much of an effect. Morris' previous reservations about the viability of 'X' as a service seem to have disappeared in the light of this new direction of threat, and in August 1960 he asked Hopson to consider substituting some of 'X's normal output for articles tailored towards local African interest. Rather than directly seeking to rebut or counter Peking, Morris saw opportunity in the significant interest the East African press had in developments elsewhere in Africa. This interest was at that time supplied by the coverage of news agencies such as Reuters, which was patchy. If IRD, through Transmission 'X', could supply a news commentary service on developments taking place in non-British Africa, Morris assured Hopson this would be 'snapped up'.[74]

Hopson believed that 'X' could do this – in fact already was to some extent, as it was covering developments in African countries achieving independence from France. Morris' needs would have to be fulfilled by being 'presented as a counter to Communist bloc and other propaganda directed against British interests in Africa as a whole, in conformity with Transmission 'X's charter – and with IRD's charter in general', but Hopson believed that within these limits 'X' could still provide the foundation for such a commentary service.[75] And so it did, subsequently providing two separate but complementary services for the CO: the East Africa Special, an article produced once a week on a single topic slanted for an East African audience;

[73] M McMullen (CO London), June 5, 1959, TNA CO 1027/243/INF111/031.
[74] O H Morris (CO London) to D C Hopson (IRD), August 10, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.
[75] D C Hopson (IRD) to O H Morris (CO London), August 17, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.

and African News Snippets, which provided an almost wholly factual summary of news from the continent, as per Morris' requests noted above.[76] Here, again, IRD displayed flexibility in adapting to the needs of posts, with 'X' carrying material that was neither counter-Communist or counter-nationalist, but that nonetheless supported British aims.

There was an increasing acceptance of the daily Transmission 'X' news commentary service within the CO. There are few examples of outright praise, though material on the problems the USSR had experienced with planned agriculture in 1962 did elicit some. 'We have been greatly encouraged to note the quantity (and quality if I may say so) of I.R.D. material produced on this subject', noted the CO. 'We are taking every opportunity of distributing such material to all our British Information Services posts, not only those in East Africa'. This was 'gratifying', wrote Klatt of IRD, 'all the more so as the Colonial Office has not always seen eye to eye with us'. IRD therefore needed to 'show our continuing willingness to co-operate.'[77]

RIVAROL/'X' got off to a poor start with the CO. The consensus was that the service had little of relevance to say to African listeners, and there was resistance to the idea that a centralised service was practicable or even a good idea. Once Cairo Radio had been replaced by a new threat, the CO suddenly saw the potential of the service. O H Morris, one of its leading early detractors, came full circle, courting IRD and the service to address local issues on Africa and Communism. 'X' had diversified, completing the first of a number of further divisions of its service that would be driven by local needs and those of other departments such as the CRO.

[76] For an example see 'Africa News Snippets', January 4, 1963; East Africa Special, January 8, 1963, in TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1011/2/G.
[77] K G Fry (CO) to C F R Barclay (IRD), May 25, 1962; Minute, W Klatt (IRD), June 12, 1962; Minute, Earle (IRD), June 26, 1956; TNA FO 1110/1558/PR10542/30.

French-Speaking West Africa, Previous British Colonies, and the Commonwealth Relations Office.

The Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) had received 'X' from its inception, but had not sent it out to their posts.[78] It was finally rolled out in November 1960, roughly two years after the service began – the CRO having reserved a veto for material directed at, or about, Commonwealth countries.[79] 'X' was now received across Africa; once again, it was to mixed reviews, and faced a variety of obstacles. In Accra, overt anti-Communist propaganda could not be placed because of strict governmental censorship of the press. In Lagos, the style of the 'X' news snippets was viewed as simply not suitable for the press there. However, things were more positive in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, with Transmission 'X' being seen as already having had considerable value in areas other than those under the CRO's purview. The fact that it was difficult to place information was not the point – it was, J C Hyde in Salisbury argued, not the basis on which the usefulness of the information should be judged: 'If [local publicists] are not interested', noted Hyde, 'then they should be'. Posts made increasingly diverse use of 'X' material. For example, when questions about Communist literature and broadcasts were raised in the territories in the Federation of Rhodesia by local Africans – questions that territorial officials could not answer with sufficient authority – the post at Salisbury requested extra copies of 'X' to use as confidential briefing material for local administrators. By 1960 South Africa was also interested in the service, and 'X' had completed its roll-out across the continent.[80]

West Africa required a new direction for 'X', and another sub-service of commentary tailored for the region. In this area, Cairo Radio was not the threat against which it was deployed: Chinese Communism was seen to be the main threat to Western interests, though

[78] 'Transmission 'X' Progress Report', D C Hopson (IRD), May 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/23.
[79] D C Hopson (IRD)to T A H Scott (CRO London), October 24, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.
[80] J R E Carr-Gregg (Accra) to A Scott (CRO), November 14, 1960; C F MacLaren (Lagos) to A Scott, October 28, 1960; J C E Hyde (Salisbury) to A Scott (CRO), November 1, 1960; J Borthwick (Johannesburg) to A Scott, November 1, 1960; TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/44.

Afro-Asian issues were certainly important in that context. Straight news and objective content – much more like a worldwide version of the LPS; objective news supporting Western interests – was seen as much more likely to gain editorial editorial approval in the region. As with the other major deployments of 'X', a dummy run was sent out for approval and comments, but in this case IRD themselves were quick to point out flaws in their own initial content, taking particular issue with the new service's even-handedness. '[T]hough we should be fairly objective I do not think we should take it too far!' advised Tucker upon reading the dummy material. Hopson agreed: 'There are one or two items which are so objective as to bring us no joy at all'.[81]

In French-Speaking Africa, Dakar considered (the mild version of) 'X' to be 'good and useful'; Leopoldville, in contrast to most other posts, considered X's anti-Communist output to be too mild, almost 'too subtle for local consumption – present indications are that nothing is too piquant for the [ex-Belgian sections of the] Congolese in this sphere.'[82] These two former colonies bracketed the two extremes of what was required of 'X'. The two posts would receive the service by RTT rather than by airmail for speed, and translated by IRD into French. This new, West Africa service, that covered the entire region, comprised around 500 words.[83] The West Africa Special was indeed more impartial and factual than the usual 'X' content, though terms such as 'hypocrisy' and 'blatant falsity' would be comfortably deployed in analyses of Peking Radio, nestled output amongst more measured prose.[84]

[81] 'Transmission 'X' – for West Africa: 'dummy run'', Minute, H H Tucker (IRD) 24 January 1961 and D C Hopson (IRD) February 1, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/4.
[82] D A Roberts (British Embassy, Dakar) to J G McMinnies (IRD), March 20, 1961; J N Croce (British Embassy, Leopoldville), March 29, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/4A.
[83] J G McMinnies (IRD) to D A Roberts (Dakar), February 23, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/4.
[84] 'West Africa Special', 'Daily Commentary', January 9, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1125/2/G.

Usage in Asia, Europe and at Home.

Given that this chapter has a secondary aim of fully covering 'X', even if this means moving outside the scope of the thesis, it should also briefly consider the use of the service outside of the region under study. 'Athens, Berne, Bonn, Oslo, Rome and Vienna have regular customers for 'X'', reported IRD in 1961, although there is no analysis in the files anywhere to indicate how this was received, or used, by the posts concerned. It is perhaps most likely that these customers of 'X' treated the output as part of the general ebb and flow of information to and from IRD to countries whose positions within the Cold War were fixed. In one case at least, however, this fed back into the Middle East, as Rome Radio's Arabic Service used 'X' information in its broadcasts.[85]

In Asia, 'X' constituted the majority – 80% – of anti-Communist material placed by information officers in Thailand. Indonesia and Burma proved more resistant to anti-Communist information work in general, but in Burma 'X' got 'a good proportionate showing.' Vietnam, Tokyo and Hong Kong also placed some 'X' material, but in the case of RIO Singapore, Malaya, Colombo or Borneo IRD rather inexplicably had no information about their usage. Communist subversion, spy rings and (understandably) China were the preferred subjects. In Hong Kong a weekly special 'Commentary on Communism' was produced, with notional attribution rather than the 'special correspondent' by-line.[86] Japan would be provided with its own 'Tokyo Exclusive', a weekly commentary on Communism specially tailored for local consumption.[87] With this, IRD would find echoes of the criticism of the service that it first encountered from the Colonial Office 6 years previously. Whilst (in contrast with the CO) Tokyo always found something of value in the weekly 'Colin Johnstone' articles they were sent, there was 'too many colour words, too many irrelevant details and too many cases of just plain

[85] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'' Annex 'B' 'Usage and Reactions' C F R Barclay (IRD), January 5, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/8.
[86] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'' Annex 'B' 'Usage and Reactions' C F R Barclay (IRD), January 5, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/8.
[87] For an example see 'Tokyo Exclusive' January 8, 1963 in TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1125/2/G.

waffle.' IRD were also accused of 'bad English'; it was all of 'disappointingly low quality'.[88] IRD were more sanguine about the quality of their product by this point, having honed it over some considerable time and ascribed these issues to a failure to adequately understand the purpose of 'X' and how it would be used. '[I]f you regard some of the details [as] irrelevant', IRD replied, 'it would be fairly easy for you to simply delete them'.[89]

The various 'X' commentaries and specials were of course distributed throughout the FO, CO, CRO and COI offices in London. Outside the government, and from the beginning, the daily transmission of 'X' was also couriered from Carlton House Terrace at around 4.30pm to the BBC: this proved too late to be included in the BBC's political commentary for the day, a situation that Ralph Murray saw as unacceptable. This did not form the only point of contact, however, with Riley often in telephone contact with the BBC's Arabic desk during the morning, in the event of any particularly appropriate piece of content being available. As such 'X' material did find its way into the Daily Commentaries produced by the Arabic desk. IRD did not imagine that the BBC would necessarily use the scripts they were sent, but the hope was that their content would at least influence programme controllers.[90] By 1963, 'X' material was still despatched to the BBC at Bush House in the last van of the day, with commentary, scripts, and regional specials delivered to Hugh Lunghi of Central European Services, the head of Africa, Caribbean and Colonial Services, and various other heads and members of Middle Eastern, Latin American and African services, along with D M Graham of the BBC Central Research Unit.[91]

[88] J G Figgess (British Embassy, Tokyo) to D C M Rivett-Carnac (IRD at RIO Singapore), May 14, 1964, TNA FO 1110/1764/PR10123/18.
[89] J K Drinkall (IRD) to J G Figgess (British Embassy, Tokyo), June 1, 1964, TNA FO 1110/1764/PR10123/18.
[90] 'Delivery of Transmission 'X' Material to the BBC', H M Carless (IRD), December 23, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/1; 'Transmission 'X' Progress Report, D C Hopson (IRD), May 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1359/PR1125/23; Secret Minute, L F Sheridan (IRD) to C F R Barclay (IRD), November 7, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[91] 'Transmission 'X'', (unknown day) January 1963, TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1011/2/G.

Refocussing the LPS and 'X' post-1963

In July 1963, the decision was taken to change the name of the Transmission 'X' service to the 'Topical Commentary Service' (TCS) to better reflect the content and type of material produced.[92] At the point of the change of name, 'X'/TCS was reported to be producing the following output, a considerable expansion over 'X"s original remit:

Daily Commentary	English, approximately 1,200 words. Three or four items – one item translated into French for West Africa.
Gordon Tate Articles	About three a week. Generally in English but occasionally translated into French.
Weekly Commentary	In English and French. A digest of African items from the Daily Commentaries.
East Africa Special	A weekly article in English with a slightly anti-Communist pay-off.
African Snippets	Weekly news snippets in English. Mainly straight but a few exposure items
Tokyo Exclusive	Weekly Commentary on Communism in English.
Cairo Radio Themes	Weekly summary of Cairo's main propaganda line to Arabs and East Africa.
Ankara Exclusive	Three or four articles weekly.[93]

When the Qasim regime fell to a *coup d'état* on the 8 February 1963, there was a flurry of anti-Communist activity towards Iraq. Any hopes of getting 'X' into the one of the two really important markets that had to that point eluded it, and perhaps the front line against Communism in the Middle East, proved illusory. The Ba'athist regime soon forbade publication of anti-Communist material in the newspapers, and so Transmission 'X', in line with most IRD material, was impossible to place. In December 1963, the extent of Transmission 'X' distribution in Baghdad was the four walls of the British Embassy.[94]

The recommendation of the Plowden Report on Representational Services Overseas in 1964 was that efforts in the information field needed to be linked directly to policy objectives.

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[92] Circular, 'Topical Commentary Service' C F R Barclay, dated June 9, 1963 but likely July 9, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1713/PR1125/5.
[93] 'Material Produced by IRD Topical Commentary Service' C F R Barclay (IRD), dated June 9, 1963 but likely July 9, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1713/PR1125/5. Gordon Tate is a fictitious name. J R Greenwood (British Embassy, Rangoon) to R Andrew (IRD), February 17, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1309/PR1079/3.
[94] C W R Long (Baghdad) to A C Elwell (IRD), December 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1673/PR10193/71.

The same year Heads of Missions in underdeveloped countries began to call for increases in British Council work and improvements in the reception quality of BBC programmes. It was, in IPD's assessment, the underdeveloped nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the new propaganda effort must be directed. Substantial funds would be required from the 1965/66 onwards to effect the required changes. Following a 50% increase in the information budget for 1960/61, the Treasury was likely to be wholly unsympathetic to any further increases, and these funds would need to be met by cuts elsewhere.[95] 'Are these broadcasts important enough to survive the present economic blizzard?', Hopson was asked as early as 1961. It is a measure of how IRD saw 'X' that Hopson believed that they were.[96]

The lack of adequate news agency coverage was a driver for rolling out 'X' across West Africa. Once a substantial news agency network was established, the material that IOs had previously worked so hard to distribute could now be easily picked up by editors and commentators from news agency sources. The situation was compounded by the growth of television and increased radio network coverage. The recommendation of the Plowden Report was that the LPS no longer needed to support a positive projection of British values and interests. The same year the output of the service was significantly reduced, as part of the budget saving towards the new information requirements. The LPS would be turned into an airmail-only service,[97] and refocused on supporting British commercial interests. Political material and feature articles would be dropped to a moderate level of approximately 6 per month.[98] LPS would no longer be, as Ralph Murray had put it, 'a comprehensive service of information and comment about British policy and the British way of life.'[99] In any case, by mid-

[95] A Moore (IPD), Draft minute on propaganda work, undated but June/July 1964, TNA FO 1110/1843/PR1125/10.
[96] 'Transmission 'X' by Wireless for South-East Asia' Minute, A M Smith; D C Hopson (IRD), August 15, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1455/PR1125/17.
[97] Though the beam service to America would remain for the time being.
[98] A Moore (IPD), Draft minute on propaganda work, undated but June/July 1964, TNA FO 1110/1843/PR1125/10.
[99] Confidential PP12/2, Ralph Murray (Assistant Under Secretary of State for the FO), May 19, 1958, TNA CO 1027/88/INF57/01.

1964 it was only the Middle East and the (French) West Africa editions of the TCS that were sent by LPS, and these were moved over to other delivery methods when the cuts in the LPS budget were announced.[100]

Cairo Radio's attacks on British interests and policies in the Middle East continued beyond this point, and IRD continued to prepare monthly reports for the FO on the station's activities. During 1965, the station continued to broadcast anti-British, anti-imperialist rhetoric, incitement to violence, and approval of violent acts committed against British troops and citizens in the region. If Britain was prepared to compromise on information activity in search of better relations with Egypt, the reverse was not the case. IRD explained why: 'Cairo consistently took the line that the UAR could not barter its commitments to Arab nationalism for the benefits of improved relations with Britain.' Heikal, reporting in *Al-Ahram*, with the article broadcast by Cairo Radio, affirmed that Egyptian interests were diametrically opposed to those of the British.[101] Cairo Radio continued to influence radio stations in Yemen, and Sana'a radio praised the assassination of Sir Arthur Charles, speaker of the Aden National Council, in September 1965. Cairo continued to produce atrocity propaganda aimed at the British, for example accusing the British of killing civilians in attacks in Dhofar.[102] The *Voice of the Arab*'s impact had been in decline throughout the 1960's, but its credibility would not survive its reporting of the Six Day War in 1967. The *Voice of the Arabs* broadcasts were so divorced from the fact of what was happening on the ground that they were impossible to defend in the face of the truth – the nature and the fact of its propaganda fully exposed. Having been instrumental for the build-up of Egyptian confidence in their military prior to the war, and for sustaining this during at least the first two days of the crisis, Ahmed Said was eventually dismissed, and *Voice of the Arabs*

[100] 'Possible economies in COI output', Minute, H H Tucker, July 16, 1964, TNA FO 1110/1843/PR1125/10.
[101] 'Cairo Radio Propaganda since 14 August', undated, but August/September 1965; 'Cairo Radio's Anti-British Propaganda since Ahmed Said's Return to Cairo from Britain', IRD Report, undated, but likely August 1965, TNA FO 371/183949/VG1432/4 and VG1432/5.
[102] San'a and Ta'iz Radio Propaganda, undated but likely September 1965; 'UAR Radio Propaganda October and November, 1965', IRD report, undated but likely December 1965, TNA FO 371/183949/VG1432/5.

entered a new phase. Although it did not wholly give up on revolutionary propaganda, encouraging such in both Muscat and Oman, senior employees whose career spanned both sides of the Six Day War reported that the broadcasts were so bland post-1967 that they were indistinguishable from the regular domestic service.[103]

As discussed below, the ultimate fate of 'X' is unclear, and in any case falls outside the scope of this thesis. One element of it – the East Africa Special – was terminated in August 1965: the development of news communication throughout the continent had rendered it somewhat redundant by that point, and it was dropped with no objection from the receiving posts.[104]

Conclusion: the importance of Transmission 'X'

Transmission 'X' material was by its nature ephemeral, and only exemplar or dummy-run material exists in the National Archives, as part of correspondence files.[105] It is in fact largely due to the intransigence of the CO over their use of the RIVAROL service that anything exists beyond a handful of files within the IRD series, their dissatisfaction generating an amount of correspondence out of proportion to their share of the posts receiving the service. Given the dry, factual nature of 'X' output, there perhaps would be little additional value in making an extended analysis of the content of the service over time, even if sufficient material existed to make this possible. It is also impossible to measure the impact of the service in any real sense. This is of course the case with all propaganda, but to a greater degree with 'X'. There are occasional references to the amount of articles successfully placed by information officers in local media, but there are glaring omissions too – as noted above, at one stage IRD had no

[103] Boyd, *Broadcasting*, pp. 28, 331-332.
[104] See Minutes and correspondence in FO 1110/1955/PR10556/5.
[105] Sample 'X' material exists in FO 1110/1097 (FO dummy runs) FO1110/1359, FO 1110/1328, FO 1110/1337, FO 1110/1583 FO 1110/1616, FO 1110/1764, FO 1110/1843, FO 1110/1955, CO 1027/239.

information on RIO Singapore's use of 'X' material. It was also not the practice to separate 'X' from the normal output of the LPS in reports prepared on that service. In fact, in 1961 'X' material was specifically excluded from consideration in Leslie Glass' review of the use of IRD material, as it did not fall in to any convenient category and thus merited separate consideration, which it did not receive until January 1963. As Kit Barclay noted:

> From time to time we receive requests and suggestions from posts for the treatment of particular subjects of interest to them; we also try to meet ad hoc requests for counter-propaganda action. These help us in trying to assess the use of Political Commentary, as do periodic reports we receive from a number of posts. But our picture is still very incomplete.[106]

'X' material could inspire articles, subtly influence the editorial line, or have one or two facts or observations plucked from it – all of which without using any of the text contained in the commentary, and thus impossible to attribute to 'X' with any degree of reliability.

There is, regrettably, no information on the end of 'X', or the TCS as it was known by the point it disappears from the files. There are three possibilities: firstly, the advent of new media and news agency coverage of world events may have removed the need for the service by the mid-1960s, and it quietly faded away; secondly, after disconnecting 'X' from the LPS, it was absorbed into another service, becoming part of the general editorial output of IRD; or thirdly, the service continued in some form, and evidence of this exists in some form in files which fall outside of the remit of this thesis and which to this point the author has been unable to find – perhaps 'X' had become a regular and unremarkable part of the normal IRD output, scarcely worthy of mention. At this point it is impossible to say, though it was the rise of news agency coverage that would seem to be the most plausible.

None of this detracts from the importance of the service. It is clear from the way it is described by senior members of IRD, and in the way it was considered by the majority of posts where it was received, that it was valued and served a unique function. A significant percentage

[106] Confidential Circular, Kit Barclay (IRD), January 29, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1616/PR1011/2/G.

of IRD work was the mobilization of facts presented in such a way as to either further British or Western interests, or to work against those of the Communist Bloc or the forces of anti-imperialism. In this regard it is abundantly clear that 'X' was a major part of this work in the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia. It came into being as a means of combating Cairo Radio, perceived as the preeminent threat to British interests in the Middle East and East Africa, and it was considered the best and only rebuttal tool available to the Western powers to this end. By the end of the period under examination it had become flexible and responsive enough to deal with all manner of broadcasting threats on three continents, a complementary weapon alongside the BBC in the war against Communism, and a service that grew in the main due to requests from posts. It was sufficiently well thought of that it expanded to the Far East largely driven by these requests. It managed to attract zero interest from either Radio Cairo or the Communist bloc, and was never exposed for what it was despite its widespread distribution and little in the way of secure communication.

In the Middle East, a reduced market for IRD's traditional product, coupled with a softly-softly approach towards Nasser, meant that 'X' was one of the main thrusts of IRD's work in the region. Across the area under consideration, apart from the BBC and the general service of the LPS, Transmission 'X's Daily Commentary remained the fastest means by which IRD could respond to propaganda directed at British interests – on a daily basis to most receiving posts. Less regularly, but with the ability to be driven by the needs of individual posts, articles and specials provided a fuller exploration of topics and themes. In posts such as Ankara and Salisbury 'X' was used for purposes far beyond IRD's original intention. By 1963, the distribution list for 'X' covered 14 pages, which serves to illustrate quite how widespread its use had become.[107]

[107] 'Transmission 'X', distribution list January 1963, TNA FO 1616/PR1125/2/G.

Transmission 'X' correspondence reinforces a number of points about IRD, and was representative of difficulties and problems IRD experienced in general over the regions under discussion. Firstly, there was a degree of disdain for IRD's methodology, and resentment at any encroachment into propaganda or information work by IRD in territories that fell under the administration of the other foreign departments. This was most marked in the Colonial Office, sections of which still considered IRD to be peddlers of out-of-date, unsubtle, Eurocentric propaganda that had no place in the countries they administered, despite the improvement under Stacpoole. The Commonwealth Relations Office was much more measured in its analysis. In the case of the CO, this attitude was fuelled by the second point to be repeated here: IRD's monolithic approach to propaganda did not work in the Middle East or Africa. Attempts to provide a 'catch-all' service, driven by and authored from London, were unworkable, and earned them little support. When Transmission 'X' was turned towards combating Communism, IRD was on more traditional ground and the service was much better received. Thirdly, IRD proved remarkably flexible, prepared to go to significant lengths to ensure that material found a home in posts, even if it proved necessary to edit or alter this far beyond their original intention. Fourthly, the dry, factual content of 'X' gives insight into some of the methodical, workmanlike, constant output that IRD generated – the propaganda war seen through the lens of Transmission 'X' is very dull indeed.

