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An 'Oxfam of the Mind'? Humanitarianism, Overseas Development and the BBC World Service, 1965-1999

An 'Oxfam of the Mind'? Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Overseas Development at the BBC World Service, 1965-1999

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Abstract

From its creation as the Empire Service in 1932 until the present day, the BBC's overseas broadcasting arm has depicted itself as a fundamentally benevolent organisation, serving humanity as a whole by 'telling the truth' to hundreds of millions of listeners worldwide. As the empire ebbed away in the 1960s, the BBC was forced to adapt its approach to international broadcasting in recognition of Britain's diminished global status. This adaptation was broadly successful: by the end of the millennium, the rebranded 'World Service' had retained its international reputation as a trusted source of impartial news and vital information, while also adopting a new and prominent role within the global development sector, reflected by the launch of a World Service-branded international development NGO, the BBC World Service Trust (now BBC Media Action) in 1999. In the same year, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan celebrated the organisation's impact as a global force for good, describing it as 'perhaps Britain's greatest gift to the world in the twentieth century'.

This thesis critically evaluates this characterization of the World Service as a post-imperial 'gift to the world', focusing on its interactions with a range of governmental and non-governmental actors within the interconnected fields of humanitarian, human rights, and overseas development between the mid-1960s and the end of the 1990s. Through close analysis of recently declassified or previously unstudied official documents from the BBC and FCO archives, newly collected oral history testimony from former World Service staff, and World Service-related source material located drawn from the NGO sector, it demonstrates how the World Service succeeded in sustaining itself through this period despite the numerous challenges to its existence and status. It argues that the World Service carefully but consistently deployed the language of humanitarianism and human rights, alongside new forms of overseas development activity, to help it to navigate three closely related long-term challenges: the end of empire, the conduct and sudden conclusion of the Cold War, and the emergence of new, neoliberal modes of governance on both the national and international stage. In doing so, it not only challenges and complicates the prevailing image of the BBC World Service as a benevolent 'gift to the world', but also situates the World Service as a unique and valuable vantage point from which we might better understand how and why

Britain projected itself as a force for good on the global stage in the latter third of the twentieth century.

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Thank you first to my supervisory team, Simon Potter, Grace Huxford and Amy Edwards, for your enthusiasm, encouragement, and faith in me. Your feedback and guidance has been immeasurably helpful in turning this project into a fully-fledged thesis. I count myself very lucky to have been able to build such a productive working relationship with you all. Over the last four years, I have been given the space to research and write more or less exactly as I saw fit, taking comfort and inspiration from the knowledge that you would ultimately ask me to justify and qualify my decisions in an academically rigorous fashion. For this and for so much more, including the seemingly endless task of helping to cut my overly long sentences down to size, I am hugely grateful! Thanks also to my MA supervisor at Central European University, Professor Marsha Siefert, who played no small part in sparking and then stoking my academic interest in 'The Radios' and the Cultural Cold War.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to those whose financial support has allowed me to avoid the other, far more onerous type of debt. I'll always be grateful to the University of Bristol's Faculty of Arts for awarding me the Postgraduate Scholarship which has funded the vast majority of my time as a PhD student, and made this experience possible. Smaller research grants from the Blinken Open Society Archives, the Chalke Valley Historical Trust, and the University of Bristol Faculty of Arts Conference and Research enriched and improved the experience immeasurably, funding research trips to Caversham, London, and Budapest, as well as a 3-day Oral History Workshop run by the Oral History Society and Institute of Historical Research. The Global Humanitarianism Research Academy's generous sponsorship made it possible to attend a truly superb two-week summer school, hosted by the Leibniz IEG in Mainz and the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva in the summer of 2019, which was an enormous academic and personal highlight of the PhD experience.

I have had the good fortune to make some firm friends among my fellow PhD candidates. Alice, Blanche, Ellis, Xander, Emma, Aurora, Milenko, Matt, Penny, Ben, and Rachel, thank you for the proof-reading and the pint-drinking – both were necessary. To my friends outside academia, a sincere thank you for giving me something, anything else to talk or think about these past four

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. Any views in expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Steve Westlake   DATE: 9 September 2022

Plagiarism Statement

In March 2022, I published the following article, which draws on this research:

Steve Westlake, 'Building the BBC-branded NGO: Overseas Development, the World Service, and the Marshall Plan of the Mind, c.1965–99', *Twentieth Century British History*, 33:1 (March 2022), 29–51, https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwab027

List of Abbreviations

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BBCWAC: British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre

BBCXS: British Broadcasting Corporation External Services

CBA: Commonwealth Broadcasting Association

CBC: Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CCTV: Chinese Central Television

CEDO: Centre for Educational Development Overseas

CMDF: Commonwealth Media Development Fund

COHP: Commonwealth Oral Histories Project

CPRS: Central Policy Review Staff

CPU: Commonwealth Press Union

CRO: Commonwealth Relations Office

CSCE: Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

DEC: Disasters Emergency Committee

DFID: Department for International Development

ECOSOC: United Nations Economics and Social Council

ELT: English Language Teaching

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)

FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GCHQ: Government Communications Headquarters

ICI: Imperial Chemical Industries

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

KHF: Know-How Fund

MPM: Marshall Plan of the Mind (BBC)

M4D: Media For Development

NBC: National Broadcasting Company (United States)

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NIEO: New International Economic Order

NWICO: New World Information and Communication Order

ODA: Overseas Development Assistance

ODM: Overseas Development Ministry

OSA: Open Society Archives

OSI: Open Society Institute

PCI: Population Communications International

RFE: Radio Free Europe

RSA: Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce

TCTP: Technical Co-operation Training Plan

TNA: The National Archives

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UDI: Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Rhodesia)

UN: United Nations

UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Fund

UNOSOM: United Nations Operation in Somalia

WHO: World Health Organisation

WPFC: World Press Freedom Committee

WSI: Writers and Scholars International

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Introduction: An 'Oxfam of the Mind'? Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Overseas Development at the BBC World Service, 1965-1999

> It seems unfair that the British Government and people alone should have to bear the cost of this matchless enterprise, but there is obviously no alternative. One can only hope that Britain will sustain the will to go on with the BBC more or less as it is. BBC is, for the free mind, what Oxfam is for the hungry.[1]
>
> > Malcolm W. Browne, Eastern Europe Correspondent of the New York Times, in a letter to a fellow-journalist, 1976.

In the autumn of 1976, the BBC's External Services (BBCXS) faced a potentially serious problem.[2] Facing the threat of major budget cuts at the suggestion of a government-appointed 'think tank', the Central Policy Review Staff, the BBC's international broadcasting arm, based at Bush House in the Strand, needed to respond quickly and convincingly to explain why it remained worthy of government funding. As part of this response, the BBCXS's Chief Publicity Officer, Michael Williams, quickly assembled a short booklet, 'intended for those inside and outside Bush House who find themselves asked about the impact the External Services have and the kind of audience they reach'.[3] Containing dozens of quotes and testimonials from a cosmopolitan selection of journalists, politicians, and international organisations, who praised the BBC's unique

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[1] BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter BBCWAC), E62/33: Audience Research Reports / Listener Letters, '"The Oxfam of the Mind": A Selection of Published Comment on BBC's External Services', Michael Williams, BBC External Services Chief Publicity Officer, September 1976.

[2] From the Second World War until 1988, the whole of the BBC's broadcasting operations targeting overseas audiences were known officially as the 'BBC External Services' (abbreviated as 'BBCXS'). The term 'BBC World Service' was first introduced in 1965, referring exclusively to the BBCXS's English-language service for listeners around the world. However, the 'World Service' name was soon commonly used by many within and beyond Bush House to refer to the entirety of its operations in both English and foreign languages. In 1988, this convention was formalized, when the entire organisation formerly known as the BBC External Services was officially renamed as the 'BBC World Service'. This thesis will follow the BBC's own conventions, using the 'BBCXS' abbreviation to refer to the whole of the BBC's broadcasting operations targeting overseas audiences before 1988, and 'World Service' for the period after 1988. See Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 224.

[3] BBCWAC, E62/33, '"The Oxfam of the Mind"', September 1976.

contribution to international broadcasting, the booklet described the BBCXS as *The Oxfam of the Mind.*[4]

Six years later, this comparison between Oxfam and the BBCXS was still being repeated. A promotional pamphlet released in June 1982 to commemorate the BBCXS's fiftieth anniversary proudly displayed the words of New York Times journalist Malcolm Browne, stating his belief that the BBC's external broadcasting was 'for the free mind, what Oxfam is for the hungry'.[5] The same phrase was also paraphrased by former Managing Director of the BBCXS, Gerard Mansell, in the closing sentences of his official history of the BBCXS published that year. In the book's very final sentence, Mansell concluded that Brown's depiction of the BBCXS in these terms 'was a description that was liked in Bush House. It seemed to say it all.'[6]

But what, exactly, did this comparison say? Why would the BBC's overseas broadcasting arm choose to describe itself in such terms, metaphorically aligning itself with Britain's most famous humanitarian relief and overseas development NGO? For what reasons, and with what justification, did the BBCXS choose to present itself as an international broadcaster with a fundamentally *humanitarian* mission and impact?

This thesis answers these questions, representing the first academic study focusing on the BBCXS's relationship with humanitarianism, human rights, and overseas development between the mid-1960s and the end of the twentieth century. It argues that this largely overlooked aspect of the BBCXS's work helps to explain how and why it survived throughout this period, despite the diverse array of threats it faced. While its importance ebbed and flowed over the course of this thirty-five year period, the BBCXS's role as a humanitarian, human rights, and overseas development actor was critical in helping the organisation to navigate three complex and inter-related challenges: the end of the British empire and the reimagining of the Commonwealth as an independent, voluntary association of sovereign nation-states; the conduct and sudden end of the Cold War; and the emergence of a new neoliberal political orthodoxy which transformed the relationship between the state and non-state sectors in the UK. The following chapters represent

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Andrew Walker, *Voice for the World: The Work of the BBC External Services* (London: BBC Publications, 1982), 4.

[6] Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 265.

the first in-depth analysis of how and why the BBCXS pursued a distinct and deliberate overseas development agenda during these years, establishing complex but transformational relationships with an array of NGOs, government bodies, and international organisations working within the overseas development sector. In doing so, it makes a significant contribution not only to the history of international broadcasting, but also adds to our understanding of British internationalism since the 1960s, and of the global 'rise of the NGO'.

Tuning In: Situating the BBCXS as an International Broadcaster

Ever since the BBC first began broadcasting to overseas audiences in the 1930s, it has insisted that its services for listeners beyond Britain's borders are fundamentally indivisible from the rest of the BBC, adhering to the same basic principles and editorial values. It is therefore valuable to begin this historical study of the BBCXS by recognizing the broader BBC's impressive credentials as a historical practitioner in its own right – one which, since at least the 1960s, has sought to exert a strong influence over how it is remembered and understood, not least by curating or commissioning its own official histories of the BBC. Asa Briggs' magisterial, BBC-commissioned History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, published in five volumes between 1961 and 1995 and heavily based on BBC archival material to which he was given privileged access, serves as an essential point of reference for any scholar of the BBC interested in the period before 1974, while Jean Seaton's official history, drawing more heavily on oral history interviews with former BBC staff, covers the years 1974-1987.[7] Both Briggs and Seaton, anointed by the BBC to produce these official histories, were granted fuller access to BBC personnel and archival material than any BBC 'outsider' might hope to receive.

Informing and intersecting with these officially-sanctioned scholarly histories stands the work of former BBC Director of Radio Frank Gillard, who from 1972 until the mid-1990s conducted a major officially-sanctioned oral history project on the BBC's institutional history. by October 1995, Gillard had collected sound recordings from 132 contributors, and video recordings from 98 contributors.[8] Unlike Briggs and Seaton's academic histories, which would be read widely

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[7] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom,* Volumes I-V (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974-1987* (London: Profile, 2015).
[8] 'Frank Gillard, speaking from his home', 25 October 1995. Origins of the BBC Oral History Collection, BBC 100 website. Accessed at https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/bbc-memories/frank-gillard/ on 2 June 2022.

beyond the BBC, Gillard's project was initially designed with the BBC itself in mind as its key audience and beneficiary. In a 1995 interview for his own project, Gillard explained how his project would 'not only throw new light on the BBC background, new insights into the way it had developed, but would produce those insights in forms that were broadcastable, so the BBC would have an account of its past in sound and in vision, which could be used in its own media'.[9] As the BBC celebrates its centenary in 2022, so Gillard's aims were fulfilled, with the publication of a bountiful (though carefully curated) selection of '100 voices' from Gillard's Oral History collection, made available to researchers and the British public via the BBC website as part of the *BBC 100* project.

These interviews, never previously available to external researchers, provide a truly exciting and thrillingly rich source base for those interested in a broad range of topics, and have been used extensively within this thesis. Yet they also serve as a contemporary reminder of the BBC's continued authority and sway over knowledge production regarding its own history, and of the potential value of turning to sources beyond the BBC's institutional reach (when such sources are available), to act as a counterpoint to the source material which the BBC itself deems to be valuable or suitable for consumption beyond its own organisational borders. My extensive use of source material drawn from outside of the BBC's 'official' history - from the archives of external organisations such as Oxfam, from the newly collected oral testimony of former BBC staff who were overlooked within the BBC's 'official' oral history, or the life narratives of non-BBC employees who engaged with the BBC for development-related reasons - is informed by this desire to gain a more critical perspective on the BBCXS's recent history by exploring beyond the BBC's own institutional logic and limits.

The occasion of the BBC's centenary has certainly helped to draw debates about the BBC's historical role within British society, and its relationship with the British state, to the fore. Alongside the *BBC 100* project which the BBC has embarked upon, curating a selection of commemorative snapshots from across a century of broadcasting history in a form that is highly accessible to the web-browsing British public, 2022 has also seen the publication of two major new magisterial histories of the organization, designed respectively to complement or challenge

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[9] 'Frank Gillard, speaking from his home', BBC 100 website.

the *BBC 100* project.[10] While these new works have inevitably been constructed with contemporary concerns in mind – perhaps most notably, what exactly the BBC's future might look like as technological and political challenges appear to pose an apparently insurmountable threat to its existing model for 'public service broadcasting' – they also reflect the fact that contested claims about the BBC's independence and impartiality have been a near-constant feature of its hundred-year history. Its status as neither a *state* broadcaster whose editorial values are directly set or overseen by the government, nor a straightforwardly *commercial* broadcaster predominantly funded by advertising and primarily motivated by economic gain, has fascinated a broad church of scholars and observers who have sought to identify the nature and extent of the organisation's self-proclaimed 'independence'.

The idea of the BBC as a public institution, influenced by yet fundamentally independent from both the state and the market, continues to animate scholarly and public debate to this day, and remains enshrined in the BBC's Editorial Guidelines.[11] Unsurprisingly, the BBC's official histories overwhelmingly endorse the BBC's capacity to operate independently and impartially throughout its history, portraying an organisation which heroically and (for the most part) successfully resisted attempts by both Labour and Conservative governments to impinge upon its institutional independence.[12] Yet scholarly critics of the BBC (such as the sociologist Tom Mills) have argued that on the contrary, the BBC's ability to serve as a truly independent 'public service broadcaster' was always limited rather than enabled by its arms-length relationship with the British state, with its relatively autonomy peaking during the 1960s and 1970s before the rigours of neoliberal governance and the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s forced it to conform to a more restricted role.[13]

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[10] David Hendy, *The BBC: A People's History* (London: Profile, 2022)*;* Simon Potter, *This is the BBC: Entertaining the Nation, Speaking for Britain?* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022).

[11] 'The BBC's reputation and the strength of its brand in the UK and around the world are based upon its fundamental values of editorial integrity, independence and impartiality. These values are central both to the BBC's Public Services and our Commercial Services. Audiences everywhere must be able to trust the BBC. In order to achieve that, our impartiality, editorial integrity and independence must not be compromised by outside interests and arrangements. We must maintain independent editorial control over our content.' 14.1 Introduction, Section 14: Independence from External Interests, BBC Editorial Guidelines, June 2019. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/ on 6 June 2022.

[12] Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors,* 4-5.

[13] Tom Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service* (London, Verso, 2016). For further discussion on this topic, see Chapter Three of this thesis.

The question of the BBC's independence is of course not just a scholarly or historical one, but also a matter of contemporary public and political debate, as part of a broader discussion about whether the BBC is 'fit for purpose' a hundred years on from its creation which has seen the BBC draw criticism from both traditionally left- and right-of center publications.[14] A BBC social media campaign launched in February 2022 spoke directly to recent criticisms of BBC 'bias', describing the BBC as 'a unique experiment: there's no angle, there's no biased vibes, no sponsors interfering with play'.[15] Those who support the BBC's claims to independence and unbiased approach to broadcasting can point to copious evidence that politicians from both major British political parties and beyond have often voiced their frustration towards the BBC's unwillingness to toe the party line. A recent review of 'Beebology' in the London Review of Books helpfully outlined this, declaring that 'every government has complained that the BBC has constantly undermined their efforts to govern the country' and claiming that 'one powerful lobby claims it is a hotbed of radicals bent on undermining national identity, another that it is the mouthpiece of the establishment'.[16] Yet evidence that political figures from both the left and right wing sometimes disapproved of the BBC, or that governments did not feel as if they could 'control' the BBC, does not prove that the organisation was either independent nor impartial, and should not discourage further investigation into this question.

This thesis's focus on the BBC's role as an international broadcaster provides an illuminating yet under-explored intervention into this ongoing debate about the organisation's relationship with the British state. The BBC's overseas broadcasting arm's claims to independence and impartiality are probably even more complicated and controversial than those of the BBC as a whole. Unlike the 'domestic' BBC, which has historically relied on the licence fee rather than direct taxation as the main source of its funding, the BBCXS has historically (until 2014) relied

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[14] 'Is the BBC biased?' *The Week,* 26 November 2021, accessed online at https://www.theweek.co.uk/100501/is-the-bbc-biased on 22 August, 2022; Roger Mosey, 'After 75 years of the BBC licence fee, is the BBC fit for purpose?', *The New Statesman,* 1 June 2021, accessed online at https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk-politics/2021/06/after-75-years-bbc-licence-fee-it-still-fit-purpose on 22 August 2022; Robin Aitken, 'The BBC's real problem is nothing to do with the licence fee', *The Spectator,* 30 August 2020, accessed online at https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-bbc-s-real-problem-is-nothing-to-do-with-the-licence-fee on 22 August 2021.

[15] This is Our BBC', BBC online video, 2 February 2022. Accessed at https://twitter.com/bbc/status/1488799352504135681 on 7 July 2022.

[16] 'Beebology', Stefan Collini. *London Review of Books,* 44:8 (2022), accessed online at https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v44/n08/stefan-collini/beebology?fbclid=IwAR0eFXKWAx-q9gLPgo9YevGofXeLVtilnI7a2-0bdWV_ZBGkR93ZWKyzw-0 on 1 June 2022.

almost entirely on a direct grant-in-aid from the Foreign Office.[17] When the BBCXS began broadcasting in foreign languages in the late 1930s, it was at the suggestion of the Foreign Office, who negotiated a secret and unwritten 'gentleman's agreement' with the BBC which gave civil servants the right to provide guidance on what should or should not be included within the BBC's foreign language broadcasts.[18] These broadcasts dramatically expanded during the Second World War, remembered within official histories of the BBCXS as its 'finest hour', during which the durability of this 'gentleman's agreement' would be tested rigorously.[19]

The Foreign Office's decision to continue and expand its funding to the BBCXS beyond the end of the Second World War was clearly informed by a belief that this 'gentleman's agreement' would be extended into the Cold War. Key personnel like Sir Ian Jacob, who moved easily between roles at the BBC (Controller of European Services 1946-47, Director of the Overseas Service 1947-51 and Director General 1952-1960) and Whitehall (Chief Staff Officer at the Ministry of Defence 1951-2), recognized the BBCXS's role as an 'essential adjunct of British diplomatic and foreign policy objectives', and epitomized the close relationship between Bush House and Whitehall during this key period.[20] The BBCXS's refusal to abide by the Eden government's instructions to avoid broadcasting about British opposition to the Suez incursion in 1956 demonstrated that the BBC could, on occasion, defy attempts by British governments to dictate the content of its broadcasts.[21] Yet strong evidence exists to demonstrate how the BBCXS worked overtly and covertly with the British state throughout the post-war era to support its foreign policy objectives. James Vaughan has shown how even when the BBC pushed back against efforts by the Foreign Office or the British Army to exercise strict control over the BBC's broadcasting in the Middle East during the 1950s, it still functioned as 'an arm of British Government information policy and cultural diplomacy'.[22] Separately, Hugh Wilford and Alban Webb have

[17] Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson, *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932-2018* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 297-305.

[18] Potter, *This is the BBC,* 66.

[19] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 265. See also Nelson Ribeiro and Stephanie Seul, eds, *Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC's Foreign-Language Services during the Second World War* (Abingdon: Routledge: 2017).

[20] Alban Webb, 'Constitutional niceties: three crucial dates in cold war relations between the BBC External Services and the Foreign Office', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* 28:4 (2008), 557-567. See also Webb, *London Calling*, 132.

[21] Webb, *London Calling,* 157-185.

[22] James Vaughan, 'The BBC's External Services and the Middle East Before the Suez Crisis' in 'BBC World Service, 1932-2007: Cultural Exchange and Public Diplomacy', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television,* 28:4 (2008), 499-514.

highlighted the BBCXS's close links with the Foreign Office's covert anti-Communist propaganda unit, the Information Research Department, during the early Cold War.[23]

This important work has helped to bring to the fore the BBCXS's key role as a Cold War protagonist. During the 1950s and 1960s, Bush House struggled to balance its much-vaunted editorial commitment to impartiality and objectivity with its role as an 'adjunct' of British foreign policy, as Britain engaged in a complex and increasingly global ideological contest where claims about 'truth', 'propaganda', and 'freedom of information' took on a totemic significance. This thesis engages closely with the question of how and why the BBCXS fought back against claims that it broadcast Cold War propaganda, as well as its resistance towards any external efforts to influence its broadcasts which it believed might threaten its reputation for objectivity. It builds on a rich and extensive historiography of Cold War broadcasting, which has dramatically evolved over the past twenty years to move beyond the (often triumphalist) Cold Warrior narratives embedded within the memoirs or 'insider histories' of former broadcasting personnel who worked at the US-funded Cold War broadcasters Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.[24] The question of how valid these broadcasters' claims to be broadcasting 'truth' or 'freedom' were, or how crucial their contribution to the end of the Cold War really was, is less central to this thesis. |Instead, it takes its lead from those scholars who have approached Cold War broadcasters (and their archives) as sites where historians can study the transnational exchange of ideas and the creation of new, complex identities in ways which do not always comfortably fit within the binary model of a Cold War fought between the 'free' and 'unfree' worlds.[25]

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[23] Hugh Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed', *Review of International Studies,* 24:3 (1998), 353-369; Webb, *London Calling,* 39-45.

[24] See for example Arch Puddington*, Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2000); A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Richard Cummings, *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009); George Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War within the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

[25] Anna Bischof and Zuzana Jürgens, eds, *Voices of Freedom - Western Interference?: 60 Years of Radio Free Europe* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015); Alec Badenoch, Andreas Fickers and Christian Henrich Franke, *Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Broadcasting and the Cold War* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013); Linda Risso, 'Introduction' in 'Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War', *Cold War History*, 13:2 (2013), 145-152; Friederike Kind- Kovacs, *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014).

Within both the 'older' and 'newer' school of Cold War broadcasting scholarship, the BBCXS has so far received far less attention than the US-backed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, aside from occasionally being mentioned as a source of inspiration for RFE/RL journalists seeking to improve their reputation for objectivity.[26] With Alban Webb's book on the BBCXS and the Cold War focusing on the period between 1945 and 1956, very little scholarly work has yet been undertaken which has sought to explore and explaining the BBC's role as a Cold War broadcaster since the 1960s.[27] Yet while more work covering the BBCXS's role during the latter decades of the Cold War would be welcome, this thesis is not exclusively or predominantly a history of the BBCXS's role as a Cold War broadcaster. Instead, responding to Federico Romero's call to de-centre the Cold War from our historical understanding of the latter half of the twentieth century, I approach the Cold War as just one contextual framework which co-existed and overlapped with others to inform decision-making within the BBCXS between the mid-1960s and the end of the century.[28] Focusing on a time period (1965-1999) which allows for an appreciation of how the end of the Cold War affected the BBCXS's role as a humanitarian, human rights, and overseas development actor, this thesis makes a clear contribution to the *global* history of international broadcasting. It examines how the BBCXS responded not only to pressures directly arising from its status as a Cold War protagonist, but also to separate, though related global challenges that characterized this period: the development of new, 'world-shrinking' broadcast technologies; the end of the British empire and the emergence of new forms of political and economic solidarity with (and within) the Global South; and the changing role of NGOs and international organisations like the United Nations within the field of overseas development.

Marie Gillespie's 'Tuning In' research project conducted between 2007 and 2010 at the Open University has helped to begin the process of reimagining the BBCXS's role since the 1960s as more than a Cold War broadcaster. The project has highlighted the BBCXS's complex position

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[26] See for example Johanna Granville, '"Caught with Jam on Our Fingers": Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', *Diplomatic History*, 29:5 (2005), 811-839; Susan Haas, 'Communities of Journalists and Journalism Practice at Radio Free Europe during the Cold War 1950-1995' (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2013); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

[27] Alban Webb, 'The BBC Polish Section and the Reporting of Solidarity' in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds. *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service* (New York: Routledge, 2012). See also Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside Books, 1992), 128-142.

[28] Federico Romero, 'Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads', *Cold War History* 14:4 (2014), 685-703. See also Holger Nehring, 'What was the Cold War?', *The English Historical Review*, 127:527 (2012), 920-949.

as both an instrument of British 'public diplomacy' and a space in which British and non-British staff members worked with and alongside each other to form new, cosmopolitan ways of thinking about Bush House's mission and purpose.[29] The project has provided rich evidence of the BBCXS's complex role as a 'forum of transnational communication', suggesting that its 'vast stores of cosmopolitan cultural capital' have played a valuable role in helping Britain to flourish as a practitioner of 'soft power' on the international stage since the Second World War.[30] The project also offered a first glimpse of the BBCXS's role as an overseas development actor during the post-Cold War era, in the shape of Andrew Skuse's chapter on the BBC Pashto Service's development-focused soap opera, *Naway Kor, Naway Jawand* (New Home, New Life).[31] Skuse's insights on the 'neocolonial encounter' between BBC personnel, partners from Western NGOs and international organisations, and Afghani writers and listeners, have helped to inspire this thesis, which situates *Naway Kor, Naway Jawand* and the programmes and projects it inspired within a longer historical narrative of BBC overseas development-focused rhetoric and activity dating back at least as far as the 1960s.

More broadly, this thesis departs from Gillespie and Webb's framing of the BBCXS as a 'cosmopolitan contact zone', arguing instead that the BBCXS was a purposeful and partisan British overseas development actor with a discrete sense of its own mission and priorities. By focusing more closely on the BBCXS's role as a provider of BBC-branded broadcasting expertise, training, and 'know-how' to a diverse array of international partners under the auspices of overseas development, this thesis offers a deeper and more critical perspective on the BBCXS's post-imperial contribution to the world than any previous scholarly work.

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[29] See Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, 'Introduction: Corporate Cosmopolitanism: Diasporas and Diplomacy at the BBC World Service, 1932-2012' in Gillespie and Webb, eds, *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service 1932-2012,* 1-20. On the BBCXS's role as part of the UK's public diplomacy efforts, see Nicholas Cull, 'Public Diplomacy: Seven Lessons for its Future from its Past', University of Leeds School of Media and Communications (Phil Taylor Papers), accessed at https://universityofleeds.github.io/philtaylorpapers/vp017fe0.html on 6 June 2022; James Pamment, *British Public Diplomacy and Soft Power: Diplomatic Influence and the Digital Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 42-49, 106-109.

[30] Gillespie and Webb, 'Introduction: Corporate Cosmopolitanism' in *Diasporas and Diplomacy,* 3.

[31] Andrew Skuse, 'Communication for development and public diplomacy: Insights from an Afghan radio drama' in Gillespie and Webb, *Diasporas and Diplomacy,* 193-211.

Benevolent Expertise, British Internationalism, and the 'NGO Moment' at Bush House, 1965-1999

Aside from its contribution to the history of the BBC and international broadcasting, this thesis also builds on recent work seeking to understand Britain's changing international role since the 1960s. In the introduction to his influential 2011 edited volume on Britain's experience of empire in the twentieth century, Andrew Thompson noted that the 'twilight decades' of the empire (which he identifies as the 1960s and 1970s) are 'barely mentioned at all' in most scholarly studies of Britain's imperial past, an oversight he described as 'distinctly puzzling'.[32] Further historical study of the period in which Britain was forced to come to terms with the 'loss' of empire has the potential to inform and improve contemporary debates about the relationship between Britain's imperial past and its apparently post-imperial present. Over the last decade or so since Thompson's intervention, an exciting and diverse collection of historians have focused on the question of how the experience of decolonization affected British society and culture, often drawing on source material created by or for 'ordinary' Britons rather than relying on government-produced documents to do so.[33] Among this growing literature, Jordanna Bailkin's work on British youth and the Voluntary Service Organisation and Anna Bocking-Welch's work on middle-class British voluntary associations during the 1960s demonstrate how a focus on non-governmental British efforts to support 'overseas development' at or after the end of empire can make a major contribution to this ongoing debate. Such work can illuminate how ideas and practices from the imperial past have continued to inform and interact with other, newer ways of thinking about Britain's 'place in the world' ever since, despite the decline of overtly imperial rhetoric or thought within British mainstream political culture since the 1960s.[34]

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[32] Andrew Thompson, 'Introduction' in Andrew Thompson, ed., *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1-31, 1.

[33] See for example Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2012); 'Where did the Empire Go? Archives and Decolonization in Britain', *American Historical Review*, 120:3 (2015), 884-899; Anna Bocking-Welch, *British Civic Society at the End of Empire: Decolonisation, Globalisation, and International Responsibility* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, 'Race' and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kojo Koram, *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire* (London: John Murray, 2022).

[34] Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire,* 55-95; Bocking-Welch, *British Civic Society at the End of Empire.*

Both Bailkin and Bocking-Welch's work reveal how 'ordinary' or 'non-expert' Britons, organizing themselves into voluntary associational groups, demonstrated and acted upon their belief that they had a special responsibility and credible role to play in helping the rest of the world on the path towards 'development'. Philip Murphy has argued that Britain's desire to play a leading moral role on the global stage was far from extinguished by the loss of its empire, or indeed its subordination to the United States within the global order during the second half of the twentieth century.[35] As this thesis will show, the assumption that Britain possessed not just a moral responsibility towards supporting global development, but also a disproportionate amount of relevant 'expertise' or 'know-how' that could speed up this process, continued to underpin the actions of a variety of British governmental and non-governmental overseas development organisations, including the BBCXS, from the mid-1960s through until the end of the 1990s.

The BBCXS serves as a useful site for tracing the extent to which British 'expertise', developed through the experience of colonial rule, continued to be reimagined and repackaged as vital 'know-how' for the postcolonial global development project beyond the mid-1960s. As such, this thesis is in part an investigation into how the 'chameleon politics' identified by Eva-Marie Muschik (amongst others), which helped former colonial servants transform their reputations into post-colonial international development experts, continued to exist or evolve as individual, generational, and institutional memories of colonial rule began to diminish within Britain by the end of the twentieth century.[36] Yet just as the history of the BBCXS since the 1960s cannot be adequately understood solely through the lens of the Cold War, nor does it make sense to assume that it can be explained only through its relationship with Britain's colonial past. By focusing on the BBCXS's relationship with parts of the world where memories of British colonial rule were less immediate or direct (such as in post-1989 Eastern Europe or, to a lesser extent, Communist China in the 1970s and 1980s), and with international organisations such as the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross, this thesis contributes to the new, 'global' approach to

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[35] Philip Murphy, 'Britain as a Global Power in the Twentieth Century' in Thompson, *Britain's Experience of Empire,* 34.
[36] Eva-Maria Muschik, 'The Art of Chameleon Politics: From Colonial Servant to International Development Expert', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 9:2 (2018), 219-244. See also Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007); Sarah Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Caroline Ritter, *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

British history proposed by Tehila Sasson, James Vernon and others in an October 2018 issue of the *Journal of British Studies*.[37] In doing so, it acknowledges the multifaceted and cosmopolitan nature of the BBCXS's institutional make-up, without making the assumption that this cosmopolitanism diluted or detracted from its ability to act as an agent of British power overseas.

By telling the story of how, why, and with what justification the BBCXS came to refer to itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind' in the 1970s and 1980s, and why it went on to create its own BBC-branded international development NGO in the 1990s, this thesis also makes a contribution to our historical understanding of the changing role of the NGO within twentieth century Britain. The work of historians such as Matthew Hilton and Chris Moores has highlighted the 'rise of the NGO' within British politics and society since the 1960s, as non-governmental organisations which portrayed themselves as fundamentally 'apolitical' were often drawn deeply into the sphere of governance.[38] In placing their nominally 'independent' expertise at the disposal of the state, and accepting funding from national or international governing bodies (in amounts which often exceeded that that received from donations from the British public), overseas development NGOs like Oxfam experienced a profound transformation in terms of the scope of their activity, and their positionality within the wider overseas development sector.[39] This transformation was by no means just a British phenomenon: Kevin O'Sullivan has recently and persuasively made the case for a global 'NGO moment' between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s, drawing on case studies from Britain, Ireland, and Canada to argue that humanitarian aid and development NGOs became the 'primary conduits of Western compassion for the global poor' during these years.[40] Building on the burgeoning historiography of human rights centred around Samuel Moyn and Jan Eckel's argument in favour of the 1970s as a 'breakthrough' decade, O'Sullivan's work urges scholars to keep investigating the role that NGOs have played in enabling former imperial powers like Britain

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[37] Tehila Sasson, James Vernon, Miles Ogborn, Priya Satia, 'Britain and the World: A New Field?' *Journal of British Studies*, 57:4 (2018), 677-708.

[38] Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson and Jean-Francois Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2013), 188-217; Chris Moores, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[39] Matthew Hilton, 'International Aid and Development NGOs in Britain and Human Rights since 1945', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 3:3 (2012). See also Maggie Black, *A Cause For our Times: Oxfam – the First 50 years* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1992).

[40] Kevin O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 2.

to maintain and justify their disproportionately powerful role within the international community since the end of empire.[41]

The history of the BBC has yet to be fully integrated into this vision of this period as an 'NGO moment'. While historians such as Suzanne Franks, Andrew Jones and Tehila Sasson have examined the BBC's role in facilitating certain forms of charitable fundraising since the 1960s, these works have not considered these activities within a longer historical context, or focused on the reasons why the BBC might have been compelled to change its relationship with the NGO sector during this period in response to the latter's rise in global prominence. Nor have the BBCXS's repeated efforts to depict itself as *a kind of humanitarian NGO* since the 1960s been evaluated or explained in relation to the purported 'rise of the NGO', despite Bush House's concerted efforts to situate itself, both rhetorically and through a variety of development-related practices, as an ally and constituent part of the wider NGO sector. By drawing these claims and practices to the fore, and critically evaluating how and why the BBCXS's relationship with the humanitarian / overseas development sector changed between the end of empire and the end of the century, this thesis offers a new perspective on the role that the NGO sector played in shoring up Britain's post-imperial reputation as a 'global force for good'.[42]

Methods and Sources

As an enquiry into the BBCXS's role as an overseas development actor since the mid-1960s, and into its relationship with both the UK government and the NGO sector through this role, this thesis draws heavily on the rich seam of archival material on that subject identified within the BBC's Written Archives Centre (BBCWAC) in Caversham. Much of the most useful material has been found within the World Service Registry Collection folders (E40), which includes policy files outlining some of the scope and scale of the BBCXS's various overseas development programmes,

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[41] Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). Barnett, Paternalism Beyond Borders; Tehila Sasson, 'In the Name of Humanity: Britain and the Rise of Global Humanitarianism', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Berkeley (2015); Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 2011); ; Kevin O'Sullivan, 'A "Global Nervous System": The Rise and Rise of European Humanitarian NGOs, 1945–1985', in Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel and Corinna R. Unger, eds, *International Organisations and Development, 1945–1990*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 196–219; Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[42] Marie Gillespie, 'The BBC World Service is a force for good – look after it, or risk losing it', *The Conversation,* 1 April 2014. Accessed at https://theconversation.com/the-bbc-world-service-is-a-force-for-good-look-after-it-or-risk-losing-it-25045 on 4 June 2022.

and its interactions with a variety of other global development actors, during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These departmental-level documents are complemented by material from other sections of the archive, such as Audience Research files (E3) and files produced by specific BBCXS language services such as the Polish Service (E62). I also make use of material from relevant files regarding the overall BBC's relations with humanitarian and human rights organisations such as Oxfam and Amnesty International (R78), and its training schemes for Commonwealth and Overseas Trainees (E30). Since few scholars have yet written archivally-based studies of the BBCXS's history since the 1960s, and none has ever focused on this history through the lens of overseas development, this thesis represents the first time that most of these documents have ever been submitted to scholarly analysis.

The thesis also draws on BBCXS-related materials created by UK government departments including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Commonwealth Relations Office (DO) and the Overseas Development Ministry (OD), as well as the government-funded British Council (BW), all of which is housed at the National Archives in Kew. These files document relations between the BBCXS and these government departments or bodies, containing correspondence between government ministers, civil servants and BBCXS management, and copies of official reports and requests exchanged between Downing Street, Whitehall, and Bush House relating to the latter's overseas development work. Again, the bulk of this material has not been cited in previous histories of the BBCXS: since the majority of these files covering the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s have only been made available to researchers within the last decade, this thesis will be the first scholarly work to make use of them.

While these institutional and state records represent an invaluable source base, the limitations of relying entirely on these 'official' archives when seeking to evaluate the BBCXS's role within the fields of humanitarianism, human rights, and overseas development between 1965 and 1999 must be addressed. Firstly, there is the problem of the 1990s – a decade which is a crucial constituent part of this thesis's chronology, yet one for which there is very limited archival material available for researchers working at either Caversham or Kew. Despite the decision in 2013 to release government papers to the public after twenty years rather than thirty, accessing BBC or government files created during or since the 1990s has proved a significant challenge, with only sporadic (albeit still useful) collections of documents being made available to the researcher

relating to this later period. Secondly, there is the more general issue of archival logic: recognizing that the BBC and the state's own archival collections are not inert or value-free stores of potential source material, but deliberately constructed and carefully curated historical products in their own right, created by leading British institutions with their own agendas regarding what they wish to be remembered and forgotten.[43] Even when scholars are able to access this material, approaching its assiduously with the intention of reading 'against the grain', the archive's structural form and its silences inevitably place some limitations upon the researchers with regard to the kinds of conclusions that they can support.[44]

In order to address these twin challenges, I have embraced a number of complementary research methods. One is to approach the BBCXS through archival and published materials created by the NGOs and international organisations which it interacted and sometimes directly collaborated with during this period. As has been mentioned, one of this thesis's main aims is to investigate how, why, and with what justification the BBCXS came to describe itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind' or 'government-funded NGO'. Documents created by NGOs like Oxfam or the International Committee of the Red Cross clearly provide a new and valuable vantage point from which to scrutinize these relationships. This thesis is not simply a history of the BBCXS *as* an NGO, but also contributes to that growing body of scholarship which seeks to understand contemporary British and international history *through* the NGO, reflecting the value that NGO-created archives and/or documents can add to the history of key twentieth century topics such as decolonization, overseas development, and the Cold War.[45] Through extensive use of the Oxfam archival collection held by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, as well as NGO-backed publications like the *New Internationalist* and the *Index on Censorship*, this thesis is able to cut across the archival logic of the BBC and the British state, providing a valuable new perspective from which it is easier to identify and critically evaluate the assumptions, motivations, and beliefs which inspired both institutions during this period. As such, this 'NGO-created' source base provides far

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[43] Bailkin 'Where did the Empire Go?'. On the secret collection of so-called 'migrated archives' stored on FCO property at Hanslope Park, see Daniel Lomas, 'Lost Files, History Thieves and Contemporary British History', *History and Policy,* 9 January 2018. Accessed online at https://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/articles/lost-files-history-thieves-and-contemporary-british-history on 5 June 2022.
[44] Antoinette Burton, 'Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive stories' in Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-6.
[45] Sarah B. Snyder, 'Bringing the Transnational In: Writing Human Rights into the International History of the Cold War', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 24:1 (2013), 100-116.

more than simply an indirect route to accessing information that might exist in a currently inaccessible form within the 'official' archives of the BBC or the UK government. Rather, it serves as a helpful means of 'provincializing' the BBCXS, viewing it from the perspective of organisations whose interactions with it during this period were often new and initially tentative, and as a result took on relatively indirect, informal, or unstructured forms, at least in comparison with its more formalized relationship with Whitehall.

Oral testimony also makes up an important source base within this thesis. As previously mentioned, I make considerable but cautious use of excerpts from some of the oral history interviews conducted by Frank Gillard on behalf of the BBC during the late 1980s and early 1990s, which have now been made available to external researchers through the *100 Voices* website. I also engage with the testimony of former BBCXS journalist Keith Somerville, interviewed in 2013 as part of the Institute for Commonwealth Studies' Commonwealth Oral History Project, to help illuminate how the post-imperial Commonwealth was conceptualized within Bush House (and how Somerville's interviewer approached the BBCXS as an ally of the Commonwealth). The content of these interviews, as well as the summaries and supporting literature within which they have been situated by the creators of these oral history archives, represent a rich source for historical enquiry into the BBCXS's past and present status.[46]

These archival interviews have been supplemented by my own small-scale oral history project. Between March and September 2020, I conducted interviews with nine former BBCXS employees with first-hand experience of working on, or closely observing, some element of Bush House's overseas development-related work. Since only two of those interviewed (former World Service Managing Director John Tusa and Controller of European Services Peter Udell) had been previously interviewed as part of the BBC's own institutional oral history projects, these interviews provided original and often first-hand testimony from individuals whose thoughts and memories would otherwise make little impact on our collective historical understanding of the BBCXS, yet played a leading role within the historically significant overseas development work which the BBC undertook between the mid-1960s and late 1990s.

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[46] On the value of archived oral history collections see April Gallwey, 'The Rewards of using Archived Oral Histories in Research: The Case of the Millennium Memory Bank', *Oral History,* 41:1 (2013), 37-50.

These interviews were not predominantly undertaken to gather new factual information about the BBCXS's overseas development activities that was not available via archival or published documents, although they sometimes did provide this. Rather, they were conducted to understand how those interviewed remember and reflect on the value or significance of overseas development activities, speaking from their contemporary vantage point in the coronavirus-struck spring, summer, and autumn of 2020. These contemporary memories of events and practices which occurred between 1965 and 1999, and the beliefs and emotions which these memories evoked, serve as a valuable addition to the available source base for those interested in understanding the BBCXS's historical significance as a site and vessel for British post-imperial benevolence. When considered alongside the documentary evidence drawn from publications or archival documents, and approached with an acknowledgement of the selective and subjective nature of their testimony, these interviews provide an exciting new route into understanding the affective and emotional environment within Bush House during a period in which it was subject to a series of intense external pressures and potential identity crises.[47]

Finally, this thesis engages with a broad range of published memoirs, life narratives, and official or 'insider' histories produced by former BBCXS staff. Relevant material regarding the nature, extent, and aims of the BBCXS's overseas development activity 1965-99 has been drawn from sources including the BBC's official annual handbooks, *The Listener* magazine, and the BBC website. Histories of the BBCXS by former Managing Directors Gerard Mansell and John Tusa and former Commonwealth Correspondent Andrew Walker have been supplemented with the memoirs of those whose professional and personal lives intersected with, but were not defined by, Bush House. The autobiographical accounts of figures like the Methodist leader Pauline Webb, Chinese state television executive XiongXiong Xu, and star of *The Archers* soap opera Charles Collingwood not only add valuable colour and detail to specific episodes within the BBCXS's history, but also help to punctuate and challenge some of the assumptions embedded within the narratives about the BBC's purely benevolent international role contained within these official histories.[48] As such, they make a small but crucial contribution to the overall task of scrutinizing,

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[47] Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce & Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Lynn Abrams, 'Subjectivity and intersubjectivity' in Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* Second Edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 54-78;
[48] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives,* Second Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 235-251.

complicating, and challenging the BBCXS's post-imperial reputation as a 'global public service broadcaster' and 'gift to the world'.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis's opening chapter offers an evaluation of the BBCXS's institutional philosophy from the creation of the English-language 'World Service' in 1965 until the organisation's fiftieth anniversary in 1982. Using previously unused source material from the BBC and FCO archives, as well as NGO-produced publications and newly collected oral testimony from former BBCXS staff, it argues that the language of humanitarianism and human rights was already beginning to take on a new and valuable role within Bush House during this period. The BBCXS initially struggled to redefine its mission and purpose and maintain the support of a diverse array of stakeholders, as it responded to challenges relating to decolonization and apartheid in Southern Africa and détente in Cold War Europe. But by positioning itself as part of a broader coalition of British state and non-state organisations working (directly or indirectly) to promote Britain's unique moral contribution to the post-imperial international community, the BBCXS was able to secure its financial future and its international reputation as a global force for good.

Chapter Two evaluates the BBCX's institutional philosophy from 1982 to 1999. It explores how Bush House responded to two separate but related threats: firstly, the 'heating up' of the Cold War in the early 1980s and its subsequent and largely unexpected end less than a decade later; and secondly, the BBC's complicated relationship with Thatcherism and its political legacy. It proposes that Bush House's 'humanitarian turn' proved a key element in the BBCXS's navigation of these challenges, offering a credible way for the organisation to continue to demonstrate its strategic importance in a post-Cold War world, while also creating new opportunities for external funding and partnerships which helped to partially protect it from its domestic opponents. As the first scholarly work to take a close, critical view of the collaboration between sections of the BBCXS and international development NGOs and donors during the 1990s, this chapter draws heavily on archival and published materials created by both the BBC and NGOs to offer a novel perspective on the question of how NGOs established themselves as the primary agents of Western compassionate expertise by the end of the twentieth century.

In Chapter Three, I focus on a leading manifestation of the BBCXS's role as a global development actor, the BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind (MPM). Through a detailed analysis of MPM's broadcasting development work in post-Communist Eastern Europe during the 1990s, as well as its curious, semi-detached status as a BBC-branded charitable trust, it argues that MPM's creation was not just a pragmatic or opportunistic reaction to the end of the Cold War. Rather, it suggests that MPM was also a product of a compulsion which had existed within the BBCXS since at least the 1960s: the urge to position Bush House as a global development actor which used its broadcasting expertise to serve both Britain's national interest and the interests of humanity as a whole. Using previously unseen material from the BBCXS archives and oral testimonies from some of MPM's key personnel, it evaluates MPM's historical significance as a manifestation of the BBC's broader approach to post-imperial international development, and as a precursor to its contemporary efforts within the field of 'Communication for Development' (C4D).

Chapter Four explores a largely overlooked and underappreciated aspect of the BBCXS's work, English Language Teaching (ELT). Situating the work of the BBC's English by Radio and Television department in relation to the existing historiography on ELT's role as an overseas development tool, this chapter focuses on the case study of BBC English's *Follow Me!* series, and its purchase and adaptation by China's national broadcaster, CCTV, in the early 1980s. By re-contextualizing archival and audiovisual sources created by BBC English about the series' significance and legacy, using the autobiography of CCTV executive XiongXiong Xu to challenge the BBC's own narrative, the chapter offers a new insight into the symbolic successes and financial failures of this much-mythologized television series. In doing so, it shows how Bush House strove to position itself as a leading partner for both the British and Chinese governments in their joint efforts to place British 'know-how' at China's disposal during the early years of the Deng Xiaoping era. Put forward

Chapter Five examines the BBCXS's relationship with the United Nations, and particularly its educational, scientific and cultural organisation, UNESCO. After exploring the ideological similarities between the BBCXS and UNESCO's institutional philosophies in the early post-war era, it evaluates the BBC's changing relationship with UNESCO during the 1970s and 1980s, in relation to the emergence of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement. It explains how and why the BBCXS gradually distanced itself from UNESCO during

this period, eventually lending its support to the anti-NWICO lobby within the UK as a diverse group of nations and individuals from across the Global South and the global NGO sector sought to challenge what they perceived as the 'cultural imperialism' of the existing global information order. In doing so, this chapter provides further evidence of the BBCXS's fundamental mistrust of any alternative proposals for media development which fell outside of its own established approach to overseas development, as well as its willingness to work with the British government and Commonwealth-affiliated organisations to challenge such proposals.

Commonwealth concerns take centre stage in my final research chapter, focusing on the BBCXS's relationship with the Commonwealth between 1965 and 1999. Using oral testimony from the Commonwealth Oral History Project (COHP), archival and published documents relating to the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), and a newly conducted interview with a former Secretary-General of the CBA, it explores how and why the BBCXS consistently demonstrated its support for the Commonwealth in its post-imperial form, primarily through its leading role within the CBA. In outlining the reasons why the BBC largely preferred to conduct its overseas development work within the CBA rather than alternative international organisations like UNESCO, this chapter contributes to a growing field of scholarly works interested in understanding the historical significance of the unofficial or 'People's Commonwealth', appreciating the role which this often unheralded international organisation has played in connecting post-imperial visions of British benevolence overseas with older notions about Britain's moral leadership of the world rooted in its imperial past.

Chapter One: 'We Offer You Our Intention to Do Good Rather Than Ill': The Institutional Philosophy of the BBCXS, 1965-1982

In the BBC's official handbook for the year 1967, Managing Director of the BBC External Services Tangye Lean wrote with pride of the opening of a new BBC short-wave radio relay base on Ascension Island. Describing Ascension as 'one of the many islands which went unnoticed by the first and second British Empires', Lean explained that this tiny rocky outcrop, located a thousand miles off the coast of Western Africa, was now a significant and valued British overseas territory.[1] First settled in 1815, the island had served as a useful communications hub for the British Empire, thanks to its strategic location in the mid-Atlantic, and was a valuable military base for Allied planes fighting in North Africa during the Second World War. By 1967, the island was shared between the BBC, the commercial telecommunications company Cable and Wireless, the Composite Signals Organisation (part of Britain's official intelligence-gathering body, GCHQ), and around five hundred American military personnel, who leased a base for 'space trackers associated with Cape Kennedy'.[2] In Lean's eyes, Ascension Island was not just a vital global communications hub, but was also 'important as a symbol and beginning': proof of both Britain and the BBC's continued roles as providers of strategic, globally valued information in the post-imperial era.[3]

Fifteen years later, Lean's successor as Managing Director, Gerard Mansell, reflected back on how the BBCXS had acquitted itself in the 1960s and 1970s. In his official history of the organisation, written in 1982 to mark its fiftieth anniversary, Mansell recalled these decades with pride, describing them as a time when 'a truly international flavour was creeping in, and Britain, as reflected in the programme output, was losing its imperial image and acquiring a new one, more in tune with the spirit of the times'.[4] Recognizing that Britain was 'no longer a world power of the first rank', Mansell argued that the BBCXS had nevertheless succeeded in portraying Britain as 'a

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[1] Tangye Lean, 'Atlantic Relay: A New Stage in World Broadcasting', *BBC Handbook 1967* (London: BBC, 1967), 17-19.
[2] Lean, 'Atlantic Relay', 17.
[3] Lean, 'Atlantic Relay', 19.
[4] Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1982), 246.

purveyor of truth and a source of practical wisdom in world affairs' who, given the decline of its imperial power, 'could be regarded as disinterested'.[5] But how accurate was Mansell's vision of the BBCXS as a paragon of post-imperial benevolent expertise, and upon what evidence did it rest? Why did Mansell seek to promote this particular vision of the BBCXS?

This chapter examines and evaluates the BBCXS's institutional philosophy from the creation of the 'World Service' in 1965 until the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1982. This was a period in which the BBCXS's fundamental mission and purpose was thoroughly reviewed and partially revised, as Bush House sought to plot a viable course into the post-imperial future. By the end of this period, the BBCXS had successfully positioned itself at the heart of a broader coalition of influential British voices, spanning both the NGO sector and mainstream party politics, which believed in Britain's duty and capacity to continue playing a disproportionately influential role in global affairs during the post-imperial era. Recognizing the comparative limits of Britain's military and economic might, this influential school of thought argued that Britain might continue to play this role through providing moral leadership, as well as access to a deep reservoir of technical knowledge and expertise, to the rest of the world.

This chapter also explains how and why the BBCXS engaged with the emerging language of humanitarianism and human rights to argue that it remained a vital asset in Britain's wider effort to act as a 'global force for good'. By analyzing previously unexamined documents from within the BBC and FCO's archival collections, newly collected oral testimony from former BBCXS staff, and publications produced by humanitarian and human rights NGOs, it demonstrates how the BBCXS cautiously but clearly began to turn towards the language of humanitarianism and human rights to explain its continued value to a diverse array of.

In its first section, this chapter outlines the thinking behind the re-branding of the BBCXS's flagship English language service as the 'World Service' in 1965, and explains how controversies relating to Britain's relationship with Rhodesia and South Africa between 1965 and 1970 created previously underappreciated tensions within Bush House around the question of exactly how to balance the changing moral convictions of its own staff with the BBC's commitment to impartiality. Using previously unseen materials from the BBC and FCO archives, it offers a

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[5] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told,* 246.

counter-argument to the prevailing depiction of this period within BBC official histories as one of relatively smooth transition from the colonial to the post-colonial era.

Next, I analyze the official review of BBCXS philosophy commissioned by Gerard Mansell in 1974. This review, overlooked within existing scholarship on the BBCXS's recent history, nevertheless helps to illuminate how senior managers at Bush House were able to propose a vision of the organisation's past, present, and future which found favour among the BBCXS's increasingly cosmopolitan workforce, without undermining the BBC's claims to serve Britain's specific national interest. This section explains how this settlement was reached against the backdrop of the ongoing Cold War, exploring how the BBCXS responded to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and the human rights-related political activism in Central and Eastern Europe which it inspired.

While recognizing the important role that Cold War considerations played in shaping the BBCXS's mission during the 1970s, this chapter also explains how and why Bush House rejected being characterized as an international broadcaster whose mission and purpose was defined by the Cold War. Focusing on the BBCXS's success in fending off major budget cuts proposed by Downing Street's Central Policy Review Staff, it identifies a set of assumptions held at the top of the BBCXS regarding the benevolence of Britain's contribution to humanity as a whole, which were endorsed and shared by important British political actors within both the state and non-state sectors.

Lastly, the chapter highlights the BBCXS's links with NGO-backed publications *Index on Censorship* and *New Internationalist*. It demonstrates how these publications (and the NGOs which published them) viewed the BBCXS as an ally and 'fellow traveller', sharing its conviction that despite its apparent 'decline', Britain still had an ongoing and outsized moral role to play on the international stage.

From General Overseas Service to World Service

The year 1965 represents an apposite starting point for an investigation into the BBC World Service's institutional philosophy, since it was in this year that, in a very real sense, the 'World Service' was born. The BBC had been broadcasting in English to audiences beyond the UK's

borders since 1932, when it launched its Empire Service. This service had been re-christened as the Overseas Service in November 1939, then rebranded again as the General Overseas Service in November 1942.[6] While the BBC also invested in other English-language services designed for regional audiences during the Second World War, for example its Eastern Service for South Asia, it was the General Overseas Service which was the immediate predecessor of today's English-language World Service.

In a 1992 interview for the BBC Oral History project, former BBCXS Managing Director Austen Kark described the General Overseas Service as operating 'in the form of a lighthouse', meaning that its transmission could not be heard in all parts of the world at the same time, but instead 'revolved' between different regions at different times, and therefore could not be heard outside of specific, pre-determined time slots.[7] While problems with signal reception continued, the development of new relay stations like the one on Ascension Island meant that the new 'World Service' was able to operate on a more universal basis than its predecessor, offering a continuous, 24-hour service to listeners around the world. Yet the most important difference between the 'World Service' and its predecessor was not the improvement in its broadcasting hours or signal quality, but the change in its imagined audience. When the BBC imagined its listenership to the General Overseas Service, it assumed that these listeners held a deep, sentimental connection to the United Kingdom: British military or civilian personnel serving Britain's national interest far from home, or non-British listeners who nonetheless felt an affinity towards Britain for cultural, linguistic, or historical reasons. Reflecting back on the period before the creation of the World Service, Gerard Mansell referred to the BBC's imagined listeners abroad as 'people with white faces, or what we called would-be expatriates, black- or brown-faced Englishmen'.[8] The World Service, however, imagined itself as speaking to a very different audience: one which, according to Asa Briggs, 'understands English but is not of British descent'.[9] This shift in the intended

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[6] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told,* 195.

[7] Austen Kark interviewed by Frank Gillard, BBC Oral History Collection, 1992, online video recording, <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/people-nation-empire/empire-and-europe/> [accessed 2 February 2022].

[8] Austen Kark interviewed by Frank Gillard.

[9] Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting, Vol. 5: Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)*,* 692. According to former BBC Commonwealth Correspondent Andrew Walker 'the stereotype of the average listener was no longer the British expatriate – perhaps a planter sitting on his verandah listening to London with a sundowner in his hand[…]The stereotype now is an upwardly mobile Asian male with a bicycle'. Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside Books, 1992), 78.

recipient of the BBC's overseas broadcasting in English inevitably required a simultaneous shift in the way that the BBC imagined the value and purpose of its external broadcasting.

Existing histories of the BBC spend relatively little time reflecting on the difficulties which the BBCXS faced in implementing this fundamental shift in its imagined audience. Where they do, they tend to paint a picture of difficulties swiftly overcome, with Bush House effectively and relatively painlessly meeting the challenge of delivering a new, post-imperial 'World Service'. Mansell described the period as one in which 'a new spirit of intellectual enquiry was at large, a sense of breaking new ground and creating a new role for the BBC, as well as a fascination with the developments which were transforming the world'.[10] Asa Briggs's account of the transition from General Overseas Service to World Service corroborated this optimistic vision of the process, arguing that the man responsible for overseeing the transition, Robert Gregson, succeeded in 'break[ing] down divisions of thinking and of interest which went back to the Second World War, a war which Gregson considered had at last faded into the historical background.'[11] Yet two episodes involving Britain's ongoing imperial and post-imperial entanglements in Southern Africa between 1965 and 1970 demonstrate that the task of adjusting to a new, post-imperial era was not always a straightforward one.

