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THE POLICIES AND POSITION  
OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL FROM THE  
OUTBREAK OF WAR TO 1950

Diana Jane Eastment

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first detailed study of the British Council and British cultural diplomacy between 1939 and 1950. It attempts to tell the story of the British Council in that period, of its organisation and relations with Government Departments and of its work overseas. These activities have been placed in the wider context of British foreign policy. The thesis is based mainly on unpublished and largely untapped primary sources, in particular the archives of the British Council and those Foreign Office Departments that dealt with its work.

As this is a pioneering work, much background description has been necessary and a chronological framework has been chosen to simplify explanation. The thesis is divided into two parts, the war and the post-war period, and each chapter deals with a specific subject and extends over the timespan of the section it is in. Both parts begin with an analysis of the Council's development at home and its interaction with Government Departments. (Chapters One and Eight) The first section includes a chapter on the work of the Council's technical divisions which were mostly absorbed by the Central Office of Information after the war. (Chapter Two) The remaining chapters deal with the British Council's work overseas: Chapter Three, with its work in Europe and the European neutrals after the outbreak of war; Chapter Four, with the Council's activities in its largest area of operation during the war, the Middle East; Chapter Five, with the start of its work in the Commonwealth and Empire; Chapter Six, with operations in Latin America; Chapter Seven, with the reasons for the lack of Council activities in the United States and the Soviet Union and its unusual work in China. Organisational problems have created some anomalies; for example, the Council's work in Turkey is described in Chapter Three and its work in Aden, Cyprus, Palestine and Malta in Chapter Five and not in the chapter on the Middle East, Chapter Four. In the second part, Chapter Nine is concerned with the Council's return to Europe and its enforced retreat from eastern Europe. Chapter Ten looks at its developing role in the Commonwealth and Empire and Chapter Eleven covers the changes in its work in the Middle East, Latin America, the United States, the Soviet Union and China. Appendices provide additional explanation in the form of organisational charts

details of annual expenditure and a list of important British Council figures.

The main body of source material used in this thesis was taken from the British Council's own voluminous records, which were deposited recently at the Public Record Office in London, and from the files of the Foreign Office Library Department and Cultural Relations Department. Additional material was found in the papers of the Cabinet Office, the Prime Minister's Office and other Government Departments. Private papers have also been studied and this thesis owes much to the kindness and cooperation of the Council's former staff in supplying invaluable information.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC(BE)	British Element, Allied Control Commission, Austria.
BES Ltd.	Book Export Scheme Limited.
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation.
BW	British Council Papers.
CAB	Cabinet Papers.
CDWA	Colonial Development and Welfare Act.
CO	Colonial Office Papers.
COI	Central Office Of Information.
DO	Dominions Office
DOT	Department of Overseas Trade papers
FO	Foreign Office Papers.
INF	Ministry of Information papers.
IO	India Office papers.
MEW	Ministry of Economic Warfare.
MOI	Ministry of Information.
OEPEC	Overseas Emergency Publicity Expenditure Committee
PREM	Prime Ministers' Office papers.
PWB	Political Warfare Bureau.
PWE	Political Warfare Executive.
T	Treasury papers.
UN	United Nations.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation.
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.
VOKS	All Union Society For Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.
WO	War Office papers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every encounter between two nations or two members of two nations is a cultural encounter. However, until approximately the First World War, foreign policy decisions were made in their own largely self-contained and essentially European diplomatic culture. But the revolution in communications and travel, and the discredit earned by the old diplomacy after the war, altered this context, bringing a growing number of people into the process. The emergence of extra-European powers destroyed the unity of the pre-1914 diplomatic world. Furthermore, political, economic and military interdependence rendered all governments responsible to some extent to an international constituency. The promotion of national philosophies and achievements helped to gain support for national policies. Ideology played an increasingly important part in international relations as an excuse and a justification for action. In 1939 the Allies went to war in defence of western civilisation and afterwards divided into two ideologically separate blocs. Between the two world wars every major European power embarked on a programme of national advertisement. France, Germany and Italy simply intensified the activities of bodies established in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1925 the Soviet Union established the All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) and in 1934 Britain established the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries which became the British Council.<sup>2</sup>

The foundation of the Council was symptomatic of the absolute and relative decline of Britain as a world power. The foundation of similar bodies by other powers did not necessarily indicate the same fact, as this was also the start of the era of mass communications and increased Government intervention in, and control over, international communications. In propaganda, as in other fields, 'laissez-faire is no longer regarded as good enough'.<sup>3</sup>

1. These were the Alliance Francaise, the Auslandsschulen and the Dante Alighieri Society. For further details see R. McMurray and M. Lee, The Cultural Approach. Another Way in International Relations. (Chapel Hill 1947)
2. The Japanese also established a Society for the Promotion of International Cultural Relations in 1934 and Switzerland and Czechoslovakia had similar bodies. For further information about VOKS see F. Barghoorn, The Soviet Cultural Offensive: the Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy. (New Jersey 1961)
3. Minute by R. Fraser, 2 February 1944, T222/68



The arrival of the Council signalled Britain's recognition of the changing nature of international politics and the importance of prestige and influence where traditional political and economic power bases are threatened. Foreign policies that can no longer be enforced by other means have to rely heavily on influence; as Eden explained

It is perfectly true, of course, that good cultural propaganda cannot remedy the damage done by a bad foreign policy, but it is no exaggeration to say that even the best of diplomatic policies may fail, if it neglects the task of interpretation and persuasion which modern conditions impose. 4

The Council was established as a direct response to the virulent propaganda of the fascist powers. Until 1934 Britain's only means of reply was through the News Department of the Foreign Office whose response was limited to the dissemination of news and factual comment.<sup>5</sup> The Council was designed to meet the challenge of hostile propaganda to British influence in the short-term and, in the long-term, to build up bodies of opinion in foreign countries favourable to Britain. In 1935 a statement of the Council's aims was drawn up that remains applicable to the present day.

To make the life and thought of the British peoples more widely known abroad; and to promote a mutual interchange of knowledge and ideas with other peoples. To encourage the study and use of the English language, both in foreign countries and the Crown Colonies and Dependencies; to assist overseas schools in equipping themselves for this purpose; to enable students from overseas to undertake courses of education or industrial training in the United Kingdom; to bring other peoples into closer touch with British ideals and practice in education, industry and Government; to make available to them the benefits of current British contributions to the sciences and technology; and to afford them opportunities of appreciating contemporary British work in literature, the fine arts, drama and music. To co-operate with the self-governing Dominions in strengthening the common cultural heritage of the British Commonwealth. 6

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4. Eden to Simon, 23 December 1937. T161/907 S35581/03/38/1

5. The earliest mention of the need for British cultural propaganda is in M.T.H.Sadler, 'The Meaning and Need of Cultural Propaganda' The New Europe, 23 May 1918, vol.7, No.84, p.121-125

6. Draft Memorandum and Articles of Association, 1935. BW2/121

In addition, the Council hoped to stimulate 'a return to sanity in international relations'<sup>7</sup> and later 'a peace of understanding by the peoples of the peoples of the world'<sup>8</sup> by a wider appreciation of British culture and arts.

From the outset the Council stood in striking contrast to its strident opponents. Its aims were essentially long-term, its message pro-British rather than anti-foreign and its methods unobtrusive. The means by which British propaganda sought to conceal its purpose were tortuous. The Council was unique in seeking to avoid all activities suggestive of propaganda or politics. This did not mean that it did not convey a political message but that it did not wish to appear to be propagandising or preaching politics. Such tactics were believed to be more effective in that a target's resistance to propaganda would not be aroused. In addition, if the target could be led to believe that he had reached his own conclusions, the disguise would be complete and Britain would have acquired an unsuspecting propagandist. These tactics were especially necessary as the Council worked with the educational, cultural and governing elites of foreign countries. By influencing the opinion-formers it was hoped to reach a wider audience and again the source of the idea would be concealed. As these were unusually well-informed individuals the Council's material had to be accurate and as truthful as possible.

It was agreed that our portrayal of Britain must be the truth and nothing but the truth - though not necessarily the whole truth, especially where the demand ..... is not for the complete picture.<sup>9</sup>

There were initially no restrictions on the methods the Council could use and it could choose which aspects of Britain to promote to different audiences. The Council tended to seize every opportunity to expand its range of functions and became a repository for activities that did not specifically belong to any other body.

The Council's work had been described as cultural propaganda, cultural diplomancy and cultural relations. Definitions of propaganda are agreed on only one criterion for propaganda, that

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7. Lord Tyrrell to Sir Daniel Stevenson, 19 December 1934. BW 2/79  
 8. Executive Committee Minutes, 28 May 1945. BW 69/11  
 9. Controllers Meeting Minutes, 22 May 1946. BW76/2

it should be motivated by a deliberate and calculated intent to persuade others to think or act in a particular way. The Council's activities were intended to reap political and economic benefits for Britain by encouraging a pro-British outlook. The Council itself, in the period in question, most frequently described its work as cultural propaganda and that practice has been followed, although the Council also used a variety of other phrases to avoid the unpleasant associations of the word 'propaganda'. Although the Council's work was non-political in content it was political in purpose. The Council did not force others to 'think British' but hoped that its clients would do so after attending a Council institute or studying in Britain or taking part in any of the Council's other myriad activities. To be effective propaganda requires continuity, concentration of resources and the careful selection of targets. The Council rarely enjoyed all three and complained most frequently of being unable to plan on a long-term financial basis.

The Council was the brainchild of the Foreign Office News Department and that it was kept at one remove from Whitehall, reflects the circumstances of its foundation and the enormous reluctance of Britain to accept propaganda as a normal function of government. Reginald Leeper, who became head of the Foreign Office News Department in January 1935, was the father of the Council. It was through his effort and initiative that the Council was founded and evolved as it did. The Treasury's first grants to the Council were meagre by comparison with those enjoyed by its rivals and it was partly in order to attract funds from industry that the Council was established as a semi-official body.<sup>10</sup> Lord Tyrrell served as the first chairman of the Committee for Relations with Other Countries but he resigned in 1935 to become President of the Council, a post that he held until 1947. He was succeeded <sup>as chairman</sup> by Lord Eustace Percy, a former Minister of Education and recently retired Minister Without Portfolio. Lord Lloyd, chairman of the Council's Near East Committee since 1935, took over from Percy in 1937.

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10. For an account of the dispute between commercial and cultural interests on the Council's Governing Board, see P.M. Taylor, Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council 1934-1939, Journal of International Studies, Vol.4 1978, p.244-265

Lloyd was a dynamic and authoritarian leader of deep religious conviction and devoted to the cause of the British Empire and Tory social reform, impatient of bureaucracy and officialdom and 'essentially always a one-man team'.<sup>11</sup> The Council chairmanship was 'peculiarly congenial' to him.<sup>12</sup> Maurice Peterson who served with Lloyd in Egypt left this description:

Small, dark, overflowing with nervous energy, he possessed a driving power which left but little respite for himself or those who worked for him.<sup>13</sup> He had a keen, almost feminine, intuition.....

Lloyd's strong personality had earned enemies as well as allies in the English political establishment. He had served as Governor of Bombay for five years from 1918 and as High Commissioner in Egypt from 1925 to 1929 when he had been forced to resign. During the 1930's, Lloyd stood firmly with the anti-appeasers, had links with the German opposition to Hitler, advocated rearmament and was President of the Navy League from 1930. Stanley Unwin, chairman of the Council's Books and Periodicals Committee, was 'aghast' when he learnt of Lloyd's appointment but 'a complete convert' after two meetings of the Executive Committee.<sup>14</sup> More importantly, on becoming chairman Lloyd had secured the official recognition of the Council's status as a permanent institution. Lloyd recorded

when he accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to assume the chairmanship of the Council, Mr Chamberlain had assured him that he regarded the British Council as a permanent body forming an integral part of the country's organisation for National Defence and that he accepted Lord Lloyd's clearly expressed intention to demand from the Treasury annually increasing sums for the development of the Council's programme.<sup>15</sup>

With Chamberlain's approval Lloyd had repeated this agreement to Sir John Simon, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had promised to record his concurrence to this arrangement in writing at the Treasury. The Foreign Office and the Treasury were frequently reminded of this agreement if either balked at proposals for the Council's expansion.

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11. E.Percy, Some Memories, (London 1958), p.195

12. C.F. Adam, Life of Lord Lloyd, (London 1948), p.272

13. M.Peterson, Both Sides of the Curtain, (London 1950), p.64

14. S.Unwin, The Truth About a Publisher, (London 1960), p.422

15. A.J.S.White to C.G.Syers, 3 May 1940. BW 2/109

Lloyd believed fervently in the value of the Council's work. In May 1939 he wrote to Halifax,

I believe more and more, as I immerse myself in this strange but absolutely absorbing work, that it is worth armies, battleships and aeroplanes and that its effects - unlike those agencies' is both lasting and beneficial.

I could show you that for £600 p.a. I could guarantee to get rid of hostile Italian influence in Malta and make the fortress permanently British in sentiment and so on da. capo. 16

Lloyd's influence and personality gave the Council an importance and purpose that enabled it to withstand attacks on its independence and adverse criticism. However, 'the deeply-rooted suspicion which underlay Lloyd's nature'<sup>17</sup> augmented difficulties with Government departments and especially the MOI, and his inability to delegate authority prevented cooperation with voluntary societies and participation in joint ventures.

The staff and overseas contacts of the Council were regarded as an important nucleus for a wartime Ministry of Information. It was decided that the Council would be absorbed by the Ministry on the outbreak of war but that its name would be retained 'for use within certain limits in order to make it easy to resuscitate the Council after the war, assuming that to be the future policy of His Majesty's Government'.<sup>18</sup> The propaganda activities of the Council - films, lectures and press articles - would be transferred to the Ministry while the Council would continue its educational work under the control of the Ministry. That the activities of the Council were not necessarily interchangeable with those of a MOI and that much of their success rested on their semi-official status had not been considered.

Lloyd agreed to these arrangements, although the Executive Committee, the Council's governing body, was unaware of them owing to the secrecy surrounding these plans and because it was to be dissolved in the event of war. It was surprising nonetheless

that the British Council, which for the last four and a half years has been engaged in national propaganda of a cultural nature, should not have been consulted. 19

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16. Lloyd to Halifax, 25 May 1939. F0393/642 P1282/44/150

17. Peterson, op.cit. p.66

18. Note on a Conference at the Treasury, 17 February 1939,  
T 161/907 S35581/06

19. Lloyd to Halifax, 13 June 1939. F0800/322 H/XXX/4

In August 1939 Lloyd was offered a place on the proposed Advisory Committee to the Minister of Information and the post of Director of Propaganda in Foreign and Neutral Countries. His first reaction was to accept both but on reflection he accepted only the former with his own men from the Council placed at strategic points in the Ministry. Colonel Bridge, the Council's Secretary-General, would be head of the Foreign Publicity Division and his assistants would coordinate the Ministry's regional specialists. The Council's employees abroad were 'key men', Council teachers 'the obvious people' to undertake propaganda in urgent situations, and the Council's institutes and Anglophile societies the 'focal points of British influence' in an area.<sup>20</sup> In every country where the Council operated its organisation would be used by the Ministry after war broke out: In Greece, the Council's staff and premises were to be the main outlets for the dissemination of British propaganda; a month before the outbreak of war the Council agreed to infiltrate six extra English teachers into the Roumanian provinces to organise propaganda when war started.

Lloyd's maxim was expansion wherever possible. The Council's grant rose from £5,000 in 1935 to £15,000 in 1937 when Lloyd took over. In the next two years it quadrupled to £60,000. These sums, however, were trifling in comparison to those spent by Britain's enemies and represented, in Leeper's words, 'the minimum we must do if we do not wish to see our position irretrievably compromised'.<sup>21</sup> The Council had a staff of two in 1935 rising to forty in 1939. These pioneering days were nostalgically regarded as a golden era when everyone knew each other personally, staff morale was high and there were 'few regulations; no audit department; no complicated budgeting'.<sup>22</sup> Lloyd deployed the limited funds at his disposal to create a cultural blockade of the Third Reich. In Scandinavia, France, south-eastern and southern Europe the Council rallied Britain's friends, whilst in the Middle East it bolstered Britain's position.

This thesis takes up the Council's story at this point. The events leading to the establishment of the Council and its life until the outbreak of war have been covered by Dr P.M. Taylor in The Projection of Britain.<sup>23</sup> The story ends in 1950, partly

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20. Minute by Everett, 13 September 1939, BW 2/363

21. R.A. Leeper to G.Hale, 6 January 1939.T 161/1029 S35581/03/39

22. A.J.S.White, The First Twenty-Five Years, (London 1965) p.29

23. P.M. Taylor, The Projection of Britain, (London 1981)Chapt.4

because of the thirty-year rule and because the Council's future was reviewed again in that year. The Council's manifold activities between these dates cannot be comprehensively described and certain omissions have been necessary. The thesis concentrates on the development of the Council's organisation in London and its relationship with Government departments and its work overseas. The work of the Home Division and the output of the Production Division have not been examined in detail. The first forms a unique chapter in the Council's history arising from the extraordinary conditions of the war, and deserves lengthier treatment than could be allowed in this thesis. Pressures of time and space, and a lack of expertise in the critical judgment of celluloid, graphics and print, have prevented an adequate assessment of the Council's output in those areas.

The thesis is based almost entirely on primary sources and in particular on the archives of the British Council and the records of the Foreign Office Library Department and Cultural Relations Division. The Council was supervised initially by the Foreign Office News Department but in 1941 this responsibility was transferred to a special section of the Librarian's Office. In 1944 a Cultural Relations Division was created from this section to handle the increased volume of work in the cultural field undertaken by the Council and foreign organisations and the Government's bilateral and international commitments. The Council's archives have been preserved haphazardly and reveal many gaps when read in conjunction with the Foreign Office material, which is full and detailed. Relevant files of other Government departments have also been consulted but these are relatively few. As an organisation on the periphery on Whitehall the Council did not concern many departments other than the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. Most disappointing, however, is the disappearance of a once large collection of British Council files from the Colonial Office records for the war period. Searches by myself and the staff of the Public Records Office have failed to trace them. Unhappily, Lord Lloyd's papers remain closed. However, former Council staff and their relatives have been generous in providing interviews and material. In addition, the private papers of the Council's employees held in university and other libraries have been studied. The most useful published sources have been the Council's Annual Reports and publications and the memoirs of Council staff.

As the Council is Britain's chief cultural arm overseas an examination of its work offers new insights into the role of cultural propaganda in British foreign policy and into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Britain's position overseas. In Britain's case cultural propaganda has been used more often to bolster a weakening position and to mitigate political, economic and military shortcomings, than to reinforce an already strong position. This is inevitable for a declining power whose predicament is worsened by the fact that its propaganda becomes less attractive as its other forms of influence wane. It would therefore be foolhardy to seek to replace political power with influence alone; but in Britain, at least, the potential of propaganda has never been overrated.

\* \* \* \*



## CHAPTER ONE

### STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

The outbreak of war threatened to end the British Council's short life. This chapter describes the Council's struggle for survival, its institutional development and its relationship with Government departments during the war.<sup>1</sup> On 3 September the Council had become a part of the MOI. Abroad, Council staff assumed additional duties as Press Attaches and naval and military intelligence gatherers. In Roumania a Council employee was sent to remote areas in the summer and autumn by the British Military Attache in Bucharest with instructions to observe and report troop movements. In Greece a Council teacher undertook naval intelligence work for the British Consul in Samos.<sup>2</sup> There are probably other unrecorded instances of Council staff engaging in extra activities in their often remote posts, but there is no available evidence to show that they were involved in subversive or black propaganda operations. Indeed, Julian Amery, working for Section D in the Balkans, recorded that in Yugoslavia the Council served as a decoy as 'the Italians were busily shadowing the innocent and unsuspecting Representative of the British Council'.<sup>3</sup>

Relations between the Council and the MOI were stormy from the outset. Just before hostilities broke out Lloyd rejected integration with the Ministry on the grounds that the two organisations were fundamentally different. Unlike the Ministry the Council was a permanent body, yielding results in the long-term and using distinctive methods and targets. Moreover, the mechanics of combining the two had been inadequately considered. The experience of the Press Department was probably sufficient to convince Lloyd that the Council would fare better outside the Ministry.

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1. The Council's relations with the Colonial, Dominions and India Offices are described in Chapter Five.
  2. Both instances are recorded in C.A.F.Dundas to M.A. Robertson, 7 October 1942, BW29/13.
  3. J. Amery, Approach March, (London 1973), p.165.

Suspended on the outbreak of war, its staff seconded to the Ministry, it was soon discovered that the Council's Press Department's contacts and methods were incompatible with those of the Ministry and that association with the Ministry positively harmed the work that had been previously undertaken with success. In discussions in September with Lord Macmillan, the Minister of Information, Lloyd agreed to the transfer of films, broadcasting, lectures and visual propaganda to the Ministry. The Council's educational and books departments and the Press and Receptions Division would remain outside the Ministry together with activities in the fields of music, drama and the fine arts.

The Foreign Office, similarly dissatisfied with the Ministry and campaigning for the return of enemy propaganda to its control, urged a larger and more independent role for the Council. The desultory nature of the early months of the war offered a continuing role for the Council in the vital countries of Europe and the Mediterranean. On 21 September Lloyd informed the Executive Committee that the Foreign Office no longer wanted the Council placed in cold storage for the duration of the war.

Since then the Foreign Office had shown a keen anxiety, after receiving a considerable number of messages from Missions all over the world, that the Council should go ahead in practically every field that was feasible..... A strong case had been made out for cultural propaganda in wartime. The Council should be particularly careful in no way to become involved with political propaganda<sup>4</sup>

The Treasury, on the other hand, argued that cultural propaganda was not related directly to the war effort and that the need for economy dictated that these activities should be suspended. Furthermore, if any work was continued it should be performed by the Ministry to eliminate overlapping and waste.

The MOI was vulnerable and faced widespread attack. A division of responsibility in the conduct of propaganda had already been conceded by the establishment of Section D and Electra House for the dissemination of propaganda to the enemy.

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4. Executive Committee Minutes, 21 September 1939, BW68/3.

On 28 September the War Cabinet decided to return responsibility for the issuing of news to the departments concerned, thereby reversing the basis on which the Ministry had been founded. Thus emasculated the Ministry was unable to prevent the secession of the Council to the Foreign Office in mid-October. The MOI's loss of cultural propaganda was symptomatic of its weakness at the start of the war and the Foreign Office could congratulate itself as it had also regained control of propaganda to enemy countries.

To gain greater security the Council's Executive Committee had considered applying for a Royal Charter before the war. The Treasury, in particular, opposed this course after the outbreak of war. In September 1939, Edward Hale, principal assistant secretary at the Treasury, wrote to Eric Bamford, seconded from the Treasury to the MOI as administrative controller, concerning the Council's application for a Royal Charter.

I am not particularly anxious to proceed with this now, in order not to commit ourselves further than we already are to the continuance of the British Council in its present form after the war.....<sup>5</sup>

The Treasury was determined to 'stonewall' on the issue and argued that the Council risked rejection of its application by the Privy Council because it was a subject of controversy in the Press and did not need a Charter to function efficiently.<sup>6</sup> The Treasury also suggested that a Charter would undermine rather than safeguard the Council's independence as it would 'be regarded as a public mark of Government endorsement and protection'.<sup>7</sup> The Foreign Office attributed the Treasury's attitude 'to a fear that the Council's activities might overlap with those of the MOI and to a feeling that cultural propaganda was not necessary in wartime'.<sup>8</sup>

5. E. Hale to E. Bamford, 29 September 1939. T161/981  
S35581/06/39/1
6. Minute by C.G. Syers, 4 March 1940. T161/1029 S35581/03/39
7. Minute by Sir Alan Barlow, 5 March 1940. T161/1029  
S35581/03/39
8. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 January 1940. DW68/3

In January 1940 the Executive Committee learnt that the Foreign Office were unwilling to pursue the matter in view of the Council's difficulties in settling relations with the MOI. These disputes with the Ministry were to Lloyd's mind a reason for continuing with the application as he suspected

that some people in the Ministry desire to take the opportunity of the war to suppress or curtail the Council, and he thinks that a Charter would fortify his position.<sup>9</sup>

Despite Lloyd's perseverance, however, by March 1940 the Foreign Office, preoccupied by events in Scandinavia and increasing tension in Europe, capitulated to the Treasury 'in view of the difficulties involved in such a step in wartime'.<sup>10</sup>

Lloyd was appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies in Churchill's Cabinet formed after Chamberlain's downfall following the debacle in Norway. He remained the Council's chairman and almost immediately declared his intention to 'return to the attack' on the question of the Charter.<sup>11</sup>

By August the Treasury had withdrawn its objections and in October the Council's Royal Charter was signed by the King. The Times said the *act* established

that body as a permanent institution of the realm and sets a seal upon the labours of the pioneers who have carried it from small beginnings to its present wide sphere of influence.<sup>12</sup>

The Charter conferred greater security if only because the Council's abolition would require its revocation. In addition, it laid down aims and rules of organisation that placed the Council on a firmer footing. The Charter declared that the Council had been formed

9. Minute by Sir Alan Barlow, 5 March 1940. T161/1029  
S35581/03/39

10. Halifax to Simon, 14 March 1940. T161/1029  
S35581/03/39

11. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 May 1940. BW69/6

12. The Times, 11 October 1940. p.5. col.3.

for the purpose of promoting a wider knowledge of Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the English language abroad and developing closer cultural relations between Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and other countries for the purpose of benefiting the British Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>13</sup>

In the Council's first annual report its purpose was stated less formally

The Council's aim is to create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy may be and from whatever political conviction it may spring.<sup>14</sup>

That British foreign policy in future required a broader basis of support than in the past, suggests that Britain no longer had sufficient power in other forms to secure her objectives and that her opponents had become more numerous and more vociferous. The Council's work was also directly related to the successful outcome of the war, the annual report argued, as the spread of British ideals and principles would help to ensure the preservation of western civilisation. The Council was not averse to claiming short-term benefits from its work and at the end of 1940 claimed 'a definite part' in creating a steady Anglophile spirit in Greece and buttressing a delicate situation in Egypt, Iraq and Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

The encouragement of reciprocal cultural relations was fundamental to the Council's work. Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, the Council's Chief Representative in Latin America, contributed funds for the establishment of a Latin America House in London and wrote in March 1942 that

Experience has shown that just as in international commerce some balance of trade is essential, so it is also in the cultural "Commerce of Ideas",..... and that it is impossible to make forced exports of "culture" even into a well-disposed country unless that country feels that reciprocal interest is being taken in its own traditions and culture.<sup>16</sup>

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13. Charter of Incorporation granted by His Majesty,  
October 1940. (London 1948)
14. British Council Annual Report, 1940/41, p.2.
15. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 January 1941  
BW69/6
16. Memorandum by Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, March 1942,  
BW2/10

European culture could no longer assume superiority and had to be mindful of the differing cultures of the new actors emerging on the international stage.

An earlier proposal to incorporate the Council as a company limited by guarantee had resulted in the accumulation of members who would have acted as shareholders. The members were a large amorphous body with no executive powers or obligations 'confined to persons of distinction in those aspects of the national life with which the Council finds itself concerned'.<sup>17</sup> Members of the Council were elected by the Executive Committee. Initially, all members of Advisory Committees, except representatives of government departments, became members but this practice lapsed, as did the rule that official nominees could not be members of the Council.

Composed of not less than fifteen and not more than thirty members, of which nine were government nominees, the Executive Committee met quarterly to consider issues of policy and finance.<sup>18</sup> Its composition was designed to ensure a balanced range of opinion. In 1939 it included members of Parliament and the general public, civil servants and representatives of the three main political parties. From the Conservative Party there were Sir John Power and Sir Eugene Ramsden; representing the Liberal Party, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and from the Labour Party, Attlee, Alexander and Lord Snell. In the House of Commons the Council was described as

as all-party body; it does not exist for any political reason, nor has it any political bias whatsoever.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Council was frequently criticised for its traditional cast, for being too narrow in outlook and composition and unrepresentative of 'British democracy and progress in social and democratic experiment'.<sup>20</sup>

17. Charter of Incorporation. op.cit.

18. These Departments were: the Lord President's Office, the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Dominions Office, the Home Office, the Boards of Trade and Education and the Scottish Office.

19. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, Vol.369, 18 February 1941. Col.80.

20. Ibid. Col.75.

In 1941 Sir Stanley Unwin, Chairman of the Books and Periodicals Department and a member of the Executive and Finance and Agenda Committees, suggested that greater participation from members of the left of British politics should be encouraged because the public 'rightly or wrongly think there is too much class bias in the British Council's activities'.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Harold Laski regretted that the Council had 'so small a representation of liberal views in its membership'.<sup>22</sup>

Executive Committee meetings were seldom fully attended and a sub-committee, the Finance and Agenda Committee, was appointed to deal with routine financial matters. Consisting of the chairman and seven active members of the Executive Committee, it met monthly and became more influential than its parent body. The conclusions of the Finance and Agenda Committee were seldom overturned by the Executive Committee which tended to 'merely rubber stamp the policy of the permanent officials'.<sup>23</sup> To assist the Executive Committee there were ten Advisory Committees in 1939 providing expert advice on cultural and technical subjects. A Science Advisory Committee was added in 1941 and a Humanities Advisory Committee in 1944. The Advisory Committees worked closely with their corresponding Council departments and were represented by their chairman on the Executive Committee.

The chairman of the Council was also the chairman of the Executive Committee and therefore the administrative head of the Council. The post was unpaid until 1939 and held at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Council was organised in divisions under a Secretary General assisted by deputies. The divisions were divided into geographical departments, eventually four dealing with work in Britain (the Home Division), in the Empire (the Empire Division), in the Middle East (Foreign Division A), and in Latin America (Foreign Division B),<sup>24</sup> and functional departments producing material for the Council's activities.

21. S.Unwin to A.J.S. White, 11 July 1941 BW2/55

22. Ibid.

23. Minute by J.L.D.Winnifrith, 11 January 1945. T219/2

24. A fifth was added in 1944, Foreign Division C, to deal with liberated Europe

In 1939 one officer could be responsible for a region and a production department but as the Council grew liaison was provided by weekly Heads of Division meetings which submitted projects to the Executive and Finance and Agenda Committees. These meetings in practice controlled the policy of the Council as the two main committees were 'insufficiently informed, too big, and meeting too infrequently' to exercise proper control.<sup>25</sup> As a precaution against the destruction of the Council's London office some departments were transferred to premises at South Leigh in October 1940. In 1944 the books, periodicals and export departments were moved to larger premises at Oriel College, Oxford. This dispersal of the London organisation increased problems of coordination.

Excluding particular cases arising from local factors, such as the one-party system in Turkey, the Council's work overseas was based on three models - institutes, Anglophile societies and offices. The first were founded extensively in educationally-undeveloped areas, particularly the Middle East and the Balkans. Anglophile societies predominated in Latin America while in educationally-advanced countries, for example in Scandinavia, the Council operated through local institutions fed by a central Council office. Institutes were controlled directly by the Council whereas Anglophile societies, although subsidised and supplied with teaching staff by the Council, were administered by boards of local nationals. The Council had to respect the autonomous status of these societies and was often frustrated by the limited influence it could exert. In the third model the Council worked with such bodies as the workers educational association, extra-mural departments of universities and anglophile groups where they existed. Institutes were the most costly form of operation and offices the least expensive. The Institutes and societies attracted mainly lower and middle class students, businessmen and some professional people seeking to advance their careers by learning English. In Latin America especially, women outnumbered men. Distinguished social and political figures were attracted by cultural events organised by the Council and a wider audience was reached through the distribution of Council material outside the Institutes and societies.

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25. Anonymous memorandum, probably by R.Davies, 1945. T219/3



The Council preferred to have its own staff in each country, ideally a Representative assisted by an administrative deputy and specialist officers dealing with the distribution of material. The Representative was responsible for policy and the development of the Council's work and acted in close consultation with the British Mission.

By the nature of its work the Council's success depended on the quality of its staff. Lloyd had laid down as a condition of his chairmanship that

When engaging additional staff for this purpose he should be able to give them a personal assurance that if they were taken into the permanent establishment of the Council, they would be no less sure of a permanent career than if they were civil servants.....<sup>26</sup>

In practice this meant that even if the Council was suspended for the duration of the war, as had been planned, its staff, whether seconded to the MOI, the Forces or elsewhere, were guaranteed salaries at the level they had received at the Council and 'the right to be readmitted to the Council as soon as demobilisation took place'.<sup>27</sup> This agreement aroused considerable anxiety at the Treasury and the Overseas Emergency Publicity Expenditure Committee decided in September 1939 that no further recruitment to the permanent staff of the Council should take place for the duration of the war.<sup>28</sup> However, a Permanent Overseas Service was established in 1940 in order that the Council's work could continue abroad. A scheme for a Home Service was presented to the Treasury in 1943 but nothing came of it. The Council's newly-recruited London staff therefore had no security of tenure, pensions or fixed pay scales.

The unattractiveness of the Council's contracts, even in the Permanent Overseas Service, caused problems with recruitment, especially to the lower posts. The Council was too young to draw on its own service and had to look for the increasingly rare individual not already engaged on war work.

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26. OEPEC Meeting, 29 August 1939. T162/858 E39140/3

27. Minute by C. Bridge, 30 August 1939. BW2/109

28. OEPEC Meeting, 12 September 1939 T162/858 E39140/4

Insistence on teaching qualifications, languages or cultural affinities was a luxury that the Council could not afford, resulting in 'the influence of the amateur'.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, 'the selection machinery was often makeshift' and appointments were made abroad without the candidate being interviewed.<sup>30</sup> Security vetting of senior appointments seems likely in view of evidence that applicants for teaching posts in Spain and Turkey were referred to M.I.5.<sup>31</sup> To attract good staff the Council raised salaries to compete with those offered by rival bodies, such as the Universities and the Army Education Corps, a practice that was deplored by the Foreign Service. The Embassy at Ankara complained that

The British Council had apparently adopted the easy but expensive expedient of bribing people to leave other jobs by offering enormous salaries.<sup>32</sup>

Council staff also faced charges of cowardice, laziness and unorthodoxy from hostile commentators. The Ankara Embassy again reported that

Both Consuls-General, however, express some doubt as to whether the salaries paid, the hours worked and the length of the holidays are entirely in conformity with British official standards and with what might be expected in wartime.<sup>33</sup>

However, service personnel seconded to the Council frequently protested at the drop in salary they had sustained and at the inadequate allowances provided for inflation and entertainment. In the chaotic financial conditions of the war, salaries often failed to keep pace with rising prices and most of the Council's staff in Turkey at the end of the war were nearly bankrupt.

A heavy degree of responsibility was delegated to the Council's Representatives, nine of whom were appointed to the Middle East alone during the war. Difficulties of communication and the Council's reliance on personal contacts for the development of its work, made this inevitable. The Council's staff in the Middle East were not visited from London until 1942 and opportunities for travel to England were limited.

29. Memorandum by T.P. Tunnard-Moore, 1945. T219/3

30. White, op. cit. p.46.

31. See Ifor Evans report on a visit to Spain and Portugal, 1942 BW2/145, and a Minute by Ifor Evans, 4 April 1942. BW56/12

32. Memorandum by C. Busk, October 1944. FO 924/11 L1084/387/45

33. A.K. Helm to Eden, 3 October 1944, FO 924/35 LC1126/15/45

After visiting Spain and Portugal in 1942 Ifor Evans, the Council's Education Director, reported on the isolation suffered by the Council's employees and the desirability of regular tours by senior Council officials 'if a just balance of authority between London and our offices overseas is to be maintained'.<sup>34</sup> The Council was fortunate to secure the services of distinguished individuals, some from the academic world, for the duration of the war, including Professors Boase, Macmillan, Roxby and Starkie.<sup>35</sup> At home senior staff tended to be recruited from the ranks of retired Government officials. The Secretary-General, White, came from the Indian Civil Service, Gillan, Davies and Kennedy-Cooke from the Sudan Political Service and Hussey and Ward Price from the Nigerian Service.<sup>36</sup>

Wherever possible the Council tried to persuade its staff that their duty lay in remaining at their posts and not in joining the Forces. In March 1942 Council teachers at schools in Istanbul were told in a telegram signed by the Foreign Secretary that their work was 'as essential as any other undertaken anywhere in the common cause'.<sup>37</sup> However, the Council suffered throughout the war from a shortage of staff and the threat of defections to the Forces. A Council official in Palestine in 1941 described the trials of his post.

We must have men of the very best type, who are adaptable to the highest degree so that they can teach stupid pupils, drink endless coffees with officials, stand constant rebuffs and scorn from the type of Englishman abroad whom one finds in these parts, step over dead camels on their way to work, go without cultural amenities for weeks at a stretch, keep away from excessive drink and foreign women and still retain their sense of proportion and remain English.<sup>38</sup>

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34. Report by Sir Angus Gillan on a tour of the Middle East, 1945. Gillan Papers

35. See Appendix A

36. See Appendix A

37. Eden to English High Schools in Istanbul, 16 March 1942.  
BW29/13

38. L. Hollyer to M. Blake, 25 November 1941. BW47/5

At the end of 1942 Britain reached a manpower crisis and was forced to cut the estimates of the armed services for 1943. The Council's staff at home and overseas had been exempted from military service in 1940 'the national importance of the Council's work having been recognised by the Government'.<sup>39</sup> In November 1942, however, the Ministry of Labour ruled that all Council male employees under the age of thirty should be released 'if the military authorities have real need of their services...'.<sup>40</sup> This order threatened to paralyse the Council's work, particularly in the Middle East where new demands for the Council's services from the Minister of State's Office had placed additional burdens on the Council's overstretched staff.<sup>41</sup> A meeting at the British Embassy in Cairo in December 1942 resolved that no Council staff could be spared and Sir Miles Lampson, the British Ambassador, warned that

a few more men pruned from the Council would surely not help to solve the manpower problem at home..... On the other hand I assure you most seriously again that it would definitely put a stop to our work out here.<sup>42</sup>

Short-term military requirements threatened to endanger Britain's long-term interests in the Middle East. Protests also reached London from Richard Casey, the Minister of State in the Middle East, and from the Military authorities. Bevin argued that the Council could not escape the cuts and Eden was inclined initially to agree with him. However, pressure from its representatives in the Middle East forced the Foreign Office to endorse Lampson's request in February 1943. In April the situation was reversed and, with the support of Sir Henry Wilson, Commander-in-Chief Middle East, the Council began to recruit from the services whose position had been eased by the collapse of Axis resistance in North Africa. In June Casey 'arranged that G.H.Q. should take a firm line and not let unit commanders impede the release of personnel'.<sup>43</sup>

39. Lloyd to Sir Miles Lampson, 24 January 1940. BW29/13

40. Minute by K.T. Gurney, 5 February 1943. FO370/733

41. See Chapter Four.

L603/178/410

42. Lampson to Eden, 24 January 1943. FO370/733 L513/178/410

43. Minute by K.T. Gurney, 28 June 1943. FO370/718 L3336/41/410

In February 1941 Lloyd died at the age of sixty-one after a short illness. His death came as a severe blow to the Council and was mourned in its Institutes and societies overseas. The Council had grown considerably under his leadership and had withstood attacks on its independence by the MOI, which are dealt with below. Approximately half of the total staff now numbering 333 were based overseas. The search for Lloyd's successor had begun when Lloyd was appointed to the Colonial Office. Halifax, with Lloyd's knowledge, had offered the post temporarily to William Wedgwood Benn, a Labour M.P. and former Secretary of State for India, until Lloyd could resume his duties at the Council. Wedgwood Benn had declined the offer wishing to remain in active service.<sup>44</sup> Lloyd had agreed to continue as chairman until Lord Harlech, then High Commissioner in South Africa could take over. However, Harlech did not return from South Africa and Lloyd remained chairman, as he did not expect to serve in a peacetime government and wanted to be the Council's chairman after the war. From the Colonial Office Lloyd kept a close watch on the Council, instructing his secretary that 'no matters concerning the British Council should be dealt with by him or any other department without prior reference to me'.<sup>45</sup> Sir John Chancellor, a vice-chairman of the Council, was appointed assistant chairman but this arrangement was not successful 'for Lord Lloyd did not allow Sir John to exercise any authority and dealt direct, as was his way, with Council staff at various levels'.<sup>46</sup> For the Council's staff this meant being summoned to the Colonial Office at any hour of the day or night during the worst of the blitz.

The Council's staff abroad speculated whether the death of Lloyd would mean the end of the Council. Leeper, now in charge of subversive propaganda at Woburn Abbey, was also apprehensive and warned Eden against appointing a caretaker chairman as 'a long interregnum works havoc with any institution'<sup>47</sup>

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44. Halifax to Benn, 29 May 1940, and Benn to Halifax, 2 June 1940, Halifax Papers FO 800/322 H/XXX/30 & 31

45. Lloyd to S. Sabine, undated, BW2/88

46. White, op. cit. p.48

47. R.A. Leeper to Eden, 9 February 1941, FO370/634

L1722/1404/410

Leeper did not think that either Chancellor or Lord Riverdale, the Council's other vice-chairman, had sufficient authority to lead the Council and urged that it 'should not be allowed to slacken or fail for lack of direction'.<sup>48</sup> R.A. Butler, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, sounded the Executive Committee and found that Chancellor was willing 'to continue to do the donkey work' and that Riverdale aspired to the post of acting chairman for the duration of the war.<sup>49</sup> In Chancellor's view Lloyd's choice would have been for Riverdale, with Chancellor to mind the Council until the end of the war when Harlech would be available. Chancellor left a note to this effect with Brendan Bracken for Churchill's consideration.<sup>50</sup> The Council's president, Lord Tyrrell, nominated, in order of preference, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord de la Warr and Lord Crawford. Attlee nominated Wedgwood Benn for the post and this choice was approved by Eden.<sup>51</sup> Churchill, however, anticipated discontent in the Conservative Party 'if one post after another of this kind goes to our Socialist Colleagues' and asked James Stewart, the Conservative Party Chief Whip, to find 'a good Conservative'.<sup>52</sup> Stewart suggested Sir Malcolm Robertson 'who has great foreign experience and energy', Sir Francis Lindley, a former Ambassador, and Lord Kennet.<sup>53</sup>

The Minister of Information, Duff Cooper, suggested that he should be ex-officio chairman of the Council on the grounds that control of the Council and the MOI should be unified. Duff Cooper did not recognize any distinction between the Council's and the Ministry's work.

The supposition is that the British Council exists only for culture, and not for political propaganda, but this at the best of times was mere camouflage since no country would be justified in spending public money on cultural propaganda unless it had also a political or commercial significance.<sup>54</sup>

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48. Ibid.

49. Minute by R.A. Butler, 8 February 1941 F0370/634 L1722/1404/410

50. Minute by Sir John Chancellor, 14 March 1941.

Chancellor Papers, Box 27/4 p.6.

51. Minute by J. Seal, 15 February 1941. PREM 4 20/3 p.76

52. Minute by Churchill, 15 February 1941. PREM 4 20/3 p.75.

53. Minute by J. Stewart, 17 February 1941. PREM 4 20/3 p.72

54. Duff Cooper to Churchill, 7 February 1941. PREM 4 20/3 p.80

The Secretary of State for India, Leo Amery, maintained that Lloyd had wanted Ronald Storrs to be his successor. Storrs' claim was strong as he had been a close friend of Lloyd, knew the Council well and believed that Lloyd had wished to have him as his deputy while he was at the Colonial Office 'but was frustrated by the opposition of certain members of the Council who preferred Chancellor'.<sup>55</sup> Other candidates were Sir Percy Loraine and General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter. In March the Finance and Agenda Committee resolved that the chairman should have

sufficient prestige to be able to deal on an equal footing with Government Departments and to be received by rulers of foreign states when he went abroad and that he should be able to give his time daily to the work of the Council.<sup>56</sup>

The decision was suspended until Eden's return from the Middle East. In May, after the fall of Greece, Eden informed Churchill that the Executive Committee had chosen the Duke of Devonshire and that he and Attlee concurred with this choice. The personal minute from Churchill to Eden in reply gives a rare indication of Churchill's attitude to the Council.

There are however several important matters about the British Council which must be settled before we can make these appointments. First, is it to go on? Many people consider that now we are at war and have a MOI it is redundant. It certainly very expensive and apart from junketings in South American states, there are few countries open to it. There are no doubt a number of influential people who have ensconced themselves in this organisation. Full justification will have to be shown to the Cabinet by defining and explaining the reality of its work in the immediate future. On the whole I am inclined to think that its usefulness ended with the death of Lord Lloyd.<sup>57</sup>

From this it seems clear that Churchill was unconvinced of the value of cultural propaganda in wartime, sceptical of the Council's organisation and did not see a role for it in the war zone of the Middle East or in the Commonwealth and Empire.

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55. Leo Amery to Duff Cooper, 10 February 1941. INF 1/445

56. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 11 March 1941. BW69/3

57. Minute by Churchill, 10 May 1941. FO370/634 L1407/105/410

In addition, Churchill was no doubt exasperated by the continuing disputes between the Ministries of Information and Economic Warfare over the control of propaganda and between the MOI and the British Council which were shortly to be aired in the Cabinet.<sup>58</sup> The disappearance of the Council would remove one source of argument.

The Foreign Office rallied to the support of the Council, the control of which it did not share, unlike the other channels of propaganda. Eden replied personally to Churchill.

I attach great importance to the work of the British Council. I was responsible for the early development of its work when I was last Foreign Secretary. In my view it would be a grave error to close it down now after all the effort that has been put into it.<sup>59</sup>

The Foreign Office emphasised the distinction between the Council and the MOI, the coordination between the two organisations and the improbability of any savings in expenditure if they were merged. Eden also stressed that the existence of the Royal Charter would hinder a quiet dissolution of the Council. The Foreign Office were also quick to point out that the German expenditure on cultural propaganda in 1937/8 was officially estimated at £3 million whereas the Council in 1941/2 was only spending £50,000. Churchill's reaction was to propose a new candidate for the post of chairman.

But the name of Malcolm Robertson has been brought to my notice. He is certainly a far more able and more experienced man; has great energy and is doing nothing; whereas the Duke of Devonshire is already employed.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Office pressed the candidature of the Duke of Devonshire but Churchill insisted on Robertson and dropped his suggestion that the existence of the Council should be justified to the War Cabinet, observing that,

All that is required is someone who works in loyal accord with the Foreign Office, and I am sure Sir Malcolm Robertson would do this.<sup>61</sup>

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58. For an account of relations between the MOI and the MEW see C. Cruikshank, The Fourth Arm, (London 1978)

59. Eden to Churchill, 20 May 1941. FO370/634 L1407/105/410

60. Minute by Churchill, 20 May 1941. FO370/634 L1407/105/410  
The Duke of Devonshire was Parliamentary Secretary of State for India and Burma.

61. Churchill to Eden, 3 June 1941. FO370/634 L1407/105/410



Churchill's view prevailed and Lord Snell replaced Chancellor as vice chairman to balance the appointment of a Conservative as Chairman. A postscript was provided by an article in the Press, which the Council believed to have been inspired by Duff Cooper, asserting that the appointment of a Council chairman required the approval of the Ministry of Information. Eden had to reassure the new chairman and Riverdale that he was 'entirely opposed' to any move by the MOI to take over the Council.<sup>62</sup>

Robertson described himself as a 'British diplomat of the Old School' yet his ideas on the need to extend Britain's representation abroad were far from traditional and were reflected to some extent in the Eden reforms of the Foreign Office of 1943 which were based on Robertson's recommendations.<sup>63</sup> Robertson had joined the Foreign Office in 1898 and had served in Europe and North and South America. In accepting the post of British Minister to the Argentine Republic in 1925 Robertson recorded that

I should not only have a chance of pushing our trade, but of endeavouring to make Britain better known culturally, an ambition that I had nurtured for many years.<sup>64</sup>

In 1926 he founded the Anglo-Argentine Association of English Culture which was the prototype for all other Anglophile societies and as Ambassador was instrumental in securing the despatch of the D'Abernon Mission in 1929. At that time Robertson had little faith in 'the Foreign Office pundits' sharing his views on the extension of contacts abroad.

It was obvious that the permanent officials at home had not yet attuned their minds to the idea that activity on behalf of British trade, industry and culture might be of value to Diplomacy and the conduct of Foreign Affairs generally.<sup>65</sup>

He resigned as Ambassador in 1929 and returned to England becoming chairman of Spillers Limited in 1930.

62. Eden to Riverdale, 16 June 1941. BW82/8

63. See Lord Avon, The Reckoning (London 1964) p.257

64. Draft autobiography, Sir Malcolm Robertson, Private Papers.  
(Cited as Robertson Papers)

65. Ibid.

The formation of the Council in 1934 came as 'a very great relief',<sup>66</sup> to Robertson who was by then a member of the Ibero-American Institute which was placed at the disposal of the newly formed Council.

Lady Blanche Lloyd congratulated Robertson on his appointment and wrote that there was 'much sympathy and identity of outlook about main principles between you and him'.<sup>67</sup> Leeper, too, approved of Churchill's choice and wrote to Robertson that

Your appointment comes at a particularly suitable moment in connection with the Foreign Office reform. You will be in a good position to link the work of the Council and the Diplomatic Service and to see that the latter understands and assists the work of the former..... I remember the talk we had together in the Foreign Office before the war when we found that our views on Germany coincided.<sup>68</sup>

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#### THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

After the Council left the MOI in October 1939 the question of its precise role and functions remained to be settled. In December 1939, Sir P. Waterfield, Deputy Secretary at the MOI, proposed that the Ministry should take over all disputed areas and those Council departments that were duplicated in the Ministry. This left the Council only its purely educational and cultural work which the Treasury regarded as a luxury in wartime. Bridge and Leeper, however, declared that there was scope for both organisations and that overlapping could be avoided by the conclusion of demarcation agreements. Considerable confusion reigned as to where responsibility lay for particular activities and as to what each body was planning. The Council was extensively involved in the fields of Press articles, photographs and films whereas the new Ministry had to establish contacts and accumulate supplies. In the Colonies both organisations distributed all three types of material but the Council was able to correspond with the Colonial Information Offices directly while the MOI had to go through the Colonial Office. An exasperated MOI official

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66. Ibid.

67. Lady Blanche Lloyd to Robertson, 12 June 1941.

Robertson Papers

68. Leeper to Robertson, 12 June 1941. Robertson Papers.

minuted in December

The definition of their activities as being cultural, while ours are political, does not seem to work well in practice.<sup>69</sup>

In January 1940 it was decided that failing a solution arising from direct negotiation between Lloyd and the new Minister of Information, John Reith, the issue would be submitted to the War Cabinet by Halifax and Reith. The crux of the matter was

whether "culture" is to be interpreted in such a way as to include everything which is not directly political, or whether it should not be interpreted strictly so that the whole of no-man's land..... falls within our (MOI) province.<sup>70</sup>

Reith, who 'set out to recover all that had been lost in September and gain even more',<sup>71</sup> was the most formidable and intransigent opponent that the Council had yet faced. His appointment had been greeted with trepidation and Reith later recorded that

I had, stupidly perhaps, imagined that that body had been absorbed by the Ministry when war broke out. Not at all..... Another loose end; another absurdity. Come inside, I suggested. Oh no. Lloyd said that the duty of the British Council was the propagation of British culture; and it would never do to have the taint of propaganda about it. And where, I asked, does the propagation of culture end and the propagation of propaganda begin?<sup>72</sup>

Reith's first plan was to mount 'a frontal attack on all the outlying centres of propagandist activity, including the British Council, by means of a letter to the Prime Minister'.<sup>73</sup> This was abandoned in favour of a meeting with Lloyd. To pave the way Leeper was approached with a list of proposals that the Ministry hoped he would persuade Lloyd to accept. Leeper was unsuccessful and when Reith and Lloyd met the gulf between them was wide. Lloyd complained to Halifax that Reith wanted to absorb the Council completely and display a pure-

69. Minute by H.V.Hodson, 8 December 1939. INF 1/443

70. Minute by M.Balfour, 15 January 1940. INF 1/443

71. M.Balfour, Propaganda in War, (London 1979) p.161

72. J. Reith, Into The Wind, (London 1949) p.366-7

73. A.P. Waterfield to S.Hood, 10 January 1940. INF 1/433

un-understanding' of the necessity for the Council to steer clear of political propaganda.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the Treasury supported Reith's stand and agreed that 'as propaganda is inevitable and culture can be postponed' the Ministry should have responsibility in all borderline cases.<sup>75</sup>

Reith's proposals entailed the loss of most of the Council's technical departments to the MOI, with the Council acting as the Ministry's agent in remaining fields. The Ministry also wanted better representation within the Council's organisation although it offered no reciprocal facilities. Above all, Reith wanted Lloyd to 'accept the fundamental principle that responsibility for propaganda in foreign countries rests with this Ministry alone'.<sup>76</sup> Lloyd attributed their differences to 'a misconception of the exact nature of the Council's functions' and, although he accepted that the Council's work remained propaganda, he insisted that its separation from political propaganda was essential.

But it is a fundamental paradox that the political effect of cultural propaganda increases in proportion to its detachment from political propaganda, no matter how honestly and candidly the latter is conducted.<sup>77</sup>

Lloyd maintained that the Council's contacts overseas desired knowledge of Britain but would not tolerate political propaganda and the Council's business was

To encourage their sympathy for this country so that when British political propaganda comes to them from other sources they are predisposed to receive it.<sup>78</sup>

The only departments the Council was willing to surrender were films and broadcasting. The Council, however, would keep its own films committee and distribution network and indent on the Ministry's vote for its film work. The remainder, Lloyd argued, formed an interdependent whole.

The Ministry was, therefore, deeply at variance with the Council not only in matters of detail but also in principle.

74. Lloyd to Halifax, 31 January 1940. BW82/7

75. Barlow to Waterfield, 8 February 1940. INF 1/443

76. Waterfield to Hood, 8 February 1940. INF 1/443

77. Lloyd to Reith, 16 February 1940. BW69/5

78. Ibid.

Simultaneously, Reith was fighting for the return of news and censorship to the Ministry's control and for greater influence in the conduct of propaganda to the enemy. In February Lloyd reassured a nervous Finance and Agenda Committee that Halifax 'had promised his support to resist any attempt to circumscribe or to absorb the functions at present carried out by the Council'.<sup>79</sup> Further discussions in March and April at ministerial and official level brought no agreement and it was finally Reith who lost his enthusiasm for the fight. In April the Finance and Agenda Committee was told that Reith

had even offered to hand over to the Council the control of all propaganda work in foreign countries - an offer that had been declined as likely to endanger the propaganda activities of the Council.<sup>80</sup>

Victory went substantially to the Council. No definitions of function or real changes had resulted from nearly four months of negotiations and the Council's relations with the Ministry reverted to the old formula:

That with goodwill and a real intention to make things work, particularly to avoid overlapping, the cultural versus political propaganda criterion should be satisfactory.<sup>81</sup>

On another front Reith was more successful. In April the Press and Censorship Bureau returned to the Ministry but Reith was unable to regain more before the fall of the Chamberlain Cabinet in May 1940. Reith was succeeded by Duff Cooper who took up his new post 'with a lack of enthusiasm which his experience in office did nothing to diminish'.<sup>82</sup> In June the control of propaganda to enemy countries was transferred from the Foreign Office to the MOI but in July the newly-created Special Operations Executive for the conduct of subversive propaganda and sabotage was given to the Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton. Overt propaganda to enemy and enemy-occupied countries stayed at the MOI, providing a source for considerable disagreement as Dalton argued that all forms of propaganda to these countries should be under the control of a single minister - himself. In the summer of 1940, as

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79. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 13 February 1940. BW69/5

80. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 April 1940. BW69/6

81. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 May 1940. BW69/6

82. Balfour, op. cit. p.61.

Britain faced the threat of invasion, the MOI made another bid for the control of cultural propaganda on the grounds that the Council had contravened the Reith-Lloyd agreement. Duff Cooper was also trying to frustrate the transfer to Dalton of open propaganda to enemy countries and was in difficulties with the Press at home. Lloyd attributed Duff Cooper's attack to machinations by the Council's declared enemy, Lord Beaverbrook, who had joined the War Cabinet as Minister of Aircraft Production in August. Lloyd mobilized the Council's supporters, whom he identified as Attlee, Greenwood and Sinclair, and protested to Halifax

I wish the Ministers of Information would leave us alone and mind their own Department. The present Ministry needs a lot of minding.<sup>83</sup>

In preparation for the coming battle with the Ministry, Lloyd rehearsed the Council's staff in their defence.

It is important never to admit..... that it is not possible to distinguish the borderline between cultural and political propaganda in wartime - that has always been their contention on which they based their attack on the Council, and we have always denied it with the result that we are distinct.

Waterfield, at the Ministry, favoured a Cabinet ruling to defeat Lloyd but Colonel Scorgie, deputy Director General and formerly head of the Stationery Office, warned that 'Lord Lloyd and the British Council are persuasive in discussion'.

There is a lot of Hitler diplomacy about the Council's methods. They make swaggering, impossible claims and proposals in the hope that something will be conceded. Whenever we have disputed directly with the Council we have lost something in the settlement.<sup>85</sup>

Duff Cooper, however, believed he held a strong hand. The Ministry had recently prevented the Council from receiving any of the Ministry's paper quota, the Treasury had supported the Ministry on the issue of newsreels,<sup>86</sup> and the Council risked trouble with the Dominions and India Offices if it pursued its film distribution plans.

83. Lloyd to Halifax, 25 July 1940. FO800/332 H/XXX/34

84. Minute by Lloyd, 21 October 1940. BW2/85

85. Minute by Lt.Col. N.G.Scorgie, 19 November 1940. INF 1/443

86. This was a dispute between the Council and the MOI as to which newsreel should be distributed in the Empire.

Moreover, with the intensification of the war the Council's cultural ambit is narrowing. That, I think, is what they instinctively recognise. Unless they can poach from us they have little to do, and sooner or later public opinion will recognise that their large and expensive organisation is not justified in this war.<sup>87</sup>

Duff Cooper postponed a planned meeting with Lloyd 'owing to a reluctance to initiate what might prove to be a disagreeable conversation' and mistakenly assumed that a 'mere hint' to the Council that if they did not behave the Ministry would recommend to the War Cabinet that the Council's independence should be ended would bring Lloyd into line.<sup>88</sup> Duff Cooper declared that the Council's case was 'so weak that it ought to be easy to convince the Cabinet.'<sup>89</sup> In January 1941 Duff Cooper wrote to Eden that

There is no real division between cultural and political propaganda since the ultimate object and, indeed the sole justification for cultural propaganda, must be political and commercial.<sup>90</sup>

The issue of the Council was peripheral to Duff Cooper's main battle with Dalton for the control of overt propaganda to Nazi-occupied Europe. In May, with the Lord President, Sir John Anderson, acting as mediator, Eden, Duff Cooper and Dalton agreed to form a triumvirate to improve liaison and coordination while leaving existing responsibilities as they stood. Duff Cooper was 'never happy' at the Ministry and later recommended that all 'foreign propaganda should be under the direct control of the Foreign Office'.<sup>91</sup> In June he voiced his dissatisfaction to Churchill, laying claim again to the control of all forms of propaganda. Churchill called on Beaverbrook to put an end to the ceaseless squabbles. In his report to the War Cabinet, Beaverbrook outlined two choices in regard to the Council: absorption by the MOI or the restriction of the Council 'to cultural activities, entertainments, scholarships and systems of education'.<sup>92</sup> On the question of overseas publicity Beaverbrook reaffirmed that the Foreign Office must be responsible for the strategy and the

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87. Minute by Lt.Col. N.G. Scorgie, 19 November 1940. INF 1/443

88. Minute by Duff Cooper, 14 December 1940. INF 1/443

89. Ibid.

90. Duff Cooper to Eden, 11 January 1941. T161/1104 S35581/03/41

91. Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget, (London 1953) p.287-8

92. Memorandum by Beaverbrook, 21 June 1941. CAB65/20 WP(41)137

MOI for the execution and endorsed the Ministerial Committee of three for the coordination of black propaganda. In reply Duff Cooper insisted that the MOI

should have charge of secret as well as overt, of cultural as well as political propaganda, in order to ensure complete coordination through unity of command.<sup>93</sup>

Unless such a course was adopted Duff Cooper maintained that the Ministry should 'disintegrate into its component parts'.<sup>94</sup> A week later Churchill presented his own paper on information and propaganda to the War Cabinet in which he wrote concerning the Council that 'general agreement had been expressed with the second suggestion in Lord Beaverbrook's previous paper'.<sup>95</sup> In a paper prepared for the War Cabinet by the Foreign Office and the Treasury it was explained that

The Council claims that the cultural nature of its activities distinguishes it from the MOI, whose function is the dissemination of propaganda. Publicity being the essence of the Council's work it does not indulge in underground activities, and thus claims to be distinguished from the organisation now working under the MEW.<sup>96</sup>

The War Cabinet had no desire to change the Council's status or, perhaps, to stir another hornets' nest, despite the pleadings of Duff Cooper. The established formula was perpetuated:

namely, that the functions of the Council should be divided - propaganda activities of the Council falling under the MOI, while the educational and strictly cultural activities would remain with the Council.<sup>97</sup>

At a meeting in the Lord President's Office on 1 July it was agreed that educational and cultural work would remain the Council's prerogative while all its propaganda activities should be carried out only with the prior approval of the MOI.<sup>98</sup> A special post was created within the Ministry for liaison with the Council. This was held briefly by Harold Nicolson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, who was replaced by Eric Bamford, deputy Director-General, when Brendan Bracken succeeded Duff Cooper as Minister. Nicolson, however, continued

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93. Memorandum by Duff Cooper, 24 June 1941.CAB65/20 WP(41)139

94. Ibid.

95. Memorandum by Churchill, 30 June 1941.CAB66/14 WM(41)7

96. Note by the Foreign and Treasury, June 1941.CAB123/57

97. War Cabinet Conclusions,30 June 1941.CAB66/14 WM(41)7

98. Meeting, Lord President's Office, 1 July 1941.CAB123/57



to be the Minister's personal representative on the Executive Committee of the Council. Duff Cooper left the Ministry 'with a sigh of relief' at the end of July.<sup>99</sup>

Bracken was a close friend of the Prime Minister and had been Churchill's Parliamentary Private Secretary. As a newspaper proprietor himself Bracken was able to disarm press criticism of the Ministry and win its confidence. He overhauled the Ministry's structure and 'moved through the Ministry during that opening week like a dose of salts'.<sup>100</sup> Cyril Radcliffe replaced Walter Monckton as Director-General and Bamford replaced Scorgie as his deputy. Bracken believed 'that foreign publicity was a waste of time' and 'affected a disinterest in the overseas information services' which he was content to leave in the hands of the capable Kenneth Grubb who was on good terms with the Council.<sup>101</sup> Instead of challenging the Service Departments' control of military news directly as Duff Cooper had done, Bracken concentrated on keeping those Departments to the letter of the agreement that they should keep the Ministry fully informed. Bracken adopted a similarly pragmatic approach in his dealings with the Council. He sought to improve existing arrangements with the Council rather than attack its independence. Bracken's first step was to invite Robertson to a meeting 'to try to bring order into our singularly ill-contrived world'.<sup>102</sup> At that meeting Bracken, clearly unaware of past battles with the Council, encouraged Robertson to expand its operations, especially in the United States and in bringing visitors to Britain. Bracken's largesse caused consternation among some Ministry officials but it nevertheless signalled the start of a new and more harmonious era in relations between the two organisations. The Ministry had overcome its teething troubles and Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union that summer offered Britain a breathing space once it became clear that the Red Army would not be defeated as quickly as had been feared. In addition, Bracken won the battle for the control of all overt propaganda. In September the Political Warfare Executive, consisting of Eden, Dalton and Bracken working through their officials, was created to conduct all forms of such warfare to enemy, occupied and satellite countries. In March 1942 Dalton went to the

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99. Duff Cooper, op.cit. p.287-8 (London 1974)p.266

100. A.Boyle, Poor Dear Brendan: the quest for Brendan Bracken,

101. C.Lysaght, Brendan Bracken(London 1979)p.16

102. Bracken to Robertson, 28 August 1941, INF 1/445

X Board of Trade and his successor did not inherit the same responsibilities for propaganda.

Overseas, the Council and the MOI acted so closely together in some areas that they became almost indistinguishable. In Iraq, the Council Representative Information Officer worked 'hand in glove' and stocks and films, photographs and periodicals for the Middle East were pooled in Cairo.<sup>103</sup> In Latin America, the Ministry's Press Attaché undertook most of the Council's film and press distribution while the Council acted as the Ministry's agent in bringing visitors to Britain. In the United States, the Council's output was channeled through the Ministry's British Library of Information in New York. As the war progressed it was impossible for the Council to avoid all mention of it, as stipulated in agreements with the Ministry, as it was undesirable to restrict the Ministry war material to the exclusion of general themes. With the approach of Allied victory the need for war propaganda diminished and was replaced by a growing clamour for information about Britain. Increasing overlapping between the two organisations prompted Radcliffe to ask Bracken 'to consider whether for post-war purposes the two organisations should not be one for overseas work'.<sup>104</sup> At a meeting at the Treasury in July 1943 to discuss the Council's application for a supplementary grant, Bamford suggested

that the Council and the MOI could supplement each other's work and the right course was to have closer integration and join planning and execution of the work of the Ministry and the Council in each regional field.<sup>105</sup>

The Ministry's friendly overtures alarmed the Council as much as its hostility had done. The Foreign Office agreed that the Council should not become too closely identified with the Ministry for

the work of the British Council will continue and must be strongly developed in the post war period, whereas the MOI was not a permanent Department and its work and its Press Attachés would be absorbed in the Foreign Office.<sup>106</sup>

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103. Minute by E. Monroe, 8 July 1943. INF 1/445

104. Minute by Radcliffe, 2 July 1943. INF 1/446

105. Minute by Bamford, 9 July 1943. INF 1/446

106. Ibid. No decisions had yet been taken on the future of the MOI.

The Council was even more concerned at the entry of the PWE into the field it considered to be its own, especially PWE broadcasts to occupied Europe. In December 1942 a PWE paper outlined the main themes to be used in convincing Europe that Britain would play a leading role in the post war world.

In projecting Britain, we have, broadly speaking two main tasks to perform - to make known firstly, what the British are like and how they think and secondly, what they have created and how they live together in society..... curiosity about the character of the British people must be stimulated if interest in the British way of life is to be aroused. But an appetite once stimulated must be fed, and in British social and intellectual achievements we can find an almost inexhaustible supply of nourishing and palatable food.<sup>107</sup>

This memorandum would not have been out of place at the Council. Therefore, although relations with the MOI improved considerably in the last two years of the war, the Council faced a new danger, namely, that of being swamped by its more powerful neighbours in the propaganda field and irretrievably compromised by the similarities of general themes used.

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#### THE FOREIGN OFFICE

The Council was 'an annex and dependency' of the Foreign Office.<sup>108</sup> The Foreign Office appointed the Council's chairman and monitored its activities through representatives on the Executive, Finance and Agenda and other important committees. Until 1940 the Council's Secretaries General were seconded from the Foreign Office which gave

general guidance to the British Council regarding their activities in foreign countries. They do not issue to the British Council any detailed instructions as to the programme they should adopt, but have made the following arrangements, which while leaving the Council reasonable latitude and initiative in framing their own plans, ensure that an adequate check is kept on the Council's policy and expenditure.....<sup>109</sup>

The arrangements referred to provided for close consultation between Council and Foreign Office staff abroad.

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107. A. Bullock, J. Griffin, F. Hardie, P. Ransome, D. Ritchie and M. Roberts, The Projection of Britain, 10 December 1942.

FO898/413

108. Lloyd to O. Sargent, 5 April 1940. FO 800/277 Mis.40/1

109. Foreign Office memorandum, 8 July 1940. BW2/340

In December 1939 Leeper, then with the Department of Propaganda to Enemy Countries, resumed supervision of Council affairs in the Foreign Office from Charles Peake, head of the News Department, who 'never really found time to deal with it'.<sup>110</sup> At the beginning of 1940 Leeper was replaced by Stephen Gaselee, Foreign Office Librarian, who had neither Leeper's interest nor his influence in the Council. White recorded that 'the Council missed during the war the day to day guidance in its affairs on which it had to rely so much in Mr. Leeper's day'.<sup>111</sup> In May 1941 Kenneth Gurney, who had no previous knowledge of the Council or of propaganda, took over from Gaselee. The pressure of wartime diplomacy enabled the Council to escape close Foreign Office scrutiny in London. Abroad, the Council's activities were developed in cooperation with British Missions and, in Spain, China and the Soviet Union, Council staff were attached to the Embassy. In Spain, the Council's Representative, Professor Starkie, was regarded as Britain's official Cultural Attaché by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs although not by the British Embassy itself. At the Embassy in Chungking Dr. Needham and Professor Roxby, Council Representative held the title of Counsellor and in the Soviet Union the Council was only able to work through the Embassy's Press Office. Liaison between Council staff and the local British Mission was generally close and continuous, the Mission being ultimately responsible for all the Council's activities. His Majesty's Representatives corresponded directly with the Council, sat on the mixed committees appointed to select students for Council scholarships and were expected to attend Council functions. As a Foreign Office official minuted on the Council's activities abroad, 'the "machinery" may be independant as long as the policy is not'.<sup>112</sup>

However, with the establishment of Representatives overseas, corresponding directly with the Council, the Foreign Office found that their ability to control the Council diminished as information became scarce. A Foreign Office official examining the Council's budget in 1944 noted that

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110. Minute by E.H. Carr, 23 December 1939. INF 1/443

111. White, op. cit. p.50

112. Minute by M. Palairt, 25 September 1943. FO 370/727

If the British Council follow the practice they have come to adopt in other countries once they are established, they will consult us about new proposals which need Treasury sanction, about small isolated problems on which they cannot make up their own minds, and about little else.<sup>113</sup>

In disputes with Government Departments the Foreign Office invariably supported the Council. At the beginning of the war Halifax dismissed the suggestion that cultural propaganda was a luxury in wartime.

To my mind the Council's cultural work is just as important as the political propaganda of the MOI. Our cultural assets are one of our greatest assets in presenting our case against Nazi Germany and it is surely vital that we should keep them constantly in evidence in neutral countries, so that they can see that we are able to maintain, and even to extend, our cultural influence in spite of the strain of war.<sup>114</sup>

Eden too, who had been instrumental in the Council's birth and had presided over its infancy, was ready to back the Council when its independence was threatened. No doubt the Foreign Office's loyalty was due in part to the fact that it did not have to share the Council and was able to control exclusively at least one part of Britain's overseas publicity. Senior MOI and Treasury officials complained frequently about the Foreign Office's support of the Council's proposals. Moreover, it was often pressure from the Foreign Office and its Representatives from abroad that led the Council to expand its activities more rapidly than might otherwise have been the case.

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#### THE TREASURY

Relations with the Treasury revolved chiefly around the annual wrangle over the level of the Council's grant. After receiving estimates from its Representatives overseas, drawn up in consultation with the British Mission or, where there were no Council staff, by the Mission, the figures were scrutinised by the Council and the Foreign Office. The

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113. Minute by H.Hedley, 5th January 1944. FO370/641 L3901/462/  
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114. Halifax to Simon, 12 January 1940. INF 1/443

estimates were compiled a year or more before the funds were expended and tended to include all desirable items to give the Representative flexibility to carry out projects which might arise at short notice. In the overall grant there was a considerable unallocated reserve fund for unforeseen expenditure. When a total had been agreed the full estimates were submitted to the Treasury by the Foreign Office.

The Council's estimates for 1939/40 were conditioned by the recommendations of the Vansittart Committee<sup>115</sup> which included an extra £100,000 for publicity in 1939. The Council's estimated expenditure from Government sources was £295,000, a sum in excess of the Council's ration of the additional funds and bringing the total proposed expenditure on propaganda, including the BBC, to £500,000. This figure seemed exorbitant to the Treasury which, in March 1939, suggested a 20% cut in the Council's budget amongst other economies. A deputation from the Executive Committee protested to Halifax, Attlee remarking 'that the amount involved seemed small in relation to the Government's huge expenditure on armaments'.<sup>116</sup> Lloyd reminded Halifax that the Council was 'as big or bigger a contribution(sic) to peace as any which the Prime Minister or yourself are to-day so earnestly striving to achieve'.<sup>117</sup> Halifax forwarded the Council's objections to the Chancellor, arguing that the cut would have 'effects adverse to the reputation of this country out of all proportion to the relatively small sum involved'.<sup>118</sup> In May 1939, faced with a deteriorating international situation, the Treasury not only restored the grant to its original level but promised an additional £100,000, if satisfactory proposals for expenditure were made. After consultations with the Foreign Office, Lloyd proposed to use the extra funds to counter Axis propaganda in the Balkans, the Middle East, Spain and Turkey. The Treasury released the promised funds.

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115. The Vansittart Committee for the Coordination of British Publicity Abroad was set up in January 1938 and met three times between January and May. Vansittart's far reaching and ambitious proposals were reduced by the Treasury but a promise of increased funds in 1938 and 1939 was gained for British propaganda overseas. For further details see P.M.Taylor, The Projection of Britain, (London 1981) chapt.6.

116. Executive Committee Minutes, 14 March 1939. DW68/3

117. Halifax to Simon, 27 February 1939. T161/1029

118. Ibid.

The outbreak of war in Europe in September resulted in a downwards revision of the Council's grant and a suspension of further funds until the Council's relations with the MOI had been settled. The Council was thus placed in serious financial difficulties, compounded by the length of the negotiations with the Ministry. The Treasury was disappointed at the outcome and, as a result, looked closely at existing controls on Council expenditure, particularly after receiving its estimates for 1940/41 which totalled over £500,000. The Treasury was sceptical of the Foreign Office's vigilance as the Council's accounting department and found it difficult to query individual items of expenditure or to weigh their relative merits. Its critical role was confined to the general scale of the Council's operations and its relationship with the MOI. The Treasury regarded the Library Department of the Foreign Office, with some accuracy, as a rubber stamp for the Council's proposals. It therefore sought greater controls over the Council's freedom to spend its grant and detailed explanations of the estimates.

The Treasury's misgivings were justified, for the Council's accounting and auditing departments had not developed to keep pace with the grant. Treasury control had been applied through the examination of the estimates and through specific rulings, such as the ban on capital outlay abroad after the outbreak of war. The indirect influence of the Treasury is illustrated by the case of the British Institute in Bucharest. The Council wished to construct a building on a site donated by King Carol and was strongly supported by the Foreign Office. The Treasury pointed to the British guarantee to Roumania and claimed that propaganda would not prevent a Soviet or Nazi invasion. In March 1940 Halifax personally asked Simon to reconsider as 'the success of the British Council activities is so important a factor in maintaining our position in Roumania'.<sup>119</sup> Barlow was unmoved.