Transmission 'X' bridges the areas under consideration in this thesis. It was a highly significant tool for IRD, but it was far from the only one the department used either in the Middle East or Africa. The final two chapters will therefore return to the situation following Suez, and consider the more traditional work of IRD, beginning with that in Africa.

Chapter Six

Counter-Communism and Decolonisation in Africa

> The dialectic between decolonizers and nationalists was worked out within the basic bipolarity of international politics; how and when a country achieved its independence depended less on its supposed state of political maturity than on prevailing priorities of Cold War strategy.[1]
>
> J D Hargreaves, 'Approaches to Decolonization'

> [A]s the Colonies approach independence they will inevitably become more exposed to contact with Communist countries and organisations, and I suggest that if means can be devised of carrying out suitable measures now, we may save ourselves much trouble and expense later on.[2]
>
> Douglas Dodds-Parker (FO), March 28, 1956

IRD broadly faced the same challenges in northern and eastern Africa as it did in the Middle East. However, the texture of the Communist and Arab nationalist challenges to British interests, and the potential for IRD to meet them effectively, varied significantly. Put simply, the Communist threat in the Middle East was a paper tiger, and despite early Western fears Communism never achieved a significant foothold in the region. Arab nationalism was an unstoppable force – accommodation with the movement was the only answer that made sense – and it soon became seen as a valuable bulwark against the spread of Communism.

In Africa, however, both threats played out across a tapestry of differing national and regional interests, backgrounds and religions. In the Muslim nations of North and East Africa, Arab nationalist propaganda found a receptive audience. In the largely Christian nations of West Africa, it carried far less weight. Decolonisation spread rapidly across the continent, but there

[1] J. D. Hargreaves, "Approaches to decolonization", in Rimmer and Kirk-Greene, eds, *The British intellectual engagement with Africa in the twentieth century* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 103-4, 107.
[2] Douglas Dodds-Parker to D Lloyd (CO), March 28, 1956, TNA FO 1110/957/PR10109/48/

was a significant regional variation in timing and outcome: for the British-controlled nations, West Africa began its transition to independence before the East, and so provided IRD with an opportunity to supply information about events in the former to the recipients in the latter. Communist propagandists worked through Egyptian cultural and political connections with Africa, and forged their own, but in contrast with the Middle East there was a genuine groundswell of indigenous socialist movements. Colonialism was a still-open wound.

The Arab nationalist threat to British interests in Africa was in decline by 1961. It had been, by and large, a broadcast threat, albeit one supported by training and education programmes. The danger from Communism in Africa was on the increase and for the Communist powers broadcasting was but one strand of a diverse cultural propaganda drive into the continent. Cairo's African campaign, and IRD's response to broadcasting has been covered in the preceding chapters. This chapter will consider how IRD saw, and reacted to, Communist designs on Africa within the context of decolonisation. The specifics of IRD's work in Africa varied significantly from country to country, and the record is patchy at best – for example, there is a comparatively large amount of information on the Congo, but little on Somalia. The intention here, therefore, is to concentrate on the themes and factors that held wide significance for Africa, though with the use of specific examples.

Having secured a direct role for the department in Africa, IRD sought to expand their work to meet the renewed Soviet and nascent Chinese efforts to penetrate Africa. Communist penetration and Western response brought the continent a decisive Cold War significance, and the process of decolonisation framed the efforts of all sides. The situation was fluid, and the period under consideration essentially amounted to a jockeying for position, wherein the aim of both Western and Communist information agencies was to establish a preferential relationship with the regimes of nations following their independence. This chapter will first look at how IRD assessed the growing Communist threat to British interests in Africa, in which China was a

significant player in contrast to the Middle East. For IRD, as for the Communist powers, Africa was almost wholly a new market for their product and services, and this presented the department with a number of challenges as they sought to secure the loyalty of colonial nations following independence. IRD's portfolio of products has already been discussed; these same publications were distributed throughout Africa to broadly the same type of recipients. What is somewhat surprising is that, despite producing material on Africa, as late as 1962 nothing was produced by the department written specifically for an African audience. The second, longest section of this chapter will examine the methods and tactics the department deployed in a specifically African context.

In East Africa IRD faced a number of obstacles to overcome, even as late as 1961. Despite the department's improved relationship with the Colonial Office Information Department, two out of the three CO information officers stationed in East Africa remained determinedly opposed to IRD material. Other issues, such as political restrictions on propaganda in certain nations, affected IRD on a country-by-country basis. The legacy of colonialism was a regional issue for British propagandists, much as it had been in the Middle East, but in Africa the history of slavery and subsequent colonisation was particularly divisive. The maintenance of relationships with white-minority regimes in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia perpetuated old tensions, and worked against the positive message that Britain was trying to project. The third and final section of this chapter will explore these obstacles to IRD work in Africa.

Communist tactics in Africa

The Communist push into Africa was paralleled by a burgeoning interest that nations approaching independence had in the outside world. Nowhere was this more evident than in

Nigeria. The IO there, Colin MacLaren, summarised the situation with a concision that often escaped IRD's own arguments. With more and more of the population 'beginning to feel their oats' and look to the outside world, they were increasingly exposed to Nasserite and Communist propaganda. 'If someone does not dive in with the right thing', MacLaren reported, 'someone will dive in with the wrong thing. I think in a way it is as simple as that.'[3] The fear amongst the British information services was that the desire amongst Nigerians for reading material, and their curiosity about the wider world, was growing faster than their ability to satisfy it.[4]

The arrival of the Reuters news service in Nigeria exposed the country to Soviet criticisms of the West and illustrated Communist influence throughout the world. Whilst there did not appear to be any consequent increase in Communist activity in the country, MacLaren detected a significant increase in interest about Communism amongst the educated and government officials, and newspapers were affording greater coverage to Communism and Communist nations. There was, MacLaren emphasised, 'a need for serious study of the techniques required to counter communist propaganda when it begins to show itself seriously. The material produced by the Foreign Office shows no sign of any understanding of what motives dominate the minds of nationalists – and that means practically all natives able to have any political notions whatever – in a country about to shed European control.' Whilst feelings towards Communism were generally negative, highlighting (for example) the situation in Hungary required 'an effort of imagination that few…are in a position to make'. The requirement for overt propaganda methods meant that any attack on Communism was evidently from a non-Nigerian source, and this therefore raised the issue of whom this benefited. In MacLaren's opinion, British agencies, including IRD, needed to get a grip on the 'mental

[3] C F MacLaren to J Stacpoole, December 19, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/6/G.
[4] 'General notes on British information services in West African Colonial Territories', J W Stacpoole, June 1958, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/57.

processes' of the Nigerian population before any propaganda could hope to be persuasive.[5] MacLaren's reading of the situation was important to IRD. Perhaps the one source based in Africa that the department really trusted, MacLaren would return to London to work for IRD following Nigerian independence.[6]

The Communist nations naturally benefitted from this increased exposure. Though Communism was in no way universally popular, neither were the nations of the West. The task for the Communists was to shape the perception of their nations to the good. As discussed in Chapter 2, Soviet relations with the developing nations of Africa were no longer contingent on a shared socialist ideology. At this stage, the aim was to pull allegiances away from the Western nations and ideally towards the Communists. In a similar vein, from the African side, whilst Communism itself was perhaps not that attractive, there were aspects of the Soviet and Chinese positions in world affairs and elements of their foreign policy that were. In East Africa, it was recognised by the British that there were few genuine Communists but a significant proportion of African nationalists who were Communist sympathisers. The pattern adopted by the Communists to penetrate Africa in the information field, as seen by IRD and generalised as this may be, was 'to cultivate sympathetic journalist-politicians before independence…and after independence, when bloc-trained journalists enter naturally into the official nationalist government…to shift the emphasis onto the general aid plan of which information projects and training are only one aspect.' This was a long-term strategy, without instant results and at the mercy of the decolonisation process. By late 1963, IRD assessed that Kenya and Zanzibar were still at the first stage, Tanganyika and Uganda where somewhat in the middle, with the negotiation of aid agreements still progressing. The Somali Republic was already at an advanced

[5] 'A Note on Anti-Communist Propaganda in Nigeria', C MacLaren, undated but May 1958, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/57.
[6] O H Morris (CO) to D C Hopson (IRD), 17 October 1961; TNA FO 1110/1447/PR10585/4.

stage. Ethiopia fell outside the general pattern and the Communists had made no headway there.[7]

It wasn't just journalism, of course. There were other routes to shaping opinion and establishing influence, particularly the formation or development of Communist 'front' organisations – putatively independent organisations in fact under the control of the Soviet bloc or China (particularly the former). Here, too, though IRD targeted such organisations, the department did not believe that these were agitating for the adoption of Communism itself. In 1959 there did not appear to be sufficient evidence that the 'objective conditions' existed for it to flourish. Rather, African nationalism and anti-colonial attitudes were deployed 'to wean the emergent states away from the West.' Local leaders of front organisations such as the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) were encouraged by the Soviets to further their positions within local government and unite disparate smaller groups under their organisations. The organisations themselves were used by the Communists to disseminate propaganda.[8]

Even in the case of trade unions, IRD saw no concrete threat from sustained Communist influence in dependent territories, although the situation in West Africa was seen as more troubling, and more significant inroads had been made into French territories. IRD advised a cautious approach towards British attempts to influence African trade unions. In the department's view, failure to do so risked what was the defining nature of democratic trade unions – independence – being lost. There was also a continental dimension to future plans, as

[7] 'Communist Penetration of East African Information Media', September 19, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1692/PR10556/4/G.
[8] Draft, 'Communist "Front" Organisations in Africa', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G.

from the department's standpoint in 1959 the concept of a pan-African trade union seemed likely to have increasing appeal.[9]

There were also more practical and straightforward means to win influence: the provision of money and services. The development of infrastructure and trade links, training of skills, and cold hard cash were naturally attractive to nations emerging from colonial control. A joint US/UK Information Working Group was quick to identify the independence of 'almost a score' of African countries in 1960 of having 'vastly increased the possibilities of Sino-Soviet activities in the continent…[the Communists] have been quick to seize their opportunity to penetrate Africa by every means available – diplomatic, economic, cultural and propaganda.' Economic moves into newly independent nations, including loans at low interest (in the case of Chinese loans to Ghana and Guinea, interest-free), were 'deceptively attractive' and 'tempting if not irresistible to African governments who are eager to industrialise their countries as rapidly as possible.'[10]

The working group believed that the Sino-Soviet push for cultural relations, with its attendant opportunities for propaganda, found its most serious expression in training opportunities for Africans within the Soviet bloc, and the provision of instructors and teachers for African countries. Communist front organisations played 'a supporting role to Communist governmental efforts'. Efforts were confined to promoting extremist organisations under pan-Africanism; international organisations were wary of offending any organisations by seeking affiliates.[11]

Though historically the nations of Africa had little common purpose, rejection of colonialism presented a common and uniting cause to fight. The concept of Pan-Africanism,

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[9] Draft, 'The Orientation of Trade Unions in Tropical Africa', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CO), April 12, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/58/G.
[10] 'United States – United Kingdom Information Working Group Meeting October-November 1961, United Kingdom Paper' FO 1110/1435/PR10554/61/G.
[11] 'United States – United Kingdom Information Working Group Meeting October-November 1961, United Kingdom Paper' FO 1110/1435/PR10554/61/G.

and the movement that supported it, had developed through the early twentieth century. Married to the Cold War push for decolonization in the 1950s, and the perceived value of aligned nations to both the Soviet Union and America, this was a fertile ground for propaganda. The USA and USSR pushed African politics into a Cold War context, and the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s meant that Africa 'became a three-way ideological battleground', as Maoism competed with American capitalism and Soviet Communism for the hearts and minds of African leaders and revolutionaries.[12] In the same way as Arab nationalism would come to be seen as an asset in keeping the Communists out of the Middle East, African nationalism was increasingly seen by IRD as filling a similar role.

As noted in Chapter 4, the pan-African movement was 'not basically hostile to the West, save on the colonial issue.' Rather than attempt to counter or side-line the movement, the colonial powers needed instead to cultivate it as a bulwark against both Communist and Egyptian influence. Failure to do so ran the risk of it becoming 'a vehicle for Soviet subversion'. Communist penetration and co-option of wider African movements and organisations was a greater threat however. IRD's David Lancashire noted that 'the revolutionary pan-Africanist who is directly or indirectly boosted by Communist propaganda is not, in the public mind, turned into a Communist stooge; if they register the point at all, he is merely seen to be enlisting allies in a just cause.'[13] By 1961, David Roberts of IRD was championing a 'campaign to expose Communist subversion of African organisations'. He reasoned that this removed 'the need to explain what Communism is from scratch and merely concentrates on the simpler thesis that the Communists are taking the Africans for a ride.'[14] As noted previously, there was a latent concern amongst IOs that too much education about Communism could be counterproductive. By

[12] Nicholas Cull, "Africa", in Cull, ed, Propaganda and mass persuasion: a historical encyclopedia, 1500 to the present (Santa Barbara Calif., 2003), pp. 8-9.
[13] 'Report on visits to Lagos, Lomé, Accra, Freetown and Conakry', July 1961, H H D Lancashire, TNA FO 1110/1436/PR10555/5.
[14] IRD noted that pan-Africanism was a somewhat artificial construct when applied across Africa as a whole, but did have attraction for countries on both sides of the Sahara. Draft, 'Pan-African Movements', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G; Minute, D A Roberts (IRD), October 23, 1961, TNA FO1110/1488/PR1011/101/G.

targeting IRD's campaign thus, this issue was avoided and the IOs' constant demands for simplified propaganda satisfied.

Soviet tactics in the short- and medium-term were seen by FO as primarily to subvert and co-opt pan-Africanism and its organisations for their own use. By associating a Communist front organisation with each pan-African organisation, the Communists sought to co-opt the most dynamic political force in Africa and spread influence beyond those countries in which they had diplomatic representation. The Communist bloc's 'normal tactics of penetration' would also be deployed: trade and aid, travel to the bloc, propaganda (supported by 'very heavy broadcasting schedules'), and bribery. In the long term, it was the 'allegiance of the next generation of African leaders' that was being sought.[15]

To that end, the Soviets and the Chinese funded the AAPSC's Permanent Secretariat in Cairo. Its anti-colonial stance and rhetoric appealed to both. This was not necessarily a wholly successful exercise; whatever ancillary benefits may have accrued. The conclusion was that, wary of tarring the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) movement with outside influence, genuine penetration of Africa through the organisation was 'outwardly negligible.' Ultimately, the support from both major Communist powers may have damaged the institution to some extent; the USA believed that the Sino-Soviet split had certainly done so.[16]

Afro-Marxism, a term without precise definition, was nonetheless used to describe the direction of African leaders whose economic and political analysis was Marxist in origin but did not embrace – and sometimes rejected – Communism. Though something to be monitored, Afro-Marxism was not viewed as necessarily a precursor to Communism. African Socialism, which alongside Afro-Marxism could in theory be exploited in the short-term by the Communist

[15] Confidential despatch, November 19, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/76.
[16] Draft, 'Afro-Asian Influence on Africa', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G ; R D Clift (UK Delegation to NATO) to D A Roberts (IRD), January 11, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1564/PR10554/80; 'United States – United Kingdom Information Working Group Meeting October-November 1961, United Kingdom Paper' FO 1110/1435/PR10554/61/G.

powers, presented 'doctrinal difficulties' arising from the particular nature of fractured African socialist practices – so fractured, in fact, that IRD did not see any detailed analysis of it to be profitable.[17]

The use of slogans and catch phrases, it could be argued, has a greater significance for propagandists in the case of less literate and less-developed societies. The 'sound-bite' has the ability to instantly convey a whole range of associated meanings. In Africa at the end of 1961, it was recognised by IRD that the Soviets were making a much better fist of this than the Western nations. The phrase 'neo-colonialism', it was believed, had become sufficiently ingrained in African discourse that it would be difficult to shift – impossible, perhaps, even using 'tit-for-tat phrases such as "Neo-Imperialism"', no matter how attractive that particular appellation was for the British in their 'semantic warfare' with the Soviets. IRD's concern was that 'Socialist-minded African nationalists' who sought to express their hostility to the West seemed all too ready to adopt Communist propaganda jargon to do so. 'Neo-colonialism' in IRD's estimate seemed 'to be catching on very widely, and is poisoning African minds.' More work needed to be done.[18] IRD penned an interim report as a stop-gap in late 1963, and also commissioned a Background Book by Brian Crozier on the subject of neo-colonialism, which was published in 1964.[19]

Despite any estimate of printed or radio propaganda impact being purely speculative, increases in both over the few years leading up to 1961 signified 'a danger that their influence has risen sharply.'[20] At an information officers' conference in Nairobi in 1961, the British Information Services projected that '[f]ew people who study the African scene closely have any doubts but that within a few years of independence genuine parliamentary democracy will have disappeared in the region of Africa under discussion and have been replaced, in essence if not in

[17] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa.', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49.
[18] H M Carless (IRD) to D A Roberts (FO), September 25, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/52; Minute, Hugh Carless, April 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/8.
[19] Confidential, J B Ure (IRD) to P M Foster, October 31, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1691/PR10554/58.
[20] 'United States – United Kingdom Information Working Group Meeting October-November 1961, United Kingdom Paper' FO 1110/1435/PR10554/61/G.

form, by some kind of authoritarian government, in the range extending from military dictatorship to "banana republic", as was neatly summed up somewhere as "tyranny tempered by inefficiency"…None of the emergent territories has a chance of reaching the necessary levels of public awareness and responsibility in time.'[21] If these constraints were true, they could only complicate IRD's efforts to secure Western-leaning regimes following independence. For the Soviets, any destabilisation of the status quo would be enough in the short term.

IRD Methodology in Africa

The situation that presented itself to IRD in Africa was different again to that in the Middle East, which in itself had required new thinking not based on European practice. '[W]e would do well', noted IRD's David Lancashire, 'to realise that the mood of the African-in-the-street towards a communism whose dialectics and intentions they do not grasp (perhaps the one generalisation it is safe to make) is conditioned by different factors from those operating in Europe or even Asia'.[22] IRD were not averse to the odd generalisation of their own, however: despite what was perceived as short-term differences in tactics between the Communist powers, the conclusion was that it was still practical to not distinguish between Soviet and Chinese information campaigns.[23]

In Africa, IRD still targeted educated elites and opinion-shapers over the masses. There was, however, another tranche of society to consider – a definition tainted by imperialist prejudices, but nonetheless relevant: '*évolués*'; Europeanised Africans. These may have been few

[21] 'Information Officers' Conference, Nairobi, 1961. 'Information Work in Emergent African Countries.' Note by British Information Services, Kenya.', TNA FO 1110/ 1578/PR10585/3.
[22] 'Report on visits to Lagos, Lomé, Accra, Freetown and Conakry', July 1961, H H D Lancashire, TNA FO 1110/1436/PR10555/5.
[23] 'United States – United Kingdom Information Working Group Meeting October-November 1961, United Kingdom Paper' FO 1110/1435/PR10554/61/G.

and far between – for example in Congo-Leopoldville[24] – yet their low numbers made them even more valuable targets for IRD. These Europeanised Africans, educated by definition, could be worthy of attention even at school-leaver age, with a reasonable expectation that they would become influential in perhaps a decade's time.[25] As such, efforts to court *évolués* formed a slightly more long-term strand of the prevailing effort to influence the immediate successor regimes and opinion-shapers of the newly independent nations of Africa.

There were two distinct elements to IRD's work in Africa: positive publicity – Britain as friend, supporter of independence, and associate – and counter-publicity, where the main focus was on 'the positive presentation of our policy, objectives and way of life.' These were largely enacted via British trade and institutional links. British policy accepted that counter-propaganda was a necessity across Africa, but there were two standout considerations. Firstly, the British were aware that any indiscriminate campaign ran the risk of raising awareness of Communist ideas outside of the intellectual or political circles in which it was already present. This was the constant concern of the CO in the first few years under examination, though IRD believed their assessment of the risk to be inflated. Secondly, there was the risk of British propaganda 'being suspect as parti [pris] and therefore counterproductive.'[26] IRD avoided criticism of African national governments' links or relationships with Communist nations, preferring to concentrate their efforts on Communist, or Communist-penetrated, organisations.[27]

One example of the above was IRD's strategy towards Guinea. Having followed an avowedly revolutionary socialist policy since independence in 1958, Guinea was a model of political repression and personal oppression. Though IRD was firmly of the opinion that 'many of Guinea's misfortunes have arisen from her own pig-headed incompetence', the department was adamant that they should not point this out. Rather, efforts were directed towards showing

[24] In the Belgian Congo, the term was applied generally to the educated middle class.
[25] Appendix J, 'Information Research Department Work', September 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1531/PR10158/18/G.
[26] Original text is parti puis. 'Information Policy for Africa', June 30, 1961, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/76
[27] Minute, Hugh Carless, April 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/8.

how the Guineans had been misled and taken advantage of by Communists. 'From this the moral for the whole of Africa is deduced.'[28]

General British information work across Africa was as varied as one would expect. In East Africa, whilst opportunities to place material in the press and radio were limited, Britain fostered goodwill by providing equipment such as printing presses or transmitters, trained staff and seconded BBC staff. In French West Africa, where Britain had little in the way of interests to protect, Bob Marett notes that rather than appoint information officers, it was British practice to open small embassies wherein the emphasis was more on offering assistance to newly independent nations than on normal information work. As such, information work became the responsibility of all staff. 'The Information Officer', explains Marett, 'if anybody could be called that, was essentially the Ambassador himself.'[29] Yet IRD and the African IOs progressively developed an increasingly cogent strategy for Africa as a whole.

At a Regional Information Conference at Dakar in April 1961, four main points arose out of the discussion. That all material for Africa should be 'Africanised' mirrored previous conclusions on IRD work in the Middle East: material should be topical and appropriate. Radicalism in Africa, and the 'natural left-wing, almost revolutionary socialist swing' needed to be accommodated and respected. This paralleled the accommodation of Arab nationalism in the Middle East – fighting battles that could not be won could only ever be counterproductive. The desire amongst Africans to stay out of the Cold War meant that rather than strict anti-Communism, propaganda should emphasise constructive themes, illustrating the benefit to Africans of following a certain course – although Communist machinations should also be discretely highlighted whenever possible. Finally, 'cross-fertilisation' between former British and

[28] Minute, J Bunce (IRD), March 27, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1536/PR10165/11.
[29] Robert Marett, *Through the back door: an inside view of Britain's overseas information services* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 197-198.