The Rhodesian and South African Controversies, 1965-1970

The BBCXS's mission, purpose, and relationship with the UK government were called into question over the Rhodesian crisis which erupted in the autumn of 1965. On 11 November, after years of protracted negotiations about arranging a transition towards majority rule, Rhodesia's Prime Minister Ian Smith unilaterally declared independence from British rule.[12] Committed to the policy of 'No Independence Before Majority Rule' (NIBMAR), UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson denounced the Rhodesian government's announcement as an 'illegal declaration of independence', given Rhodesia's failure to adapt its existing constitution, which entrenched the political disenfranchisement of its majority black African population.[13] From this point on, the Wilson

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[10] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 246.
[11] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Vol. 5, Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 700.
[12] Kate Law, 'Pattern, Puzzle, and Peculiarity: Rhodesia's UDI and Decolonisation in Southern Africa', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 45:5 (2017), 721-728.
[13] Richard Coggins, 'Wilson and Rhodesia: UDI and British Policy Towards Africa', *Contemporary British History*, 20:3 (2006), 363-381, 369.

government was faced with a complicated task. It felt obliged to impose sanctions on the Smith regime in recognition of the 'illegality' of its unilateral declaration, but wanted to avoid accusations that Britain was punishing 'ordinary' Rhodesians, for fear that this might lead to even greater support for Smith among Rhodesia's white population. Wilson was also acutely aware that Britain's approach to handling the crisis would be scrutinized by its international allies and opponents alike, particularly within the rest of Southern Africa and the Commonwealth.

The BBCXS was quickly enlisted by the UK government to support it in this task. Within weeks of UDI, Bush House was instructed by the Foreign Office to create a new broadcasting service directed specifically at reaching white Rhodesians, which Mansell described as being 'intended to stress their isolation and vulnerability and the likely consequences of the Smith regime's illegal action'.[14] The new Rhodesian Service began broadcasting in January 1966 via a British Diplomatic Service-owned transmitter in Francistown, just across the border in another of Britain's remaining African colonies, Bechuanaland.[15] Responsibility for the Rhodesian Service was placed in the hands of the BBC African Service's Frank Barber, who would later play a prominent role within the BBCXS's relationship with UNESCO during the 1970s and 1980s.[16]

The Rhodesian Service, which operated until 1970, occupies a somewhat awkward position within the BBCXS's post-war history, threatening to undermine its reputation for both impartiality and independence. A decade earlier, Bush House had faced perhaps the greatest challenge to its editorial independence from government since the Second World War, when the Eden government had sought to prevent it from broadcasting about the scale of the domestic opposition within Britain towards the government's proposed military action in the Suez.[17] The BBCXS's success in facing down this attempt to curtail its editorial independence in the autumn of 1956 quickly passed into Bush House folklore, and frequently evoked as evidence that the BBCXS was a genuinely impartial international broadcaster, rather than an instrument of British state propaganda.[18] Yet in agreeing to the UK government's request to set up a bespoke Rhodesian Service for the express

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[14] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 250.
[15] Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson, *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932–2018* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 255-257.
[16] Anne Symonds, 'Obituary: Frank Barber', *The Independent*, 7 July 1999. See also Chapter Five of this thesis.
[17] For the most detailed account of government-BBCXS relations during the Suez Crisis, see 'Chapter 10: Suez' in Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service, and the Cold War*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
[18] For a detailed account of the BBCXS's handling of the Suez Crisis, see Alban Webb, *London Calling,* 129-53.

purpose of challenging the legitimacy of the Smith regime's declaration of independence, the BBCXS demonstrated that it accepted the principle that the UK government had the right to use it to address specific post-colonial problems as they emerged. More than this, there is clear evidence that BBCXS staff were fully aware that he Rhodesian Service was not simply a tool for disseminating the British point of view on the crisis, but for waging psychological warfare against the Smith regime. Minutes from a meeting held by the External Service Directorate (a select group of the BBCXS's senior leaders) on 30 November 1965 show that the Rhodesian Service was, unequivocally, designed to act as a pro-British and anti-Smith propaganda instrument, detailing how 'a psychological warfare unit was being established within the C.R.O. [Commonwealth Relations Office, the government body responsible for relations between Britain and the Commonwealth], *with the H.African.S* [an acronym for the BBC's Head of African Services] *in charge*, for the service of ideas to the BBC and other broadcasters in Rhodesia'.[19] Frank Barber's role as the head of a government-appointed 'psychological warfare unit' shows how, ten years on from Suez, the BBCXS remained willing to place its staff and its reputation for independence and impartiality at the disposal of the British state in certain circumstances.

New oral history testimony from two former Rhodesian Service employees provides further evidence that the BBCXS knowingly acted as an instrument of pro-British propaganda in Rhodesia. In an August 2020 interview, former BBC African Service staffer Robin Denselow remembered working on the Rhodesian Service as a 'rather odd' experience, explaining that 'it felt sort of propagandian [sic], sort of outside the normal BBC remit, very different to everything we did later.'[20] In an interview in which he looked back on a long career at the BBC African Service with much pride, and argued that the BBC usually 'just wanted to get information out there so people knew what was going on', Denselow framed the Rhodesian Service as something of an aberration, describing it as 'bizarre' and 'very much the only propaganda thing I've ever worked on'.[21] Peter Udell, another former BBCXS staff member who was assigned to work for the Rhodesian Service, also conceded that they 'made mistakes', recalling the following incident:

> In these Rhodesian broadcasts, one day the head of the unit said to me, as a raw character, hadn't been in the BBC very long, could you please go to the microphone and read

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[19] BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter BBCWAC), E2/610/18: Foreign General External Services Directorate Meetings Minutes, 5.1.1965 – 21.12.1965, Minute 614, 30 November 1965. Italics added for emphasis.

[20] Robin Denselow, interviewed by the author, 13 August 2020.

[21] Denselow, interviewed by the author, 13 August 2020.

this, and he gave me a script, but it wasn't a script, it was Hansard, he said to me will you please read the Foreign Secretary's statement about Rhodesia that is in Hansard. I said well do you want me to edit it, he said no just read it, and I thought why, because it seemed to me rather strange to be actually reading just minute after minute of Hansard. Well he said this will give, according to the British lawyers, this will give the statement of the Foreign Secretary the status of law, by my reading it at the microphone. Thinking back on that, I don't think that was a legitimate thing to be doing. But having said that, and having said that there were mistakes that we made, so much of what we did was perhaps rather better than anybody else was able to do in international broadcasting.[22]

While Denselow and Udell's recollections of events which took place over fifty years earlier must be treated as distant memories, rather than as forensically accurate accounts of their time at the Rhodesian Service, they are very helpful in explaining how the BBCXS's reputation as an impartial and independent international broadcaster was not overly damaged by this experience. They show how, even for those who worked at the Rhodesian Service, the experience of setting up and operating a dedicated 'psychological warfare' unit on behalf of the UK government has been successfully marginalized or compartmentalized within a broader overall narrative of the BBCXS's post-imperial history which emphasizes its independence, impartiality, and benevolence. Yet the episode also clearly illustrates how the BBC struggled to reconcile the tensions between the two basic principles at the heart of its institutional philosophy – its commitment to maintaining a reputation as a purveyor of impartial and objective information rather than 'propaganda', and its commitment to serving the national interest – when concerns relating to Britain's withdrawal from colonial rule in Rhodesia drew these two commitments into conflict with each other.

Britain's relations with Rhodesia's neighbour to the south were a source of further uncertainty within Bush House during the late 1960s and early 1970s. While existing histories of the BBCXS make no mention of it, an episode that took place in May 1970 concerning an upcoming tour of the UK by the South African national cricket team demonstrates that a large cohort of Bush House staff were feeling unsatisfied by the way in which their senior managers interpreted some of the BBC's most fundamental broadcasting principles by this time.

BBCXS policy files from May 1970 show that the organisation was gripped by serious disagreements over whether the BBC's African Service ought to broadcast radio coverage of a

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[22] Peter Udell, interviewed by the author, 14 August 2020.

planned tour of the UK by the apartheid-government backed South African cricket team.[23] British anti-apartheid activists had organized demonstrations at each match of the South African rugby union team's 23-game tour of Britain between November 1969 and January 1970. By the spring of 1970, the anti-apartheid 'Stop the Seventy Tour' committee had turned its attention to the South African cricket team's upcoming tour of Britain. The committee's activism gained support from a broad cross-section of British society, including from within Bush House, where a group of BBCXS employees, led by African Service producers Israel Wamala and Robin Denselow, pursued a campaign proposing that the BBC should refuse to broadcast coverage of the cricket tour to its audiences in Africa.

Wamala and Denselow's campaign was initially met with stiff resistance from the BBCXS's senior management. This tension was symptomatic of the complex nature of the BBC's broader approach to apartheid during the 1950s and 1960s. Gavin Schaffer and Howard Smith have examined how the BBC's commitment to 'impartiality' came under intense scrutiny from both the anti-apartheid movement and the South African government, resulting in a cautious and self-consciously 'balanced' approach to reporting on South Africa.[24] As early as 1961, the BBC was creating programmes which publicized and criticized the most egregious examples of the South African government's violence against its black population, with Richard Dimbleby in a 1961 episode of *Panorama* famously comparing the Sharpeville Massacre to 'places like Guernica and Lidice, Belsen and Hola and Little Rock'.[25] However, it carefully avoided any programming which could be interpreted as an institutional criticism of apartheid *per se* throughout the 1960s and 1970s, maintaining an overall tendency, in Schaffer's words, to 'soften the realities of the regime so that it could be rendered within the "liberal imagination"'.[26]

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[23] For more on the significance of this particular tour to the history of anti-apartheid activism in Britain, see Simon Stevens, 'Why South Africa? The Politics of Anti-Apartheid Activism in Britain in the Long 1970s' in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2014), 204-225. On the BBC's complex relationship with apartheid South Africa, see Gavin Schaffer, 'The Limits of the 'Liberal Imagination': Britain, Broadcasting and Apartheid South Africa, 1948-1994', *Past & Present*, 240:1 (2018), 235-266.

[24] Schaffer, 'The Limits of the "Liberal Imagination"', Howard Smith, 'Apartheid, Sharpeville and Impartiality: The Reporting of South Africa on BBC Television 1948–1961', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 13 (1993), 251–98.

[25] Richard Dimblebly quoted in Smith, 'Apartheid, Sharpeville and Impartiality', 253.

[26] Schaffer, 'The Limits of the 'Liberal Imagination', 258.

The BBC's ambiguity on the subject of white supremacist rule in South Africa was exemplified by BBCXS Managing Director Oliver Whitley, who, in response to Denselow and Wamala's campaign, felt compelled to prepare a short document in May 1970 defending the plan to broadcast sporting commentary of the cricket tour. In a sign that Whitley expected further debate and dismay regarding this decision, the document was circulated it to his senior staff 'in case it may be of help to any who find themselves engaged in argument or discussion'.[27] In the note, Whitley explained that he believed that the BBC could not justify refusing to cover the tour, since 'the BBC's position of emotional and opinional [sic] detachment in this and any such matter is both fundamental and crucial to public service broadcasting'.[28] Nor could he accept the argument that had been put to him by BBC staff members that 'the BBC cannot be "neutral between good and evil", and since "racialism" is so widely recognized to be "evil", the BBC's corporate detachment from an opinion in a racialist issue is not necessary or even right'.[29] He rejected this line of reasoning, arguing that the 'racialism' of the South African regime was in fact 'not regarded by a significant part of the public as evil or, at least, not thought to be as evil as various other attitudes or acts which are by common consent matters of public controversy of the kind that the BBC most certainly and obviously must be impartial and detached about'.[30]

Whitley's vision of the BBCXS's institutional philosophy, which prioritized 'emotional and opinional [sic] detachment' over the moral convictions of its staff, was far from universally accepted at Bush House. Wamala and Denselow swiftly organized a petition challenging Whitley's conclusion that refusing to broadcast the tour would jeopardize the BBC's reputation for objectivity. The petitioners argued that, on the contrary, since the BBCXS's commentary of the tour 'would be heard by listeners in independent Africa as well as by white South Africans […] the conclusion might well be drawn that by broadcasting these matches, the BBC accepts the principal [sic] of apartheid on which the South African team is selected.'[31] In the petitioners' eyes, the reputational damage that the BBC would incur among these 'listeners in independent Africa'

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[27] BBCWAC, E40/477: External Services – Policy 1967-1980, O.J. Whitley, 'South African Cricket Tour', 7 May, 1970.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

through its implicit acceptance of the legitimacy of apartheid was a far greater threat to the organisation's credibility.[32]

The petition collected an impressive 234 signatures from BBCXS staff before being submitted to senior management, with the number and variety of names attached suggesting that its supporters were spread widely across many different departments at Bush House, and not merely concentrated in the African Service.[33] In a sign of how seriously these protests were taken, a series of emergency meetings were swiftly arranged between senior management and the petition organizers. The BBC's Controller of Staff Administration also met with the General Secretary of the main trade union for BBC staff, the Association of Broadcasting and Allied Staffs, who conveyed his members' wish to be allowed the option to opt out of working on coverage of the tour on moral grounds.[34] However, before the battle over the BBCXS's definition of impartiality in relation to apartheid could be fought in earnest, the argument was made moot by the decision of the British Cricket Council on 22 May 1970, under instruction from the UK government, to bow to the anti-apartheid movement's pressure and withdraw its invitation to the South African team.

Both the Rhodesian Service and South African cricket tour episodes help to reveal the way in which post-imperial concerns about Britain's responsibility towards supporting the political and civil rights of the black majority in Southern Africa contributed to a sense of confusion and internal tension within Bush House. In the case of Rhodesia, the BBC's willingness to act as a propaganda instrument of the British state demonstrated that despite its claims of independence and impartiality, Bush House still accepted the British government's right to instruct it to serve a specific and somewhat murky diplomatic purpose. In this instance, both the government and the BBC agreed that it was more important that the BBC use its influence to support British policy goals in Rhodesia than it was to avoid the Smith regime's inevitable accusations of propagandism. In the case of the South African Cricket Tour, competing visions of the meaning of 'impartiality' once again emerged, threatening internal harmony within Bush House and pointing towards the need for the BBCXS to reassess its approach to appearing 'neutral' or 'balanced' in the minds of both its global audiences and its own employees. Taken together, these two case studies help to

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] BBCWAC, E40/477, M. Kinchin Smith, 'South African Cricket Tour', 21 May, 1970.

explain how and why the BBCXS would embark on a major reassessment of its institutional philosophy during the 1970s.

Revisiting 'what we are fundamentally all about': The Syrop Review (1973-1975)

Three years on from the cricket tour controversy, the BBCXS's leadership had become convinced that a major review of the organisation's philosophical principles was necessary. After succeeding Oliver Whitley as Managing Director in 1972, Gerard Mansell commissioned an official review of the organisation's philosophy the following year. Under Mansell's instruction, a special Bush House Working Group was formed, which was asked to 'prepare a paper on External Broadcasting Philosophy with the intention that such a paper should lead to discussions throughout External Services Directorate, in order to help in clarifying and updating our own thought on what we are fundamentally all about'.[35]

The man tasked with leading this working group was Konrad Syrop. A veteran of the organisation who had joined the BBC Polish Service at its inception in 1939, he had served the BBCXS with distinction ever since. With experience of working across a variety of different departments, including fourteen years as the Head of European Productions (1955-1969) followed by stints as Programme Editor at General Talks and Features (1969-1971) and Head of the Central European Service (1971-1973), Syrop's role as Chairman of the Bush House Working Party would be his final, crowning assignment before retirement.[36]

Syrop's appointment to this influential role helps to illustrate the important role that the ongoing Cold War played in shaping the BBCXS's approach to reassessing and updating institutional philosophy during this period. While concerns about Britain's relationship with its former colonies like South Africa and Rhodesia helped to highlight the need to revisit 'what we are fundamentally all about', it is significant that Mansell turned to Syrop, a Polish émigré who had most recently served as the Head of the Central European Services (broadcasting to Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Finland), rather than a senior figure from the African Service, to oversee and guide this redefinition.

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[35] BBCWAC, E40/477, Gerard Mansell, 'Notes on Philosophy', 8 April, 1974.
[36] Leonard Miall, 'Obituary: Konrad Syrop', *The Independent*, 6 August 1998.

Mansell's choice of Syrop reflected the fact that the Cold War concerns of the Central and Eastern European Services had been at the forefront of debates about the nature of the BBCXS's post-war mission since at least the 1950s. The Hungarian uprising of 1956, which took place during the same week as the Suez crisis, was another litmus test for the BBC and its commitment to impartial, objective broadcasting during international crises. Beginning as a popular protest against the Soviet-backed Rákosi government and Hungary's ongoing political subordination to the Soviet Union, the uprising was eventually crushed by the Soviet Red Army, compelling over 200,000 Hungarians to flee their home country.[37] Unlike other Western broadcasters, most notably the US-backed Radio Free Europe, the BBC was careful to avoid broadcasting anything to Hungarian audiences during the uprising which could be interpreted as a direct incitement or endorsement of revolutionary action, or an indication that the West was preparing to provide military support to the uprising.[38] While Radio Free Europe emerged from the crisis with its reputation for truthfulness severely damaged, the BBC Hungarian Section's conduct during the uprising was subsequently praised by senior managers at Bush House as having been commendably restrained, despite its staff's sympathy towards the revolutionaries' aims. In a 1989 interview for Frank Gillard's BBC oral history project, former Hungarian Section Head Ferenc Rentoul explained how 'we were very careful never to incite, never to give the sort of encouragement that could be misunderstood', in the hope that this would inspire trust among their listeners in Hungary.[39]

This restrained approach to broadcasting during a Cold War crisis reflected a broader Cold War broadcasting philosophy which had been developed and adhered to at Bush House since the late 1940s. As the war against Nazi Germany in Europe gave way to a new Cold War between the capitalist 'West' and Communist 'East', the BBC continued its wartime role of broadcasting to audiences across Central and Eastern Europe in their national languages, as well as launching a brand-new Russian Service in 1946. While these services broadcast with the full backing of the British government, they were not intended to act as straightforward mouthpieces of the British

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[37] Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne and János M. Rainer, eds, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002).

[38] The exact nature of Radio Free Europe's role during the Hungarian Revolution continues to be debated by Cold War scholars: see A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 79-130; Johanna Granville, '"Caught with Jam on Our Fingers": Radio Free Europe and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', *Diplomatic History* 29:5 (2005).

[39] Ferenc Rentoul interviewed by Frank Gillard, BBC Oral History Collection, 1989. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/coldwar/uprisings/ on 2 February 2022.

state, nor as instruments for directly attacking the principles or practices of Communism or seeking to foment uprisings against Communist rule.[40] Instead, while the Foreign Office kept a close eye on their output, the BBC's Central and Eastern European services developed an approach to broadcasting for listeners behind the Iron Curtain which sought to secure the BBC's credibility as a source of accurate, objective, and impartial information. This 'cool, detached, almost clinical approach' was conceived under the assumption, as Head of the Eastern European Service Alexander Lieven wrote in 1971 internal report, that 'there is no need to try and discredit communism – it is already discredited in the eyes of the audience'.[41] Lieven's belief that the BBC should avoid taking an adversarial approach to broadcasting to Communist Europe drew heavily on the ethos instilled within the Russian Service by former Head Anatol Goldberg, who was convinced that 'if one starts broadcasting with the idea of creating a strong body of anti-governmental opinion within the Soviet Union, one is bound to fail. But if we manage to convince our listeners that they are spending half an hour a day in the company of decent people, we may perhaps play a small and indirect part in influencing opinion in Russia'.[42] In pursuing this 'decent' approach to Cold War broadcasting, the BBC sought to position itself as a sane, rational alternative to both the state-controlled domestic media and more explicitly anti-Communist international broadcasters like the US-backed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.[43]

Having served as the Head of Central European Services 1971-1973, Konrad Syrop was intimately familiar with this 'decent', non-adversarial approach to Cold War broadcasting. In October 1973, he began his investigation into the BBCXS's institutional philosophy by writing to some of his senior colleagues across Bush House, asking them to answer some basic questions he had prepared on their understanding of the organisation's mission, the preferences of their respective audiences, and their thoughts on the future of international broadcasting. While the exact questions he asked have not survived, the replies which he received, along with draft and final versions of the final report published in April 1974 and internal discussions of the report

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[40] For further details of the BBC-government settlement on the BBCXS's Cold War mission and purpose, see Alban Webb, 'Constitutional niceties: three crucial dates in cold war relations between the BBC External Services and the Foreign Office', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* 28:4 (2008), 557-567.

[41] BBCWAC, E40/347/1: Broadcasting to Communist Audiences, 1971-1986, Alexander Lieven, 'Broadcasting to Communist Audiences', 26 July 1971.

[42] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Anatol Goldberg, 'Notes on Broadcasting to the Soviet Union and the Communist World', 11 August 1971.

[43] Peter Fraenkel, 'The BBC External Services: Broadcasting to the USSR and Eastern Europe' in K. R. M. Short, ed, *Western Broadcasting Over the Iron Curtain* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986).

which took place within Bush House after its publication, have all been preserved within the BBC's archives. This archival material has not been analysed in any previous BBCXS scholarship, despite providing a rich source base for those interested in understanding how the organisation understood its present and future role as an international broadcaster during the 1970s. Furthermore, since these documents were created for internal use within Bush House, rather than being designed for consumption by external audiences, they afford an insight that could not be gained solely through analysing texts designed for consumption beyond Bush House, such as press releases, BBC-wide lunch-time lectures, or official publications.

Syrop's correspondence with colleagues throughout Bush House confirms that across the BBCXS, there remained a deeply held belief that their work as broadcasters was fundamentally about 'telling the truth' to audiences whose access to information was otherwise limited. In his response to Syrop's October 1973 questions, Head of the German Service R. A. L. O'Rorke captured a more general trend within Bush House, stating his belief that 'as long as we seek only to broadcast the truth as we sincerely believe to see it, we shall not go very far wrong'.[44] Head of Transcription Services George Steedman concurred, stating in his response to Syrop's final report that 'the oldest BBC principle I was brought up on (in a Broadcasting House still influenced by Reith) was "The BBC never breaks faith with the listener; if it says a thing is so, it is so." I find no problem in deducing detailed broadcasting practice from that single proposition'.[45] Yet while there was a general agreement among those questioned by Syrop that the BBCXS had a long and honourable tradition of truth-telling to which it ought to remain completely committed, the question of exactly how 'the truth' was arrived at, and exactly how and why telling it might further Britain's specific national interest, was a source of some debate.

For some, the relationship between 'telling the truth' and 'serving the national interest' was a relatively simple one. Head of Overseas Regional Services I. N. Lang wrote to Syrop of his belief that the BBCXS's accurate and objective broadcasts helped to paint 'a cumulative picture of a people which is democratic, fair, tolerant', which 'create[d] an atmosphere within which British diplomacy and British trade can operate to Britain's advantage'.[46] Syrop's successor as Head of

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[44] BBCWAC, E40/477, R. A. L. O'Rorke, 17 Oct 1973.
[45] BBCWAC, E40/477, George Steedman, 'Commentary of K'S Essay Towards a 'Philosophy' of External Broadcasting', 13 May 1974.
[46] BBCWAC, E40/477, I. N Lang, Head of Overseas Regional Services to Chairman, Bush House Working Party, 30 Oct 1973.

Central European Services, Marie Anthony, agreed with this, arguing that 'the objectivity and fairness of the BBC reflect in the minds of many of our listeners the qualities they associate with Britain', and that as long as the BBCXS retained its commitment to 'applying professional, journalistic, criteria to news and commentaries', it would help towards creating an overall vision of Britain on the international stage as a benevolent and trustworthy force.[47] According to this philosophy, by adhering to the BBC's journalistic principles of accuracy, objectivity, and impartiality and avoiding any directly adversarial or explicitly ideologically motivated broadcasting, the BBCXS helped to cultivate an implicit association between Britishness and truthfulness, which in turn strengthened Britain's international reputation and standing.

These responses reflect how many in the BBCXS treated the idea of serving Britain's national interest as something of an afterthought: an incidental, rather than a central justification for the BBCXS's broadcasting output or its continued existence. Defending or improving Britain's international standing was, if it was thought about at all, considered as a benign by-product of the 'truth-telling' practices which they engaged in as BBC journalists and broadcasters, and which they genuinely believed to be objective and non-ideological in nature. Figures like O'Rorke, Lang, and Anthony do not seem to have thought of themselves or their colleagues as servants of the British state, but as journalists first and foremost, whose professional loyalties lay not with any particular national, political, or ideological cause, but with the pursuit of accurate, objective news. In a later publication, Controller of European Services Peter Fraenkel expressed this belief clearly by described himself and his colleagues as 'journalists, not diplomats', and rejecting the notion that the BBCXS was, first and foremost, an organ of British 'public diplomacy'.[48]

Yet there were those within Bush House, particularly among its more senior management, who openly acknowledged that the process of 'telling the truth' was *not* a politically neutral or unideological act, and accepted that their work as international broadcasters was a constituent part of a wider political project to promote Britain's specific national interest. Austen Kark, Editor of the World Service (and later Managing Director 1984-1986), explained in his response to Syrop that while he agreed that the BBCXS 'must appear to hold no distinct editorial position of its own' for the sake of its international credibility, the nature of newsmaking meant that 'we are of course

[47] BBCWAC, E40/477, Marie Anthony, Head of Central European Services, to Chairman, Bush House Working Party, 7 November 1973.
[48] Fraenkel, 'The BBC External Services: Broadcasting to the USSR and Eastern Europe', 141.

taking editorial decisions which, *sub specie aeternitatis*, it must be admitted, are likely to show some bias'.[49] For Kark, it was 'absolutely impossible' for the BBC to function as a broadcaster 'without a degree of personal/national/cultural prejudice showing', but this should not cast any doubt on the legitimacy or 'truthfulness' of the BBCXS's broadcasting.[50] On the contrary, Kark believed it right and proper that the BBCXS demonstrate a certain level of 'prejudice', arguing that 'I think it perfectly right that we should discriminate against racialism, totalitarianism whether of left of right and any ideology which reduces the dignity of man'.[51] Crucially, Kark's vision of a 'truth-telling' international broadcasting philosophy rejected the idea that the BBCXS must occupy (or be seen to occupy) a position of absolute moral neutrality, accepting that Bush House 'should care about right and wrong, good and evil, poverty, disease, pollution, corruption, cruelty, justice.'[52] This vision of the BBCXS's broadcasting philosophy rested on a belief that the BBC's stated commitment to impartiality did not preclude the BBCXS and its staff from making moral judgements about the 'good' or 'evil' nature of certain political ideologies or types of government, or from devising ways through their work of undermining any ideology or government which, in their eyes, 'reduced the dignity of man'. While the BBCXS might avoid directly criticizing specific foreign governments or political ideologies, this was a strategic decision designed with the intention of increasing the BBC's impact as a tool for challenging or undermining these governments and/or ideologies, rather than evidence that the BBCXS was a truly unideological institution.

Kark's remarks echo those made by Managing Director Oliver Whitley in an April 1970 note to the Foreign Office. He argued that the main value of the BBCXS was how its broadcasts 'help[ed] to increase the instability of political systems based on the total inversion of morality and reality for ideological purposes', at the same time as they helped to promote the notion of a 'British propensity for truthfulness'.[53] While just a month after writing these remarks he would argue vociferously that the BBCXS's commitment to impartiality precluded it from refusing to cover the South African cricket tour, Whitley was nonetheless convinced that it was right and proper for the BBC to help 'increase the instability' of foreign governments which, in his eyes,

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[49] BBCWAC, E40/477, Austen Kark to Chairman of Bush House Working Party, 29 Oct 1973.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] O.J Whitley to D.P.M. Cape, Foreign Office, 6 April 1970 Quoted in Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 256.

pursued 'ideological' aims at the expense of 'morality'.[54] Clearly, the South African government's racist policies were not considered a sufficient 'inversion of morality and reality for ideological purposes' for Whitley to consider using the BBC to challenge, undermine, or embarrass the South African cricket tour. Yet figures at the top of the BBCXS like Whitley and Kark accepted that challenging, undermining, or embarrassing foreign governments *was* part of the organisation's mission, even if this goal was generally pursued by relatively indirect or roundabout means.

Konrad Syrop's final report, published in April 1974, reached a very similar conclusion to that offered by Whitley and Kark. Quoting from the BBC handbook for 1974, Syrop concluded that while it was imperative that the BBCXS maintain its reputation for impartiality in the future, 'impartiality does not imply an Olympian neutrality or detachment from those basic moral and constitutional beliefs on which the nation's life is founded. The BBC does not feel obliged for example to appear neutral as between truth and untruth, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, compassion and cruelty, tolerance and intolerance (including racial tolerance).'[55] It is notable that Syrop's vision of BBC philosophy explicitly included 'racial tolerance' as one of the 'constitutional beliefs on which the nation's life is founded', suggesting a significant shift since 1970, when Whitley had argued in favour of 'emotional and opinional [sic] detachment' on the issue.[56] Yet notwithstanding this change, Syrop's vision for the BBCXS's broadcasting philosophy shared Whitley and Kark's conviction that despite its commitment to impartiality, the BBC nevertheless retained both a right and a duty to take sides on the great moral issues of its time. The pursuit of impartiality should not, in Syrop's view, preclude the BBCXS from broadcasting in a way which was designed to undermine the legitimacy of those foreign governments whose actions it deemed immoral.

In his report, Syrop went on to explore the implications of this conclusion in some detail, particularly focusing on how the pursuit of 'truthfulness' and the rejection of 'neutrality' might necessitate changes in the way that the BBC approached broadcasting to Communist Europe. Partially revising the established orthodoxy of the Goldberg/Lieven approach, which avoided directly criticizing the actions of state socialist governments, Syrop argued that the BBCXS would be wrong to avoid broadcasting about certain issues simply because they may have an 'unsettling

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[54] Ibid.
[55] BBCWAC, E40/477, Konrad Syrop, 'Some Questions on External Services' Philosophy', 2 Apr 1974.
[56] BBCWAC, E40/477, O.J. Whitley, 'South African Cricket Tour', 7 May 1970.

influence' on their audiences behind the Iron Curtain. In Syrop's view, the BBC could in fact justify more programming which critically analysed social issues like poverty, bad housing, and unemployment behind the Iron Curtain.[57] According to this revised vision of its basic principles and purpose, the BBCXS ought not to use its commitment to impartiality as an excuse for avoiding any programming which might 'unsettle' its audiences, or offend their governments.

While commissioned in response to a specific set of challenges which arose within Bush House, Syrop's investigation and revision of the BBCXS's broadcasting philosophy took place against a broader international context in which debates about human rights were taking on a greater prominence. Samuel Moyn has proposed that the 1970s represented a 'breakthrough' decade in the history of human rights, when debates about the existence of a discrete set of universal, fundamental rights which superseded the authority of the nation-state 'achieved a prominence that far outstripped even that of its founding epoch thirty years before'.[58] This was the decade in which the human rights NGO Amnesty International dramatically increased its global profile, transforming from a small-scale, voluntary pressure group into a professionalized, transnationally active and globally recognized campaigning organisation which, by 1977, could boast over 168,000 members spread across 107 countries, as well as a Nobel Peace Prize.[59]

While organisations like Amnesty International insisted that they were politically neutral, and that the rights which they advocated for were universal and fundamentally non-ideological in nature, the language of human rights was inevitably co-opted and incorporated into the ongoing Cold War competition between communist East and capitalist West. This trend was reflected in the protracted negotiations of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, eventually leading to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act by 35 nations in the summer of 1975. Originally proposed by the Soviet Union as a mechanism by which it might legally guarantee the status quo of the borders of post-war Europe and improve its access to Western technology and credit, recent

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[57] In his final report, Syrop asks (somewhat rhetorically) 'are we sure that we are applying in all our services the same strict and honest journalistic criteria to our selection of programme material that is critical of a particular regime or country?' BBCWAC, E40/477, Konrad Syrop, 'Some Questions on External Services' Philosophy', 2 Apr 1974.

[58] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass/London: Harvard University Press, 2010), Prologue, 3. See also Moyn, 'The Return of the Prodigal: The 1970s as a Turning Point in Human Rights History' in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[59] Mümtaz Soysal, 'Amnesty International Nobel Lecture', Dec 11 1977. Accessed online at https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1977/amnesty/lecture/ on 2 Jan 26 2022.

scholarship has tended to emphasize the historical importance of the agreement in terms of its human rights provisions. Historians such as Daniel C. Thomas and Sarah Snyder have argued that the so-called 'third basket' of provisions, which guaranteed 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religions or belief', made a vital contribution to the eventual collapse of Communism in Europe.[60] The inclusion of these provisions within a high-profile international agreement created an opportunity for human rights activists on both sides of the Cold War divide to monitor and publicly criticize human rights violations committed by Communist governments in ways which were impossible before Helsinki. The proliferation of non-state human rights monitoring groups, and the transnational exchanges of information and ideas which they undertook, helped to create a new geopolitical environment which enabled political dissidents to organize and mobilize on a new scale, eventually encouraging the emergence of effective political opposition movements like Poland's Solidarity trade union.[61]

International broadcasters took a keen interest in the negotiation, signing, and impact of the Helsinki Final Act. Aside from its prominence as a leading example of international co-operation, this was also due to the fact that the future of international broadcasting was discussed at Helsinki. These discussions resulted in the addition of a clause within the Final Act's section on 'Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields' in which signatory states note 'the expansion in the dissemination of information broadcast by radio, and express hope for the continuation of this process' as part of a wider process of improving 'the circulation of, access to, and exchange of information' among all nations.[62] This clause offered international broadcasters like the BBCXS a useful basis on which to complain about efforts by the Soviet Union and other Communist states to 'jam' their broadcasts aimed at listeners behind the Iron Curtain.[63] Yet ultimately, there is relatively little archival evidence to suggest that the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, or the

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[60]Section VII, Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; Part 1. (a) Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States, Helsinki Final Act. Accessed online at https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf on 26 January 2022. Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[61] Robert Briers, *Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).
[62] "Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields", Subsection 2 ("Information"), part (a), Helsinki Final Act, 42.
[63] George W. Woodard, 'Cold War Radio Jamming' in A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, eds, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2010), 51-63.

subsequent establishment of Helsinki-related human rights monitoring groups, represented a major turning point for Bush House, either in terms of its approach to broadcasting to audiences in Eastern Europe, or with regard to its broader institutional philosophy. Key figures such as Managing Director Gerard Mansell occasionally used language which bore a close similarity to that used within the Helsinki Final Act: in an opinion piece on 'The Case for External Broadcasting' written in December 1975 (just five months after the signing of the Final Act), Mansell waxed lyrical about his belief in the 'free movement of ideas' and the 'fundamental right of every person to free and untramelled access to the facts'.[64] But the BBCXS certainly did not follow in the footsteps of Radio Free Europe, which commissioned special audience research reports dedicated to measuring the impact that the Helsinki Final Act had had upon its listeners, and used its airwaves to promote and publicize the work of dissident groups like Charter 77, which explicitly justified their criticisms of the Czechoslovak government on the basis of their violations of the Helsinki Final Act.[65]

Unlike RFE, the BBCXS's Central and Eastern European Services scrupulously avoided broadcasts which explicitly supported or endorsed the activism of Helsinki-inspired human rights groups. In a memo sent to her staff on 14 July 1977, The BBCXS's Head of the Central European Services, Marie Anthony, explained why the BBC would not be following RFE's lead by broadcasting the unedited text of Charter 77's founding document to its listeners across the region. The existence of this memorandum suggests that Anthony was responding to an ongoing debate within the Central European Service as to whether broadcasting Charter 77 in full lay within the BBC's purview as a nominally 'impartial' international broadcaster. Explaining why she had decided not to broadcast the text, Anthony argued that she remained wary of allowing any external group to 'use the BBC as a platform to address the audience directly', warning of the dangers of allowing the BBC to be manipulated – either by dissident groups themselves, or by 'those who have an interest in linking the dissidents with "western centres of subversion" and to depict us as

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[64] The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), FCO 26/1787, Gerard Mansell, 'The Case for External Broadcasting', 16 December 1975.
[65] Blinken Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest (hereafter OSA), HU-OSA-300-6-2:4/15, 'Three Measurement of East European Attitudes to the Helsinki Conference 1973-1978'. See also Steve Westlake, 'Human Rights Radios? Radio Free Europe, the BBC External Services and the 'Helsinki Process', 1973-1978 (MA Thesis, Central European University, Budapest), accessed at https://sierra.ceu.edu/search/X?SEARCH=westlake&Da=&Db=&m=v&submit.x=0&submit.y=0 on 25 January 2022.

encouraging internal dissension, interference in internal affairs, etc.'[66] However, Anthony's conclusion demonstrates that she did not want her refusal to broadcast Charter 77 to be taken as a sign that the BBCXS considered human rights issues unworthy of broadcast time:

> To sum up: "Human rights" is a major theme in our output, and we should report
> as we do any other important story, and we should reflect reaction. But our
> support is implicit in everything we do and say as 'free broadcasters'.[67]

Anthony's memorandum, read in relation to Syrop's report on the BBCXS's broadcasting philosophy written two years earlier, helps to illuminate the BBC's approach to Cold War broadcasting during the 1970s. The BBCXS carefully avoided aligning itself explicitly with dissident groups behind the Iron Curtain, even when those groups used the 'apolitical' language of human rights to defend and legitimize their opposition to their governments in the wake of the Helsinki Final Act. Yet it did identify itself as an institution with a distinct moral mission – one which recognized the difference between 'truth and untruth, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery'.[68] As the next section will demonstrate, this provided a flexible basis for the BBC to argue that its broadcasts might serve Britain's national interest *outside* the geopolitical boundaries of the Cold War, as well as within that specific context.

The Central Policy Review Staff and the BBCXS as a 'Universal' Broadcaster

As a result of the Syrop review, the BBCXS settled on an updated vision of its institutional philosophy which placed Cold War concerns about challenging threats to 'freedom', 'justice', and 'truth' at the heart of its overall mission as an international broadcaster. Yet the BBC was keen to avoid being categorized solely as a Cold War weapon, recognizing how this might place limitations on the organisation's scope and long-term future. Focusing on Bush House's broadly successful efforts in fighting off a sweeping set of budget cuts proposed by the UK government's Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) think tank between 1975 and 1979, this section explains how the BBCXS developed and deployed a persuasive argument, which drew sparingly but effectively on the language of humanitarianism and human rights, to rail against the CPRS's proposed budget

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[66] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Marie Anthony to Central European Staff, 14 July 1977.
[67] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Marie Anthony to Central European Staff, 14 July 1977.
[68] BBCWAC, E40/477, Konrad Syrop, 'Some Questions on External Services' Philosophy', 2 Apr 1974.

cuts. Bush House successfully argued that the BBCXS was, and should remain, a fundamentally *universal* broadcaster - that is, one which aspired to reach listeners in all parts of the world, no matter whether their governments enjoyed friendly or unfriendly relations with the UK - and not a *targeted* broadcast service, which was only aimed at reaching audiences in states whose governments were ideologically opposed to Britain's.

In late 1975, Foreign Secretary James Callaghan commissioned the CPRS to conduct a review of Britain's overseas representation. This independent unit within the Cabinet Office, commonly known by its nickname the 'Think Tank', had been established in 1971 to provide policy recommendations to the Heath government.[69] Headed by Sir Kenneth Berrill, a former Chief Economic Adviser to the Treasury, the CPRS was tasked with drawing up a set of recommendations for making major savings across the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

These cuts were just one symptom of a Britain's broader economic woes during the mid-1970s. In April 1975, The *Wall Street Journal* ran a famous editorial entitled 'Goodbye, Great Britain', depicting the British economy as a sinking ship, and advising its readers to avoid investing in sterling or lending to British companies, as the UK struggled with rampant inflation.[70] By the autumn of 1976, the Callaghan government had been forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund to bail out the British economy, eventually leading to deep cuts in government spending, as well as major harm to Britain's international prestige.[71] It was against this backdrop that the CPRS was asked to draw up its proposals, and provided with an extraordinarily wide brief covering 'political, economic, commercial, consular and immigration work, defence matters, overseas aid and cultural and information activities'.[72]

Since it extended to all aspects of British overseas representation, whether 'performed by members of the Diplomatic Service, by members of the Home Civil Service, by members of the Armed Forces of by other agencies supported by the Government', the BBCXS fell within the purview of the CPRS's review. Bush House was no stranger to such reviews, having previously

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[69] William Wallace, 'After Berrill: Whitehall and the Management of British Diplomacy', *International Affairs*, 54:2 (1978), 220-239, 222.
[70] Kathleen Burk and Alec Cairncross, *Goodbye, Great Britain: The 1976 IMF Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Foreword.
[71] On the 1976 IMF crisis, see Richard Roberts, *When Britain Went Bust: The 1976 IMF Crisis* (London: OMFIF Press, 2016).
[72] Wallace, 'After Berrill', 222.

managed to navigate the budget cuts proposed by the Rapp (1965), Beeley (1967) and Duncan (1969) reports – reports whose actual impact on the BBCXS were, according to Asa Briggs, 'sometimes less momentous than their authors expected'.[73] Yet the CPRS review is of particular interest. Once again, Bush House was largely successful in discrediting many of the review committee's more critical conclusions, and preventing the implementation of its most controversial or financially damaging recommendations.[74] Yet while the CPRS's impact on the nature of the BBCXS's work was ultimately rather limited, the rigours of the review process motivated leading figures within Bush House to develop and publicly express new visions of the organisation's contribution to Britain's national interest, and to the interests of its listeners around the world. This has left behind a rich source based of documentary evidence which can be analysed to work out exactly how the organisation explained its continuing value, and how it justified its contemporary mission as a post-imperial international broadcaster to a variety of external stakeholders from the mid-1970s.

The CPRS's first published report, published in June 1976, demonstrates that it believed that the BBCXS was still an important asset within Britain's broader foreign policy infrastructure. This interim report strongly endorsed the BBCXS's argument that its broadcasts served Britain's national interest, particularly through its broadcasting to the Soviet Bloc, stating that 'External Broadcasting is the most effective instrument we have for keeping alive knowledge of the values and ideas of a free society' and accepting the principle that 'it is right for the Government to continue to pay for them'.[75] The report also acknowledged the continuing importance of the BBC's editorial independence from government, concluding that it was of 'paramount importance' that the BBCXS maintain a reputation for independence and impartiality if it was to continue to serve this purpose.[76] Yet the CPRS's final report, published in August of 1977, nevertheless proposed major cuts to the BBCXS's budget and broadcasting reach. Recommending that the BBCXS focus its resources on broadcasting to Communist and Third World countries where news and

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[73] Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom,* Volume 5, 714. See also Johnston and Robertson, *BBC World Service*, 198-202.
[74] As early as 1978, commentator William Wallace wrote that 'the outcome of more than twelve months' study by a Cabinet Office team might, after heavy exchanges of fire from entrenched positions, be little more than a few modest changes in the status quo'. Wallace, 'After Berrill', 220.
[75] BBCWAC, R78/1178/1: External Services Central Policy Review Staff - February 1976 - August 1978, 'Chapter 15: Information and Culture: CPRS Review of Overseas Representation, Fourth Draft', 15 June 1976.
[76] BBCWAC, R78/1178/1, 'Chapter 15: Information and Culture'.

information were not readily available, it proposed cutting funding to the Arabic and Latin American services by 50%, and entirely shutting down the Japanese, Burmese, Somali, Tamil and Nepali services, as well as all broadcasting to Western Europe in both English and vernacular languages, and all English language broadcast services for North America and Australasia. All told, these cuts would have meant that Bush House lost nearly 40% of its total broadcasting output.[77]

Unsurprisingly, these proposals were greeted with dismay at Bush House. Senior leaders were not only critical of the impact that these proposed cuts would have on the BBCXS's size, reach, and prestige, but of the underlying assumptions about the BBCXS's purpose upon which they apparently rested. Gerard Mansell addressed this point directly in an address given to the Royal Commonwealth Society on 3 November 1977. In his remarks, Mansell complained that the CPRS was treating his organisation as if it were 'a sort of public utility, like water, or electricity, to be switched on when you need news and information about world affairs'.[78] This 'mechanistic and strictly utilitarian' understanding of the BBCXS's mission and purpose was, he explained, a fundamentally misplaced one. Constantly stopping or starting different language services in response to changing geopolitical developments, or broadcasting only to 'those whose ideologies and interests are in conflict with ours', would dilute the BBC's efficacy as a tool of British influence within unfriendly nations, making it more difficult to counter accusations from unfriendly foreign governments that the BBCXS was 'nothing but a concealed instrument of propaganda masquerading under the guise of objectivity'.[79] As such, the CPRS's proposals to shut down services aimed at 'friendly' nations would in fact hinder rather than help the BBCXS in serving Britain's Cold War interests. It was only through offering (or at least aspiring to offer) a *global* and *universal* broadcast service, rather than a *targeted* one aimed only influencing listeners in unfriendly nations, that the BBCXS could successfully function as a valuable British Cold War weapon.

Mansell's conviction that the BBCXS should maintain its aspiration towards providing a universal broadcast service was based on more than Cold War pragmatism. In a lunch-time lecture

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[77] Gerard Mansell, Address to Royal Commonwealth Society, 3 November 1977. Published as 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth: Implications for External Broadcasting Of the "Think Tank" Report' in *Round Table: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth,* 68 (1978), 48-54, 51.
[78] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth', 51.
[79] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth', 52.

delivered to BBC colleagues in March 1976, he argued that the 'universality of our coverage is a reflection both of Britain's continued interest in the world as a whole and of the universal value of the underlying ideas disseminated through the BBC.'[80] This notion that the BBCXS had a moral responsibility, to both Britain and the rest of the world, to broadcast as widely as possible was one which Mansell returned to in his November 1977 speech criticising the CPRS:

> As a nation we are deeply conscious of the importance to ourselves of our own freedoms and have a tradition, which has survived the loss of Empire, of concern for the affairs of humanity as a whole, a feeling for the universality of freedom. We have to look at the C.P.R.S recommendations against the background of considerations of this kind.[81]

These remarks suggest that Mansell's rejection of the CPRS's proposed cuts rested on his belief that the BBCXS was not, or at least not simply, a Cold War weapon, but was rather an embodiment of a British 'concern for the affairs of humanity as a whole' which extended far beyond the confines of the Cold War.

This vision of the BBC as a manifestation of Britain's benevolent concern for the rest of humanity dated back to the very creation of the BBC's external broadcasting arm in 1932. In his opening address on the Empire Service, BBC Director General John Reith declared that the ervice would be 'exploited to the highest human advantage' and 'dedicated the best interests of mankind'.[82] Technical and financial constraints meant the BBC's overseas broadcasting efforts during the 1930s were in fact rather limited in their ambition, focusing on creating aurally unambitious programming which sought to maintain a sentimental connection between the 'lonely listener in the bush' and their homeland.[83] Yet Mansell could persuasively argue that his contemporary vision of the BBCXS as a *universal* broadcaster was faithful to Reith's original vision of the BBC as an external broadcaster, while the CPRS's vision of a pared-back, Cold War-focused BBCXS 'contrasted with Reith's belief in providing all that is best in every department of human knowledge and achievement'.[84]

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[80] Gerard Mansell, 'Why External Broadcasting? A Lecture', BBC Lunch-Time Lecture, BBC, 1976, 9.
[81] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth', 53.
[82] J.C.W Reith, Director General of the BBC broadcasting on the first day of the Empire Service, Saturday 19 December 1932. Quoted on the dust jacket of Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told.*
[83] Simon Potter, *Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 171- 200. See also Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*: *The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 57-70.
[84] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth', 51.

While Mansell's references to Reith within his speeches and writings point to his admiration for the man, there were important differences between the two, not least in terms of their relationship to empire. Whereas Reith envisaged a BBC which played a significant role in support of Britain's imperial project, Mansell's vision of the BBC's global role was, in contrast, deliberately and self-consciously post-imperial. As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, Mansell and his contemporaries at the top of Bush House appear to have viewed British imperialism as a historical phenomenon, rather than a going concern, and indeed celebrated the possibilities that the end of empire offered the BBCXS in terms of arguing in favour of its impartiality. Yet this vision of a post-imperial BBCXS was not one which ignored or renounced Britain's imperial past. Instead, it treated it as a valuable resource upon which both Britain and the BBC might continue to draw. Indeed, Mansell's belief in Britain's ability to play a contemporary global role as a disinterested purveyor of truth practical wisdom rested on his confidence that post-imperial Britain 'has known how to retain and foster, all over the world, but particularly in the Commonwealth, that great web of relationships of every kind, personal, political, professional, which was built up over the generations'.[85] As such, post-imperial Britain enjoyed the best of both worlds - what Mansell's colleague Austen Kark referred to in 1973 as 'the advantages both of a considerable imperial history and of a decently impotent present'.[86]

While Mansell's vision of the BBCXS's mission was avowedly post-imperial, it rested upon a paternalistic belief in Britain's ongoing responsibility 'to exert a world-wide influence which I believe must be recognized as being beneficial, desirable, and probably unique'.[87] Bush House was far from alone in maintaining a belief that in order for humanity as a whole to overcome its problems, continued British (or more broadly Western) interventions into the nominally independent postcolonial nation-states of the so-called 'Third World' were not only morally right, but absolutely necessary. As Kevin O'Sullivan has demonstrated, paternalistic attitudes towards humanitarianism, which placed the moral sentiment of the 'donor' rather than the perspective of the 'beneficiary' at the heart of explanations about the value of overseas aid, transferred easily over from the age of colonial development into the 1960s and 1970s, when NGOs became the dominant vehicle for servicing the Western urge to intervene in the

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[85] Mansell, 'Why External Broadcasting?', 10.
[86] BBCWAC, E40/477, Austen Kark, Reply to Chairman of Bush House Working Party, 29 Oct 1973.
[87] Mansell, 'Why External Broadcasting?', 15.

'developing world'.[88] While the imperial language of 'civilizing mission' was jettisoned, the conviction that the West possessed the expertise, authority, and moral superiority required to 'save' the rest of the world remained intact, even if this conviction was now operationalized primarily through the NGO sector. If we accept Michael Barnett's definition of paternalism as 'the attempted or accomplished substitution of one person's judgment for another's on the grounds that it is in the latter's best interests, for their welfare or happiness', the BBCXS should surely be considered alongside these NGOs as being motivated by a self-consciously post-imperial but thoroughly paternalist humanitarian urge to improve the lives of distant others.[89]

Yet while he would later go on to describe the BBCXS as 'the Oxfam of the Mind', Mansell did not directly or explicitly align the BBCXS with the NGO sector in his speeches and writing composed to defend the BBCXS against the CPRS during the late 1970s. Nor do these texts contain any explicit description of the BBCXS's mission as fundamentally 'humanitarian' in nature: instead, words such as 'sanity', 'decency', and 'truth' were more commonly used to define the BBC's contribution to humanity.[90] As later chapters will demonstrate, the systematic adoption of a more explicitly humanitarian register to describe the BBCXS's mission would not take place until the 1990s. Yet there is evidence, drawn from within the NGO sector itself, which demonstrates that as early as the mid-1970s, the BBCXS had already established important direct relationships with certain British humanitarian and human rights groups, whose voices served to back up Bush House's claim that it acted as a disinterested purveyor of truth. More broadly, a mutually reinforcing relationship emerged between the BBCXS and certain NGOs during the 1970s and early 1980s, which arguably played a role in legitimizing Britain's depiction of itself as a post-imperial force for good on the international stage.

One influential NGO whose aims and founding principles clearly overlapped with those of the BBCXS was Writers and Scholars International (WSI), a human rights campaigning group founded in London in 1971. Closely associated with the more famous Amnesty International,

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[88] Kevin O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 23-25.

[89] Michael Barnett, *Paternalism Beyond Borders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11.

[90] For example, in 'Why External Broadcasting?', Mansell argued that an important role that the BBCXS played was in ensuring that 'the values of our own society, which are to do with basic freedoms, with sanity, decency and truth, continue to be held up as a viable and desirable way of running a society'. Mansell, 'Why External Broadcasting?', 1.

WSI was a much smaller-scale organisation, which focused on raising global awareness about the censorship and repression faced by artists, academics, intellectuals, and authors around the world at the hands of their domestic governments. WSI's main instrument for achieving this goal was its magazine *Index on Censorship*, which published writings which were banned in their countries of origin, and advocated for freedom of expression to be internationally recognized as a fundamental human right.[91] Like the BBCXS, *Index* insisted that its mission and philosophy was a truly universal one, rather than one which operated only within the intellectual confines of the Cold War. In an editorial in *Index*'s first edition, WSI board member Stephen Spender explained that while the magazine's foundation had been inspired by the calls of Russian dissidents like Aleksander Solzhenitsyn and Pavel Litvinov for the West to respond to the repression of intellectual freedoms within the Soviet Union, it would not limit itself to raising awareness of censorship and human rights abuses taking place in the Communist world. Rather, it was committed to raising awareness of threats to intellectual freedom all over the world, whether in the Soviet Union, South Africa, or even the United Kingdom.[92]

While the two organisations operated on wildly different scales and reached different audiences, the BBCXS and *Index* shared another key similarity: a conviction that, notwithstanding their 'Britishness', they were nevertheless politically and ideologically impartial - and thus capable of identifying and promoting a set of fundamental rights which were truly universal. Like the BBCXS, *Index* also treated the fact of its Britishness (or, more accurately, its 'Englishness') as a factor which *added* to its credibility an impartial and non-ideological voice, rather than a characteristic which might limit or preclude impartiality. In his very first editorial, *Index* editor Michael Scammell recognized the need to explain how WSI could claim to be a truly international organisation 'when the whole thing is run by Englishmen'.[93] He firstly offered the explanation that 'the Englishness of our committee... is more or less accidental, in that the idea grew up among a group of Englishmen of drawing attention to the problem of maintaining intellectual freedom and they decided to do something about it'.[94] Yet he also conceded that 'it could be argued, of course, that this was *not* an accident,

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[91] John Steel, '"Making Voices Heard…": Index on Censorship as Advocacy Journalism', *Journalism*, 22:1 (2018), 20-34.

[92] Stephen Spender, 'With concern for those not free', *Index on Censorship,* March 1972, 11-15, 13-14.

[93] Michael Scammell, 'Notebook', *Index on Censorship*, 1:1 (1972), 5-9, 7.

[94] Scammell, 'Notebook', 7.

that it is part of a long and honourable tradition of concern for freedom and the freedom of others that is typical of this country'.[95] In arguing that 'England is no bad country to act as a base for this type of activity' because of this 'honourable tradition', Scammell demonstrated a fundamental belief shared with senior figures at the BBCXS like Gerard Mansell. Both were convinced that contemporary British organisations like their own were ideally placed, *because* of their Britishness, to play a leading role in defining and determining which rights and freedoms should be considered universal.

This shared assumption about the continued benevolence of Britain's moral contribution to global affairs through its concern for the 'freedom of others' helps to explain the further connections that existed between the BBCXS and *Index* throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The *Index on Censorship* archival collection housed at the Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest contains numerous folders of programme scripts and background research materials which were sent from the BBCXS's Central Talks and Features Department to *Index*, suggesting that the two organisations shared information, and considered each other as partners engaged in a shared endeavour.[96] In a speech given in December 2018, *Index's* founding editor, Michael Scammell, referred to the BBCXS as a 'vital source of information' on which the magazine relied for up-to-date accounts of current censorship trends in different Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.[97] This sense of a shared mission was only heightened in 1981, when Hugh Lunghi was appointed as Michael Scammell's successor as *Index's* editor-in-chief. A gifted linguist who had previously served as Winston Churchill's Russian interpreter during the Second World War, Lunghi devoted the majority of his career to the BBCXS, having joined Bush House in 1954 and worked his way up to become Head of Central European Services. By appointing Lunghi to this role, WSI clearly, if implicitly, endorsed the BBCXS as a fellow traveller on the road towards 'freedom'.

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[95] Scammell, 'Notebook', 7.

[96] OSA, HU OSA 301-0-3, Boxes 166 and 167: Country Files, Europe and Central Asia: General: Eastern Europe: Background Information: BBC Talks, 1986-1991.

[97] Michael Scammell, '*Index on Censorship* and the Publication of Tamizdat in the 1970s', speech given at International Conference and Book Exhibition, Hunter College of the City University of New York, 11 December 2018, online video recording, YouTube, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN0hZjqaDu0> [accessed 10 Jan 2022]

Index was not the only publication which helped to build the BBCXS's reputation as an institution whose work complemented that of British NGOs. *New Internationalist* was founded in July 1973 with the financial backing of Oxfam, Christian Aid, and Third World First, aiming 'to inform and involve as many people as possible in the campaign for world development'.[98] Although it struggled financially during its early years, the magazine played a significant role in linking international development experts with supporters in the UK, providing critical analysis of developed states' overseas aid programmes, and offering an alternative to the mainstream media's limited coverage of news about the relationship between the West and the developing world.[99] In October 1976, the magazine devoted its issue to the question of understanding the global media's role in international development, including an in-depth article focusing on the BBCXS. The article provides a valuable insight into the overwhelmingly positive way in which the BBCXS was conceptualized by leading overseas development NGOs at this time.

Written by Iain Guest, who had previously worked for the BBC as a documentary-maker, the article addressed the key tension at the heart of the BBCXS head-on, asking 'is it possible to be both "objective" and "British" at the same time, as well as avoid the charge of "cultural imperialism"?'[100] Guest is not entirely uncritical of the BBCXS, depicting Bush House as something of a colonial throwback with 'an atmosphere akin to an exclusive billiards club…one imagines an ageing tea planter sipping gin and nodding approvingly.'[101] Yet on the whole, his account overwhelmingly endorses the BBCXS's own vision of itself and its mission, arguing that despite (or perhaps even because) of its imperial past, the BBC was both genuine and overwhelmingly successful in its attempts to provide a broadcasting service which was impartial, objective, and ultimately benevolent. Guest concludes that 'the claim to objectivity does seem justified. The BBC World Service *does* seem unique compared to its competitors', and celebrates the fact that the BBCXS was willing to broadcast programmes on development-related topics, such as the problem of access to water in sub-Saharan Africa, which few other mainstream British media organisations covered.[102] Notably, the article also reveals how the BBCXS called on development NGOs like Oxfam to act as external and apolitical 'experts' on

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[98] 'Editorial', *New Internationalist*, Issue 1, July 1973, 1.
[99] Maggie Black, *A Cause for our Times: Oxfam - The First 50 Years* (Oxford: Oxfam Professional, 1992), 205-6.
[100] Iain Guest, 'London Calling', *New Internationalist*, October 1976, 7-10, 4.
[101] Guest, 'London Calling', 7-8.
[102] Guest, 'London Calling', 8.

programmes like this, who could 'give the programme a Third World perspective' – thus helping to further expand Oxfam's own reputation as an expert and authentic voice for the developing world.[103]

By the early 1980s, Britain's best known humanitarian NGOs were willing to explicitly lend their support to the BBCXS, acknowledging the complementary role that Bush House played in relation to their own international efforts. In November 1980, when the BBCXS faced the possibility of yet another round of government-imposed budget cuts, a coalition of NGOs including Oxfam, Christian Aid, and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development all spoke out in its favour. A joint memorandum by these NGOs, delivered to Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington in protest against the Thatcher government's plans to cut the UK's aid budget, described the government's proposed cuts to the BBCXS as being 'in the same vein'.[104] Describing the BBCXS as 'a British asset without comparison in the world. An asset relied upon by people denied freedom in their own countries', the memo provides valuable evidence that some of Britain's leading humanitarian NGOs were not only willing to speak up in favour of the BBCXS, but considered the BBCXS's mission to be strongly aligned with their own.