This is the usual demand that because Germany and Italy have got palaces we must provide a mansion.<sup>120</sup>

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119. Halifax to Simon, 7 March 1940. BW2/131

120. Minute by Barlow, 10 May 1939. T161/1029 S35581/03/39

To gain a full grant for the Council in 1940, Leeper was forced to concede a number of conditions in his negotiations with the Treasury. An informal gentleman's agreement was reached on the understanding that the Foreign Office would watch the Council more closely in future. The main points were that the Council should not ask for a supplementary grant, save in exceptional circumstances, that the Council would not divert funds allocated for one country to another, as in the event of an invasion, before consultation with the Treasury and that specific Treasury sanction was required for all large projects, including new services, staff appointments and capital expenditure. These conditions became permanent and the Council agreed to consult the Foreign Office as well on new senior staff appointments.

The rapid German advance westwards in the summer of 1940 forced a further reduction of the Council's grant. But the disappearance of British influence in Western Europe 'only re-emphasised the necessity for its rapid development in others', particularly the Balkans, Spain, the Middle East and Latin America.<sup>121</sup> In February 1941 the Council received a supplementary grant of £200,000, restoring the total for 1940/41 to £500,000.

The Council's swiftly expanding grant and the uncertain conditions in which future spending was planned placed an intolerable strain on budgetary arrangements. In its early years the Council was able to obtain supplementary grants with relative ease and, in the first two years of the war, to finance growth in one area from contraction in another. By 1942 both these factors had ceased to operate and the established financial procedures broke down. In December, the Council was forced by the increased activities of the Home Division and escalating prices in the Middle East to ask the Treasury, with Foreign Office support, for a supplementary allocation of £100,000. The Council blamed the Treasury for arbitrarily reducing its budget estimates whilst the Treasury believed that the over-spending was 'due to the absence at the time of any effective system of financial control within the Council'.<sup>122</sup>

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121. O.Sargent to Barlow, 14 February 1940. T 161/1029

122. Barlow to S.Gaselee, 27 January 1943. BW2/341



The Council's recently appointed Finance Officer, Reginald Davies, had to agree with the Treasury 'as each Department (was) going ahead incurring commitments without consulting anyone else'.<sup>123</sup>

Working in collusion with the Treasury, Davies placed the Council's finances on a sounder basis using budgetary procedures adopted by the BBC.<sup>124</sup> In February 1943 the Council was awarded a supplementary grant of £80,000 and the Treasury took up its right to appoint representatives to the Council's Executive and Finance and Agenda Committees. Stricter controls were put on the unallocated reserve fund, all projects costing more than £5,000 requiring specific Treasury approval. The Council's estimates for 1943/4, although reduced by £100,000, had risen dramatically to £1,875,000. The Chancellor warned that it would be unwise for the Council to continue planning 'on the assumption that the expansion of their activities which has been taking place in the last few years will continue indefinitely'.<sup>125</sup>

Despite these additional safeguards, however, by May 1943 the Council was in serious financial difficulty. New claims from the Middle East amounted to half the unallocated reserve fund and ten months of the financial year remained. Tours by the chairman and other senior officers had resulted in commitments to expenditure authorised neither by the Council in London or by the Treasury or Foreign Office. This loophole was closed to the chagrin of Robertson who regarded the power to sanction spending when abroad as one of the few remaining privileges of the chairman. At a stormy meeting of the Finance and Agenda Committee in May, Robertson argued that it was not possible

for a body like the British Council which was expanding very fast to stick to a definite budget, even with an unallocated reserve of £200,000.<sup>126</sup>

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123. Minute by C.G.L.Syers, 23 July 1940. T161/1104 S35581/03/41

124. Minute by C.H.M.Wilcox, 10 September 1942. T161/1233 S35581/9

This meant that the Council's budget would be calculated in terms of the Council's rate of expenditure at the end of the year rather than the total of the previous year.

125. K.Wood to Lord Riverdale, 3 March 1943. BW2/342

126. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 11 May 1943 BW69/9

Gaselee, for the Foreign Office, expressed only sympathy for the Council's plight and Sir John Power, honorary Treasurer, suggested that

as the Treasury had taken over the whole of the Council's financial affairs the decision (on cuts) should rest with them.<sup>127</sup>

Megan Lloyd George, Power and Snell proposed seeking a decision from the War Cabinet, but Riverdale objected that such a move might endanger the Council's unofficial status. The Committee resolved to approach the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer directly. Meanwhile, the Council's staff abroad were instructed not to begin new projects and in June Davies called a halt to all new expenditure.

At the end of May Robertson saw Eden at the House of Commons while Riverdale tackled Cadogan. Richard Law, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, raised the issue with the Treasury on Eden's behalf but Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was adamant that the Council could not have a supplementary grant and suggested that the Council could find funds needed for the Middle East by pruning activities elsewhere. In a letter from Eden to Wood at the end of June, the Foreign Office argued that the Council was 'a major instrument of policy' and that the Foreign Office was under pressure from its representatives overseas to expand its activities because they were

the best means of affecting the attitude of Governments and peoples in areas vitally important to us, and of bolstering the moral of Allied troops and civilians who are refugees in this country and in the Middle East.<sup>128</sup>

In July the Foreign Office rebuffed Wood's proposal that the Council could find the extra funds from its existing budget:

For the strengthening of our position and prestige the Council's activities are very necessary, especially in the Middle East, South America and China, and we feel that any money spent there now would be returned a hundred fold. Expenditure in the areas which we regard as of less importance from the political point of view is negligible and thus no pruning is possible there. We should like to see the Council operating in all areas on a large scale, but there is not enough money to go round.<sup>129</sup>

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127. Ibid.

128. Eden to K.Wood, 27 June 1943. BW2/342. See below, p.116-117

129. Eden to K.Wood, 5 July 1943. T161/1153 S35581/03/43

After a further exchange of views, the Treasury reluctantly approved an extra grant of £100,000 for the Council, chiefly for projects in the Middle East. Wood warned that the Council must not be regarded as 'a fairy godmother with a bottomless purse' and that liaison between the Council and the MOI must be improved.<sup>130</sup> In September a Budget Committee was formed under Riverdale's leadership to ensure the framing of more accurate estimates of future expenditure.

The Council also received funds from non-governmental sources and in October 1942 Davies suggested that to relieve the Council's financial position, corporations based overseas 'might be invited to contribute towards specific activities by the Council in the countries concerned'.<sup>131</sup> The Council's accounts for that year showed a number of donations for the Middle East made by British companies: the Dunlop Rubber Company, British Celanese Limited, the Morgan Crucible Company and the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The Finance and Agenda Committee, however, decided that the Council could not undertake more than its existing indirect industrial propaganda. In the following year the Foreign Office ruled that the Council could accept private donations only if the money was used in conformity with the policy laid down by the Foreign Office and not to further the specific interests of the donors.<sup>132</sup>

Pressure on the Council's budget eased considerably at the end of 1943 to the extent that it was underspent by almost the amount of the extra funds granted in July. The difficulties of finding staff accounted for most of the shortfall as many projects had been postponed, such as the opening of an institute in Persia. The surplus led to public criticism but illustrated the impossibility of forecasting expenditure eighteen months in advance. The Council's grant for 1944/5 was underspent by nearly £1 million because of more stable prices than had been anticipated and the continuing manpower shortage. An investigation by the Public Accounts Committee in July 1944 revealed 'serious defects in the control of the Foreign Office and of the Council over its own organisation'.<sup>133</sup>

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130. K.Wood to Eden, 10 July 1943. BW2/342

131. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 10 November 1942. BW69/8

132. M.Palairret to Robertson, 11 September 1943. BW2/79

133. Minutes of evidence taken before the Committee of Public Accounts, 13 July 1944. para 4810.

The Treasury, however, assured the Committee that improved procedures gave it 'fairly watertight' control over the Council's expenditure.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, the Treasury conceded that, financially at least, the Council was de facto an agency of the Government.

By the end of the war it was clear that the planning of long term activities on a short term financial basis was impossible. Moreover, the Council's administrative structure had not developed to deal with the increasing grant. The Budget Committee had been formed on Riverdale's insistence that the existing organisation did not provide adequate safeguards and Riverdale had also suggested the appointment of a managing director to take over the Council's administration leaving the chairman responsible only for policy. Barlow reported that Riverdale, Snell and others within the Council were 'thoroughly dissatisfied with the present position'.<sup>135</sup> Robertson's views are unknown. At the end of 1943 Davies, in consultation with Sir Angus Gillan, director of the Empire Division, suggested to the Treasury, but not to Robertson, White or the Foreign Office, a similar scheme for a full-time administrative head. Davies advised the Treasury to propose

a strong Commission of Enquiry to look into the organisation of the Council and see whether it was really fitted to discharge the wider and extended functions it was now undertaking.<sup>136</sup>

In March 1944 the Treasury took up Davies's suggestion. Robertson agreed and insisted that the enquiry 'should be at Cabinet level so that the Council could receive a directive as to its place in the Government scheme'.<sup>137</sup>

Robertson's discontent stemmed from the increasing restriction that had been placed on his powers as chairman. In addition, he objected to having to refer to the Executive Committee which he regarded as peopled with Government nominees and individuals 'not really qualified to direct propaganda or advise on policy'.<sup>138</sup> The chairman's power to approve projects

134. Ibid. para.4816.

135. Minute by Barlow, 10 September 1943. T161/1153 S35581/03/43

136. Minute by C.H.M. Wilcox, 1 September 1943. T161/1153

S35581/03/43

137. Executive Committee Minutes, 14 March 1944. BW68/3

138. Minute by K.T. Gurney, undated. F0924/1 LC724/724/451

without reference to London whilst on tour was removed in 1944 and Riverdale opposed Robertson's suggestion that his financial authority should be increased to cover items up to £500 unless a question of principle was involved. The limit of £100 remained. Moreover, the Council had grown to such a size by the end of the war, with a staff of approximately one thousand five hundred, that it was impossible for one man to control, as Robertson had attempted, with the result that long term planning was sacrificed to the demands of daily decision making. Although dedicated to the Council's cause, Robertson

did not, or could not, spare enough time from the House of Commons to carry out the day-to-day direction of the Council's work and his constant failures to keep important appointments in Hanover Street led to difficulties.<sup>139</sup>

This meant that Robertson himself was often uninformed about the Council. In 1943 he complained that he heard first from his colleagues in the House of Commons about Parliamentary Questions concerning the Council;<sup>140</sup> In 1944 Robertson minuted on a paper discussing operations in East Africa

here is another case..... When we are opening up in new territories or changing our policy, I really must be consulted before action is taken.<sup>141</sup>

Robertson did not have sufficient administrative experience to deal with the Council's structural problems or to fight the Council's Whitehall battles. In wartime the Council could be allowed a certain leeway but the size of its budget by the end of the war demanded that, in future, the Council would have to be a more professional body.

Lacking a central policy-making department the Council's structure

contained no provision for coordination between the requirements of the various Divisions at a high level and the result had been that expenditure had grown haphazard without any system of priorities and without any real consideration of the overall value of the work attempted.<sup>142</sup>

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139. White, op.cit. p.49

140. Minute by Robertson, 7 June 1943. BW2/114

141. Minute by Robertson, 1 April 1944. BW7/1

142. Anonymous memorandum, possibly by R.Davies, 1945.T219/3

In 1943 regional officers were given greater authority in the territorial distribution of functional expenditure to prevent functional officers from diverting funds from one country to another without reference to the regional officer. Personal ambitions and influence, in one council official's view, weighed more than relative merit in the growth of the Council's divisions. In general, the overseas departments were overshadowed by the technical divisions, and were often headed by officers who were ignorant of their areas and overburdened by detail. This resulted in the absurd situation of a regional officer being unaware of the material being distributed in his area by the production divisions. In 1945 Davies complained that each division was promoting its own activities without reference to the others and that the Council lacked a 'sense of solidarity'.

There is no leadership; there is no sense of loyalty; there is no inspiration; there is a feeling of frustration, of muddle and above all of planlessness.<sup>143</sup>

Liaison should have been possible through weekly heads of division meetings, but the Cultural Relations Department of the Foreign Office described these as

a kind of Soviet at which decisions appear to be taken, not a result of any considered planning, so much as of an armistice reached at the end of a battle between competing regional and functional interests.<sup>144</sup>

Criticism was levelled at the Council's staff. The Council's director of appointments explained that due to the difficulty of finding staff in wartime there had been 'an unduly large recruitment of the *épicene*, the intellectual (in its bad sense), the *déraciné* and the failure'.<sup>145</sup> The Council's senior staff were also found wanting. In 1943 Bamford took the view that

Especially since the death of Lord Lloyd the Council had had no one to coordinate their activities or to attempt to assess the relative priority that ought to attach to different projects. Neither Sir Malcolm Robertson nor Mr. White has the qualities for pulling the Council together in this way.<sup>146</sup>

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143. Ibid.

144. Memorandum by the Cultural Relations Department, undated T219/3

145. Memorandum by T.P. Tunnard-Moore, March 1945. T219/3

146. Minute by C.H.M. Wilcox, 26 June 1943. T161/1153

Within the Council it was also 'felt by many that the control of the Council is primarily in the hands of a small group of people which does not include the Chairman or the Secretary General'.<sup>147</sup> The Foreign Office regarded Robertson's judgement as 'not necessarily impeccable' and believed that there were 'too many ignorami at headquarters at present'.<sup>148</sup> The Treasury likewise had 'seen and heard enough to appreciate that not all of Malcolm Robertson's brood are swans'.<sup>149</sup>

Similarly, the Council was not satisfied with the officials appointed by the Foreign Office for liaison with the Council. Gillan attributed many of the Council's problems to 'the absence of a strong interested organisation with the Foreign Office machine to deal with Council matters'.<sup>150</sup> Davies agreed, pointing to the fact that the Foreign Office

were content to leave British Council affairs in the hands of a man like Mr. Gurney who..... had not really the remotest idea of how the administration of the Council's business was in fact carried out.<sup>151</sup>

Robertson, too, complained that the Foreign Office never 'had anything but parting contact with us'.<sup>152</sup> The Treasury concurred that the Foreign Office had failed to provide adequate guidance and had too often left the Council 'at the mercy of enthusiastic ambassadors.....'<sup>153</sup>

In a minute for Eden written in November 1944, Churchill, too, expressed concern at the Council's inability to control its budget and concluded that

I think their expenditure and enterprises should be strictly scrutinised now. They are certainly one of the objects ripe for retrenchment when the War come to an end. We must be very careful this does not grow on us.<sup>154</sup>

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147. Memorandum by T.P.Tunnard-Moore, March 1945. T219/3

148. Minute by K.T.Gurney, 9 October 1944. F0924/4 LC901/532/410

149. C.H.M.Wilcox to K.T.Gurney, 24 June 1944. F0924/5

LC378/784/410

150. Minute by Sir Angus Gillan, 17 October 1944. BW2/151

151. Minute by C.H.M.Wilcox, 1 September 1943. T161/1153

S35581/03/43

152. Executive Committee Minutes, 28 May 1944. BW69/11

153. J.A. Drew to J.L.D.Winnifrith, 2 December 1944. T 219/2

154. Churchill to Eden, 26 November 1944. F0924/17 LC1589/1589/451

It is interesting to speculate that Churchill, had he been returned as Prime Minister after the war, would have been less willing than Attlee to allow the Council to continue much as it had in wartime. Attlee had a close working knowledge of the Council having served on its Executive Committee before the war and was regarded by the Council as an ally.

Another problem needing investigation was overlapping between the Council and the MOI. In subject matter duplication was 'nearly total'.<sup>155</sup> A memorandum on the question prepared for Radcliffe explained that

The area of overlap is all the larger because it has been brought about not by one-sided invasion on the part of either, but by a simultaneous converging movement of the two organisations into what is now the largest subject of overseas publicity - namely, the British "way of life", or, in other words, the British achievement in political, social and economic organisation.<sup>156</sup>

One of the Council's chief critics at the Dominion's Office summarised the hostile view of the Council.

the Council is run by faded aristocrats who seek to placate by fantastic and extravagant gestures countries whose political ideas are out of harmony with our own and that the Council as a whole is unwilling to set bounds to its ambitions but that it eagerly seizes new responsibilities which are adequately (and indeed more effectively) covered by other organisations.<sup>157</sup>

Therefore, there were considerable grounds for investigation into the Council. Not only was the headquarters' organisation unable to cope with the Council's vastly increased functions but more fundamental issues were raised concerning the role of cultural propaganda in British foreign policy and the Council's right to conduct it. At the suggestion of Robertson and Tyrrell, Sir Findlater Stewart, wartime head of the Home Defence Executive and former Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the India Office, was appointed to carry out the enquiry. At Stewart's request the investigation was treated as a confidential inter-departmental enquiry. The Council's future looked as uncertain as it had on the outbreak of war.

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155. Minute by K.Grubb, 11 November 1944. INF 1/445

156. Minute by R.Fraser, 17 October 1945. INF 1/961

157. Minute by A.Pugh, 1 January 1945. DO 35/1212 WN420/2



## CHAPTER TWO

### INVISIBLE EXPORTS

Preferring the phrase 'national interpretation' to cultural propaganda in its 1940/1 report, the Council explained that it exported Britain's cultural resources:

all achievements of the nation past and present in the spheres of intellect, art, science, government, education and invention, and that intangible but powerful force, the national personality, as manifested in a country's past history and present way of life.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year's report, 'the life and thought of the ordinary British citizen' were added, as national interpretation did not mean

solely a recitation of the past but also an interpretation of the present. Tradition unrelated to life is like history unrelated to politics.<sup>2</sup>

The Council's output was uncontroversial, pro-British rather than anti-foreign and the same from 'Dictator-ruled Portugal to Popular-Front Chile'.<sup>3</sup> Its English language teaching courses were based on existing methods and the contents of its libraries and reading rooms were as wide as funds and space allowed. The criterion for supply was demand, which prevented waste and satisfied the specific desires of audiences. Demand was also the most effective yardstick as it is on subjects that 'people desire to be informed that they will be most receptive'.<sup>4</sup> The chief weakness of the Council's material was its lack of regional specialisation: the same material was sent to every area. In the case of Latin America, this resulted in lecturers on social welfare arriving to expand a 'kind of gospel' that did not appeal 'to all the powers that be' and in a Walter Raleigh exhibition being sent to Venezuela.<sup>5</sup>

It was the task of the London Departments, known as functional departments, to provide the information and material required by the Council's institutes, offices and Anglophile societies overseas. Their output was also distributed by

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1. British Council Annual Report, 1940/1. p.16
  2. British Council Annual Report, 1941/2. p.13
  3. Minute by White, 24 August 1942, BW2/94
  4. British Council Annual Report, 1941/2. p.14
  5. J.V.Perowne to White, 12 May 1942. FO370/881 L1A7A/17/410

commercial and private channels and through the MOI and other official agencies. To provide expert guidance on selection, editing and production, each department, with the exception of Press and Receptions, had an Advisory Committee. The regional departments dealt with the establishment of Representatives, offices and institutes overseas and received only intermittent guidance from the Foreign Office. The functional departments could supply material wherever demand arose but the regional departments needed Foreign Office and Treasury approval before embarking on work in a country. It is possible, therefore, to argue that the Council did operate in the United States, the Soviet Union and most of the Commonwealth and Empire during the war although it was not physically represented and did not have specific Foreign Office and Treasury approval for work in these areas. Large amounts of material were supplied to the British Information Services in the United States, to commercial distributors and to the British Library in New York. Likewise, in the Soviet Union, extensive links were established with scientific institutions and with VOKS. Similarly, a great many books, periodicals and films were despatched to the Dominions and India. It was with the functional departments that the MOI mostly clashed.

Educational activities were the foundation of the Council's work. The Education Division was created in 1940 from two pre-war departments, Students and Teaching Appointments. Professor Ifor Evans, of London University and formerly at the MOI, was appointed Educational Director in December 1940, and had four main tasks: the creation of a permanent overseas teaching service; the provision of the most effective system for teaching English as a foreign language; the encouragement of other English studies abroad; and the introduction of foreign students to Britain. The first task had to wait until the war was over.

To find the best means of teaching English as a foreign language a committee was set up under Professor Gilbert Murray. Its report, submitted in 1942, concluded that it would be premature to choose a particular method and that further investigation was necessary. Professor F. Clarke, Director of the Institute of Education at the University of London, undertook to supervise the analysis and collection of evidence from the Council's and other staff overseas. The committee

also made recommendations on the selection and training of teachers and on examinations overseas. It was disbanded in 1944 after failing to find an existing method of teaching English as a foreign language that was more effective than any other.

The Tilley Report in 1920 argued that the Government had a moral duty to provide for the educational and cultural welfare of its nationals resident overseas. The Council's institutes and the schools it supported abroad were designed to meet this responsibility and to raise standards of English teaching. Lloyd cherished schemes for the provision of a British education for all children of United Kingdom birth and for the numerous Maltese, Cypriot and other British communities in the Middle East. Although the Treasury had subsidised some British schools in the Middle East on the advice of the Foreign Office, there were many more Italian, French and German schools. The Council took over the administration of all grants to British schools overseas in 1937. Support for these schools was designed to prevent British subjects from being absorbed in the local population, to enable them to retain a British outlook and to spread British influence through the native pupils that attended them. As the Foreign Office explained to the Ministry of Education,

We value highly on political grounds the work that this school (Victoria College) has done and is still doing, in inculcating our own ideas of loyalty, sportsmanship, decent living and the value of learning upon boys who will later exercise a considerable influence upon the affairs of their own countries.<sup>6</sup>

The support of British schools was advocated strongly by British Missions overseas. At the end of the war Britain's ambassador in Turkey argued that 'to support efficiently managed schools of a British pattern abroad is certainly the most useful enterprise that the British Council can undertake'.<sup>7</sup> It was, however, a costly enterprise and one the Treasury did not accept was the duty of the British Government.

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6. Eden to R.A. Butler, 28 August 1942. F0370/664 L2949/8/410  
Victoria College in Egypt.

7. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to Eden, 14 August 1944. F0924/35  
LC1447/15/452

The Council was discouraged from subsidising British teachers and lecturers at foreign schools and universities by the Treasury in an attempt to force foreign governments to pay adequate salaries. Nevertheless, in Egypt, Iraq and other areas, the Council supplemented salaries to attract good applicants. A considerable number of appointments were made despite the difficulties of recruitment. In 1942/3 three professors and two lecturers were appointed to the University of Istanbul, two professors went to Cairo University, fourteen lecturers and three school mistresses were sent to Turkey and twenty-three lecturers and three teachers were found for Anglophile societies and schools in Latin America. In 1943/4 the Council filled two chairs at the Universities of Istanbul and Cairo and appointed twenty-six lecturers and teachers to nine schools in Spain, Portugal, the Middle East and Latin America.

In 1935/6 the Council spent £350 on bringing foreign students to Britain; this sum had risen a hundredfold by 1938/9 to £35,000.<sup>8</sup> The students were selected by British Missions in consultation with local educational authorities and came mainly from Europe with the exception of Germany. The outbreak of war severely restricted numbers and increased the proportion from the Middle East. In the summer of 1940, when German invasion seemed imminent, the Council ceased bringing students to Britain and returned as many as possible of those that had completed their studies to their own countries. One hundred and three Council students remained in Britain. At the end of 1940 the danger from Germany receded and the Foreign Office instructed the Council to resume bringing students to Britain, particularly from the United States, Turkey and Latin America. In 1942/3 seventy students came to Britain and a residential course at Somerville College, Oxford, attracted one hundred and fifteen students from twenty-one countries. The greatest number came from Turkey; in 1943, twenty-six engineering students, twenty naval engineering students, seventeen English students and five others. A high proportion also came from China despite the hazards of the journey. In 1943 grants were awarded to fifty Chinese post-graduate students. By December 1944 there were one hundred and sixty-one Council students in Great Britain.

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8. For a history of the introduction of foreign students to Europe - see F. Dunlop, Europe's Guests (Strassburg 1966)

The value to British trade from the training of foreign students in Britain was recognised from the outset. The Council cooperated with British industry in arranging apprenticeships and training schemes and made a substantial contribution to a Federation of British Industry scheme for bringing Chinese engineers to Britain. They numbered thirty-one by 1944. The Department of Overseas Trade stated that

It seems equally reasonable to infer that by beginning such training under British auspices, the students so trained would have a natural predisposition towards the United Kingdom commercial methods and United Kingdom goods.<sup>9</sup>

The Education Division also provided an information service for students overseas. In 1944 the Council calculated that it was in contact with approximately four hundred and fifty students a year, drawn from thirty-four foreign countries and eleven regions of the Empire. Their ages ranged between twenty-two and fifty, the average being thirty. To assist in placing students in British universities the Council maintained close links with those universities. In 1942 a Committee of the Hebdomadal Council at Oxford, comprising the Vice-Chancellor and a number of heads of houses, was founded to examine matters of common concern. Similar committees were established later at Cambridge and London. The Council also enjoyed good relations with other universities and the Vice-Chancellors' committee.

Following the outbreak of war the Council faced a new problem, namely students stranded in Britain either by enemy occupation of their own countries or by the difficulties of communication which prevented funds reaching them and their return home. In correspondence with Nancy Parkinson of the National Union of Students, firstly in connection with Polish students, the Council sought to alleviate their plight. It emerged that not only foreign students but also Allied and Dominion personnel required welfare services and educational provision. In October 1939 the Board of Education persuaded the Council that it had a valuable role to play among foreign communities in Britain and a Resident Foreigners Committee was formed. In August 1940, in cooperation with the Home Office,

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9. Students Committee Minutes, 10 March 1935. BW2/19

the Admiralty, the War Office and the Air Ministry, the Council undertook to provide educational and cultural facilities for the nationals of occupied countries resident in Britain. Subsequently, added to these were merchant seamen, members of the Allied armed forces, internees, evacuees from Gibraltar, colonial subjects engaged on war work and the armed forces of the Dominions. An Advisory Committee on Foreigners in Britain was created which became the Home Division, organised through regional offices in Britain. Granted a separate vote for the purpose, the work of the Home Division became a unique feature of the Council during the war.<sup>10</sup>

The supply of books and periodicals closely followed the development of educational facilities. The Books and Periodicals Committee led one of the most powerful departments in the Council's organisation. Its prominence was due to the energy and influence of its chairman from 1936, Stanley Unwin. In his capacity as President of the Publishers' Association, Unwin had been associated with the Council from its inception as 'the foremost, if not the only, expert on the distribution of English books abroad'.<sup>11</sup> Unwin joined the Executive Committee in April 1935 and became chairman of the Books and Periodicals Committee in December 1936 on the resignation of John Masefield, the Poet Laureate. Through Unwin the Council gained the cooperation of publishers and booksellers in Britain and overseas. Unwin recognised

that books would play a vital role in the kind of work the British Council contemplated, and that it was essential that the Council should be entitled to buy on trade terms.<sup>12</sup>

Unwin secured the supply of newspapers and periodicals returned from newsagents for the Council free of charge to distribute overseas, and arranged for the Council to pay only half the retail price on books and some periodicals. By 1943 the expansion of the Books and Periodicals Department necessitated separation into four new divisions - books, periodicals, export and publications.

The Books Department supplied institutes, Anglophile societies, libraries, universities, schools and made presentations to distinguished individuals. The Council was

10. The work of the Home Division is not being examined in this thesis. See I. Hay, *Peaceful Invasion* (London 1946)

11. R. Kenny to C. Bridge, 10 April 1935. BW275

12. S. Unwin, *The Truth About a Publisher* (London 1960) p. 416

anxious that it should not be associated with any particular viewpoint; at a meeting of the Books Committee in March 1940 Lloyd was

very insistent upon the necessity for giving foreigners an adequate view of British life, i.e. by making sure that they received publications expressing the Labour, Liberal and Conservative viewpoints, and not those expressing the ideas of one political group alone.<sup>13</sup>

The Council cooperated closely with the MOI in the distribution of books. John Hampden was employed by both the Ministry and the Council to direct this work and was the editor of a series of Council brochures.

The Periodicals Department distributed a wide variety of magazines to institutes, Anglophile societies and mailing lists. Where transport facilities permitted, daily newspapers were despatched, as well as periodicals ranging from Nature to Flight and Vogue. Newspapers and magazines were carefully balanced to avoid accusations of political bias.

The excellence of the arrangements devised by the Council forced the MOI to concede the major responsibility for the distribution of books and periodicals abroad to the Council. In December 1939 the Ministry asked the Council to take over the distribution of periodicals in the Middle East 'with the eventual possibility of the entire distribution of periodicals on behalf of the MOI being in the hands of the British Council',<sup>14</sup> which eventually became the case. The most notable exception was the circulation of religious periodicals which the Council decided would involve it in controversy.<sup>15</sup>

In 1942 an important exchange of periodicals was initiated between the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Lenin Library and institutions in Britain. In 1943 ninety micro-filmed periodicals were sent to China. In the Empire, educational and general publications and women's and health magazines were most popular. In India, in 1944, the Council supplied periodicals to three hundred and ninety-six universities, colleges and libraries. By 1944 the Periodicals Department distributed nearly nine hundred different publications,

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13. Books and Periodicals Committee Minutes, 19 March 1940 BW70/1

14. Books and Periodicals Committee Minutes, 18 December 1939  
BW70/1

15. Minutes of Controllers Meeting, 27 January 1948, BW76/4  
The Council started distributing religious periodicals after the war.

and the most popular was The Geographical Magazine, with a circulation of three thousand, five hundred, followed by Country Life and The Manchester Guardian Weekly.

The commercial and legal aspects of this work were dealt with in the Export Department. This included negotiations on copyright and translation rights, the organisation of reviews and exhibitions, and, most importantly, the administration of the Book Export Scheme. This scheme was devised by Unwin and incorporated as a subsidiary company of the Council. Its objective was to facilitate the sale of British books abroad by providing a general stimulus to the trade and a measure of official encouragement by reducing the risks carried by booksellers and publishers to a calculable minimum. Since the outbreak of war the reluctance of publishers to supply books on a 'sale or return' basis, fluctuating exchange rates and the inability of foreign customers to obtain sterling, had hampered seriously the sale of British books abroad. In cooperation with the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Export Credit Guarantees Department of the Board of Trade, the Publishers' Association and the National Book Council, the Book Export Scheme Limited was established and administered by the Council. Through Britain's Diplomatic Missions overseas suitable booksellers were supplied with catalogues of books for which the BES Ltd. would arrange initial currency and transport and guarantee to take over unsold copies up to a certain limit. Under this arrangement British publishers were entitled to certain benefits extended by the Export Credit Guarantees Department and were assured of payment. The widespread shortage of books and paper as the war progressed meant that books unsold in one country would be purchased elsewhere and, where currency difficulties prevented the operation of BES Ltd., as in the case of Turkey, the provision of a special subsidy by the Treasury enabled British books to be circulated. The Scheme was devised

as an attempt to develop the export trade of Great Britain, which in many politically important areas is in danger of extinction. <sup>16</sup>

It was applied at first in key areas, South East Europe, the Middle East, the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America.



The export of books was the only industry in which the Council took a direct interest for it was regarded as an integral part of its work and more than just a commercial venture.

The maintenance of quality, variety and quantity (of British books and periodicals overseas) is of direct interest to everyone concerned with the maintenance of British prestige abroad.<sup>17</sup>

When BES Ltd. was liquidated after the war it was estimated that the published price of books sold under the scheme, that that could not be sold privately, was £458,679.

The Publications Department commissioned, edited, designed and produced all Council publications. Sales to the book trade and wider commercial distribution was undertaken by the publishers Longmans, Green and Company Limited and by the British Publishers' Guild to ensure that the Council's name did not appear on any publication.

Britain Today was the most widely circulated of the Council's publications. The first issue appeared in March 1939, under the editorship of E.L. Woodward, and was immediately successful overseas, especially in Eastern Europe. It was printed fortnightly and distributed free to carefully selected mailing lists. Demands soon outstripped its first edition of five thousand copies and this print run was soon trebled. Britain Today was initially a modest publication, with no illustrations, but contained articles by Leeper and others on British policy. In August 1939 the Council had to apply to the Overseas Emergency Publicity Expenditure Committee for an extra £3,000 to upgrade its format and increase its circulation. In the same month A.P. Ashley of The Times replaced Woodward as editor. When the Council moved to the MOI on the outbreak of war, Britain Today was transferred to the Foreign Office. In November it moved to the Ministry and in December returned to the Council, 'but at the request of the Ministry it pursued its previous policy and did not confine itself exclusively to cultural subjects'.<sup>18</sup> In July 1940 Ashley was called up and his place was taken by R.Scott-James who remained editor throughout the war.

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17. British Council Annual Report, 1941/2. p.70

18. Monthly Oversea Bulletin, 3 January 1946. BW2/148

From March 1939 to the outbreak of war Britain Today was an overtly propagandist magazine. It aimed 'to get at key people.....those in fact, who in every country influence others'.<sup>19</sup> Its first edition on 17 March argued that democracy or 'ordered liberty' was equal to modern conditions and worth fighting for and that a desire for peace was 'a sign not of fear but of wisdom' but Britain was 'not prepared to buy this peace at too great a sacrifice'.<sup>20</sup> The mood of the British people, Britain Today declared, was one of grim determination to protect their freedom and preparations for local defence were proceeding with 'astonishing rapidity'.<sup>21</sup> At the end of March Britain Today described the depth of resources in the Empire and announced that 'there will be no reluctance to meet the cost of defending our liberties and those of our friends'.<sup>22</sup> Considerable attention was devoted to the policy of appeasement, described as 'a characteristically English policy', to explaining that the British people unanimously recognised that it had failed and to stressing that 'the sure consequence of treaty-breaking is war on the same scale as in 1914'.<sup>23</sup> The invasion of Poland was taken as 'the final proof of the bad faith of the German National-Socialist Government'.<sup>24</sup> After its removal to the MOI and return to the Council, Britain Today modified its tone and although comments on the progress of the war and its effects on Britain were included, the magazine increasingly concerned itself with preparations for peace, reconstruction and the arts and sciences.

By 1940 the circulation of Britain Today had reached 27,000 and it was published in English, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. The French and Italian editions were discontinued after the defeat of France and the entry of Italy into the war. Nevertheless, its circulation continued to rise and reached 68,000 by 1941. The despatch of a few copies to the New York World Fair resulted in a distribution of 26,000 copies in the United States. Portugal was the next largest consumer and, until the end of 1941, a thousand copies of each issue were sent to Japan. Britain Today was so

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19. DEPEC Meeting, 3 August 1939. T162/858 E39140/2

20. Britain Today, No.1, 17 March 1939, p.1 & 7

21. Ibid. p.8

22. Britain Today, No.2, 31 March 1939, p.8

23. Britain Today, No.4, 28 April 1939, p.2

24. Britain Today, No.11, 29 September 1939, p.1

successful in Portugal that the Germans produced bogus copies containing anti-British propaganda. It was enlarged and printed monthly in 1941 and consisted of twenty-eight pages of text and eight of illustration.

The Council was often embarrassed by the propagandist nature of Britain Today; it was banned in Greece and in Portugal, the British Embassy complained about its political content. The Council 'always concealed the fact that Britain Today had any connection with it'.<sup>25</sup> and its publication 'caused much controversy and many heart-burnings within the Council' resulting in regular proposals to abolish it.<sup>26</sup> However, Council staff and British Missions abroad supported the periodical and it was published throughout the war. Britain Today's circulation reached 100,000 in the early part of 1942, due largely to new readers in North and South America. The British Library of Information in New York had a mailing list of 40,000 and in Argentina, it was the only British official publication that did not come under a ban placed on the distribution of propagandist literature. In the same year the paper shortage at home and the hazards of supply across the Atlantic, resulted in arrangements for the printing of Britain Today in Toronto, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Panama. To offset some costs Britain Today was sold in Canada, Australia, the United States and French North Africa in January 1944, and was not distributed free in liberated Europe, although free distribution was continued in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. By the end of the war, the monthly circulation stood at 130,000.

In connection with BES Ltd., but for a wider audience, the National Book Council published for the Council British Book News. This was a monthly list of new publications and was sent free to any applicant outside the British Empire. In 1940 it had a monthly circulation of 16,000 and an additional 2,300 copies were printed in Cairo for the Middle East.

The British Life and Thought series, which first appeared in 1940, was created by Unwin. It consisted of educational and factual essays, distributed singly or in volume form.

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25. White to Riverdale, 22 May 1941. BW82/8

26. Minute by K.T.Gurney, 7 July 1944. F0924/4 LC497/7/410

Titles in the series included The British Commonwealth, The British System of Government and British Justice. The series was widely approved and laid particular emphasis on Britain's contribution to politics and administration, in the form of the parliamentary system and the judiciary. For the Allied communities in Britain a multi-lingual publication entitled International Guild Books was produced which reprinted many of the articles in the British Life and Thought series.

A new series called Britain Advances was introduced in 1943 designed 'to give examples of socially valuable progress on various subjects and to depict a progressive, up-to-date community'.<sup>27</sup> These pamphlets, of which twelve were produced, contained many photographs and were described as 'accurate but popular'.<sup>28</sup> They included Landmarks given to the People, about the National Trust, Machines on the Farm, on Britain's success with mechanised agriculture, and London Calling the World, on the BBC's overseas broadcasts.

The Council also published a British Contributions series, on Britain's contributions to Persian and Indian studies, and Science in Britain, aimed at specialist audiences. In addition, the Council commissioned some books, including A.L.Rowse's Spirit of English History, which was published in 1943.

The chief function of the Press and Receptions Division was to supply articles and feature materials for the Empire and foreign Press on all subjects not specifically connected with the military and political course of the war, to arrange visits of journalists and distinguished guests to Britain, and to provide information for the national, provincial and periodical Press in Britain on the Council. The Press Department was established in April 1938 under the direction of Toby O'Brien. Although transferred to the MOI on the outbreak of war it was returned to the Council in October to preserve the valuable and independent contacts and machinery that the Council had built up and because the Ministry was in 'bad odour with the neutral press'.<sup>29</sup> Moreover,

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27. British Council Annual Report, 1943/4. p.114

28. Minute by K.T.Gurney, 27 January 1945. F0924/112 LC160/19/451

29. Minute by E.B.O'Brien. 10 October 1939. BW82/7

We must remember that the name of the British Council is established and that it may be a good cover for activities parallel to those of the MOI.<sup>30</sup>

The distinction between the two Press departments was slight at the outset and both provided information on subjects that fell between the political-cultural dividing line. Furthermore, O'Brien said that he could not be confined to cultural subjects 'simply because his contacts would not be prepared to accept such subjects exclusively'.<sup>31</sup>

A daily London Letter was compiled with special Empire and South African editions and French and Spanish translations. Articles and weekly features, such as Facts About Britain, Theatre and Films in Britain, Wartime Sport and British Women's Newsletter, were distributed in English Spanish and French to the overseas Press through over two hundred centres. The Council's Press material being less overtly propagandist than the Ministry's, often secured publication where the Ministry's did not. The Information Officer to the Government of India, J. Hennessy, asked for as many articles as the Council could supply.

I consider that the most efficacious type of propaganda is that which is intrinsically interesting and which does not look like propaganda: such is the value of your British cultural articles that newspapers - even hostile ones - snap them up eagerly, because they are intrinsically interesting to their readers.<sup>32</sup>

In February 1940, Hennessy reported that 'the British Council material reaches every English-printed and Indian-language newspaper of any importance throughout the country'.<sup>33</sup>

The Press Department was reorganised on the resignation of O'Brien in 1944. Public relations were transferred to the Home Division, the photographic section was reconstituted as a separate department, and the remainder became the overseas Press Department. In 1940 the photographic section consisted of only one man, L.W. Forsdick, who had joined the Council after thirteen years with a Fleet Street photographic agency. Under his guidance it developed into a full department, with its own photographers and equipment, supplying all the Council's

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30. H.V.Hodson to White, 4 October 1939. BW82/7

31. White to Lloyd, 19 March 1940. BW82/7

32. J.Hennessy to A.H.Joyce, 25 September 1939. India Office Papers  
INF LI/1/63 1221/39

33. A.H. Joyce to E.B.O'Brien, 14 February 1940. I.O.Papers  
INF LI/1/63 614/40

photographic needs at home and abroad.

The Receptions Department was founded in March 1939 to organise hospitality to visitors to Britain. As Leeper explained to the Treasury

We are increasingly convinced that one of the best forms of propaganda is to pay appropriate attention to influential foreigners who visit this country and to help them see things which interest them and make a good impression.<sup>34</sup>

As in the case of the Press, it was found that the Council's organisation for the entertainment of foreign guests was too valuable to be transferred to the Ministry.

The Council had facilities for "bear-leading" which we had not got, and in the beginning the Council's facilities and experience were not otherwise employed. It was also in our minds that, on occasion, the outward sponsorship of the British Council might afford better cover for Ministry sponsorship for the more timid neutrals.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, the Council acted for the MOI and Foreign Office in entertaining distinguished guests and important delegations. The approval and consent of the Foreign Office and the Security Executive had to be given before the Council could issue invitations. The Security Executive was especially wary of visitors from neutral countries, particularly Argentina, Spain and Sweden, and regarded technical and scientific representatives from countries other than the Allies or Turkey as 'highly undesirable'.<sup>36</sup>

In 1940 the Council entertained Press delegations from France, Cyprus, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece, in 1941 from Iceland, Canada and the West Indies, in 1942 from Sweden and Brazil and in 1943 from Spain and West Africa. Regular receptions were also organised in London for the ambassadors of countries in which the Council worked and for visiting societies. In connection with the delegation from Turkey in 1940, Lloyd claimed that

The visit of the Turkish editors to this country last summer, through its subsequent influence on public opinion in that country, has no doubt contributed to establishing an attitude sympathetic to the Allied cause.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Leeper to Hale, 1 April 1939.T161/1105 S35581/07

35. E.Bamford to M.Palairret, 24 December 1943. INF 1/446

36. Minute by K.T.Gurney, 23 April 1943.F0370/772 L854/62/410

37. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 January 1941.BW69/6

In December 1943 the MOI took over the entertainment of foreign journalists but from February 1944, preparations for the invasion of Europe temporarily halted the arrival of all foreign guests in Britain. However, the ensuing Allied victory opened the flood gates to a new tide of visitors from Europe.

The Council subsidised a number of newspapers abroad that might otherwise have disappeared. In June 1938 O'Brien argued that

When the next war breaks out we shall have to swallow our British pride and "buy" a large number of neutral papers.<sup>38</sup>

The most important and costly of these were the Anglo-Portuguese News and Cyprus Post. Both were entirely owned and financed by the Council and were the only English language newspapers in their areas. The Anglo-Portuguese News was the only English journal in Europe after May 1941. Cyprus Post was the only English daily in the island and the Council supported it at the request of the Colonial Office. Similar considerations led to the support of other papers.<sup>39</sup>

The Council was a reluctant newspaper proprietor and learnt by experience that it could not control the views expressed in these papers. In Cyprus frequent criticism of the Colonial Government and local authorities in the columns of the Cyprus Post landed the Council in great difficulties. In Portugal and Turkey local laws forced the Council to place nominal ownership in the hands of nationals of the country in which the paper was published. Moreover, the Council feared that the low standard of some of the newspapers would bring discredit to its other activities. After a visit to Portugal in December 1941, Ifor Evans advocated a radical improvement in Anglo-Portuguese News and described the Cyprus Post as a 'festering sore', after a visit to the island in 1943.<sup>40</sup> The latter had become increasingly a paper for the British forces in the island whom O'Brien diagnosed to be

less interested in "blue-prints for brave new worlds" than in pictures of cottages with thatched roofs, churches or rolling downland.<sup>41</sup>

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38. Minute by E.B.O'Brien, 7 June 1938. BW14/1

39. See Appendix E

40. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 November 1943. BW69/9

41. Executive Committee Minutes, 29 June 1943. BW69/9

In evidence to the Public Accounts Committee in July 1944, White explained that the Council hoped to be rid of its newspaper responsibilities soon 'because we do not like running newspapers'.

We are not quite certain that it fits into our system, and our experience in the last few years has shown that it is an extremely embarrassing thing to do.<sup>42</sup>

There was little difference between those papers supported by the Council and those supported by the MOI. The Council subsidised publications that were essentially political while the Ministry supported purely cultural magazines, such as the Arabic Quarterly and the Persian Quarterly, for the good reason that the Ministry had had the money at the time to do so. Both these periodicals were offered to the Council at the end of the war but by that time the Council had decided against the subsidy of foreign journals and was liquidating all its commitments in this field.

In October 1939 the film work and staff of the Travel Association were transferred to the Council. The pre-war Joint Film Committee<sup>43</sup> became a committee of the Council under the chairmanship of Philip Guedalla. The Film Department was strengthened and reorganised under the direction of Neville Kearney, appointed in January 1940. The Joint Film Committee's activities had been limited to the selection of films, made by other bodies, for distribution abroad until 1939 when it was given responsibility for providing films for the British Pavilion at the New York World Fair. The committee was not concerned with feature films and concentrated on documentaries and, to a limited extent, newsreels. Immediately prior to the outbreak of war the committee commissioned films about the Navy, Airforce and Parliament and supplied projectors to the Council's principal institutes and Anglophile societies.

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42. Minutes of evidence taken before the Public Accounts Committee, 13 July 1944. p.4933 and 4976

43. The Joint Film Committee consisted of representatives from the British Film Institute, the Post Office, the Foreign Office, the Department of Trade, and, after December 1939, the Dominions Office, the Colonial Office, the India Office and the Government Cinematograph Advisor as well as the Council and Travel Association.



The disappearance of the Travel Association's official role in the committee hastened the supersession of trade films by cultural films, a process which had begun before the war. For the Fair the committee chose mainly prestige films, pageantry being 'the hallmark of the entire Pavilion'.<sup>44</sup> Under the Council's influence this trend continued, for it was believed that as the Council's role was to influence elites in foreign countries its films should illustrate loftier topics than manufacturing industry. Moreover, the committee feared that bald trade publicity, however artistically presented, would undermine the Council's claim to be a purely educational and cultural body.

In January 1940 the committee examined its stock of films and found that they had been designed mainly

for advertisement, for interest, education or entertainment, but not with a view to their being seen almost exclusively by foreign audiences.<sup>45</sup>

Kearney recommended more films covering the people of Britain, British culture, Parliament and local Government, education and more educational and teaching strips. Defence subjects were no longer the Council's concern. He argued that the Council's films should show the diversity of race, creed and countryside in Britain and the unity of the British people.

They should show the finer qualities of the British character, its courage and humour; how the struggle to win a living from the soil or from the sea has helped to form it; how independence and tolerance..... have led to the democratic freedom which we enjoy; they should try to explain our cultural and economic ideals and show the way we are trying to attain them.<sup>46</sup>

The general films produced by the Council followed these guidelines, portraying British towns and villages and her social system. In addition, scientific and educational films were made in a growing proportion. The production of industrial films was suspended in 1941 and resumed in 1944, concentrating on export industries suggested by the Board of Trade.

44. P. Swann, The British Documentary Film Movement (PhD. Thesis, University of Leeds, 1979) p. 226

45. Film Committee Minutes, 31 January 1940. BW2/33

46. Film Committee Minutes, 31 January 1940. BW2/33

In March 1945 A.F.Primrose, secretary of the Film Department, wrote to E.L.Mercier at the Department of Overseas Trade,

If we can be of any assistance to the Department of Overseas Trade in helping to stimulate the export trade, do not hesitate to let us know. This is what we have in mind in producing films relating to industries and..... it is certainly not outside the province of the Council to stimulate interest in British products if we can.<sup>47</sup>

In 1940 the Council began its film production programme, completing ten new films and a special batch of six industrial films made in cooperation with the Board of Trade. By 1942 it was commissioning an average of twenty films a year on general and educational subjects and in the latter category, particularly historical and geographical treatments of the Empire. In 1942, 497 prints of documentaries were distributed for theatrical exhibition in seventy territories and 1,773 prints were distributed for non-theatrical screening in fifty-two territories. The audiences were large: between September 1942 and March 1943 the National Film Society of Canada arranged 2,402 screenings to a total audience of 417,663. In Portugal, Queen Cotton was shown to 13,500 people in seven cinemas while Green Girdle was seen by 26,900 people in twenty-four cinemas. In 1943 over two thousand prints were sent to more than seventy countries. The number of documentary films distributed in 1944 fell to six hundred in eighty-four countries but the number of prints sent to education authorities and other institutions for non-theatrical distribution doubled. Commentaries in twenty-two languages were recorded for use with these films. The Council's films were designed to be part of a theatrical programme, were mainly short and were sold to commercial distributors and not distributed free as the MOI's were.<sup>48</sup> In 1943 the Council opened its own pre-view theatre with cutting rooms and editing facilities, in Hanover Square. All the Council's films were viewed by representatives of the Ministry's Foreign and Empire Publicity Divisions before being sent abroad.

Until March 1940, when the general relationship between the Council and the Ministry was reviewed, the two film departments collaborated closely as the Ministry had few films of its own

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47. A.F.Primrose to E.L.Mercier, 4 March 1945. BT60/37/5

48. For a description of the Council's films see F.Thorpe and N.Pronay, British Official Films in the Second World War.

and was dependent partly on the Council's overseas distribution network. In January 1940 Sir Kenneth Clark was appointed head of the Ministry's Film Division and began to develop an independent distribution network for the Ministry's films and to sever links with the Council. In an agreement with Guedalla in May, Clark confined the Council to cultural subjects, so that the Council was not allowed to show a picture of a soldier, and secured MOI representation in the Council's film committee and department. The Council had no similar representative in the Ministry and the Ministry proposed that it should indent on the Ministry's vote for its film work. This proposal was defeated eventually and the Council's own grant for film activities was restored.

Conflict between the Ministry and the Council in the sphere of films continued throughout the war. The Ministry complained of 'the predatory activities of the British Council Film Committee',<sup>49</sup> and tried to absorb it completely. Differences on technical and administrative details were aggravated by personal antipathies. Both Kearney and Guedalla intensely disliked and ridiculed the documentary film movement; sentiments that were warmly reciprocated. The documentary movement had been represented on the Joint Film Committee but disputes over the selection of films for the British Pavilion ended their cooperation.<sup>50</sup> The documentarists arranged an independent display of their own films at the Fair. A reshuffle at the MOI in May 1940 brought the documentary movement in the Ministry's film unit. From that moment Kearney saw a conspiracy led by the documentarists at the MOI to secure control of all British official film production and distribution, including the Council's. The documentarists were certainly hostile towards the Council and in 1942, Robertson appealed to Bracken in vain.

If you would instruct your Film Division to cease from their persistent and wearisome efforts, chiefly foul and pernickety, to have mine suppressed, though their knowledge of foreign countries is quite clearly elementary, if indeed it can be rated so high, we might be able to start doing some real good between us. For Heaven's sake let us try!<sup>51</sup>

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49. Minute by H.V.Hodson, 8 October 1940. INF 1/444

50. See P.Rotha, Documentary Diary, (New York 1973)

51. Robertson to Bracken, 1 January 1942. BW63/4

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Criticism of the Council's films by the Ministry and by such publications as Documentary Newsletter and New Statesman centred on what was described as the Council's 'thatched cottage' approach.

Their mirror of Britain is a mirror that reflects Lords, Wimbledon, the Derby, the Old English Inn, the beautiful countryside, our glorious old buildings - the heritage of the past, and all's right with the world.<sup>52</sup>

Censure of the rosy view of English society presented in the Council's film, also stemmed from the belief that they were poor propaganda and might do 'definite harm to the British democratic cause'.<sup>53</sup> Conversely, the same critics called for the transfer of the Council's film department to the MOI on the grounds that it produced blatant propaganda no different from the Ministry's. Documentary Newsletter argued

If we are fighting the war for the preservation of our way of life, and the British Council says that it is their job to hold a mirror to that way of life, then surely they are engaged in political propaganda.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, there was little to choose between the Council's Sailors Without Uniform and the Ministry's Merchant Seaman. Moreover, the Ministry and the Council sometimes found themselves bidding against each other for the same film, for example, The Mastery of the Seas, which was described as 'essentially from start to finish a prestige propaganda film'.<sup>55</sup> The Council's Executive Committee regretted that the Ministry 'failed to appreciate the purpose of the Council's films'<sup>56</sup> while the Ministry maintained that 'for overseas purposes even the Council's scientific and educational films are really prestige propaganda'.<sup>57</sup>

Guedalla's and Kearney's dislike of the documentary movement sprang partly from their use of film to make what Kearney and Guedalla regarded as left-wing propaganda. Guedalla preferred films on

ordinary life and thought in Britain rather than a strained and pretentious concentration on "blue-prints" of a non-existent future half-way between J.B. Priestly and Moscow.<sup>58</sup>

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52. Documentary Newsletter, vol.2, No.7, July 1941

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Minute by H.V.Hodson, 8 October 1940. INF 1/444

56. Executive Committee Minutes, 10 December 1941. BW68/3

57. Minute by E.Bamford, 9 September 1941. INF 1/445

58. P.Guedalla to C. Webster, 5 December 1941. BW63/4

However, the Council was not deaf to its critics which included its staff overseas. Eric Church in Brazil argued for interesting instead of purely patriotic film propaganda and that

we must attempt to do more than wave a Union Jack in the eyes of our friends. It does not dazzle them; it bores them.<sup>59</sup>

White agreed that

what the people there want to know about Britain is whether we are moving with the times and we should be careful not to dwell too much on our past achievements or our old traditions.<sup>60</sup>

As the war progressed the Council produced less films on traditional themes and more on industry, education and social development in Britain and a greater proportion of scientific, instructional and medical films. It was perhaps inevitable that the Council's films were so heavily criticised in the early part of the war as it had agreed not to portray the war which resulted in such films as Western Waterway, a film about Bristol made in 1941, that showed the town in normal peacetime activity, ignoring completely the heavy bombing that it had suffered. As Gerald Campbell, head of the British Information Services in the United States, explained to Kearney,

the Council wishes to develop knowledge of our cultural life both now and after the war, ironically enough, the somewhat bloody-minded Americans, who expect to see pictures of ruined houses and bodies, remark with disgust when they see a "tranquilising picture", Don't these people know there is a war on? <sup>61</sup>

Towards the end of the war, however, overseas demand turned to educational, instructional and reconstruction films, such as the Council was producing. The MOI moved into these fields and the output of the two film departments became very close in content. Between 1940 and 1945 the Council made eighty documentary films, distributed to eighty-four territories in twenty-two languages.

The Council also produced British News which had been seen first at the New York World Fair where it was judged one of the successes of the British Pavilion. It was a special compilation of the ten issue produced weekly by the five

59. E.Church to E.L.N.Sturt, 1 August 1943. BW16/1

60. Minute by White, 13 April 1942. BW16/1

61. G.Campbell to N.Kearney, 7 July 1941. BW63/4

British newsreel companies, made on a rotating basis by those companies. British News was revived in May 1940 for the re-opening of the Fair in June and, at the request of the Colonial Office, a weekly service of British News was introduced into twenty-eight colonies and mandated territories. The Council's success in securing this important field for its newsreel was due to Lloyd's appointment to the Colonial Office in May. The Select Committee on National Expenditure recommended in September that British News should be the official British newsreel overseas in preference to the Ministry's newsreels.<sup>62</sup> Predictably, the Ministry vigorously opposed the implementation of this recommendation, arguing that an official newsreel would be 'inevitably suspect' and that the Ministry's own arrangements would be more effective.<sup>63</sup> As elsewhere a compromise was reached and it was agreed that there was scope for the newsreel of both organisations. British News was confined to the Colonial Empire, Portugal and Panama. The MOI undertook the commercial production and distribution of newsreels and agreed to consult the Council on non-theatrical distribution.

At the beginning of the war the Council surrendered its broadcasting activities to the MOI and this was confirmed in the Reith-Lloyd concordat of May 1940.<sup>64</sup> The Council's involvement in broadcasting before the war had been minimal. A Joint Broadcasting Committee of the Council and Travel Association was founded in 1936 and distributed a small amount of material. With the suspension of the Travel Association for the duration of the war the Council's Press Department took over responsibility for broadcasting and the Joint Committee was dissolved. Confusingly, an identically named committee was set up by Leeper in the spring of 1939 to supply material to foreign broadcasting stations. This committee, however, had both black and white propaganda purposes and after September 1939 its overt activities passed to the MOI and its covert work to Section D at the War Office.

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62. Twelfth Report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, 10 September 1940,

63. Ibid.

64. See above, p. 28-30

At the Ministry Leeper's committee increasingly undertook cultural propaganda and in December 1939 the Council was approached with proposals for cooperation. The Council responded cautiously in view of the political aspects of the committee's work, even though much of its subject matter fell within its scope. In January 1940 Leeper advised the Council to leave cultural broadcasting to the committee with suitable arrangements for liaison.<sup>65</sup> In future the Council's regional officers attended committee meetings, the Council supplied material and speakers in the form of British Council scholars in Britain and the committee advertised Council activities in its recorded programmes. The committee was misplaced at the Ministry and in July 1940, with the support of the BBC, the Ministry considered dissolving it. The Foreign Office, however, was anxious that the Committee's work should be continued and suggested that it might go to the Council. The Council was reluctant to be saddled with a body that was likely to lead to further troubles with the MOI and demanded additional funds if cultural broadcasting was to become its responsibility. The committee continued to function until 1941 when it seems to have disappeared.

By 1943 the Council was involved again in broadcasting, as demand overseas for general background material about Britain grew as Allied victory approached. Either directly, by providing speakers or arranging programmes, or indirectly, by providing material, especially music, the Council participated in broadcasting in twenty-one countries. In ten of these,<sup>66</sup> broadcasting formed a major part of the Council's work. In 1943 the Council, the MOI and the BBC agreed to cooperate in cultural broadcasting and a circular to this effect was sent to their agents in Latin America.

It was generally agreed that the certainty of victory makes it possible for us to decrease to a certain extent, war and political propaganda, and to increase to a similar extent projection of Britain and things British from the long-term angle.<sup>67</sup>

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65. R.A.Leeper to C.Bridge, 18 January 1940. BW2/183

66. The Belgian Congo, Chile, Colombia, Iceland, Malta, Paraguay, Persia, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay.

67. Memorandum to Press Attachés, BBC and British Council Representatives in Latin America, July 1943. BW2/182



In February 1944 the MOI agreed to the Council resuming broadcasting activities and in 1945 the Council entered into discussions with the BBC on the broadcasting of English lessons and other matters.

After its films and broadcasting committees with the Council had become wholly Council affairs, the Travel Association was placed on a 'care and maintenance' basis with an annual grant of £2,500 for the duration of the war. The chairman of the Travel Association, Lord Derby, continued as a vice-chairman of the Council and a member of its Executive Committee. In January 1942 Derby raised the question of the Travel Association's future with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Treasury's view was that the Council and the Travel Association were two distinct organisations that could not be merged.

The sharp distinction between the commercial nature of the Association and the political nature of the Council suggests that the emphasis should be laid on a demarcation of function, not an amalgamation.<sup>68</sup>

This difference accounted for the widely varying levels of Government subsidy. If the Council absorbed the Association the Treasury would be financing commercial publicity which, believed, should be funded by those industries benefiting from it. Moreover, the Council's grant was already large and a separation of the two organisations might result in a reduction of the Council's work. On the other hand,

The Council's terms of reference are already nebulous enough and it is difficult to see how to set limits to its expenditure. The difficulty might be greatly increased if it were allowed to enter the field of commercial publicity.<sup>69</sup>

In February 1942 an inter-departmental committee was formed to consider the matter. The Travel Association had three options: integration with the Council; the transfer of its grant to the Council and the maintenance of its separate identity; a separate grant and cooperation with the Council through standing committees. Collusion between the Treasury and the Department of Overseas Trade and assertions of

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68. Minute by C.G.L.Syers, February 1942. T 219/51

69. Ibid.

independence by both organisations ensured that the third option would be chosen. A standing committee of the Council and the Association was established in May to allocate functions common to both bodies. The Travel Association's grant continued to be carried on the Department of Overseas Trade vote and the Treasury reserved its position on the question of funds for the Association after the war. The future of tourist and commercial publicity became caught up in the discussions on the future of the MOI and the Council. Although Findlater Stewart was not asked to look into this question, in his report he declared the work of the Travel Association to be inconsistent with the Council's functions.

The sponsorship of lecture tours by distinguished speakers was one of the Council's main activities before the war. In June 1939 the Lectures Committee considered its progress to date and concluded that the Council must avoid giving the impression that it only sponsored titled or upper-class lecturers. Lectures fell into two groups, achievement and cultural. The former were designed to combat a view that Britain was decadent and the latter to counter the belief that Britain was a nation of shopkeepers and sportsman; the committee felt that examples of British humour must be avoided at all costs. The European lecture programme was maintained until May 1940, with lectures by Wedgwood Benn in the Low Countries, and by Herbert Morrison and Wickham Steed in France, amongst others. The escalation of the war in that month resulted in the cancellation of many more, including engagements for Leo Amery in France and a tour of Italy by T.S. Eliot and Osbert Sitwell.

Nevertheless, the supply of lecturers to the Council's institutes and societies remained an important function. In 1940 Sir Harold Gillies, a leading pioneer of plastic surgery undertook a six weeks tour of South America as did Professor J. Entwistle, an expert in Spanish and Portuguese studies. James Rurves-Stewart, a distinguished neurological physician, lectured in Spain and Portugal and in April 1941 a delegation from the University of Oxford, sponsored by the Council, gave a series of popular lectures after conferring the degree of Doctor of Civil Law on Dr. Salazar, the President of Portugal.

In 1942, the easing of transport problems, enabled the Council to send four lecturers to Sweden, including T.S.Eliot and W.G.Holfod, Professor of Civic Design at Liverpool University. The Iberian peninsula was the other main area of activity in 1942, receiving Sir Ronald Storrs, Father M.C.D'Arcy, Master of Campion Hall at Oxford, and Brigadier H.W.B.Cairs, Nuffield Professor of Surgery at Oxford. Medical and technical subjects dominated the Council's lecture programme in 1943/4, with Sweden, Spain and Portugal again receiving the lion's share. An exception was a highly successful tour of Spain and Portugal by Leslie Howard, ending in tragedy when his plane was shot down returning to England.

The Visual Propaganda Department prepared small exhibitions and provided material for the Council's offices and institutes, such as flags, posters, sports cups and medals. Small displays were assembled consisting of pictorial, written and other material on a particular subject. These included British Industry and the Everyday Life of the British People, Modern British Architecture, British Social Achievements, Post-War Planning and a wide range of other topics. The Department also responded to individual requests for material. The Venezuelan Society of National Sciences was presented with four rare maps of Venezuela and the Caribbean and children's libraries in British Guiana and Ecuador received collections of historical and geographical pictures.

It was anticipated that the Council's Drama, Music and Fine Arts Departments would disappear or be drastically reduced after war broke out,<sup>70</sup> for they were considered to be a luxury and unnecessary in wartime, especially by the Treasury. Despite the difficulties posed by the war, the Council continued these activities as far as circumstances would allow. In October 1939 a Drama Advisory Committee was formed to 'safeguard the Council from embarking on any venture that did not command the approval of the theatrical profession as a whole'.<sup>71</sup> The letter of invitation to its members stated that the need

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70. E.Hale to A.P.Waterfield, 6 January 1940. T 161/1029

S 35581/03/39

71. White to Lord Esher, 17 October 1939. BW2/55

for this purely cultural form of propaganda is greater now than it has ever been. During the last war the finest talent of the German theatre was sent to neutral countries where some surprise was felt that England did not follow suit. Today enemy propaganda of this kind is already at work and the Council are desirous of taking steps to counter it.<sup>72</sup>

In wartime it was not possible to mount drama tours overseas and so the Drama Department concentrated on distributing play scripts and negotiated for the translation and performance of British plays in Allied and neutral countries. It was represented also on the International Advisory Committee of ENSA.

Likewise, the Music Department was forced to abandon the sponsorship of tours by British artists and orchestras overseas and focused instead on sending scores, song books and records to societies, institutes, schools, the Armed Forces and broadcasting stations. A distinguished Advisory Committee, counting among its members Arthur Bliss, Sir Adrian Boult, Ralph Vaughan-Williams and Dr. William Walton, provided practical help and guidance. In 1942 the Council entered the field of recording and sponsored among others, recordings of Walton's Belshazzar's Feast and Bliss's Pianoforte Concerto. In the same year Kathleen Long, the pianist, toured Iceland and Malcolm Sargent visited Spain and Portugal. Music was exchanged with the Soviet Union and material sent by the Council enabled the Services Choral Society to perform The Messiah in Cairo Cathedral on the eve of the Alamein offensive. In 1943 Sargent toured Sweden and the Council sponsored performances of British music by indigenous orchestras abroad. In the British West Indies and in Latin America music officers were appointed to supervise the development of musical societies and performances of British music and to establish British music libraries.

The Council's Fine Arts Department was responsible for all British fine arts exhibitions abroad, both official and semi-official. It had provided the Fine Art Section for the British Pavilion at the New York World Fair and parts of this were displayed subsequently in Canada and the United States. Two other exhibitions were assembled in the United States in 1940, including an exhibition of British Arts and Crafts that

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72. Ibid.

was shown also in Canada and South America. In the United States the Council was careful not to appear frivolous by its exhibitions and Sir Eric Maclagan, chairman of the Advisory Committee, expressed

a fear that the anti-British element in the United States might feel that raw materials which had been sent over for war purposes under the terms of the Lend Lease Bill, were<sup>73</sup> being used in the production of exhibitions.

Exhibitions of Art by British Children and collections of British Contemporary Art were widely shown in all neutral and most Allied countries.

The dissemination of scientific information and the promotion of scientific contacts were not thought at first to be functions of culture or publicity. With the outbreak of war, however, normal channels of communication within the international scientific world were interrupted and steps had to be taken to restore contacts and stimulate research as well as to publicise Britain's contribution and to explain the implications of scientific discoveries. The fact that science, in its many forms, was increasingly permeating every aspect of society made it 'potentially one of the strongest foundations on which to build closer cultural relations between nations'.<sup>74</sup> This became an important feature of the Council's work.

In January 1941 Sir John Chancellor informed Lord Hankey, chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the War Cabinet, that the Council intended to form a Science Department.

The formation of such a committee by the Council had arisen from suggestions from the British Medical Association and the Royal Society of Medicine that the Council should help in the organisation of British medical propaganda in South America. At its first meeting in January, the Science Advisory Committee invited Sir William Bragg to represent it on the Council's committee and entrusted the responsibility for scientific propaganda to the Council.<sup>75</sup> In July 1941 the British Medical Information Service, representing the British Medical Association and the MOI, moved from the Ministry to the Council.

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73. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 23 September 1941. BW69/7

74. The British Council Science Department, (London 1945) p.7

75. Science Advisory Committee Minutes, 20 January 1941. CAB 90/2

The Science Committee worked through a triumvirate of panels; general science under Bragg; medicine under Sir Edward Mellanby; engineering under Sir William Larke. In 1944 an agricultural panel was added under the direction of Mr. Scott Watson. Bragg was also chairman of the Science Committee; he was succeeded by Sir Henry Dale in 1942. A Science Department was established under James Crowther who held strong left-wing views and was an admirer of the Soviet Union, which he had visited seven times between 1929 and 1935, becoming senior advisor on technical education to the Supreme Economic Council in 1930. Crowther maintained that the scientific world had a social duty to explain itself to governing elites and to the general public in order to ensure the scientific planning and development of society. In 1941 Crowther wrote

the English governing classes, as typified by the Cabinet, are non scientific, whereas,.... the most important part of the population the skilled artisans are roughly scientific. This split with regard to science is but one of the social fissures which will destroy the social structure if they are not removed.<sup>76</sup>

The Science Department had three main aims: to present and interpret Britain's contribution to science; to provide information on science and its organisation in Britain; and to develop closer cultural relations between scientists of all nations. The Council was not concerned with the commercial aspects of science and did not advertise British products or enter into negotiations for their sale. It was involved only with scientific contacts between learned, professional and educational groups.

The Science Department produced a number of publications, mostly for sale overseas. Monthly Science News, first issued in August 1941, provided a current record of British contributions to science. It was a popular newsletter of four illustrated sheets for the general reader, published in English, Arabic, French, Portuguese and Spanish and printed in six countries. By 1945 its total circulation had reached 65,000. With the support of the War Cabinet Scientific Advisory Committee the Council secured an extra allocation of paper in December 1941 so that Monthly Science News could be distributed

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76. J. Crowther, The Social Relations of Science, (London 1941) p. 636

at home. In addition, extracts from the magazine were reprinted regularly in the foreign and British Press.

A series of pamphlets entitled Science in Britain was also produced, describing the life and work of distinguished British scientists and engineers for the specialist reader. Science Comment was a monthly compilation of abstracts and reviews of scientific books and films. The British Medical Bulletin, first produced in 1943 as an abstracting journal, developed into a four hundred page volume reviewing advances in British medicine and written by medical experts. It was published in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Turkish and reprinted in Sweden with a total circulation of 10,000 copies by 1945. In addition, it was supplied to the Ministry of Health and the War Office.

The Science Department provided the secretariat of the Anglo-Soviet Scientific Collaboration Committee, and, arising from this committee, formed a section to deal with the exchange of scientific information with the Soviet Union. Through the committee, Soviet scientific publications were collected at a Science Library at South Kensington, a comprehensive scientific and technical Russian-English dictionary was produced and Soviet scientific papers were translated. The Science Department acted as the intermediary between British scientific institutions and the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and maintained contacts with the Science Bureau of VOKS. A Science Information Department was founded in 1944 to deal with this work and with the provision of general scientific information.

The Film Department was advised by the Science Department on the production of scientific and technical films. Medical films especially, were successful, particularly Surgery in Chest Disease and Accident Service. Scientific broadcasts were arranged, including a series, recorded by thirteen eminent scientists, called Science Lifts the Veil on the conquest of the sub-visible universe. Exhibitions and lecture tours were arranged and a Society for Visiting Scientists was opened in London in 1944 in cooperation with the Royal Society. In the field of engineering the Council played a valuable role in making known abroad British Standards Specifications. In collaboration with the British Standards Institute they were translated into Spanish and Turkish. Sets of specifications

were presented to suitable centres abroad.

The output of the Council's functional departments supplemented and complemented that of the MOI. In many fields - books, periodicals, visitors and science - the Council outstripped the Ministry, whilst in others, notably broadcasting, the Council surrendered most of its activities. In the fields of film and the Press, the two organisations competed and frequently clashed. The work of the smaller, purely cultural departments - drama, music and fine arts - was reduced while the war continued. The films, books and periodicals and the Press departments had the largest grants. Educational activities were entirely outside the Ministry's sphere and remained the basis of the Council's other work; many of the books, periodicals, films and similar items sent overseas were for educational use in the Council's institutes and schools. However, the Council had to subordinate its educational purpose in the national interest to influence a wider audience by producing and distributing material publicising the British viewpoint and organising prestige events. The Council's functional departments made a significant contribution to Britain's total propaganda output during the second world war.



## CHAPTER THREE

### CULTURAL BLOCKADE

Europe was the Council's main concern before, and in the early stages of the war. By showing the Union Jack in northern and southern Europe Britain hoped to steady the nerve of her friends while not provoking her enemies. In the Far East Britain was as impotent in the field of propaganda as she was to prove to be initially in the field of combat. Somewhat belatedly in April 1939, the Council was urged to send English teachers to Tokyo and in November it took over the British Library of Information and Culture in Tokyo. The Council's efforts were described by the director of the Library as 'a heroic last-minute rearguard action on unfamiliar terrain against a carefully prepared and skillfully delivered attack'.<sup>1</sup> The Council preferred, instead, to concentrate its resources in Europe and, after the spring of 1941, in those countries that remained accessible.

After Hitler's Balkan campaigns Britain, and the Council, were forced to Europe's extremities - Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. The Council formed an important, and in Spain and Turkey, the most important, part of Britain's propaganda counter-attack. Neither the Council or the MOI operated in Eire and the Council did not work in Switzerland either. Cordial relations with the neutrals were essential to Britain's war effort and the extent of the Council's activities in them is a measure of their primacy. Turkey was the largest single consumer of the Council's budget and the other three European neutrals came next after Egypt, Palestine and Argentina. But first the Council had to mount a blockade of the Third Reich itself.

#### Retreat From Europe 1939-1941.

After attending a meeting of the Strategical Appreciation Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence in March 1939, Leeper reported that the Chiefs of Staff expected propaganda

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1. F.Hawley, Notes on British cultural policy in Japan, 1 June 1944. BW2/95

to be Britain's principal offensive weapon in the early stages of the war.<sup>2</sup> The chief organ for overt propaganda at that time, excluding the BBC, was the British Council and its overseas contacts. It was planned that the Council should be absorbed by the MOI on the outbreak of war and, therefore, the build up of its operations during peacetime would provide the Ministry with a ready-made network for the dissemination of propaganda. Moreover, a cultural blockade of Hitler's Germany would augment the economic, diplomatic and military blockade designed to encourage the internal collapse of the Third Reich. Hitler was to be isolated from his friends and sources of supply and black and white propaganda would provoke a revolt against his leadership.

The Council did not operate on a significant scale within Nazi Germany, partly because of the difficulties of so doing in a totalitarian state and partly because of resistance from the Embassy in Berlin, from within the Council and from the Foreign Office. Between 1935 and 1938 the Council received various suggestions from Germany for the development of cultural relations, principally for the distribution of material and the provision of scholarships and lecturers. Sir E. Phipps, British ambassador in Berlin, opposed an extensive propaganda campaign on the grounds that Germany might demand reciprocal facilities in Britain which would give Dr Goebbels an advantage in view of the comparative accessibility of information channels in Britain. Phipps recommended that the Council should meet only specific demands for material and subsidise the occasional cultural event. Colonel Bridge, the Council's Secretary General, minuted on the numerous requests the Council received from Germany,

In my opinion the effect of anything we can do in Germany at present would be so small and relatively so unimportant to the work we have to do in other countries, that it is useless entering into any activity in that country until the suggestion that we should do so comes from the Embassy.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, there was opposition on the Council's Executive Committee to any demonstrations of friendship towards Germany.