French colonies, and visits to Britain and Europe, were to be encouraged as much as possible.[30] On the flipside of this final point, IRD also liaised with other Western nations to restrict the movement of students who transited areas in Western Europe *en route* to the Soviet Bloc.[31]

Beyond these points, and with front activity intensifying, IRD believed that the information services needed to do all that was possible to expose the true nature of such organisations, and their connection with and utility to the Communist powers. At the same time this support was to be provided to non-Communist international organisations, and delegates who could be relied upon to support Western interests sent to international conferences, even those that were 'ostensibly harmless', to ensure that British interests did not go by default.[32]

Issues of topicality were coloured by issues of colonialism. During a 1961 tour of West African posts by IRD's David Lancashire, a key concern of posts was how to make the department's standard anti-Communist fare relevant – at all – to Africans. Colonialism worked against many of the standard examples IRD used elsewhere. An official from the Nigerian Foreign Office reported that criticism of the Hungarian government met with the response that 'it may be Communist but it is run by Hungarians, not by foreigners and for the present that is all that matters to us'.[33] IRD obviously needed to focus on African issues.

IOs in East Africa were convinced of the need for restrained propaganda. Their conclusion was that 'any statement emerging from the United Kingdom which disparages the ideology, politics or behaviour of another Power can only be counter-productive.' Propaganda needed to be subtle, avoid directly challenging Communism, and be dispassionate and factual. In the IOs' opinions it was important to exploit 'all the advantages of inner lines of communication'

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[30] Minute, 'Regional Information Conference at Dakar', C F R Barclay (IRD), April 10, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/12.
[31] Report by Croce, enclosure with D M H Riches (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to D C Hopson (IRD), May 4, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1532/PR10158/7/G.
[32] Draft, 'Communist "Front" Organisations in Africa', enclosure with D C Hopson (IRD) to C G Costley-White (CRO), August 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1231/PR1032/57/G.
[33] 'Report on visits to Lagos, Lomé, Accra, Freetown and Conakry', July 1961, H H D Lancashire, TNA FO 1110/1436/PR10555/5.

before independence.[34] What was wanted in Britain's East African colonies was 'not so much material taking an openly anti-Communist line as material about developments in Africa written from the point of view of a moderate Nationalist whose leanings were towards the West rather than towards the Communists.' This type of information work would normally have been conducted by IPD, yet in East Africa it was (primarily) through the effectiveness of Transmission 'X' that IRD took on this role.[35] 'Positive' information work had been part of IRD's original mandate, though this had been quickly been set aside in the late 1940s in favour of more 'offensive' propaganda, ceding the positive role to IPD and the British Council.[36] Here, though, IRD's continued to diversify and take on responsibilities that would appear beyond the department's remit.

British information policy in Africa from 1962 was increasingly positive, and directed along a number of political themes: the right to independence, and to defend that right; promotion of inter-racial relationships; helping nations work towards a 'strong and inviolable Africa…[a]bove all'; the example of parliamentary democracy, while accepting that Africans should create their own administrations; promotion of the Commonwealth and the United Nations; nuclear disarmament, with the necessity of British deterrent strategy until that point; stable, economically viable decolonisation. In the economic sphere, the British emphasised an increase in trade, commercial relationships and provision of technical advice. Britain was to assist in the African nations' inclusion into the global economy. Culturally, the aim was to promote English language teaching and educate about African culture, and here the British Council had a significant role. Countering Communism meant exposing the deficiencies of 'scientific socialism' – planned economies, development programmes and governance – while

[34] 'Information Material on World Affairs for African Consumption', Memorandum for a meeting on 7 December between Mr R H K Marett, Foreign Office, the Chief Secretary, Government of Kenya, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Kenya and United Kingdom Information Officers, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, December 7, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.
[35] Ralph Murray (FO) to C Y Carstairs (CO), February 10, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.
[36] Lucas and Morris, "Crusade", p. 101.

showing the variety of ways the West could help post-colonial Africa develop. Britain's achievements in 'political and economic liberation' of colonial peoples were to be contrasted with the suppression of national loyalty, eradication of religion and economic exploitation faced by the satellite nations of the Soviet bloc.[37] Efforts were being made on the part of the Soviets to 're-write' African history in a Marxist context. This, IRD's David Roberts noted, had 'always been a Communist obsession'. The issue in Africa was that the Western powers had 'failed to provide a history of Africa acceptable to Africans for the up and coming generation.'[38]

IRD work in certain African nations was comparatively easy, notably the Congo and Nigeria. In the case of the former, one IRD officer wrote that she was 'hampered only by lack of material.'[39] This was not the case in the majority of nations, and where IRD work proved problematic, one solution was to get someone else to do it. In mid-1961, IRD established a contact within the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency. The agency, administered in Paris and an official organ of the French Government, was an important new route for IRD given the agency's prodigious output – 16,000 words daily to East Africa alone.[40] AFP was understandably reluctant to receive anti-Communist material directly from IRD regarding ex-French colonies,[41] but the real benefit was providing a third-party route for information in to ex- or current British ones. Other agencies could also distribute IRD material where IRD was unable to do so. For example, in post-independence Somalia, where the British information office had been closed, the number-two man in the American Embassy in Mogadishu passed on IRD material to select high-level individuals via the Chief of Police, and recipients included the Prime Minster.[42] British nationals could also be counted upon: the English Radio broadcasts of Radio Brazzaville were

[37] 'Information Policy for Africa', June 30, 1961, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/76.
[38] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa.', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49.
[39] E Wyndham (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to F R H Murray, November 25, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1299/PR1058/5/G.
[40] Minute, H M Carless (IRD), July 27, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1409/PR10172/2.
[41] F B Richards (Paris) to D C Hopson (IRD), January 8, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1536/PR10165/5.
[42] Report by D A Roberts, enclosure with Minute, D A Roberts (IRD), October 2, 1962, TNA FO1110/1539/PR10171/7G.

handled by three British subjects and so offered a reliable means to get the department's material transmitted.[43]

Contacts with the British press could also be exploited. Norman Reddaway believed that the most useful means 'of propagating I.R.D.'s wares [in neutralist countries] is to expand the distribution of [largely British] newspapers and periodicals which regularly reflect discrete briefing by I.R.D. in London.'[44] This technique bypassed local restrictions on propaganda; however these prohibitions could often simply be sidestepped. In Khartoum, distribution of propaganda by foreign nations was banned, yet the Sudanese police seemed happy to turn a blind eye to its circumvention. Rather than being tasked with distribution, the IO in Khartoum sent lists back to either the RIO or IRD of persons to whom certain material should be forwarded under plain cover. The Sudanese police were apparently fully aware of this situation and took no action.[45]

Publishing of IRD-sponsored or -authored material provided another opportunity for IRD to get their material into Africa with its provenance obscured, and there were a number of schemes to get cheap books onto the African market. For example, in mid-1963 IRD were in consultation with Longman's with the aim of producing cheap books for underdeveloped nations, with Africa the first and main target. Additionally, Franklins were seeking 'co-operation' for a new and widespread publishing scheme in Nigeria.[46] Such co-operation was viewed with caution by IRD. Franklin's was a cartel, created in large part by the USIA and one that made use of USIA posts abroad to support its operations via local publishers. IRD were in two minds: whilst the department's J B Ure could see in the Franklin's scheme the potential to reach a vast and untapped market, and a chance to adapt the scheme to create and distribute (particularly

[43] J R Cotton (Brazzaville) to L C W Figg (IRD), September 26, 1956, TNA FO 1110/922/PR1058/2'A'.
[44] British Embassy Khartoum (and quoting Norman Reddaway of November 21, 1961), to Information Executive Department, December 20, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1526/PR10150/1.
[45] British Embassy, Khartoum to L C Glass (FO), December 28, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1487/PR1011/5/G.
[46] Minute, H H Tucker (IRD), June 14, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1697/PR10566/28/G; Minute, J B Ure (IRD), October 21, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1700/PR10569/24.

'indigenous') IRD material, Tucker was wary of the financial implications, and whether the scheme was 'in essence an attempt to harness the Nigerian market to the American system.'[47]

IRD obviously believed that just getting the information into the right hands could be profitable. In Uganda, IRD sent out material under plain cover to recipients who the department assumed were 'unaware of its origin'. These materials were mailed from within Uganda. With Uganda approaching independence, there was obviously some concern how a successor government would view such practice, but there were no plans to stop it. IRD's J G McMinnies argued that, as well as making it difficult to resume it in the future, 'recipients might well react with enquiries, perhaps in embarrassing quarters, about the source, and possible continuation of their supply.'[48]

Given the above efforts to get material into Africa, it is perhaps somewhat surprising then that even as late as mid-1962 no IRD material was produced specifically for an African audience. Two periodicals, *African Opinion* and *Communism and Africa,* were published in English and French, and material was of course distributed, but nothing, including the two periodicals above, was tailored for Africa. Whilst the Soviets largely made material such as general publications aimed at underdeveloped countries available to Africans via translation, there were a few such as the illustrated *News* magazine, certain embassy briefs, publications of front organisations and others that appeared to be specially prepared for an African audience.[49] The 'omni-directional' nature of the majority of IRD and COI work was a core part of its construction, but by 1962 Leslie Glass noted that it was 'becoming increasingly clear that if we

[47] Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The story of the U. S. Information Agency* (Boulder, 2004), p. 6; Minute, J B Ure (IRD), October 21, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1700/PR10569/24.
[48] 'Report on I.R.D. Possibilities in Uganda', J G McMinnies, May 28, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1579/PR10590/6/G.
[49] 'I. R. D. Written Material in West Africa', report by L C Glass, June 1, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1488/PR11011/101/G.

want our material to carry punch, it must have local relevance. This means either editing or re-writing on the spot; or more material for special areas produced in London; or both.'[50]

IRD's rules concerning the distribution of their material were fairly strict, but they were prepared to bend them if necessary. In countries where it was illegal to distribute material without an imprint, IRD got round this with the (perhaps rather thin) subterfuge that material was 'internal papers intended as for our own office briefs.' Obviously, any distribution by the USIS or similar agency would make such a cover story unsustainable. In certain circumstances, IRD would arrange for the publication to be reproduced 'in a slightly different form' omitting reference numbers and dates since, it was 'a pity, if the chance for such distribution occurs, to miss a market.'[51]

One final option was to provide training for the information organisations of a nation, both to increase their effectiveness and presumably to influence thinking. In 1961, two Sudanese officials from the Ministry of Information were invited to a 3-week course on anti-Communist propaganda techniques in Britain. The first ten days were spent with the COI, BBC (at TV Centre and at the Monitoring Unit at Caversham) and at Oxford University, and the remainder with IRD at Carlton House Terrace.[52] This was by any measure a comprehensive course and one with access to usually restricted areas of the British information apparatus, and this access and training was by no means restricted to the Sudanese.

The most guaranteed way to ensure IRD interests or aims were progressed in a country was of course to station an IRD officer there. Doing so allowed IRD to establish links with organisations perhaps beyond those that would be created by normal information officers and to feed back information that was specifically useful to IRD. An example of this would be the

[50] Minute, L C Glass (FO), April 17, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1488/PR1011/80.
[51] J B Ure (IRD) to L R Kay (IRD), August 19, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/40.
[52] Information Office, British Embassy Khartoum to IED, June 20, 1961; 'Training Programme for Sayed Mohammed Saleh Fahmi and Sayed Abu Bakr Awad', undated but September 1961, TNA FO 1110/1395/PR10156/7/G.

work of Elizabeth Wyndham, an IRD Officer specialising in international organisations. In 1958, posted to Sudan, Wyndham established a women's club, and worked hard to establish and maintain good relations with Sudanese society, particularly the young. Most male university graduates were Communists; these were the future husbands of the women Wyndham sought to influence, and thus she sought to influence them by proxy.[53] IRD considered Wyndham's reports 'particularly valuable' and deserving of distribution throughout Africa, the Commonwealth and the Middle East. Her reports opened 'a window on a little known view – that of a traditional society, Islamic and patriarchal, where old forms are breaking down and new ideas are flooding in.'[54] Wyndham was subsequently stationed in the Congo, where she liaised with the West Germans, established contact within the church, and toured the regions of the Congo feeding back specific and valuable information to IRD.[55]

Whilst such individuals as Wyndham were skilled and of great use to IRD, they were also of great use to the information offices in which they were stationed. L R Kay, IRD's man in Leopoldville, operated under cover of the general information staff, but was also required to pitch in with 'straight' information work. (Kay was one of two assistants to the Information Officer.) Kay noted that '[f]rom the point of view of my cover this makes excellent sense.' However, cuts to the information staff meant that he had to fill in for the Information Officer when he was away, and this cover was not reciprocated. 'Something has got to give', he explained, 'andin [*sic*] the circumstances I am afraid that IRD work is bound to suffer.'[56]

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[53] 'Tentative Programme for Two Sudanese Broadcasting Officials', undated but September 1961, TNA FO 1110/1395/PR10156/7/G; Minute, H M Carless, October 15, 1958; 'Six-Monthly Report: April to October, 1958', E Wyndham; TNA FO 1110/1138/PR1050/17.

[54] R W Bailey (British Embassy, Khartoum) to D C Hopson (IRD), May 3, 1960; 'Six Monthly Report: October 1, 1959 – April 1, 1960, Elizabeth Wyndham; Minute, H M Carless, May 10, 1960; TNA FO 1110/1295/PR1050/10/G.

[55] E Wyndham (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to F R H Murray, November 25, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1299/PR1058/5/G.

[56] L R Kay (IRD) to J K Drinkall (IRD), November 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/64; H H Tucker (IRD) to L R Kay (IRD), September 11, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/40.

This potential co-option was factored in by IRD when considering new positions for their officers. When discussing proposals for an IRD officer in Lagos, IRD were aware that whoever was sent had to be 'strong enough to cope with the C.R.O. before he will be able to tackle the Nigerians', and so not be side-tracked by the CRO into helping with their own information work.[57] McMinnies in Kenya had already some experience of the High Commission seeking to use him as 'a useful pair of hands in Chancery.'[58]

IRD officers were so fundamental to getting IRD work in place that when the (British) Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun merged in October 1961 to form the independent Republic of Cameroon,[59] David Lancashire of IRD was dispatched to Yaoundé as a press attaché to test the market for full-time information. This was intended to be for an initial period of 18 months. Despite the role involving the full remit of press officer responsibilities – of which IRD work would only constitute a part – IRD were prepared to foot the bill for the full 18-month term. IRD, instead of the Information Executive Department (IED), also made the arrangements. This may well have been, as the press officer noted, because Cameroon was 'the hinge between West and Central Africa…the only African country whose independent government is actively engaged in hostilities against a Communist revolutionary movement…the only country in Africa with both a French and English culture and officially using both languages.'[60] IRD were obviously keen to establish a presence in such an important nation. Though happy to carry the post for the eighteen-month period, IRD saw no reason why the

[57] Minute, C F R Barclay (IRD), February 25, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1700/PR10569/17/G; Minute, R MacLaren (?) (IRD), May 16, 1963; Minute LC Glass (IRD), May 15, 1963; TNA FO 1110/1700/PR10569/1/G.
[58] J G McMinnies (BIS Nairobi) to J K Drinkall (IRD), August 9, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1704/PR10585/32/G.
[59] French Cameroun had achieved independence earlier in the year, in January 1960.
[60] Minute, H M Carless (IRD), August 10, 1961; Minute, H M Carless (IRD), July 27, 1961; Minute, W Wilson, July 31, 1961; 'Information Work in the Republic of Cameroun', H H D Lancashire (IRD), July 6, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1406/PR10168/18.

department should continue to pay beyond that point, and the post was instead transferred to the open vote at the end of 1962.[61]

One legacy of French colonialism was that the provision of material in French became increasingly important to IRD in Africa, particularly in the Congo. In late 1960, IRD acquired an in-house, full-time translator in order to increase the amount of French material they were able to supply.[62] IRD work at the recently opened consulate in Yaoundé, in Cameroon, would of course also benefit from French material. Domestic African languages did not always receive the same attention, however. IRD were aware that the Communist bloc was paying 'ever increasing attention' to Swahili, yet neither the CRO nor the BIS saw this as significant enough of an issue to ask for IRD material in Swahili, considering the broadcasts already available from the BBC.[63]

Information officers in Africa largely fulfilled the same functions as their counterparts in the Middle East, but there were a number of local factors that provided additional opportunities for IRD. Some of them reflected the tribal nature of African society: In Congo-Leopoldville IRD targeted traditional African societal values that the department saw as inimical to Communist ideals and practices. Subordination of family ties to Communist state obligations, compulsory working, state ownership of land and collectivisation all appeared to IRD to threaten traditional Congolese attitudes, which placed family first, and the state a very distant third after tribal ties.[64]

Religion provided another opportunity, particularly in West Africa where there were common religious ties between Britain and its dependent territories. As early as October 1956, MacLaren had established contacts with the Head of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy in Nigeria. It goes without saying how important Christian contacts would have been in a country

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[61] C F R Barclay (IRD) to C E King (British Embassy, Yaoundé), September 11, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1537/PR10168/18. Lancashire was nearly declared persona non grata for his activities in the Cameroons, Telegram, Yaoundé to FO, November 28, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1537/PR10168/21.
[62] IRD to Information Section, Leopoldville, December 5, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1299/PR1058/11.
[63] 'Material in Swahili', D A Roberts, February 22, 1963; and passim; TNA FO 1110/1691/PR10554/21.
[64] L R Kay (IRD) to J K Drinkall (IRD), April 26, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/20.

in which Christianity, playing second fiddle to Islam until the early 1950s, was on the ascendant. Nigerian religious figures were useful not only for their influence with the population, but also because they were able to read Arabic and material could therefore be supplied to them directly by RIO Beirut.[65] MacLaren also forged links with the White Fathers, a missionary organisation with direct ties to Rome, that had sought the evangelization of Africa since the end of the 19th century. By 1962, copies of IRD publications, brochures and periodicals were being sent to the organisation's London address for distribution across Africa.[66]

Outside of Nigeria, L R Kay, the IRD officer in Leopoldville, passed on significant numbers (in the hundreds) of booklets starting in June 1963 to Pére Ryex, a Jesuit superior based in Kwilu province. By any measure this represents a considerable distribution for IRD. Contacts with the Catholic Church were also strengthened in northern Congo during the early 1960s, as well as with the representative of the Apostolic Delegate.[67] There were also, lesser contacts with Islamic religious figures in the east, that echoed the sort of ties IRD had been able to establish in the Middle East – Somali Islamic leaders seemed receptive to IRD material on Communism and Islam, perhaps even to wholly authored sermons.[68]

The department carried out some minor work as far out as Mauritius, and by February 1959 had commenced work in territories as small as Guinea.[69] Yet even as late as mid-1960 IRD

[65] C F MacLaren (CO) to W T A Cox (CO), October 4, 1956, TNA FO 1110/960/PR10109/95; C F MacLaren to J Stacpoole, December 19, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1167/PR10109/6/G.
[66] Mainly in the French Haute-Volta region, but also in Urundi, Leopoldville, Ruanda, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Ghana. Fr. R Vezeau to B MacDermot (British Legation to the Holy See), January 5, 1962; H H Tucker (IRD) to Rev. William Burrdige, March 12, 1962; FO1110/1530/PR10157/7.
[67] L R Kay (IRD) to J B Ure (IRD), September 6, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/40; Report by Croce, enclosure with D M H Riches (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to D C Hopson (IRD), May 4, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1532/PR10158/7/G.
[68] T E Bromley (Mogadishu) to E B Boothby (FO), July 22, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1304/PR1071/5; Report by D A Roberts, enclosure with Minute, D A Roberts (IRD), October 2, 1962, TNA FO1110/1539/PR10171/7/G.
[69] See throughout FO 1110/1057/PR10109/66; IRD to W N Hugh-Jones (Conakry), February 27, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1204/PR1065/1/G.

assessed British information resources in Africa to be thin on the ground, when weighed against the efforts of the Soviets and Chinese to penetrate Africa.[70]

CO resistance continued beyond Stacpoole's appointment in 1957, and there were further obstacles that presented themselves to IRD. These are discussed below. To sum up the preceding two sections, one could do worse than the assertion of Ralph Murray, explaining the situation as faced by the FO information services to the CO in early 1961:

> The whole gravity of the cold war is changing as the factors of political, economic and ideological penetration by the Communist bloc change character with the devolution of responsibilities by the colonial powers and with the devotion of additional Communist resources to "co-existence", and we are expanding and, I hope, improving our organisation to meet this.[71]

Obstacles and Resistance to IRD work in Africa

As previously discussed, the Colonial Office had opposed IRD's direct involvement in Africa, though by 1958 the situation was improving with the COID under new leadership. Convincing information officers in East Africa of the value of IRD material, nevertheless, was a continuing and frustrating problem for IRD to overcome. This was still the case in 1961. By this point there were three IOs in East Africa – McMullen in Nairobi, Gilmour in Tanganyika and Morgan in Uganda – and of these, only Morgan seemed enthusiastic or even particularly informed about IRD work. McMullen, formerly of the CO, was considered by IRD to be 'an old enemy'. During a meeting in early 1961, Morgan at least was able to say that 'such-and-such a piece of I.R.D. material was distributed in such-and-such a way' for most of the department's material brought up in the session. McMullen and Gilmour, in contrast, seemed either ignorant

[70] D C Hopson (IRD) to M G L Joy (British Embassy, Addis Ababa), June 15, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1261/PR101/3/G.
[71] Ralph Murray (FO) to C Y Carstairs (CO), February 10, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.

of the material, or to have made no effort to distribute it – or even to have investigated the market for it.[72]

It must have been particularly galling for IRD to continue to be so reliant on a handful of individuals who could so effectively stall their operation over much of the continent. Gilmour and McMullen's attitude was of course a reflection of that held previously by many CO officials back in London. '[T]he whole question of I.R.D./Colonial Office liaison…has never been satisfactory', wrote IRD's 'Tommy' Tucker in 1961, 'because of the negative attitude of the Colonial Office. Indeed, the comparative success we are having with our material in other parts of Africa serves to highlight this attitude, not only on the part of officials in London but of those in the field as well.'[73]

In Kenya, McMullen complained about 'a "morgue" of [IRD] material on international themes where the cold war operates and on Communism, which have been totally unsuitable tels quels, and because of lack of factual source material and time, beyond tinkering with editorially.' In McMullen's opinion, any improvement 'would require a fair amount of determined brain-washing at the production level' – which was harsh comment indeed. IRD believed that McMullen displayed a continued lack of understanding as to how their material was to be used. It was not to be treated as general information material to be handed out overtly, nor was McMullen supposed to focus on the 'politically conscious elite'. 'The right answer', argued IRD, 'is to take all the opportunities available to us of influencing all sections of the population within reach…our main target is those who help to form public opinion in all walks of life.' IRD fully rejected McMullen's belief that their material was not sufficiently based on fact.[74] Ultimately,

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[72] Minute, C F R Barclay (IRD) [citing Marett of the FO], January 20, 1961; Minute, H H Tucker, January 23, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.
[73] Minute, C F R Barclay (IRD) [citing Marett of the FO], January 20, 1961; Minute, H H Tucker, January 23, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.
[74] Minute, 'Information Officers Conference, Nairobi, October 1961', C F R Barclay, October 19, 1961; Memorandum No.1 'The Information Target' and Memorandum No. 2 'Content and Presentation of United Kingdom Material', UKIO Kenya, undated but enclosure with O H Morris (CO) to D C Hopson (IRD), 17 October 1961; TNA FO 1110/1447/PR10585/4.