All of these examples help to make sense of the BBCXS's description of itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind'. They point towards the existence of a tentative but mutually beneficial relationship between the BBCXS and the NGO sector during the 1970s and early 1980s, which was helpful to Bush House as it sought to explain how it could continue to meet its dual commitments to 'telling the truth'and 'serving the national interest' in challenging circumstances. While relatively modest, the establishment and existence of these links with the NGO sector at this time would pay greater dividends for the BBCXS later in its history, by offering a valuable historical precedent to help justify deeper, more significant collaborations between Bush House and a variety of humanitarian and development-related actors in the 1990s.

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[103] Guest, 'London Calling', 7.
[104] TNA, PREM19/859 f137, 'Overseas Aid: Oxfam Director General to Lord Carrington', via the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website, accessed at https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/142201 on 30 Nov 2021.

Conclusion

On July 12 1982, a Thanksgiving Service was held at St Paul's Cathedral to jointly celebrate the BBC's sixtieth anniversary and the BBCXS's fiftieth anniversary. Attended by luminaries including the Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the service was described by the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in his opening prayer as an opportunity to 'give thanks for the contribution the BBC has made to the life of our nation and to the world through the free communication of ideas.'[105] According to the Service Paper, the BBCXS's Overseas Religious Broadcasting Organizer, Pauline Webb, delivered the following prayer as part of the service:

> Lord God, giver of all good things, we give you thanks for the gifts of the mind and body, imagination and feeling, that you have given us, and the opportunity to use them both for the fulfilment of ourselves and for other people. We offer you our words and images, our music and movements that they may sow good seeds in the hearts of all those who hear and see. We offer you our intention to do good rather than ill; to build up rather than destroy that we may co-operate with your work of building true community in this country, the Commonwealth and the world as a whole. These things we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.[106]

Webb's insistence that the BBC's intention on the global stage was to 'sow good seeds' and 'do good rather than ill' illustrates how, surrounded by the great and good of the British state establishment, the BBCXS was willing to pledge itself anew to a universalist mission: one in which, despite its insistence on its independence and impartiality, it pledged to act as a global force for good, working towards the creation of 'true community' between Britain, the Commonwealth, and the wider world.

The BBCXS was not alone in offering a vision of Britain's post-imperial role as an inherently moral one. While recognizing that the end of empire inevitably meant a relative decline in Britain's material capacity to influence the rest of the world, a powerful coalition of state and non-state actors shared a conviction that Britain still had a profound moral role to play in helping humanity as a whole. A belief in Britain's duty to act as a 'force for good' and defender of 'fundamental rights and freedoms', both within the moral confines of the ongoing Cold War and in relation to the economic development of the newly independent 'Third World', remained a powerful

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[105] St Paul's Cathedral Archive, 'A Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving', 12 July 1982. A digital copy of the service paper was provided to the author via email by St Paul's archivist Vanessa Bell.
[106] 'A Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving'.

mobilizing force in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. In identifying itself publicly and privately with this belief, the BBCXS was able to artfully navigate the significant challenges it faced during this period, both in terms of the external threats of budget cuts, and internal concerns about how to balance its commitment to impartiality with the need to avoid 'Olympian neutrality'.

This chapter has demonstrated how, while the BBCXS rarely described itself as a 'humanitarian' organisation, or explicitly aligned itself with those who used the language of human rights to explain, justify, or camouflage their own political or ideological beliefs, it nonetheless created and benefited from new associations with activists and NGOs from the humanitarian and human rights sectors. As the next chapter will demonstrate, these links with NGOs would intensify during the 1980s and 1990s, as would the BBCXS's willingness to rhetorically as well as operationally align itself with the NGO sector. Yet this later, more intense engagement with the NGO sector was at least partly made possible because of the BBCXS's willingness during this earlier period to explain the value of its work in similar terms to those used by NGOs - terms which maintained the assumption, dating back to the age of empire, that the West could and should intervene to 'save' distant others through the provision of 'impartial', 'objective', and 'apolitical' expertise.

Chapter Two: Unwrapping 'Britain's Greatest Gift to the World': The BBC World Service's Institutional Philosophy, 1982-1999

In October 2008, former BBC World Service Controller of European Services Andrew Taussig published an article in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* in which he reflected on the impact and significance of the end of the Cold War.[1] Recalling the 'relief and joy' that he and his colleagues felt as Communist rule collapsed across Eastern Europe in 1989, Taussig explained how this joy was eventually accompanied by a sense of uncertainty about what the post-Cold War era might look like for the World Service:

> So international broadcasters came out of the cold war with the elation of past achievements and the allure of what more they might now do with enhanced access in a more open media environment. Less regard was given to sober calculations about how fast they might descend the priority lists of government decision-makers contemplating new foreign policy horizons and constrained by limited budgets.[2]

While the end of the Cold War was greeted as a moment of triumph for the World Service, it also created a problem: if the people of Eastern Europe no longer needed to rely on the BBC's external broadcasting to access non-state media, what was the point of continuing these broadcasts? As former state socialist countries opened up their economies and societies to Western influence, would Western governments see the need to spend money on international broadcasting at all?

Dramatic changes would certainly take place within Bush House during the 1990s. Yet fears that the end of the Cold War might also mean the end of the World Service would prove to be unfounded. In fact, by the end of the 1990s, the World Service had succeeded in growing its reputation as a global force for good. In remarks which have been repeated in BBC press releases and official documents ever since, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the World Service in 1999 as 'perhaps Britain's greatest gift to the world this century'.[3] Annan's endorsement was made in the same year that the World Service embarked on an ambitious new

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[1] Andrew Taussig, 'You Lose Some, You Win Some - 1989 and after', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 28:4 (2008), 583-618.

[2] Taussig, 'You lose some', 585.

[3] House of Commons (HC), Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC), 'The Implications of the Cuts to the BBC World Service', HC 849, Vol. II, Ev w21, 2011. Quoted in Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson, *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932-2018* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1. Notably, while this quote from Kofi Annan appears in numerous publications by or about the BBC World Service produced since 1999, the original context in which these remarks were made has seemingly been lost.

endeavour, establishing its own BBC-branded international development charity, the BBC World Service Trust (known since 2011 as BBC Media Action). This decision reflected a more general shift which had taken place across the World Service throughout the 1990s: its embrace of the humanitarian and overseas development sector, which saw Bush House cultivate close relationships with a variety of NGOs, international organisations, and state actors on a far greater scale than ever before. Indeed, according to Taussig, the World Service as a whole had by this time evolved into a kind of 'government-funded non-governmental organisation (NGO) — combining the breadth of constituency which NGO values command with the resources and clout which government can make available.'[4]

This chapter examines how and why the World Service came to embrace this new 'government-funded NGO' identity in the 1990s, arguing that Bush House did indeed undergo a kind of 'humanitarian turn' during this decade, and exploring the extent to which the end of the Cold War explained or enabled this shift. By the end of the century, concerns about the World Service's interventions abroad being categorized as antagonistic 'propaganda' had largely been superseded by a post-Cold War optimism about the possibility of using BBC broadcasting as a tool to support humanitarian interventions and longer-term overseas development projects around the world. Specific sub-sections within the World Service took on more overt and more ambitious humanitarian roles than ever before, while leadership figures like Managing Director John Tusa made strategic use of the language of humanitarianism, human rights, and overseas development to create a link between their own vision of the World Service's future, and the Cold War-inflected broadcasting philosophies of their predecessors.

The chapter begins by examining the period 1980-1986, during which the BBC External Services (as the whole of the BBC's external broadcasting operation was known before rebranding as the 'World Service' in 1988) continued to offer limited and often indirect forms of support to dissidents within the Soviet Bloc who used the language of human rights to explain and justify their political opposition. During this post-détente period of heightened Cold War tensions, fears about tarnishing the BBCXS's reputation as an 'impartial' source of information came into conflict with a growing feeling, both within and beyond the BBC, that it should not self-censor or deny its desire for political change behind the Iron Curtain simply for fear of being branded as a purveyor

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[4] Taussig, 'You Lose Some', 593.

of propaganda. By evaluating how and why debates about the relationship between 'propaganda', 'truth', and 'human rights' re-emerged within the BBCXS during this period, we gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the way that Cold War concerns continued to shape, but not dictate, the BBCXS's broadcasting philosophy.

Next, the chapter explores the period between 1986 and 1993, when Bush House was forced to respond to two simultaneous challenges: the end of the Cold War, and the Thatcher government's attempts to transform the BBC's institutional culture. Focusing on the actions and rhetoric of Managing Director John Tusa, whose tenure spanned this crucial six-year period, it argues that Tusa developed an updated and expanded vision of the World Service as a universalist and humanitarian actor, which offered Bush House a way to simultaneously convey its continued strategic importance to the government in a post-Cold War world, while creating new opportunities for external funding and partnerships which could insulate it from the threat of government budget cuts or 'efficiencies' imposed by BBC Director General John Birt.

Finally, this chapter provides evidence that the World Service's 'humanitarian turn' in the 1990s was more than a stylistic or rhetorical shift. Focusing primarily on the case study of the BBC Somali Section, but linking to wider developments across Bush House which contributed to the creation of the BBC World Service Trust in 1999, this section demonstrates how humanitarian NGOs and international organisations came to fund specific World Service programmes, sometimes directly influencing their form and content. Beyond this, it explains why the World Service's relationship with the humanitarian sector dramatically changed during the 1980s and 1990s, situating Bush House within a broader shift in both British and global history in which NGOs took on a new political and cultural prominence. Understanding the World Service's 'humanitarian turn' during the 1990s helps to demonstrate how, by the end of that decade, NGOs had established themselves in the minds of both political elites and wider publics throughout the West as reservoirs of credible, apolitical expertise, and as ideal vehicles for conveying Western compassion towards the rest of the world.

Propaganda, Priorities, and Human Rights, 1980-1986

On 4 May 1980, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher gave a radio interview regarding the impact that new communication technologies might have on the conduct of East-West relations. Demonstrating her government's interest in expanding and improving the transmission of broadcasts from Britain to the Soviet bloc, she explained that 'we are particularly anxious that broadcasts to the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states should have top priority'.[5] It was her hope, she stated, that through these broadcasts, the West might launch 'a massive propaganda campaign of the kind we have never mounted'.[6]

Thatcher's remarks were greeted with some concern at Bush House. During an interview on the BBC Radio Four programme *The World at One* the next day (and subsequently published in *The Times*), BBCXS Managing Director Gerard Mansell outlined the nature of his concerns about this proposed 'massive propaganda campaign':

> There is no reason why the vast majority of the Soviet public should not be aware of going on and of the attitude of the British to those events. But to convert what we do now into 'propaganda', in reverse to what Radio Moscow carries out, in my view would be utterly counter-productive, because our stock-in-trade is the truth.[7]

This exchange between Thatcher and Mansell helps to illustrate a major question which continued to preoccupy the BBCXS throughout the first half of the 1980s: namely, whether the general 'heating up' of the war of words between East and West during this period should trigger a re-evaluation of the BBCXS's own approach to international broadcasting. As shall be demonstrated, Mansell's dismay at the use of the term 'propaganda' to describe what the BBCXS broadcast to its audiences across the Iron Curtain was a response which, by this time, was not shared by all at Bush House. As opposition groups within and outside the Soviet bloc increasingly used the language of human rights to criticize state socialism and to mobilize popular support on both sides of the Iron Curtain, BBCXS employees struggled to demonstrate their sympathies towards (and occasional direct involvement with) these groups, without straying from the commitment to political impartiality which lay at the heart of the BBC's stated broadcasting philosophy.

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[5] Margaret Thatcher, 4 May 1980. Quoted in BBCWAC, E40/347/1: Broadcasting to Communist Audiences, 1971-1986, Leonid Vladimirov, 'Giving Voice to Democracy: Speaking Directly to the Peoples of the Soviet Bloc', June 1984.

[6] Ibid.

[7] 'Flaws seen in propaganda idea', *The Times,* 6 May 1980.

During the first half of the 1980s, the BBCXS was required to respond to new demands in line with an overall heating up of Britain's Cold War rhetoric. The vocal anti-Communism of Margaret Thatcher (elected in May 1979) and Ronald Reagan (elected in January 1980), the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, and the imposition of martial law in Poland in the winter of 1981 all contributed to a sense that, by the time that the BBCXS celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1982, the period of détente exemplified by the negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act had come to an end. In its place, a 'new' or 'second' Cold War had developed.[8]

The early 1980s was also a period in which the monitoring and publicization of human rights abuses within the Soviet bloc took on a new political prominence, in part thanks to the emergence of a transnational 'second society' of social and political activists, inspired and emboldened by the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.[9] The development of an influential, transnational network of Helsinki Committees for Human Rights, and the subsequent formation of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights in 1982, ensured that systematic human rights abuses against political opposition groups within the Soviet bloc were widely reported in the West.[10] The US Helsinki Watch Committee, established in 1979 and funded by the Ford Foundation, may not have directly supported the Reagan administration's hawkish approach to Cold War diplomacy during this period, but it did provide evidence of ongoing human rights abuses within the Soviet bloc which was useful to those seeking to characterize the Soviet Union as an 'evil empire'.[11]

It is against this backdrop that the BBCXS's conflicted feelings about being depicted as part of a 'massive propaganda campaign' on behalf of the West must be understood. At the beginning of the 1980s, Bush House feared that the Thatcher government might impose major budget cuts on the BBCXS, despite its successful navigation of the recent CPRS review. Yet in 1981 the government approved a ten-year programme of measures to improve the BBCXS's

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[8] Sean Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War 1945-1991* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 181-188; Olav Njølstad, 'The Collapse of Superpower Détente, 1975-1980' in Mervyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War,* Volume 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135-155.

[9] Sarah Snyder, 'Human Rights and the Cold War' in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, eds, *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 237-248.

[10] Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[11] Rosemary Foot, 'The Cold War and Human Rights' in Leffler and Westad, eds, *Cambridge History of the Cold War,* Vol. 3, 445-465.

audibility around the world worth £102 million, and also increased both the budget and broadcast hours of the Russian and Polish Services, in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the imposition of martial law respectively.[12] These budget increases, welcome as they were, were also an indication to Bush House that the government viewed these broadcast services as a part of Britain's Cold War arsenal. As Alban Webb has noted, between 1980 and 1983 the Polish Section was regarded by the UK government as not only a broadcaster, but also as a key source of information-gathering about Polish opposition movements, whose networks and connections with opposition groups and individuals within Poland meant that their contribution to British intelligence was 'greater than Embassy Information work'.[13]

Around this time, the BBCXS's approach to broadcasting to the Soviet bloc was also facing scrutiny from a separate source. The opinions of a select group of Soviet dissident writers were taken very seriously at Bush House during the late 1970s and 1980s. As Mark Hurst has demonstrated, during the period from the mid-1960s until the end of the Cold War, a broad church of British human rights activists sought to assist Soviet dissidents through a variety of schemes, including campaigns against the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes, support for Soviet Jews seeking to emigrate to Israel, and advocacy for religious freedoms to be recognized within the Soviet Union.[14] Partly as a result of this activism, figures such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Amalrik and Vladimir Bukovsky were placed on something of a pedestal among Britain's political, diplomatic, and cultural elite. These individuals occupied an influential position within British and wider Western political and diplomatic discourse, both as genuine victims of Communist repression, and as intellectually formidable characters who were skilled at diagnosing the ills of Soviet Communism in terms of its impingements upon the fundamental human rights of its citizens.[15]

Each of these three figures was invited to visit Bush House, though each held different opinions regarding the value of the BBC Russian Service. According to the BBC's Head of Central

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[12] Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 178-179.

[13] Alban Webb, 'The Polish Section and the reporting of Solidarity, 1980-1983' in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds, *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service, 1932-2012* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 87-99.

[14] Mark Hurst, *British Human Rights Organisations and Soviet Dissent, 1965-1985* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[15] Hurst, *British Human Rights Organisations,* 11-43.

European Services Peter Fraenkel, Amalrik complained during his visit that the Russian Service's output was characterized by 'a certain wishy-washiness: on the one hand…on the other…'.[16] Bukovsky, whose profile was so elevated within the UK that he was invited to act as an informal political adviser to Margaret Thatcher before her first meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1984, was apparently more impressed.[17] As part of a TV documentary about the BBCXS broadcast on Thames Television (ITV) in 1982, Bukovsky claimed that the BBC Russian Service had built up a 'tremendous reputation' among its tens of millions of listeners in the Soviet Union, whereby 'if they [the BBC] say so, everybody would believe'.[18] Bukovsky even claimed that the Russian Service's broadcasts had a direct impact in reducing political repression within the Soviet Union, declaring that 'I know of several cases, when I was still in the Soviet Union, of people being released, just because their cases were mentioned on the Russian Service of the BBC as being unjust.'[19] This kind of public endorsement of the BBC's ability to have a positive impact on the human rights situation in the Soviet Union, simply by 'telling the truth', must have delighted Bush House.

Given his status as probably the most famous Soviet dissident in the world, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's opinion of the BBC Russian Service was of particular interest at Bush House. A politically conservative Russian nationalist, Solzhenitsyn was not a straightforward advocate of 'human rights' in the contemporary, liberal democratic sense of the term: in a Harvard Commencement Address delivered in 1978, he argued that 'all individual human rights were granted on the ground that man is God's creature', and complaining that 'the West has finally achieved the rights of man, and even to excess, but man's sense of responsibility to God and society has grown dimmer and dimmer'.[20] Yet as Michael Bradley has argued, he nevertheless became regarded as 'an emblem of the new global concern of human rights' from the mid-1970s onwards, in large part thanks to the publication, translation and dissemination across the West of his three-

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[16] Andrei Amalrik quoted in Peter Fraenkel, 'The BBC External Services: Broadcasting to the USSR and Eastern Europe' in K. R. M. Short, ed, *Western Broadcasting Over the Iron Curtain* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986).

[17] Luke Harding, 'Vladimir Bukovsky obituary', *The Guardian,* 28 October 2019.

[18] Vladimir Bukovsky, *Afternoon Plus,* Thames Television (ITV), first broadcast on May 21 1982. Accessed online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPqqXHMwqKQ on November 24 2021.

[19] Vladimir Bukovsky, *Afternoon Plus.*

[20] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *A World Split Apart: Harvard Commencement Address, 1978.* Accessed at https://www.solzhenitsyncenter.org/notable-quotations on 26 February 2022.

volume non-fiction account of the Soviet forced labour camp system, *The Gulag Archipelago*.[21] This harrowing account of the severity and scale of the systematic imprisonment, violence, and murder of Soviet citizens by the state contributed to a broader shift which took place within the West during the 1970s, as international human rights activism became a popular pursuit as well as a key element of the foreign policy platform of most mainstream political parties.[22]

Among its many legacies, *The Gulag Archipelago* had a direct impact on the BBCXS's own broadcasting philosophy, becoming the first literary work to be adapted and serialized for radio by the BBCXS before having been translated into English. In a 1984 article, BBC Head of Central European Services Peter Fraenkel explained that, until the mid-1970s, it was BBCXS policy to broadcast literary readings or serializations 'only when, in translation, the work had made a stir in Britain and we could quote reviews from British journals by way of introduction'.[23] These rules were put in place to try and fend off accusations that the BBCXS was actively promoting or endorsing texts which might be censored or banned within the countries that they were broadcasting to for ideological reasons. But in the case of *The Gulag Archipelago*, which circulated widely in unofficial *samizdat* versions among Russian speakers across Western Europe in 1974 before being translated into English and French the following year, the BBC decided to forego this cautious policy:

> When we saw Russian texts of his [Solzhenitsyn's] books – well before English translators had tackled them – we knew we were faced with writings of extraordinary quality and power. We could predict that they would eventually make an impact in Britain. It seemed unrealistic to sit on our hands and wait for that to happen before we broadcast excerpts. We also suspected that our competitors would not wait![24]

This shift in policy illustrates that Bush House was capable of reacting dynamically and adapting its approach to broadcasting across the Iron Curtain in certain circumstances – including those where messages of 'extraordinary quality and power' such as the accounts of human rights abuses

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[21] Mark Philip Bradley, 'Human Rights and Communism' in Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, and Mark Selden, eds, *The Cambridge History of Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Volume 3, 151–77.
[22] Jan Eckel, 'The Rebirth of Politics from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s' in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds, *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014),226-260. See also Michael Cotey Morgan, 'The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights' in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela and Daniel J. Sargent, eds, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2010), 237-251.
[23] Fraenkel, 'The BBC External Services', 149.
[24] Fraenkel, 'The BBC External Services', 148.

contained within *The Gulag Archipelago* compelled the BBCXS to revisit its established principles.

Yet despite this notable adjustment, the BBCXS's relationship with Solzhenitsyn was not defined solely by mutual admiration. Just like Amalrik and Bukovsky, Solzhenitsyn had been invited to tour Bush House and meet with senior managers and BBC Russian Service employees in 1976. Writing some twelve years later, John Tusa recalled Solzhenitsyn's visit as a somewhat testy one, in which the latter criticized the BBC's non-adversarial approach to international broadcasting, 'explain[ing] in magisterial terms that this very British approach to events in the Soviet Union was misguided and irrelevant'.[25] This version of events was corroborated in a recent oral history interview, in which former BBC Eastern European Service head Peter Udell recalled attending a dinner party with Solzhenitsyn soon after his visit to Bush House. According to Udell, Solzhenitsyn argued at the dinner that the BBC's approach to broadcasting to the Soviet Union was like 'feeding lettuce to a tiger': a frustrating and ultimately unsatisfying experience for its listeners, because of the BBC's unwillingness to directly criticize the Soviet government.[26]

Significantly, Solzhenitsyn's frustration at the BBC's non-adversarial approach to broadcasting to the Soviet Union was shared by a cadre within the Russian Service itself. In his 1992 book *A World In Your Ear,* Tusa noted how 'Undoubtedly, some in the World Service thought him [Solzhenitsyn] right' to propose that the BBC should embrace a 'more engaged type of broadcasting, the approach of a journal de combat'.[27] By the mid-1980s, the BBC's Central and Eastern European Services was divided into two broad camps – those who remained committed to the 'detached' and 'decent' approach to broadcasting associated with key figures like Alexander Lieven and Anatol Goldberg (discussed in detail in Chapter One of this thesis), and those who felt the time was now right for the BBC to adopt a more ebullient, adversarial approach.

Two documents from the BBC's archives help to illustrate the way in which the BBCXS responded to external pressure from the government, the press, and Soviet dissidents to adopt a more direct and critical tone to its broadcasts across the Iron Curtain. The first is a paper called 'Giving Voice to Democracy: Speaking Directly to the Peoples of the Soviet Bloc', published in

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[25] John Tusa, 'Broadcasting After Glasnost', Speech delivered to the European Atlantic Group on 20 April 1988, published in John Tusa, *Conversations With the World* (London: BBC Books, 1990), 60.
[26] Peter Udell, interview with the author, 14 August 2020.
[27] Tusa, *A World In Your Ear,* 77.

June 1984. Written by BBC Russian Service Programme Assistant Leonid Finkelstein under the pseudonym 'Vladimirov', the paper was published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, a think tank funded by right-wing American organisations such as the Heritage Foundation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who had close links with the Reagan administration.[28]

Across approximately forty pages, 'Vladimirov' argued that the time was right for the BBC to abandon the 'honest and gentlemanly approach' to broadcasting to the Soviet bloc it had favoured since the end of the Second World War, and instead adopt a more critical tone, aligning the BBC with 'the arrival in office of more confident and assertive governments in Britain and the United States' and a 'renaissance of belief in what might be loosely and generically termed "Western values" among Western intellectuals'.[29] Referring to the 'concluding section of the Helsinki Final Act' and its provisions on the 'promotion of human, cultural and educational contacts between East and West', the paper advocated for the BBC to accept and acknowledge that it had a role to play as part of a broader 'Western propaganda campaign', and that it should no longer allow accusations of propagandism to prevent it from serving that purpose.[30] In Vladimirov's view, the BBCXS's historic fear of being labelled as an instrument of propaganda was a misplaced one, since 'truth and propaganda are not mutually exclusive'.[31]

In characterizing the BBCXS as 'a broadcasting service whose high-quality output certainly falls into the generic category of propaganda', Vladimirov's paper represented a break from a tradition which had defined the BBC's approach to broadcasting across the Iron Curtain since its earliest years.[32] As has been outlined in Chapter 1, Bush House's leadership consistently argued that its 'cool, detached, almost clinical' approach to Cold War broadcasting was the very opposite of propaganda. Yet by looking at the writing of rank-and-file BBC Russian Service employees like 'Vladimirov', it becomes clear that some within Bush House had either never fully accepted this argument, or had at least grown tired of it by the mid-1980s. Having spent almost six years in a

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[28] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Leonid Vladimirov, 'Giving Voice to Democracy: Speaking Directly to the Peoples of the Soviet Bloc', June 1984, Alliance Publishers Ltd. for the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies. On the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies' links to the CIA, see William Clark, 'The Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies' (PhD Thesis, University of Strathclyde, 2014), 9-26.
[29] Vladimirov, 'Giving Voice to Democracy'. 6.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

Soviet forced labour camp before defecting to the UK in 1966, followed by over a decade working for the US-funded Radio Liberty before joining the BBC in 1980, 'Vladimirov' was clearly frustrated by the limitations imposed by Bush House's fixation on avoiding or challenging any accusations of propagandism. Yet as Gerard Mansell had made clear in his May 1980 appearance on *The World at One*, senior leaders at Bush House still sought to distance the BBCXS from any association with the word 'propaganda'.

It is important to note that Vladimirov's opinion was not shared by all of the émigrés from the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc working at Bush House. In a 1982 television documentary, Polish Section staff member Krzysztof Pszenicki was asked directly whether their broadcasts were a type of propaganda. He responded emphatically:

> It is not propaganda, it is anything but propaganda. Because credibility is the only weapon we've got. The decision regarding what we broadcast is actually made in this building, because we are totally independent from an outside body, we see ourselves as part and parcel of the BBC, and we work within the same philosophy, the same sort of framework as the rest of the BBC.[33]

Whether we treat Pszenicki's opinion here as a genuinely held belief or as something that was crafted for the camera, it helps to illustrate that even among its émigré employees, BBCXS staff remained uncomfortable with aligning themselves publicly with any explicitly political or ideological cause.

Head of Eastern European Services Peter Udell recognized that the ideas contained in Vladimirov's paper, though controversial, should be discussed more widely within Bush House. According to a cover note attached to a copy of Vladimirov's paper found in a BBC archival folder, Udell arranged a meeting with senior colleagues to discuss the paper, which raised 'issues which are of central importance to our broadcasts to the Soviet Union' but 'which the BBC felt should not be published under the name of a member of its staff'.[34] No record of this discussion survives in the BBC archives, but the debate about whether the BBCXS should take a more openly critical approach to broadcasting to the Soviet bloc did not die away.

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[33] Krzysztof Pszenicki in *Afternoon Plus on the BBC External Services* (Thames Television, broadcast May 21st 1982). Accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPqqXHMwqKQ on October 6 2021.
[34] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Peter Udell, 'Leonid Finkelstein's Paper: "Giving Voice to Democracy"', 7 June 1984.

Between April and June of 1986, Head of the Turkish Service Gamon McLellan was tasked with observing the Central and Eastern European Services, to check whether its employees were broadcasting in a sufficiently impartial manner, and avoiding any material which was too overtly sympathetic towards particular political points of view. McLellan's final report, and the responses it inspired, offer a valuable insight into the BBCXS's efforts to avoid appearing propagandistic while ensuring that its broadcasts did not appear cold, distant, or unsympathetic to its target audience behind the Iron Curtain. McLellan acknowledged the huge value that was added by placing more control over programme output in the hands of staff like Vladimirov and Pszenicki: recent émigrés with first-hand experience of life under Communism, who 'ought to some extent to be able to represent the listeners in editorial discussions with section managers who are not always natives of the target country'.[35] Yet McLellan was also adamant that the BBC should continue to reject any efforts to use the BBC for propagandistic purposes, concluding that 'the points made by such people as Alexander Lieven, Anatol Goldberg, and Evelyn Anderson about the need to avoid anything that smacks of propaganda are as valid, I think, today, as when they were written'.[36] In a meeting arranged to discuss McLellan's report, Pszenicki acknowledged that the Polish Section may have occasionally strayed into 'propaganda' territory, admitting that the sympathies that he and his colleagues felt towards the Solidarity movement within their country meant that 'perhaps he had been guilty of being soft on those [Solidarity] spokesmen he had interviewed'.[37] These excerpts demonstrate how the BBCXS remained fundamentally cautious about aligning themselves directly with any of the political opposition movements which were beginning to flourish within the Soviet bloc at this time. Even organisations like Solidarity, who used the language of human rights to justify their opposition and gain widespread popular support across the West, were approached with caution.[38]

Overall, the period between 1980 and 1986 was one in which the BBCXS continued to cling to a broadcasting philosophy which rejected 'propaganda', and as a result, remained cautious of being too closely associated with those on both sides of the Iron Curtain who used human rights

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[35] BBCWAC, E63/22/1: Broadcasting to Communist Europe, Gamon McLellan, 'Broadcasting to Communist Europe', 31 August 1986.

[36] Ibid.

[37] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, 'Summary of Discussion on McLellan Report', 1 November 1 1986.

[38] Robert Brier, *Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1-18.

rhetoric to criticize and undermine Communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Figures like Solzhenitsyn and Solidarity leader Lech Walesa were treated with respect and even admiration, both among the émigrés working within the Central and Eastern European Services and by senior management. Yet Bush House remained unwilling to abandon its belief that the BBC should not explicitly align itself with any external organisation of a political nature, even one which claimed to be based on protecting fundamental human rights. However, as the Cold War eventually came to an end, this belief would be revisited and partially revised.

The End of the Cold War and John Tusa's Vision for the World Service, 1986-1993

In 1986, the BBCXS appointed a new Managing Director, John Tusa, who would serve in that role until 1993. During his tenure, Bush House was required to navigate its way through two major and somewhat interconnected challenges. One of these challenges was an external development entirely beyond the BBC's control: the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, resulting in the sudden end of the Cold War which had played a major role in informing the BBCXS's post-war broadcasting philosophy. The other was an internal change, far less grand in its geopolitical scale but no less keenly felt within Bush House: a dramatic shift in leadership and managerial culture at the BBC, exemplified by the rise of John Birt, who as Deputy Director General (1987-1992) and subsequently Director General (1992-2000) led a transformative series of reforms which posed a serious threat to the World Service's budget, status, and prestige. In responding to these two challenges, Tusa drew heavily on ideas and rhetoric which connected the World Service to the humanitarian, human rights, and overseas development sectors, reflecting back on previous descriptions of Bush House's mission and purpose as 'universal' to help create a durable new vision of the World Service which placed humanitarian and human rights concerns at the heart of the organisation's global mission.

It was under Tusa's direction that Gamon McLellan produced his November 1986 report on the Central and Eastern European Services, which concluded that the BBCXS would continue to avoid offering direct support to political movements like Poland's Solidarity which used the language of human rights to legitimize and publicize their opposition. Yet despite this, the BBCXS certainly did provide a platform for opposition groups like Solidarity to establish their credibility and grow their public profiles within their home countries. Key Polish opposition figures like Jacek Kuron, Lech Walesa, and Adam Michnik, all of whom would eventually play a pivotal role in the

'round-table' talks which led to the reintroduction of free elections in Poland in 1989, were frequently interviewed on air by the Polish Section throughout the 1980s. BBC Polish Section staff also worked clandestinely to disseminate information and commentaries provided by the Polish opposition within the West. Senior staff members Krzyzstof Pszenicki, Jan Krok-Paszowski and Gienek Smolar were founding trustees of the Information Centre for Polish Affairs, a charitable organisation formed in London in February 1980 to collect, publish, and disseminate news and commentaries from within the Polish opposition movement. Pszenicki, who in a 1982 television documentary had argued that the Polish Section was 'anything but propaganda', edited the Information Centre for Polish Affairs' journal, the *Uncensored Poland News Bulletin*.[39] In a history of the BBC Polish Section published in Polish in 2009, Pszenicki acknowledged that 'strictly speaking, we broke numerous BBC rules' by conducting this work, which clearly extended beyond the BBC's boundaries of impartiality. Yet he was also convinced that the Polish Section's work on behalf of the Polish opposition was in fact no secret to senior managers at Bush House, who effectively turned a blind eye to their political activity outside of work.

As the Solidarity movement gained further momentum in the latter half of the 1980s, overt demonstrations of sympathy towards the Polish opposition within broadcasts remained officially prohibited at Bush House. In his 2009 book on the Polish Section, Pszenicki recalled that senior managers would occasionally conduct 'spot-checks' on the content of their broadcast output, sometimes requesting externally verified English-language transcripts of news and current affairs broadcasts, in an effort to guard against any explicitly pro-Solidarity or anti-government messages being broadcast.[40] Polish Section staff also faced pushback from above in relation to other obvious demonstrations of support: Peter Udell remembered how those who came to work wearing badges in support of Solidarity were 'invited by the management not to, because that would have been committing themselves.'[41] Yet the BBCXS did deliberately cultivate close relations with the Polish opposition during this period: the appointment of Eugeniusz Smolar, an active supporter of the Solidarity movement, as Head of the Polish Section in 1988, was a clear sign of this.[42] By 1989,

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[39] Krzysztof Pszenicki, *Tu Mowi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* (Warsaw: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2009), 109-111. The author is reliant on the (unpublished) English translation of this publication, kindly provided by Mr Pszenicki.

[40] Pszenicki, *Tu Mowi Londyn,* 139.

[41] Peter Udell, interview with the author, August 14 2020.

[42] Webb, 'The Polish Section and the reporting of Solidarity, 1980-1983', 92-94.

even senior managers at Bush House were building personal relationships with Solidarity leaders: in June, John Tusa and Andrew Taussig even flew to Warsaw to attend Lech Walesa's name-day celebrations at Walesa's family home.[43]

While the BBCXS did not directly broadcast in support of the opposition movements which toppled Communist governments across Central and Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, Bush House was undoubtedly pleased with, and proud of, the association that others made between its broadcasting and the end of the Cold War. Figures like Vaclav Havel, whose status as an icon of the collapse of Communism in the region was guaranteed with his election President of Czechoslovakia in December 1989, endorsed the BBC as having made a real contribution. In March 1990 Havel, who had been a founder member of human rights group Charter 77, met with Tusa and publicly praised the positive impact that the BBC Czechoslovak Service had made through broadcasting news of opposition movements emerging across the Soviet bloc.[44] During his visit to London, Havel also requested that the BBC continue to broadcast across Central and Eastern Europe during its transition to democracy – a request that Czech-born Tusa (whose family had emigrated to the UK just before the outbreak of the Second World War) would work hard to meet.[45] The Marshall Plan of the Mind project, examined in detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis, was just one example of Tusa's efforts to ensure that the World Service played a role in supporting the former socialist bloc's transition to liberal democracy.[46]

While the World Service was subsequently credited with having contributed to the eventual collapse of Communism in Europe, its approach to Cold War broadcasting throughout the 1980s remained a decidedly cautious one. Many would argue that this approach was ultimately vindicated: the BBC's influence and reputation for trustworthiness in the region was demonstrated by the fact that it was invited by figures like Havel and Walesa to play a role in helping to establish a new model of public service broadcasting in Czechoslovakia and Poland respectively. Yet, as Taussig has demonstrated, this sense of vindication was accompanied by trepidation: what would the future of the World Service look like in a post-Cold War world, against a domestic backdrop

[43] John Tusa, 'We Have Lost The Election: Poland, 1-6 June 1989' in Tusa, *Conversations With The World,* 147-161.

[44] Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside, 1992), 158.

[45] Walker, *Skyful of Freedom*, 165.

[46] Steve Westlake, 'Building the BBC-branded NGO: Overseas Development, the World Service, and the Marshall Plan of the Mind, c.1965-1999', *Twentieth Century British History,* 33:1 (2022), 29-51.

where British institutions were being transformed by the processes of privatization, deregulation and commercialization ushered in by successive Thatcher governments?

During the second half of the 1980s, the BBC's leadership underwent a dramatic change in personnel and priorities. Between March 1985 and May 1986, the government-appointed Peacock Committee conducted a review of the BBC which many feared might lead to the abolition of the licence fee, forcing the BBC to adopt a commercial business model.[47] While these fears were not realized, the Committee did recommend that the BBC should purchase more of its programming from independent, private sector production companies, moving 'towards a sophisticated market system based on consumer sovereignty'.[48] The government-approved appointment of a former Managing Director of Times Newspapers, Marmaduke Hussey, as BBC chairman in 1986, followed by Alisdair Milne's forced resignation as Director General under Hussey's direction in January 1987, were clear signals that radical change was afoot at Broadcasting House. John Birt's appointment as Deputy Director General in 1987 heralded a period of major internal reform across the BBC, as new commercial management techniques drawn from the private sector were introduced, corporate consultants were hired to recommend major financial and administrative changes, and a new internal market was created within the BBC through Birt's 'Producer Choice' initiative.[49] Imposing these sweeping, top-down changes made Birt deeply unpopular among many at the BBC, with one BBC freelancer memorably describing Birt and his allies in 1993 as 'Beelzebub's lieutenants within the temple'.[50] While it would be unfair and inaccurate to portray either Hussey or Birt as government stooges, their appointments were indicative of how the BBC was forced to respond to broader changes within British politics, economics, and society during the 1980s and early 1990s which saw many other public- or state-owned institutions dismantled, deregulated, or otherwise opened up to the logic of the 'free market'.[51]

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[47] Tom Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service* (London: Verso, 2016), 147-148.

[48] Alan Peacock, *Report of the Committee on the Financing of the BBC,* London: HMSO, 1986, Cmnd. 9824, para. 592. Quoted in Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service,* 148.

[49] On the Birt Reforms, see Mills, *Myth of a Public Service,* 141-166; Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors,* Georgina Born, *Uncertain Visions*, 101-5.

[50] Mark Lawson, 'John Birt and the Enemies of the Faith', *The Independent*, August 30th 1993. Accessed online at https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/john-birt-and-the-enemies-of-the-faith-1464475.html on November 30 2021.

[51] Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service;* Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974-1987* (London: Profile, 2015)*, 281-304.* For a comparison of the way in which two of Britain's most revered public

While Birt's reforms were primarily focused on the domestic BBC, they also clearly made an impact at Bush House, setting the backdrop against which Tusa would draw up his own plans for implementing change at the BBCXS.[52] Tusa has been remembered within the BBC's official history as a staunch opponent of Birt and his reforms, described by Seaton as a 'great bearer of BBC values' who sought to defend Bush House against the changes being forced upon the BBC from above.[53] Tusa certainly did play a vocal role in criticizing and opposing Birt's reforms, including the decision in 1994 to merge the World Service's newsroom with that of the 'domestic' BBC. In June 1997, alongside his fellow former BBCXS Managing Directors Austen Kark and Gerard Mansell, Tusa published a letter in *The Times* claiming that Birt's reforms meant that the World Service 'has been dismantled', describing Birt as 'the wrecker, anxious not to be thwarted in his indefensible designs'.[54] Yet while Tusa vigorously criticized Birt's efforts to reduce the World Service's autonomy from the rest of the BBC after his retirement, he was also responsible for implementing changes while Managing Director which drew the World Service closer to both the UK government and the commercial sector.

Tusa's relationship with the Foreign Office was a complex one. Under his leadership, the World Service negotiated a new triennial funding agreement, replacing its previous annual grant-in-aid, which made it easier for Bush House to plan spending on infrastructure and longer-term projects autonomously.[55] Yet in return for this agreement, Tusa agreed to allow the National Audit Office, the UK's independent public spending watchdog, to examine the World Service's financial records, and to draw up a plan for improving efficiency and making cost savings across Bush House through managerial and structural reforms. This was a radical departure for the World Service, which up to this point had steadfastly denied the NAO's right to access its records or oversee its spending decisions 'on constitutional grounds' since it was part of the BBC, and not an

services, the BBC and the NHS, were changed by Thatcherism, see Patricia Holland with Hugh Chignell and Sherryl Wilson, *Broadcasting and the NHS in the Thatcherite 1980s: The Challenge to Public Service* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 118-148.
[52] For an in-depth account of Birt's proposals for reforming the World Service, see Johnson and Robertson, *BBC World Service,* 284-288.
[53] Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors*, 285.
[54] John Tusa, Austen Kark and Gerard Mansell, 'Wrecking of BBC World Service; Letter', *The Times,* June 13 1997.
[55] Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom,* 147-8.

arm of government.[56] Yet Tusa was willing to concede on this principle, and open the World Service's finances and managerial structures up to the scrutiny of a government agency for the first time, tacitly accepting Bush House's subordinate status in relation to the UK government. This decision may well have been influenced by Tusa's desire to secure an extra £5 million in funding from the government to establish a World Service Television Service. These hopes would be dashed: after a lengthy consultation process, the government rejected the proposal.[57]

Tusa's dream of creating a World Service Television Service would eventually be realised through another radical development - direct collaboration with commercial partners. After failing to secure government funding, Tusa commissioned the merchant bank Schroders to prepare a business plan which involved partnering with commercial broadcasting organisations such as the American network NBC and Rupert Murdoch's majority-owned STAR TV, whose Asiasat satellite would beam World Service Television to audiences around the world.[58] World Service Television also drew working capital from another 'commercialized' part of the BBC, BBC Enterprises, which was responsible for monetizing BBC-branded products such as magazines and educational materials, as well as selling the rights for BBC programmes to foreign broadcasters.[59] Launched in March 1992, World Service Television was a prime example of Tusa's willingness to open the World Service up to external, non-governmental sources of income and expertise – in this instance, commercial media organisations and financial consultants - in order to pursue its universalist broadcasting philosophy. Yet as shall be demonstrated, this 'opening up' of the World Service would not be restricted to the commercial sphere: organisations from the non-profit or 'Third Sector' would also become a vital source of funding and support for Bush House from the 1990s onwards.

By 1992, Tusa had developed a coherent and durable new vision for the future of the World Service, which would secure its future in a post-Cold War, post-Thatcher world. Tusa outlined this vision in a speech delivered at Chatham House on 29 October 1992, organized to mark the World

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[56] National Audit Office Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Financial Control and Accountability of BBC External Services, HC44 25 November 1986. Accessed online at https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/result/pqpdocumentview?accountid=9730&groupid=107687&pgId=7c2d7f53-4b77-495e-a830-a5c1a6ac88bb&rsId=17CDB047715#134 on 30 November 2021.
[57] John Tusa, 'BBC World Service as a Public-Sector Broadcaster', *The World Today* Vol. 48, No.12 (Dec 1992), 230-233.
[58] Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom,* 148-151.
[59] John Cain, *The BBC: 70 Years of Broadcasting* (London: BBC Books, 1992), 116.

Service's 60th anniversary. Arguing that the World Service 'would not, and did not, have to find a new theory and justification for broadcasting internationally once the great ideological overlay of the Cold War and East-West rivalry had vanished', Tusa explained that the World Service would continue to provide a universal and fundamentally altruistic broadcasting service, 'respond[ing] to the needs of the audiences where the need is great, rather than limiting it to those areas where foreign policy has determined that information needs should be satisfied'.[60] Tusa's conclusion made clear his desire to persuade his audience that the World Service should be understood as a manifestation of Britain's internationalist compassion:

> In part [World Service] broadcasts operate like aid; they certainly transfer knowledge and skills; they have an element of cultural advertisement and cultural diplomacy; they are an instrument of informal diplomacy; they bring individuals in touch with a nation; they are non-coercive, and therefore generous.[61]

Tusa's description of the Bush House's broadcasts as a 'generous' form of 'aid' clearly connected his vision of the World Service's broadcasting philosophy in the 1990s with the organisation's past: it echoed the 'concern for humanity as a whole' espoused by his predecessor (and mentor) Gerard Mansell during the CPRS crisis fifteen years earlier, as well as John Reith's statement in 1932 that the BBC's external broadcasting efforts should be 'dedicated the best interests of mankind'.[62] These earlier descriptions of the BBC's external broadcasting efforts as generous, benevolent, and fundamentally universal in outlook and ambition were helpful for Tusa as he sought to explain how the World Service's mission remained intact even after the Cold War had ended.

Yet Tusa's vision of the World Service's role as a global force for good was not identical to that of his predecessors. For example, Tusa was far more relaxed about including explicit references to 'human rights' within his public statements about the World Service's broadcasting philosophy than any previous Managing Director. A World Service 'mission statement' published in 1991 (quoted by Andrew Walker in his 1992 history) declared:

> Free and untainted information is a basic human right. Not everyone has it; almost everyone wants it. It cannot by itself create a just world, but a just world order can never exist without it. The BBC World Service aims to be trusted by its audience, independent of

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[60] Tusa, 'BBC World Service as a Public-Sector Broadcaster', 230.
[61] Ibid., 232.
[62] J.C.W Reith, Director General of the BBC broadcasting on the first day of the Empire Service, Saturday 19 December 1932. Quoted on the dust jacket of Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told.*

political partisanship and commercial pressures. It reflects the world to the world, promotes a common understanding and shared experience between people of different nationalities and cultures.[63]

This idea that the World Service had a right and duty to defend this 'basic human right' was one that Tusa returned to in his 1992 book *A World In Your Ear,* in which he explained that 'I have always seen the free flow of information as a basic human right, and regard the part that international broadcasting can play in delivering it as one of its most essential functions.'[64]

This explicit description of the World Service as a protector and defender of human rights represented a significant shift from the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Bush House's support for human rights activism, and for particular political movements inspired by the language of human rights, remained 'implicit in everything we do and say' but deliberately unspoken.[65] While Tusa's confident description of the World Service's role as a humanitarian and human rights actor in the early 1990s clearly built on earlier descriptions of the organisation as an 'Oxfam of the Mind' with a universal mission to provide trusted news and information to listeners around the world, they also represented a new departure for the World Service – advertising the fact that the BBC was now positively and deliberately aligning itself with the international human rights movement in a way that it had not before.

Re-emphasizing the World Service's credentials as a humanitarian and human rights actor created new possibilities for securing new kinds of support (and funding) from within the humanitarian, human rights and overseas development sector. By positioning the World Service as part of a broader coalition of British organisastions concerned with alleviating the suffering of distant strangers, Bush House's 'humanitarian turn' opened the door for a series of new collaborations with a variety of NGOs, international organisations, and philanthropic trusts during the 1990s and beyond.

Before examining these collaborations in detail, it is important to address the fact that John Tusa himself does not subscribe to the argument that the World Service undertook a humanitarian turn under his leadership. In an August 2020 interview, when presented with this hypothesis, Tusa

[63] BBC World Service 'Vision' for 1991-1992, quoted in Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom,* 161.
[64] John Tusa, *A World In Your Ear* (London: Broadside Books, 1992), 13-14.
[65] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, Marie Anthony to Central European Staff, 14 July 1977.

pushed back against the suggestion that the World Service was seeking to align itself with the work of Western humanitarian, human rights or overseas development organisations:

I think we would have been very wary of getting lined up with international pressure groups, because they have political agendas, they have different political agendas, they may have admirable political agendas, but that would mean that we would be thinking the whole time well how far do our objectives align with their sometimes more explicitly political objectives, and we didn't need to, we didn't need to say BBC World Service is side by side with development, World Bank, international human rights or anything like that, we never saw ourselves as part of a portfolio of international organisations, all of which were probably working in a similar direction, we were journalists, we primed information, and if that information was then used and harnessed for other causes, like human rights, then that was fine, but that was their business, that was somebody else's agenda, but it wasn't ours.[66]

Tusa was also adamant in his 2020 interview that the World Service had not cultivated close relationships with any specific NGOs or international organisations during his tenure as Managing Director:

I'm absolutely clear that we did not feel that we had to align ourselves with other organisations, I mean I had no meetings ever, not that I avoided it, I had no meetings ever with things like International Red Cross, Oxfam or whatever, I knew some of the people, but there was never an institutional connection with these organisations […] All my instincts would be we stood where we were, on what we did, in the profession that we operated, and that actually there was no need to become part of a conscious, let's call it a worldwide portfolio of humanitarian-type organisations[...] I couldn't imagine say, having regular conferences with Oxfam, who else, the World Health Organisation or whoever, saying how can we work together, that would have felt deeply antipathetic, it feels now to this day deeply antipathetic.[67]

This oral testimony provides a fascinating perspective on this understudied period in the World Service's history. It demonstrates how, from the vantage point of August 2020 when the interview took place, Tusa regarded it as important to refute the idea that under his leadership, the World Service considered itself as part of a 'worldwide portfolio of humanitarian-type organisations'. Yet as will be demonstrated in the rest of this chapter and in chapter 3, there is plentiful evidence to demonstrate that the World Service *did* build close relationships with a variety of different NGOs, international organisations, and philanthropic trusts, both during and after Tusa's time as Managing Director.

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[66] John Tusa, interview with the author, 18 August 2020.
[67] John Tusa, interview with the author, 18 August 2020.

There are many possible explanations for Tusa's insistence that the World Service did not maintain or pursue close relationships with humanitarian, human rights, or overseas development organisations during the 1990s. Almost thirty years have passed since Tusa, 83 years old at the time of the interview in August 2020, retired from the role of Managing Director, leaving ample time for memories to shift or change. It is also certainly possible that Tusa was genuinely unaware of some of the relationships that sprung up between certain humanitarian organisations and sections of the World Service under his tenure – after all, senior managers cannot know everything that is going on across a large organisation like the World Service. Yet alongside these straightforward explanations, we must also consider another, informed by Portelli's famous argument that 'what is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings'.[68]

Tusa's memories of the World Service's relationship with 'humanitarian-type organisations', as expressed in August 2020, are likely to have been constructed in a way that, consciously or subsconsciously, sought to pre-empt or minimise any criticism, blame, or embarrassment on Tusa's part. In the early 1990s, aligning the World Service with the humanitarian sector may well have seemed a smart and relatively uncontroversial strategic move: at that time, humanitarian NGOs had faced far less scholarly or public scrutiny into their claims to act as authentic, apolitical expressions of Western benevolent expertise than they have been in the thirty years which have passed since then. By 2020, claims about the non-political and purely altruistic nature of humanitarian NGOs had been far more thoroughly investigated and challenged, both within the academic and the public sphere.[69] In his testimony, Tusa demonstrates an acute awareness of, and wariness towards, the 'political agendas' of 'international pressure groups', arguing that the World Service was 'antipathetic' towards these agendas at the time. Yet given the constructed nature of memory, we must consider the possibility that Tusa's antipathy or suspicion towards the 'political agendas' of these 'international pressure groups' may not in fact have

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[68] Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006), 37-38.

[69] See for example Peter A. Gourevitch and David Lake, 'Beyond Virtue: Evaluating and Enhancing the Credibility of Non-Governmental Organisations' in Peter A. Gourevitch, David Lake and Janice Gross Stein, eds, *The Credibility of Transnational NGOs: When Virtue is Not Enough* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-34; Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking for the Third World,* Second Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 102-154; Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson and Jean-Francois Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

developed until much later, in response to the gradual erosion of these actors' reputations as 'apolitical' or purely altruistic in their motivations and global impact.

The final section of this chapter will lay out the evidence in support of this latter conclusion, demonstrating the extent of the World Service's interactions with a variety of humanitarian NGOs and international organisations, and explaining how and why these interactions proliferated during the 1990s.

The World Service as Humanitarian Actor: Somalia, Afghanistan, and Beyond, 1992-1999

Until now, little has been written about the World Service's burgeoning post-Cold War relationship with the humanitarian sector. Indeed, existing scholarship on the World Service's history has yet to focus on any aspect of the World Service's experience of the 1990s in much depth. Mansell and Walker's official histories were published in 1982 and 1992 respectively, and thus cannot offer a comprehensive overview of Bush House's priorities and preoccupations during the final decade of the millennium.[70] Even in the most recently published academic survey of the World Service's history, the decade has continued to be overlooked: in their otherwise comprehensive survey history published in 2019, Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson spend just a few pages discussing the 1990s, describing it simply as a period of uncertainty in the World Service's history in which 'brand identity was damaged, needs were not met, resources and programme quality were downgraded'.[71] No further space is devoted to exploring or elaborating on this claim before the book moves on to discuss the period after the shocking events of September 11 2001, when a new strategic focus on the Middle East apparently 'came to fill the narrative vacuum in the West left by the end of the Cold War.'[72]

Johnston and Robertson's brief treatment of the 1990s is somewhat understandable. Despite recent efforts to develop new research approaches to 'historicize' the period in relation to particular overarching themes in modern British history, the decade remains an elusive and rarely

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[70] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told;* Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom.*
[71] Gordon Johnston and Emma Robertson, *BBC World Service: Overseas Broadcasting, 1932-2018* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 288.
[72] Johnston and Robertson, *BBC World Service*, 288.

tackled chronological period.[73] But by using alternative methods such as oral history and scouring the collections of humanitarian NGOs themselves (rather than government or BBC archives), new insights into the meanings, motivations, and outcomes of these connections between the World Service and the NGO sector can be gained. Through these two lenses, we are afforded a closer look at this fascinating period in the World Service's history than could be achieved through relying solely on the BBC's own archives for source material. Far from representing a 'narrative vacuum', the 1990s was in fact a time of reflection, re-evaluation, and revival for the World Service, as confidence spread within Bush House regarding its contemporary and future role as a humanitarian and global development actor.

These alternative methods make it possible to conduct a valuable case study of a section of the World Service whose recent history is not well-documented within the BBC's own archives, but whose activities during the 1990s help to increase our understanding of how and why the World Service intensified its role as a global humanitarian actor at this time. The BBC's Somali Section was founded in 1957 at the official behest of the Colonial Office, in an effort to support British colonial interests in the region. In the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis, the British Governor of Somaliland, Sir Theodore Pike, requested the BBC set up a radio station to help 'in the fight against Ethiopian and Egyptian attempts to use radio to whip up anti-British feeling among Somalis'.[74] Under the leadership of Section Heads Mark Dodd (1957-1961) and Bob Martin (1961-1969), it operated on a very modest basis, generally broadcasting for no more than an hour a day, but developed a loyal and affectionate relationship with its listenership in Somalia, as evidenced by the hundreds of informal and heartfelt letters the Section received every month.[75]

By the 1970s, Britain's colonial presence in Somalia was already fading into memory within Whitehall, and Britain's overall strategic interest in the Horn of Africa had considerably declined, calling into question the Somali Section's continued value. While the service managed

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[73] In the Spring of 2021, Dr David Geiringer (Queen Mary University London) and Dr Helen McCarthy (University of Cambridge) convened the *Rethinking Britain in the Nineties: Towards a New Research Agenda* virtual workshop series, which sought to reframe and historicize the academic historian's relationship with the 1990s.

[74] Oxfam Archive, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (hereafter OA), MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307: BBC World Service, Somalia: studio and office costs of a missing persons programme working to reunite family members both within Somalia and across the diaspora, Date: 1993-1999, *40 Years of the Somali Service: Halkani waa BBC London* [BBC World Service Internal Booklet], Mark Dodd, 'How Broadcasting in Somali from the BBC Began', 3.

[75] Ibid.

to avoid being completely shut down during the major budget reviews of 1977 and 1981, it would maintain something of a precarious existence until the end of the Cold War. Throughout the 1980s, Somalia's President Barre frequently complained to Prime Minister Thatcher that the Somali Section was broadcasting falsehoods and overt criticisms of his regime, which he claimed represented a threat to Anglo-Somali relations.[76] These criticisms from Barre placed pressure on senior managers at the World Service to conduct costly and time-intensive investigations into the Somali Section's output, including the translation of Somali Section programmes into English for checking. Against this backdrop, many within the Section must have feared that it would soon be judged by senior leaders at Bush House (and their paymasters in Whitehall) to be more trouble than it was worth.

Yet in the 1990s the value of the Somali Section would be dramatically reassessed, both within Bush House and at Whitehall. The downfall of President Barre and the outbreak of civil war in 1991 saw many Western countries, including the UK, forced to withdraw their official diplomatic presence in Somalia and shut their embassies for safety reasons, despite their desire to take an active part in shaping Somalia's future. The civil war would develop into one of the first major global humanitarian crises of the post-Cold War era, with the United Nation eventually leading a large-scale humanitarian intervention in the form of the UNOSOM peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance programme.[77] The Somali Section, which by then had been running a Somali-language service for over thirty years, suddenly took on a new importance as a link between the international community and the Somali people, acting, in the words of Section Head Florence Akst in May 1994, as an 'unbroken thread' which 'links millions of Somali with each other and, via London, with the rest of the world'.[78] With its large pre-existing audience within Somalia, the World Service could potentially provide valuable support to the UN and other international agencies in achieving their peacekeeping and humanitarian goals within the country.

UN aid agencies operating in Somalia throughout the 1990s clearly considered the Somali Section an ally and an asset. In 1997, UNICEF's chief representative in Somalia, Dr Agostino

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[76] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, *40 Years of the Somali Service: Halkani waa BBC London,* 11.

[77] The motives and meaning of the UN's peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention in Somalia are subject to considerable scholarly debate: A useful summary on the nature of this debate is provided by Stefano Recchia's recent article on the issue from an American military perspective. See Stefano Recchia, 'Pragmatism over principle: US intervention and burden shifting in Somalia, 1992-1993', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 43:3 (2020), 341-365.

[78] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, Florence Akst, Somali Newsletter May 1994.