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2. Minute by R.A. Leeper, 3 March 1939. FO395/647B P1402/105/150
  3. Sir E. Phipps to Eden, 7 February 1936. BW32/1
  4. Minute by C. Bridge, 23 September 1937. BW32/1

The question was reconsidered after the Munich conference in the belief that Germany might now be more friendly towards Britain and that many Germans were out of sympathy with the Nazi Party. Kenneth Johnstone, Deputy Secretary General, agreed that the Council could cultivate liberal and pro-British attitudes in Germany:

How far that feeling would be allowed to develop by the Nazi authorities I do not know, but I believe that they would have serious difficulty in stopping the wave, if once we could start it . . . . .this would not only do the Council's cause but also the Council itself some good. We do not want to get the reputation of being a purely anti-German organisation.<sup>5</sup>

Johnstone added that any activities would have to be started immediately and on a lavish scale to make an impression and suggested bringing young Germans to Britain, perhaps on 'Chamberlain Scholarships'.<sup>6</sup> Bridge and Leeper agreed in principle with these proposals, although Leeper warned Lloyd that the Council's work in Germany would have to be restrained to avoid antagonising public opinion in Britain.<sup>7</sup> Leeper continued:

But I do want to say this, whatever atrocities the Nazi regime may commit, it is important that we should do everything in our power to keep in contact with such elements as we can who are capable of appreciating the British outlook on life and are anxious to learn more than they can get from their own newspapers and broadcasts.<sup>8</sup>

Bridge discussed these proposals with the Embassy in Berlin in November 1938. Recommendations arising from these discussions, including the institution of a daily wireless service, the formation of a British Library of Information, professional and academic exchanges and the supply of British books, films and lecturers, were presented to the Cabinet in December.<sup>9</sup> The Cabinet referred the proposals to the departments concerned for detailed consideration. Bridge informed the Council that the Prime Minister wanted to mount an intensive propaganda campaign in Germany and that the Council would receive a generous subsidy for this extra work.<sup>10</sup> Nothing came of these plans, however, as after March 1939 all matters concerning Germany were taken

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5. Minute by K. Johnstone, 3 October 1938. BW32/1
  6. Ibid.
  7. Leeper to Lloyd, 21 November 1938 BW32/1
  8. Ibid.
  9. CAB 23/96 CP(38)284 8 December 1938.
  10. Minute by K. Lindsay, 6 December 1938. BW32/2

out of the Council's hands and controlled by the Foreign Office.

On Germany's borders the Council could do little more than encourage Britain's friends. In the east the Council's activities were concentrated in Poland and were stepped up after Munich. No work was undertaken in Czechoslovakia before she was dismembered by her neighbours. In January 1939 new premises for the Anglo-Polish society and a British school were opened in Warsaw. A service of news and feature articles was provided for the Polish Press and the local Council representative edited The Warsaw Weekly, jointly subsidised by the Council and the Polish Government with a circulation of 2,000 to Government offices, Anglophile societies and educational institutions. Scholarships, exhibitions and film shows were organised and four English Chairs were sponsored at Polish universities. In February 1939 Sir H. Kennard reported an improvement in the attitude of the Polish authorities towards Britain since Munich which was 'marked by a fortunate and conspicuous development of British propaganda activities in Poland under the auspices of the British Council'.<sup>11</sup> Kennard continued that the Council had done

considerable service to the maintenance of British prestige and interests in a country where propaganda by foreign states - notably France and Germany - is active and successful and where the ordinary citizen is too frequently prevented by lack of information or its suppression and distortion in high quarters, from forming an accurate judgement of British ways and policy. ....the value of these activities can hardly be overestimated.<sup>12</sup>

The Council continued working in Poland until the German invasion in September. During the war the Home Division established close contacts with Polish airmen, soldiers and civilians in Britain and the Middle East.

To the north of Poland the Council actively promoted pro-British sentiment in the Baltic States, Finland and Scandinavia. In January 1939 there were sixteen Anglophile clubs in Sweden, six in Denmark, five in Finland, three in Norway and Latvia, two in Estonia and one in Lithuania. The Council offered scholarships, distributed British books and periodicals and supported The Baltic Times which was published in Tallin.

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11. Sir H. Kennard to Halifax, 8 February 1939. F0395/662

12. Ibid.

Although the Baltic States had declared their neutrality on the outbreak of war the Nazi-Soviet Pact had sealed their fate. Increasing Soviet pressure after the German invasion of Poland resulted in the signature of treaties of mutual assistance in October that gave the Soviet Union effective control. The Council continued its modest activities until August 1940 when German victories in the west were echoed in the east by the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.

In Finland the Council had supported the Finnish-British Society since 1935 and had founded a reading room and library in Helsinki in the same year. Scholarships for Finnish students and material for the branches of the Society absorbed most of the Council's Finnish budget. As the threat of war with the Soviet Union grew in October 1939, the Finnish population was mobilised, a large part of the British community was evacuated to Sweden and the Anglophile societies were suspended. The Council resumed its contacts after the Russo-Finnish war but they were suspended again in September 1941 when relations were broken off with Finland following her alliance with Germany in June.

Denmark, Norway and Holland received comparatively little attention from the Council although Anglophile societies were supported where they existed and some material was distributed. The German invasion in the spring of 1940 forced a hurried evacuation of Council staff and the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company, which was almost trapped in Arnhem on a tour sponsored by the Council, by the rapid German advance. In Sweden the Council's activities were on a larger scale and centred on local Anglophile groups. Difficulties of communication hampered Council work until the end of 1941.<sup>13</sup>

A British Institute existed in Paris before the Council was founded and the Travel Association also had offices there. The Council embarked on an extensive programme of activities in France in 1939. Noble Hall acted as Council and Travel Association Representative. The Council subsidised the independent Paris Institute, sponsored a large number of lecture tours, organised film shows and offered scholarships. A considerable amount of material was prepared for the French Press by the Council, particularly on British rearmament and readiness for war. Activities continued until the summer of 1940.

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13. The development of the Council's work in Sweden is dealt with below, p.104-105

The most important areas for the Council in the early stages of the war, however, were Italy and the Balkans. In the first years of the Council's life Anglo-Italian relations stood at their lowest after Britain had led the imposition of sanctions against Italy following Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. An institute had been founded in Florence in 1918 by British residents but the Council had none of its own. The Italian Government decided against unprovoked war on France and Britain in August 1939 and on 1 September, Britain's ambassador, Sir Percy Loraine, advised that the Italians 'will be sensitive to attention as well as to slights'.<sup>14</sup> Italy declared herself non-belligerent after the German invasion of Poland and Britain took steps to improve Anglo-Italian relations in the hope of weaning Mussolini from the Axis. Britain was careful not to provoke Mussolini in the Balkans but the Council had continued to support the Herbert British Institute in Tirana, the Albanian capital, after the Italian invasion in the spring of 1939. Its activities were modest and unobtrusive and the Council sought to ensure that it did not fall foul of the Italian authorities. In Italy the Council's activities increased dramatically in 1939. Lloyd told the Executive Committee in September that both 'the Foreign Office and the Ambassador wanted the Council to push ahead there'.<sup>15</sup>

In the summer before the outbreak of war in Europe the Council took over an institute in Milan that had been founded by the Florence Institute and opened a centre in Palermo in July. An institute was established in Naples in November and at Rome and Genoa the following month, marking 'the official inauguration of the British Council's forward policy of promoting British culture in Italy'.<sup>16</sup> This was achieved with the support of Loraine and the connivance of the Italian authorities. White explained in November that

Signor Mussolini has let it be known through Count Ciano that he approved the extension of the British Council's work in Italy, which included the opening of new institutes at Genoa, Milan, Naples and Palermo.<sup>17</sup>

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14. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, 3rd Series (London 1954) Vol. 8, p.494  
 15. Executive Committee Minutes, 21 September 1939. BW68/3  
 16. Sir P. Loraine to Halifax, 27 December 1939. BW40/9  
 17. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 14 November 1939. BW69/5

However, in December Loraine reported to Halifax that

The attitude of the Italian Government seems to be that while they view the British Council's initiative in this direction with favour, we can not at this stage look for their open cooperation or expect to make any propaganda capital out of the venture.<sup>18</sup>

The Council kept a low profile and its unofficial status was clearly of value to its work in Italy. The possibility of an Anglo-Italian cultural agreement was rejected finally in February 1940 and the Council was forced to work within the rules of a fascist state, including the banning of Jews from its institutes. Likewise, a Jewish teacher sent to Genoa had to be recalled hurriedly. Germany's invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940 offered Italy the opportunity of cheap gains at the expense of the Allies. The position of the Council's institutes deteriorated rapidly. An outburst of anti-British feeling resulted in the capture of the Milan Institute by rioters in May, while demonstrators gathered regularly outside the institutes at Palermo, Naples and Genoa. The Council's staff was evacuated a week before Italy entered the war. When Italy declared war in June there were one thousand students at the Rome Institute, four hundred and fifty at Milan, three hundred at Palermo and two hundred at Genoa and Naples. The numbers were a small but significant testimony to the Council's work in Italy in the last year before she joined Britain's enemies.

British propaganda faced a daunting task in the Balkans. After the Anschluss and the collapse of the Little Entente and French influence, in south-eastern Europe became the 'main battleground between British and foreign, chiefly German, influences'.<sup>19</sup> Britain had few cards to play; she was unable to compete with German economic penetration or supply the arms and other material demanded by the Balkan states. Moreover, British diplomacy was hampered by Britain's weak military position and by the territorial disputes of the area. In <sup>March</sup> April 1939 Britain and France offered unilateral guarantees to Greece and Roumania. When war broke out Britain sought to resurrect a Balkan bloc but Germany's victories in the west in the summer of 1940 shattered that fragile structure. Roumania was forced to concede large areas to her neighbours and denounced the British guarantee

18. I.Greenlees to C.Bridge, 2 February 1940. BW2/87

19. Memorandum by Leeper, September 1938. FO 395/647A

A general desire to offer Germany no provocation and a fear of Soviet and Italian designs undermined all British attempts to unite the Balkans against the Axis powers and restricted the field for British propaganda.

Before war had broken out Lloyd had been anxious to rival the political, economic and cultural agreements offered by Germany and Italy in the Balkans. In October 1938 Alec Cadogan recorded in his diary:

George Lloyd at 6.30 about Roumanian wheat. Says we must at once buy 60,000 tons of Roumanian wheat. But we don't want the damned stuff.....<sup>19</sup>

After a tour of the Balkans in 1938, Kenneth Johnstone argued that

the results of our cultural propaganda, however energetically conducted and however well supported financially, will fade unless we are prepared to rescue the Balkan states from complete economic domination.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the absence of support in the economic and political fields, the Council pressed ahead with the development of widescale activities in the Balkans. In 1939 the Council prepared for the opening of institutes in Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Yugoslavia and the extension of its work in Greece. In October 1939 the Roumanian Minister in London suggested that Lloyd should visit Bucharest 'to strengthen the will of the Roumanian Government in present circumstances'.<sup>21</sup> Lloyd's trip was extended to all the Balkan capitals and from Roumania he reported to Orme Sargent, Deputy Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office,

They are in an awful flutter here over the Russians and you trip over Germans everywhere you walk.<sup>22</sup>

In Roumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, however, the Council was only able to make a superficial impression, but in Yugoslavia and Greece it found more promising soil.

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19. Ed. D. Dilks, The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945 (London 1971) p.121

20. Executive Committee Minutes, 14 March 1939. BW68/3

21. Foreign Office telegram to Bucharest, 10 October 1939.

FO 800/278 Ro/39/4

22. Lloyd to O. Sargent, 16 November 1939. FO 800/278 Ro/39/7



An English club was founded in Roumania in 1936 but disputes between the Club, the Anglo-Roumanian Society and the Roumanian authorities and the Treasury's parsimony prevented the foundation of an institute, even though a site had been donated by King Carol.<sup>23</sup> English classes were organised by the Anglo-Roumanian Society for one thousand five hundred students in September 1939, rising to three thousand by November but increasing German pressure forestalled the initiation of further activities. After the humiliating cessions of territory in June and August 1940, King Carol was forced to abdicate in September and the Council's freedom of action was severely curtailed by his successors, General Antonescu and the fascist-style Iron Guard. As part of an anti-British campaign instituted by the Iron Guard, the Council was asked to leave Roumania in September and did so in the following month with other British subjects. In November Roumania acceded to the Tripartite Pact.

Likewise, in Bulgaria and Hungary the Council's work was modest. Both fell into Germany's sphere of influence, having fought with her in the earlier world war and harboured the same revisionist grievances against the treaties that had ended it. King Boris' indiscretion allowed Britain some leeway and the Council was able to maintain a small institute in Sofia in 1940 and to support the English Speaking League. The staff were swiftly evacuated in February 1941 before the arrival of the German army. In Hungary an English Chair and lectureships were subsidised at Budapest University and lecturers were sent to the Anglophile societies. Writing in The Contemporary Review in January 1939 a Hungarian appealed for increasing contacts with Britain:

The reward will indeed be rich, because it would lift Hungary from her isolated position in the Danube Valley, from the embrace of Slavs and Germans, and bring her nearer the British Empire. Cultural ties that may yet be forged in the future will contradict the principle of geopolitical materialism, which holds that the intellectual attitude of a nation must be defined and limited by her geographical surroundings.<sup>25</sup>

But the Nazi embrace was soon tightened and before the Council could find premises for an institute, Hungary had joined the Axis.

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23. See above p. 40

24 See M. Peterson, Both Sides of the Curtain, (London 1950) p. 128

25 Dr. J. Balogh, 'Anglo-Hungarian Cultural Relations'. Contemporary Review, Vol. CLV, January 1939, p. 88

Following Johnstone's visit to Yugoslavia in 1938, the Council planned the foundation of institutes and societies throughout the country. After war broke out, mindful of Yugoslavia's fear of incurring German or Italian displeasure, the Legation advised the Council to concentrate on existing Anglophile societies and schools. Julian Amery, assistant Press Attaché and Section D's agent in Belgrade, also experienced the Legation's cautious attitude to propaganda in Yugoslavia.

My duty as Press Attaché was to try to influence opinion in favour of the Allies. But the Legation policy was to keep the temperature low, to support Prince Paul, and at all costs to avoid provoking the Germans. To reconcile these two aims was a difficult and frustrating business.<sup>26</sup>

The Council found similar difficulties but decided to proceed with the opening of institutes at Belgrade and Zagreb 'to show that we are not losing our heads' in the war of nerves in the Balkans.<sup>27</sup> In December 1939, an ostensibly independent but officially-controlled newsagency, Britanova, was founded in Belgrade with branches in other Balkan capitals and Turkey and the Council supplied it with a large amount of material. A Yugoslav-British Institute was formally opened in Belgrade in May 1940 with five hundred students and a director of studies was appointed in Zagreb.

After the fall of France, Yugoslavia stood isolated in the Balkans, with the exception of Greece, and the German Legation and Axis-controlled media became the dominant influences in Belgrade. Amery's press office was suppressed and only the Council remained to present the Allied view. Enrolments at the Institute continued after the Italian attack on Greece in October 1940 and by March 1941 it had one thousand students on its books. In the same month, bowing to Axis pressure, Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact, but a political coup in Belgrade reversed this action and Yugoslavia declared neutrality. The Council's work continued throughout these events and it was not until German troops began pouring into Yugoslavia in April that the Council's staff left with the Legation party, which escaped to Lisbon. Unfortunately, the Council's director of studies at Zagreb was captured. In April 1941, Stephen Childs,

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26. J. Amery, Approach March, (London 1973) p.157

27. Minute by K. Johnstone, 18 October 1939. BW66/1

the former Press Attaché in Belgrade, wrote to the Council to congratulate it on the success of its work in Yugoslavia.

It must be a great satisfaction to the Council - as it was to me - to realise that the arduous and patient work of the Council.....has played a great part in creating the Yugoslav will to fight and suffer for the ideals of Freedom and Democracy.<sup>28</sup>

In south-eastern Europe, the Council spent the most, and was the chief organ for British propaganda, in Greece. Before war broke out the Council supported the Anglo-Hellenic League in which it had 'a nucleus of devoted Greek supporters on whose independent collaboration we can rely'<sup>29</sup> and in 1938 established an Institute of English Studies at Athens. This was administered by the Byron Professor of English Literature at Athens University, a post subsidised by the Council. The first Byron professor was H.V.Routh, appointed in January 1938. In addition, the Council appointed a British headmaster to Spetsai College and was invited by the Greek authorities to take over the athletic training of the Greek Youth Movement. Problems arose for the Council in January 1939 from new laws providing for the surveillance of all foreign cultural organisations, unless they were registered by cultural agreements such as the Germans, Italians and French had. Moreover, the Greek Government insisted on nominating candidates for Council bursaries. Lloyd visited Athens in March 1939 and saw the King and General Metaxas. He persuaded Metaxas to conclude a cultural agreement and to compromise on the bursaries question. The Foreign Office agreed reluctantly to a cultural treaty, having had no previous experience of one but recognising that it was necessary to guarantee the continuation of Council activities in Greece. The Anglo-Greek <sup>cultural</sup> treaty was signed on the entry of Greece into the war and set an important precedent.

On the outbreak of war the Institute in Athens was entrusted with the conduct of all British publicity and related activities in Greece, for it possessed both 'suitable staff and premises'.<sup>30</sup> The Athens Embassy had planned that the Council's centres would be 'the principal channels for the dissemination of information throughout Greece'.<sup>31</sup> Professor Routh doubled as Council Representative and Press Attaché and liaised between the Embassy

28. S. Childs to White, 7 April 1941. BW66/2

29. Executive Committee Minutes, 14 March 1939. BW68/3

30. A. Waterlow to C. Warner, 10 April 1939. FO395/6478pP131/105/150

31. MOI Publicity Planning Section, Report on Greece, July 1939.

and the Council. As the Embassy explained to the MOI planners with reference to the Council,

Existing publicity is almost entirely in its hands and its work in Greece has been specially fruitful.<sup>32</sup>

British propoganda in Greece aimed to encourage the conclusion of an Anglo-Greek alliance or at least Greek neutrality and to counter insinuations that Britain was not prepared to fight. The Council's organisation was

available for use in all three stages and no better nucleus could be wished for. At present it spends about £20,000 a year in Greece and that amount could be profitably increased.<sup>33</sup>

Through the Athens Institute and its branches and the Anglo-Hellenic League, 'the cultural purpose was a cover for the publicity purpose' and enabled the deployment of personnel to areas 'where opinion most needs steadying'.<sup>34</sup> These were identified as being on the Italian border and in the Dodecanese. The Council's work expanded rapidly in 1940 with the development of institutes at Salonika, Samos, Patras and Calamata. At the start of the autumn session the Athens Institute was besieged by eight thousand applicants.

After the Italian attack in October the Council's institutes were closed by a Government decree in November that forbade the operation of foreign cultural organisations. The defence of Greece became for Britain as much a moral obligation as a political and military necessity. Churchill wrote to Eden, then in the Middle East, on 2 November

Greek situation dominates others now.....  
Aid to Greece must be attentively studied lest whole Turkish position is lost through proof that England never tries to keep her guarantees.<sup>35</sup>

While Eden sought a way to save Greece the Council redoubled its efforts there. For the next four months private classes and meetings were arranged wherever possible and the Institute turned its attention to more overtly propogandist activities. Working in cooperation with the Greek Propaganda Ministry, the Council's staff assisted in the preparation and translation of leaflets, broadcast a daily English lesson, provided material for the

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32. Ibid.

33. Ibid..

34. Ibid.

35. W.S.Churchill, The Second World War, (London 1949)Vol.2 ,p.474

Greek Press, published English books, supervised the distribution of National Defence Weekly, described as a Greek Illustrated News, and ran a large Anglo-Greek social club. In January 1941, Lloyd claimed the credit for the Council in Greece in 'creating an Anglophile spirit which has defied the blandishments and threats of the Axis powers'.<sup>36</sup>

In the new year, however, the Council's work was severely curtailed by the war and on the day before the signature of an armistice with Germany on 23 April, the Council's staff was evacuated. At the Council's Annual General Meeting in June, Riverdale spoke of the Council's success in Greece:

He referred to a message sent by General Metaxas shortly before his death in which he said that the work of the British Council in Greece had contributed largely to the Anglophile spirit of the Greek people.<sup>37</sup>

The Council was successful in Greece because its work had been conducted against a favourable political and military background. Britain had been able to honour her guarantee, at least in part, and, as Churchill explained to Eden in March,

in any event to have fought and suffered in Greece would be less damaging to us than to have left Greece to her fate.....<sup>38</sup>

#### The European Neutrals 1939-1945.

In the Mediterranean the neutrality of Spain at one end and Turkey at the other was vital to Britain's war effort. An Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of mutual assistance was signed on the outbreak of war but Turkey's obligations were strictly limited. Caution and a delicate balancing of the demands of the European powers were the hallmarks of Turkish policy during the war. Her pivotal position in the eastern Mediterranean and military unpreparedness meant that Turkish neutrality was itself of great strategic value to Britain. If Turkey gave way to, or was defeated by the Axis powers, the way to the Suez Canal and the oilfields of Iraq, Iran and the whole Arabian peninsula would be open. On the other hand, Turkey's entry into the war on the Allied side would demand supplies and equipment that Britain could not spare. After the fall of

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36. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 January 1941. Bw69/6

37. The Times, 12 June 1941, p.9, col.7. The message was transmitted orally to Lloyd through the Greek Embassy in London.

38. Churchill, op.cit. vol.3 p.93

France, Turkish belligerency would have invited German, Italian or possibly Soviet attack, which Britain would have found impossible to resist. Turkish neutrality, therefore, was vital and attempts to gain her more active cooperation during the German invasion of the Balkans failed. After Italy's entry into the war, Turkey declared the tripartite treaty invalid and limited herself to the status of a non-belligerent.

Turkish independence and favourable neutrality were the essential background to British policy in the Middle East and the Council's efforts were directed towards securing these objectives. The nationalist Republican People's Party of Ataturk, which still controlled Turkey, made impossible the development of conventional Council work, but the Council's unofficial status and flexibility enabled it to penetrate to a remarkable degree a xenophobic nation. Its first contacts were in connection with British schools in Turkey and the provision of English teachers. Ataturk's vision of a truly Turkish nation meant that these schools catered mainly for British pupils as Turkish children under the age of twelve were forbidden to attend foreign schools. Therefore, the Council sought to place Englishmen within the Turkish educational system. In November 1940 Michael Grant was sent from the Cairo Office to organise this work. Before joining the Council, Grant had pursued a distinguished academic career, joining the army on the outbreak of war. In Turkey he established close personal contacts <sup>with</sup> the Minister of Education and with university and state educational bodies.

Grant began by organising English classes at private schools and technical, agricultural and military colleges. At the request of the Minister of Education, candidates for posts at the University of Istanbul were found, four in 1940, and an Adviser on Technical Education to the Turkish Government was appointed. Grant's outstanding success was in arranging for Council teachers to give tuition in English in the Halkelevis. In 1941 there were three hundred and thirty Halkelevis throughout Turkey, acting as

the Headquarters of the People's Party through which the political views of the Government radiate and where political life and information are centred.<sup>39</sup>

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39. Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Diplomat in Peace and War, (London 1949) p.139-40.

They were run by volunteers responsible to the provincial Party President. The Council's teachers were supplied free and English sections were donated to the Halkelevi libraries. Through the Halkelevi the Council was the only foreign body in Turkey in direct contact with the People's Party organisation.<sup>40</sup> From September to December 1941 the Council's staff taught two thousand nine hundred pupils, of which approximately half were taught at institutions belonging to the Ministry of Education, one thousand were taught at Halkelevis and the remainder were members of Government Departments or the Armed Forces. Included amongst the last were the Chief of the Air Staff, the Under Secretary of State for Air, students at Robert College and air force detachments in Smyrna. The expansion of this work was only limited by staff numbers. In 1942 the President of the Administrative Council of the People's Party informed Grant that the Halkelevis would take all the English teachers the Council could provide. By June the Council was in contact with three and a half thousand Turks.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the Council offered private tuition to prominent citizens, including the son of the President and the Ministers of Education and Commerce and their families. All branches of the Council's work in Turkey grew by fifty per cent in 1942 and the Council's Finance Officer noted approvingly that 'money spent in Turkey gave a greater return than money spent anywhere else'.<sup>42</sup> At the end of the year Grant's success was acknowledged in The Times.

Only quite recently, through the British Council, some interest has been taken in educational matters, and it must be admitted that thanks to the tact and understanding shown by its representatives who are working in close cooperation with local authorities, the result has been extremely satisfactory and encouraging and gained the full appreciation of all Turks who have been following the progress made.<sup>43</sup>

As the military position of the Allies improved in 1943, increasing pressure was placed on Turkey to enter the war. Although she refused to do so until February 1945, the Turkish leaders actively encouraged the development of the Council's work. This was, after all, a field in which Britain did have resources to spare. In 1943 the programme of the People's Party

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40. Sir P. Loraine to Sir J. Chancellor, 12 April 1941. BW61/9  
 41. Of which 37% were in Halkelevis, 27% in secondary schools, 22% in higher education and 9% in the Armed Forces.  
 42. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 11 August 1941. BW69/8  
 43. The Times, 9 December 1941, p.3, col.4.

promoted education from fifth to third place and stressed the importance of technical education. The programme omitted the principle that education should be free from foreign influence for the first time and referred to Halkelevis' primary role and the Council's help in building up their libraries. Grant was again asked for as many teachers as the Council could provide, a request that he described as

an offer of wholehearted collaboration amounting to the permanent, exclusive and ubiquitous establishment of British influence in the whole vast system of 600 Helkelevis. 44

The Council estimated that by 1945 it taught 10,000 students. In addition there were nine British professors at Turkish universities and colleges and English bulletins on medicine, agriculture and engineering and British novels and plays were translated, printed and distributed locally. A Turkish Education Attaché was appointed to the Embassy in London to deal with the large number of Turkish students brought over under the auspices of the Council. The Council's success was due largely to Grant's efforts and to the fact that he was 'on exceptionally good terms with the leaders of the Turkish People's Party' which enabled the Council to secure a position of exclusive influence within the organs of the Turkish Republic.<sup>45</sup> A reception in Ankara in 1944 to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Council's work in Turkey was attended by the Prime Minister and six Cabinet Ministers as well as the British ambassador and other members of the diplomatic corps. President Ionu, who had attended a number of functions organised by the Council, sent a personal message of goodwill. In November 1944 the Foreign Office commended the Council's work in Turkey and agreed with the Ankara Embassy that

no single branch of our activities in Turkey can at present give better returns than the British Council.<sup>46</sup>

Spanish neutrality was vital to the Allied position in the Mediterranean and to the security of Gibraltar. The triumph of fascism under Franco had seriously damaged Anglo-Spanish relations and the opposition of Labour Party representatives on the Council's Executive Committee had prevented the

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44. M. Grant to T.P. Tunnard-Moore, 28 January 1943. BW61/4

45. Minute by A.M.B. Schofield, 1 November 1943. FO371/37435

RI0432/22/44

46. M. Palairret to White, 30 November 1944. FO924/11 LC1126/15/452



development of Council activities in Spain. In 1938 Lloyd held discussions with the Spanish ambassador in London and reported to the Treasury in May 1939 that the Duke of Alba was anxious that Britain should counter Axis propaganda in Spain.<sup>47</sup> Lloyd approached Snell in an effort to overcome Labour opposition, and especially that of Attlee, to Council operations in fascist Spain. Lloyd argued that it was

sheer folly for us to lie back and do nothing and let the Germans and Italians get all the key positions, culturally as well as economically and politically.<sup>48</sup>

Lloyd told Snell of the Portuguese leader's 'grave anxiety' that as a result of the civil war Franco would be unable to rid Spain of German personnel.<sup>49</sup> In Dr. Salazar's opinion, Lloyd explained, Franco would welcome help to counter the growth of German and Italian influence. Attlee, however, was unmoved and Leeper argued that propaganda would be ineffective in a country preoccupied with internal reconstruction.

Attlee resigned from the Executive Committee after the outbreak of war in Europe to concentrate on his other duties. Although there was no immediate danger of Spanish intervention, the improvement of Anglo-Spanish relations was essential. Lloyd's persistence secured an interview with Franco in October against the wishes of the British ambassador who had himself only recently arrived in Madrid.<sup>50</sup> Franco gave 'guarded assurances of his support in principle'<sup>51</sup> to the start of Council activities but the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Relations when 'apprised of General Franco's decision', was 'less than forthcoming.'<sup>52</sup> The Times commented favourably on the purpose of Lloyd's visit.

Apart from the question of news, however, the principal requirement of the moment is to provide Spanish Nationalist opinion, which was warped during the civil war, with the means of acquiring the fundamental facts concerning British institutions and aims, because the desired friendship between Great Britain and Spain can best be based on knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

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47. Minute by E.Hale, 6 May 1939. T161/1029 S35581/03/39  
 48. Lloyd to Snell, 4 January 1939. F0395/657 P163/163/150  
 49. Ibid.  
 50. M.Peterson, Both Sides of the Curtain. (London 1950) p.215  
 51. Digest of Teaching Work Overseas, March 1941. BW82/10  
 52. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 14 November 1939. BW69/5  
 53. The Times, 28 October 1939, p.5, col.2.

The implementation of the Council's plans, took longer than Lloyd anticipated. Sir Maurice Paterson, Britain's ambassador in Madrid, recorded that

For six months we fought a weary battle over the payment and religion of the British Council's employees, the control to be exercised by the Spanish Government, the reciprocal facilities to be given Spain. Even Beigbeder's goodwill had seemed unequal to the task of shortening this Sisphyean labour which was carried on to the accompaniment of impatient interventions by Lloyd in London.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, in April 1940, Peterson advised that the Council should accept the Spanish conditions, which included a requirement that Council staff should be Roman Catholic, that Council lecturers had to be approved and that lists of students at the Council's Institute should be submitted in triplicate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delicacy of the Council's operations in Spain had repercussions elsewhere, particularly in Latin America. In Mexico, for example, the Council decided that it could not provide books to a club used by Spanish refugees.<sup>55</sup> The director for the proposed Madrid Institute had to be 'unequivocably pro-Franco.....Roman Catholic and.....an Hispanic scholar of distinction'.<sup>56</sup> In June, Professor Walter Starkie of Dublin University, an authority on Spain was appointed Representative and director of the Institute. Starkie was a flamboyant and dominating figure who had travelled widely in Spain. He was a personal friend of the Duke of Alba and acceptable to Franco, whom he had supported in the civil war. At the end of 1938 Julian Amery met Starkie at Burgos and described him as

a stout middle-aged gentleman of florid complexion.....(carrying)..... a gladstone bag and a violin case.<sup>57</sup>

Starkie's personality and extensive contacts in Spain were to cause difficulties with Peterson's successor, Sir Samuel Hoare, whose own acquaintance with Spain was limited by comparison. Starkie accepted Lloyd's invitation as 'an answer to a prayer' to be able to join Britain's side in the war and to return to his beloved Spain.<sup>58</sup>

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54. Peterson, op.cit. p.216

55. K.Grubb to White, 24 January 1940. BW2/85

56. Digest of Teaching Overseas, March 1941. BW82/10

57. Amery, op.cit. p.104-5

58. W.Starkie, In Sara's Tents, (London 1953), p.7.

The Council faced an uphill task, for a French Institute had been established for 25 years and twelve German and seventeen Italian institutes were already flourishing. Nazi influence in the Spanish Press was paramount and Allied propaganda virtually banned. Moreover, the rapid advance of the German armies across France had convinced 'nine Spaniards out of ten .....that Hitler will win the war'.<sup>59</sup> After the collapse of France and the entry of Italy into the war the balance between interventionists and non-interventionists was precarious. The atmosphere in which the first British Institute opened in Madrid in October was dangerous and hostile and its start was necessarily unobtrusive. In the same month Franco met Hitler on the Spanish frontier and, although he refused Hitler's demands, Spanish resistance was in danger of being undermined by increasing German penetration. The Foreign Office was anxious to assure Franco of British support if he remained relatively independent of the Axis. Hoare recommended in November that Britain should continue its policy of generous support for Spain in the economic sphere on condition that Spain did not assist Britain's enemies and gave full publicity to the goods that Britain supplied.

The normal activities of the MOI were impossible in Spain and personal contacts and 'conversation had an exceptionally strong influence in the making of opinion.....'.<sup>60</sup> To the Institute in Madrid Starkie added two schools, for infants and juniors, and a chapel for Catholic services. To attract social members entertainment was on a lavish scale. Starkie was on good terms with Falangists, Monarchists and Traditionalists and 'had been at the front during the civil war and had written in favour of Franco's cause'.<sup>61</sup> Ex-Republicans who were friends of Britain also attended as well as writers, artists, musicians, clerics and members of the diplomatic corps - with the exception of the German and Italian. Friendly co-operation was established with the French Institut and Lycée and the American ambassador lectured at the Institute in June 1941. On the educational side the Institute provided English lessons and courses for teachers and ex-servicemen wishing to join the Spanish diplomatic service. In its first full term in the first quarter of 1941, the Institute had 180 students.

59. Lord Templewood, Ambassador on a Special Mission. (London 1946)  
60. Ibid. p.135.

61. W.Starkie to Robertson, 2 July 1941. BW56/3

The success of Hitler's Balkan campaigns in the spring led to renewed nervousness about a possible German invasion and attendance declined. Nevertheless, the Institute stayed open throughout the summer vacation and organised holiday courses in response to the opening of a large, new German cultural Institute. The hostility of the Axis powers to the British Institute was demonstrated by ceaseless Spanish Gestapo surveillance and harassment of staff to the extent that by the end of 1941 Starkie dare not leave the Institute lest one of his staff should make a false move. The secret police sought evidence to close the Institute and succeeded in frightening away some members. Despite their efforts, however, numbers continued to rise and by the end of 1942 there were more than one thousand students and five hundred members.

The British Embassy was initially cautious in its attitude towards the British Institute but in March 1941, Hoare lectured there and became a convert to its activities. However, Hoare opposed the expansion of its activities to the provinces until 1943 on the grounds that such a request to the Spanish authorities might have unfortunate repercussions on the Madrid Institute by drawing attention to its success. In the summer of 1943, with the tide of the war turning in the Allies' favour, Hoare agreed to the opening of an Institute in Barcelona on the same conditions as Madrid. In December he recommended the foundation of institutes in Bilbao, Valencia and Seville and the coordination of private English educational activities in Spain. In October 1943, the institute in Barcelona was opened and a year later at Bilbao; the Valencia Institute was opened in March 1945 and one at Seville in January 1946. The Madrid, Bilbao and Seville Institute buildings were owned by the Council, the latter being a seventeenth century palace.<sup>62</sup> In September 1944 after discussions between Starkie and the Spanish Ministry of Education, English was placed on an equal footing with French and German in Spanish schools. By the end of the war the Council had a considerable organisation in Spain despite the attitude of cold reserve adopted by the British Government to Franco's regime in the diplomatic sphere. At Potsdam it was agreed that Spain would not be invited to join the United Nations

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62. For a fuller description of the British Institutes in Spain, see W. Starkie "The British Council in Spain", Bulletin of Spanish Studies, Vol. 24, October 1948, p. 270-5.

and Franco became increasingly isolated. Through the activities of the Council, Britain was able to maintain contacts unacceptable at an official level against the establishment of a more acceptable regime in Spain in the future.

In marked contrast to the other European neutrals, Portugal appeared a favourable field for the Council. A long tradition of common interest was represented by the Anglo-Portuguese alliance, and the Nazi-Soviet pact and the invasion of Catholic Poland had undermined German propaganda. But the collapse of France and the pro-Axis stance of Spain posed grave threats and in the first years of the war, British propaganda had the difficult task of persuading the Portuguese to believe in the ultimate victory of the Allies despite overwhelming enemy triumphs.

The Council had 'from the beginning regarded Portugal as a key country',<sup>63</sup> and it had been the inroads of German, Italian and, later, Falangist propaganda that had led it to support English Rooms and lectureships at universities, scholars in Britain and the export of British books to Portugal. In 1936 the Council subsidised the salary of George West, secretary of the English Room at Coimbra University, which became an institute in June. An English Room was also opened at the Technical University in Lisbon and, in November 1938 the Lisbon Institute was formerly by Lloyd. He met Salazar, who was concerned chiefly about Axis activities in Spain, in October 1939, and in December, the British ambassador reported that

There remains no doubt as to the good work which is being done by the British Institute under Mr. West's direction. Portuguese applications to join the Institute are on the increase, and the foundations are being laid for that intensification of Anglo-Portuguese relations which it is the declared policy of H.M.G. to achieve.<sup>64</sup>

By March 1940 the Lisbon Institute had over one thousand students and in December a third institute was opened at Oporto. West was appointed a Recognised Official of Public Instruction by the Portuguese, a distinction held by the directors of the German and Italian Institutes.

63. Digest of Teaching Work Overseas, March 1941. BW82/10

64. R.W. Selby to Halifax, 31 December 1939. F0371/24491  
C416/416/36

The roll-call of German victories continued into 1941. Ronald Tree was in Lisbon when Yugoslavia was overrun and German troops stood poised on the borders of Greece. Tree commented on the visual display in the capital:

Everywhere there were pictures of healthy young Germans encased in the newest form of helmet, sitting on the latest form of tank, armoured car or aeroplane, smilingly acknowledging the plaudits of the countries they had just overrun. We, on the other hand, had little or nothing to show: pictures of pre-war cricket matches and village greens were relied on to convey the British way of life, which looked to the Portuguese as if it were to disappear forever. 65

In May 1941 the Foreign Office asked the Council to expand in Portugal 'in any way possible' to offset the effect of Germany's victories.<sup>66</sup> Ifor Evans visited Lisbon at the end of 1941 and recommended an increase in staff, the elevation of West to Representative and the consolidation of the Council's work at the three centres. In Lisbon, Ifor Evans advised the Institute to be more selective and to aim at the official and professional classes. At Coimbra he argued that the Council should concentrate on the university, 'for there is the training ground of future officials, secretaries, directors of education, perhaps of a future Salazar'.<sup>67</sup>

The Council's work in Portugal expanded steadily in the last three years of the war. New, larger institutes were opened in Lisbon and Opporto in 1943. At the beginning of 1945 the Lisbon Institute had fifteen hundred members and students and a waiting list of eighteen hundred. Opporto had five hundred and Coimbra had two hundred. After a visit to Portugal in May 1945 W.H.Montagu-Pollock and George Hall reported that

Dr. Salazar expressed his satisfaction with the Council's work in Portugal, drawing attention to its importance for the furtherance of Anglo-Portuguese relations, and added that he shortly hoped to make English the first foreign language in the Portuguese education system.<sup>68</sup>

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65. R.Tree, When the Moon was High, (London 1975) p.160.  
 66. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 6 May 1941. BW69/7  
 67. Report by Ifor Evans, January 1942. BW2/145.  
 68. Foreign Office Report on a visit to Council Institutes abroad, 1945. BW2/111

Salazar stressed the value of the Council's unofficial status, which had enabled his Government to permit its expansion without granting reciprocal facilities to the Axis powers.<sup>69</sup> Hall warned Salazar that economic problems might force the Council to contract its activities and that Portugal should not rely too heavily on British help for the teaching of English.

It was equally important that the British case should be presented in Portugal's colonies 'since a growth in anti-British sentiment there would inevitably react unfavourably upon opinion in the mother country...'.<sup>70</sup> A Council Representative arrived in Angola in May 1943 and began English lessons at the Clube Luso Britanico de Angola at Loanda in July. A small sum was provided for equipment, books and a broadcast English lesson. Although Britain's ambassador in Portugal supported the continuation of these activities after the war, other calls on the Council's grant forced withdrawal in March 1946. The British vice-consul took over the work previously undertaken by the Council.

Sweden's policy of strict neutrality and the problem of communication between Britain and Sweden in the first two years of the war, prevented the establishment of direct activities. After the German invasion of Norway and Denmark in April 1940, Sweden was cut off from Allied assistance and, after June, was dependent on Germany for essential supplies. In this position, Sweden was forced to make concessions to German demands and could not allow the expansion of British representation in Stockholm. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, however, the route to Sweden was reopened. The Council's first Representative arrived in Stockholm in October 1941. Ronald Bottrall, was a distinguished poet and an English lecturer who had worked in Finland, the United States, Singapore and Florence before the war. A Council office was opened in Stockholm by the British ambassador in December, in the presence of the Swedish Minister of Education and representatives of Swedish arts, sciences and education. The office's chief function was to fill the gap left by the unavailability of British newspapers, books and periodicals and a reading room and printing facilities were installed. Bottrall successfully established contacts with Swedish professional, scientific and

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69. Ibid.

70. OEPEC Meeting, 23 June 1941. T162/858 E39140/13

educational bodies and the Swedish-British Society. English courses and lectureships at universities and summer schools were sponsored and Council staff taught in secondary schools and contributed to the School Radio English programme. Through tours conducted by the Council and Legation staff, the number of Anglophile societies rose from fifteen in 1942 to fifty-four at the end of the war, with a total membership of eight thousand four hundred. The societies met once a month from September to April and Bottrall recruited lecturers from the British Legation and British residents in Sweden.<sup>71</sup> Distinguished lecturers also arrived from England: in 1941 Sir Kenneth Clark, and Malcolm Sargent; T.S. Eliot in 1942; in 1943 Sir Lawrence Bragg and Harold Nicolson. As the tide of war turned in the Allied favour from mid-1943 onwards, the Council's work expanded as fast as staff and supplies would permit. The Stockholm Office and its operations through Swedish agencies became a model for Council work in post-war Europe. At the end of 1944 Bottrall returned to the London office to help plan the Council's return to liberated Europe and his place was taken briefly by Professor Roberts, former Professor of History at Rhodes College.

Iceland was low in the Council's priorities until March 1939 when the Executive Committee, on Lloyd's recommendation, decided to expand activities to combat German penetration of this strategically vital island.<sup>72</sup> Support for the Anglia Society was increased, scholarships were offered to Icelandic students for study in Britain and a lecturer was appointed to Reyjavik University. British forces occupied Iceland in April 1940 after the German invasion of Denmark and the Council's attention turned to easing friction between the Icelanders and their British occupiers. The work of the Anglia Society was extended to encourage fraternisation. Social functions dominated cultural events and at monthly meetings 'the preliminary lecture on some cultural subject was tolerated for the sake of the dancing that followed'.<sup>73</sup> This trend intensified after the

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71. For an account of Bottrall's activities, see E. Butler, Amateur Agent, (London 1963) p.221

72. Although Iceland was not strictly neutral, it has been placed in this section for convenience.

73. Report by C. Jackson, 28 August 1944 BW 37/1



arrival of American troops on the island in June 1941. The Council now had to ensure that British influence was not eclipsed by the large American presence on the island. Its work was concentrated in the capital at the University and the Anglia Society.

With hindsight the most striking feature of the attempted <sup>cultural</sup> blockade of Germany was that it was undertaken at all in the face of such overwhelming odds, especially in south-eastern Europe. The encouragement of Britain's friends on Germany's borders would delay at best the spread to German power, as in Yugoslavia and Greece, for Britain had little of practical value to offer. Cultural propaganda salved Britain's conscience and showed that she had not forgotten her interests entirely. As in the case of Greece, it was Britain's duty to act where she could and in the British Council she had acquired a new instrument. Without support from the other arms of British power, however, the Council could do little more than offer a token gesture. It was more successful on the fringe of Europe where it had political and economic backing and where a more fluid situation allowed influence to be a factor at the margin. Particularly after the fall of France, the die was cast in Europe, excluding the Iberian peninsula, but there were still high stakes to be won in the neutral countries. In these, the Council attracted local support and presented Britain's case effectively. In Turkey and Spain its work was especially valuable as the MOI was unable to function normally in these countries. In Turkey, under the guise of independence, Grant was able to 'secure a hearing in places where the MOI cannot go',<sup>74</sup> and in Spain

Spanish opinion does draw a distinction between the Council, which they regard as objective and impartial, and the Govt. or Ministry; and that the Council can therefore do effectively in that country things which we (the MOI) could not hope to do.<sup>75</sup>

These two examples alone underline the value of the Council's semi-official status. Moreover, the Council's work in the neutrals demonstrates that it would be mistaken, when considering the impact of British propaganda overseas during the war, to disregard the Council's contribution.

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74. Minute by E. Monroe, 8 July 1943. INF1/446

75. A.P. Waterfield to E.H. Carr, 8 February 1940. INF1/443

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DESERT SWANSONG

Britain was the dominant imperial power in the Middle East and after Lloyd became chairman he placed special emphasis on the Council's work in this region. The Council's first Representative, C.A.F. Dundas, was appointed to Cairo in 1938 to implement projects arising from Lloyd's tour of the area in 1939. Dundas recorded that

Lord Lloyd believed that Great Britain's control of the eastern end of the Mediterranean was a vital link in Imperial communications and that any action which the Council could take to strengthen British influence in that area was of fundamental importance in preparing for war and for the ensuing peace.<sup>1</sup>

British influence was threatened not only by Arab nationalism and hostility towards British endorsement of the settlement of Jews in Palestine, but also by Italian propaganda and German activities in Iraq and Turkey. Moreover, as Lloyd wrote to Percy after his tour in 1937, Britain had neglected her position.

When one reflects that for at least half a century the French and, for a lesser time, though in that time most energetically, the Italians, have both been fostering their cultural interests while we have done nothing or little at all, it is not surprising that we should find a hunger for our help which is almost overwhelming.<sup>2</sup>

As war approached Britain tried to safeguard her position by adopting a pro-Arab policy in Palestine and limiting Jewish immigration in a White Paper published in May 1939. In 1938 the BBC began broadcasting in Arabic, the first of its foreign language programmes, and the Council opened its first institutes in Egypt.

The Council's operations in the Middle East during the war fall into two phases. When war broke out its organisation was embryonic and its main task was to establish contacts and centres wherever possible. After the cessation of Axis

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1. C.A.F. Dundas, Notes on the Council's policy in the Middle East, 7 June 1941. BW2/85

2. Lloyd to E. Percy, 14 April 1937, BW2/58

resistance in May 1943 its work took on a new importance and, with strong support from British diplomatic and military representatives, developed rapidly. From the German invasion of Poland to the fall of France, British propaganda sought to counter Axis subversion and propaganda and secure the cooperation of Arab governments. The events of the summer of 1940 severely undermined Britain's prestige and raised doubts about her ability to survive. The entry of Italy into the war turned the Middle East into an active theatre of operation and German propaganda now had a base in the Levant. Lloyd was appointed by Churchill to a Standing Ministerial Committee on the war in the Middle East and the Council's efforts were redoubled. General Wavell's victories at the end of the year and the liquidation of the short-lived Italian empire in Africa brought only a short respite. As Hitler swept through the Balkans in the spring of 1941, General Rommel forced the British army back in Libya. Rebellion in Iraq, fighting in Syria and the joint occupation of Iran stretched Britain's resources still further. In Egypt and Palestine, too, Britain's enemies stood poised and the whole of Britain's position in the Middle East was in jeopardy. The Council's budget grew rapidly as Britain tried to mitigate its military and political shortcomings.

The Council's Cairo Office covered Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, Turkey, Transjordan, Iraq, Aden, the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia.<sup>3</sup> By 1942 the Council had nineteen institutes in these areas. In March of that year, Turkey and Aden were given independent representatives, reporting directly to London, but dependent on Cairo for publicity material, and representatives responsible to the Cairo Office were appointed to Iraq, Iran, Cyprus and Palestine in the summer.

The Council's first interest in the Middle East was educational and was focused on Egypt, the linchpin of British influence in the area. Britain's ambassador in Egypt was advised by an Advisory Committee on Education in Egypt, established in 1934 by Sir Miles Lampson, on the advice of his predecessor as High Commissioner, Sir Percy Loraine. Dundas was a member of this committee and it planned the Council's annual estimated expenditure in Egypt. In 1937 the Council took over the administration of all grants to British schools.

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3. Turkey, Aden, Cyprus and Palestine are dealt with in chapters 3 and 5.

In Egypt, It entirely ran three schools and supported eleven others.<sup>4</sup> The most famous of them was Victoria College, attended by eminent Arabs, including the Regent of Iraq in 1940, Emir Abdullah Ilah. In a letter attached to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, it had been agreed that posts in Egyptian universities should be offered first to British candidates.<sup>5</sup> Writing to Eden in 1942, Lampson asked that every effort should be made to find British staff for two vacant professorships at Cairo University where the Council supported an English Department.

I need not emphasise the importance to British influence on the future of Egyptian education, and thus on the whole future of Egyptian relations with Great Britain, of good appointments to these posts.<sup>6</sup>

The chairs were filled eventually by British candidates nominated by the Council.

By 1941 the Council had institutes at Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, and five other centres, providing English lessons leading to degrees from the University of London and a meeting ground for Egyptians and Englishmen. Members often had a good grasp of English and the institutes were 'much more engrossed with working as centres of Anglo-Egyptian friendship than as language-teaching institutes.'<sup>7</sup> In addition, they provided hospitality for British and Dominion personnel stationed in the Middle East. Social contacts were promoted further by the Anglo-Egyptian Union, jointly financed by the Council and the Egyptian Government. Its work was supported strongly by Lampson:

In post-treaty conditions, when our influence here depends to a growing extent upon the personal influence individual Englishmen can exercise over Egyptian minds, and on a close understanding between the two peoples, this work has a value that it might not have had in earlier days..... There is much goodwill about and the Anglo-Egyptian Union is one of the instruments by which we can harness it.<sup>8</sup>

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4. The three schools owned by the Council were the St. Paul's Boys School and the Ma'adi and Gezira Preparatory Schools in Alexandria.
  5. Lord Killearn to the Egyptian Government, 30 June 1944 F0924/38 LC89/28/452. Cmd.5360 (London 1936)
  6. Lampson to Eden, 1 May 1942. F0370/663 L1808/8/410
  7. Advisory Committee on English Overseas Minutes, June 1941
  8. Lampson to Eden, 3 July 1939. F0395/659 P3142/2567150 <sup>BW21/1</sup>

Guests of honour at functions organised by the Union in 1941 included Anthony Eden, General Wavell, Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur Longmore and Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson.

The Council offered only advice and specialist services in the Sudan, as Lloyd

felt that the country was comparatively rich and that its own Government officials would see to the type of work which the Council was organising elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Iraq was bound to Britain by the treaty of 1930 which provided that each should come to the aid of the other in the event of war. For Britain, Iraq's importance lay in its strategic position at the head of the Persian Gulf and in its oilfields and pipelines. Indeed,

At the outbreak of war Iraq was hardly less important than Egypt to the security of the British position in the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

However, Iraq's wholehearted cooperation was not assured. German propaganda had made substantial inroads on Iraqi opinion, especially among the intelligentsia and army officers, and had a firm hold over Iraqi education. In 1939, Sir Basil Newton, the British ambassador in Baghdad, urged that the Iraqi Government's request for teachers for its technical schools should be met as

apart from the general advantage of establishing and increasing British influence in technical education in this country, these men will be valuable as a check to the undesirable influence which it is feared will be brought into the technical schools by a number of students who have recently returned from Germany.<sup>11</sup>

A Council Representative arrived in November 1939 and an Institute was opened in Baghdad in February 1940 to act as 'a rallying-point for whatever pro-British sentiment there might be there'.<sup>12</sup> The Institute was designed to

widen the Iraqi's knowledge and to show him that Great Britain is not as grasping as she is made out to be and that Iraq can gain by cooperation with other countries.<sup>13</sup>

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9. Dundas, Notes on the Council's policy in the Middle East, 7 June 1941. BW2/85

10. E.L. Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, (London 1970) Vol.1, p.571

11. Sir B. Newton to Eden, 19 April 1939. FO371/23199 E6706/40/93

12. Dundas, Notes on the Council's policy, 7 June 1941. BW2/85

13. Advisory Committee on English Overseas, June 1941. BW71/1

The Institute's social club attracted equal numbers of Iraqis and Englishmen, numbering one hundred in all. The Regent of Iraq became its patron and the Prime Minister, Nuri Said, and the British ambassador, its vice-patron and president respectively.

In March 1940 Rashid Ali replaced Nuri Said and refused to break off diplomatic relations with Italy in June. Unable to halt Iraq's drift away from the alliance by military means, the Foreign Office sought to influence the Iraqi Government with offers of economic aid. The Council, for its part, extended its English classes to the Staff College and the Royal Military College in Baghdad and Council teachers were appointed to the Law College and Technical School. In February 1941, R.A. Butler, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, was able to assure the House of Commons that 'there is now an Englishman teaching English in every school' in Iraq.<sup>14</sup> Although Rashid Ali was forced to resign in January 1941, he returned to power in a coup in March and strong military measures proved necessary to bring Iraq into line. On 2 May British forces from Palestine and Transjordan entered Iraq and Baghdad was relieved at the end of the month. During the rebellion the Council's staff retired to the safety of the British embassy with other members of the British community. In June the Press Office in Baghdad was strengthened and the Council's Institute was reopened on 1 July. In a demonstration of solidarity, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, the British ambassador, the United States Minister and other members of the diplomatic corps attended the ceremony. An Institute was opened at Mosul in January 1942, in an area of strong Axis influence. A year later Iraq declared war on the Axis and signed the United Nations declaration, becoming the first Middle Eastern State to do so.

The Council's activities in the Persian Gulf and Arabian peninsula were restricted. Educational advisers were appointed to the Governments of Beirut and Kuwait to improve educational facilities and stop students going to Iraq. Plans were drawn up for a Gulf School and Technical College but in Saudi Arabia the Council's proposals met with a rebuff.

Ibn Saud was unwilling to allow any extension of contacts between his peoples and the European countries. Lord Lloyd was not prepared to do anything to force Council activities onto the Saudi Arabians.<sup>15</sup>

14. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, Vol. 369, 18 February 1941, col. 83

15. Dundas, Notes on Council policy in the Middle East, 7 June 1941, BW2/85

In 1943 British and American armies drove the Africa Corps out of North Africa and the political pendulum in the Middle East swung back towards the Allies. The Middle East War Council recommended to the War Cabinet in June that the Council's work should be strengthened both during and after the war.

There is a widespread and deep-seated desire in the Middle East for further opportunities for education. The comparative failure of Great Britain to meet this need, and the active propaganda of the Axis countries, combined in the pre-war years to dispose the younger Arab educated classes towards sympathy with Fascist ideas. In the future, assistance by British agencies in the cultural field would be both welcomed locally and beneficial to all concerned, by fostering goodwill and encouraging the development of Arab thought on lines in harmony with Western civilisation.<sup>16</sup>

The Council was urged to consider 'the best means of bringing British influence to bear upon this development'.<sup>17</sup> The Middle East War Council advocated the improvement of secondary and higher education, the stimulation of agricultural and technical education, the appointment of British personnel to educational posts, the establishment of an Academy of Higher Studies and the development of Arab studies in Britain. In supporting these proposals, Richard Casey, Minister of State in the Middle East, argued that

the organisation and development of British enterprises in the cultural field should be regarded as an important part of British policy in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup>

Robin Hankey, in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, minuted on this material,

it is really essential for our long-term interests that we should stand well with Arab opinion and be regarded by them as their main hope among the Great Powers. These proposals for cultural assistance and interest.....may prove a useful alternative line of approach to the Arabs.....<sup>19</sup>

While the issue of the war had remained in the balance, the Council had sold the merits of the British way of life against

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16. Resolutions of the Middle East War Council on the Political Situation in the Middle East, 17 June 1943. CAB65/40 WP(43)24  
 17. Ibid.  
 18. R. Casey to Eden, 15 July 1943. FO370/708 L3935/7/410  
 19. Minute by R.M.A. Hankey, 17 June 1943. FO370/708 L3935/7/410

those of the other European powers. As the scales tipped in the Allies' favour attention turned to the future and to the maintenance of stability and liberal institutions in an area where democratic ideals were known only to a small educated élite and where the gap between the latter and the majority was enormous. A Council officer in Cairo maintained that Britain

should no longer be concerned merely with telling the Arab world how good, capable and powerful the British people are: our purpose should be to try to get inside the mind of the educated Arab and encourage him to develop for himself an orderly, responsible, liberal outlook on life in general, so that he can use and not mis-use the scientific and technological resources which are now available to him. It is only in that way that he will become a good neighbour.<sup>20</sup>

Once the urgency of providing publicity to suit military requirements had disappeared, Britain was able to look to her long term interests in the Middle East and cultural propaganda came into its own. The Council's role in future was not simply to persuade the Arab world of the superiority of the British cause but also to build up a body of educated democratic opinion that would look to Britain for guidance. Official contacts had to be supplemented and educational systems reformed so that the resources of the Middle East could be developed with the minimum of foreign interference and in cooperation with Britain. Elizabeth Monroe, head of the MOI's Middle Eastern Division, identified three main propaganda aims for Britain in the Middle East; the combatting of apathy and the satisfaction of a demand to learn English and a curiosity as to the nature of British institutions. The first was a task for the MOI, the second for the Council and the third for both organisations. Monroe recommended that the Council's teaching grant should be expanded 'as much as is humanely possible'.<sup>21</sup>

Support for the Council by British military and civilian authorities increased markedly in the last two years of the war. This was due partly to the contacts established and interest stimulated by Robertson and Ifor Evans during tours of the region in the first half of 1943. In Egypt, Robertson met Nahas Pasha, the Prime Minister, who was suspicious of the Council because of its connection with Lord Lloyd, with whom Nahas Pasha 'had

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20. J. Hadfield to White, 27 September 1943. BW29/6

21. Minute by E. Monroe, 8 July 1943. INF 1/446



many quarrels'.<sup>22</sup> Robertson allayed Nahas Pasha's fears and reported to his wife that he had 'seldom seen a man's whole attitude change so much as his did during the course of our interview'.<sup>23</sup> In Turkey Robertson was a guest of the People's Party and he found the military authorities to be generally sympathetic towards the Council's aims, especially General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and General Maccreary, who both promised support for the Council in finding staff from the services.<sup>24</sup> In his report on the tour Robertson stated that

The military view seems to be that our work if extended and properly carried out, will be worth several divisions.<sup>25</sup>

Robertson also gained the goodwill of Lampson and Casey, who had 'previously looked upon the British Council and its work as a long-term policy' and now realised 'that they were playing a vital role in current affairs'.<sup>26</sup> In June Casey supported the Council's request for a supplementary grant arguing that 'the work of the British Council is essential'.<sup>27</sup> A month later the Service Departments agreed to the release of twenty-five men for service with the Council in the Middle East.

Robertson was impressed by the development of the Council's work in Iraq and encountered

A widely-held view that if the British Council had been working in Iraq for fifteen or twenty years instead of three or four, German anti-British propaganda would not have had the success it did in fact have.<sup>28</sup>

The expectation of an eruption of Arab and Jewish hostility in Palestine, as soon as the war was over, dominated Robertson's discussions there. Robertson predicted that

The Arab world and notably Iraq will turn definitely hostile and again become a happy hunting-ground for intrigues against the British Empire. Our whole strategic position would be seriously compromised, more especially if Egypt, in its ambition to lead the Moslem and Arab world, were also to show hostility towards us.<sup>29</sup>

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- 22.. Robertson to Mrs Robertson, 20 January 1943. Robertson Papers  
 23. Ibid.  
 24. Report by Robertson, March 1943. BW2/227  
 25. Ibid.  
 26. W.J.Makin to White, 10 May 1943. BW29/8  
 27. R.Casey to K.Wood, 27 June 1943. T161/1153 S35581/303/43  
 28. Report by Robertson, March 1943. BW2/227  
 29. Ibid.

Robertson urged the necessity for coordinating British policy in the Middle East and rapidly expanding the Council's activities to secure a base for British influence against future upheavals. Robertson reported that the British ambassador in Tehran, Sir Reader Bullard, was 'clamouring for the immediate extension of British Council work in Persia'.<sup>30</sup> Bullard maintained that the war offered a good opportunity to establish British influence in Iran before Arab hostility and Soviet encroachment revived with the return of peace and that

It is to be supposed that the old spheres of influence, as applied to Persia, is dead, and it suits us well to make use of cultural influence.<sup>31</sup>

Ifor Evans met a similar response to the Council's work during his tour of the Middle East in May. It was clear that Britain's position in the Middle East after the war would have to rest on new foundations.

The time when our interests could be protected by force has disappeared. We can remain an influence in the Middle East only if we have the goodwill of the effective parts of the populations concerned.<sup>32</sup>

The Council's structure in the Middle East was reorganised in 1943. Ill-health forced Dundas to resign at the end of 1942 and Ifor Evans became temporarily Representative for the Middle East. In November, Professor T.S.R.Boase, fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, was appointed the new Representative. His beat included Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, the Persian Gulf, Syria and Afghanistan and he was responsible for liaison with the Minister of State's Office, the Services and other bodies.

At a meeting of Council staff in Cairo in May 1943 priorities were established for new projects. On the advice of the military authorities and the Minister of State's Office, which had impressed on Ifor Evans 'the necessity of elaborate action on a generous scale' in Iran, that country was placed first.<sup>33</sup> Next in importance came Egypt and then Iraq and Palestine. In view of French susceptibilities, it was predicted that Syria and the Lebanon would not be a fruitful field for British cultural propaganda in the near future. The highest priority,

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30. Sir R.Bullard to Robertson, 22 February 1943, BW2/227  
 31. Sir R.Bullard to Robertson, 22 February 1943. BW2/227  
 32. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 November 1943. BW69/9  
 33. Ibid.

however, was accorded to a new project, the establishment of the Allied Liaison Division to provide educational and cultural facilities for Allied servicemen and refugees in the Middle East.

The Treasury had ruled in August 1940 that such work was the responsibility of the Service Departments concerned, the Council's Home Division catering for Allied servicemen on leave and Allied civilians. This procedure had worked in Britain but had led to 'complications and confusions' in the Middle East.<sup>34</sup> Special educational facilities had to be devised for the Allied troops, and in December 1942, the Allied Liaison Sub-Committee of the Middle East War Council asked the Council to undertake this work, in cooperation with the Army Education Corps and with the aid of a grant from the War Office. In recommending this proposal, Casey stated that

Quite apart from its obvious long-term propaganda value for the post-war period it will be of immediate importance in increasing the usefulness of personnel whose present knowledge of English is inadequate for service needs. (there are for example some one thousand two hundred Polish Officers at present idle, more than half of whom might be employed if they knew English).<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, as the war moved away from the Middle East, 'national political factions began to surface among the troops left in the Middle East'.<sup>36</sup> Casey hoped that the Council might improve conditions among the various groups 'which may otherwise prove a dangerous breeding ground for discontent and political dissensions.....'.<sup>36</sup> Failure to act in this direction, Casey warned, would 'reduce their already low morale to a point where the units would cease to be of political or military value'.<sup>37</sup>

The Council contributed £25,000 to start these activities in July 1943 with the help of staff seconded from the Services. Majors McNab and Bidwell were appointed Director and Assistant Director respectively. The Allied Liaison Division organised English classes, English centres, welfare huts, reading rooms, libraries and the distribution of Council material. It worked mainly in Polish, Greek, Yugoslav, Albanian and Italian camps in Egypt and Palestine and had established eighty-three centres by 1944. These camps contained a wider cross-section of

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34. Eden to K.Wood, 22 June 1943. BW2/342  
 35. R. Casey to Eden, 17 March 1943. FO 370/708 L1870/7/410  
 36. R. Casey, Personal Experience, (London 1962) p.131  
 37. R. Casey to Eden, 17 March 1943. FO370/708 L1870/7/410

society than the Council usually dealt with as there was no selection of students or members. The Division had contacts with British and Allied services headquarters, with relief organisations and with the Political Warfare Bureau and the Office of War Information. In 1944 it had a London-appointed staff of fourteen and nineteen locally-appointed and fifty voluntary teachers. Its field of operations expanded as the Division followed Yugoslav Partisans and Royalists to camps in Italy and Albania and Polish army and air force units to centres in Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy. The Division estimated in 1945 that it was in contact with two hundred thousand persons. The Council looked forward to using these links when it returned to Europe.

it is desired that every Allied Forces unit and every camp of refugees shall come so to depend on British Council cultural services that, on return to their countries they may desire to resume studies and contacts at the earliest possible moment.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, the problems that accompanied the end of the war in Greece, Yugoslavia and Poland prevented the Council from benefiting from these wartime contacts.

After the Allied Liaison Division, the development of activities in Iran claimed the Council's attention. Iran was jointly occupied by British and Soviet forces in August 1941. The Tripartite Treaty of January 1942 acknowledged Iranian independence and stipulated that the occupying powers would withdraw not later than six months after the end of the war. German activities in Iran and the failure of the Shah to suppress them had led to the occupation. Immediately, Germans in Iran were imprisoned but the Iranian public remained pro-German and the Iranian Government did not ban Axis propaganda. It was clear that 'great efforts would be necessary to reconcile the various sections of the population to the British and Russian occupation'. In May 1942 it was agreed that the Council's work should be developed quickly in Iran and that an Institute should be established in Tehran. The possibility of a Russian collapse on the south-eastern front towards the end of 1942 resulted in an upsurge of Axis activity. British demands on, and

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38. Allied Liaison Division Report, November 1944. Bw29/20

39. OEPEC Meeting, 14 January 1942. T162/858 E39140/16

difficulties with, the Iranian authorities persisted and serious rioting broke out in Tehran in December. Most Iranian resentment was directed towards Britain and in May 1943 the Foreign Office suggested that propaganda activities should be stepped up even at the risk of offending the Russians.<sup>40</sup> A month earlier Freya Stark, a leading British propagandist in the Middle East, had reached the same conclusion and recommended that

The British Institute could be got going with no difficulty and at once, and its influence if it were started everywhere, in big towns and small, could be felt within three months or so of its starting.<sup>41</sup>

A Representative was appointed in March 1943 and an office was opened in Tehran. An Institute and Club were founded in May and were soon turning away applicants for lack of space. Institute membership reached six hundred in 1943 and a branch was opened at Alborz College to provide tuition for another eight hundred students. An Institute was opened in Isfahan in December for four hundred students and special classes were provided for the Iranian Air Force. After a visit to Tehran in December a Council official reported that the Council's work was warmly appreciated and that the Shah had 'paid a high tribute to the work of the British Council, and said he hoped to see young Iranians sent to Britain for training'.<sup>42</sup> In 1944 a third institute was opened at Shiraz and the Tehran Institute had three branches providing evening classes for nearly one thousand students in different parts of the city. The Council also taught English in institutions under the control of the Ministry of Education and appointed an Educational Adviser to advise the Iranian Government on the development of education. The total number of students learning English under Council supervision was more than four thousand.

In 1943 Egypt was given its own Representative, R.W.G.Reed, formerly headmaster of Victoria College for twenty-five years. The improvement of conditions for British staff engaged by Egyptian schools and universities and appeals from the Egyptian Government for more British staff dominated the Council's work.

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40. E.L.Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*,  
 41. F.Stark, *Dust in the Lions Paw*, (London 1967) p.150 (vol.4)  
 42. W.J.Makin to O'Brien, 8 January 1944. BW49/1

Failure to deal with these problems, the ambassador warned, betrayed

a certain lack of appreciation of the political issues at stake. If we fail to fill at least a certain number of these key university posts we will have lost the opportunity of making Egyptian higher education predominantly British in tone, with all that this implies for our hold on a country where our future influence must largely depend on indirect means.<sup>43</sup>

As if to highlight the lesson, the Council's relations with the Egyptian authorities improved after the appointment of Amin Oman Pasha as Minister of Finance in 1944, a pupil and friend of Reed for thirty years. The Treasury, however, was reluctant to allow the Council to subsidise the salaries of teachers in other government's employ and even the Foreign Office's staunch backing for some of Reed's proposals did not persuade the Treasury.

Reed's experience of English schools in Egypt led to an emphasis on this aspect of the Council's work at the expense of the institutes and clubs established by Lloyd and Dundas. Reed concentrated on the extension of existing English schools and the reform of English-teaching in Government schools by the creation of a British Overseas Teaching Service. However, the institutes and the Anglo-Egyptian Union were less expensive and reached a more influential level in society. The Cairo and Alexandria Institutes membership of the Union stood at 1,200 in 1944 and a new branch was opened at Port Said with the active support of the Egyptian Military Governor of the Canal Zone who acted as the chairman of its committee.

In Iraq the Council's work continued to expand with the foundation of joint institutes and clubs in the strategically important towns of Basra and Kirkuk in 1944. The total number of club and institute members rose from 777 in 1943 to more than 2,000 in 1945.. The Council also subsidised British teachers in Iraqi schools and Council teachers taught English in military, medical and teacher's colleges. Six annual scholarships to the American university in Beirut were awarded and a Junior Institute and Kindergarten were opened in Baghdad.

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43. Lord Killlearn to Eden, 21 July 1943. BW29/6

Children from the Iraqi Royal Family and the Government were pupils at the Kindergarten.

After the Joint Anglo-Free French invasion of Vichy Syria and Lebanon in June 1941 the administration of the Levant States became a source of constant friction for British and Free French officials in the Middle East and in London. A declaration of independence for Syria and Lebanon had accompanied the Allied attack but General de Gaulle sought to preserve French influence and was suspicious of British motives in regard to the Levant. The Foreign Office wish to avoid anything likely to suggest that Britain intended to replace French influence and was willing to recognise French predominance. However, Britain also had to satisfy Arab opinion that the grant of independence was genuine and keep final control of policy in the Levant for the duration of the war. In February 1942, Sir E. Spears became British Minister in the Levant States and head of the British Mission to the Free French. The Free French authorities widely believed that Spears deliberately attempted to subvert French influence in the Levant and relations between Spears and General Catroux, leader of the Free French in the Middle East, were poor.

Hostility to French control ran deep in Syria and the Lebanon. In January 1942 Dundas reported proposals for the propagation of British culture in the Levant which, it later emerged, had originated with the Spears Mission.<sup>44</sup> In London the Foreign Office was wary of provoking French suspicions by agreeing to an exploratory tour by a Council official. However, the Minister of State, Oliver Lyttleton, was consulted and approved the proposals. In March, Simon Butlin, Educational Advisor to the Council's Middle East Office, travelled to the Levant, ostensibly for a holiday. He returned with modest proposals for the distribution of material to the sum of £500 because of French nervousness 'at the possibility of losing perhaps their last hold - that of French culture - in the Lebanon and Syria'.<sup>45</sup> It was essential, in Butlin's opinion, that the Council should not appear to be embarking on a cultural drive even though there was a wide demand for its services.

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44. O. Lyttleton to Eden, 20 February 1942. F0370/676

L516/435/410

45. Report by S. Butlin, May 1942. F0370/676 L2606/435/410

Butlin concluded:

I gained the impression that since the British occupation of Syria, those who chafed under French rule would welcome an increase of Anglo-Saxon influence. In the Lebanon of course, this feeling is especially strong among the large non-Moslem population, who fear the rule of the desert and look to us for protection. France, they feel, will not be in a position to assure their independence after the war.<sup>46</sup>

Butlin's recommendations were supported by Casey and some material, mainly books, was distributed in Syria and the Lebanon.

With Spears' approval, Butlin proposed a dramatic increase in the Council's expenditure in Syria and the Lebanon in 1943/4 to £3,000, to be spent chiefly on the selection and subsidy of staff and students for the American University at Beirut and the establishment of a British hostel. The American University was highly esteemed and Butlin recorded that 'it was impossible to go anywhere in Syria and Lebanon without meeting the influence of the American University'.<sup>47</sup> L.S. Pearson arrived in 1943 to take up a post at the University and to act as principal for a hostel for British Council scholars at the University. Butlin was appointed Representative at the end of the year, and reported in May 1944 that

It had been evident from the beginning that any work to be done by the Council would have to be done with the approval and support of the Americans. That support has been given most generously and the work seemed to fall into two parts, first, work to be done with the Americans for the sake of Anglo-American cooperation and secondly, work for the Syrians and Lebanese for its own sake.<sup>48</sup>

Butlin and Boase both reported on Spears' desire to see the Council's activities considerably expanded. In a meeting with Boase in Cairo in December 1943, Spears had been anxious to offer Council assistance to the Syrian and Lebanese education authorities and wished to announce publicly the presence of the Council in the Levant, which had not been publicised previously.<sup>49</sup> Boase and Spears had agreed that a reading room or centre should be opened in Damascus as soon as possible. Elections for legislatures in Syria and Lebanon

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46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 May 1944. BW69/10

49. Boase to M.Blake, 18 December 1943, BW59/3



were held in the summer of 1943 but the French had been unwilling to cede control. In November, the Lebanese Cabinet had been arrested but a general strike and anti-French riots had forced the French to give way. Catroux agreed to withdraw French control in December and Syria and the Lebanon became independent in January 1944. In these circumstances the development of British cultural propaganda was more easily undertaken. Gurney informed the Council in that month that the Foreign Office shared

the opinion of Sir E. Spears and Boase that the activities of the Council should be expanded in order that we may pull our weight with Arab opinion in these areas. We cannot afford to create a false impression, in such an important part of the world, of our attitude towards Arabs and Arab feeling, nor to leave solely to the French and the Americans the presentation of the European case.<sup>50</sup>

Butlin was recalled to London for instructions and £46,000 was allotted for the Levant in 1944/5, although it was still to be given no publicity and did not appear in the Council's Annual Report. The Council's plans were disrupted by Butlin's inability to leave England until after the Allied invasion of France and the outbreak of fighting between Syrian and French troops in May and June delayed further the foundation of a Council centre. Nevertheless, a start had been made and valuable contacts with the American University in Beirut and with the Syrian and Lebanese education authorities had been established.

Following the successful invasion of Ethiopia and Eritrea by Allied forces in 1941, the Council was invited to begin work in both areas. The British military authorities occupying Eritrea requested the foundation of a British institute at Asmara to teach English to Italians.<sup>51</sup> Dundas surveyed the field in 1942 and recommended this proposal to the Council but staffing difficulties prevented it from meeting this request. Instead, only a small amount of material was distributed by the British Minister.

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50. K.T. Gurney to M. Blake, 12 January 1944. BW59/1

51. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 November 1941. BW69/7

The Council's resources in East Africa were concentrated in Ethiopia where Italian influence was strong. Immediately after its liberation the Council received a similar request from the military authorities for the tuition of Italians in English to assist the administration of the country. In its 1942/3 estimates the Council provided £6,000 for a Representative and the foundation of an institute but the shortage of staff delayed the arrival of a Representative until August 1942 despite the Foreign Office's impatience. In April, Dundas had been told that the Foreign Office attached

importance and some urgency to appointment of representative in Ababa as H.M. Minister has telegraphed that Emperor has welcomed proposed activities in the near future.<sup>52</sup>

The Representative, H.L. Littler, had served with the Council in Bulgaria and Turkey and had considerable experience with foreign students in Britain and overseas. Ethiopia was a primitive country and Littler concentrated on the development of educational facilities on British lines, a policy that was warmly supported by the Emperor. Littler had an audience with Haile Selassie in December 1942 and he agreed to open the new British Institute and Anglo-Ethiopian Club in Addis Ababa in January 1943. English classes were organised at the Institute and in Ethiopian military, police and medical academies. In 1944 new institutes were opened at Dessie, Harar, and Jimmia and a number of Council staff were employed in Ethiopian schools. The Emperor encouraged the Council's work and attended the anniversaries of the foundation of the Addis Ababa Institute and some of its functions. The institutes, in their turn, celebrated the anniversaries of Haile Selassie's coronation and return to Ethiopia.