McMullen performed almost no IRD work; Donald Hopson reported that McMullen 'did not understand it and was in consequence very much opposed to it. He regarded it as being his job to only do "positive" information work'.[75]

The attitude of McMullen and Gilmour drove Ralph Murray to press for IRD representation in Nairobi – the Kenyan information office was the main one in East Africa and so had widespread responsibilities. Murray made this suggestion to the CO within the context of significant increases in IRD work being undertaken across the region – an IRD officer would handle the increased workload, provide expertise on both Communist and Egyptian propaganda, and such official and unofficial techniques and facilities as were only available to the department. IRD was also in a perfect position, Murray argued, to stimulate a flow of West African information to the east, and would have the time to pursue the painstaking and involved process of cultivating contacts for IRD material that local IOs likely did not have. The officer, IRD suggested, should hold a 'recognisable status' in Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar and Tanganyika. Whilst the CO baulked at the idea of an IRD representative with such wide-ranging responsibilities, the idea of an officer attached to Kenya as an IO, who could offer advice to the other territories, was acceptable. The officer could even have cover as CO staff.[76]

Seconded to Nairobi in November 1961 under the above agreement, IRD's, John McMinnies opened up contacts throughout the Kenyan administration; in various ministries, intelligence, the military, broadcasting and education. In addition, IRD could now count on a flow of information and intelligence out of the country, better informing their work. Despite only officially covering Kenya as per the CO's restrictions, McMinnies had visited and assisted Tanganyika and Uganda within a few months of his arrival.[77]

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[75] 'I.R.D. Officer, Nairobi', D C Hopson, April 11, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1578/PR10585/24/G.
[76] Ralph Murray (FO) to C Y Carstairs (CO), February 10, 1961; C Y Carstairs to R Murray, April 5, 1961; R Murray to C Y Carstairs, April 11, 1961;TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.
[77] 'I.R.D. Officer, Nairobi', D C Hopson, April 11, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1578/PR10585/24/G.

The CO had proven so intractable across Africa that in 1958 the Embassy in Khartoum had written in exasperation to ask IRD 'on which side is the Colonial Office batting? On the Christian and anti-communist or the Soviet and communist? ...I cannot, even after deep thought, attempt a guess as to why they should not help us like men in this fight.'[78] Yet this resistance was fading as territories achieved independence and subsequently fell under FO or Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) responsibility.

Nigeria was the second African nation to join the Commonwealth during the Cold War (Ghana was the first), and the first nation to do so whilst IRD was involved in Africa. The contrast with how the CRO viewed IRD is clearly evident. After Nigerian independence it was the view of the High Commission in Lagos that 'much of the IRD non-attributable material on offer was not worth the risk we should run in passing it around.' The 'techniques and materials of colonial days' were no longer seen as relevant. Yet the CRO was quick to ask for IRD help in reviewing counter-Communist work in the country – help that would also provide IRD with an opportunity to gain valuable on-the-spot intelligence on the situation in Nigeria. The High Commission wanted 'an IRD specialist of senior rank, to visit Lagos and our outposts for a minimum of ten days… to cast an expert eye on the Communist propaganda material reaching this country…and to advise us… and the visit should provide IRD themselves with detailed and first-hand information.'[79]

It is worth pointing out that the CO Information Department was – by and large, and with the possible exception of Cox – not working to be obstructive for the sake of it, much as it must have seemed that way to IRD. The CO information department (COID) was, prior to 1946, the CO's Public Relations Branch, not a full information arm. As Rosaleen Smyth has described, a CO handbook published in 1948 set out the role of the COID as both to develop

[78] O H Myers (British Embassy, Khartoum) to H H Tucker (IRD), undated but May 1958, TNA FO 1110/1138/PR1050/8/G.
[79] D W S Hunt (Lagos) to C S Costley-White (CRO), November 14, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1442/PR10569/17/G.

the information departments of the individual colonies, and to strengthen and maintain the relationship between Britain and her colonies '"by giving them information about British life and achievement, by explaining relevant government policy, and by trying to prove that the Western democratic life has more to offer than Communism"' – though, as Smyth notes, post-war colonial policy was 'developed within the context of the Cold War…[and with] a hint of approaching decolonisation.'[80] Where IRD had quickly adapted to a multi-faceted approach to counter-Communism, the CO in Africa, insulated from Communism, would not have needed to do so. That the COID, with a decade-long history of countering Communism – or not – in territories that were its sole purview, shifted its attitude at all is perhaps most surprising, and surely a product of rapid decolonisation and the sudden exigencies of the Communist threat as to any desire to do so. By 1962 the Colonial Office was a pale shadow of its former self, and it recognised that its time had largely passed, accepting that

> [t]he area to which the Colonial Office directs its information work has considerably diminished in the past few years, and will continue to diminish. We are therefore generally content to fall in with the views of the other Overseas Departments.[81]

IRD encountered resistance beyond that of the CO, of course. For example, in May 1960 the Chancery in Ethiopia decided that with a wholly state-controlled media there was little market for IRD's product. The Embassy sent a letter to IRD asking them to stop sending all of their material forthwith. With Communist economic penetration already evident, the Chancery's letter left Hopson rather nonplussed:

> 'We had believed we were in on a rising market in Africa…I am not in a position to express an opinion about the scope for information work in Ethiopia…We must leave you to be the best judge of that. But, frankly, these two most recent letters have made me wonder whether we at home and you in the field are really on the same wavelength as regards aims and objects….I find it hard to believe

[80] Colonial Office, Handbook on public relations work in the colonies, mimeograph, 1948, cited in R. Smyth, "The genesis of public relations in British colonial practice", *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (2001), p. 157
[81] 'Review of Overseas Information Work', O H Morris (CO) to J A Bergin (Department of Technical Co-Operation), 23 February, 1962, TNA FO 953/2094/PE1004/6.

> that there is no one in Ethiopia who would not be interested in facts…of such vital concern to the future of his country.[82]

The Embassy at Addis Ababa was at pains to stress how difficult it was to cultivate personal contacts. Such carefully cultivated personal friendships as the Embassy staff had managed to make were, they said, in danger of being ruined if they attempted to pass IRD material.[83]

Independent, Commonwealth, and under a highly left-wing regime, Ghana presented a particular challenge to IRD work. It was difficult to circulate any of the department's material there, even to those sympathetic to Britain's position, as there was a risk that this would compromise them to the authorities. IRD sympathised with the High Commission that it was 'without doubt that Accra is a tough assignment'. By March 1962, the British High Commissioner in Accra was calling for an IRD officer to be attached to his staff to help out, ostensibly as a Second Secretary.[84] The British viewed Ghana not only as under threat of Communist subversion, but as a threat to the rest of the continent, too. Any information work in this most authoritarian of the newly independent African states was immensely difficult. The information infrastructure was controlled by 'left-wing extremists… [who were] supervised closely by the President and his information advisors so that it is impossible…to place I.R.D. material in them. It was – 'a situation…which approaches that prevailing in a Communist country'.[85]

Criticisms of topicality and appropriateness of IRD material, as far as the UKIOs in East Africa were concerned, centred on both cultural and racial issues. There was, in the case of the former, an assumption of similar cultural, religious and moral values that was simply incorrect in a region where much of the population came from a tribal background. The IOs believed the

[82] D C Hopson (IRD) to M G L Joy (British Embassy, Addis Ababa), June 15, 1960; D C Hopson (IRD) to J A MacLeod (British Embassy, Addis Ababa), June 15, 1960; TNA FO 1110/1261/PR101/3/G.
[83] D A H Wright (British Embassy, Addis Ababa) to D C Hopson (IRD), August 8, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1261/PR101/3/G.
[84] A F G Hornyold (Accra) to G S Bozman (CRO), November 17, 1962; Minute, G B Bozman (?) (IRD), November 26, 1962; FO1110/1571/PR10566/14/G; C Costley-White (CO) to Donald Hopson (IRD), April 3, 1962, TNA FO1110/1571/PR10566/3/G.
[85] 'Note on I.R.D. Work in Ghana', August 1962-August 1963, TNA FO 1110/1697/PR10566/47/G.

latter, racial, factor to be perhaps the most crucial issue. IOs perceived amongst the African population a 'severe psychological…block as far as anything European is concerned'. Africans did 'not conceal that the principal factor motivating their current political views is a bitter resentment of the European, deriving from some racial slight they (alas too often) have received, or imagine they have received.'[86]

Indeed, Britain's relationships with her colonies in Africa were often shaped by similar stereotypical, racial and paternalistic assumptions to those that prejudiced her relationships with the Middle East – and these were often even less palatable. Such assumptions surged to the fore at the beginning of the Mau Mau emergency in Kenya in 1952. British propaganda often sidestepped any consideration of the Kikuyu's (genuine) grievances: their behaviour was so *savage* that it stood outside any rational discussion of Kenya's political situation. Characterised thus, Kenyan government and Colonial Office propaganda often explored Kikuyu acts in terms of irrationality and madness, of a failure to adapt to colonial civilising norms of behaviour, of 'adolescence', and of connections to tribal (non Christian) religion. Many settlers' actions and attitudes went further, coloured by (as the CO saw it) a failure to commit to future self-government, and displaying a ruthlessness towards the insurgents. The CO propaganda campaign therefore also sought to address what was seen as a concernedly 'South African outlook to…African problems' amongst the settler population.[87]

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[86] 'Information Material on World Affairs for African Consumption', Memorandum for a meeting on 7 December between Mr R H K Marett, Foreign Office, the Chief Secretary, Government of Kenya, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of Kenya and United Kingdom Information Officers, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, December 7, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1435/PR10554/1/G.

[87] Carruthers, *hearts and minds*, pp. 136-137, 139. Report on the situation in Kenya, written by Erskine to Harding, 9/11/53; WO 216/860 cited in Carruthers, *hearts and minds*, p. 147 IRD did not operate in Colonial territories at this time, nor had their remit expanded beyond straight counter-Communism. IRD were certainly involved in trying to paint the Mau Mau uprising as Communist-inspired in the British and international press (see Carruthers, "Red") however, the Emergency was essentially over by 1956-7, when IRD became active in Africa itself. The author has not uncovered any evidence that IRD concerned itself locally with Mau Mau. Race was not just a problem for the colonial powers. It should also be noted that America's domestic race-relations situation derogated their messages of freedom and equality, and provided ample ammunition to Communist propagandists. As Kenneth Osgood has argued, '[f]ew issues more thoroughly hampered U.S. courtship of the developing world than American racial practices.', Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p. 281.

Given the above, the fact that Britain was pulled into relationships with minority governments in southern Africa inevitably soured the view of Britain in the eyes of black Africans, and undermined the message that British information policy sought to project. A cornerstone of British policy was the emphasis of British principles and values – held up as a positive and, it was hoped, attractive example to the developing nations of Africa. The essential hypocrisy of the situation was clear, as an information report of 1963 noted: 'freedom of the individual, equal political rights for all, equal rights before the law, impartial justice…it is no good our stressing these points if at the same time we seem, by upholding white minority governments in Southern Rhodesia or the Union [of South Africa], to be abetting the denial of these freedoms and rights to black African populations.'[88]

Nowhere was this situation more evident than in South Africa. IRD had to chart a careful course there, and a comparatively late one at that. In the last months of 1962, when IRD material was first requested by the Chancery in Pretoria, Roberts of IRD was well aware of the central issue. 'The racial policies of the South African Government entail special conditions for I.R.D. work', he noted. 'The over-riding consideration is that it would be fatal to allow our anti-Communist effort to become identified in the minds of Africans with the ill-directed anti-Communism of the South African Government.[89] The problem was that Communism was a particularly convenient label to apply to any opposition the Afrikaner government faced. Kit Barclay cautioned that this could mean the 'misuse' of supplied IRD material in support of white nationalist interests. This must have been (objectively) somewhat galling, since there was significant resistance to Communism amongst a white population in which Barclay perceived a 'ready market for I.R.D. material'.[90]

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[88] 'Information Policy Report', F W Marten (British Embassy, Leopoldville) to R H K Marett (FO), May 24, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1661/PR10158/20.
[89] 'Information Research Department Work, South Africa, Appendix H', enclosure with Minute, D A Roberts, October 9, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1554/PR10201/9.
[90] C F R Barclay to Information Officer, Johannesburg, January 4, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1554/PR10201/1.

There were several strands of propaganda for IRD to consider: propaganda to Afrikaans and the South African authorities, with the aim of making their own propaganda more sophisticated; propaganda 'to progressive white opinion'; and propaganda aimed at Africans. Of these, understandable when framed in a continental context, it was the latter that was IRD's 'real business' in South Africa. The embassy was already engaged in overt, 'white' propaganda (if one will forgive the unfortunate confusion of terms) to the black population, in the form of newsletters. A covert, 'black' campaign, was also being considered between IRD and the Embassy, and it should be noted that this was a genuine departure from IRD's standard practice of eschewing such material – the first example of such that this research has discovered in the regions under study since that during the Suez Crisis. Any 'grey' propaganda ran the risk of causing major problems with the South African government – although it was noted that this could perhaps be achieved by 'seepage' of propaganda from Basutoland, a crown colony (present day Lesotho).[91] By November 1962, the Secretariat in Basutoland was requesting significant increases to the initial volume of material sent just one month earlier.[92] Naturally, contacts relevant to South Africa existed outside the country, notably within the ANC, and IRD, and the Embassy in Pretoria, sought to cultivate contacts within the organisation at its base in Dar es Salaam from 1962 onwards.[93]

Conclusion: Kenya, and the end of the colonial period in Africa.

It was 'no use to speak of keeping the Cold War out of Africa', declared IRD's David Roberts in 1962, a trifle obviously. 'It has arrived there and is going on.'[94] As noted above,

[91] 'Information Research Department Work, South Africa, Appendix H', enclosure with Minute, D A Roberts, October 9, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1554/PR10201/9.
[92] U B Tristram (Maseru) to K G Fry (CO), November 2, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1558/PR10542/44.
[93] J S Longrigg (Pretoria) to D A Roberts (IRD), November 29, 1962 (2 letters of the same date), TNA FO 1110/1554/PR10201/7/G.
[94] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa.', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49.

comparatively few involved in information work in Africa would have disagreed with him. By this point, the British had 6 information officers in Africa, reflecting the increased importance of the continent: one in Dakar covering Senegal and Mauritania; one in Abidjan covering the Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta and Dahomey; one in Bamako covering Mali; one in Yaoundé (an IRD officer) covering Cameroon; one in Brazzaville covering Congo-Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Chad and Gabon; and one (with two assistants, one of whom was IRD) in Leopoldville covering Congo-Leopoldville. In Nairobi, an IRD officer – Kay – was operating 'under the aegis of the Colonial Office and the United Kingdom Information Office.' Other posts and labour attachés performed an amount of IRD work and were briefed on IRD material respectively. In Mali, the prospect of posting an IRD officer there was under constant review. These were, Roberts reported, 'thinly spread forces, determined by finance, manpower and the limits of practical possibilities…a first effort… All these officers had to master the administrative and technical problems of setting up posts from scratch and are now beginning to make their impact'[95]

By the end of 1963, the only significant British territory remaining, Kenya, would also be independent. The fate of this territory was viewed at the time through the lens of the fears the IOs noted above, and the reality of the situation on the continent. As Kenya progressed to independence, IRD work shifted to a new focus. As McMinnies explained, 'the key IRD targets will at last be clearly identified. While maintaining a shotgun spread over the existing field, we shall need to concentrate accurate rifle fire on the individuals who will hold the vital offices after independence. We would also expect, whichever party wins, to cash in on the modest stakes we have laid on each.'[96]

[95] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa.', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49; Minute, 'Africa Section Activities', March 22, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1564/PR10554/22/G.
[96] J G McMinnies (BIS Nairobi) to J K Drinkall (IRD), March 15, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1704/PR10585/32/G.

The fear in Kenya was that the country would suffer 'the natural anti-Western spasm which grips most African countries attaining independence', although it was hoped these would be short-lived. A bloc presence was likely to be established within Kenya before independence. 'Communist experts can heighten and accelerate the process of demonstrating its [Kenya's] neutrality and African-ness in which the Government will indulge immediately after Independence.' It would, in the British analysis, be reasonable to expect that Kenya would 'swerve to the left' to the same degree as Tanganyika had.[97] Of key concern to IRD was that the policy of non-alignment, which Kenya was to pursue after independence, would limit the scope for direct IRD work and force an increase in indirect methods.[98]

IRD would soon have to adapt again, in Kenya and across the rest of the continent. By the close of 1962 television was making its first appearance in Kenya, and new challenges and opportunities would therefore arise for the use of IRD material and for information work in general. Stills material – maps, illustrations, photographs and cartoons – would constitute the material made available for television in the first instance; yet even here new rights would need to be arranged for old material.[99] The period between 1956 and 1963 was one of preparation for IRD, as it was for the Communist powers. Following independence, it seems reasonable to expect that both sides expanded their work considerably in the light of either stable post-colonial government or in any revolutionary atmosphere where allegiance to one side or the other remained up for grabs. This period, however, is outside the scope of this thesis. Any examination beyond 1963 would, though, give some insight into how successful IRD's early work was in establishing the desired relationships with the correct individuals and organisations following independence. IRD were by no means confident of success. 'The ideological and

[97] 'Indications of an early swing to the left in Kenya', August 12, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1704/PR10585/51/G.
[98] 'I.R.D. Work in Kenya', J G McMinnies (BIS Nairobi) June 27, 1963 TNA FO 1110/1704/PR10585/23/G.
[99] H V W Staff (IRD) to J G McMinnies (Nairobi), August 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1578/PR10585/39.

cultural battle is likely to be a long one' explained Roberts. 'It is only just being engaged and it is far too early to tell which way it will go.'[100]

[100] 'Communist Prospects in Tropical Africa.', D A Roberts (IRD), enclosure with R H K Marett to Sir Roger Stevens, June 7, 1962, TNA FO1110/1564/PR10554/49.

Chapter 7

British Information Policy in the Post-Suez Middle East

> Our position is such in the Middle East today that we have comparatively few cards to play. We can no longer threaten or dominate. It follows, therefore, that, at any rate in the short term, we must woo.[1]
>
> Paul Wright (FO), November 7, 1957

The propaganda effort in support of the British campaign during the Suez Crisis was a failure, though the fault lay with policymakers more than the propagandists. It is difficult to imagine how it could have been a success. Suez left Egypt's position and prestige greatly enhanced, and laid bare the limits of Britain's imperial reach, and her duplicity, for all to see. As Britain refocussed her regional strategy away from Egypt onto the Baghdad Pact following the Egyptian *coup* of 1952, the British information services invested time, money and effort developing the information infrastructure in Iraq. The Iraqi *coup* of July 1958, and Iraq's withdrawal from the pact the following March, left this investment unrealised. The failure at Suez, and the diminution of the Baghdad Pact, were twin blows that forced a wholesale reassessment of British information work in the Middle East.

The reformed pact, rebadged as the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), struggled to find its feet. Lacking Iraq as a focus, efforts were split between the remaining regional members: Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. On the information front in which IRD was involved, working through the Counter Subversion Office (CSO), the effort was largely refocused on Turkey, with increasing cooperation with Iran.

[1] 'Information Policy for the Middle East', P H G Wright, November 7, 1957, TNA FO 953/1853/P10020/3.

British policy shifted rapidly towards seeking a rapprochement with Nasser; Britain wanted to establish 'correct, if cool' relations,[2] for both strategic and financial reasons. As discussed in the chapter on Transmission 'X', this meant fire-fighting the worst excesses of Cairo Radio polemic whilst building bridges, and working on 'positive projection', in an effort to enhance Britain's image. Through to 1962, the danger to British interests from Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism and the unfettered hostility of Cairo Radio was adjudged by the Regional Information Office (RIO) in Beirut to rank as a greater threat than Communist subversion,[3] but the information services' options were curtailed by policy. This downplayed approach fuelled resentment in certain quarters that the British position *vis-à-vis* Egypt was being allowed to go by default (as to an extent it was). The more extreme of analysis outside of government declaimed:

> Using propaganda – the only real weapon he possesses – Nasser has undermined, defied us, abused us and defiled us; he has turned the Arab World against us, destroyed our prestige, lied about us and weakened us to the extent that we can no longer hold up our heads in the Middle East…our public relations have been so apathetic that, sometimes, rather than putting spokes in Nasser's wheels, we have actually helped spin them round.[4]

These were the issues that confronted IRD in the Middle East between 1958 and 1963. They combined with the factors detailed previously – most importantly a parochial attitude (IRD's assessment) that made issues of the wider Cold War hard to sell without local relevance, and a cultural and educational climate that emphasised broadcast propaganda over IRD's traditional paper product – to create a unique set of challenges for IRD during this period, and these are examined below. The two most significant nations were cut off from IRD work for diplomatic reasons: the UAR (Egypt and Syria) and later Iraq. Iran and Turkey were CENTO nations, and thus much of IRD's work went through the CSO to both. Various nations hindered

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[2] 'Information Policy Towards the Middle East', undated enclosure with Secret, R Murray (FO), November 14, 1958, TNA FO 953/1857/P10020/72/E.
[3] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to C F N Barclay (IRD), December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G.
[4] 'Britain's Public Relations in the Middle East', Paper by D A Scott-Reid (Publicity Manager for the Iraq Petroleum Company Ltd.), December 20, 1956, TNA FO 953/1740/P1041/39.

IRD work through policies of non-alignment. These were constraints of circumstance; constraints of policy affected all else.

This chapter covers the period of British rapprochement with the Arab nationalist movement, looking first at how British policy towards Nasser shaped information work in the Middle East. The second section explores IRD's work in the Middle East, and the region-specific material that the department produced in partnership with the Regional Information Office in Beirut. It also examines the varied 'market' for IRD material in the region. The CENTO CSO represented the third 'side' to the complimentary, three-pronged approach to the department's propaganda campaign in the Middle East, respectively: IRD propaganda from London, IRD propaganda adapted through the regional expertise of the RIO, and propaganda from CENTO nations sourced from IRD material. CENTO gave IRD material the cover of a regional source, and perhaps the best attribution the department could hope for. In contrast with the RIO, the CENTO CSO was far from a rousing success, however. Inheriting all of the Baghdad Pact's problems – and none of its infrastructure – IRD had a difficult relationship with the slowly developing CSO. The third part of this chapter looks at IRD and the CSO in some depth.