Paganini, praised the Somali Section for the special programmes it had arranged during a recent cholera outbreak, which broadcast details on the opening hours of UN clinics and health centres. According to Paganini these broadcasts, along with the Somali Section's regular news bulletins, 'complement the work of humanitarian agencies like ours'.[79] Unsurprisingly, the Section was proud of this kind of endorsement, and shared it across the BBC through an article in *Ariel*, the BBC's internal magazine, which celebrated the Section's 'humanitarian role'.[80]

Yet the BBC was also wary of building an overly close relationship with the UN, lest it threaten their reputation for objectivity and impartiality among their Somali listeners. As the UN's peacekeeping mission dragged on without finding a long-term resolution to the violence in Somalia, it was important for the BBC's credibility among its listeners across Somalia and the Somali diaspora that it was not viewed as the 'voice of the UN'. In a BBC history of the Somali Section written to celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 1997, former Head Mohamed Abdullahi (the service's first Somali-born boss) remembered how he regularly 'locked horns' with UNOSOM, who he claimed frequently sought to influence the BBC's reporting on a range of topics. Abdullahi proudly recalled how when the Head of UNOSOM wrote 'several times' to the Chairman of the BBC to complain about some of their broadcasts, 'he was politely told that the Somali Service does not cross a street to pick a fight'.[81] In highlighting this exchange, Abdullahi clearly sought to depict the Somali Section as a truly impartial broadcaster, unwilling to bow to the demands of any external body, even one as humanitarian in their aims as the UN, if those demands conflicted with the BBC's own editorial values. Yet strong evidence exists which shows that elsewhere within the Somali Section, its programming was certainly being influenced by other humanitarian organisations: namely, a select group of NGOs whose funding and editorial input helped to make the Somali Section's broadcasting possible.

A collection of humanitarian NGOs including Oxfam and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) followed the UN in identifying the Somali Section's value as a potential tool for supporting their humanitarian interventions in Somalia. These NGOs cultivated close links with the Section throughout the 1990s, recognizing the value that a popular and trusted radio

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[79] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, 'Somali Service Praised for Humanitarian Role', *Ariel,* Volume 2, 1997.

[80] Ibid.

[81] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, Mohamed Abdullahi in *40 Years of the Somali Service,* 13.

station held as a medium for disseminating information which could support their organisational goals. These NGOs used their significant financial resources to ensure that the Somali Section produced programming which they felt was having a positive humanitarian impact.

One of the Somali Section's most high-profile collaborations with humanitarian NGOs during the 1990s was the programme *Baafinta* (Somali for 'Missing Persons'). *Baafinta* had been originally created in 1972, designed as a way for divided family members to broadcast messages and contact details to loved ones with whom they had lost contact. In its early years, the programme was a short five-minute broadcast, mostly utilized by Somali merchant seamen or their families to stay in touch. Unsurprisingly, the programme took on a new prominence after the outbreak of the civil war, as the numbers of missing or displaced people of Somali origin increased exponentially. In order to meet the demand for longer, more frequent episodes of *Baafinta* in response to the huge increase in listener letters received, the Somali Section would require greater resources than its modest existing budget could afford. By 1992, a solution was found. Archival material from the Oxfam collection shows that an agreement was made for the programme to be co-funded by a coalition of prominent international humanitarian NGOs, made up of Oxfam, the International Red Cross Committee, and Concern.[82] As well as providing funding, the ICRC would also provide further assistance by forwarding any listener messages addressed to the BBC for free through the local offices of the Red Crescent Society in Somalia.[83]

Internal documents created by Oxfam, explaining the project objectives and funding rationale for *Baafinta,* help to illustrate the humanitarian benefit which this NGO coalition believed the programme was bestowing upon its listeners in Somalia. According to data provided to Oxfam by the BBC Audience Research Team in April 1997, *Baafinta* received between six and eleven thousand letters from missing persons, or requests for information on missing persons, each year.[84] Oxfam treated these numbers, alongside direct quotations from these letters and 'anecdotal evidence from Somalis in Somalia', as key evidence to inform their conclusion that *Baafinta* was 'a key resource and tool in reuniting Somalis affected by years of turmoil', and thus worthy of Oxfam funding.[85] The amount of money that Oxfam, the ICRC and Concern paid the BBC to keep

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[82] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452: Box 3307.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid. A BBC report produced for Oxfam in April 1997 reported the number of letters received as 6,175 in 1993; 8,254 in 1994; 10,014 in 1995; and 8,856 in 1996.
[85] Ibid.

Baafinta on the air was relatively modest: the coalition of NGOs jointly contributed between £10,000 and £30,000 a year during the period 1992-1999.[86] Yet the existence of this funding arrangement provides strong evidence of the fact that by this time, both the BBC and humanitarian NGOs recognized that humanitarian action was a legitimate and vital aspect of the World Service's mission and purpose. It also demonstrates that the World Service was happy to accept funding from a non-governmental source, and did not consider accepting this money to be incompatible with its world-famous commitment to impartiality.

Collaboration between the World Service and the humanitarian NGO sector was not limited to the Somali context. By the mid-1990s, humanitarian NGOs were not just providing funding to specific language services at Bush House. They were also taking a leading role in shaping the content of their programming, collaborating directly with BBC staff to ensure that the messages that they wished to convey to listeners within conflict-affected countries were delivered as widely and as persuasively as possible. The BBC Pashto Service, for example, built this kind of close relationship with a broad coalition of NGOs and overseas development actors, including the World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontiers, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In his anthropological study of the BBC Pashto Service, Andrew Skuse has demonstrated how the BBC worked closely with this humanitarian coalition to create an ambitious new Pashto-language soap opera series for Afghan audiences, entitled *Naway Kor, Naway Jawand* ('New Home, New Life').[87] Since its launch in 1994, *New Home, New Life* has developed a reputation as one of the most widely recognized and celebrated examples of the 'Drama for Development' genre of broadcasting. Advocates of Drama for Development argue that dramatic media narratives can act as valuable tools for achieving short- and long-term development goals. [88] *New Home, New Life* focused on telling relatable and appealing stories concerning everyday life situations in Afghanistan in a 'never-ending' soap opera format, with each 15-minute episode designed to be short enough to hold the listener's interest between episodes, ending with a dramatic 'cliff-hanger'

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[86] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF HOR 011 A8, Box 1904: BBC World Service, Somalia: contribution to the production of BBC Somali Service's daily broadcast "Baafinta" ('Missing Persons'), Date: 1996-1999.

[87] Andrew Skuse, 'Communication for Development and Public Diplomacy: Insights from an Afghan Radio Drama' in Gillespie and Webb, eds, *Diasporas and Diplomacy*, 193-211.

[88] Andrew Skuse, Marie Gillespie and Gerry Power, eds, *Drama for Development: Cultural Translation and Social Change* (New Delhi: Sage, 2011).

to encourage the listener to tune in to the next episode. This use of entertaining and engaging dramatic techniques was intended to help build a relationship of familiarity and trust between listeners and programme, making it an ideal vehicle for transmitting information on topics which the BBC and its humanitarian partners wished to promote.[89]

The programme was a huge ratings success: By 2001, the BBC's Afghan Education Development Project (which was by that time responsible for producing *New Home, New Life*) estimated that at least 80% of *all* Afghani adults had listened to at least one episode of the programme.[90] While this self-reported number may be inflated, the programme's listenership was undoubtedly enormous, and included hard-to-reach demographic groups such as women and those living in rural areas. BBC Producer Liz Rigbey, who had previously worked on the long-running Radio 4 soap *The Archers*, remembered her time working on *New Home, New Life* fondly, and was proud of the humanitarian contribution the programme made. In a 2014 article in the *Independent* newspaper, she recalled how 'every village had radios and people crouched under the stars to listen. Everything else – aid, food, aid workers, could be stopped but you can't shoot words.'[91]

Skuse's doctoral research, conducted during the late 1990s at the BBC Afghan Education Project's offices in Peshawar where *New Home, New Life* was written and recorded, reveals just how intimately involved the BBC's humanitarian partners were in shaping the content of the soap opera. A 'Consultative Committee' including representatives from the BBC, the United Nations, and NGO partners including Médecins Sans Frontiers and CARE International regularly met to decide which humanitarian or developmental themes would be promoted in upcoming episodes of the series, and exactly how these themes would be weaved into the narrative in a convincing and dramatically satisfactory manner.[92] Stories were designed to introduce listeners to a variety of development-related topics such as vaccinations, literacy promotion, and economic alternatives to

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[89] Skuse, Andrew, 'Negotiated outcomes': an ethnography of the production and consumption of a BBC World Service radio soap opera for Afghanistan' (PhD dissertation, University College London, 1999), 194-210.
[90] 'Impact Data: New Home New Life', BBC Media Action, July 15, 2001. Accessed online via the Communication Initiative Network website at https://www.comminit.com/content/impact-data-new-home-new-life-nhnl on November 29, 2021.
[91] Simon Usborne, 'The Afghan Archers: how a radio soap opera won hearts and minds in Afghanistan', *The Independent,* 6 October 2014. Accessed at https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/the-afghan-archers-how-a-radio-soap-opera-won-hearts-and-minds-in-afghanistan-9778537.html?r=20833 on 1 February 2022
[92] See Appendix 4: Consultative Committee Meeting notes for episodes 355-366 in Skuse, 'Negotiated Outcomes', 336-339.

growing poppies for the drug trade.[93] In the Spring of 1996 the Consultative Committee identified 'mine awareness' as a useful theme to incorporate into storylines, in the belief that such storylines could be used not only to improve listeners' understanding of how to avoid or handle unexploded ordnance, but also in recognition that the subject could 'add some real suspense and danger' to forthcoming episodes, and thus improve the series' reputation and reach as a work of drama.[94]

This kind of co-creation of programming with external humanitarian organisations also took place within the BBC's Somali Section during the 1990s. The ICRC collaborated with Somali Service Senior Producer Yusuf Graad Omar and Deputy Head of Section Maria Frauenrath to create a bespoke series entitled *Somali Conduct in War*. The series, which featured over 90 interviews with 'ordinary' Somalis collected by Omar and Frauenrath during a duty trip to Somalia in 1996, focused on exploring 'traditional rules of combat, traditional ways of solving conflicts, current causes of conflict, and Islam'. These interviews provided first-hand testimony of some of the most violent atrocities committed during the ongoing Civil War, including the bombing of a Quranic school, and sexual violence committed by soldiers on both sides of the civil war against young female victims.[95]

A major theme of the series was the idea that these violent acts represented an aberration from Somalia's past, when popular adherence to 'traditional codes of conduct' found in Islamic law would have made such violence unthinkable. The series' theme song reminded listeners of this imagined past, where 'there used to be at wartime inviolable rules, religious people were not disturbed, and the children were left alone, elderly people and women were not killed, the disabled, having to crawl, and the blind, those who took refuge in the mosque and those who surrendered – all were spared'.[96] It then introduced its listeners to some of the fundamental tenets of International Humanitarian Law, drawing clear links between the provisions contained within this body of law and the aforementioned 'traditional' customs of Islamic law which protected non-combatants.[97] In doing so, *Somali Conduct in War* clearly encouraged its listeners to believe that International

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[93] 'BBC helps bring 'New Life' to ordinary Afghans', *The New Humanitarian,* December 18 2000. Accessed online at https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/186648 on December 2 2021.
[94] Appendix 4: Consultative Committee Meeting notes for episodes 355-366 in Skuse, 'Negotiated Outcomes', 338.
[95] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, 'Somali Conduct in War' in *40 Years of the Somali Service: Halkani waa BBC London* [BBC World Service Internal Booklet], 3.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

Humanitarian Law was compatible with, and perhaps even coterminous with, local laws or codes of conduct derived from 'traditional' and/or religious culture. By broadcasting this kind of content, the World Service clearly moved into the direct promotion of a body of international law which was inextricably associated with the ICRC itself.[98]

Oral testimony from former Somali Section staff helps to illustrate how BBC staff clearly saw themselves as part of a larger coalition of Western humanitarian organisations working in Somalia. In an April 2020 interview with the author, former Somali Section Deputy Director Maria Frauenrath confirmed this:

> SW: I wanted to ask whether you considered all of your time at the World Service, or specific jobs you held at the World Service, as qualifying as humanitarian work or as international development work. Would you define it in that way? If so why, and if not, why not?
>
> MF: Yes, so Somali Service absolutely, and if you see the reaction of like UNICEF, or UNDP, or ICRC, Oxfam, Concern, Red Cross, yes, they clearly say it has, it had a big humanitarian impact, things like educational programmes, also we did literacy training at one stage, literacy training through the airwaves, I mean if that is not humanitarian, I mean we taught twenty thousand or whatever Somali adults, it was targeted at adults, to read and write, it was through the air, with a great NGO, we had a lot of, um, I forgot the name now, but it was a literacy NGO, so we had a lot of cooperation with humanitarian organisations, and there's no doubt for me that one was quite um, a humanitarian task.[99]

Frauenrath's testimony provides a direct challenge to John Tusa's account of the relationship between the World Service and the humanitarian sector in the 1990s in his oral history interview with the author three months later. It is important to note that in her testimony, Frauenrath describes humanitarian and overseas development activities taking place during the mid- and late 1990s, while Tusa had already left the BBC by the end of 1993. Yet Frauenrath's testimony does strongly support the argument that the BBC World Service *did* build strong, continuous, and mutually beneficial relationships with a wide variety of 'humanitarian-type organisations' during the 1990s. The BBC Somali Section positioned itself as one humanitarian actor within a wider collaborative

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[98] On the ICRC's complex role as a guardian and contributor to the creation of International Humanitarian Law, see Yves Sanodz, 'The International Committee of the Red Cross as Guardian of International Humanitarian Law', December 31 1998, accessed online at https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/about-the-icrc-311298.htm on December 2 2021.

[99] Maria Frauenrath, interview with author, 7 April 2020.

network of NGOs and international organisations which, in Frauenrath's words, 'did our best to alleviate the mass suffering that was on the ground'.[100]

The World Service's growing interest in collaborating with humanitarian organisations also manifested itself beyond the confines of specific language services like the Somali or Pashto sections. By the mid-1990s, dozens of other BBC language services had begun broadcasting programming that was created either in close collaboration with humanitarian or international development charities and NGOs, or as a result of funding provided to the World Service by external philanthropic organisations. These efforts were spearheaded by the World Service's Education Department, whose Head, Jenny Stevens, built strong relationships with a variety of charities and trusts who were willing to fund the World Service to create programming aimed at supporting women. In August 1995, a special series of programmes entitled 'Women Today', created in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, was broadcast across no fewer than twenty-four different language services. According to a World Service promotional leaflet, the series included programmes such as the Bulgarian service's 'introduction to the feminist movement both in Bulgaria and elsewhere', and the Nepalese service's *The Better Half* series, which aimed 'to highlight existing social and economic conditions of Nepalese women, and inspire them to seek recognition for their contribution to society'.[101] Organized to coincide with the United Nations' Fourth World Conference in Women, the series would be followed up by a larger-scale, four-year project called *Sexwise.* A joint project between the World Service Education Department and the International Planned Parenthood Foundation, *Sexwise* saw the World Service broadcast programmes in 22 languages on sexual education, providing information and hosting debates on controversial subjects such as contraception, abortion and HIV/AIDS.[102]

The World Service's commitment to playing a permanent and ongoing role within the overseas development sector was formalized in 1999 with the creation of the BBC World Service Trust, a dedicated, BBC-branded international development NGO which brought the development-focused activities of various World Service departments under one umbrella. The institutional

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[100] Frauenrath, interview with author, 7 April 2020.
[101] OA, MS. Oxfam PRF SOM 452, Box 3307, *Women of the World*, BBC World Service Education Promotional Leaflet, August 1995.
[102] 'Project Overview', BBC World Service Sexwise website, accessed online at http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/sci_tech/features/health/sexwise/project_ov.shtml on 9 March 2020.

thinking behind the creation of the Trust is examined in greater detail in Chapter Three of this thesis. But the significant level of collaboration between humanitarian NGOs and specific BBC language services like the Somali and Pashto Service, as well as the development-related activities of the World Service Education Department during the 1990s, clearly helped to forge deeper links between the World Service and the NGO sector, paving the way for the emergence of a dedicated BBC-branded overseas development charity.

All of these examples of the many kinds of humanitarian or development-focused programming the World Service embarked upon during the 1990s help to illustrate the breadth as well as the depth of the Bush House's immersion into the world of humanitarianism and overseas development by the end of the 1990s. Yet they also speak to a more general trend within British history between the 1960s and the end of the millennium: the rise of the NGO as the primary vehicle through which both political elites and the wider public expressed their compassion towards distant others.

The BBC's relationship with the charitable sector is almost as old as the BBC itself. Fundraising appeals have been a staple of the BBC's domestic broadcasting since 24 January 1926, when 'This Week's Good Cause' was launched, beginning with an appeal on behalf of the National Children's Home and Orphanage.[103] By the mid-1960s, the BBC was working closely with the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), an umbrella organisation created in 1963 by leading humanitarian NGOs including Oxfam, the British Red Cross, and Christian Aid to coordinate collective fundraising appeals for major global humanitarian crises, which were broadcast on BBC radio and television.[104] As Jean Seaton has noted, from the outset, the BBC clearly considered itself as the senior partner in this relationship, maintaining strict editorial control over the duration and content of any broadcast appeals, and insisting that DEC appeals 'had to be a response to a calamity, not part of normal fundraising'.[105] Andrew Jones' work demonstrates how aid agencies who wished to shift their focus away from short-term disaster relief towards tackling the longer-term structural causes of global poverty were constrained by fears that the BBC would refuse to broadcast any appeals which blamed disasters on political or structural factors, rather than 'natural'

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[103] Eve Colpus, 'The Week's Good Cause: Mass Culture and Cultures of Philanthropy at the Inter-war BBC', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22:3 (2011), 305–329.
[104] Andrew Jones, 'The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and the Humanitarian Industry in Britain, 1963–85', *Twentieth Century British History* 26:4 (2015), 573–601.
[105] Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors,* 204.

phenomena like extreme weather or earthquakes.[106] These concerns contributed to the decision by War on Want, an overseas development NGO which had been pivotal in founding the DEC, to withdraw from the committee in 1979.[107]

While it was willing to use its broadcasting platforms to help charities to raise money for disaster relief during the 1960s and 1970s, the BBC maintained a significant level of professional and emotional distance from the NGO sector. Individual BBC employees were permitted to associate with NGOs like Oxfam, but efforts by Oxfam-supporting BBC employees to arrange a more institutionalized or formal relationship between the two organisations were rejected by senior management. In July 1971, BBC Head of Music and Oxfam supporter Leslie Perowne wrote to the Head of Secretariat at Broadcasting House 'with my Oxfam hat on', to request advice on how to build a larger 'pool of friends' for Oxfam among BBC staff, in the hope that this might lead to greater coverage on BBC radio and television for Oxfam's fundraising campaign for East Pakistan/Bangladesh.[108] BBC Head of Secretariat Richard Pendlebury politely but firmly rejected this request, explaining that 'we are in the broadcast appeals business and have to be (and be seen to be) as impartial as possible between one good cause and another'.[109] Moreover, Pendlebury argued that Oxfam had already received 'a great deal of free publicity on the BBC air in the form of incidental mentions in programmes', and that any more explicit endorsement of Oxfam's campaigns 'would jeopardise the BBC's reputation for impartiality'.[110]

During the 1980s, the BBC's relationship with the NGO sector became less detached and less paternalistic, muddying the distinction between the cause being promoted and the broadcast medium being used to promote it. As Suzanne Franks has demonstrated, new forms of broadcasting on behalf of 'good causes' were developed during this decade which raised serious questions about how the BBC balanced its belief in the 'public service' of providing a platform for such causes against its commitment to impartiality.[111] Michael Buerk's famous 1984 reporting on

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[106] Jones, 'The Disasters Emergency Committee', 590-598.

[107] For an in-depth account of War on Want's history, see Mark Luetchford and Peter Burns, *Waging the War on Want: 50 Years of Campaigning Against World Poverty* (London: War on Want, 2003).

[108] BBCWAC, R78.4,414/1: OXFAM, 01/02/1958 to 08/04/1991, Leslie Perowne to Richard Pendlebury, 19 July 1971.

[109] BBCWAC, R78.4,414/1, Richard Pendlebury to Leslie Perowne, 26 July 1971.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Suzanne Franks, '"Please Send Us Your Money": The BBC's Evolving Relationship with Charitable Causes, Fundraising and Humanitarian Appeals', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* 38:4 (2018), 863-879.

the Ethiopian famine, broadcast on the BBC news to tens of millions of television viewers in the UK and quickly syndicated to foreign television stations like NBC in the United States, was an indication of this shift. Harrowing images of starving women and children, deliberately presented in a narrative form designed to elicit an emotional response among viewers, were no longer restricted to DEC appeals, but also incorporated within the BBC's mainstream news coverage.

The BBC's decision to throw its weight behind the Band Aid and Live Aid campaigns organized by Bob Geldof in response to the Ethiopian famine provide further evidence that the BBC's relationship with the NGO sector had changed dramatically by this time. Franks points out that there were voices within the BBC who questioned whether broadcasting celebrity-led charity telethons or promoting charity singles were appropriate actions for a public service broadcaster which was explicitly wedded to the principle of impartiality.[112] Yet ultimately, these concerns were overruled by a belief that the BBC had a moral duty to support these unprecedented efforts to mobilize the British public's concern for distant others via a mass donation campaign of a kind never seen before in the UK. As Jean Seaton put it, 'impartiality evolved as "neutrality" had to be tempered by hard judgements'.[113]

The BBC's 'hard judgement' seems to have been that it could ill afford *not* to align itself with the popular, consumerist, emotive form of humanitarian activism which Geldof's campaigns exemplified. Kevin O'Sullivan has convincingly argued that historians should approach the period between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s as an 'NGO moment': a time in which NGOs 'became the primary conduits of Western compassion for the global poor', successfully establishing themselves within the minds of Western publics and policymakers as 'the symbol of, and principle channel for, public and state interventions in the Third World'.[114] For the BBC, a 'public service broadcaster which claimed to operate separately from the British government, aligning itself more closely with popular humanitarian movements like Live Aid made strategic sense. It ensured that the BBC was closely associated with these movements in the eyes of their viewers and listeners, imbuing the BBC with some of the heady combination of popular credibility and celebrity stardust which the NGO sector had accumulated by this time. Nor was the decision to align the BBC with

See also Tehila Sasson, 'In the Name of Humanity: Britain and the Rise of Global Humanitarianism', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Berkeley (2015), 123-136.
[112] Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors,* 186-207.
[113] Seaton, 204.
[114] O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment,* 2.

this kind of global humanitarian activism a one-off: by 1986, the BBC had set up Comic Relief, a biannual charity telethon which would follow Geldof's model of using celebrities and the mass media to encourage tens of millions of ordinary Britons to manifest their 'global compassion' through donations or conspicuous consumption of charity merchandise (such as the famous 'Red Nose'). Against the backdrop of the Peacock Committee's deliberations and growing fears that the government might abolish the licence fee, the BBC's 'humanitarian turn' during the mid-1980s might be explained in part as a deliberate effort by the BBC to ensure that it appeared relevant and emotionally attuned to the British public it purported to serve.

The domestic BBC's new approach to humanitarian fundraising in the 1980s offers some helpful context against which to explain the World Service's decision in the early 1990s to start collaborating with and accepting funding from NGOs. By this time, the terms of the relationship between the BBC and the NGO sector had fundamentally changed, to the extent that the World Service could collaborate openly with, and receive funding from, a constellation of NGOs, international organisations, and philanthropic trusts. In the context of the ever-present fear of government- or Birt-imposed budget cuts, these collaborations served a practical purpose as a valuable alternative source of funding. But beyond this, they also served an important symbolic purpose, helping to bolster the World Service's international reputation as a 'gift to the world' – an example of Britain's compassion for distant strangers, which ultimately helped to justify its disproportionately powerful role within the post-imperial, post-Cold War international community.

Conclusion

The nature and scale of the collaborations between the World Service and a variety of NGOs, international organisations and philanthropic trusts demonstrated in the previous section helps to illustrate how, by the 1990s, Bush House had indeed embarked on a 'humanitarian turn' - one which would continue into the twenty-first century. Within the Somali and Pashto Sections, as well as at the Education Department, we can see that a diverse array of World Service staff agreed wholeheartedly with John Tusa's statement in 1992 that Bush House's broadcasting 'operated like aid': working alongside external partners not only to provide information which aimed to ameliorate short-term disasters or alleviate immediate suffering, but also to co-create programming designed to inform and influence listeners on 'longer-term' harbingers of developmental change.

This humanitarian turn helped the World Service maintain its relevance and sense of purpose, even as some of its worst fears during the 1990s came to pass in the following decades. By the mid-2000s, fears about whether the government would continue to fund the BBC's Central and Eastern European language services were realized. In 2005, the BBC closed its Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovene, and Bulgarian language services, with the Romanian service following suit in 2008.[115] By 2014, even the World Service's traditional source of government funding, the grant-in-aid from the Foreign Office, had been stopped – a state of affairs which would have been regarded as utterly disastrous at any other point in the organisation's history.[116] Yet the World Service continued, funded jointly by the licence fee and by a new form of government funding drawn directly from the UK's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) budget.[117] At the same time, the BBC World Service Trust (renamed BBC Media Action in 2011) expanded dramatically, establishing a global reputation as a leading international media development actor which it maintains to this day. Currently operating in 24 countries across Asia, Africa and Europe, it regularly receives tens of millions in annual funding from a broad variety of donors, including the UK government, the United Nations, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.[118] Thanks in part to its 'humanitarian turn' in the 1990s, the World Service was able to plot a financially sustainable course into the twenty-first century, even when its traditional funding sources were eroded, by positioning itself alongside other overseas development actors as a worthy recipient of state ODA funding.

Yet while this humanitarian turn took place within the specific context of the 1990s, it was only possible because its advocates could argue that it represented an extension of, rather than a divergence from, the World Service's overall mission and purpose since the 1960s. This was a point that John Tusa himself emphasized in an oral history interview conducted by his BBC

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[115] Taussig, 'You Lose Some', 609.

[116] Johnson and Robertson, *BBC World Service,* 303-304.

[117] Johnson and Robertson, *BBC World Service,* 297-301.

[118] 'Reaching Millions: Informing, Connecting and Inspiring Change', BBC Media Action Website. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work on May 21ˢᵗ 2020. 'Where Our Money Comes From', BBC Media Action website. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/about/funding on May 21ˢᵗ 2020. These figures were reported prior to the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development to form the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in September 2020.

colleague Frank Gillard in 1993, when asked to reflect on how the end of the Cold War changed the World Service's view of the future:

> We had in place a theory of how we broadcast internationally which was valid both for the Cold War world and for the post-Cold War world. And I think we deserve a little bit of credit for this, because we had done this for thoroughly good reasons. We wanted a justification for international broadcasting which would apply to the whole world. Not just to closed societies, not just to enemies, not just to people in the Communist bloc, but which would explain why we broadcast to everybody. And the theory was simply that you have a right and a duty to broadcast to anybody who wants information, and that is a universal need.[119]

This description of the World Service's mission, as a universal one extending to 'everybody' and serving a 'universal need', connected Tusa's vision for the post-Cold War World Service as a humanitarian actor with earlier iterations of the World Service's 'universal' broadcasting philosophy espoused by his predecessor Gerard Mansell, as examined in Chapter One. Yet while Mansell's Bush House had depicted itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind', it ultimately held back from actively endorsing or collaborating with external humanitarian or human rights groups. In contrast, Tusa and his successors presided over a BBC which more openly embraced and extended these relationships, as the end of the Cold War and the rise in NGOs' status as seemingly authentic embodiments of Western compassion and benevolent expertise made such collaboration both possible and desirable.

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[119] John Tusa interviewed by Frank Gillard, BBC Oral History Collection, 1993, online video recording, accessed at https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/coldwar/collapse on 2 February 2022.

Chapter Three: Building the BBC-branded NGO: Overseas Development, the World Service, and the Marshall Plan of the Mind[1]

On October 17th, 1991, the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (RSA) hosted a symposium at their London headquarters, entitled 'Eastern Europe: New Challenges to Business'.[2] The round-table brought together an illustrious panel of speakers to discuss how Western nations and corporations might support the region as the Cold War drew to a close. The panel was made up of four prominent speakers, including a leading director of the newly created European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Boris Zenic; the Chief Executive of British Petroleum, Robert Horton; and former US President Ronald Reagan.

In his remarks, Reagan unsurprisingly celebrated the recent fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, as well as the role that the capitalist democracies of the West (and, in a nod to his audience, Britain in particular) were already playing in providing economic support and political guidance to the region as it began its transition to democratic capitalism. With his typical rhetorical flair, he made the case for maintaining and intensifying that support, arguing that 'our friends in the east' had reached a 'critical turning point':

> We have been there as they found their way out of darkness. We must be there now to lead them to a bright future. We must let the benefits of democratic capitalism flow like a steady river into these countries where the sun is just beginning to shine.[3]

Completing the quartet of invited speakers was a somewhat less obvious choice for a panel devoted to solving the 'new challenges to business' in Eastern Europe: John Tusa, Managing Director of the BBC World Service. Exactly what did the international broadcasting arm of the BBC have to contribute to a debate on Western support for Eastern European business?

In his remarks, Tusa emphatically made the case that the World Service had a vital role to play in ensuring that the 'benefits of democratic capitalism' proposed by Reagan did indeed 'flow' into Eastern Europe. His speech outlined his vision for a grand project designed to support 'the

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[1] This chapter is based on an article on the same subject matter published by the author in March 2022. See Steve Westlake, 'Building the BBC-branded NGO: Overseas Development, the World Service, and the Marshall Plan of the Mind, c.1965–99', *Twentieth Century British History,* 33:1 (2022), 29–51.

[2] Ronald Reagan, Robert Horton, John Tusa and Boris M. Zenic, 'Eastern Europe: New Challenges to Business', *RSA Journal*, 140:5424 (1991), 31-40.

[3] Reagan et al, 'Eastern Europe', 31.

process of the recreation of plural societies' in the former Soviet Bloc.[4] Just as the United States had provided Western Europe with a 'Marshall Plan' for economic recovery after the Second World War, so the West must now deliver a 'Marshall Plan of the Mind' to post-socialist Eastern Europe – a plan with the BBC at its very heart.[5]

This chapter evaluates the historical significance of the BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind organisation (MPM), which was created soon after Tusa's RSA speech. It outlines the nature of MPM's work in post-Communist Eastern Europe during the 1990s, showing how despite the World Service's celebrated commitment to impartiality, MPM transmitted unequivocally pro-capitalist and pro-British narratives to its considerable audiences in the region. More significantly, it argues that while MPM was in some ways a very specific response to the end of the Cold War, it was also a manifestation of the BBC's longer-term commitment to supporting British interests abroad through overseas development work. The creation of MPM was, I argue, symptomatic of the World Service's efforts since the end of empire to cultivate a new image for itself – as not just a trusted international broadcaster, but a fundamentally humanitarian organisation which used its broadcasting expertise to help uplift humanity as a whole.

Drawing on a combination of archival documents, oral history interviews, and published primary sources, this chapter establishes MPM's historical significance as the first BBC-branded overseas development NGO. It examines exactly how and why the World Service took the decision to create its own NGO in the 1990s, arguing that this development reflected the BBC's growing recognition that it could derive significant benefits by aligning itself, both rhetorically and operationally, with the overseas development sector. In doing so, this work provides valuable evidence not only of the World Service's evolving role as a tool of British power on the global stage in the post-imperial era, but also of the growing significance of the overseas development NGO as a vehicle for projecting British influence overseas in that period.

The opening section of this chapter examines the basis of the BBC World Service's historic reputation as an independent, impartial, and benevolent 'global public service broadcaster'. Next, the chapter delves into the case study of the Marshall Plan of the Mind itself, outlining the nature of its interventions in Eastern Europe, and examining its credentials and historical significance as

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[4] Ibid., 38.
[5] Ibid.

a BBC-branded overseas development NGO. MPM is then contextualized in relation to the World Service's earlier overseas development work and situated as a direct precursor to the contemporary BBC-branded overseas development NGO, BBC Media Action.

Approaching the World Service as a 'Global Public Service Broadcaster'

In his speech to the RSA, John Tusa highlighted three key characteristics which, he claimed, qualified the World Service to play a leading role within Western efforts to help rebuild Eastern Europe and the (soon to be former) Soviet Union: independence, impartiality, and expertise. [6]

First, he argued that the World Service was recognized throughout the world for its institutional *independence*. Throughout its history, the World Service has always insisted on its editorial independence, and as part of the BBC, its sovereignty over editorial decisions has been enshrined within the corporation's Royal Charter, which has historically limited the UK government's ability to directly control what the BBC broadcasts.[7] As has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, scholars have enquired into the nature and limits of this 'independence', in some cases powerfully critiquing the BBC's claims that this charter really does enable the organisation to act as a 'public service broadcaster', free from government influence over the form or content of its broadcast output.[8] Nevertheless, and despite its continued total reliance on the UK government for funding, Tusa felt confident in describing the World Service as 'a journalistic organisation where independence from government is at the heart of our being'.[9]

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[6] Tusa's speech was given on October 17th, 1991, ten weeks before the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26th.

[7] The BBC website has a section dedicated to the history of the BBC Royal Charter, outlining the continuities between the first charter granted in January 1927 and the most recent in January 2017. BBC Royal Charter Archive, https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/research/royal-charter, accessed on 28 May 2020.

[8] Tom Mills' 2016 history of the BBC represents the most vehement academic denial of the BBC's independence from government: Tom Mills, *The BBC: Myth of a Public Service* (London: Verso, 2016). James Cook's 2017 article examines a concrete example of government censorship of BBC broadcasting to domestic audiences, revealing how the Wilson government forced the BBC to cancel its planned broadcast of the controversial post-apocalyptic nuclear docudrama *The War Game* in 1965. James Cook, 'Who Banned the War Game? A Fifty Year Controversy Reassessed', *Journal of British Cinema and Television,* 14:1 (2017), 39-63. On the limits of the BBC's approach to dealing with a sensitive domestic topic like multiculturalism in a 'balanced' and 'neutral' way, see Gavin Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960-1980* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). See also Georgina Born, *Uncertain Visions: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC* (London: Vintage, 2005); Peter Goodwin, 'Low Conspiracy? – Government interference in the BBC', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2:1 (2015), 96–118.

[9] Reagan et al, 'Eastern Europe', 38.

Secondly, Tusa argued that the World Service was *impartial*. He made the case that throughout the Cold War the BBC's Eastern European language services had avoided broadcasting any overtly anti-Communist or subversive programming, declaring that '"our job" was never to destroy the totalitarian governments; it was to inform the citizens of those countries, a crucial difference'.[10] As has been discussed in previous chapters, the BBC took great care and pride in pursuing an approach to external broadcasting which emphasized objectivity, trustworthiness, and endorsing or challenging particular political ideologies or movements, in an effort to avoid being branded as an instrument of British propaganda. While this approach did not stop Britain's Cold War adversaries from labelling the World Service's broadcasts as propaganda, they were at least treated as one of its most sophisticated and nuanced purveyors. A 1984 Soviet treatise on the BBC's 'history, apparatus, methods of radio propaganda', while denouncing the BBC's Russian language broadcasting as politically motivated anti-Soviet interference, admitted that these broadcasts were particularly difficult for the Soviet authorities to discredit, describing them as 'factological propaganda' whose bias 'can be uncovered only by means of a specialised, lengthy and painstaking analysis'.[11] Even those leading the Soviet Union tuned in to the BBC's language services at times of crisis when seeking accurate, reliable information: Mikhail Gorbachev famously listened closely to the Russian Service while under house arrest during the failed military coup against his leadership in December 1991, stating in a press conference soon after his release that 'the BBC was best of all' in helping him to keep up to date with developments while cut off from the outside world.[12]

Finally, Tusa made the case to his audience at the RSA that the World Service's *expertise* was very much in demand beyond Britain's borders. He claimed that requests from newly installed Eastern European governments for the BBC to share its technical, journalistic, and broadcasting know-how, were 'intense, continuing, [and] varied...we have not begun to meet – let alone satisfy the need'.[13] In support of this argument, Tusa might have turned to a recent statement by Tadeusz

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[10] Reagan et al, 'Eastern Europe', 36.
[11] Vladimir Artyomov and Vladimir Semyonov, 'The BBC: History, Apparatus, Methods of Radio Propaganda', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 4:1 (2007), 73-89, 117. It is important to note that the article cited is in fact a summary and translation of the original 1984 article written by Artyomov and Semyonov, summarized and translated by David Wedgwood Benn, formerly of both the BBC Russian Service and the Information Research Department.
[12] Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside, 1992), 138-139.
[13] Reagan et al, 'Eastern Europe', 37.

Mazowiecki, Poland's first Prime Minister of the multi-party era, who in February of 1990 declared that 'what we need in Poland is the BBC style of journalism. It is dispassionate and unbiased, looking at an event and analysing it from several points of view…such journalism is a necessary element in the process of absorbing the values of pluralist democracy.'[14] This kind of endorsement provided the ideal justification for the BBC to get involved in building a new, pluralist, democratic Eastern Europe.

These three characteristics – independence, impartiality, and internationally sought-after expertise - were deemed by Tusa to place the World Service in a special category, separate from and elevated above any other international broadcaster which had operated during the Cold War. Indeed, Tusa later argued that the World Service was more than an international broadcaster, characterizing it instead as a *global* public service broadcaster - an organisation whose 'broadcasting and journalistic principles have remained remarkably constant and non-political' and whose mission was 'to give a global perspective on international events to a global audience'.[15] According to this vision of the World Service, the organisation did not just serve Britain's narrow national or political interests, but truly served the world as a whole.

While much of the existing scholarship on the World Service has critically examined the basis of its claims to independence, impartiality, and expertise, we still know comparatively little about how these claims evolved over the course of the latter third of the twentieth century.[16] It is notable, for instance, that these quintessential BBC World Service characteristics (independence, impartiality, and expertise) bear more than a passing resemblance to those identified as crucial in

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[14] BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBCWAC), E62/43/1: Polish Journalists - BBC Training Programme, 01/01/1990 to 31/12/1990, BBC International Press Release, Feb 22nd 1990.

[15] John Tusa, 'BBC World Service as a Public-Sector Broadcaster', *The World Today,* 48 (1992), 230-33.

[16] On the BBC's role in maintaining the sentimental bonds of empire overseas from its creation until the end of empire, see Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). On the impartiality of the BBC's foreign language services during the Second World War, see Nelson Ribeiro and Stephanie Seul, eds, *Revisiting Transnational Broadcasting: The BBC's foreign-language services during the Second World War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). On the relationship between the UK government and the BBC's language services aimed at listeners in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the early Cold War, see Webb, *London Calling.* See also Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds, *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service, 1932-2012* (London: Routledge, 2012); Gordon Johnston, 'The BBC World Service and Global Britain', *History and Policy,* Policy Papers (2020), accessed online at https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/the-bbc-world-service-and-global-britain on May 22 2022.

explaining the so-called 'rise of the NGO' since the 1960s.[17] As Matthew Hilton and his co-authors convincingly argue, from this time onwards many previously small-scale and volunteer-run NGOs expanded, professionalized, and took on new, influential roles within the world of politics and governance, in large part thanks to their (carefully cultivated) reputations as trusted providers of independent, impartial expertise.[18] This rise of the NGO in Britain was part of a broader shift across the West, identified at the end of the century by Akira Iriye and subsequently evaluated and critiqued in greater depth by scholars such as Kevin O'Sullivan, whereby NGOs took on an increasingly prominent role as vehicles for expressing and enacting the Western urge to intervene in the decolonizing 'Third World'.[19] Yet so far, despite their shared insistence on the 'non-governmental' yet necessary nature of their work, the changing relationship between the BBC and the burgeoning NGO sector during this period has received little attention.[20]

The rest of this chapter explores this relationship in depth, by examining the origins, objectives, and practices of the BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind – an entity which should, I argue, be understood as the first BBC-branded NGO. This case study is then situated within a longer-term contextual framework, drawing attention to the World Service's use of NGO-related rhetoric to promote and justify its work since the 1960s, as well as to its continuing role as an agent of British overseas development after the end of empire. In doing so, it builds on the evidence of the BBC's humanitarian and overseas development work during the 1990s discussed in Chapter Two, to show how the World Service was not just collaborating with the humanitarian / development NGO sector during the 1990s, but was in fact already an active and fully-fledged participant.

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[17] Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson and Jean-Francois Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[18] On how NGOs navigated the political sphere while maintaining a rhetorical commitment to remaining 'apolitical', see Chapter 5, 'The Pressure of Politics: Walking the Corridors of Power', in Hilton, McKay, Crowson and Mouhot, *The Politics of Expertise*, 108-145.

[19] Akira Iriye, 'A Century of NGOs', *Diplomatic History*, 23: 3 (1999), 421–435; Kevin O'Sullivan, 'A "Global Nervous System": The Rise and Rise of European Humanitarian NGOs, 1945–1985', in Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel and Corinna R. Unger, eds, *International Organisations and Development, 1945–1990* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 196–219; Kevin O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 175-185.

[20] For notable exceptions see Suzanne Franks, '"Please Send Us Your Money": The BBC's Evolving Relationship With Charitable Causes, Fundraising and Humanitarian Appeals', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 38:4 (2018), 866-879; Andrew Jones, 'The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and the Humanitarian Industry in Britain, 1963-85', *Twentieth Century British History,* 26 (2015), 573-601; Tehila Sasson, 'In the Name of Humanity: Britain and the Rise of Global Humanitarianism', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California Berkeley (2015), 123-136.

Developing and Implementing the Marshall Plan of the Mind, 1991-1999

The Marshall Plan of the Mind has so far received little attention from historians of the BBC, and almost none from scholars of Britain's post-war foreign policy or overseas development efforts.[21] As a phenomenon of the 1990s, it might be argued that MPM falls into a scholarly blind spot between the end of the Cold War and the September 11 attacks: a period which is, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, still in the process of passing through the historiographical 'uncanny valley' between the present and the past.[22] Yet despite the limited availability of BBC archival material relating to the 1990s, key information on the MPM's origins, aims, outputs, and eventual dissolution can be gleaned from the small number of MPM-related archival documents found within the BBC's External Services Collection. I have supplemented and contextualized this material using relevant secondary published material, as well as new oral history interviews with former MPM staff and leadership conducted by the author. When combined, this source material serves as an ample basis for exploring and establishing MPM's historical significance.

The origins of the idea for the World Service project that would become MPM are not entirely clear. According to Krzysztof Pszenicki, a senior member of staff at the BBC Polish Service, the idea of creating a new BBC entity focused on providing training for journalists from the former Soviet Bloc originated with Gienek Smolar, then Head of the Polish Service. It was first presented at a breakfast meeting at the Churchill Hotel in February 1990 attended by visiting Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, World Service Managing Director John Tusa, Head

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[21] The only previous scholarly works to focus on MPM in any detail are Ruth Mandel's illuminating article examining a Kazakh soap opera created by the MPM in the mid-1990s from an anthropological perspective, and James Stewart's article examining the impact of MPM's training school established in Bucharest in the mid-1990s. Both articles draw mostly on the personal experiences of the authors in observing or contributing to the MPM projects they describe. See Ruth Mandel, 'A Marshall Plan of the Mind: The Political Economy of Kazakh Soap Opera' in F.D. Ginsburg, Abu-Luhod, L. and Larkin, B., eds, *Media Worlds: Anthropology of New Terrain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 211-228; James Stewart, 'A Suitable Case For Transplant? The BBC and Public Service Journalism in Post-Communist Romania', *Journalism Practice*, 7:3 (2013), 329-344. MPM is briefly mentioned as a forerunner to the BBC World Service Trust in Caroline Sugg and Gerry Power, 'Great Expectations and Creative Evolution: The History of Drama for Development at the BBC World Service Trust' in Andrew Skuse, Marie Gillespie, and Gerry Power, eds, *Drama for Development: Cultural Translation and Social Change* (New Delhi: SAGE publications, 2011).

[22] The decade was described, revealingly if not unproblematically, as a 'Holiday from History' by journalist Jonathan Freedland in a 2018 BBC Radio 4 documentary. J. Freedland, 'The 90s: A Holiday from History', BBC Radio 4, first broadcast September 1st 2018. Accessible online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08n1hnh. I am grateful to Dr David Geiringer for making me aware of this phrase (and programme) during the *Rethinking Britain in the Nineties: Towards a New Research Agenda* virtual workshop series run by Dr Geiringer (Queen Mary University of London) and Dr Helen McCarthy (University of Cambridge) in early 2021.

of Training Gwyneth Henderson, Controller of European Services Andrew Taussig, and Pszenicki himself.[23] While the first seeds of the idea may have come from the Polish Service, it was Tusa who would become the driving force behind the project. By the time of his RSA speech in October 1991, Tusa had developed a vision for a broader 'Marshall Plan of the Mind'. He hoped that the BBC would play an important role within this project through its broadcasting to Eastern Europe and training of Eastern European journalists, but believed that its overall success depended on the involvement of a much wider coalition of Western institutions:

> The whole complex fabric of training professionals and skills that East Europe is desperately lacking can only be met under the umbrella of a unified approach. I would call it an 'Agenda for a Civic Society'. It would identify crucial areas where knowledge and skills need to be transferred fast and in quantity - say, accounting, communication, history, banking. It would allocate appropriate parts of the task to the professional groups involved, broadcasters, the publishers, and to experts in distance learning and teaching on the ground. It would seek mixed business, private, United Nations and government funding. It would aim to have trained some thousands of professionals in these skills basic to a Civic Society within five years. If we do not create a project as integrated, systematic and radical as this, you might call it a 'Marshall Plan of the Mind', then all the intentions that exist in this room and beyond, run risk of foundering because they all, however admirable in themselves, fall short of the total need.[24]

While the eventual form that the Marshall Plan of the Mind took may not have quite matched Tusa's lofty ambition, the World Service would indeed embark on a new venture under this epithet, with the aim of making a unique contribution to transforming 'civil society' within post-socialist Eastern Europe.

The Marshall Plan of the Mind was transformed from aspiration to actuality thanks to a UK government unit called the Know-How Fund (KHF). According to Foreign Office official historian Keith Hamilton, the Fund was initially launched in April 1989, and jointly administered and funded by the Foreign Office and the Overseas Development Ministry.[25] Its original, relatively modest aim was to provide small, targeted grants designed to help Poland to marketize parts of its economy. However, its mission and geographic scope was quickly expanded in response to the collapse of Communist rule across Central and Eastern Europe over the next two and a half years.

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[23] Krzysztof Pszenicki, *Tu Mowi Londyn: Historia Sekcji Polskiej BBC* (Warsaw: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2009), 138. The author relies on the (unpublished) English translation of this publication, kindly provided by Mr Pszenicki.
[24] Reagan et al, 'Eastern Europe', 38.
[25] For a full monographic summary of the Know-How Fund's work, see Keith Hamilton, *Transformational Diplomacy after the Cold War: Britain's Know-How Fund in Post-Communist Europe, 1989-2003* (London: Routledge, 2013).

The unit was soon tasked with making British 'know-how' on a wide range of administrative, educational, commercial, legal, and political matters available to states transitioning away from Communist one-party rule. By the end of 1991, it was administering grants in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Soviet Union.[26] The BBC World Service was one of the many British organisations which secured KHF funding during this period, successfully positioning itself as a reservoir of vital 'know-how' which the British government might draw upon to achieve its strategic goals in the region.[27] The amount of money that Bush House secured via the Fund was far from trivial: according to a report published by the UK Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2000, across the 1990s the Know-How Fund provided the World Service with £10 million in funding to 'produce programmes which supported civil society, reform and democratisation'.[28]

BBC archival records show that the World Service had already received its first tranche of Know-How Fund money by February 1990, some twenty months before John Tusa delivered his 'Marshall Plan of the Mind' speech at the RSA. This initial grant was used to deliver six-week training courses in the UK for six separate groups of six Polish journalists (36 in total).[29] An agreement between the Know-How Fund and the BBC drafted in the same month demonstrates that these courses were provided by Bush House at an initial annual cost to the government of £122,600. In Week 1, trainees were provided seminars on Media in Britain (with a heavy focus on the history and constitution of the BBC, BBC editorial structures and considerations, relations with government, and the nature of 'public service broadcasting'). During the remainder of the course, trainees would go on attachment to the BBC Polish Service, 'to experience first-hand how the theory of editorial freedom works and to do some practical work organised and supervised by the Senior Instructor', or take part in 'structured visits to other parts of the BBC and to outside commercial electronic and print media'.[30] The Know-How Fund clearly considered these courses a valuable investment: the BBC subsequently received supplementary Know-How Fund grants to

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[26] Projects funded included a new training school for commercial bankers in Katowice, and a new Stock Exchange building in Budapest. See Keith Hamilton, 'The Know-How Fund: The Early Years', Historians, Records and Historical Services, Foreign and Commonwealth Office General Services Command, April 1997, 15. Accessed online at https://issuu.com/fcohistorians/docs/hpopub_2 on 6 April 2020.

[27] Hamilton, 'The Know-How Fund: The Early Years', 6.

[28] 'BBC World Service', Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Third Report, 28 February 2000. Accessed online at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/101/10110.htm on 6 March, 2022.

[29] BBCWAC, E62/43/1: 'Polish Journalists - BBC Training Programme, 01/01/1990 to 31/12/1990'.

[30] Ibid.

re-run the course, and then expand it to include Hungarian and Czechoslovak participants in 1991.[31]

BBC archival documents also offer a glimpse into the opinions of the Polish journalists who took part in this first training course. All six of the 'trainees' who took part in the first course run in February 1990 were seasoned professionals in their home country: they included Aleksandra Kania, who anchored her own programme on international economic affairs on national Polish television, Antoni Mielniczuk, Editor of the Morning Programme on Poland's Radio 1 station, and Marcin Zimoch, television news and Polish Radio 3 presenter.[32] Trainees were asked to write reports on their experience of the course, which provide a rare insight into the value and utility of these courses from the point of view of the participants, rather than the organizers or funders. Their existence and their content suggest that the BBC was keen to gain trainees' feedback in order to improve and tailor future courses to the needs and preferences of journalists from Eastern Europe. In their joint report, Kania and Mielniczuk wrote that they felt that 'information and experience acquired during our 6-week stay in Great Britain will no doubt help us update and restructure our work in Poland, providing we can find anyone to listen to us at home'. [33] This response hints at the journalists' fears that without reforms to the structural and institutional context in which they worked, BBC training in would only have a limited impact in bringing about the wider changes to 'civil society' which the Know-How Fund and BBC were hoping for. Trainees also wished that the course had focused more on practical aspects of knowledge exchange relating to subjects such as 'computer applications, computer graphics, social action programming, phone-ins…' as opposed to 'asking people who have not spoken English for months to listen to 9 hours of lectures' on the history of mass media in Britain, and the intricacies of the BBC's history, constitution, editorial structures and definitions of 'public service broadcasting'.[34] This feedback, provided at the BBC's request, suggests that these Polish journalists, while glad of the opportunity to learn from the BBC, may have nonetheless felt some frustration at the didactic and somewhat paternalistic approach that the BBC seems to have taken to strengthening 'civil society' in Poland at this early stage.

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

Having gained the Know-How Fund's seal of approval, the Marshall Plan of the Mind was placed on a new and more permanent organisational footing in September 1992, as the BBC registered 'BBC MPM' with Companies House.[35] From this point on, MPM operated as a BBC-affiliated yet legally separate charitable trust – in effect, a BBC-branded NGO. Obtaining this semi-detached new organisational status was a significant moment. As a separate legal entity, MPM was able to secure funding streams from international and non-governmental donors in a way that the World Service, as a constituent part of the BBC, was not. Early MPM funding was provided by donors such as the Open Society Institute, an international grant-making network set up by the Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist George Soros dedicated to promoting the spread of liberal democratic values and principles in the former Communist world.[36] This appears to be the first time that BBC World Service-branded programmes and training projects were created using money provided by anyone other than the British state or the Commonwealth.

With valuable external funding and a flexible organisational status secured, MPM could expand its horizons. The organisation quickly moved on to a more ambitious model, whereby instead of simply providing short training courses for a handful of Central and Eastern European journalists in the UK, it set up a trio of specialized BBC-branded media training schools in three key cities in former socialist states: Bucharest in Romania, Yekaterinburg in the Russian Federation, and Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina.[37] Funded jointly by the Know-How Fund (around 70%) and the Open Society Institute (30%), the BBC Media School in Bucharest received around £1 million in funding between 1992 and 2001 to train around 500 Romanian radio and TV journalists.[38] According to World Service trainer James Stewart, who worked at the Bucharest

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[35] Memorandum of Association, Companies House, September 7th 1992. Accessed online at https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02746733/filing-history?page=6 on 14 May, 2020.

[36] 'Marshall Plan of the Mind', Memorandum submitted by the BBC World Service, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Minutes of Evidence, House of Commons, September 1999. Accessed online at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmfaff/815/9101206.htm on 28 May, 2020. On the Open Society Institute (now Open Society Foundations), see https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/who-we-are/our-history.

[37] 'The Know How Fund', Subsection 170, Section IV: Achieving the UK's Objectives in the Bilateral Context, *Relations with the Russian Federation,* Third Report, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, 15th February 2000. Accessed online at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaff/101/10110.htm#a45 on April 10th, 2020.

[38] Stewart, 'A Suitable Case For Transplant?' 336.

school in 1994, the school taught a curriculum with 'an emphasis on both technical standards (recording, editing, scripting, presenting) and the principles of public service journalism'.[39]

In a 2013 article reflecting on his time in Bucharest, Stewart argued that in hindsight, these training schools achieved limited success in achieving their aim of helping to establish a sustainable new model for public service journalism in Eastern Europe. In part, Stewart's frustrations echoed those voiced by the Polish journalists who visited the BBC in February 1990 that their training would only be of value 'providing we can find anyone to listen to us at home'. While the BBC trained Romanian journalists to understand and appreciate the theory and practice of public service journalism (as the BBC understood it), these journalists had little opportunity to put this training into practice, since they were severely limited by the wider political, commercial, and cultural framework within which they worked. In explaining why the journalistic values taught at the BBC school did not take root in Romania, Stewart described how few of the trainees he had worked with in 1994 had kept working as journalists in Romania, with many emigrating to work abroad, or choosing to pursue more lucrative or safer careers outside of media. Those that remained were unable (or unwilling) to bring their BBC-informed principles on how to conduct public service journalism to bear within a national media landscape which, while no longer controlled by a socialist one-party state, was still dominated by a small group of special interests with close links to the national government.[40]

While the BBC's journalism training schools may not have succeeded in sowing the seeds of a flourishing civil society, their establishment and existence into the mid-2000s demonstrates MPM's ambition to play a leading role in developing a new approach to journalistic practice in 'New Europe'. Alongside its journalistic training schools, MPM also threw itself into producing a new and ambitious range of educational radio and television programming, designed specifically for Eastern European audiences still coming to terms with the end of state socialism. The BBC Written Archives Centre's collection of documents on this subject is frustratingly small, allowing only a brief glimpse into MPM's approach to programme development in just one of its target countries, the Russian Federation.[41] However, those documents which have been retained for

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[39] Stewart, 'A Suitable Case For Transplant?' 336.
[40] Stewart, 'A Suitable Case For Transplant?' 339.
[41] Archival primary sources on MPM are very limited, with only two slim files relating to MPM held at the BBC's Written Archives Centre. BBCWAC, E3/1350/1: Eurasia: BBC MPM (Marshall Plan of the Mind); E62/43/1: Polish

posterity offer significant insight into the nature, content, aims, and target audience of MPM programmes for Russian audiences.[42]

A market research report produced in Russia in September 1996 on MPM's behalf provides a helpful summary of some of MPM's programmes. It shows that in the Spring of 1996, the BBC commissioned a newly-created Russian market research firm to conduct a series of focus groups in the Russian city of Novisibirsk, with the aim of gathering the opinions and feedback of Russian viewers of an MPM-produced television documentary series entitled *Udalos!* ('Succeeding!'). Despite its origins as a BBC MPM production, *Udalos!* was broadcast on the Russian domestic television channel RTR, which was widely available on terrestrial television across the Russian Federation. Each of *Udalos!'s* five episodes focused on a different aspect of contemporary Russia's economy or society (heavy industry, light industry, agriculture, education, and retail). The series was presented by Alexander Gurnov, a familiar and respected figure among Russian television audiences, who had presented national news coverage both before and after the fall of Communism. In its industrial episodes, *Udalos!* explained how new production, management, and marketing techniques imported from the West were being successfully adopted by companies adjusting to the new economic circumstances.[43]

Focus group members quizzed by the market research company were particularly positive about an episode which followed the fortunes of fashion houses in the provincial city of Kostroma and in their home city of Novosibirsk. According to the report summary based on their responses, these episodes showed how 'a designer from a small provincial town [was]...capable of getting clients even from the U.S.' by using innovative designs, adopting new marketing techniques, and collaborating with Western companies to find a niche in a globalized market.[44]

Journalists - BBC Training Programme, 01/01/1990 to 31/12/1990. The National Archives' Treasury and Foreign Office records contain a handful of Know How Fund files which are available to researchers, but none which mention MPM. The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA): T 631/364: USSR Know-How Fund; T 651/39: Know-How Fund for Soviet Union; FO 973/711: Britain's Know How Fund; FO 972/233: Know How Fund for Eastern Europe.

[42] BBWAC, E3/1350/1: Eurasia: BBC MPM (Marshall Plan of the Mind), 'Report - BBC MPM Qualitative Report on Project "Udalos!" [Succeeding!], September 1996 - Russian Market Research Company'.

[43] Ibid. One section of the report describes how the focus groups 'described A. Gurnov as a nice and attractive person, whose speech was clear and easy to understand'.

[44] Ibid.

All episodes of *Udalos!* were clearly intended to emphasize the same core message: that Russian businesses, organisations, and individuals were already making a 'success' of life after Communism, and that closer economic relations with the West in the future would only accelerate and consolidate that success. Crucially, according to the evidence contained within the market research report, *Udalos!* was identifiable to its audiences as a product of the BBC. Moreover, this BBC branding was considered as an important signifier of the quality of the programme by its Russian viewers. When focus group members were asked about who was responsible for producing the series, they responded that 'the producers were believed to be "professionals from BBC" who support reforms in Russia, whose hearts bleed for Russia.'[45] This evidence shows how MPM used the BBC's pre-existing reputation as a benevolent and trustworthy broadcaster to try and shape the Russian television-watching public's opinions and emotions in a pro-capitalist direction.