After discussions with the British Minister in Saudi Arabia in January 1944, Boase proposed the despatch of a Representative to Riyadh to develop educational facilities.

Considerable anxiety at the moment is being felt over the lack of any educational system in Saudi Arabia capable of producing administrators or leaders. Anything we could do in Saudi Arabia would be welcomed by the Minister of State's Office and by all concerned.<sup>53</sup>

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52. K.T. Gurney to Dundas, 29 April 1942. F0370/677 L1454/444/410

53. Boase to M. Blake, 9 January 1944. F0370/917 L646/646/410

However, the probability that retrenchments would have to be made after the war, restricted the development of Council activities in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf to the distribution of a small amount of material.

The political difficulties of conducting propaganda for Britain in Afghanistan prevented the Council from working there before 1939. The 'nervousness' of the Afghan authorities forestalled any Council proposals even though Afghanistan, 'situated between the North-West Frontier of India, Russia, Central Asia and Persia', was an important propaganda field.<sup>54</sup> Instead, France and, to a greater extent, Germany had penetrated the country; in the 1920's, of all the Afghan students overseas only one was in Britain whereas there had been forty-eight in Germany. Lloyd raised the question of operations in Afghanistan with the India Office at the end of 1940 but it was decided that the Council would have to wait until a favourable opportunity presented itself. The Council's Representative in Iran, T.W. Morra, visited Kabul in 1941 and reported that the French and Germans were far ahead of Britain in the field of propaganda. Afghanistan's traditional dislike of Britain and fear that concessions to Britain would lead to demands for reciprocal facilities from the Soviet Union, ruled out direct Council operations. Moreover, foreign propaganda had been banned officially and social contacts were virtually impossible. However, Morray did see the Afghan Minister of Education and a small library and some other material was supplied to the British Legation.

After the expulsion of Axis forces from North Africa and the invasion of Italy in the summer of 1943, the Council was advised to prepare for activities in Afghanistan in the expectation that the Afghan Government would now be willing to come more openly over to the Allies. In October the Foreign Office endorsed the view of the British Minister in Kabul, Sir Giles Squire:

In Afghanistan, where our chances of exercising direct political influence will always be limited, the cultural approach is important and may be increasingly useful.<sup>55</sup>

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54. Minute by Sir Trenchard Fowle, 11 December 1939. BW6/1

55. K.T. Gurney to White, 1 October 1943. BW6/3

Squire argued that it was in the field of cultural relations 'that our greatest task and our chief opportunity seems to be'.<sup>56</sup> The Council budgeted for the establishment of an institute in Kabul in 1944.

In January 1944 the Afghan Government requested the secondment of three British professors for Ghazi College in Kabul. The Foreign Office and India Office saw this as symptomatic of a change of attitude on the part of the Afghan authorities and the Council was urged to make every effort to meet this request. Murray visited Kabul and recommended that the Council should concentrate on filling teaching posts and postpone the foundation of an institute for

while great interest was shown in the many services which the British Council has to offer, the policy of strict neutrality even in matters cultural and the old fear of Russian reciprocity still precluded and is likely to preclude for some time any direct British Council activity.<sup>57</sup>

The removal of German nationals from teaching posts later in the year offered a chance to establish British influence. However, the difficulties of finding suitable candidates hampered the Council and only two of the three posts had been filled by the end of the war.

The Middle East was the most important area for the Council during the war in terms of staff and expenditure, which were approximately three times greater than the resources devoted to Latin America, the next largest area of activity. British diplomatic and military representatives encouraged the Council to expand further and Freya Stark argued that the Council was 'the ideal instrument for holding a friendly Middle East in times of peace'.<sup>58</sup> Stark was

in favour of putting all the weight it can possibly carry upon this institution - chiefly because it has the advantage of being purely cultural and offending no nationalist susceptibilities. When A.L.O.s, political officers, occupying armies, etc. are forced to withdraw there is every chance that the British Institutes will remain and flourish.<sup>59</sup>

However, a lack of finance and manpower after the war dictated that the wartime development of the Council's work in the Middle East should be the high-water mark of its organisation there.

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56. Sir G. Squire to Eden, 11 November 1943. BW6/3

57. Report by Murray, July 1944. DWG/1

58. Lucy Moorehead (ed.), Collected Letters of Freya Stark,

59. Ibid.

(London 1974) p. 156.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPERIAL REMEDIES

The British Empire was more than just an expression of political, economic and strategic interests. From the nineteenth century onwards it contained an evangelical mission to 'civilise' backward peoples. Unlike the French, who sought direct cultural assimilation, the British converted by example and were content to leave untouched native practices. It was not until the empire was disintegrating that Britain realised that its foundations were shallow. Cultural penetration had not automatically followed political domination. In an effort to underpin the unity of the Empire and Commonwealth, steps were taken during the war to explain Britain's purpose and strengthen links. These measures were slow to take root because they also implied a recognition of the fact that the allegiance and support of the Dominions and even the Colonies could not be guaranteed without positive action. Even then, there was a danger that the canker of nationalism might destroy the fragile imperial structure.

The Council had to overcome many obstacles before cultural propaganda was accepted as a normal part of imperial policy. As a Foreign Office inspired and controlled organisation, the Council was primarily concerned with foreign countries and the Foreign Office did not want the Council's meagre budget spread more thinly. Moreover, the Dominions Office argued that in peacetime 'anything in the nature of propaganda for Britain might be suspected and resented in the Dominions', whilst there was no room for cultural activities in wartime.<sup>1</sup> For its part the MOI claimed a monopoly of activities in the Dominions and Colonies and was supported by the Treasury. Furthermore, the Treasury maintained that, at least in the Colonies, activities such as those of the Council's were the responsibility of the Colonial Office. Hale defined the Council's area thus:

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1. Dominions Office memorandum, 22 January 1945. DO35/1212  
WN 420/2

The object of the grant to the Council is to obtain political advantage for this country by work in the cultural field, and the present financial stringency makes it necessary to confine our main efforts to countries in which our position is threatened by rival powers.<sup>2</sup>

By this criterion the Council had operated on a significant scale before 1939 in the Colonies of Malta, Cyprus and Aden and the Mandated Territories of Palestine and Transjordan.

The Council, on the other hand, believed it had a mandate for wider operations in the Commonwealth and Empire. Its Draft Memorandum of Articles and Association of 1935 had included amongst its aims

To cooperate with the self-governing Dominions in strengthening the common cultural tradition of the British Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, when the Council was founded the Dominions Office had agreed to the inclusion of the Dominions in the Council's sphere and had appointed a liaison officer.<sup>4</sup> The Colonial Office had nominated a representative to the Council's Executive and Students Committees. Furthermore, in its Charter the Council's work was held to be 'for the purpose of benefiting the British Commonwealth of Nations'. Ironically it was discovered later that this phrase had been inserted by the Treasury's solicitor after consultations with the Inland Revenue 'merely to avoid liability to tax by introducing a charitable object'.<sup>5</sup> The Council was aware that its failure to act in the Commonwealth and Empire 'provides a convenient line of attack for our detractors',<sup>6</sup> but disputes with the Dominions Office, the MOI and the Treasury continuing throughout the war, hampered the development of operations.

The Council's tasks were outlined by K. Johnstone in 1939: firstly, the presentation of the Empire to foreign opinion to counter misleading propaganda and, secondly, the development of intra-Commonwealth and Colonial cultural relations.<sup>7</sup>

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2. E.Hale to H.Eastwood, 29 January 1939. BW2/109
  3. Draft Articles of Association, 1935. BW2/121
  4. Tait to Pickthall, 22 November 1934. India Office Papers  
L/I/1/70 104662/41
  5. Minute by R.Seymour, 29 November 1941. BW2/89
  6. Minute by White, 15 August 1939. BW17/5
  7. Memorandum by K. Johnstone, 1 January 1940. BW2/88

The Secretary of State for the Dominions, Sir Thomas Inskip, was cautious and discouraging when approached by the Council in July 1939. Inskip pointed to the 'formidable difficulties' to be encountered in any plan 'for representing through a United Kingdom organisation the interests of the Dominions', or for 'the conduct by the British Council of anything in the nature of centralised Empire propaganda'.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Dominion High Commissioners in interviews with Lloyd in August proved more enthusiastic. On Australia's behalf, Bruce was especially concerned with

the necessity of checking the growth of American influence and in particular of presenting to Australia a true picture of this country; at the moment there was a certain tendency there to consider Great Britain in danger of becoming impotent and out of date.<sup>9</sup>

Massey, for Canada, was optimistic but warned that the Council would have to work indirectly in Canada. Although he could not be officially connected with the Council's work, Massey 'promised that behind the scenes he would give it every possible support'.<sup>10</sup> Lloyd told the Executive Committee in September that

The Canadian Government were anxious that the Council should not work as the British Council but under the name of some other well-known organisation.<sup>11</sup>

Massey had recommended Major Ney of the Canadian National Council of Education and the Overseas Education League, who had already undertaken some work for the Council, but Lloyd was reluctant to delegate control. The proximity of Canada to the United States created additional problems; all overt propaganda activities were banned in the United States and there was a danger that 'anything suggestive of propaganda there (Canada) would arouse suspicion in the entire continent'.<sup>12</sup>

Malcolm MacDonald at the Colonial Office proved more receptive than Inskip had been, declaring that

My mind too has been working along parallel lines and I have been going into the question of the best means of disseminating a wider knowledge, both in this country and abroad, of the Colonial Empire and what we stand for in relation to it.<sup>13</sup>

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8. Minute by Lloyd, 17 July 1939. BW2/88

9. Minute by K. Johnstone, 15 August 1939. BW2/88

10. Minute by K. Johnstone, 20 August 1939. BW2/88

11. Executive Committee Minutes, 21 September 1939. BW68/3

12. Minute by R. B. Stevens, 18 August 1939. FO395/649A P3354/105/15

13. M. MacDonald to Lloyd, 17 July 1939. BW2/88

On the second question of cultural relations within the Empire, however, Johnstone complained that the Colonial Office was both sceptical and complacent.

They did not, I feel, quite see the utility of the cultural work in its positive sense, that is to say as a means of satisfying the desire for self-expression and developing a sense of connection with this country.<sup>14</sup>

In his African Survey, published in 1938, Lord Hailey had urged the desirability of developing educational, cultural and information agencies within the Colonies:

the provision of facilities in British territories for the study of British political and social aims, and for the exchange of ideas between the two races is a matter which appears to need more consideration than has been given to it in the past.<sup>15</sup>

The outbreak of war in Europe temporarily upset the Council's plans. The new MOI refused to concede a role for the Council in the Dominions and Colonies even though Lloyd had secured the approval of the Dominions before they had become Britain's Allies. In April 1940, MacDonald and Eden, at the Colonial Office and Dominions Office respectively, agreed to the continuation of existing activities on condition that expansion required the approval of each Department. Lloyd's appointment to the Colonial Office in the following month marked the turning point in the Council's history. Lloyd believed fervently in Britain's imperial mission and in the Empire as a force for peace and stability in the world. At the opening of the Valletta Institute in May 1939, he had asserted that

Not the least of the function of an Imperial Government is to make available to all those to whom it is responsible the full wealth of their common inheritance in the things of the mind no less than material things.<sup>16</sup>

As Secretary of State, Lloyd was able to remove obstacles to the establishment of the Council in the Colonies. He wrote to Stanley Unwin in December 1940 that he had

from the beginning of my work in the British Council longed for the opportunity of developing the Council's work in the Crown Colonies, but have never seen the opportunity before me until now.<sup>17</sup>

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14. Minute by K. Johnstone, 20 August 1939. BW2/89

15. Lord Hailey, African Survey, (London 1938) p.1304.

16. Text of Opening Speech by Lloyd, 6 May 1939. BW43/2

17. Lloyd to S. Unwin, 6 December 1940. BW2/91



Lloyd argued that the Council was equipped for work that could be undertaken more effectively by an unofficial body and that could only be developed by private initiative with the help of the Council. As Sir Charles Jeffries, Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office in 1940, later recorded:

During the war, when people came to realise the importance of the "projection of Britain" to the Colonial and other territories, it became apparent that in the British Council there existed a ready made organisation which only needed to be developed and expanded along its own established lines to suit admirably the purpose in view.<sup>18</sup>

The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of July 1940 was a landmark in the evolution of British Colonial policy. Discontent in the West Indies had called attention to the need for greater expenditure on social services and in this Act, the concept of welfare became the formal concomitant of development. Moreover, unlike its 1929 predecessor, the 1940 Act contained an explicit emphasis on education that was significant for the Council. Lord Hailey's comment on the Act was apposite.

You cannot build up polirical liberties on dwarf bodies and stunted intelligences.<sup>19</sup>

Economic and social developments are the sine qua non of responsible democratic government and cannot be undertaken in a vacuum: education in its broadest sense must be their partner. The Council's task complimented that of the Welfare Fund, namely, 'filling the minds of those who standards of life are to be improved materially'.<sup>20</sup> The problem of idle intelligences preoccupied the Council.

Certainly culture is not a cure for malnutrition, tropical disease, or economic distress and the effects of maladministration: but even when they have been rectified there will still be a gap to be filled unless the mind is to be left dangerously unoccupied.<sup>21</sup>

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18. C. Jeffries, The Colonial Office, (London 1956) p.189

19. Parliamentary Debates (Lords) Vol.119, 9 July 1941, Col.721

20. Minute by White, 15 August 1941. BW17/5

21. Minute by K. Johnstone, 11 August 1939. BW2/89

One of the obstacles to Council work in the Colonies had been the inability of many colonies, and especially those in most need, to pay for cultural services. The Development Act provided £5 million per annum for social services and general development. Nevertheless, facilities above basic educational requirements remained beyond the Colonial Governments' purses and the overriding demands of the war prevented the implementation of many schemes made financially viable by the Act. The Colonial Office was anxious, therefore, to secure as much help from the Council as it could, arguing

that local funds were not sufficient to provide the kind of amenities which the Council could offer, and that, even if these (CDWA) funds were less adequate, it would be argued that the provision of the Council's services, although very valuable to the Colony, were an imperial rather than a local interest.<sup>22</sup>

The passing of the Development Act also made necessary the improvement of communications between the Colonial Governments and their subjects in order to carry out the new projects. During the war the MOI's machinery was used.

The fall of France, Belgium and the Netherlands in the summer of 1940 destroyed the traditional political balance between Europe and her dependencies. It was impossible to contain the consequences of a struggle between freedom and totalitarianism to Europe once the support of the Colonies had been enlisted. The entry of Italy into the war and the threat of a German invasion endangered the traditional lifeline of the Empire. In the Far East, where Britain's weakness was most apparent, new regional responsibilities had to be assumed by the Dominions, establishing a precedent for future changes in the Commonwealth balance of power. In the Middle East Britain's imperial past provided bases from which to attack the Axis and the Council's activities in the area expanded rapidly. Responsibility for operations in Malta, Cyprus, Aden, Palestine and Transjordan remained with the Council's Cairo Office whilst at home steps were taken to develop the Council's work in other parts of the Empire.

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22. Minute by T.Hardie, 4 February 1942. T161/1153

A committee representing the Colonial, Dominions and India Offices and the Council was formed in December 1940 to deal with the distribution and production of films. Proposals to extend this collaboration in the Dominions foundered on the vexed questions of authority and responsibility for publicity and the anticipated sensitivity of the Dominion Governments. These factors persuaded Lloyd 'to deal first with work in the Colonies and to leave for the present the more difficult meeting about work in the Dominions'.<sup>23</sup> A lack of expert staff in this area was another reason for the Council's slow start. In early 1941, Angus Gillan was appointed head of the new Empire Division. A member of the Sudan Political Service for thirty years, Gillan was an administrator of long experience with special knowledge of the Middle East. He brought enthusiasm, ability and conviction to the new Division and had instigated the foundation of the Khartoum Cultural Institute while in the Sudan. In contrast to Lloyd, Gillan believed that wherever possible the Council should work with indigenous bodies and local committees. Lloyd's successor at the Colonial Office, Lord Moyne, had been chairman of the Royal Commission on the West Indies and an advocate on increased social and cultural services in the Empire. Moyne was 'anxious to have the Council's cooperation in the cultural' field and proposed the establishment of a joint committee.<sup>24</sup> The events of the summer were to underline the need to improve the condition and unity of the Empire.

Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June and the signing of the Atlantic Charter in August, the month in which the Empire Division was formally constituted, were important events for the Colonies. The Atlantic Charter, asserting the right of all peoples to choose their governments, acquired universal significance, despite Churchill's qualifications. American distaste for imperial rule was re-echoed by Britain's new ally, increasing the pressure to raise social, economic and educational standards as the prerequisite of eventual self-government. The Development Act signalled the end of a laissez-faire attitude to the Empire; the maelstrom of war created new political realities that were to have an even more profound

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23. Minute by White, 6 January 1941. BW2/88

24. F.R.Cowell to White, 18 April 1941. BW2/313

effect. For Britain, decentralisation and self-government remained the goal but for her two major allies the perpetuation of the Colonial system as it had existed was anathema.

Interdepartmental discussions in the summer established that although the Dominions, India and Burma Offices wished existing Council activities continued, they did not favour their expansion in wartime. The Colonial Office, however, believed that there was a 'tremendous field' for the Council in the Colonies and were 'wholeheartedly in favour' of the Council's plans, 'not merely as a wartime measure but as a permanent arrangement'.<sup>25</sup> The Foreign Office was concerned only that funds should not be diverted from its area, while the MOI agreed to a Council drive in the Colonies in exchange for its exclusion from the Dominions, where the MOI wished to preserve its monopoly. A Joint Standing Committee of the Council and the Colonial Office was formed in December 1941 and the Council joined the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies.

The Council's relationship with the Colonial Office differed from that with the Foreign Office; in the Colonies the Council acted as an agent of the Colonial Office and its activities were controlled more effectively. The Colonial Governments were responsible for basic educational services and the Council for providing facilities above this minimum standard. Where necessary the Council was empowered to provide services properly belonging to the Colonial authorities, on an agency basis for a limited period. Colonial Governors and Chief Secretaries were involved closely in the planning of Council expenditure, and the Colonial Office participated in recruitment and appointment to posts in the Colonies.<sup>26</sup>

Two factors made the Council's work in the Empire fundamentally different from work in foreign countries; it was not operating on foreign soil and it did not teach English. The former implied 'a pre-existing sympathy with British traditions and culture, even though accompanied in some cases by a suspicion of British policy'.<sup>27</sup> But Britain's influence over the organs of publicity in the Empire imposed additional burdens.

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25. Minutes of a meeting at the Treasury, 17 October 1941, BW2/315

26. Joint Standing Committee Minutes, 26 January 1942. BW77/1

27. A. Gillan, Memorandum on British Council Administrative Policy in the Empire, 28 January 1942. BW2/313.

It is as if we were dealing not as in the case of neutral and allied but independent states with a full-grown man and an equal whose opinions we are attempting to influence in certain limited respects, but with a youth who has been entrusted to our care, and who is dependent on us for his entire view of life, including his attitude to his own domestic issues.<sup>28</sup>

The Colonial audience was unsophisticated, illiterate and lacking in 'propaganda resistance' and the propagandists' task was more often one of adult education.<sup>29</sup>

In conformity with the spirit of declared British policy, the Council sought to develop the Colonial peoples' own identities as well. The foundation of British institutes was inappropriate and the Council aimed instead for local centres, managed by local committees. Besides encouraging support this would be

in consonance with the principle of democracy, will point to the fact that the institute is something belonging to the people themselves and not an extraneous (even British) imposition. And it will be a useful training ground for the eventual assumption of more real responsibility.<sup>30</sup>

Above all, institutes supported by the Council must not appear to be under the control of the native administration. Gillan instructed that

everything should be done to avoid giving any impression that the centres are a means of extending government control over a potentially "difficult" class.<sup>31</sup>

The power of the Council's purse, Gillan calculated, would be sufficient to bring an erring, nominally independent institute into line. The Council's role, therefore, was not only the projection of Britain to the Colonies, but also to help to prepare them for self-government and rehabilitate the functions of an imperial power.

The loss of Malaya, Singapore and Burma in early 1942, closely followed by Rommel's victories in North Africa, dealt a severe blow to Britain's morale and prestige. One result was the exposure of imperial policy to searching challenge. The Japanese had achieved not only a military but also a psychological victory all the more momentous in its consequences because it

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28. Overseas Planning Committee: Plan of Propaganda for the Colonies, 12 August 1942. INF I/555

29. Ibid.

30. Gillan, Memorandum on Administrative Policy in the Empire,

28 January 1942. BW2/313

31. Ibid.

undermined the faith of the English people themselves in the Colonial system'.<sup>32</sup> It was the manner as well as the magnitude of the defeats in the Far east that had shocked British opinion. The Times called for a 'radical revision of traditional notions and practices' and Margery Perham, in the same publication, advocated a 'new and more intimate and generous relationship',<sup>33</sup> with the Colonies. Adjustments in colonial administration and social, economic and educational policies were demanded. The fact that the recapture of these territories and their future rested on the cooperation of the United States, augmented the pressure for change. American opinion was critical of Britain's colonial record, especially in India, which was threatened externally by Japan and internally by political discontent. Japan's victories exploded the myth of western superiority and encouraged the nationalist aspirations of the peoples of south-east Asia. A return to the status quo ante bellum was impossible. After a battle with the MOI, the Council was confined to removing the causes for hostile comment and barred from answering that criticism directly in the United States.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Stanley, declared in Parliament in July 1943, during the Allied invasion of Sicily, that, in future, British colonial policy would combine the principles of trusteeship and partnership. Solid social and economic foundations were to be the basis for political evolution and

it is up to us to see that circumstances as soon as possible justify political advances and to ensure as quickly as possible people are trained and equipped for self-government.<sup>35</sup>

To this end educational progress in the Colonies should be directed towards 'education by life for life' and not just towards literary achievement.<sup>36</sup> This entailed education through community effort, local government, trade unions and cooperative

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32 N.Mansergh, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, (London 1968)p.143-4

33. The Times, 14 March 1942. p.5, col. 2 & 6

34. This long-running dispute between the Council and the MOI on influencing American opinion on the issue of India, was resolved in the spring of 1942 by events in India and by Bamford's insistence that the 'interest of the United States in India is now military and constitutional. Culture by itself is off the map'. Bamford to White, 20 March 1942. BW2/31

35. Parliamentary Debates(Commons)13 July 1943. Vol.391,col.49

36. Ibid.

societies and the recruitment of native personnel into the Colonial service. Higher education was to be improved by strengthening links between British and Colonial universities, 'intellectual lend-lease', as Stanley termed the proposals. A Commission of Enquiry was entrusted with the task of improving collaboration between the universities and the Council was invited to attend. In West Africa, the Council's Representative gave evidence to the Elliot Commission on education in the four colonies.

The Council's first sorties into the Colonies, however, were motivated by the threat posed to Mediterranean colonies by Nazi and fascist propaganda. The pattern of work established in foreign countries was transferred to these colonies, but with the resources then available, Gillan described the task as 'trying to dam Niagra with an Upper Thames Weir'.<sup>37</sup> The strategic outposts of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Aden were vital to Britain's position in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. The first three were targets for hostile Axis propaganda and Aden stood isolated and open to anti-British Arab propaganda. The Council did not work in Gibraltar until 1944, a year after the danger of invasion from Spain had passed, and provided instead educational facilities for the Gibraltarian community evacuated to Britain. The Governor agreed to the start of activities in November 1943 and the Gibraltar Society was revived and rehoused by the Council in a building known as the Calpe Institute. It was opened by the Governor in November 1944 and offered a wide range of cultural, social and sporting facilities.

In Malta, Britain faced large-scale and 'violently subversive' Italian propaganda.<sup>38</sup> To counter this preparations were begun in December 1938 for the opening of an institute in Valletta. The Council hoped that

a really elaborate and luxuriously equipped Institute will show the Maltese quite plainly that we intend to stay in Malta and to push our own point of view and that no amount of opposition will deter us.<sup>39</sup>

The Institute was opened by Lloyd in May 1939 and W.R.L. Wickham, formerly at the University of Egypt and director of the Anglo-Egyptian Union, was appointed director and Representative.

37. A. Gillan, 'The Projection of Britain on the Colonial Empire', British Commonwealth Objectives, 1946, p.144
38. Executive Committee Minutes, 13 June 1939 BW 68/3
39. Minute by H.P. Croom-Johnson, 6 February 1939 BW 43/1

Wickham steered a delicate course between the different factions in Malta and stressed the Institute's independence of the Maltese Government. The Institute was primarily a social centre, holding lectures, concerts and debates, that were occasionally broadcast. Lectures on The Progress of the War were started in October 1939 and in April 1940 a joint Maltese-English production of The Gondoliers was staged at the Royal Opera House. By March 1940 the Institute had over one thousand members and Wickham described its aims thus:

The dual function of the Institute has been to try to give the Maltese some knowledge of English life and ways and to attempt to eliminate the distinctions and differences between the Maltese and the English by providing a place where they could meet on an equal footing of absolute equality and in an atmosphere calculated to stimulate mutual interests.<sup>40</sup>

A British officer in Malta during the war left a less charitable impression of the Institute.

Later we would discover other strata of society including those who kept a stiff upper lip by continuing to attend concerts and other social gatherings organised by the British Institute. This was run by the British Council and did a good job - although some felt in rather a snooty or haughty fashion - by remaining open in Valletta and continuing to hold functions even in the craziest, noisiest days of blitz and bombardment.<sup>41</sup>

After June 1940, Malta lay in a dangerously exposed position and on 26 June, Wickham was instructed to keep the Institute open throughout the summer 'providing all distraction and entertainment possible'.<sup>42</sup> The cellar was strengthened to provide shelter during air raids and the Institute remained open, although normal activities were suspended because of the evacuation of Valletta and the surrounding area. A full programme was resumed in September 1940 with one thousand five hundred members registered at the Institute, despite the curfew and the danger of air raids. It was closed temporarily in March 1941 for repairs but by April had two thousand members. Malta's ordeal continued and in May 1942 the Council applied successfully to the Air Ministry and the Admiralty for increased facilities for the transportation of material to the Institute.

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40. W.R.L. Wickham to G. Ogier, 7 May 1940. BW43/3

41. G. Hogan, Malta: The Triumphant Years. (London 1978) p.35-6

42. White to Wickham, 28 June 1940. BW43/3



Much of the Institute's popularity lay in the up to date news and information it could supply. There is no doubt that it played 'no insignificant part in sustaining the morale of the defenders' of Malta in its darkest days.<sup>43</sup>

In 1943 an Institute was opened on Gozo; and Wickham, as a member of the Maltese Board of Education, travelled to Tripoli and Tunis to advise the Military administration on education. He returned to London in 1944. By the end of the war there were over four thousand members at the Valletta institute, roughly half of which were Maltese, nearly four hundred at Gozo, the majority being Maltese, and the Council staff only numbered eight.

In Cyprus the Council attempted

to supplement the resources of the Cyprus Government and to help the Cypriots to raise their standard of living and to bring home to the population of the islands the advantages of belonging to the British Empire.<sup>44</sup>

The Council anticipated opposition from Greek nationalists and the Church and sought to ensure that its work 'should be outwardly haphazard and not present the appearance of a deliberate cultural drive.....'<sup>45</sup> The Cypriot Government had spent little money on promoting Britain or teaching English, leaving the Council a daunting task in view of the majority Greek population's desire for union with Greece. In the absence of institutions of higher education, Greek and Turkish students attended universities in their own countries and had little loyalty to the British Empire. The Council began by trying to improve secondary education but the inability of Greek students to study in Greece during the German occupation, offered a chance to begin more advanced studies. However, lack of funds and the Cypriot Government's refusal to take over any of the Council's educational work, forestalled the foundation of centres for higher education.

In 1940 the Council opened institutes at Nicosia, Kyrenia, Larnaca and Famagusta and at Limassol in 1941. They mainly taught English but were used as social clubs by members

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43. British Council Annual Report, 1941/2, p.7

44. C.A.F.Dundas, Notes on the Council's Policy in the Middle East, 7 June 1941. BW2/85

45. Ibid.

and Allied troops during the summer when no tuition was offered. The total number of students and club members stood at more than one thousand by 1943 and the only limitations to expansion were shortages of staff and space. Ifor Evans visited Cyprus in 1943 and recommended a complete review of the Council's policy in the island. He attributed the Council's large expenditure in Cyprus to an attempt by Lloyd to encourage a lethargic Government to improve facilities but this had failed. Ifor Evans concluded that it was 'a record of improvisation, partially successful and partly unjustifiable' and advocated either planned expansion or complete withdrawal.<sup>46</sup> In London, these alternatives were considered too drastic and it was agreed that there should be a 'steady toning up' of services but no expansion.<sup>47</sup> The Colonial Office declared that it would 'strenuously oppose' any proposals to withdraw but conceded that the Cypriot Government would have to take over some of the educational work done by the Council.<sup>48</sup> In 1945 total memberships of the institutes stood at one thousand five hundred and the Council had thirteen full-time staff in the island.

Aden was Britain's newest colony in the Middle East and Lloyd was anxious to develop contacts with the colony and transform it into the future educational and cultural centre of southern Arabia. A teacher and some material were sent to Aden in 1940 and Lieutenant-Colonel M.C. Lake was appointed Representative. After discussions with the Acting Governor, Lake proposed the foundation of an institute incorporating the MOI's library and reading room. The institute was opened in 1941 and a women's branch was added in 1942. In July 1943 the Governor announced the Council's intention to establish and maintain a college for post-elementary pupils from Aden and the surrounding territories, to be known as the Lord Lloyd College. A temporary preparatory school would be founded to feed the College until the Protectorate's own schools could do so. The Council also provided scholarships for teacher training courses in the Sudan.

After reviewing the Council's policy in Aden in 1943, Ifor Evans recommended that although the colony was not as politically important as other areas in the Middle East, the institute should be maintained as it was the only symbol of British culture in

46. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 November 1943. BW69/9

47. Minutes of a Meeting at the Council, 18 January 1944. BW26/1

48. Ibid.

southern Arabia. Gillan agreed that the Council's expenditure in Aden should not increase but pointed out that it was morally committed to the Lord Lloyd College project. Fortunately, difficulties in finding a suitable site delayed expenditure until after the war. Gillan concurred with Ifor Evans' view that Aden was relatively unimportant and 'unlikely to assume the importance as a Council base in the Middle East which Lord Lloyd appears to have visualised'.<sup>49</sup>

Palestine was ripe territory for anti-British propaganda, Hitler's anti-semitic tirades and Britain's and France's failure to check Mussolini in Ethiopia, encouraged the Palestinian Arabs to look to the fascist powers to defeat Zionism. Arabic broadcasts from Berlin exacerbated Britain's difficulties and in 1937 the Council began supplying material to the Palestine Broadcasting Service. With the approach of war Britain tried to safeguard her position by adopting a pro-Arab policy in Palestine. A White Paper published in May 1939<sup>50</sup> proposed strict limits on Jewish immigration and assured Arabs that further immigration would be subject to their consent. It also promised the establishment, within ten years, of a state jointly governed by Arabs and Jews. In September 1939 the communal conflict in Palestine was suspended but the British authorities expected the fighting to be resumed as soon as the war was over.

The war offered an opportunity to break down barriers between Arabs and Jews and to improve contacts between moderate leaders. Lloyd was particularly interested in raising Arab educational standards and in providing a British education for the children of British personnel stationed in Palestine. In 1940 institutes were opened at Nablus and Jaffa and in May, Dundas visited Palestine to discuss the extension of the Council's work to Jewish settlements. On the advice of the High Commissioner, the Council acquired the School of English Studies at Tel Aviv and opened an institute at Haifa. Dundas recommended to Lloyd in September 1940

immediate opening at Haifa on the grounds that repeated air raids have led to more and closer friendliness between Jews and Arabs than ever before. This favourable situation is likely to deteriorate if air raids cease, and the High

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49. Minute by Gillan, 27 October 1943. BW2/313  
50. Cmd. 6019 (London 1939)

Commissioner is anxious that before the opportunity is passed a start should be made on the work which may help to mitigate the deterioration in communal relationships.<sup>51</sup>

In 1941 the Council extended the social side of its work in Palestine to attract leading Jews and Arabs who had avoided the mainly educational institutes. Clubs were designed to stimulate indigenous cultural activities and were founded mainly in the Arab areas of Palestine.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the three institutes at Haifa, Jaffa and Nablus, new centres were opened at Tel Aviv and Nazareth in 1942 and a library and cultural events were organised in Jerusalem. Reverses in the desert before El Alamein brought a slump in attendances at the Nablus and Nazareth institutes. A special department in the Representative's office was created in 1943 to organise activities in the Jewish settlements and material was presented to the Hebrew University and to Hebrew schools. The Council also supported schools for the British community and worked among Greek and Polish refugees in Palestine.

By 1943 it was clear to the opposing factions in Palestine that the Axis powers would be defeated. The issues of Jewish immigration and the future of the Palestinian state re-emerged. Ifor Evans reported during a tour of Palestine in May, that

It has been urged upon us by high and competent authority that the Council's work in Palestine is one of the few methods by which the grave dangers of rebellion in the post-war period may be avoided.<sup>53</sup>

Referring to Zionist extremists, the Representative argued that 'contact between these deluded elements and ordinary British opinion must be what we must aim to bring about'.<sup>54</sup> The task was monumental and to some in the Council, including Evans, hopeless unless expenditure was on an heroic scale. The Council faced serious cut-backs in its budget and many schemes in Palestine, including a multi-racial institute at Haifa, were threatened. On his return to London Evans advised that

Activity on our present very meagre scale cannot be effective given the gravity of the present Palestinian crisis. It is almost as if one were to give an aspirin to a man who was dying of cancer..<sup>55</sup>

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51. Dundas to Lloyd, 27 September 1940. BW47/2

52. At Jaffa, Nablus, Hebron, Jenin, Beisan, Gaza, Tulkan and Nazareth.

53. Evans to White, 1 May 1943. BW2/98

54. J. Morrison to E. Deuchars, 23 June 1943. BW47/2

55. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 November 1943. BW69/9

Conversely, the Council considered that withdrawal would discourage Britain's friends and reduce all hope of reconciliation. The Council's activities continued and proved popular, especially in Haifa and Tel Aviv where students had to be turned away. Controversy about Palestine's future coupled to the Council's own uncertain future, allowed the Council's work to continue until terrorist activities threatened the safety of the Council's staff. Palestine absorbed the largest number of the staff in the Colonial Empire, enjoying a complement of seventy-eight by September 1945.

In neighbouring Transjordan the Council's work developed slowly and, until 1942, centred on two schools in Amman. In that year an Anglo-Arab club was founded at Azraq and the Council sponsored the King Hussein Club in Amman in the following year. These clubs were valuable meeting grounds for Arabs and British officials and were chiefly social and cultural.

The chief threat to the British West Indies lay in internal discontent and unrest that had erupted into violence before the war and led to the establishment of a Royal Commission. The Council had offered prizes for proficiency in English since 1936 and two years later entered discussions to improve the supply of British books and films to the West Indies. Further work was suspended pending the recommendations of the Royal Commission, to which the Council submitted a memorandum. Low standards of education in the West Indies handicapped normal Council work, and adult and higher education were 'so deplorable that British prestige not only in the islands but elsewhere in the world suffers considerably'.<sup>56</sup> Cultural centres established in each of the main islands would serve as 'a permanent basis for higher education in the West Indies'.<sup>57</sup> The Council argued that a rise in material standards of living in the islands would not solve the problem of unrest which stemmed from spiritual deprivation:

the germ of discontent and unrest at present affecting their community can be seen to be by origin and nature cultural frustration born of an inadequate and premature education system rather than discontent with material circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

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56. T. Lewes, Memorandum on British Cultural Propaganda in the West Indies, September 1938. BW2/89

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

The Council took over the supply of documentary films to the West Indies in September 1940, also the selection and purchase of books for West Indian libraries. In the same month as bases in the Caribbean were leased to the United States, Hugh Rutledge, the Everest explorer, toured the West Indies for the Council and found a general demand for its services. In Jamaica, Rutledge saw an island 'divided against itself' but in the Jamaica Institute there was a meeting ground for black, white and official groups.<sup>59</sup> W. Minshall, Information Officer for Trinidad and Tobago, regretted that the Council had not come to the West Indies twenty years earlier and was concerned about the strong American influence in the islands and the 'internal problems of racial and class prejudices which are among the reasons for encouraging free association in cultural pursuits'.<sup>60</sup> A similar picture emerged from the other islands for each of which, despite local misgivings, Rutledge proposed an institute. Barbados, he felt, should have the first institute, the Welfare Fund paying for the building while the Council met the running costs. Through the 'medium of cultural experiment' Rutledge hoped to 'succeed in removing the reproach of neglect by the Mother Country'.<sup>61</sup> The Joint Standing Committee did not approve the foundation of institutes in each island fearing that it would raise too many delicate issues, such as that of the colour bar. It recommended instead that the Council operate through existing bodies, such as the Jamaica Institute, believing that this would arouse less suspicion and hostility and also be less costly.

The Carnegie Corporation decided to suspend financial aid to projects in the British Empire in August 1942 for the duration of the war. The Corporation's support for libraries in Africa and the West Indies had been an important element in the Council's plans. In the West Indies, negotiations with the Comptroller for Development and Welfare resulted in the consignment of libraries and the training of librarians to the Council. Its work in the West Indies was officially described as 'public library and allied cultural services'.<sup>62</sup> It was

59. H. Rutledge, Report on a tour of the West Indies, September

60. Ibid.

1940. BW2/140

61. Ibid.

62. Joint Standing Committee Minutes, 6 May 1943. BW2/77

entrusted with the maintenance and exhibition of the historical archives of the islands. A similar agreement was reached later in West Africa.

F.D. Gray was appointed administrative Representative in the West Indies and he was joined by Harold Stannard of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies as Cultural Advisor. In June 1943 Sir Harry Luke, a former Governor of Malta and High Commissioner in the Western Pacific, was appointed Chief Council Representative in the West Indies. In the following year Representatives were sent to Barbados, Jamaica and British Guiana. Luke picked Trinidad for his headquarters and travelled so extensively in the next three years that he did not spend more than one consecutive week in any colony. Luke was

greatly helped by the fact that several of the West Indian Governors and the Comptroller for Development and Welfare had been friends in the Colonial Service, or, in the case of several other Government officials, had actually served under me elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

In Jamaica, which had a new constitution in 1944, providing for the first elections under universal suffrage, Council activities flourished. The Council's official, J. Paget, was a member of the Board of Governors of the Jamaica Institute and Council material and finance enabled the Institute to extend its scope and develop a junior Centre to bring in 500 new members. A Committee was established by the Director of Education in Jamaica under the chairmanship of Paget, following a visit by the Irvine Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, to draw up a five year plan for adult education. In Trinidad the Council took over the administration of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Library Scheme from the Carnegie Corporation, which included the development of libraries in British Guiana, Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands. In Barbados the Council cooperated closely with the Erdiston Cultural Institute, a local government project. In each of the islands the Council's technical services were extended and six scholarships were offered in 1944 for study at British universities. By September 1945 the Council had thirty-one full-time staff in the West Indies.

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63. H. Luke, Cities and Men, (London 1956) vol.3, p.147

Sir Harry Luke's diaries for his time with the Council can not be traced; they are not with his other papers at the Middle East Library, St. Anthony's College, Oxford or at the Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

Britain's Colonies in Africa were the next area of exploration. Following the defeat of Mussolini's forces in East Africa in mid-1941, consultations with the Colonial Office and the Conference of East African Governors secured an agreement in principle to the extension of the Council's work to these territories. In October the Council's opportunity occurred in the form of Malcolm Guthrie of the School of African and Oriental Studies, who was willing to undertake a survey for the Council in conjunction with the pursuit of his own studies. Guthrie's comprehensive report revealed the inadequacies of education in East Africa and the problems arising from inter-racial hostility. He proposed that the Council could mitigate both by the foundation of a large number of locally organised institutes and the distribution of its material.<sup>64</sup> Guthrie's survey was not completed until October 1943 by which time, overriding demands on the Council's resources following the Allied landings in North Africa in November, prevented the implementation of his proposals. When a Representative was appointed in 1947 the field had to be surveyed again and until then the Council only distributed some material through the Colony's Information Officers.

The West African Colonies were more fortunate than their eastern counterparts. Strategically and economically vital to the war effort, especially after Italy had entered the war, they were vulnerable to Nazi propaganda emitting from the Vichy French territories on their borders. The Free French attack on Dakar in September 1940 and the threat of retaliation had brought the war uncomfortably close. In July 1941 the agreement of the West African Governors to the operation of the Council in their territories was announced and, in November, Dundas embarked on a tour of the Colonies. He returned convinced of the vital need for the Council's services 'particularly from a war point of view'.<sup>65</sup> Dundas stressed the urgency of the situation.

There is a great deal of friction between white and black already occurring and this is increasing. Practically nothing is being done to improve relations. There is also immense inertia and the Information Officers are very badly placed to deal with this for they are Government and that means automatically suspect.<sup>66</sup>

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64. Guthrie, Report on a Visit to East Africa, 1942/3. BW2/321

65. Dundas to Gillan, 27 March 1942. BW2/318

66 Ibid.



In Dundas' view the Council's unofficial status was a great advantage. He envisaged three main areas for the Council: the guidance and informing of Africans through newspapers and institutes; educational and cultural work useful to all the Colonies, such as the production of special films and textbooks, that they could not afford individually; the provision of neutral meeting points. He recommended that educated Africans were the best channels through which British ideas could reach the rest and the indigenous press offered the most effective means of reaching them. However, the West African newspapers were uniformly critical of Britain and the Colonial Governments and, failing the publication of newspapers under the Council's auspices to redress the balance, Dundas advised the establishment of a news agency in Accra. The manipulation of the Press was the key to the success of his proposals as Dundas believed that

no single factor can assist more in obtaining the maximum war cooperation from the African, and no single factor could be more valuable in assisting after the war in maintaining friendly relations between Great Britain and the African people.<sup>67</sup>

To help in 'the guidance and formation of local public opinion'<sup>68</sup> Dundas advocated institutes in all the larger towns run by local committees. These would also answer charges that Britain sought to hold back the African, prepare Africans better for employment and instil 'some kind of political sense' and weaken the influence of radical ideas in the urban areas.<sup>69</sup> The need to present the case for Britain and western democracy was central to his report.

Recent labour difficulties aired in the press (in Nigeria) show the way the wind is blowing, and many senior British officials believe that unless immediate action is taken to neutralise this tendency, there may be created a young, intelligent group of educated Africans, primed with half-baked communist theories, believing in agitation as a means to gaining their ends, and acquiring an ever-growing political conviction that the British are retarding the political, social and economic development of the black races in Africa.<sup>70</sup>

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67.C.A.F. Dundas, Report on a Tour of West Africa, November 1941 to March 1942. BW2/318

68.Ibid.

69.C.A.F. Dundas, Memorandum on a British Council Newspaper for Nigeria, 22 December 1941. BW2/318

70.C.A.F. Dundas, Report on a Tour of West Africa, November 1941 to March 1942. BW2/318

The Governor of the Gambia broadly agreed with Dundas' proposals but was sceptical of the benefits anticipated from the Council's unofficial status.

I foresee considerable difficulties in keeping a clear distinction in the African mind between the activities of the British Council and of the Imperial, or local Colonial, Government. Public criticism by the Council would, in African circumstances, be impossible. The absence of criticism would be interpreted as a tacit agreement with Government policy.<sup>71</sup>

Dundas' advocacy of Council-sponsored newspapers in West Africa, although strongly supported by the Governor of Nigeria, was rejected in London on the grounds of finance and control over policy. The Council decided that it 'might be able to do better work by influencing editors rather than by competing against them.'<sup>72</sup> Dundas' other proposals, however, were accepted.

In December 1942 the attention of the War Cabinet was drawn to the need to assert British interests in West Africa for more immediate reasons. Lord Swinton, the Resident Minister, was concerned by rumours, following the Allied invasion of North Africa, that the United States would supplant Britain in West Africa, arising from the apparent subordination of British interests to American control in French West Africa. The desirability of stating clearly the traditional goals of British colonial policy in answer to American proposals for international trusteeship was urged by Stanley, Attlee, Eden and Cranborne in a paper for the War Cabinet.<sup>73</sup> Roosevelt's visit to British and French colonies in Africa on his way to Casablanca only confirmed his dislike of imperialism. However, Churchill's determination to hold the imperial line hardened as the Allied successes mounted.

Professor W.M. Macmillan was appointed senior Representative in West Africa in May 1943. His headquarters were at Accra in the Gold Coast, the most politically advanced of the four colonies and the first to have an elected majority in the Legislative Council. A former Rhodes scholar, historian of wide repute and founding member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, specialising in African affairs, Macmillan was also a member of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies and of the

71. Sir H. Blood to C. Jeffries, 7 November 1942. BW8/3

72. Joint Standing Committee Minutes, 20 March 1942. BW77/1

73. War Cabinet Memoranda, 15 December 1942, CAB66/32 WP(42)178

Empire Intelligence Section of the BBC. In Democratising the Empire, published in 1941, Macmillan argued that the development of the Colonies towards full production and political freedom required greater educational and social services for the native peoples. Macmillan hoped that a careful policy of practical help and investment in the Colonies would enable Britain to tap a fund of goodwill to establish democratic traditions. He was critical of Britain's inclination to 'soft-pedal on any suggestion of political advance' and warned that,

It we fail, the peoples concerned will sooner or later take control into their own hands, under some form which may be much less desirable both for our own future and the harmony of the world.<sup>74</sup>

Education, Macmillan believed, was the key to advance. The Council could contribute by improving adult education facilities, by providing libraries and reading rooms, and by offering cultural and social amenities to university-educated Africans. In West African conditions, Macmillan argued, cultural relations could only be conducted in the 'upper strata'. The cooperation of the white community was essential and they would frequent centres 'knowing they will bump into a share of Africans' only if those centres maintained high standards.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, equal social status had to be assured and Macmillan believed that senior civil servants would not mix freely with their clerks.

We must conserve our energy if we are to serve efficiently the smallest and hitherto most neglected, but also most important class - the really "educated" Africans and British administrators.<sup>76</sup>

Membership of institutes was restricted by charging fees. Macmillan's approach aroused controversy within the Council. Gillan was interested chiefly in the education and development of Africans to assist the transition to self-government, while Ward-Price, formerly of the Nigerian Service and then director of the Colonial Division of the Empire Division, minuted,

in my view we should deal entirely with Africans that is the young, educated Africans, which are the only ones which we would be able to mould nearer our heart's desire.<sup>77</sup>

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74. W.M. Macmillan, Democratising the Empire, (London 1941) p.44

75. Minutes of the Joint Standing Committee, 12 May 1944.

BW77/1

76. W.M. Macmillan to Gillan, 7 February 1944, BW8/2

77. Minute by Ward-Price, 30 May 1944. BW8/5

Macmillan's first task, however, was the development of libraries in West Africa. He aimed to found one national library in each Colony with a second tier of reading rooms, supported by local agencies with the Council's help, open to the less literate. The former would provide 'any book any<sup>78</sup> intelligent student might reasonably ask for in any field', whilst the latter would enable the national libraries to concentrate on the 'highbrow'. Two officers arrived in 1944 to supervise the development of the libraries and the training of African librarians at the Council's school of Librarianship at Achimota College. In addition a travelling book service was started for each Colony.

The Council's work in West Africa was hampered considerably by an influx of service and civilian personnel which placed an intolerable strain on the colonies' resources. The Council's staff had to contend with problems of accommodation, transport, supplies and communications with London as well as a debilitating climate. Macmillan had assistants in Freetown and Lagos and an administrative assistant, who arrived in 1944. In 1943 reading rooms were opened in Lagos and Freetown and an Institute in Freetown. A British Council House was opened in Accra in 1944, followed by institutes in Bathurst and Lagos in 1945. The institutes were run by local committees on which the Council and the Colonial Education Department were represented. By December 1945 the Council had thirty-four full-time staff in West Africa.

The Council had little success in the Dominions and India during the war. Contrary to pre-war pronouncements, the Dominion High Commissioners argued that the expansion of the Council's activities in wartime would be inappropriate and liable to criticism in the Dominions as an unnecessary luxury. As with the Colonies, the uniqueness of the Dominions' relationship to Britain called for different methods of operation from those employed in foreign countries. It was Gillan's policy to encourage the development of sister councils in each Dominion instead of appointing Representatives. These councils would advise the Council and execute its plans.

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78. Mona Macmillan, *The British Council in West Africa, 1943-45*, Chapter 6 of unpublished draft biography, p.161.

The eventual picture might be a series of collateral councils in the United Kingdom and the Dominions which in addition to the primary objective of interpreting their own countries abroad might each form a real Commonwealth cultural clearing house.<sup>79</sup>

Robertson favoured greater cooperation between Britain and the Dominions and Colonies in improving knowledge within the Empire of its component parts and in projecting a united front overseas. Indeed, Robertson

would like the British Council ultimately to develop into a British Empire Council, so that we can draw our men from the whole British Empire..<sup>80</sup>

Against the odds, however, the Council made some valuable but limited progress in the Dominions and India, with the exception of South Africa. Here, the Council was advised by the High Commissioner to defer activities until the war was over. The most promising development was in Canada.

The entry of the United States into the war in December 1941 made possible more overt propaganda in the Continent. Massey had supported the Council's proposals before the war and had agreed to the subsidy of prominent speakers to undertake lecture tours in 1939/40. The decisive factor, however, was the donation of £10,000 by Millington-Drake in 1941 for the promotion of Anglo-Canadian relations.<sup>81</sup> As joint trustee of the fund with Massey, and encouraged by 'responsible unofficial opinion', Robertson proposed to the Dominions Office that a Council official should tour Canada.<sup>82</sup> In 1942 Michael Huxley, who had been involved in the organisation of propaganda to enemy countries and in the United States, went to Canada on the Council's behalf. He 'was met by a mixture of sympathy and suspicion' but enjoyed the full approval and collaboration of the Canadian authorities.<sup>83</sup> Huxley proposed the formation of a Canada Action Group to undertake the projection of Canada to Royal Air Force personnel stationed there in connection with the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme. In due course this group would form a national body devoted to the promotion of Canada at home and abroad. The Canadian Prime Minister's approval was secured and

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79. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 March 1943. BW69/8

80. Parliamentary Debates (Commons) Vol.385, 26 November 1942, Richard Casey, Minister of State in the Middle East, felt also that the Council should represent the Dominions and Empire. See R. Casey, Personal Experience (London 1962)p.161.

81. See below p.168

82. Minute by Gillan, 19 March 1942. BW2/314

83. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 10 November 1942. BW69/8

the Council agreed to appoint a secretary to the planned Canada Foundation. Its chairman was Justice Thorsen, President of the Exchequer Court; the Executive Secretary was W.B. Herbert, former Assistant Director of Public Information, and representatives of the Department of External Affairs and the Wartime Information Board were included. Gillan hoped that this body would 'provide a useful prototype for work in other Dominions later on'.<sup>84</sup> However, the Foundation, which began work on the 15 November 1942, concentrated on the short range projection of Canada to British airmen and made little effort to form a body similar to the Council. The Foundation was 'suspicious of any form of Council intervention or patronage' and preoccupied with internal debates.<sup>85</sup>

Canadian participation in the Council's work in Latin America was considered; British Missions in the area were anxious to present a united Empire viewpoint. The Foreign Office and the Dominions Office agreed that Council Representatives in Latin America should help the Canada Committee, as it became known, where possible. Some cooperation resulted, such as the opening of a Canadian section in the Council's reference library in Guatemala, but Canadian cultural activities in Latin America were minimal during the war.

In Australia and New Zealand the Council mainly distributed material, particularly to the Press. In London E.W. McAlpine, London editor of the Australian Consolidated Press, took the Council's London Letter and other articles from the Press Department; in Australia the Council was in contact with the newspaper proprietor, Sir Keith Murdoch. Films, periodicals and travelling exhibitions were also distributed. The main obstacles to Council work in the two Dominions were lack of contacts and machinery through which demands could be assessed and material distributed. In March 1943, whilst in Cairo, Robertson raised the issue of Council operations directly with the New Zealand Minister of Defence and instructed Gillan, in the following month, to take up the matter with the New Zealand government. In May, to improve contacts, the Council entertained a Parliamentary Delegation from the two Dominions in London. The Council's tendency to consult Dominion officials and Governments directly, antagonised the Dominions Office.

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84. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 10 November 1942. BW69/8

85. Gillan to McNab, 23 March 1943. BW12/1

A Dominions Office official minuted after hearing of Gillan's approach to the New Zealand Government,

It is typical of the "imperialistic" attitude of the Council that they should try to occupy every position without consulting the proper authority .....it is for the U.K. Government to decide what form U.K. propaganda shall take in the Dominions and not for the Dominion Governments.<sup>86</sup>

Without an official invitation, the Council could do little.

We can not very well butt in without some ostensible invitation and though some people in Australia House are sympathetic, I cannot get an official interest expressed. The Dominions Office is sympathetic but,<sup>87</sup> of course, cautious and won't take a line on its own.

The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in London in May 1944, on the eve of the Normandy invasion, provided the Council with the opportunity it needed. Good relations were established with the staffs of the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers, especially with the former. The weight of opinion among the Prime Ministers was in favour of strengthening the unity of the Commonwealth through existing methods of cooperation rather than by the creation of new machinery. For the Council, the justification for its work in the Commonwealth was that it replaced political ties by the cultural links that united the Empire. The Council circumvented the Dominions Office in pursuing contacts made during the Conference and found an ally in P. Dawson of the Australian News and Information Bureau in Australia House. While the Dominions Office was deciding in August 1944 that there would be no increase in the Council's work in the foreseeable future, Dawson secured a meeting for Gillan with Bruce in September.

The Anzac agreement of January had declared Australia's and New Zealand's interest in all preparations for peace in Asia and especially in the Pacific basin. The failure to consult the two Dominions over the 1943 Cairo Declaration on the future of the Japanese empire had been resented and America's growing influence in the Pacific was equally disliked. Bruce may, therefore, have seen in the Council a means of reinforcing the Commonwealth viewpoint in south-east Asia, for not only did he urge Gillan to send an official to tour Australia, but he also

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86. Minute by Pugh, 11 May 1943. DO 35/1200 2509/15

87. Minute by Gillan 13 April 1944. BW12/1

promised to discuss the matter with Cranborne and issue a personal invitation to the Council. As for the Dominions Office argument that the Council could operate adequately through the Public Relations Departments of the High Commissioners' Offices, Bruce declared this to be 'quite fatal'.<sup>88</sup> In Bruce's view,

What was important at the moment was that we should help to give a British background to the functions which would fall to Australia after the war in the Pacific. Australia was just beginning to realise that she was a nation and also that she was very isolated and had no sort of cultural background. She wanted to remain British and to portray and purvey British influences in the Pacific, but she must have help in doing so.<sup>89</sup>

In discussions with Cranborne it became clear that Bruce was more interested in Council collaboration 'in presenting the British point of view generally in the Pacific'<sup>90</sup> than in the dissemination of British ideals in Australia. Nevertheless, by the end of 1944 it was agreed that Gillan should visit Australia and New Zealand in the near future, although the precise purpose of his tour remained ambiguous.

Before 1939 the Council had sent material, chiefly press articles and films, to the Government of India's Information Officer via the India Office. This material was distributed unofficially to editors and the Council received in return a summary of events in India for use in its press material. When the Viceroy declared war on India's behalf after Germany's invasion of Poland, considerable anger was felt by India's leaders and the Congress Party resigned from the Government. The Council continued to send material and in November 1939 extended its coverage to Burma. J. Hennessy, Principal Information Officer in India, reported in February 1941 that

All the British Council's material is invaluable. Their articles and photographs secure between ten and fifty publications each in the pages of all the leading Indian newspapers.

In the summer the Council doubled the quantity of material sent to India and in discussions with A.H. Joyce, Information Officer

88. Minute by Gillan, 7 September 1944. BW12/1

89. Minute by Gillan, 9 September 1944. BW12/1

90. Pugh to Gillan, 14 September 1944. BW12/1

91. J. Hennessy to A.H. Joyce, 26 February 1941. IO L/1/1/64  
16/26A 993/41



at the India Office, it was agreed that although political conditions ruled out the foundation of a British Institute in India, there was still a considerable field for the Council, especially in providing facilities for Indian students and others in Britain. On being informed that the Council's activities were to be expanded Amery 'displayed a very great interest' and spoke to Robertson.<sup>92</sup> In September the Council's Representative in Iran visited India briefly and established contacts with academic and cultural bodies.

The outbreak of war in the Far East in December, and the rapid Japanese advance, signalled the start of a new era for Indian nationalism. The fall of Singapore in February 1942 and the loss of Burma in the following months brought the war to India's frontiers and intensified the political crisis. The failure of the Cripps Mission in March highlighted the deep division within Indian nationalism and Britain's difficulties mounted with the launch of Gandhi's Quit India campaign in the summer. The battle of Midway Island in June ended the run of Japanese victories and in August Gandhi and the Congress leaders were arrested. The crisis had passed in India and in the Pacific the Japanese were beginning to lose the initiative.

These events suspended the Council's plans and in January 1942 Gillan reported that he had been 'warned off' India.<sup>93</sup> At the end of the year the India Office considered the establishment of an Advisory Committee on cultural relations with India and Amery wrote to Robertson recommending this course.

It seems to me of prime importance at the stage which the India question has now reached that there should be a much wider appreciation by Indians of what this country stands for in the world and what association with it in the British Commonwealth means. Educated Indians are, of course, already well versed in English classical literature, but I doubt if they have much appreciation of the extent to which our outlook has changed in recent times and of the trends of modern political thought in this country.<sup>94</sup>

Amery was confident that the Treasury could be persuaded to release the necessary funds if a good scheme was put to it.

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92. A.H.Joyce to White, 28 August 1941. IO L/1/1/70 103679/41

93. Minute by Gillan, 31 January 1942. BW2/313

94. Amery to Robertson, 28 November 1942. IO L/1/1/70 104662/41

In response, the Council proposed that the India Office should be represented on its Executive Committee and that a joint standing committee should be formed. In January 1943 Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, was informed of these discussions and also of plans for the establishment of an Indian Institute in London and a body similar to the Council in India. Linlithgow was pessimistic about the general situation in India and deprecated contacts with the Indian universities on the grounds that they were staffed by nationalists and steeped in politics.<sup>95</sup> The formation of a committee was postponed while the Viceroy's views were studied but the Council and the India Office agreed that they were too gloomy.

Linlithgow was replaced by General Wavell in 1943 and at the end of the year the Council received encouraging messages from India. Joyce, then visiting India, reported on the 'splendid opportunity' for the Council in India.<sup>96</sup>

There are pretty clear indications that among the educated Indians who are clearly nationalistic and in no sense pro-British, a feeling is being created by the trend of war events.....that India's best interests are likely to be served by remaining in the Commonwealth of Nations and in close association with Britain..... this feeling is capable of being nursed towards a conviction if we start now to develop relations in the cultural field.<sup>97</sup>

Amery wrote to Wavell in January 1944 proposing the despatch of a small British Council delegation to India. Wavell was cautious and suggested that the Council wait until after the hot weather and consult Sir John Sargent, Secretary to the Department of Education in India, who would be visiting London in the summer. Sargent opposed direct Council representation in India in view of the number of goodwill missions that were already swamping the country and because many, even moderate, Indians believed that the Council was a propaganda organisation because of its association with Lloyd who was 'still regarded in India as the protagonist of British imperialism'.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Sargent warned that

rumours which have reached India in recent years of the British Council's activities in the Middle East and Near East, have lent some colour to the impression that it is a British propagandist agency.<sup>99</sup>

95. Linlithgow to Amery, 23 March 1943. IO L/1/1/70 104662/41

96. A.H. Joyce to T. Morley, 16 October 1943. IO L/1/1/65 16/26A

97. Ibid. 105296/43

98. Memorandum by Sir John Sargent, July 1944. IO L/1/1/70 10790/4

99. Ibid.

Sargent recommended that the Council concentrated on establishing informal contacts with Indian academic, scientific and artistic groups.

Discussions between Robertson and Amery resulted in the despatch of T.W. Morray, the Representative in Iran, to India for the second time. Wavell welcomed this plan and in November, wrote privately to Amery;

My own view has from the first been that the Council should begin by encouraging closer relations between the universities at home and out here. If attempts are made to establish anything like an office for British propaganda in this country there would of course be great suspicion and the Council could do very little.<sup>100</sup>

Morray arrived in India early in 1945 and proposed that the Council appoint a Representative to supervise the distribution of material and the development of contacts between British and Indian cultural and academic bodies. Wavell was encouraged by Morray's progress and reported that if 'the Council can get started without active Government intervention it will probably succeed.....'<sup>101</sup> At the Simla Conference in June Morray discussed the resumption of Council activities in Burma with Government representatives. The fall of Rangoon in April ended a war that left Burma devastated and Burmese leaders determined to achieve independence more swiftly than had been envisaged in a White Paper published in May.<sup>102</sup> The Burma Office needed all the help it could find to re-establish British influence in Burma. The Council was invited to attend meetings in London to discuss the future of Burma. The general election at home, the Findlater Stewart enquiry, and the uncertain situation in India and Burma temporarily halted the development of the Council's work in Asia.

As the end of the war approached the Dominions Office considered the future of publicity in the Dominions and Dominion publicity in foreign countries. In a memorandum on Imperial Relations, with special reference to education, prepared in 1943, Boyd Shannon commented

With the Dominions grown to nationhood, and in times when so many of the ideals of Britain and the Commonwealth have been challenged by foreign powers, an increasing need is felt to maintain the essential unity of the Commonwealth.<sup>103</sup>

100. Wavell to Amery, 1 November 1944. IO L/1/1/70 10790/44

101. Wavell to Amery, 6 March 1945. IO L/1/1/70 10790/45

102. Cmd. 6655, London 1945

103. Memorandum by Boyd-Shannon, 4 July 1943. DO 35/1191/2441/5

During the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in London in 1944 a conference was held at the Ministry of Information of representatives of the Dominions, the Indian High Commission and Whitehall Departments. This meeting decided that each Dominion must be responsible for its own publicity and that general Empire propaganda 'could not be properly continued after the Ministry of Information had come to an end by an organisation such as the British Council'.<sup>104</sup> The possibility of an Empire Information Unit or Board of Commonwealth Publicity was tentatively discussed but met with strong opposition from Canada.<sup>105</sup> The Dominions Office argued for the retention of the Ministry of Information until Japan had been defeated in view of the effect its prior dissolution would have on opinion in Australia and New Zealand, but was pessimistic about the future of publicity in Canada. Mackenzie King who had

been prepared to stretch a point in wartime..... may be very anxious in peacetime not to commit himself to any form of Government encouragement of publicity.<sup>106</sup>

In October 1944, the Dominions Office decided to continue publicity in the Dominions after the war. The Ministry of Information had had no staff in the Dominions during the war but had a special section to prepare material for them. The Dominions Office had two officers in London and staff attached to the United Kingdom High Commission overseas to deal with publicity; three in Canada, two in South Africa and one each in Australia and Eire.<sup>107</sup> These staff were to be kept to cover government publicity while the Council was to act as the Dominions Office's agent 'within the framework of a broad scheme for cultural interchanges within the British Commonwealth'.<sup>108</sup> The Dominions Office's attitude towards the Council was discouraging and Findlater Stewart, in his report, endorsed the Dominions Office's view that the Council had only a limited role in the Dominions. In the event of extensive Council operations in the Dominions, the Dominions Office wanted the same control over Council expenditure as the Foreign Office enjoyed and the right to comment

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104. Dominions Office Meeting Minutes, 20 November 1943. DO 35/1211  
WN201/6

105. Ministry of Information Meeting Minutes, 15 May 1944.  
DO 35/1211 WN201/6

106. Minute by S. Stephenson, 27 April 1944. DO 35/1211 WN201/6

107. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), Vol. 399, 9 May 1944, col. 1689

108. Dominions Office Meeting Minutes, 20 October 1944. DO 35/1211  
WN201/2

'about the suitability of the general character of the picture of Britain which the Council is presenting' in the Dominions.<sup>109</sup> The Dominions Office wished to ensure that Britain was portrayed

not merely as a repository of ancient traditions but as a nation qualified for leadership in a world of progress.<sup>110</sup>

The Council refused to accept the low priority accorded by the Dominions Office to cultural relations and pressed ahead with its plans for Australia, New Zealand and India.

Likewise, the Colonial Office asked Findlater Stewart for greater controls over the Council's policy and expenditure. In a draft demarcation document the Colonial Office argued for the right to veto Council appointments, to control current expenditure as well as the budget estimates and to guide the Council's work in each Colony by the issue of a 'charter' or 'directive'.<sup>111</sup> Robertson described the draft agreement as 'a temporary Treaty of peace between belligerents',<sup>112</sup> and Gillan agreed that it was 'unnecessarily restrictive'.<sup>113</sup> In the event the Council accepted a less stringent document, affirming the Council's status as the Colonial Office's agent in the Colonies. In April 1945 the Council's accountant described the Colonial Office's powers vis à vis the Council thus:

The Colonial Office will be responsible for determining policy e.g. the territories in which activities are undertaken and the relative distribution of effort between the different territories. The Colonial Office will indicate to the Council the methods and channels to be used, though it may at its discretion delegate in particular instances to the Council.<sup>114</sup>

The Colonial Office's authority in relation to the Council was the envy of other Departments but it appeared greater on paper than it was in practice. More significant than the written agreement was the close relationship between Council and Colonial Office officials in contrast to the generally poor relations between the Council and Dominions Office, that stemmed from the Dominions Office's hostility towards the development of Council activities in the Dominions and the steps the Council took to circumvent this opposition.

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<sup>109</sup>. Dominions Office Memorandum, January 1945, D035/1211 WN420/2

<sup>110</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>. Colonial Office Memorandum, 8 February 1945. BW2/313

<sup>112</sup>. Minute by Robertson, 24 September 1944. BW2/313

<sup>113</sup>. Minute by Gillan, 15 September 1944. BW2/313

<sup>114</sup>. Minute by K. Jesty, 13 April 1945. BW1/2

During the war, therefore, important steps were taken towards the establishment of publicity services in the Commonwealth and Empire. The Council adapted well to the varying conditions encountered and had to revise its ideas and methods. In the Middle East its work followed the pattern established in foreign countries. In the West Indies and West Africa, too, Institutes had to be founded in the absence of suitable indigenous bodies but they were principally adult education and social centres. The management of these Institutes by local committees went some way towards meeting the Council's first intention to operate indirectly in the Colonies. In the Dominions the formation of a corresponding council in Canada had failed to live up to the Council's expectations, but the decline of the British Empire in relation to her two major wartime Allies brought calls for the consolidation and solidarity of Commonwealth opinion. Australia welcomed the Council's help in presenting the Commonwealth case in the Pacific and Asia but the improvement of inter-Commonwealth ties remained a delicate issue. In India, too, the political situation militated against the initiation of direct Council operations but there was widespread recognition of the possible future importance of cultural relations. Likewise, in the Colonies, their progressive evolution towards self-government ensured that the development of cultural relations would become increasingly important. The Council's work in the Colonies was an integral part of the advancement of the Colonies towards independence whereas in the Dominions the Council sought to increase and improve existing cultural and educational links. Most importantly, Britain had accepted that cultural relations within the Commonwealth would be a permanent feature of future relations, whilst in the Colonies it had taken, in Gillan's words,

the Government and the Council all too long to appreciate that the interpretation of Britain within our own Empire is at least as strong a moral obligation as it is to foreign countries.<sup>115</sup>

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE COMMERCE OF IDEAS <sup>1</sup>

Britain's chief interest in Latin America was traditionally economic: a significant part of her total overseas investments lay in that continent with Argentina possessing the lion's share. Propaganda, therefore, was designed to strengthen these trading links and, after the outbreak of war, to preserve the region for the Allied cause. The first steps had been taken at the end of the 1920's with the foundation of the first Anglophile society by Britain's ambassador in Buenos Aires, Sir Malcolm Robertson, in 1928 and the investigations of the D'Abernon Mission in 1929. These had been followed by the Prince of Wales' visit to Argentina in 1931, the Prince of Wales Scholarship Scheme and the establishment of the Ibero-American Institute in London in 1932, under the direction of Philip Guedalla.<sup>2</sup> When the British Council was founded Guedalla placed the Institute at the Council's service and the Ibero-American Committee, formed with representatives from both organisations, became the Council's first regional committee. Additional Anglophile societies were soon founded at Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro in 1934, Sao Paulo in 1935 and Lima and Santiago in 1938.

Britain's influence in Latin America had diminished steadily since the turn of the century. Her place had been taken by the United States and by Germany in the economic field. Culturally, France and then Spain and Portugal, remained the dominant powers. Increasing tension in Europe was reflected in growing rivalry in Latin America in all spheres. For Britain the main threat lay in German and Italian economic expansion and anti-British propaganda. The triumph of fascism in Italy, Germany and Spain augmented the challenge; not only were there substantial Italian and German communities in South America mobilised to spread the fascist gospel, but there were also many, especially in the indigenous ruling elites, to whom such doctrines appealed. Britain's cultural propaganda, therefore, had a dual role. Firstly, to gain the cooperation of the Latin American Republics in the war and in this long-term themes were as important as immediate war propaganda. As one commentator predicted,

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1. Title of lecture given by Lord Macmillan in 1935 on a tour of South America for the Ibero-American Institute. See Lord Macmillan, A Man of Law's Tale (London 1952), p.355
  2. For an early account of the work of the Ibero-American Institute See "Cultural Relations with South America", The Listener, Vol. 13 No. 323, March 1935.

The South Americans prefer us to the Axis, but if we want their wholehearted support and confidence, we must convince them that the post-war world, as reconstructed by a triumphant Britain, would offer them a finer future than one reconstructed by a triumphant Germany.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the development of cultural relations would partly replace Britain's waning commercial influence and was 'regarded as a kind of A.R.P. protection for our severely shaken economic interests'.<sup>4</sup>

With the outbreak of war in Europe the protection of Britain's interests in Latin America became vital. The South American Republics provided foodstuffs and raw materials essential to Britain's war effort and were strategically important to the safeguarding of the shipping lanes on which these supplies depended. The meeting of Foreign Ministers at Panama in September 1939 had broadly agreed on the desirability of an Allied victory abroad and neutrality at home. As a result of this declared neutrality the Council was obliged to move cautiously as foreign schools and societies were open to attack as symbols of foreign interference. Nevertheless, Guedalla and White, on a tour of the Republics in the same month, encountered a wide demand for the Council's services and representatives were appointed locally in Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Venezuela. Previously the Council had had no staff in the sub-continent and depended entirely on the enthusiasm and goodwill of Britain's diplomatic representatives in the area, whose duties, especially after the outbreak of war, limited the time that could be devoted to the promotion of cultural relations. The British communities in Latin America tended to remain tightly-knit groups having little contact with the local populations and their clubs were exclusive, formed either for patriotic reasons or 'to provide an opportunity for the consumption of unadulterated imported liquor'.<sup>5</sup> In his report White commented on the suspicion with which foreign organisations were regarded in Latin America.

A wave of Nationalism has passed over South America in recent years and a determination to check foreign penetration makes it necessary to proceed with the Council's work carefully.<sup>6</sup>

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3. R.V.Peddar, 'British Propaganda in South America' The Contemporary Review, No. 932, August 1943, p.97.

4. Memorandum by Millington-Drake, March 1942, BW2/10

5. Minutes of the Ibero-American Committee, 30 April 1936 Bw2/12

6. Report by White, November 1939 BW2/143



Financial considerations dictated that the development of the Council's activities would be gradual at first until funds were released by the German victory in the West in 1940. Effective British propaganda was then doubly necessary as in Latin America 'few thought we had any chance of winning through'.<sup>7</sup> The possibility of Nazi victory in Europe dominated the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Havana in July and resulted in a strengthening of regional defence arrangements. The defeat of France offered added incentive to the development of British cultural propaganda in Latin America: Britain could now try to establish itself 'in the place of France as the distinctive interpreters of European views and European tradition'.<sup>8</sup> As a belligerent, Britain could increase legitimately her propaganda in Latin America in the expectation of long-term benefits.

Inasmuch as war is a convenient excuse for publicity we should deliberately trade upon that excuse and penetrate as far as we can under its cover.<sup>9</sup>

Commercial motives directed the Council's work in Latin America. The Foreign Office and Department of Trade, as well as British firms with trading interests in the continent, were represented on the Ibero-American Committee which pressed for extensions of Council work in areas where it was felt that Britain's economic interests stood in most peril. In 1938 the Foreign Office requested the Council to increase its work in Venezuela, Colombia, and later Peru, in view of their important oil supplies.<sup>10</sup> Argentina and Brazil, however, as suppliers of vital foodstuffs and raw materials, headed the list. Moreover, it was believed that cultural propaganda might offset Britain's growing difficulties in the financial field. In 1939, in discussions surrounding a teaching mission to Colombia it was emphasised that such an offer should be made to balance 'shortages of attractive promises of trade purchases by Britain' in the forthcoming Anglo-Colombian treaty.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the Board of Trade suggested, with a 'striking faith' in cultural relations, that embarrassing favourable trade balances with Guatemala and San Salvador could be relieved by the despatch of a cultural

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7. K.Grubb, Crypts of Power, (London 1971)p.113

8. Latin American Propaganda Policy Committee, 29 May 1941. BW2/17

9. Ibid.

10. White to P.Guedalla, 24 August 1939. BW2/14

11. White to R.B. Stevens, 25 April 1939. BW2/10

mission to those countries.<sup>12</sup> In justifying the Council's expenditure in Latin America for 1939/40, Guedalla

explained that these proposals received the support of trading interests; the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Lord Bearsted (on behalf of Shell) having promised contributions.<sup>13</sup>

The correlation between trade and cultural propaganda meant that Britain's blockade of Europe had adverse effects on the Council's work. In 1940 Lloyd wrote to Lord Davidson and Duff Cooper 'pointing out that the efforts of the British Council and the Ministry of Information would be rendered almost nugatory if exports to that continent were handicapped'.<sup>14</sup>

Kenneth Grubb, who took over the Latin American desk at the Ministry on the outbreak of war, soon found that it was the benefits to British trade that chiefly impressed the Treasury when it came to providing funds for propaganda in Latin America.<sup>15</sup> Grubb preferred cooperation and close liaison with the Council to rigid demarcation agreements. A former missionary with extensive knowledge of Latin America, Grubb understood the value of propaganda and also of less official contacts. Writing to O'Brien at the Council in October 1939, he outlined his view of the Ministry's role in Latin America:

I am particularly anxious that the work of the Council should not in any way suffer in Latin America through the activities of the Ministry, but rather that the former should be backed up and, if possible, expanded.<sup>16</sup>

The Council attended propaganda policy committees on Latin America at the Ministry and when Grubb toured South America in 1940, Guedalla took his place at the Ministry. In the field, too, the two organisations worked together closely.