The final section of this chapter looks at the beginning of the end of the restrictions on propaganda towards Egypt. Uncomfortable with British policy, IRD and the RIO had been increasingly vocal over the inconsistencies between Britain's robust information approach against Communism, and that towards Nasserism. By the middle of 1963, and at the end of the period under consideration in this thesis, IRD again started to formulate unattributable propaganda directed at Cairo.

British policy and the constraints on information work

Britain was clear on the challenges faced in the Middle East, and IRD had several issues to address at once. There was a tension between Britain's policy towards Nasser on one hand – restraint in the interest of better relations – and the reality of the threat Nasserism presented to British interests. The Foreign Office saw that Nasser's ambition as 'the self-appointed leader of Arab nationalism' acquired a momentum and expansionist policy that was 'basically inimical to our interests.' These interests were, in the main, the provision and supply of Middle Eastern oil, and the fulfilment of British responsibilities to her colonies in Africa. The fact that both Egyptian and Communist propaganda threatened these interests tied the regions together. In a wider, Cold War context, British policy was to oppose – and to hopefully prevent – the spread of Communism throughout the area, maintain communications, and develop defensive policies through 'partnership' and the Baghdad Pact (rather than bilaterally as previously).[5]

In view of the above factors, whilst Egypt's politicking and propaganda ran contrary to British interests, the situation was complex. Reviewing British policy in the Middle East in October 1958, the FO was clear that British interests would be best served by 'accepting the legitimate aims of Arab nationalism and by manoeuvring ourselves into a position in which these aims do not appear to the Arabs to be unobtainable except by the destruction of our position.' This would not apply everywhere: Britain would assist friendly, traditional regimes in the Persian Gulf to chart their own path of resistance to, and accommodation with, the forces of Arab nationalism. In the Sudan, independence would be fully supported as a bulwark against Egyptian machinations into sub-Saharan Africa. The three main aims of British policy in the Middle East were to maintain the supply and profitability of oil, ensure regional stability and peace, and to

[5] 'Notes on British Foreign Policy IV. The Middle East', undated but 1958, TNA FO 953/1856/P10020/49; this brief was part of a series intended to inform Ministers, revised monthly. This section on the Middle East was withdrawn following the Iraq coup in July 1958, and not immediately replaced.

keep the Soviets from achieving dominance. The FO believed that accommodation with Arab nationalism, the dominant movement in the region, could help secure all three objectives.[6]

In January 1958, information officers from across the Middle East met in Tehran to discuss themes that would be 'saleable' to the region. Their recommendations emphasised a recasting of the British attitude towards the Arab world as one of partnership, of mutual benefit to both sides. This should not try to draw on past associations; as Ralph Murray asserted:

> It is I think now acknowledged that the battle for the preservation of our interests in the Middle East is a propaganda battle...If we do not win this battle, the demagogic forces roused by our opponents can overwhelm all the military, political and commercial factors in our favour...we are not simply given a political basis for winning this battle. We have plenty of means of communicating propaganda to the Arab peoples – but to attempt to make propaganda to their half-baked intelligentsia out of the stock 'long-standing association' line is about as effective as trying to promote Anglo-German relations by references to the Battle of Waterloo.[7]

Realpolitik meant that an accommodation with the UAR was necessary, however bitter a taste this would leave in the mouths of some. Britain needed a cordial relationship with Egypt, and as previously discussed the Arab nationalist movement could not be effectively resisted in any case. Britain had significant economic interests; in the case of oil, this was a regional resource for which there was no viable future alternative. Propaganda themes encompassing the mutual benefit of the trade in oil and the expansion of Middle Eastern were foremost in the IOs' minds. Cultural and spiritual similarities could be contrasted with Soviet ideals such as atheism and collectivism, and common ideals such as democracy and freedom emphasised. The danger of Soviet cooperation was a central theme of propaganda, to be balanced out by a positive projection of Britain and of Anglo-American solidarity.[8]

Policy was the main constraint on information work. The IOs in Beirut recognised this, as did the FO. Commenting on the paper prepared by the IOs, the FO's Paul Wright noted that

[6] 'Points for a Middle East Policy – Part I', October 15, 1958, TNA CAB 134/2342.
[7] Memo, Ralph Murray to H Beeley, November 12, 1957, TNA FCO 953/1853/P10020/1.
[8] 'Information Policy for the Middle East', October 18, 1957, TNA FO 953/1853/P10020/3.

the root problem facing information work in the Middle East was 'the political policy which information must reflect. Our position is such in the Middle East today that we have comparatively few cards to play. We can no longer threaten or dominate. It follows, therefore, that, at any rate in the short term, we must woo.' A 'residual respect' for Britain, the economic benefits of an oil partnership, and the protective shield of British and American power against future aggression was, Wright bemoaned, 'a poor enough hand to play against the Russian cards which, though they may be jokers, are very powerful, namely

a) support for the Arabs against Israel;
b) a promise to free the Arab world from the Western imperialists;
c) economic aid with no strings attached.'[9]

Politically, Wright noted that better Anglo-Egyptian relations, the alignment of Britain with progressive forces rather than traditional regimes, and 'exorcising the ghost of imperialism' were pre-requisites in securing the region's alignment with the West instead of with Communism, as was a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute. This latter view echoed that of the embassy in Beirut and the British Middle East Office prior to the Suez Crisis. They were firmly of the opinion that the major focus of propaganda should be an accommodation or solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute: 'All our other Middle East policies will fail, or be limited in their success, until that happens.' However, this was hardly feasible, as Wright soon realised. Arab public opinion, which needed to be favourable towards Britain to provide for effective information work, was, in Wright's opinion, 'severely limited by the intractability of the central political problem of the Arab-Israeli dispute and the inability of any British voice to speak [overtly] on this issue in tones which its Arab listeners want to hear.'[10] Beyond helping preserve

[9] 'Information Policy for the Middle East', P H G Wright, November 7, 1957, TNA FO 953/1853/P10020/3.
[10] 'Information Policy for the Middle East', P H G Wright, November 7, 1957, TNA FO 953/1853/P10020/3; (original emphasis) G R Gauntlet (Beirut) to CCB Stewart (IPD), January 23, 1956, TNA FO 953/1629/P1041/7; Draft on information policy for the Middle East, P H G Wright, February 13, 1958, TNA FO 953/1854/P10020/16.

existing borders, Britain felt it was in no position to otherwise address the Arab-Israeli dispute during this period.[11]

British policy was to seek 'to normalise relations' with the UAR, in so far as that was possible. This aim limited the propaganda that IRD could deploy. As a Foreign Office guidance telegram of June 1959 spelled out, it was

> in no part of Her Majesty's Government's policy to conduct propaganda against the legitimate interests of the U.A.R. (or to denigrate Nasser personally). It is indeed of the first importance that Egyptian suspicions should if possible be allayed, so that normal relations can be re-established…it is essential that the Egyptians…should be given no excuse for claiming that our publicity effort is not consistent with our desire for normal relations.[12]

Egypt exerted a significant influence over the Middle East and North and East Africa – over much of this territory they were the preeminent threat to British interests in the last years of the 1950s. Even as late as the end of 1962, the RIO believed Nasser and Egypt ranked as the main threat in the Middle East rather than Communism. But by this point, in Norman Reddaway's analysis, this was 'changing into a threat of Nasser plus the communists or the communists in their own right'. In his assessment, there was by this point a

> communist threat of some reasonable proportions in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. In Syria and Iraq for example there are traditional ties and dealings with the U.S.S.R. In Egypt, Nasser has successfully used Russian help to do the West down, and is continuing to use it to keep himself afloat...In Jordan and Saudi Arabia the threat is more in the future[13]

Back at home, IRD had been doing comparatively little to influence the press on either Arab nationalism or Communism in the Middle East. In light of British policy the head of IRD's Middle East desk, Ann Elwell, explained the department had

> for some time past done very little on the Middle East with the British Press…Firstly, we have not been anxious to encourage too much anti-U.A.R.

[11] 'Notes on British Foreign Policy IV. The Middle East', undated but 1958, TNA FO 953/1856/P10020/49.
[12] 'Information Policy towards the U.A.R.', Foreign Office Guidance No. 209, June 3, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/48/G.
[13] G F N Reddaway to C F N Barclay (IRD), December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G.

> comment in papers such as the Daily Telegraph which anyway does quite well in this line without our help. Secondly on the more strictly I.R.D. subjects there has not latterly been a great deal to add to what the papers were saying already.[14]

The BBC were seemingly quite content to be directed by the FO as to how to deal with Middle Eastern personalities, and enquired whether it was desirable for them 'to deal in a more or less bare-fisted manner with any of the leading statesmen (or their principle spokesmen).'[15]

British propaganda and information work should, Wright argued in 1958, turn as much as possible on positive rather than negative themes. The British attitude towards Arab nations needed to be explained not as a continuation of previous policy – as so much anti-British propaganda cast it – but focussed instead on partnership between the West and the Middle East. What was needed was to draw comparison between Communist and Western policy and practice implicitly as much as explicitly, and to keep Western interests out of the issue – to show that the West was not using the Middle East to further its own Cold War interests. (There are parallels here with IRD's campaign in Africa.) There were delicate issues, such as the authoritarian governments of certain Baghdad Pact members, and the imperialist associations of the continued British presence in Aden, and these issues too needed to be handled positively – highlighting the cultural and economic work Britain did on behalf of Muslims in the pact, and the preservation of the rights and interests of Adenis who wished to remain independent from the Yemen.[16]

Propaganda and information work in the Middle East was not only a priority for the Foreign Office departments focussed on that particular task. The military command in the region, preparing for a reduction in British strength in 1957, was convinced that a strong

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[14] Ann Elwell (IRD) to Norman Reddaway (RIO Beirut), November 20, 1964, TNA FO 1110/1819/PR10547/89; The Telegraph had previously needed to be steered away from looking in to the effect the information services were having in the region. Barclay noted to IPD's head: '[i]t is undesirable that the spot-light of publicity should be turned on our information activities in the Middle East at the present time and you may consider whether it is worthwhile having a word with the "Daily Telegraph" about this.' IPD later did speak with the Telegraph, noting that to publish such a piece would 'encourage hyper-sensitive [regional] Governments to suppress' information activities. C F R Barclay (RIO Beirut) to D A Roberts (IPD), November 14, 1958; Roberts to Barclay, November 26, 1959; TNA FO 953/1939/P10043/13/P10045/13.

[15] Beresford-Clark (BBC) to F R H Murray (FO), November 3, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1067/PR136/49/G.

[16] Draft on information policy for the Middle East, P H G Wright, February 13, 1958, TNA FO 953/1854/P10020/16.

information infrastructure was vital to protect British interests. [I]t becomes all the more important', the HQ of British Middle East Land Forces wrote to the Chiefs of Staff, 'to strengthen in every way possible the peacetime propaganda under the direct control of H.M.G.'. To do so would, in their assessment, reduce the chances of requiring a military commitment, and in the event of war provide for 'efficient politico-military psychological warfare.'[17]

There was, then, an inherent tension between threat and response, and desire and ability: Nasser was the greatest threat to British interests, but re-establishing normal relations meant not confronting Cairo propaganda head-on, nor risking covert action that may be uncovered; the military saw strengthening the propaganda machinery in the Middle East as a paramount aim, but with the loss of Iraq and the fallout from Suez, the information infrastructure was weakened, not strengthened, and IRD was forced to adapt.

There were, however, positive signs that British policy could pay dividends. The Afro-Asian Writers' Conference was a microcosm of all the issues against which IRD faced in the Middle East. After the first conference was held in Tashkent in 1958 the second was held in Cairo, attracting 44 delegations from 43 countries and including the Arab League (despite assurances from member countries, none of the delegations came from a CENTO member). Attended by both the Soviet Union and China, the conference intertwined threads of Communism and Afro-Asian solidarity (under the auspices of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, based in Egypt and a central pillar of Egypt's cultural drive into Africa), and emphasised issues surrounding anti-colonialism. In the assessment of the British, the conference was a tool for the Communist nations to culturally penetrate the African nations present.[18] Yet a few months later a number of themes with which to separate Egypt from the Soviets began to present themselves.

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[17] 'What on earth is "politico-military psychological warfare"? – a regrettable example of the practice of taking refuge in long winded jargon from clean thinking?!'. Minutes, C C B Stewart (IPD), 26 March, 1957; Top Secret, HQ MELF to MOD, March 21, 1957; FO 953/1740/P1041/42/G.

[18] H Beeley (British Embassy, Cairo) to the Earl of Home (FO), March 1, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1603/PR151/30.

In a speech on May 30 1962, Nasser set out the ways in which the form of Arab Socialism that he advocated differed from Communism. Arab values of religion, democracy, land ownership, private property and peaceful change were arrayed against Communism's atheism, dictatorship, collectivism, state property and revolutionary violence. Leslie Glass of the FO seized upon this as a road-map for the direction of IRD propaganda aimed at non-aligned nations in the region. Whilst avoiding praising Arab socialism, IRD were tasked to 'plan a campaign by various methods…quoting chapter and verse both of ideology and actual activities, the Communist attitude on these five points…fairly short, simple and adapted to non-aligned countries, and we should plug away hard at all these things for the next 12 months.'[19]

IRD saw these contrasts as 'mainly of degree and application rather than of principle.' Yet at this point Nasser was still formulating the direction of Arab Socialism he was advocating. IRD noted with interest that the differences, whilst apparently slight, were fundamental to both Soviet and Chinese Communism, and were optimistic that therein lay potential leverage.

> Nasser's bold assertion that he can bring about a happy democratic state of affairs without any help from Marxism-Leninism is a clear challenge to the Soviet Union and World Communism. So far, Moscow propaganda has been silent, but true to Communist form, oblique criticisms are beginning to appear, notably in the World Marxist Review and in the French Communist weekly, Democratie Nouvelle[20]

Having avoided criticism of Arab nationalism, the British therefore had the potential to reap the benefit by using Arab Socialism and Nasser's message for their own Cold War propaganda needs, without facing any significant charge of hypocrisy. Here, then, was a concrete example of the direct usefulness of Arab socialism to the British information effort in the Middle East. That this was possible was only due to Britain's policy of rapprochement in the years after Suez.

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[19] Minute, L C Glass (FO), June 22, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1600/PR148/1.
[20] Minute, B L Strachan (IRD), June 21, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1600/PR148/1.

Information work in the Middle East

The policy detailed above was the driving force behind the creation of the Transmission 'X' service. 'X' allowed IRD to use any half-truths, spin or lies on the part of Cairo Radio against it without recourse to similar tactics, and within guidelines. 'X' was a significant and widely used tool for the RIO and information officers to use, but it was not the only one. British information work after Suez relied heavily on what RIO Beirut referred to as 'the "old faithfuls": themes of propaganda, tried, tested and agreed upon for Arabic-speaking areas. These were:

> Treatment of Arab students in the bloc
> Aid and Trade Aims
> Attitude to Islam
> Attitude to Nationalities problems, e.g. the Kurds Criticism of Arab Countries'
> Internal and External Policies
> Criticism of Arab Political Movements
> Wooing of Developing Countries
> Coherent accounts of British policies and actions in Aden and the Gulf[21]

IRD and IPD shared responsibility for propaganda and information work in the Middle East, and neither had main authority. Each department was responsible for its own work, supervised by Ralph Murray, in whom, as an ex-head of the department, IRD could at least be guaranteed a sympathetic ear. Bob Marett (himself ex-IPD), was by this stage working alongside Murray at the FO and recalled that the information departments were 'working at high pitch and with a new sense of purpose' following Murray's promotion in 1957.[22] Working under Murray and Marett in 1957, UK-based responsibility in IPD lay with a Middle East advisor and two officers; in IRD one officer was responsible for the Middle East, the Far East and South East Asia, supported by a team of researchers. By this point, both departments liaised on a daily

[21] I L Monro (RIO Beirut) to A C Elwell (IRD), March 21, 1964, TNA FO 1110/1819/PR10547/25.
[22] Marett, *Back door*, p. 191.

basis, and independently consulted with the News Department, political departments, Cultural Relations Department, CRO and CO, MoD, Board of Trade, COI and the BBC.[23]

Organisations outside government also had a motivated self-interest in maintaining Britain's position in the Middle East. Most significant of these, the oil companies were happy to contribute to the British information effort, alongside their own considerable public relations campaigns. For example, BP were for their part by mid-1957 aiming to help with better premises and equipment for the British Council in Kuwait and for the Embassy information centre in Baghdad, with the supply to bookshops and newsagents stocking British books across the Middle East, and with the flow of visitors between the Middle East and Britain. Shell alone was prepared to commit £100,000 per annum from 1958 onwards for publicity, and jointly with BP, subsidise broadcasting for an additional £50,000 per annum.[24]

Norman Reddaway, ex of IRD and now at the RIO in Beirut, was as well placed as any to comment on IRD work in the region. Information officers were 'less active on traditional I.R.D. business than in many parts of the world because the main pressure does not come from the Communists and because there is a virtual embargo on propaganda vis-à-vis Cairo.' There was very little of IRD's 'traditional paper product' passed out.[25] Reflecting this, whilst IRD financially supported 'one or two' people in areas such as Somali, the RIO and the CENTO CSO were the only two places in which IRD officers were stationed across the Middle East. In the RIO, this was two officers and one trainee, whilst IRD provided one officer and his assistant to the CSO.[26] Arabs were, in Reddaway's words, 'listeners not readers', and were 'passionate' in

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[23] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to C F N Barclay (IRD, December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G; 'Information work in the Middle East', undated but with S Hebblethwaite (Treasury) to R Murray (FO), May 14, 1957, TNA FO 953/1740/PR1041/50. Christopher 'Kit' Barclay had moved the other way, from the RIO back to IRD, underlining the relationship between the two.
[24] Chisolm (British Petroleum) to C C B Stewart (IPD), May 30, 1957, TNA FO 953/1741/P1041/63; Minute, P H G Wright (IPD), July 1 1958, TNA FO 953/1856/10020/13.
[25] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to Sir John Nicholls (FO), December 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1689/PR10547/85.
[26] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to C F N Barclay (IRD, December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G; Secret, C F R Barclay to R H K Marett, February 14, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1683/PR10523/19/G.

avoiding becoming tangled up in the Cold War. In the Middle East it was IRD's 'speed and flexibility' that was paramount – a reference to Transmission 'X', amongst other things – and it was through facilitating visits to Britain, contacts with organisations, and through the provision of personnel that IRD made itself useful to the cultural and information efforts in the region.[27] (Technical expertise and provision and allocation of financial support should be added to this list.)

'Plugging', the practice of repeating and reformulating the same propaganda points again and again, was recognised by IPD as a fundamental propaganda technique, and one heavily exploited by Cairo Radio. On the British side, IPD found 'the greatest difficulty in putting this elementary principle into practice…all normal channels of expression open to the Department, such as the BBC, London Press Service, Agencies etc. are bedevilled by the journalistic conception of what does and what does not constitute "news". In practice any given items of news or public statement of opinion once used is considered dead unless some fresh peg can be found to hang it on.' It was, in IPD's consideration, this particular disparity between the practice of Cairo Radio and that of the British that accounted for much of the criticism levelled at the British propaganda effort in the Middle East.[28] This was less of an issue in respect of work directed at personal contacts, the mainstay of the more 'intellectual' end of IRD's output such as the *Interpreter*, but this did little to allay public fears that the British were doing little, and it carried its own risks. Propaganda activities were certainly frowned upon in non-aligned nations, and illegal in several. As David Roberts of IRD explained, the department's work in the Middle East often depended on these contacts, and of many 'personal arrangements (often illegal) built up over the years.'[29]

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[27] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to Sir John Nicholls (FO), December 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1689/PR10547/85.
[28] The solution put forward was to feed several themes suitable for 'plugging' each week, incorporate them into as many ministerial or similar speeches as possible, and so have them picked up by the BBC, LPS etc. repeatedly. Minute, C M Pirie-Gordon (IPD), April 24, 1957, TNA FO 953/1740/P1041/47.
[29] D A Roberts (IRD) to C F R Barclay (RIO Beirut), November 26, 1959, TNA FO 953/1939/P10043/13/P10045/13.

IRD placed great emphasis on getting the right information to the right people. Sometimes posts felt that they were failing because they had achieved only limited distribution of IRD material, and IRD were clear that this was not the case. IPD were clear on this point: the amount of propaganda was not the issue; all propaganda would fail to be effective if the message it carried was not right. It was not possible to overcome such 'sales resistance' just by forcing increasing amounts of propaganda across a region. '[O]ne of our difficulties in getting these facts and views understood in the Middle East', noted IPD's head, 'is the need to overcome, against the background of the tensions in the area, the sales resistance of the local populations to anything which they think savours of British "propaganda". If they do not like the taste of the medicine offered them, they will not like it any more – they may dislike it more – if you try to make them swallow twice as much.'[30]

IOs needed to be highly selective not just in to whom information and material was passed to, but what and how much. Too much material might mean that little if any was read, and there was a danger, as IRD's Ann Elwell realised, that material could be collected by a recipient not to be used 'but for reasons either of hope that it may…be the talisman for which he is looking, or out of pure politeness. We…believe in rigorous selectivity'. This also meant that IRD relied on IOs to tell them if they were receiving too much product, so that supplies could be trimmed.[31]

Material and Markets in the Middle East

The portfolio of products that IRD made available to posts has already been examined in the preceding chapters, and so only a few region-specific initiatives are worth examining. These products were largely distributed in two ways, with IRD providing English language material to

[30] Draft for house of commons debate, C C B Stewart (IPD), March 13, 1956, TNA FO 953/1729/P1041/33.
[31] A C Elwell (IRD) to D J Makinson (Tehran), May 10, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1642/PR10134/12.

information officers at posts and Arabic language information work tailored to the region produced by the RIO at Beirut. By early 1960 IRD were writing special articles upon request and producing their own material in Arabic. Image-based propaganda was of high value in a region with widespread illiteracy, and by this point 'Fact Features' contained an illustrated series and IRD had retained an in-house cartoonist. Local IOs noted that religious material was 'still very much in demand.'[32] Preceding the quick-reaction material for broadcast that was part of the Transmission 'X' service, IRD had begun producing radio scripts in April 1957, authored to be ready for broadcast.[33]

By 1961 RIO Beirut was issuing 25-30 anti-Communist articles in Arabic every month. The majority of these were 'edited version of I.R.D. articles, radio scripts and Digest items.' Ten or so articles a month were authored in-house by the RIO. IRD material also appeared in radio scripts produced by the RIO's writers' panel and excerpts from 'Fact Features' were often used in local newspapers. It was not until September 1960 that the RIO first passed these figures on to IRD; before then they had simply provided a list of pamphlets in production each month. Coupled with the possibility of 'inadequate reporting from the field', it is clear that any detailed analysis of figures would be impracticable.[34]

By mid-1961 the RIO's average output of articles per month had climbed to 35. The office was producing, on average, 12 booklets in Arabic on anti-Communist themes per year. These were translations or adaptations of material produced in London, and production runs varied from between 3,000 and 5,000 copies. Between 1956 and 1961 the RIO published 35 books in Arabic, either reprints of English-language books or commissioned by the RIO, and these ran on average to 3,000 copies.[35] Between 1963 and 1964 RIO Beirut published 11 books in Arabic, with 4 more in hand. Many of these were from staple IRD-approved authors such as

[32] 'Extract from Summary Record of the R.I.O. M.E. Conference Beirut 11-14 April 1960', FO1110/1322/PR10104/61.
[33] Letter, Information Research Department, January 27, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1100/PR10111/6/G.
[34] C F R Barclay (RIO Beirut) to H Carless (IRD), September 26, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1322/PR10104/99.
[35] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Middle East', June 7, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1432/PR10547/65.