Outside of Russia, MPM devised programming which was even more direct in promoting the benefits of the transition to capitalism, and in publicizing the UK's particular contribution to this process. A 1994 article in the trade journal *Outlook on Agriculture,* penned by World Service producer Tim Grout-Smith, outlined how MPM was playing a key economic role in newly independent Ukraine by 'spreading the message through radio and television' about the 'attempts...being made to revive Ukrainian agriculture using Western technology, management and marketing'.[46] One episode of a five-part television series produced by MPM for Ukrainian audiences featured a former state-run collective farm in rural Western Ukraine, which had recently been purchased by the British Food Consortium 'to show agronomists from the state sector how British methods and practice could work in Ukraine'.[47] The series was made possible by a special grant of £460,000 from the UK government's Know-How Fund.[48]

The Ukrainian face of the series was provided by Mykola and Tamara Sobchuk, a farming couple who were flown over to East Anglia (apparently 'Britain's nearest equivalent to Ukrainian farming') to be filmed while commenting approvingly on the machinery, agro-chemical products,

[45] Ibid.
[46] Tim Grout-Smith, 'Agricultural Reform in Ukraine: Spreading the Message', *Outlook on Agriculture,* 23 (1994), 287-291.
[47] Ibid., 288.
[48] Ibid., 287.

and management techniques being used on some of Britain's largest commercial farms.[49] The series emphasized the Sobchuks' relatability and trustworthiness as authentic representatives of Ukraine's rural community, with wife Tamara playing a pivotal supporting role as the embodiment of the 'jolly homely Ukrainian mother'.[50] Yet the Sobchuks were, in reality, far from a 'typical' farming couple – in fact, Mykola had travelled to the UK numerous times before, having entered into a commercial partnership with ICI, one of the UK's most prominent multinational corporations and a market-leading producer of agricultural products such as seed and fertilizer, some years before the making of the programme.[51]

Further evidence suggests a close relationship between MPM and ICI. Grout-Smith's feature on MPM's work in Ukraine published in *Outlook on Agriculture* was in fact sponsored by the chemical company, and most strikingly of all, Companies House records show that between September 1992 and 1996, ICI executive John Cheason Mitchell sat on the Board of Directors of the MPM Trust.[52] While these facts do not prove that ICI had any direct editorial control over the content or style of MPM programming, they do support the conclusion that this major British corporation believed it stood to gain from supporting and promoting MPM's work in Eastern Europe.

Although developing agricultural programming for Ukrainian audiences was an important project for MPM, it did not capture the imagination or attention of observers from the world of British politics or media circles. While Grout-Smith's work in Ukraine can now only be read about in a relatively obscure agricultural trade journal, other aspects of MPM's work were treated as far more newsworthy in the UK, and were even endorsed by the British Prime Minister – leaving behind a much richer documentary record within the British popular press.

The most famous MPM programme of all (at least within the UK) was *Dom Syem Podyest Chtery* ('House Seven, Entrance Four'), a daily Russian-language radio soap opera telling stories of everyday life in a contemporary Moscow apartment block. In a June 1996 speech given at Chatham House, John Tusa's successor as Managing Director of the World Service, Sam Younger,

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[49] Ibid., 289.
[50] Ibid., 290.
[51] Ibid., 289.
[52] 'Directors and Secretaries: The BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind Trust', Companies House. Accessed online at https://companycheck.co.uk/company/02746734/THE-BBC-MARSHALL-PLAN-OF-THE-MIND-TRUST/companies-house-data on 19 May 2020.

described the series as 'a version of *The Archers*'.[53] Young explained how the show was 'designed to put across a lot of messages about life in the [former] Soviet Union, and about issues of family relationships, of starting up businesses, of community affairs, civic responsibility and so on'.[54] *Dom Syem* was produced in Moscow by a team of Russian actors and writers, initially overseen by Liz Rigbey, the former producer of *The Archers* who, as discussed in Chapter Two, had also recently worked on the BBC Pashto Service's 'drama for development' soap opera, *New Home, New Life*.[55] While accurate listening numbers are not available, *Dom Syem* does seem to have gained a significant audience in post-Soviet Russia: in his memoir, John Tusa remarked that the soap 'became very popular, sometimes attracting the biggest audience of the day', while a report in *The Independent* newspaper suggested that Downing Street estimated its daily audience in October 1997 at around 3 million.[56] Thanks to a special broadcasting agreement between the BBC and Radio Moscow, *Dom Syem* was the first BBC programme ever heard on domestic (FM) Russian radio frequencies. It was thus almost certainly listened to by far larger audiences than any programmes ever broadcast by the World Service's Russian language service, which broadcast on the far less accessible short-wave band.[57]

Back in the UK, the programme caught the attention of the incoming New Labour government. During a two-day state visit to Russia in October 1997, Prime Minister Tony Blair toured MPM's studio in Moscow, even making a brief appearance in an episode of *Dom Syem*.[58] In his somewhat awkward cameo, Blair (playing himself) stops his motorcade to help lead character Varya to pick up fallen groceries, before conversing with her via his translator about the

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[53] Sam Younger, 'International Broadcasting in the 21st Century: BBC World Service Plans for the Future', Chatham House, 26 June 1996. Accessed online at https://www.chathamhouse.org/library/chatham-house-online-archive on 10 April 2020.

[54] Younger, 'International Broadcasting in the 21st Century'. On the origins of *The Archers* as a government-backed tool for encouraging agricultural modernization in rural post-war Britain, see William J. Brown and Arvind Singhal, 'Entertainment-Education Media Strategies for Social Change: Promises and Problems' in D. Demers and K. Viswanath, eds, *Mass Media, Social Control, and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University, 1999), 263-280.

[55] A brief but colourful first-hand account of Rigbey's role in overseeing *Dom Syem* can be found in the autobiography of Charles Collingwood, a member of *The Archers* cast who visited the MPM office in Moscow in December 1992. Charles Collingwood, *Brian and Me: Life On – And Off – The Archers* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, 2009), 180-190.

[56] Stephen Castle, 'An Everyday Story of Russian Working Folk – Starring Tony Blair', *The Independent. 5* October 1997. Accessed online at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/an-everyday-story-of-russian-working-folk-starring-tony-blair-1233970.html on 22 April 2020.

[57] John Tusa, *Making a Noise: Getting It Right, Getting It Wrong in Life, Arts and Broadcasting* (London: Orion, 2018), 280.

[58] Castle, 'An Everyday Story'.

benefits of 'education, education, education'.[59] In a short TV interview given immediately after his star turn, Blair stated that 'there's a lot of confidence in Britain abroad, and there's a lot happening here in Russia. If we can use our position in order to help British trade and British investment and Britain's standing in the world, then great. And if it takes starring in a soap opera then I'm delighted.'[60] For Blair, MPM's utility lay squarely in its value as a tool for supporting British commercial and diplomatic interests in Russia. MPM's willingness to use its platform (and the BBC brand) to promote those interests – whether subtly or otherwise – cannot be ignored.

These brief overviews of three MPM-created series all demonstrate how the organisation sought to play a vital role in promoting British (and more broadly 'Western') political and commercial interests in Eastern Europe during the early 1990s. Using the BBC brand and funding from the UK government's overseas development budget, alongside money provided by non-governmental foundations like the Open Society Institute, MPM encouraged domestic radio and television audiences in the region to accept the emergence of the Western, liberal democratic, capitalist model of statehood as the natural and preferred successor to state socialism, and to look on the increased involvement of British firms or consortiums in their economies as a sign of progress and future prosperity. In MPM, the World Service had created a BBC-branded NGO which placed the BBC's global reputation for independence, impartiality, and expertise at the disposal of a specific group of national and international donors.

MPM in Context: The BBC World Service as British Overseas Development Actor before 1991

While these examples demonstrate the pro-British intent (if not the impact) of MPM's work in post-socialist Eastern Europe, the question remains as to how to situate MPM within the broader history of the World Service. Should MPM be considered as an aberration, a well-meaning and relatively insignificant expression of the exuberance and optimism for democratic capitalism engendered by the end of the Cold War? Or is the MPM case study illustrative of a much longer-

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[59] 'Russia: Moscow: Tony Blair Ends by Starring in Soap Opera', AP Archive, Oct 6th 1997. Accessed online at http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/041f0afb2064e019131eb03e87a761bd on 22 April 2021.
[60] Ibid.

term trend within the history of the World Service? Perhaps even more crucially, what does the MPM case study tell us about the relationship between the BBC and the world of the NGO?

It is clearly the case that in many ways, MPM did represent a radical departure for the World Service. A former Head of MPM, Corinna Furse (who was already a seasoned staff member before joining MPM, having worked for the World Service since 1984), remembers how MPM's work felt 'so new and exciting', as she and her colleagues were posted across Eastern Europe to deliver training programmes. [61] Furse and her colleagues also attended meetings in the City of London with major consultancy firms like Arthur Andersen, to seek professional advice on how MPM might access new funding streams from major global philanthropic organisations. Furse's testimony on these meetings is helpful in illustrating how new and different these kind of meetings felt to World Service staff:

> I can just remember having a meeting with them and they absolutely opened our eyes to being much more ambitious about what we were thinking about doing. I don't know what we worked with them for or how long we worked with them for, but I can remember having meetings, I remember sitting in the reception area, they were very close to us then, and I sat waiting for the meeting, and they were all streaming out for lunch, and I just remember sitting there thinking, God they all look exactly the same, they all had their nice suits and ties on, I think they were mostly men, and it was really funny, very different from World Service, completely different culture.[62]

As has been described in Chapter Two, the World Service was also collaborating with consultants from the world of big business around this time to help fund the creation of a World Service Television service. While BBC MPM would not be run on a commercial basis like World Service Television, MPM's status as a small, legally separate charitable trust meant that it was far more organisationally nimble than the World Service proper, able to react quickly and decisively when new funding opportunities or collaborative possibilities arose. It operated in the style of a small overseas development-focused NGO, while benefitting from the status and global caché of the BBC brand.

In a recent oral history interview, a former member of BBC MPM's Board of Trustees also provided testimony supporting the argument that MPM represented a new, more politically ambitious kind of venture for the World Service. Christopher Beauman, who in his day job worked

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[61] Corinna Furse, interview with the author, 26 June 2020.
[62] Furse, interview with the author.

for the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (set up by Western governments in 1991 to provide economic capital for development projects across the former Soviet Bloc), was invited by John Tusa to act as a non-executive trustee of BBC MPM. When asked about the relationship between the World Service and MPM, Beauman explained the importance of MPM's status as a separate legal entity with its own board, which functioned as a 'symbolic sign of being independent, so that when you went to the Know-How Fund it wasn't seen as a way of getting money for the World Service, it had its own rationale and its own logic, its own mandate and so on.'[63] While Beauman never worked for the World Service, he recalled wondering at the time about whether MPM's programming represented a deviation away from the BBC's historic commitment to impartiality:

> I remember something crossing my mind, was it impartial to be in favour of democracy, you could always argue that there was a democratic urge behind the MPM, but it didn't interfere with the BBC's impartiality. It was obviously lurking there, but the World Service was not about to change the world, and MPM was about to change the world. Maybe I'm a bit out of date on that, but I always thought with the World Service the whole point was to be impartial. MPM was not impartial in quite the same way.[64]

Beauman was not the only observer to conclude that MPM was something of an aberration for the World Service: Karen Merkel, who worked for nine years at MPM's successor organisation, the BBC World Service Trust, described MPM in as 'just plain weird' and 'really quite preposterous, as a project, and as something that the World Service should have never, in my view, ever have countenanced', suggesting that the only reason that the World Service ever embarked on such work was because 'it was John Tusa's project, so no one was going to say no to him.'[65] Corinna Furse also recalled that MPM was treated with suspicion by some groups within the World Service who felt that MPM was 'trampling on other people's patches' and 'gate-crashing onto their patch', particularly among those working for Bush House's Central and Eastern European language services. This sense of resentment was also described by former Head of the BBC Hungarian Service Peter Szente, who described how he and his colleagues in the BBC Central and Eastern European Services viewed MPM:

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[63] Christopher Beauman, interview with the author, 20 August 2020.
[64] Christopher Beauman, interview with the author, 20 August 2020.
[65] Karen Merkel, interview with the author, 24 April 2020.

It was well meant, even if terms like Marshall Plan of the Mind reek of PR advisors' sweat. I do not think it is too cynical to say that they would rather have had the Marshall Plan money.[66]

These oral accounts from previously overlooked observers or participants provide a valuable counter-narrative about MPM's novelty and its compatibility with the World Service's long-standing broadcasting philosophy, compared to that put forward by Tusa himself. In an August 2020 interview with the author, Tusa was keen to dispel any notion that MPM was a pet project of his, or one which caused any controversy or resistance within the wider World Service:

I suppose that once the notion of MPM appeared, I mean if there had been real resistance, if people had said this is not consistent with what the World Service does elsewhere, it even might contradict what we do elsewhere, then I think we wouldn't have done it. But nobody felt that. I think I probably christened it, and thereafter it was people like Corinna Furse, have you spoken to her? She was terribly important, and it was people like Corinna who ran with it. So if I'm associated with it then that's very nice, but if there hadn't been a general view that this wasn't absolutely consistent with what the World Service did, and didn't conflict with what it did, then it would not have been done.[67]

The testimony of previously overlooked figures like Merkel, Furse, Beauman, and Szente provides an important counter-point to Tusa's claim that MPM's *modus operandi* was uncontroversial and 'absolutely consistent' with the World Service's overarching mission and purpose. They help to complicate and challenge the narrative about the consistency and impartiality of the World Service's work which tends to characterize most histories of the organisation. The vast majority of scholarship on the World Service has relied heavily on written and oral testimony from senior figures like Tusa when seeking to examine and/or explain the World Service's historical significance – in part because of the prominence of his former role as Managing Director, and also partly due to the fact that the vast majority of publications, interviews, and other types of source material about the World Service were written by (or about) its most senior employees. Tusa's significance as an agent of change at the World Service is illustrated by his role in backing ventures like MPM – but the nature and scale of this change cannot be accurately gauged without considering the testimony of those figures in and around MPM whose opinions and memories of this period are only now beginning to be prioritised. The voices of women, emigres, and non-British employees, particularly those who only spent a short part of their career working at the World Service,

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[66] Peter Szente, correspondence with the author, 15 August 2020.
[67] John Tusa, interview with the author, 18 August 2020.

remain heavily under-represented within official and scholarly narratives about Bush House's history. Yet it is exactly these voices which can offer the unique insights and contextual information which can enhance, complicate, or challenge our understanding of how and why change happened within the World Service.

While the creation of a BBC-branded NGO was undoubtedly a new enterprise for the World Service, overseas development had been an important and underappreciated part of the organisation's mission since at least the 1960s. Indeed, the relationship between the World Service and the UK's official overseas development agencies is almost as old as the World Service itself. After its foundation in 1932, the BBC Empire Service quickly became involved in the British government's plans for 'colonial development'.[68] Simon Potter has explored the figure of the 'lonely listener in the bush' as the BBC's original imagined listener to the Empire Service, emphasizing the Service's aim to maintain sentimental links between the (overwhelmingly white and male) Britons called to serve the Empire in far-flung places and their home country.[69] But this was not its only imagined imperial function. In 1936, the Colonial Office's Committee on Broadcasting Services in the Colonies (also known as the Plymouth Committee) concluded that dedicated colonial broadcasting services were essential for the economic and social development of Britain's colonies. It proposed that the BBC, acting on government instruction and with extra government funding, should play a leading role in bringing this about.[70]

Over the next thirty years, the BBC functioned not just as the provider of sentimental sonic connections between agents of British colonialism and the metropole, but also as one of the British government's most significant partners in the project of colonial development.[71] Between 1948 and 1962, a senior member of BBC staff was permanently seconded to the Colonial Office to provide professional advice to the government of the day on how best to integrate the BBC's broadcasting and technical expertise into their colonial development strategies.[72] Under the

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[68] On the nature of post-war British colonial development policies, see Charlotte Lydia Riley, '"Tropical Allsorts": The Transnational Flavor of British Development Policies in Africa', *Journal of World History*, 26: 4 (2015), 839-64.

[69] Simon Potter, *Wireless Internationalism: Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 171-200.

[70] Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 81-82.

[71] See for example Sydney W. Head, 'British Colonial Broadcasting Policies: The Case of the Gold Coast', *African Studies Review*, 22 (1979), 39-47; J.F. Wilkinson, 'The BBC and Africa', *African Affairs,* 71 (1972), 176-85.

[72] Wilkinson, 'The BBC and Africa', 178.

instruction of the Colonial Office, nearly sixty members of BBC staff were deployed to Nigeria between 1950 and 1962 to help establish and run a new Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, with senior BBC staff retaining a significant presence within its management team well after Nigeria declared independence in 1960.[73]

Figures like Tom Chalmers, who led these efforts in Nigeria before taking on a similar role in Tanzania from 1958 to 1962, ensured that the BBC maintained a key role in supporting the British state's overseas development work, even as the era of formal colonial rule in Africa came to an end.[74] In recognition of his expertise, Chalmers was appointed by the United Nations to act as a Deputy Regional Representative on its Technical Assistance Board in Tanzania for two years, before returning to the BBC in 1964 to act as its first 'Special Assistant in Overseas and Foreign Relations'.[75] In this latter role, he cultivated a strong working relationship between the BBC and the UK's newly created Overseas Development Ministry (ODM).[76]

Having successfully transitioned from a senior management role overseeing colonial development projects to a UN position as a doyen of 'technical assistance', Chalmers typified the BBC's wider success in portraying itself as eminently qualified to play a prominent role in the new world of post-colonial overseas development which emerged from the 1960s.[77] In a report produced for the ODM in February 1967, Chalmers outlined the BBC's track record in providing journalistic training courses and 'expert advice and services' for overseas broadcasters, describing how 'in the last ten years, 700 production and general trainees have been accepted from 92 countries, and 241 technical trainees from 54 countries', thanks in large part to funding provided by the ODM and the Commonwealth Relations Office or its predecessor, the Colonial Office.[78] The report anticipated, and advocated for, the strengthening and deepening of the BBC's relationship with the ODM, building on the basis of these previous partnerships.

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[73] Wilkinson, 'The BBC and Africa', 179.

[74] Leonard Miall, 'Obituary: Tom Chalmers', *The Independent,* September 4th, 1995.

[75] Miall, 'Obituary: Tom Chalmers'.

[76] On the creation of the Overseas Development Ministry, see Barrie Ireton, *Britain's International Development Policies: A History of DFID and Overseas Aid* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18-35.

[77] On the wider phenomenon of individuals and institutions adapting and repackaging their colonial expertise for the age of overseas development, see Eva-Maria Muschik, 'The Art of Chameleon Politics: From Colonial Servant to International Development Expert', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 9:2 (2018), 219-244.

[78] BBCWAC, E30/76/1: Aid: BBC Aid to Developing Countries, Tom Chalmers, 'BBC Aid to Overseas Broadcasting Organisations', February 1967.

Official BBC-published material produced throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s helps to illustrate how the BBC valued and celebrated its relationship with the ODM. Every edition of the BBC handbook published annually between 1965 and 1990 featured reports on 'Overseas Development' or 'Aid to Overseas Broadcasters', identifying these efforts as a consistent, continuous, and integral element of the World Service's work. The 1966 edition proudly stated that during that year alone, the BBC had deployed staff members to provide expert advice to broadcasters in 'Aden, Bechuanaland, Ceylon, Israel, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Singapore, the Solomon Islands, Uganda, Thailand, and Zambia', with the majority this overseas work made possible thanks to the ODM's financial support.[79] These handbooks also reveal how the ODM provided the World Service with funding to provide training courses aimed at overseas journalists throughout these decades, mostly supporting journalists from the developing countries of the Commonwealth. This regular allocation of extra funding drawn from the ODM's official aid budget was in addition to the regular annual grant-in-aid the World Service received from the Foreign Office.

While the amount of money that the UK government was willing to provide to the BBC for overseas development schemes ebbed and flowed, the fundamental assumption that the BBC played an integral role within Britain's official overseas development efforts remained constant. As Chapter Six of this thesis examines in greater detail, the World Service also pursued this overseas development agenda through its relationship with the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, an international organisation dedicated to sharing broadcasting 'expertise' between Commonwealth countries.[80] While elsewhere the World Service consistently fought to present itself as an external broadcaster which was independent from the UK government, within the context of overseas development, Bush House celebrated its close links with the British state: in a lunch-time lecture delivered to colleagues in November 1966, Head of Staff Training Owen Reed proudly described the BBC as 'agents of the Government's machinery of foreign aid.'[81]

This longer history of overseas development-related programmes, projects and interventions help to explain why figures like John Tusa might view MPM as being 'absolutely

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[79] 1966 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1966), 30.
[80] On the origins of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (known before 1974 as the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference) see Potter, *Broadcasting Empire,* 106.
[81] Owen Reed, 'Training for the World's Broadcasters', BBC Lunchtime Lectures, 5th series, 16 November, 1966.

consistent with what the World Service did'. While those who created or staffed MPM may not have recognized it themselves, their work did represent a later manifestation of the same kind of development-focused way of thinking which had permeated the World Service to some extent since its earliest years. Through establishing MPM, the World Service was once again proudly demonstrating its willingness and its suitability to act as a government-funded overseas development agency. What *was* new about MPM was the geographical context it operated in (Eastern Europe rather than the 'developing world'), the type of external partnerships it created with non-state actors, and its organisational status as a BBC-branded NGO.

From Eastern Europe to the World: MPM and the creation of the BBC World Service Trust

By the time that Tony Blair was making a cameo appearance on MPM's flagship programme in October 1997, the organisation had begun a dramatic shift in its aims, ambition, and geographical reach. As the Cold War seemingly passed into the realms of history, some of the funding schemes set up by Western governments to ensure a transition towards democratic capitalism in Eastern Europe began to shrink or fade away. The Know-How Fund would continue to operate until 2003, but by January 1998 it had substantially reduced the amount of funding it provided to MPM (a cut of 75% percent, according to a *Times* article from the time).[82] Yet from 1997, MPM could turn to a variety of international and private philanthropic donors, as well as the Blair government's newly created Department for International Development, to fill this funding gap. This change in funding meant an abandonment of MPM's previous geographical focus on the former Soviet Bloc. By early 1998, MPM had begun creating radio and television programming in partnership with the World Health Organisation, supporting UN-funded leprosy elimination campaigns taking place in India, Brazil, Indonesia, Nepal and Ethiopia.[83] Endorsed by high-profile global celebrities like footballer Pelé and the distance runner Haile Gebrselassie, the project exemplified MPM's transformation into a truly global overseas development actor.

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, MPM was not the only part of the World Service which was developing strong relationships with external and/or non-governmental

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[82] Michael Binyon, 'Soap With a Message', *The Times,* 30 Jan 1998.
[83] 'BBC Combats Leprosy', bbc.co.uk, October 15 1998. Accessed online at
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/194106.stm on 21 May 2020.

overseas development organisations by the mid-1990s. Within the Somali and Pashto language services and the Education department, deep connections were being forged between the World Service and a diverse array of international organisations, humanitarian NGOs, and philanthropic trusts, whose aims and interests were considered to overlap with those of the BBC, and whose funding and editorial input was actively sought out. While MPM was unique in its status as a legally separate yet BBC-branded and affiliated trust, its co-existence and intersection with these other development-focused activities within Bush House provides further evidence of the existence of a wider, development-informed culture within the World Service by this time, based around the assumption that the World Service had a unique, benevolent, and expanding role to play as a global development actor.

The benefits of bringing together these disparate strands of development-focused activity across the World Service became increasingly obvious. By 1999, MPM was no more, having been replaced by a successor organisation named the BBC World Service Trust. The Trust brought three different development-focused elements of the World Service under one umbrella: MPM, the BBC World Service Education department led by Jenny Stevens (which had collaborated with the Ford Foundation and the International Planned Parenthood Fund to create programmes about sexual health and gender equality), and BBC World Service Training, headed by Gwyneth Henderson, who had helped secure the first funding for training Polish journalists at Bush House back in 1990.[84] From this point on, the Trust would take overall responsibility for overseas development activities, positioning itself as a legally and financially independent international development charity which applied the BBC's editorial standards, adhered to its values, and worked closely with colleagues within the World Service 'proper' on a variety of different programmes.[85]

Renamed as BBC Media Action in 2011, the Trust has firmly established itself as a leading voice within its field: according to its 2020/21 annual report, the organisation operated 18 offices in 23 countries across Asia, Africa and Europe that year, receiving £29.6 million in funding. [86] While the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is BBC Media Action's biggest

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[84] 'Who We Are', BBC Media Action website. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/about on 21 May 2020.

[85] Who We Are', BBC Media Action website.

[86] 'Annual report and Accounts 2020/21', BBC Media Action. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/about/annual-reports/ on 7 March 2022.

donor, it is joined by a veritable 'Who's Who' of global development donors, including the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Swedish, Canadian, and Norwegian national governments, and independent philanthropic trusts like BMB Mott Macdonald and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.[87] The scope and scale of the work undertaken by today's BBC Media Action dwarfs that of MPM, yet its principles and positionality as a BBC-branded yet organisationally separate NGO clearly build on MPM's legacy.[88]

Conclusion

The story of MPM's origins, work, and transformation into a truly global international development charity represents a significant episode in the BBC's history. It provides a fitting endpoint to the story of how the World Service played a continuous role as an agent of British overseas influence from its earliest years as the Empire Service of the 1930s through until the end of the millennium, and exemplifies the decisive turn that the World Service made during the 1990s in embracing and embedding itself within the NGO sector. Yet while this chapter has mostly focused on the question of how to explain and understand MPM in relation to the World Service's longer history, it is also important to connect what was happening within Bush House with the wider history of overseas development and of the NGO sector since the 1960s.

This was a period when organisations which explicitly identified as 'non-governmental' gradually gained prominent and increasingly formalized roles within the field of overseas development.[89] As Western governments' faith in the developmental impact of top-down, state-led international development projects gradually dissipated, NGOs like Oxfam, which previously had primarily concerned themselves with relieving immediate suffering during emergency or disaster situations, developed a reputation for delivering longer-term development projects at the

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[87] Ibid.

[88] BBC Media Action frame their relationship with the World Service on their website thus: 'We apply the editorial standards of the BBC, build on its values and often work closely with the BBC World Service…However, we are legally and financially independent and work to a distinct mission.' 'Who We Are', BBC Media Action website.

[89] There is a large and growing body of scholarship on the evolution of humanitarian NGOs into major players in the field of international development since the 1960s. For an overview of the impact that increasing involvement with state and international aid bodies has had on these NGOs, see David Hulme and Michael Edwards, eds, *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close For Comfort?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997). For a more recent historical perspective on the growth of the sector in Britain in the post-war era, see Clare Saunders, 'British Humanitarian, Aid and Development NGOs, 1949-Present' in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton, James McKay*, eds, NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 38-58.

local or 'grassroots' level, and grew in international stature as credible alternative agents of overseas development.[90] NGOs increasingly became embedded within the world of overseas development governance, policymaking, and practice, as Western governments provided major grants to these NGOs from their national aid budgets. This governmental funding dramatically supplemented, and in many cases began to dwarf, the funds that NGOs raised from their more 'traditional' routes such as charitable appeals to the public. According to its 2019/20 Annual Report, Oxfam received 45% (£165.3 million) of its income from governments and other public authorities that year, compared with 22% (£80.7m) from donations and legacies.[91]

This trend surely helps to explain why the World Service was willing to experiment with NGO status by creating MPM in the early 1990s, before fully committing to the concept of the BBC-branded global development NGO with the World Service Trust. The World Service was clearly keen to take advantage of the opportunities that the NGO status and 'brand' afforded for extending the organisation's influence and resource base. By this time, establishing a BBC-branded NGO, and aligning the World Service with the NGO sphere more generally, made good business sense for the BBC. The NGO sector's reputation for 'apolitical' international development expertise combined potently with the World Service's pre-existing 'brand' as an independent, impartial and expert international broadcaster, to create a new kind of synergistic 'super-brand' which helped the World Service to access new, international sources of funding from global philanthropic and development-focused organisations. At the same time, MPM helped the World Service to reiterate its claims to act as a benign force for good in the world during a time of major geopolitical uncertainty, while simultaneously enhancing its reputation among British foreign policy circles as a potent tool for spreading pro-British messages overseas.

This chapter has sought to explain and evaluate the reasoning behind MPM's creation, the nature of its work in Central and Eastern Europe and further afield throughout the 1990s, and how this work related to earlier efforts by the World Service to position itself as an overseas

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[90] Andrew Jones, 'British Humanitarian NGOs and the Disaster Relief Industry, 1942-1985', PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham (2014). See also O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment,* 99-116.
[91] Akira Iriye, 'A Century of NGOs', *Diplomatic History,* 23 (1999), 421-435. For a case study tracing Amnesty International's evolution from small-scale human rights NGO to attaining consultative status at the UN and having a significant impact on international law, see Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and the Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); 'Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20', Oxfam GB. Accessed online at
https://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/264/Oxfam_GB_Annual_Report_2020.pdf on January 25 2021.

development actor throughout its history. In doing so, it provides valuable evidence in support of this thesis's overall argument that popular and scholarly descriptions of the BBC World Service as an independent, impartial 'gift to the world' have failed to take into account how its role as a post-imperial overseas development actor complicates, and to a great extent contradicts, these descriptions.

Chapter Four: Follow Me! International Co-operation, Overseas Development, and BBC English by Radio and Television, 1964-1999

On 4 November 2003, a bronze statue of one of English language teaching (ELT)'s most famous figures, Louis Alexander, was unveiled in the grounds of the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press building in Beijing. In a ceremony attended by five hundred guests, speakers including Alexander's widow, Julia, and the British Ambassador to China, Sir Christopher Hum, were invited to celebrate the linguist's role in helping to make studying English a 'national preoccupation' in China.[1] A rare example of a statue built to commemorate an Englishman in China, its inscription read:

> Louis George Alexander
> born 15 January 1932 – died 17 June 2002
> The man who cracked the linguistic code
> of the English language and made it learnable
> for millions of students worldwide
> through *New Concept English* and many other coursebooks.[2]

While the inscription highlighted Alexander's highest-selling textbook series, *New Concept English,* it might just as easily recognized another of his hugely popular series, *Follow Me!*, written to accompany an innovative television series of the same name created by the BBC World Service's English by Radio and Television department.[3]

Initially created for an audience of adult English language learners across Europe, by the early 1980s the BBC had sold *Follow Me!*'s format to China's state broadcaster, CCTV, who would re-make the series specifically for Chinese audiences. As television audiences dramatically expanded during the 1980s, *Follow Me!* became one of China's first 'must-watch' television series, broadcast during a prime-time slot on Chinese state television to an audience estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. The series' enormous viewing figures coincided with a period of rapid economic development, as China embarked upon a new approach under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping which opened Chinese markets to greater access to foreign capital and greater

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[1] 'L.G. Alexander: a statue in Beijing', *English Today,* 20:2 (2004), 20-25, 20.

[2] 'L.G. Alexander's Life and Career', Warwick English Language Teaching Archive Hall of Fame, accessed online at https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/elt_archive/halloffame/louis_alexander/biography/ on 15 March 2022.

[3] Ibid.

international co-operation. Despite its unprecedented popularity, *Follow Me!'s* role within this 'opening up' of China's economy and society in the 1980s has so far remained largely overlooked.

Focusing on *Follow Me!'s* adaptation for Chinese audiences in the 1980s, I argue that the BBCXS used the series to try and position itself as a major asset within Britain's wider effort to improve Anglo-Chinese relations during this period, and sought to ensure that the BBC, and Britain more generally, would gain materially and reputationally from China's economic transformation. In simultaneously contributing to and capitalizing on a broader global trend towards defining English Language teaching as a form of overseas development aid, the World Service followed in the footsteps of other British cultural institutions with roots in the imperial past, most notably the British Council. While BBC English's efforts to define itself as an overseas development actor ultimately yielded limited benefits, they nonetheless help to demonstrate how and why the World Service sought to align itself with the overseas development sector throughout the latter third of the twentieth century. These efforts also help to illuminate broader trends in Britain's approach to post-imperial overseas development: in particular, the way in which overseas development was overwhelmingly treated as a form of long-term economic investment which ultimately prioritized British interests, values, and assumptions over those of the stated beneficiaries of that investment.

The first section of this chapter addresses and explains BBC English's relatively overlooked position within the existing historiography of the World Service and the BBC, before outlining the wider global context against which BBC English established itself as a popular, commercially successful, and academically credible provider of ELT programming. Situating BBC English within a wider network of ELT providers who from the 1960s onwards increasingly argued that ELT should be regarded as a form of overseas development activity, it explores Bush House's attempts in the 1970s to create ELT programming designed to support Britain's economic interests, and to depict Britain as a source of vital economic know-how. It then analyses how the BBC managed to place itself at the forefront of ELT's audiovisual turn, culminating in the creation of the *Follow Me!* series which would attract the interest of the Chinese government in the early 1980s.

Next, drawing on a combination of BBC and FCO archival material, contemporary radio and television documentaries created for UK audiences, and the memoirs of leading Chinese

television executive XiongXiong Xu, the chapter examines *Follow Me!'s* adaptation for Chinese television and critically evaluates its reputation as a BBC 'success story'. Focusing on the hopes, expectations, and assumptions which British and Chinese actors displayed through their support for and interactions with *Follow Me!,* it identifies the series as a prime example of the post-imperial World Service's efforts to secure an autonomous but government-financed role within the UK's official overseas development apparatus.

Finally, the chapter turns to consider *Follow Me!'s* legacy and overall significance in the story of the World Service's 'humanitarian turn' since the 1960s. Despite its phenomenal viewing figures and the rich anecdotal evidence of China's enthusiastic embrace of the series, BBC English was ultimately not able to use this leverage to secure greater funding from the government's aid budget to fund its ambitious plans for expansion from the mid-1980s onwards. This failure is compared and contrasted with BBC English's position in the 1990s and 2000s, by which time the World Service's role as a major overseas development actor had been cemented. Despite its initial failure to spark a new era of ODA-funded BBC English ventures, I argue that *Follow Me!* was a significant precursor to the World Service's later, post-Cold War efforts to cultivate an updated institutional persona as a 'gift to the world' and 'government-funded NGO'.

BBC English by Radio and Television and ELT as Overseas Development, 1965-1979

The BBC has been in the business of teaching English since the spring of 1939, when its fledgling Arabic language began broadcasting lessons, and producing pamphlets designed to aid and promote English language teaching by radio, to audiences across the Arab world.[4] By the end of the Second World War, the BBCXS had established a dedicated English teaching department, producing English language lessons for broadcast via radio and (from 1962 onwards) television. Alongside the Transcription Unit, which sold recordings of BBC programmes to foreign radio stations, BBC English is one of a select few BBC departments which has consistently generated revenue throughout its history: in his 1992 history of the World Service, Andrew Walker noted that, with annual revenues of over £2 million, the department earned far more than any other within Bush House.[5] Yet apart from brief, passing mentions like this, to date, the BBC's English language

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[4] Simon Potter, *Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 127-8.
[5] Walker, *Skyful of Freedom,* 151.

teaching efforts have received surprisingly little attention from scholars of the World Service, or within more general histories of the BBC. This lack of secondary source material on English by Radio and Television means that those interested in understanding its role within the wider BBC must turn to primary sources like those preserved within the BBC archives for evidence of the department's mission, aims, and achievements. Through analysis of a range of material including speeches, correspondence, and information published within the BBC's annual handbooks, a sense of the department's interest in, and role within, wider British overseas development efforts begins to emerge.

In a lecture he delivered to BBC colleagues on 13 April 1966, BBC English's Head Christopher Dilke acknowledged that up to this point, his department had maintained something of a marginal status within the wider BBC. In his opening remarks, Dilke explained that he regarded his invitation to speak as 'a heart-warming token of respectability, rather similar to the MBE lately bestowed on the Beatles', suggesting that he felt that his department still had to argue its corner in order to be regarded as a significant or 'respectable' element of the BBC's overall broadcast output. Indeed, Dilke claimed that '*English by Radio* has not always been considered respectable', before arguing that his department had 'nothing to be ashamed of': a notably modest and defensive approach to promoting and publicizing his department's work to an audience made up of his own BBC colleagues.[6]

These remarks seem designed to address, or try and pre-empt, criticisms of the BBC's efforts as an ELT provider. Dilke explained how since its creation over twenty years earlier, BBC English had faced criticism 'from the exponents of classroom teaching', who doubted that broadcasting was a suitable medium for effective language learning.[7] Coupled with his suggestion that his colleagues within the department were 'constantly effacing themselves to present good native speakers in more or less realistic situations', Dilke's remarks hint at the existence of a kind of inferiority complex within the department, whose programmes were focused on conveying the basics of language acquisition, as opposed to the kind of 'high culture' which many within the

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[6] BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBCWAC): Christopher Dilke, 'English by Radio and Television', BBC Lunch-time Lecture, Fourth Series, 7, 13 April 1966, 3-4.
[7] Dilke, 'English by Radio and Television', 3.

BBC still believed should represent the core of the corporation's offer to both domestic and foreign listeners.

Yet under Dilke's leadership, BBC English by Radio and Television had developed into a reputable, innovative, and profitable element of the BBC's global operations. While decades later John Tusa would struggle to launch a dedicated World Service television station, Bush House had actually begun creating its own television series as far back as 1962, in the shape of BBC English's ground-breaking and highly exportable series, *Walter and Connie.* By 1966, the rights to *Walter and Connie* had been sold to forty-two countries, including countries on either side of the Cold War divide: Dilke proudly explained how the series could be viewed in 'almost all the countries in Western Europe; Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia; much of the Middle East and Northern Africa; half a dozen of the South American countries; and Thailand', bringing in a 'distinct profit' for the BBC.[8] Thanks to its global reach and its ability to bring money into the BBC, BBC English clearly occupied a valued, if still somewhat marginal, position within the BBCXS and the wider corporation by the time of Dilke's speech - further underlined by the very fact that he was invited to deliver a lunch-time lecture to his BBC colleagues at this time.

During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, BBC English's status and credibility as a key constituent part of the BBCXS would undergo something of a quiet revolution, in parallel with the professionalization and academicization of the ELT sector. By the 1980s, ELT had been transformed into a respectable and profitable global industry, as well as a recognized sub-field within the emerging academic discipline of Applied Linguistics. In order to understand the nature and causes of this change, it is important to contextualize the BBC's approach to ELT in relation to wider trends within the history of English language teaching during the second half of the twentieth century.

The history of teaching English as a foreign language dates back far further than the age of radio and television. Indeed, Britain's long history as an imperial power in the pre-radio age established a cultural and educational legacy upon which the global expansion of English as a second language during the twentieth century was built.[9] Yet it was the period between 1945 and

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[8] Ibid., 11.

[9] A. P. R. Howatt and Richard Smith, 'The History of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, from a British and European Perspective', *Language & History*, 57:1 (2014), 75-95, 79-81.

1970 in which the number of English speakers and English learners around the world increased at an unprecedented rate, despite the parallel decline of Britain's imperial power during these years. This was the period which, according to ELT scholar David Crystal, witnessed the rise of English as a truly 'global language'.[10] No longer the sole possession of the country in which it originated, English became what Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan termed a 'hyper-central language', becoming so widely used on a global scale that it became the dominant medium through which any individual, wherever they were in the world, might access or exchange knowledge from outside their own linguistic community.[11] In the post-imperial era, English took on a particularly prominent role within the so-called 'developing world', functioning as a pre-existing practical tool or *lingua franca* which, it was widely believed, could help emerging, post-colonial nations to position themselves strategically and benefit from the globalizing economic trends which defined the second half of the twentieth century.[12]

A crucially important aspect of the English language's evolution into a 'global' language across the twentieth century was its relationship with the concept of development. As linguistics scholars Elizabeth Erling and Philip Seargeant have demonstrated, the assumption that a better grasp of the English language was a prerequisite for economic development has been a characteristic of the post-war overseas development sector, with development actors ranging from national governments, international organisations, and NGOs working to promote or provide English-language teaching and learning as a route towards both national and personal development.[13] Yet the historical context within which this assumption about the developmental value of English was forged, the roles that Western actors played in promoting this idea, and the

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[10] David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11-14.

[11] Abram De Swaan, *Words of the World: The Global Language System* (Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell, 2001), 1-14.

[12] Sham Haidar, 'The Role of English in Developing Countries: English is a Passport to Privilege and Needed for Survival in Pakistan', *English Today,* 35:3 (2019), 42-48. See also Catherine Prendergast, *Buying Into English: Language and Investment in the New Capitalist World* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 1-22.

[13] Philip Seargeant and Elizabeth J. Erling, *English and Development: Policy, Pedagogy and Globalization* (Ebook: Channel View Publications, 2013), 1-22. The related claim that the global spread of ELT teaching throughout the twentieth century represented a form of 'linguistic imperialism' was most famously made by Robert Phillipson in 1992, in which he argued that 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages.' Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47. See also Kanavillil Rajagopalan, 'Critical Pedagogy and Linguistic Imperialism in the EFL Context'*, TESOL Journal*, 9:4 (2000), 5-6; Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

motivations or reasoning which lay behind this activity, have so received relatively little attention from historians of twentieth century international history.

After 1945, both British and American scholars and policymakers concerned with overseas development promoted the idea that English could provide a neutral communicative bridge between ethnic groups and nation-states throughout the decolonizing 'Third World', recognizing the economic and strategic value that the USA and the UK might derive from this belief.[14] Replacing earlier, British-led efforts to promote English as an inherently superior and 'civilizing' language during the age of empire, ELT was repackaged for the post-imperial era as a practical, technocratic, and value-neutral tool for conveying information across cultures, rather than as an inherently superior language which would enable the less fortunate to access the 'civilizing' ideas embedded within the great works of English literature or 'high culture'. BBC English was one of the organisations which took part in collaborative work alongside American colleagues to try and promote this new, pragmatic image of the English language as a tool for economic development. In 1964, BBC English worked with the US government-funded Voice of America station to create a joint series of ten programmes which was designed to show how speakers of the different global variants of English could easily understand each other.[15] The existence of this series points to the way in which ELT was conceptualized at the BBC by this time. Its main purpose was not (or at least not solely) to directly create or nurture a cultural or sentimental bond between the learner and Britain or British culture, but rather to function as a tool for aiding economic development and personal advancement within the postcolonial context.

In adopting this new approach to ELT, the BBCXS followed in the footsteps of Britain's other major cultural diplomacy institution, the British Council. Instead of treating ELT as a way to improve knowledge about, and interest in, British culture abroad, by the 1960s the British Council had begun to characterize its ELT work as a form of British overseas development aid.[16] Caroline Ritter has demonstrated how the British Council made this shift in response to direction from the British government, which by this time had come to view ELT not only as a technocratic

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[14] Diana Lemberg, 'The Universalist Language of the Future: Decolonization, Development, and the American Embrace of Global English, 1945-1965', *Modern Intellectual History,* 15:2 (2018), 561-592, 562-4.

[15] Randolph Quirk and Albert Marckwardt, *A Common Language: British and American English* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and the United States Government, 1964). Quoted in Caroline Ritter, *Imperial Encore: The Cultural Project of the Late British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 169.

[16] Ritter, *Imperial Encore,*160-166.

form of overseas development aid, but also as a 'valuable and coveted export' which, if managed correctly, might bring great commercial advantages for Britain in the future.[17] By positioning itself not just as a cultural organisation but as an overseas development actor, the British Council gained access to a rich new vein of government funding from 1964, with the newly created Overseas Development Ministry (ODM) providing a significant and growing percentage of the its overall budget between 1964 and 1979.[18]

It is against this backdrop that BBC English's emergence as both an overseas development actor and a successful commercial venture from the 1960s onwards must be understood. Between 1965 and 1979, the department devoted itself to creating new television series which were designed to boost the English language's global reputation as an instrument of economic development, positioning the BBC as a vital partner within Britain's wider overseas development apparatus. Working in collaboration with the British Council, BBC English secured funding from the ODM to create five major new ELT series, incorporating film, radio, and published elements.[19] In 1975, the ODM financed the production of the BBC's *Teaching English with Vision* series, which included location filming in six developing countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Swaziland, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia).[20] The department also created ambitious new series like *The Bellcrest Story* and *The Sadrina Project* during the 1970s, both of which used novel dramatic narrative techniques to teach English for business purposes in an innovative and televisually appealing way, utilizing soap-opera like plots and high production values and avoiding the traditional, pedagogical approach to ELT which had defined BBC English's approach before the 1960s. These series helped to cement BBC English's reputation as a valued member of Britain's overseas development sector, and simultaneously helped to bring a valuable new revenue stream into Bush House.

At the same time that ELT was being reimagined as a form of post-colonial overseas development activity, its status and standing within the academic and commercial fields was also being reappraised. Developments like the creation of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in 1967 reflected the fact that ELT was becoming more globally

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[17] Ministry of Education, *Report of the Official Committee on the Teaching of English Overseas*, 23 March 1956, UKNA, CAB 21/4292, quoted in Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 164.
[18] Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 173-174.
[19] Hugh Howse, 'BBC English by Radio and Television: An Outline History' in *The Use of the Media in English Language Teaching: Milestones in ELT* (London: English Teaching Information Centre, 1979), 15-24, 20.
[20] 1976 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1976), 62.

recognized as a specialized area of professional expertise, while academic interest in ELT as a sub-field within the emerging interdisciplinary field of 'Applied Linguistics' also increased around this time. Significantly for the BBC, Applied Linguistics scholars were not only attracting greater resources: they were also increasingly embracing broadcasting as a legitimate and exciting medium for effective language teaching.[21]

Recognizing the potential value of this development, BBC English began to work closely with ELT specialists working at august academic institutions such as the Institute for Education of London University, the School of Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh University, and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, who helped the BBC to apply cutting-edge theoretical and methodological approaches to their programming.[22] These mutually beneficial relationships would continue throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, enabling BBC English to create ELT programming that was both academically credible and entertaining enough to maintain the attention of foreign radio and television audiences.

One of the BBC's key collaborators from the academic world of ELT was John Trim. Trim, who founded the Department of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge in 1965, was one of Europe's foremost academic authorities on applied linguistics and foreign language acquisition.[23] He also advised BBC English on numerous programme series throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, including on its first ever television series, *Walter and Connie*.[24] Between 1971 and 1997, Trim also served as Director of the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project. In this influential and prestigious role, Trim helped to oversee a structural transformation in foreign language teaching and learning across Europe, developing a new model for language teaching which prioritized the teaching of 'notional' and 'functional' categories as the key elements of teaching and measuring foreign language acquisition.[25] This model was the basis for the development of a common framework, often known as the 'Threshold Level project', which

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[21] John Trim, 'The Integration of Elements in Multi-Media Language Learning Systems' in *The Use of the Media in English Language Teaching: Milestones in ELT* (London: English Teaching Information Centre, 1979), 8-15.
[22] Dilke, 'English by Radio and Television', 5.
[23] 'About John Trim', European Centre for Modern Languages website, accessed at https://www.ecml.at/Resources/TheJohnTrimCollection/AboutJohnTrim/tabid/1789/language/en-GB/Default.aspx on 8 April 2022.
[24] Richard Smith and Nicola McLelland, 'An Interview with John Trim (1924–2013) on the History of Modern Language Learning and Teaching', *Language & History,* 57:1 (2014), 10-25, 18.
[25] A. P. R. Howatt and Richard Smith, 'The History of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, from a British and European Perspective, *Language & History*, 57:1, 75-95, 89-90.

became the starting-point for the creation of new syllabuses for foreign language teaching and learning across Europe throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[26]

Another key figure in the emergence and Europe-wide adoption of the 'functional-notional' approach to applied was Trim's colleague on the Council of Europe's Committee on Modern Language Teaching, Louis Alexander – whose statue would later be unveiled in Beijing. Author of the influential *New Concept English* series of ELT textbooks (first published in 1967), Alexander co-authored the Council of Europe's 'Threshold' and 'Waystage' syllabuses, which were designed to provide the blueprint for foreign language teaching throughout Europe, and followed the 'functional-notional' approach advocated by Trim. His textbooks were huge sellers – in 1977 alone, he sold 4.7 million books, which was recorded in that year's Guinness Book of Records as the greatest number of copies sold by any individual author in one year.[27] As was the case with Trim, Alexander also enjoyed a close working relationship with BBC English, helping them to create programming which would closely align with the Council of Europe's favoured approach to ELT, and thus putting the BBC in a strong position to design series which would appeal to the growing ELT market within Europe. This mutually beneficial relationship peaked with the creation of the *Follow Me!* television series in 1979, for which Alexander served as a consultant, and wrote the accompanying textbook series.[28]

Follow Me! was by far BBC English's most ambitious and most expensive production to date. Following the blueprint established by earlier series like *The Bellcrest Story* and *The Sadrina Project, Follow Me!* adopted an entertainment-led approach to ELT, using dramatic sketches involving recurring characters and high production values to make each 12-15 minute 'lesson' more appealing to television audiences. The series featured expensive sets and many location-based scenes, making it far more visually appealing than most other English language teaching TV programmes. This was possible because BBC English had secured external funding for the series

[26] 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Reference Level Descriptions Language by Language: Components and Forerunners', Council of Europe website, accessed at https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/cefr-reference-level-descriptions-language-by-language-components-and-forerunners on 8 April 2022.

[27] 'L.G. Alexander's Life and Career', Warwick English Language Teaching Archive Hall of Fame. Accessed at https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/elt_archive/halloffame/louis_alexander/biography/ on 8 April 2022.

[28] 'Obituary: Louis Alexander', *The Guardian,* 9 July 2002. Accessed online at https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/jul/09/guardianobituaries.obituaries on 8 April 2022.

from the national broadcasters of West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, as well as the Council of Europe.[29] Designed specifically to complement the 'Threshold' and 'Waystage' models for language learning developed by the Council of Europe, the series was both a commercial and a reputational success for the BBC. This success soon drew the attention of admirers from beyond Europe, who identified *Follow Me!'s* format and style as being well-suited to their own ELT aims. Less than year after the series was first broadcasts across Western Europe, representatives from the Chinese government approached the BBC, with the aim of securing the rights to bring *Follow Me!* to the television screens of the world's largest developing country.

Follow Me! in China: Popularity, Impact, and Links to Overseas Development

Very little has been written about the history of the BBC's relationship with China. While it has broadcast continuously to China since 1941, the most in-depth source of information on the BBCXS Chinese Service's long history available in English appears to be a short article published on the BBC website in 2011 to mark the station's final Mandarin-language radio broadcast, declaring that 'to a country starved of information, BBC Chinese carried news from inside and outside China - most notably of the Vietnam War and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s'.[30] Gerard Mansell's 300-page official history of the BBCXS, published in 1982, contains just one paragraph on the Chinese Service, explaining that it was founded in 1941 to broadcast weekly newsletters in Mandarin, eventually expanding in 1943 to a daily half-hour service which incorporated literary, cultural and scientific programmes as well as news.[31] Jinrang Tong and Hugh Mackay's chapter within Alban Webb and Marie Gillespie's 2012 edited volume explores the role that web forums hosted by the contemporary, online-only BBC Chinese service have played in twenty-first century Chinese society, but provides no historical context for this discussion beyond a brief reference to the 2011 article mentioned above.[32]

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[29] 1979 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1979), 53.

[30] 'BBC Chinese Service makes final broadcast in Mandarin', Vivien Marsh (BBC World Service Asia-Pacific Editor), 28 March 2011. Accessed online at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12864041#:~:text=The%20BBC%20Chinese%20Service%20has,BBC%20World%20Service%20in%20January on 8 March 2022.

[31] Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 210.

[32] Jingrong Tong and Hugh Mackay, 'Discussions on BBC Chinese *Have Your Say* forums: National Identity and International Broadcasting in the Interactive Media Era' in Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb, eds, *Diasporas and*

This lack of information about the Chinese Service within World Service scholarship appears to reflect the relative unimportance which senior figures at Bush House afforded to Communist China during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In comparison to the level of resources and attention devoted to broadcasting to Communist Europe discussed in previous chapters, the contrast is stark. According to Mansell, BBC decisionmakers concluded after the Second World War that greater investment in broadcasting to China would be a waste of its limited resources given the very small number of radio sets in China, which severely limited its audience there.[33] Without embarking on a dedicated research project exploring the extent of BBC archival material on the Chinese Service, it is difficult to ascertain much about the service's post-war history: as yet, no detailed scholarly account of the how the BBC Chinese Service responded and reacted to the great events of this period, including the Communists' victory in the civil war, the Korean War (in which thousands of British troops fought against the Chinese People's Liberation Army), the Great Leap Forward, or the Cultural Revolution, has been published. While such a project lies outside the scope of this thesis, it would surely make an enormous contribution to the fields of Chinese, international, and broadcasting history.

Fortunately, archival documents from another section of Bush House do afford a glimpse into how the BBCXS reimagined its relationship with China during the 1970s and 1980s. BBC English archival records from this period point to an important shift that took place in China's relationship with the English language at this time. Correspondence demonstrates that by 1971, BBC English had begun providing ELT resources free of charge to the Chinese Embassy in London, while the following year it responded positively to the request of the Chinese Embassy in Khartoum to send scripts of an already existing Chinese language series offered by BBC English.[34] These documents show that BBC English resources were already being created with Chinese audiences in mind in the early 1970s, and that these resources were being requested and gratefully received by certain groups within China's official diplomatic corps.

These developments reflected a broader improvement in Sino-British relations by the early 1970s. As Chi-Kwan Mark has demonstrated, this was a period in which Britain, against the Cold

Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service 1932-2012 (London: Routledge, 2012), 230-248.

[33] Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told,* 209.

[34] BBCWAC, E40/434/1: English by Radio and Television - China, General (1971-1983).

War backdrop of a broader Western 'opening to China' spearheaded by US President Richard Nixon, became committed to the 'full normalization of Anglo-Chinese relations', with Prime Minister Ted Heath particularly keen to further Britain's economic interests by acknowledging China's growing global importance as a strategic partner.[35] Yet while these small-scale developments in the early part of the decade hint at the establishment of closer ties, it was not until the latter years of the 1970s that BBC English's relationship with China would truly blossom.

The mid-1970s was a period of major turbulence within Chinese politics. Following a decade of violence and instability during the Cultural Revolution, the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976 was the catalyst for a dramatic change in direction for the Chinese Communist Party. After outmanoeuvering Mao's designated successor Hua Guofeng, the economically reform-minded Deng Xiaoping would eventually emerge as Mao's long-term successor as 'paramount leader' of the People's Republic.[36] Reversing decades of strict limitations on foreign trade, capital flows, and cultural exports, under Deng's leadership China adopted a new 'Open Door Policy', which sought to stimulate economic development by cautiously yet quickly opening China's economy up to far greater levels of marketization and access to foreign investment, technology, and expertise.[37] While there is as yet almost no English-language scholarship exploring exactly how or why, it is clear that under Deng's leadership, the Chinese Communist Party came to view foreign language learning as a vital prerequisite for China to achieve its economic goals, with English identified as the most important of these due to its global role as the international language of science and technology.[38] Most significantly for the BBCXS, China's drive to improve English language education would not be restricted to the classroom: by 1978, China's state-run television broadcaster, CCTV, had concluded that English language teaching would become one of the key aspects of its broadcast output.

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[35] Chi-Kwan Mark, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China, 1950-1972* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 161- 189.
[36] See Robert Bickers, *Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* (Harvard, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 358-398. For a useful account of the Cultural Revolution as viewed from the perspective of the contemporary British Left, see Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 179-211.
[37] For an in-depth account of Deng Xiaoping's economic policies during this period, see Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2011), 217-229.
[38] A helpful exception is Du Hui, 'The Globalisation of the English Language: Reflections on the Teaching of English in China', *International Education Journal,* 2:4 (2001), 126-133, 128.

BBC English was well positioned to take advantage of this new Chinese interest in ELT broadcasting. Christopher Dilke's successor as Head, Hugh Howse, was a committed Sinophile. The son of a British missionary based in Canton (modern-day Guangzhou), Howse had been born and raised in China, and was fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese, studying both languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in his youth, embarking on a career in the Malayan Civil Service prior to joining the BBC's Far Eastern Service in the early 1960s.[39] On taking up his new role as Head of BBC English in 1971, Howse made special efforts to ensure that his department would play a prominent role within wider British efforts to improve relations with China, inviting delegates from the Chinese Embassy in London to visit Bush House, and arranging a business trip to Beijing in May 1972.[40]

By the end of the decade, Howse's efforts had met with some commercial success: archival documents from the BBC's Written Archives Centre show that in November 1978, CCTV purchased 95 films from BBC English, including three full television series (*Walter and Connie, On We Go,* and *People You Meet*), excerpts from which were included as part of CCTV's own English by Television programmes, broadcast six nights a week on China's only television channel.[41] A March 1981 report written by Howse stated that the BBC was also credited as the main source for the textbook which accompanied this television series, which by that time had sold over six million copies in China.[42]

Yet while BBC English worked to build friendly and profitable relationships with Chinese diplomats and policymakers, the decades-long history of ideological opposition between Britain and Communist China inevitably created some difficulties. Even as BBC English resources gradually found their way into Chinese educational settings during the 1970s, their content was carefully curated, contextualized and qualified by Chinese authorities concerned with the subversive or 'polluting' influence that such material might have on its readers in China. An April 1979 memo from Howse to the Managing Director of the BBCXS Gerard Mansell included the text of an 'Information to Readers' sticker attached to some BBC-branded *Walter and Connie*

[39] 'Alumni Profiles: Alan Young', SOAS University of London website. Accessed at https://www.soas.ac.uk/centenary/alumni-profiles/1950s/alan-young.html on 24 March 2022.
[40] BBCWAC, E40/434/1: English by Radio and Television - China, General (1971-1983).
[41] BBCWAC, E40/434/1, Head of English by Radio and Television to Managing Director of External Broadcasting, 25 April 1979.
[42] BBC WAC, E40/434/1,'My Proposed Press Conference, March 18th or March 24th', Hugh Howse, 2 March 1981.

teaching materials, which had apparently spotted by a British Council employee on a visit to the South China Institute of Technology in Canton a year earlier. The sticker warned potential readers that while these materials were useful 'in order to meet the needs of research workers in understanding the actual situation of English-teaching material from abroad', readers should demonstrate caution, since 'the form of the content of this teaching material serves to propagate the rotten Capitalist class viewpoint and to prettify the mode of life of the Capitalist class'.[43] While anecdotal, this snapshot helps to illustrate the complicated political context which BBC English was forced to navigate in its dealings with China during this period, and the way in which the Chinese authorities demonstrated caution as well as enthusiasm in their partial embrace of the BBC's English language teaching resources.