The Council concentrated in the early part of the war in the economically and strategically important states of South America. In Argentina the Association of English Culture at Buenos Aires, under the direction of Leslie Mead, continued to flourish with five thousand students and nearly one thousand members by early 1941. A new cultural society was established at Cordoba and classes were expanded at the English School in

12. Minute by R.B.Stevens, 11 April 1939. FO395/665A PI365/1365/150

13. Executive Committee Minutes, 7 June 1939. BW68/3

14. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 9 July 1940. BW69/6

15. For a description of Ministry of Information activities in South America during the war, see R.H.K.Marett, Through the Back Door (London 1968)

16. Grubb to E.B. O'Brien, 1 October 1939. BW2/15

Rosario. A Book Exhibition organised by the Council in Buenos Aires was visited by fifteen thousand people in September 1940. In Brazil there were five societies under the general guidance of Eric Church in Rio. To the established societies at Rio and Sao Paulo, Church added new ones at Belo Horizonte, Santos and Curitiba. At the latter the Governor of the state was the President and his Secretaries of Education, Finance and Agriculture were its directors. Francis Toye, formerly director of the Florence Institute, was transferred to Brazil in 1941 to direct the eight hundred students and seven hundred members of the Rio Society whose President was the Brazilian Minister of State for Education. In Chile George Jones, an employee of a British firm,<sup>17</sup> became honorary coordinator of the Council's work and larger premises for the Centro Anglo-Chileno were opened in Santiago in March 1940. A branch of the Centro was established at Valparaiso in the same year and the Council maintained close links with the University of Chile and British schools in Chile.

Following White's visit to Colombia in 1939, a five-year plan of expenditure and cultural agreement was concluded with the Colombian Government, under which a teaching mission of five qualified English teachers were appointed to Colombian schools, their salaries being divided between the Colombian Government and the British Council. In addition, the Colombian Ministry of Education provided premises for a Colombian-British Institute, which was opened in March 1940 in Bogota, with branches in four provincial cities. The Council also secured contributions from fifteen British firms for fixed periods towards scholarships for Colombian students at British universities. The rapid development of the Council's work in Colombia was due in part to the cooperation of the Colombian Government and to the energies of the British Minister. Likewise, in Uruguay, British cultural propaganda flourished under the enthusiastic guidance of Britain's ambassador, Sir Eugen Millington-Drake, whose handling of the Graf Spee incident did much to raise British morale in the continent *before the defeats of* the summer of 1940. The Anglo-Uruguayan Cultural Institute at Montevideo had more than one thousand students by 1941 and branches in five other cities. A small amount of work was also undertaken in Peru, where the British-Peruvian Cultural Institute at Lima had to be rehoused following an earthquake.

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17. Buchanan Jones and Company Limited

Also in 1940 a British trade and cultural mission, under the chairmanship of Lord Willingdon, arrived in Latin America to explain British economic policy in the circumstances of war and to promote British exports. The Council had cooperated previously with Lord Willingdon on his tour of South America in 1938 and, in 1940, his group included Hugh Mackintosh, designated to survey British cultural activities. Mackintosh was in charge of a special unit of the British Information Services in New York to assist British publicity in Latin America. His report strongly endorsed the importance of cultural propaganda and was regarded as a 'key document' by the Council, entitled 'The Political Importance and Potential Effect of Higher Propaganda' it defined cultural relations as

exchanges on the plane of thought designed to promote international harmony and understanding and to consolidate such a friendship between enlightened nations as will lead to a unanimous front against retrograde and aggressive barbarism.<sup>18</sup>

Mackintosh's main criticism was that Britain's effort was insufficiently financed and supported. Mackintosh emphasised the importance of reciprocity in cultural relations with Latin America in view of a growing national spirit and stressed the necessity of appealing to the intellectual classes, whose influence was disproportionate to their numbers. The war, in his opinion, offered a unique opportunity for Britain to replace Germany economically and France culturally. In Latin America he recommended that

the development of cultural relations be deemed no less a major war activity than our official British propaganda, and that the Institutes already formed be treated, in fact, as pivotal strategic points for development in relation both to our war and post-war policy.<sup>19</sup>

Mackintosh was informally appointed the Council's honorary liaison officer in New York in 1942 to maintain contacts with the Cultural Relations Division of the State Department and to cater for the entertainment of British Council guests, lecturers and staff journeying to and from Latin America.

The growth in the Council's work called for the appointment of a chief representative to coordinate operations. In Buenos Aires, relations between the Embassy and the Cultura were strained

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18. Report by H.S. Mackintosh, October 1941. BW2/17

19. Ibid.

as neither had the time to deal with the Council's expanding activities. The Council had difficulty finding a suitable representative and the intervention of Alexander Cadogan increased its problems. Cadogan suggested that, as the Foreign Office no longer had use for their ambassador in Montevideo, who had, in Cadogan's words, 'ceased to be an asset to His Majesty's Government in Uruguay', the Council might 'soften the blow' by offering Millington-Drake the post in Latin America.<sup>20</sup> Millington-Drake was well-known to the Council as his enthusiasm for cultural propaganda had led to voluminous correspondence. He had founded the Anglo-Uruguayan Cultural Institute in Montevideo in 1934 and contributed a third of its running costs. He had served with Malcolm Robertson at the Buenos Aires Embassy in 1929 before being transferred to Uruguay as British Minister in 1934. Millington-Drake's reputation for independent action made the Council cautious and White declared that he 'would be definitely unsuitable' unless he could be restrained.<sup>21</sup> Millington-Drake appealed directly to the Council's chairman outlining ambitious schemes for the Council in Latin America. In the event, a lack of alternatives and the close personal friendship of Millington-Drake and Robertson secured the post for Millington-Drake.

His appointment aroused concern in Britain's diplomatic missions in Latin America who feared that his actions would be interpreted as those of the British Government. They argued that either Millington-Drake should be granted diplomatic status, and so be under their direct control, or that, as

cultural work.....impinges so much so often on political work the very closest touch must be maintained by the Supervisor [Millington-Drake] with the Head of Mission concerned and the latter's opinion must, of course, prevail in connexion with any suggested cultural activities.<sup>22</sup>

These initial difficulties and misunderstandings were ironed out in time, with the arrival of a staff for Millington-Drake in Buenos Aires and an agreement that the last word lay with His Majesty's Missions in each Republic.

However, Millington-Drake was not easily restrained and immediately planned an extensive tour of the continent including Mexico, where he anticipated 'a triumph for the British Council if their delegate were to open up cultural relations even before

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20. Cadogan to Robertson, 17 June 1941. BW2/92

21. White to Robertson, 20 June 1941. BW2/92

22. S. Stevenson to Robertson, 17 December 1941. BW2/92

diplomatic relations were resumed'.<sup>23</sup> The settlement of the dispute between Mexico and the United States in November and the subsequent resumption of diplomatic relations between Britain and Mexico, denied Millington-Drake this opportunity. Nevertheless, he proceeded across the Republics in September and November 1941 producing 'wild schemes' for the furtherance of British cultural diplomacy. J.V. Perowne, head of the Latin American section at the Foreign Office, minuted drily,

I hope the Costa Ricans won't attribute the Earthquake to Mr Drake's (sic) advent.<sup>24</sup>

Millington-Drake and Guedalla had been contemporaries at Oxford and it had been Millington-Drake's suggestion that Guedalla should lead the party of Oxford undergraduates to Buenos Aires in 1931. Millington-Drake had acted as the Ibero-American Institute's man in the field, organising the Prince of Wales scholarships and looking after the Institute's lecturers. However, from this point onwards relations between the two had deteriorated. Millington-Drake found Guedalla obstructive and ungrateful and alleged that Guedalla's 'pontifical and dictatorial attitude' had resulted in his exclusion from the affairs of the Ibero-American Institute.<sup>25</sup> He maintained further that

When the British Council was started, his (Guedalla's) attitude towards it was definitely hostile and there were major rows between him and Lloyd when the latter first took over.<sup>26</sup>

When war broke out Guedalla was in Latin America and saw Millington-Drake in Montevideo where a truce was declared and although clashes between the two continued, they did not affect seriously the Council's work. Millington-Drake stressed the themes of English democracy and the development of social welfare in Britain. He believed that the alliance with the Soviet Union had enhanced Britain's image in Latin America and that America's entry as a result of Japanese aggression had helped Britain's position, but that

it is still necessary fully to convince the great part of the masses in Latin America that in throwing in their lot with the British "Empire" (including specially Canada) and the United States, they have in fact made common cause with the two great democracies from which they may even have something to learn.<sup>27</sup>

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23. Millington-Drake to Robertson, 7 July 1941. BW2/92  
 24. Minute by J.V. Perowne, 8 December 1941. F070/636 L3668/2353/410  
 25. Millington-Drake to Sir F. Ogilvie, 2 December 1943. Millington-Drake Papers, Misc. Corresp. 4/9  
 26. Ibid.  
 27. Memorandum by Millington-Drake, March 1942. BW2/10

In the same memorandum Millington-Drake stated

It is no exaggeration to say that apart from our fighting spirit, the maintenance of our political liberties practically unimpaired under war conditions is perhaps our greatest asset in Latin America today.<sup>28</sup>

In February 1942 Millington-Drake anonymously donated £50,000 to the British Government for the promotion of 'better mutual knowledge in regard to cultural and social welfare between this country and the sovereign states of the American Continent'. Eden and Robertson were appointed co-trustees of the donation, which was divided as £10,000 each for Canada and the United States and £30,000 for Latin America. Millington-Drake hoped,

at a time when things were going so badly (Singapore etc.), to give an indication of confidence in the future and of friendship.....towards the New World.....Played promptly at that moment it would have been in its way a trump card of propoganda, not only cultural, but in a sense political, in the situation as it then was.<sup>29</sup>

However, his plan for 'a striking gesture' faded as disputes continued between the Council, the Foreign Office and the Treasury as to how the money could best be spent. Finally, £20,000 was set aside for the foundation of a Latin American centre in London; these were the Hispanic Council and the Luso-Brazilian Society, established after the war.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the third Foreign Ministers Conference was held at Rio in January 1942. Before the conference twelve Latin American states had severed diplomatic relations with the Axis and nine of those had declared war. After the meeting, the remainder, except Argentina and Chile, broke relations and four more declared war. For Britain this meant that a more aggressive publicity policy could be pursued and that Axis subversive activities would be countered more effectively by the new Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defence. However, the Rio Conference foreshadowed also increased United States publicity in the continent and any expansion of the Council's activities into Central America and the Caribbean would bring it into direct contact with American publicity agencies. The relationship between British and American publicity in Latin America was a subject of debate. With the appointment of Nelson Rockefeller in August 1940, as Coordinator of Inter-American

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28. Ibid.

29. Millington-Drake to Sir F.Oglivie, 1 March 1944, Millington-Drake Papers. Misc. Corresp. 4/9

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Affairs to promote good hemispheric relations, the Council became aware of a growing American cultural effort. At the Buenos Aires Conference in 1936, the United States had signed multi-lateral cultural exchange conventions with the Latin American Republics and in 1938 the Department of State organised a Division of Cultural Relations to administer official activities and assist private agencies. Until 1941 the entire United States cultural programme was concentrated in the western hemisphere, through the twin agencies of the Cultural Relations Division and the Rockefeller Committee. There was little coordination between the two and the Cultural Relations Division regarded the Coordinator's Office 'with mingled alarm and contempt'.<sup>30</sup>

The War Cabinet recognised the double threat posed to British economic interests in Latin America. In September 1940 it heard that

The Americans were stealing our trade under cover of German propaganda which spread reports that this country was not in a position to send ships or deliver goods.<sup>31</sup>

In March 1941 the Council's educational director, Evans, observed that Britain 'must meet with American propaganda in South America as well as German propaganda'.<sup>32</sup> United States' publicity was seen as a challenge and as more of a hindrance than a help. Both the Council and the Ministry of Information were at a disadvantage to their American rivals in terms of finance, manpower and materials and were forced to delegate much greater responsibility to their agents in the field. However, Britain did not suffer from the unpopularity that the geographical proximity of the United States conferred. Indeed, British successes - Reuters taking over from Havas - were a cause for concern as they were criticised in the United States and risked the issue being pushed 'to the headlines in the United States'. In South America, Britain's 'first consideration must be the avoidance of unnecessary offence to the United States'.<sup>33</sup>

Political reasons for maintaining a low profile in Latin America in 1941 to avoid antagonising American opinion were obviously strong. One result was that the Council undertook only minimal activities in Cuba for fear that anything more

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30. R.Gallop to M.Bonham-Carter, 23 February 1943. F0371/33903  
A1488/348/51

31. Memorandum on Willingdon Mission, 13 September 1940. CAB66,  
WM249(40)8

32. Ibero-American Committee Minutes, 10 March 1941, BW2/16

33. E.Sturt to K.T.Gurney, 20 February 1942. F0370/667 L141/17/410

'may filter through to the United States and create an adverse opinion there'.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the United States was not informed of Millington-Drake's appointment so that it would not seem that a 'cultural offensive' had been launched or that Britain was undermining Allied disapproval of Argentina's refusal to sever relations with the Axis.<sup>35</sup> Relations between Council's staff and representatives of the Rockefeller Committee or the Cultural Relations Division were more often cordial than hostile. After America's entry into the war, Council representatives reported an increasing American publicity programme, and Bonham-Carter, head of the Latin American Division at the Ministry of Information, stated, in January 1942, that

There are certain indications that the United States State Department wishes us to "lay off" doing any publicity or propaganda in Latin America. We are not particularly surprised at this, knowing that our North American friends like to look upon Latin America as a field for their own activities only.<sup>36</sup>

J.V. Perowne at the Foreign Office was less charitable seeing in them 'more or less deliberate attempts by the United States to supplant us and make Latin America their own preserve'.<sup>37</sup> He advised that Britain's cultural and political propoganda should be kept separate and that Britain should only cooperate with the United States in the presentation of war news.

However, by 1943 some of the Council's staff had come to regard American activities as a direct attack on their own work. No doubt personal antipathies played a part, but the brash and often amateur activities of the Rockefeller Committee hampered the Council and its staff resented the lavish funds at the disposal of American officials, which were sometimes used to take over an activity previously undertaken or contemplated by the Council. These difficulties were augmented by the fact that the Council did not operate in the United States, where cultural relations were handled by the Ministry of Information, and in Latin America, too, the distinction between the two organisations was vague. From Paraguay, Brazil and Colombia, in particular, the Council received complaints, prompting R.Gallop at the Foreign Office to warn that

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34. Minute by R.B.Stevens, 3 August 1939.F0395/666 P3387/3387/150

35. Cadogan to Robertson, 1 July 1942.Millington-Drake Papers,  
Misc.Corresp.4/4

36. M.Bonham-Carter to Dr.R.A.Humphreys, 10 January 1942. BW2/17

37. J.V. Perowne to Bock, 4 March 1942. BW2/17

quite a few of Mr. Rockefeller's recruits seem to have a strong sense of salesmanship and to treat Anglo-American relations on a basis of commercial competition.<sup>38</sup>

Robertson and Millington-Drake favoured cooperation with the United States in Latin America for the mutual advantage of both countries and because Britain had little alternative. As Millington-Drake explained:

It seems the only course in view of the pressure which America could bring on us in view of the present world situation if we gave them occasion to resent our cultural activities in Latin America.<sup>39</sup>

Millington-Drake travelled to Washington in January 1942 and established contact with the Rockefeller Committee and the Cultural Relations Division. He assured Robertson that

The upshot of these contacts was to confirm what I had gathered in December, viz. that Mr Berle as well as Mr. Sumner Welles and others agreed to the view that our cultural activities in Latin America on the restrained war-time scale contemplated, as compared with the practically unlimited activities of the United States in the same direction, far from prejudicing the latter were in fact to their advantage psychologically, in view of the Latin American dislike of feeling under the excessive influence of the "big sister" republic and even in cultural matters; and that so long as our activities were conducted on parallel lines to those of the United States and with cordiality and frankness in regard to them whenever there was reason for consultation, we should not, even in Central America and the Caribbean zone, meet the opposition which the Council had reasonably enough feared.<sup>40</sup>

Millington-Drake was greatly impressed by the scale and thoroughness of the American effort and stressed the role of the Council in reducing psychological resistance in Latin America to United States publicity and suggested joint institutes and libraries. He reported that Sumner Welles reacted to the view that British cultural propaganda helped that of the United States, by saying that

not only do I agree with you but if you were not doing this work in Latin America we should have to ask you to do it.<sup>41</sup>

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38. R.Gallop to M.Bonham-Carter, 23 February 1943. F0371/33903  
A1488/348/51
39. Millington-Drake to J.V.Perowne, 30 March 1942. F0370/667  
L1270/17/410
40. Millington-Drake to Robertson, 31 July 1942. Millington-Drake Papers, Official Reports 4/1
41. Memorandum by Millington-Drake, March 1942. BW2/10

Millington-Drake's unauthorised discussions in Washington were described by the Foreign Office as 'unfortunate' especially as the United States Government had not yet been officially informed of his appointment.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, although the Foreign Office supported collaboration with the United States in war propaganda in Latin America, it preferred that Britain's cultural propaganda remain completely distinct.

In the first place, British and American culture are two totally different things, and if we were to derive any value from cultural propaganda in Latin America, where the United States will inevitably become increasingly preponderant economically and politically, it is to our interest that this distinction should be maintained. Moreover, the closer our association with the United States, the less we shall be liked in Latin America, and although our political association with the United States must be increasingly close we have nothing to gain, and a great deal to lose by leading Latin America to believe that our cultural identities have been merged, above all, anything which suggested that we were preparing a joint Anglo-American cultural drive in Latin America would alienate their sympathies.<sup>43</sup>

Millington-Drake was warned against identifying the British cultural programme with that of the United States in Latin America, although the Council was not to compete with the United States. Britain's long-term interests dictated that there should be close understanding and cooperation with the United States but this did not extend to the field of cultural propaganda where Britain could make an independent showing. Britain aimed

To preserve, and if possible intensify, by all suitable means, our existing good political, economic and cultural relations with these States, subject to the overwhelming necessities of the successful prosecution of the war and of the maintenance of the fullest comity and understanding with the United States.<sup>44</sup>

Linked to the problem of cooperation with the United States in Latin America was the issue of British Council operations in Central America. In discussions for the 1937/8 budget, Eustace Percy, the Council's chairman, had stated that

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42. Cadogan to Robertson, 1 July 1942. Millington-Drake Papers, Misc. Corresp. 4/4

43. Ibid.

44. Minute by J.V. Perowne, 26 February 1943. F0371/33903

There is something to be said for the view that we must leave the countries of the "Inner Monroe Doctrine" to the United States, and that any English cultural work there will merely redound to the advantage of the United States.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, the Council's funds were limited and before the United States entered the war, British propaganda had to be careful not to arouse American suspicions and provide fuel for the isolationists. The Council, therefore, followed a policy of restraint in Central America, although the Ministry of Information did operate in that area,

partly because of the dominant American interest which might resent too much forward policy on our part, and partly because we must necessarily apply our funds principally in those areas where British interests are most obvious.<sup>46</sup>

In addition, Guedalla was opposed to operations in a zone that he regarded as 'the Mediterranean of the United States'.

However, by 1943 considerable amounts of functional material were distributed on behalf of the Council in Central America by the Ministry of Information's agents and British Legations. On the suggestion of J.H. Leche, British Minister in Guatemala, an exploratory tour of the region for the Council was undertaken by Mrs Cheverton, an employee of the Ministry of Information. Mrs Cheverton recommended the centralisation and coordination of the Council's activities in the area by the appointment of staff at a single centre. She was 'astounded' at the unpopularity of the United States in the area and

impressed by an almost universal yearning to break the United States monopoly and to turn back to Europe and particularly.....Great Britain.<sup>47</sup>

Ecuador, Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Panama and San Salvador appeared for the first time in the Council's estimates in 1942/3. The Council founded an Institute in Mexico in 1943 which began English classes in February 1944 with over one thousand five hundred students. The formal opening of the Institute was attended by the President of the Republic and the British Ambassador and the number of students had risen to nearly three thousand. After Mexico, San Salvador enjoyed the largest British cultural programme in Central America due partly to the energies

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45. E.Percy to E.Guedalla, 13 March 1937. BW2/13

46. F.Ogilvie to J.H. Leche, 4 January 1944. BW2/99

47. J.H. Leche to F.Ogilvie, 14 February 1943 BW2/99

of the British Minister. The Council's activities in Central America were reorganised in 1944 under the direction of Mrs Cheverton based in Guatemala City and henceforth a greater amount of material was distributed more effectively. In Cuba the Council's films were shown in 80% of the cinemas to an average weekly audience of two-hundred thousand. A wave of strikes and revolts in Central America in the first half of 1944 led to the suspension of Council activities, particularly in San Salvador where all operations were closed down for six months after the overthrow of the government in May.

In South America the Council's work expanded steadily throughout the war. Despite Argentina's refusal to break off relations with the Axis the Council's work developed considerably after Millington-Drake's appointment. Argentina's continued neutrality made the development of Anglo-Argentinian cultural relations both more desirable and more delicate. In April 1943 there were six Culturas on the Buenos Aires model and through Millington-Drake's office in the capital a large amount of functional material was distributed and a great many extra-mural activities promoted. Although Britain was obliged to follow the United States' hostile attitude to the seizure of power by Generals Ramirez and Rawson in June 1943 the Council supported the establishment of eight new Anglophile societies in 1943 and seven in 1944. After a tour of the provinces in 1943 Millington-Drake explained the Council's success thus:

It is clear to me that the bulk of the Argentinian people who incline to the democratic cause - and naturally this has increased recently - welcome these visits as an opportunity for demonstrating their sympathy for the democratic side and for Great Britain in particular. This is especially the case with officials or civil servants of all grades who are naturally afraid of manifesting their sentiments in ordinary circumstances because of the meticulously neutral attitude of the Central Government.....They thus find a most welcome outlet for their feelings in cultural relations, without risk of suffering any consequences.<sup>48</sup>

Argentina's relations with the Allies continued to deteriorate culminating in the suspension of diplomatic relations in June 1944.

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48. Millington-Drake to Robertson, 25 January 1943. F0370/722  
L1416/62/410

Britain had followed reluctantly America's example and withdrawn her ambassador but was unwilling to alienate Argentinian goodwill further in view of Britain's large capital investments in the country and her war-time dependence on imports from Argentina. Accordingly, although Millington-Drake was instructed to avoid contacts with the unrecognised Argentinian government, the development of cultural relations continued unchecked. In July 1944 Millington-Drake held a widely publicised congress of British Council staff in Latin America in Buenos Aires. The Council directly sponsored twelve provincial institutes with a total of more than five thousand students and, indirectly, upwards of ten thousand English students at the numerous Argentina-Britain associations. Thus a substantial benefit was reaped from the Council's quasi-independent status. Millington-Drake's American counterpart was forced to abandon all his projects until Argentina entered the war in March 1945 and diplomatic relations were restored the following month. Similarly, the Council's activities continued unhindered by the outspoken hostility of the American Ambassador to the Argentinian military dictatorship. Indeed, the situation for the Council notably improved with the suppression of Axis newspapers and the appearance of more sympathetic officials in charge of the development of Argentina's cultural relations.

Chile, too, had refused to accept the Rio Conference resolution calling for the severance of relations with the Axis and declined to take firm action to suppress Axis activities. Nevertheless, the Council's activities were extended and received a broad measure of official support. In 1941 a society was formed at Concepcion and one at Antofagasta in 1943. The fourth anniversary celebrations of the Chilean-British Institute at Santiago in 1943, soon after Chile had broken relations with the Axis, were attended by the former Chilean President and the Ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs. The societies functioned under the auspices of the Comision Chileno de Cooperacion Intelectual and the Council supplied them with fully-paid directors, financial grants and publicity material. The Santiago Institute provided a gallery for Chilean artists, held musical recitals and organised broadcast English lessons to an estimated six thousand listeners. In addition, the Council helped sixteen Anglo-Chilean schools, from presenting prizes to the supply of trained staff. The Council also subsidised the South Pacific Mail, a weekly paper for

English speaking people, published in Valparaiso and distributed in Peru and Bolivia as well as Chile.

In the other South American states, the Council could work more freely. In Brazil, Francis Toye succeeded Church, who returned to the London office, as Representative in April 1943. He had collaborated closely with the Ambassador, Sir Noel Charles when they had both been in Italy before that country had entered the war, and in Brazil again Toye found Charles ready 'to support us in every way',<sup>49</sup> The Cultura in Rio was an entire floor of a modern office block and had a small teaching staff of six catering for seven hundred students. In the Council office Toye was helped by two young girls, an office boy and an old man. This lack of staff hindered the Council's work in Brazil but there were still over two thousand students at the Rio society by the end of the war and a total of six thousand attending the five societies. Although Brazil entered the war on the Allied side in August 1942, the Council was not officially recognised by the Brazilian government until 1944.

Colombia was a major area of expansion for the Council during the war. Four additional institutes were opened in 1941 and the cultural agreement with the Colombian government was automatically renewed in 1942. By agreement between the two governments the contracts of the Teaching Mission were extended until 1947. Through the Teaching Mission and the English teaching activities of the institutes, English overtook French in 1943 as the most widely taught foreign language. In the same year national examinations in English were inaugurated for the Colombian-British Institutes. Extra-mural activities in Bogota included the teaching of English in the Staff College, the Military School, the National School of Commerce and similar bodies. In Medellin the Institute took over the direction of the Department of English at the University and classes were given to the local military garrison.

In Paraguay the Council was fortunate to secure the services of George Pendle as director of the Asuncion Institute and Council Representative. Pendle was energetic and ambitious for the Council and aimed to create a monopoly of English teaching for the Council and to make Britain the predominant cultural

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49. F. Toye, *Truly Thankful*, (London 1957) p.97



influence in Paraguay. The Institute was opened in March 1942 and attracted influential members from the ruling military dictatorship, including the Minister and Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, the Chief of the Military General Staff, judges, naval chiefs, officials from the Ministry of War and representatives from the Police and Army. In 1943 the Council started giving English classes at the Military General Staff Head Quarters, the Military School, the Naval Academy and the Workmen's Academy. From April 1943 English lessons were broadcast over the State Radio which, through a link with a commercial station, was transmitted on four wavelengths, twice a day to all the neighbouring Republics. Examinations were dictated monthly and quarterly prizes were awarded for the best essays. In addition, cultural talks were broadcast three evenings a week. Answering fan mail became a considerable problem for the Council's staff. The Legation reported in 1943 that

In spite of the usual United States competition, it (the Council) is the most popular and the most widely used of all the foreign educational bodies which now function here.<sup>50</sup>

The Anglo-Uruguayan Cultural Institute and its five provincial branches continued to flourish after Millington-Drake's departure. Two new branches were established in 1944 and the Institute at Montevideo also worked through seventeen extra-mural centres. The Director of the Montevideo Institute acted as Council Representative and as such was largely concerned with the distribution of Council material as the Montevideo Institute was run entirely by local subscription and the provincial institutes too were largely independent of the Council financially.

The British-Peruvian Association at Lima moved into new premises in 1943, which were opened at a special ceremony by the President of the Republic who was also Honorary President of the Association. In 1944 it had six-hundred and fifty pupils and two hundred members. At Arequipa development was hampered by cramped premises and there were only one-hundred and thirty pupils and two hundred members by 1945. In 1944 the Council secured a special grant of £10,000 from the Treasury, on the recommendation of the British Minister in Peru, for the foundation of a British School in Lima, catering for both British and Peruvian children.

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50. O.F.H.Brickell to J.V. Perowne, 4 January 1943, F0371/38165  
AS1273/96/410

In October 1941 an Institute was founded at Caracas, with the Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs as President and the Director General of the Ministry of National Education as the chairman of the Executive Committee. The Institute flourished and attracted important Venezuelan lecturers and representatives from Venezuelan scientific and academic institutions. The Institute's bulletin was very popular and requested by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and institutions as far afield as the New York Public Library. As well as film shows within the Institute, the Council's films were also lent to the Venezuelan Ministries, to schools and to societies such as the Workers' Centre. In 1945 the Institute had five hundred and fifty-seven students and one hundred and eighty-five members.

The Council opened an Institute at La Paz in 1943 after Bolivia had declared war on the Axis in April. Relatively small scale activities were undertaken by the Institute throughout the war but because of the inaccessibility of the interior no attempt was made to found centres outside the capital. Likewise, in Ecuador an Institute was only established in Quito, providing the usual cultural and educational facilities. In 1945 it had two hundred students and one hundred members.

With a few notable exceptions, as, for example, in Buenos Aires, the Council rarely received the backing of the local British community. Mackintosh, after his tour of South America with the Willingdon Mission in 1941, recorded that

we received the impression that certain British Government circles on the one hand, and sections of the British communities on the other, regarded this vital sphere of operation as a rather faddish activity insisted upon by highbrows and blue-stockings - to be regarded with tolerance and even mildly encouraged, but not to be taken very seriously, let alone to justify any kind of all-out support.<sup>51</sup>

In 1943 the Ibero-American Committee discussed the 'imperfect understanding' of the Council's aims and work which it felt prevented British communities from giving their full support.

Thus in more than one place where handsome financial backing is given to the local war funds collections and the Ministry of Information Press Offices, objections have been raised to the support of the Institute or School on grounds that the Community's funds are intended for war purposes.<sup>52</sup>

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51. Report by H.S.Mackintosh, October 1941. BW2/17

52. Ibero-American Committee Minutes, 7 February '43, BW2/10

By the end of the war the Council had representatives in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, Paraguay and Guatemala City. It directly supported thirteen societies in Argentina, nine in Uruguay, five in Brazil and Colombia, four in Chile, two in Peru and Paraguay and one in the capitals of Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela. There were an estimated twenty-six thousand adult students learning English under the auspices of these societies. Cultural propaganda had begun in earnest after Dunkirk and the fall of France, when faith in Britain's ultimate victory had been dim. After the entry of the United States into the war, conditions for the development of propaganda improved considerably. However, Britain faced now a massive American publicity campaign, supported by a growth in popularity of the Pan-American ideal, which was regarded as a hindrance to Britain's long-term interests. The defence of Britain's economic interests, against the return of peace and against United States as much as Axis encroachment, became the paramount consideration of British propaganda. And in this task cultural propaganda had a special and predominant role. Unable to match the United States in quantity, the Council hoped to win the hearts of the ruling classes in Latin America with the high quality and sophistication of British culture and political development and, by accident more than design, to appear as the foremost exponent of European culture and the counter-balance to the all-pervasiveness of 'Yankee' culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE BIG THREE

The Council's presence in Britain's three major wartime allies was, by contrast to its work in other foreign countries, muted and distorted. Although relations with the United States, the Soviet Union and China occupied much of the Foreign Office's attention, only in China did the cultural effort match the diplomatic. Special factors dictated that the Council could not operate normally in any of these countries. The perceived sensitivity of the American public to foreign propaganda, the nature of the Soviet system and the disintegration of China's social and economic structure presented insuperable barriers. At first glance, the United States would appear to offer the best opportunity in the world for the propagation of the British way of life.

The benevolent neutrality and, after 1940, the active cooperation of the United States were vital to Britain's prospects for victory. However, it was agreed before war broke out that 'it was contrary to good policy to undertake propaganda in the United States', in view of the suspicion with which foreign publicity was regarded and German warnings that the United States should not allow itself to be tricked into a second war, as they had allegedly been brought into the first by cunning British propaganda.<sup>1</sup> Even the Travel Association could not provide cover as there would be no tourist traffic to promote after war broke out and 'the disguise would be so obvious..... as to indicate an unwarrantable contempt for American intelligence. Moreover, it was believed that Americans would not understand the subtle distinction between the Council and an official Ministry of Information and therefore, 'anything which even looks like official or semi-official propaganda' should be avoided.<sup>3</sup> The MOI planners agreed that Britain would lose more than she would gain by establishing a propaganda machine in the United States.

America will judge the European powers not by what they say about themselves, but by what they do. It is almost certain that American reaction in our favour will arise from the mistakes of enemy Powers, both in policy and propaganda, than from anything we say in justification of British action.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minute by A.Dudley, 26 July 1939 F0395/648B P3227/105/150
  2. Ibid.
  3. Leeper to A.Fletcher, 2 March 1939 F0395/641 P664/44/150
  4. Minute by A.Dudley, 26 July 1939 F0395/641 P664/44/150

The American Press in London, wireless communications and a small extension of the British Library in New York were considered sufficient in a country 'where there is always a fund of sympathy on which we can rely'.<sup>5</sup>

These views were supported in Washington by the newly-arrived British ambassador, Lord Lothian, who believed that

the American people overwhelmingly desired not to become involved, and, consequently that any efforts on our part to influence them to look favourably on Britain's war effort and war objectives, would be regarded as propaganda aimed at getting them into the war.<sup>6</sup>

The British Library, consisting of a small office in the Rockefeller Centre under the control of the Foreign Office, was the sole outpost for the presentation of the British cause and was under strict instruction not to engage in propaganda.<sup>7</sup> Ronald Tree, on a tour of the United States for the MOI shortly after the outbreak of war, recorded that

If the British Government intended to prove to the world that it had no intention of propagandising its war effort in the United States, it could not have done a better job.<sup>8</sup>

This situation was mirrored in the MOI's American Division that at first acted chiefly as a press cutting service for the British Library in New York.

The Council adhered faithfully to the ban on publicity, but with increasing reluctance. Lloyd found an ally in John Reith, who arrived at the Ministry as Minister in January 1940. Lloyd had opposed the ban and feared that German propaganda had gained from Britain's absence. He explained to Reith that he had

urged the Foreign Office that just because the propaganda situation is a delicate one in the United States, that is not any reason why propaganda should not be done if vision and intelligence are used upon the problem.<sup>9</sup>

Reith agreed with Lloyd but met 'with striking lack of success' when he tried to raise the ban.<sup>10</sup>

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5. Ibid.

6. R.Tree, When the Moon was High, (London 1975)p.95

7. Alexander Korda, the film producer, returned to the United States after war broke out, on Churchill's instructions, to produce pro-British films. He established offices in the Rockefeller Centre that were used as a cover by British intelligence. M.Korda, Charmed Lives (London 1980) p.146

8. Tree, op.cit. p.96-97

9. Lloyd to Reith, 6 May 1940. BW 82/7

10. Reith to Lloyd, 7 May 1940. BW 82/7

The events of the summer of 1940 forced Britain to pursue a more positive propaganda policy in the United States. Six days after the armistice had been signed at Compiègne, the War Cabinet concluded

that the time had come when more active steps should be taken to make our point of view more widely known in the United States and to counteract German propaganda.<sup>11</sup>

Although Churchill had stated firmly that the British Empire would continue the fight alone, gloomy prophets in the United States forecast that Britain would either sue for peace or be invaded and occupied by Germany. In her solitary position Britain could hope to survive but not to defeat the Axis, and even survival depended on material assistance from across the Atlantic.

There is a real danger that American doubts as to our prospects of victory may lead to a slackening of the will to help us. As in the long run we are dependent on America for victory, it is a matter of the highest importance that nothing should be left undone to dispel those doubts.<sup>12</sup>

The elimination of the French fleet at Oran in July underlined Britain's determination and Churchill's dire warnings of the dangers that would follow the triumph of fascism in Europe struck home in a vulnerable America. Nevertheless, such events had to be clearly impressed upon the American consciousness to overcome a traditional isolationist viewpoint.

The new Minister of Information had returned recently from a lecture tour of the United States and had reached the conclusion that Britain's publicity machine was 'totally inadequate'.<sup>13</sup> Duff Cooper revamped the American Division at the Ministry and appointed a Press Attaché in Washington. Moreover, Lothian believed too that it was time to expand Britain's information services to show the American people 'the danger Britain faced and the implications of this for the United States'.<sup>14</sup> The lifting of the ban revealed new opportunities for the Council. Lloyd argued that as the Council was charged with the sole responsibility for cultural propaganda, this activity in the United States was also its duty.<sup>15</sup> The Foreign Office agreed that if the Ministry could operate in the United States, it was 'now

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11. War Cabinet Conclusions, 28 June 1940, CAB65/5 WM(40)186
  12. Minute by D. Scott, 22 July 1940. FO371/24230 A3561/26/45
  13. Tree, op.cit., p.118
  14. Tree, op.cit., p.146
  15. Lloyd to F. Whyte, 29 July 1940. FO371/24230 A3561/26/45

permissible for the British Council to operate in the United States also'.<sup>16</sup> The MOI, however, stated that existing arrangements should stand and the Council be barred from establishing an independent and parallel organisation in the United States. The Ministry's arguments appealed to the Treasury, whose permission the Council needed to initiate activities in the United States.

This issue became immersed in the wider battle between Lloyd and Duff Cooper for the control of cultural propaganda and was overshadowed by the Ministry's growing difficulties with the Press, the Foreign Office and the Service Ministries. However, although the Ministry sought to prevent direct Council work in America, it did not object to the Council distributing its material in the United States through the Ministry's organisation. Exhibitions assembled by the Council for the New York World Fair were subsequently exhibited at other centres and the Council offered book exporters a percentage of the losses incurred in the sale of British books in the United States. The Ministry asked the Council's Periodicals Department to distribute periodicals to mailing lists compiled by the Council but vetted by the Ministry.

Then when it is decided that we shall distribute any particular paper, we shall indicate to you (the Council) the types of people or institutions we wish to receive it or even perhaps the actual names on a particular list. The despatch will thereafter be arranged by the Council acting as the Ministry's agent, in conjunction with the paper concerned; the paper's own wrappers will be used and there will be nothing to indicate that it had not emanated from their Offices.<sup>17</sup>

Britain's desperate position in the summer of 1940 had motivated this flurry of activity and it was followed by actions that brought America more openly to Britain's side. In September, fifty American destroyers were transferred to Britain in exchange for bases in the West Indies in an agreement that 'marked the passage of the United States from being neutral to being non-belligerent'.<sup>18</sup> In December 1940 Roosevelt was reelected and the United States was designated 'the most important single field for British publicity overseas'.<sup>19</sup> The Ministry, however,

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16. S. Gaselee to M. Peterson, 26 November 1940. BW 63/2

17. F. Whyte to A. J. S. White, 19 July 1940. FO371/24230 A3561/25/45

18. Churchill, op. cit. Vol. 2, p. 358

19. OEPEC Meeting, 17 December 1940. T162/858 E9140/10

argued that it would be dangerous if the Council were now allowed to start working there as it had 'all along been regarded as a propaganda body' and such a step might be seen as 'evidence of a new and important British propaganda drive'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1941 Sir Gerald Campbell was appointed head of the newly formed British Information Services, independent of the British Library, with Aubrey Morgan and John Wheeler-Bennet as his two assistants. Campbell was not 'very keen on cultural propaganda in the States as he thought they only wanted war news',<sup>21</sup> and it was agreed that the Council should operate indirectly in the United States. With the arrival of Brendan Bracken at the Ministry of Information, the organisation of British publicity in the United States was reshaped. The Foreign Office relinquished control of the British Library to the British Information Services and Morgan replaced Campbell. However, Bracken treated Tree's proposals for a radical extension of, and increase in, the activities of the British Information Services 'with some scepticism' and was inclined to rely once again on American journalists, who he believed to be 'more effective advocates of the British cause than any official propaganda'.<sup>22</sup> As for the Council, Bracken had no desire to exclude it from the United States and

stated that he was willing to give the British Council practically carte blanche in the United States - on cultural matters - and wanted to see them in closer relations with the British Library in New York. He even contemplated the possibility of the British Council taking this over.<sup>23</sup>

Partly because the Council's resources were already overstretched and because the Ministry's senior officials were adamant in retaining control of British propaganda in the United States, nothing came of Bracken's proposals. Instead, the Council concentrated on increasing the supply of materials to the British Library and to commercial distributors in the United States.

However, it was not British propaganda that brought America into the war but a direct attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour by the Japanese. Until the United States was a full belligerent the British Information Services and the Council maintained a low profile. After December 1941 the United States

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20. Duff Cooper to Eden, 11 January 1941. T 161/1104 S35581/03/41

21. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 29 July 1941. BW69/7

22. C.E. Lysaght, Brendan Bracken (London 1979), p. 216

23. Minute by E. Bamford, 13 September 1941. INFI/445



set up its own information service, known as the Office of War Information, and sought the cooperation Britain in presenting Allied policy to the American public. In 1943 the Council raised the possibility of establishing separate representation in the United States to conduct Britain's cultural publicity. Powerful arguments were raised against this course; the multiplicity of British organisations already in the United States, shortages of manpower and finance and the Foreign Office's view

that there were objections to the British Council engaging in cultural activities in the United States of America, partly because this would be likely to involve overlapping with the British Information Services and partly because culture has a propaganda flavour.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the Washington Embassy reported that Halifax

expressed definite view that British Information Services would be responsible in the United States of America for work falling to British Council in other countries so long as war lasted and said he had strong objection to any duality being established. ....If the British Council is to operate in the United States it should be through British Information Services ....In this way they could build up connexions which they could take over after war.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the Council's role remained the supply of materials to the British Information Services but it was with great reluctance that it abandoned its claims to greater independence. This caused acrimonious disputes between the two organisations and accusations of treachery. For example, when the British Information Services took over the distribution of Britain Today it was circulated free to forty thousand addresses. The British Information Services demanded subscriptions, which reduced the circulation to three thousand and then produced its own magazine, Britain, to rival the Council's publication. The Council retaliated by arranging for Britain Today to be published in Canada and sent to their own mailing list in the United States, effectively by-passing the British Information Services.

The distribution of films provided the most fertile ground for disagreement. When the ban on publicity had been raised in 1940 the Foreign Office had advised the Council that it could

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24. Minute by R.A. Butler, 19 August 1943. FO 370/728

L4509/115/410

25. R.A. Butler to Eden, 24 September 1943. FO 370/728

L4959/115/410

now distribute its own films in the United States 'in exactly the same way as they already despatch them for distribution in other countries'.<sup>26</sup> However, the only point of reference for the distribution of British official films in the United States was a representative of the International Film Centre, employed by the Ministry and attached to the Library. Both Guedalla and Kearney regarded this Films Officer with great suspicion as a member of the documentary movement, which they despised, and as an employee of the Ministry of Information, which they believed was dedicated to the destruction of the Council's film activities. Moreover, Kearney maintained that normal commercial channels were always more effective than official agencies. Accordingly, they were extremely reluctant to entrust the commercial distribution of the Council's films in the United States to the Ministry of Information, although they were content to leave non-commercial distribution in the hands of the British Library. In May 1941 the Ministry produced plans for an organisation in New York to handle the commercial distribution of all films; a scheme that the Council vigorously opposed. In December 1942, however, the Council was forced to agree that the films of both organisations for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution, should be distributed through the British Information Services. Kearney's worst suspicions were confirmed when it was discovered towards the end of the war that not a single British Council film had been commercially distributed in the United States. The British Information Services maintained that there had been no demand for them, but the Council saw more sinister reasons, especially as its films had been successfully commercially distributed in Canada and were popular with the American troops in Britain. In January 1945 the Ministry relented and allowed the Council to find their own commercial distributors in the United States, provided that all the Council's films were vetted by the Ministry first. This concession came too late, however, as within a year the Council's Film Division was transferred to the embryonic COI.

Therefore, although it would be inaccurate to say that the Council undertook no work in the United States during the war, such services as it was able to provide were strictly limited.

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26. A.W.G. Randall to P.Guedalla, 26 December 1940. BW63/2

In 1944 the Foreign Office mooted the possibility of attaching an educational and cultural adviser to the Washington Embassy or the formation of an Anglo-American cultural collaboration committee. The Council believed that 'after the war, the United States will inevitably be one of the most important, most difficult and most fruitful fields for cultural cooperation'.<sup>27</sup> It proposed that it should act as a link between the many public and private bodies engaged in cultural and educational activities on both sides of the Atlantic, rather than attempt to initiate such work or compete with existing agencies. However, the Council had lost the battle for direct representation in the United States and the decision would not be reversed for nearly thirty years. Ronnie Tree, speaking in a debate in the House of Commons in June 1944, argued that the Council should be confined to those countries where culture and art formed the main part of Britain's publicity, such as Italy or Portugal, but that

in countries like the United States and the Soviet Union, where a positive interpretation of all aspects of our life must be attempted and the facts given, as well as the countering of actual misrepresentation which is always being made by our enemies, the British Council should be definitely excluded. 28

The Council was equally unsuccessful in establishing an organisation in the Soviet Union. Fundamental differences between Britain and the Soviet Union had hampered collaboration before the war and the difficulties of penetrating a totalitarian society had prevented the establishment of cultural contacts. The Ministry of Information planners had not recommended the foundation of a publicity bureau in the Soviet Union, at least in the early stages of the war even if it had been possible, although hospitality to Russians visiting Britain was considered important.<sup>29</sup> The Council provided facilities for Soviet merchant seamen arriving in Britain but no further action was taken until after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

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27. Memorandum on the future development of the Council,  
March 1944, BW2/101
28. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th Series, Vol 401.  
June 1944, Cols.887-8
29. Ministry of Information Publicity Division Planning Section,  
Report No.239, FO 395/648B P2958/105/150

In September a British delegation visited Moscow to discuss the provision of supplies for the Russian war effort. Arising from this conference, Beaverbrook, leader of the delegation, presented a memorandum prepared by Sir Charles Wilson to the War Cabinet on the exchange of scientific information with the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

The Council, to which all responsibility for medical and scientific propaganda had passed, received these suggestions. The Finance and Agenda Committee was told in October that Eden had ruled

that any general programme of activities would be premature. He promised, however, that he would refer to Sir Stafford Cripps any concrete proposals that we care to submit and he suggested that we should take up the question of exchanging scientific information.<sup>31</sup>

In consultation with Sir John Anderson, Chairman of the Science Advisory Committee to the War Cabinet, the Council investigated ways of improving facilities for correspondence between British and Soviet scientists and the exchange of scientific publications. The Council was concerned only with non-military information and with private correspondence and exchanges. In addition, music scores were despatched to Moscow at Cripp's request.

In February 1942 a Press Attaché, John Lawrence, was attached to the Embassy at Kuibyshev. The Ministry of Information suggested that the Council should use Lawrence as its contact in the Soviet Union and it was agreed that Lawrence should correspond with the Council on cultural matters. The Ministry argued that in the Soviet Union 'any political or war propaganda can only grow out of scientific and cultural exchanges'.<sup>32</sup> Initially, at least, the Council's work would have to be the cloak for normal Ministry operations. Both Cripps and the Soviet ambassador in London had advised the Ministry that only scientific and cultural publicity would be possible at first. In these circumstances the Council argued that

all work in the Soviet Union should be carried out by the Council and that the whole of the Ministry's work is an encroachment.<sup>33</sup>

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30. War Cabinet Minutes, 8 October 1941, CAB 66/19 WP(41)238  
 31. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 7 October 1941. BW69/7  
 32. E. Bamford to K.T. Gurney, 4 April 1942. FO370/674  
L1348/310/410  
 33. R. Seymour to K.T. Gurney, 10 April 1942. F) 370/674  
L1348/310/410

Reluctant to begin another battle with the Ministry of Information, the Council agreed to work through Lawrence on condition that all educational and cultural proposals be referred exclusively to itself.

After the Anglo-Soviet Treaty in May, Lawrence was able to work more openly and began producing a newspaper, The British Ally, and to distribute Ministry material. Incessant Soviet demands for the opening of a second front in Europe and misrepresentation of the British war effort demanded the presentation of the British case but the establishment of informal and unofficial contacts was extremely difficult. The Soviet Government's reaction had been lukewarm to proposals for correspondence between British and Soviet scientists. The Council was told that all such contacts would have to be conducted through scientific institutions and would be nearly impossible due to the dispersal of Soviet scientists.

Towards the end of 1942 the Council considered the appointment of its own representative in the Soviet Union

since Mr. Lawrence is carrying on political propaganda openly the Ministry can no longer maintain that a cultural umbrella is essential to them. 34

Robertson was anxious that the Council should not be identified with the Ministry and that the development of scientific and cultural relations should not go by default in view of Lawrence's increasing Ministry work. Housing and food shortages in the Soviet Union, however, militated against the expansion of British representation. In December 1942 after discussions between the Council, the Science Committee, the Foreign Office and Clark Kerr, it was agreed that a prominent scientist should go to the Soviet Union to establish contacts and survey the field for the Council. Unfortunately, the Soviet Government objected to the visit of Professor Dirac, holder of the Isaac Newton Chair at Cambridge,

on the grounds that the Soviet scientists are dispersed over the whole vast territory of the USSR and that no contacts would be possible. 35

The question of Council representation fell into abeyance after this setback.

34. Minute by K.T. Gurney, 27 October 1942. F0370/675

L3160/310/410

35. Minute by K.T. Gurney, 21 May 1943. F0370/675 L3356/31 /410

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union became an important field for the Council's functional departments, especially the Science Department. In 1943 in an agreement with VOKS, the director of the Science Department, James Crowther, was entrusted with the provision of information on British science to the Soviet Union. An exchange of political and non-political publications between the All Union Lenin Library and British academic and scientific institutions was organised and books, periodicals, films, music scores and photographs were despatched. In April the Council jointly sponsored a delegation of British surgeons to the Soviet Union. In London Anglo-Soviet showings of scientific films were undertaken and the Council assisted with exhibitions of Russian books. The Foreign Office supported the exchange of publications with the Soviet Union in view of the dearth of contemporary Soviet material in Britain.

The difficulties the Council experienced in establishing contacts in the Soviet Union were a facet of the wide gulf that separated the Western Allies from their Soviet counterpart. A member of the Council's staff was sent to Moscow at the end of 1943 but only to supervise the exchange of publications. The suspicion that pervaded diplomatic relations extended to the cultural and scientific fields. E.L. Woodward wrote, on the attitude of the Soviet Union,

They regarded their defence against Germany as an episode in a vaster and larger struggle. Unlike the British and the Americans, they did not look forward to victory over the Germans as the beginning of a new era. They were not fighting for the "freedom" of western civilisation; they were hardly less concerned with protecting themselves against their "allies" than with winning the war against Germany.<sup>36</sup>

The story of the Council's, and indeed the Ministry's, activities in the Soviet Union during the war bears out this observation.

In China, before September 1941, the Council provided a small subsidy for a British School in Tsingtao and grants, administered by the Embassy, to the English departments of some universities and to the Sino-British Cultural Association.

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36. Woodward op.cit. Vol II (London 1971) p.4.

Proposals for a subsidy to Hong Kong University 'to show the Japanese that we intend to maintain our position in the Far East as far as possible',<sup>37</sup> were shelved on the outbreak of war in Europe. Japanese pressure in the Far East, and particularly on the Burma Road, forestalled British help to China. After the entry of the United States into the war, the situation was eased but there was no immediate prospect of Britain being able to increase supplies considerably. Moreover, although the involvement of Britain and the United States in the war with Japan enhanced the chances of Chinese victory, the subsequent disputes over strategy, allocation of supplies and the choice of military commanders placed additional strains on Anglo-Chinese relations. General Chiang Kai-Shek made matters worse in 1942 by attempting to interfere in the Indian political situation. Clearly a great deal of fence-mending of Anglo-Chinese relations needed to be undertaken.

In January 1942 the British Ambassador in China, Clark Kerr, suggested that English teaching and cultural facilities could be extended under the auspices of the British Council.<sup>38</sup> Dr. E. R. Hughes, Reader in Chinese Religion and Philosophy at Oxford University, travelled to China in 1942 under the joint sponsorship of the Council and the University, and arrived in Chungking in April, as the Japanese were overrunning Burma rendering access to China almost impossible. Future contacts and supplies could henceforth only be maintained by air transport from bases in Assam over the "Hump" of intervening mountains to Kunming and Chungking. Furthermore, British prestige in the Far East was severely undermined by Japan's victories in 1942. Hughes spent two and a half years in China establishing contacts with Chinese scholars at a number of centres, but mainly at Kunming. Hughes' range of contacts was inevitably limited and the Foreign Office and the Council were anxious that they should be extended.

Sir H. Seymour, the British Ambassador, advised in September 1942, that

Owing to the peculiar status enjoyed by university students and professors in China, anything which we can do to alleviate the difficulties under which they are working cannot fail to react favourably on Chinese opinion of Britain and should, in the long run, produce very considerable results.<sup>39</sup>

37. Minute by H. P. Croom-Johnson, 2 February 1939. BW23/3

38. Telegram from Clark-Kerr, 5 January 1942. FO370/668 L77/77/410

39. R. Seymour to Eden, 9 September 1942. FO370/670 L3771/77/410

After a visit to China in May 1942 Sir John Sargent, Education Commissioner with the Government of India, had reached a similar conclusion and recommended that

To do this now when there are obvious difficulties to be overcome would be more effective than to do it after the war when it will no doubt be interpreted as part of the usual scramble to extend western spheres of political and commercial interest. 40

In the summer of 1942 Seymour appointed John Blofeld, Press Attaché at Chungking, as his adviser on cultural relations. The Council, meanwhile, after discussions with the Foreign Office, had decided to sponsor the visit of an eminent scientist and an academic to China. Dr. Joseph Needham, Reader in Bio-Chemistry at Cambridge since 1933, who described himself as a 'Christian Marxist', and Professor E.R. Dodds, Regius professor of Greek at Oxford, arrived in China in February 1943. In the previous month an Anglo-Chinese Treaty had been signed to bolster Chinese morale by the abrogation of Britain's extra-territorial rights in China. The selection of Dodds and Needham aroused comment inside and outside the Council. The Council's Science Advisory Committee protested at not being consulted and Stephen Gaselee at the Foreign Office described Dodds as 'an extreme pacifist' and Needham as 'a "pink" if not quite "red"'.<sup>41</sup> The Science Advisory Committee to the War Cabinet, too, was incensed at being by-passed and the Lord President, Anderson, drew Eden's attention to the left-wing sympathies of both men and alleged that Needham had been a pacifist until the Soviet Union had been attacked by Germany.<sup>42</sup>

Before setting out for China, Needham was invited by the American Ambassador in London, to visit the United States on his way. Such a stop-over was considered highly desirable by the Foreign Office 'in the interests of Anglo-American cooperation more particularly in the Far East' and was approved by Eden.<sup>43</sup> The Council was acutely aware of the extensive American cultural and educational programme in China. In July 1943 Sir Henry Dale remarked that

China would be an important field later on and unless British influence was introduced at the start it would come exclusively under the influence of the United States.<sup>44</sup>

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40. Report on a visit to China by J.Sargent. May 1942. FO370/669  
L2278/77/410

41. Minute by S.Gaselee, 7 October 1942. FO370/670 L3503/77/410

42. Sir John Anderson to Eden, 5 October 1942. FO 370/670 L3694/77/410

43. Minute by J.Ashley-Clarke, 17 September 1942. FO370/669 L3161/77/410

44. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 13 July 1943. BW69/9



Needham's visit to the United States was a great success and he established good relations with a large number of official and unofficial organisations.

The intellectual isolation and personal and material deprivations suffered by the Chinese academic world since the Japanese attack in 1937 meant that this small effort by Britain was welcomed more enthusiastically than could have been anticipated. Britain's ability to fulfill the expectations aroused by the arrival of Dodds and Needham was enhanced by the Government's decision at the end of 1942 to allow the Chinese Government to draw on its 1941 export credit of £5 million 'for the purpose of training students in this country'.<sup>45</sup> In cooperation with the Chinese Government and British industry the Council arranged for the placing of nearly seventy Chinese students a year with British universities and firms. Dodds, Needham and Blofeld were unanimous in recommending that the Council should concentrate on improving contacts with Chinese academic and scientific circles and expanding the Sino-British Cultural Association. Through the Council Britain aimed to influence these classes in three ways; firstly, by gaining their gratitude for the help offered in China's hour of need; secondly, by

the putting into operation of some of the more far-reaching schemes [which] will show them that we are convinced that this war will not be lost by the Allies,

and thirdly, by

establishing channels through which British culture and British ideals can be brought home to, and caused to flourish in, the minds of China's future leaders.<sup>46</sup>

Dodds returned to England in the summer of 1943 and recommended that Chinese universities should be helped by the supply of books and the exchange of students and academic personnel. Four Chinese professors were invited to Oxford and Cambridge to take up residence for a year and Dr. Hughes returned to Oxford in 1944 as assistant to the Professor-elect of Chinese, Dr. Chen Yin-Chiao. Also in 1944 Dr. W.L. Renwick, Professor of

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45. K.T. Gurney to W. Bridges-Adams, 23 November 1942. F0370/671 L3939/77/410

46. R. Seymour to Eden, 9 September 1942. F0370/670 L3771/77/410

English Literature and Language at Newcastle travelled to China as a visiting lecturer and Dr. Dorothy Needham, Needham's wife and a lecturer in Bio-Chemistry, Dr. L.E.R. Picken, a Research Fellow at Cambridge, and Dr. Sanders, an expert on penicillin, joined Needham.

Needham established a remarkable organisation at Chungking known as the Sino-British Scientific Cooperation Office.<sup>47</sup> In the first seven months of 1943 Needham undertook a 8,000 kilometre tour of universities, research institutes and technical colleges in the north and west of China. In August Needham developed the Office in Chungking which he described as

part of an allied attempt to break the Japanese intellectual and technical blockade around China. It was our aim to bring help to the Chinese scientists and technologists isolated even in the biggest cities of "Free China", and much more so in the remoter locations where war factories had grown up and exiled universities established themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Needham likened the work of the Office to that of a clearing house for scientific information or as 'intellectual lend-lease in both directions'.<sup>49</sup> It was the link between the Chinese Ministry of Health and the Medical Research Council in England, between the Chinese Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and many more. In its first year the office was wholly associated with, and fully financed by, the Council but the exigencies of war necessitated closer relations with the Ministry of Production, which created a special China office to deal with this work. Working closely with the Military, Naval and Air Attachés at the Embassy in Chungking, Needham provided the Ministry of Production with information on war science and technology in China collected from his many contacts with the Chinese Army and Air Force as well as civilian research bodies. In return the Ministry of Production, as far as possible, met Needham's requests for information and materials. All information collected by Needham on post-war Chinese commerce and industry was passed to the Board of Trade. In addition, the fruits of Needham's discoveries were

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47. J. Needham, Science Outpost, (London 1948) p.13.

48. Ibid., p.17

49. Ibid., p.75

relayed to scientific institutions in Washington, such as the Office of Scientific Research and Development, the Committee for Medical Research and the Department of Agriculture. In China the Science Cooperation Office was officially associated, after consultations with the Generalissimo, with an organisation known as the 'Council for the Promotion of Science in the National Defence' and had special liaison officers with the principal Chinese ministries - War, Economics, Education, Agriculture - and the National Health Administration of the Academia Sinica. Needham's office was more often known as the British Scientific Mission in China than as the Council's Science Office.

The main features of the Office were the maintenance of contacts between British and Chinese scientists, the supply of scientific information and materials to the Chinese, the facilitation of the output of scientific literature from China, the provision of advice to Chinese scientific and technical bodies and assistance with the exchange of scientific personnel. Under these five headings a multitude of activities was undertaken over an astonishingly wide field. In addition, in three years from 1943 to 1946, Needham and his staff undertook journeys covering 25,000 kilometres in extremely hazardous conditions, visited three hundred Chinese scientific and technical institutions in ten of the eighteen classical provinces of China, including the communist strongholds of Shensi, Kansu and Ningshai. As well as being joined by eminent British scientists, Needham also recruited distinguished Chinese scientists to work in the Office. A full description of its work cannot be given here but a few statistics may convey some impression of the vast range of work undertaken. Despite the very considerable difficulties of supplying China, the Council was able to secure room for cultural and scientific material in the infrequent air transports from India. In 1943 both aircraft and supplies were limited by the demands of other theatres; in 1944 China came nearer to collapse than at any other time in her seven-year struggle. Nevertheless, by the end of the war one hundred and sixty-nine scientific, technical and medical journals were reaching China regularly in microfilm form and one hundred and eighty-eight in print form, the Council had spent £60,000 on research chemicals and apparatus for China and nearly 7,000 volumes had been presented. The Office also answered individual requests, such as a list of the edible and poisonous plants of North Burma and the Shan States for the Chinese Surgeon-General.

Much of the credit for the office's success must go to Needham himself and the enthusiasm of his British and Chinese staff. Needham paid tribute to the help of the British embassy staff and especially that of Sir Horace and Lady Seymour and commented,

Such understanding was not unremarkable for it is a comparatively new thing in international relations that science and technology should take a prominent place.<sup>49</sup>

The development of this office was largely out of the Council's hands and the Council was not directly represented in China during the war; Hughes was engaged mainly in his own research, Blofeld belonged to the MOI and Dodds returned soon after his tour for health reasons. The Council did not find a representative until 1945, by which time the foundations of Anglo-Chinese cultural relations had been laid. The Foreign Office commented on the Council's work in China,

It has made an excellent start, and it represents almost the only constructive work which it is possible for us, for the time being, to carry on in China. It is potentially, for the future, of the very highest importance.<sup>50</sup>

In January 1945 Needham and the Council's new Representative, Professor P.M. Roxby, Professor of Geography at Liverpool University were given diplomatic status to improve their standing in negotiations with the Chinese authorities.

The most striking feature of the Council's operations in China during the war is the contrast between the diplomatic and the cultural effort. After the Cairo Declaration of December 1943, the United States had assumed responsibility for relations between China and the Allies and the Foreign Office's chief interest lay in ensuring that the intricacies of the Chinese situation did not damage Anglo-American relations. The Foreign Office saw no opportunity for mediation between the Kuomintang and the Communists and was aware of American distrust of British motives in the Far East. The Foreign Office did not believe that China would be a great power in the near future or that she would play a stabilising role in Asia but, nevertheless, urged the Council to expand its activities as much as possible. Moreover, unlike almost every other field of Anglo-American relations in China, Needham worked closely with American government agencies.

## SUMMARY

At the end of the war the Council had thirty-one Representatives overseas in as many foreign countries and British colonies. There were ninety-nine British institutes and like centres catering for a total of nearly twenty-five thousand students. The forty-six cultural societies of Latin America had over thirty-three thousand students and social members. In the last year of the war the Council spent £3 million, roughly half overseas. The most striking feature of its work during the war was this dramatic rise in expenditure from government sources. This fact alone suggests that the Council's work was regarded as a direct contribution to the war effort and that the value of long term cultural publicity had been recognised. The Foreign Office and the Treasury were under constant pressure from British political and military personnel overseas to increase the Council's work. The Foreign Office encouraged the Council to expand widely and kept only a distant watch on its protégé. Relations with the MOI settled into wary cooperation after 1941 and both had large and often overlapping organisations overseas and both proclaimed the same message by the end of the war.

The Council's activities spread as opportunity and finance allowed. In Europe, its efforts met with little success after the failure of Britain's diplomatic and military policies. In the Middle East, however, Britain's case reached large numbers through the agency of the Council and expenditure in this area exceeded that in any other area. Turkey was the biggest single consumer of the Council's budget and the Council estimated in March 1945 that it was teaching English to ten thousand pupils there. Although overall expenditure was considerably less in Latin America, significant numbers were reached by working through indigenous organisations. The Council's work in Latin America was dominated by the long term priority of protecting British economic interests but in the Middle East, it also served a short term purpose, for example in Iraq after the Rashid Ali episode and in Iran after the joint occupation. The work of the Allied Liaison Division was chiefly short term and designed to ease the problems of the service authorities in the Middle East. The Council achieved comparatively little in the Commonwealth and

Empire during the war, although the Colonial Office had accepted the desirability of cultural and educational activities in the Colonies. The Dominions Office, its staff overseas and the Dominion Governments proved much more reluctant to concede that the cultural links of the Empire required strengthening and that the Council was the right body to conduct such work. In the neutral countries, the Council reinforced British foreign policy, for example, by reassuring Franco of British support if he remained neutral. The failure of the Council to operate in the United States reflected an early MOI victory and its lack of activities in the Soviet Union was a measure of the difficulties of penetrating the Soviet system.

It is not surprising that the Council's administrative machine did not develop as quickly as its grant and there was unanimous agreement at the end of the war that a radical overhaul was necessary. The Council's wide range of functions, the number of countries in which it operated and the size of its grant raised fundamental questions about the role of cultural publicity and the Council in Britain's relations with other countries.

CHAPTER EIGHTTEMPORARY LEASE

With the approach of Allied victory the future of the wartime departments fell under scrutiny. The Machinery of Government Official Committee on the MOI did not examine the Council and took no account of the Findlater Stewart enquiry. Indeed, Stewart was unaware of the review of the information services that was taking place.<sup>1</sup> Bracken had recommended the disappearance of the Ministry at the earliest possible moment, the defeat of Germany,<sup>2</sup> but the committee concluded that the Ministry would have to be maintained for the conduct of propaganda in the Far East. When Japan had been defeated, the committee recommended that the Ministry should be wound up, leaving each department to decide the publicity that was required in its own sphere on its own responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

The end of the war meant the termination of the Ministry's censorship and security duties and the return of its policy functions to the departments concerned. Stripped of these activities the rump could not function effectively. A central government publicity unit was rejected in the belief that it would be open to political objections which, Radcliffe argued, would not be the case with departmental publicity. However, the desirability of retaining the accumulated skills and expertise of the Ministry's creative and production divisions was recognised. Alan Barlow, the chairman of the committee, favoured a central body to perform technical and producing functions and specialist services as a common agency for all departments. As well as being a more efficient and economic utilisation of resources, it would ensure cohesion in publicity output and allow the employment of creative and media experts who would not fit easily into existing departmental structures. The committee put forward three options in March 1944: a joint organisation of the Foreign, Colonial, India and Dominions Offices operating independently; the same body acting as part of the Foreign Office; the four overseas departments working separately with suitable arrangements for cooperation. The first was rejected by the Foreign Office which declared

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1. Minute by D.Ormiston, 12 February 1950 F0924/782 CRA 20/1
  2. Machinery of Government Committee Meeting, 8 February 1944  
CAB 87/71 GIS(44)1
  3. Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, 31 August  
1944 CAB 66/54 WP(44)482
  4. Machinery of Government Committee Meeting, 8 February 1944  
Cab 87/71 GIS(44)1

We regard as our own special responsibility the presentation of all British news and activities to foreign countries and the presentation everywhere of our policy and our views on international affairs, and we would, therefore, wish to have the requisite machinery in our hands and as part of the Foreign Office.<sup>5</sup>

The second option was unlikely to appeal to the other departments and, in view of the committee's low opinion of the Foreign Office's creative abilities, unlikely to be recommended. Reluctantly, the committee plumped for the third choice

because we are greatly impressed by the value after the war of a vigorous policy of publicity in foreign countries and there is a danger that if this is left to the Foreign Office, initiative will wither and the organisation go stale, or perhaps be staffed from inappropriate sources.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, partly in order to preserve the standards of propaganda output, a scheme for a central technical agency was pursued. The final meeting of the committee in June concluded that, despite political objections, there was a strong case for maintaining a MOI with decision-making powers.<sup>7</sup> In March 1945, however, the abolition of the Ministry when the war in the Far East had ended was announced. Responsibility for overseas publicity would return to the four departments concerned and inter-departmental cooperation would coordinate the needs of other departments.

Parallel to these discussions, Stewart investigated the workings of the Council in London. The Council's senior officials advocated the replacement of the existing Executive and Finance and Agenda committees by a small board, meeting regularly. They recommended also that the chairmanship should be a full-time post and combine the post of managing-director of the new board. Moreover, it was suggested to Stewart that the Lord President's Office would be a more suitable parent body than the Foreign Office.

It seems inadvisable that one of the departments responsible for regional political guidance of the British Council should be exclusively responsible for its whole machinery.<sup>8</sup>

The Foreign Office, preoccupied by the diplomacy of the coming peace and the absorption of the MOI's organisation overseas, gave

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5. Cadogan to Barlow, 23 March 1944 T 222/68
  6. Barlow to Radcliffe, 28 March 1944 T 222/68
  7. Machinery of Government Meeting, 2 June 1944 CAB 87771 GIS(44)6
  8. Undated Minute by White, BW2/151



scant attention to Stewart's enquiry. Sir David Scott from the administrative side of the Foreign Office was consulted but the British Council section of the Library Department was not. The Foreign Office wanted tighter controls over the Council and the elimination of overlapping with the official information services, which was estimated at being nearly complete.<sup>9</sup> From his interview with Stewart, Scott concluded that

Sir Findlater has taken the Council too much at its own valuation, and has accepted too readily its assumption of wider functions and diverse methods. I don't think the Council should be a public organisation in the proper sense at all.<sup>10</sup>

Scott complained, with some justice, that the Council was inclined to do everything itself instead of using existing interested bodies. He was opposed to the Council taking over tourist publicity from the Travel Association and undertaking broadcasting that was properly the responsibility of the BBC. Scott was scathing of Stewart's plans for the reform of the Council's administration and regarded as 'sheer nonsense' Stewart's proposal that the Council should draw up a five year plan of expenditure of up to £5 million per annum. Scott did not 'see how the Council could possibly have as much as a million a year'.<sup>11</sup>

MOI officials advised Stewart that only the restriction of the Council to purely educational and cultural activities would end overlapping. The Treasury made detailed recommendations for the reform of financial procedures within the Council, that were accepted by Stewart, and urged the strengthening of Foreign Office control. The chief interest of the Dominions, Colonial and India Offices was in the maintenance of adequate controls over Council operations in their respective territories.

The first drafts of Stewart's report reached the Foreign Office and Treasury in December 1944 and copies were sent to interested departments in March, as the decision to abolish the Ministry was announced. The Council did not see the report until June, despite repeated requests and growing indignation among the members of the Executive Committee. Stewart's report concerned exclusively the structure of the Council's headquarters; he did not examine the Council's work overseas or its efficiency at lower and middle levels. He recommended the replacement of the Executiv

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9. Minute by W.H. Montagu-Pollack, 3 August 1944 FO 924/120 LC3370/1699/451

10. Minute by A. Dudley, 15 November 1944 FO924/112 LC024/19/451

11. Ibid.

Committee by a Governing Board of six or seven administrators, appointed by the Foreign Secretary, meeting at least weekly. Advisory Committees were to be retained but have no government representatives and have no right to membership of the Governing Board. Membership of the Council was to be enlarged and regional interests in the United Kingdom were to be included. Foreign Office interests would be protected by a right of direct access to the Board on major issues and by close contacts at the official level. Stewart proposed that an Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office should deal with the Council's affairs. The Foreign Office would provide the broad strategic plan and the Council the method of execution, although a veto was reserved for the Foreign Office for proposals likely to be embarrassing to its overall responsibilities. Overseas, the Council's staff should remain unofficial and Stewart noted that British Missions should not ask the Council to undertake activities beyond its sphere. Finally, Stewart recommended a radical improvement in staffing arrangements and the appointment of an Establishments Officer.

The Stewart enquiry and the imminent general election posed a dilemma for Robertson. He was prepared to serve as a full-time chairman for three years, renouncing his political and business interests in the meantime. However, Eden proved 'vague in the extreme' about his future with the Council and so, in order to fulfill his obligations to his constituents, Robertson resigned in May 1945.<sup>12</sup> Robertson had not endeared himself to his senior officials by his frequent absences and haphazard direction of the Council's affairs. Robertson believed fervently in the Council's mission but did not have the administrative skill or patience to pursue its goals. He was unpopular with the Foreign Office and the Treasury and later complained that

Unfortunately neither the Cabinet, Tory, Coalition, or Labour, nor the Foreign Office itself, nor our great newspapers, have yet had the time, or, apparently the inclination, to take a living interest in the organisation which can, and indeed should be made into a living example to the world.<sup>13</sup>

Under Robertson's chairmanship the Council expanded dramatically and reached its zenith. Before resigning Robertson protested angrily at the cuts imposed on the Council's 1945/6 budget and

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12. Eden to Robertson, 31 May 1945. Robertson Papers.

14. Final chapter, draft autobiography, Robertson Papers.

would have found the post-war economies very difficult to accept. His successor was not appointed until the future of the Council had been decided. Lord Riverdale became acting Chairman for the second time.

Consideration of Stewart's report by the Foreign Office was delayed pending the return of Eden and George Hall, Parliamentary Under Secretary, from the San Francisco Conference and by the necessity of obtaining the views of Missions overseas. The head of the newly-created Cultural Relations Department of the Foreign Office, W.H. Montagu-Pollack, had ample opportunity to study the report and had more interest in, and knowledge of, cultural relations than his predecessors at the Library Department. As Counsellor at the Legation in Stockholm during the war, Montagu-Pollack, had been instrumental in the spread of Council activities and in the foundation of numerous Anglophile societies. In April 1945 he undertook with Hall a tour of the Council's establishments in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Both returned impressed with the value of cultural publicity and 'toying with the idea of taking it over as a direct Foreign Office service'.<sup>14</sup> In May, Montagu-Pollack drafted alternatives to the Stewart proposals. Cultural propaganda, he argued, was the essential prerequisite of political publicity and inextricably linked to, and concerned with, the direct pursuit of Foreign Office ends.

The Council is an instrument of long-term foreign policy and long-term as well as short-term foreign policy is the province of the Foreign Office.<sup>15</sup>

Effective coordination was only possible in a single body and it was

basically illogical and unsatisfactory for an organisation financed entirely from public funds not to be subject to effective governmental supervision, and supervision can never be really effective without control.<sup>16</sup>

Montague-Pollack proposed that the Council should be absorbed into the future Foreign Publicity Department of the Foreign Office which would include a Director of Cultural Publicity. Likewise,

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15. The Case for Cultural Publicity, drafted by the Cultural Relations Department, May 1945. T 219/3

16. Ibid.

the Council's work in the Commonwealth and Empire would be taken over by the Departments concerned. In the field the Council would retain the facade of unofficial status.