Brian Crozier, Robert Conquest and Walter Kolarz.[36] Publishing contracts were sometimes a partnership affair: for example, arrangements were made in 1963 under the Arabic Commercial Books Scheme for Zohair Baalbaki, a Syrian publisher, to publish a book per month annually, with the RIO contracted to pay the costs of seven and the publisher five.[37] The same scheme even managed to penetrate into Iraq, and IRD was particularly heartened to note that (a rather modest) 200 books from the scheme had been distributed in Iraq by mid-1963.[38]

It was not the case that IRD solely concerned itself with securing books and magazines with an overtly pro-British or anti-Communist slant. That Reddaway at the RIO and Ackland at IRD were both prepared to get involved with procuring issues of "The Dairy Farmer" and "Electrical and Radio Trading" for Kuwait – with Ackland forwarding them by bag personally each issue – shows that even the most mundane of publications had value to the cultural side of IRD's campaign.[39]

The trade in literature was in some instances a *purely* cultural effort for IRD. In 1961, Makinson, the Press Officer in Tehran, had arranged translation rights for the publication of best-selling English novels that were 'only anti-Communist in the sense that they pre-empted Russian translations of our classics, for example Dickens' novels, which might present a gloomy picture of industrial England.'[40] Payment for these rights – and of £500 to cover publication – had been made by IRD. Contact with the publisher was solely through a local British Council officer who, acting as a 'cut out', represented the payments as having come from an anonymous donor. When both the British Council officer and Makinson moved on in 1963, IRD took over the scheme wholesale, arranging the rights for a run of 10,000 copies for each of 11 titles

[36] In total between 1962 and 1965, 24 books were published under the Arabic Commercial Books Scheme. M Franklin (RIO Beirut) to H Tucker (IRD), November 4, 1964, TNA FO 111/1819/PR10547/25.
[37] Annexe to P E Dahan-Bouchard (RIO Beirut) to D R M Ackland (IRD), December 6, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1716/PR121/605.
[38] H H Tucker (IRD) to N Reddaway (RIO Beirut), June 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1716/PR121/356/G.
[39] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to D R M Ackland (IRD), March 8, 1963; Ackland to I Goulding (Kuwait), March 19, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1682/PR10505/1.
[40] D J Makinson (Tehran) to D R M Ackland (IRD), April 29, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1717/PR121/295.

including works by authors such as Milton, Wells and Buchan. This time IRD worked through the London publishing agent Peter Janson-Smith, covering his costs. It is worth noting that the publisher in Tehran was H Santini of Franklin's, the aforementioned publishing house that was heavily linked with the USIA. There is no evidence that the USIA were informed of IRD's involvement.[41]

Originally produced for internal use, IRD's weekly *Arabic Press Extracts* was by the end of 1958 made available to select recipients across the Foreign Service, the BBC, and individuals such as Sefton Delmer, the Second World War propagandist now resident at the *Daily Express*. The aim of the *Extracts* was to supplement other material already produced – for example the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts – and to contain 'nuggets' of information not found elsewhere. Indeed, this is what the BBC found most valuable: it was the 'gossip' contained therein, information not normally reported by any agency or the BBC's monitoring service that was the report's worth.[42] Despite this, the *Extracts* were discontinued in May 1959, replaced by the new 'Fact Features', which as the name suggests was intended to be an entirely factual report of some 350 words, containing diagrams where possible. [43]

Across the Middle East in 1961, IRD and the RIO achieved mixed results. In Iran, information supplied was edited to suit local conditions by Tehran press and radio. Pamphlet distribution matched that within the Lebanon at 200. Turkey – understandably given its issues with the Soviets, and membership of both CENTO and NATO – published a total of 388 scripts, articles and commentaries, and booklets were widely distributed. Tel Aviv Radio made regular use of IRD and RIO radio scripts. In the Persian Gulf, Radio Bahrain and both local

[41] D J Makinson (Tehran) to D R M Ackland (IRD), April 29, 1963; Makinson to Ackland, July 6, 1963; Ackland to Peter Janson-Smith, July 13, 1963; TNA FO 1110/1717/PR121/295, and *passim*.
[42] Minute, 'Arabic Press Extracts', November 28, 1958; Confidential Minute, Leslie Sheridan, November 13, 1958; H M Carless (IRD) to P G D Adams (RIO Beirut), December 19, 1958; Gordon Waterfield (BBC) to D C Hopson (IRD), December 4, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1096/PR1124/6/G.
[43] Confidential note, Information Research Department, May 7, 1958, TNA FO 1110/1237/PR1124/8; Confidential Minute, H H Tucker (IRD), October 9, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1237/PR1126/G.

newspapers made use of IRD's anti-Communist material.[44] In contrast to the situation in Africa, where Communist radio broadcasts to the continent had doubled in 1961, there was little change in the number of broadcasts from Communist sources to the Arab Middle East, and only a 5% increase to non-Arab countries.[45] In all cases the aim was that such material would be attractive enough on its own merits to be published. However Hopson noted that 'in some countries, Jordan for instance', payment to newspapers was made by Missions for both 'projection of Britain' and I.R.D. material.[46]

IRD was almost wholly prevented from working in the UAR and Iraq. In the case of the former it was because of attempts to build bridges. In the case of the latter, it was through trying to maintain what was left of a once strong relationship. Yet there remained routes for IRD material into Egypt. One stemmed from the more cordial relationship between Cairo and Washington. In 1959, the USIA in Egypt started to receive copies of *The Interpreter*, *Digest* and *Religious Digest* from IRD via the USIS in London at the Americans' request (British and American cooperation in information work across the Middle East and North Africa was formalised in October 1957).[47] It is not possible to judge the extent to which the Americans used them but at least the department's product was getting in to Egypt in a small way.[48] There was also the fact that anti-Communist material produced by the Cairo press – usually directed against Arabic Communism – sometimes reflected ideas and themes which IRD and the RIO had been distributing in neighbouring countries, and which may arguably have been picked up.[49] Any material broadcast with sufficient strength to be listened to in Egypt may well also have had an effect.

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[44] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Middle East', June 7, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1432/PR10547/65.
[45] Minute, J Walsh (IRD), March 5, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1522/PR10145/20/G.
[46] D C Hopson (IRD) to N W H Gaydon (British Embassy, Leopoldville), May 5, 1961, TNA FO 1110/140//PR10158/18/G.
[47] Telegram no. 2155, Sir H Caccia (Washington) to Foreign Office, October 21, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1049/PR10104/146/G.
[48] Minute J B White, 6 May, 1959; IRD to Chancery, Washington, February 18, 1959; Chancery, Washington to IRD, February 27, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1172/PR1016/1.
[49] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Middle East', June 7, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1432/PR10547/65.

This cross-pollination of propaganda from neighbouring countries was one of the few routes open for the British towards Iraq. The years following the Iraqi coup saw a significant shift in that nation's alignment: from the great hope of British propagandists of a Baghdad Pact centred on Iraq, the country by this point had over 630 Eastern bloc technicians involved in projects financed by Soviet credit which by 1961 stood at £73m. Despite measures against local Communists, Iraq was considered to be increasingly dependent on the Soviet bloc and 'fully aligned with the Russians on every political issue'. By the early 1960s Qasim's claim on Kuwait only exacerbated already deteriorating relations. Britain was involved in little information work and 'virtually nothing at all on the I.R.D. front.'[50] Qasim's perceived 'insecurity' limited the amount of work that could be done because the lion's share of British information effort was turned to calming the Iraqi regime and reassuring them of Britain's intentions.[51]

The British Ambassador in Iraq noted that the Iraqi press relied heavily on foreign broadcasts for news but, though there was a ready supply of material from RIO Beirut, the Embassy in Jordan was struggling at this stage to get material placed on the Hashemite Broadcasting Service (HBS). The Jordanian service was a well-established broadcaster with a long reach and would have provided a route into Iraq for IRD material. Yet the British embassy was short-staffed and with no guarantee of success declined to make fresh efforts to court the HBS, though their 'shortcomings in IRD work…[weighed] much on the Ambassadors conscience'.[52]

This had not always been the case. Four years earlier in 1959, the HBS were making 'full use' of British radio scripts. Cultural programming such as 'women's corner, children's corner and…medical programmes' were much used, as was anti-Communist material, though this was

[50] Draft by Ann Elwell ACE 2/10; G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to C F R Barclay (IRD), August 25, 1962; FO1110/1549/PR10193/28/G.
[51] Roger Allen (British Embassy, Baghdad) to Sir Humphrey Trevelyan (FO), April 2, 1962, TNA FO 953/2086/P1935/1.
[52] A J D Stirling (British Embassy, Amman) to A C Elwell (IRD), January 18, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1486/PR101/243/A.

not used in full. The broadcaster described anti-Communist material as 'excellent' and they made use of as much material as could be supplied. IRD material in Arabic was being used to build up an anti-Communist resource library. Due to high demand for Arabic material from Jordan, IRD even – on request – dusted off a number of the 'more dateless' *Voice of Britain* scripts aimed at the positive projection of Britain, some of which both the RIO and Amman were able to make use of.[53]

Alongside the HBS, the Jordanian press was placing an average of 40 articles a month by 1961. Yet by the end of the year the British Ambassador was reporting that the situation was in sharp decline. The last full time IO had been transferred to combined duties at the Chancery. However good arrangements appeared on paper, the Ambassador reported that information work had 'not been taken seriously in Amman for some time.' The embassy's inability to use the HBS towards Iraq was but one example. Whilst the Ambassador, with a number of political and developmental battles to fight, was prepared to let straight information work falter for a time, he called for an IRD officer to be sent out on contract to head the information office (as cover) and to concentrate on IRD work. With an additional post in the Middle East already secured in the British information budget, the question was whether Jordan – adjudged only fourth in need in the region by Reddaway after Iraq, Egypt and Syria – warranted an IRD officer. However dispassionate this assessment, each of the three British embassies in those three countries had advised against any IRD work. The fact was that Jordan had an enthusiastic Ambassador and was therefore likely the best place in which to make such an effort.[54] A year later, however, the situation had improved. The Chancery had reviewed the need for an IRD officer and concluded that the work being done by that point was 'adequate for present purposes.' It was 'essential', however, that the possibility of an IRD post be kept open for the next nine months, in case the

[53] T Parsons (Amman)to D A Roberts (IPD), July 22, 1959; D A Marston (RIO Beirut) to Hugh Carless (IRD), April 21, 1959; P R H Wright (RIO Beirut) to Carless, July 17, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1210/PR1080/4.
[54] 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Middle East', June 7, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1432/PR10547/65; Roderick Parkes (Ambassador, Amman) to C F R Barclay (IRD), December 14, 1962; C F R Barclay (IRD) to G F N Reddaway (IRD), January 2, 1963; Reddaway to Barclay, December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G.

situation changed following the establishment of diplomatic relations between Jordan and the Soviets.[55]

The assessment of information work in the Lebanon was fairly positive, though little early progress was made with Lebanese radio (by 1958 the RIO was busy translating IRD radio scripts into Arabic, which it was hoped would be useful in improving the situation). The Information Department at the British Embassy in Beirut made 'fairly extensive' use of IRD material, placing anti-Communist articles in the press, forwarding certain IRD publications (for example the 'Facts About…' series) to the press, with 'one or two outstanding editors' receiving the *Interpreter*. The information department also worked with a panel of journalists who produced around 12 articles per month, some based directly on IRD material and quotations. By 1961, between 150 and 200 anti-Communist articles were appearing in the Lebanese press each year, and 200 copies of anti-Communist pamphlets were being distributed to confidential contacts. RIO material in Arabic was distributed – some of it on a large scale – and there appeared to be strong links with trade unions.[56]

Elsewhere there remained little or no opportunity for IRD work. In Kuwait, 'the Radio and Television Station's eschewal of all political controversy and…reluctance of the newspapers to engage in Cold War polemics' limited the amount of IRD work that could be performed beyond a limited number of personal contacts.[57] There was no press in Bahrain and so the issuing of daily commentary to the information office there was a waste: '[w]e can only read it ourselves – which I am afraid is seldom rewarding'. Likewise the *Digest* was of no use. Books and the *Interpreter* were considered useful for background, but it was 'the simple graphic

[55] Roderick Parkes (Ambassador, Amman) to J A Pilcher (FO), September 25, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1669/PR10180/6.
[56] Information Department, British Embassy (Beirut) to IRD, February 13, 1958; IRD to Information Office, British Embassy (Beirut), March 5, 1958; TNA FO 1110/1154/PR1088/2 ; 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Middle East', June 7, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1432/PR10547/65.
[57] 'Extract from Kuwait Info Policy Report' entered into file June 13, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1682/PR10505/3.

approach' – in limited numbers – that was most suitable.[58] IRD remained almost wholly disengaged from Saudi Arabia.

The CENTO member states and the Counter Subversion Office[59]

The Baghdad Pact was set up under the concept of a 'Northern Tier' defensive system to provide a political and military defence against the Soviet Union's border, and to tie the nations into what was hoped would be seen as a mutually beneficial organisation. IRD's involvement was through supply of staff, material and expertise to the Counter Subversion Office (CSO), which handled counter-subversion and propaganda duties (a PR office handled positive information), and attendance at infrequent Counter Subversion Committee (CSC) meetings, through which strategies were developed.[60] Britain had made a considerable investment in time and effort to set up Baghdad Radio as a regional counter to Cairo Radio. This had value to both the information services and to the military: In the opinion of the Political Office Middle East Forces in 1957, if Baghdad Radio, 'an Arab station on Arab territory could become really effective it might be the best possible counterblast to Egyptian, Soviet and other hostile propaganda; more so than British efforts even.'[61]

This Arab provenance was of particular value to the British, and IRD were keen to invest time and effort in the information capabilities of the Baghdad Pact. As the FO's Levant Department put it in 1956: 'Good Iraqi propaganda could clearly be of great value in other Arab countries; it would suffer less from xenophobic prejudice than our own efforts, and the Iraqis

[58] D A S Gladstone (Political Agency, Bahrain) to IRD, May 24, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1556/PR10502/1.
[59] There were three regional member nations of CENTO: Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan is left out of the analysis that follows because it is outside the region under consideration, and availed itself by far the least of the CSO during this period.
[60] There was also a Liaison Committee, which facilitated security service liaison and cooperation in respect of Communist subversive threats and Soviet bloc espionage. Hashimoto, "British Intelligence", p. 137
[61] J B H Shattock (POMEF) to J Rennie (FO), May 2, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1048/PR10104/58/G.

could say things which we should like to say, but cannot.'[62] The reversal of British fortune in Iraq was therefore highly significant. From a pro-Western, partnership regime under Nuri as-Said, the Iraqi revolution ushered in an administration under Abd al-Karim Qasim that was actively hostile – Britain was, in the words of Roger Allen at the Embassy in Baghdad 'the principle villain in his international scene' – and so whilst a very small amount of information work was performed, and almost none related to IRD, the focus of British information work was preparing the ground for any replacement regime.[63]

The CSO was moved from Baghdad to Ankara following the Iraqi withdrawal from the pact, and Ankara subsequently become CENTO's HQ. In contrast with the mainly security service representatives from the regional members of the pact, the post of British representative was filled by an IRD officer, as was that of his assistant. (The department also paid for the positions of J A Speares and Tony Hornyold.) Not only did this appointment inevitably forge strong links between IRD and the CSO, it also presented a direct channel for IRD to the Turkish authorities. There was, in Kit Barclay's words, 'excellent co-operation with the Turks for the distribution of our material.' This was mostly via writers' panels of Turkish journalists who adapted IRD material, as well as a book translation effort and the usual selected distribution of material such as the *Interpreter*.[64]

The Turks, largely aligned with the British view of the use and methodology of information and propaganda, and with the offices of the CSO based in Ankara, certainly made the best use of the potential of the CSO. In fact, as Reddaway explained, the Turks 'very sensibly come to use the C.S.O. as their own I.R.D.'. The Iranians, though lacking the convenience of the CSO office in their own city, also made good use of the material, supported by strong British support in Tehran and the firm backing of SAVAK's head of propaganda.

[62] Levant Department to Chancery (Baghdad), March 3, 1956, TNA FO 953/1713/PG1931/5/G.
[63] Roger Allen (British Embassy, Baghdad) to Sir Humphrey Trevelyan (FO), April 17, 1962, TNA FO 953/2086/P1935/2.
[64] Secret, C F R Barclay to R H K Marett, February 14, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1683/PR10523/19/G; J A Speares (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), March 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/16/G.

Pakistan, further away still from Ankara than Tehran, seemed uncertain of the benefit that could be gained from the CSO and poorly represented.[65]

The hand-over notes of the Deputy Press Officer in Tehran, Makinson, provide some idea of how IRD material was used in Iran. With a post in which IRD work was considered a particular responsibility, Makinson spent around 65% of his time on IRD work, with the balance spent on other information work – keeping in touch with newspapers, performing PR functions and the like. All counter subversion material was and had been placed through SAVAK and the Iranian Department of Public Relations and Radio. Makinson trained SAVAK in counter subversion, acted as a conduit for IRD material, and (with difficulty) stimulated Iranian involvement in the CSO. Throughout the 'radio war' between the Soviets and Iran which took place between 1959 and the start of 1962, IRD supplied 'robust' anti-Communist material for SAVAK's use – the Embassy reported that the Iranians appeared to be prepared to 'try anything' and were using almost everything anti-Communist that the British were able to supply. Following a reduction in tensions between Tehran and Moscow in 1962, the British thereafter supplied more discreet propaganda targeted more at Communism in general rather than at the Soviets. IRD material was also used as reference material for Embassy staff and in particular the information staff including Makinson.[66] As Makinson described, the CSO 'have only to walk across the road to get at the whole machinery of Turkish Government…By contrast communication with Tehran and Karachi appears inefficient…But it is unwise to write off the Iranian C.S. effort because it does not reach the standard of what we call Turkish/CSO co-operation. The latter enjoys all the advantages of bilateral negotiation, plus the facilities of a well staffed research office on the spot, which both Tehran and Karachi lack'.[67]

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[65] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to D C Hopson (IRD), March 20, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1557/PR10523/32/G.
[66] D J Mackinson's Handing-Over Notes, undated but mid-1963, TNA FO 1110/1642/PR10134/27; Extract from Tehran Information Report, June 1963, TNA FO 1110/1642/PR10134/20; G W Harrison (British Embassy, Tehran) to F R H Murray (FO), June 6, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1185/PR1034/11.
[67] D J Makinson's Handing-Over Notes, undated but mid-1963, TNA FO 1110/1642/PR10134/27, original emphasis.

IRD was responsible for the British contribution to the CSO, providing the British input of material, including much from the BBC, along with staff. It is apparent that what IRD wanted from the CSO was in effect a multilateral version of itself, though narrower in scope, and with the success of efforts in Turkey matched in the other nations and with all working well together. As such, and as Adams of RIO Beirut noted, it was 'lamentable' that the organisation had 'to devote so much of its time and energies to the problems of its own organisation and administration.' Having begun to free itself from a bureaucratic mire towards the end of its tenure in Baghdad, the transfer from Baghdad Pact to CENTO and its relocation to Ankara seems to have thrown all into disarray. The CSO also not only found itself scouring Ankara for new offices but without a transmitter of its own – its original one was left behind in Baghdad and proved problematic to recover. The situation obviously impacted on the CSO's productivity, and in early 1959 the CSO was still working towards specimen publicity rather than fully operational. '[C]onsiderable progress' had however been made in educating the members 'in the psychological aspects of subversion and in the need to provide a psychological antidote.' In Adams' opinion, even if no other result were to come about, the CSO would have justified its existence through this training.[68]

There were other problems within the organisation. It was noted by IRD that the supporting staff lacked experience 'in even the simplest of information research procedures: filing, press cuttings, assembly of material on given themes etc.' Even the name 'Counter-Subversion Office' seemed to Donald Hopson unfortunate, as it gave the impression that it was 'capable of dealing with all the problems of human discontent.' It had done 'some useful work' in his opinion, but was still by late 1959 hamstrung by lack of material being contributed by

[68] A M Smith (FO) to J A Speares (Ankara), April 3, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/12/G ; P G D Adams (RIO Beirut) to D C Hopson (IRD), February 29, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/14/G; J A Speares (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), March 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/16/G.

member nations other than Britain.[69] IRD's contribution was so significant that the CSO's limited duplication facilities could not meet the requirements of the regional members for the department's material, and so the CSO had to call for increased amounts of briefs, articles and radio scripts from IRD directly so as to meet demand.[70]

By this point there were, at least, a handful of projects under preparation. Turkish and Iranian writers' panels were now working on contracted material, and Speares found the programme of tasks on which the CSO were embarking to be encouraging.[71] Yet progress was 'slow and all too dependent on Asian personal interests and amour proper.'[72] By February 1960, Hugh Carless reported that the CSO seemed to be 'gradually shaping into the mould we have cast for it – a unit concentrating on research and unattributable publicity about Communism and the briefing of governments about front organisations, conferences, etc.'[73]. With a significant number of pamphlets being produced, the issue was by this point one of quality, usually arising out of a lack of experience amongst their authors of the requirements of propaganda material.[74]

Even so, by March it was not at all clear by this point that the CSO had a future. The Iranians (with the notable exception of SAVAK's propaganda chief) had veered between wanting to scrap the CSO and use their contributed resources internally, and the other extreme of turning the CSO 'into a psychological warfare headquarters for the Middle East.' The American representatives seemed to have focussed on keeping the CSO small, their contributing officers sometimes obstructive towards an organisation that they had 'never liked' according to Carless. For example, the US Chief of Operations did not regularly attend and in cases where he could be useful, such as in helping improve pamphlets' propaganda value by sub-editing, he appeared

[69] Minute, J A Speares (Ankara), January 19, 1960; D C Hopson (IRD) to F J Leishman (British Embassy, Tehran), October 19, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/84/G.
[70] Information Research Section, British Embassy Ankara to IRD, September 28, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/63/
[71] 'Monthly Report on Counter Subversion', P Joy (Ankara), December 3, 1959; Minute, J A Speares (Ankara), January 19, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/84/G.
[72] J A Speares (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), March 13, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/16/G.
[73] Minute, H M Carless, February 4, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/13.
[74] 'Monthly Report on the C.S.O. (January)', P Joy (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/20.

unwilling to help. Of the other member nations, Pakistan's opinion was equivocal, whilst that of the Turks tended to mirror Britain and IRD's aim of a limited research and propaganda remit for the office. Carless' aim amongst these contrasting opinions was to keep the CSO – rebadged as a reference or research section – focussed on research and unattributable counter-Communist publicity, and to turn it into a smaller 'backroom section' of CENTO's Public Relations Division. Whilst this carried the risk of downgrading the CSO in the eyes of Iran and Pakistan, it would mean that the CENTO PR Division emerged as an equivalent of NATO's Information Section.[75]

Much of the issue stemmed from the CSO's directive to respond to '[a]ny attack on the purposes of the Pact, from whatever quarter and whether directly Communist-inspired or not'.[76] The Counter Subversion *Committee's* terms of reference (1955) defined subversion as Communist subversion, whereas the Counter Subversion *Office's* terms (1956) did not – and in fact included a passage on countering neutralism. The CSO's terms of reference were wholly unacceptable to the British and Americans, but proved highly attractive to Iran and Pakistan (particularly the latter).[77] Separating Communist threats from non-Communist ones was not straightforward, however. Chikara Hashimoto argues that the 'demarcation line between Communist and non-Communist activities was often blurred – because Communist Parties were illegal in the Pact area, their subversive activities were often conducted in tandem with non-Communist groups against local governments.'[78] This can only have served to further complicate the issue.