BBC English's relationship with China entered a new phase in 1980, when CCTV sent a delegation of 7 executives to visit the UK to gain an insight into new approaches to using television for educational purposes at the BBC's Education Department and the Open University. During the tour, Hugh Howse invited the Chinese delegation to visit Bush House, eventually striking up a business relationship (and personal friendship) with CCTV television executive XiongXiong Xu. Correspondence between Howse and Xu, preserved within the BBC English files, demonstrates how a deal was struck to bring *Follow Me!* to Chinese television screens. Significantly, the deal meant that *Follow Me!* was not simply rebroadcast in China with Chinese subtitles, but entirely re-made for Chinese audiences, with the original series' entertaining sketches combined with new pedagogical sections which were to be filmed in CCTV's Beijing studios. The first episodes of the new, Chinese *Follow Me!* were broadcast in the Spring of 1982.[44]

The experience of selling the *Follow Me!* format to CCTV, and of supporting CCTV in the process of converting the series into a format that was considered more China-friendly, was celebrated as a huge success by the BBC World Service at the time. The BBC's keenness to promote and publicize *Follow Me!'s* breakthrough in China is helpfully illustrated in *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World,* a BBC television documentary created to celebrate the World Service's fiftieth anniversary. Broadcast on BBC One Television in December 1982, it provides a

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[43] BBCWAC, E40/434/1, Head of English by Radio and Television to M.D.X.B, 25th April, 1979.
[44] 1982 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1982), 231-2.

valuable way to understand which aspects of the World Service's work Bush House wanted to promote and publicize to British television audiences at that time.

BBC English's relationship with China was one of the key subjects that the BBCXS wanted the British television-watching public to know about. While *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World* covers a wide variety of different departments and language services over the course of its forty-five minute duration, a lengthy and prominent section was devoted to describing and celebrating *Follow Me!*'s impact in China, depicting the series as both a cultural and commercial success. In a short piece to camera, BBCXS Managing Director Douglas Muggeridge directly describes *Follow Me!* as a 'really big success', which 'even makes a little bit of money for us'.[45] Describing Hugh Howse as a 'super salesman', Muggeridge reserves special praise for the role of Kate Flower, *Follow Me!*'s main presenter, who he describes as 'a national television star in China'.[46] The documentary then provides evidence of her celebrity status in China, including footage of Flower being greeted warmly by passers-by as she travels around Beijing before being surrounded by a crowd of fans clamouring for her signature at a crowded bookshop, which has just stocked the first available copies of the *Follow Me!* textbook.[47] With its footage of ordinary Chinese people ardently watching *Follow Me!* at work on communal television sets, or hailing Flower as she cycles around the streets near the Forbidden City, the documentary clearly promotes the idea that the series was making a major contribution to English language learning in China. *Follow Me!* is portrayed as a key example of the BBCXS's effectiveness at presenting Britain and the BBC as effective and generous providers of knowledge and expertise which would help 'less developed' countries like China on the path towards greater economic development.

Yet despite its unerringly positive presentation in *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World,* it is in fact difficult to make a final judgement on whether *Follow Me!* was indeed a 'success' story for BBCXS. Evidence to support Douglas Muggeridge's claims that the series was a commercial money-maker for the World Service is scant, at least within BBC English's files relating to China. According to the memoirs of XiongXiong Xu, the television executive who purchased the series for CCTV, his organisation only paid around 10,000 RMB (which was worth approximately

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[45] *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World,* BBC One Television, first broadcast 8 December 1982. Programme listing available via BBC Programme Index accessed at
https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/0/20?q=hang+on+i%27ll+just+speak+to+the+world#top on April 9 2022.
[46] *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World.*
[47] *Hang On, I'll Just Speak to the World.*

£8,520 in 1978) for the rights to adapt the series, which was hardly a princely sum.[48] *Follow Me!* was broadcast on CCTV for seven years (1982-1989), enjoying an audience which, although impossible to measure accurately, was certainly large. A 1982 article in the *China Daily* newspaper claimed that '*Follow Me!* has ten million viewers in China, equaling the number of TV sets in our country [China]', while Kathy Flower estimated the actual number at around 500 million in a 2008 radio documentary for the World Service.[49] Yet the BBC archives provide no evidence that the BBCXS was able to secure any major commercial benefits on the back of having made such a popular series possible.[50]

What *is* clear from the archival and audiovisual source material examined above is the fact that the BBCXS was proud of *Follow Me!,* and wanted the British government and the British public to know about this aspect of its work. Indeed, the BBC remained proud of *Follow Me!* even decades later. In 2008, Kate Flower was invited to present a retrospective radio documentary for the World Service in which she reminisced on her experience of living and working in Beijing in the 1980s. While the documentary did not focus on BBC English's aims in helping to co-create the series or attempt to evaluate the overall impact that *Follow Me!* had on Chinese society, it gently implied that the series had made at least some contribution to China's transformation from an inward-looking and 'backward' developing nation into a global superpower. During a section of the documentary comparing the 'greyness' of Beijing in the 1980s with the vibrant and colourful city preparing to host the Olympic Games in 2008, an unnamed Chinese fan of *Follow Me!* was given the opportunity to provide her opinion on the series' value:

> To the millions of Chinese, *Follow Me!* wasn't just an educational programme. It was our first peek at a colourful and believable, contemporary world, contrasting so dramatically with the dull, depressing one we were living in.[51]

It is this kind of intangible, non-commercial, but nevertheless meaningful impact that the BBCXS promoted as evidence of *Follow Me!'s* 'success' - the idea that *Follow Me!* made a subtle,

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[48] Jack Hobbs, XiongXiong Xu, Tad Osaki, *Three Sons of the 20th Century: An Autobiographical Trilogy Born During the Great Depression* (Ebook: Amazon Kindle Publishing, 2011), 316.
[49] China Daily figure quoted in a 2003 article on *Follow Me!* published on the CCTV English website: 'Follow Me!', accessed at http://www.cctv.com/program/e_documentary/20080229/103523_1.shtml on 9 April 2022. 'Teacher Flower', BBC World Service, first broadcast 14 March 2008. Accessed via BBC World Service website at https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/2008/03/080312_teacher_flower.shtml on 12 November 2021.
[50] The 2008 BBC World Service documentary 'Teacher Flower' estimated *Follow Me!'s* audience in China at around 500 million.
[51] 'Teacher Flower', BBC World Service.

immeasurable, but invaluable contribution to China's transformation into a more cosmopolitan, globalized, and economically developed nation. Yet in order to reach a more satisfying scholarly judgement on *Follow Me!'s* success and significance as a tool for supporting China's economic development, it is necessary to turn away from source material created by the BBC itself, and consider how external perspectives might provide a helpful complementary point of view from which to evaluate the series' impact.

In 2011, XiongXiong Xu, the CCTV executive responsible for bringing *Follow Me!* to China, published a joint English-language autobiography, written alongside two colleagues from the media industry, Jack Hobbs from the USA and Tad Osaki from Japan.[52] Building a rich autobiographical narrative spanning from the 1930s to the twenty-first century, Xu's chapters provide a vivid account of his fascinating life story before, during, and after working on *Follow Me!*: his peripatetic and often traumatic childhood as the son of a government-employed telecommunications engineer during the war-torn 1930s and 1940s; his enrolment as a student at the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute and role as a volunteer English interpreter in Korea in the aftermath of the Korean War; his post-war career in the Chinese Foreign Ministry as a Diplomatic Courier, which was ended as a result of the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, leading to a forced spell in a rural re-education camp; and his rehabilitation and successful career with CCTV from 1978, culminating in his appointment as Director of CCTV's External Service (the Chinese version of the BBCXS) in 1987. Within this broader life story, Xu explores how and why he decided to secure the rights to *Follow Me!* for CCTV, and what 'success' for the series meant for him, providing a perspective which offers a valuable alternative to that which could be gained by relying solely on BBC-created source material. As one third of a joint autobiography of three relatively obscure media executives, whose lives and careers had little to do with Britain or the BBC outside of this specific episode, Xu's account has been understandably overlooked until now. Yet it represents a complicated but invaluable source for those interested in understanding how non-British, non-BBC-affiliated actors understood and interacted with the BBCXS's mission, purpose, and values during the 1970s and 1980s.

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[52] Xu's memoirs are part of a collection including the autobiographical reflections of two other international media executives born at roughly the same time in Japan and the USA, who describe themselves in the introduction as 'sort of "astral siblings"', whose paths 'intersect at the junction of the media and information highway'. Hobbs, Xu and Osaki, *Three Sons of the 20th Century*.

Just like *Hang On I'll Speak to the World,* Xu's autobiography portrays *Follow Me's* purchase and adaptation for Chinese television as a 'success'. Yet while the BBC documentary framed this 'success' in terms of the real, potential, or imagined benefits that the BBC might gain from selling *Follow Me!* to China, Xu's definition of 'success' is far more focused on how *Follow Me!* was a springboard for his prestigious career as a media executive, and how his personal triumphs echoed and symbolized China's success in transforming from an economically and educationally impoverished state into an economic superpower by the end of the century.

Xu depicts the decision to purchase *Follow Me!* for CCTV as a highly risky venture for which he bore personal responsibility, and as an important stepping stone in his rehabilitation in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Like millions of others across China, Xu's life was dramatically changed as a result of the Cultural Revolution, when institutions like government ministries (including the Foreign Ministry where Xu worked), universities and schools were purged of the 'bourgeois' elements which the Maoist Red Guards identified as enemies of the revolution. Xu's autobiography tells of how, under suspicion of harbouring anti-revolutionary sympathies, Xu and his family were sent to a rural re-education camp in Hunan province in 1970, where they worked for two years uprooting weeds, ploughing hillsides, and attending political education classes, sharing a tiny room in a two-family cottage. In 1972, Xu and his family were allowed to leave their re-education camp, and Xu was allocated a relatively low-status job as a photographer at the Hunan Cultural Bureau. He held this position for four years before finally being allowed to return to Beijing in 1976, eventually securing a job working for CCTV's Education Department two years later.[53]

Xu's treatment of the Cultural Revolution within his autobiography serves as an important contextual factor against which to evaluate his portrayal of *Follow Me!*. In describing his own personal experience of displacement, re-education, and forced agricultural labour, Xu adopts a tone which carefully avoids any overt criticism or complaints, writing that 'I always feel positive when I reflect on that re-education' which 'taught me much and eradicated my political naivete'.[54] Nevertheless, he concludes later in his life narrative that the Cultural Revolution represented 'the most terrible and harmful political movement that the Chinese people have ever endured', whose

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[53] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 241-243.
[54] Ibid., 253.

anti-intellectualism and attacks on institutions like schools and universities had caused dramatic, long-term damage to China's education system.[55] Xu's approach, which is critical of the Cultural Revolution's overall detrimental impact on China, but self-consciously skates over or leaves unexplored the specific personal impacts or traumas that it inflicted upon himself or his family, is indicative of a broader tension or ambiguity which has characterized China's approach to remembering the Cultural Revolution since 1976.[56]

During the section of his autobiography focusing on his time working for CCTV's Education Department between December 1978 and March 1987, Xu explained that his desire to purchase *Follow Me!* was rooted in his belief in the potential that educational television held as a route to rapidly overcoming the damage done to China's traditional educational institutions during the Cultural Revolution. Arguing that 'after the negative experience of the Cultural Revolution, we knew how important education was to the development of a nation, to the modernization of the country and to the life of the people,' Xu depicts his decision to reach out to BBC English to secure the rights to *Follow Me!* as a part of this wider push within China to take a new approach to education, technology, and the co-option of foreign ideas and products in order to aid the nation's economic development. [57]

In his account of how *Follow Me!* was purchased, reimagined, and recreated for Chinese audiences, Xu presents himself as having taken a series of risks, firstly in negotiating a deal with BBC English to purchase the rights to the original series, and subsequently in taking personal responsibility for creating the resulting Chinese series. He claims that he persisted with the project despite the disapproval of China's State Education Committee, which had taken charge of creating all educational programming for Chinese television until then, and which 'regarded the program [*Follow Me!*] negatively, contending that it was not the way to teach language and it would not help the students pass the examination'.[58] Xu remembers the first indication that his risk had paid off with a dramatic story of being visited in his office by the Director General of the State

[55] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 364.
[56] Chris Berry, Patricia M. Thornton and Peidong Sun, 'The Cultural Revolution: Memories and Legacies 50 Years On', *The China Quarterly,* 227 (2016), 604-12.
[57] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 364.
[58] Ibid.

Administration of Radio and TV the day after the first episode of *Follow Me!* was broadcast on Chinese television:

> "The English program last night was your production?" he asked without directing his question to anyone in particular. It was already unusual for the Director General of SART to visit our office. Moreover, he appeared so serious, as he always was, that all of us were immediately startled. Getting no immediate answer, he continued '*Follow Me!,* I mean.' Someone ventured, 'Yes'.
>
> 'Is it a British production?' The Director went on.
>
> 'Yes, it is a BBC production, but we adapted it and re-produced it'.
>
> 'How did you acquire the program? Buy it?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'How much?'
>
> 'Not much. Only about ten thousand RMB.'
>
> 'How many episodes altogether?'
>
> '52.'
>
> 'One episode a week, for a year?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> Carefully giving the answers, we were prepared for possible criticism from our unexpected leader.
>
> Then someone asked boldly, 'Director, did you watch it?'
>
> 'Mm.'
>
> 'What opinions do you have?'
>
> 'Good. Very good.' With this he turned and departed.
>
> We stared at each other for a second and burst into laughter.[59]

This excerpt helps to illustrate how Xu's memories of the 'success' of *Follow Me!* differ from the vision of success which the BBC sought to project through the *Hang On I'll Just Speak to the World* documentary. From Xu's perspective, *Follow Me!* was not, or at least not primarily, a BBC success story. Indeed, one could argue that BBC English is portrayed as having been thoroughly out-negotiated by Xu, having sold the rights to its flagship programme for 'not much'. Rather,

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[59] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 315.

Follow Me! is presented as a 'success' because it gained the approval of the CCP, demonstrating how Xu had found a formula for incorporating Western products and expertise into educational programming in a way that was cheap, extremely popular with viewers, and not deemed to pose any threat to Chinese cultural or political standards by its government.

Xu also proudly outlines some of the material signals of *Follow Me!'s* success in his autobiography, explaining how the *Follow Me!* textbook sold over 6 million copies, how CCTV began repeating the series in morning, afternoon, and prime-time slots, and how 'at the hour when the program was on the air, you could hear the sound of the program coming out of every window of the apartment buildings'.[60] These claims back up the BBCXS's own depictions of the series' popularity within China. Yet Xu's version of event helps to illustrate how *Follow Me!'s* historical significance lay less in what it achieved for the BBCXS, and more in its utility for himself, and for China and the CCP as it sought to rebuild its credibility as a ruling party capable of steering China to prosperity after the disaster of the Cultural Revolution.

As Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce and Barbara Laslett have argued, the process of making historical arguments based on singular personal narrative sources like Xu's autobiography must be approached with great caution, since these types of narratives are, by their very nature, 'selective in what they recall and relate, self-serving in emphasis, and sometimes downright deceptive'.[61] It is obvious that Xu's views on *Follow Me!'s* historical impact and significance are clearly shaped by his desire to present the series as one episode within a wider life narrative arc which emphasized his personal triumphs over adversity. Yet while we must acknowledge that Xu's memoirs inevitably represent a limited and subjective perspective through which to gain a better view of *Follow Me!'s* historical significance, this should not preclude us from appreciating the historical value of this perspective, approaching the text as a historical artefact containing multiple layers of meaning and knowledg, and reflecting on the ways in which Xu's agency, positionality, and identity help to illuminate unknown or underappreciated elements of *Follow Me!'s* history.[62]

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[60] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 358.

[61] Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce & Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 147.

[62] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives,* Second Edition (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 235-251.

According to Xu, *Follow Me!* also played an important role in persuading numerous foreign governments and international organisations to invest in China during the 1980s. Specifically, Xu argued that 'the success of *Follow Me!'* helped to open the door for CCTV to launch other foreign language learning programmes, including Japanese, French, and German language learning series, for which the Japanese, French, and German governments provided 'teaching material and technical support, which included well-equipped TV studio and postproduction facilities'.[63] Xu also claimed that after his promotion to Head of CCTV's Education Department in 1982 (for which he believed *Follow Me!'s* success was largely to thank), the World Bank contacted him to offer to provide a major loan to help CCTV create a dedicated new Educational TV channel. While Xu's managers turned this offer down, much to Xu's disappointment, China's State Education Commission subsequently secured a World Bank loan worth over $80 million – a loan which, Xu implies, was granted in response to *Follow Me!'s* popularity and success.[64]

It is of course impossible to verify whether *Follow Me!* truly was a motivating factor in inspiring foreign governments and international organisations to invest in Chinese educational television on the basis of Xu's autobiography alone. However, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, BBC archival documents from the period do demonstrate a frustration within Bush House that other Western governments were trying (with some success) to 'muscle in' on the friendly relationship which the BBC had built with CCTV through *Follow Me!*.

Overall, Xu's account of *Follow Me!'s* purchase, adaptation, and reception in China provides a valuable counterpoint to the BBCXS's own presentation of the series. While the BBCXS celebrated the series as a 'success', the actors who seem to have gained the most concrete benefits from *Follow Me!'s* appearance on Chinese television seem to have been Xu himself, the Chinese television-watching audience, and the CCP. As the following section will demonstrate, any hopes within Bush House that *Follow Me!* would help to establish the BBCXS's effectiveness as an overseas development actor would remain unsatisfied, as BBC English would ultimately fail to convert *Follow Me!'s* 'success' in China into a better funding arrangement with the UK's Overseas Development Administration.

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[63] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 366.
[64] Xu, 'Three Sons of the 20th Century', 364.

Capitalizing on 'Success': *Follow Me!'s* Legacy

In September 1982, Margaret Thatcher became the first serving British Prime Minister to visit Beijing. Taking place three months after the conclusion of the Falklands conflict, the focus of Thatcher's visit would be to begin negotiations on the future of Hong Kong. Facing a complicated, protracted, and potentially embarrassing negotiation process, which threatened to highlight Britain and China's contrasting fortunes as global powers, British diplomats were keen to ensure that these discussions took place within a within a wider context which emphasized how Sino-British relations had improved since normal diplomatic relations had resumed in 1972.[65] In this context, BBC English's recent sale of *Follow Me!* to CCTV was identified as a valuable example of how British and Chinese organisations had recently worked together successfully. A month before Thatcher's Beijing visit, BBCXS Managing Director Douglas Muggeridge was invited by No. 10 Downing Street to provide a briefing on *Follow Me!'s* success in China.[66]

BBC English by Radio and Television archival documents demonstrate how Hugh Howse sought to capitalize on the apparent 'success' of *Follow Me!*, as well as the Thatcher government's interest in building stronger diplomatic and commercial relations with China, to secure greater funding for BBC English from the UK government's overseas development budget. The Overseas Development Administration (ODA), which was responsible for overseeing this budget, had already provided a small amount of funding (around £15,000 per year) to BBC English since 1971 to work in partnership with the British Council to create six new ELT productions designed specifically for audiences in 'developing countries'.[67] By 1983 Howse had been appointed as the BBCXS's General Manager of External Business and Development, in recognition of his success as a 'super salesman' at BBC English. In this new, commercially-focused role, Howse would make a concerted effort to build on the BBCXS's existing relationship with the ODA, emphasizing the long-term commercial benefits that British companies might reap from supporting China to develop its English language capacity. In early February of 1983, Howse arranged a lunch-time meeting with the ODA's Chief Education Adviser, Bill Dodd, to discuss how 'Mrs Thatcher's visit

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[65] Chi-Kwan Mark, 'To "educate" Deng Xiaoping in Capitalism: Thatcher's Visit to China and the Future of Hong Kong in 1982', *Cold War History*, 17:2 (2017), 161-180, 163.

[66] BBC WAC, E40/434/1,'Briefing for Mrs Thatcher', Hugh Howse, 19 August 1982.

[67] BBC WAC, E40/457/1: English by Radio and Television in Developing Countries – O.D.A., Howse to Mansell, 20 January 1983.

to Peking led her to take decisions involving expenditure of some £3.5 million over the next two years to promote English and agricultural development know-how in China.'[68] Keen to position Bush House as an ideal destination for at least some of this money, Howse urged his boss, BBCXS Managing Director Douglas Muggeridge, to 'ring your central point of contact at Number 10 to make the case for the BBC to be associated with ODA funded English language teaching developments in China'.[69]

Over the next year, Howse drew up plans to expand BBC English's activity in China, deciding to try and work closely his contacts at CCTV (including XiongXiong Xu) to ensure that his ideas would be well received within China. In January 1984, Howse travelled to Beijing once more, meeting with CCTV executives to gauge their interest in collaborating on a new ELT series to follow *Follow Me!*. By February, Howse had developed a proposal which sought to secure an extra £500,000 in funding for BBC English from the ODA. If successful in securing this funding, BBC English would work in collaboration with CCTV to co-create a new, 25-part television series on English for Science and Technology for Chinese audiences.

In his proposal, Howse explained that the new series he envisaged would build directly on the success of *Follow Me!*, but focus on a somewhat narrower target audience:

> The target groups would be students following courses in science and technology, research students, teachers and lecturers in the field of science and, in general, all those in China with a professional interest in science and technology and who need to communicate in English about their work and their interests. The emphasis would need to be on science and technology in general with the following areas given a certain prominence: engineering; electronics; computer technology; agriculture and various aspects of applied science.[70]

In focusing on these 'various aspects of applied science', the series pitched itself not only as a valuable ELT tool, but also as a way to increase Chinese interest in, and demand for, the kinds of scientific and technological goods which British companies produced. Acknowledging that £500,000 was a large sum (and far greater than any previous amount which the ODA had previously provided to BBC English), Howse argued that without this level of funding, the BBC could not hope to produce a programme of similar quality to *Follow Me!* (which had been co-

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[68] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, Howse to Mansell, 2 February 1983.
[69] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, Howse to Mansell, 2 February 1983.
[70] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, 'China Central Television: Proposal for Collaboration with BBC English by Television on a Television Series teaching English for Science and Technology', Hugh Howse, 24 January 1984.

funded by the Council of Europe and national broadcasters from across Western Europe), and that CCTV might refuse to co-operate on the project if it could not boast the same high production values.

Despite Howse's best efforts, the ODA rejected his proposal. On February 16 1984, R. L. Baxter of the ODA wrote to Howse with the bad news, explaining that despite the fact that 'when I visited China last autumn I heard enough about your "Follow Me!" programmes to make me receptive to the idea of following them up with something at a more advanced level', the ODA had concluded that 'there could be no question, unfortunately, of finding £500,000 from our very small programme of technical cooperation with China.'[71] In response to this disappointment, Howse sought to find an alternative route to securing the funding, concluding in a memo to Managing Director Douglas Muggeridge that 'the only means of funding the series would be financial co-sponsorship by a consortium of British companies or by a major company with an interest in China'.[72] While an ambitious and unorthodox suggestion, the prospect of securing funds for BBC English programming from the private sector was not entirely novel; in 1975, Howse had secured a loan of £40,000 from British/Dutch oil giant Shell, to help fund a series entitled *The Petroleum Programme* which BBC English would co-produce with a Singaporean government's CEPTA TV.[73] Yet alternative funding was not forthcoming, and the BBCXS's ambitious plans for a science and technology focused, ODA-funded follow-up to *Follow Me!* were destined not to come to fruition.

The BBC struggled to establish itself as a priority partner for the ODA due to the existence of another, more established ELT provider: the British Council. As previously mentioned in this chapter, BBC English and the British Council had collaborated on certain ELT projects throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and each considered the other to be an important partner in the task of increasing and improving ELT provision around the world. Yet this was not a partnership of equals.

While both BBC English and the British Council embraced the idea that ELT could and should be defined as a form of overseas development activity from the 1960s onwards, the British

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[71] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, R. L. Baxter to Hugh Howse, 16 February 1984
[72] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, Howse to MDXB, 16 May 1984.
[73] BBC WAC, E40/458/1: English by Radio and Television in Developing Countries – O.D.A., Hugh Howse to MDXB, June 11 1975.

Council enjoyed a far closer and more lucrative relationship with the UK government's overseas development administration. By the end of the 1960s, the British Council had successfully pivoted from an institution whose mission was the promotion of British culture abroad into one of the British government's most important overseas development agencies. By 1966, over a third of the British Council's annual grant-in-aid from the government was drawn from the overseas development budget, and by the mid-1970s, it was responsible for administering a variety of overseas development schemes, including the Technical Co-operation Training Program (TCTP) and the Centre for Educational Development Overseas (CEDO), whose work in the field of educational development extended far beyond the realms of ELT.[74] BBC English's status as a British overseas development actor paled in comparison.

The British Council's status as the ODA's preferred ELT partner was acknowledged by BBC English as an insurmountable and somewhat irritating fact of life. In February 1983, Hugh Howse wrote to Managing Director Douglas Muggeridge that 'the position of the British Council as the ODA's English language teaching agent is enshrined in a "contract" going back to Judith Hart's days as Minister for Overseas Development in the early 1970s', constituting a 'special relationship' which meant that the BBC's access to ODA funding would always depend on the British Council's support or acquiescence.[75] Evidence of the British Council's gatekeeping role is provided by a memorandum from Matthew Macmillan, Controller of the British Council's English Language and Literature Division, to Howse in February 1983. In the memo, Macmillan makes it clear that the British Council's priority for ELT in China is teacher training, rather than creating new television programming, declaring that 'such is the obvious need for good training that we are recommending the bulk of ODA support to be directed to these initiatives'.[76] Without the Council's approval, Howse's chances of securing any substantial amount of ODA funding appear to have been next to none.

Besides the domestic competition that the BBCXS faced for the ODA's attention and funding, it also faced increasingly fierce competition from foreign broadcasters and agencies, who were also seeking to build friendly relations with Chinese television authorities in the hope of securing future commercial benefits. In the January 1984 report in which he tried to secure ODA

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[74] Ritter, *Imperial Encore*, 173.
[75] BBC WAC, E40/458/1, Howse to MDXB, 2 February 1983.
[76] BBC WAC, E40/458/1, Matthew Macmillan to Hugh Howse, 9 February 1983.

funding for a Science and Technology series to be aired on CCTV, Howse warned that if the BBC was not able to capitalize on *Follow Me!'s* popularity and success, other Western nations would:

> In this context, it is worth bearing in mind that, following upon the success of BBC English by Television's *Follow Me!* in China, the French government has "bribed" China Central Television into transmitting a French-teaching series by building a special television studio for the use of the education department of China Central Television and by providing experts and French-teaching programmes free of charge. Similarly, the USIA [United States Information Agency] is now beginning to make an American English style *Follow Me!* which, again, will be presented to the Chinese without charge.[77]

While Howse clearly included this information in an effort to spur the ODA into action, lest the UK be left behind in the scramble to secure friendly relations with CCTV, the ODA remained unmoved.

Howse's concern that non-British broadcasters might swoop in to take commercial advantage of the positive atmosphere created by *Follow Me!'s* success was shared by the British Embassy in Beijing. In August 1983, the Embassy's First Secretary Alan Maley wrote to Howse with 'disturbing news from CBS': the American commercial network had negotiated a 'massive new agreement' to supply CCTV 64 hours of programming for the next 12 months.[78] In response to this development, Maley suggested to Howse that the BBC should 'think of counterthrusts of a comparative kind' and 'consider what kind of 'cooperative' offer might be made to CCTV to offset this new development': a suggestion to which Howse responded positively, arguing that CBS's contract with CCTV 'gives an added importance to the proposal I have been making [to the ODA]'.[79] The exchange helps to illustrate how both the British Embassy and the BBC conceived of *Follow Me!'s* role in China, not just as a way of supporting China's economic development, but also as a route to securing a valuable new market for all sorts of BBC programming in the future.

This evidence shows how, despite *Follow Me!'s* popularity in China, BBC English failed to convert this into new funding opportunities for the BBCXS, either from commercial agreements with CCTV for further BBC programmes, or by securing a bigger slice of the UK government's overseas development budget. Yet within a decade, the BBCXS's role and status

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[77] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, 'China Central Television: Proposal for Collaboration with BBC English by Television on a Television Series teaching English for Science and Technology', Hugh Howse, 24 January 1984.
[78] BBC WAC, E40/457/1, Alan Maley to Hugh Howse, 23 August 1983.
[79] Ibid.

a key provider of ELT resources and global development actor had grown considerably. While *Follow Me!* may not have single-handedly had a transformative effect on the BBCXS's relationship with the UK's overseas development apparatus, its existence and limited 'success' did at least serve as a starting point from which a more ambitious, and more lucrative, approach to delivering ELT as a form of overseas development aid could be developed in the 1990s.

Conclusion

In March 2008, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) approved a major new project, worth £50 million, entitled 'English in Action'. According to Secretary of State Douglas Alexander, the programme would 'significantly increase English language skills for 27 million people in Bangladesh', making 'a valuable and lasting contribution to economic and social development in that country' using a combination of print, television, radio and mobile phone technology.[80] At the heart of this project was the BBC World Service Trust: working alongside partners including the Open University, Dutch international development consultancy BMB Mott MacDonald, and Bangladeshi NGOs the Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme and Friends in Village Development, the Trust would play a leading role in developing and delivering the project over its nine-year duration.[81]

This example provides clear evidence demonstrating how, by the early twenty-first century, the BBC's ELT operations had secured a leading role within the UK's overseas development ecosystem. While The World Service Trust (renamed BBC Media Action in 2011) has been organisationally separate from the rest of the World Service since 1999, its reputation and credibility as an overseas development actor rests on the BBC World Service's historic reputation as a site of development-related expertise, and as a trusted partner with whom the UK government (and external funding organisations) have cultivated long-term relations. It is in this context that *Follow Me!'s* significance as an example of BBCXS overseas development activity should be evaluated.

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[80] Douglas Alexander, 'English Language Skills: Bangladesh', Written Ministerial Statement, 18 March 2008. Accessed online at https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wms/?id=2008-03-18b.61WS.1 on 10 April 2022.
[81] Philip Seargeant and Elizabeth J. Erling, 'The Discourse of "English as a language for international development": Policy assumptions and practical challenges' in Hywel Coleman, ed, *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language* (London: British Council, 2011), 248-269, 249.

Hugh Howse and his colleagues must have felt frustration and disappointment at having their proposals to create a more ambitious, more expensive suite of development-related ELT programming for China turned down by the ODA in the mid-1980s. Yet while *Follow Me!* may not have succeeded in the short-term, it was a significant precursor to a closer and more lucrative relationship between the World Service and the overseas development sector – a relationship which, by the 1990s, would help Bush House to stay relevant, respected, and well-funded into the twenty-first century. As such, it deserves recognition as a significant contributor to the reputation that Bush House developed as an overseas development actor before the 1990s - a reputation which, as demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, would take on a greater prominence and strategic value after the end of the Cold War.

Chapter Five: Navigating the New World Information and Communication Order: Britain, the BBC World Service, and UNESCO

In the summer of 1979, the BBC invited *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Oliver Pritchett to take a tour of Bush House, home of the External Services since 1941. Facing the now-familiar threat of major budget cuts, the BBCXS threw open its doors, presumably hoping that a positive review from one of the right-wing press's leading columnists might tip the balance of budget negotiations further in their favour. Entitled 'Tower of Babel, WC2', the resulting column painted a portrait of the BBCXS as an impressive, if somewhat idiosyncratic outpost of benevolent British cosmopolitanism.[92] Struck by the juxtaposition between Bush House's 'imposing' stone staircases and its unglamorous 'spongy linoleum floors', Pritchett described an institution which combined the quixotic and the quotidian. In Pritchett's eyes, Bush House was both an impressive bastion of internationalism and a bureaucratic backwater: a place where one would 'hear strange languages in the lifts and smell exciting smells from the canteen' before wandering along 'corridors, painted in institutional cream or green, full of tiny offices'.[93]

During his tour of this 'formidable' yet 'shabby' building, Pritchett met with staff from dozens of different nationalities. While acknowledging the diversity of the organisation's workforce, the columnist identified some intangible factor which united them - an overarching sense of cosmopolitan collegiality which bonded them together across the organisation's thirty-nine different language sections. Head of the African Service, George Bennett, sought to capture the essence of the *esprit de corps* shared by all of the organisation's 3350 employees, explaining to Pritchett that 'it's like a little United Nations here. The people all feel they belong to the same organisation'.[94]

The comparison between Bush House and the United Nations was by no means original, and is one which has been repeated in many published works on the history of the World Service. The BBC's newly created '100 Voices' history website, commissioned to mark the corporation's upcoming centenary in 2022, labelled the World Service 'a United Nations of broadcasting', while

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[92] Oliver Pritchett, 'Tower of Babel, WC2.' *Sunday Telegraph*, August 5, 1979, 6.
[93] Pritchett, 'Tower of Babel'.
[94] Pritchett, 'Tower of Babel'.

Andrew Walker's 1992 history of the World Service suggested that Bush House's restaurant and bar 'could be part of the United Nations, except that the staff get on with one another rather better'.[95] This notion that the World Service might accurately be described as a 'better' version of the UN was also reiterated to the author by former BBC Somali Service producer Maria Frauenrath, who in a recent interview characterized the organisation as 'the little UN broadcaster in a way but, a bit more effective!'[96]

While these comparisons have often been made in a relatively off-hand or light-hearted way, they illustrate how BBC scholars and staff have consistently treated the United Nations as a key point of reference for understanding the World Service's mission and institutional character. The specific allusion to the UN in Pritchett's 1979 *Sunday Telegraph* column is of particular interest, given the nature of the relationship between the UK and the UN during this period. While the UK had played a key supporting role in creating the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War, by the late 1970s, the UN faced growing criticism, particularly from those on the right of British politics who had become convinced of its ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and perceived bias towards 'Marxist' or 'anti-Western' proposals theories and policies. UNESCO, the UN's agency for educational and cultural affairs, was often a particular focus of such criticism.[97] By 1985, these critical viewpoints had gained sufficient political momentum to inspire the Thatcher government to follow its closest ally, the United States, in withdrawing the UK from UNESCO altogether. The UK would remain outside UNESCO until the election of the first New Labour government in 1997.

As one of Britain's leading internationally-focused cultural institutions, and an important part of Britain's wider foreign policy apparatus, the BBCXS took a keen interest in these developments. This chapter examines the nature of the relationship between UNESCO and the BBCXS. It explores the key ideals and ideological assumptions around cultural 'universalism' which linked the BBC and UNESCO, and highlights some of the personal connections between

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[95]Alban Webb, 'Emigres: How did the BBC become a United Nations of Broadcasting?' History of the BBC, accessed online at https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/people-nation-empire/emigres on April 5th, 2021; Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside,1992), 114.

[96] Maria Frauenrath, interview with the author, April 7th 2020.

[97] See for example 'Freedom of information or a licence for sedition?', *The Times*, 17 Nov. 1978, 16; 'Our News is Good News', *The Economist,* 7 Aug. 1976; 'Britain fights Unesco call for Press clamp', *Daily Telegraph*, 18 Sept. 1978, 6.

these two organisations. Next, its focus turns to the 1970s and 1980s and efforts to use the United Nations to try and transform the relationship between developed and developing nations during this period, focusing in particular on the emergence of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement, and the reasons why it attracted the antipathy of a powerful coalition of Western governments and non-governmental actors, including the BBCXS. By evaluating primary and secondary source material on the BBCXS's role during the NWICO debates, the vast majority of which has never been studied by scholars of the BBC or of overseas development, the chapter offers a valuable new perspective on Britain and the BBC's vision of how global development could and should be achieved in the post-imperial era.

Like the BBC, UNESCO's historical role as a global development actor has often been overlooked or under-appreciated. Yet as the recent work of scholars such as Sarah Brouillette and Perrin Selcer has helped to highlight, UNESCO's mission was as inherently concerned with 'development' – that is, the material improvement of quality of life as measured against a pre-determined (though not always explicitly stated) set of assumptions – as other UN agencies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).[98] As cultural organisations with global reaches and missions, both the BBC and UNESCO positioned themselves as organisations with the capacity, inclination, and moral authority to improve the lot of humanity as a whole. By understanding how and why the BBCXS gradually came to position itself as an opponent of the NWICO movement which emerged within UNESCO, and how the BBCXS eventually came to support (or at least acquiesce in) the Thatcher government's decision to

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[98] Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2019); Perrin Selcer, *The Postwar Origins of the Global Environment: How the United Nations Built Spaceship Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); See also Paul Duedahl, ed., *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (New York and Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1975', *Journal of World History*, 22:1 (2011), 101-33. For histories of other UN agencies concerned with development, see Marcos Cueto, Theodore M. Brown and Elizabeth Fee, eds, *The World Health Organisation: A History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019); Corinna Unger, 'International Organisations and Rural Development: The FAO Perspective', *International History Review* 41:2 (2019), 451–58; Anna Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960-70', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 40:5, 879-896; John Toye, 'Assessing the G77: 50 Years after UNCTAD and 40 years after the NIEO', *Third World Quarterly,* 35:10 (2014), 1759-1774.

withdraw from UNESCO altogether, we gain a clearer understanding of Bush House's relationship with both the British government and the idea of overseas development during the latter third of the twentieth century. In analyzing the BBCXS's relationship with UNESCO, this chapter provides another valuable opportunity to reassess the BBCXS's reputation as an independent, impartial 'gift to the world', and situates the BBC more clearly within a broader coalition of state and non-governmental organisations which used the language and practice of overseas development to further Britain's national interest in during the 1970s and 1980s.

Compatible Cultural Internationalisms: Britain, the BBC, and UNESCO, 1945-1960

The creation of the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War was, amongst many other things, a totemic moment in the history of universalism. Key founding documents such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are saturated with the language of the universal: the UDHR famously opens with the declaration that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights', while the Preamble of the UN Charter commits its members to 'employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples'.[99]

Since the UN's founding in 1945, scholars and policymakers working within the fields of international law and history have been preoccupied with understanding how the UN's commitment to universalism relates to another of the fundamental principles enshrined in its Charter, that of the sovereignty of the nation-state.[100] Alongside this, there is the related question of how (or whether) the UN has managed to develop a vision of universalism that was truly 'global', incorporating the intellectual input of actors from all parts of the globe, rather than simply transplanting the values of Western liberal democracy onto the rest of the world. In 2008, Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga argued that the values, commitments, and internal contradictions contained within the UN's founding documents were the product of a complex, multilateral process of negotiation between Western and non-Western actors, 'nourished by the contention and

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[99] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1. Accessed online at https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf_on 12 April 2022. United Nations Charter, Preamble. Accessed online at https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text on 12 April 2022.
 and UN Charter.
[100] Article 2.7 of the UN Charter states that 'Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.' United Nations Charter, Article 2.7.

convergence of competing universalisms and not merely the Western tradition of thinking about security and rights with which the organisation is usually associated.'[101] Yet over the last ten years, intellectual historians interested in understanding the UN's role within the history of twentieth century humanitarianism, human rights, and economic development have demonstrated how the UN's approach to universalism during its early years were (unsurprisingly) most influenced by ideas about the nature of humanity, civilization, and enlightenment originating from the West – particularly France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The UN's universalism was obviously constructed with regard for earlier attempts at constructing a viable form of global governance, most obviously the UN's ill-fated inter-war predecessor, the League of Nations, whose universalist ambitions had been hamstrung by the colonial concerns of its two great powers, France and England.[102] Samuel Moyn, Paul Betts, and Mark Mazower have highlighted some of the continuities, rather than the divergences, which characterized Western internationalist thought about the nature of universalism before and after the creation of the UN. [103] This work has helps to highlight the survival of some key assumptions about the economic and cultural superiority of Western imperial powers well into the post-war era, and how these assumptions played a vital role in shaping the UN's approach to global governance and global development.

According to this reading of UN history, the 'universal' language embedded within the UN's founding documents was in fact carefully calibrated so as to represent no threat to the continuing imperial ambitions of the Allied Powers. Of particular relevance to historians of twentieth century Britain is Mazower's argument that, in contrast to the familiar depiction of the UN as the child of a new strand of cosmopolitan internationalism formed in response to the horrors of the Second World War, the organisation in fact drew heavily on the British approach to imperial rule developed during the interwar period when constructing its fundamental principles. Mazower points to the significance of 'imperial internationalist' figures such as Jan Smuts, who drafted the

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[101] Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, 'New Histories of the United Nations', *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008), 251–74, 252-3.

[102] See Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 356-393.

[103] Samuel Moyn, 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in the History of Cosmopolitanism', *Critical Inquiry* 40:4 (2014), 365-84; Paul Betts, 'Universalism and its Discontents: Humanity as a 20th Century Concept' in Fabien Klose and Mirjam Thulin, eds, *Humanity: A History of European Concepts in Practice From the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 51-73; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Introduction.

preamble to the UN charter which proclaims its 'faith in the fundamental human rights' and commitment to the 'equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small', yet maintained his belief that the British Empire might continue to pursue an imperial 'civilizing mission' in Africa and Asia under the UN's umbrella.[104]

The disproportionate influence of British 'imperial internationalism' was certainly noticeable in the creation of UNESCO, the UN's agency for education, science and culture. Glenda Sluga and John and Richard Toye have shown how British intellectuals Julian Huxley and Alfred Zimmern, who had expended considerable intellectual energy in thinking through Britain's approach to colonial development during the interwar years, played a pivotal role in shaping UNESCO's ideological outlook, with Huxley even being appointed as UNESCO's first Director General.[105] While UNESCO's offices were ultimately to be located in Paris, it was in London which the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education met between 1942 and 1945 to plan UNESCO's creation and draft its constitution, with UK Minister for Education Ellen Wilkinson chairing UNESCO's inaugural conference in November 1945.[106] While the United States inevitably played the most influential role in determining UNESCO's institutional profile and scope, it is reasonable to conclude that Britain still managed to play a disproportionately influential role in shaping the intellectual backdrop against which the organisation's mission and methods were decided.[107]

UNESCO's constitution demonstrates the organisation's commitment to the universal values at the heart of the UN. It famously proposed that 'since wars being in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed', arguing that lasting peace must be founded 'upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind'.[108] As Paul Betts has argued, UNESCO's efforts to secure global peace by encouraging greater international cooperation

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[104] Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace,* 28-65.

[105] Glenda Sluga, 'UNESCO and the (One) World of Julian Huxley.' *Journal of World History* 21:3 (2010), 393-418; John Toye and Richard Toye, 'One World, Two Cultures? Alfred Zimmern, Julian Huxley and the Ideological Origins of Unesco.' *History*, 95 (2010), 308–31.

[106] Footage of Wilkinson reading out the preamble to the UNESCO constitution at the inaugural conference on November 16, 1945 is available on the UNESCO website. 'November 16, 1945: Ellen Wilkinson, Minister of Education of Great Britain, reads to Constitution of UNESCO', Accessed online at https://en.unesco.org/news/75-years-ago-unescos-constitution-adopted on April 7th, 2021.

[107] On the US's role in the creation of UNESCO see Sam Lebovic, *A Righteous Smokescreen: Postwar America and the Politics of Cultural Globalization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 8-40.

[108] Preamble, UNESCO Constitution, 16 November 1945. Accessed online at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html on April 7th, 2021.

in the fields of education, science, and culture took on a greater importance after as the emergence of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and 1950s, which made it increasingly unlikely that the UN would be able to make any meaningful contribution to boosting the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind' through international law.[109] With more direct legislative routes increasingly blocked, it was UNESCO, through early projects like the six-volume *History of Mankind* series and its famous 1955 *Family of Man* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which often took the lead in promoting what exhibition curator Edward Steichen called 'the essential one-ness of mankind'.[110]

UNESCO's stated role was more than one of simply facilitating cultural exchange between nations. It was also a fundamentally evaluative, curatorial, and advisory role, whereby UNESCO took responsibility for identifying and amplifying the cultural, educational, and scientific work which it deemed to be universally edifying and valuable. The organisation's constitution explained how it would fulfil this role through activities such as 'suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom' or 'assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science'.[111] It was also committed to 'mental engineering': developing educational and cultural initiatives which were designed to promote 'scientific worldview humanism', and setting up worldwide associations in the fields of history, economics, law, political science and sociology, which encouraged scholars working in those disciplines to work in accordance with the UN's mission and priorities.[112] While it lacked the legal or coercive power to impose its supposed superiority by force, these claims help to illustrate how UNESCO viewed itself, or at least what it aspired to be: not as a neutral or value-free meeting place for different cultures, but as an arbiter of universal cultural, educational, and scientific value, which might legitimately determine which knowledge or cultural products should be safeguarded or promoted worldwide on the basis of being of value to all humanity.[113]

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[109] Paul Betts, 'Universalism and its Discontents', 63.
[110] Betts, 'Universalism and its Discontents', 63. See also Paul Duedahl, 'Selling Mankind: UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945-1975', *Journal of World History* 22:1 (2011), 101-33.
[111] Article I, UNESCO Constitution.
[112] Paul Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds: UNESCO, Mental Engineering and Education', *Foro de Educación,* 18:2 (2020), 23-45, 24-5.
[113] Perrin Selcer, 'The View from Everywhere: Disciplining Diversity in Post-World War II International Social Science', *Journal of the Behavioral Sciences*, 45:4 (2009), 309-329.

UNESCO's conviction that knowledge and culture of 'universal' value could be identified and introduced to all humanity echoed the cultural internationalism which had characterized the BBC since its earliest years. Histories of the BBC have tended to focus on the corporation's relationship with British nationhood, attempting to evaluate the historical significance of the BBC's role in reflecting and contributing to changing notions of Britishness across the twentieth century.[114] Yet as historians like Simon Potter and David Hendy have pointed out, *inter*nationalist aspirations have retained an important (and deeply related) place within the BBC's institutional imagination since its earliest years. From the creation of the BBC in 1922, pivotal founding figures such as Cecil Lewis, John Reith, and Arthur Burrows were all committed, in different but ultimately complementary ways, to building a BBC which would contribute to peace, civilization, believing in what Lewis called a 'greater guiding principle' which, it was hoped, would help Britain and the world to avoid the catastrophe of another world war.[115] From March 1925, the BBC was an enthusiastic member of the International Broadcasting Union, which BBC Chief Engineer Peter Eckersley later characterized as 'a broadcasting League of Nations…born in hope in gaiety in an era of peace'.[116] Reflecting on the *esprit de corps* at the BBC's first home in Savoy Hill, Lionel Fielden (who joined the BBC as a Talks Assistant in 1927) described how the BBC's offices brimmed with 'the same feeling of dedication and hope which characterized the League of Nations in its early days', declaring that 'we really believed that broadcasting could revolutionize human opinion'.[117]

This sense of a global mission on behalf of humanity as a whole would also characterize the BBC's first foray into international broadcasting, the Empire Service. In his first-ever address on the Empire Service in 1932, John Reith argued that the BBC had a moral duty to broadcast the best of British and world culture and learning to listeners around the world, stating that 'it has been our resolve that the great possibilities and influences of the medium should be exploited to the highest human advantage…the service as a whole is dedicated to the best interests of mankind.'[118]

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[114] See for example Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974-1987* (London: Profile, 2015); David Hendy, *The BBC: A People's History* (London: Profile, 2022).
[115] Hendy, *A People's History,* 9-31; Simon Potter, *Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 19.
[116] Potter, *Wireless Internationalism,* 36.
[117] Quoted in Hendy, *A People's History,* 39.
[118] J.C.W Reith, Director General of the BBC broadcasting on the first day of the Empire Service, Saturday 19 December 1932. Quoted on the dust jacket of Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told.*

The confidence that Reith displayed in the BBC's ability to broadcast cultural material which would contribute to the 'best interests of mankind' beyond Britain's national borders comfortably co-existed with the sense of moral affinity with he and his colleagues felt towards the internationalism of the League of Nations.

The failures of the League of Nations in the 1930s and the subsequent experience of the Second World War do not appear to have dimmed these internationalist tendencies within the BBC. Having rapidly expanded its overseas broadcasting operations between 1939 and 1945 to incorporate foreign as well as English-language stations, which were listened to by tens of millions of non-British listeners around the world, the BBC's role as a self-consciously global institution had been cemented.[119] The BBC and the post-war Labour government negotiated a permanent footing for the BBC's overseas broadcasting operations, deliberately seeking to create a model that emphasized Bush House's editorial independence from government, in the hope that doing so might help the BBC to appear as an objective and trusted source of information for audiences of all nationalities, and not simply an organ of British Cold War propaganda.[120] In doing so, the BBC maintained its commitment to the internationalist ideals of the inter-war era, many of which continued to find a home within the new architecture of global governance – for example at UNESCO, whose commitment to identifying and disseminating educational and cultural resources to aid the cause of global peace and 'civilization' was inspired by predecessors such as the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.[121] In both Bush House and the halls of UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, staff were motivated by a shared vision of the way in which they might aid humanity as a whole: by ensuring that the 'best' cultural, educational, and scientific knowledge (as judged by those working within both institutions, who considered themselves capable arbiters of 'universal' value) was made available and accessible to as much of humanity as possible. At the heart of this shared notion of cultural universalism was an assumption about the nature of human development as a process involving the transfer of knowledge from the

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[119] Hendy, *A People's History,* 343.
[120] Alban Webb, 'Constitutional Niceties: Three Crucial Dates in Cold War Relations between the BBC External Services and the Foreign Office', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television,* 28:4 (2008), 557-567.
[121] Toye and Toye, 'One World, Two Cultures?', 316-7, 325. See also Corinne Pernet, 'Twists, Turns, and Dead Alleys: the League of Nations and Intellectual Cooperation in Times of War,' *Journal of Modern European History*, 12:3 (2014), 342-358.

(imperial) core to the (colonial or post-colonial) periphery: an assumption which, by the 1960s, would come under greater scrutiny.

More work is still required to fully investigate the nature and extent of the relationship between the BBC and United Nations between 1945 and 1965. Yet the compatibility between the core values of the two organisations is further illustrated by the ease with which former BBC staff members attained high office within the UN during the first twenty years of the latter's existence. A prime example of this is the career of George Ivan Smith, an Australian broadcaster who worked as Director of the BBC's Pacific Services during the Second World War. In 1948, Smith was appointed as chief of English language radio at the UN's new Information Centre in London, launching a long and distinguished career at the UN which included becoming the director of the UN's External Affairs division (1958-61) and serving as Secretary-General U Thant's personal representative in south-eastern and central Africa (1963-1966.[122] Tom Chalmers was another BBC executive who easily crossed the divide between Bush House and the UN: after undertaking a secondment to oversee the establishment of new national broadcasting services in Nigeria and Tanganyika during the 1950s and early 1960s, Chalmers served as a Deputy Regional Representative on the UN's Technical Assistance Board for East and Central Africa in Dar es Salaam between 1992 and 1964, before returning to Bush House once more to serve as the BBC's Special Assistant in the Overseas and Foreign relations Division.[123] It is also worth noting that Julian Huxley, UNESCO's first Director General, also had strong links with the BBC, having partially cultivated his reputation as a doyen of benevolent, cosmopolitan humanism thanks to his regular role as an 'expert' on the popular BBC radio programme 'Brains Trust'.[124] Indeed, John and Richard Toye suggest that Ellen Wilkinson may have been swayed into supporting Huxley's candidacy for the UNESCO leadership on the basis of having appeared alongside him on the programme.[125]

These personal connections added to the ample common ground that existed between the 'Reithian' values of the BBC, with its internationalist commitment to 'inform, educate, and entertain' the world as well as the nation, and UNESCO's mission to engage in 'mental

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[122] 'George Ivan Smith', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed online at
https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ivan-smith-george-charles--27646 on April 7th, 2021.
[123] 'Obituary: Thomas Chalmers', Leonard Miall, *The Independent,* 3 September 1995.
[124] Toye and Toye, 'One World, Two Cultures', 319.
[125] Toye and Toye, 'One World, Two Cultures', 319.

engineering' in the name of global peace and prosperity.[126] Yet by the 1960s, as the world adapted to the geopolitical changes resulting from the rapid decolonization of Asia and Africa, this common ground would come into greater question.

New Orders Nullified: Economic and Cultural Development and the Global South at the UN, 1960-1985

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United Nations became a prominent arena that postcolonial nation-states used to highlight and address some of the structural inequalities still embedded within the global economic system. A diverse collection of actors from across the 'developing world' used the UN's agencies and institutions to organize and promote the New International Economic Order (NIEO), a set of economic proposals designed to change the international terms of trade in favour of the so-called 'Third World'. NIEO's failure to secure meaningful changes to the global economic order by the mid-1970s informed the creation of a new cause, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) movement, which sought to address the West's alleged 'cultural imperialism' over the developing world. The BBCXS's role within, and response to, the NWICO affair provides a valuable perspective on how Britain positioned itself within global debates on the role of information and communication technology within development during this period.

The rapid decolonization of Asia and Africa during the 1950s and 1960s dramatically changed the make-up of the United Nations. Across these two decades, the sheer number of independent member states represented at the UN expanded significantly, shifting the arithmetical logic within the organisation in favour of these newly independent states. In 1960, the UN admitted its largest ever number of new member states (17). Within a year, having recognized the increasing importance of the developing world as a possible geopolitical power bloc in its own right, US President John F. Kennedy declared his support for designating the 1960s as a 'decade of development', to which the UN responded by passing a resolution launching the 'United Nations Development Decade' in December 1961.[127] By 1965, the UN Development Programme (UNDP)

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[126] Duedahl, 'Peace in the Minds', 24.
[127] '1960-1970, 1st Development Decade', UN Documentation: Development. Accessed online at https://research.un.org/en/docs/dev/1960-1970 on 12 April 2022.

had been established as another signal of the UN's recognition that global development would play a central role within its overall mission from now on.[128]

Identifying the reduction of world hunger as its most urgent developmental concern, in 1960 the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) launched its 'Freedom from Hunger' campaign, co-operating with national governments and NGOs to organize the largest overseas development campaign in world history. Britain played a prominent role, with the British public raising almost £7 million for the campaign, which sought to encourage direct donations from Western individuals and voluntary or non-governmental groups to supplement government aid to tackle hunger across the developing world.[129] The BBC played its part in publicizing the campaign – in 1965, it commissioned a special radio documentary which promoted the campaign's ongoing impact after five years.[130] Anna Bocking-Welch has persuasively argued that the British public's positive response to this UN development campaign was, at least in part, due to the perception that such campaigns represented an extension and continuation of Britain's historic role as a global development actor within the framework of empire, resulting in a 'public narrative that situated the campaign as the next stage in a long trajectory of British imperial benevolence'.[131] Yet while the British public may have perceived the Freedom from Hunger Campaign as a repackaged version of an established, imperial form of British humanitarian intervention, the campaign also encouraged those within and beyond Britain whose vision for international development transcended the geopolitics of imperialism.

Despite its limitations, the Freedom from Hunger Campaign showed that the UN could act as a powerful force for sourcing and mobilizing resources with the aim of boosting economic development within the postcolonial 'Third World'. Well before the 1960s, postcolonial national leaders like India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had identified the UN's potential utility as a space for creating international solidarity among the rapidly expanding community of newly independent postcolonial nation-states, and perhaps even for pursuing political or legal reforms

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[128] Olav Stokke, *The UN and Development: From Aid to Cooperation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 83-115.

[129] Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies', 880.

[130] Peter Enders and the British Broadcasting Corporation, *BBC Documentary: 'A Campaign Five Years Old',* Freedom from Hunger Campaign Oral History Project, 1965. Audiotape available in the National Library of Auastralia's Records of the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1961-1973, MS 4529.

[131] Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies', 883.

which might reshape the global order in their favour. The creation of the Non-Aligned Movement following the Bandung Conference in 1955, and the formation of the G77 coalition of developing countries at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in June 1964, were clear indicators of a will towards developing an alternative geopolitical bloc within the UN focused on overcoming the challenges of underdevelopment in the Global South.[132] Adom Getachew has written of the ambitious 'worldmaking' ideas developed by a variety of influential postcolonial political and intellectual figures during this period, who sought to use the United Nations as an arena for securing systematic change to the global economic order in ways which clashed or overlapped with the models for global development offered by the US-led Western and Soviet-led Eastern blocs.[133]

New ideas about the global, post-imperial nature of international development were flourishing not only within the developing world, but within the West too. Created in 1964 by the incoming Wilson government, the Overseas Development Ministry (ODM) symbolized Britain's desire to be seen as a great power which was moving from its colonial past to adopt a post-imperial and truly 'global' approach to overseas development. Barrie Ireton, a former Director General of the ODM's successor organisation, the Department for International Development (DfID), has argued that since the ODM's creation in 1964, Britain's approach to overseas development has been defined by a commitment to 'the reduction of poverty in the poorest countries'.[134] This avowedly 'needs-based' approach to overseas development was a core element of Labour's election-winning 1964 *New Britain* manifesto:

> Labour will create a Ministry of Overseas Development to be responsible not only for our part in Commonwealth development but also for our work in and through the specialist agencies of the United Nations. This new Ministry will help and encourage voluntary action through those organisations that have played such an inspired part in the Freedom from Hunger campaign. We must match their enterprise with Government action to give new hope in the current United Nations Development Decade.[135]

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[132] On the relationship between NAM and the G77 and their role within the Cold War, see Chris Alden, Sally Morphet and Marco Antonio Vieira, 'The Non-Aligned Movement and Group of 77 During the Cold War, 1965-89' in Chris Alden, Sally Morphet and Marco Antonio Vieira, *The South in World Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 57-90.

[133] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019), 178.

[134] Barrie Ireton, *Britain's International Development Policies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

[135] *The New Britain,* Labour Party Manifesto, 1964. Accessed online at http://labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1964/1964-labour-manifesto.shtml on 22 April 2022.

This vision of overseas development, which emphasized the UN as a key partner and vehicle for British overseas development activity and expanded Britain's overseas concerns beyond its (former) empire, was indicative of Labour's broader efforts to imagine a 'New Britain' defined by technological and scientific progress, progressive social reform, and a post-imperial approach to internationalism.[136]

Yet despite this rhetoric, the new ODM would not entirely depart from more established ways of thinking about overseas development. The notion that Britain maintained a special responsibility for development within the Commonwealth remained important, with Secretary of State Barbara Castle acknowledging in a 1965 white paper that 'the reasonable needs of the dependent territories have a first charge on the aid programme'.[137] More fundamentally, Britain's governmental approach to overseas development was developed around an obvious but key assumption, namely that such development would serve Britain's national interest.

As with earlier, colonially-focused approaches to overseas development, the ODM maintained that 'the provision of aid is to our [Britain's] long term advantage': overseas aid was conceptualized as a long-term investment in improving Britain's place in the world, by creating new opportunities for trade, building new markets for British exports and expertise, and contributing to national security.[138] Policymakers like Castle were sincere in their desire to use the ODM as an instrument to reduce global poverty. Yet the ODM's institutional commitment to approaching global development through the lens of Britain's narrow national interest meant that it would inevitably find itself in conflict with any proposals to change the global economic order which might threaten Britain's disproportionately powerful position within the international community.

This position placed Britain in opposition to the transformative economic proposals put forward by representatives of the G77 group within the UN during the 1960s and 1970s. The most prominent of these was the 'New International Economic Order' (NIEO), a set of proposals

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[136] Gerold Krozewski, 'Global Britain and the Post-colonial World: The British Approach to Aid Policies at the 1964 Juncture', *Contemporary British History*, 29:2 (2015), 222-240. See also Rhiannon Vickers, 'Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam', *Journal of Cold War Studies,* 10:2 (2008), 41-70.