Britain's Embassies and Legations, especially in the Middle East, supported the retention of the Council's semi-autonomous position. In Latin America and Europe opinion was divided but on balance favourable. Foreign governments were deemed more likely to allow activities by the Council that might not be permitted to an official organisation and the Council could be more experimental and flexible by virtue of being able to make more mistakes than an official body. This meant that British Missions had less control over the Council's activities, but twenty-two out of thirty-five replies were content with existing arrangements. Local relationships between the Council and the Foreign Service depended greatly on personal factors and only eight Missions declared in favour of complete control for widely differing reasons.<sup>17</sup>

If Montagu-Pollack's radical proposals were not accepted, the Foreign Office demanded closer control over Council policy than envisaged by Stewart, including Foreign Office representation on the Governing Board and any committees it wished, and joint standing committees for each region to plan production schedules for all media. The Foreign Office was supported by the Dominion Office which, in addition to control over and information about the Council's plans, wanted 'a general control of the type of picture of this country which the British Council presents in the Dominions'.<sup>18</sup>

The Treasury and the Colonial Office accepted Stewart's report as it had included their views on relevant issues. For example, the Colonial Office position, that the Council's work in the Colonies 'is in essence an agency service on behalf of the Colonial Office carried out by the Council for reasons of convenience and economy,' was included in the report despite Stewart's support for a more independent role for the Council in foreign countries.<sup>19</sup> The Treasury was prepared to accept Montagu-Pollack's plan if the Foreign Office pressed the issue but considered the delay in reaching a decision deplorable. As a

17. Minute by H.Hedley, 16 April 1945. FO 924/113 IC1947/19/451

18. Pugh to W.H.Montagu-Pollack, 30 June 1945. FO 924/114 LC210/19/451

19. Stanley to Eden, 29 March 1945. T 219/3

result, the Council's finances were in disarray and, as Anderson wrote to Eden,

I should have thought that in the present state of world politics it was most desirable that we should at the earliest opportunity get a really effective body to handle cultural propoganda.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the Treasury was sceptical of the Foreign Office's ability to manage the Council's operations better than the Council had done and senior officials believed that there was a strong case for leaving the peculiar needs of cultural propoganda outside the confines of the government.

This kind of business is much better done at one remove from Whitehall.<sup>21</sup>

Bamford and Grubb at the MOI also favoured compromise, arguing that in certain circumstances the Council's apparent independence was valuable and that the Council was 'in itself an example of the British way of approach to the management of such affairs...'<sup>22</sup>

An inter-departmental meeting at the Foreign Office in June decided to reject the plan for the Council's abolition on the advice of Lord Dunglass, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, who declared that it would be unacceptable to the House of Commons. He was supported by Richard Law, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, and Hall who predicted trouble from the Labour benches. Law and Dunglass proposed that the Council should remain as it was but have 'infused' into it such representatives of interested departments 'as are necessary to guide policy and secure efficiency'.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the return of Kirkpatrick to the Foreign Office in the summer of 1945 as Assistant Under Secretary of the Information Department resulted in a modification of the Foreign Office stand. Drawing on his experience at the BBC, Kirkpatrick insisted that the chairman and Governing Board should be independent and that the Council should be allowed to continue its day-to-day activities with the minimum of interference from the Foreign Office. But Kirkpatrick argued that the Foreign Office should have a veto over policy and appointments at home and abroad.

A Cabinet Committee of the new Government met to consider the future of the information services in September 1945. Attlee outlined the situation: to retain the MOI meant reversing the

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20. Anderson to Eden, 26 May 1945. FO 924/114 LC2237/19/451

21. J.Beighton to E.Bridges, 20 June 1945. T 219/4

22. Minute by K.Grubb, 16 January 1945. INF 1/961

23. R.Law to J.Anderson, 16 June 1945. FO924/114 LC2391/19/451

announced decision of the previous government, risked the allegation that the government would use it as 'a medium for party propaganda' and required legislation. Conversely, there was a need for publicity at home and overseas and for a unified organisation to coordinate policy and output. The four overseas departments demanded control of policy overseas and Bevin argued for the integration of all the bodies involved in overseas publicity with the Foreign Service, including commercial, tourist and cultural publicity. This meant the 'transformation of the British Council into a branch of the public service under the control of the Foreign Secretary.....'<sup>24</sup> For publicity material and technical advice the Foreign Office was prepared to rely on a Government Information Agency.

E.J. Williams, however, the Minister of Information, advocated the retention of the Ministry as the most efficient and economic means of meeting the requirements of post-war publicity. He challenged the view that the production of propaganda material could be separated from regional knowledge and argued that governmental publicity differed from departmental public relations and

that British publicity addressed to foreign countries and to the Empire and to the public is a unity and in modern conditions a necessary instrument of the Government as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

Williams did not comment on the Council except to state that 'firstly by a clear understanding and observance of respective responsibility, and secondly by a full and free exchange and discussion of projects', the two could coexist peacefully.<sup>26</sup> He was supported by Addison who favoured at least the creation of a Ministry of Public Relations from the ashes of the MOI and the Council, with a trained Public Relations Service that would be seconded to departments.

Nevertheless, at a Ministerial meeting on 3 October the Lord President, Herbert Morrison, was instructed to prepare a report on the assumption that the MOI would disappear. Bevin was designated to devise a plan for the coordination of propaganda overseas. In his report, Morrison endorsed the decisions of the

24. The Future of British Publicity in Foreign Countries, Memorandum by the Foreign Office, 13 September 1945. CAB 129/4 CP(45)168

25. Memorandum by the MOI, 17 September 1945. T222/66 Gen.85/3

26. Ibid.

previous Government and agreed with Foreign Office proposals for the creation of two ministerial committees, under a common chairman and supported by committees of officials, to ensure the presentation of a common line. Morrison recommended that expenditure on all forms of publicity should be reduced 'for political as well as financial reasons'.<sup>27</sup> Williams and Addison were the only dissentients. On 6 December the Cabinet decided that the MOI should disappear as, in Attlee's view, it was 'politically dangerous that there should be a Minister with no other responsibility than the conduct of propaganda'.<sup>28</sup>

With Bevin's backing, the Foreign Office continued to maintain a strong line on the Council's future. In explaining to Dalton why the Stewart proposals were unacceptable, Bevin wrote

I can not help feeling that a large amount of the work done by the British Council during the war ought to be incorporated in a thoroughly efficient Consular Department. With regard to the proposal of a small Board of Management and an independent Chairman, I am really not enamoured of this. I think the Foreign Office ought really to be responsible for this work.<sup>29</sup>

Bevin's desire to re-establish Foreign Office control over all forms of propaganda overseas divided opinion in the official committee. Although it was agreed that the Foreign Office should chair the Overseas Publicity Committee, the absorption of the Council's staff into the public service was not supported. Moreover, the Foreign Office anticipated that the transfer of the Council's production divisions to the proposed COI would enable a ceiling of £2 million for 1946/7 to be imposed on the Council, to be reduced to £1 million thereafter. Barlow outlined the implications of these proposals.

In effect, if the Foreign Secretary has his way the British Council as an independent chartered body is dead, although the name might be retained for its goodwill in certain fields.<sup>30</sup>

His committee, however, felt that

While subject to ultimate Foreign Office control, it [the Council] should be given a considerable degree of autonomy in the field.....because its work is likely to be done more effectively if it is not done by officials but by persons more closely connected with the academic world.<sup>31</sup>

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27. Report by the Lord President, 30 November 1945 CAB 129/5 CP(45)316  
 28. Cabinet Minutes, 6 December 1945 CAB 129/5 CP(45)60  
 29. Bevin to Dalton, 25 August 1946 T 219/3  
 30. Minute by Barlow, 8 January 1946 T 222/66  
 31. Government Information Services Committee Minutes, 20 December 1945 T219/3

The Cabinet approved the establishment of a COI in February 1946 and committees of Ministers and officials to coordinate policy. Departments had the right to contract out of the COI on specific occasions, if the Treasury were satisfied that the Department could perform the task better. This applied especially to departments such as the Ministry of Food and its publicity in connection with rationing. The MOI was wound up in March 1946 and the COI was born on 1 April.

The outstanding questions of ministerial responsibility for the BBC and the future of the Council were presented to the Cabinet. It had to decide whether educational and cultural work was 'work proper to the Government itself' and if it was 'possible to achieve the required degree of efficiency and economy if such work is not performed direct by the Government'.<sup>32</sup> The Foreign Office advanced two alternatives with regard to the Council. The advantages of Plan A, as it was known, providing for tighter controls over expenditure and policy, were that it involved the least change and, therefore, the least controversy and that 'the facade of a body independent of the Government and the goodwill created by the British Council would be maintained'.<sup>33</sup> Plan B provided for the abolition of the Council, but not only would it inflict increased administrative burdens on the overseas departments, it would also require legislation to revoke the Council's Charter and so provoke controversy. This plan had a further disadvantage in that it

presupposes either that the Council ought never to have been set up at all or that it ought not to have been allowed to develop so far with Government financial assistance, since its activities have all been proper to the Government itself. (this is the view favoured by the Foreign Office.)<sup>34</sup>

Plan B, however, promised considerable economies and ensured the coordination of overseas information policy. A third course open to the Cabinet was to adopt Plan A as an interim measure, while preparations were made to abolish the Council.<sup>35</sup>

The Cabinet decided on 21 February to continue the Council for five years

on the understanding that there would be closer scrutiny of its projected activities, that it should no longer have authority to do its own

32. Report of the Official Committee on Government Information Services, 9 February 1946, para.42 CAB 129/7 CP(46)54

33. Ibid. para.33

34. Minute by E.M.Nicholson, undated T 222/6

35. The Cabinet also considered the abolition of the Council and the transfer of its functions to a new department of the Foreign Office.



production and procurement work, and that its scope should be restricted to educational and cultural work and that it should not overlap with the Government Information Services.<sup>36</sup>

Bevin had been persuaded to accept this compromise on condition that the position would be reviewed after five years.

He believed that in time it might be possible for the Consular Service to take over many of the functions now discharged by the British Council. Meanwhile he must be kept fully informed in advance of the policy which the Council is pursuing.<sup>37</sup>

Addison and Hall supported the restriction of the Council's role and independence but Bevan

stressed the importance of not subjecting the British Council to rigid Foreign Office control. The work which it was set up to do could not be carried out by a Government Department, and if its agents were subordinated to Foreign Office representatives abroad they would be unable to do work of any value.<sup>38</sup>

For coordination with other publicity services, the Council would 'be considered as one of the Government's information services'.<sup>38</sup>

The Council accepted the Cabinet decision with equanimity, relieved that the long period of uncertainty was over and claiming that it affected the Council's work

to a far smaller extent than might be supposed, for the greater part of its work is already educational and cultural, and this restriction permits of concentration on what are in fact the essentials.<sup>39</sup>

However, it was 'far from satisfactory' for cultural propaganda demanded forward planning and its effects could only be measured in the long term. Moreover, it perpetuated doubts about its future and hampered recruitment. Nevertheless, the Council was confident that

five years was a sufficient period in which to demonstrate finally the folly of closing it or paring it down.<sup>41</sup>

With the Council's future temporarily settled, the appointment of a chairman became urgently necessary. Amongst nominations recorded at the Foreign Office were Sir Ronald Storrs, Sir Charles

36. Cabinet Conclusions, 21 February 1946 CAB 128/5 CM(46)17

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Bevin to Riverdale, 20 March 1946 Fo 930/483

40. British Council Annual Report, 1945/6 p.7

41. White, op.cit. p.62

Jeffries, Sir Kenneth Clark, Lord Keynes, Lord Harlech, Malcolm MacDonald, Harold Nicolson<sup>42</sup> and Richard Crossman. The Foreign Office sought 'an energetic man to clean up the mess' who combined leadership and drive with academic interests and had associations with the Labour Party.<sup>43</sup> The post was almost offered to Patrick Gordon-Walker in March 1946, but the Foreign Office legal department advised that as a Member of Parliament, he was debarred from holding an office of profit under the Crown (although this had not prevented Robertson's appointment in 1941). In May a Council sub-committee nominated General Sir Ronald Adam<sup>44</sup> and, from the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris in June, it was reported that Bevin concurred. Gordon-Walker replaced J.J. Lawson as vice-chairman.

In addition to his long and distinguished military career, Adam had many contacts with the academic world. His father had been a founder of Manchester University and, as Adjutant-General from 1941 to 1946, Adam had sponsored the foundation of the Bureau of Current Affairs and the extension of Army education. During the war he had worked closely with Bevin and other Labour leaders on the home front and with the Council's Home Division. Adam confirmed the primacy of education in the Council's work and his enthusiasm for cultural relations endeared him to the staff and restored a sense of purpose to their activities. Adam had three overriding tasks: the reorganisation of the Council's central machine; the establishment of a Council service; the completion of the transfer of the Council's production departments to the COI. The Economist diagnosed the root of the problem.

Like a child that has had its main growth on an unsuitable diet, its muscles are weak and its shape distorted, owing to the abnormalities of 1939-1945.<sup>45</sup>

When Adam became chairman, the Council had a budget of just over £3 million and nearly three thousand staff operating in every continent. Educational activities remained the mainspring of

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42. Nicolson recorded that he had been rejected for the post by Bevin. N.Nicolson, Diaries and Letters 1945-1962, (New York) 1968) Vol.3

43. Minute by I.Kirkpatrick, 3 January 1946. F0924/266 LC47755/146/451 p.43

44. Stanley Unwin claims responsibility for Adam's nomination. See, S.Unwin, The Truth About a Publisher, (London 1960) p.432

45. The Economist, 20 November 1946, p.862

the Council's work and Adam was interested particularly in the welfare of foreign students in Britain and in the investigation of methods of teaching English as a foreign language.<sup>46</sup>

The Stewart and Foreign Office proposals for the Council's reorganisation were abandoned, leaving Adam a free hand. To assist him he brought G.H. Shreeve from the War Office and invited the Treasury Method and Control Department to examine the structure. The retirement of Lord Derby and Lord Riverdale enabled Adam to appoint Sir Philip Morris as vice-chairman to improve contacts with universities and educational institutions. Morris had worked closely with Adam as Director-General of Army education from 1944 to 1946 and as Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University. Arthur Howard, Conservative Member of Parliament, filled the remaining vacancy on the recommendation of Eden. The Executive Committee remained and was reformed at Bevin's suggestion to include more representatives from the left. New appointments included H.V. Tewson, General-Secretary of the Trade Union Congress, Mrs Ayrton Gould, a Labour Member of Parliament, F. Abbots from the educational side of the Cooperative movement and W.E. Williams, Director of the Bureau of Current Affairs.

Two new sub-committees were created in September 1946. The Finance and Agenda and Budget Committees became the Finance Committee and a Policy Committee was established 'to deal with matters of general cultural and educational policy'.<sup>47</sup> Issues of fundamental policy remained the prerogative of the Executive Committee and its meetings were combined with those of the Policy Committee when they coincided. Following recommendations from the Treasury, the Council's structure was reorganised in 1947. Adam became Chairman and Director-General, the Secretary-General was replaced by two Assistant Directors-General and the departments were arranged into eight divisions. The divisions were divided equally between the two Assistant Directors-General and four were regional under one, and the other four dealt with arts and sciences, education, finance and establishments. A central Secretariat was created responsible directly to the chairman.<sup>48</sup>

In 1946 the Council had Home and Overseas Services and a Permanent Overseas Service, each with different gradings and pay

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46. Interview with General Adam, 15 December 1980. Adam was instrumental in persuading the University of London to found the first Chair in English language teaching.

47. Minute by White, 10 September 1946 BW 2/332

48. See Appendix B

scales. Adam wanted an integrated Council service with provision for the short term secondment of staff from educational bodies. The Council's staff did not enjoy the same privileges and conditions as members of the Civil Service and salaries were lower generally. Half of the Council's budget in 1946 was absorbed by salaries for two thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven staff, half of which were overseas. Proposals for the rationalisation of the staffing structure were presented annually to the Treasury with the support of the Foreign Office and the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Estimates, but with no result. Staff in the Council's home service remained disestablished and turnover was high; between April and December 1947 there were three hundred resignations at home.<sup>49</sup> During the war vetting of applicants for Council posts had become lax, but with the return of peace normal vetting procedures were reintroduced. Defections in 1948 to the eastern bloc and marriages between Council staff and nationals from Eastern European countries, forced changes in the rules.<sup>50</sup> Retrospective vetting was undertaken and the Council no longer negotiated directly with the security services, but through the Foreign Office. In addition, a Cabinet ruling was obtained forbidding Council employees married to Eastern European nationals from working in other satellite states or other foreign countries without prior reference to the Foreign Office.<sup>51</sup>

Complicated and lengthy discussions before Adam's appointment had settled the fate of most of the production departments but the Council fought to retain its own technical experts. It argued that the COI's concentration on mass production at an economic rate would lead to a fall in the standard of specialist cultural material. The Council had relinquished reluctantly its films, photographs, overseas press, book export promotion, visual publicity, publications and copyright divisions to the COI. In future the Council would be in the same position as a Government department, commissioning material from the COI. Thirty-five senior and sixty-five junior posts were suppressed on the transfer of functions to the COI, but the Council did keep some advisory expert staff and some of its publications. On these losses White commented,

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49. Third Report of the Select Committee on Estimates, 1947/48, The British Council, HMSO, March 1948

50. See Chapter Nine, p. 250

51. J.P. Finch to M. Waugh, 27 April 1950 FO924/779 CRA 18/316

Lord Lloyd must have turned in his grave for he had wished the Council to be broadly based and had fought for the retention of these subjects at the outbreak of war.<sup>52</sup>

In agreement with the Board of Trade, the Council undertook to hold exhibitions abroad to promote British exports, on condition that the trade provided the displays and the advance publicity. At the request of the Publishers' Association, the Council agreed to organise book sections at International Trade Fairs and became responsible for virtually all exhibitions of British books abroad. The Policy Committee decided that although the Council should not become an advertising agency for British firms, within certain limits the display of material issued by reputable firms and public utility corporations was permissible.

The fields of music, drama and the fine arts were broadly entrusted to the Council but their relative cost, in the financial stringency of the post-war years, limited their utility. In reducing the Council's 1946/7 budget, Bevin 'referred specifically to the work of the Drama, Fine Art and Music Departments, whose expenditure he wishes to see drastically reduced'.<sup>53</sup> It was suggested that the Council could make these activities self-supporting and in April 1948, the Council was instructed that the Secretary of State wished

to concentrate as much as possible on those activities which were most likely to produce quick returns in the political field - for example, visits, courses, lectures and English lessons, rather than longer-term projects such as exhibitions of modern paintings.<sup>54</sup>

Britain's economic problems encouraged expenditure at home. The students committee was reconstituted in 1946 and the regional network developed by the Home Division during the war was expanded to provide support for foreign students in Britain. From 1945 to 1950 the Council provided, on average, two hundred and fifty newscholarships annually as well as short term bursaries and apprenticeships. In addition, the Council's hostels were open to other foreign students, merchant seaman and overseas visitors. From January 1950 the Council took responsibility for the welfare of all Colonial students in Britain, then approximately four thousand. The Council also gave educational advice and information and assisted the recruitment of staff from Britain

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52. White, op.cit. p.62

53. W.H.Montagu-Pollack to White, 17 January 1946 BW 1/4

54. Minute by C.Mayhew, 19 April 1948 FO924/615 LC1556/16/451

for schools and universities overseas. By 1948 there were forty-two posts in foreign universities subsidised and filled by the Council. The Council continued to produce the publications started during the war and to commission films and distribute British News. In 1946 a new journal, English Language Teaching, was introduced with great success. Britain Today continued but only in the English edition and was no longer distributed free except in the Colonies. The promotion of British books abroad remained important and the Council sought to establish comprehensive English libraries in every country that it worked in. The work of the Science Department grew considerably and scientific officers were attached to the Council's offices; their work was complementary to that of the Scientific Attachés employed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. In the field of medicine the Council dealt only with research and, in agriculture, worked closely with the Agricultural Research Council.

The problem of defining functions, that had plagued relations with the MOI, remained to be settled with the Foreign Office Information Department. In the Foreign Office's view the Council should be restricted to specialist audiences while the information services would deal with the general public:

In the vast no-man's land of subjects which are neither wholly political nor wholly cultural, the Council tackles the expert and the Information Services the plebs.<sup>55</sup>

The Council's role as seen by the Foreign Office was to influence in the long-term specific, educated, often already receptive, groups in foreign countries. This delimitation was anathema to the Council which argued that the audiences found in Council centres and Anglophile societies were the least profitable. Adam in particular wished to widen the Council's audience and to reach the non-academic as well as the expert.

In strictly cultural subjects, which are defined as the English language, British Drama, Fine Arts, Literature and Music, the Council will undertake publicity and education directed towards any category of people and will use any medium for this purpose. In all other subjects the Council will undertake education rather than publicity and its operations will be directed not to the general public, but to certain defined groups.<sup>56</sup>

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55. Minute by A.Dudley, 3 March 1946. Bw 2/342

56. Annex to Evidence presented to Sub-committee D of the Select Committee on Estimates, 16 October 1946, p.469, Memorandum by the British Council.

The wide range of the Council's functions rendered the definition of precise groups almost impossible. In 1947 the Council's Representatives in foreign countries were asked to place targets and themes in order of priority. Education authorities, universities, schools and teachers came top in all areas. In Latin America and the Middle East technical specialists and government officials came next in importance with intellectuals, and working class organisations placed last. In Europe the latter two groups were placed above technical and scientific groups. Only in Latin America were Anglophile societies given a high priority; in Europe they were being described as 'either snobbish, run for political and personal ends and out of touch with modern Britain'.<sup>57</sup> In Europe visits and exchanges were the most favoured activities whereas English language teaching, libraries and the training of teachers came first in the Middle East and Latin America. On the question of themes the replies were

almost unanimous in stressing that modern realist and practical aspects of British civilisation are most likely to appeal today.<sup>58</sup>

The Council's most serious disagreement with the Foreign Office in the post-war period arose from the reorientation of its educational policy by the new Education Director, Dr A.E. Morgan, with the support of Adam. Morgan argued that the Council should relinquish direct teaching of elementary English and the support of British schools and transfer these responsibilities to the countries concerned. Instead, the Council should reach beyond political and intellectual elites through the use of discussion group techniques. Financial necessity forced the Council to reduce subsidies to British schools in the Middle East and Latin America but the attempt to move towards a wider adult audience failed to attract much support and was vigorously opposed by the Foreign Office's representatives overseas. The Foreign Office protested that discussion groups were no substitute for English teaching and British schools and might be regarded with suspicion by foreign governments. Particularly in educationally undeveloped areas the Foreign Office warned that Morgan's policies were 'a grave mistake'.<sup>59</sup> These views found considerable sympathy within the Council and educational policy reverted to traditional lines at the end of the decade.

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57. Representatives Conference Report, September 1947. BW 1/28

58. Ibid.

59. Minute by J.P. Finch, 6 July 1949. FO924/771 LC2291/71/452

Attempts to lay down rigid lines of demarcation with the Information Services in each medium were abandoned in favour of consultations when difficulties arose, as had been the outcome of similar discussions with the MOI. Likewise, differences were frequent. Considerable confusion existed in the field of libraries which were the cornerstone of the Council's work in post-war Europe and the mainstay of its Institutes and Anglophile societies. The Information Services also wished to establish libraries but the Council insisted that libraries fell within its purview. Local conditions dictated the outcome of this dispute; in Europe joint libraries were entirely Council-administered whereas in the Far East they were exclusively run by the Information Services, although the Council supplied the educational and cultural books. Similarly, in the fields of enquiries, lectures, books and press articles the distinction between the two bodies was nebulous. The Council was only allowed to distribute articles on cultural subjects and on its own activities to the overseas press, but where it was uneconomic for it to maintain its own press officer, the Information Officer placed such articles. In 1947 the Council assumed sole responsibility for lecture tours in foreign countries, except the United States. A more complex and somewhat ludicrous arrangement was arrived at for the provision of books overseas.<sup>60</sup>

The division of functions was resolved locally. To improve coordination joint committees of the Council and the Information Services were encouraged. In Cairo there were two such bodies dealing with books and with films and photographs. In Prague a committee consisting of the Press Attaché, the Council Representative and Embassy staff examined the aims and requirements of British propaganda in Czechoslovakia. In Poland the Council's Representative was treated as head of the Cultural Department of the Embassy, and attended morning staff meetings.

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60. Note on overlapping between the Council and the Information Services. FO 924/664. The Council was permitted to supply to libraries its own publications and books on English language and literature, drama, music, fine arts, specialist interests in fields of science medicine, agriculture and technology, bibliographical works, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, non-political geography, social, economic and constitutional history and biography up to 1939 (but not diplomatic or international history) law, British social and economic organisation, education, town planning, reconstruction, religion, naval and military history up to 1939, the Colonies and Dominions, philosophy and the non-parliamentary publications of Government departments.



In Iraq the problem was solved in a novel fashion with the Council covering the towns and the Information Services, the provinces. As had been the case in relations between the Council and the MOI, it was impossible to separate cultural and political publicity. The area of overlap was large and each organisation complemented and reinforced the other, requiring close and careful liaison. Cultural publicity does not operate in a vacuum and is augmented by successful, simultaneous political explanation. Likewise, the interpretation of official policies is facilitated by an understanding of their background.

Liaison with the Foreign Office in London was conducted through regular joint regional conferences. The allocation of Council expenditure overseas took account of the level of expenditure of the Information Services in a given country. An internal Foreign Office memorandum instructed that the Council should be treated more or less as an adjunct of the Foreign Office.

Just as we wish Council officials in foreign countries to regard themselves as part of official British representation abroad so we should like their administrative staff at home to be treated, as far as their lack of official status permits, as if they were part of the Foreign Office, or at any rate closely associated with it.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, although the Foreign Office wanted to give 'positive guidance' to the Council, 'which it needs as an instrument of British policy abroad', this did not extend to accepting cultural relations as a conventional activity of government.<sup>62</sup> The Council was told that

His Majesty's Government does not consider that "cultural" work, consisting in such activities as those of the British Council, forms part of the normal functions of a diplomatic mission.<sup>63</sup>

Following the Council's reorganisation in 1947 and in response to economies demanded by the Treasury, the Foreign Office decided that detailed interference in the Council's affairs was no longer necessary and Bevin pronounced himself satisfied that the Council could be entrusted to manage its funds properly.<sup>64</sup> The Cultural Relations Department was run down and Missions abroad were instructed to settle issues locally with the Council.

61. Foreign Office Circular No.144, 28 December 1946.

62. Ibid.

FO 924/253 LC4940/113/45

63. Minutes of a Policy Committee Meeting, 11 February 1947. BW69/1

64. Minute by W.H.Montagu-Pollock, 7 January 1947. FO924/594C LC208/208/451

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After the war the Council entered a period of rationalisation and consolidation dictated by Britain's economic difficulties which ended the rapid rise in expenditure that had occurred during the war. The 1946/7 estimates were cut by £800,000 and pegged at the previous year's level. A considerable under-spending of the 1945/6 budget of £900,000 offset the reduction enabling the Council to bring forward expenditure on capital projects for 1946. The demands of liberated Europe and the rising cost of living, however, resulted in a contraction in services in the Middle East and Latin America. The Council at first tried to spread the cuts thinly but continuing financial stringency forced withdrawal from some countries. Decreases in the Council's budget were a measure of the Government's economic problems rather than of a desire to restrict cultural publicity. White reported that

Mr. Bevin and the Chancellor are sympathetic with our work but declare that the country simply can not afford to give us what we need.<sup>65</sup>

The pattern continued with a cut of £541,000 in 1947/8 and a 10% overall reduction in expenditure on overseas publicity in 1948/9. In the search for economies in 1947, the Foreign Office considered whether the abolition of the Council and its incorporation into the Foreign Office was a preferable 'alternative to wholesale liquidation of the Council in a considerable number of countries'.<sup>66</sup> Net expenditure in 1947/8 totalled £3,161,000 whereas in 1948/9 only £2,853,000 was available. In 1948/9 the grant of £3,232,000 was hit by the devaluation of sterling in September which meant that savings had to be found to cover the additional cost of expenditure abroad. The impossibility of planning long-term activities on a short-term financial basis caused frustration and dismay within the Council. Referring to the 1947/8 cuts, Tunnard-Moore, Director of the Dominions and India Division, complained that the Government

thought that by fixing our ceiling we could quickly redistribute our finances - a lunatic mathematical outlook, which leaves out human nature, past commitments and the deplorable political effect on the aboriginals of Ruritania when the nice British Council which has been teaching them English free of charge for the past six years, walk out with their umbrellas and their English grammars. Poor, little, cultural Chamberlains<sup>67</sup>

65. White to Riverdale, 19 January 1946. BW 1/4

66. Minute by I Kirkpatrick, 29 April 1947. CAB 124/1019

67. T.P. Tunnard-Moore to Wilmot, 19 March 1947, BW 12/1

The Government's economic difficulties focused attention on public spending and in 1948 a review of the cost of the home information services was set up by Cripps who suggested that the overseas information services also should be investigated. The Foreign Office warned the Council as it prepared its 1948/9 budget that its expenditure might be attacked in Cabinet as social welfare was more easily defensible at that time. At the end of 1948 a committee of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries was formed to plan overseas publicity expenditure, including the Council's, for three years, assuming progressive budget reductions. In 1949 the Council suspended recruitment and by 1952 its staff had been reduced by 43% and expenditure in many countries halved. From 1947 to 1952, because of rising costs and falling grants, the activities of the overseas information services were reduced by approximately 50%. To judge priorities in reducing the Council's work overseas three tests were applied: how far good relations with the country concerned were important politically to the British Commonwealth; the influence of the country concerned; the commercial and economic advantages to be gained by the Council's work.<sup>68</sup> The Council also had to consider the extent to which a country was amenable to influence, the level of the information services and whether Britain had obligations, such as a cultural convention, to a country.

The Council became Britain's agent for the fulfillment of a number of its international and bilateral obligations. Through its work with the Allied Ministers of Education Conferences during the war the Council had been instrumental in the foundation of UNESCO.<sup>69</sup> It was a member of numerous agencies in Britain dealing with UNESCO and of the British delegations to UNESCO general conferences. In addition, the Council was the agent for the administration of fellowships granted in Britain by UN bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Furthermore, the Council represented Britain on Council of Europe and Brussels Treaty cultural committees. It was appointed Britain's principal agent to carry out reciprocal arrangements contained in bilateral cultural conventions; by 1950 conventions had been concluded.

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68. Finance Committee Minutes, 15 April 1947. Paper C

FO 924/594C LC1798/208/451

69. See chapter 9 p. 225

with France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Czechoslovakia and Brazil. The conventions were administered by Mixed Commissions for which the Council provided the secretariat in England and some members of the British section. At home the Council worked with a number of official and private bodies including the Arts Council, the Workers Educational Association and the BBC.

In 1950 the Council prepared for the investigation that would accompany the end of the five year lease granted in 1946. Foreign Office and Treasury criticisms echoed those of 1945: the need for closer scrutiny and tighter controls over expenditure and appointments. In a draft Cabinet Paper the Foreign Office argued that the Council's independence was an asset overseas and that cultural propaganda would be less effective if it was conducted officially. This arrangement also relieved the Foreign Office of responsibility for statements made by Council lecturers or in Council publications. More importantly, the Foreign Office concluded that if the Council did not exist its functions would have to be carried out by Government Departments or other bodies with grants from public funds and

That the Council performs a task which is recognised by leading countries of the world as an essential feature of international relationships and is an important aid to the maintenance and development of British political and trading influence in the widest sense.<sup>70</sup>

The Treasury, too, concluded that existing arrangements were the most suitable. The absorption of the Council's functions by the Government would not lead to savings, would increase the administrative burdens of the departments concerned, would require a central coordinating machinery and

it would reduce the effectiveness of Government policy control and make it more difficult to ensure that Government policy was being correctly interpreted.<sup>71</sup>

In December 1950 an interdepartmental Working Party, of representatives of the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury and the COI, was formed to examine the Council's work and to evaluate its importance in terms of the cold war and trade. Its terms of reference indicate how far the Council was still from being recognised as a permanent institution.

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70. Draft Cabinet Paper, undated. FO924/782 CRA 20/6

71. Final Report of Organisation and Methods Division, November 1950 T219/68

To examine whether the British Council should continue its activities and, if so, what economies might be secured either by re-defining its activities or by cutting its expenditure by a reduction in the kinds of work it did or in the countries in which it operated.<sup>72</sup>

CHAPTER NINE

ADVANCE AND RETREAT IN EUROPE

Britain's reduced status was the dominating feature of her world position at the end of the Second World War. With her Commonwealth partners, Britain was the only country to have fought throughout, with the exception of Germany, but the outcome had been decided by the United States and the Soviet Union. British propaganda in Europe had the dual task of rebuilding the morale of western Europe and, from January 1948, undermining the spread of communism in Europe. The resumption of links with western Europe and the restoration of its economy was vital to Britain as the junior partner in the post-war coalition.

The only conclusion for Britain was that everything must be done to rouse western Europe from its state of shock and depression if the shape of the post-war world was not to be decided in Washington or Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as 'the sole remaining repository' of western civilisation Britain had a special responsibility to present an alternative to 'the golden charm of Washington and the drum-fire of Kremlin ideology'.<sup>2</sup>

In central and south-eastern Europe the opportunities for the exercise of direct political influence were limited, whilst in the west, Britain was bound to attempt to overcome the political vacuum, as long as there was no effective balance to Soviet domination in the east. The former meant the development of less overt means of influence and the latter implied the improvement of contacts at every level to encourage concerted action in the face of an emerging monolithic eastern bloc. Greece and Italy lay in a special category as outposts of liberal democracy in the Mediterranean and so, important targets for British publicity. For different reasons, Germany and Austria also were treated separately; their long isolation and then occupation created new problems. Finally, there were the neutral countries of Europe, in which the Council had established large organisations during the war. In each area, the Foreign Office anticipated that the Council would have a valuable role to play.

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1. F.S.Northedge, Descent From Power (London 1974)p.21
  2. Memorandum on the Council in Europe by W.R.L.Wickham, July 1944  
FO 924/192 LC3151/188/452

It is considered by the Foreign Office that the indirect influence which the long term work of the British Council may exert will be of particular value in post-war Europe, in circumstances which have changed violently since 1939, and which may allow of less direct political influence being exerted by this country than in the past.<sup>3</sup>

The planned rapid extension of the Council's work in Europe caused some misgivings to senior Council staff, such as R.Seymour and W.Wickham, who feared that the continuity of these activities could not be guaranteed. Adam and K.Johnstone, however, amongst others, favoured expansion against the time when economies would force a more cautious approach. By the end of 1945 there were forty-seven Council staff in France and her colonies, ten in Italy and Belgium, nine in Greece, eight in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia and a single officer in Denmark and Finland.

As an instrument of long term propaganda, the Council began preparations for its return to Europe during the darkest days of the war. The twin problems of reconstruction and re-education were identified as those to which the Council could bring the most expertise. Discussions within the Council centred on the provision of material designed to supplant the doctrines of fascism with those of western democracy at 'the right psychological moment' Such actions were 'essential if the coming peace is to endure'.<sup>5</sup> In March 1941 the Council approached Sir George Chrystal, secretary to the Greenwood Committee on reconstruction problems. The Committee proved impotent,<sup>6</sup> however, and the Council's most promising lead was through the Home Division and its contacts with the education branches of the Allied Governments and Free French in London. The Czech, Norwegian and Belgian Governments had invited the Council to resume operations in their countries as soon as circumstances allowed. The Home Division had started a training scheme 'with a view to equipping them for education work in their own countries after the war' and courses in social problems, economics and welfare for foreign nationals in Britain.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a proportion of scholarships was allotted on the basis of an applicant's potential value to the reconstruction of his country.

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3. Draft Memorandum to H.M.Representatives in Liberated Europe  
13 March 1945 BW 2/9
  4. Minute by B.Fernald, 31 March 1941 BW 2/94
  5. Ibid.
  6. The Committee could only coordinate the work of other departments and met only three times before Greenwood's dismissal.
  7. N.Parkinson to S.Wood, 6 March 1942 BW 2/94



The possibility of joint exploratory talks on educational and cultural reconstruction was mooted in October 1941 and a forthcoming meeting between the Allied Ministers of Education and the Board of Education, at the suggestion of the Council, offered an ideal opportunity. From this meeting evolved the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, established in the autumn of 1942, meeting bi-monthly under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education.<sup>8</sup> The Council provided the secretariat and chaired many of the commissions through which the Conference worked. These were appointed to consider the negotiation of bilateral cultural conventions, the supply of books and periodicals to liberated Europe, the re-stocking of national and university libraries and the provision of textbooks. At its sixth meeting the Conference decided that it would not examine the reform of education in Axis countries or the education systems of member states. Parallel discussions between the Council and the Board of Education established that re-education in Germany was outside the Council's sphere, being largely a political undertaking. Observers from the United States and the Soviet Union joined the Conference in May 1943 and were joined subsequently by representatives from China, India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Regular delegates were appointed to form an inter-Allied bureau of education in December, that might become a permanent international agency. It emerged that a cultural and educational organisation, beyond immediate post-war needs would be welcomed. At San Francisco in April 1945 UNESCO was established as a direct result of these wartime discussions. Reconstruction, which had motivated the Conference originally, was confined to an annex of UNESCO's constitution and taken over by UNRRA.<sup>9</sup>

In the field of films, the Council was represented on the Educational Films Commission of the Conference and the Film Subcommittee of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-war Requirements,<sup>10</sup> and, in September 1943, joined the MOI-PWE Coordinating Committee on films. The Council had supplied films to east Africa and Libya from its Cairo office in cooperation with the MOI. Following the invasion of North Africa, the Council operated with the PWB

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8. See A. Haigh, Cultural Diplomacy in Europe, (Strassburg 1974)

9. Cmd. 6963, HMSO November 1945

10. This Committee was formed in September 1941 under the chairmanship of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross. It prepared estimates of post-war requirements and priorities for the Allied Governments and authorities represented on the Committee. Its report was completed in June 1943.

in the distribution of films and other material in Algeria and initially entered Italy as part of the PWB, attached to the Military Missions. The closure of cinemas for any length of time in northern Europe was ruled out as likely to depress morale and so alternatives to Axis films, that would be immediately banned, had to be prepared. The Council was instructed to produce additional prints and to increase the number of languages into which they were dubbed to cater for Europe. Following Operation Overlord, the PWD was to be the sole organisation for the distribution of films in Europe and all British films were selected by the PWE's regional specialists.<sup>11</sup> Scripts for the Council's films were submitted to the regional specialists before and after translation.

The Council's film department embarked on an extensive dubbing programme; to the ten languages<sup>12</sup> already used by the Council were added Italian, Norwegian, Greek, Slovak and Danish. Davies queried whether this work for short term political ends was proper to the Council but Kearney, Guedalla and Kennedy-Cooke argued that if the Council did not do this work, the MOI would have a monopoly and renew its calls to take over the Council's film activities. By the end of 1943, the PWE had requested one hundred and fifty films from the Council at a cost of £22,129 and nearly two hundred prints, mainly for Italy and Germany. The Council demanded and received an extra grant for this work. By May 1944 a nucleus of two hundred Council films had been assembled, mostly dubbed into Polish, French, Belgian and Dutch.

As with films, the Allies planned to replace rapidly and restock libraries and bookshops. The Council undertook a large number of translations but was forbidden to stockpile by the Treasury, in view of the Council's own uncertain future. Shortages of manpower, paper, books and finance also prevented the accumulation of reserves or the servicing of reading rooms run by the PWB, as had been planned. However, after the final defeat of Germany, the Council played a significant role in the revival of the European book trade by retaining the Book Export Scheme Limited for some countries, such as Austria, Czechoslovakia Hungary, Poland, Italy and Greece, until normal channels were re-established.

11. The Anglo-American Psychological Bureau (PWB) was established in Algiers in 1943 to handle all propaganda-combat, strategic, consolidation - in the Mediterranean and included representatives of the PWE, MOI, OSS and OWI. A psychological warfare coordinating division was set up in London for the invasion of Europe, which became the PWD.

12. French, Spanish, Portuguese, Brazilian, South American Spanish, Persian Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Afrikaans.

The timing of the Council's return to a country was decided by the Foreign Office and the military authorities. In Cairo, the Council's Representative, Professor Boase, discussed with Leeper and Stevenson the future of the Council's work in Greece and Yugoslavia respectively. After the invasion of North Africa, Leeper advised Boase also on the development of Council operations in Algeria, Sicily and Italy. In addition, the preparation of supplies and the training of Allied personnel, had brought the Council into contact with the Civil Affairs Directorate of the War Office, which was responsible for the administration of liberated territories. Different methods of managing civilian affairs in the immediate post-hostilities period had emerged. In east Africa, Sicily and southern Italy, authority was vested in a formally established military administration, although a separate civil affairs chain of command had developed in Italy. However, these methods were considered inappropriate to northern Europe where friendly or Allied, and not enemy, territories were to be invaded. Negotiations with the Allied Governments in London prior to invasion prepared the ground for the revival of civilian administrations. Local control was to be established as soon as possible. These factors affected the development of the Council's work in different countries.

The Council did not want to be associated directly with Allied administrations but initially had to distribute supplies through Civil Affairs officers and the PWD. In Robertson's opinion,

the Council should be chary of entering a country overtly until the native government is more or less stabilised and it would be undesirable to identify ourselves too openly with British or Anglo-American military administrations or with a returning exiled government.....

It was anticipated that internal upheavals and civil war in post-war Europe would prevent the foundation of stable governments, but the overwhelming demand for material encountered when the Allies landed in Sicily and the relatively peaceful transition to normal conditions in many areas, forced the Foreign Office to revise this estimate and sanction the resumption of Council work in Europe sooner than had been expected. Likewise, although there was some opposition within the Council to operations in ex-enemy countries, the demand was so great that the Council agreed to work in all areas except Germany in January 1945. By the end of the year, the south-east European states, Italy and

Finland had been given priority over northern Europe.<sup>14</sup> In the Council's overall budget, Europe, with the exception of the former neutrals, enjoyed the largest share.

The extraordinary conditions pertaining to many parts of Europe forced the Council to compromise. Where necessary, for example, in Italy, Norway, Yugoslavia and Greece, the PWD restored initial cultural and educational contacts on the Council's behalf. The PWD and the PWB proved fruitful recruiting grounds for the Council; in many areas the Council took over the staff and activities of these bodies. W.Wickham reported in October 1944,

All PWB officials with whom I spoke in Italy are of the opinion that their functions have changed and are changing to such a degree that they may be taken over by the British Council because the need in Italy is not now for military or political propaganda but for educational and cultural activity.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the Council was anxious that its peacetime work should not be sullied by association with wartime and political propaganda and wherever possible, and in the majority of countries operated from the start through diplomatic missions and its own representatives.

However, even where the Council did have its own staff, circumstances often dictated that it should forfeit much of its independence. Shortages of food, fuel and accommodation forced reliance on the British Mission for supplies and the four-power control commission in Austria and the armistice agreements in Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria circumscribed severely the Council's freedom. In Austria the Council's staff worked as members of the British Political Representative's staff and in Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria, where the terms of the armistice placed the control of propaganda in Soviet hands, the Council functioned as part of the British Political Mission. As Johnstone explained,

A very short acquaintance with conditions under the Russian occupation is sufficient to convince an enquirer that this is, in fact, the only possible cover under which the Council can work.<sup>16</sup>

The Soviet monopoly was guarded jealously and dictated caution; additional problems were created by the difficulty of securing entry and exit visas.

14. Minute by H.Hedley, 31 August 1945 FO924/117 LC4369/111/451

15. W.Wickham to K.T.Gurney, 24 October 1944 FO924/48 LC1375/148/452

16. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 July 1946 BW69/12

In December 1942, a month after the Allied invasion of North Africa, the Council was alerted to the possibilities for cultural propaganda in the French territories by Major Ian Greenless, a former Council employee engaged with the PWB at Allied Forces Headquarters. Greenless suggested the establishment of a Representative in North Africa to counter the effects of Axis propaganda and widespread ignorance about Britain. In London, Johnstone, recently returned from North Africa, told White

that the inhabitants of North Africa have been soaked with German ideas, that their ignorance of Britain is appalling and that in the interests of the Allied cause it is important that this should be corrected as soon as possible.<sup>17</sup>

The Foreign Office endorsed these proposals and the Council supplemented the work of the Press Attachés that were appointed to North Africa. R.L. Speaight of the French Department noted,

There are strong political arguments in favour of an initiative there. The country is full of men who may play an important role in the France of the future and we ought to start enlightening them about ourselves. Also we do not want to leave the field entirely to the Americans.<sup>18</sup>

Harold Macmillan, Resident Minister in North Africa, approved the appointment of a Council Representative in January 1943.

Austin Gill arrived in North Africa in July, after the continent had been cleared of Axis forces and the invasion of Italy had begun. A former lecturer in French at Edinburgh University and member of the Home Division, Gill opened an office and English Library, that also served as a reading room and a lecture hall, in Algiers. He was concerned mainly with the distribution of books and periodicals and moved to France at the end of 1944 as acting Representative. An office was founded at Casablanca in May 1945 but financial cutbacks forced the closure of the Algiers office and the suppression of the post of Representative later in the year. The Library in Algiers continued to function and the Casablanca office became the centre for the distribution of material in Algeria and Morocco. Further economies in 1947 forced the Council to withdraw completely from North Africa

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17. White to K.T. Gurney, 15 January 1943 FO 370/738 L338/338/410

18. Minute by R.L. Speaight, 20 January 1943 FO 370/738

The first European representatives were appointed to France, Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia in 1944/5 and in July 1945, the Council was instructed to give top priority to Italy and Greece. These two countries were to be Britain's 'bastions of democracy' in the Mediterranean against the encroachments of communism to the Middle East and Africa.<sup>19</sup> To preserve Italy for the democratic fold, fascist influence had to be expurgated and an alternative presented to the lure of communism. Anglo-American victory and economic assistance provided part of the answer but an extensive re-education and propaganda programme was necessary. Rear Admiral E.W.Stone, Chief Commissioner on the Allied Control Commission from June 1944, stressed that

A further safeguard to preserve Italy among the free nations of democracy, and indeed a duty of the Allies, is the education of the minds of the Italians towards a democratic way of life.<sup>20</sup>

Admiral Stone went on to recommend that 'much can be done in this way by institutions such as the British Council.....'.<sup>21</sup> The Foreign Office asked the Council to pay special attention to this aspect of its work in Italy.

If the Italians are to become partners with the Allies, they must be prepared to assimilate their national characteristics with the principles of democracy, and after twenty years of fascism they will need advice on its interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

The Council worked closely with the PWB and the MOI in Italy and Greenlees was assiduous in safeguarding its interests and property in the wake of the advancing Allied armies. He was joined by R.McNab, C.G.Bidwell and I.Himbury, former Council employees, who acted on the Council's behalf in the PWB, until October 1944, when they returned to the Council's service. Greenlees urged the Foreign Office to reopen the British Institutes in Italy as soon as possible, arguing that the Council's activities would be more valuable to the Allies in the long term than those of the PWB.

Although political propaganda is enormously valuable it must be supported and complemented by cultural propaganda of the kind carried out by the Council. In the long run, Italy, where the people have been subjected to an excess of propaganda, cultural propaganda will be the most effective.<sup>23</sup>

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19. Minutes of Meeting at the Foreign Office, 17 July 1945 BW40/9  
 20. Memorandum by Admiral Stone, 23 June 1945 W0220/512 CA 318/3  
 21. Ibid.  
 22. H.D.Bryan to R.Seymour, 10 August 1945 F0924/181LC3027/82/452  
 23. I. Greenlees to M.Palairret, 16 August 1943 BW40/9

In the armistice agreement signed with Badoglio in the following month, the Press, radio, cinema and theatre were placed under Allied control and the suppression of fascist ideology was proclaimed. In October, Italy declared war on Germany and became a co-belligerent.

Greenlees' request was forwarded to Macmillan in Algiers in February 1944 and he 'advised that no action be taken until after Rome was in Allied hands'.<sup>24</sup> Rome fell in June but the physical difficulties of living in Italy in this period forestalled Council activities until the end of the year. Italian desire for knowledge of developments in the world outside the Axis was intense and the demand for material, overwhelming. In November, Sir Noel Charles, the British ambassador, who took an active interest in the Council, approved the resumption of Council activities in Rome and then Naples and Palermo. The reopening of the Florence and northern institutes had to wait until the Allied victory in Italy in June 1945. Meanwhile, it was important that the Council should begin work in order not to leave the Americans a clear field.

Italians do not necessarily want to go either towards Russia or America, but in default of any initiative from our side, they are likely to eat from any hand that feeds them.<sup>25</sup>

In the spring of 1945, Kennedy-Cooke toured Italy and in April, Ronald Bottrall arrived from Sweden to take up his new post as Representative in Italy.<sup>26</sup> In discussions with Charles an order of priority for the opening of institutes in 1945/6 was agreed: Rome, Milan, Florence and then Palermo at an estimated cost of over £90,000. It was planned to open institutes in the north at Turin, Genoa, Naples and Venice in the following year.

An office was opened in Rome to supervise the distribution of material, the Rome Institute was reactivated and the British School reopened. Contacts were established with official and unofficial educational and cultural bodies in Italy and an Anglo-Italian Association was formed under the presidency of the British ambassador. Francis Toye returned from Brazil to resume his duties as director of the Florence Institute, which had been preserved by its staff during the war. In addition, the Council worked in Palermo and Naples as scheduled, but only Turin in the

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24. Minute by H.Hedley, 18 August 1944 F0924/48 LC148/148/452

25. Charles to Robertson, 11 January 1945 F0924/181 LC263/82/452

26. Charles opposed Greenlees reappointment as Representative because of his involvement in Italian politics.

north. When the peace treaty with Italy was signed in February 1947, the combined membership of the Council's four institutes and the Florence Institute totalled four thousand five hundred. However, this pace of expansion could not be maintained and even the consolidation of existing activities demanded painful decisions.

The Council was bombarded by Leeper in Greece with demands for the immediate resumption of large scale activities as soon as he arrived with the Papandreou Government in October 1944. In the same month, Churchill agreed with Stalin in Moscow that Greece should be a British sphere of influence, an agreement that ratified existing facts. Kenneth Johnstone, then Commanding Officer of the Anglo-Greek Information Services, as the political warfare teams under his control were known, was appointed acting Representative and the difficulties of finding staff in Britain forced the Council to rely initially on Johnstone's men. As a result, considerable commitments were undertaken by Leeper and Johnstone on the Council's behalf against the Council's better judgement, in particular, the teaching of elementary English on a wide scale.

The uprising of December 1944 called a temporary halt to Leeper's concern with the Council's work. However, the revolt and the events that followed, highlighted the danger of a communist takeover in Greece, aided by dire economic conditions that made extremist ideologies more acceptable. After the Varzike agreement in February 1945, Leeper urged again that extensive measures should be undertaken to strengthen the moderate viewpoint. He was anxious to establish British influence in the Greek educational system and amongst Greek youth.

It is for this reason that I attach so much importance to the work of the British Council here. If this work is well done.....they can tap various strata of society especially younger people, who may soon have a role to play and who, under the influence of British ideas, may form the nucleus of that Centre party whose absence at present is a serious weakness to stability and to our own influence here.<sup>27</sup>

In 1945 the Council subsidised two chairs at Athens and one at Salonika University, granted a disproportionate number of scholarships to Greece and appointed an Educational Adviser to the Greek Government. In July, it took over the teaching activities of the Anglo-Greek Information Services in Athens, providing seventy-three classes a month to over two thousand.

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27. Leeper to Eden, 21 November 1944 FO 371/43735 R18967/745/19



The introduction of English teaching to Greek schools in January 1948 removed part of this burden but the numbers of local English teachers that needed to be trained overwhelmed the Council and American help was sought. Johnstone's request to the Council for the re-equipment of Greek schools were referred to the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education and the physical rehabilitation of Greek educational institutions was undertaken eventually by UNRRA, although the responsibility for the supply of reading material remained with the Council.

Professor Runciman was appointed Representative in October 1945 and Johnstone returned to London. Regional directorates had been established in Piraeus, Kavalla, Corfu, Crete and Mitylene. In each area English schools were organised, as far as possible on a self supporting basis, which doubled as cultural centres. The possibility of a directorate at Rhodes under Lawrence Durrell was discussed with the Foreign Office and the British military authorities who had begun giving English lessons, but no firm decision was reached. The Council took over the Anglo-Greek Review from the Anglo-Greek Information Services and continued subsidising the Anglo-Hellenic League. In 1946 Institutes of English Studies were opened in Athens and Salonika, with over three thousand pupils each, to continue the English teaching initiated by the Anglo-Greek Information Services. A British institute of Higher English Studies was founded in Athens to cater for more advanced students and to provide a cultural centre and a library. Financial restraints in 1947 led to the abandonment of the proposed Rhodes directorate and the Anglo-Greek Review.

The Council's successes, however, could not hide Britain's inability to provide the Greek Government with any further military or political aid. The renewal of the guerilla war in 1946 and the referral of the problem to the United Nations in December, foreshadowed the announcement of what became known as the Truman Doctrine in March 1947. In that month Runciman wanted that

The popularity of Britain in Greece is waning fast and unless we are prepared to assist those Greeks whose belief in British culture and the British way of life is unshaken, we must not be surprised if, at any rate in the provinces, we find the Greeks turning in other directions for guidance and sympathy.<sup>28</sup>

To fill the political vacuum in western Europe, Britain advocated the restoration of French power and the strengthening of Anglo-French relations. The Council was entrusted with the chief responsibility in the sphere of cultural relations and the atmosphere in post-war France was encouraging.

Never has the name of England been so much respected in France, never have Frenchmen been so ready to stretch out their hands in friendship across the Channel.<sup>29</sup>

A meeting to coordinate Anglo-French cultural relations was held at the Council in March 1944 with representatives from the Institut Francais,<sup>30</sup> the Foreign Office, the Board of Education, the BBC, the Board of Trade and the Vice-Chancellors' Committee. Reciprocal arrangements for the exchange of school and university teachers and occupational and professional groups were approved. The multiplicity of organisations that emerged later in Paris - the Information Office, the British Institute and the British Council - led to acrimonious disputes reaching to the British Embassy and the French Government.

A Council office was opened in Paris in October 1944 in the former premises of the Travel Association and the British Institute returned to its pre-war home, under its former director, Hugh Sellon. The Institute had provided English correspondence courses throughout the German occupation and its library had been preserved intact. Austin Gill, the Council's Representative, concentrated on the resumption of Council work in Paris and of contacts with French educational and cultural bodies through specialist liaison officers. One of his first initiatives was English lessons for French railway workers 'appropriately enough having regard to their record in the Resistance'. This was the only direct English teaching undertaken, as English classes were the province of the British Institute, which was independent of the Council. The exploration of the provinces waited on the return of Britain's Consular offices to France.

The Council planned initially for five regional directorates at Lyons, Lille, Nancy, Rennes and Strassburg, the first two to be founded in the autumn of 1945 and the remainder in 1946. Cuts in the Council estimates forced a reduction to three centres at Grenoble, Toulouse and Nancy. In 1947 a fourth was established

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29. Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget (London 1953) p.353

30.- English lessons given by the Institut Francais to the Free French during the war were subsidised by the Council and the grant to the British Institute was suspended.

31. Executive Committee Minutes, 20 December 1944 BW 69/10

at Lille and the Grenoble office was transferred to larger premises at Lyons. Each centre had a library and held concerts lectures, exhibitions and film shows. In Paris and London the Council supervised the exchange of students and development of contacts between British and French universities. A large number of French visitors were brought to Britain and ambitious projects, such as exchange visits between the Old Vic Theatre Company and the Comedie Francaise, were undertaken.

The Foreign Office considered it 'politically important' that the Council should operate in all northern Europe as soon as circumstances allowed.<sup>32</sup> The demand for the Council's services was enormous and the PWD was anxious that the Council should resume work as quickly as possible to take advantage of the high prestige Britain enjoyed immediately after the war. Representatives were sent to Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands in 1945 to establish 'cultural contacts at the highest level and contacts with the educational movements of the masses'.<sup>33</sup> The structure of the Council's work in northern Europe was not uniform. In Denmark the Council worked closely with the Danish Council, a body similar to itself, and the Danish-British Society, which had twenty-three branches by 1947 and four thousand six hundred members. In Belgium and the Netherlands centres were founded at Brussels, Antwerp, Liege, The Hague and Amsterdam, attended mainly by academic and professional groups.<sup>34</sup> The Council's officer in Norway enjoyed close relations with the Minister of Education and had weekly meeting with the Permanent Under Secretary in charge of cultural affairs and with the Norwegian State Broadcasting Organisation on schools broadcasts. After visiting Norway in 1947 Adam returned impressed with the pattern of the Council's work there and described the Representative as 'an unofficial adviser to the Ministry of Education', with the result that the Norwegian Government paid for most of the Council's services.<sup>35</sup>

Finland lay on the fringe of northern Europe, an ex-enemy country in the Soviet sphere of influence. Despite this

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32. Minute by A. Haigh, 26 October 1944 F0924/79 LC1471/147/452

33. H. King to M. Blake, 6 July 1946 BW 14/2

34. From 1941 the Council provided some facilities for Belgian exiles in the Belgian Congo. These activities ceased at the end of the war and the Library and Institute were taken over by the British Consul-General and run by a local committee nominated by the Governor-General. In December 1946 the British House, as it became, passed to the Information Office.

35. Minute by W. H. Montagu-Pollack, 10 June 1947 F0924/596

unpromising scenario, however, Finland became an important field for the Council. Activities there had been suspended in September 1941 but the British Library had stayed open throughout the war, run by the daughter of the President of the Finnish-British society, who had himself fled to England and joined PWE. The Council heard in November 1944 that there was a considerable demand for British material in Finland and that the Soviet Union was surprised that the Council had not yet returned.<sup>36</sup> There was no provision in the budget for work in Finland in 1945/6, although some supplies and lecturers were sent from Stockholm. The Foreign Office pressed the Council to expand its work.

We consider that she offers, at the moment, more fruitful ground for British cultural penetration than many other European countries, and that she should therefore be given higher priority than she would otherwise receive as an ex-enemy country.<sup>37</sup>

A Representative arrived in Helsinki in October 1945 and opened an office and re-established contacts with the Finnish-British society. The Council's work flourished and English replaced German in 1946 as the first foreign language taught in schools. A series of broadcasts entitled Britain Today were organised and by 1947 there were forty-seven Anglo-Finnish groups, some attached to factories, workers' associations and student bodies. It was estimated that

In one way or another, but principally through its films, the Council is now in some kind of contact with perhaps 10,000 people here.<sup>38</sup>

The relaxed attitude of the Soviet Union to Finland's internal political and social development was reflected in the development of foreign cultural organisations in Finland. The Soviet, French, American and British diplomatic and cultural representatives attended each others' functions. Open collaboration with the United States, however, was avoided in order not to give the appearance of a western cultural bloc and because it was feared that the Council would be a junior partner in a joint venture. Moreover, Britain and the United States shared only a common language and not a common culture.

An Anglo-American institution is an awkward and doubtful vehicle for forwarding our purpose and it prevents the founding of a more valuable (from our point of view) purely Anglophile body.<sup>39</sup>

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36. Minute by R. Dottrall, 30 November 1944 BW 30/1  
 37. Montagu-Pollack to R. Seymour, 5 May 1945 BW 30/1  
 38. P. Grundy, Annual Report, 10 April 1947 BW 30/3  
 39. Minute by K. Johnstone, 24 March 1946 BW 30/1

The return of the Council to central and south-eastern Europe formed part of Britain's struggle to retain some influence in those areas that had been occupied by the Red Army. Britain lacked military, political and economic influence in this region and was forced to rely on less tangible instruments to bolster her position.

Our opportunities for exercising direct political influence in most of the countries of Eastern Europe are likely to be limited. Indirect means of influence, such as the long term work of the British Council, will therefore be very valuable.<sup>40</sup>

The weakness of Britain's position was recognised by the Cabinet in 1946 when it approved increased expenditure on the Information Services and the Council in eastern Europe.

The Foreign Secretary said that the best means of preventing the countries of South Eastern Europe from being absorbed into an exclusive Soviet sphere of influence was to provide a steady stream of information about British life and culture.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, it was vital that Britain did not relax her opposition to the Soviet domination of eastern Europe for

a policy of appeasing Russia by abandoning in Eastern Europe our advocacy of the parliamentary form of social democracy would alienate our friends in Europe, would undermine our position in the Middle East and, in particular, it would be likely to shock American opinion.....<sup>42</sup>

Above all, Britain must not appear to have forsaken her friend in central and south-eastern Europe and pro-Western affiliations had to be nurtured by maintaining links wherever possible and by distributing propaganda material. Even though the task might seem fruitless in the short term,

It would be disastrous if we did not keep a foot in the door, to be able to exploit that chance (of an improvement in relations), instead of having to build up afresh from nothing.<sup>43</sup>

The Foreign Office and the Council were optimistic initially that cultural propaganda might highlight the deficiencies of communism and undermine its omnipotence. British political and cultural publicity in eastern Europe had a positive and a negative aspect. On the one hand, it was designed 'to spread a knowledge of the Government's social programme and the achievements of the western way of life', and, on the other, to counteract 'the

40. Cadogan to Robertson, 9 January 1945 BW 69/10

41. Cabinet Conclusions, 15 January 1946 CAB 128/3 CM(46)5

42. Heads of Division Meeting, 14 January 1947 F0953/4E File

43. I. Tathan to K. Johnstone, 1 June 1947 BW 66/4

falsification of news on international affairs' and the anti-British propaganda disseminated' by the Communists'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Britain had a duty to undertake this task as the only victorious exponent of western civilisation. In the first two years of peace it seemed that something might be achieved along these lines

From Poland Britain's ambassador reported in August 1945 that a Council officer 'would find himself almost embarrassing popular. His problem will be to feed a starving and eager public'.<sup>45</sup> In September, the Foreign Office reminded the Council that 'it attached the highest importance to as speedy a development as possible of the British Council's work in Poland'.<sup>46</sup> Cavendish-Bentinck, the British ambassador, urged that

It is essential to capitalise this cultural enthusiasm before it is dissipated in other directions and leads to disillusion and British Council representative would gain far more respect by beginning now when conditions are difficult.....<sup>47</sup>

Bevin minuted on this telegram, 'Try to send someone'.<sup>48</sup> The Soviet Union, France and even Italy had already reopened their institutes in Poland. Bowing to this pressure, the Council accorded Poland the highest priority and hastily transferred C.G. Bidwell from its Middle East office to act as a temporary Representative.

Bidwell arrived in January 1946 and established close relations with the Minister of Education who wanted the Council's help in training Polish English teachers. The Council's work in Poland was on a grand scale and flourished with official and unofficial support. Much of its success was due to Bidwell, who became Representative at the end of the year on the advice of the Embassy. The only cloud in the picture was an attack on the Council's building in Warsaw in October 1946 by Polish youths claiming that it was a centre for reactionary forces.

Conditions for the development of Council activities in post-war Czechoslovakia initially appeared favourable. The Council had had close contacts with the Czech Government in exile in London during the war and there was a widespread demand for the Council's services. As 'the Slav state most familiar with and most open to western ideas', Czechoslovakia was the key to

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44. Meeting of Heads of Missions in Eastern Europe, 14 January 1947 F0953/4E File

45. Cavendish-Bentinck to Bevin, 16 September 1946 F0924/210 LC3547/1695/452

46. W.H. Montagu-Pollack to K. Johnstone, 5 September 1945 BW51/3

47. Cavendish-Bentinck to Bevin, 16 September 1946 BW51/3

48. Minute by Bevin, undated F0924/219 LC3887/1695/452

a successful cultural penetration of the eastern bloc.<sup>49</sup>  
 Johnstone was advised by the Czech Ministers of Education and Information in June 1946 to

stake our claim and lay our foundations in the ground we mean to cover, since the situation is still fluid and the elements unfriendly to western cultural penetration have not yet begun to exploit their new advantage.<sup>50</sup>

Sir Philip Nichols, the British ambassador, while admitting the influence of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia, argued that the Council could ensure

that the leading Western influence was English, and we should receive encouragement in this from Dr Benes, who was extremely anxious that his country should not be swallowed up by Russian influence.<sup>51</sup>

The first Council staff arrived in July 1945 and in November the Kaunicky Palace was rented as the Council's institute and office. It was officially opened in June 1946 in the presence of President and Madame Benes, the Czech Prime Minister and Vice Premier, four Government ministers and over four hundred other distinguished guests. The Embassy reported on the occasion that

the part which could be played by the British Council and the Institute in cementing Anglo-Czech friendship can hardly be exaggerated.<sup>52</sup>

A regional office was opened in the capital of Slovakia, Bratislava in March 1946. The Council's work expanded rapidly with additional centres established in Bohemia and Moravia, increased contacts with the Czech universities and a cultural convention signed in 1947.<sup>53</sup> The number of Anglophile societies, all supported by the Council, rose from two in 1945 to thirty-five in 1947, with a membership of six thousand seven hundred.

The Council planned to return with Britain's diplomatic mission to Yugoslavia. David Shillan, the Council's officer in Belgrade before the war, visited Bari and Egypt in December 1944 to inspect the work of the Allied Liaison Division with Yugoslav military and civilian personnel. Following the formation of a government in the spring of 1945, Shillan returned to Belgrade and proposed the formation of an institute in the capital and

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49. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 July 1945 BW 69/12

50. Ibid.

51. Minute by Montagu-Pollack, 26 April 1945 F0924/202

LC 1659/1028/452

52. C.A.E. Shuckesburg to Sargent, 21 June 1945 F0924/458

LC3119/234/452

53. Cmd. 7236 HMSO 1947.

offices in the regional capitals, but warned that it would be inadvisable to encourage the formation of Anglophile societies.<sup>54</sup> An office was opened in Belgrade in July 1945 and in April 1946 the Council took over the English Reading Room from the MOI. The Council had 'to be content with doing the services the Yugoslav Government wishes'<sup>55</sup>, which were largely 'applied culture, or the provision of educational, technical, scientific and medical advice'. By supplying what was needed, the Council hoped to become

if not indispensable, at least so useful to a large number of institutions that any attempt to destroy or curtail our work will meet with opposition from many official Yugoslav circles.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, the Council's requests for permission to open reading rooms in the provinces and for entry and exit visas were refused frequently and linked at first to Yugoslav grievances with the British occupying authorities in Slovenia and Croatia, and later to the Venezia Giulia issue. Britain's ambassador attributed the Yugoslav attitude to the 'grave suspicions of the activities of our consulates, and indeed of this Embassy,' harboured by the internal security authorities. The Committees for Culture and Art and for Education also regarded the Council with hostility and rejected its offers of help with English teaching. The Council's difficulties were compounded by the improper behaviour of its first representative, who was replaced by W.G.Tatham in 1947<sup>57</sup>

Despite these problems, the Council's offices in Belgrade and Zagreb (opened in 1947) were besieged by students and the libraries were very popular and taken on tours of the provinces. In January 1947, Britain's ambassador secured a promise from Tito to facilitate the development of the Council's work and, in the same month, Tito and the Minister of Education attended the opening of a Council book exhibition in Belgrade.<sup>58</sup> Tatham and his assistants were allowed to undertake limited tours of the provinces, but any real expansion of the Council's work depended on a change of heart by the Yugoslav Government and on the extent of Soviet influence in Yugoslavia.

Hungary, as the 'holder of the middle Danube'<sup>59</sup>, and western

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54. D.Shillan to White, 15 August 1945 BW 66/4

55. Report by W.G.Tatham, 23 November 1945 BW 66/4

56. W.G.Tatham to K.Johnstone, 15 March 1947 BW 66/4

57. The Council's first Representative contravened Yugoslav laws regarding the disposal of property and appeared in court.

58. Minute by P.Noel-Baker, 3 July 1947 BW 66/4

59. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 July 1946 BW 69/12



in tradition, at first appeared a more promising field, despite the Soviet occupation. Churchill had anticipated a fifty per cent share in influence in Hungary, and in January 1945, as Budapest fell to the Red Army, the Treasury authorised Council expenditure there. In June, J. Gascoigne of the British Political Mission in Budapest, reported the view of a leading Hungarian that

If Great Britain and the United States did not soon do something to teach Hungarians what was happening in the West, and about their particular brand of democracy, he feared that it would slip more and more into the Russian orbit.<sup>60</sup>

Gascoigne favoured publicity among a small and selected group

to help us spread the gospel and to change this trend of thought which is now permeating all classes - that Hungary's future is bound up with the Soviet Union alone.<sup>61</sup>

R.G.C. McNab for the Council met Gascoigne in December in Naples and agreed that the Council's staff should be attached to Gascoigne's section to avoid raising the question of the Council's presence with the Soviet authorities; the foundation of an office would have to wait until a peace treaty had been signed and the Soviet troops withdrawn. Gascoigne hoped to use the Council to offset Britain's lack of options in Hungary.

Owing to our inability at present to offer anything very concrete to Hungary in either the political or economic fields, I feel that it is especially important that we should press on with our cultural relations.<sup>62</sup>

McNab went to Budapest in December 1945 and was entirely dependent initially on whatever facilities the British Political and Military Missions could spare. The demand for English lessons and changes in the school curriculum, dictated that McNab's chief concern was with English teaching and the training of teachers. Contacts with academic, professional and business groups were established and British Council Weeks were organised in provincial centres.

Bulgaria and Roumania were the least promising areas of south-east Europe; the overwhelming Soviet presence and the terms of the occupation, which placed the control of propaganda in

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60. J. Gascoigne to T. Howard, 6 June 1945 BW 36/2

61. Ibid.

62. J. Gascoigne to the Foreign Office, 21 January 1946 F0924/418  
LC 640/64/45

Soviet hands; militated against the penetration of western influence. At Moscow, Curchill had conceded the major proportion of interest to the Soviet Union in these two countries. In Roumania the British Mission took over the English reading rooms and the library of the Anglo-Roumanian Society, which was suppressed by the Roumanian authorities. The Council was unable to work directly and only supplied small amounts of material.

The Americans and the French were quick to develop their educational and cultural activities in Bulgaria after the war. The Alliance Francaise had functioned throughout the war and the American College and a reading room were reopened. Britain was more cautious, in spite of many requests for material received by the Sofia Embassy. Colonel L.G. Barbrook undertook an exploratory tour for the Council in April 1946 and recommended that 'only a modest beginning should be contemplated and serious long term commitments should be avoided'.<sup>63</sup> A campaign against western influences in the summer forestalled activities until the following year. The Bulgarian Government agreed in January 1947 to the opening of a Council office on condition that Bulgaria should have reciprocal facilities in Britain and that the Council was responsible to the Embassy in Sofia. A Council Representative arrived in April and normal diplomatic relations were established in September after the peace treaty had been signed. An office was opened in the quarters of the British Military Mission and the Council was able to carry out all its normal functions. Relations with the Bulgarian authorities alternated between indifference and hostility, depending on the internal political climate.

Austria was a special case in Allied post-war plans as, although she had been jointly occupied, she could only be identified partially with the policies of Nazi Germany. Austria had been isolated from the West for eight years and the desire for news of events outside the Third Reich was overwhelming. The four occupying powers vied with one another to flood with propaganda a country that was 'still the cultural focus of south-east Europe'.<sup>64</sup> The Council's task was to help fill the ideological vacuum in Austria with British ideas. In January 1945, before the final

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63. Report by L.G. Barbrook, May 1946 BW 18/3

64. Executive Committee Minutes, 9 July 1946 BW 69/12

expulsion of German forces, the Council consulted W.H.B.Mack, Deputy Commissioner(Civil) of the British Element of the Allied Commission for Austria (AC(BE)). Mack insisted that the Council would have to operate under his authority and in September, a month after the British headquarters had officially moved to Vienna, the Council was notified that a Council Representative would be welcome, attached to the Information Service branch of the Political Division. Following an exploratory visit by senior Council officials in November, the first Council staff arrived in December. In November, also, elections had been held throughout Austria for both the central and provincial parliaments, which were established in December. In January 1946, the Allied Council formally recognised the Austrian Republic and Mack was appointed British Representative to the Austrian government. C.R.Hiscocks, the Council's Representative, was sent out 'in a great hurry' in February, after six months with the British Military Government in Germany.<sup>65</sup>

Working closely with the Education Division of the A.C.(BE), the Council initially concentrated on meeting the demand for English lessons and books. Hiscocks stressed the positive aspect of the Council's involvement with education in Austria in contrast to the negative requirements of denazification. Instead of proscribing books and ideas, the Council put 'a healthy and more positive outlook into the minds of the Austrians.'<sup>66</sup> More spectacular cultural events were organised to compete with those of the United States and the Soviet Union and especially the French.<sup>67</sup> Most notably, the Council sponsored a visit by Malcolm Sargent and Leon Goossens to the Graz Music Festival in 1945 and tours by the Sadler's Wells Ballet and the Arts Theatre Company in 1946. An office was opened by the chairman in November 1946 and further centres were founded at Graz, to cover Styria, and at Klagenfurt, to cover Carinthia, both in the British zone. In 1946 the Council was invited to open an office in the French zone and in December the Klagenfurt staff were transferred to Innsbruck.

65. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Estimates(Sub-Committee F)9 September 1946, evidence given by Hiscocks at the British Council Headquarters in Vienna.Para.443

66. Ibid. Para.443

67. Ibid. Para.450.The French had occupied the 80-roomed Palais Lobkowitz for their cultural headquarters.Hiscocks described the publicity for their Autumn Exhibition as having 'the French equivalent of the Royal Engineers behind it',The Council,on the other hand,'had small placards' and had to charge for admission

The Klagenfurt centre was kept open by local staff and visited regularly by the Council's specialist officers from Vienna and by the director at Innsbruck. Hiscocks' plans to open an office at Salzburg in the American zone had to be abandoned for lack of funds. No attempt was made to breach the Soviet zone, although the Council was very aware of extensive Soviet cultural activities in the British zone. Austria remained a high priority, being on the borderline between two spheres of interest in which 'it would be of the greatest possible importance to us to maintain Western influence'.<sup>68</sup>

The problems encountered in post-war Germany prevented the development of Council activities. The overwhelming demands of physical and economic rehabilitation eclipsed less immediately apparent intellectual and emotional needs. Moreover, in Germany educational and social reform was placed more squarely in the hands of the Allied Control Commission than in Austria. Many of the services that the Council would normally have performed were undertaken by Education and Information Officers in the British zone. In December 1945 THE Council asked to be represented by an observer or an adviser on the staff of the British authorities in order to make known the activities of the Council and to safeguard its future operations. Although the Council was barred from working directly in the British zone and had no budget for Germany, it received a great many requests from the Control Commission for material. These requests were met from the Council's stocks and paid for by the Control Office.