IRD's head Donald Hopson believed that the CSO needed to focus on propaganda rather than counter-subversion, as the latter role's reliance on political action held a potential for future problems. That the regional members did not share this view was evidenced by the fact that local nations' representation was drawn from their respective security services. This made it

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[75] Minute, H Carless (IRD), February 26, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/41/G; 'Monthly Report on the C.S.O. (January)', P Joy (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/20.
[76] 'Brief for the Secretary of State', M Wright (FO), June 1, 1957, TNA FO 1110/977/PR146/63/G.
[77] Notes for Minute W Marsden (CENTO?), August 20, 1963; Minute, A Elwell (IRD), August 20, 1963; TNA FO 1110/1683/PR10523/50/G.
[78] Hashimoto, "British Intelligence", p. 167.

difficult for both the CSO and IRD to assess how their material was used or distributed, or its perceived value, as security officials were reluctant to speak on such matters. Another issue, one to IRD's credit, was that member nations did not see how information material produced by the CSO itself could be as well-prepared or bilaterally available as that produced by IRD. The issues surrounding subversion meant that the regional members of the CENTO secretariat (in Speares' assessment) saw in the American and British representatives an 'intention to soft-pedal or even abolish' counter subversion activities, 'behind every administrative move or suggestion no matter how innocent.'[79]

The issue of whether the CSO should be a propaganda office or – as the Iranians wanted – target itself at counter-subversion and psychological warfare, was moot in Hopson's assessment. Combatting Communist subversion required the attention of the whole of governmental and national activity. 'We cannot expect five or six chaps sitting together in Ankara to do more than make a very limited contribution to the solution of this problem', he wrote.[80] By early 1960, the head of the propaganda section of Iran's SAVAK intelligence organisation finally agreed with IRD's position, that the CSO should be confined to propaganda and information work. [81]

Britain's stance arose out of the need to avoid associating CENTO with regional disputes that included one or more member countries. For example, any criticism of India – even implicitly, even within a counter-Communist context – risked bringing CENTO into the regional dispute between Pakistan and India. Additionally, there was unease in Turkey lest any form of provocative broadcasts from Ankara added unnecessary extra strain on relations with the Soviets. There was, therefore, an emphasis on avoiding any such associations whilst aiming such

[79] 'Notes on the Future of the Counter Subversion Office', enclosure with J A Speares (Ankara) to D C Hopson (IRD), April 8, 1959; J A Speares (Ankara) to D C Hopson (IRD), April 8, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/22/G; 'CENTO Liaison Visit', P Joy (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), January 26, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/13.
[80] D C Hopson (IRD) to F J Leishman (British Embassy, Tehran), October 19, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/84/G.
[81] 'CENTO Liaison Visit', P Joy (Ankara) to H M Carless (IRD), January 26, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/13.

defensive criticism and commentary as they were able on Communist aims, tactics and propaganda.[82] It is not the case that Britain wished to keep out of issues of regional, non-Communist subversion, just that CENTO was not the place to do it. Officials had made representation that they would be happy to engage with such issues bilaterally, but none of the regional members had taken up the offer.[83] There was also a practical dimension to limiting the work of the CSO. With only 'five or six chaps' working at the office, it was British policy to 'safeguard against the diversion of the slender resources of the Counter Subversion Office into undesirable fields.'[84]

A significant proportion of the IRD files relating to the CSO concern the continuing issue over the office's terms of reference, which had still not been agreed upon by the end of 1963. IRD found the whole debate somewhat spurious: the need for unanimity over any action coupled with the lumbering bureaucracy of member nations meant that it would be fairly simple to block any unwanted proposals.[85] Indeed, the CSO was reported to work well 'without being troubled by disputes over principles'. By 1963, the regional members had not put forward any contentious proposals and the US and UK had not had to use their veto powers. As regards the terms of reference, the decision was made '[t]o put the question under the mat.'[86] Despite all the disagreements and wrangling, Kit Barclay believed the organisation had performed quite well.[87]

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[82] Peter Joy (Ankara) to H Carless (IRD), October 24, 1959, TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/72. The military side of CENTO also faced this issue, and despite planning repeated efforts by member nations to plan against Soviet-inspired action from Iraq, for example, military planning was restricted to preparation against action from the Soviet Union alone. 'Action against Communist-inspired Propaganda and Subversion', G F Hiller, February 9, 1961, TNA FO 1110/1426/PR10523/47. The Liaison Committee, responsible for security service cooperation and intelligence sharing, did progressively move beyond restrictions to address solely Communist threats. In 1957 its terms of reference expanded to include 'communist-inspired' threats, and in 1962, responding to pressure from regional members, to include non-Communist threats. Hashimoto, "British Intelligence", p. 154.

[83] 'U.K. Delegation Brief for the Thirteenth Session of the Counter-Subversion Committee of CENTO, A C Elwell (IRD), January 18, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1683.

[84] P Joy (Ankara) to C F R Barclay (FO), November 7, 1961; C Barclay to P Joy, November 29, 1961; TNA FO 1110/1426/PR10523/126; D C Hopson (IRD) to F J Leishman (British Embassy, Tehran), October 19, 1959; TNA FO 1110/1251/PR146/84/G.

[85] Minute, B L Strachan, September 25, 1962; Minute, C F R Barclay, September 26, 1962; TNA FO 1110/1557/PR10523/72/G.

[86] Minute, A Elwell (IRD), August 20, 1963; Minute W Marsden (CENTO?), August 20, 1963; W J A Wilberforce (Ankara) to W Marsden (FO), June 10, 1963; TNA FO 1110/1683/PR10523/50/G; 'UK Delegation Brief for the

The CENTO CSO became a 'clearing house' for material between the member nations, much in the same way as IRD acted in the propaganda and information sphere for the British government. In mid-1960, the decision was made to use the CSO to facilitate information on, and rebuttal of, hostile radio broadcasts, and in this sense the office slotted into the wider web of Transmission 'X' and the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts as not just a recipient of information but also as a provider of, in this case, Turkish-language monitoring summaries.[88]

Through 1962-1963 the regional members increasingly availed themselves of the services of the CSO, driven in the main by a far greater engagement on the part of Pakistan. As a result, operational expenditure doubled over the year to £2,040 per month. Perhaps the most successful initiative of the CSO, the use of the Turkish and Iranian writers panels of journalists to edit, translate and regionalise material, was by this point also being adopted by Pakistan.[89]

A return to unattributable propaganda against Egypt.

IRD had engaged with the worst excesses of Cairo Radio propaganda through Transmission 'X'. As previously discussed, though counter-Communism soon constituted the bulk of Transmission 'X' output, the service retained a nominal mandate to counter the more extreme of Cairo Radio's anti-British or anti-imperial rhetoric: this was, of course, the reason it had come into existence and it had been practically the only tool deployed by the British to do so. However, by the time of the Regional Information Officer's Conference in early 1962 the policy of restraint towards Cairo was beginning to chafe somewhat, at least in certain circles.

Thirteenth Session of the Counter Subversion Committee of CENTO', Ann Elwell (IRD), January 18, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1683/PR10523/9/G.

[87] Minute, B L Strachan, September 25, 1962; Minute, C F R Barclay, September 26, 1962; TNA FO 1110/1557/PR10523/72/G.

[88] 'Proposals for the re-orientation of the functions and organisation of the counter subversion office', July 12, 1960; Counter subversion office interim report to member governments: 'mutual support against hostile broadcasts', September 9, 1960; TNA FO 1110/1353/PR146/95.

[89] 'U.K. Delegation Brief for the Thirteenth Session of the Counter-Subversion Committee of CENTO, A C Elwell (IRD), January 18, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1683.

The general consensus was that a campaign of unattributable publicity, whilst not a cure-all for the situation, would at least stop Britain's case 'going by default'. Norman Reddaway, amongst others, came away from the conference convinced that more needed to be done, and began to start mobilising support. Authorisation, noted Reddaway, needed to be extended from solely anti-Communist publicity 'to cover hostile activities by the Egyptians and possibly others, [so that] IRD could adjust its machinery and be on the lookout for suitable openings for action.' Placing articles in the British press so that LPS and the BBC, as well as regional newspapers could pick them up, seemed to be the best solution.[90]

There was, however, considerable disagreement between IRD and the various other Political Departments as to the amount of damage Cairo was doing to British interests, and whether or not action was better than inaction. IRD's opinion was clear: 'Cairo's propaganda machine continues to be unrepentantly and vividly hostile', wrote Kit Barclay to Reddaway in August 1962; it was anomalous to be 'attacking Communist propaganda in the Middle East and Africa, while allowing a clear field to very similar damaging outpourings from Cairo.' 'You have my sympathy', replied Reddaway, 'doing a sorcerer's apprentice act amongst the measured haverings of Eastern Department and all the doubts of the better-notters. Aden is…an excellent example of how we pay for a policy of stiff-upper-lipmanship…we should go in for unattributable publicity, mainly in our own press and beam it out here by BBC and LPS.'[91]

In an April 1963 reassessment of policy, Foreign Secretary Lord Home set out how British information services would address the important issues in the region. Douglas-Home, who would become Prime Minister in October later that year, was firmly of the view, shared by the US State Department and much of the Foreign Office (though it would appear IRD and IPD

[90] G F N Reddaway (IRD) to L C Glass (IRD), May 16, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1504/PR101116/6.
[91] C F R Barclay (IRD) to G F N Reddaway (IRD), August 21, 1962; Reddaway to Barclay, September 25, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1504/PR101116/6/G.

were not consulted),[92] that Nasser's ability to harm British interests in the Middle East would only be increased by open hostility towards the Egyptian President. In Home's opinion, any attempt to separate British opposition to Nasser from opposition to Arab nationalism would be doomed to failure. Home was in 'no doubt that vigorous [Arab] nationalism [was] the most effective antidote to Communism in the Middle East, even though it may also take an anti-Western form'; Britain should adopt '[a] public posture of benevolent approval for Arab unity in general'. The Foreign Secretary made it clear, however, that Britain should be seen to honour its obligations, for example to Kuwait, and that she should be ready to 'oppose Egyptian subversion in territories with which we are directly concerned'.[93]

Home's report noted avoidance of *open* opposition to Nasser, or of the *appearance* of hostility, and this was interpreted by IRD as giving them greater freedom to pursue a wider range of 'unattributable publicity' within the context of the above. Nothing in Home's dispatch explicitly excluded such a response to Egyptian activities, be they by the intelligence services or agencies such as Cairo Radio. Britain could easily be considered to hold a direct or indirect interest in most of the nations of the Middle East, because of CENTO, oil and overflight rights. The dispatch signalled a sea change in IRD work in the region. The department concluded that '[t]his means that it is only in Syria, the Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia [and] the [internal affairs of] the Yemen…that we need pay no heed to UAR subversion'. IRD began to proceed accordingly. It is worth noting that Home's dispatch did not address Egyptian activities in Africa, and so IRD's activities in this area remained unchanged.[94] The gloves were back off to some degree, and as such Transmission 'X' became but one of a suite of means available to get at Cairo, no longer the only tool for the job.

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[92] Ann Elwell (IRD) notes on 'British Policy Towards President Nasser, 'Nasserism' and Arab Nationalism', May 3, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1631/PR10116/7/G.
[93] 'British Policy Towards President Nasser, 'Nasserism' and Arab Nationalism', April 17, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1631/VG1051/14.
[94] Ann Elwell (IRD) notes on 'British Policy Towards President Nasser, 'Nasserism' and Arab Nationalism', May 3, 1963; J L Welsner (IRD) notes May 8, 1963; Kit Barclay (IRD) notes May 10, 1963 TNA FO 1110/1631/PR10116/7/G.

Conclusion

IRD's efforts in the Middle East over this period were limited; by policy, the political situation in the region, and by Britain's reduced standing after Suez. The policy of rapprochement with Nasser, whilst it left information departments frustrated, was formulated in response to the overriding need to build bridges with Egypt following Suez. Once diplomatic relations had improved, constraints on IRD began to relax a little. There was even some evidence of a benefit to information work, in the possible uses of Arab Socialism against Communism noted above, but this was an exception.

The Middle East continued to be a difficult region in which for IRD to ply its trade. IRD remained locked out of the two main powers in the region, Iraq and Egypt, and had no dealings with Saudi Arabia. The department had largely overcome issues of topicality and relevance in its material, aided by relationships with the RIO and CENTO CSO, but there remained political issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the desire of many nations to stay out of the Cold War, that were insurmountable. The CENTO CSO represented a means for IRD to push their own material out through a local organisation, but internal difficulties limited its effectiveness. It did, however, act as a useful conduit for IRD information and expertise to the member countries.

Decisive conclusions on the effectiveness of IRD work in the Middle East prove elusive. If information on IRD work during this period seems patchy, that was the case at the time. At a meeting of the region's information officers at RIO Beirut in May of 1962, Strachan, the IRD attendee, reported that there remained widespread ignorance of IRD work. 'Apart from pushing out our material in the few countries where this is easily done, many would, I suspect, sooner have nothing to do with it', he reported. This naturally meant that very little information flowed

the other way. IRD remained ignorant of how much of its material was reaching its targets and what effect it had. 'We rely entirely on the Information Officer playing it by ear, which could, if his hearing is poor, be disastrous', he explained

> This seems deplorably amateurish. We should have a small section of experts in the most modern techniques of operational and market research. There are many difficulties but they could be overcome. For instance, data could be gathered under cover of a commercial type operation or in informal conversation. After all, the target population, leader of opinion, is small and the samples would be correspondingly so. We desperately need statistical information on reading and listening habits, basic attitudes, susceptibilities and so on. For example, we have no data even on so simple a thing as the virtues which are most admired in a given country. For all I know, when our material depicts the Russians as pitiless tyrants, it may be giving them quite a boost in some parts of the world!

In the margin, IRD's head Donald Hopson has written 'This is V. true'[95]

[95] B L Strachan (IRD) to C F R Barclay (IRD), May 14, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1562/PR10547/79/G.

Conclusion

As Susan Carruthers correctly asserted in 1995, the examination of IRD continues to provide 'a salutary corrective to the notion that only one side engaged in the cold war competition to win hearts and minds'.[1] In the post-Suez Middle East and decolonising Africa this thesis' study of IRD humbly offers a further corrective. It sets the active and expanding role of IRD in countering both Communism and Arab nationalism against the assertions of historians who have stressed the rapid ceding of Britain's Middle Eastern role and influence to America following Suez. As such, it is hoped that it adds in a small way to the comparatively recent historiography of Suez that offers a far more nuanced and complex reading of the crisis' impact.[2]

The British did not roll over, defeated and shorn of regional ambition, after Suez. Many – though not all – Foreign Office officials believed that Britain should proactively maintain her position in the Gulf; that her relationships and interests were important not just to the nation, but also in a wider Cold War context, performing a role that the US lacked the experience to adequately perform. The FO briefed strongly in support of this position in advance of the Anglo-American Bermuda conference at the start of 1957 – a conference that repaired much of the rift between the two nations that the crisis had brought to a head.[3] As Richard V Damm has shown, British assertiveness was matched by an American position that sought consistency of policy between the two nations in the Middle East, and even to rebuild Britain's standing. For his part, Macmillan assured the Americans that through 'power, prestige, *propaganda*, assistance

[1] Carruthers, "Red", p. 294.
[2] For example – and oft cited - Peter Hahn's argument that Suez 'destroyed all vestiges of Britain's influence in the Middle East' is patently outmoded (Peter Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and diplomacy in the early Cold war* (Chapel Hill, 1991), p240. For an in-depth re-examination of the impact and aftermath of Suez, and reassessment of its historiography see primarily Simon C. Smith, *Reassessing Suez 1956: new perspectives on the crisis and its aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008) and Smith, *Ending Empire*, but also Tore Tingvold Petersen, "Transfer of Power in the Middle East", *The International History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1997), among others.
[3] Smith, *Ending Empire*, p. 73.

and services' nationalism in the Middle East could be appropriately channelled to the benefit of Western interests.[4]

Suez may even have been 'a blessing in disguise' for the British. America could hardly repeat such actions as the ones taken during the crisis if she wanted British assistance in the Middle East, and British policymakers and propagandists were well aware of this. 'Suez', argues Tore Petersen, 'freed Britain from the American embrace in the Middle East, and possibly also elsewhere'.[5] Given this thesis' evidence for the interconnectivity between the Middle East and North and East Africa, any freedom of action Britain gained through Suez was likely also applicable there – more so, in fact, because of existing British imperial commitments. Here, again, the fallout from Suez can be overplayed. The Suez crisis itself was of somewhat less interest to British African colonial subjects – beyond the immediate aftermath of the crisis – than the surge in Egyptian propaganda and influence that followed it. This is a fine distinction, yet the point can perhaps be underlined by the fact that IRD, despite its remit to counter Arab nationalism, did not find itself unduly concerned with the crisis itself beyond the issues of damage-limitation noted in chapter 3. As such, and with Petersen's comments above borne in mind, Keith Kyle's assertion that following the crisis '[t]he final stages of decolonisation went rapidly ahead…with the outcome conditioned by the demonstration effect at Suez of the harsh limits of British power' perhaps requires mild qualification.

'Neither the imperial project nor the imperial contest…ceased with Suez', argues A J Stockwell; '[c]ontinuity in imperial policy matched continuity in imperial attitudes.' America's dislike of Communism, notes Stockwell, was quickly set aside in the belief that Britain's 'evolutionary approach' to issues of self-government and decolonisation was the best hope of

[4] Author's emphasis. Memo of Conversation, 21 March 1957, FRUS 1955-57, Vol. XII, p. 716 cited in Richard V. Damms, "In Search of 'Some Big, Imaginative Plan': The Eisenhower Administration and American Strategy in the Middle East After Suez", in Smith, ed, *Reassessing Suez 1956 new perspectives on the crisis and its aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 398.

[5] Tore Tingvold Petersen, "Post-Suez Consequences: Anglo-American Relations in the Middle East from Eisenhower to Nixon", in Smith, ed, *Reassessing Suez 1956 new perspectives on the crisis and its aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 471.

securing the allegiance of successor regimes in post-independence African states.[6] America sought the right pace of decolonisation, not the fastest, and agreed with the British Colonial Office that the key was avoiding 'the double danger of over-haste, which might lead to anarchy and open the way to Communist influence, or of dilatoriness, which might drive the potential leaders into collaboration with Communism'.[7] As argued here, whilst IRD did not control the pace of change, the department was at the core of British (and so, Western) efforts to make sure that former colonies stayed out of the Communist sphere of influence. British hopes were that colonies preferably remained economically, culturally and politically tied to Britain once they gained their independence. 'The British did not intend the *substance* of their colonial relationships to vanish with the trappings of colonial rule', argues John Darwin: The intention was that independence would simply herald a 'new phase' in the African colonies' relationship with Britain, rather than any transfer of influence to either of the superpowers. As discussed, IRD propaganda had a central role to play in securing this ideal, though perhaps it was largely for nought - Darwin concludes that the 'most striking feature of British decolonization was the failure to construct the expected close post-colonial relationships with the new states.'[8]

If the Suez Crisis was still a climacteric,[9] it did not herald the surrender of British influence. Indeed, the year of the Suez Crisis, and the crisis itself, were the catalysts for a significant expansion of IRD work across the regions under study. In a few short years, the department, responding to constant requests from posts and shifting British policy considerations, significantly diversified the material it offered. The preceding chapters of this thesis chart that transformation, and show that IRD largely conquered the issues of topicality, flexibility and responsiveness that had devalued its material in the eyes of Information Officers

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[6] A. J. Stockwell, "Suez 1956 and the Moral Disarmament of the British Empire", in Smith, ed, *Reassessing Suez 1956: new perspectives on the crisis and its aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 502, 508-509.
[7] Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth High Commissioners, No. 76, Secret, 28 March 1957. PRO (TNA) PREM 11/1724 cited in Gordon Martel, "Decolonisation after Suez: Retreat or Rationalisation?", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2000), p. 412n.
[8] John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford, 1991), p. 75, original emphasis; John Darwin, *Britain and decolonisation: the retreat from empire in the post-war world* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 330.
[9] Anthony Adamthwaite's term, Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited", p. 459.

and local recipients alike. From 1956, IRD's remit was expanded to cover the increasing Communist propaganda threat to British interests in Africa, and the largely concurrent threat from Nasserite pan-Arabism and Cairo-centred pan-Africanism. It should be emphasised that IRD did not just provide better, more appropriate and more tailored material: the department's work did not just improve, in other words. It *changed*, with IRD increasingly working beyond its traditional remit into what could be termed 'straight' information work. Whilst counter-Communism remained the department's mainstay, IRD, particularly in Africa, performed both a cultural and 'positive projection' function. Through Transmission 'X', IRD fulfilled the role of a traditional news agency, though one largely aimed at rebutting Communist and Nasserite propaganda – and rebuttal itself was anyway a significant change of approach.[10] In East Africa IRD went further, however, and through 'X' the department aimed to provide a 'balanced and representative picture of African developments' to CO posts.[11] This was positive propaganda on British achievements during decolonisation, and on conditions in ex-colonies following independence, and it was anti-Communist only in the sense that it served British interests. Elsewhere, the English best-seller publishing deal arranged through Peter Janson-Smith, discussed in Chapter 7, was a purely cultural initiative.[12] No longer a solely anti-Communist department by 1956, by 1958 IRD had further evolved from being, as Scott Lucas and C J Morris have put it, 'anti-anti-British', into something altogether more rounded and diverse. Susan Carruther's assertion that IRD's work in the colonies was 'anti-anti-British…because it was