[137] *The Work for the New Ministry,* Government White Paper, 1965. Quoted in Ireton, *Britain's International Development Policies,* 39.

[138] *The Work for the New Ministry,* Government White Paper, 1965. Quoted in Ireton, *Britain's International Development Policies,* 39.

designed to rewrite the global terms of international trade in favour of the postcolonial nation-states of the Global South, whose principles were eventually adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in May 1974.[139] Based on a belief that the existing global economic order was structured in a way that impinged on the 'economic sovereignty' of developing countries, the NIEO movement sought to use the UN (particularly its General Assembly) and international law as an instrument to 'redraw the contours of global trade and the inequalities on which it was constituted'.[140] Yet as Nils Gilman and Kevin O'Sullivan have demonstrated, Western reactions to these proposals tended to be either lukewarm or outright hostile: although some governments (like West Germany's Brandt government) and Western NGOs like Oxfam engaged constructively with UN debates and public discussions relating to the proposals, the refusal of the major Western powers to seriously engage with the movement meant that by the late 1970s, the NIEO movement had lost its political momentum.[141] The vision of global development proposed by the NIEO's proponents, which would require a dramatic rebalancing of the relationship between Global North and Global South, was fundamentally unacceptable to Western political elites as they struggled to adapt to the economic challenges such as the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s. Instead, what Getachew has labelled as a 'neoliberal counterrevolution' prevailed, as arguments about the 'economic sovereignty of the state' were ultimately subordinated to the 'disciplining mechanisms of the market' within the UN, via reforms of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).[142]

Recognizing the NEIO lobby's failure to secure legal changes to the global economic order through the UN's General Assembly, G77 members turned to another UN agency, UNESCO, as a promising arena for pursuing its goals. A new set of radical proposals, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), emerged. Building on the intellectual foundations of NIEO, the NWICO debate moved the dispute over the structural inequalities of global development from the economic across to the cultural sphere. On one side of the argument were those who insisted

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[139] 'Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order', resolution adopted at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly, 1 May 1974, United Nations, Official Records of the General Assembly, A/ RES/3201(S-VI). Quoted in Kevin O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 78.
[140] O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment,* 79.
[141] Nils Gilman, 'The New International Economic Order: A Reintroduction', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 6:1 (2015), 1-16; O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment,* 85-88.
[142] Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire,* 173-4.

that the majority of humankind's interests were not served by the existing international media system, which was dominated by Western commercial news agencies, and who believed that UNESCO should pursue and endorse a new information and communication order which respected the right of all sovereign nations to control the 'fair flow' of information within their borders.[143] While supporters of NWICO often varied in the exact solutions that they proposed, the movement broadly argued in favour of national governments' right to play a more active role in regulating and controlling the flow of information into and out of their respective nation-states, in order to ensure that this information was compatible with the broader aims of national self-determination and economic development. On the other side of the debate, NWICO's opponents argued that such proposals threatened press freedom, and were in contradiction to UNESCO's constitution, which stated that UNESCO would 'promote *the free flow* of ideas by word and image'.[144] Closely related to these debates was a related discourse around this time regarding the concept of 'cultural imperialism'.[145] Most associated with the American Marxist scholar Herbert Schiller, the concept was prominently used by proponents of NWICO to explain how the sovereignty of developing world nation-states was impinged upon by the continuing cultural influence of commercial media organisations from the Global North within those states.[146]

These disagreements over 'cultural imperialism', 'freedom of information', and UNESCO's responsibilities and positionality in relation to this debate, became increasingly complex and fiercely contested, dominating UNESCO proceedings for most of the decade between 1975 and 1985.[147] By 1977, UNESCO's Secretary General Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow had sanctioned the formation of an International Commission for the Study of Communication

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[143] Mark Hannah, 'Free Flow versus Fair Flow: Revisiting the New World Information and Communication Order Debates in the Global Era', *Journalism,* 22:1 (2018), 248-264, 252-254.

[144] UNESCO Constitution, Article I.

[145] Diana Lemberg, *Barriers Down: How American Power and Free-Flow Policies Shaped Global Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 154.

[146] Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media Are American* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

[147] For the most in-depth historical account of the NWICO movement so far, see Sarah Nelson, 'Networking Empire: International Organizations, American Power, and the Struggle over Global Communications in the 20th century' (PhD Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2021), 313-364. While there is relatively little historical scholarship focusing specifically on the NWICO debate, there is an extensive literature on the subject, and on the differences between 'free' and 'fair' flow of information in the field of Communications Studies. See for example Divina Frau-Meigs et al, *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics: Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012); Hannah, 'Free Flow versus Fair Flow'; Ulla Carlson, 'The Rise and Fall of NWICO: From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of Multilevel Governance', *Nordicom Review,* 2 (2003), 31-68.

Problems, tasked with the job of developing proposals for a new global information order. The Commission was led by the Irish statesman, human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Seán MacBride. Over the next three years, the MacBride Commission investigated two key issues: whether UNESCO ought to play some role in overseeing the activities of powerful commercial Global North media organisations within the Global South; and the possibility of passing some kind of UNESCO declaration in the name of protecting the safety of journalists working abroad. As will be explored in the following section of this chapter, MacBride would call on the BBCXS to help in this task.

While the MacBride Commission's final report, published in April 1980, was never translated into a concrete set of binding proposals, the potential upheaval to the global information and communication order created by the NWICO discussions created enormous tension within UNESCO. As Diana Lemberg has demonstrated, increasingly influential right-wing US pressure groups such as the Heritage Foundation were virulently anti-MacBride, describing the Commission as a 'Soviet-Third World conspiracy' and labeling MacBride himself as 'one of UNESCO's Moscow aligned radicals'.[148] Within the UK, Rosemary Righter, a leader writer at *The Times* newspaper leading anti-NWICO campaigner who was regularly interviewed by the BBC, argued that NWICO's proposals were antithetical to Western liberal values, and impressed upon Western governments the extent to which 'the majority of the UN's members rejected the values, presumed in 1945 to be universal, which the global organisations had been founded to protect and spread.'[149] These complaints would ultimately contribute to a climate of criticism which informed the US and UK's decisions to leave UNESCO in 1984 and 1985 respectively.[150]

NIEO and NWICO's mutual failure to achieve their transformative goals via the UN illustrate the fundamental differences in how global development was conceptualized in the West and the Global South. While certain groups within the UK, US, and Western Europe (particularly within the NGO sector) demonstrated a genuine interest in the radical proposals put forward at the UN to change the terms of trade between the developed and developing worlds, these groups could not alter Western governments' belief that these proposals represented a threat to their national

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[148] Diana Lemberg, *Barriers Down,* 197.
[149] Rosemary Righter, *Utopia Lost: The United Nations and World Order* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1995), 117.
[150] Diana Lemberg, *Barriers Down,* 198-204.

interests. Indeed, as Kevin O'Sullivan has shown, Western NGOs like Oxfam which initially lent their support to the NIEO altered their positions once it became clear that Western governments would oppose the movement, turning away from campaigns for fundamentally changing the global terms of trade, and instead focusing their efforts on less transformative, less radical forms of activism such as the fair trade campaign, which were relatively compatible with the emerging neoliberal economic order.[151] These episodes help to underline how Western governments conceptualized overseas development throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s: as a practice designed not (or at least not only) to dismantle the structural inequalities between developed and developing world which had been created during the age of empire, but to maintain Western nation-states' structural advantages into the post-imperial era. It is against this broader backdrop that the BBCXS's own changing relationship with UNESCO and the NWICO movement during the 1970s and 1980s must be understood.

From Engagement to Antipathy: The BBCXS's Response to NWICO

The BBCXS provides a unique and revealing vantage point from which to investigate Britain's role in, and response to, the NWICO debate. Indeed, Bush House's shifting relationship with the MacBride Commission across this period helps to illuminate some important, yet often unspoken assumptions which informed Britain's approach to overseas development during the 1970s and early 1980s.

One might be forgiven for assuming that Bush House was relatively uninvolved or unconcerned with NWICO. The BBC's position in relation to NWICO rarely featured in British press coverage on the issue, which was typically framed as a contest between the governments of 'non-aligned' or 'Third World' countries, acting through UNESCO, and an influential lobby of commercial news organisations from across the West, but especially from the United States.[152] The BBCXS, belonging neither to the non-aligned bloc nor the world of commercial news, could easily be seen as somewhat removed from the fray. Nor is much time spent discussing the BBC's response to NWICO in existing official histories of the World Service. Despite writing his book during the thick of the NWICO debate in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Gerard Mansell does not mention it (or, indeed, the UN) at all in *Let Truth Be Told,* while in his 1992 official history, Andrew Walker

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[151] O'Sullivan, *The NGO Moment,* 93.
[152] See for example 'Freedom of information or a licence for sedition?', *The Times*, 17 Nov. 1978, 16.

offers only a few sentences on the subject, explaining that talk of a new information and communication order 'has now died down… mainly because Western countries showed that the remedies proposed were worse than the disease in that they would have circumscribed press freedom'.[153] John Tusa, delivering a lecture at the University College of North Wales in June 1988, made a passing reference to NWICO, described it as an 'effort to circumscribe the work of reporters, to ensure that their copy took on a more "constructive" tone', suggesting that the movement had been partly inspired by Leninist theories about the right of government to control the press.[154] Both of these brief mentions suggest that the World Service approached NWICO as a potentially well-meaning, but essentially misguided, potentially dangerous, and Communist-inspired attempt to curtail media freedoms. Moreover, the critical and somewhat dismissive way that these authors described NWICO in these excerpts suggests that the BBCXS maintained a consistent opposition to the movement from its inception.

Yet a closer look at some of the primary sources available through the BBC archives reveals a more complicated and illuminating story. In fact, Bush House occupied a unique and valuable position within the NWICO debate: as a manifestation of the West's (and specifically Britain's) ongoing preponderant influence over global media in the post-imperial era, the BBCXS might easily be characterized as an instrument of 'cultural imperialism'; yet its status as part of a self-consciously non-commercial 'public service broadcaster' meant that it did not sit neatly alongside the majority of anti-NWICO Western media organisations. Previously unstudied correspondence and minutes from the BBCSXS archives reveal how Bush House navigated this situation, showing how until 1979, the BBCXS maintained good relations with UNESCO and the MacBride Commission, only taking up a more outspoken anti-NWICO stance when the changing domestic and global political context made it expedient to do so.

As early as the summer of 1976, influential figures within the BBCXS were paying close attention to the emerging NWICO proposals, and thinking about the potential benefits that the BBCXS might gain in taking on a more central role within this emerging debate. BBCXS's Chief Publicity Officer E. M. O. Williams collected British press coverage relating to NWICO, annotating these clippings with his own reflections and disseminating them among senior staff

[153] Walker, *Skyful of Freedom,* 162.
[154] John Tusa, 'Freedom and Responsibility in Broadcasting' in *Conversations With the World* (London: BBC Books, 1990), 122.

members. These annotated clippings included a *Sunday Times* editorial, dated July 25th, which described UNESCO's latest proposals to reform the world information order as representing nothing less than the 'mass murder – of the right to the semblance of a free press in developing countries'.[155] Striking a decidedly anti-UN tone, the (anonymous) editorial described UNESCO's efforts towards 'news control' as a typically unhelpful intervention from the UN, which 'has already provided enough reason for an almost unqualified cynicism about the objectivity of UN organisations, or their reliability in defence of freedom'.[156] The editorial ends by claiming that 'Britain can do more than most' to fight against the 'repellent alliance' of 'totalitarians of left and right' driving NWICO: most notably, by reversing its decisions to cut the budget of the BBCXS, which was described as 'a substantially better candidate for sacrosanctity, in the new round of cuts, than the overseas aid programme'.[157]

It is unsurprising that the BBCXS's Chief Publicity Officer would want to draw attention to this kind of ebullient support for Bush House being published in a leading newspaper like *The Times*. In a note attached to the editorial, Williams called it 'most useful, relevant, and powerful'.[158] However, what is perhaps more surprising is that Williams seems to have wholeheartedly embraced the (rather tenuous) causal link made in the editorial between challenging the efforts 'news control' apparently being championed by UNESCO and increasing the BBCXS's budget. In a memo sent directly to BBCXS Managing Director Gerard Mansell on 28 July (three days after his circulation of the *Sunday Times* editorial), Williams made the case that the BBCXS ought to openly offer its support to the anti-NWICO movement. Arguing that '[t]he western news agencies and newspapers are alarmed and anxious' at the prospect of the NWICO lobby dominating UNESCO, Williams declared that 'they await a lead: no-one is better qualified to give it than the chief of the most prestigious disseminator of information throughout the world - the X.S of the BBC.'[159] In Williams' view, there were good pragmatic as well as idealistic reasons that the BBCXS should take a leading role within the emerging anti-NWICO lobby, since doing so would 'make clear, by implication, to the FCO in the most powerful and

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[155] BBC Written Archives, Centre, Caversham (hereafter BBCWAC): E40/347/1, Broadcasting to Communist Europe, 'Here is the News - Official', *Sunday Times*, July 25th 1976.
[156] 'Here is the News - Official', *Sunday Times*.
[157] 'Here is the News - Official', *Sunday Times*.
[158] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, E.M.O. Williams to MDXB, July 28th 1976.
[159] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, E.M.O. Williams to MDXB, July 28th 1976.

public way, that this is no time to cut X.S'.[160] Made in the context of the CPRS budget cut proposals (discussed in detail in Chapter 1 of this thesis), Williams' remarks show how the BBCXS approached NWICO as a potential battleground on which it might prove its continuing relevance and value to the UK government. Yet Williams' ambition for the BBCXS to become the flag-bearer for global anti-NWICO sentiment was to remain largely unfulfilled, at least during this earlier period.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Williams was far from alone in his conviction that Bush House ought to adopt a critical stance towards UNESCO over its interest in developing NWICO-related proposals. BBC leaders did occasionally publicly express their NWICO-related fears: in a speech given to the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers' Association of Britain February 1979, BBC Director General Ian Trethowan argued that 'the UNESCO proposals would have had the effect of giving carte blanche to any government to insist that the only source of news in its country would be its own news agency'.[161] However, these kinds of remarks, made at small, private events, were a far cry from the kind of world-leading anti-NWICO stance that Williams seems to have had in mind. The BBC's archival files on NWICO show that Williams believed that the BBCXS should actively rally Britain's main news agencies and newspapers behind them, suggesting that Bush House ought to organize a series of conferences to 'examine the growing threat to press freedom throughout the world', and set up an international 'watch committee' to 'monitor the various moves to stifle news gathering and to make periodic reports on these developments'.[162] Instead, the BBCXS positioned itself as a critical friend to the MacBride Commission during this earlier period of the NWICO debate – one which sought to influence the final shape of the Commission's report, rather than ignore or oppose it from the outset.

In January 1979, four of the BBCXS's most senior staff (Managing Director Gerard Mansell, Director of News and Current Affairs Richard Francis, Controller of English Services Austen Kark, and Controller of the Future Policy Group Stephen Hearst) held a cordial meeting with UNESCO's Seán MacBride at Bush House.[163] According to the meeting minutes, MacBride

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[160] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, E.M.O. Williams to MDXB, July 28th 1976.
[161] BBCWAC, R78/1205/1, News: UNESCO Declaration and Macbride Commission, 'Speech by Ian Trethowan, Director General, BBC on Wednesday February 21, 1979 at the Annual Banquet of The Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers' Association of Britain at Marlborough House, London SW1', 28 February 1979.
[162] BBCWAC, E40/347/1, E.M.O. Williams to MDXB, July 28th 1976.
[163] BBCWAC, R78/1205/1, 'Meeting with Sean McBride [sic]', 19 January 1979.

explained that the purpose of his visit was 'to seek the BBC's help in preparing the case for the creation of an international charter for journalism, analogous with arrangement for the protection of Human Rights', with MacBride expressing the hope that 'the BBC would jot down some guiding principles covering the relationship between broadcasters and government' which might help him in the 'tremendous task' of trying to draw up a universal code of conduct to protect both journalistic freedoms and the interests of their global readers and listeners.[164] Clearly, the MacBride Commission, which was tasked with finding a solution to the problems raised by the NWICO movement, considered the BBCXS as a valuable partner, rather than an opponent, in that process. Indeed, MacBride's desire to secure the BBCXS's input into his Commission suggests that he believed that Bush House could and should play a role in helping to define a set of principles about the relationship between government, the media, and the public which had genuinely 'global' aspirations. As such, it helps to highlight the BBC's prominent status within the imagination of key UNESCO decision-makers like MacBride as a potential source of broadcasting and journalistic principles which were potentially universal in their benevolence and utility. While the BBCXS representatives at the meeting might have been sceptical about some of MacBride's proposals, in particular the idea that UNESCO ought to be empowered to create a special, protected status for journalists within international law, the minutes clearly demonstrate that the relationship between UNESCO and the BBC was far from antagonistic at this stage.[165]

The idea that the BBCXS and UNESCO enjoyed constructive and friendly relations in relation to the NWICO movement during this time is further evidenced by a 'debate' that took place between Seán MacBride and Charles Curran, a former Managing Director of the BBCXS and Director General of the BBC, in the pages of the BBC-published *The Listener* magazine in August 1979.[166] Based on a conversation between the two which had been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, the article brought MacBride and Curran together to discuss their views on the relationship between modern media and the 'exercise of power' around the world.[167] While characterized as a 'debate' in its title, the tone of the article is in fact far more collegial than adversarial, with both Curran and MacBride emphasizing areas of broad agreement between their

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[164] BBCWAC, R78/1205/1, 'Meeting with Sean McBride [sic]'.
[165] Ibid.
[166] 'Information is Power—a debate between Curran and MacBride', *The Listener*, August 2, 1979, 141-142.
[167] Ibid., 141.

views. For example, consider this excerpt on the subject of the relationship between journalism and democracy:

> Curran: …for me, the role of the media, whether we're talking about the press or about broadcasting, is a part of the total democratic, educative process. It seems to me that the function of the journalist, at least in part, is to inform the public which is going to influence, decide, direct the major decision of politicians. I suspect that you would agree!
>
> MacBride: I agree 100 percent with you and I'd probably go further than you. I think that journalism, particularly investigative journalism, has become part of the essential process of democratic rule in the world.[168]

In further remarks, MacBride even declared his willingness to provide 'a free commercial on the World Service BBC', which he described as 'extremely good, extremely objective…and I think this is recognized in the Third World'.[169] While Curran and MacBride expressed some disagreements, for example on the question of whether journalists should be provided with a 'special status' or licensed by either national governments or the UN, the conversation was clearly based on mutual respect, and a shared belief in the educative and uplifting effect that media could and should have in the developing world. The complimentary tone of Curran and MacBride's conversation in *The Listener* helps to underline how the BBC and UNESCO maintained a positive, polite, and somewhat productive relationship up to this point.

Yet by the early 1980s, the BBCXS's stance towards the MacBride Commission, and towards UNESCO more generally, had shifted from courteous engagement to open criticism and opposition. Influential individuals like Hugh Lunghi, who after a long career at the top of the BBCXS became editor of the leading human rights journal *Index on Censorship* in 1980, used their platforms to openly criticize the MacBride Commission's proposals. In an editorial published in March 1981, Lunghi argued that NWICO was distracting from the important work that Western journalists and broadcasters were already undertaking to address 'the North-South imbalance in communications resources', explaining that 'practical help in training, equipment an funds amounting to several million pounds worth have been extended to Third World journalists'.[170] Complaining that in recent years 'UNESCO has greatly reduced its practical help to third world media', Lunghi implied that the NWICO debate ignored and detracted from the West's existing,

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[168] Ibid., 141.
[169] Ibid., 142.
[170] Hugh Lunghi, 'A New Order?', *Index on Censorship*, 10:1 (1981), 3.

successful efforts to help develop media and communications infrastructure within the developing Third World.[171]

Another leading British critic of NWICO was Frank Barber, who had spent the majority of his career working for the BBC African Service (and, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, had run the Rhodesian Service between 1965 and 1969). In an article published in the same issue of *Index on Censorship* as Lunghi's editorial entitled 'UNESCO: Threat to Press Freedom', Barber railed against the MacBride Commission's interim report as a prime example of 'Unescospeak', a 'bundle of pretentious humbug' whose 'vocabulary is largely drawn from American sociology and whose moral assumptions have been provided by Soviet doublethink'.[172] Depicting UNESCO as not just an inefficient and bureaucratic proprietor of 'turgid opaqueness', but as having become obsessed with the neo-Marxist concept of 'cultural imperialism', Barber fiercely criticized the report as 'rambling and repetitive', concluding that ' it is by no means certain that Mr MacBride and his 15 colleagues knew for sure what they were supposed to be investigating'.[173]

Both Barber and Lunghi's anti-MacBride polemics help to demonstrate how a strongly held anti-UNESCO sentiment had taken root among some of Bush House's most respected and influential former employees. Indeed, by the middle of 1981, opposition to the MacBride Commission was not just an opinion held by leading 'elder statesmen' associated with the BBCXS like Barber and Lunghi: it was official BBCXS policy.

Just as E. M. O. Williams had hoped, Bush House eventually came to align itself openly with the broader anti-NWICO movement, and in particular with the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), an organisation created in 1976 by a coalition of academics, political, and commercial actors, mostly from the United States, which characterized NWICO as a dangerous threat to press freedoms and freedom of expression.[174] In May 1981, The WPFC organized the 'Voices of Freedom' Conference in Talloires, France, bringing together sixty-three media leaders from 21 countries to 'take the initiative and to announce the principles to which a free press subscribes' in response to the 'proposed curbs of press freedom' advocated by the NWICO's

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[171] Lunghi, 'A New Order?', 3.
[172] Frank Barber, 'UNESCO: Threat to Press Freedom', *Index on Censorship,* 10:1 (1981), 15-22, 18.
[173] Barber, 'Threat to Press Freedom', 20.
[174] Lemberg, *Barriers Down,* 189-90.

supporters.[175] Participants of the conference unanimously agreed a joint declaration, known as the 'Declaration of Talloires', stating that 'we believe that the time has come within UNESCO and other intergovernmental bodies to abandon attempts to regulate new content and formulate rules for the press'.[176] The list of signatories included the BBCXS's Controller of the Future Policy Group, Stephen Hearst.

Documents from the BBC archives illustrate how BBCXS officials also became increasingly critical of UNESCO in their internal correspondence during the 1980s. In a February 1984 memorandum, Head of International Broadcasting and Audience Research Graham Mytton noted his belief that 'the "cure" proposed within UNESCO is worse than the disease' (a phrase which, as previously noted, was subsequently used by Andrew Walker in his 1992 history of the World Service).[177] Controller of Public Affairs and International Relations David Barlow clearly agreed, writing in a July 1984 note that 'we should not have anything to do with UNESCO but sup with a very long spoon'.[178] At a Board of Management meeting held a month later, Barlow warned colleagues that while UNESCO might be resuming attempts to build closer links with the BBC, this was 'inadvisable while the organisation continued on the road towards a "new information order".'[179] These internal documents clearly demonstrate to the BBCXS's keenness to distance itself from UNESCO by this time – a significant change from some five years earlier, when it had shown a willingness to engage constructively with the MacBride Commission.

While the BBCXS clearly became more overtly critical of UNESCO during this period, the intellectual basis of its criticism does not seem to have shifted dramatically. A speech delivered by BBC Director General Ian Trethowan at the Royal Overseas League in February 1981 helps to illustrate this. In his remarks, Trethowan largely restated the argument which he had made in his speech to the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers' Association two years earlier, where he had outlined his concerns about the sympathetic response within UNESCO towards the NWICO

[175] 'The Declaration of Talloires', Booklet published by the World Press Freedom Committee, 1981, 1-5. Accessed online at https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/5110323/declaration-of-talloires-the-world-press-freedom-committee on April 4 2021.

[176] 'The Declaration of Talloires', 5.

[177] BBCWAC, R78/2,390/1: News - Unesco Declaration and Macbride Commission, Graham Mytton to D.P.A., 13 February 1984

[178] BBCWAC, R78/2,390/1, 'Note for File About UNESCO', David Barlow, Controller, Public Affairs and International Relations, 31 July 1984.

[179] BBCWAC, R78/2,390/1, Board of Management Meeting Minutes, 20 Aug 1984, 513.

movement. The speech even repeated parts of the earlier speech word for word, including a section where he voiced his concerns that 'UNESCO proposals would have had the effect of giving 'carte blanche to any government to insist that the only source of news in its country would be its own news agency'.[180] Yet what *was* different about the Royal Overseas League speech was its willingness to directly criticize the MacBride Commission. Coming almost a year after the publication of the MacBride Commission's Final Report on the Study of Communications Problems in April 1980, Trethowan's Royal Overseas League speech announced the BBC's clear and unequivocal opposition to the Report's findings, characterizing it as 'an institutionalized move which seeks to establish an inter-governmental scheme nominally to protect journalists on foreign assignments, but in practice to limit their freedom.'[181] This critical statement stands in stark contrast to the cordial welcome that MacBride had received at Bush House just two years earlier, highlighting how the BBC had become more willing to openly criticize UNESCO by the time that the MacBride Commission had published its final report.

By the autumn of 1983, the BBCXS was actively encouraging the Thatcher government not to engage with the MacBride Commission or the wider NWICO movement any further. Minutes from a BBCXS archival file on 'Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Organisations, 1983-4' show that on 18 October 1983, Gerard Mansell attended a meeting to discuss how the UK should approach the upcoming 22nd UNESCO general conference taking place in Paris a week later.[182] Also in attendance were the Foreign Office's Assistant Under-Secretary of State Lord Nicholas Gordon-Lennox; an unnamed official from the Overseas Development Ministry; the renowned social scientist, Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Press and Chairman of Reuters Founders' Share Company Lord Oliver McGregor; and Sir Edward Pickering, former editor of the *Daily Express* and chairman of the Commonwealth Press Union.[183] According to the minutes, in the meeting, both McGregor and Mansell 'warned against the dangers in accepting the evolutionary nature of any NWICO', urging Gordon-Lennox to encourage the UK's representative

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[180] Ian Trethowan, 'The BBC and International Broadcasting: A Speech given by Sir Ian Trethowan, Director General, BBC to the Royal Overseas League in London, Monday 2nd February 1981', London: BBC Publication, 1981. 10.

[181] Trethowan, 'The BBC and International Broadcasting', 10.

[182] BBCWAC, E40/624: Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Organisations, 'Summary record of the parliamentary under-secretary of state's meeting with Sir E Pickering at 5pm on 18 October 1983'.

[183] BBCWAC, E40/624, 'Summary record of the parliamentary under-secretary of state's meeting with Sir E Pickering at 5pm on 18 October 1983'.

at the upcoming UNESCO conference, Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, to voice the UK's opposition to NWICO.[184] Mansell also provided Gordon-Lennox with a document outlining the BBCXS's overseas development work, including a list of the training projects run by the BBC in Third World countries and of journalists from developing countries who had attended training courses run by the BBC and paid for by the ODM.

Though the details of this list are not included in the meeting minutes, the very act of providing the UK government with this information suggests that the BBCXS considered its overseas development work as an important rebuttal to NWICO. All of the institutions represented at this meeting (the UK government, the BBC, Reuters, and the Commonwealth Press Union) had a vested interest in ensuring that Britain could present a convincing counter-argument to NWICO in Paris – one which mobilized evidence of the extent and effectiveness of their existing efforts as overseas development actors, in the hope that this would persuade others at the conference that NWICO was a misguided and unnecessary step. By providing the UK government with evidence designed to challenge the need for an NWICO, the BBCXS contributed to a broader British effort to prevent UNESCO from reaching any conclusions which defined the current international communication order as the product of Western cultural imperialism, or called into question Britain and the West's overall approach to overseas development.

How should we explain the BBCXS's shift from cautious but constructive engagement with UNESCO over NWICO in the late 1970s to outright hostility? As has previously been mentioned, there is evidence of some sympathy within Bush House towards the notion that Third World actors' criticisms of the existing international communication order were, at least to some extent, justified.[185] Yet ultimately, the proposals put forward by the MacBride Commission were considered unacceptable by the BBCXS. Not only did the prospect of an NWICO threaten the BBC's hard-won competitive advantage as an influential international broadcaster with an established global news-gathering network: it also suggested that the overseas development work that the BBCXS pursued alongside existing partners like the ODM and the Commonwealth was

[184] BBCWAC, E40/624, 'Summary record of the parliamentary under-secretary of state's meeting with Sir E Pickering at 5pm on 18 October 1983', undated.
[185] See for example Walker, *Skyful of Freedom,* 162; Tusa, 'Freedom and Responsibility in Broadcasting, 121-122.

too unambitious and too UK-focused to actually make a meaningful contribution to the task of tackling structural inequality between the developed and developing world.

Domestic political factors appear to have played a critical role in informing the nature and timing of the BBCXS's institutional response to NWICO. Bush House's cautious engagement with UNESCO transformed into active opposition at almost exactly the same time that the UK experienced a change of government in May 1979. During the Callaghan government, the UK remained committed, at least rhetorically, to the notion that the United Nations remained the best forum for discussing and organizing international responses to global problems like poverty, inequality, and development. In his 1978 book *Human Rights,* the then Foreign Secretary David Owen depicted the UN as an imperfect but legitimate and somewhat effective arena for addressing these problems, criticizing its failures in reducing conflict in the world, but praising it as an 'effective and practical instrument' for addressing the global scourge of hunger and disease.[186] Indeed, Owen argued that despite its imperfections, the UN represented the 'best sort of world organisation we [Britain] are likely to get':[187]

> The [UN] charter was drafted at a time when Western influence and British prestige were at their zenith. Were it to be rebuilt now from scratch, the structure of the organisation would be very different. It would not be so favourable to Britain or to many of our nearest allies. Britain would be unlikely to be one of the five permanent members of the Security Council.[188]

While Owen's pro-UN stance was particularly pronounced, it was characteristic of Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s which acknowledged the UN's role as a global force for good, and a legitimate and effective arena for pursuing Britain's overseas development goals.[189] Alongside this longer-term intellectual commitment was the uncomfortable fact that in 1976, Britain had been forced to turn to a UN agency, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to bail out its struggling economy.[190] Against this domestic political backdrop, and at a time in the late 1970s when the BBCXS was constantly fearful of government-sanctioned cuts to its budget, the BBCXS's initially respectful and constructive approach towards UNESCO and the MacBride

[186] David Owen, *Human Rights* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), 98.
[187] Owen, *Human Rights,* 102.
[188] Owen, *Human Rights,* 102-3.
[189] *The New Britain,* Labour Party Manifesto, 1964. Accessed online at http://labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1964/1964-labour-manifesto.shtml on 22 April 2022.
[190] Stephen Pickford, 'Britain's Big Bailout', *The World Today,* 72: 6 (2016), 27.

Commission made strategic sense, even if many in Bush House were immediately sceptical about the prospect of a UNESCO-led attempt to reform or revolutionize the global media order.

Yet after the election of the first Thatcher government in May 1979, it made better strategic sense for the BBCXS to adopt a more vocally anti-UNESCO stance. Taking their lead from the Reagan administration in the United States, the Thatcher government adopted an increasingly hostile stance towards UNESCO throughout the early 1980s, responding sympathetically to complaints about the 'corruption' and 'politicization' of the UN within the pages of influential right-wing newspapers like *The Times* and *Telegraph*. The NWICO issue, which both the British and American press tended to frame as a battle between the attackers and defenders of the 'freedom of the press', was an ideal subject upon which the BBCXS could find common ground with the Thatcher government: a valuable commodity during a period in which, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the BBC and the government were often characterized as being at war with each other.

There is further evidence to suggest that the BBCXS's decision to back the Thatcher government's decision to oppose NWICO, and its refusal to criticize its eventual decision to withdraw from UNESCO entirely, were motivated as much by practical and strategic concerns as by idealistic or ideological ones. In a letter to Minister for Overseas Development Timothy Raison written on December 20th 1985, the BBCXS's Controller of Public Affairs and International Relations David Barlow stated his personal disappointment at the government's decision to leave UNESCO, but noted that 'I very much hope that we may be part of any process which involves discussion about how monies up to now spent on UNESCO may be reallocated for other aid projects abroad.'[191] BBCXS personnel even argued that Bush House ought to secure a portion of this funding on the basis that its work represented a better example of UNESCO's original values and principles than UNESCO itself. In a note to the Foreign Office written on January 30th 1986, the BBCXS's Controller of Resources and Administration argued that 'we see a clear relationship between the aims of UNESCO – as expressed by its founders – and those of the BBC in general and the External Services in particular', arguing that the BBCXS 'follow these guiding principles in a very practical sense' before listing a variety of educational and development-focused BBCXS

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[191] BBCWAC, E40/625/1, Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Organisations, 1985-1986, David Barlow, BBC Controller for Public Affairs and International Relations, to Mr. T. Raison of Overseas Development Ministry, 20th December 1985.

programming ' in line…with UNESCO's work'.[192]Yet the BBCXS's hopes of securing a financial windfall from the UK's withdrawal from UNESCO were soon dashed, with the Foreign Office informing them that the BBC was ineligible for this funding, since 'it was Government policy all along to re-allocate any savings from our contribution [to UNESCO] through the Aid programme'.[193] While ultimately unsuccessful in achieving its aim of securing more funding for the BBCXS, this correspondence shows how within Bush House, the notion that the World Service represented a purer, 'better' manifestation of UNESCO's original principles (as laid out in its 1945 constitution) than UNESCO itself remained prevalent, even if only as a rhetorical ploy to try and secure greater financial support.

Britain would not rejoin UNESCO until 1997, as part of the newly elected Blair government's 'ethical foreign policy' strategy.[194] By this time, any hopes that Global South actors might use UNESCO as an arena suited to mounting a challenge to the existing global economic or information order had dissipated. The World Service took a leading role in transforming the UK's new-found enthusiasm for UN-based overseas development activity into action, collaborating with UNESCO to create programming like the BBC Pashto Service's groundbreaking development-focused radio soap opera series *Naway Kor, Naway Jawand* (New Home, New Life) discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.[195] In recent years, UNESCO and the BBC World Service have intensified this collaboration, working together to create a nine-part television adaptation of UNESCO's 'General History of Africa' book collection (disseminated by both BBC World television and UNESCO), and partnering on the UNESCO Global Education Coalition's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[196] UNESCO has also provided funding to the World Service's dedicated international development charity, the BBC World Service Trust (renamed BBC Media Action in 2011), to conduct training workshops for commercial broadcasters in developing

[192] BBCWAC, E40/625/1, David Witherow (Controller of Resources and Administration) to P.R.M. Hinchcliffe, Information Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, January 30th 1986.
[193] BBCWAC, E40/625/1, P.R.M. Hinchcliffe, Information Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to David Witherow, March 11th, 1986.
[194] Victoria Honeyman, 'New Labour's Overseas Development Aid Policy: Charity or Self-Interest?' *Contemporary British History,* 33:3 (2019), 313-335.
[195] Colin Power, *The Power of Education: Education for All, Development, Globalisation and UNESCO* (Singapore: Springer, 2014), 23.
[196] 'Watch on BBC World News: nine-part series based on UNESCO's 'General History of Africa' book collection', UNESCO website, accessed online at https://en.unesco.org/news/watch-bbc-world-news-nine-part-series-based-unesco-s-general-history-africa-book-collection on 28 April 2022; 'BBC World Service', UNESCO Global Education Coalition website, accessed online at https://en.unesco.org/covid19/resources/bbc on 28 April 2022.

countries such as Kenya to build their capacity to respond effectively during humanitarian disasters.[197] The close working relationship between UNESCO and the BBC as partners in global development since the UK rejoined UNESCO in 1997 has pushed the memory of the World Service's antipathy towards UNESCO during the 1980s into the background. Yet understanding how and why Britain and the BBC's relationship with UNESCO has ebbed and flowed since the 1960s provides a valuable perspective allowing new, more complex understandings of Britain's relationship with the UN, the Global South, and approaches to overseas development to emerge.

Conclusion

The BBCXS's changing relationship with UNESCO during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s helps to illuminate some key themes within both the history of the BBCXS, and of Britain's post-imperial approach to international relations and global development more broadly.

Firstly, the BBCXS's stance towards UNESCO closely and consciously mirrored that of contemporary UK governments, undermining the BBC's perennial claim to be independent from and impartial towards the policies and preferences of the UK government of the time. In adopting a constructive and respectful stance towards the MacBride Commission before May 1979, before shifting to a critical and ultimately hostile position towards UNESCO by the mid-1980s, Bush House recognized the potential value or goodwill that it might generate for itself within Whitehall over the NWICO debate by ensuring that it positioned itself as a semi-detached yet staunch ally of the government of the time. This is particularly notable during the mid-1980s, a period in which the BBC and the Thatcher government are usually regarded as having been irrevocably opposed to each other's understanding of the proper relationship between the BBC and the state. The NWICO story helps to illustrate how the BBCXS did not remain impartial on major geopolitical questions, and was willing to directly provide support to the UK government on international issues when it perceived that doing so made good strategic sense.

More broadly, the NWICO debate helps to illuminate the BBCXS's desire to project itself as an active and effective overseas development actor during this period – one which, alongside key partners like the Overseas Development Ministry and the Commonwealth Press Union,

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[197] 'UNESCO partners with BBC Media Action on lifeline communication training in Kisumu County, Kenya', Unesco webite, accessed online at https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-partners-bbc-media-action-lifeline-communication-training-kisumu-county-kenya on 28 April 2022.

believed that British expertise, leadership, and 'know-how' were a necessary prerequisite. In making the case against NWICO, BBCXS actors and supporters consistently argued that NWICO's transformative approach to tackling global inequalities was unnecessary, and would cause more harm than good. It positioned the BBC at the heart of British efforts to provide training and technology which could help 'Third World' countries towards their development goals, without threatening Britain's privileged position within the United Nations or the existing global economic and information order. It also provided evidence to support the anti-NWICO lobby's argument that existing, Western-led efforts to support media development in the Global South were both benevolent and sufficient. It was only after UNESCO abandoned its efforts to encourage a systematic reform of this existing order in the 1990s, instead moving towards more 'practical' methods in line with those advocated by Western states from the 1970s, that Britain and the BBC became willing to lend their support once more.

The NWICO debate thus shows how the BBCXS's post-imperial mission to act as a global development actor and 'gift to the world' was constructed, enacted, and explained within a broader framework for global governance, paying close attention to development-related proposals and debates taking place within the UN. While Global South nations sought to use the UN's institutions to transform the global economic order, the UN remained an international organisation whose purpose and limits had predominantly been determined by the Western powers who had created it in the 1940s, and who could effectively thwart any attempt to use the UN to challenge or undermine their preponderant power. Against this backdrop, the BBCXS took on a role in resisting any efforts by representative or supporters of the Global South to use UNESCO as a tool for forcing Western nations and corporations to change their approach to media and communications in the 'developing world'. By opposing NWICO and providing material and moral support to the UK government in its efforts to discredit UNESCO, the BBCXS helped to justify Britain's paternalistic claim to be acting in the best interests of the 'developing world', despite its opposition towards this attempt to genuinely transform the global media landscape.

Chapter Six: A Brotherhood of Broadcasters? Overseas Development, the Commonwealth and the BBC World Service, 1965-1999

In a speech delivered to the Royal Commonwealth Society in November 1977, BBCXS Managing Director Gerard Mansell reflected on the BBC's support for the Commonwealth. After reminding his audience of the BBC's role in first introducing radio broadcasting to Commonwealth countries across Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, Mansell turned to focus on the present day, declaring that 'even today there are several dozen BBC or ex-BBC staff working in Third World countries which are Commonwealth members, and Commonwealth broadcasters - engineers, producers, management executives – continue to attend BBC courses every year.'[1] The BBC's ongoing commitment to providing training and expertise across the Commonwealth was a clear source of pride.

Special praise was reserved for the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), which Mansell called 'the most close-knit and friendly of all international broadcasting bodies'.[2] Explaining to his audience that the CBA 'contains as its members many organisations that were originally modelled on the BBC and operating on the same principles', Mansell celebrated the BBCXS's prominent role within the contemporary organisation. While recognizing that relationships between the BBC and national broadcasters across the Commonwealth had changed since the days of the empire, he nevertheless described the CBA as a fraternal and intimate organisation, 'a sort of brotherhood of broadcasters who speak the same broadcasting language, see the importance of broadcasting in the same light and seek to abide by the same values within the limits imposed upon them by the circumstance of their own countries'.[3]

But what exactly were these 'same values' that Mansell referred to? By the time of his speech in 1977, the vast differences between Commonwealth member states made the notion of a shared set of *political* values wholly unrealistic.[4] Yet the Commonwealth and the CBA endured -

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[1] Gerard Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain in the Commonwealth: Implications for External Broadcasting of the "Think Tank" Report' (Article based on address to Royal Commonwealth Society, November 3, 1977)*, Round Table: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth*, Volume 68, Issue 269 (1978), 48-54, 48.

[2] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain', 48.

[3] Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain', 48.

[4] Sue Onslow, 'The Commonwealth and the Cold War, Neutralism, and Non-Alignment', *The International History Review,* 37:5 (2015), 1059-1082, 1064.

according to Mansell, still united by a common history which provided a durable basis for practical co-operation to continue in the post-imperial era.

This chapter critically evaluates Mansell's claim regarding the existence of a post-imperial, Commonwealth-based 'brotherhood of broadcasters', examining the complexities and contradictions of the BBC's relationship with the Commonwealth between 1965 and 1999. It highlights the close personal and institutional links that were forged between the two organisations across this period, as both sought to shake off their historical associations with empire and redefine themselves as independent, post-imperial, and genuinely 'global' organisations. Beyond this, it demonstrates how the ideas and institutions of the 'official' Commonwealth, as they were reformulated during and after the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965, were broadly embraced and subtly promoted by the BBCXS. Perhaps even more significantly, this chapter is the first to explore how and why the World Service became heavily invested in the unofficial or 'People's Commonwealth' during this period. Operating as one of many non-governmental actors which maintained old Commonwealth connections and cultivated new networks for exchanging ideas, technology, and personnel, I argue that the BBCXS took on a unique and active role in supporting and promoting the Commonwealth's continued existence during this period.

In its opening section, this chapter explores how and why a diverse range of British state and non-state actors, including the BBC, maintained their support for the Commonwealth after 1965. Engaging with new historical thinking about the significance of the 'unofficial' or 'People's Commonwealth', it examines how contemporary British supporters of the Commonwealth conceived of the organisation as a valuable network for hastening or encouraging economic development within the former empire, while simultaneously maintaining or protecting Britain's global reputation and influence within the postcolonial Global South. Next, the chapter analyses some of the ways in which the BBCXS engaged with, and contributed to, the Commonwealth's overseas development work since the 1960s, explaining why Bush House developed a stronger working relationship with the Commonwealth than with other contemporary international organisations such as UNESCO. Finally, using previously overlooked source material drawn from the CBA's official journal COMBROAD, as well as newly collected testimony from former World Service employee and CBA head Elizabeth Smith, the chapter examines how the CBA helped contribute to the World Service's emergence as a major player in the overseas development sector

by the end of the 1990s. In doing so, it demonstrates how throughout the period 1965-1999, and especially during the 1990s, the Commonwealth served as an important transnational space in which the World Service could position and promote itself as an overseas development actor, burnishing its reputation as a pillar of Britain's post-imperial approach to benevolent internationalism.

'Gigantic Farce' or Global Force for Good? Understanding British Support for the Post-Imperial Commonwealth

Support for the Commonwealth remained a constant, though not uncontroversial, dimension of mainstream British politics throughout the second half of the twentieth century. There have been times in which this commitment has been called into question: Camilla Schofield has powerfully demonstrated how an influential strand of post-imperial Conservatism, often associated with Enoch Powell, came to view Britain's continued membership of the Commonwealth as a millstone around the country's neck and a danger to its future, which might obligate Britain to provide aid to its former colonies to its own detriment, and open up British society to mass immigration and multiculturalism from the (non-white) Commonwealth.[5] One might also think of Margaret Thatcher's capacity for frustrating and infuriating her fellow Commonwealth Heads of State, for example by refusing to sign off on a joint programme of economic sanctions aimed at South Africa in 1986 which all forty-eight of the Commonwealth's other member states had agreed upon (an episode which was memorably brought to life in a 2020 episode of Netflix's hit historical drama series, *The Crown*).[6] Yet overwhelmingly, support for Britain's continued involvement in the Commonwealth has remained a significant, if often softly spoken, cornerstone of British foreign policy throughout the post-war era.

August British institutions including the Royal Family and the BBC have played a key role in promoting the Commonwealth's value (and continued existence) to the British public since the 1960s. Both have regularly teamed up to deliver the annual Commonwealth Day radio and television broadcasts, while the BBC also broadcasts coverage of the Commonwealth Games every

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[5] Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 140-207.

[6] '48:1', Series 4 Episode 8 of Netflix series *The Crown,* first aired 15 November 2020.

four years.[7] The uncontroversial nature of the BBC's role in promoting the Commonwealth to this day through these broadcasts is illustrative of the Commonwealth's status within British politics and society as a benign, if generally overlooked international organisation.[8]

Recent years have seen a renaissance in interest in, and support for, the Commonwealth as an influential lobby on the right of British politics have sought to talk up the Commonwealth's potential to serve as an alternative or more suitable global market for British trade and exports in response to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.[9] The seriousness of this suggestion has been severely questioned, with historians like Philip Murphy providing significant evidence to dismiss the Commonwealth's credentials as a possible replacement for the EU as the UK's leading international political and economic partner.[10] Yet these Brexit-informed arguments in favour of maintaining or deepening Britain's Commonwealth ties are but one strand within a stronger thread of pro-Commonwealth belief and activism which has run through British politics and society since the mid-1960s.

Support for the Commonwealth was a cornerstone of the first Wilson government's approach to international affairs, and in particular to overseas development. As discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, Labour won the election in 1964 making the promise to help build a 'New Britain', jettisoning the colonial pretensions which led to the Suez Crisis in 1956, avoiding British involvement in the emerging Vietnam war, and implementing major structural changes to government such as the creation of a new Overseas Development Ministry.[11] Yet the Commonwealth remained a cornerstone of Labour's approach to diplomacy and overseas development. As Charlotte Riley has shown, the ODM was a descendant of, rather than a complete departure from, Labour's 'colonial development' policies of the 1940s, with key figures like

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[7] Simon Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 227-8.

[8] Philip Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes: The Myth of the Commonwealth* (London: Hurst, 2018), 16.

[9] For example, in a major policy speech delivered at Chatham House on December 2 2016, then Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson declared that after Brexit, Britain would focus on 'seizing the moment to campaign for openness and open markets across the globe, beginning with some of those dynamic commonwealth economies that are already queuing up to do free trade deals.' Boris Johnson, 'Beyond Brexit: a Global Britain', December 2 2016. Accessed online at https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/beyond-brexit-a-global-britain on 29 July 2021.

[10] Philip Murphy has argued that from a British perspective, the post-imperial Commonwealth represents something of a paper tiger, '…better described in terms of collective imagination, not to say fantasy.' Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes,* 12.

[11] Rhiannon Vickers, 'Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam', *Journal of Cold War Studies,* 10:2 (2008), 41–70.

Barbara Castle and Judith Hart recognizing the Commonwealth's continued role as a disproportionately important site of British overseas development aid and activity despite the end of formal empire.[12]

Labour's vision of the post-imperial Commonwealth as a special site for the practice and performance of British benevolence overseas was shared by actors from the NGO sphere. As Jodi Burkett has demonstrated, the idea that the Commonwealth represented a special, particularly promising arena in which British actors could enact radical social and economic change abroad in the post-imperial era captured the imagination of activist organisations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Anti-Apartheid Movement during the 1950s and 1960s.[13] Burkett shows how both the CND and the AAM, while pursuing explicitly 'progressive' and 'anti-imperialist' causes, conceptualized the post-imperial Commonwealth as a 'means by which Britain could maintain its international position'. [14] To these groups, the Commonwealth represented an ideal canvas upon which a new, post-imperial image of Britain and Britishness could be projected. While they staunchly and deliberately distanced themselves from Britain's colonial past, these groups nevertheless maintained a belief in Britain's right and responsibility to provide moral leadership on the world stage.

Crucially, it seems that support for the post-imperial Commonwealth was not only the preserve of a small collection of cosmopolitan, politically active minority groups, but a genuinely popular phenomenon within British society more broadly. Anna Bocking-Welch has examined how ideas about the Commonwealth shaped the thoughts and actions of working- and middle-class Britons belonging to a variety of civic associational groups, showing how older notions of Britain's special 'responsibility' for the Commonwealth co-existed with, and helped to shape the new thinking about aid, internationalism, and British national identity which emerged during the 1960s.[15] Other historians have begun to take an interest in exploring the nature and make-up of this curious, broad coalition of British support for the post-imperial Commonwealth, examining

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[12] Charlotte Riley, '"The Winds of Change are Blowing Economically": The Labour Party and British Overseas Development, 1940s-1960s' in Andrew W. M. Smith and Chris Jeppesen, *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?* (London: UCL Press, 2017), 55-57.

[13] Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, 'Race' and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 59.

[14] Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain*, 59.

[15] Anna Bocking-Welch, *Civic Society and The End of Empire: Decolonisation, Globalisation and Intenational Responsibility* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 29.

the reasons why British individuals, groups, and organisations from across the political and social spectrum remained interested in, and committed to, the Commonwealth after the end of empire.[16]

New approaches to Commonwealth history are needed in order to answer these questions. In a 2020 blog post, Philip Murphy highlighted the potential value of de-centring the 'inter-governmental' Commonwealth and the 'high politics' of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, and instead turning towards greater exploration of the 'People's Commonwealth' - that is, the abundance of semi- or unofficial exchanges of ideas, information, and people which the post-imperial Commonwealth encouraged and enabled.[17] In doing so, scholars interested in British and international twentieth-century history may gain a new appreciation of the Commonwealth's value as a subject for historical enquiry in its own right, and as a source of valuable new perspectives (and primary materials) to approach key themes in global twentieth century history such as race, human rights, or the impact of the Cold War. As Sue Onslow has pointed out, the post-imperial Commonwealth serves as an alternative archive of contemporary global history, imbued with a unique transnational institutional logic, and capable of revealing much that is new about late twentieth century British and international history. This archive exists not only in the form of official documents created by or about the Secretariat, but also in the form of material such as the Institute for Commonwealth Studies' Commonwealth Oral History Project (discussed in more detail below), as well as within the collections of the multitude of voluntary, civic, and non-governmental groups throughout the Commonwealth who interacted with its ideas and structures since the 1960s.[18]

The BBC provides an ideal vantage point from which to conduct an enquiry into the 'People's Commonwealth', given its status as a (nominally) non-governmental public service broadcaster which participated in the associational life of the Commonwealth. The next section of this chapter examines the BBC World Service's relationship with the post-imperial Commonwealth in detail, using primary source material drawn from the Commonwealth Oral

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[16] Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle, 'Reframing Cultures of Decolonisation' in Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle, eds, *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 1-26; Philip Murphy, 'Britain as a Global Power in the Twentieth Century' in Andrew Thompson, ed., *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 33-75.

[17] Philip Murphy, 'Taking Stock of the Commonwealth', Institute of Commonwealth Studies website blog, July 7 2020. Accessed online at https://commonwealth-opinion.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2020/taking-stock-of-the-commonwealth on 2 May 2022.

[18] Onslow, 'The Commonwealth and the Cold War', 1060.

History Project, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, and the BBC's own archives. This body of evidence shows how the World Service benefitted from the idea of the Commonwealth as an appropriate backdrop for British post-imperial benevolence, using the Commonwealth as an arena in which it might build its own reputation as a global development actor.

'A Shared Set of Unspoken Values'? The BBCXS, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, 1965-1987

1965 was a year of significant structural change for both the Commonwealth and the BBC. This was the year in which the Commonwealth established its Secretariat, a new intergovernmental bureaucratic entity which was entirely independent from British governmental oversight. Although based in London's Marlborough House, the Secretariat was not a British proposal. Instead, it reflected the wishes and increased influence of 'New Commonwealth' leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Milton Obote of Uganda and Eric Williams of Trinidad, who hoped its creation might help transform the Commonwealth into a genuinely post-imperial institution capable of addressing inequalities in trade and development between Commonwealth members.[19] While Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were not particularly enthusiastic about creating an new independent and interventionist Commonwealth institution, they acceded to the Secretariat's creation as a 'visible symbol of the spirit of co-operation' between 'Old' and 'New' Commonwealth.[20]

At roughly the same time, the BBC was also undergoing its own shift in focus away from the 'Old Commonwealth' and towards the 'New'. As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, 1965 was also the year in which the BBC decided to rename its flagship English language radio service for listeners beyond Britain's borders as the 'World Service' – a term which would quickly become a catch-all used to refer to all of the BBC's external broadcasting services, whether in English or a foreign language.[21] This name change reflected a broader shift in the BBC's aims for its English-language overseas services. From this point on, the BBC became more focused on depicting itself

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[19] Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes,* 28-31. See also W. David McIntyre, 'Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat', *International Journal,* 53:4 (1998), 753-777, 761.
[20] *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiques of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat 1987), 90. Quoted in McIntyre, 'Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat', 764.
[21] Potter, *Broadcasting Empire,* 224.

to listeners around the world as a truly 'global' broadcasting service, rather than as simply the voice of Britain. Gone were the days when its ideal imagined listener overseas was identified as the 'lonely listener in the bush', with a personal or sentimental connection to Britain, and who had dominated the imagination of the previous generation of programme producers and managers.[22] Instead, the BBC fixed its sights on a new kind of archetypal listener: one who, according to Asa Briggs, 'understands English but is not of British descent'.[23] The people of the 'New Commonwealth', for whom English was likely to be a second, third, or fourth language, were a crucial element of this imagined global listenership.

As noted in the previous section, the mid-1960s was a period in which a broad coalition of British actors came to view the post-imperial Commonwealth as promising space in which Britain might reaffirm its global status as a benevolent great power. Key figures within the BBC World Service clearly subscribed to this way of thinking, treating the Commonwealth as a valuable global setting within which both the BBC itself, and Britain more broadly, might demonstrate their post-imperial credentials as global leaders in the field of overseas development. Between 1965 and 1983, World Service executives delivered a clutch of speeches outlining and repeating this vision, accepting invitations to speak at Commonwealth-supporting organisations such as the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Royal Overseas League, and the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers' Association.[24] Speeches like Mansell's 1977 'Brotherhood of Broadcasters' address to the Royal Commonwealth Society, discussed in the opening section of this chapter, reiterated the World Service's sense of sympathy and fealty towards the Commonwealth in its post-imperial form. Despite its repeated and publicly declared commitment to political impartiality, the World Service's senior leadership clearly took pride in celebrating and promoting the idea that the Commonwealth had an important role to play in making sure that the new, post-imperial world order was a prosperous one.

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[22] Simon Potter, *Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 171-200.

[23] Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume V:* Competition (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 692.

[24] See for example Mansell, 'The Voice of Britain'; Ian Trethowan, 'The BBC and International Broadcasting', a speech given to the Royal Overseas League, 2 February 1981; Douglas Muggeridge, 'The New War on the Airwaves', speech given to the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers' Association, 14 April 1983.

Outside of these speeches, the World Service's approach to supporting the post-imperial Commonwealth was significant, yet often subtle. There is little evidence to suggest that Bush House's approach to broadcasting in relation to the Commonwealth strayed from the 'objective and impartial' stance which characterized its overall approach to international broadcasting, as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis. Yet it is nevertheless possible to point to evidence that key figures within the World Service felt that a shared set of 'Commonwealth values' existed, and that they felt connected and committed to the preservation and promotion of these values.

Andrew Walker, who served as the World Service's Commonwealth Correspondent between 1967 and 1985, represents a useful case study in understanding how and why key senior World Service employees felt sympathetic towards the post-imperial Commonwealth, and how this subtle support for the Commonwealth manifested itself within the BBC. Walker is the author of *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service*, an official history of the organisation published in 1992 which is an essential reference for historians of the World Service.[25] Yet much earlier in his career, Walker had written two less well-known books, outlining his views on the Commonwealth's values and significance.

In his first book, *The Modern Commonwealth,* published in 1975, Walker clearly endorses the value of the Commonwealth in its contemporary, post-imperial form. Within its closing chapters, he challenges those in Britain who have 'a tendency to look to the past and see the Commonwealth as a substitute for the British Empire, and a poor one at that', arguing in favour of the Commonwealth's value as an organisation capable of 'bringing people of different races together and enabling them to co-operate in a practical way'.[26] For Walker, the 'common ideas, institutions and ties which link its people together' made the Commonwealth a useful institution for tackling some of humanity's greatest challenges in the post-imperial era, such as 'bridging the gap' between the developed and developing world.[27]

Walker's vision of the post-imperial Commonwealth as a site for 'practical co-operation' between nations is expanded upon in his second book, *The Commonwealth: A New Look,* published in 1978.[28] Here Walker builds on the theme of his previous book's closing chapters by arguing in

[25] Andrew Walker, *A Skyful of Freedom: 60 Years of the BBC World Service* (London: Broadside, 1992).

[26] Walker, *The Modern Commonwealth* (London: Longman, 1975)*,* 158.

[27] Walker, *The Modern Commonwealth,* 151-155.

[28] Andrew Walker, *The Commonwealth: A New Look* (London: Pergamon Press, 1978).

favour of the post-imperial Commonwealth's institutional value as an overseas development actor, focusing on how the Commonwealth facilitated the transfer of technical expertise from more economically developed Commonwealth member states like the UK to the newer postcolonial states in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. In chapters describing the different forms of co-operation the Commonwealth facilitated (Economic and Technical, Educational and Legal, Medical and Scientific), Walker emphasized how the Commonwealth's existence encouraged the creation and continuance of different transnational networks, be they institutional or more informal, which made a contribution to addressing global development.