A meeting at Norfolk House in August 1946 discussed the possibility of the Council taking over some of the educational work of the Control Office. The Council was concerned chiefly with higher education, the exchange of students and the teaching of English in German universities.

The universities had been permeated by Nazism, and the first task facing the Allies was to eradicate this influence.<sup>69</sup>

This was attempted in two stages, firstly, by dismissing university teachers with Nazi associations and installing suitable lecturers in key posts; secondly, by organising exchanges in the educational field. The Council had considerable experience to offer in both these areas.

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68. Minutes of Meeting between Council, Foreign Office and Control Commission, 18 April 1947. F0924/596 LC1899/611/451

69. M. Balfour and J. Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-6, Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, p.236.

A small reconnaissance team of two senior Council staff toured the British zone in September and recommended that the Council operate as far as possible through existing organisations and have only a distribution office at Hamburg. The Foreign Office and the Control Commission approved this plan and the Council was asked formally in February 1947 to begin working in Germany. However, the Council had no funds for activities in Germany and a new re-education programme had been initiated in 1947 with strong financial backing. The Treasury was reluctant to give the Council a special grant arguing that 'enough of the British taxpayers' money was already being spent on Germany'.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the numerous demands received by the Council for material and information and for assistance in filling posts in German universities, demonstrated that there was room for the Council in Germany. The publicity section of the Food and Agriculture Division in Hamburg, amongst others, regretted the lack of Council action.

It is unfortunate that the British Council is not going to be able to function here this year as the Americans and the Russians are beginning to get into their stride and forging ahead, and of course our popularity with the Germans is rapidly declining.<sup>71</sup>

However, the Council did re-establish lectureships in English in 1947 at the universities of Bonn, Göttingen and Mainz and the Berlin Technical University and secured the appointment of Ernest Barker to the chair of political science at Cologne University. On behalf of the German section of the Foreign Office, programmes were arranged for educational groups from the French and German occupying authorities in Berlin and for a party of German publishers from the British zone. In addition, ninety-five German students were brought to Britain, a total only exceeded by French and Swedish students on Council scholarships.<sup>72</sup>

The former neutral countries in Europe were given a lower priority than the newly-liberated, partly because activities were already well developed in three of them. The Council had not operated in Switzerland during the war, but in 1945 an office was opened in Berne. To emphasise the Council's unofficial status

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70. J. Beighton to W.H. Montagu-Pollack, undated BW 32/3

71. R. Bunbury to N. Symonds, 12 March 1947 BW 32/3

72. Work on a large scale in the German Federal Republic started in 1959, with a headquarters at Cologne and offices at Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich and Stuttgart.

the office was moved to Zurich, away from the British legation, in 1946 and the British Minister was advised against joining the Anglo-Swiss society.<sup>73</sup> The Council worked through existing bodies and did not teach English. By 1947 there were thirty-two Anglo-Swiss clubs and a wide range of material was distributed by the Council's office.

In Sweden and Portugal, the Council consolidated the gains of the war years and sought no further expansion. From an office in Stockholm, the Council arranged exhibitions, tours and concerts and serviced the Anglo-Swedish societies, numbering seventy-six in 1947, with a total membership of almost ten thousand. In Portugal, the Council concentrated on its institutes at Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra where elementary English classes were reduced gradually and fees were charged for advanced students to lower costs.

The Council's work in Spain followed the same pattern as in Portugal, with institutes at Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Seville and Valencia. However, the Council was forced to be more circumspect than in the past by the increasing isolation of the Franco regime and the hostility towards it in Britain, especially in the new Labour Government. Britain's dilemma was to reconcile opposing concerns.

We have a long term interest in developing close and friendly relations with Spain. In conflict with this long term interest, we have a short term interest in maintaining a reserved and even frigid attitude towards the Spanish Government pending a change of government to a more liberal regime.<sup>74</sup>

This resulted in a confused policy towards contacts with Spain; cultural and business exchanges were permissible, 'as they help our long term interest', but military, naval and official contacts were discouraged. The Council had to decide whether to offer Starkie permanent employment as their Representative to prevent him returning to Dublin University, even though his pro-Franco views were well-known. Sir Victor Mallet, British ambassador at Madrid, supported Starkie's appointment describing him as 'quite a national figure in Spain',<sup>75</sup> but the Foreign Office opposed this course, on the grounds that it might prejudice relations with a future, liberal government in Spain. Mallet's opinion prevailed, in view of the 'greatest importance' that he attached to the Council's

73. Report by H.King, 1 January 1946 F0924/438 LC454/130/452

74. Minute by R.Garner, 10 November 1945 F0924/187 LC2009/124/451

75. Mallet to Montagu-Pollock, 15 April 1946 F0924/256

work and because

The Institutes had done excellent work and had established contacts with circles not easily reached by the Embassy staff.....The Council should endeavour to convert to the British way of thinking those foreign countries whose political thought was hostile to our own; to preach to nations already converted was not enough. Spain offered an excellent opportunity for the development of effective cultural propaganda.<sup>76</sup>

Mallet saw a more combative role for cultural propaganda than that envisaged by the Council or the Foreign Office.

Franco, too, admired the Council's work and wished to learn from its example. In an interview with Starkie in January 1946, he praised the value of cultural diplomacy to the preservation of international peace and possibly saw a way to lessen his own isolation. Franco

welcomed the possibility of strengthening the cultural bond between nations: "we need to know one another" he said, "not just to speak one another's languages but to know how we live, what our general masses think, what each of us has to offer in the way of science, technical equipment, literature, art and ideas."<sup>77</sup>

Considerable controversy was generated by the agreement concluded with Franco in 1940<sup>78</sup>, especially the condition that the Council should employ only Roman Catholics. Under pressure from Parliament<sup>79</sup> and the Press, the Foreign Office asked the Cabinet for a decision in February 1946. The Foreign Office explained that no other government imposed a similar restriction and that it was contrary to Article I of the United Nations Charter. Conversely, the rule had not been enforced strictly and eight of the Council's twenty-eight staff in Spain were not Catholic. However, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1946 was an ardent Catholic, the Spanish Government was hostile to revision and it would require legislation to permit the employment of non-Catholics in British institutes. Furthermore, it might provide an excuse to expel the Council from Spain. Nevertheless, and despite Mallet's advice 'that the agreement should be allowed to stand until the present regime comes to an end',<sup>80</sup> the Cabinet

76. Minutes of a meeting at the Foreign Office, 9 January 1947  
BW 56/7

77. Starkie to Mallet, 11 January 1946 BW 56/7

78. See above p. 99

79. The question had been raised in the House of Commons on 11 February 1946 Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 5th Series,

Vol. 419, col. 1-2

80. Cabinet Minutes, 22 February 1946 CAB 129/7 CP(46)76

resolved to withdraw from the agreement.<sup>81</sup> In the event, due to Mallet's protests, the agreement stood, on condition that it would not be enforced.<sup>82</sup> The five institutes and the school in Madrid continued to flourish under Starkie's direction, with a total of four thousand six hundred students and nearly four thousand members by December 1947. It was decided 'that the expansion of the Council's activities in Spain should be reserved for the moment when a democratic government was finally established'.<sup>83</sup> Two of the five institutes were closed as an economy measure in 1950, in spite of protests from the Embassy.

With the exceptions of Albania, Germany and Roumania, therefore, the Council was operating in every European country by 1947. It could not escape, however, the consequences of the final collapse on the wartime alliance in that year after the breakdown of the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference in April. In Bevin's opinion, 'in the light of recent international developments.....the British Council had a particularly important part to play in coming months'.<sup>84</sup> The rejection of the Marshall Plan by the Soviet Union in July drew publicly the dividing line in Europe. West of the line, the Marshall Plan was accompanied by other attempts, led by Britain, to unite and revive western Europe. In the east, the grip of the Soviet Union and of the communist parties was tightened rapidly. The line of the Iron Curtain perpetuated the old cultural and social divide of Europe, with the exceptions of Greece and southern Italy in the western sphere and Finland and Czechoslovakia in the east.

The Council's position in eastern Europe deteriorated steadily in the next three years, whilst in the west, it sought to underline the concept of Western Union. Kenneth Johnstone outlined the Council's priorities in Europe; the highest priority was given to those countries where the ideological struggle was the keenest, namely, countries under Russian domination or targets of a communist campaign.<sup>85</sup> In the first rank were France, Greece, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Poland, which, with Spain and Turkey, enjoyed budgets of over £40,000. Next came Austria, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden with budgets of between £20,000 and £30,000. Belgium,

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81. Mallet to Bevin, 15 May 1946. F0924/428 LC2419/100/452

82. Minutes of a Meeting at the Foreign Office, 9 January 1946. BW56/

83. Parliamentary Debates 5th Series, 22 March 1948. Vol. 448, col.

2250-

84. Minute by C. Mayhew, 19 April 1947. F0924/615 LC1556/16/451

85. Policy Committee Minutes, 14 October 1947. F0924/595

LC4670/208/451



Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Roumania and Yugoslavia had budgets of less than £20,000. Bulgaria and Roumania were new in the estimates and severe cuts had been imposed in the budgets of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

Despite official hostility and worsening conditions in eastern Europe, the Council was determined to continue activities as long as possible. As Pierson Dixon, Britain's ambassador in Prague, explained,

If the Council were to curtail its activities very drastically or to retire from the scene altogether it would be interpreted by our friends as meaning that we no longer cared what happened to them and such inclinations as they might have to resist the regime would be correspondingly discouraged.

Secondly, by remaining as a shop window in which to display attractions and advantages of the Western way of life, the Council can help to stimulate amongst the Czechs (Communists among them) feelings of regret for what they have lost and a longing to regain it. Thirdly, there is the long-term consideration in the years to come that the friendship of the Czechs may again be of positive value to us and that the Council can help to maintain this. <sup>86</sup>

Increasing tension and the harassment of foreign organisations and those who supported them rendered this course not only difficult but also dangerous for the Council's employees. The consolidation of Soviet dominance in eastern Europe began to take its toll in 1948. In that year many functions of the Ministries of Education in Hungary, Bulgaria and Roumania were removed to 'National Committees' and staff sympathetic to the West in official and academic organisations were replaced. The Council became progressively an object of suspicion and hostility. Attendance at the Council's institutes became dangerous for the citizens of eastern Europe: in Bulgaria the ability to speak English was regarded 'as a true sign of Fascist tendencies.....'.<sup>87</sup> From Hungary in April 1949 the Council's Representative wrote,

the policy of the Government in cultural matters is fundamentally opposed to anything more than a superficial connection with the West; the Council itself is regarded as a centre of espionage; and it has now become the task of the new officials to find a way, not of making use of the Council's services, but of avoiding the responsibility of giving encouragement without committing their departments to a downright refusal.<sup>88</sup>

86. P.Dixon to C.Warner, 22 May 1948. F0924/712 LC2034/127/452

87. Representatives Annual Report for 1947/8. BW18/9

88. Annual Report by E.Duke, 21 April 1949. BW36/10

The Council was an obvious target for charges of spying and subversion and staff were implicated in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Most damaging was the Vogeler-Sanders trial in Hungary in which one of the accused claimed to have passed political and economic reports to a Council employee. As a direct result the Hungarian government demanded the closure of the Council in March 1950. In addition, locally appointed staff and members and students of Council institutes in all Iron Curtain countries were persecuted and imprisoned. Sterndale-Bennet, reporting on clandestine visitors to the Council's premises, surmised that

their purpose seems merely to intimidate and unnerve the staff who are always asked why they work for the British and told they will suffer for it.<sup>89</sup>

In Czechoslovakia, the director of the Council's institute at Bratislava, Dr Brander, was shot by a man the Foreign Office believed to be a police agent.<sup>90</sup> The Council's problems were compounded by the defection of a few of its staff in eastern Europe. Most serious and harmful was the defection of Bidwell in June 1949. Bidwell had joined the Council in 1943 and had risen to be Representative in Poland. He was followed in February 1950 by another senior official, Dr Anna Rides, who had been head of the Council's medical relations department in Czechoslovakia for three and a half years.

The Council, however, refused to be forced into withdrawal and embarked instead upon a war of nerves with the communist authorities

One cardinal point of our policy has been not to quit of our own accord.....it is probably the one course which our bitterest opponents hope and pray we will take, since it spares them all the trouble and unpleasantness of having to make a case against us in the eyes of the world. It also lends itself to ready interpretation as an admission of guilt.<sup>91</sup>

In 1948, in a search for cuts in the Council's budget, the effectiveness of the Council's work in eastern Europe was examined. Britain's missions behind the Iron Curtain strongly supported the continuance of the Council's activities. Some doubts were expressed about the utility of student exchanges where the candidates were selected by the authorities, but all praised the

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89. Memorandum by Sterndale Bennet, 29 July 1948. F0924/708C

LC320/107/452G

90. J. Close to Adam, 15 February 1950. F0924/831 CRL124/3

91. K. Johnstone to J. Jardine, 21 February 1950. F0924/778 CRA 18/5

Council's institutes. A cultural toe in the door was considered valuable, despite the otherwise inauspicious conditions for the development of British influence.

The past year's changes have greatly limited the Information Department's access to public opinion here, and have, in my view, correspondingly enhanced the value of the contacts which the Council can maintain under the flag of culture. The Institute is now, in fact, the one place where a number of Czechs can still meet a number of Englishmen. 92

Likewise, in Poland the Council provided a valuable meeting place for east and west and offset Britain's political weakness:

I do not think there can be any doubt that it [the Council] enables a great many Poles to keep in touch with English modes of thought in spite of the dictatorship. If we were to take it away I certainly think that the Poles would feel that we were losing interest in them and that it would have a bad effect politically.<sup>93</sup>

In Hungary routine activities, although confined to the capital were continued after the communist victory in the elections in August 1947 but, 'a gradual freezing out' process began at the end of 1948 with restrictions on the issue of visas and residence permits.<sup>94</sup> English teaching declined and closer controls were imposed on the appointment of Hungarian delegates, scholars and visitors to Britain and on the distribution of periodicals and films. McNab reported in November 1948 that the Cultural Section of the Ministry of Education was 'still convinced that the British Council is a secret service intelligence agency.....'.<sup>95</sup> In 1949, despite protestations of friendship by the Minister of Education and the Under-Secretaries for Press and Culture, English-language teaching was drastically reduced, placed third behind Russian and French as an optional extra, and the Hungarian-British Society was suppressed.<sup>96</sup> The gathering pace of Russianisation in Hungary restricted the Council to largely distributive functions by 1950. In March the Council was expelled.

Prior to the Prague coup in February 1948 the Council had prospered in Czechoslovakia, with three well-attended Institutes and a wide range of contacts and activities. Following the

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92. P.Dixon to C.Warner, 14 June 1949, F0924/773 LC1924/102/452

93. Minute by R.Hankey, 30 July 1949. F0924/773 LC1785/102/452

94. K.Helm to Bevin, 6 September 1948. F0924/713 LC3484/133/452

95. R.McNab to K.Johnstone, 11 November 1948. BW36/5

96. W.Young to Attlee, 6 April 1949. F0924/760 LC228/30/452

communist take-over, however, Dixon sought to emphasise Britain's disapproval by cultural as well as political and economic measures.

There remains the field of culture which the new Government is showing signs of trying to exploit in order to demonstrate that in spite of certain differences of opinion on political matters Anglo-Czech relations are still fundamentally unaltered.<sup>97</sup>

On Dixon's advice a visit of the Hallé Orchestra, sponsored by the Council, was cancelled, British universities were discouraged from taking part in the 600th anniversary of the Caroline University and a football match between the two countries was postponed indefinitely. Student exchanges and the entertainment of Czech visitors to Britain were reduced 'since they cannot any longer contribute very much and they might be harmful'.<sup>98</sup> Mounting pressure against the Council, including the shooting of Dr Brander, the defection of Dr Rides and a propaganda campaign, persuaded Dixon to recommend the Council's withdrawal in February 1950. Adam opposed this course and a note of protest instead was presented to the Czech government in April.

Poland shared with Czechoslovakia the largest budget in eastern Europe and the Council's programme was extensive. Following Bidwell's defection, however, in June 1949, the Council's position progressively deteriorated. In November English teaching in Polish schools and universities was considerably reduced and the Council's educational activities virtually eliminated. In March 1950 it was rumoured that the security forces were planning to raid the Council's offices and the atmosphere grew tense. Nevertheless, the Council resolved to continue and the Ambassador was confident that all was not yet lost:

In my view Council's prospects in Poland have not yet deteriorated sufficiently to justify our voluntarily leaving the field to new barbarians in contradiction to our long-term policy of returning to the offensive in Eastern Europe.....Vast Majority of people in this country are still determined as far as possible to preserve their Western habits of mind and spiritual affiliations with the civilised world.<sup>99</sup>

The Council was refused permission to resume its activities in Roumania but it was able to operate with some degree of success in Bulgaria until the latter half of 1948. In September 1948

97. P.Dixon to C.Warner, 10 March 1948. F0924/710 LC1132/127/452

98. P.Dixon to C.Warner, 22 May 1948. F0924/712 LC2034/127/452

99. *Ibid.*

foreign schools were closed and a general anti-British drive reduced visitors to the institute to thirty a day. In 1949 exit visas for Council scholars were refused, student leaders passed a resolution forbidding attendance at Council functions and a hostile Press campaign was inaugurated. Visitors fell to a daily average of seventeen. The withdrawal of privileges from the Council's Representative, including his ration book and identity card, at the end of 1949, left him with 'less status and facilities than, for example, a guard at the Legation'.<sup>100</sup>

In April 1950, the Cabinet considered whether the Council should withdraw voluntarily from the satellite countries or wait to be expelled. In a memorandum presented to the Cabinet in March, the Foreign Office had argued against voluntary withdrawal.

Although it seems clear that all satellite countries are intended sooner or later to take their culture exclusively from the USSR .....the Council can still do valuable work and has prestige value.

By voluntary withdrawal we shall be doing the Kremlin's work for it.....We should think twice before abandoning our friends after encouraging them. A withdrawal forced on us would, on the other hand, be understood.<sup>101</sup>

The Cabinet approved the Foreign Office's line.<sup>102</sup> In the event, the Council and the information services were expelled from Czechoslovakia in May, the Council charged with giving 'moral and ideological support to local reactionary forces',<sup>103</sup> and from Bulgaria in June. The United States had already left Bulgaria and the Alliance Francaise followed in August. In Poland the Council survived, but under the threat of summary expulsion.<sup>104</sup>

The Council's fortunes followed an exactly opposite course in Yugoslavia. Its activities were restricted until Tito's break with Stalin in June 1948. In October, Yugoslavia severed all cultural ties with the Soviet Union and its satellites offering western cultural bodies a wide, new scope. The Council's work expanded rapidly and functions at the Belgrade and Zagreb offices were regularly attended by more than two hundred members. Its network was extended to Croatia and Slovenia in 1949 and further expansion was planned in 1950.

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100. J.A.Cayton to G.Shreeve, 23 October 1949 BW 18/7  
 101. Cabinet Minutes, 20 March 1950 CAB 129/39 CP950)19  
 102. Cabinet Conclusions, 6 May 1950 CAB 128/17 CM(50)51  
 103. Note by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 Feb. 1950.  
 104. Cultural contacts with the eastern bloc were re-established in the late 1960's.

Finland remained a case apart. The number of Finnish-British societies increased and a Teachers of English Society was formed. Films continued to form an important part of the Council's programme and a British Documentary Film Week held in Helsinki in 1948 attracted seven thousand viewers. Despite the signature of the Russo-Finnish Treaty in April 1948, providing for the strengthening of cultural ties among other things, the Council's work was considered worthwhile.

because the issue has not yet been decided and our efforts may help to strengthen Finnish resistance to the Russians without and the communists within.<sup>105</sup>

Parallel to these developments in eastern Europe, western Europe sought greater security in closer relationships. The Treaty of Dunkirk of March 1947, General Marshall's speech at Harvard in June, leading to the creation of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, and the Brussels Treaty of March 1948, signalled a new course in British foreign policy. These events also had implications for British publicity. The Brussels Treaty called on the five powers to

make every effort in common to lead their peoples towards a better understanding of the principles which form the basis of their common civilisation and to promote cultural exchanges by conventions between themselves or by other means.<sup>106</sup>

Publicity for the concept of western union was to be accompanied by a campaign against communist propaganda.

British propaganda in western Europe had two objectives: firstly, to convince Europeans that Britain was serious in its commitment to Europe; secondly, to promote the spiritual union of western Europe to enhance cooperation in other spheres. Bevin told the House of Commons in January 1948,

If we are to preserve peace and our own safety at the same time we can only do so by the mobilisation of such a material and moral force as will create confidence and energy in the West and inspire respect elsewhere, and this means that Britain cannot stand outside Europe and regard her problems as quite separate from those of her European neighbours.<sup>107</sup>

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105. Minute by R. Etherington-Smith, 18 April 1948 FO924/705  
LC2057/57/452

106. Cmd. 1702 HMSO 1947

107. Parliamentary Debates (Commons) Fifth Series, 21 January 1948, Vol. 446, col 1397

The identification of Britain's interests with those of western Europe was a departure from traditional conceptions and required underlining if it was to be believed. Attlee told the Cabinet that

In spite of all the evidence.....there is a strong feeling in Western Europe that we are not serious in support of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation. This takes two forms: that we are half-hearted about our contribution to Western Europe's recovery and that we work more enthusiastically with the Commonwealth.<sup>108</sup>

British publicity had to correct these misapprehensions 'at every possible opportunity'.

The Brussels Treaty provided for the conclusion of cultural conventions between member states,<sup>109</sup> and a Committee of Cultural Experts was formed which held its first meeting in London in August 1948. It produced agreements on visits of school inspectors to member states, courses for teachers on the theme of western union and for government officials on the administrative machinery of member states. Sub-committees were appointed to deal with issues of common concern. The Council awarded special scholarships to students from western Europe and in 1948/9, brought more visitors to Britain from northern Europe than any other part of the world. Within the five Brussels Treaty powers, the Council sought to stimulate 'the sense of cultural community' and then to proclaim this unity to the outer world in the hope of attracting recruits by exposing the defects of the Soviet alternative.

although the Five Power Union does not exist for any aggressive purpose, that is to say, for the purpose of direct attack on another cultural outlook, it is deliberately intended to act as a challenge and a contrast to another, and, as the Five Powers feel, a lower conception of civilisation in all its branches.....<sup>110</sup>

In January 1948 Bevin presented a paper to the Cabinet on Britain's 'Future Foreign Publicity Policy', which was both a response to the creation of the Cominform in September 1947 and the inauguration of an anti-communist propaganda campaign. A ministerial committee on anti-communist propaganda appointed a committee of officials to review existing policy and machinery for

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108. Cabinet Minutes, 30 July 1948 CAB 129/29 CP(49)193

109. Cultural conventions were signed with Belgium (Cmd.7002) in 1946; France (Cmd.7450) and the Netherland (Cmd.7984) in 1948; with Norway (Cmd.7748) in 1949; and with Luxembourg (Cmd. 8982) in 1950.

110. K.Johnstone to Macdermot, 10 May 1948 BW14/6 .

offensive and defensive action against Soviet and communist propaganda at home and abroad. The Soviet Union and the Cominform appeared to threaten not only the security but also the fabric of western civilisation. French and Italian delegates had attended the foundation of Cominform and a campaign of disruptive action had been initiated, most notably strikes in France and Italy in November 1947. The crisis had been overcome in France but the issue was undecided in Italy. Bevin was anxious 'to mobilise spiritual forces, as well as material and political' for the defence of western European ideals. This task could not be left to the United States.

It is for us as Europeans and as a Social Democratic Government, and not the Americans, to give the lead in spiritual, moral and political spheres to all the democratic elements in Western Europe which are anti-communist and, at the same time, genuinely progressive and reforming, believing in freedom, planning and social justice - what one might call the "Third Force".<sup>111</sup>

Britain and western Europe offered 'vital and progressive' ideas that were preferable to both 'totalitarian communism and laissez-faire capitalism'.<sup>112</sup>

Britain's publicity in Europe had been confined hitherto, to extolling the virtues of British policy and the British way of life. It had not attempted 'systematically to expose the myths of the Soviet paradise'. The official committee on anti-communist propaganda reported in May 1948 and recommended the lifting of restrictions on subversive propaganda in or to communist-controlled countries and on propaganda in other countries designed to stimulate subversive activities in the Soviet orbit.<sup>113</sup> The committee advised that the Government should be less secretive about the conduct of anti-communist activities in foreign countries through official channels. Particular proposals for action in any of these spheres, however, required ministerial approval. Liaison between the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff was considered adequate for black propaganda, but for white propaganda, the committee advocated the revival of the machinery devised by PWE during the war, which would ensure also coordination with the United States.<sup>114</sup> A small section was created in the Foreign Office to collect material on communist policy, tactics and propaganda and to provide information for anti-communist propaganda; this included evidence

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111. Cabinet Minutes, 4 January 1948 CAB 129/23 CP(49)3

112. Ibid.

113. Report of Official Committee on Anti-Communist Propaganda

114. Ibid. CAB 130/231 GEN231/2 May 1948 CAB 130/231 GEN231/1



of low standards of living and lack of civil liberties and human rights behind the Iron Curtain. Communist foreign policy was to be portrayed as a threat to world peace and 'Communism represented as the stalking-horse of Russian imperialism'.<sup>115</sup> The Cold War was intensified in 1948 by the Prague coup in the spring and the blockade of Berlin in June.

The battle lines had been drawn in Europe and the Council's continuing financial restrictions forced concentration on those areas where the threat to Britain's interests was greatest and where the ideological war was still undecided. As a result, operations in Scandinavia and northern Europe were reduced. No European country, except Germany, escaped the cuts, but Italy and Greece remained top in order of priority, followed by France and Spain. Three new centres were opened in Italy in 1948, at Naples, Genoa and Venice, and the Council's work was coordinated with the Information Services by the foundation of joint libraries and reading rooms. The communist party was defeated decisively in the general elections in April and the Brussels Treaty powers resolved in November to invite Italy to join their deliberations on the formation of a Council of Europe. Thus, Italy was ranged firmly with the West and Britain could afford to reduce its extensive publicity programme.

Activities in Greece continued on a surprisingly large scale in spite of the civil war. However, the Council's plans were disrupted by soaring prices, problems of travel, the inability of the Greek Government to begin comprehensive English teaching and the call up of many of those eligible for Council scholarships. Greece was regarded as a special case, not only because of the communist threat but also because Britain had 'a traditional responsibility' to maintain cultural ties between the two countries.

Surely there can never have been a time when it was more necessary to encourage the Greeks to feel that western civilisation was worth belonging to and worth any sacrifice to continue to belong to; and to the Greeks, whether we like it or not, we and not the Americans nor the French are Western Civilisation.<sup>116</sup>

Following the formal establishment of the German Federal Republic in May 1949, the Council was notified that the Military Governor of the British zone welcomed the appointment of a Council

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115. Cabinet Minutes, 4 January 1948 CAB 129/23 CP(48)3

116. Minute by K. Johnstone, 13 January 1948 BW 34/19

liaison officer, attached to the Executive Board of the Zonal British Relations Board. The Treasury refused again to sanction expenditure in Germany and it was not until 1950 that the Council was able to open an office to take over the cultural work of the High Commission.

After 1948 Germany and Yugoslavia were the Council's only areas of growth in Europe and substantial cuts were made elsewhere. The Council explained that 'the general resumption of contacts had reached its limit and the pendulum had begun to swing back the other way'.<sup>117</sup> Europe's priority was short-lived because of the speed with which links had been re-established with the outside world. Britain's other partners in the Commonwealth and Empire had greater educational and cultural needs and a special claim on Britain's attention. The Council's limited resources had to be deployed where they could secure the best return on expenditure. In Europe there was considerable unofficial cultural cross-fertilisation and the dividing line was clear cut by the end of the decade. In Africa and Asia, however, the situation was more fluid and successful cultural propaganda might become a decisive factor in Britain's favour.

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117. British Council Annual Report, 1951/2 p.9

## CHAPTER TEN

### DEVELOPING ROLE

The projection of the Empire to itself was a wartime development which continued into peacetime. In 1946, with the establishment of the Central Office of Information, the publicity machines of the Dominions and Colonial Offices were overhauled to undertake larger publicity programmes than had been contemplated during the war. There had been no information officers in the Colonies before the war, but by 1950 nineteen Colonial governments had full-time publicity staffs, and in the remainder special responsibility for information was delegated to other government officers.<sup>1</sup> These developments were symptomatic of a realisation that the goodwill of the Commonwealth and Empire could no longer be assumed and that Britain had to explain and justify her actions. The war had accelerated the development of nationalism in the Colonies, increased the confidence of the Dominions and revealed Britain's inability to remain in the first rank of powers except by virtue of her overseas possessions and influence in the Commonwealth. Britain's future position therefore rested partly on the solidarity of Commonwealth opinion and the replacement of constitutional ties with nebulous cultural and linguistic links. Britain was unable to maintain the territories of her Empire in a relationship of dependence if they were bent on becoming free and the new Labour Government was markedly less committed to its preservation than its predecessors had been. There were four main areas of publicity: in the Commonwealth and Empire about Britain; "development" publicity in the Colonies; after 1948, anti-communist propaganda; publicity about the British Empire in foreign countries. The Council was concerned with the first three.

An internal Dominions Office memorandum in 1943 outlined the general picture of Britain to be projected in the Commonwealth.

the Britain to portray to the young nations of the Commonwealth is not so much the land of winding lanes, Tudor cottages, rustic accents, venerable shrines and beefeaters at the Tower - these they will take for granted - as the country of modern inventions, up to date classrooms and canteens, new factories, broad highways, great airfields, the home of an energetic and enterprising race. 2

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1. The Colonial Territories 1949-50, Cmd.7959, HMSO, 1950.
  2. Memorandum by Boyd Shannon, 26 July 1943. DO35/1911/2441/5

The Colonial Office, for its part, advocated concentration on a few broad themes 'designed to show the advantages of the British connection'.<sup>3</sup> In relation to colonial policy it wished to highlight plans for development and welfare and political advance and the Colonial peoples' 'faith in the British connection'.<sup>4</sup>

In projecting the Empire to itself, our object is the promotion of Empire solidarity and pride; and our means are those which encourage the group spirit and group consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

These were the symbols of Empire, usually those of the Mother Country and especially the Union Jack and the monarchy.

In 1947 an Empire Publicity Committee, including representatives from the Council, was established to prepare a detailed scheme of Empire publicity at home and abroad. In February it recommended that publicity in the Dominions should portray the Commonwealth as a mutually-beneficial association working for peace and stability in the world. It should also

stimulate and strengthen Commonwealth links by presenting the Commonwealth as an association of free nations and of dependent territories being led to higher cultural, economic and social standards.<sup>6</sup>

In the Colonies the committee recommended that British publicity should

develop understanding of the ultimate purpose of British colonial policy, a sense of self-interest in the well-being of the Empire and pride in membership of it and confidence in its future.<sup>7</sup>

In the Colonies the Council was also used 'not only as a means of "putting across" Britain but also as a powerful instrument in the improvement of race relations'.<sup>8</sup> This was especially necessary in Africa, particularly East and Central Africa which, unlike West Africa, had large unofficial European populations. But even in West Africa this work was important and in 1948 the Governor of Nigeria explained how the Council helped.

Hospitality offered by the Council staff both at official parties held on the Council's premises and on unofficial occasions in their own homes is making a significant contribution to the development of inter-racial harmony.<sup>9</sup>

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3. Overseas Information Official Meeting Minutes, 19 July 1946.  
CAB 124/1007 01(0)(46)12

4. Ibid.

5. Minute by R. Fraser, 11 November 1946. CAB 124/1018

6. Report of the Empire Publicity Sub-Committee, 20 February 1947

7. Ibid. PREM 8/648

8. Minute by K.W. Blackburne, 17 January 1949. CO 878/48/1

9. J. Macpherson to Creech-Jones, 30 November 1948. CO 878/45/6

The attitudes of the Colonial and Dominions Offices to cultural propaganda followed precedents established during the war. The Dominions Office remained cautious and unwilling to delegate responsibility for cultural publicity to the Council, while the Colonial Office encouraged the Council to work to the limit of its resources. In August 1947 Ivor Thomas informed Adam that

Mr Creech-Jones feels strongly that the British Council's work in the Colonies should be maintained in order that, as the Colonies themselves progress towards greater self-consciousness and selfsufficiency, their culture and institutions may retain a British flavour and cultural ties may supplement or take the place of political ties on which less reliance can be placed than in the past.<sup>10</sup>

Opposition to the activities of the Council in the Dominions came from within the Dominions Office and from United Kingdom High Commissions. As a result the Dominions, contrary to the Council's wishes, received a low priority in its budgeting and were the most seriously affected by the financial cutbacks at the end of the decade. In the Colonies, on the other hand, the Council's work was regarded as a valuable supplement to that of the Colonial Governments and was warmly supported by senior officials within the Colonial Office and Sir Charles Jeffries in particular. The Colonial Office, of course, had secured a greater measure of control over, and a clearer definition of functions with, the Council and this may have partly accounted for its enthusiasm for cultural publicity. Moreover, the needs of the Colonies were more immediately apparent and in the Dominions there was evidence to show that the deliberate projection of Britain might cause offence either as a new weapon of imperialism or because the Dominions believed that they did not need tuition in the British way of life. In 1948 the Council's task in the Colonies was clarified and its status as an agent of the Colonial Office confirmed.

The aim of the Council is to carry on in the Colonies any activity in the cultural and educational sphere of which the chief purpose is the "projection" of the British way of life and the promotion of closer relations between the people of the Colonies. It is not concerned with normal educational work.....<sup>11</sup>

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10. I. Thomas to Adam, 9 August 1947. BW26/4

11. The Colonial Territories 1948-49, Cmd. 7715, HMSO 1949.

Increasing tension in Europe in 1948 led to a growing concern with the loyalty and strength of the Commonwealth and Empire. An official committee on anti-communist propaganda recommended in May 1948 the formation of committees to coordinate Colonial propaganda, to develop broadcasting in the Empire, to examine the welfare of overseas students in Britain and to review policy and machinery for action against Soviet and communist propaganda at home and abroad. In June, a committee of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, the Colonies and Commonwealth Relations recommended

a propaganda campaign to play up our own treatment of native peoples in the Commonwealth and to debunk Russian treatment of their backward peoples and minorities and Russian treatment of her satellites.<sup>12</sup>

This line was broadly approved by the ministerial committee on anti-communist propaganda and in July, committees were established to manage publicity in the Colonies and arrangements for foreign students in Britain.<sup>13</sup>

Bevin proposed to Creech-Jones in September 1948 that there should be an immediate increase in the funds available for publicity in the Colonies.

I have no doubt that we are menaced by an immediate and most powerful campaign to subvert our influence wherever possible, but perhaps especially in the Colonies and India and Pakistan. It is therefore of the greatest importance to the position of this country that we should do all we can, urgently to bind these areas to us by the development of educational and cultural ties and by spreading widely and vigorously among their peoples the knowledge of the benefits which association with us confers and of the realities of Communism in all its horror.<sup>14</sup>

Bevin suggested that the Colonial Information Policy Committee should examine

urgently what extension of the British Council's work in the Colonies, India and Pakistan will be necessary over the next three years in order effectively to cement cultural, and particularly educational, ties with them.<sup>15</sup>

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- 12. Ministerial Committee on Anti-Communist Propaganda Minutes, 16 June 1948. CAB 130/37 GEN 231/4
  - 13. The first became the Colonial Information Policy Committee
  - 14. Bevin to Creech-Jones, 22 September 1948. CAB 124/1029
  - 15. Ibid.

The Colonial Information Policy Committee submitted a three-year plan in July 1949, costing an additional £1.6 million, of which the largest single share was for the Council.<sup>16</sup> In presenting these figures to the Treasury, the Colonial Office argued that

The British Council is doing valuable work in the presentation of the British way of life to the Colonial peoples, and its work is of particular value in the field of race relations. In both respects it provides a valuable weapon of anti-communist propaganda.<sup>17</sup>

It was proposed in November 1949 that the entire responsibility for the welfare of overseas students in Britain should be transferred to the Council. The Colonial Office believed that such work was better undertaken by an unofficial body. The Council took over this work in January 1951.

The draft papers prepared by the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1950 for the Cabinet's review of the Council's future, revealed interesting developments in their attitudes. In marked contrast with its earlier pronouncements, the Commonwealth Relations Office declared that the Council's work could not be undertaken officially as its value lay in its close links with the educational and cultural worlds and that it was 'indispensable'

if cultural relations within the Commonwealth are to be developed. This is not something that can be done by voluntary effort.<sup>18</sup>

The Colonial Office's memorandum reaffirmed the Council's three long-term aims, the strengthening of cultural ties, the improvement of race relations and the promotion of friendship by activities outside the scope of official organisations. In addition in the short-term,

The Council can do valuable positive work in countering Communist propaganda by showing that Britain and the Western tradition for which Britain stands has something better to offer than the Communist way of life.<sup>19</sup>

The foundations of the Council's work in the Commonwealth and Empire had been laid during the war. The most pressing issue in 1945 was the proposed visit of Gillan to Australia and New Zealand

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16. This figure was later reduced considerably by the Treasury.

17. K.W.Blackburne to Crombie, 15 December 1948. CO875/48/1

18. J.Hope to M.Ormiston, 14 April 1950, FO924/782 CRA 20/6

19. K.W.Blarkburne to M.Ormiston, 12 April 1950. FO 924/782

and the related questions of activities in Canada and South Africa. Soon after returning from Australia and New Zealand, Gillan embarked on a tour of South East Asia which encompassed not only Britain's possessions in the region but also those of the other European powers and Siam, Burma and India. These two tours opened up a wide new field for the Council which demanded resources that could only be found at the expense of areas where the Council's work was already well-developed - Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Palestine, Aden, West Africa and the West Indies. The development of the Council's activities will be examined in this sequence.

In 1945 the Dominions Office remained unconvinced of the need for British cultural propaganda in the Dominions and the United Kingdom High Commissioners' Offices proved reluctant to concede any authority over publicity to the Council. The Dominions Office allowed the Foreign Office to place the Dominions in the lowest category in the priority list that was presented to the Council for planning in 1946/7. However, in February 1945 Gillan set out to examine a dual role for the Council in presenting Britain to Australia and New Zealand and the Commonwealth in the countries of the Pacific basin in cooperation with the two Dominions.

Unfortunately, when Gillan arrived in Australia he met 'very considerable misconceptions' concerning the Council and the purposes of his visit in official circles.<sup>20</sup> This was partly due to the Council's failure to bring the Dominions Office fully into its deliberations and partly to the lukewarm attitude of the Dominions Office which meant that Britain's High Commissioner, Sir Ronald Cross, and the Australian authorities had been briefed inadequately. Cross maintained that Gillan was unaware 'of the extreme delicacy of his mission' and 'lacked appreciation of local political feeling and in particular of the necessity of working only with the full agreement of the Commonwealth authorities'.<sup>21</sup> Gillan's interview with the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, on 6th March, 'did not carry matters very far' and was described by Cross as a 'failure'.<sup>22</sup> However, although Curtin was initially suspicious and regarded the Council as 'dangerous and unnecessary', he agreed that Gillan should meet his other Ministers

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20. A. Gillan, Report on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, May 1945, Gillan Papers.

21. R. Cross to G. Hall, 10 March 1945. DO 35 1212/WN420/12

22. Ibid.



Dr. Evatt (External Affairs), Mr Calwell (Information) and Mr Dedman (Post-War Reconstruction).<sup>23</sup> Gillan found them 'fully appreciative of Council possibilities and most helpful in their advice on immediate procedure'.<sup>24</sup> Gillan was 'careful to avoid press publicity' until the Council received official blessing for its work and Cross was fearful lest Gillan's visit might appear as the launch of a British propaganda drive. The Dominions Office and Cross felt justified in their cautious attitude by the first reactions of the Australian authorities and were agreed that the establishment of a Council office would be impossible. Cross concluded prematurely that the tour 'should enable Gillan to gain valuable knowledge but otherwise will only fill in time and save appearances.'<sup>25</sup> Sir Eric Machtig, Permanent Under-Secretary, minuted on Cross's account of Gillan's visit 'very disappointing' to which the Secretary of State, George Hall, added, 'It is more than disappointing. It is intolerable.'<sup>26</sup> Hall referred to Cross's view that Gillan had aroused Australian suspicion and hostility by failing to be as unobtrusive as the Dominions Office had wished.

Gillan's account of the same events was more optimistic, he had been embarrassed by the demands he had encountered as he was forced to avoid commitments until the principle of Council operations in Australia had been settled. He reported that

The whole attitude, expressed in different ways but all to the same effect, was, "This is what we've been waiting for for years. Thank God, the Old Country is at last waking up."<sup>27</sup>

On the official level contacts were established successfully with the Ministries of Reconstruction and Information, which in turn convinced the Prime Minister 'that Council representation in Australia would be to her considerable advantage' in the cultural aspects of reconstruction and in the projection of Australia in Britain and foreign countries.<sup>28</sup> On the 27 April, the Council was asked to establish an office in Australia which would also cover the South West Pacific basin.

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23. Gillan to White, 5 March 1945. BW 12/1

24. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, May 1945. Gillan Papers.

25. R.Cross to G.Hall, 10 March 1945. D035 1212WN420/12

26. Minute by G.Hall, 14 March 1945. D035 1212 WN420/12

27. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, May 1945, Gillan Papers.

28. Ibid.

Gillan's sojourn in Australia was interrupted by a visit to New Zealand where the High Commissioner, Sir Harry Batterbee, was sympathetic and 'had done much to prepare the ground'. On 2 May Gillan had an interview with Mr. Nash who was acting as Prime Minister in Mr Fraser's absence at the San Francisco Conference. He reported that

Mr Nash naturally did not commit himself at this first interview but he showed a keen interest in, and knowledge of, the Council's aims and activities, and he proposed that I should discuss matters in more detail at a departmental level with a view to putting up concrete proposals to him. I gained the impression that it had indeed been virtually decided<sup>29</sup> to invite the Council's active cooperation.....

A departmental meeting at which Gillan was present drafted a letter for Nash to address to the Council welcoming the establishment of a Council office and Representative in New Zealand and the co-operation of the Council in the presentation of New Zealand abroad, particularly in the South Pacific. The letter began

Although it is probably true to say that the people of New Zealand have a knowledge and understanding of Britain as full as that of the people in any other overseas country, I consider that any activity which will widen and deepened mutual appreciation<sup>30</sup> of the people in our two countries should be encouraged.

The successful outcome of Gillan's visit seemed to validate the Council's view that only as an independent organisation could it work effectively in the Dominions. Moreover, the Council's educational and cultural activities required specialist staff that the High Commission did not possess and the authorities in both Dominions had stressed that it was the Council's 'independent representation' that they approved. Nevertheless, caution was still urged; Batterbee recommended that the Council 'should start circumspectly and in a modest way' pointing to the 'boomerang effect' of lavish United States propaganda.<sup>31</sup> The Dominions Office received Gillan's report in July 1945 but took no action on it until 1946 by which time the interest generated by Gillan's visit had been dissipated. The Council's first Representative in Australia arrived in Sydney in January 1947 and founded an office in Canberra with branches in Sydney and Melbourne.

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29. Ibid.

30. Nash to Gillan, 7 May 1945. BW 2/149

31. H. Batterbee to G. Hall, 12 May 1945. DO 35 1212 WN420/12

The greater sophistication of audiences in Australia and New Zealand meant that cultural events had to be of a high standard. In 1947 the Boyd Neel Orchestra toured the two Dominions and in 1948 the Ballet Rambert and the Old Vic Company, headed by Laurence Olivier, visited at the Council's expense. In 1949 the Council sponsored a tour of the Stratford Festival Company and mounted important fine art exhibitions. In the same year Gillan left the London office to become Representative in Australia. The second part of the Council's role, the presentation of Commonwealth opinion in the Pacific, did not materialise. It opened a small distribution office in Fiji in 1949 but there were no comparable organisations in Australia or New Zealand with which it could plan the projection of the Commonwealth in the Pacific. Gillan urged repeatedly the formation of bodies on the lines of the Council and the desirability of Australia and New Zealand recognising their cultural responsibilities in the region. Britain, he insisted, could not cover the field alone and on his retirement in 1951 he appealed over Australian radio,

Is it not for us, together, to work to give the fruits of this heritage to others who are today searching feverishly, uncertainly for the good life? There is another competitor in the field, strong, ruthless and plausible, who seeks, whether by force or fraud, to enmesh them body and soul in the toils of slavery. If we who bear the flag of freedom do not march breast forward it may soon be too late.<sup>32</sup>

In January 1946, Machtig suggested that the Council should explore the ground in Canada again but with caution in view of the prejudice against the Council 'largely on the grounds that it was designed for projecting British culture to foreign and Colonial peoples'.<sup>33</sup> However, financial stringency and the continuing obstruction of Britain's High Commission in Canada, which maintained that it already had the field well-covered, prevented the Council from acting on this suggestion. Sir Shuldham Redfern, director of the Council's Dominions Department, received an encouraging letter from Vincent Massey in August 1947 in which he stated

I am one of those people who feel that the British Council should operate in Canada - not, of course in any way suggesting Empire propaganda, but as an organisation existing to keep the Canadian public in touch with the "cultural"...life in Great Britain.

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32. Australian Broadcasting Commission "Guest of Honour"

1 July 1951, Gillan Papers

33. A Clutterbuck to S.Redfern, 23 June 1947, BW20/2

I gather that there is no official objection to this in Ottawa, and I would hope that before long a representative of the BC(sic) might be established there. He could do a most useful job in restoring and strengthening contacts between this country and Great Britain..... 34

In the summer of 1947 the Council was forced to abandon plans for an exploratory tour of Canada and planned instead to send officers to supervise the distribution of Council material. However, because of the dollar crisis, Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, High Commissioner in Canada, advised the postponement of all plans until 1948. Redfern put Clutterbuck's objections to the Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, in November who declared that they were 'without substance'. He was 'entirely sympathetic and said he thought that nothing but good would come from an extension of the Council's activities to Canada'.<sup>35</sup> Mackenzie King emphasised that the Federal Government could not be associated with the Council because of the delicate relationship between the Federal and provincial governments and because governmental control of an organisation like the Council 'meant red tape, bureacracy, a stifling of initiative and a waste of public funds'.<sup>36</sup> One result of King's opposition to public funding of semi-official bodies was that the Canadian Foundation, established on the Council's initiative during the war, nearly collapsed due to lack of funds.

In August 1948 the Council received Clutterbuck's blessing for a visit by Redfern and in October and November he visited every province, except New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Redfern recommended a low-key operation, the attachment of staff to the High Commission and periodic tours by senior Council staff. His conclusions were supported by King and the Canadian authorities and by Clutterbuck. Nevertheless, because of other calls on the Council's budget, activities were restricted to the distribution of material through the High Commission.<sup>37</sup>

Likewise, in South Africa, partly because it was the last call on the Council's Commonwealth budget, the Council only distributed material through the High Commission. The delicate political situation and the introduction of a strict system of apartheid in 1948, also militated against the development of cultural relations.

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34. V.Massey to S.Redfern, 18 August 1947. BW 20/2

35. Minute by S.Redfern, 25 November 1947. BW20/2

36. Ibid.

37. A Council officer was appointed to the U.K.High Commission in Canada in 1958.

In 1945 F.D.Gray, deputy director of the Empire Division, minuted that the Council's resources were already overstretched in the Commonwealth and could not accommodate South Africa as well. He continued,

My personal opinion is that South Africa is a country which is so permanently inflamed by political passions that the kind of work which the Council could undertake would have no effect on the future relations of the Union and the United Kingdom. 38

Further minutes supported this view. A tentative provision for South Africa was made in the Council's estimates for 1948/9 but it was eliminated in the following year.

For the British Empire in the Far East there could be no return to the status quo ante bellum. Japan's victorious advance had revealed shortcomings of British rule. Britain had been unable to defend her peoples against external aggression and those peoples had shown little inclination to rally to the cause of the Empire. The neglect of Britain's naval and military position was mirrored in the field of propaganda. Nationalism in the Far East was fuelled by Japan's victories and fostered by the Allies and by Communists. Britain, France and Holland, faced opposition from the United States and the Soviet Union in attempting to re-establish their Empires in the Far East, but the Colonial Office insisted that colonial government would have to be restored before self-government within the Commonwealth would be possible.

The end of the war found the Council over-stretched by existing commitments. The functional departments were able to supply some material to the Far Eastern Publicity Division of the Political Intelligence Department for Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies and to the Colonial Office for Hong Kong and Singapore. Lord Killearn, Special Commissioner for South East Asia, urged a greatly increased role for the Council and not only within Britain's own territories. In March 1946 Killearn telegraphed to the Foreign Office,

As regards Thailand surely it is essential that something should be done immediately and effectively to counteract American infiltration, to build up Britain's position which has always been traditional and is in danger of being undermined..... As regards Thailand and French Indo-China, I recommend most strongly the British Council should be directed to give immediate and pressing attention to take all available measures in both countries. 39

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38. Minute by F.D.Gray, 26 February 1945. BW 2/314

39. Killearn to Bevin, 17 March 1946. F0930/483 P284/1/907

On the strength of this telegram, Kirkpatrick recommended that a supplementary grant should be provided for Council work in these two territories. However, in May, the Foreign Office ruled that the Council should not open up new ground in South East Asia unless sufficient funds were guaranteed to ensure continuity.<sup>40</sup>

In December 1946, although no funds had been guaranteed, Gillan set out on a tour of South East Asia at the request of Killlearn and MacDonald, Governor-General of Malaya and British Borneo. In his report Gillan observed that

Not only political but educational aspirations.... have developed enormously in volume and clamour. There has been a toughening in fibre and an increased sense of independence. At the same time a long period of isolation has intensified a desire to renew old ties with the west, though on a different basis of human relationship.<sup>41</sup>

Gillan encountered an intense demand for books, periodicals and educational equipment to replace that destroyed during the war and a desire for greater educational opportunities in Britain for students from the Far East. He was also struck by the pre-eminence of the United States, especially in the field of films.

Power, wealth and the "conqueror Kudos" impress many types of mind, whilst others are attracted by the excellent and none too blatant show rooms of the United States Information Services.<sup>42</sup>

Gillan recommended that the Council establish a regional headquarters at Singapore to cover the whole region except for Burma and Hong Kong, with offices in the larger territories including Malaya. He anticipated that Singapore might become an educational and research, as well as a commercial, centre and Killlearn stressed the importance of Singapore 'as an essential British....bastion in the Far East, both defensively and culturally'<sup>43</sup> National sentiment in Malaya dictated that the Council have a separate office and Representative at Kuala Lumpur, although final authority would rest with the Singapore office. Commenting on the Malayan national movement Gillan wrote,

It is not at present in any way separatist. Its aims are equally of social and administrative equality within, and not separation from, British Empire. But it is watchful.<sup>44</sup>

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40. Minute by E.H.Moss, 6 May 1946.F0924/417 LC55/55/452

41. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of South East Asia, December 1946.

42. Ibid.

Gillan Papers

43. Ibid.

44. A.Gillan, "A Council Field in South East Asia" Council Review, April 1946

In Brunei, British North Borneo, Siam, French Indo-China and the Philippines, Gillan advised against direct activities, recommending only the supply of material to the British authorities and Press officers. A Press Attaché's Office had been opened recently at Bangkok, one was soon to be opened in Manila and there was a British Information Office at Saigon. In Brunei and British North Borneo, the scope was so limited that a Representative was not justified. In Sarawak there was no Public Relations Department or Information Service and only an embryonic Education Department and so, with the support of the Governor, Gillan proposed the foundation of a centre and a library. Sarawak's transition to Crown Colony status required

every possible concrete evidence of the advantages of the latter, and in its present impoverished and devastated condition such evidence may not spring readily to the native eye.<sup>45</sup>

Siam had been the largest area of Council expenditure in the Far East before the war and there was a great desire to renew traditional cultural links, especially among the older generation. The standard of English among Siamese youth was poor and they looked to the United States. Gillan recommended that the Council subsidised a Chair of English Language and Literature at Chulalongkorn University and assist in the provision of British teachers for schools.

At Killearn's prompting, Gillan proposed the establishment of a Council organisation in Indonesia in view of its potential influence on British Colonies in the region.

Indonesian pan-nationalist tendencies may in any case have an effect on certain British-Malay schools of thought. An unfriendly Indonesia would be a menace to imperial interests in British Malay and Borneo.<sup>46</sup>

For Hong Kong, Gillan recommended an office and the improvement of library facilities. With the development of the university, the Council could offer scholarships in China, and possibly to the Malayan Chinese, and encourage the training of Chinese English teachers within the university. These proposals were supported strongly by Britain's ambassador at Nanking and by the Council's Representative in China.

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45. A. Gillan, Report on a tour of South East Asia, December 1946  
Gillan Papers.

46. Ibid.

Gillan's report was backed by Killearn and by Malcolm MacDonald who

emphasised the critical nature of the period through which the region is passing and, in the case of the dependencies, his belief that the outcome might largely depend on an adequate presentation of the cultural advantages to be gained by a maintenance of the British connection.<sup>47</sup>

The South East Asia Department of the Foreign Office reported that the Secretary of State

regarded publicity work in South East Asia, including cultural publicity, as of A1 priority and that he would go to any lengths to ensure that funds were available.<sup>48</sup>

Gillan was told that the Foreign Office was 'keen for you to start with the least possible delay'.<sup>49</sup>

However, drastic cuts in the Council's budget forced the abandonment of Gillan's carefully-laid plans. The proposed regional office at Singapore, with centres in other territories, was replaced by two offices at Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. In 1948 an office was opened in Hong Kong and in 1949 staff were established in Sarawak and North Borneo. Activities flourished in Singapore but in the Malayan Federation they were confined to the capital by the disturbances. An office was opened in Indonesia in September 1948 but the republican war against the Dutch restricted work until the Dutch withdrawal. Material was supplied also to Saigon, Hanoi and Bangkok.

India was one of the most intractable problems facing the new Labour government. The Labour Party had been pledged to Indian independence since 1919 and Pethick-Lawrence, appointed Secretary of State by Attlee, had declared in an election address 'that India must attain full self-government in friendly association with Britain and the Dominions at the earliest possible date'.<sup>50</sup> However, at the Simla Conference in June 1945 the Moslem League had insisted irrevocably on the formation of two separate states. In January 1946 the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, announced his intention to form a new Executive Council and to summon a Constituent Assembly to draw up a form of government for India to which Britain

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47. Ibid.

48. Minute by W.H.Montagu-Pollack, 11 February 1947 FO924/603A  
LC653/16/452

49. Ibid.

50. N.Mansergh, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs,



could transfer power. In the following month, a Cabinet Mission led by Pethick-Lawrence travelled to India. One member of the Mission was A.H. Joyce, Publicity Adviser at the India Office, who took with him details of the Council which he discussed with Sir John Sargent, Educational Adviser to the Government of India and C. King, Chief Publicity Officer. King advised that the political situation would have to be clarified before cultural relations could be developed. On his return in July, Joyce held a meeting at the India Office to discuss the Council's future in India. The meeting agreed that Gillan and his assistant should tour India if the India Office could secure the approval of the Treasury and the Government of India to this proposal. Adam wrote to Pethick-Lawrence that both he and Wavell felt 'that the time is now ripe for certain kinds of our work specially adapted for India'.<sup>51</sup> The India Office approached the Treasury in August, arguing,

But at a time when in our relations with India we are having to substitute new links for old, we are concerned to bring to bear other means....of presenting the United Kingdom to India, and it would, we feel, be neglecting a considerable opportunity if we failed to do everything in our power to extend British cultural relations with India. For this purpose there is no doubt in our minds that the British Council is the appropriate instrument.<sup>52</sup>

On Wavell's advice, Gillan's visit was postponed pending the arrival of Sir Terence Shone, High Commissioner Designate, who would approach the Interim Government for permission for the Council to send agents to India. Shone was strongly in favour of the initiation of Council activities in India and was an old ally of the Council from Egypt and Syria. His deputy reported in November 1946 that Nehru and the Education Minister and the Commonwealth Relations Department of the Interim Government, had agreed to the Council's proposal. At the London Conference in December, T.P. Tunnard-Moore, Gillan's assistant, met Nehru and explained the Council's plans to his secretary. The Conference failed to find a solution to India's constitutional problem and the situation remained deadlocked.

Gillan arrived in Delhi in December 1946 after his tour of South East Asia but had no instructions as to the scale on which the Council could operate in India and so confined himself to Delhi and Bombay in order not to arouse expectations too much.

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51. Adam to Pethick-Lawrence, 24 July 1946 BW 38/5

52. J. Patrick to J.L.D. Winnifrith, 28 August 1946 IO Papers  
L/I/1/79 16/26H

Gillan had 'to walk very delicately' as, although there was general support for the development of cultural relations, plans for direct representation excited suspicion.<sup>53</sup> On 16 January 1947, through the good offices of Shone, Gillan had an interview with Nehru. Throughout the meeting Gillan had the impression that Nehru 'was wondering where the catch lay'. Nehru asked a number of questions, including the source of the Council's funds, and, as Shone reported

his attitude was wary rather than enthusiastic. It appeared that India would have something to gain from the Council's work and that it would therefore be welcome.<sup>54</sup>

After consultations with the Interim Government, Gillan proposed offices in Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Lahore.

Gillan's report received powerful support from Wavell and Shone. In February 1947 the British Government announced its intention to transfer power by June 1948 and Wavell was replaced by Mountbatten. Shortly before Wavell's departure, his secretary wrote to the India Office with his reactions to Gillan's recommendations.

He thinks it most important that there should be an adequate and expanding vote for the activities of the British Council in India and that cheeseparing about this would be the worst possible economy from the point of view of Britain.....We do not need to be extravagant and vulgar, but we must do things well and look as though we appreciated the value of cultural contacts with India.<sup>55</sup>

Wavell warned that insufficient expenditure would be more damaging than none at all and would invite unfavourable comparison with the American effort. Shone argued that the Council would be preserving old relationships in a new form.

It seems to me that on this score there is a very strong case for a large subvention of the Council's activities from the very outset in order that no chance may be lost during the transitional period of assessing and exploiting the goodwill which we have accumulated in India during the past and of which, I believe, much remains.<sup>56</sup>

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53. A.Gillan, Report on a visit to India, January 1947. Gillan Paper  
 54. T.Shone to Cabinet Secretary, 17 January 1946. BW38/5  
 55. S.Abell to J.Patrick, 28 February 1947. IO L/1/1/79 16/26H  
 56. T.Shone to J.Patrick, 8 March 1947. IO L/1/1/79 16/26H

As heir to such goodwill as would remain, the High Commissioner was naturally anxious to maintain it and it was the unofficial and semi-official contacts, Shone argued, that would suffer most from the withdrawal of British interests in India.

Nevertheless, however rapidly or extensively proposals for expanding our official representation may be implemented, it will never be possible to fill the gap created in India by the withdrawal of Englishmen from the many services they have manned in the past and by the consequent winding up of the institutions and associations they have maintained. The loss of popular contact will be great and largely irrecoverable; but I feel that the British Council, if it appears early in the field and is really well equipped, could do a great deal to mitigate the consequent loss of goodwill.<sup>57</sup>

Mountbatten agreed with Shone that it was 'most important that there should be plenty of money for financing the work of the British Council in India'.<sup>58</sup>

However, the Council's plans suffered two severe blows; firstly, the partition of India in August and secondly, a fifty per cent cut in the Council's budget for India in 1947-8. As a result of partition the Council had to provide two separate establishments and the cuts meant that it could afford little more than a single office in each country. In January 1948, Sir John Sargent, former education adviser to the Government of India, visited London for discussions with the Council before returning to India as its first Representative. At the end of the year Sargent retired to London to direct operations in Asia, and W.R.L. Wickham, formerly Representative in Malta and Brazil, took over in Delhi and W.R. Owain Jones moved from Aden to Karachi. In May, a report agreed by all three was presented to the Council, estimating minimum expenditure in 1948/9 of £90,000 rising to £200,000 by 1950/1 for three years. The report warned that if the Council did not meet the great demand for its services in India other countries would readily step in. They had found that English was not as widely used as had been assumed, that British ideals were only superficially understood by a small minority and that British influence would only survive for one generation unless steps were taken immediately to reinforce it.

57. Ibid.

58. Mountbatten to Pethick-Lawrence, 9 April 1947. L/1/1/79 16/26f

In our view the opportunity for the creation through the British Council of long-term British cultural influence in India is not likely to recur in so favourable a manner. In the course of only a few years the generation now in influential positions and able to direct opinion towards us, which has, despite its record of political hostility to Britain, been largely British-trained and British-educated, will die out and be replaced by men and women at least less well-informed and at worst hostile. It is in the interests of Britain to capitalise now the considerable goodwill remaining to her in this country and in the sphere allocated to the Council lies a major portion of that goodwill.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the support of the High Commissioner, the India Office and the Viceroy, now Governor-General of India, the Council was unable to persuade the Treasury to release sufficient funds. In September 1948, Noel-Baker, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth relations, told the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the development of the Council's work in India and Pakistan could not wait for the outcome of a general enquiry into the cost of the Overseas Information Services and that the principle of Council operations in the sub-continent had to be decided;

whether as a matter of high policy we should further the Council's work in the new Dominions, or whether our economic position is such that for the sake of such a comparatively small sum of money we must abandon the project altogether. This, of course, would mean leaving the field wide open to the Soviet Union, who are increasing their propaganda activities, under the guise of cultural relations, with every month that passes.<sup>60</sup>

The Treasury was unmoved and suggested that funds could be found from the Foreign Office's share of the Council's budget. Operations in the sub-continent began modestly with offices at Delhi and Karachi in 1948. The following year additional offices were opened in Madras, Calcutta and Lahore.

Britain's position in Burma at the end of the war was even more unstable than it was in India. A theoretical independence had been granted by Japan to Burma and Britain had pledged in 1931 that Burma would not lag behind India on the road to self-government.<sup>61</sup> Nationalist opposition to the re-establishment of British rule had been quick to manifest itself on the return of

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59. Report by Wickham, Sargent and Owain-Jones, 17 May 1948. BW38/5  
 60. P. Noel-Baker to S. Cripps, 10 September 1948. IO L/1/1/80.16/26M  
 61. Cmd. 4004 HMSO 1931.

peace. The Governor of Burma feared that many senior Burmese, impressed by American wartime efficiency, looked to the United States, while Burmese youth looked admiringly to the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup> There was a great need and scope for pro-British publicity in Burma and the Burma Office had recommended to Findlater Stewart that the British Council

by reflecting in its cultural activities British life and British ideals, should be able to give valuable subsidiary help to the pro-British publicity which it is considered to be so important to develop on our return to Burma.<sup>63</sup>

The Burma Office also envisaged a vital role for the Council in the care of Burmese students and cadets in Britain. B.R. Pearn, Director of Public Relations, was concerned particularly the view in Burma that American troops had won the Burmese campaign should be dispelled and that propaganda 'with a view to encouraging a favourable disposition towards the principle of Dominion status'<sup>64</sup> should be undertaken by the Council. The Council faced new organisation problems in Burma as there were neither British Missions or High Commissions to offer guidance. Although the Governor was to have overriding authority, the delicate political situation meant that he could have no overt connection with British publicity. In February 1946, the Treasury agreed reluctantly to Council expenditure in Burma but doubted

the propriety of the British Council undertaking work which on the face of it would not be cultural but straight political propaganda.<sup>65</sup>

In March J.S. Bingley, formerly Representative in Gibraltar and Persia, travelled to Burma and reported in June that: 'future prospects Council work definitely encouraging'.<sup>66</sup>

However, the physical difficulties of living and working in Burma after the war, made Bingley's task trying although the demand for his services rapidly increased. Gillan visited Rangoon in October and reported that

Looking back on it we should have been well advised to resist an improvised and too hasty entry. We should have carried out the normal exploratory survey, made a plan and then put it into operation with an assurance of sufficient staff and material.<sup>67</sup>

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62. C.Thorne, Allies of a Kind (London 1968) p.608  
 63. Unsigned memorandum for Findlater Stewart, IO L/1/1/79 16/26H  
 64. B.R. Pearn to White, 31 August 1945. BW 19/1  
 65. J.Winnifrith to P.Smith, 16 February 1946. BW 19/1  
 66. Bingley to Tunnard-Moore, 3 June 1946. BW19/1  
 67. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of South East Asia, December 1946.

Gillan saw a number of Burma's political leaders, including U Aung San, founder of Burma's biggest party and deputy chairman of the Executive Council, who was

more concerned to give me a lecture on his particular brand of controlled democracy than to listen to mine about the Council; but he was in no way antagonistic.....<sup>68</sup>

Gillan also discussed the Council with U Tin Tut and U Saw, both members of the Executive Council, who were 'genuinely interested and anxious to cooperate'.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, he was wary of developing the Council's work too rapidly.

To start now would be a gamble. In another year we shall know more about the development both of the constitutional relations between Britain and Burma and of social relationships between Britains and Burmese.<sup>70</sup>

Events were to justify Gillan's caution. U Aung San, U Saw and U Tin Tut were all members of the Burmese delegation to London in January 1947, that reached an agreement with Britain whereby elections would be held in April for a Constituent Assembly. In September, the Assembly approved a constitution designating Burma as an independent sovereign republic outside the Commonwealth and in January 1948, Burma became independent. The factions within Burma were not reconciled by this event and civil war broke out in April. Gillan's three contacts all perished; U Tin Tut was assassinated in September 1948 and U Saw was hanged in 1949 for the instigation of the murder of U Aung San and his colleagues in July 1947. The Council would not escape the repercussions of these events. Bingley continued to distribute a small amount of material but was forced to leave as a result of his alleged association with the assassins of U Aung San. By the middle of 1948 all trace of Council activity in Burma had disappeared.

Ceylon's transition to Dominion status was smooth and uneventful. It was the most advanced democracy in Asia before the war and there had been no repetition of the violence seen in India. Ceylonese Ministers had remained in office throughout the war. In February 1945, Gillan spent five days in Colombo en route to Perth and took the opportunity to discuss Council operations with the Governor and senior British officials.

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68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

Gillan recommended that the Council should begin work in Ceylon for, 'as the constitutional links with any Empire country loosen the more important it is that we should strengthen the cultural ones'.<sup>71</sup> Sir Henry Moore, the Governor, wrote to the Colonial Office in June arguing that Ceylon's needs were greater than those of East Africa or Kenya 'since the East African governments ought to be able without any political difficulties to push English culture through their Departments of Education'.<sup>72</sup> The Governor only wanted material from the Council and advised against the establishment of direct representation in view of the opposition of the Sinhalese and Tamil movements to the spread of British culture. At the end of 1945 the Council proposed modest increases in the material it sent to Ceylon but received no reply from the Colonial Office. Political advance in Ceylon was hardly interrupted by the war and a new constitution was published in 1946 providing for Cabinet government on the British model. A general election was held in 1947 and Ceylon became a Dominion in February 1948. At the beginning of 1949, the Council was invited to start work in Ceylon and a staff and office were established in that year, mainly concerned with improving the standards of English teaching and maintaining links between Ceylonese and British universities.

Britain's colonies in the Mediterranean and the Middle East were the first to receive the Council's services before the war and bore the brunt of the post-war economies. In Malta and Gozo, the institutes continued to flourish, the Valletta institute receiving amongst its distinguished visitors in 1948, the Shah of Iran, Lord Mountbatten and the Lord Chancellor. The Gozo institute escaped the cuts in 1948 but only at the expense of the withdrawal of subsidies from the local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides movements, the cancellation of exhibitions and the raising of membership fees. In Gibraltar, the Council was forced to consider the closure of the Calpe Institute in 1947 but, happily, negotiations with the Governor and leading public figures resulted in raising sufficient funds by local subscription to enable it to function until 1950 without financial support from the Council. A Council Representative remained to help with the administration of the Institute, which was renowned for its orchestra.

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71. Gillan to White, 21 March 1945. BW 2/315

72. Minutes of Joint Standing Committee, 24 July 1945. BW 77/1

In Cyprus, too, the Council was forced to re-evaluate its pattern of activities. In particular, it wished to withdraw from elementary English teaching which consumed a major part of the Cyprus budget. This meant cutbacks in the English School, the Junior School and the village evening classes, which gave lessons in twenty-three villages, and in the English taught in the Council's five institutes. This reorientation was achieved gradually in the face of opposition from the Colonial Government and the Council turned to adult education and cultural activities.

Some savings were found in the Council's modest budget for Aden. The institute continued to attract a wide range of members and was described as

the one meeting place in Aden for all communities, Arab, Italian and Jewish with members of the British colony assisting as lecturers and instructors.<sup>73</sup>

In addition, the Council looked to Palestine for economies expecting that the hostile situation would render activities nearly impossible. After the report of the Anglo-American Commission in 1946, there were widescale resignations from its institutes in Arab areas. However, work continued in spite of Zionist terrorist activities, until February 1947 when all British subjects were moved into the Protected Zones. The situation deteriorated markedly in November after the United Nations General Assembly accepted the partition of Palestine. The Council's staff were restricted increasingly to the main cities and, in consultation with the Colonial Office, the Council budgeted for the maintenance only of an office at Jerusalem, with a skeleton staff, after Britain had withdrawn on 15 May 1948. Sir Alan Cunningham, British High Commissioner in Palestine, resisted this proposal, pointing out that the Council would have to take over many of the educational activities undertaken previously by the British administration, particularly in the Arab area. The School of Higher Studies in Jerusalem supported by the Council, was the only place where Arabs could study, with Jews, for British degrees. Referring to the Council's club in Jaffa, Cunningham wrote,

If the Arab connection is of any significance to Britain, then this institute is of real importance and its future should not be jeopardised at this stage.<sup>74</sup>

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73. British Council Annual Report 1946/7 p.44

74. Cunningham to Creech-Jones, 13 December 1947 BW 47/7



In the proposed Jewish state, Cunningham looked forward to the Council meeting the demand for technical advice and instruction. Cunningham concluded,

It seems paradoxical that at a time when the British administration is withdrawing, the only British agency remaining should be weakened rather than strengthened. This is not to imply that the Council will be the only British agency at work in Palestine, but that it is recognised that the approach through the field of culture and human relations is, to put it at its lowest, a valuable adjunct to the political or diplomatic approach.<sup>75</sup>

The Council's Representative, J. Jardine, agreed that the Council's long term aims should not be endangered by short term considerations. Concentration in Jerusalem would isolate it from the two new governments and break links that had been built up carefully in the Arab and Jewish communities. Moreover, Jardine had been assured by Arab and Jewish leaders that the Council would be welcome; Dr Weizman had placed 'a high value on the Council's work in the Jewish community!'.<sup>76</sup>

Cunningham recommended the expansion rather than the contraction of the Council's work, but his appeals fell on deaf ears at the Colonial Office and the Council. Adam replied that the Council's work in Palestine had been exceptional and that,

With regard to function, the Council is not required or designed to fill gaps in a country's education system, nor to provide liaison between disparate racial or political groups.....At present effective work has almost ceased outside Jerusalem and I have no desire to leave hostages around the country indefinitely.<sup>77</sup>

The Foreign Office, however, whose responsibility Palestine became after 15 May, agreed with the High Commissioner 'that it would be unwise to let our political withdrawal be followed by a cultural one'.<sup>78</sup> Increasing violence in the spring of 1948 forced the Council to take precautionary measures. The Representative's office was transferred to Amman at the end of April, the institutes were entrusted to Arab and Jewish caretakers and the School of Higher Studies and the Haifa and Jaffa institutes were closed. During the civil war that followed the termination of the British mandate, Jardine was able to maintain contacts in the Arab state from his office in Transjordan but he was unable to rescue Council property in Israel, which was largely lost. The Council's

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75. Ibid.

76. Jardine to Adam, 20 January 1948 BW 47/7

77. Adam to Cunningham, 29 December 1947 BW 47/7

78. C. Warner to G. Dudley, 7 February 1948 F0924/629 LC491/34/451

1949/50 budget for this area was slashed, although increased services were provided in Jordan and the Council's library in Jerusalem was preserved.

The war had hastened the development of nationalism in the Colonies and particularly in the Gold Coast and Nigeria where constitutions, published in 1946 and 1945 respectively, were rejected by nationalist leaders. The Council's work fell into two categories, both of which were hampered by shortages of staff; the development of libraries and Council centres. Macmillan perceived the new mood of impatient nationalism in West Africa:

Confined to the capital cities and Government circles, he had met it face to face only among the large groups of teachers and students whom he had addressed; but he sensed the unrest. There were riches from cocoa but very insufficient education.<sup>79</sup>

By restricting membership of the Council's institutes to the 'nearly highbrow', Macmillan hoped to provide an outlet for the educated African and surroundings in which black and white could meet on equal terms. He did not wish to exclude the less educated but believed that the black intelligentsia stood most in need of cultural facilities and that the Colonial Governments should provide these services for the masses. Institutes were opened at Bathurst and Lagos in 1946, completing the Council's coverage of the four colonies. In the development of libraries, Macmillan advocated the foundation of central libraries, with cultural adjuncts, in each colony. A second tier of reading rooms, organised locally and supported by the Government, could cater for the less advanced. Macmillan returned to England suffering from malaria in 1946 and his post was not refilled. Each colony in future had its own representative. Macmillan had fought consistently for the Council's independence from the colonial authorities and was displeased at the outcome of the Findlater Stewart enquiry and the demarcation of functions with the Colonial Office which, in his view, had restricted the Council severely. He

began to feel very disillusioned with the policy-makers at home, and suspected that the weak front shown to the Colonial Office had to do with finance, and that Gillan might even be pleased that the Government's "Development" Department should save the Council by going direct to the Treasury. He began to think it was time for him to go.<sup>80</sup>

79. Mona Macmillan, Draft Biography of W.M. Macmillan, chapter 6, p.158

80. Ibid. The "Development" Department was the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. For Findlater Stewart report see above p202

After Macmillan's departure, the Council tried to broaden the base of its work in West Africa as Gillan believed 'that the time has come when we must open the door a little wider if we are not to be accused of snobbery'.<sup>81</sup> National libraries were founded by the Council in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in 1947 and travelling library services were organised elsewhere. In the institutes a range of activities was undertaken; a typical programme of group events was that of the Accra Institute in 1949:

Monday	Accra Choral Society
Tuesday	Table Tennis Match, Ballroom Dance classes, Play Reading, Drama Group.
Wednesday	Meeting of Readers and Writers Group, Open Night(Film Show, quiz or recital).
Thursday	Orchestra Group, Gramophone recital.
Friday	Meeting of Operatic Society, Play Reading, Drama Group.
Saturday	Hockey Matches (and Wednesdays). <sup>82</sup>

During the riots in the Gold Coast in 1948, the Institute was visited by a mob but no damage was done. In 1947 the Council's work was extended to Nigeria's Eastern Province and in 1948 to the Northern Provinces. The Council gave up direct responsibility for the development of libraries in 1948 and this work was transferred to the governments concerned with the Council offering only expert guidance.