[10] Minute, D C Rivett-Carnac (IRD), November 9, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46/G.
[11] D C Hopson (IRD) to T A H Scott (CRO), September 1, 1960, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/21.
[12] The cultural books effort also existed on a smaller scale. Between 1958 and 1959 Khartoum reported a 'large unsatisfied demand for British books of any description' to IRD. The department made arrangements with the British Council, who dispatched one of their younger staff members at intervals to Charing Cross Road to round up appropriate second-hand books. These were then dispatched by the COI to the Sudan, where they were distributed to 'barrow-boys and…kiosk owners.' Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was little feedback on success, and little if any money found its way back from the barrow-boys to IRD. The scheme was dropped after a year or so. Minute, D R M Ackland (IRD), May 30, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1526/PR10150/12.

anti-Communist', whilst applicable to her work on Malaya and Cyprus, and Kenya in 1952, does not apply to IRD's work post-Suez in the Middle East and Africa.[13]

A greater volume of work, performed over a wider and more diverse area, necessitated an increase in staffing levels that was no less significant (though also due to parallel initiatives in South America and Asia). In 1955, IRD employed 43 researchers and a support staff of 25.[14] By the 1960s, with Kit Barclay taking over from Donald Hopson as head of the department in 1962, IRD had grown to around 400 staff. This five-fold increase was not all to the good, according to Norman Reddaway, who believed it had changed a 'lean team' into something 'fat and sluggish'.[15] The head of the department's Editorial Section, 'Tommy' Tucker, agreed. In Tucker's view, during the 1960s IRD had 'not outgrown its strengths but…had outgrown its effectiveness.' The department 'needed trimming'.[16] It should not be forgotten that through the RIOs in Beirut and Singapore, and links with organisations such as CENTO and NATO, the number of staff directly involved with IRD work was larger still. IRD's operations, and staffing levels, peaked in the 1960s.[17]

During this period, British intelligence and information agencies agreed that Arab nationalism presented a greater threat to British interests than Communism across the Middle East and northern and eastern Africa. The danger was well recognised even before the Suez Crisis, and in May 1956 IRD's work against Communism in the Middle East was subordinated to the task of countering Nasserite propaganda. The situation, from a British perspective, worsened after Suez: far from removing Nasser, the crisis served only to elevate Nasser's standing. Subsequent Egyptian foreign policy sought the removal of Western influence over an

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[13] Lucas and Morris, "Crusade", p. 105, Carruthers, "Red", p. 312. As noted earlier, IRD would even have gone so far as to create indirect propaganda that criticised British policy, the better to build trust in an African audience, but the CO would not allow it. Minute, 'Anti-Communist Propaganda in the Colonies', H A H Cortazzi, July 31, 1957, TNA FO 1110/1057/PR10109/65.
[14] Jenks, *Propaganda*, p. 64.
[15] Reddaway was less than complimentary about his old colleague, Kit Barclay, in his new role. Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, p. 138.
[16] Tucker Transcript, BDOHP, DOHP 11, pp. 7-8.
[17] Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, p. 138.

increasingly wide area, into territories under direct British control, predominantly by radio. It was not until late 1962 that RIO Beirut believed the balance had shifted towards either a more equal, or predominantly Communist, threat.[18]

British prestige suffered greatly over Suez, and the crisis was a resounding victory for Nasser and the Arab nationalist movement. This dramatic change of fortune was, of itself, not a sufficient reason to give up the fight against Arab nationalism, given the scale and tenor of Egyptian propaganda and the danger it presented to British interests. It was the policy of seeking normalised relations with Cairo as swiftly as possible that stayed British propagandists' hands. In a Cold War context Arab nationalism needed to be courted and this was a further reason to restrict propaganda directed at Nasser or Egypt – it would be seen as also being directed at the wider Arab nationalist movement. There was an apparent tension between the interests of propagandists – protecting British interests from nationalism – and the British policy of disengagement from regional politics. The fact is, however, that there was no overarching regional policy. The FO, whilst arguing forcefully for British disengagement with nationalism in general, also supported a renewed commitment to protect British influence and interest against in the Gulf and southern Arabia against the same nationalist forces.[19] British territories in Africa were likewise to be protected from Egyptian influence. What emerged was a pragmatic and flexible approach to Arab nationalism.

James Vaughan asserts that the post-Suez political landscape of the Middle East saw IRD quickly refocus on countering Soviet propaganda. In fact, IRD stands out as an exception to the British policy of leaving Egyptian propaganda unchecked. IRD, working within the constraints of policy, was charged with defusing the polemic of Cairo Radio, and the department's solution was the rebuttal service Transmission 'X'. Though 'X' ultimately became an almost exclusively

[18] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to C F N Barclay (IRD), December 29, 1962, TNA FO 1110/1543/PR10180/6/G.
[19] Stephen Blackwell, "Pursuing Nasser: The Macmillan Government and the Management of British Policy Towards the Middle East Cold War, 1957-63", *Cold War History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2004), pp. 93-94

anti-Communist service, it continued to address Egyptian propaganda until at least late 1959. By the following year, Britain had begun to divest herself of her African colonies, and so a major element of the danger to British interests from Cairo Radio was progressively removed.[20] Nevertheless, programmes such as the *Voice of the Arabs* remained a threat, as James Brennan notes, 'to the more intangible target of Britain's regional reputation.'[21] By early 1963, IRD had renewed an unattributable campaign against Cairo and Nasser.[22]

Vaughan notes that, after Suez, IRD became less flexible in how it approached Communism and Nasserism. '[A]nti-Nasser operations', he writes, 'tended to be viewed through the prism of the broader Cold War struggle rather than as part of Eden's bid to defend an independent British position against both the forces of Arab nationalism and superpower encroachment upon British spheres of influence.'[23] Indeed, Cold War considerations soon surged to the fore, yet when the wider Egyptian propaganda campaign beyond the Middle East is considered, the situation was more nuanced. From 1958 onwards, British information policy worked to support maintaining the supply of and profit from oil (predominantly in the Gulf and southern Arabia), stability in the Middle East, the fulfilment of obligations to Britain's African colonies, and to keep Communist influence to a minimum.[24] Each goal, with the exception of the latter, derived from independent, British interests as much as from Cold War needs, and each factor, for IRD, required addressing both Arab nationalist and Communist threats. It was often difficult to separate the two in any case: Egypt's pivotal position as a gateway to Africa for the Communist powers' cultural propaganda and aid programmes leant Egyptian actions a Cold War dimension, as did the increasing realisation that Arab nationalism was a counter to, rather than a

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[20] 'The Future of Transmission 'X'", J G McMinnies (IRD), October 18, 1960, and Minutes, TNA FO 1110/1337/PR1125/46.
[21] Brennan, "Poison and Dope: Radio and the art of political invective in East Africa, 1940-1965", p. 34.
[22] 'British Policy Towards President Nasser, 'Nasserism' and Arab Nationalism', April 17, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1631/VG1051/14; Ann Elwell (IRD) notes on 'British Policy Towards President Nasser, 'Nasserism' and Arab Nationalism', May 3, 1963; J L Welsner (IRD) notes May 8, 1963; Kit Barclay (IRD) notes May 10, 1963 TNA FO 1110/1631/PR10116/7/G.
[23] Vaughan, "Cloak", p. 78.
[24] 'Notes on British Foreign Policy IV. The Middle East', undated but 1958, TNA FO 953/1856/P10020/49; Points for a Middle East Policy – Part I', October 15, 1958, TNA CAB 134/2342.

facilitator of, Communist expansion. IRD's battle for Arab hearts and minds turned from seeking the defeat of Arab nationalism to attempts to shape its allegiance.

To these ends, IRD's relationships with the RIO in Beirut, and the CENTO Counter Subversion Office in Ankara, were key. A section of the RIO was to all intents and purposes IRD's local office in the Middle East, and staffed by former and future IRD officers. The RIO increasingly shouldered the burden of making counter-Communist material attractive to local journalists and broadcasters, and of interest to local recipients. By 1956, almost all of the material in Arabic for the Middle East and Arabaphone regions of Africa was produced by the RIO. If the issues of topicality and appropriateness were finally (largely) overcome by the development of the RIO, the material was still from a British source. The final piece of the puzzle for the Middle East, and the reason why the FO and IRD persisted with the CENTO CSO, was to get the same sort of material produced from a Middle Eastern source. This process was far from smooth, and progress was patchy. The CSO, in essence, provided facilities, manpower and a route for IRD material into the regional member states for their own use. Whilst Turkey benefitted most, Iran's use of the CSO gradually improved, as did Pakistan's by the end of the period under study. Through the use of panels of local journalists, IRD and CSO research was regionalised, and found its way into local press and radio.

If the RIO and CENTO were key, then it is no exaggeration to say that IRD's relationship with BBC Monitoring was fundamental. Already reliant on monitoring for much of the material that informed the department's research, the need to address the increasing reach of Communist and Egyptian broadcasts into Africa made the service even more indispensable. Given how poorly intelligence from the CO was received by IRD, monitoring was the only high-volume source of information the department could trust. IRD were the driving force for the expansion of the service to cover colonial Africa, including the construction of a new monitoring station at Karen, near Nairobi. As discussed in the preceding chapters, IRD and the BBC

developed this expanded capability in partnership. The BBC were closely connected with 'X', to the point of providing a preamble to 'X' written by monitoring service staff, and a number of the corporation's regional desks received 'X' daily. Working with and through the BBC, the RIO and the CENTO CSO, IRD adapted and responded to the needs of posts across the Middle East and Africa.

IRD had a far less productive relationship with the Colonial Office. Quite why the information department of the CO and regional administrations were so obstructive is unclear. Clearly, Cox's attitude towards IRD was central to the issue. Philip Murphy has argued that the CO's attitude stemmed from 'a desire to protect its own control over policy making, and the finely balanced systems of consent and collaboration over which it provided.'[25] The CO certainly believed that IRD involvement in the colonies could raise awareness of Communism – an assessment rejected by IRD – and Cox was at pains to note that the CO did not have the means to distribute material on the scale which IRD desired, even if he had a mind to do so. But lack of ability was not the issue – it was the delay caused by Cox's attitude to improving the situation. This may only have delayed matters for a year, but that was long enough given that the majority of the decolonisation process in Africa was complete by the end of 1961. As noted previously, it is impossible to say to what degree the delay in commencing IRD work negatively impacted the task of influencing successor regimes in the colonies. IRD, at least, were livid.In Africa, Cairo Radio's potency as a propaganda tool was beginning to wane by 1961: the station faced increasing competition from the Communist nations, as well as rising numbers of domestic, post-independence broadcasters. The gradual transfer of 'X' to a predominantly anti-Communist service reflected this shift. In any case, in the Middle East, the audience for 'X"s material on Cairo had been comparatively modest. If the period between 1956 and 1963 charts the rise, and the beginning of the fall, of Cairo Radio's threat to British interests in Africa, it encompassed

[25] Murphy, "Exporting a British intelligence culture: The British intelligence community and decolonisation, 1945-1960", p. 13.

only the beginning of Communist campaign in Africa. During this period, IRD and the department's opposite numbers in Moscow and Peking competed in a scramble for the allegiance of the successor regimes of post-colonial Africa.

Without Suez, it is unlikely that Egyptian influence would have spread so far, and so quickly. That the Communist powers also expanded their interest into Africa, and in the case of the Soviet Union across the Middle East, at the same time meant that IRD found itself responding to two separate yet connected threats. Beginning with the independence of the Sudan in 1956, the process of decolonisation in Africa, itself likely affected by Suez, meant that IRD needed to find a means of countering both Communism and nationalism quickly and appropriately, or concede an advantage. Topicality and resistance from posts were issues within IRD's power to rectify; there were, however, issues beyond the department's control that limited the market for the their material, or the effectiveness of any propaganda.

Curtailed by policy and obstructed by the CO, IRD faced yet more obstacles in the restrictions placed upon either anti-Communist or counter-Nasserite propaganda by host governments, lack of radio and newspapers in certain nations, a primitive information infrastructure across much of Africa, difficulties within CENTO, and the almost complete exclusion of IRD material from the two most significant nations in the Middle East, Iraq and Egypt. Peter Partner has described the 'political sterilisation of news… [as] a widespread phenomenon in the Arab world.'[26] Whilst this latter fact strengthened the position of the BBC in providing a wider – and less boring – alternative for listeners (as it would have done for *Sharq*) it restricted the opportunities for Information Officers to get IRD material broadcast on domestic, Arab radio networks or in local newspapers. If IRD's success post-Suez was modest, therefore, then this should perhaps not be a surprise.

[26] Partner, *Arab*, p. 125.

IRD's focused its propaganda on the presentation of selected facts rather than fiction, and this stands in stark contrast to the polemic of Cairo Radio. Bob Marett recalls that, 'towards the end of 1960… I was able to have quite a friendly chat, and even compare notes, with my official opposite number and rival, the Egyptian Director General of Information. I told him that we had always found that the most effective policy in propaganda was to tell the truth… He was politely disbelieving. Either he considered this another example of British subtlety, or he thought me an absolute fool.'[27] British propagandists, including IRD, made no attempt to engage with Cairo Radio on equal terms. Whilst this was due, in the main, to the fact that the British simply did not have the wherewithal to do so after Suez, and were constrained by policy, they were also playing a longer game. The contrasts between the two methods tended to give the impression at the time – which was partly true – that Britain was losing by default. However, the more obvious propaganda of Cairo Radio was seen in some quarters to be less effective in retrospect, as Hugh Carleton-Greene, Director General of the BBC, argued in 1969:

> The power of Cairo Radio as a weapon in Col. Nasser's hands has been much exaggerated by many people. In so far as Cairo Radio achieves anything it is through the expression of feelings… which are already there. It does not create them. Those who expect British or French or American broadcasts to compete with Cairo Radio are equally mistaken… The truth is an unexciting weapon and it often works too slowly for those who, naturally enough, are eager for quick results.[28]

The market in the Middle East for traditional IRD work was comparatively small. This stemmed largely from the moratorium on propaganda levelled at Arab nationalism noted above, though IRD also felt that the Communist threat was less pressing there than elsewhere (for example in South-East Asia). IRD provided technical expertise, personnel, facilitated exchange visits and stood ready to respond quickly and with flexibility should the need arise. IRD provided the same services to Africa, where the market for the department's material was

[27] Marett, *Back door*, p. 195.
[28] Hugh Greene, "The third floor front: a view of broadcasting in the sixties" (The Bodley Head Ltd,: London, 1969), pp. 28-29 cited in full in Partner, *Arab*, p. 146.

potentially significant, yet during this period limited by minimal infrastructure. IRD also worked to protect and promote British interests and here, by late 1963, the situation was changing markedly.

Though the ultimate fate of Transmission 'X' remains unclear to this point, it is evident that the need for the service was much diminished by the arrival and spread of news agencies across Africa. The progressive rollout of syndicated news agencies such as Reuters into the developing nations during this period began to shift emphasis away from the hitherto vital relationships between IRD and information officers, and to refocus efforts back on IRD in London.[29] With the scope of IO work reduced, the standing and numbers of IOs in the region began to decline, to the concern of IRD and the RIO. Norman Reddaway, hardly surprisingly given his position as head of the RIO and his association with IRD, noted that it was 'doubtful whether this reduction has been wise.' The traditional role of IOs, and IRD's connection to them was clearly changing however, as Reddway explained in December 1963:

> Governmental publicity is suspect, radio sets universal, the news-agencies and newspaper distribution efficient… The process of information dissemination by agency, radio and newspaper has become automatic and speedy. If enough eminent men in London say interesting things, and if the News Department and I.R.D. do their briefing of publicists well, the news machine will automatically carry well-chosen words to the ends of the earth. There is still a place for the selective reinforcement of these words by Information Officer, L.P.S., Guidance Telegram etc., but it is a less important place than it used to be. Priming the publicity pump in London is the most important side of the "informing the world about Britain and H.M.G." side of our business.[30]

Despite the limited campaign against Arab nationalism, IRD's work, particularly through Transmission 'X', rounds out explorations of the wider relationship between Egypt and Britain following Suez, in which information work takes a back seat, such as Robert MacNamara's study

[29] Interestingly, IRD returned to the news agency business in Africa at the end of the 1960s, with a shell-company buyout of a Kenya agency, Africa Features, in 1968, which was registered as a British company in 1971. Putatively a commercial enterprise, it was in fact heavily subsidised by MI6/IRD in much the same way as the Arab News Agency (ANA) had been. This was a necessity, as the writing was already on the wall for small agencies by this point. Lashmar and Oliver, *Secret Propaganda War*, p. 81.

[30] G F N Reddaway (RIO Beirut) to Sir John Nicholls (British Embassy, Beirut), December 7, 1963, TNA FO 1110/1689/PR10547/85.

of the wider Anglo-Egyptian détente of 1958-1962.[31] Pericentrism, a post-post-revisioninist framework for analysis of the Cold War put forward by Tony Smith, looks to the important role that the 'junior members' of the international system had in *'expanding, intensifying and prolonging* the struggle between East and West.' Any study of propaganda conducted by Britain, and Egypt – as 'junior members' – in the Middle East or Africa adds to the study of pericentrism for many reasons, for example: the courting and co-option of nationalist movements (particularly Arab nationalism) by the superpowers (particularly the Soviet Union's efforts to expand into Africa on the back of Egyptian influence); the largely independent course charted by Britain towards decolonisation, with IRD at the vanguard of shaping the allegiance of future regimes (however unsuccessfully); CENTO's anti-Communist/counter-subversive propaganda apparatus, of central importance to the Middle East but forged with America very much in the back seat; the primacy of Egyptian propaganda as a threat, and the fears of Western nations over possible Communist connections to the movement. Smith's pericentrism is one strand of wider efforts to globalise the Cold War beyond the traditional focus on the superpowers, assigning agency to the periphery as well as to the central players. IRD is part of the story in each case.[32]

The focus of this thesis is on IRD, and it was written in large part to fill in the gaps in the history of the department in the Middle East post-Suez, and in Africa in general. This process has already begun, though in support of other directions of study, in the works of Brennan, Franzén, Hashimoto and Murphy already noted. Beyond any history of the department, however, the study of IRD has something further to add: IRD, as one of the primary research departments on Communism and Arab nationalism, and one that drew from local information offices and the British intelligence and security services, can itself contribute to the analysis of Communism and nationalism, provided one approaches their findings with the appropriate

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[31] Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the balance of power in the Middle East, 1952-1967: from the Egyptian revolution to the Six-Day War* (London, 2003), chapters 8, 9, 10.
[32] Tony Smith, "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2000), p. 568, original emphasis; in particular see Westad, *Global*.

degree of caution. Whilst propaganda itself is a product of policymaking decisions, IRD's research, and analysis of open intelligence such as that provided by BBC monitoring, also informed British policymaking. As Hashimoto has shown, from 1956 onwards the Foreign Office took responsibility for counter-subversion abroad, and for 'collating and assessing' foreign intelligence.[33] With the FO progressively taking over from the CO in Africa, IRD became increasingly central to British propaganda between 1954 and 1963.

This thesis has argued that IRD held a principal role in British efforts to contain Arab nationalism, and in the transitional phase of decolonisation when Britain still believed she could maintain a guiding relationship with successor governments and opinion-shapers in Africa. A study of IRD has less to contribute – perhaps somewhat surprisingly given the central role of the department during Suez – with regards to the two stand-out events for Britain in the Middle East following the crisis: the British interventions in Jordan in 1958, and Kuwait in 1961. IRD had no part to play in either intervention, or any subsequent justification of British actions – at least, there is nothing in the documentary record to suggest that the department had any special part to play.

Despite not being involved in the Jordan or Kuwait interventions, and whilst the department's covert actions in the Middle East were largely set aside to foster positive relations, the department continued to be involved in political warfare elsewhere in the developing world. Between 1965 and 1966, IRD held a central role in Britain's counter-Communist efforts in Indonesia. The aim in Indonesia mirrored, in part, that of the Suez campaign – regime change – although this time for avowedly Cold War reasons and with America's full cooperation. Norman Reddaway, installed as Political Warfare Coordinator at the RIO in Singapore, worked with IRD to encourage activity against local Communists and in an effort to (successfully) depose President Sukharno. The effect of IRD and RIO propaganda is of course impossible to

[33] Hashimoto, "British Intelligence", pp. 43-47.

measure, though the British certainly believed it had been effective, hardly a laudable achievement as Western propaganda aimed to dehumanise Indonesian Communists, and up to half a million Communists were massacred. In a parallel with Suez, David Easter has pointed to IRD's use of black propaganda during the department's campaign in Indonesia.[34]

Within the confines of this thesis there are still areas that would likely yield much of interest. The nations studied could easily have been expanded to include more on the Aden protectorate or Pakistan, for example. Yet it would not have been possible to study Aden in isolation from the Aden emergency, which took place beyond the limits of this thesis, and IRD only became involved in the protectorate towards the end of the period under study. Pakistan, as a member of CENTO, suggests the need for greater inclusion, but any expansion would have drawn India in by necessity. The study of propaganda agencies beyond IRD has not been considered here, and the efforts of the British Council, the Colonial Office Information Department, IPD's overt campaigns and British propaganda connections with American agencies would have provided a more holistic picture of propaganda in the region.

Comparisons could be drawn between IRD's work in the Middle East and Africa and the department's campaigns in Asia and South America (in the case of the latter, IRD's work remains unstudied). There are likely to be many similarities in how IRD conducted propaganda in the various regions of the 'developing' world. It is also likely that the department's experience in the Middle East informed campaigns conducted elsewhere. The domestic, British side of what has been studied here – particularly IRD's domestic campaigns regarding decolonisation – would further flesh out this thesis' findings. With a focus on 'priming the publicity pump' from 1963 onwards, domestic campaigns would have taken on an increasing importance worldwide. As such, any research that looks beyond 1963 will likely have to incorporate IRD's domestic work to a greater degree.

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[34] David Easter, "Keep the Indonesian pot boiling: Western covert intervention in Indonesia, October 1965-March 1966", *Cold War History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2005), pp. 68, 63.

In addition to the above omissions, some pertinent material remains out of reach. The files at the BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham are closed on the subject of the BBC's Monitoring service, though the monitoring reports themselves are available. The BBC's side of what was effectively a partnership between BBC monitoring and IRD therefore remains untold. In contrast, the IRD files retained at the FO's Hanslope Park may soon be made public, though in what proportion of the total, or over what timescale is unknown – as is their content. Given that files from that 'migrated' archive that have already been released were related to British colonial activities, there may well be files of relevance to the matters discussed in this thesis. If there are, whether they are corrective or simply add colour, remains to be seen.

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