Besides providing an insight into how the World Service's leading Commonwealth correspondent viewed the post-imperial Commonwealth as a global development actor, *A New Look* also demonstrates Walker's belief that Britain's ongoing support of the post-imperial Commonwealth was not simply an exercise in altruism. Echoing an argument made by British Foreign Secretary David Owen in his book *Human Rights* (discussed in Chapter 5), Walker argues that Britain's continued membership of the Commonwealth was crucial to ensuring it retained its disproportionately influential role within the international order, including at the United Nations, concluding that 'as the representative of the group of more than 30 nations constituting about a third of the world's population, Britain's position as a permanent member of the Security Council is justifiable.'[29]

While Walker's pro-Commonwealth predilections were not necessarily shared with equal fervour across Bush House, they nevertheless help to illustrate why the BBC approached the Commonwealth as an organisation worth backing – even if this support was often subtle in nature. In order to understand and unpack these subtleties, it is useful to turn to a new source base created over the last decade: the Institute of Commonwealth Studies's Commonwealth Oral Histories Project (COHP). Commissioned by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, between 2012 and 2015 the COHP interviewed 74 individuals with close links to the Commonwealth, with the aim of preserving the testimony of those who had contributed to the organisation's continued existence and evolution since the creation of the Secretariat in 1965.[30] The resulting oral history archive offers contemporary historians a rich base from which to examine the motivations, ideals,

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[29] Walker, *The Commonwealth: A New Look,* 112.
[30] 'About the Project', Commonwealth Oral History Project website. Accessed online at https://commonwealthoralhistories.org on 30 July 2021.

and assumptions which informed the making and subsequent mission of the post-imperial Commonwealth.[31]

The positionality of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies's research team in relation to the 'official' Commonwealth gives the COHP a unique perspective: since it is part of the University of London and not officially affiliated with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Institute arguably represents part of the so-called 'People's Commonwealth' of semi- and unofficial Commonwealth-affiliated organisations discussed earlier in this chapter, maintaining intimate connections with its subject of study. As experienced historians of the Commonwealth, the research team conducting the project were acutely aware of the challenges and opportunities associated with interviewing 'elite' figures with close associations with a particular institution. In a podcast on the 'challenges of elite interviewing', Sue Onslow (who conducted the vast majority of COHP interviews) acknowledged the 'diplomacy' involved in persuading interviewees to 'let go of their history', and the level of 'negotiation' between the researchers and interviewees in determining which stories were told.[32] Informed by her conviction that 'honey catches more flies than vinegar', Onslow's interview style is friendly and non-adversarial, positioning herself in relation to her interviewees as a knowledgeable and sympathetic interlocutor and fellow Commonwealth 'insider'.[33]

While the majority of those interviewed as part of the COHP project held some kind of official political or bureaucratic role within the Commonwealth, the collection also includes testimony from figures associated with the non-governmental, 'unofficial', or 'People's' Commonwealth which existed alongside the formal Secretariat. Among this group of 'unofficial' Commonwealth-affiliated interviewees was Keith Somerville, a Professor of Journalism at the University of Kent, who worked for the BBC World Service between 1980 and 2008, including lengthy stints as a reporter based in Southern Africa. The transcript of Somerville's testimony, as presented in written form on the COHP website, represents a rich source of information about the

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[31] On the value of archived oral history collections see April Gallwey, 'The rewards of using archived oral histories in research: the case of the Millennium Memory Bank', *Oral History* 37 (2013), 37-50.
[32] Sue Onslow, 'Challenges of Elite interviewing', 30 June 2016. Accessed online at https://commonwealthoralhistories.org/videos-and-podcasts/ on 27 May 2022.
[33] Ibid.

BBC's relationship with the post-imperial Commonwealth, and the often unspoken assumptions which informed and inspired this relationship.

When asked by interviewer Sue Onslow about the BBC's role within the Commonwealth during the early 1980s, Somerville responded positively, focusing on a sense of 'shared values':

> KS: The BBC was still very much an organisation which felt – and you can even see it now when you look at the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, many of the people at the top of it are former BBC people who were senior, Elizabeth Smith, Rita Payne, who were all with the BBC during the '80s and '90s – I think behind it all, that the BBC had the same sort of ethical set of values that matched up with what the Commonwealth was seeking to do. Just the idea of the BBC's 'nation which would speak peace unto nation' is very much the same sort of broad ethos, I would say, as the Commonwealth. I think there was the feeling that the BBC had a huge audience in the Commonwealth, [that it] was still admired, respected, even if many governments within the Commonwealth might have been suspicious of BBC output, because it said things they didn't perhaps want their own people to hear.[34]

Later in his testimony, Somerville argued that, despite this shared 'ethical set of values' between BBC and Commonwealth, the World Service never used its programmes to deliberately promote the Commonwealth. However, by committing scarce resources to covering showcase events such as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, as well as stories such as the execution of the writer Ken Saro Wiwa by the Nigerian government in 1995, he recognized that Bush House was demonstrating its support in an indirect yet important way:

> KS: These were very, very important issues. I don't think there was ever a conscious thing of 'Commonwealth, Commonwealth, Commonwealth. We must cover the Commonwealth.' But it was just part of our being, it was our audience.
>
> SO: Part of your remit? Part of the BBC's DNA?
>
> KS: Yes, part of the DNA. Unsaid, unspoken.[35]

Aside from these assertions by an individual who was well placed to observe (and contribute to) the BBC's 'unsaid, unspoken' support for the Commonwealth, Somerville's testimony provides further evidence pointing towards the significance of this relationship for both organisations, and

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[34] Keith Somerville, Interview with Sue Onslow, Commonwealth Oral History Project (www.commonwealthoralhistories.org). Accessed at https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/5077/2/Keith_Somerville_Transcript.pdf on 27 May 2022, 4-5.
[35] Ibid., 9-10.

for historians of the Commonwealth. Firstly, there is the very fact of Somerville's inclusion within the COHP project, suggesting that the project's organizers at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies recognized the value that a former World Service employee might add to their aim of creating an oral archive which would help capture the post-imperial Commonwealth's historical significance. Secondly, the interview transcript reveals the apparent sympathy of the interview*er* as well as the interview*ee* towards the BBC World Service's claims to be a post-imperial international broadcaster:

> SO: So, the BBC was actually a type of diplomatic actor, an opinion maker,
> an opinion former?
> KS: Yes and it reflected an image of Britain that for many people was very, very
> positive. The BBC used to do lots and lots of surveys and it would come out
> that one of the first things that people saw in the BBC – particularly in
> Commonwealth countries because of the history, both of colonialism and then
> the decolonisation of the World Service, if you like – was the BBC taking over
> from the old Empire Service; becoming something that was no longer, if you
> like, a voice of empire, was a voice of a new world.
> SO: I love the World Service precisely because of that aspect.[36]

Onslow's conversational and friendly approach to the interview, in which she, without prompting, offered up her personal admiration for the World Service, seems to have helped to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere in which Somerville felt encouraged to share insights about the World Service's support for the Commonwealth which had typically remained unspoken.

Through her questions, Onslow repeatedly demonstrates her own fascination with trying to work out exactly how the World Service's 'unspoken' support for the Commonwealth translated into action, for example by asking Somerville whether this support was 'acknowledged, managed, directed, in the preparation of the editorial line' (a question that Somerville largely avoids answering), or enquiring into the kinds of help that the BBC provided to other Commonwealth countries or the Commonwealth Journalists Association.[37] Yet nowhere in the interview does

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[36] Ibid., 6.
[37] Ibid., 8.

Onslow ask Somerville to reflect on whether the World Service really was a truly post-imperial broadcaster, or whether it was appropriate for the World Service to be providing support for the Commonwealth, be it explicitly or implicitly. The assumption that the BBC's role within and coverage of the Commonwealth was fundamentally benevolent and altruistic is one which, for all its richness, remains unexamined within the interview – and is in fact reinforced by Onslow's unprompted declaration of 'love' for the World Service.

Both Andrew Walker's vision of the Commonwealth as a site of 'practical co-operation' and Somerville's testimony on the World Service's 'unspoken' support for the Commonwealth provide a valuable insight into the way that the post-imperial Commonwealth was conceptualized and instrumentalized at the World Service. Viewed from Bush House, the Commonwealth's importance lay in its usefulness as a framework within which the BBC might work to boost Britain's international reputation as a source of benevolent expertise. One important way in which the BBC demonstrated its continued support for the post-imperial Commonwealth was through the leading role it took on within the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA).

Established in 1974, the CBA built on a longer legacy of 'practical co-operation' between Commonwealth national broadcasters on development-related projects. The first Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference (CBC), arranged at the behest of the BBC, was held in February 1945, just three months before the Allied forces declared victory in Europe in the Second World War. Simon Potter has suggested that the BBC's main aim in initiating these conferences was to try and maintain the goodwill and co-operation which the experience of war had fostered between the BBC and the national broadcasters of its increasingly independent-minded 'dominions' (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa), in an attempt to wield a 'guiding influence over the wider pattern of broadcasting in the empire'.[38] But the CBC would instead function as a space in which the BBC, acting in concert with other 'Old Commonwealth' broadcasting associations, could consolidate and co-ordinate their influence over the development of broadcasting across the rapidly decolonizing 'New Commonwealth'. During the 1950s, the CBC provided training, expertise, and staff secondments to national broadcasters in newly or soon-to-be independent postcolonial states including Nigeria, Malaya, and Jamaica.[39]

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[38] Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 138.
[39] Ibid., 206.

With the influx of new member states to the Commonwealth in the 1960s, the CBC evolved. In 1963, the Conference was placed on a more consolidated organisational footing, appointing its first full-time Secretary-General, and establishing a small office of its own.[40] The BBC provided office space for this new administrative body to be hosted at Broadcasting House, while its Assistant Head of Overseas Talks and Features, Michael Stephens, was seconded to act as the Conference's first Secretary-General between 1963 to 1968.[41] By the end of the 1960s, the Conference had succeeded in positioning itself as a significant agent within wider efforts to encourage the economic development of newly independent Commonwealth countries through the provision of 'overseas assistance' from its richer member states. While not officially connected to or funded by the 'official' Commonwealth at this stage, the Conference's constructive role was recognized by the Secretariat, with Commonwealth Secretary-General Arnold Smith declaring in 1970 that it was an important partner in the Secretariat's 'long-haul task of development'.[42] Smith noted approvingly that the Conference's members 'rightly considered communications systems as investment for development', and endorsed the idea that technical assistance and broadcasting expertise provided by the older members would help 'to raise educational standards, to prevent disease and to improve technology' in the developing world.[43]

In 1974, the existing system of conferences held every two or three years (which appear to have often been more notable for their after-conference parties than their impact on broadcasting) was reorganized into a more permanent Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA).[44] At its inaugural meeting in Malta in 1974, the CBA published a commemorative booklet which highlighted the organisation's primary function as a broadcasting-focused overseas development agency. The booklet declared that it was 'natural that the longer established broadcasting organisations, such as the BBC (Britain), the CBC (Canada), the ABC (Australia) and the NZBC (New Zealand), should have been called upon - and readily responded to the call - for assistance

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[40] Ibid., 207.
[41] Ibid., 209.
[42] The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), FCO 26/539: Eighth Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference held in Jamaica 1970, Arnold Smith, 'Message for Eighth Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference, 2-15th June 1970', 2.
[43] Ibid., 2.
[44] Australian broadcaster Clement Semmler recalled how at the 1968 CBC in New Zealand, he discovered BBC Director General Hugh Carleton Greene drinking black velvets in a hot-pool at 2.a.m with senior BBC colleagues and 'the same number of the most attractive young ladies from the hotel staff'. Clement Semmler, *Pictures on the Margins: Memoirs* (St Lucia, Queensland, 1991), 117–18, quoted in Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 206.

in providing training…in the developing countries of the Commonwealth.'[45] The CBA was to be the instrument by which this transfer of broadcasting expertise from the 'Old' to the 'New' Commonwealth was to be achieved.

From its creation in 1974 until 1992, the CBA was led by the St Lucia-born broadcasting executive Alva Clarke. From the BBC's point of view, Clarke's appointment as Secretary-General was more than acceptable. Having first joined the BBC's Caribbean Service in 1961, Clarke had gradually worked his way up in Bush House to become the Senior Producer for the BBC's daily short-wave transmission to the region, 'London Calling the Caribbean'. Indeed, the CBA's conference handbook from 1974 shows that despite its multi-national membership, the CBA was from the outset dominated by figures with BBC connections: while delegates to the conference came from over forty different countries, almost two-thirds of them had either worked for or been trained by the BBC.[46]

The BBC's annual handbooks published during the 1970s and 1980s highlight the BBC's leading role within the CBA throughout these decades. These official publications were reference books published by the BBC each year to publicize and celebrate the corporation's work, with dedicated sections highlighting the work of specific channels or teams within the BBC regularly provided for each year. This makes them a valuable source for tracing change over time across the BBC as a whole, as well as within specific sections such as the BBCXS. Every BBC handbook published between 1965 and 1990 contained a section on 'International Relations', which unfailingly made reference to the BBC's membership of the CBC or CBA. Though they tended to be rather short and somewhat generic in nature (typically just a few sentences noting the attendance of BBC executives at any CBC/ CBA conferences), on occasion these references offer a greater glimpse into the kind of work that the BBC undertook under the umbrella of the Commonwealth. For example, in the 1966 Handbook, the BBC Controller for Staff Training and Appointments Lance Thirkell wrote a short paper on 'Aid to Overseas Broadcasters', in which he explained that, in co-operation with the Overseas Development Ministry, the BBC was now offering three 'Special Overseas Courses' for radio training:

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[45] *COMBROAD: Commonwealth Broadcasting Association* (London: Secretariat of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, 1974). 9.
[46] *COMBROAD: Commonwealth Broadcasting Association,* 12-24.

Each course lasts ten weeks and a maximum of twelve students attend. Since they began in the 1950s, 296 broadcasters from thirty-four Commonwealth and three foreign territories have been trained on these Special Overseas Courses. They are designed primarily for the immediate needs of the developing countries of the Commonwealth.[47]

Thirkell's remarks show how the BBC prioritized providing support to 'developing countries of the Commonwealth' over support to 'foreign territories', pointing to the BBC's belief, echoing that of the ODM discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, that Britain maintained a special responsibility towards supporting development within the Commonwealth. The paper concludes by outlining Thirkell's belief that 'through training in its broadest sense and the various ways in which it is carried out, the BBC maintains links of goodwill throughout the world', and his conviction that conducting overseas training courses for Commonwealth broadcasters has helped the BBC to acquire 'a world-wide reputation of "know-how"'.[48] Excerpts from later handbooks briefly refer to the BBC's practical efforts: for example, the 1973 edition describes how 'A BBC expert went to Southern Africa in 1972 to advise on setting up tape libraries in a number of Commonwealth countries' while 'three other experts in radio studio operations and television production went to Cyprus for several months to run training courses there, also under the auspices of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference'.[49]

Alongside the small amount of CBC and CBA-related archival material housed in The National Archives already cited in this chapter, these relatively short excerpts from BBC handbooks represent the clearest evidence available of how the BBC approached the Commonwealth as a suitable space for pursuing its expertise-focused approach to overseas development. To this researcher's knowledge, no comprehensive history of the CBA has yet been published: having been rebranded as the 'Public Media Alliance' in 2014, the organisation has attracted less scholarly or popular attention from than other, comparable Commonwealth-affiliated groups such as the Commonwealth Press Union or the Commonwealth Journalists' Association, both of which remain active under those names to this day and provide detailed histories of their origins and aims on their contemporary websites.[50]. Nor is the CBA's history

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[47] Lance Thirkell, 'Aids to Overseas Broadcasters', 1966 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1966), 30-32, 30.

[48] Thirkell, 'Aids to Overseas Broadcaster', 31-32.

[49] 1973 BBC Handbook (London: BBC, 1973), 97-98.

[50] The worthy task of compiling a comprehensive narrative of the CBA's history is beyond the scope of this thesis. Although some documents directly published by the CBA, such as the handbook prepared for its inaugural 1974 conference, are held by major repositories like the British Library, such examples are sporadic and rare. See 'Our

during these years consistently represented within the BBC archives' External Services Collection, with no specific files or series dedicated to preserving documents on the BBC's relationship with the CBA, or the Commonwealth more generally, from the mid-1960s onwards. These limitations mean that this chapter cannot offer a definitive answer on key questions such as why the CBC was reorganized and reformed into the CBA in 1974, or the extent to which the BBC was the driving force behind this development. [51] Nevertheless, it is both possible and worthwhile to offer some suggestions on why the BBC maintained its support for the CBA throughout the 1970s and 1980s, based on the source material that is available.

Firstly, the BBC appears to have viewed the CBA as a valuable alternative site for conducting its overseas development work during a period in which it gradually distanced itself from another major international organisation which concerned itself with the relationship between broadcasting and development during this period, UNESCO. As has been discussed in Chapter 5, the 1970s was a decade in which a transnational coalition of actors used UNESCO as a forum to develop and lobby for a New Information and Communication Order (NWICO). While the NWICO movement's supporters argued that major structural changes were required in order to ensure that media and information technology was used to support development in the Global South, the CBA's work was used as a counterpoint to that accusation.

Foreign Office correspondence from October 1983 demonstrates that when the British delegation to an upcoming UNESCO conference in Paris sought to put together a dossier of evidence to prove that Britain was already making a major contribution to supporting media development in the developing world, it drew heavily on evidence from Commonwealth-affiliated organisations including the CBA, the Commonwealth Press Union, and the Commonwealth Media Development Fund.[52] Sir Edward Pickering, Chairman of the CPU, compiled around twenty pages

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History', Public Media Alliance website, accessed at https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/about-us/ on 30 April, 2022; 'History', CPU Media Trust website, accessed at http://cpu.org.uk/about-2/history/ on 30 April 2022; 'Our History', Commonwealth Journalists Association website, accessed at http://commonwealthjournalists.org/our-history/ on 30 April 2022.

[51]The CBA's own papers are currently held in storage in an uncatalogued state by its successor organisation, the Public Media Alliance. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the papers' uncatalogued nature, accessing these papers for research purposes was not possible as part of this research project, despite the supportive efforts of the Public Media Alliance's CEO, Sally-Ann Wilson.

[52] The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), FCO 58/3075: New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO): Communications Projects and General Policy, 1983, 'New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO): Intergovernmental meeting in London, October 1983.

of evidence outlining the nature and extent of support provided to the developing world in the form of training schemes, technical co-operation, and infrastructure projects, which he sent to the FCO noting his hope that 'these documents will help you to build up a strong case to be put to UNESCO'.[53] While the vast majority of these documents were focused on the CPU, they also demonstrate how the CBA functioned as a vital training provider across Africa and Asia, providing details of the different training needs identified by CBA regional training groups on subjects such as 'Farm Broadcasting', 'Television Colour Conversion' and 'Educational Broadcasting', and how 'Assistance has already been offered to the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in the form of an expert in Television Training (Mr Gordon Croton, Head of TV Training, BBC)'.[54] These document thus demonstrate how the CBA, as part of a wider coalition of Commonwealth-affiliated organisations, served a valuable purpose for both the BBC and the British state in providing evidence of their continuing contribution to global media development. The work of Commonwealth associations including the CBA thus served a useful function for Britain in its efforts to discredit and derail the NWICO movement, by allowing Britain to argue that it was already supporting developing countries to improve their information and communication systems through the provision of 'expertise' or 'know-how'.

Secondly, the CBA was useful to the BBC as a potential source of future funding, should the BBCXS's traditional funding source, its annual grant-in-aid from the Foreign Office, be shrunk or cut entirely. As has been discussed earlier this thesis, successive UK governments during the 1970s and 1980s questioned whether the grant-in-aid which the FCO provided to the BBCXS represented an effective use of limited resources. This uncertainty created an environment within Bush House which encouraged senior figures to investigate alternative funding possibilities, including the possibility of securing additional funding from the government's overseas development budget, as well as from commercial and non-governmental sources. The BBC External Service Collection's files on 'Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Associations' show that by the mid-1980s, the BBCXS was receiving funding from the Commonwealth Secretariat, brokered by the CBA, to pay for it to run bespoke training programmes for broadcasters in developing Commonwealth countries.

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[53] TNA, FCO 58/3075, Sir Edward Pickering to Lord Nicholas Gordon-Lennox, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 19 October 1983.
[54] TNA, FCO 58/3075, 'Commonwealth Broadcasting Association: Regional Training'.

The CBA strengthened and formalized its relationship with the Secretariat after the latter launched its Commonwealth Media Development Fund (CMDF) in August 1979. The CMDF, which was itself funded through the overseas development budgets of Commonwealth member states (with the UK by far the biggest overall contributor), did not provide grants to individuals or to governments, but only to a select list of four specialized, non-governmental media agencies.[55] The CBA claimed one of the spots on this list, alongside the Commonwealth Press Union, the Commonwealth Journalists' Association, and the Thomson Foundation.[56]

In a September 1985 memorandum relating to a BBCXS proposal to provide in-country training to employees of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, CBA Secretary-General Alva Clarke agreed that the CBA 'should undertake financial implications involved in a radio training exercise by [BBC World Service Head of Overseas Training] Gwyneth Henderson or whoever'.[57] Confirming that 'our funds for training come from the Commonwealth Media Development Fund administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House', Clarke requested that Bush House 'give an idea of the figure required for this exercise I would begin to put in motion the leverage for acquisition of funds'.[58] This memorandum thus demonstrates how by the mid-1980s, CBA membership was functioning as a useful route by which the BBCXS could to access CMDF funding to pay for its overseas development work. Since the CBA was led by a former BBCXS employee, based in Broadcasting House, and imbued with decades of personal and institutional links with the BBCXS, it presumably provided a far easier route to funding than might be expected through going cap-in-hand to the FCO to ask for money in addition to the grant-in-aid during this period.

As has been discussed in Chapter Two, Bush House would eventually respond to increased government scrutiny over its funding during the 1980s by implementing a broad range of managerial reforms, allowing it to negotiate a relatively generous 'triennial' funding agreement

[55] Isla Paterson, 'Evaluation of the Commonwealth Media Development Fund', *Commonwealth Secretariat Evaluation Series,* 76:1 (2005), 1-18. Accessed online at https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/76%20-%20Evaluation%20of%20Commonwealth%20Media%20Development%20Fund-%20Final%20Report.pdf on 25 June 25 2021.
[56] Paterson, 'Evaluation of the Commonwealth Media Development Fund'. 14.
[57] BBCWAC, E40/625/1: Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Organisations, 1985-1986, 'Radio Training in Ghana Request', Alva Clarke to MDXB, 16 August 1985.
[58] BBCWAC, E40/625/1, Clarke to MDXB, 16 August 1985.

which secured its future into the 1990s. However, this outcome was far from certain to those responsible for securing the World Service's immediate financial future in the preceding decade. The CBA thus provided a valuable alternative route by which the BBCXS might be able to continue accessing British government funding intended for overseas development purposes, albeit by more indirect means, should its government grant-in-aid be shrunk or stopped completely.

This alternative route to UK government funding was particularly valuable now that the BBC had lost its effective monopoly as a provider of training or 'expertise' to overseas broadcasters. As discussed in Chapter Three, the BBCXS had been receiving UK government funding for overseas development purposes since the creation of the Overseas Development Ministry in 1964, and before that had maintained an important role within successive pre- and post-war British governments' approaches to colonial development. This funding, drawn from the UK's overseas development budget, was received in addition to the Bush House's regular grant-in-aid from the Foreign Office. Yet while the BBC may have established itself as one of the UK government's 'preferred partners' for broadcasting-related overseas development projects, there is evidence that some within Bush House worried that this privileged position was under threat.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, decisions about using the UK's overseas development budget for media development projects overseas were generally overseen by the British Council which, as mentioned in Chapter Five of this thesis, stood somewhat ahead of the BBCXS in the pecking order from the ODM's perspective. A January 1986 report produced on behalf of the European Economic Community explained that the British Council 'acts as the ODA's adviser and executive agent for much of British activity in this field', making decisions on which UK organisations would receive government funding to provide training to journalists and broadcasters from the developing world.[59] By 1980, the BBC had also lost its effective monopoly on providing such training opportunities, thanks to the creation of the National Broadcasting School. Funded by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (the regulatory body for commercial radio and television in the UK), the National Broadcasting School was primarily focused on providing training for domestic local radio and television broadcasters. However, it also offered training courses aimed

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[59] European Institute for the Media for the Commission of the European Communities, *Assistance from the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities to the Media in the Third World* (European Institute for the Media for the Commission of the European Communities: Brussels, 1986), 73. Accessed online at http://aei.pitt.edu/12767/1/12767.pdf on 19 July 2021.

at journalists from abroad, training between fifty to fifty-five overseas students a year between 1982 and 1984.[60]

This rival provider of training for overseas journalists was a source of some frustration at the BBC. Head of Radio Training John Turtle felt that the British Council was deliberately directing potential trainees away from the BBCXS, complaining in a March 1983 memorandum that 'the British Council will inevitably direct as many trainees as they can to the National Broadcasting School…we appear to get only those who persist - firmly - in pressing for BBC training'.[61] These fears were reiterated by the Controller of Overseas Services, Mark Dodd, who argued in August 1983 that the British Council was 'making unilateral decisions and from our point of view, regrettable decisions, about what sort of broadcasting training should be supported with ODA money.'[62] These remarks suggest that those involved in training overseas journalists at the BBC were fearful that they might lost their long-standing monopoly as a government-endorsed provider of development-related broadcasting expertise.

The CBA was a valuable space in which the BBC could potentially tackle some of these fears at source. If the BBCXS could secure funding for training overseas journalists through the CBA, it could bypass the British Council entirely. It could also use the CBA as a forum to encourage the governments of Commonwealth countries, when making requests for aid to the UK government, to insist that any broadcasting or journalism training they requested was delivered specifically by the BBC, rather than any other training provider. A note circulated to those travelling on BBC business in February 1983 made it clear that BBC employees should encourage their overseas colleagues to insist on the BBC as their preferred provider of training when dealing with UK government:

> it is essential that the BBC makes what it can offer, whether that be training or individual programme series, clear to the governments and particularly the ministries of External Affairs of developing countries, so that the latter in putting in their bids for British development aid can specify the BBC as the training organisation they wish to place their people with, and specific BBC educational/developmental programmes as the materials they would wish to have for their use, supported in each case by ODA funds.[63]

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[60] *Assistance from the Member States,* 76.

[61] BBCWAC, E40/624/1: Aid to Foreign Broadcasting Organisations, John Turtle (Head of Radio Training) to Hugh Howse (General Manager of External Business and Development), March 7 1983.

[62] BBCWAC, E40/624/1, Mark Dodd (Controller Overseas Services) to D.P.A, 2 August 1983.

[63] BBCWAC, E40/624/1, 'Draft Briefing Notes for BBC Duty Travelers'.

The existence of the CBA therefore provided the BBCXS with a way of transmitting these messages to national broadcasters across the 'developing' Commonwealth, ensuring that any requests they submitted for training or support would insist on the BBC as their preferred provider. It also provided a platform through which the BBC could promote and advertise its offer as a training provider and source of broadcasting expertise to these national Commonwealth, acting as a 'closed shop' which competitors like the National Broadcasting School did not have access to. As the following section will demonstrate, the CBA's in-house journal, *COMBROAD*, also played a role in promoting the BBC's credentials as a benevolent and expert provider of journalistic and broadcast training to developing Commonwealth countries.

The BBC's support for and activity within the CBA throughout the 1970s and 1980s was therefore not solely based on the ideological or moral commitment that many within Bush House felt towards the post-imperial Commonwealth as an institution. As has been demonstrated, key figures within the BBC also saw the CBA as a useful alternative arena through which it might try to overcome potential threats to its resources or status, whether they came from the UK government or alternative providers of training for overseas journalists and broadcasters. The CBA served an important role in helping to realise, and advertise, the BBC's commitment to performing a role as a contributor to the post-imperial task of overseas development. This role would continue, and even expand, into the late 1980s and 1990s.

Promoting the BBC as Global Development Actor: COMBROAD, the CBA and the World Service, 1987-1999

The previous section provides a useful overall picture of the reasons why the BBC valued its relationship with the CBA between 1974 and 1987, based on a diverse and relatively disparate collection of archival materials drawn from a variety of sources. Fortunately, a more comprehensive and cohesive source base exists to make examining this relationship during the period 1987-1999 a more straightforward task, providing more concrete evidence of the way the CBA helped to burnish the BBC's reputation as a global development actor.

Launched at the same time as the organization itself in 1974, the CBA's official quarterly journal, *COMBROAD,* informed and connected a transnational community of broadcasting executives and experts across the Commonwealth. As an official CBA publication, *COMBROAD* was edited by the CBA's Secretary-General, working from their offices at BBC Broadcasting House in London. It gave those working in national broadcasters across the Commonwealth an instrument to publicize their latest programming or technical developments, as well as summarizing the conclusions of any recent CBA committee meetings, and providing reviews of the latest broadcasting-related books or equipment.

While a full run of *COMBROAD* editions published since 1974 has only been preserved by the CBA itself, and was therefore unavailable to the researcher due to the access limitations previously mentioned in this chapter, every edition of the journal published between 1987 and 1999 was accessible via the British Library. This made it possible to investigate *COMBROAD*'s coverage of the BBC's role as an overseas development actor during this fascinating period, spanning the end of the Cold War and the 'humanitarian turn' which the World Service undertook during the 1990s (discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis). On the basis of the sources available to the researcher, it has not proved possible to establish much information on exactly how many readers across the Commonwealth *COMBROAD* reached, who these readers were, or the level of influence that it achieved upon those readers. Yet its features, editorials, and advertisements provide a valuable insight into the CBA's approach to overseas development during those years, and the extent to which it functioned as an amplifier for the BBC's credentials as a benevolent and truly global broadcasting actor.

COMBROAD's pages are saturated with evidence of the CBA's commitment to encouraging development throughout the Commonwealth through the power of broadcasting. Every issue published between 1987 and 1999 contained at least one (and often more than one) article promoting the positive impact that broadcasting was having on levels of economic and social development across the Commonwealth. Articles such as 'Promoting Adult Education in India through Broadcasting' (September 1989), 'Success for Farm Broadcasts in Bangladesh' (June 1991) and 'Radio Beats Killer Diseases' (March 1996) celebrated the positive impact that CBA-backed broadcasting development programmes were having in Commonwealth countries, or

affirmed the potential of these schemes, if only the CBA were able to provide greater financial backing.[64]

Unsurprisingly, the BBC also featured prominently within *COMBROAD's* pages between 1987 and 1999, with articles praising the BBCXS's positive global impact and forward-looking approach to international broadcasting appearing regularly. For example, in *COMBROAD's* March 1987 edition, Special Assistant to the Managing Director of the BBCXS Maureen Bebb wrote of Bush House's efforts to launch a BBCXS television channel, noting that 'potential rebroadcasters worldwide expressed considerable interest' in the proposal, which would 'keep Britain in the forefront of international broadcasting'.[65] In its June 1994 edition, *COMBROAD* publicized the opening of the BBC's new Centre for Broadcast Skills Training in Wood Norton, quoting BBC Resource Managing Director Rod Lynch who described the centre as a 'move for the common good'.[66] These articles did not directly promote the BBC's credentials as an overseas development actor, but instead provided a medium for the BBC to publicize its impact and its plans for the future on a global scale to a transnational readership, helping to maintain the BBC's international reputation as a source of broadcasting expertise and inspiration. *COMBROAD* also provided a soapbox for BBC senior managers to preach their vision for the future of public service broadcasting to an international audience: both BBC Chairman Marmaduke Hussey and BBCXS Managing Director John Tusa published long articles outlining their views on the proper relationship between the government and the state in *COMBROAD* (in September 1988 and March 1992 respectively).[67]

Alongside these articles, *COMBROAD* also promoted the BBC's credentials as an international provider of broadcasting expertise through its advertisements. The journal frequently carried half- or full-page adverts promoting BBC World Service radio training courses for managers, producers, or trainers from overseas, as well as opportunities for foreign broadcasting companies to hire World Service resources or equipment through the BBC's new International

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[64]'Promoting Adult Education in India through Broadcasting', *COMBROAD*, 84 (September 1989), 23-26; 'Success for Farm Broadcasts in Bangladesh', *COMBROAD*, 91 (June 1991), 31-33; 'Radio Beats Killer Diseases', *COMBROAD,* 110 (March 1996), 23.

[65] Maureen Bebb, 'BBC External Services and Television', *COMBROAD,* 74 (March 1987), 31-33.

[66] Elizabeth Smith, 'BBC skills centre opens for business', *COMBROAD,* 103 (June 1994), 15.

[67] Marmaduke Hussey, 'Channels of Culture from the BBC', *COMBROAD,* 80 (September 1988), 15-22; John Tusa, 'Fourth Estate or Fifth Column? Media the Government and the State', *COMBROAD,* 94 (March 1992), 1-6.

Operations department, and to purchase World Service products like the BBC's 'Topical Tapes' or a subscription to the BBC English magazine.[68] This material helped to reinforce the idea that the World Service's broadcasting expertise was valuable in a commercial sense, as well as in an altruistic sense.

In 1994, overall responsibility for editing and publishing *COMBROAD* passed to the newly appointed Secretary-General of the CBA, Elizabeth Smith, who would serve in this role until 2010. Like her predecessor Alva Clarke, Smith had also worked for the BBC World Service before joining the CBA, serving as Controller of English Services at Bush House between 1987 and 1994. Under her leadership, the CBA gained new momentum, taking a greater role in securing funding for broadcasting-related development activity from a variety of different sources throughout the 1990s and 2000s, including from the burgeoning NGO sector. In doing so, she helped the BBC to broaden and deepen its relationships with the NGO sector, demonstrating the CBA's continued value to the BBC as a space in which it could strengthen its credentials as a global development actor and 'force for good'.

Smith's testimony regarding the CBA's mission, purpose, and relationship with the BBC has been captured in an hour-long oral history interview conducted by this thesis' author in July 2020. Like all oral testimony created through interactions which encourage interviewees to reflect on their personal roles within broader developments, Smith's account of the CBA's history must be approached with care, taking into account key factors relating to the unreliability of memory: most importantly, the deliberate or accidental distortions or omissions of fact resulting from the interviewee's positionality in relation to the subject and individuals being discussed.[69] In addition to this, any analysis must take into account the intersubjective relationship between interviewee and interviewer, acknowledging that the testimony is a product not only of the interviewee's memory, but also of the way in which interviewer and interviewee relate to each other within a broader cultural and social context, inflected by factors such as age, gender, and social class.[70] Conducted via a telephone call from her home in Brisbane, Australia during the COVID-affected

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[68] See *COMBROAD* 80 (Sep 1988) (inside front cover); 90 (March 1991) (Inside front cover); 82 (March 1989), 3.

[69] Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth: 'Elite' Oral History* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), 35-42.

[70] Lynn Abrams, 'Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity' in Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory,* Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2016), 54-78; Joan Sangster, 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History', *Women's History Review*, 3:1, 5-28.

summer of 2020, Smith's interview with the author cannot be treated as a definitive account of her leadership of the CBA, yet offers clear and valuable insights into her memories of the organisation's mission and purpose, and of its relationship with the World Service and wider BBC, during a period for which no archival documents are yet available for historical study.

Early in the interview, Smith outlined her vision of the CBA's organisational mission and objectives:

> SW: How would you describe the mission or the work of the CBA in a nutshell, and the kind of objectives that you had when you took over?
>
> ES: Yes, well when I went there the objectives weren't fully defined, but it was clear that this was a membership-based organisation with corporate members from among the public service broadcasters around the Commonwealth, and its mission was to help them with new technological developments, with training, with consultancies, with a view to helping and supporting public service broadcasting, with the free and fair coverage of elections, there was a focus on that, and all that kind of thing, that was what the objectives were.
>
> SW: Was there any difference between the way public service broadcasting was defined at the BBC and at the CBA?
>
> ES: Not much, no, I think it was roughly aligned. The problem was for poorer CBA members, is they were struggling to be independent from governments in different countries, because governments tended to encroach on their independence over the years, which was a major problem.[71]

This excerpt helps to illustrate Smith's understanding of the CBA's role, of 'helping and supporting public service broadcasting' within 'poorer CBA members' through providing 'training' and 'consultancies'. It also points to the fundamental, yet apparently assumed, alignment between the BBC and the CBA's definition of 'public service broadcasting'.

Elsewhere in her testimony, Smith speaks of the ease with which she moved from the BBC World Service to the CBA during the mid-1990s, while also describing her early tenure as Head of the CBA as being characterized by a struggle between those at the BBC who valued its relationship with the CBA, and those who did not. She recalled that one of her first responsibilities as CBA Secretary-General was to defend it from the managerial revolution that John Birt was imposing on the BBC after his appointment as Director General in 1992:

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[71] Elizbeth Smith, oral history interview with the author, July 24th 2020.

By the time I joined it, interest in the CBA was in decline, that was in John Birt's time, and he didn't like it, he was very focused on value for money, and strict adherence to the mission statement that he had for the BBC, so he was really not very interested in the CBA, and he thought the BBC, the CBA had had one of its offices on the BBC's premises, but then they started charging for their office, and at that point I thought it would be more advantageous to move the CBA out of BBC BH [Broadcasting House] premises, and so we took up offices in Fleet Street, which was then where the World Service was, and the World Service was a much more natural part of the BBC for the CBA to relate to, rather than Broadcasting House.[72]

In depicting Bush House as a 'natural' ally of the CBA, this testimony helps to demonstrate how Smith conceived of the World Service and the CBA as partners. It also bonds the World Service and the CBA together in their opposition towards John Birt and his 'mission statement for the BBC' which, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, posed a major threat to Bush House's autonomy and budget in the mid-1990s. By positioning the CBA as fellow victims of Birt's economizing (by losing their office at Broadcasting House), Smith further aligns the CBA with the World Service, strengthening the sense that these two organisations were 'natural' partners with a joint mission to save the BBC's future and reputation as a broadcaster whose domain and duties extended beyond the domestic or national framework.

Despite Birt's apparent antipathy towards the CBA and the loss of its Broadcasting House office, the organisation appears to have flourished throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Smith remembered in her interview that the CBA's staff expanded from two to six permanent members of staff during her tenure as Secretary-General, evolving into a 'very good organisation' which was 'small but very nimble'.[73] Smith explained how the CBA survived and thrived during this period by focusing on her success in securing alternative, non-BBC sources of funding:

SW: You mentioned that the organisation grew under your leadership. Was that as a result of your finding new funding or resources?

ES: Yes, it was, I spent a lot of time getting funding for particular projects. When I began there, there were a range of funders I used, and they were very keen to work with us, some funding from the Commonwealth itself, we had some money from that, some money from DFID, there was funding from UNESCO, we developed some partnerships with UNESCO, and many other funders who were interested in training and developing broadcasters to become more confident, fulfilling their public service ideals with their coverage, promoting

[72] Elizbeth Smith, oral history interview with the author, July 24th 2020.
[73] Elizbeth Smith, oral history interview with the author, July 24th 2020.

democracy and all that sort of thing, also we did some training that was purely technical, to help them with the transmission of their broadcasting.[74]

As well as securing this financial support from DFID and UNESCO (presumably after 1997, the year in which DFID was created and the UK rejoined UNESCO after a twelve-year absence), the CBA also secured funding from the World Bank in November 1998 to run economics and business journalism courses in Uganda, Tanzania, and Malawi.[75] These new funding sources helped contribute to the CBA's impressive overall offer as a training provider: By 1998, the CBA was responsible for administering 53 different training courses, collecting together funding from a diverse array of governmental, non-governmental, and inter-governmental sources.[76]

This expanded role for the CBA was made possible thanks to increased financial support from CBA members to match the funding from external sources. Smith secured a 30% increase in subscription rates from the national broadcasters which made up the CBA's membership to act as a 'special training levy' aimed at 'training broadcasters in developing countries'.[77] The BBC's support for increasing the CBA's budget was made clear in an article published in the December 1994 issue of *COMBROAD*, which stated 'the decision was reached as a result of a BBC initiative announced by the Corporation's Deputy Director General, Bob Phillis, who backed the CBA's decision to place training as the Association's first priority'.[78] Given the fact that Phillis also served as Managing Director of the World Service at this time, this agreement demonstrates how the World Service maintained its commitment to the CBA, and its belief in the CBA's value as a site for overseas development activity, even during this period of Birt-induced upheaval at Bush House.

Issues of *COMBROAD* from the period 1994-1999 provide further evidence to support Smith's oral testimony, demonstrating that during this period, the CBA developed new relationships which expanded both its funding base and its institutional prestige. For example, a round-up of CBA training and consultancies published in *COMBROAD* in June 1995 announced that the CBA had secured funding to organize a fact-finding trip to London by Radio Tanzania's Editor-in-Chief during the run-up to the upcoming Tanzanian elections, courtesy of the

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[74] Elizbeth Smith, oral history interview with the author, July 24th 2020.
[75] 'World Bank and CBA join for radio courses', *COMBROAD*, 121 (November 1998), 17.
[76] 'CBA Training News for 1999', *COMBROAD,* 122 (February 1999), 12.
[77] 'Training Levy Set', *COMBROAD*, 105 (December 1994), 1.
[78] Ibid.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. This UK government-funded organisation, founded in 1992 with the aim of supporting the emergence of multi-party democracy in both the developing world and the former Soviet Bloc, also funded two CBA courses for Tanzanian broadcasters on election coverage, which were run by a member of the BBC World Service's African Service, Tido Mhando.[79] This example demonstrates how the World Service was still gaining access to additional funding for its overseas training programme through the CBA; funding which was entirely separate from its regular grant-in-aid from the UK government.

The CBA also cultivated a closer relationship with overseas development NGOs during the 1990s. Even before Smith's appointment as Secretary-General, the CBA had used *COMBROAD* to promote and publicize the work of broadcasting-related overseas development NGOs such as the One World Broadcasting Trust, which had been co-founded by the BBC World Service's former Head of the African Service, John Wilkinson.[80] *COMBROAD* also publicized the work of Population Communications International (PCI), described in its June 1995 issue as having 'pioneered the use of mass media to promote smaller desired family size, use of family planning and elevation of the status of women, particularly through radio and television serial dramas in developing countries'.[81] PCI's links with the CBA ran deep - the article states that 'a number of CBA member organisations have participated in these projects', while both Elizabeth Smith and her predecessor at the CBA, Alva Clarke, sat on PCI's board of trustees.[82] PCI's work included the creation of a 'family planning soap opera' in India in 1984 designed to promote 'family planning and the elevation of the status of women'.[83] As discussed in Chapter Three, the BBC's Afghan and Somali Services would embark on their own development-related soap operas during the mid-1990s, working alongside prominent NGOs such as Oxfam and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Yet this evidence suggests that the CBA was already promoting and engaging with this kind of work within the context of the Commonwealth a decade earlier.

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[79] 'CBA training and consultancies', *COMBROAD,* 107 (June 1995), 4. For a highly critical account of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's role in promoting British and Western interests overseas since its foundation in 1992, see Rebecca Fisher, 'The Insidious Nature of 'Democracy Promotion': The Case of the Western Foundation for Democracy' in Rebecca Fisher, ed., *Managing Democracy, Managing Dissent: Capitalism, Democracy and the Organisation of Consent* (London: Russell Press, 2013), 334-356.

[80] John Wilkinson, 'Broadcasting: One World Trust', *COMBROAD*, 78 (March 1988), 28-30.

[81] 'Family Planning by Soap', *COMBROAD,* 107 (June 1995), 10.

[82] 'Of JR and Condoms', *New Internationalist,* 156 (February 1986), 9-10.

[83] 'Family Planning by Soap', *COMBROAD,* 107 (June 1995), 10.

By establishing the CBA as a significant part of the funding ecosystem for global media development, Smith's actions mirrored similar efforts within Bush House at the same time to strengthen the World Service's relationship with external humanitarian and overseas development organisations. Chapter Three of this thesis has explored the way in which specific language services built relationships with leading humanitarian NGOs such as Oxfam and the International Committee of the Red Cross during the 1990s, as well as the development of the World Service's own development-focused NGO, BBC MPM, which secured funding from the UN-backed World Health Organisation for public health broadcast projects across the developing world. Under Smith's leadership, the CBA supported the World Service's efforts to embed itself within this world, helping the BBC and an array of other overseas development organisations to mutually endorse each other's credentials as benevolent, post-imperial global actors. By providing a semi-detached space for such activity to take place under the 'Commonwealth' umbrella, the CBA played a crucial contribution in the World Service's emergence by the end of the 1990s into a fully-fledged member of the global development community.

Conclusion

In 2004, UNESCO published a new set of editorial guidelines aimed at broadcasters working in developing countries across Asia. In his foreword, the Director of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau described the publication as 'an attempt to help broadcasters find their way through the maze and help them identify good practice that ensures free and fair coverage'.[84] Yet while these guidelines were published, disseminated, and endorsed by UNESCO as an exemplar for 'good practice', they had in fact been written by another organisation - the Commonwealth Broadcast Association. Indeed, the final version of the publication was edited by Mary Raine, a former news and features editor for the BBC World Service.

In her own preface to this document, CBA Secretary-General Elizabeth Smith explained that in compiling these guidelines, the CBA had 'drawn heavily' on the guidance provided to production staff belonging to CBA-affiliated broadcasting corporations in nine different Commonwealth countries, including All India Radio, the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, and

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[84] Prof M. Tawfik, 'Foreword' in Mary Raine, ed., *CBA Editorial Guidelines* (New Delhi: UNESCO, 2004). Accessed online at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000135672/PDF/135672eng.pdf.multi on August 16 2021.

the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.[85] Despite this diversity of inputs, Smith noted that 'there is very little difference between the guidelines of these major broadcasters, even though there is a great difference in the societies to which they broadcast.'[86] What bound all these national broadcasters spread across the Commonwealth together was a common ancestor – the BBC.

This set of editorial guidelines – based on the BBC's approach to public service broadcasting, but made 'global' and 'universal' through the CBA, and then UNESCO – helps to illustrate how the BBC benefitted from lending its support to the post-imperial Commonwealth. Through its leading role within the CBA, the BBC could promote its capacity to act as a global development actor, cultivating an approach to overseas development which was characterized by the provision of BBC expertise and 'know-how' to broadcasters within the developing world. CBA membership resulted in both ideological and practical benefits for the BBC World Service: shoring up its reputation as a benevolent global actor, while also offering an alternative route to funding if its traditional sources were to dry up. The CBA offered a route through which the World Service could continue to shape and define the nature of 'good practice' and 'public service broadcasting' beyond Britain's borders in the post-imperial era. The CBA's continued existence helped to legitimize the notion that Britain and the BBC had a special role to play in providing 'practical assistance' which would shape the economies, societies, and cultures of newly independent Commonwealth countries in the developing world.

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[85] Elizabeth Smith, 'Preface' in *CBA Editorial Guidelines*.
[86] Ibid.

Conclusion

This thesis has answered two main questions about the history of the BBC's international broadcasting arm during the latter third of the twentieth century. Firstly, in what ways did the BBCXS act or present itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind' during this period? Secondly, for what reasons did the BBCXS pursue a role as a humanitarian / overseas development actor?

Chapter One of this thesis explained the context in which the BBCXS first depicted itself as an 'Oxfam of the Mind' in the mid-1970s, originally deploying the phrase to identify itself as a uniquely altruistic international broadcaster, capable of nourishing the 'free minds' of listeners around the world who, it was claimed, would otherwise be starved of access to the truth. By 1982 this claim to benevolent expertise was already a central pillar of the BBCXS's external relations, with depictions of the organisation as one which sought to 'sow good seeds in the hearts of all who hear and see' and 'do good rather than ill' a prominent part of the celebrations of the BBCXS's fiftieth anniversary. Bush House remained cautious about identifying itself as an ally or advocate of specific humanitarian or human rights causes during this period, in part due to Cold War-inspired fears of being discredited or attacked as an organ of politically-motivated propagandism. Yet by rhetorically comparing itself to one of the world's most famous humanitarian NGOs, and beginning to cultivate closer relations with NGO-backed publications like *Index on Censorship* and *New Internationalist*, the BBCXS clearly sought to encourage key stakeholders (including those holding the purse-strings within government) to consider its value in terms of its moral contribution to the rest of the world.

Chapter Two demonstrated how the BBCXS built upon this foundation during the 1980s and (especially) the 1990s, building deeper partnerships with an array of humanitarian NGOs and overseas development agencies, and eventually creating its own BBC-branded international development charity. It identified the end of the Cold War as a significant moment in the BBCXS's relationship with the NGO sector. While it did not result in a wholesale transformation of the organisation's institutional philosophy, it was significant in encouraging the BBCXS to position itself more explicitly as a part of a broader, transnational movement in favour of 'basic human rights' – for example, the 'right to free and untainted information' referenced in a 1991 World

Service mission statement. This chapter also reflected on the important role played by key individuals within Bush House, such as Managing Director John Tusa, both in embracing and promoting the idea of the World Service as a defender of 'basic human rights' and in overseeing greater collaboratation with humanitarian partners to create programming which 'operates like aid'. Yet while Tusa's vision of the BBCXS was clearly a product of its particular time, it could only have been developed and implemented because of its compatibility with a much older vision of the BBCXS - as a manifestation of Britain's right and duty to play a leading role in the global struggle against human ignorance and suffering – which dated back all the way to the 1930s.

In Chapter Three, the thesis delved into a case study of one of the BBCXS's most prominent overseas development projects during the 1990s, the Marshall Plan of the Mind. Serving as the first historical enquiry into MPM's mission and work, it established the impressive scale and scope of the BBC's work in Romania, Russia, and Ukraine, and explained how and why MPM adopted a new *modus operandi* as the first BBC-branded NGO. Beyond this, it demonstrated how MPM was not simply a product of the immediate geopolitical context (i.e. the sudden end of the Cold War and the Western urge to construct a 'New Europe' in its own image). Instead, it demonstrated MPM's status as one particularly colourful episode within a much longer narrative running throughout the BBCXS's post-imperial history, emphasizing Bush House's continual desire to use and grow its international reputation for independent, impartial expertise, and thereby to secure short- and long-term strategic and economic advantages for Britain.

Chapter Four showed how the BBCXS sought to simultaneously position itself as both a generous provider of vital aid to developing countries, and a cutting-edge commercial venture capable of opening up promising new markets for British exports. It demonstrated how Bush House followed peers like the British Council in re-categorizing its English Language Teaching work as a form of overseas development aid, before attempting (and largely failing) to secure greater funding from the UK government on the basis of the alleged 'success' of BBC English's flagship *Follow Me!* in China from 1982. A new analysis of Chinese television executive XiongXiong Xu's memoirs, and previously unstudied correspondence between the BBCXS and the UK government's overseas development ministry, made it possible to comprehensively re-evaluate the BBC's own official narratives and reflections regarding the significance and success

of *Follow Me!*. The chapter highlighted how the BBCXS's idealistic commitment to serving the 'universal needs' of its global audiences during the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by an institutional appreciation of the potential benefits the BBC might accrue from establishing a global reputation as a source of development-related expertise.

Chapter Five placed debates around the BBCXS's role as a global development actor into a new institutional context, by examining Bush House's initially lukewarm and ultimately antipathetic response towards UNESCO's proposals for tackling global information and communication inequality during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It showed how despite its perpetual claims to independence and impartiality, the BBCXS was (eventually) willing to lend its support to the powerful and politicized anti-NWICO lobby, and to the Thatcher government's own efforts to discredit and derail the NWICO movement. It explained how Bush House was able to justify taking this stance by depicting itself as a benevolent provider of media infrastructure and training in the developing world (especially within the Commonwealth), whose existing work in this area was ignored and even threatened by NWICO. As such, the chapter helps to highlight how the BBCXS's role and reputation as an overseas development actor was used as a tool to help rebut those who questioned, or sought to overturn, Britain and the West's continued dominance of the existing global communication order.

Finally, Chapter Six explored how, why, and when the BBC's urge to contribute to global development in the post-imperial era was channeled through the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association. Demonstrating the nominally independent CBA's reliance on the BBC, it showed how the CBA's existence and its support for development projects across the 'New Commonwealth' served as a valuable alternative transnational space where the BBC could burnish its credentials as a global development actor. It showed how the BBCXS used Commonwealth links to secure its status as the premiere provider of broadcasting training and expertise for journalists from the former empire, and to seek out potential new funding opportunities should the Foreign Office follow up on their threats to cut their annual grant-in-aid. By the 1990s, the CBA and its journal, *COMBROAD,* were playing a valuable role in in strengthening the BBCXS's relationships with a variety of international and non-governmental organisations, helping to

underline Bush House's continued vitality and relevance at a time when its autonomy and prestige were under threat from the neoliberal management reforms sweeping the BBC.

Overall, this thesis has drawn to the surface the problems, qualifications, and complications which ought to accompany any depiction of the BBCXS as a 'gift to the world'. It has examined the BBCXS's post-imperial rhetoric and practical work in the field of overseas development to highlight points of co-operation between the BBC and the British government since the 1960s which have not previously been integrated within our historical understanding of this important relationship. In doing so, it offers a significant counterargument to histories of the BBCXS, the wider BBC, and twentieth century British politics and society which have tended to characterize that relationship as being defined by perpetual conflict or creative tension. Instead, it suggests that we should approach the BBC not as an independent, impartial public service broadcaster capable of 'holding the state to account', but as a semi-detached organ of the state, whose autonomy rested on a shared belief between both the BBC and the government of the time that this arrangement helped promote a more persuasive image of Britain as a benevolent global power.

Through making its specific contribution to the history of the BBC, this thesis has also engaged with one of the broader, still-open questions of twentieth century British history: namely, how (and to what extent) Britain maintained and justified its disproportionately influential international role during the second half of the century. Intricately connected to this question is the question of how Britain's approach to internationalism during this period incorporated and intersected with the experience of decolonization, as Britain sought to justify its continued status at the top table of global affairs despite the end of its formal rule over large parts of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Previous works on the history of the BBCXS since 1945 have tended to focus on the Cold War as the dominant geopolitical framework against which we should understand the organisation's mission and purpose. This thesis has instead characterized the BBCXS's approach to the Cold War as one which rested on a pre-existing, almost primal belief in Britain's capacity and duty to be global force for good – a belief which pre-dated and survived both the emergence and the eventual denouement of the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

This work therefore speaks to the recent calls within modern British studies to rethink our engagement with the concept of 'decolonization', treating it not as a singular historical moment or process, but as a collection of processes or 'multiple fronts' which incorporates not just the formal transfer of political sovereignty from the colonial to the post-colonial state, but the creation of new economic, social, and cultural structures which make that sovereignty worthwhile.[87] It has reflected on the civilizing beliefs, ideas, and assumptions which informed the BBCXS's mission during the latter third of the twentieth century, arguing that while the forms in which the BBCXS described and enacted its desire to intervene to improve the lot of humanity as a whole may have changed, the core beliefs and assumptions which inspired these actions were closely connected to earlier, imperial notions of the BBC's rights and duties as a British 'public service broadcaster'.

Throughout each chapter, the thesis has cast a spotlight on the post-imperial BBCXS's repeated claims towards 'expertise' and 'know-how' - which apparently qualified it to intervene in a wide variety of geographical and geopolitical settings, from Deng Xiaoping's China to UNESCO to post-Cold War Eastern Europe. It has drawn out how these interventions rested on older, often unspoken assumptions about the special contribution that Britain, with 'the advantages both of a considerable imperial history and of a decently impotent present', was apparently uniquely well placed to make towards global development in the post-imperial era.[88] The BBCXS's work in the realms of humanitarianism, human rights, and overseas development between the mid-1960s and late 1990s was a crucial meeting place between older, more explicitly paternalistic visions of Britain's unique commitment towards 'humanity' and 'civilization' and newer yet clearly related ideas about the West's duty to place its superior knowledge at the disposal of the world's poor through the intervention of non-governmental experts. By occasionally and strategically describing itself as a kind of humanitarian NGO, embarking upon NGO-like 'development-focused' training projects aimed at journalists and broadcasters from the Global South, and collaborating more closely with specific humanitarian and overseas development NGOs, the BBC was able to continue a new version of the same mission which it had pursued

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[87] See Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, Introduction in Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of The Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7. Quoted in Erik Linstrum, Stuart Ward, Vanessa Ogle, Saima Nasar, Priyamvada Gopal, Decolonizing Britain: An Exchange, *Twentieth Century British History*, 33:2 (2022), 274–303, 289.

[88] BBCWAC, E40/477, Austen Kark, Reply to Chairman of Bush House Working Party, 29 Oct 1973.

since the 1930s – defining and disseminating a particular vision of what 'improvement' looked like for the rest of the world beyond Britain's borders. This thesis has shown how this mission remained entirely concerned and compatible with Britain's national interests, as understood from Bush House, simultaneously reflecting and contributing to wider efforts to transform Britain's image on the international stage from an imperial global power to a self-avowedly post-imperial one.

It is hoped that this work might encourage further scholarly investigations into the nature and extent of the 'multiple fronts of decolonization' which the BBC has experienced, is experiencing, and is yet to experience. It also speaks to the potential value of conducting further research on other British institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, which since the 1960s have often depicted themselves as being motivated by a post- or non-imperial will to use their expertise as a benevolent 'force for good'. While this thesis has focused on the lens of humanitarianism, human rights, and overseas development as a route to exploring (amongst other things) the mental and material limits of 'decolonization' at the BBCXS, a focus on other factors only briefly touched upon here – for example, the role played by gender or race in shaping the possibilities for and pace of change – would surely make a huge contribution to our understanding of the ways in which 'decolonization' extended far beyond the 1960s within and beyond the BBC.

Methodologically speaking, this thesis has drawn heavily on the BBCXS's own archives, and on existing historical literature produced by and for former BBCXS staff. Yet it has also relied on source material which has brought a new coalition of voices to the foreground, including some which have largely been overlooked until now when writing the history of the BBC. By incorporating the perspectives of 'semi-outsiders', including those who only worked with or for the BBC for a short part of their career, this thesis was able to puncture through some of the more hagiographic layers of the BBC's history. For example, in Chapter Two, the voices of women like Corinna Furse or Maria Frauenrath, for whom working for the World Service was just one part of a longer career spanning multiple institutions and sectors, provided a useful counterpoint to voices such as John Tusa's or Peter Udell's, who spent almost their entire professional careers working for the BBC, and whose recollections and opinions have been featured in numerous popular and scholarly works on the BBCXS.

Rarer, and perhaps even more valuable still are the perspectives of real 'outsiders' whose interactions with the BBCXS were more transactional than formative: those of the ordinary Russians quizzed by a market research survey team discussed in Chapter Three, or of the Chinese television executive XiongXiong Xu in Chapter Four. Taken together, these voices hint at the value of adopting a new approach to writing the history of the BBC, or of any other British twentieth century institutions whose work placed them in intimate contact with an array of smaller external bodies, be they outside consultants, funders, suppliers, customers, or cross-sector partners. By working from the 'outside in', instead of relying solely or predominantly on the archival records of the institution one wishes to understand, one might successfully cut through the dominant yet often unspoken institutional logic with which these records will inevitably be saturated, to build a more critical and more genuinely 'global' understanding of these British institutions' historical roles and significance. The prospect of further work which might approach the history of Britain's key national institutions through previously untapped archival source material – through the archives of British businesses, trade unions, or charities for example, or of governments or institutions beyond Britain's borders - is a hugely exciting one.

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Simon Derry (24 April 2020)

Karen Merkel (24 April 2020)

Elizabeth Smith (24 June 2020)

Peter Udell (14 August 2020)

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