A Representative was not sent to East Africa until 1947. R.A.Frost established his headquarters at Nairobi in Kenya and founded the multi-racial Kenya Institute in 1948, with the help of a grant of £50,000 from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. The Governor of Kenya reported in June 1948 that the Council was 'a really important influence in the life of the Colony'.<sup>83</sup> K.W.Blackburne, director of Information Services at the Colonial Office, visited East and Central Africa in May 1949 to discuss the development of Council operations. He told the Colonial authorities that the Colonial Office expected

that the Council could serve a most valuable purpose particularly in improving relationships between the various communities and in taking an interest in the African "intelligentsia".<sup>84</sup>

Blackburne recommended that the Council should concentrate on advanced Africans and the urban black populations in Uganda,

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81. Gillan to C.Jeffries, 25 January 1946 BW 8/3  
 82. Accra Institute Group Notices, June 1949 BW 8/6  
 83. F.S.Mitchell to L.Cohen, 30 June 1948 CO 875/45/1  
 84. Report by K.W.Blackburne, May 1949 CO 875/47/1

Tanganyika and Nyasaland. The Council's efforts to promote contacts between Europeans and Africans in Kenya had provoked considerable criticism from official and unofficial sections of the white population. In Northern Rhodesia Colonial officials argued that the Council should work mainly with the European populations as the African was less advanced than elsewhere in East Africa and the strong South African influence made whites suspicious of anything British. Indeed, it was recommended that a Council officer in Northern Rhodesia should speak Afrikaans and preferably be a South African. Blackburne suggested

that it is of equal importance to give the Afrikaans population of Northern Rhodesia a better understanding of Britain, as it is to improve race relations in other colonies.<sup>85</sup>

In 1949 the Council made plans to expand its operations in Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland but in the event could afford only one new centre at Mombasa.

The pattern of the Council's work in the West Indies was well established by the end of the war. In 1944 the Council had taken over the administration of the regional library scheme and it had been told in October 1945 that

the most important single contribution which the British Council could make to the spread of British culture in the West Indies lay in the development of public libraries...<sup>86</sup>

This became the central feature of the Council's work in the islands but in 1948 this responsibility was transferred to the local authorities. However, the West Indian Governors argued that their colonies could not afford the scheme and that it should not have been started without sufficient funds to guarantee its completion. At the expense of other projects and to preserve the work already done, the Colonial Office asked the Council to finance this scheme until 1953 when it would be returned to the colonial governments. Over the same period the Council also supported a rural library scheme.

The Commonwealth and Empire had by these stages become an increasingly important field for the Council. In 1950 Sir Charles Jeffries called for a 'drastic reassessment' of the Council's priorities towards the new Commonwealth and Britain's African and Asian possessions 'where the link of blood-relations with us

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85. Ibid.

86. Joint Standing Committee Minutes, 2 October 1945 BW77/1

is absent'.

I can say with absolute certainty that if we could treble the Council's present activities in the more important Colonies it would have a really significant effect and would have a good chance of turning a tide which otherwise may go against us for all the excellence of our official administration.<sup>87</sup>

The growth of nationalism and the relative decline in Britain's power undermined traditional political, economic and strategic ties and placed greater reliance on a 'different form of imperialism - that is to say, of expansion which brings material benefits and extends the influence of culture'.<sup>88</sup> With the accession of the the Asian Dominions, the Commonwealth had to adjust to accommodate national republics and concentrate on strengthening its unity. The English language and the cultural traditions of the departing imperial power were symbols of that unity. Britain's policy of eventual self-government for the colonies was

coupled to the hope that they may of their own volition remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is to this end that the British Council may be able to do some of its most valuable work in promoting an appreciation of the cultural values of the British connection and of a mutual understanding.<sup>89</sup>

The projection of Britain and the development of cultural relations within the Empire could not be left to chance. The Council regarded both the United States and the Soviet Union as threats to British cultural influence in the Empire. Deteriorating relations between the West and the Soviet Union in Europe called for a re-examination and reinforcement of the unity of the Commonwealth and Empire to give Britain some independence of action and to combat the lure of communism. As Jeffries explained,

It is obvious enough that it is vital for us, and not only for us but for Western civilisation, and, I believe, for the best interests of the "backward peoples" themselves, that they should be with us and not with those who are against us.<sup>90</sup>

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87. C.Jeffries to W.Strang, 17 June 1950 F0924/843 CRL 160/40  
 88. T.S.Eliot, Notes on a Definition of Culture, (London 1963)p.92  
 89. A.Gillan, Address to Conference of Local Government Clerks, Sydney, 13 September 1950 Gillan Papers  
 90. C.Jeffries to W.Strang, 17 June 1950 F0924/843 CRL 160/40

○ CHAPTER ELEVEN

FIRM FRIENDS, DANGEROUS ENEMIES, WAVERING ALLIES.<sup>1</sup>

To finance the expansion of the Council's work in Europe and the Commonwealth and Empire, savings had to be found in the areas of high expenditure during the war - the Middle East and Latin America. In addition, the Council received unwelcome economies from its failure to become permanently established in the Soviet Union, the United States and China. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the war as the predominant powers on the world stage and it was vital that Britain's case should be presented well in both. The Council looked forward to expanding its work in both:

There is no doubt that if the political connection between Britain and the Soviet Union is to endure, it must be supported by greater understanding between the two peoples. Substantially, there is no other method of approach to the Soviet people than through cultural relations and the high esteem in which scientific, technical and scholarly achievement is held by the Russian governing classes makes the Council quite obviously the appropriate channel of communication.

In normal times the development of social cultural relations is the best if not the only means of stimulating close understanding between the people of Great Britain and the United States.<sup>2</sup>

However, for many reasons, some of which were apparent during the war, the two super-powers slipped almost entirely from the Council's field.

In the Soviet Union increasing tension in Europe was reflected in the decline of the Council's work. The Council continued to work closely with the Moscow Embassy's Press Department but accommodation problems and official restrictions prevented the establishment of a large staff. A drive against western tendencies in culture and art in 1946 and the difficulties of finding visitors acceptable to the Soviet authorities reduced considerably the Council's scope and at the end of the year it was forced to abandon all its activities in the Soviet Union. The suppression of the Council at the centre of the Soviet empire foreshadowed its expulsion from the satellites and the continuing worsening of relations at the diplomatic level. Britain's ambassador

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1. Title taken from the Drogheda Report, Cmd. 9138 1954 para.7  
 2. Memorandum on Future Development, March 1944 BW 2/101

noted that

Nowhere was the change that came over the Soviet scene after the breakdown of the Foreign Ministers Conference in 1947 more apparent than in the attitude of VOKS. <sup>3</sup>

Through the Home Division the Council had established contacts with American servicemen based in Britain during the war. Nancy Parkinson, head of the Home Division, pressed for an early review of the ban on the Council's representation in the United States to preserve these links. In New York the Council's various affairs were transferred to the appropriate division of the British Information Services and consisted mainly of the exchange of information with the Cultural Division of the Department of State, purchases from the United States, the distribution of Council material and travel arrangements for Council students and guests journeying to and from Latin America. The British Information Services passed to Foreign Office control and preserved their monopoly on publicity in the United States. The Foreign Office argued that a distaste for foreign propaganda organisations persisted in the United States and that ties on cultural, linguistic and educational levels were already strong and needed no encouragement. Parkinson described the latter argument as 'so pathetic as to make one despair' for it implied a level of understanding between the two nations that did not exist. <sup>4</sup> Richard Casey, when Minister of State in the Middle East, had written to Churchill on the subject of Anglo-American relations. As a former Australian Minister in the United States, Casey was well placed to offer an objective view. Many Americans, he argued, believed the British to be 'old-fashioned, class conscious, supercilious, patronising and imperialistic'. Casey continued

I do not believe in the sentimental approach, common blood, culture, language, "only the Atlantic divides us", etc. The British and the Americans are different people and we do not naturally understand one another..... partnership has got to be worked for; it will not happen by itself. <sup>5</sup>

A more compelling argument against the Council operating directly in the United States was that of finance. The Council had no budgetary provision for the United States in its post-war

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3. Peterson, op.cit. p.283

4. Minute by Nancy Parkinson, 15 October 1945. BW 63/7

5. Casey, op.cit. p.153

estimates that were already squeezed by cuts and the demands of Europe and the Commonwealth and Empire. The Foreign Office argued that the development of organised cultural relations with the United States would require vast dollar expenditure that the Treasury would never sanction. The Council believed that this need not be the case if its role was restricted to coordinating and encouraging existing organisations. The Foreign Office's view, however, prevailed. The Council did not operate directly in the United States, although the distribution of material, preparation of art exhibitions and arrangements for theatrical and musical touring companies were undertaken where the United States met most of the cost.<sup>6</sup>

Japan's surrender in August 1945 did not bring peace to China and before the end of the year the Kuomintang and the Communists had clashed in Manchuria. Britain maintained a policy of neutrality in line with the Moscow declaration of 1945. The Nationalist Government was recognised but provided with little aid there were few official contacts with the Communists. General Marshall's attempts to reconcile the two sides in 1946 failed and by the beginning of 1947 general civil war had broken out, exacerbated by a grave financial and economic crisis. The Council's work, however, continued unhampered except in so far as inflation and material shortages affected the planning of activities and the working conditions of staff. On the conclusion of hostilities in the Far East, the Chinese Government and the evacuated universities returned to eastern China, followed by the Council, which transferred its headquarters to Nanking, keeping the Chungking office as a regional centre. An office was opened in Shanghai in March 1946 and grants were given to the Henry Lister Institute and Schools and the Sino-British Cultural Association in Kunming, Chungking, Shanghai and Nanking. The Council also assisted the re-stocking of Chinese universities.

Under Professor Roxby's guidance the balance was restored between cultural and the humanities and science and technology aspects of the Council's work in China. Much of Needham's work had been outside the Council's field and, although the Council continued to be associated with the Scientific Cooperation Office, with Needham's departure in 1946 its involvement decreased. Needham's successor jointly represented the Council and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and worked

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6. Two officers were appointed to the Washington Embassy in 1972/3 to deal with educational and cultural liaison.



independently of the Council's Representative in China. Roxby planned regional centres at Peking in the north, Nanking and Shanghai in the east, Hankow and Wuchang in central China, Canton or Hong Kong in the south-east and Kunming in the west. The Foreign Office vetoed the use of Hong Kong as a regional centre on political grounds.<sup>7</sup> The major features of the Council's work in China were the granting of scholarships and fellowships for study in Britain, invitations to distinguished Chinese to visit Britain, English-teaching in Chinese colleges and universities and the maintenance of libraries and reading rooms. No institutes were established in deference to Chinese sensitivity concerning foreign organisations but a large amount of material was distributed through the Council's offices, which also served as cultural centres holding film shows, musical recitals and public lectures. Roxby commented on the Council's future in China that

There is a general recognition that the British-trained returned students are, as a whole, reliable and anxious to give disinterested service and are one of the most valuable elements in this country. At present they are small in number but many of them occupy important and responsible positions and nearly all.....retain warm feelings of friendship and regard for Great Britain. <sup>8</sup>

Before his departure Needham entered a strong plea for the continuation of scientific work in China, arguing that scientific and technical aid rather than Shakespeare was what the country urgently required and that the provision of such information offered Britain the means to compete with American plans for the rapid industrialisation of China. Needham maintained that

If our efforts have been welcomed unbelievably warmly it has been because it has been clear that we stood for the England of Newton and Darwin, of Rutherford and Fleming, and not for the classical learning of the squirearchy..... <sup>9</sup>

Roxby died suddenly in February 1947 and was replaced by Linda Grier. In 1947 a regional office was opened at Peking and a centre and library at Nanking. The work of the Shanghai office was expanded and Grier visited six other cities to encourage the establishment of branches of the Sino-British Cultural Association.

7. Minute by H.Prideaux-Brune, 10 December 1945, FO 924/176  
LC5832/40/452

8. Memorandum by Roxby, 20 September 1945. BW 23/6

9. Supplementary Recommendations by Needham, 7 November 1945.  
BW 23/6

The Scientific Office was reorganised and moved to Shanghai where its normal activities were continued. In 1947 twenty post-graduate and five fellowships were awarded and by 1948 the Council was subsidising eight posts at Chinese universities. The Representative and the regional directors undertook substantial tours of China establishing contacts with educational institutions and finding new outlets for the Council's material.

In September and October 1947 the Nationalist armies were defeated in Manchuria and northern China. In November the Council's staff were advised by the Embassy to leave Peking and work in Communist-controlled areas was abandoned in order to preserve relations with the Nationalist Government. The Foreign Office took a more pessimistic view than the Council of its prospects in China in the event of a Communist victory. The Council had provided material to Communist areas and there is a record of a consignment of books for the Communist leaders being sent to Chou-en-Lai's secretary on a personal basis in November 1946.<sup>10</sup> In the meantime, the Council followed a holding policy until the outcome of the civil war had been decided. In November and January 1949 the Communist scored decisive victories and Tientsin and Peking were occupied in January, Nanking in April, Shanghai in May and Canton in October. A member of the Council's staff recorded the events that followed the downfall of the Kuomintang in Nanking. The Council's centre was closed over the weekend of 21/22 April as a precautionary measure but the staff went to the office on the Sunday morning.

The Communist troops were coming in, order was restored in the city and there were no incidents Nobody came to see us and we were not interfered with in any way. We opened our centre on the Monday.....we have carried on in just the same way and no one has said anything about us at all.<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese People's Republic was formally proclaimed in Peking on 1 October 1949. In January 1950 Britain recognised the new Communist Government in China and the Council's headquarters moved to Peking. The Council's activities continued in an anonymous limbo of non-recognition and attracted both communist and non-communist participants. The official British and American

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10. Despatch note in FO 924/423 LC4581/69/452

11. A.C.Scott, 'Work for the British Council at Nanking in 1949', Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, Vol.38, 1950, p.137.

information services were closed by the new regime. The Council, however, resumed contacts with colleges and universities, including those that were now wholly communist institutions. Its centres, especially at Shanghai, were well attended and, at Nanking the centre was busier than before the Communist take-over, with monthly attendances totalling twelve thousand. Although the Communist authorities were not actively hostile towards the Council, their attitude became increasingly negative. The Council's unrecognised status meant that shows and lectures could no longer be held in public buildings and articles could not be placed in the Press in the Council's name. Movement of staff within China was restricted, entry visas for new staff were not provided and it became difficult to import material. By 1951 the Council had been forced to close all three centres and to suspend the bringing of Chinese scholars and visitors to Britain and the despatch of lecturers to China. Its unofficial status had enabled it to remain after the Communist victory but it could not continue without official cooperation. Nevertheless, it remained optimistic that it would eventually return to the fruitful field it had discovered in China.

The popularity of the Council's Centres in China to the last is a measure of the eagerness of the Chinese for cultural relations with Britain. This gives hope that the present withdrawal of the Council's activities is temporary and that cultural contact between the two countries, whose peoples have so much to give and to gain, will be resumed at some not very distant time. 12

With the return of peace Britain was confronted in the Middle East with a wide range of problems that had lain in abeyance during the war. Above all, the question of Palestine dominated and complicated Britain's relations with the Arab states. There was also the renegotiation of Britain's treaty rights in Egypt and Iraq, the dangers posed by Soviet pressure in Iran and Turkey, the safeguarding of commercial interests in the Arabian peninsula and the growth of an Arab nationalism hostile to Britain and her imperial history. Britain had neither the military or the economic means or the political will to retain her pre-war position in the area and sought to use instead new weapons to fight a rearguard action in defence of essential interests. By encouraging

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12. British Council Annual Report, 1951/52, p.24. The Council resumed work in China in 1973.

the political and economic development of the Middle Eastern countries and their cooperation in areas of mutual concern, Britain hoped to increase the security and stability of the area and thereby safeguard her own interests.

But Britain lacked the economic resources to give such aid herself and the time had long gone when she could force reforms on reactionary Governments against their will. We had to deal with those in possession, hoping by a process of influence and persuasion to make them more liberal within a framework of treaties which would regularise Britain's relations with the Arab countries while ending the old and increasingly distasteful system of British suzerainty. 13

Education had a vital role to play in raising standards of living and political practice and there was considerable scope for the improvement of facilities. The wartime activities of the British Council were expected to pay dividends in this field.

The prospect for Britain was not entirely bleak. British prestige stood high and there was a great demand for English teaching, for information about Britain and for technical and scientific assistance that Arab countries looked to Britain to provide. However, severe financial difficulties, that placed Britain in the position of being a debtor country to Egypt, prevented, not only the maintenance of the diplomatic and military position but also, the exploitation of the interest in Britain that had been generated by the war. As the area of highest expenditure and most rapid growth for the Council during the war, the Middle East offered the greatest opportunities for cutbacks. After a cost-cutting tour of the area in the spring of 1946 Gillan reported informed British opinion to be asking,

Britain has won the greatest war in history at the cost of thousands of millions of pounds of money and hundreds of thousands of lives. Her prestige stands higher than it has ever stood before. The whole world wants to learn English, and most of it looks to Britain for leadership culturally as well as morally and materially. And yet you come here just at this moment to throw your opportunities away for the sake of a few thousand pounds. Why? 14

The Council's Middle Eastern estimates for 1946/7 were reduced by 50% and this trend continued.

13. F. Williams, A Prime Minister Remembers, (London 1961) p.176-7

14. A. Gillan, Report on a tour in the Middle East, April 1946.

A conference of the Middle Eastern Information Officers held in Cairo in September 1946, attended by senior British military and diplomatic representatives, concluded that public opinion was turning against Britain and that Britain's difficulties were being exploited by Soviet and communist propaganda. Sir R. Campbell Britain's ambassador in Egypt, argued for a publicity machine geared

to counter communist propaganda and at the same time bring home to the Egyptian masses the character and virtues of the British system.<sup>15</sup>

The conference agreed that such measures were necessary to show that Britain and the United States could bar a Soviet advance in the Middle East which would in turn persuade the ruling classes to undertake the social reforms advocated by Britain. Concerning the Council there was 'a general consensus of opinion that its work is of great importance and should be developed'.<sup>16</sup> The conference recommended that the Council's grant should be increased and explained that

The British Council enjoys one great advantage in the Middle East. Its representatives are outside the political arena and their relations with the natives do not suffer in the same way from current events. ....We can use the Council within the limits of their educational work, to promote knowledge and sympathy with our institutions.<sup>17</sup>

This appeal fell on deaf ears at the Treasury, faced, as it was, with considerable economic problems at home.

The drastic reduction of the Middle East budget forced a radical revision of priorities. Under the influence of its new Education Director, Dr A.E.Morgan, the Council tried to eliminate as far as possible elementary English teaching and subsidies to British schools, mainstays of the Council's wartime activities in the Middle East, in favour of the training of foreign English teachers and adult education through the application of the discussion group techniques developed by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs during the war. Morgan argued that it was not the Council's responsibility to alleviate the deficiencies of the Arab education or to provide a British education for all British subjects abroad. Support for primary schools should be withdrawn

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15. Minute by I. Kirkpatrick, 30 September 1946. FO 924/516

LC5189/914/452

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

and retained only for good secondary schools, such as Victoria College. The institutes should abandon elementary English teaching and coaching for university courses and become instead centres of adult and pedagogic instruction.

In 1947 the Council withdrew completely from the direct administration of British schools in Egypt and its responsibilities were transferred to a Schools Governing Bodies Committee, founded in November and including representatives of the Embassy and the Council. The 1948/9 annual report contained a strong plea for the maintenance of schools run on British lines in the Middle East.

There can be no doubt of the value to the political stability of these countries of the British type of education, which recognises the importance of the development of character and a sense of social responsibility. Indeed it has been argued with reference to certain countries that educational development is a prerequisite for the sound development and stability of their political and economic life. <sup>18</sup>

Morgan's views challenged the foundations of the Council's work in the Middle East as they had been built by Lloyd. They were briefly adopted but strong opposition from diplomatic and Council personnel overseas forced the Council to revert to established methods.

A meeting at the Foreign Office in July 1949 urged the Council to revise its educational policy in the Middle East in order to combat the lure of communism. The failure of the Middle Eastern governments to reform their political systems and to raise standards of living was attributed to the lack of an educated, liberal élite.

Our fundamental difficulty is that, while we are determined that these independent countries shall themselves be responsible for putting their own houses in order, none possess the leaders to do it. An educated nucleus, capable of honest leadership and genuinely anxious to raise the moral, intellectual and material standards is needed, or all reforms will break down under corruption, inertia and the desire to avoid responsibility. <sup>19</sup>

Britain, the meeting agreed, was admirably placed to meet the educational needs of the Middle East but the real issue was whether the Government was prepared to provide enough money for

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18. British Council Annual Report, 1948/9, p.90

19. Minutes of a meeting on Education in the Middle East,

this and 'whether indeed we should not regard education as our primary mission in the Middle East'.<sup>20</sup> The question was undecided.

In Egypt, negotiations for the revision of the 1936 Treaty aroused considerable hostility towards Britain. The issues of the evacuation of British troops, the future status of the Sudan and provisions for defence, provoked much bitterness which was reflected in attendance at the Council's institutes, particularly in the provinces. In the spring of 1946 the Council's work came briefly to a standstill and in 1947 a bomb was planted at the Alexandria Institute and disturbances occurred at Zagazig. In January 1947 membership of the Anglo-Egyptian Union stood at over one thousand, approximately two-thirds Egyptian, but continuing political differences resulted in its closure at the end of the year.

More important, however, was the fact that most of the Council's activities continued unhindered. During the rioting of February 1946 the Council's institutes were the only British-occupied buildings that did not need military guards and students sometimes formed escorts to take British members of staff home on troubled nights. In Cairo and Alexandria the Institutes maintained a fairly constant number of students from 1946-1950, approximately one thousand at the former and six hundred at the latter. Due to the financial cuts, the three Delta Institutes had to abandon English teaching and become purely cultural centres. They were run on a skeleton basis by local staff supervised from Cairo. The Institute at Minia was closed. Efforts to limit the Council's commitments to British schools in Egypt and within the Egyptian education system met with strong resistance from the Embassy. In July 1945 Killearn argued that this work was 'the most solid element in our position here'. Killearn explained that

the days of which I might call..... the "gunboat diplomacy" are past. And we now have to rely on other means - and indeed better means to maintain our position in Egypt. Education stands in this in the first rank. It costs us comparatively little; the returns are incalculably great. <sup>21</sup>

Cuts in the Council's budget in 1946/7 the Embassy warned were

all too likely to be interpreted locally both by Egyptians and Britons, as a sign that we are abandoning our traditional position here. <sup>22</sup>

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20. Ibid.

21. Killearn to Eden, 13 July 1945. F0924/169 LC3063/31/45

22. J. Bowker to Bevin, 20 February 1946. F0924/244 LC733/17/454

There was some restoration of the budget in the following year, mainly to provide new premises for Victoria College in Cairo, to increase subsidies to schools and to extend facilities at the Delta Institutes. But the downward trend continued in 1949 and 1950, with increasing emphasis being placed on the improvement of educational facilities in Egypt at the expense of the Council's cultural and social activities. In July 1949 the tapering off of subsidies to British schools was halted, a decision that was strongly supported by Campbell in a despatch to the Foreign Office in January 1950. If necessary, Campbell argued, funds should be diverted from information work for education.

The evidence of the need is all around us in the lamentable absence of leadership and moral responsibility which makes us despair of advancement in the Middle East and which increases the sense of frustration and creates only communism's opportunity.

If it is wise economy to spend where the yield will be greatest, is it too much to say that the expenditure which may reasonably be expected to contribute most effectively to raising the moral, intellectual and material standards of the Middle East and to saving it from falling under communist domination will be those spent on schools.<sup>23</sup>

In 1950 the Institute at Mehalla was closed and most functional activities reduced.

The future status of the Sudan was one of the issues at stake in the renegotiation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the question on which talks broke down in 1947. Attlee was not prepared 'to hand them over to the ruling classes in Egypt',<sup>24</sup> After a visit in 1946 Gillan reported that

Ever since the 1936 Treaty, Egypt had been blatantly propagandising her wares - political, material and cultural - in the Sudan while Britain, preoccupied by war, had let many opportunities slide.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the delicacy of the negotiations with Egypt the Council was encouraged to develop its work in the Sudan. A Representative arrived in 1947 and a centre was opened at Omdurman in January 1948 run by a committee of twelve Sudanese advised by the Council's Representative. It received over three hundred applications for membership but was only able to take half of them. In addition, the Council worked through, and subsidised, the Khartoum Cultural

23. R.Campbell to C.Warner, 28 January 1950, FO 924/790 CRL 22/8

24. F.Williams, op.cit. p.177

25. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of the Middle East, April 1946.



Centre and the Unity High School. It aimed to provide staff for schools and colleges in a deliberate move to compete with Egyptian influence. Unfortunately, this effort was wasted when the Foreign Office decided in 1950 that the Council would have to withdraw from the Sudan in order to maintain its activities in Ethiopia.<sup>26</sup>

Ethiopia suffered most severely in the post-war cuts, having its budget for 1946/7 reduced by two-thirds to \$15,000. This meant that major projects had to be abandoned despite the Emperor's personal involvement in some of them; Haile Selassie 'was not amused'.<sup>27</sup> In 1946 the institute at Dessie and a community centres project, started by the Emperor, were abandoned and in 1947 the Harar Institute disappeared, leaving only one at Addis Ababa. Ethiopia was eager for British help in the development of education and was willing to share expenditure equally; many of the Council's staff received half their salaries from the Ethiopian Government. However, limited resources and the low priority given by the Foreign Office to Ethiopia, forced the Council to reduce its work there. In 1946 it was

pointed out that the Foreign Office have a low priority interest in this country and it was considered whether the Council's activities should be dropped entirely.<sup>28</sup>

The Council opposed this course but the Foreign Office's view prevailed in the long run and the Council's organisation in Ehtiopia was run down gradually. The Council's work in Eritrea was allowed to lapse completely after the war.<sup>29</sup>

Turkey, too, suffered heavily, beginning with a thirty per cent reduction in 1946/7 and the main lines of work established during the war were continued. Soviet pressure for bases and a revision of the Montreaux Convention, underlined Turkey's strategic significance. Britain was unable to help Turkey resist Soviet demands leading to the announcement of substantial American aid for Turkey in March 1947. Through the Council, however, she could preserve some of her traditional influence and interests. Britain's ambassador justified his demands that the Council's grant should not be reduced thus:

The fostering of close political relations between the United Kingdom and Turkey during the years ahead must be a paramount feature of British foreign policy.

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26. A centre was reopened at Omdurman in 1958

27. A.Gillan, Report on a tour of the Middle East, April 1946

28. Ibid.

Gillan Papers.

Such relations are best founded on a friendship based on mutual understanding, and I regard the work of the British Council as really important contribution to this understanding.....we can afford to neglect no means of fostering our own ideology in this country which lies on the boundary between the two camps. 30

Apart from elementary English teaching in the Halkelevis, the Council concentrated on encouraging the training of Turkish English teachers and continued to support the Boys and Girls High Schools in İstanbul. Weekly English broadcasts were compiled for Ankara Radio and the translation of English books continued. A Turkish State Ballet School with two British instructors in charge was founded in 1947 after a visit by Ninette de Valois sponsored by the Council. In 1948 the Council organised a very popular festival of Anglo-Turkish Music in Ankara that was attended by President İonu. A member of the Council's staff was appointed Adviser in English Teaching to the Director of Training of the Turkish General Staff and the Council's pupils included General Orbay, Chief of the General Staff, who wanted all Turkish officers to learn English. Britain also replaced her rivals in the field of technical education through the activities of the Council. Two Technical Advisors were provided to organise the development of Ankara Polytechnic, the Council nominated the Professor of Aeronautics to the Technical University at Istanbul and the Works Manager of the Ankara Industrial School. British teachers and material were sent to Turkish technical institutions, Turkey agreed to recognise English science degrees and over forty technical students were brought to Britain. The Council's Ankara office had a special Engineering Adviser. In February 1947 the British Consul-General at Izmir reported on the pervasive influence of the Council in Turkey.

In my endeavours to foster good relations with the Turks I have been made aware of the strong influence that has been subtly exerted here by the British Council under Mr Postlethwaite, whom I without hesitation acknowledge as the most valued collaborator I have had at any post....<sup>31</sup>

Attempts to renegotiate the 1930 Treaty with Iraq failed, but fear of Soviet designs in eastern Turkey and northern Iran brought Iraq to the side of the West. However, the issue of Palestine hindered efforts to improve relations between Iraq and Britain.

30. D.Kelly to Bevin, 6 September 1946.F0924/247 LC4250/17/451

31. D.V.Cusden to D.L.Busk, 5 February 1947. BW 61/3

The Council's activities were concentrated on the four institutes at Baghdad, Mosul, Basra and Kirkuk. An Education Officer was appointed to the Baghdad Office in 1948 to liaise with the Ministry of Education and supervise the teaching of English in Iraqi schools. The Council's activities were extended to military and technical colleges and a fortnightly film programme was shown to King Feisal at the Palace. In 1948 the Kirkuk centre had to be abandoned because of financial shortages and the outbreak of war in Palestine in that year, in which Iraqi troops were involved, curtailed the Council's work.

British propaganda in Iran had the dual task of combating strong Soviet influence in the north, which served as a centre for the dissemination of communist propaganda, and deep nationalistic resentment of Britain's commercial position. In the spring of 1946, after a visit to Iran, Morgan described Britain's unpopularity as stemming from a view that saw Britain 'as the buttress of the hated oligarchy and Russia as the light of rising freedom'.<sup>32</sup> The Information Department at the Tehran Embassy was strengthened and strong pleas were entered for the rapid extension of the Council's work.

The British Council in Persia must therefore be regarded as in the frontline and it should not be stinted.<sup>33</sup>

However, plans for the foundation of three new institutes had to be abandoned due to financial stringency, although the Ambassador pressed vigorously for one at Mershed in the Soviet zone where only small-scale activities were undertaken. In October 1945 Bullard had argued that it would

be a serious error to include the British Council in the campaign of "axing".....The Council here is popular and influential both with the public and the Persian Government, and, I am thankful to say, has avoided being suspected of political activities, at any rate by the Persians.<sup>34</sup>

The three existing institutes at Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz had an average monthly attendance in 1947 of nine hundred, two hundred and two hundred and fifty respectively. They concentrated on courses for Iranian teachers and advanced classes. In 1948 they were reorganised and transformed into groups of centres in

32. Finance and Agenda Committee Minutes, 14 May 1946. BW 69/12

33. J.le Routegel to C.Warner, 17 September 1946. FO 924/247

L4449/17/451

34. R.Bullard to Bevin, 24 October 1945. BW49/3

each city with reduced staff to allow expansion elsewhere. New centres were opened in the communist stronghold of Tabriz and at Resht and Meshed in the former Soviet zone. The Embassy at Tehran attached 'great importance' to the foundation of these centres in the north 'as a means of offsetting Soviet propaganda'.<sup>3</sup> In Iran as a whole in May 1949, there was a Tass representative in Tehran, a Soviet-Iranian cultural society and regular Soviet broadcasts. Economies in 1950 forced the closure of the Resht and Shiraz centres.

As a result of the Franco-Syrian crisis in May and June 1945, all French schools and educational activities in Syria were suspended. French culture had not penetrated as deeply in Syria as in the Lebanon and four years of British military occupation had made English a popular foreign language. The Syrian Minister of Education in 1945 was a graduate of the American University in Beirut and sought British and American help in replacing French dominance of the Syrian education system. The Council was advised to advance cautiously by the Foreign Office in view of French susceptibilities, Syria's low priority and the high cost of living in the Levant. Even the modest activities the Council had embarked upon during the war, evoked a warning from Britain's ambassador in Paris.

So long as these activities continue I trust I shall not be instructed to continue to assure the French Government that we have no intention of taking over the position hitherto occupied by the French in the Levant.<sup>36</sup>

The Legation in Beirut advocated a more forward policy arguing that

the encouragement of the teaching of English by qualified and reliable staff must clearly be of benefit to British interests, not only from the point of view of our political influence in Syria and therefore the Middle East generally, but, what is perhaps more important, as a factor in the development of trade between the British Empire and the Levant States.<sup>37</sup>

The Foreign Office was more cautious, but

at the same time, if we let the Americans set the pace, for the moment, we should be able to meet French objections; so that we need not be over-modest.<sup>38</sup>

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35. J.le Routegel to C.Warner, 28 September 1948 F0924/624 .  
LC3795/34/451
36. D.Cooper to Bevin, 25 July 1945 F0924/172 LC3132/32/452
37. T.Shone to Bevin, 31 July 1945 BW 59/1
38. W.H.Montagu-Pollack to E.Hussey, 29 December 1945 BW 59/1

The Council maintained offices at Beirut and Damascus, a hostel at Beirut linked to the American University, and organised English classes for teachers and professional groups. Separate representation was established at Damascus in 1947 to avoid offending Syrian sensibilities. A new centre was opened at Aleppo in 1948 after grave warnings from the British Minister on the infiltration of Soviet influence in northern Syria.

There is no doubt that Communist activities are growing rapidly and a Council centre should be able to influence an important section of the community which is particularly susceptible to Communist propaganda.<sup>39</sup>

In both Syria and the Lebanon the Council worked closely with local educational bodies providing educational advice and supplies and distributing a wide range of material.

Transjordan became independent in 1946 and the Council's work was expanded on the grounds that Britain needed 'all the help we can get to retain Arab goodwill'.<sup>40</sup> It cooperated with the King Hussein Club in Amman and distributed films and periodicals to government departments, schools and other institutions. The level of expenditure was comparatively modest because of Jordan's low priority in relation to other Middle East countries.

There was little change in the Council's work in Saudi Arabia from year to year. A small budget was spent mainly on students selected by the Saudi Government. The British Minister explained that

British Council activities like all other foreign manifestations have to be most gently and tactfully developed in this country. We can only take such opportunities as seem to offer.<sup>41</sup>

The Persian Gulf similarly received a low priority and the Council's work did not develop there at all.

The constitutional changes in India after the war greatly enhanced Afghanistan's significance in the eyes of the Foreign Office. In 1946 the Council was advised 'that the Secretary of State now attaches great importance to this country',<sup>42</sup> and that every effort should be made to improve cultural ties. However, the Council's options were limited; financial problems, the cautious attitude of the Afghan authorities and the difficulty

39. T. Shone to Bevin, 16 August 1946 FO924/246 LC4007/17/451

40. Minute by D.N. Greenhill, 7 November 1946 FO924/554 LC5072/3/45

41. P. Gafferty-Smith to Bevin, 10 August 1946 FO924/24 LC3763/17/45

42. Minutes of a meeting at the Foreign Office, 21 October 1946

of finding staff willing to serve in Kabul, hindered the start of Council work. A third post at Ghazi College was filled eventually but the Council was unable to rival the influx of American teachers. In October 1947 a member of the Council's staff in Iran visited Kabul and concluded that the foundation of a British Council office or institute

can not be entertained yet in this country where the narrowest Muslim ideas are all too prevalent, and suspicion, even mistrust, of the British is not yet dead.<sup>43</sup>

In the absence of guidance from the Foreign Office until the end of the decade and under pressure from the Treasury to find savings, the Council tried social and cultural work at the expense of more costly educational provision in the Middle East. By 1950 it had reverted to its earlier practices in an effort to influence the Arab world in a pro-British direction through education rather than information work that suffered from the lack of an appealing text.

We no longer had any message which could conceivably appeal to an Arab. With our involvement in the Israel/Arab dispute and our need to protect the Suez Canal and the oil fields, our interests came slap up against those of the Arab nationalists, and no amount of propaganda about our good intentions or our fine record of colonial emancipation in other parts of the world, could do the slightest good.<sup>44</sup>

Latin America was a prime target for retrenchment after the war. Although the economic and commercial rationale for publicity work remained, the Council's staff was advised in March 1946 that

The period of rapid expansion has now, however, come to a close, and though, of course, we hope that our scope and influence may steadily grow, our task during the next few years will be mainly one of consolidation.<sup>45</sup>

Even this forecast proved optimistic. The retirement of Millington-Drake in April 1946 signalled the end of an era of expansion in Latin America and withdrawals and closures would become the common feature of the future. The Foreign Office deplored these measures on political grounds, fearing that the United States would exploit Britain's absence and that it would induce alarm and despondency among Britain's friends.

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43. Report by O. Blomfield, 1 October 1947 F0924/699 LC145/47/452

44. R.H.K. Marett, Through the Back Door, (London 1968) p. 94

45. British Council circular, March 1946, BW 15/1

It is our general policy to avoid action which might look like a loss of interest in any Latin American country (they are all members of UNO), and S.A.Dept.(sic) can not be assumed to be agreeing to withdrawal from anywhere the Council is now operating.<sup>46</sup>

However, the Foreign Office assigned a low overall priority to the Latin American Republics, with the exception of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Next in importance came Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Colombia, followed by Uruguay and Cuba.<sup>47</sup> The Council's work was reduced and expanded along these lines. A new office was opened in Lima in 1946 and two new centres were founded in Uruguay. The post of Representative in Central America was abolished leaving the development of cultural relations in the hands of the newly created British Ministries in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador. No direct activities were undertaken in Cuba, Costa Rica, Haiti, Santo Domingo or Panama. In 1947 the Council was forced to withdraw from Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay and reduce its work elsewhere. In Colombia, two of the four institutes were closed<sup>48</sup> and in 1948 the Council's offices were merged with those of the cultural associations in Colombia and Peru to save money. The Council considered withdrawing from Venezuela in 1949, but a donation of £3,000 from the Shell Company Limited enabled it to support a British-Venezuelan Institute at Caracas.

In Argentina, the Council supported institutes in Buenos Aires and thirteen provincial centres; of the latter, seven became financially independent of the Council by 1949 and four new ones were founded. In addition, extra-mural classes were organised at a further eight centres. An Argentine-British medical centre was opened in Buenos Aires and a British medical library was started. A cultural convention was signed with Brazil in 1948<sup>49</sup>, which it was hoped would atone for British shortcomings in other areas.

It will be a matter of considerable difficulty to satisfy Brazilian eagerness for increased commercial relations with the United Kingdom after the war, and there is on this account everything to be said for making progress in the field of cultural relations.<sup>50</sup>

46. Minute by J.V.Perowne, 17 August 1946 F0924/493 LC3821/497/452

47. W.H.Montagu-Pollack to White, 16 June 1945 BW 15/1

48. The two institutes that were closed were at Cali and Barranqui leaving one at Bogota and one at Medellin.

49. Cmd. 7606 1949

50. Minute by E.L.N.Sturt, 14 March 1945 F0924/178

In Chile, the Council concentrated on two institutes at Santiago and Valparaiso and on the subsidy of British schools. A thriving institute was supported in Mexico City which had over fifteen hundred students and branches in nine other cities.

The Council Annual Report for 1948/9 contained a special plea for its work in Latin America and underlined the historical and commercial significance of the Republics to Britain and their desire for greater knowledge about Britain.

The political and economic importance of Latin America is great and growing. It may well be vital to British prosperity.....The reductions made have hampered work and naturally reduced effectiveness. Further reductions would be disastrous, for they could only be made by coming away from more countries.<sup>51</sup>

In January 1951, in a letter to the Ministry of Defence, the Information Policy Department of the Foreign Office stated, in relation to Latin America that

Even in Latin America, which may look remote and safe, the Council's work is of value to defence. Latin America suffers from poverty and chronic bad government, and Communism is always round the corner. By educating the leaders of tomorrow in British institutions and standards of good government, the Council will make a real contribution to political stability in this rich source of strategic raw materials.<sup>52</sup>

However, Latin America was not as vital to Britain in the Cold War as Europe or the Commonwealth and Empire. Moreover, the interest and influence of the United States in South America, could be relied upon to combat the appearance of hostile regimes. The Council concentrated on the southern Republics, abandoning central America, with the exception of Mexico, and the Caribbean islands to the dominant American interest. Its organisation increasingly became integrated with the Anglophile societies, as this was the most cost-effective method of operation, although the Council did have to surrender some independence of action.

The post-war years were disheartening times for the Council. The days of expansion were over and in the search for economies much was sacrificed that could not be replaced easily. These contractions affected those countries that had been formerly

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51. British Council Annual Report 1948/9 p.105

52. A.C.Malcolm to A,Moorehead, 5 January 1951 F0924/782 CRA 20/6



the Council's major areas of operation- the Middle East and Latin America. They reflected a shift in British diplomacy towards the alliance with western Europe and the preservation of the unity of the Commonwealth and Empire. Britain's influence in the Middle East and Latin America was replaced increasingly by that of the United States and the Council lost a significant field by its failure to establish itself in the United States. The intensification of the global ideological conflict led to its expulsion from the Soviet Union and China, the two leading communist powers.

## CONCLUSION

By 1950 cultural relations were established as a permanent feature of international affairs and British diplomacy, but the British Council had not proved beyond doubt that it was the best body to conduct them. The Council was not to blame entirely for this situation. It had been founded with no precise definition of aims or methods and had become a repository for functions that did not belong to any other body. Fortunately, the Council was a flexible organisation and was able to adapt to Britain's declining fortunes and changing world conditions. It believed that it should serve British foreign policy and rarely perceived a conflict of interest between its own and the Foreign Office's needs overseas. Established in the hostile and uncertain world of 1934, the Council was asserting by 1950 'that the successful prosecution of cultural relations should be the foundation of of cold war strategy'.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural relations account for a considerable proportion of Britain's overseas relations and unofficial cultural contacts outnumber officially-sponsored activities. The Council's work was designed to give a particular direction or emphasis to aspects of this exchange. In some cases, for example in Spain and China, the cultural effort dominated the diplomatic and it was only through the Council that Britain was able to maintain significant links with these countries. The level and form of British cultural diplomacy can offer fresh insights into the aims of its foreign policy. Immediately before, and in the first year of, the war, Britain's and the Council's chief concern was with Europe and the containment of German influence. The Council's work was 'a desperate last hope, one more expediency in the British struggle to maintain the European balance of power without war'.<sup>2</sup> Its rapid expansion during the war, especially in the Middle East, showed a recognition of the fact that British influence in the future would have to rest on less tangible foundations and that, even in the Empire, former loyalties could not be guaranteed. The threat to British interests did not come only from her avowed enemies; cooperation with the United States was desirable in all but the cultural field. The contraction of Council operations in the Middle East

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1. The British Council and the Cold War, 2 January 1951 T219/83  
 2. Minute by F.C.Hawley, 1 June 1944 BW 2/95

and Latin America after the war, foreshadowed the demise of British influence on a wider scale. Its concentration in Europe reflected a change of direction for Britain and a new and deeper commitment to Europe. However although western and central Europe remained the areas of most direct political and military importance to Britain, the Council had different priorities. The eastern bloc was impenetrable for the time being, while western Europe shared a common cultural heritage with Britain and was tied to her by political, military and economic factors. The cultural dividing line had been drawn and there was little room for manoeuvre. The Commonwealth and Empire offered cultural propaganda greater dividends. The situation was more fluid outside Europe and there were still converts to be won. It was an important challenge for the advocates of cultural propaganda, although the timespan allowed was less than one generation. The swift expansion of the Council's work in the Colonies and the Asian Dominions, beginning after the war from foundations laid during the conflict, heralded a realisation of the speed of change in the developing world and of the fragility of imperial bonds; cultural propaganda was a means of extending imperial influence.

The exact level of official control over the Council is difficult to establish. Foreign Office supervision fluctuated, from quite distant relations during the war to a keen interest in the immediate post-war period. However the desirability of cultural relations was recognised and British Missions overseas generally welcomed the Council and saw its work as a valuable extension of their own. The Council's staff enjoyed a closer dialogue with communities overseas and worked with groups that did not normally meet members of Embassies or Legations, but who were as important to the successful reception of British policy as government officials.

The Council's achievements can be measured by reference to its methods and aims. Effective propaganda requires continuity, concentration of resources and the careful selection of targets. Moreover, the Council could do no more than portray Britain as she existed and 'the projection of England would be fruitless unless there be in England material worth projecting'.<sup>3</sup> The system of annual grants with arbitrarily imposed ceilings, prevented long term planning and resulted in sudden withdrawals from countries and suspensions of projects. Under Lloyd and Adam the Council

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3. S. Tallents, The Projection of England (London 1932)p.47

expanded to entrench the organisation against future cuts. The attempt to restrict the Council to cultural and educational elites proved difficult in practice as those groups were changing constantly, especially in the emergent nations, and were often too diffused to provide an easy target. The Council solved this problem by offering to each country the services that it desired or needed; scientific information and supplies in China, technical education in Turkey and libraries in the Colonies. However, at the end of the war, Britain's image was perceived to be that of an old-fashioned, outmoded power and her traditional virtues of pragmatism and evolutionary politics were unattractive in the harsh realities of the post-war world. Britain had to portray herself as a dynamic, progressive democracy at the centre of a world-wide association of peoples, providing a viable alternative to communism and free-market capitalism. Britain's political and economic decline was coupled to a growing ideological gap between Britain and the developing world which it was hoped the Council might close.

The Council aimed 'to induce in the people of other countries a state of mind favourable to this country',<sup>4</sup> to secure economic advantages for Britain and to contribute towards international harmony and world peace. Its success was dependent on the support of effective political, economic and military policies, as demonstrated by the Council's work in south-eastern Europe after the outbreak of war. Cultural propaganda is a lubricant for foreign policy, not a substitute. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the contribution of cultural diplomacy to British foreign policy as that policy has to have some basis of support before the Council can operate. It is likely that cultural propaganda can only have an effect at the margin. It is no more easy to prove economic or commercial advantages arising from the Council's work. The relationship between the sponsorship of chairs at Egyptian universities and that country's attitude towards British policy in Israel is unclear. It is impossible to show conclusively that a tour of Japan by the Royal Opera Company will improve Britain's balance of trade with that country, although there is more evidence to show that technical students trained in Britain tend to buy British goods on their return home. It is not possible to measure the contribution of cultural propaganda to world peace and harmony for it is not axiomatic that international understanding generates international goodwill. This criterion

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4. Second Meeting of Working Party, 2 January 1951 T219/84

presumes that mutual understanding will eliminate the roots of hostility; France and Germany were not comforted by their close knowledge of each other before the Second World War. Moreover, to promote international harmony, cultural relations must be reciprocal, as the Council stressed repeatedly, for the absence of a return traffic merely reinforces the dominance of those nations that can afford to practice it. Cultural relations between the developed and the undeveloped world tends to be a one-way traffic from the former to the latter; between developed nations it is a bilateral activity. The developed have the added advantage of a seemingly more successful culture, rendering the penetration of ideas from weaker or declining nations more difficult.

The review of the Council's future due in 1951 was absorbed in a general enquiry into the overseas information services, set up in 1952 under the chairmanship of Lord Drogheda. The commission reported in 1954 and recommended the largest increase in expenditure for the Council over the official information services, particularly for its work in the developing world.<sup>5</sup> The Drogheda report endorsed the Council's semi-official status and its exclusion from the United States and advocated the contraction of its operations in Europe. The Council resisted the cuts proposed in Europe and rapidly increased its work in the developing world.<sup>6</sup> In the 1960's it took over the administration of educational aid overseas, an activity that now dominates all others. In 1969, the Duncan Committee, at the time of Britain's application to join the European Economic Community, recommended an increase in the Council's work in Europe and additional funds were provided for this purpose.<sup>7</sup> In the mid-1970's, after the oil crisis, The Council began charging for its educational services, especially in the oil-rich countries of the Middle East and in Venezuela. The report of the Central Policy Review Staff in 1977 suggested the Council's abolition and the transfer of its work to the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Overseas Development or the abolition of its separate organisation overseas only.<sup>8</sup> It is a measure of the change in the Council's functions that its work could be taken over by these two departments.

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5. Cmd. 9138, London 1954

6. By 1970 80% of the Council's grant went to the developing world.

7. Cmd. 4107 London 1969

8. Report of the Central Policy Review Staff, London 1977.

In Britain's hands cultural propaganda was a barricade and not a weapon. The Council's future and Britain's commitment to cultural diplomacy were uncertain in the period studied here and remains vague. The impossibility of submitting this work to cost-benefit analysis augments the critics' case and the Council's position on the periphery of the government machine leaves it vulnerable to attack. Such activities are not designed to influence today's or even next year's governments, but the next generations and, therefore, involve a considerable gamble. Cultural propaganda can not be judged by the same standards that apply to daily diplomatic activity and information work. The prosecution of cultural propaganda depends to a large extent on faith in its value. Appropriately, the last word belongs to Rex Leeper, the Council's father.

When all is said and done, we are the representatives and guardians of a national culture which has been one of the great creative forces of human history and which still has much to contribute to the solution of the world's difficulties. We shall be shirking our duties, as well as disregarding our interests, if we fail to make available to those who wish to benefit by them, the fruits of our long experience.<sup>9</sup>

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9. R.A. Leeper, *The British Council and the Maintenance of British Influence Abroad*, July 1939 FO 395/647A

APPENDICES

APPENDIX APRINCIPAL BRITISH COUNCIL PERSONNEL 1939-1950

ADAM, General Sir  
Ronald Forbes. Deputy Chief Imperial General Staff,  
1938-1939; Commander, 3rd Army Corps;  
Commanding Officer, Northern Command,  
1940-41; Adjutant-General 1941-1946;  
CHAIRMAN & DIRECTOR-GENERAL, British Council  
1946-1955; PRESIDENT, British Council, 1950-  
1954.

BIDWELL, D.G. Released from army to join Allied Liaison,  
Division Middle East, 1943-1945;  
REPRESENTATIVE, 1946-1949; June 1949  
resigned, renounced British nationality  
and became a Polish citizen.

BINGLEY, T.S. REPRESENTATIVE, Persia, 1943-1944;  
REPRESENTATIVE, Gibraltar 1944-1946;  
REPRESENTATIVE, Burma, 1946-1948

BLAKE, M. DIRECTOR, Foreign Division A 1941-1945;  
REPRESENTATIVE, Czechoslovakia, 1945-1947

BOASE, Professor  
T.S.R. Professor, History of Art, & Director,  
Courtauld Institute, 1937-1947; Temporary  
Civil Servant, Air Ministry London & Cairo,  
1939-1943; CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, Middle East  
1943-1945

BOTTRALL, F.J.R. Assistant Director and Professor of English  
British Institute, Florence, 1937-1938;  
Temporary administrative officer, Air  
Ministry, 1940; REPRESENTATIVE, Sweden, 1941-44  
Assistant Director, Foreign Division C,  
1944-1945; REPRESENTATIVE, Italy, 1945-1950

CHURCH, E.E.R. Reader in English, Rio University, & Director  
Anglo-Brazilian Cultural Society, 1938-1940  
REPRESENTATIVE, Brazil, 1940-1943; DIRECTOR,  
Latin-American Department, London, 1943-1949

CROOM-JOHNSON, H.P. Regional Officer for the Balkans and the  
Middle East and DIRECTOR of Lecturers and  
Teaching Appointments, 1935-1939; served  
1939-1945 war; DIRECTOR, Appointments  
Department 1945-1946; DIRECTOR, East  
European Section, Overseas Division C, 1946-

CROWTHER, J.G. DIRECTOR, Science Department, 1941-1946



DAVIES, R. Principal Publicity Officer for Egypt, 1939-1942; DIRECTOR, Finance Division 1942-1947; ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, 1947 -

DUNDAS, C.A.F. Principal, Matriculation School, Baghdad, 1936-1938; CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, Middle East 1938-1943

EVANS, Professor  
Ifor Ministry of Information, 1940; DIRECTOR, Education Division, 1940-1944; Acting Representative, Middle East 1943

FURNESS, R.A. Professor of English Literature, Faud I University, Cairo 1936-1939; Deputy Chief Censor of Publications, Egypt, 1939-1944; REPRESENTATIVE, Egypt, 1945-1950

GILLAN, Sir  
Angus Sudan Political Service, 1909-1939; Principal Officer, North Midlands Civil Defence Region, 1940-41; DIRECTOR, Empire Division, 1941-1946; CONTROLLER, Commonwealth & Empire Division, 1947-1949; REPRESENTATIVE Australia, 1949-1951.

GRANT, M. Assistant Representative, Middle East 1939; REPRESENTATIVE, Turkey, 1940-1945; Deputy Director, European Division, 1945-1947

GUEDALLA, P. DIRECTOR, Ibero-American Institute, 1932-1944; CHAIRMAN, Ibero-American & Films Committees 1934-1944

HUSSEY, E.R.J. DIRECTOR, Middle East department, 1945-1949; Deputy Director, Empire Division, 1945-1946

JOHNSTONE, K. SECRETARY-GENERAL, 1937-1939; served 1939-1945 war; DIRECTOR, European Division, 1945-1950

KENNEDY-COOKE, B. DIRECTOR, Production Division, 1943-1947; CONTROLLER, Arts & Science Division, 1947-49

LLOYD, Lord,  
of Dolobran Chairman, Near East Committee, 1935-1939; CHAIRMAN, British Council, 1937-1941; Secretary of State for the Colonies and Leader of the House of Lords, May 1940 - February 1941; President of the Navy League from 1930

LUKE, Sir  
Harry High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, 1938-1942; CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, Caribbean, 1942-1945

MACMILLAN, Professor  
W.M. Member, Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, 1938-1941; Empire Intelligence Section, BBC, 1941-1943; CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, West Africa, 1943-1946

MILLINGTON-DRAKE, Sir  
Eugen British Minister, Uruguay, 1934-1941; CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE, Latin America, 1941-1946

MORGAN, Doctor  
A.E. Assistant Secretary, Minister of Labour and National Service, 1941-1945; DIRECTOR, Education Division, 1946-1951.

MORRAY, T.W. REPRESENTATIVE, Iraq, 1942-1945; REPRESENTATIVE, Sweden, 1947-1949

NEEDHAM, Doctor  
J. Reader in Biochemistry, Cambridge, 1933-1942 Head of British Scientific Mission in China and British Council SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, 1942-1946.

OGILVIE, Sir,  
F. Director-General, BBC, 1938-1942; DIRECTOR, Foreign Division B, 1942-1944

RIVERDALE, Lord VICE-CHAIRMAN, British Council, 1939-1946; Chairman, Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research 1937-1946; Negotiated Commonwealth Air Training Scheme Canada, 1939.

ROBERTSON, Sir,  
M. Foreign Service 1903-1929; Ambassador, Argentina 1927-1929; Chairman, Spillers Ltd 1930-1947; CHAIRMAN, British Council, 1941-45 Member of Parliament (C.) 1940-1945

ROXBY, Professor  
R.M. Professor of Geography, Liverpool University REPRESENTATIVE, China, 1945-1947

SEYMOUR, R.S. DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL, 1940-1947; SECRETARY, 1947-1953; DIRECTOR, General Division 1940-1943; Council Representative on Joint Standing Committ with Colonial Office, at Conference of Allied Ministers of Education 1942-1945; and on Overseas Information Ser i es Committee, 1946-1949

SHILLAN, D. DIRECTOR, Belgrade Institute, 1940-1941; Assistant Representative, Portugal, 1941-1944 Assistant Director, Foreign Division C, 1944-1945

SHREEVE, G.H. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Regional), 1947-1951

STARKIE, Professor  
W. REPRESENTATIVE, Spain, 1940-1950.  
Professor of English Literature, Madrid  
University, 1940-1950

TOYE, F. Director, British Institute, Florence,  
1940-1941; Director, Anglo-Brazilian  
Cultural Society, 1941-1943; REPRESENTATIVE,  
Brazil, 1943-1945.

TUNNARD-MOORE, T.P. DIRECTOR, Appointments Department, 1941-45;  
DIRECTOR, Dominions and India section,  
Empire Division, 1945-1947

WARD PRICE, R. Assistant Director, Colonies Section,  
Empire Division, 1941-1945, DIRECTOR,  
Colonies Section, 1945-1947

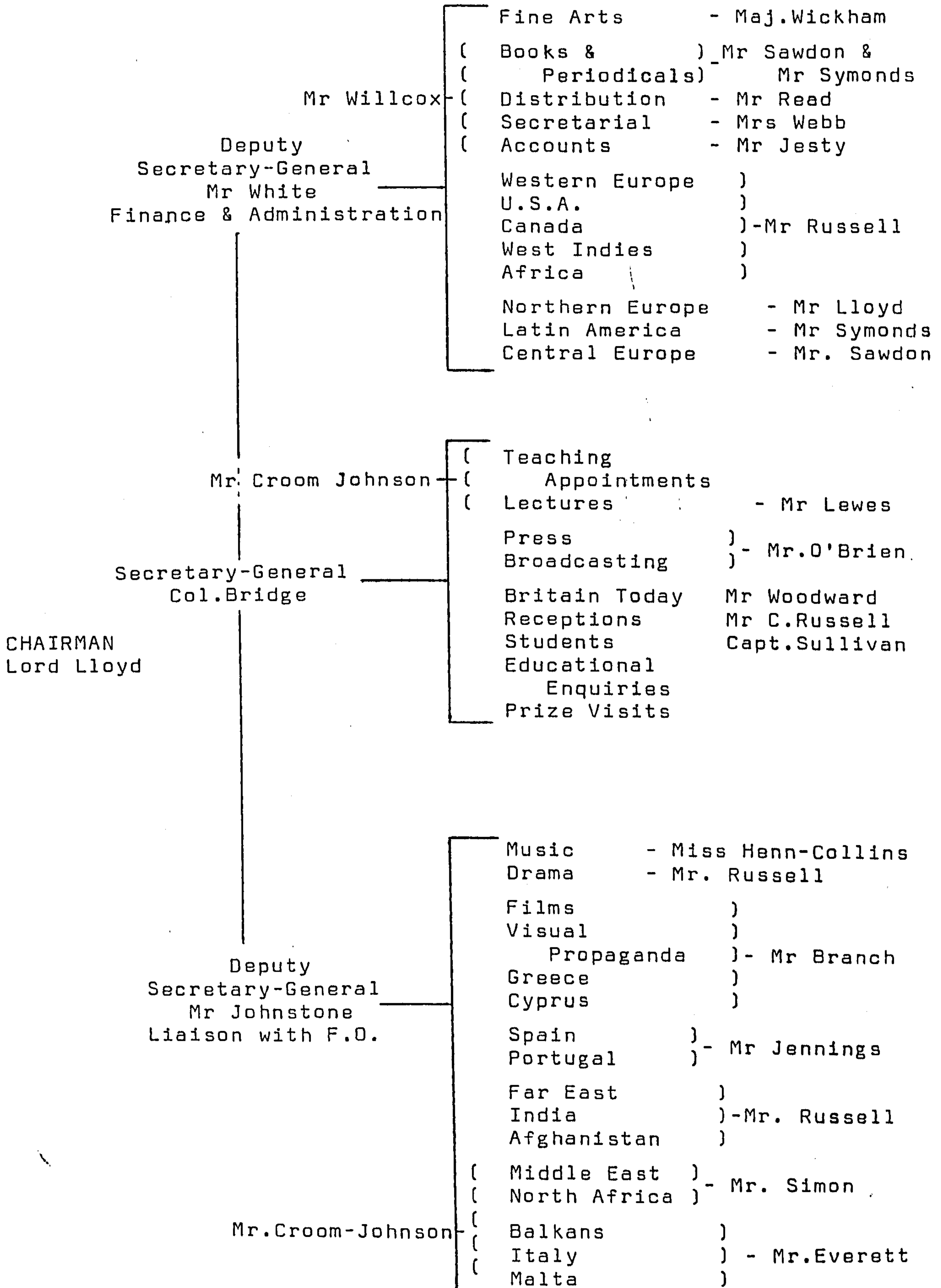
WEST, S.G. REPRESENTATIVE, Portugal, 1940-1947;  
REPRESENTATIVE, Brazil, 1947-1950

WHITE, A.J.S. SECRETARY GENERAL 1940-1947; CONTROLLER  
Overseas Division B, 1947-1962.

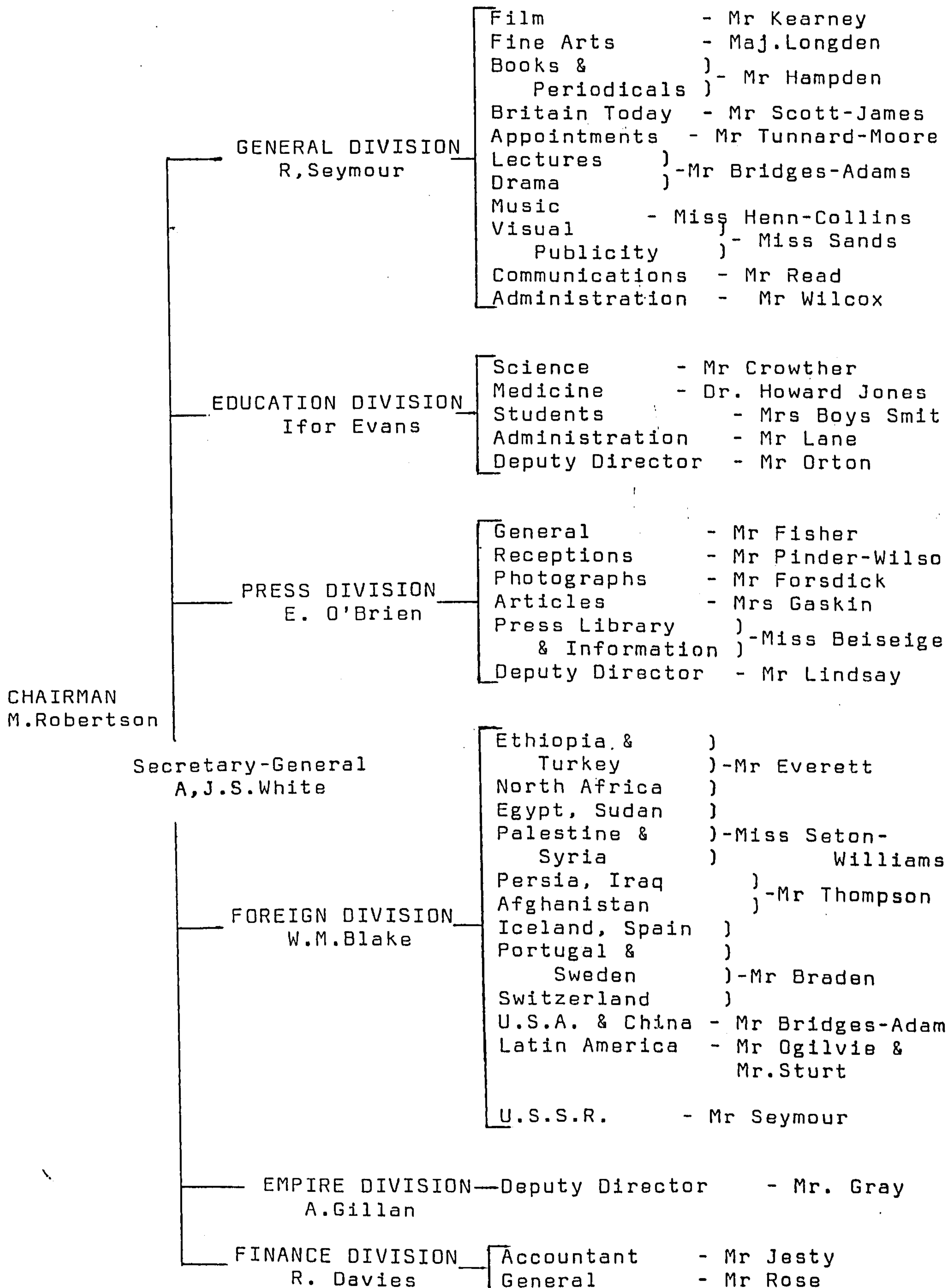
WICKHAM, W.R.L. REPRESENTATIVE, Malta, 1940-1944; Assistant  
Direct, Foreign Division C, 1944-1945;  
REPRESENTATIVE, India, 1947-1949;  
REPRESENTATIVE, Austria, 1950

## APPENDIX B

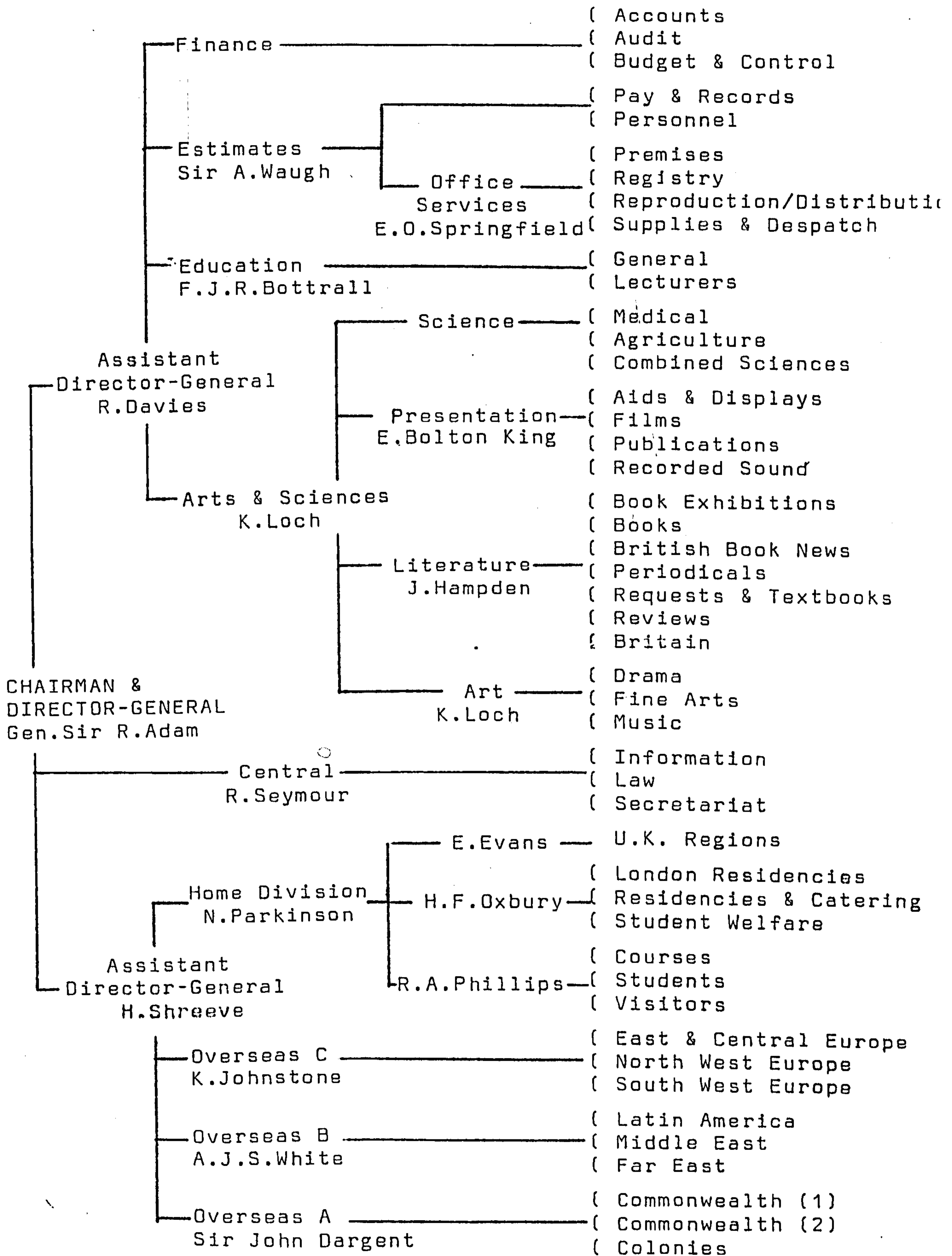
## 1. BRITISH COUNCIL ORGANISATION - APRIL 1939



## 2. BRITISH COUNCIL ORGANISATION - FEBRUARY 1943



## 3. BRITISH COUNCIL ORGANISATION - NOVEMBER 1950

DIVISIONSGROUPSDEPARTMENTS

APPENDIX CINCOME AND EXPENDITURE 1934/5 - 1949/50

<u>Year</u>	<u>Net Expenditure out of Government Grants</u>	<u>Council's General Revenue</u>	<u>Agency Expenditure</u>	<u>Total Expenditure</u>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	
1934/5	-	881	-	881
1935/6	5,000	8,947	-	13,947
1936/7	15,000	12,922	1,609	29,531
1937/8	60,000	6,095	1,048	67,143
1938/9	130,500	45,965	2,001	178,466
1939/40	330,249	21,110	1,874	353,233
1940/1	433,099	16,712	30,862	480,673
1941/2	611,728	5,994	71,101	688,773
1942/3	966,705	9,146	35,258	1,011,109
1943/4	1,573,958	60,773	11,590	1,646,321
1944/5	2,108,122	120,778	8,160	2,237,060
1945/6	2,522,370	267,646	24,609	2,814,625
1946/7	2,877,802	257,646	5,508	3,140,956
1947/8	3,161,413	274,601	3,500	3,439,514
1948/9	2,853,757	417,984	3,414	3,275,155
1949/50	3,045,321	326,088	3,540	3,374,949

(1) Actual expenditure from Government grants was usually less than the total amount allotted.

(2) This includes receipts from teaching, the sale of publications, etc. and general donations.

(3) This includes donations for special purposes, for example by industry for apprenticeships, and expenditure on behalf of and financed by other agencies, such as the work of the Home Division and the Allied Liaison Division during the war for the Service Department.

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○ APPENDIX DFOREIGN OFFICE PRIORITY LISTS<sup>(i)</sup>1939/40 (ii)

A. Egypt, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Roumania, Turkey  
Yugoslavia, Iraq, Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, Finland

Dominions & Colonies: Malta, Cyprus, Canada, Palestine, Transjordan

B. Chile, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Lithuania,  
Latvia, Belgium, France, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Iran,  
Holland, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay

C. Albania, Ecuador, Panama, Bolivia, Tunisia

D. Central America, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti,  
Liberia, Morocco, Syria, Paraguay

1943/44 (iii)

A. China, Russia, United States

B. Spain, North Africa, Argentina, Persia

C. Sweden, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Abyssinia, Afghanistan,  
Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico

D. Portugal, Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, Transjordan,  
Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay

1946/7

A1. Belgium, China, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Greece,  
Holland, Italy, Poland, Russia

A2. Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Iraq,  
Persia, Norway, Roumania, Turkey, Yugoslavia

B1. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, Spain

B2. Ethiopia, Levant States, Sweden, Sudan

C1. Chile, Colombia, Peru, Cuba Venezuela

C2. Iceland, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Dominions

D1. Albania, Luxembourg, French North Africa, Portuguese  
West Africa, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Persian Gulf, Bolivia  
Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Salvador,  
Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Santo Domingo, Tangier,  
(Dutch East Indies, Belgium Congo)

D2. Cyrenanica, Kuwait, Tripolitania

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(i) These lists were provided for the Council's guidance in  
planning expenditure.

(ii) Minute by C. Warner, 26 January 1939. FO395/641 P74/44/150

(iii) Both 1943/4 and 1946/7 Foreign Office Priority Lists, BW2/98



APPENDIX EBRITISH COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON NEWSPAPERS OVERSEAS

	1938 1939	1939 1940	1940 1941	1941 1942	1942 1943	1943 1944	Total £
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<u>Cyprus Post</u>	161	4,627	3,662	1,124	2,108	235	11,877
<u>Warsaw Weekly</u>	191	176					376
<u>Budapest Daily</u>	40						40
<u>Anglo-Portuguese News</u>		275	685	1,786	1,577	1,895	6,218
<u>Bulgar-British Review</u>		150					150
<u>South Pacific Mail (Chile)</u>		650	1,050			500	2,200
<u>Scandinavian Review</u>		934	1,000				1,934
<u>Tangiers Gazette</u>		324	637		487	812	2,261
<u>Cheftoo Daily News (China)</u>			6		36	18	60
<u>Central China Post</u>					440	160	600
<u>Do You Speak English? (Turkey) ++</u>					1,295	1,128	2,423
<u>Chamber of Commerce Journal (Turkey) **</u>						104	104
<u>Review (Turkey) ++</u>						1,178	1,178

++ Widely circulated and closely associated with the Council's work in Turkey

\*\* Published indopondontly but supported by Council subsidy to secure publication of articles about the Council.

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CAB 66	War Cabinet Memoranda 1939 - 1945
CAB 78	War Cabinet Committees (General)
CAB 87	War Cabinet Committees (Reconstruction)
CAB 90	Science Advisory Committee
CAB 98	Basic English Committee
CAB 123	Lord President's Office
CAB 124	Ministry of Reconstruction
CAB 128	Cabinet Conclusions 1945 - 1950
CAB 129	Cabinet Memoranda 1945 - 1950
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CAB 134	Cabinet Committees (General Series)

3. Colonial Office.

CO 875 Public Relations and Information

4. Department of Overseas Trade

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BT 61	Establishment

5. Dominions Office.

DO 35 Original Correspondence

6. Foreign Office.

FO 370	Library Department 1941-1944
FO 371	General Correspondence

6. Foreign Office (continued)

FO 395	News Department
FO 898	Political Warfare Executive
FO 924	Cultural Relations Department 1944-1950
FO 930	Ministry of Information 1939-1945
FO 953	Information Department

7. Ministry of Information.

INF 1	Policy Files
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8. Prime Minister's Office.

PREM 1	Correspondence and Papers
PREM 3	Correspondence and Papers
PREM 4	Correspondence and Papers
PREM 8	Correspondence and Papers

9. Treasury.

T 161	Supply
T 162	Establishment
T 219	Government & Allied Services Division
T 222	Organisation & Methods Division

10. War Office.

WO 220	Civil Affairs
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B. India Office Library and Records, London.

Selected Files have been studied in each case.

1. Afghanistan

R 12	British Legation (Only one file surviving from a once extensive propaganda series)
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2. Burma Office

M 5	Information Department
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3. Government of Aden

R 20	Ordinary Files
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4. India Office

LI/1	Information Department
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5. Political Agency, Bahrein and Kuwait

R 15	Ordinary Files
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